



GOLDEN TIPS FOR WRITING APPLICATIONS (primarily relating to applications for public monies)

This is one of a series of factsheets for voluntary and community groups issued by West Norfolk Voluntary and Community Action, WNVCA.

- You must convince the funder that your bid demonstrates that you understand and can meet their aims, outputs and concerns.
- Developing a project to fit a bid will make it more likely to be funded than trying to make an existing idea fit the funding available.
- Use an evidence-based approach when answering questions: use your track record, previous projects/contracts, and any evidence you have or can obtain to support your bid. Use quantitative evidence whenever possible, and qualitative evidence if there is no data, from your own and other recognised sources.
- Technical answers must be explained and supported by good practice.
- Complete all of the sections of an application form, break down every question into its separate parts and answer these specifically.
- Follow the instructions you are given in any bid document exactly; provide what is asked for including all of the documentation.
- Look at the maximum word limit – this will give you an indication of the amount of information and detail they are looking for in the answer.
- Keep to the word / page limits. Do not give appendices they do not ask for. If you are sending documents, list them with the project description if possible.
- Focus on the need for the service you are offering and evidence this need.
- Answer the questions in full – read the Guidance, highlight key points, and have it next to you as you complete the form
- Use a positive writing style – ‘we will do...’ not ‘we may do...’
- Demonstrate that you can manage risks; both your own and the funder’s.
- Demonstrate that you can manage the project; financially and operationally.
- Do not cross-reference different sections on the form.

- Refer to your documents and policies at all opportunities.
- Demonstrate that you understand good practice and can deliver to a good standard, benchmarked if possible.
- Be clear about what your project objectives and activities are: bullet point the key messages you want to get across and compare with the fund criteria, then add any omitted points that are needed. Ensure these messages are in the bid and in the appropriate place.
- Get another person with some knowledge to read the bid document before you send. Is it clear to them?
- Do a mock scoring of your finished bid against the criteria (if you know criteria and weighting) – does it score high enough to be funded?

Remember:

- Bids are often marked by a **scoring panel** – if a question is not answered fully or the answer is not clear it will not get a very good score.
- If an answer has a word or **page limit** any text beyond that may be ignored!
- Public bodies do not like taking risks – demonstrate that you know what you are doing and are a **'safe' option**.
- Funders require you to have systems to monitor and evaluate your project; show that you have these systems and operate them.
- Consider what **added value** you are offering and what your unique selling point is – sell it to the funder!
- Funders like to see **innovation** (that is improving the way things are done) as they expect organisations to evolve.
- Good working relationships with other organisations is important, especially the key agencies.
- Every bid has to show how it will continue if does not have a finite life. This can focus on **sustaining benefits** rather than necessarily sustaining the project itself.
- **Value for Money** is about effectiveness, efficiency, cost and quality. It is therefore not just the cheapest and more about delivering better than anyone else. It relates to other things apart from cost: ability to deliver; local knowledge/links; reaching those in need; skills and experience; partnership working; innovation; ability to attract match funding; ability to manage the project and finances; environmental policy; equal opportunities policy.
- Finally, don't take an existing relationship for granted – your bid still needs to be good!

This information has been produced by West Norfolk Voluntary and Community Action set up and owned by local groups to support, promote and develop local voluntary and community action.

We have taken all reasonable steps to make sure that this information is current and accurate. We cannot, however, guarantee its accuracy or completeness and therefore cannot accept liability for your acting, or failing to act, on the information given.

For resources, books, ideas and useful information please contact West Norfolk VCA or email info@westnorfolkvca.org.