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## Where to go for grant information



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- **Australian Government Grantslink Directory**, [www.grantslink.gov.au](http://www.grantslink.gov.au) – a database of Australian Government funding programs. Always check with the funding program regarding closing dates and availability as these sometimes change after they've been added to the database.'
- **Queensland Government Grant Wizard**, [www.smartservice.qld.gov.au/services/grants](http://www.smartservice.qld.gov.au/services/grants) – answer a couple of questions to be pointed to a list of suitable Queensland Government grants.
- **Federal and State members** of parliament often manage mailing lists within their own electorates so that they can keep people up to date with funding opportunities. You can see a list of state and federal members by visiting <http://www.parliament.qld.gov.au/en/members/current> (Queensland) or the Australian Parliament House website for a list of federal members and senators.
- [www.ourcommunity.com.au](http://www.ourcommunity.com.au) - **OurCommunity** produce a monthly e-newsletter which outlines funding opportunities. Unfortunately, it's not particularly targeted at community benefit projects, but to a much broader. If you have the time to read through 40 odd pages a month, it's definitely worth the \$40-odd annual subscription fee.
- **Australian Directory of Funders** lists more than 300 funding bodies, including philanthropic trusts and foundations, that offer grants for community projects. It costs \$99 per year to subscribe - <http://www.philanthropy.org.au/seek-funding/access-grant-makers/>.
- **Busigrants** publishes 12 newsletters a year – it's a paid subscription service that lists local, state and federal grants available for businesses. <http://www.fundingcentre.com.au/busigrants>.
- **Communitybuilders NSW** is a NSW Government website that contains links to funding organisations and valuable information for organisations seeking funding. It's focussed on NSW but does include federal grants which are applicable across the country. <http://www.communitybuilders.nsw.gov.au/building-your-resources/links-to-other-funding-websites>.
- **Community Foundations Gateway** was a joint project of Philanthropy Australia, Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal and other organisations. The project has ceased but the archive is at: <http://communityfoundations.philanthropy.org.au>.
- **Grantsearch Australia** publishes a grants register which it claims has more than 4000 entries. <http://www.grantsearch.com.au>.



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## How to write a grant in just 20 minutes



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Is it really possible to write a grant in 20 minutes?

Yes. Because writing a grant is the very last step in a long process of project planning, partnership development, costing, refinement and communication. And you need to go through this process for every project idea that you have. Then when a funding opportunity comes along, the process of actually filling in the form is a piece of cake.

This is what strategic grant writing is all about.

There are ten questions you need to be able to answer before you go anywhere near a funding application form.

### Ten questions

1. What are you hoping to achieve?
2. Why does it need to be done?
3. How will you do it?
4. What steps will you take?
5. When will each step occur?
6. How much will it cost?
7. How will you manage risk?
8. Who will you involve?
9. How will you know whether it's worked or not?
10. How will you tell people about your work?

Good grant writing happens when you have time to think, and clarity around your motivations for your project. And the parts which take the most time in project planning are always around developing partnerships and genuinely bringing people on board. And that's usually what will tip your project over the line for funding as well.

The stronger your project, the more likely you are to succeed with grant writing. And the better equipped you are to answer the questions listed, the stronger your project will be.

### Why? Why? Why?

- you can't really ask for letters of support unless you can articulate what you want to do
- you're more likely to get genuine community support when you've taken the time necessary to frame up your project and talk to people about it
- you can't write a proper project budget unless you've noted all the steps necessary to see it through
- you can't know all the risks unless you start talking to the communities you need to engage
- as you answer all those questions, the information you have at hand will change the project, its costs and how it develops.

*"I have six honest serving men  
They taught me all I knew  
I call them What and Where and When  
And How and Why and Who"  
(Rudyard Kipling)*

### Plus + + +

There are other reasons answering these questions – and documenting those answers, will help you punch above your weight, kick goals and bring in the bucks.

