



# PULL OUT GUIDE TO Successful GRANT APPLICATIONS

There are over 700 contestable funding sources in New Zealand, and they vary dramatically in size and type. From large corporate based foundations through to small family trusts, with gaming trusts, community foundations and local government funding lodged in between. There are funders which distribute just a few thousand dollars every year and those who distribute several million – but regardless of size, they are all looking for the same things.

Before you make your next grant application, go through this handy pull out guide and make sure you have all the boxes ticked.

## 1. KNOW WHAT'S AVAILABLE

There are many well known funders in New Zealand, but equally there are many funding bodies that float under the radar. For your best chance of success, do your homework and make sure you know what all your options are.

The Funding Information Service hosts a comprehensive database of funding organisations throughout New Zealand. Best known as 'Fundview', this database can be accessed via the website [www.fis.org.nz](http://www.fis.org.nz). While there is a cost involved in subscribing to this database, you can get free access in most libraries, or through your local council or Department of Internal Affairs offices. To find a public access site in your region, visit the website and click on the 'Public Locations' map on the right hand side.

**Other websites which provide a useful list of potential funders include:**

[www.publictrust.co.nz/grants-and-scholarships/how-do-i-find-one.html](http://www.publictrust.co.nz/grants-and-scholarships/how-do-i-find-one.html)

Charitable Trusts administered by the Public Trust

[www.communitymatters.govt.nz](http://www.communitymatters.govt.nz)

Government Funding Agencies

## 2. BE AWARE OF CRITERIA

Every funder has a set of criteria which determines which organisations, projects, programmes and expenses they will fund. In most cases, they will have areas or sectors of the community which are given priority, and then some restrictions around the type of expenses that can be funded.

While it is easy to keep going back to the same funders over and over again, in recent times many funders have reviewed their criteria and changed the playing field. Don't automatically dismiss funders for whom you have not been eligible in the past. Likewise, be sure to double check the criteria of funders you have come to rely on.

Be aware that the funders criteria have been carefully considered and the decision makers are bound by what has been set for them. Regardless of how good your cause is, a funder cannot distribute funds to an organisation if they do not meet their criteria. Don't waste your time, and theirs, in submitting an application, instead look for a funder for whose criteria you meet.

## 3. UNDERSTAND THE CONDITIONS

In addition to criteria, many funders have conditions placed on the acceptance of applications. These conditions are often in relation to the frequency of applications from a specific group, or the amount of money the funder is prepared to fund. It is important to note that many of the conditions appear similar between funders, but if read properly the conditions can have quite different implications. Some of these conditions include:

### Organisations can only

- a) APPLY for funding once every 12 MONTHS
- b) RECEIVE funding once every 12 MONTHS
- c) APPLY for funding once every CALENDER YEAR
- d) RECEIVE funding once every CALENDER YEAR

### Organisations must have

- a) 50% of funding secured before APPLYING
- b) 50% of funding secured before their FUNDS ARE RELEASED

Some funders also have a maximum amount that they will distribute to any one group. While this is not always publicised, you can get some indication of the average grant amount by reading through the funders annual report. Make sure your application is within reach of their usual distribution amounts.

If you are at all unsure about the conditions imposed by a particular funder, call and discuss your concerns with them before you make an application.





## 4. APPLY EARLY

Most funders have a funding advisor who reads the applications, makes recommendations and then passes them on to the decision making committee. The advisor is also responsible for liaising with community organisations, so that your applications have the best chance of success.

While you are allowed to submit applications right up to the last minute, it is in your best interest to apply as early as possible. This gives the funding advisor an opportunity to consider your application and come back to you with any questions or points that need clarifying before the deadline is reached. If your application arrives on their desk 5 minutes before close-off, there is no opportunity for improvement before your application gets passed through.

## 5. BUILD A RELATIONSHIP WITH THE ADVISOR

Many people believe they could get more funding, if only they had a chance to speak to the decision makers directly. Unfortunately every organisation wants this face-to-face time, and it's simply not possible to accommodate every request. Can you imagine the floodgates?!

