

WRITING SUCCESSFUL GRANTS

***A useful and practical guide to writing grants for
community sporting clubs.***

WHAT ARE GRANTS?

Grants are funds received from statutory, voluntary or philanthropic agencies that have often been established with the primary purpose of giving grants. This is to meet their own objectives and strategies, such as government policy, community development, or meeting the needs of the local community.

The biggest providers of grants are the different levels of government:

- **Local Government (Council/Shires)** – LGAs can offer grants for a variety of purposes, such as allocating significant amounts to improving their community facilities, while also offering smaller amounts aimed at building community/activation activities and community group capacity building through local organisations.
- **State Government** - much of facility development funding comes from State Government. State Government will also offer grants to community groups which compliment government priorities (for example, women and girls, diversity and inclusion), and that assist in supporting events within the State (especially in rural areas and to build capacity of volunteers at grassroots levels).
- **Federal Government** - a lot of Federal Government funding is focused on elite sport and facility development.

The following entities also offer grants to different community organisations:

- **Statutory Bodies** – statutory bodies, such as VicHealth, will offer grants that are often focused on participation.
- **Philanthropic Trusts & Foundations** – a number of trusts and foundations have been established for funding programs and projects that serve a particular purpose. Donors can make a contribution to the project and receive a tax deduction for their donation.
- **Commercial Organisations** – commercial organisations may offer, as part of their intent to connect with the community, funding and grants for clubs to support growth and sustainability.

Grants are not the same as sponsorship or fundraising as there are usually a strict set of criteria that an organisation must meet in order to qualify for a grant. Therefore, it's important to complete any application forms thoroughly and carefully and in as much detail as has been asked for.

UNDERSTANDING GRANT TERMINOLOGY AND CRITERIA

This section is designed to give you some clues about common terminology used in grant guidelines and some suggestions on how you might respond to some key questions:

Eligibility / Who Can Apply – Usually very clear cut. If you're not eligible, do not proceed without a partner or auspice that is eligible. Some common inclusions in eligibility statements are 'incorporated body', 'not for profit', 'rural' or 'regional', or a 'Deductible Gift Recipient' (DGR) in the case of philanthropic funds/grants.

Philanthropic Funds – Are derived via donations or bequests to a charitable fund and distributed to specific projects/organisations usually with DGR status i.e. those that can receive donations and offer tax deductions. Sporting clubs don't usually have DGR but could partner with a group that does e.g. church.

Funding Objectives – This defines what the grant is for and your project needs to line up with and contribute to this objective.

Target Group – This refers to the group the funding is trying to support e.g. people with a disability, older adults. Your project must engage or support the nominated group if specified.

Project Reach – This refers to how many people, how far and wide your project will impact. Your project does not have to be widespread to have broad reach though e.g. you can increase the reach by sharing any resources developed or learning with other like agencies.

Disadvantage – When grants give preference to areas of disadvantage, find out what that refers to. To evidence your area as disadvantaged, you can use:

- **SEIFA Index** (Socio Economic Index for Areas) – you can access this from your Council.
- **Local Demographics** – Australian Bureau of Statistics, local government particularly to determine prevalence of target group in the area.
- **Rurally Isolated** - indicate distance to major centres and services.

Sustainability – Refers to your project's ability to demonstrate how it could continue after the funding is over. For example, this could be achieved by charging a fee to use next time, being able to re-use materials or attracting other fund sources. Some things can be sustainable without money – e.g. resources developed, relationships, infrastructure, learning.

Project Plan - Your project plan should include the steps you will take to implement your project including timelines, benchmarks, and who will undertake the tasks. This can be provided in a table form or Excel formats

Evaluation - This simply refers to how you are going to identify whether the project has been successful or not against the objectives set by the grant. It can use measures such as the number of participants, participant feedback, visual displays etc. Note it is never a bad idea to include your evaluation measures in your project plan

Partnerships - Real partnerships are more than just a sign off. In your grant application you should demonstrate the strength of your partnership by demonstrating joint planning, roles and responsibilities of each and how the partners will ensure communication e.g. meet monthly.

PREPARING A GRANT APPLICATION

To be successful, applications need to be well-prepared and written clearly. Grant applications must usually demonstrate that the project in question is feasible, and meets the appropriate policy goals or priorities of the particular grant agency.

