

The Travellers Aid Trust

How to Apply for Funding

General Funding Tips:

There is probably someone with money willing to fund someone without money for just about any thing you can think of under the sun. The trick is linking those two people together and sometimes that can be a bit like the proverbial needle in a haystack.

But there are a few simple questions and answers that can make the whole process just that little bit easier. These may seem very simplistic and they are, but if you get these things right from the start, you'll save a lot of time and effort. You'd be surprised how much time and energy is wasted because people aren't clear about what they want and consequently, who to get it from.

It is always a good idea to have these questions and answers written out on a basis document outlining your project before you even begin to look for funding. This will help you firstly to identify funders that are likely to support your kind of project, and secondly to complete application forms.

All application forms are similar and all funders will want to know the same basic information. If you have the following points already laid out, it makes the job a lot easier all round.

1. Define yourself! Who are you anyway? You need to be very clear about 'who' you are. Are you an individual who has a particular idea or project you want to take forward, are you an informal group of people who want to bring about positive change in your community or are you a formally constituted group working to a set of formalized objectives, for example? Whoever you are, you need to set out a clear and simple one-line explanation, like: *I am a single parent campaigning for better support for Home Educated children - We are a child & parent/carer playgroup working with children between the ages of 2 and 5 – We are a registered Housing Cooperative promoting environmentally sustainable living environments, etc...*

2. Get to the point! What do you want to do? No matter how complex the issue it is that you are trying to address, break it down into basic principles, like: *I want to produce a newsletter – we want to buy play equipment – we want to buy solar panels.* If it is a complex issue, you will still need to have a single broad aim, which can then be broken down into around three basic objectives.

3. Educate them! Why do you want to do this? Always assume that no one knows anything about you or what it is you are trying to do. Again, keep it simple and straightforward but make sure its comprehensive. It can be helpful to break it down into three short paragraphs covering background, recent developments and the situation today. For example, explain how and why home education became a legal option for parents, explain why you chose to home educate your own child and finally, explain the reason you feel that there is need for greater support for single parents who choose to home educate. Or, explain how conventional energy supplies are depleting the planets resources, quote international conventions on sustainable energy sources and how solar panels address some of these issues.

4. Show them the plan of action! How are you going to do this? Set out a clear and straightforward step-by-step outline of how you will achieve what it is you want to do. For example: *I will research the law relating to Home Education, I will put together a list of relevant agencies and organisation working with Home Educated children and I will contact other single parents who are home educating their children and get them to contribute articles talking about their own experiences.*

5. Sell it to them! What is this going to achieve? This is the important bit – always make sure that you link in a solution to the problem you are trying to address and it's a good idea to show a range of benefits if possible. For example, *By publishing a newsletter, single parents who home educate will; (a) have a way to share information and experiences, (b) highlight the difficulties faced by this group to professionals working in the field, (c) create a forum for representation, good practice and reform.*

6. Convince them! Why should anyone help you? Don't sell yourself short and don't hesitate to blow your own trumpet! If you are directly affected by something, then you are probably the best person to sort it out. And don't be afraid to state the obvious! For example: *Because I am a single parent who home educates my children, I have direct experience of*

the difficulties that individuals can experience. This means that I am very committed to the issue and therefore feel that I am very well placed to deliver this project effectively. Or, Since setting up the playgroup, we have drastically improved the child-care facilities within our community through the provision of a safe and creative environment for our children. We have already proven that we are committed and capable, etc...

7. Justify your bid! Why them? Almost all funders will want to know why you need money from them in particular. Once you have identified a funder that meets the criteria of your project, use their own aims and objectives to justify your application. Don't hesitate to literally use their own words – if their literature says they want to tackle social exclusion, promote the arts or support communities, use those exact terms in your application. In many cases, it may be that you simply meet the criteria or there is no one else who will fund you and you should say that, pure and simple. Don't beat about the bush.

8. Finally – How much is it going to cost? There is one golden rule when setting out a budget or a costing for a project – Be realistic and don't guess - research and estimate! Budgets and costings do not have to be exact, but they need to be in the right ballpark if you seriously want to succeed at whatever it is you are trying to do. It doesn't take much to make a few phone calls to suppliers of equipment or services, to look at your own phone bill to calculate an average cost of calls or to speak to people already working in a particular field to get an idea of what someone's time is worth. And always double-check and get advice, as there will usually be hidden costs that you might not have thought about.

And most important of all – DON'T WAFFLE - KEEP IT SIMPLE AND TO THE POINT!

Once you have answered these questions, you are then in a position to look for funders who are likely to support your project. The easiest way to find out who funds what is through the Directory of Social Change and Funder Finder. The Directory of Social Change publishes a range of directories of funding bodies and you should be able to find these publications at your local Community Voluntary Services (CVS) or local library. They (and some libraries) might also have access to a computer programme called Funder Finder. To use this programme, you enter in your details and the computer selects funders that are likely to support your work. Alternatively,

you can find a basic list of funders on the internet through the Directory of Social Change. You will then need to trawl through each funder and see what they will or will not fund. It's a bit time consuming, but there are no real short cuts.

Funders will normally state very clearly what they will or will not fund. **Always look at a funder's criteria and exclusions before you even think about applying**, as some will not fund individuals, will only give grants to registered charities, or only fund work with children. There is absolutely no point in even approaching a funding body if you don't meet their criteria because your application will only end up in one place – the bin! Don't waste your time or theirs – target your applications.

A WORD OF WARNING! - Don't be tempted to tailor your project or your budget to what a funder wants. If it is just a question of a few adjustments or slight re-phrasing of information, then it is alright, but not if it compromises what you are trying to achieve.

BE UP-FRONT AND PERSONAL!

Funders are there to help make good things happen – if you are up-front and honest about what you need and why, you have a much better chance of success. If you believe in yourself, others are more likely to believe in you!

Susan Alexander
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