

## **General Tips on Writing Successful Trust Proposals**

### **Do your research**

First of all, there's no point writing to a trust if they don't fund the type of project that you're asking them to consider or if they don't fund organisations like yours. Or if you need capital funding and they only provide revenue – and vice versa. Trusts have criteria for a reason and if you fail to meet them, you won't even make it past the first hurdle. Also note information like when deadlines are and whether or not they accept unsolicited applications in the first place.

### **Tell your story**

Be succinct and to the point. Use short sentences and paragraphs and remember; trustees generally have to consider far more applications than they are likely to be able to fund. They don't want to wade through pages and pages of information to get to the crux of what your bid is about. Grab their attention by summarising what your organisation is aiming to achieve/what problem you will solve or overcome in the opening paragraph.

### **Read the Guidelines**

As well as making sure you meet the criteria, you must also read the guidelines to ensure that you provide all the information requested. If they ask for an annual report and set of accounts, include them. If they ask for two referees, think who will give the best reference for your organisation and the type of project that you're seeking funding for and include them. Similarly, if a trust asks you to solely provide your accounts and specifically asks that you send nothing else, don't be tempted to include additional information. It'll add to your postage costs, won't be read, won't help your bid and may even count against you.

### **Style**

Avoid jargon, acronyms and technical information. You are used to writing in the language that everyone in your organisation understands. Trustees aren't in your organisation. And they don't have the time or inclination to research the details of what on earth you're talking about. Imagine that you know nothing about your organisation. Does what you've written make sense or do you need to include additional background information?

### **Edit**

Write your bid in full. Then go away – even leave it for a couple of days. Come back and edit it with fresh eyes. Make sure the sentences are short and snappy. That the paragraphs don't drag on for pages. That you're not repeating yourself. Pull it apart and move items to where they are in the best position. Be ruthless. Don't be precious. This isn't about you. It's about communicating about your project in a language the trustees will understand and that will help you to stand out from the crowd. Once you've done this, get someone who doesn't know your project or organisation so well to read it. Does it make sense to them? Do they understand

what you're trying to achieve? The best way to check their comprehension is to ask them to explain to you what it is that you need funding for. If they can't, or if it needs additional explanation from you, it needs to be looked at again.

Trusts are interested in:

- What need/problem you're seeking to address
- Who will benefit and for how long
- Outcomes – short term and long term
- Evaluation – how will you make sure you've done what you set out to do
- What their money will specifically fund
- What your overall budget for the project is
- How you intend to raise all the funding you need for the project

### **Review**

Before you send it off, check over your bid.

Spell check it.

Tick off the items you need to include and make sure you've included them. If possible, get someone else to cast a fresh eye over it to proof it. If not, leave it overnight and re-read it yourself. You're not editing at this stage – you should have done that already – but you need to proof it to make sure there are no errors.

Writing trust bids isn't rocket science and with practice it will get easier. However, each new project that you are seeking funding for and each new bid should get you thinking and present a challenge – otherwise you're in danger of just churning out information.

This is an opportunity to get creative; to think about how to get the interest of trustees who read about literally thousands of great organisations every year; and to remember what gives you a buzz about your organisation in the first place.