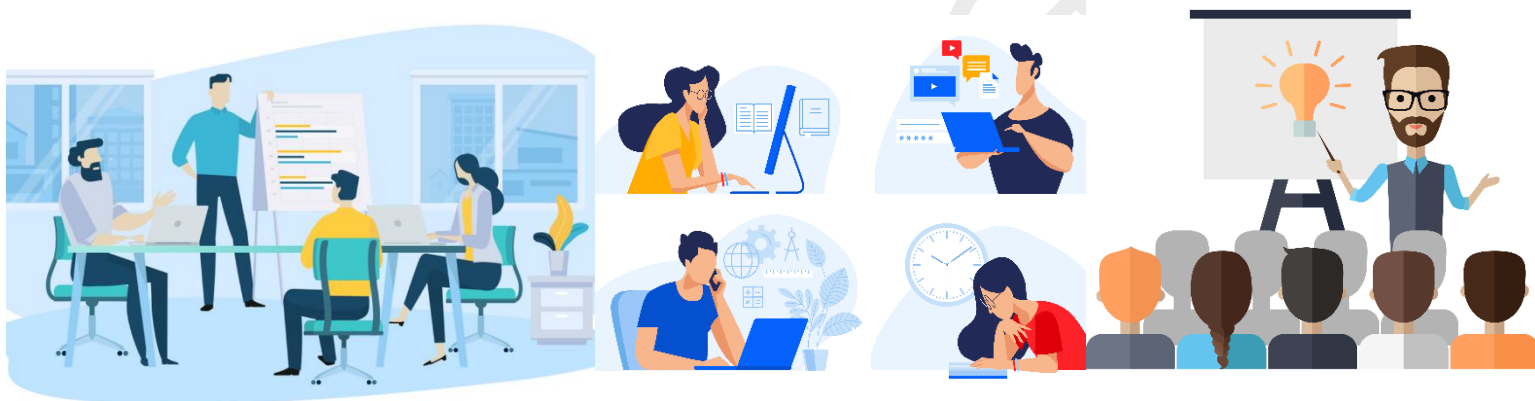




fundsforNGOs
Grants and Resources for Sustainability

PREMIUM



A PRACTICAL TOOLKIT ON SUCCESSFUL GRANT WRITING SKILLS

A Workbook for Development Professionals

By Cheryl Hooper



Cheryl Hooper

Cheryl Hooper is a multi-skilled Senior Director with 20 years' experience & skills in fundraising, strategic planning, & capacity building for UK & international NGOs especially in sub-Saharan Africa. A skilled grant writer, with successful multi-year proposals for UKAID, USAID, Comic Relief & other strategic funders, she supports NGOs with fundraising, strategic development, mentoring, & capacity building in all functions & countries across the world.

Table of Contents

What is your current knowledge and capacity? Self- Assessment Exercise	2
Start with your case for support.....	3
What do you do and why?	4
The context of your work – why is it important to know and understand the local, regional and national picture?.....	6
Pestle Analysis	6
Who are the funders?.....	7
Learn how to sell yourself!	8
Prove your capacity and ability to deliver	9
How to structure a proposal	11

Welcome!

I'm delighted that you are using this workbook to help you improve and develop your grant writing skills. I hope that by sharing my knowledge and experience, you will gain tips and skills that will help you to avoid mistakes, learn how to strengthen proposals and have greater understanding of what funders are looking for when you read questions posed in a Concept Note.

Writing winning proposals takes time. It requires attention to detail, and it requires persistence and tenacity. It's a very competitive market out there, but increasingly, funders are looking towards smaller NGOs who have less bureaucracy, are often closer to the ground with regard to implementing activities, and, provide more value for money. It is perfectly possible for you to get the attention of some of the big funders. Sometimes we just need a gentle steer in the right direction to make an application stand out above the competition.

This practical toolkit has been developed to accompany the training DVD produced by me for fundsforNGOs: 'Successful Grant writing Skills and Tips for Award Winning Proposals'. I hope you enjoy using the workbook and refer to it regularly!

Cheryl Hooper

Consultant
Global Changemakers Oxford

What is your current knowledge and capacity? Self- Assessment Exercise

What is it? Why you should try it?

