

How to apply for a grant

From The CLEAR GUIDE v1, written by Les Robinson for Mission Australia March 2009

www.enablingchange.com.au

There are numerous grant opportunities available for community groups. Obtaining a grant to employ contractors or staff can make a big difference to the effectiveness of your efforts.

1) Scan the horizon

Keep an eye out for up-coming grants. The following web site is very thorough and let's you register for regular email updates on available grants.

communitybuilders.nsw has a list of all federal, state and local government funding programs, as well as opportunities from institutions, philanthropic trusts and companies.

www2.communitybuilders.nsw.gov.au/funding/programs/

2) Read the guidelines well

The first thing to notice is the deadline for submission. Check that you have enough time (probably 2-3 weeks minimum) to put together a submission.

Then read the funding guidelines carefully and note down the likely strengths and weaknesses of your group or organisation in meeting (or exceeding) the eligibility requirements.

3) Decide whether to go for it, or not

Make a realistic assessment of your group's strengths. If your group can tick *most* of the eligibility requirements then you should consider going for the grant.

4) Get advice

Meet with local community development workers or your council's community services department. Get their ideas on the best approach. Discuss your group's strengths and weaknesses with them, and get their advice on filling in any gaps in capacity or resources. Can they think of any other organisations you could partner with?

5) Fill any capacity gaps

Now's the time to work on filling in any gaps in your group's resources and capacity. You may want to:

- do some more research;
- obtain additional advice (perhaps a skilled "project advisor");
- invite additional committee members with extra skills;
- obtain the services of outside contractors, perhaps local professionals providing their services for free (designers, landscapers, lawyers etc).

6) Consider a joint project

There are usually great advantages in applying for grants as a joint venture with other partners, especially respected organisations like service clubs, churches, or neighbourhood centres. From the funders' point of view, the addition of extra membership networks, resources, knowledge, reputation, and organisational resources (like accounting and bookkeeping), can be good reasons to prefer joint ventures.

Look for partners that are a good match with your group ie. will they fill key gaps in your own group's resources and capacity?

If you decide to start a joint venture then take special care to clarify the roles and responsibilities of each partner. See *How to start a partnership*.

Here's a checklist of things to consider when writing a submission.

- Your groups' purpose statement. See *Planning (1)*.
- How your purpose overlaps with the purpose of the funding program
- How many of the eligibility requirements can you tick?
- What is your vision for the project (ie. how will the situation be different as a result of your efforts)?
- Your evidence about the need for the project.
- Your links to the affected community.

- Your consultations with the affected community about the proposed project.
- Data on the affected community.
- The mix of members and skills on your committee or working party.
- Your networks of contacts to help promote the project.
- How you'll handle and account for the money.
- Endorsements from other organisations or significant people.
- How you'll collect evidence on progress and report back.

Preparing tenders and expressions of interest

Here is some additional information on preparing tenders for government funding.

The following is an excerpt from **The SNOW project: Tips and Tools** by the Bradfield Nyland Group (2004)
www.cnet.ngo.net.au/dmdocuments/Snow%20Project.pdf

Tenders or expressions of interest (EOIs) are submissions for funding that compete against other tenders for the contract to conduct a project. The difference between this approach and a funding submission approach is that the project has been determined by the funder and you need to argue that that are the best likely provider, rather than preparing a case to argue for a particular strategy or approach.

Beyond this, many of the principles for what makes for a successful tender or submission are the same:

1) Identify what the funding provider wants or needs

There will be written information on the specific requirements for a project, or parameters for a funding grant, but it is important to also:

- read any related information, such as policy documents, plans or reports; and

- talk to representatives from the funding provider about the aims and requirements.

Ideally, you need to know:

- why the funding or project has been developed;
- what outcomes the project needs to produce;
- whether there are particular models, practices or approaches required or preferred;
- what the preferred time frame and budget is; and
- the criteria that will be used to select the successful tender.

2) Design and cost the project

Work out how you believe the project should operate, how you would run it, and what this would cost. If the real cost is likely to be greater than the available funds, then you may need to adjust the project design, or identify ways of reducing costs. Consider possible project partners, and alternative approaches to the project.

3) Write the tender

Often a call for an expression of interest or brief will list the information that is required in the tender document, or even provide a format to be followed. The following table shows the common components, and what each section should tell the funding provider:

Section	Purpose	Information
Background/Context	To demonstrate your understanding of the project, the background issues and how the project might address identified issues	Identify the key issues that relate to the project and any particular knowledge or understanding that your organisation has
The project: tasks, outcomes, deliverables	To demonstrate your understanding of the aims of the project and specific requirements involved	The project specifications and any additions or changes you are proposing
Methodology/proposal	To explain how you will conduct the project, and how this will produce the outcomes required	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General approach and philosophy • Specific tasks and activities that will be carried out • How these relate to

		<p>specific outcomes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time frames • Target groups/client groups (who will be involved, receive services etc) • Expected level of service (service numbers, targets etc) • Monitoring and evaluation processes
Expertise of the organisation	To demonstrate that your organisation has the expertise and resources to conduct the project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brief background and overview of the organisation • Brief description of the key aspects of the organisation's expertise, experience and resources that are relevant to the project (using any selection criteria that are relevant) <p>Use an attachment to provide any more detailed information, such as descriptions of other projects, experience or qualifications of staff, organisational reports etc</p>
Selection criteria	Demonstrate that you meet all the criteria	Report against each item in the list of selection criteria (this can be done by referring to other parts of your tender document where you have already addressed particular items)
Budget	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To show the costs of purchasing the project or service from your organisation, or, where there are fixed budgets, how you will allocate the resources 	The breakdown of projected expenditure against specific items (these may be specified in the brief)

	<i>and</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To demonstrate financial management capacity 	
Conditions of business	To explain any particular conditions that you wish to have included in the contract	Specific conditions that your organisation requires

Tips:

- Keep the information brief and to the point.
- Use diagrams and tables to summarise information and present it in an accessible manner.
- Show clearly and precisely how you will conduct the project.
- Explain clearly why your organisation is well placed to manage the project competently.

Useful resources

communitybuilders.nsw has a number of guides for submission writing:

http://www.communitybuilders.nsw.gov.au/finding_funds/submissions/

Cooper, L., Verity, F. and Bull, M. (2005) **Good Practices and Pitfalls in Community-Based Capacity Building and Early Intervention Projects – A Toolkit**, is a detailed guide to writing submissions.

<http://152.91.62.59/internet/facsinternet.nsf/aboutfacs/programs/sfsc-toolkit.htm>