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# How To PREPARE EFFECTIVE APPLICATIONS FOR GRANT FUNDING

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and  
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Thank you for downloading the sample chapters of *How To Prepare Effective Applications For Grant Funding* published by Gull Publishing. This excerpt includes the Table of Contents, and the first chapter, which overviews the book.

We hope you find this information useful in evaluating this book

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Chapter 1				
“Introduction”	4			
Ten Reasons why Some Applications are Rejected	5			
Avoiding the Deadline Panic	6			
The Application Preparation Plan	7			
Chapter 2				
“The Ten Step Process”	8			
Step 1: What Do You Want to Do?	8			
Step 2: Define the Goals & Objectives	9			
Step 3: Identify the Benefits	10			
Step 4: Decide How the Project Outcomes Will be Evaluated	10			
Step 5: Test the Idea & Gain Support	11			
Step 6: Determine the Project Timeframe	12			
Step 7: Organisation Capability & Resources	12			
Step 8: Identify Potential Sources of Grant Funding	14			
Step 9: Obtain the Application Guidelines & Eligibility Criteria	15			
Step 10: Make Contact with the Grant Provider	17			
Action Summary	19			
Chapter 3				
“Key Issues”	20			
Why do Government Grant Programs Exist?	20			
Guidelines – The Link Between Funding Programs & Government Policy	20			
Applications by Unincorporated Organisations	21			
Application Formats	21			
Selection Criteria	25			
Supporting Information	26			
Chapter 4				
“Establishing The Project Budget”	28			
Operating Cost Checklist	30			
Chapter 5				
“Who Will Write The Application?”	31			
Using Professional Expertise	31			
Chapter 6				
“Preparing The Application”	33			
Typed or Handwritten Applications?	33			
Getting Started	34			
Word Limits	35			
Headings	36			
Be Succinct	36			
Seven Ways to Enhance Your Writing	36			
Editing the Final Draft	38			
Check the Spelling	38			
Proofreading	39			
Transferring the Final Draft to a Standard Application Form	39			
Completeness of Information Requested	40			
Presentation of the Document	40			
Submitting the Application	41			
Action Summary	42			
Chapter 7				
“The Application Assessment Process”	43			
Government Processes for Review of Applications	43			
Non-Government Organisations	46			
Chapter 8				
“What To Do When The Grant Is Approved”	47			
If the Application is Unsuccessful	48			
“CHECKLIST”	49 - 52			

[HOME](#)[Business Manuals](#)[Tourism Manuals](#)[Contact Us](#)

# Introduction

## CHAPTER ONE



**F**or some people the task of writing grant applications is relatively straightforward, but for the vast majority, especially for committee members of voluntary organisations, the preparation of these applications can be a difficult and time-consuming exercise.

When a voluntary organisation makes the decision to initiate a project, the entire process of preparing the application is frequently left to one person, who may have little or no experience in undertaking these tasks. Consequently, the exercise becomes extremely onerous for this person who must give a large amount of time to the job and is usually under great pressure to complete and submit the application on time.

This manual has been compiled to guide organisations and individuals through the process of writing grant applications, and provides tips to enhance the potential for a successful outcome.

While this information cannot guarantee success, the guidelines in the following chapters will help to improve the chances of gaining the grant funding your organisation is seeking.

In the majority of cases government departments and agencies are the primary sources of funding, therefore, for the purposes of this manual the following chapters focus on the preparation of applications and submissions for funding from government grant programs. Nevertheless, the fundamental principles described in this manual are relevant for applications submitted to any grant program offered by any organisation or.

Competition is fierce for grant funding, particularly government programs, with many applications submitted for each grant. Consequently, the objectives are to:

Make your application stand out from the 'pack'; and  
Avoid giving assessors any reason to reject the application.

Apart from having a worthwhile project, preparing a grant application is all about effective communication; making sure the information you wish to communicate ...

- **Is accurate and concise;**
- **Can be easily read;**
- **Can be easily understood;**
- **Cannot be misinterpreted;**
- **Is descriptive and persuasive; and**
- **Creates an image of professionalism.**

In summary, your organisation must think very carefully about what it wants to achieve, how it will be achieved, and the benefits it will create.

One very important issue is to only submit applications for projects that can be fully justified. When government grant programs are advertised, invariably some non-profit groups adopt the view 'what can we do to get some of this funding'? This approach usually results in a rushed application for an ill-conceived project with no chance of being funded.

Grant program assessors who review hundreds of applications are quick to see poorly researched projects and cast these applications aside. The correct approach is to:

- Have a worthwhile, strongly supported project or a clearly identified need or problem that should be addressed, **before** you think about an application;
- Determine the resources required for this project, need or problem; then
- Investigate where the funding can be sourced.

Successful applicant organisations build a reputation for only submitting applications for initiatives that are well thought out and fully justified. In addition, a grant application with the best chances of achieving success is one that:

- Matches the project or need with the policies and goals of the grant provider;
- Is well planned;
- Adheres rigidly to the application guidelines and eligibility criteria;
- Is thoroughly researched;
- Is well written; and
- Is professionally presented.

