

Top 10 Hints and Tips for Making a Better Ask



COMMUNITY FOUNDATION
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Making a better ask or ‘case for support’ is essential for any organisation seeking funding. It is both the cornerstone of any fundraising campaign and can help promote your best achievements.

We manage a wide range of programmes for our private clients, UK Trusts and Foundations and a variety of community endowment funds that invest in strengthening communities. Our grants recognise the inspirational role of community groups, projects and charities in identifying and addressing local needs. We also award educational grants and scholarships.

1. Each programme will have its own unique criteria that will explain the aims of the Fund, who can apply and what you can apply for. Please read and digest this information. Be honest to your organisation and to your beneficiaries by applying for a project that your organisation has the ability to deliver.
2. Ensure good governance. We look at the organisation just as much as the project. Governing documents hold the core information about your organisation and should be working documents – a document where the contents are put into action - not a document kept on a shelf and never looked at. Accounts/Income and Expenditure Sheets are a key insight into your organisation’s health. A grant will not be awarded if the organisation poses a risk through poor management and/or poor financial procedures. Ensure these supporting documents are in order and ALWAYS include them with your application by the given deadline.
3. Familiarise yourself with the term ‘Unrestricted Reserves’ (sometimes referred to as ‘Free Reserves’) and its meaning, which is ‘monetary reserves that are not tied in to a particular use’. It is recommended good practise to have a set limit of between 6-9 months operating costs in unrestricted reserves and to have a policy regarding this.

To have no unrestricted reserves could raise concerns that the organisation is unlikely to survive the short term and that the project is unviable. We need to understand that your Trustees are aware of this risk and are taking steps to increase reserve levels in the long term.

High unrestricted reserves could indicate that your organisation is in a healthy position with lots of money in the bank. It would appear therefore as though your organisation does not need a grant. You should explain if high reserves are the result of savings put aside for a specific purpose - to purchase premises for example.

Be honest about this figure within the application form as this can be checked within your annual accounts.

4. We want to see that you know your community well and understand the issues it is facing. Tell us about these issues and how they affect the people you work with. Try not to use generic statistics, local information that relates to your area is more realistic, but ensure it applies to the people you work with. Ensure your application is fact based, don’t exaggerate your claim but also don’t underestimate the value you bring to a community.
5. Write your application in clear English or Welsh, avoiding the use of jargon and of acronyms. Assume we will not know what you mean!

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6. Ensure that your figures add up. Providing us with a cost breakdown helps us to see that the project you're requesting funding for has been planned and all costs have been taken into consideration. If you are applying for part funding please tick the items you are applying for from this fund and tell us where the remaining funding will come from, including when you are expecting to know the outcome of this funding.
7. How do you know this project is needed? – explain the process you have gone through to find this information. Include any community consultation, any relevant local information and project monitoring where work is ongoing. This shows us that you have taken the views of your beneficiaries and used that information to shape the project you are proposing. Be passionate about your work, tell us why your organisation is special and explain why your beneficiaries think you are special.
8. Do remember to tell us what you will be looking for to show that your project has been successful. For example:
 - Increased membership from X to Y over 12 months.
 - Formal feedback via two questionnaires at the beginning and end of the project.
 - Video clips showing reflections by beneficiaries.
 - Feedback from a third party such as teachers, neighbours or parents.
9. Please tell us as clearly as possible what you would like to spend the funding on. eg. We will employ a fitness tutor for one hour once a week over 12 months. The tutor will provide conditioning exercise sessions for disabled members of our wheelchair basketball team which meets twice weekly at the leisure centre. The club currently has 15 members.
10. Finally, ask someone who doesn't know the project or your organisation to read the application before you submit it - if they can understand what you are proposing, you're nearly there.

Good Luck!