In NGOs where resources are stretched and time is short, it is possible to overlook the basics when it comes to fundraising and income generation. Sometimes we are not able to step back and take stock of what skills lie within our existing team, and what and where the gaps lie.

To strengthen fundraising and create a firmer financial foundation, you need to know where you are now. You need to know what your strengths are, where are the weak spots, and where improvement is needed. Taking a step back and reflecting with your team can take you forward in your development.

This work book will help you to:

- Recognize what you have achieved so far
- Identify where you can make improvements
- Be clearer on what skills are needed to achieve your fundraising objectives

Who is this workbook for?

This workbook is simply designed as a first stage process for small NGOs with limited resources. It can be used by individuals or as part of a team exercise and is suitable for Executive Directors, Fundraisers and Programmes staff who also write funding proposals.

SOME SUGGESTED GROUND RULES

- Be open and honest
- Do not under-estimate or your strengths or be over critical
- Try to analyze why things may not be working as well as you want, or need
- Use the workbook as a guide and not as a directive
- Don't try and put a square peg in a round hole!
- Don't expect instant results
- Remember that some strengths and weaknesses are not clear cut
- Do not compare your results against others

What might be identified as a strength?

A strength is something you do well. It isn't necessarily winning several grants. Rather a strength might be 'Being able to explain the need for funding convincingly'. By drilling down to why you are winning grants, you will begin to see why you are getting good results.

What might be identified as a weakness?

A weakness is something that isn't working well or successfully. To identify a weakness, it is not helpful to say 'Not being successful with grant funding'. It is better and more helpful to identify a weakness as 'not having sufficient knowledge about xxx to write a convincing funding proposal'.

Start with your case for support

2.0

If you ask individuals in your team and other stakeholders to describe what your NGO does, the chances are that everybody will describe it differently and perhaps not accurately. The two-minute elevator pitch is a good exercise to carry out with your team to reach a common consensus on how to describe your NGO to a potential funder.

Exercise 1

Ask each person in the team to describe your NGO and its projects as if talking to a complete stranger. Are you all saying the same thing? What words are used by everyone? Are you using jargon? Would a complete stranger not connected to international development understand? Each person should stand up and spend no longer than 2 minutes on their explanation.

Agree together on one version that can be used to describe your mission, aims and objectives.

Write your final version here and keep it to no more than a few sentences.

2. What do you do and why?

This section helps to describe the projects and activities that your NGO does. When writing a proposal for funding, if your NGO is implementing several projects, you may think that you have to include them all in an application. However, to write a strong proposal for funding it is vital that your proposal or application meets the criteria and interests of the funder. Therefore, you need to focus on a particular area of your work or activities that align with the funder's interests and priorities and focus on this rather than include everything.

Exercise

Write down the different projects and activities that your NGO carries out. Are these a number of unrelated activities or are they 'projects' with a defined timeline? Use the template below to document each of your projects. Try and keep this as simple as possible and use bullet points to explain the need and outcomes.

1. Project Name
2. Project Description (maximum 3 sentences)
3. Project Need (bullet points)
4. Proposed Outcomes (bullet points)
5. Number of beneficiaries

Funding terms explained

Large grant funders are keen to know what the impact of a project will make. You may have come across terms such as 'outcomes', 'impact' 'outputs' frequently, but is your programmes and fundraising team clear on what they mean?

The simplest way to understand these terms are to think of them in this way:

Impact – Long term change.

Example: Reduced discrimination and more employment opportunities for disabled people as a result of government policy change as a result of your interventions would describe the impact of your work.

Outcomes – Short/Medium term change

Example: Improved access to employment support and greater awareness of the needs of disabled people in the community would describe an outcome.

Outputs – Activities that are carried out to achieve your desired outcomes and impact.

These might be for example

- Disability awareness training for teachers, health workers, government officials
- Disability awareness training delivered in schools for pupils/learners
- Development and distribution of information leaflets on where to access support for disabled people
- Improved signage and posters in local communities
- Life skills training for disabled people
- Formation of a project steering group including disabled people

Exercise

Take each of your projects and write down the desired Impact, Outcomes and Outputs. If you have a new project you are developing, then include this.

PROJECT NAME

DESIRED IMPACT

OUTCOMES

OUTPUTS

WRITE DOWN KEY AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

1.

2.

3.

The context of your work – why is it important to know and understand the local, regional and national picture?

