
Writing the Future: strategic thinking and fundraising for literature and publishing organisations and associations

Smart fundraising from foundations and agencies...

Purpose of session:

- To consider what makes a good (and less good) project grant application
- To view grant-seeking from the grant-giver's perspective
- To reflect on ways in which your own grant applications might have an increased chance of success

Note: issues around sponsorship, membership schemes and individual giving will be covered in a future seminar.

1. Let's start with a health warning!

Generating income is more than fundraising. It's about making your organisation sustainable by creating a range of funding (diversifying your sources of income), so you are not dependent on one source. In times of economic restraint or political instability, this is easier said than done. Paradoxically, however, this makes a strategic approach even more important. This means:

- Aiming to achieve sustainability by stabilising your funding base (i.e. managing your income streams in such a way that if/when one stream comes to an end, the work can be repositioned, making it suitable for another funding stream)
- Increasing your funding where possible
- Diversifying your funding sources
- Remembering that both fundraising and diversification have costs associated with them (staff time, acquiring new skills, management effort etc)

2. Ensuring success in your grant application

There are innumerable guides to making a successful grant application – either to a public funder or to a grant-making foundation and there are increasing numbers of funder-finder websites (see the 'Further reading' section for some examples).

What is less common is the opportunity to appraise *other people's* applications (and to learn from their successes and mistakes), and to appreciate the view from the grant-giver's 'hill-top'. Depending on the extent of your fundraising experience, you now have a **choice of two approaches** to this exercise and will be asked to form small working groups accordingly.

Approach A

Your group comprises members of European Cultural Foundation grants team.

Please appoint a chairperson for your meeting (whose job it is to ensure that everyone has a chance to speak and that agreement is reached); a time-keeper; and a note-taker.

You will be given the *fundraising criteria* to which you must work *and two applications* for funding to consider. These documents will be in Russian (and English, if that was the language in which the original application was submitted).

It is your team's job to evaluate these applications against the criteria provided and to make a decision as to *which of them (if any) you would/would not support and why*.

Note: All of these applications are real, although the main identifying features have been removed. Any 'missing' information has been withdrawn at the request of ECF and you will have to make your recommendations on the basis of the data provided.

Once you have reached your decisions, consider the following:

- What in your view are the key features of a *successful* funding application?
- What in your view are the key features of an *unsuccessful* funding application?
- What were the main challenges you faced in reaching a consensus decision? Was this made easier or more difficult by the supporting information provided by ECF?
- If you were to revisit a grant application from *your own organisation*, what would you stop, keep or change the next time to enhance your chances of success?

Summarise **your decisions** and feedback your **top three observations/ learning points** to the larger group. Five minutes max.

(With thanks to colleagues at ECF)

Approach B

You are a group of experts, charged with writing a new guide - *Raising money from foundations and agencies: a good practice guide for small scale literature and publishing NGOs* - to support the needs of colleagues in Armenia, Georgia and Ukraine. You are meeting to scope the content. What are the key messages you think it would be essential to get across bearing mind that this is not a general how-to guide; it is specialist and context specific.

Prepare a **presentation of your outline content** for the larger group. Ten minutes max.

3. Further reading

<http://www.labforculture.org/en/funding>

<http://www.labforculture.org/en/funding/contents/tips>

<http://www.creative-choices.co.uk/digital-culture/finance-and-funding/how-to-arts-fundraising-getting-the-basics-right>

<http://www.creative-choices.co.uk/digital-culture/finance-and-funding/how-to-create-successful-applications-and-understand-funders>

<http://www.europe.org.uk/index/-/id/252/>

Baguley, J. (2000) *Successful Fundraising* (Bibliotek Books)

Dorner, J. et al. (2004) *Writing Bids and Fundraising Applications: one step ahead* (Oxford University Press)

Norton, M. and Eastwood, M. (2007) *Writing Better Fundraising Applications* (Directory of Social Change)