ALIA GRANT WRITING FACT SHEET

There are thousands of grants available to "for good" organisations, ranging from a few hundred to hundreds of thousands of dollars. But most grants will be highly competitive. This is a brief guide to help you make the most of the opportunities.

PREPARATION

It could be you

As a starting point, you need to believe that "it could be you". You can't approach grant writing from the position of thinking you're never going to win. And whereas grants are always competitive, sometimes there aren't very many applications so funders extend deadlines to encourage more participation. You need to go into this process knowing that this could be your year.

First, find your grant

You can decide to go looking when you have a project for which you will need financial support, or you can set up alerts so you keep abreast of new grant opportunities as they come up — and you can judge on a case-by-case basis whether or not they are going to be relevant.

Grants come in various shapes and sizes and from different sources:

- Philanthropic
- Federal, state, territory and local government
- Corporate-giving, including industry partners

Where to look

A quick search will help you find local grant opportunities, but these are some links to start you off:

- Australian Communities Foundation www.communityfoundation.org.au/
- Parliamentary Library Guide to Community Grants www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/ Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_ Library/pubs/rp/rp1718/Quick_Guides/ ComGrants
- Philanthropy Australia Directory of Funders www.philanthropy.org.au/seek-funding/ Directory-of-funders/ (subscription service)
- The Grants Hub www.thegrantshub.com.au/ (subscription service)

Do you qualify?

Before you do anything else, you need to check whether or not you, your project, or your organisation is eligible for the grant. If you're a government-funded organisation, some doors are closed; if you work for a commercial entity, the same applies.

Don't be tempted by the money, look for best fit

You don't want to receive a grant for a project which will divert resources away from your main business. There are two reasons for this — it can end up (a) damaging your original service because people neglect their own jobs to finish the project and (b) costing you money, if the grant means you need to employ new people with different expertise to fulfil the requirements. The best fit is something which progresses one of your own strategies at a faster pace or with a greater reach than you could achieve without the funding.

Achievable timeline

Another thing to look at is the timeline and whether or not it will work for your project. If you take the money and find that you have to squeeze a two year project into six months in order to meet the grant requirements, again, that's not a good fit.

Check out the acquittal requirements

As a rule of thumb, the higher the number of dollars, the greater the level of reporting that's required. If you are applying for a small amount of money, make sure the reporting is light. You don't want to be spending days monitoring, evaluating, measuring impact and writing reports for a few hundred dollars. It's just not worth the time and effort involved.

WRITING THE GRANT

Who writes the submission

Often someone in the organisation will write the submission. This means you have someone with intimate knowledge of the project and with a vested interest in success. For larger grants, it may be useful to employ a grant writing consultant who can give your submission that extra polish which will make your application stand out from the others.

Don't leave it until the last minute

Grants always have deadlines and, with a full in-box, it's tempting to keep pushing it back as other things pop up. But if you leave it until the last minute, you won't have time to gather the information you need to create a really compelling case.

Look at previous successful applications

Reading about other funded projects will give you insight into what the awarding panel is looking for — there will be case studies on the grant website, and you can read between the lines to identify the elements of the project that most pleased the funders.

Identify the keywords

On the grant website and in the application form, the criteria will be clearly stated, but it is also worth reading through the introduction about the grant to identify keywords and phrases. Dotting the same words and phrases in your application will reinforce how well your project fits with the intentions of the funder.

Less is more

For each round of grant funding, the awarding panel will need to wade through masses of paperwork relating to the different applications. Yours will stand out if you can make your case with the minimum number of words and maximum impact images.

Background information

Don't rely on web links. If they have time, members of the awarding panel will visit the web page but if they don't, all that rich material will be invisible to them. It's far better to provide an attachment with the most compelling images and stories.

Most funders are looking for evidence of impact, whether that's already proven from earlier pilots, or a reasonable expectation of the project being assessed. Numbers are good, and so are case studies. Use both.

Mutual benefit

Your grant application will be focused on the benefits to your organisation and the people on the receiving end of the activity, but don't forget that the funders are likely to want a few things out of this too — a positive sense of achievement, thanks and publicity. If possible, include elements such as funding agency branding, media coverage and speaker opportunities at events in your application.

SUBMITTING THE GRANT

Talk to the funder

Submissions that are sent in 'blind' are less likely to be successful than those where the applicant has got in touch with the funders in advance. There is always a contact on the website. Think of some questions and call them. It's a way to make a connection with someone who will be critical in helping you push your project over the line. A few minutes on the phone will help you make a personal link, explain the key points about your submission and it will mean they are looking out for your submission when it arrives.

Stakeholders

You can't overestimate the importance of letters of support from other stakeholders. Having another organisation say that they think your project is a good idea and would be worthwhile is an influential seal of approval. It also reassures the funders that this isn't a pipe dream — it is something that you will have help and encouragement to deliver.

Presentation

Limit the number of attachments and if you can, put all your images, letters of support and other content into one document. Instead of heaving a sigh at the long-winded application, multiple attachments and numerous weblinks, the awarding panel will breathe a sigh of relief and take pleasure in reading your tightly written, relevant and easily digested submission.

AFTERWARDS

Finding out the result

Be positive and have your draft media release ready in case you are successful. Think about who you would tell first; who would take the lead in receiving the grant within your organisation (you, your boss, the head of the organisation); the others you would need to inform, including people who provided letters of support.

If you don't succeed

Seek feedback from the funding agency to find out if there were any weaknesses in your application. If it was a good application, take the bones and use them for a submission to another funding body. If it had holes, take the feedback from the funding agency and use it to improve your pitch next time around.

The main thing is not to give up.