1. It would be highly unusual for a funding body or any other partner to ask you a question you haven't answered with one of the ten listed.
2. You will have a permanent record, separate to your actual application of all the things you promised partners and providers.
3. You'll connect the dots for others in your organisation, so that if you move on before the funding arrives, or before reporting is due, someone else can interpret what it is you've committed to do and how you reached any conclusions.
4. Reporting will be a breeze, because you'll have recorded step-by-step how you'll do the project, how you'll monitor its success, how you'll spend the funds, how you've calculated in-kind contributions and how you'll take care of your funders along the way.
5. You'll be able to cut and paste the information over and over again for different funding bodies
6. You'll have succinct and tidy information to share with potential partners about what you want to do and why.
7. You can use the same information for corporate sponsorship proposals, fundraising appeals or supporting efforts like crowdfunding.



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## Five things you're probably doing wrong when writing grants



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The most likely thing you're doing wrong is creating a project to suit an available bucket of money. There's nothing strategic about that and it's often obvious when you start to pull a project apart. Strategic grant writing is about strategically identifying the projects which your organisation needs to do to achieve its mission and then seeking appropriate funding bodies that meet your needs. Of course some tweaking of your projects might be necessary, but the general essence of them won't change.

But here are five other things you could be getting wrong.

### Not answering the question asked

Even long-winded questions in the application form usually include a list of headings that need to be addressed. Your job is to address them. If a question asks 'tell us what your project will achieve' and you start prattling on about how your president has been involved with the group for ten years and therefore has a long track record of achieving outcomes, you have not answered the question.

'Tell us what your project will achieve' means one thing. You need to list the specific things that your project will achieve. That might be the eradication of polio or it might be the increased awareness of the causes of obesity. It could be the protection of an endangered species or it could be engaging new audiences in interpretive dance.

### Other tips for answering questions well:

- Use plain English. Always. Period.
- Don't waffle. Get straight to the point.
- It's not a university assignment. If the questions asks to be answered in 300 words and you've done it in 150, good for you. No padding required.
- If the questions seem repetitive, they might just be. Find creative ways to say the same thing over and over again. But are the questions really asking the same thing? There is a difference between 'what will your project achieve?' and 'tell us what you need funding for?' One is about outcomes, the other is about the stuff you need to buy to achieve those outcomes.
- Always link your responses to the criteria and guidelines. If the guidelines say that funds are available for providing training opportunities for young people and one of the questions asks what your project will deliver; you probably should talk about how you're providing training opportunities for young people.

### Making assumptions about the reader

Your reader (the assessment panel, Minister, policy officer, marketing staff of a company) aren't going to research your organisation, the issue you're addressing or how other organisations have approached it. They're not going to look up acronyms. Truth be told, unless you're getting mainstream media coverage already, they're not going to have heard of you or necessarily have a personal connection to what it is you're doing. So your job as a grant writer is to take them on that journey from beginning to end.

That means you need to explain the issue in simple terms. Use other people's research or media presence. You need to tell stories about where you're located and why that's significant. You need to create a compelling case for your project and for their funding of your work.

### Being unrealistic

If you're a brand new group, a brand new committee, you're probably not going to be able to deliver a \$250,000 project in three months from receiving your funding. Even with runs on the board, you're probably not going to be able to run a massive festival for 30,000 people with a \$3000 budget. Assessment panels know this. Usually because they've seen groups make these mistakes before.

Those people assessing your application will take a very analytical approach. Does  $A + B = C$ ? Will this group really be able to achieve all these things with this much money, doing the tasks they've identified?

### Poor approach to partnerships

Partnerships – genuine partnerships, take time to grow. You can't decide today that you're going to put in for a grant, and answer questions about your community partnerships tomorrow with any conviction. Unless you already have those partnerships and relationships in place.

Partnership development is a topic all of its own, but look at it this way. What funding body is going to want to fund a community group who hasn't talked to similar groups doing similar work to ensure there's no duplication? Who's going to want to fund you if there's a club right next door asking for exactly the same thing? Why would someone give you a grant if your local Councillor or Member of Parliament hadn't even heard of you.

