

Grant Writers Guide for Community Groups

This booklet contains valuable information about the process of writing a grant.

It is hoped that reading through this booklet will give you some useful information, helpful hints and contacts that will assist you in finding, assessing, writing and administering grants on behalf of your organisation.

You may have a project in mind and need to find the grant that fits your project, or you may have a funding opportunity and need to be prepared with all the information necessary to complete an application in a short amount of time.

The Shire's Grants Advisor can help you at any stage of the grant writing process. Please feel free to make contact with questions, draft applications for review or acquittal enquiries.

Happy Grant Writing!

Finding a Grant

Scan - train yourself to always be watching out for grants. These will usually be email or newsletter advertisements or articles. Scan your emails and newsletters for the words "grants" and "funding".

Ask - When you admire another organisation's project, ask them "where did you get the funding to deliver this project?" You can then do your own research to see if you could apply for the same funding to develop a similar project in your organisation.

Read - The West Australian and local community newspapers often advertise available grants.

Email/Web - Check out relevant government department websites - each website will usually have a page on grants or funding. Often government departments or larger grant funding bodies have email alert systems, whereby you register your email address and when grants become available, you are sent an email alert. This is a great way to keep in touch with grants relevant to your field - see page 6.

Contact - The Grants Advisor at the Shire. This person receives grant and funding information from various networks and can give you advice on where to look.

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Scoping a Grant

Do your Homework. If you have found a grant you think looks interesting and may be relevant you need to read the grant guidelines!

Check whether your organisation is eligible to apply for the grant? Does your organisation need to be incorporated to apply for funding? Some grants are for community groups only, others for local governments only and yet others only apply to charitable organisations. Some grants are for regional areas (country towns and communities), and others for remote areas. Funding bodies will also outline what they will and won't fund. For example they may fund equipment but not capital works.

It is a good idea to have a look at the funding body's website. Get a feel for the sort of work they do and the priorities they may have and also, look for themes or jargon words that might be handy to use. It is an excellent idea to look for other sorts of projects that have been funded in the past. A list of these is usually available from the funding body's website.

Decide if the grant program looks suitable for your needs and fits the purpose of your organisation. Most funding bodies encourage you to contact and discuss your application before you submit it. Do this earlier rather than later—it could save you a lot of time and effort. Before submitting an application to the Shire contact the Grants Advisor.

If you are feeling confident that your organisation is eligible to apply, the next step is to discuss your project idea in more detail with your committee. It is important to remember that planning and writing grants takes time. You might ask committee members to contribute to different aspects of the application. Set yourself a timeline for when certain tasks need to be completed to get your application in on time.

However, delivering a project once the grant is successful, and acquitting the grant once the project is complete, takes even more time. This must be taken into account when deciding whether to proceed.

Do your homework on the project costings and:

- Produce basic budget estimates for public events
- Provide the best, most accurate information
- Avoid guesswork
- Get quotes for work or purchases

Some grants require a contribution by the group applying for funding. This is often "in kind" contributions such as the unpaid work of volunteers from your group. Don't underestimate the value of this in kind or volunteer labour in your costings. Volunteer labour is usually costed between \$20 to \$25 per hour per volunteer.

Sometimes grants expect a financial contribution by the organisation making the application. Can your organisation afford to do this?

Is it worth it?

Think objectively about the time it will take to write and administer the grant compared to the value of the grant. If the potential benefits do not outweigh the time taken it may be more efficient not to proceed.

Some applications take 5 minutes and net \$500 for a great little project. Others take a few days and may literally take more time to prepare than they are worth! Be realistic:

- Is the group ready to take on the project?
- Will the group meet the obligations to the funding body if successful?
- Will the project actually achieve the desired outcomes?
- Does the proposal fit easily within the required timeframe?
- Does the amount requested accurately reflect the true cost of the project?
- Could you combine with another community group to amalgamate similar projects?

Discuss your project with the Grants Advisor at the Shire if it is for a Shire grant or you need support for your grant application.

In Summary:

- Check the project objectives fit the guidelines
- Seek advice from the funding body if unsure

Tip:

Once you have decided to proceed with a project, send a chatty, informative email to members of your organisation and other community members - anyone who you may want to eventually get involved. That way they are aware of your plans and may offer ideas that will strengthen your proposal (or identify a fatal flaw!). This makes it easier to ask for a Letter of Support for your application later on in the process because they already feel informed and part of the grant process.