Funding bodies such as USAID, UKAID and other international government donors, want to make a real difference by making the world a better place through the projects they fund. They support the 8 Sustainable Development Goals and have varying priorities and interests when they open up opportunities for funding which are in line with their own individual government agendas.

Therefore, understanding what the funder is interested in supporting is only one part of the puzzle. Strong proposals also show how the proposed project fits with the Funder's agenda and also how the project will work with Government in-country to get its support and buy-in. So, for a well thought through proposal you should also know the government agenda and national framework for health, education, the economy, welfare and environment in the country where your project operates.

Exercise

Pestle Analysis

Write in the boxes below the key points that your Government is prioritizing in their national agenda

POLITICAL	ENVIRONMENTAL	SOCIAL	TECHNOLOGICAL	ECONOMIC	LEGAL

Now write in the boxes below the key areas that your projects responds to those priorities.

POLITICAL	ENVIRONMENTAL	SOCIAL	TECHNOLOGICAL	ECONOMIC	LEGAL

ARE THERE AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT? WRITE DOWN THE KEY POINTS BELOW

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

Who are the funders?

There are a number of different grant opportunities available for all types of projects and geographical regions across the world. Funds for NGOs' consistently provides members with information on grant opportunities on a daily basis, but I thought it would be helpful to begin with clarifying what types of grants are out there because depending on the type of funder, the amount of grant available, and the funder's criteria for applying, it may be that not all grant opportunities are relevant to you or the sector you work in. In a nutshell, grants can be segmented into small and medium sized grants; one off single grants; and large multi-year grants, usually for a period of 3-5 years.

So who are the funders and where does the money come from? With private grant making trusts and foundations, these tend to be established through a legacy where the individual who has left the gift in their will, may have had a particular interest or cause they want their estate to continue supporting; or there may be a wealthy family who have a wish to give back in some way (Bill Gates Foundation is an example), there are also private trusts set up through business profits which may be a wealthy business owner who has set up a trust to support specific causes close to their heart; or in some cases, a private trust or foundation may be set up through a wealthy individual to give back to something they believe in, some private trusts are founded by celebrities, or business individuals and often these want to remain anonymous.

Then you have the government or institutional donors who you may be more familiar with. These funders often put out opportunities for concept notes based on a particular area of need that a Government might want to focus on because it aligns with government strategy. Funding comes from government allocation from the national budget for that country. Examples of this type of funder would be USAID, UKAID, EU European Commission.

In the UK, there are also public grant-making organizations such as Comic Relief and BBC Children in Need. These are large grant-makers and registered UK charities, governed by an independent trustee board. Their funding is through large public appeals which often are matched by the UK government. These funders then have a grant making process for small community organizations and NGOs and they act as fund managers, assessing grant applications, distributing the money and then monitoring the grants provided. BBC Children in Need provides grants for UK projects only, whereas Comic Relief has national and international grant opportunities.

And finally, there are the Corporate Trusts. These tend to be part of a corporate social responsibility programme with grants being administered from the profits or investments. Depending on the size of the corporation, grants can be multi-year from larger corporate trusts such as the Coca Cola Foundation to much smaller, one-off grants from other companies.

There are a number of different grant opportunities available for all types of projects and geographical regions across the world. Funds for NGOs' consistently provides members with information on grant opportunities on a daily basis, but I thought it would be helpful to begin with clarifying what types of grants are out there because depending on the type of funder, the amount of grant available, and the funder's criteria for applying, it may be that not all grant opportunities are relevant to you or the sector you work in. In a nutshell, grants can be segmented into small and medium sized grants; one off single grants; and large multi-year grants, usually for a period of 3-5 years.

So who are the funders and where does the money come from? With private grant making trusts and foundations, these tend to be established through a legacy where the individual who has left the gift in their will, may have had a particular interest or cause they want their estate to continue supporting; or there may be a wealthy family who have a wish to give back in some way (Bill Gates Foundation is an example), there are also private trusts set up through business profits which may be a wealthy business owner who has set up a trust to support specific causes close to their heart; or in some cases, a private trust or foundation may be set up through a wealthy individual to give back to something they believe in, some private trusts are founded by celebrities, or business individuals and often these want to remain anonymous.