Although specific criteria may vary with each grant scheme, most grant applications require similar types of information:

- Contact information.
- Program/project description.
- Brief description of the organisation applying.
- Program/project budget.
- Amount of assistance requested.
- All other sources of funding for the project.
- How the applicant organisation meets the grant criteria.
- Guarantee that the program will proceed, and monies received will be spent on the purpose for which the money was given.
- Copies of the latest annual report and a copy of the audited financial statements.

What do funders want to see?

The following are presented as a list of key details a funder is looking to see in a grant application:

1. Alignment

The funder wants to see alignment between the objective of the particular grant, and the club's submission.

2. Defined Problem with Solutions

The funder is looking for a clearly set out list of:

- The problem.
- The impact.
- Solutions.
- Benefits.
- Performance measures.

3. Evidence

The funder will always require some form of evidence in relation to the program/idea to support the solutions presented to the problem. These could include local data (current membership/growth, bureau of statistics, LGA demographics), growth predictions or letters of support.

4. Partnerships

The grant application will need to identify whether the applicant has secured any partnerships to assist in the delivery of the program/idea.

Most funders like to see strong community partnership. This not only shows that you have done your research, it also maximises the chances of a successful project.

5. Impact

The funder wants to see the impact the program/idea will have if delivered – what are the needs it is addressing, what is its reach, and who are the target groups that will be impacted and benefit from the program/idea?

6. Demonstrating Low Risk

Funders want to ensure that the program/idea is going to be a low risk investment, and to do this, want to see the club is capable, has the requisite skills, and has clear lines of responsibility drawn up for all aspects of management of the initiative.

7. Value for Money

All funders want to see a solid budget proposal! Many grant applications fail due to poor budget, lack of detail and inconsistency.

Itemised project needs assist in demonstrating to the funder that the various components have been considered, and if the grant money is only going to cover part of your project costs, you need to show how you will cover the gap.

8. Clear Benefits and Value

Finally, the funder wants to clearly see the benefits and value of the program/idea. They want to see how good the benefits will be, and what the value will be to the community.

Larger organisations who offer funding have generally moved to online applications. If they indicate that this is preferable, it is worth giving it a go. The key to successful online applications is to be succinct, and get as much relevant information across in the word limits (often as little as 250 words per response).

TIPS FOR SUCCESSFULLY ATTRACTING GRANTS

The following are presented as key tips to consider for successfully attracting grants:

- The most important part of any application is **READING THE GUIDELINES**, following them to the letter, and ensuring that you do actually meet the criteria for the grant – some grant makers receive up to 30% of applications that do not meet the eligibility criteria.
- You need to understand the grant provider – such as their priorities, vision, mission, values, policies, plans, past initiatives, past successful grant applications. A good starting point for these details is their websites and annual reports. This information may not always be readily available, but the more you can find out, the better you can match your application to their objectives.
- You must tailor your grant applications specifically to meet the objectives of the grant provider. If you can't meet the objectives of the grant provider, **STOP**. Don't waste your time applying for that grant. Be clear about why you need the money (for example, to run a community event, a short-term project or buy equipment). It is also beneficial to use the words and language adopted by the funding body. For example, if the funder wants to see community engagement strategies, then call your activities community engagement instead of consultation or community conversations. It may seem obvious, but don't assume the person assessing your application can easily identify the connection. Make it easy and obvious for them to see how you are meeting their objectives.
- If there are percentages associated with the answers, take note and answer accordingly. For example, don't put a lot of time or detail into an answer that only scores at 5%.
- Consider appointing a dedicated person or establish a committee to run the particular grant application process for the club. The role of such person or committee would be to:
 - Determine what purpose the funds are being raised for.
 - Identify potential grant sources.
 - Write the grant application.
 - Ensure the acquired funds are being used for the designated purpose.
 - Complete all reporting and acquittal requirements.
 - Maintain relationships with grant agencies.
- Be honest, open and realistic.
- Check to make sure your organisation has the right structure to receive grant money. If necessary, identify other groups or organisations who may be able to contribute to your idea. (for example, venue, promotion and publicity, food, administration). You may need an auspice?
 - An auspice is an organisation that is financially set up to receive funds. It could be a not for profit organisation or a local government body.
 - The auspice will receive the grant money and will provide you with the funds.

- The funding agreement will be between the auspice and the funding body.
- Sometimes the auspice will take a portion of the funds to manage the funding on your behalf. Discuss this with them right at the beginning to be clear!
- If you want an organisation to auspice you, you must obtain their consent and cooperation.
- Make sure you have a written agreement with the auspice and be clear about terms and conditions, roles and responsibilities.