As a general rule of thumb, involve everyone in everything!!

Contacting the Funding Body

So to date, you've:

- Thought about the project plan and budget
- Read the guidelines
- Researched the aims, values and mission of the funding body & checked out their website
- Re read the guidelines
- Looked at past funded projects
- Discussed with your committee

It is now time to contact the funding body.

It is best to speak to the contact in person - try not to email. If locally based, arrange a meeting. Hold it where you are planning to run your project so that the funding officer can get a good feel for what will happen and who will be involved.

Work hard to develop a good working relationship with the funding officer. Talk your project idea through, be up front and clear about the project. Take their advice. They will tell you if the project is suited to their grant program and may give helpful hints on tailoring your project to suit.

It is a good idea to keep in contact with this person. Ring regularly with questions!

Planning

Don't start to write your funding application until you have done all the necessary research and planning.

If you have more than one project you wish to deliver, it is a good idea to prioritise, in case you are not in receipt of the whole amount you ask for. This is also a good idea in case your time frame changes, or for some other reason you are unable to complete the project as planned.

Resources to Assist Grant Writers

The Shire's Grants Advisor can provide support to your group when making a grant application by providing:

- Information on grants currently available
- Various resources on event management and planning for accessibility
- Ideas for answering some of the standard questions
- Information commonly required to complete grants – for example Shire statistics such as population forecasts as available on the Shire website
- Feedback on a draft application before it is submitted
- Where possible a letter of support from the Shire for external grants

Tip:

When preparing your application, make sure you factor in time for:

- Collection and collation of quotes, letters of support and other support material.
- Last minute printing hitches.
- Allow for delivery time (posting/courier/hand delivery).
- If posting, always send your grant via registered post and request a delivery receipt.
- If hand delivering, ask for a receipt.

Writing your Grant

Keep all information accurate, clear and succinct. Don't make any assumptions - write the application as though the person who will read it knows nothing about your project or your capacity to deliver the project. Never assume the organisation knows what you're trying to achieve.

Even if you feel very passionately about your project, your application must be objective in its language (but still enthusiastic - not cold!)

Read all questions carefully and answer each one even if to simply put "not applicable".

Organise all legal, financial and administrative paperwork. If you keep this information on hand you will be able to apply for funding at short notice. You are usually required to provide supporting evidence with your application. This may include:

- A copy of your organisation's incorporation certificate and constitution
- Annual Report(s), financial statement(s), bank statements
- Project budget
- Project Marketing Plan
- Project Business Plan
- Evidence of GST registration and ABN
- Evidence of public liability insurance
- Resume for any personnel involved

Any other information you think would assist the selection panel in assessing the application.

Demonstrate community support and need for the project. Some evidence that you might like to include:

- Community was consulted in the project's development stages for example attach a copy of the minutes of a community meeting which passed a motion in support of the project.
- Community and key stakeholders support the project (for example include any letters of support or sponsorship).

You might also demonstrate that:

- there are no competing interests, and
- the project will make a positive contribution to your community and fill an identified community need

Highlight community development outcomes and benefits. These might include:

- Expected level of community participation in the project
- Accessibility of project to community members
- Future benefits to the community
- Partnerships with other community groups.

List best person as contact for the group. This person should:

- Be available during the assessment period
- Understand the project completely
- Have a copy of everything

Keep a record of any contact made by the funding body and the outcome of any discussion.

Check and proofread everything and submit before due date - an incomplete document may be automatically disqualified. Late applications are generally not accepted.

- Check all questions are fully answered
- Check all relevant supporting documentation is included

Important

Before posting your grant in, it is essential that you keep a copy of the completed and signed application as well as any attachments, letters of support and quotes you have collected.

It is also prudent to make sure that your local Councillor is aware of the project if you are applying for a Shire grant for a project that involves the Shire, Shire property, or will have a significant impact on the general community.

Tip:

Start gathering Quotes and Letters of Support as soon as you commence the writing stage. It is a real stress to be waiting on these the day an application is due.

The Grant Agreement

If your grant application is successful you may receive a letter from the funding body stating the amount you have received. In most cases, there will also be a funding agreement attached. This is a formal contract between the Funding Body and your organisation.

This agreement is important as it confirms the:

- amount granted
- grant conditions
- reporting requirements
- acquittal requirements

Amount Granted: This may not be the full amount requested. In this case, you may need to make alterations to your project to accommodate the change in budget.

