Grant Writing Tips

Running an event or project can be an exciting time for groups to be able to provide information, services or activities to their members and the wider community. Being able to rely on your current resources and volunteers however may not be enough to provide all that's needed for the project and you may need to seek additional funding.

Applying for grants doesn't need to be a daunting task, as funding bodies have money set aside that they want to give you!

By following these simple steps, this can help take the mystery out of the process and equip you and your group to start applying for grants.

Identify needs → **Find grants** → **Contact funding body** → **Plan your project** → **Write the grant** → **Submit**

Identifying what you need

Think about all of your projects, programs and needs for the year ahead; even better, think ahead for the next few years and consider:
- What are you already planning?
- What is on your wish list?
- What would you love to do if you had the money?

Use this brainstorming to be able to develop a list of projects. All of these potential projects need to be able to link back to what it is you are trying to achieve, for example, are you:
- Promoting your group to increase membership?
- Hosting an event for the community to enjoy?
- Providing workshops or services in an area of need?

Ensure that you identify all the items that you will need to pay for to bring your project or event to life, for example, venue hire, equipment, entertainment, program coordination, advertising, signage, and so on. The gaps in what you can already provide, and what you can't, will help to identify what you could potentially seek funding for.

Please note that grants are rarely for organisational operating costs, so check funding guidelines thoroughly for details on eligible funding items.

Finding grants

Whilst it can be clichéd, Google may be your friend here. Given the diverse nature of programs and projects that are funded, researching grants may involve some time on the computer.

Grants are offered through Federal, State, and Local Governments, large corporate organisations and businesses, not-for-profits and philanthropic organisations.

The City of Cockburn offers a range of funding programs based on an allocated percentage of the annual rates budget to grants, donations, sponsorships and subsidies. The two major funding rounds open in February and August, and close the last Friday of March and September, respectively. Applications for Small Events Sponsorship and Individual Sponsorship are accepted any time of year. All information on applications for funding from the City is available on the website.

Grant Writing Tips

Other worthwhile funding sources may be found in this helpful event guide.

It is important to scan through all grant information to see if it aligns with your organisation's objectives and requirements and to establish whether you are eligible.

Are you eligible?

Different funding pools will have different eligibility criteria. Many require an incorporated, not-for-profit organisation to be the applicant.

The Australian Taxation Office (ATO) defines a not-for-profit (NFP) organisation as one that has 'constituent or governing documents that prohibit the distribution of profits or assets to owners, members or other private people'. NFPs in Cockburn include various:

- neighbourhood associations
- sport and recreation clubs
- playgroups
- youth-based organisations

- seniors groups
- cultural community groups
- community support organisations
- community education groups

For more information on determining whether your organisation is NFP, please visit the ATO website.

Incorporation of your organisation simply creates a new legal entity with powers similar to those of a natural person. The key point in being incorporated is that as a not-for-profit organisation, an association may operate a business and make a profit but no profits or property can be distributed to the members.

To be eligible for incorporation a group must:
- have at least six members who will have voting rights under the rules;
- be not-for-profit; and
- be formed for one or more of the purposes outlined under the Act.

For more information please see visit this website.

If your group is not incorporated, you may be able to apply with an auspice, which is another incorporated, NFP organisation. The auspice organisation agrees, as part of the application process, to receive funding on behalf of the unincorporated applicant organisation, and is ultimately responsible for ensuring the funded project is completed and the grant is acquitted.

There may also be special criteria depending on organisation type. For example, the City of Cockburn requires that schools and associated parent groups (P&Fs/P&Cs) must provide a co-contribution of 50% financial or in-kind to the project, as well as ensuring that the request lies outside the Education Department's responsibility and offers a benefit to the wider community, that's accessible outside of school hours, where applicable.

It's essential to read through grant guidelines to find out what can and can't be funded, when funds are released for successful applicants, or if there are caps on particular items or types of events. The City does not provide any retrospective funding or funding for personal items such as uniforms, catering or consumables.

Grant Writing Tips

Contacting the funding body

All grants will have a contact person to discuss your potential project. This may be via email or on the telephone. Grants Officers are also able to meet you, if required.

It's important, and often essential to meet eligibility criteria, to make contact with a Grants Officer to discuss your project. This ensures that the Officer is able to identify that your group is eligible, that the project would, in principle, be eligible and supported for an application, and that particular funding items are eligible before proceeding.

Organisations will generally not provide funding for something that is already available or being funded. Your great idea may already be happening now or in the near future. It's a good idea to check what is already being offered to the community.

The Officer will be able to direct you with considerations that you may not have previously thought of, be able to manage expectations as to what may and may not receive funding, and provide ideas to help strengthen your application to give it the best possible chance of success. Resources permitting, they may even be able to read over draft applications and provide more specific advice.

Planning your project

Planning is the key to the success of your project and your grant application. As the old saying goes, "If you fail to plan, you plan to fail". By breaking the project down into activities, assigning responsibilities, allocating a budget and obtaining quotes as necessary, you have a much better idea of the scope of what's needed to happen, when, and where you need support.

