

Some hints on grant writing

A significant amount of project planning can be undertaken prior to applying for funding. Often going through a planning process can also help you determine which funding source(s) might be the most appropriate for your project.

Note: This list is by no means exhaustive, but it is a starting point for information that will be required for many funding applications. If you have this information ready when a funding round opens, it leaves you free to spend the application period on the extras required for an individual program and writing the actual application.

Stage 1 Planning

- Start early
 - It always takes longer than you think.
 - Changes to guidelines from funding round to funding round are usually minimal.
 - You don't need to wait for a programme's funding round to open before you start planning your project.
- Identify who will be the applicant. The applicant will need to be a legal entity who can enter into a contract e.g. an incorporated group.
 - Identify the contact person for the applicant and relevant contact details.
- Spend time planning so you are clear about:
 - What you want to achieve, what will be the outcomes
 - What you actually want to do
 - How you will do it
 - What actions and where
 - Who will/needs to be involved
 - Materials required
 - Costs
 - Timeline - what's to be done, when, by whom
- You'll also need to emphasise:
 - Why your project is important
 - Value for money
 - How you will monitor and evaluate the success of your project / how you will know whether or not it has been successful?
 - How will the project site be maintained in the long term, after the project is finished?
- Identify early who you will need to consult, get advice from, seek approval/support.
Make contact with them early and discuss your project idea!

Once you are clear about what you want to do, identify the funding source that is most appropriate.

Stage 2 Gathering the information

- Collect all the information you need
 - Guidelines
 - Application form
 - Any other relevant documents eg plans, strategies
- Read the guidelines, application form etc thoroughly.
- If the program is ongoing, check what changes, if any, have been made.
- Programs often produce useful information on how to fill out the form, checklists etc - use them.
- Get any approvals or permits required.
- Find out about the assessment process
 - How will the proposal be assessed?
 - Against what criteria?

Stage 3 Writing the Proposal

- Keep in mind who will be reading your application. Remember it's usually competitive with limited funds and you want your proposal to really stand out (for all the right reasons!).
- Make the proposal interesting and easy to read:
 - through language you use
 - formatting, good print size
 - TYPE your application if at all possible.
- Make sure the application and attachments can still be read easily AFTER they have been photocopied. (Usually applications are copied for all assessment panel members)
- Answer all the questions unless any really aren't applicable - this isn't usually the case
- In describing your project, present a clear picture of what it is about, what your project will specifically achieve, and how it will achieve it.
- Match you project to the program:
 - Show how the goals of your project match that of the program
 - Use words from the guidelines, quote from plans etc
 - If the program has a particular focus (eg on-ground works), highlight it (on-ground works) in your project.

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Budget

- Make sure it has sufficient detail to be clear.
- Make sure it adds up and that the budget summary matches the full budget.
- Make sure the budget matches the project description. The panel needs to be able to see what is being done and how much each activity will cost.
- If there are funding rules, follow them:
 - Don't put in ineligible items.
 - Stick within recommended amounts or limits.
- Justify your budget especially if an item is more than a recommended limit
- Demonstrate that you're using the most cost effective and economical methods

Project site

- Sketch maps – a detailed map of the actual site and a map of the region indicating the location of the project site will probably be required.

Matching funding

- If this is required, be clear about contributions to the project and whether they are cash or in-kind.

Feasibility/Technical Advice (some programs)

- You may be required to provide written advice from 'experts' or consenting authorities to support your claims. Identify these individuals early.

Permits/approvals

- Don't leave them to the last minute! Identify any permits/approvals do you will need e.g. landholder's consent (and signatures at time of lodging), works on waterways approvals (via Catchment Management Authorities), planning permits (local government), licences to use water (Water Utilities/Retailers).
- Are there any cultural heritage sites at or near your project site?
- Local NRM facilitators will be able to assist you in identifying possible requirements.

Letters of support

- Don't leave them to the last minute! Many organisations are inundated with requests for letters of support in the last three days of big funding rounds. Identify relevant individuals/organisation could you approach for a letter of support.

Benefit to the community

- Some grant programs require that your project show significant benefits to the community, so have a think about how you can demonstrate this.

Stage 4 Completing and lodging your application

- Check that your application addresses ALL the criteria that will be used to assess it.
- Make sure it is complete (use checklist provided if there is one)
 - All questions answered.
 - All additional information attached (maps, letters of support, permits, etc).
 - All required signatures provided.
- Use the 'stranger test'. Ask someone who knows nothing about your project to read your proposal and tell you what you want to do, how you will do it and what the outcomes will be. If they can't, chances are your application is not clear.
- Send the original
- Keep a copy
- Lodge on time - **Late applications and/or attachments are not usually accepted**

Note: Grant programs are usually very competitive as more often than not, funds are limited. The aim is to give your proposal its best chance of success.