

20 Minute Fundraising Masterclass

Speakers Notes: Writing a grant application



Click the links on the right to see additional organisational information



Top Tips can be found at the end of these notes

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Presentation

Slide 1: 20 Minute Fundraising Masterclass - holding slide

Writing a grant application

2: Welcome

- Introduce yourselves using the chat box
- Use the Q&A box to ask questions to the panellists
- Video link to speakers and presentation only
- Slides and video will be available at <https://www.london.anglican.org/support/fundraising/fundraising-training-resources/>

Slide 3: Who are we?

- Sarah Reilly, MIntsF
- Carol Ward, MIntsF

Slide 4: What you will learn today

An understanding of how to approach writing trust funding applications to maximise the chances of success.

- Do your research
- Focus on format
- Write for the audience
- The So What? Question
- Voice, tone and language
- Tell the story
- Back it up
- Proofing/editing

Slide 5: Before you get started

Before you get started, there are other things that need to be in place:

- Detailed project plan and timeline
- Realistically costed budget
- Case for support
- Relevant permissions
- Trusts prospect research

If you haven't done these, you are not ready to start applying for grants. Our previous webinars on these are available at: <https://www.london.anglican.org/support/fundraising/fundraising-training-resources/>

Slide 6: Do your research

I can't emphasise enough how important it is to do your research.

- ▶ Time spent on research is saved later- you can avoid wasting time on applications that are not going to be successful.
- ▶ Refine and update your prospects – if your list was put together some time ago, your in-depth research can highlight changes in grant-making priorities. Particularly at the moment, some trusts have temporarily refocussed their giving on 'front-line' charities such as food banks.
- ▶ Prioritise your largest approaches – by looking at the range of donation sizes of each trust, you should be able to establish which are your largest bids and best matches – do these first. They often take the longest to do, but better to start big and work your way down.

- ▶ Dig deep into the detail of the trust – read their accounts and their website, find examples of other grants given.
- ▶ Look out for meeting deadlines – some trusts have rolling programmes, but others may only meet once or twice a year. If you can't see any published deadlines or meeting dates but there is a phone number, contact the trust to ask.
- ▶ Find out about previous grants - some trusts list their grant recipients and the amounts given. Others don't. But a google search might reveal recipients of their grants, and those recipients' websites or accounts may well tell you more about what they received and for what project.
- ▶ Internal research matters too - especially if you haven't been at your church or organisation for a long time. Do you know whether you have applied to trusts before? Some have strict rules about when you can reapply. Others will ask you whether you've applied to them in the past. It doesn't create a good impression if you don't know the answer to this.

Slide 7: Focus on format

There is no standard way to apply for funding

Pay attention to the format. If a Trust has a formal application process that is documented on their website or on the charity commission site, use that process.

Don't send a general letter to a trust that has an application form – it is a waste of your time and theirs.

Some format options:

- Web form (if you can, download the questions beforehand and work through them separately – some web forms are more sophisticated than others and will let you save and return to the work, others won't)
- Application form and attachments by email or by post
- Free proposal with page limits
- No guidance

The advantage of application forms is they provide the structure for you. Make sure you read and answer each question and refer to any guidelines published by the funder on what they are looking for. Sometimes they can have extremely tight word limits and sometimes tricky formatting to contend with.

For your own applications you should follow the structure we've explained previously in the case for support webinar. Keep your own applications to no more than 4 A4 pages.

Slide 8- Preparing for Application Forms (web and hard copy)

In addition to your case for support, there is a lot of standard information that you will have to endlessly fill in in slightly different ways in application forms. It is worth preparing this before you start so you can cut and paste from one central document. It will include things like:

Basic charity info: Name of organisation, former name or trading name, address (registered office), correspondence address, main contact person's contact details, secondary contact, person in charge of finance's contact details. You'll need the date you were established, your registered charity number, your website and social media addresses.

Financial and legal information: Some trusts want a list of all Trustees (that is your PCC) and a description of who they are, others will ask for the date of birth and home address of key personnel, many will want up-front copies of your bank details to speed up the payment process if you are successful. You might need a copy of a recent bank statement ready to upload.

You will need to know how many staff you have. Some will ask for number of full-time, part time staff and number of volunteers separately. Some will want you to give a single full time equivalent (FTE) figure for staff.

Know your numbers: They will ask you what your income and expenditure was for the previous year, your reserves position and your reserves policy. Having too much money in the bank can adversely affect your chances of success – if you have a lot of money in the bank, make sure you explain what it is for.

Slide 9- Time to get writing – write for your audience

Your research will help you to build up a picture of who you are writing to and to tune into their view of the world. Make sure you are writing for them.

- What are their interests? What has your reading told you about the kinds of projects they like.
- Who are the trustees, can you picture who they are and imagine you are pitching your project to them?
- Are their objectives religious or not? For church projects with community elements this is particularly important. The focus of your writing should be matched with the interests of the funder.
- What language do they use? – pay attention to how they describe themselves and others and use their language where you can. If they ask you to describe your 'beneficiaries', use that terminology.

NEVER ASSUME THAT THE READER HAS ANY PRIOR KNOWLEDGE OF YOUR ORGANISATION, YOUR PROJECT, OR EVEN OF CHURCH.