Remember to include:
- **Stakeholders (Who is involved?**) – ensure you explain your group, including current membership numbers, and others who will be involved
- **Activities and Outcomes (What?)** – identify what you want to deliver and achieve
- **Purpose (Why?)** – include your reasons for the project, the identified need, and include target participants and numbers
- **Timelines (When?)** – what needs to be done and when? This includes before and after the project
- **Location (Where?)** – where will it be held? Are there any reasons for this location? Is it a suitable location?
- **Responsibilities (How?)** – how will it operate? Who will be doing what?
- **Evaluation** – how will the success of the activity be measured? What will indicate success?

Writing the grant

Writing the grant is where you present the Who, What, Why, When, Where and How of your project. It outlines everything from your planning stage and essentially sets out your project. It helps to establish the case for support such that you can identify where a problem exists and how your organisation hopes to address this through the project.

Where possible, it's good to provide evidence to support your proposal to illustrate what will happen from beginning to end, and how the community will benefit. Applications that include letters of support will strengthen your application.

Grant Writing Tips

Some key points to remember when writing:
- 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. It gives the Grants Officers (or any other person assessing the grant) a chance to understand the project and determine if your project offers value for money.
- Answer all the questions comprehensively and take note of mandatory questions. Your grant application may not submit or even be considered if these are missing.
- Organise all legal, financial and administrative paperwork. You are usually required to provide supporting evidence with your application. This may include:
  - A copy of your organisation's incorporation certificate
  - Annual Report(s) or recent AGM minutes
  - Audited financial statement(s)
  - Recent bank statement(s)
  - Quote(s)
  - Any other information that would assist the panel in assessing the application.
- Check and proofread everything. This includes double-checking for spelling mistakes, and that numbers in your budget are correct and balance, and that the application meets the guidelines of the funding program. There is no point putting effort into an application if you haven't met mandatory requirements or are ineligible.
- Check all relevant supporting documentation is included.

Submitting

Start your application early, as checking off all the details of your proposal with your group or committee, obtaining quotes and letters of support can be a lengthy process.

Make sure you submit your application on time and preferably before the due date. Most organisations will not accept applications after the deadline.

What happens next

Assessment
After the funding round closes, applications will be assessed by the relevant grants administration team. The following points will be considered:
- Has the application been completed fully?
- How does the project serve the Cockburn community?
- What is the percentage of financial or in-kind contribution the applicant will make to the project?
- Has the applicant sourced or endeavoured to source other funding support?
- How does the project serve the City's Strategic Community Plan?
- Does the project offer an ongoing benefit for the community?

The grant agreement
If your grant application is successful, you will be notified by the funding body. In most cases, there will also be a funding agreement or conditions of funding provided. This is a formal contract between the funding body and your organisation.

This offer and grant agreement are important as they confirm the:
- amount granted
- grant conditions

- reporting and acknowledgement requirements
- acquittal requirements.

It is the grant recipient's responsibility to arrange for this agreement to be signed and returned, with an invoice for the grant amount, to the funding body.

Please note any particular acknowledgment that's required. For City of Cockburn funding, all use of City logos must be approved by the Corporate Communications department as per the conditions of funding.

If your organisation is registered for GST you are liable to pay GST for the amount of your grant; the City will therefore increase the grant amount by 10%. This also applies vice-versa where your organisation is not registered for GST you will not have to pay GST and your financial assistance amount will be the figure awarded.

Completing the project
Once you have received notification of your successful application, you are able to commence your project and start spending the funds. Remember to keep a copy of your application and refer to it regularly to ensure that your project and budget stay on track. Your project needs to adhere to what you wrote in your grant application. This needs to be demonstrated as part of your acquittal (the last step), so make sure you take pictures of your project as you go, and take notes of your progress keeping in mind what you had proposed in your original grant application.

Keep copies of all media exposure, marketing and advertising, as well as copies of all invoices and receipts as you go, so you can keep matching expenditure to your budget. These will all help you to demonstrate how the grant money was spent when it comes time for acquittal.

Variations
If at any time during the project you need to alter the budget or request an extension of time, you must ask permission from the funding body first. This must be done in writing giving an update on where your project is up to, what the variation is for and why, and any new associated proposed budget/timeline. Generally, if the variation still meets the original intent or purpose of the grant application, it is likely to be approved.

The last step – Acquittal
When your project is complete, you will need to produce an acquittal report. This will directly correlate to what was in your application and needs to include a project summary, 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. Think about the successes, challenges and what you would do differently. This can be used as a future reference for your group, and may also assist Grant Officers with directing other groups with considerations for future events on what has and hasn't worked well.

The financial report is very important to your acquittal. Check through what was in your original application budget, as this is what the Grants Officers use to acquit your grant. All expenditure items need to have an invoice and associated receipt to show what you have used the funds for. Also include the in-kind contributions made by your group.

Good luck with your application, please contact us anytime if you have further queries.