Fundraising Toolkit 4

Tips for Writing Successful Bids to Funders

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**United Kingdom
National Commission
for UNESCO**

Introduction

The UK National Commission for UNESCO (UKNC) is developing a resilient network for UNESCO Designated Sites in the UK through our 'Local to Global' project, made possible with The National Lottery Heritage Fund, thanks to National Lottery players.

From 2023-2024, Local to Global convened UNESCO site coordinators and external consultants to generate a community of practice that promotes skills, confidence and capacity-building in the following key areas:

- Audience development, stakeholder mapping and inclusion
- Fundraising and financial sustainability
- Digital transformation and web development

UKNC commissioned Claire Glazebrook Consulting (www.claireglazebrook.com) to develop best practice guidance for UNESCO Sites in the UK in the field of fundraising and financial sustainability. This is one of four toolkits made available through the UKNC website.

Interested to know more?
Please contact the UK National Commission for UNESCO at www.unesco.org.uk

Tips for writing successful bids to Funders

If you are involved in writing bids for your organisation, this toolkit pulls together a few tips to understand some of the common mistakes and ways to make your project stand out from the crowd.

There's a checklist to ensure your organisation is ready to raise funding through grants - and how to write a compelling application.

Step 1

Have a plan

Make sure your organisation has an up to date Strategic/ Management Plan. This is crucial to outline your mission, vision and objectives. It also shows that your work is strategically led and that the projects you want to do aren't funding led – they are part of a well thought out strategy.

Step 2

Align your projects

One of the most important aspects of grant writing is to align your projects with the interests of the funders you are approaching. How will your project help to achieve their aims and objectives? For instance, do they want to broker alliances, deliver locally or at national scale? What are their focus areas and who have they supported in the past?

Step 3

Develop a pipeline

This is a tool that helps you track and manage deadlines, requirements, gifts made, and follow ups of every funder you apply to. It is often just a spreadsheet showing who you have applied to, for how much, when you expect to hear back from them. It also lists out the prospective bids to help you plan ahead, avoid missing deadlines and to help you forecast potential income.

Step 4

Write compelling and concise proposals

The most important thing is to write what the funder needs to hear – not what you want to write.

If a funder asks how you meet their funding principles, answer that in detail, with how you're going to do it and give some examples – if you simply list their funding principles, they won't fund you. It sounds simple this one but it's a mistake many people make and sometimes weaker projects get through simply because they've hit the funders touchpoints better in their bid.

Some other simple 'tricks of the trade'

1. Be concise and use clear and simple language – avoid jargon (and abbreviations they may not know).

2. Make sure your budget adds up!

3. Explain if you have high reserves, e.g. if they're for a specific purpose, as otherwise when checking your accounts funders may think you don't need support.

4. Convince the funder that your project is worth investing in – Why is it needed? What difference will it make (the impact it will have)? Does it present value for money?

5. Follow the funders' format and any specific instructions. If they provide a template, follow it. If they ask for policies to be forwarded, ensure they're up to date. If they say you can't include retrospective costs, ensure your budget is clear.

6. Back up your argument with data and explain the process you've gone through to find the information. That might be consultation you've done to demonstrate you know your community well and understand the issues they're facing. Use published reports to demonstrate the need for investment, case studies or previous evaluation of your work.

7. Think about how your answers will land with someone who doesn't know you or your work – will it make sense? It's often a good idea to get someone else to read bids before they are submitted.

8. If you're not successful the first time, ask for feedback and if you can apply again.

Step 5

Grant management

You've got the grant! It's important now that everyone working on the project understands the terms and conditions of that grant – including deadlines, reporting requirements, any restrictions, and what outcomes are expected.

It's a good idea to put in place a system for tracking expenditure of each grant – so you can report on how you spent the monies. All funders understand that sometimes things change – if that happens, let the funder know as soon as possible and get their permission for any changes (rather than leaving it to the final report).

Regular reporting back to the funder builds trust (and your chances of getting another grant from them in the future). Funders like to be kept in touch and this can be as simple as sending them your newsletter, any interesting case studies or letters from beneficiaries, or how you're hitting the project milestones. Offer visits to see your work in person and record the project with photos or videos.

Step 6

Evaluation

Evaluation at the end of a project is key to demonstrating impact and that you've achieved what you set out to do. This is often part of the grant requirements and should be built into your planning from the outset.

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