Slide 10- The So What? Question

Writing funding applications is all about making and supporting strong statements that persuade the reader of the need for the work you are doing, and that helps them buy into your solution to the problem.

Trusts are interested in solving problems. But you need to tell them **what** the problem is that you are trying to solve, **who** the problem affects and **why** it is a problem.

So what? is one of the most important questions you need to ask yourself throughout writing.

Fixing your church roof because it is leaking is not a demonstration of need. You need to explain why it is so important that the building is able to open. What activities take place inside the building and, crucially, who do those activities help? What happens to those people if you cannot open because your roof is unsafe?

Problem: The church roof is leaking

So what?: The building is unsafe with water coming in

So what?: We may have to close the building if we cannot afford to repair it

So what?: With the building closed, we won't be able to offer worship, playgroup, brownies, confirmation classes

So what?: and so on, and so on – explain the impact on the community the church serves.

For every assertion you make in your writing, remember to put yourself into the shoes of the reader and ask **'so what?'**

Slide 11- Voice, language and tone

- **Use an active voice rather than a passive voice:** It is more engaging and gives a sense that the writer is taking ownership and responsibility for the work.

By this I mean saying “We will complete the work in six months” rather than “The work will be completed in six months”

- **First or third person**

First person: I and we to talk about the organisation and the project – “we will install new toilets”

Third person: Using ‘Holy Cross’ or ‘the charity’ or ‘the church’ or ‘the PCC’ or whichever relevant body - “the church would like to launch a community café”

There isn't a hard and fast rule here, but choose one and stick to it.

- **Consistent tone**

Tone in writing refers to the mood conveyed.

A funding application is a formal document, so aim towards formality but not excessively so – you still need to sound human and use plain language.

Establish the tone of your application based on what emotion you want to evoke from the reader.

It is best that one person writes the application, as it avoids too much variation in the tone and style.

- **Choose your words wisely**

The language you choose to use is important to convey tone and to connect with the reader. Where you can match your language to the funder's this will help.

Beware of using language that could be outdated or offensive to particular groups.

Avoid using jargon and acronyms and abbreviations.

Even if you think it is obvious, don't assume that the reader knows what you know. As a general rule you can use NHS and BBC without explanation. For anything else, write it in full the first time you use it, even PCC.

Slide 12 – Tell the story

Alongside your factual information about the project, think about how you tell the story of individuals who will benefit from your project.

Tell the story of one or two parishioners, or of some families attending the playgroup, of someone with a disability who would be able to attend church if there was a disabled toilet, or of the person who needed the foodbank at a time of crisis.

Talk about the difference that you made, or could make. If the project is something completely new for you but has been done elsewhere, tell the story of someone who benefitted alongside someone who could benefit but hasn't done yet.

Again, don't forget the 'so what' when you are telling a story. Think about **impact** not just outcome. So, if you build your community café, the outcome might be that older people in your community can come along for a cuppa and a chat, but the impact is the alleviation of loneliness, improvements in confidence and self-esteem from having that social contact.

Bring it to life with relevant quotes and photographs if the funder allows. Tell people's stories in their own words where you can.

Slide 13: Back it up

- **Avoid sweeping statements** – church numbers are falling. Are they? Who says so? Falling from what to what?
- **Quote from reports, newspaper articles** etc. Whether it's a testimonial about the value of a particular building or a report about homelessness relevant to your night shelter, use published third party information to support your case, but keep it relevant to your project.
- **Use relevant statistics** – draw out the community audit figures or local population statistics to demonstrate the need for your project.
- **Seek reputable endorsements** - If others have supported your project already, name them. Even better, get a quote from them endorsing your work. Even if you haven't already got funding, find influential people to make statements supporting your work. This could be community leaders, senior clergy, your member of parliament or council leader. Make sure this is relevant to your project – quotes about your unique architecture will not be right for a community outreach project.

- **Point to your achievements** – talk about things you have already achieved with other projects, or the difference you are already making.

Slide 14: Proofing and editing

Reading it aloud to yourself can uncover things that don't sound right. It can help you to break up sentences that are too long. It can help you to remove repetition. It can keep you on track with plain language and avoiding jargon.

Make the words count. Cut it, cut it again and cut it again. Don't use two words where one will do. Make every word earn its place on the page.

Have someone else read it and tell you what your project is about, ideally someone who knows nothing about your project. They will help you to uncover the assumptions you might have inadvertently made about the knowledge of the reader.

Don't make it more complicated than it needs to be.

Slide 15: Any questions

Slide 16: TOP TIPS (FROM GEORGE ORWELL):

1. Never use a metaphor, simile or figure of speech (avoid clichés)
2. Never use a long word where a short one will do
3. If it is possible to cut a word out, always cut it out
4. Never use the passive when you can use the active
5. Never use a foreign phrase, a scientific word or jargon word if you can think of an everyday English equivalent
6. Break any of these rules sooner than say anything outright barbarous

Contact details for:

- [Parish Property Support](#)
- [Church Grants \(subscription paid by Diocese of London\)](#)
- [Parish Fundraising Support](#)