Partnerships take time and energy. You should start working on them immediately. Well before you decide you need money to get something done.

### Trying to be fancy

Some people think grant applications need to be full of jargon, buzz words and fancy terminology to get funded. They don't. The simpler your writing, the better you're able to describe exactly what it is you want to do and why, the more likely you are to win over the assessment panel. The *only* jargon you should use are the words which the funding body use to describe the fund. If they use words like *strategic on-ground conservation outcomes*, it's fine to throw those words back at them.

For resources on writing in plain English, please visit [www.plainenglish.co.uk](http://www.plainenglish.co.uk).



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## What are government funders looking for?



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The most common grants accessed by grass roots not for profit groups are government grants. They're a tricky beast to get your head around. Because community volunteers are so passionate about their work they often assume that that is the driving force behind the funding programs they're wanting to access. That their passion and commitment will be rewarded with grant monies.

But that's not how government grants work.

Government grants usually come about because a need has been identified or a political party has made a commitment that it will deal with a perceived issue. That issue might be environmental, health-related, social, cultural or specific to a certain demographic within society. The issue could be something as specific as tackling soil erosion on the banks of a single river, or it could be more broad and be around tackling diabetes.

Governments have usually made a conscious decision to effectively outsource dealing with those issues to the community, through public grants programs. Makes sense. With the use of volunteers and cheap overheads, not for profit groups tend to spend government money much more efficiently than governments themselves.

When a funding program is created, it usually has very clear objectives. *This funding program aims to reduce the incidence of diabetes in Indigenous communities.* When you look at the cross section of government funding programs, across all themes, it reads like a shopping list of issues the government is outsourcing to community groups.

Your job as a grant writer is to help agencies tick things off that list.

If your project doesn't specifically deliver on the specific area the funding program was set up to tackle, then you have no business submitting an application.

### Here's a few points to remember about government grants:

- They are seeking to respond to specific issues. If your project doesn't help address that specific issue, it won't get funded.
- There are exceptions such as the *(Gambling) Benefit Community Fund* in Queensland which generally funds projects which have broad community benefit. You still need to demonstrate that your project has broad community benefit rather than say, a specific conservation outcome.
- Government funding programs usually must show a strong public benefit or the return on public investment.
- Some government programs will be just open to not for profit groups, some to groups from a specific sector. Some will be open to both private businesses and not for profits, and some will also be open to schools and local governments. Check the eligibility criteria to know exactly who will be competing for the funds in question.
- Government funding programs often have stringent acquittal and reporting requirements and it pays to know ahead of receiving money exactly what those reporting requirements are so that you can plan ahead.
- People often complain of the time spans involved in government grants. Often a short turn around time before applications close and a long turn around time before receiving funds. It pays to know upfront, what these timeframes will be. Just because funding applications close in April doesn't necessarily mean you'll get your funds before end of financial year.
- These funding bodies often employ a person whose job it is to administer the funds in question. It always pays to touch base with this person about eligibility and for any information about process and timing. And also to run your project by them. They'll usually tell you if they think you're wasting your time making a submission.

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## Are you ready to fundraise?



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All not-for-profit organisations need money to survive and to thrive. As corporate sponsorship is often an unacceptable compromise and government funding is receding into distant memory more and more organisations are thinking about developing their fundraising capacity.

If you are in this boat you'll no doubt want to be successful when you're asking people for donations. So the question you must ask yourself, is are you ready to fundraise?

To set yourself up for success let's consider these fundraising fundamentals:

### Is your project relevant?

Do you have the right project?

Not all environmental projects have equal appeal. Obscure issues perform poorly so ask yourself, is my project relevant to potential donors? Is there an existing awareness of the issue I'm planning to tackle? Are people already talking about it in their community, online and in the mainstream media? Is this something they have a strong opinion on? Relevant issues, where people have already demonstrated they really care are the winners.

### Is there a problem or a threat and is it emotive?

What makes your cause important to donors?