Grant Conditions: Gives information on exactly what the funding body will pay for. Read carefully as these conditions must be met in order to access the funds. Shire of Mundaring conditions outline the acknowledgement of the Shires support.

Reporting Requirements: Gives you details on what sort of information the funding body requires during or at the completion of a project. You may need to provide project updates at various intervals, photos, or other evidence that your project has occurred.

Acquittal Requirements: Gives you information on what financial reporting is required during or at the end of the project. Requirements vary depending on the funding body but you will need to note whether an audit is required.

As the grant writer, it is your responsibility to arrange for this agreement to be signed and returned, with an invoice* for the grant amount, to the Funding Body.

In some cases, the funding body generates a "Recipient Created Tax Invoice". Check your paperwork - if this has been generated, there is no need to send an invoice.

It is essential that you keep a copy of this documentation.

Tip:

Make a good impression on the funding body by being prompt, efficient and communicative. You or another member of your organisation may want to apply to that funding body for a future project.

Completing the Project

With all the money sorted, go ahead and deliver your project! Remember to keep a copy of your application on hand and refer to it regularly to ensure that your project and your budget stays on track. Your project needs to adhere to what you wrote in your grant application

If there are lots of bits and pieces of expenditure, you may even like to keep a copy of invoices - just for you record, so you can keep matching expenditure to your budget. Copies of Invoices will help you to demonstrate how the grant money was spent, when it comes time for acquittal.

While it is best to try to expend all your funds, if some are left over, you will need to arrange for these to be returned to the funding body as part of the final acquittal.

Celebrate your achievement!

Altering the Budget

If at any time during the project you need to alter the budget you **must ask permission from the funding body first**. This must be done in writing. Generally, if the alteration you are seeking still meets the original intent or purpose of the grant application you are likely to be given permission to do so.

Extending the Timeframe

Keep a track of when the project should be completed. If your project is looking like it will go over time, you need to request an extension. To do this, write a letter or email.

Tip:

It's a great idea to keep a PROJECT DIARY.

Take photos, record videos on mobile phones, record comments, keep a track of numbers of people participating, do press releases and cut out and keep newspaper articles.

This will make reporting a breeze! And funding bodies love it!

The Last Step - Acquittal

When your project is complete, you will need to produce an acquittal report. This will include an outline of the project, how the project met the objectives of the grant, who participated etc. Add as much support material as possible. Photos, videos and comments from participants are very effective.

Post your completed acquittal in to the funding body. It is a nice touch to attach a thank you cover letter or a Certificate of Appreciation (if appropriate).

Funding opportunities

Funding is available for community projects from the following organisations:

Government

- Department of Sport and Recreation - www.dsr.wa.gov.au/funding
- Lotterywest - www.lotterywest.wa.gov.au/grants
- Healthway - www.healthway.wa.gov.au
- Department of Culture and Arts - www.dca.wa.gov.au/funding/
- Department of Local Government and Communities WA - www.communities.wa.gov.au/grants/Pages/default.aspx
- Office of Multicultural Interests - www.omi.wa.gov.au/omi_grants.cfm
- Department of Social Services - www.dss.gov.au/grants
- Australian Sports Commission - www.ausport.gov.au/supporting/funding

Corporate

- Telstra Foundation - www.telstrafoundation.com
- RAC Grass Root Grants and Community Partnerships - www.rac.com.au/news-community/sponsorship/community-sponsorship
- SGIO Community Grants Program - www.sgio.com.au/wa/about-us/community-grants-program
- Mundaring Community Financial Services - www.mundaringcommunitybank.com.au/Community/Funding-opportunities-with-us
- Alcoa - www.alcoa.com/australia/en/info_page/PART_home.asp
- Australia Post - www.ourneighbourhood.com.au/grants/community-grants.html

Philanthropic

- Philanthropy Australia - www.philanthropy.org.au/seek-funding/
- Impact 100 WA - www.impact100wa.org.au

Searchable Databases

- Our Community Funding Centre - www.ourcommunity.com.au
- Department of Local Government and Regional Development Grants Directory - www.grantsdirectory.dlg.wa.gov.au
- Australian Federal Government Grants Directory - www.grantslink.gov.au

Other

- Community Arts Network of WA - www.canwa.com.au/doing/
- WA Association for Mental Health - www.waamh.org.au/about-us/grants.aspx