## TEN REASONS WHY SOME APPLICATIONS ARE REJECTED

From the outset it is important to be aware of the main reasons some grant applications are rejected:

- The project is not clearly explained.
  - Applications are poorly written.
  - The project is on the 'borderline' or outside the eligibility criteria.
  - Failure to adhere to the application preparation guidelines.
  - Goals and/or objectives not clearly stated.
  - Benefits not clearly identified.
  - Doubt as to the capability of the organisation to manage and complete the project.
  - Unrealistic budgets.
  - Lack of, or inadequate, post-project evaluation process.
  - Applications received later than the closing date.
-

## AVOIDING THE DEADLINE PANIC

The most common problem when preparing applications is running out of time. Usually there is a last minute rush to get everything done and submitted by the due date, so ...

Never underestimate the time it will take  
to prepare an application.

The application must be completed in plenty of time to allow careful checking of the document, and time for delivery to meet the deadline. These issues are often overlooked or given scant attention.

You cannot expect to put a funding application or submission together 'the night before' it is due and expect to get the funding. A 'rush' job will be obvious to the assessor and in these situations your application will invariably take second place to applications that have been carefully thought out, researched, developed, and well planned over a period of time.

Some government grant funding is made available only at certain times such as once or twice a year, and if the time for preparing an application is tight, it is better to apply for the next round of funding, even though this may be some months ahead, or the next year.

Avoiding the deadline panic means having a plan for the research, consultation and preparation of the application, and ideally, ***aim to have the application completed 10 days before the closing date.***

Because most of us usually operate right up until the deadline, it is essential to set this internal deadline for completing your application, to allow:

- Thorough checking of the application;
- Comprehensive and careful review of the information;
- A check of all the supporting documents to be sure they are there and in the correct order;
- Crisis management time when things do not go according to plan; and
- Delivery to the funding body.

A self-imposed early deadline will also allow the opportunity to have someone external to the organisation review and critique it as the reviewer will be doing.

If a friend with only one application to read and with ample time, cannot understand it, then you can be reasonably sure that a reviewer checking numerous applications, operating under time constraints and not having an affinity with your organisation, will not understand it either.



## THE APPLICATION PREPARATION PLAN

The points listed below summarise the application planning process:

- 1) Identify a worthwhile project or need.
- 2) Ensure the project is realistic and achievable.
- 3) Establish the goals and objectives.
- 4) Identify the benefits of the project.
- 5) Test the idea with stakeholders.
- 6) Ensure your organisation can achieve the goals and objectives if the grant is approved.
- 7) Research potential sources of funding.
- 8) Obtain application guidelines and eligibility criteria from appropriate funding sources.
- 9) Review the guidelines and eligibility criteria.
- 10) Select the appropriate grant provider.
- 11) Contact the grant provider, discuss your proposal and build this relationship.
- 12) Prepare the application in accordance with the required format.
- 13) Clearly state the project goals, objectives and benefits.
- 14) Write clearly and concisely.
- 15) Ensure all the criteria are addressed.
- 16) Adhere to the guidelines.
- 17) Establish the organisation's credibility and capacity to effectively and efficiently manage the project.
- 18) Carefully edit the application to avoid any likelihood of ambiguity.
- 19) Proof-read and check the application for typographical and spelling errors.
- 20) Make sure the application is a well-typed, professional document.
- 21) Submit the application in ample time to meet the closing date.



## The Ten Step Process

### CHAPTER TWO



Preparing an application for government funding requires more effort than just reading the guidelines and filling out the forms. A good application starts with homework; the research associated with the idea or project and research to gain as much knowledge as possible about the grant funding body and the program selected for the application.

This chapter highlights and explains the 10 key steps involved in undertaking the pre-application 'homework'. The process might seem straightforward, but in reality there are some pitfalls and a great deal of work is usually required:

- 1) Ascertain what you want to do;
- 2) Define the goals and objectives;
- 3) Identify the benefits;
- 4) Decide how the project outcomes will be evaluated;
- 5) Test the idea and gain support;
- 6) Determine the project infrastructure;
- 7) Establish organisation capability and resources;
- 8) Identify potential sources of grant funding;
- 9) Obtain the application guidelines on eligibility criteria; and
- 10) Make contact with a grant provider.

There are no shortcuts to this process if your application is to be favourably considered by the grant provider.

#### STEP 1 - WHAT DO YOU WANT TO DO?

The process starts with:

- An idea for a project; **or**
- An initiative to meet a need; **or**
- A way to resolve a problem.

If your organisation has undertaken a previous project it may be that the new initiative is compatible in some way that follows on, further develops, or is complementary to the earlier project. Whatever the aim, your organisation must clearly identify what it wants to do. Furthermore, this must be agreed and supported across the organisation.

Once this is in place the next step is to prepare a clear statement describing the project, together with the goal/s, and a plan of action to show how to make it happen.

This process should be done by the committee or preferably the group – not just by one or two people. This ensures that everyone involved is kept informed, but importantly, the quality of the project may well be enhanced if ideas from a group are taken into account.



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