

Applying to Charitable Trusts

The expectations that funders have of voluntary organisations vary greatly. They use two main means of gathering the information they require, which are a letter of application and a standard application form. Most funders produce guidelines themselves on the level of detail they require and how they want the information set out. There are however certain principles that all organisations should bear in mind. Below are some guidelines on applying to charitable trusts.

General guidance

Many Trusts now publish guidelines on what they will/will not consider funding. If available, obtain some up to date guidelines before writing to a particular Trust. Once you have received that information, pay very close attention to the details. Certain mistakes regularly crop up:

- Failing to read the section that carefully lists what will not be funded
- Assuming that the deadline for completion of applications is just a rough guide rather than a statement of fact

Applications by letter should be no more than 2 - 3 A4 sides. Any longer suggests a lack of clarity 'Exciting applications do come in short, sharp packages'.

When you think your application is complete and ready to post, ask someone unfamiliar with your work to read it and comment critically on it. You believe in your charity and work hard for it and cannot take a detached view. You are not always aware which are the most interesting and positive aspects of your work.

Once your application has been sent to a trust, keep the trust informed of any significant changes: success with other funders, the resignation of the director, the termination of the lease on your premises - to name but a few of the typical events that may occur while the trust is processing your application.

No approach can guarantee a grant, but the time and effort involved (on both sides) in unravelling a poor application is enormous. The time spent on the first application is time well spent.

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Here are some important tips to consider before making an application:

Do:

- Be sure you know why you are applying to a particular trust
- Read any available guidelines carefully
- Check you are within the trusts priorities and area of benefit
- Ensure your organisation has a system for knowing who has written to what trusts
- Make sure that all necessary documents are enclosed
- Keep the basic application to 2/3 sides of A4
- Meet the deadline given
- Make the application specific, including a stated sum of money required
- Be specific about your activities and who uses them

Ask someone outside the organisation to read through your application. If in doubt, check with the trust by phone before sending off an application. Remember to always make a copy of the final application before you send it off.

Don't:

- Make emotional appeals
- Ask vaguely for assistance
- Present shopping lists of needs
- Write a brief letter referring to lots of other papers
- Use acronyms of organisations

Further Sources of Information:

FA3 - Accounting for Volunteers Time in Funding Applications

FA4 - Filling in Application Forms - Twelve Handy Hints

FA6 - Useful facts & figures about Pembrokeshire

For further information contact:

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