Then you have the government or institutional donors who you may be more familiar with. These funders often put out opportunities for concept notes based on a particular area of need that a Government might want to focus on because it aligns with government strategy. Funding comes from government allocation from the national budget for that country. Examples of this type of funder would be USAID, UKAID, EU European Commission.

In the UK, there are also public grant-making organizations such as Comic Relief and BBC Children in Need. These are large grant-makers and registered UK charities, governed by an independent trustee board. Their funding is through large public appeals which often are matched by the UK government. These funders then have a grant making process for small community organizations and NGOs and they act as fund managers, assessing grant applications, distributing the money and then monitoring the grants provided. BBC Children in Need provides grants for UK projects only, whereas Comic Relief has national and international grant opportunities.

And finally, there are the Corporate Trusts. These tend to be part of a corporate social responsibility programme with grants being administered from the profits or investments. Depending on the size of the corporation, grants can be multi-year from larger corporate trusts such as the Coca Cola Foundation to much smaller, one-off grants from other companies.

Now that you have an understanding of the background to the different types of grant makers out there and where the funding comes from, you won't be surprised to see that there are some key differences to the application process depending on the type of funder. With the smaller private grant-making trusts and foundations for example, grants tend to be on the lower side and can vary from as little as a few hundred pounds, to up to £10k. However, each trust is different and so the key to a successful application is research to ensure that you are tailoring your application according to their funding criteria. For example, if you find that on average the grants given over a 5 year period range between 1-3k, it would be safer to ask for an amount that fits within that scale and not higher, even if their guidelines say they will fund up to £10k for example.

Learn how to sell yourself!

Every application you write regardless of the type of Funder, will need you to be able to show the Funder that your NGO will be competent enough and has the skills and expertise to deliver the proposed project.

A common question in a Concept Note is: 'How do you know this is the best approach to deal with the problem?'

A question such as this, is an opportunity for you to demonstrate why your project approach is the best and most effective method to achieve the outcomes and impact you propose. This will be based on your experience and the impact and outcomes you have achieved in the past.

Exercise

Write in the box below why the approach you are adopting to address the challenges you have identified is the best method.

<p>Areas for improvement</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 2. 3.

Prove your capacity and ability to deliver

Funders want to be reassured that you can deliver the outcomes and impact you propose. The amount of funding you ask for needs to be in line with your expertise and capacity to deliver the interventions. This is about your resources, staff, partners, and other stakeholders who would be available to support your proposed outcomes. Remember that this isn't just about frontline workers, it is also about the ability to manage and monitor finances, monitoring and evaluation, HR management and reputation.

Exercise

Write down in the box below why your NGO and your team is capable of delivering your project.

<p>Areas for improvement</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 2. 3.

Quality not quantity!

Remember that when applying for funding, it is important to tailor your 'ask' to the interests and criteria of the Funder.

An example of a strong project summary would be something like.

'This **3-year** intervention will enable **500 vulnerable, adolescent girls (16-24 years)**, who previously dropped out of school, to access education and training in entrepreneurship. The **project takes place in the densely populated area of xxx townships** in South Africa and **will enable the most vulnerable girls to be self-sufficient and financially independent** so that they can avoid coercion and exploitation by sugar daddies. Using a **rights-based approach** through financial literacy training, and access to sexual reproductive health information and support, **they will become empowered**, more confident and be better

equipped to gain meaningful employment. By the end of the project, there will be **evidence of lower pregnancy rates, reduction in teenage marriage and greater equality of opportunity achieved through constructive male engagement.**

You will see from this summary that the following points have been included:

- It is a 3-year project
- There are 500 direct beneficiaries
- The profile of the beneficiaries indicates they are adolescent girls age 16-24 years; they are vulnerable, living in hardship and open to exploitation and coercion by sugar daddies
- The geographical area is included
- The methodology is a rights-based approach with training in financial literacy and SRH
- The proposed outcomes are clearly stated (girls will be empowered, more confident and better equipped to be gainfully employed)
- The long-term impact is reduced pregnancy levels, reduction in teenage marriage, greater gender equality

Exercise

Decide on the project you require funding for and write down the project summary below. This should be no more than 2 paragraphs summarizing what you are intending to do, who you are trying to reach, the number of people benefiting/scope of work and the timeframe.

Presentation, style, and format

If there is no application form to follow, then it is necessary to write a proposal for funding with an accompanying letter. There is no set format as to how to lay out a proposal but there are some basic guidance that can be useful.