A grant application is generally viewed far more favourably if the club is able to contribute their own funds, or source funds, in some way.

- Be aware of word limits.
- Make sure a solid governance/management framework is in place to manage the project.
- Include any relevant MOUs, signed letters of agreement, Council leases as attachments with your application. Make it clear that the documented framework is in place already.
- Have a clear understanding of timeframes – decide on when you want your project to commence, and ensuring grant timelines align with your project commencement date (remember, grant applications are not processed straight away – allow time).
- Outline a risk management plan. Address the various risks that are relevant for the particular project, and how the club will address these should they arise.
- Ensure you provide a realistic and detailed budget with contingencies.
- What are your plans once the grant money is used up? Grants are usually for short term projects. Funders want to know how you will make sure that the project is sustainable.
- Don't leave submission of the grant application until the last minute, and allow for IT errors. Save word copies just in case!
- Attend workshops to enhance/refresh your project management skills. Some Councils run workshops when the grants are released to explain certain elements they are looking for. Additionally, if you have a budget, you can invite a training provider to come to your organisation or group to assist with the grant writing process.
- If you are applying for a Council grant, discuss your project or idea with the relevant area (for example, arts & culture, environment or healthy communities etc) and tap into their skills. They won't be able to write the application for you, but can give you invaluable information and support.
- Access free online resources. There are plenty on the internet!

Beyond the above, the following may also be useful for clubs to be on the ball when it comes to grants:

- To have a detailed budget including any forecasted expenditure increases so that membership fees can be set in line with club costs.
- Make a 'wish list' of all the new developments, equipment, resources, program offerings or facility improvements the club would like to achieve throughout a given year if the club could get hold of some funding. Identify from the 'wish list' the items that are grant worthy, what could be sponsored and the types of things that need fundraising.
- Talk around the club and publish in the newsletter the sorts of things the Committee would like to achieve in a given season - it may be that there is a potential sponsor within the club who may just be stimulated to come out of the woodwork.
- Identify a few people who have some know how to keep an eye out for any grants that would support an item on the 'wish list'. Their role is to alert the Committee and support the submission write up.
- Keep a calendar of grants - any number of grants re-occur at the same time each year so you can predict in some cases, and get your case ready in good time.
- If you see other clubs that have undertaken things that you would like to achieve, ask a representative how they went about it.
- If there are things on your 'wish list' that you could see benefiting another group or club, start building the relationship and discuss partnerships.
- Keep electronic copies of the grant applications you submit to cut and paste from.
- If you are unsuccessful at getting a particular grant, seek some feedback from the funding agency.
- Request application forms well before the closing date.
- Prepare the application in advance.
- Submit applications before the closing date.

It's very rare for clubs to be successful with ALL of their club grant applications. It is not uncommon for many clubs' success rates to be as low as 1 in 4. It's a very competitive process!

For all clubs, it is important to keep persisting – seek feedback from grant organisations if you are not successful – find out why and where you can improve. You can also seek feedback and support from your critical friends, such as Leisure Networks, local government, other clubs, SSAs and local associations, to better your application.

Ultimately, it is important to create a story – who your club is and what is your purpose.

We have prepared the resource, 'Key Considerations for Grant Application', that contains a list of questions that your club should be able to answer prior to commencing the process of compiling the formal grant application. This resource is designed as an exercise for clubs to work through to identify the key components of the application.

FURTHER HELP

There are a number of ways to keep in touch with the grants available:

- Contact your local government agency to see if they have a small grants program or for advice on facility development options.
- Contact your state and/or national body or view their website for available grants

National

- [Australian Sports Commission](#)
- www.grantslink.gov.au
- www.ourcommunity.com.au
- [Easy Grants Newsletters](#)

Victoria

- VicHealth www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/funding
- Sport and Recreation Victoria <http://sport.vic.gov.au/grants-and-programs>
- VicSport <https://www.vicsport.com.au/grants>
- Grants Victoria www.vic.gov.au/grants
- Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning www.dtpli.vic.gov.au/grants/find-a-grant
- City of Greater Geelong - <https://www.geelongaustralia.com.au/grants/default.aspx>

Other State Departments

- [ACT](#)
- [New South Wales](#)
- [Northern Territory](#)
- [Queensland](#)
- [South Australia](#)
- [Tasmania](#)
- [Western Australia](#)

Don't forget to Google other associated organisations (for example, multi-cultural centres). Our Club Help website also offers fantastic resources for grants and other club needs – www.clubhelp.org.au.