That said, the funding advisor is the person who can 'go into bat' on your behalf. They are your best advocate when it comes to selling your organisation, your project, and your ability to make it happen. Get to know the advisor, keep them in the loop with your successes, and listen to their ideas and suggestions. They will be the one sharing your message with decision makers, so give them every opportunity to share it in the best possible light.

## 6. PROVIDE UP-TO-DATE DOCUMENTS

Many organisations have a 'Funders File' where they keep documents most commonly requested by funders. While this is a great idea, it is essential that you regularly review the folder and ensure that the documents are accurate and up-to-date. Simple things such as contact details and current trustees are often overlooked, and out-of-date information can hold up, and at times jeopardise, the whole process.

Most funders will request 3 quotes for any specific item, and they must be current. If funding is required for a specialist piece of equipment for which there is only one supplier, make sure you explain why only one quote has been supplied. Do not try to 'fudge the figures' or build in some sort of surplus – it will not work in your favour.

## 7. SUBMIT COMPLETE APPLICATIONS

While it is not always obvious why specific information is required, it is important that you answer every question asked on the application form. Empty spaces suggest you haven't done your homework or lack the organisational skills required to get the job done.

If a funder states that you are not to include additional information, then take their word for it and leave it out. Not only will it not be read, they will be annoyed by your inability to follow instructions. However, if a funder invites additional information by all means include it. Just be sure that you summarise your response on the form itself, and clearly index the information that relates to that question. An answer of 'see attached' is not enough.

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## 8. BE LEGIBLE AND ACCURATE

It sounds simple, but you would be amazed by how many people get this bit wrong. If at all possible, complete your application online or type it out. If that is not an option, make sure you ask someone to read through your application once it is complete. You may be able to read your own writing, but others may not.

In regards to accuracy, it is easy for us to see what we expect to be there, rather than what is. It is important to get someone else to proofread your application, paying particular attention to your financial budgets and reports. Make sure they add up!

## 9. ENSURE MISSION CENTRED PROJECTS

When you are really strapped for cash it's tempting to create a specific project, just because you know there is funding available. Don't! Not only is it an ineffective way to run your organisation, it is unlikely you will receive funding anyway. Funders are only interested in supporting projects that will help you further your mission, so stick to your plan.

## 10. EXPLAIN FINANCES

While most funders recognise the need for you to keep some money in reserve, large 'nest-eggs' will undoubtedly be questioned. If you have more than 6-12 months operating budget in your accounts, make sure you explain why it is not being used to support the project in question. Funders understand that money can often be tagged for future activities; you just have to let them know when that's the case.







## 11. BE CONCISE

Say everything you need to get your point across, and then STOP. Simple bullet points using everyday language are far more effective than long-winded explanations full of fluff and jargon.

## 12. DEMONSTRATE NEED

Funders are looking to finance needs, not nice-to-haves, so it is important to explain why this item/project/programme is so essential for your organisation.

How will the funding of this application help you meet a genuine need in your community? If it is a real and urgent need, explain what has happened in your community to make it so. How has your community or organisation changed? How has recent government decisions affected your organisation or the community it serves? Why is this project or item a need in your community now, when it may not have been 12 months ago?

## 13. HIGHLIGHT THE DEPTH OF IMPACT

Working in the community is like dropping a pebble in a pond. There are some instantly recognisable benefits, but the impacts often reach further than what is seen on the surface. When describing the outcomes your projects and programmes produce in the community, make sure you highlight the true depth and breadth of the impact.

## 14. CONSIDER ON-GOING SUSTAINABILITY

Funders are interested in getting new projects started, but only if there are some long term plans for generating other support. If they feel like the project will fall over once their funding is withdrawn, it is unlikely that they will support it in the first instance. Consider how you can generate additional support through donations, sponsorship, membership and traditional fundraising activities, and then let them know your plan.

## 15. GIVE FUNDERS 'BANG FOR THEIR BUCK'

Like most people, funders want to get the most value they can for their investment. Let them know how funding your project or programme will help save them money in the long term. Are you collaborating with another organisation, therefore reducing the cost of running two separate services? Will you make the equipment, resources or facilities available for use by other groups? If you can demonstrate that the benefits will be seen outside of your own organisation and clients, this will have a positive impact on your application.

