COMMUNITY ACTION: MK

Common Funding Mistakes….and how to Avoid Them!

Ever wondered why your grant proposal was turned down? This spotlight highlights some of the most common reasons why funders reject group's bids. And gives you tips to avoid your application ending up in the bin!

Common Funding Mistakes

1. Not being eligible

Each funder has their own rules about they will and won't fund, how much they can invest, what type of funding they prefer to give (capital or revenue), and the type of organisation they will fund.

If you do not fit the funder's criteria, they will not fund you so don't waste your time (or theirs!) by applying! Always read the funder's guidelines (sometimes called guidance notes) to see if yours is a project they will consider.

2. Doesn't show a need

When funders invest in a project, they like to see that their money is making a real difference. You need to clearly identify the issue or challenge you plan to tackle, and include evidence about why you think this need exists.

There are lots of different ways to show need:
Surveys, focus groups, observations, anecdotal evidence, statistics and data, user feedback, waiting lists, gaps in provision….

If you don't have the evidence to show the need for your project, you are unlikely to get funding!

3. Doesn't show the impact on users

You need to consider what difference or change you want your project to make to your users. This is called the 'impact' or 'outcomes'.

Funders will look at the difference you want to make, and if they award you the money, they will want to see your progression towards achieving these changes.

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You need to make sure that at all stages of your project you are collecting evidence to show the impact of your service on your users.

Make sure you focus on your users as this is what the funder is giving you money for. For example, you may be given money to buy a computer to digitise your user records - this isn't a clear benefit to your user, but it does mean that it frees up your time to spend more time with your users; which is a direct benefit to them.

4. Badly planned projects or poorly managed groups

Planning is vital! Before even looking at funding, you need to ensure that your group set up correctly, with good management and systems in place. A poorly run group is not a 'safe pair of hands' to give funding to!

You also need to make sure that you have well-thought out plans for a sustainable project. Have you thought about what you want to do and how you will do it? Can you show a need for your project and provide evidence to support your claims? Can you clearly explain to funders what their money will be spent on and what it will achieve? Have you got a realistic budget and included all the costs of your project? Have you shown how you will monitor your project?

If you don't know the answers to these questions, you need to consider doing more planning!

5. Poorly written applications

Good applications are easy to read and understand, are free of 'buzzwords' and jargon, and clearly and concisely explain what it is you plan to do. The best way to check applications meet these criteria is to give them to someone outside of your organisation to read – if they don't understand it, will a funder?

Make sure you answer all the questions and include the information the funder asks for. They will not search through an application for the information so you need to present it clearly to them. Applications should be targeted to funders, and you should always take the time to make sure you have done the small things – spelling checks, completing all questions, providing relevant supporting documents, and making sure the application is signed.

You only get one chance to make a first impression so make it good!

What to do if your application is unsuccessful

Firstly, don't give up! There are lots of reasons you may not secure funding so (politely!)ask the funder to explain their decision. If there were lots of applications during that round or you need to add in a bit more information to bring your application up to standard, you may be able to re-submit.

Make sure you keep detailed records of which funders you apply to, when, what for, how much for and whether you were successful. This will help you to keep track of your applications and plan a more structured fundraising plan.

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Top Tips on writing good applications

- Rushed applications are easy to spot and won't do you any favours! Take your time, plan ahead and make sure you research the funders fully - you only get 1 chance to make a first impression!

- Always seek feedback—this can help you to improve future applications or let you know whether you can reapply

- Be clear about what you plan to do, why and how you know it is needed. Tell the funder what their money will achieve

- First impressions count so make sure yours is a good one!

- Get someone outside of your project to look at applications – they can spot the things you may have overlooked

Talk to our Support Team for more help
Support@CommunityActionMK.org or call 01908 661623

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