

4 Actions to Make Your Trust Proposals Stand Out from the Crowd

There are around 10,000 trusts and foundations in the UK giving out around £3.6 billion each year and, as such, are a huge source of income for charities but time and time again clients come to me to say that they struggle to put together a trust application or that, despite having met the criteria, they still weren't successful. There's huge competition out there for that £3.6 billion pot of funding so what can you do to make sure your application stands out from the crowd?

1. **Avoid 'Scatter Gun' Fundraising** - I've worked with many clients who look at the type of organisation a trust funds - say arts - and don't bother to establish whether or not they meet any of the more detailed criteria. This approach will give you a longer application list but it lacks focus.

Now, I know that there are many organisations that will be able to point to generic applications for small amounts that they sent to 20 or 30 trusts (or more) and that raised a few thousand pounds - but this post is about making your applications **really** work for you. This approach isn't the best use of your fundraiser's time (especially when the number one issue for the majority of my clients is lack of time to fundraise) and it also makes it less likely that these unfocused applications will be the start of a relationship with a trust - so they're often one off gifts too. By being more focused your chances of success are higher and the potential amount you can raise goes up too - so by spending the same amount of time on a smaller number of applications, organisations can raise more money in the long run.

2. **Think Like a Funder** - sit down and write your application and start by including everything that you think is relevant and that a trust will need to know (making sure you include specific information that different trusts ask for too).

Then go away, have a cuppa and come back to edit it but this time try to read it by putting yourself in the shoes of a trustee. There is a point to having that break and that's to take some time away from your application so you can come back and look at it objectively with fresh eyes. Does it make sense? Can you understand what the main elements and outcomes of the project will be? Are the benefits of your work obvious? Remember to ask someone who doesn't know your work so well to read it.

3. **Say What You Need Upfront** - get the most important point about your project out in the first sentence, if possible:

'We aim to help 50 young teenagers into work each year through our training programme in xx town.'

'Our new community centre will provide adult learning, parenting classes, community drama, and health outreach programmes in a deprived inner city area in xx city'.

What is it that you are trying to do? Get that out first and then go on to explain the hows and the whys: how you will achieve this aim; why you're the best organisation to provide this work; what you've done to engage your users/potential users in your planning.

By getting the most important point out up front, you'll encourage the reader to find out more. Many people make the mistake of trying to bury **what it is that they are trying to do** because it's what they are rather than what they do that fits with the trusts criteria. Or that they're concerned their project might not quite fit the criteria- but if it doesn't fit, they won't fund it anyway, so shout about it in your opening gambit.

4. **Follow-Up** – saying thank you to those who give you money may be obviously, but I'm constantly surprised by charities that don't. However, while a thank you is an absolute must, so too is follow-up to let a trust know how your project is doing/has done **even if they don't ask for a follow up report**. And that's probably the most important point because even if a trust doesn't ask for a report, providing them with one, will help you to stand out from the crowd.

Tell them whether you achieved what you set out to; and what your successes have been/what you've learned along the way. Getting the money is only the start.

- ✓ **Keep in touch with those who fund you,**
- ✓ **build upon that goodwill and**
- ✓ **increase your chances of raising money from them in the future.**

In an increasingly competitive funding environment organisations need to make their fundraising work smarter not harder.

Putting these 4 points into action will put you in a better, stronger position against the competition.