- Follow the guidance. For example, if the Funder asks for 2 pages then provide 2 pages. If the length of proposal/application is not given, then aim for 4 pages maximum
- Keep it simple and avoid jargon
- Give your project a title
- Write a cover letter
- Check grammar, spelling, and facts
- Research the Funder to find out the amount of funding available and average grant size. For example, don't ask for \$20,000 USD if it generally gives small grants of \$5,000
- First impressions count!

How to structure a proposal

There is no right or wrong way to structure a proposal for funding. However, the format below is one that can be used as a general template

Introduction, background, and aims and mission of NGO

1. Project name
2. Project summary
3. Geographical, social, political context of the work
4. Problem statement
5. Project context and rationale
6. Project interventions/activities
7. Rationale for the approach/methodology
8. Project outcomes
9. Project impact
10. Monitoring and evaluation (m & e)
11. Sustainability
12. Budget
13. Contact details

If you have to complete an application form, stick to the word limit – include only the really useful information and the data that supports it.

Give the funder what they want

If the funder has a set process for applications, follow it. Make sure you provide every piece of information they ask for. Check that you've completed the form correctly before you send it, otherwise it may be returned or rejected.

Tell the funder who you are

Briefly explain a bit about your organization's background, activities and aims early on in the application. If you are new to the funder, show them that they can trust you to deliver the proposed project. Provide press clippings and endorsements. Tell them about notable members or supporters. Refer to the support you have received so far. Use hard evidence (where possible) rather than anecdotes or opinion.

Describe the problem, and your solution

Offer enough information for someone completely new to the issue.

Make sure you address the key questions:

- What is the issue?
- Why is it a problem and how do you know this (evidence of need)?
- What will you do to address it (activities and outcomes)?
- What will you not be able to do (scope)?
- Why are you best placed to address the problem (track record)?
- What difference will their funding make (how you're meeting their objectives)?
- How will you measure success (monitoring and evaluation)?

Ask for project funding

Funders like to give money to something tangible and new. They are reluctant to fund vague 'administration costs'. Even if you are continuing existing work, try to present it as a specific project. Put it in a timeframe. This helps you set a deadline for results. You can include administration costs in your budget, as long as they relate to the project. See the [National Lottery Community Fund's guidance on full cost recovery](#) to help you work these out.

Be positive in your application

Use positive language. Talk about what will happen when you get the money. This will help the funder feel confident that you can make a difference. It also helps you show that your project does not begin and end with this application.

Offer a human story

Try to include case studies of people you have helped or plan to help. This lets you show the impact of your work.

Avoid jargon

Keep the language simple so an outsider can understand the issues. Only use jargon if the funder has used the terms themselves.

Offer evidence for your cause

Support any claims you make with evidence, for example: government statistics, data you've collected from surveys or market research, monitoring information or extracts from reports by relevant agencies. Provide enough to back up specific statements. You can send extra evidence, relevant promotional materials, annual reports etc. along with the application, although a grants officer may have no obligation to read anything that is not included in the actual form.

Ask for money

This is very important. When asking for money you could:

- Ask for a specific lump sum or an amount over a period of time
- Use previous project budgets as an example
- If the grant will not cover your full project budget, explain where the remaining funds will come from; funders sometimes prefer not to fund a whole project, and encourage to secure a mix of income. [For more information on funding see our funding and income overview.](#)
- Include a basic budget (unless asked for more detail) explaining the cost of individual parts of the project.

Provide a budget

The budget should explain how the money will be spent on the project. Include all the relevant costs. If possible show how you determined the costs. Remember to include things like insurance, utilities and legal fees. Your budget should be realistic and clearly relevant to your activity.

Check your application again, and again

Get someone outside the project team to read your application before you send it. They can look for errors or inconsistencies and ask for explanations.

Copyright © 2020 by Cheryl Hooper

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, distributed, or transmitted in any form or by any means, including photocopying, recording, or other electronic or mechanical methods, without the prior written permission of the fundsforNGOs, except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical reviews and certain other noncommercial uses permitted by copyright law.

November 19, 2020

FUNDSFORNGOS LLC
Office 1018
1060 Broadway Albany
New York - 12204 USA
Email: info@fundsforngos.org