Tips For Grant Seekers

In the last two years we asked philanthropic organisations, not-for-profits and schools to provide some useful tips around the grant application ‘journey’. These include comments in survey responses and are presented again here with some new and updated tips.

Pre-Application
- Get ‘the story’ or case outlined: Know your project well and believe in it. Are you ready to accept a grant and progress the project within the granting timeframe?
- Do some background research on the different types of foundations and trusts. Have someone who is passionate and knowledgeable about your project make contact with foundations or trusts who might be a ‘good fit’. Read their funding principles, conditions and guidelines.
- Just because one foundation does not require a specific piece of information, this does not mean that another foundation won’t.
- Be clear whether a foundation has a preference for discrete stand alone projects or whether the project can be part of a larger project. First cuts can be the deepest, so make sure what you are seeking to do or how you are seeking to do it is a good fit with your potential supporter.

Application
- Not sure about your Tax Status for a grant? Check with your financial advisor or the Australian Government’s ABN Lookup website (see http://abr.business.gov.au). See also the section ‘Working through the complexities of eligibility’ later in this Guide.
- Don’t forget to include (and where appropriate quantify in dollar terms) in-kind contributions (e.g. teachers’ salary, volunteer time that might otherwise incur a dollar cost) in your budget. But don’t confuse in-kind and dollars and be clear exactly what part of your project you are asking the grant maker to fund.
- Take into account what a grant maker will and won’t fund, and total dollar amount they are likely to fund (previous successful grant recipient information in a foundation or trust’s Annual Report or on their website can help you out here). But don’t water down your budget. Be realistic. There is no point being funded for a project that may well fall over half way through its implementation because you have run out of funds. Don’t over-promise and under-deliver!
Ensure that questions are carefully read, what is the grant maker asking? If you are not sure many grant makers are happy to provide clarity. A great example is looking at questions around risk. What grant makers actually want to know is whether risk has been considered and mitigated.

Don’t assume that a question about evaluation just means doing post-project surveys and taking photos. Try clearly identifying your goals, strategies, outputs, outcomes and expected impact in a table; this can then be referred to in the acquittal. Even if grant makers haven’t asked specifically for it, they will be impressed by a systematic approach.

What type of grant maker are you applying to? What language is required? Avoid jargon unless it is absolutely necessary.

Avoid generic funding applications. Make sure you address the specific interests, priorities and requirements of the grant maker you are applying to.

If you are unsuccessful in your application, seek feedback, many grant makers may welcome grant seekers calling for this, especially if they are planning on applying again. This is all part of building the relationship. At the very least, grant seekers could look at generic feedback reports or lists of who has been funded.

**Acquittal**

Before you get to the acquittal stage, keep track of your progress and keep in touch with the grant maker throughout the journey, sharing any delays and setbacks along the way. Tell the truth about things that didn’t work, grant makers appreciate this as part of their own learning. Setbacks do happen, but misunderstandings and ‘nasty surprises’ can be avoided with good communication and honesty.

Share both intended and unintended outcomes with the grant maker.

Acquit your grant in a timely manner. If you were eligible to apply again to the same foundation or trust, you will be asked whether you submitted an acquittal last time.

Ask the grant maker to share the results of your project within their networks.

With a few tweaks, think how else what you have prepared could be used (e.g. communications with your board or parent body, an article, within your strategic plan).