## 16. BE ACCOUNTABLE

Put simply, if you haven't returned your accountability reports from last time, you will not get funding this time around. Make sure you send in your accountability statements on time, in the right format and without being prompted. It really does make a difference to future applications.

## 17. PROVIDE LETTERS OF SUPPORT

If you are a new organisation, you have not applied for funding in the past, or your project could be considered as a little 'out of the box', make sure you demonstrate that you have wide community support. This can be achieved by including letters of support from other organisations or agencies, particularly those who already have a good reputation in the community and a strong history with the funder from whom you are requesting funds.

## 18. ASK FOR A 'HAND-UP'

Funders want to know that you are passionate about your cause, and that you are prepared to do whatever it takes to make it happen. They are more interested in giving you a 'hand-up' than a 'hand-out', so it is useful to have done at least some fundraising before you make the application.

You can also demonstrate a contribution by making note of how many volunteer hours have gone into the project, and how many are likely to be invested over the coming months.

## 19. PROVE YOURSELF

No matter how important your cause is, or how essential the programme, if a funder does not believe you are capable of making it happen, you will not get the funds. Show funders you have a proven track record of successful projects by including a list of your organisations accomplishments in the last 12 months.

## 20. CHOOSE YOUR TRUSTEES WISELY

Like it or not, the reputation of your trustees reflects on your organisation – both positively and negatively. Avoid recruiting trustees just so you can get 'bums on seats' and instead look for people who have a strong reputation and can make a genuine contribution to your organisation. Make sure you have a code of conduct in place for your trustees before you need it.





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## 10 THINGS YOU SHOULD CONSIDER...

1

Funders are not giant cheque books. They are real people making real decisions. As unbiased as they try to be, there is not a magic formula. You will win some and lose some – that's just the way it works.

2

Funders either have to (by law), or they have chosen to (by constitution) to distribute funds to the community. They do not have to distribute funds to *you* and *your* organisation. Receiving a grant of any size is a privilege, not a right. Treat it as such and show the funders you appreciate the gift.

3

Most trustees are working voluntarily or for a very small honorarium. They are usually involved in the funding body because they want to make a contribution to the community in some way. They are on your side, so give them every opportunity to say yes.

4

Funders have very strong networks, both within the community and amongst other funders. If you spoil your reputation with one funder, don't expect to be able to pick up and move on to the next one. Funders talk.

5

Everybody believes that their organisation is the most worthy cause in their community. They wouldn't be involved if they didn't. The truth is every cause is a good cause, depending on your perspective. At the end of the day we are all working towards strong, healthy, safe communities – try to treat other organisations as allies, not enemies.

6

Having all your costs covered is undoubtedly the preference, but even a small amount of funding is better than nothing. Instead of complaining about the piece you missed out on, practice being grateful for the piece you received.

7

Completing a funding application can take a lot of time, but when you consider the amount of money you could potentially receive, the hourly rate isn't so bad! Treat every grant application like a job application and put your best foot forward.

8

Your application may well be one of hundreds which didn't make it through and most funders do not have time to explain why a specific application was declined. On the plus side however, most funders have an advisor who is happy to talk with you before your application is submitted. Make the most of the opportunity to get your application right the first time around.

9

A good track record is an important part of securing funding, but even listing your accomplishments does not paint the full picture for potential funders. Repetition however, builds reputation. Make the most of the media to highlight your projects, programmes and successes throughout the year. When a trustee is reading your application, they will have a much better idea of who you are and what you do.

10

The amount of money available from community grants is decreasing, and the number of organisations requesting support is on the rise. You can no longer rely on community funding to keep your organisation afloat.

Take time to develop a Sustainable Funding plan that does not rely on just one income stream. Grow your donor base, investigate sponsorship options, or set up a social enterprise. Become so passionate about your cause that you will do whatever it takes to keep it going. Passion is contagious.