Emotion plays a big part. Your donors care about the natural world and if it's under threat they're more likely to respond. Of course that's why your organisations exists so remember to place an emphasis here.

Do I have elements to my project that donors care about? People first give to causes that impact other people, then animals (charismatic species first), then plants.

### Is there a sense of urgency, is there a timeline?

There are so many causes that donors can support so they'll need to feel yours is the highest priority. Problems or issues that can be solved next year don't attract financial support. If you can demonstrate that you need financial support right now donors will be more likely to respond.

### Do you have the solution?

Can you offer solutions to issues or problems where you can show how you will be effective and how the donor can see their contribution making an impact? Do you have a detailed plan for how you will solve the problem or resolve the issue? You need to be able to refer to the details of the plan and its budget and this also needs to be tied to the funding that you are asking for. Where it's appropriate solutions should be tangible and have donation price points, for example \$10 plants one tree.

### Your community

Once you've got a great project ready to go don't expect people to just come out of the woodwork. Fundraising works best where you've identified people who care about your issue and you've done some work to form a community.

For arguments sake let's say 5% of people you ask will make a donation. If you only have 200 people to ask for a donation things are not looking good. If you have 2,000 people to ask, then things are improving and if you have 10,000 people, then things are looking good.

*So before commencing your fundraising you need to ask:*

#### How many prospects do I have?

On my database how many contacts do I have as prospects (potential donors)?

#### How many active donors do I have?

Active donors are people who have made a recent donation, for example anytime in the past two year. How many donors do I have and how much do they give. What is the average gift?

#### Data

Donors respond differently depending upon how they are asked so it's important to know for your the donors and prospects the number of:

Postal addresses

Email addresses

Telephone numbers

And the size of your social media community

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## Are you ready to fundraise continued...



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### Asking and the fear of asking

It's surprising how little time and effort is put into actually asking for donations when it's obviously the key to fundraising success so you must be ready to make that commitment.

And you or someone in your team must be able to overcome the fear of asking. You are asking for help because your cause is important. Donors feel the same way. So by asking you'll be helping them to realise their commitment to issues they care about.

### Who makes the ask is important

The best person to ask for donations is the person perceived as being able to make decisions and achieve the desired change. That's usually the CEO or the President.

### When you ask is important

Australians are more likely to give in June just before the end of the financial year when they can claim a tax-deduction. They are also very generous in December. Asking in January and July will most likely lead to disappointing outcomes.

### How you ask is important

Here is a list of ways of asking in order of effectiveness.

- In person
- On the telephone
- Through the Post
- By email
- Through social media

### How much you ask for is important

People tend to do what you ask of them, after all you are the expert at solving environmental problems.

If you assume there is a limit and ask for small amounts you'll block people from being more generous. If you've presented your project well then the amount any one person will give is up to them. Never assume that any individual has a limited amount to give and you will receive pleasant surprises.

### What you ask for is important

Asking for donations for projects and campaigns is generally well received. Asking for donations to support an organisation's core costs is much less appealing.

### How often you ask is important

Organisations that ask more often have more success and not only because of the number of requests they make. If you ask just once a year donors perceive your cause as not being that important or that you lack capability. The donors will spend the next 12 months not thinking of you and others that ask more often will be front of mind and become the donor's favourite.

### Investing

Running raffles or holding a BBQ might be free however the income generated will be very limited. You'll need to spend money on fundraising if you wish to generate income. How much you invest depends on many factors, however don't expect effective fundraising to be free from costs.

### Planning

If you are going to invest time and money in fundraising you need a plan, you need a strategy. Don't go too far down the track before you've written a fundraising plan to guide you. The best people to help you are fundraising professionals, people who have made their careers from raising funds for causes and have learnt the tricks of the trade.

### Thanking donors

Now that you've received the donations it's essential to thank people. Make sure you've got systems in place to send thank you letters and receipts. Then develop a donor care strategy to really look after the people that are looking after you.

.....  
***Fundraising is a skill and  
the more you practice it the  
better you'll become.  
Good luck.***

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