

Fundraising The First Steps



This factsheet is intended for people involved in voluntary and community groups who are new to fundraising. You will find this information helpful if your group is very small and/or very new, and has not had any grants yet, or if you are new as a committee member, volunteer or employee and want to know how to get started with fundraising.

First of all, who are you?

You need to know about your group and about the project you want to fund so that you can show who is going to be accountable for any money that you get.

Funding bodies need to know exactly who will be responsible for the money, so they need to know things like whether you are a charitable organisation, or a registered charity; whether you are a branch of a national organisation or entirely local; whether you have a constitution; what your aims are etc.

If you don't know the answers to these questions, you will find it difficult to convince funders to give you any money. So start by collecting up your group's rules or constitution, check your bank account details (it should be a society or club account requiring two signatures), and make sure you know the details of your group's relationship with any parent or umbrella organisation. Hull CVS can help you with these points.

helping you make a difference

What do you need money for?

People generally start from the perspective of “our group needs some money”. The question you will be asked, either by a funder or a Funding Advice Worker is “what do you need the money for?”

Most funders will pay for the projects your group does, rather than just pay for your group. So it helps if you can list all the things you do that cost money.

You need to include the costs of running the project in the budget for the project though. That way you can share out some of the groups overall costs amongst different projects.

Then when you apply to a funder for a grant or donation, you can tell them exactly what their money will be spent on. And they are more likely to see what difference their money will make. Your group might have a few different projects in which case you might need to make a few different applications for funding.

The other important question is, how do you know your community needs you to do this activity? Have you asked or checked? If not, you will need to do some work collecting proof that your project really is needed by the people you help. The simplest thing you can do is just ask them, for instance have a meeting with your members, or do a questionnaire in your neighbourhood.

Who do you ask for money?

There are innumerable sources of money for voluntary and community groups apart from car boot sales and raffles. Charitable trusts make donations to organisations whose work meets their objectives; a wide range of Government initiatives distribute funds nationally or through local organisations,

The Council has various budgets it can spend on grants to voluntary and community groups; “The Lottery” is distributed by four different organisations. You need to choose the appropriate source of funding to suit your organisation and the work that you are doing.

For example if your group is very small and you only need a couple of hundred pounds to pay for a meeting room, there would be no need to write a complex and detailed funding bid to a government department that distributes millions of pounds to large organisations.

If your group is growing and perhaps is thinking about employing staff for the first time, then you probably need to be looking at larger funders. Hull CVS can help you select the right funders to try.



Plan Ahead

There are very few funding bodies that will receive; process; and respond to your application within a month. Most funders take much longer. Some charitable trusts only consider applications quarterly or even annually.

Comic Relief, for example, has five funding rounds every two years. So assume that you will need to be making your applications at the very least three months in advance of the project happening.

And it is no use getting started on your project in the hope that a grant will come through. Most funders will not give you money to pay for expenditure that you have already committed yourself to or already incurred. If you are relying on a grant, you *must* wait until it is in your bank before you start the work.

Some funders expect to see things in your organisation that you might not have developed yet, like child protection policies (if you work with children) or some formal way of monitoring and evaluating what you do. So that might require a bit more work before you are ready to receive a grant, and might add a bit of time to the process. Again, Hull CVS can help you with these things.

Get Help

Talk to someone else that has experience of applying for funding. There various courses about fundraising that you could to. Hull CVS can give you some assistance with your applications and give you details of other organisations that support and assist local groups or offer training or information



Other factsheets you may find useful:

Writing a Letter of Application to Funders
Easy Mistakes to Make in Funding Applications
Community Fundraising
Lotteries and the Law

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