

Landcare Notes

Landcare Note 3.4
September 2010

Grants guide for community groups

Grants give your members the resources to undertake projects and activities set out in your group's plans. Understanding how grants work and how to get them is a great asset for your group.

The process of applying for grants or trust funds can take considerable time and energy. Having a good understanding of the process can help put your best foot forward.

What grants are

A grant is a sum of money given for a specified purpose directed at achieving goals and objectives. There are a range of grants available to groups and individuals working in the environment and in community groups. Grants come from a variety of sources including Commonwealth government, state and local government, corporations, trusts and foundations. Each organisation that makes a grant available has its reasons. The grant they offer will have a specific set of criteria and requirements.

How to do it

Regardless of which grant you are considering, there are a number of stages in developing your proposal that are recommended:

1. Pre-planning – why are you applying?
2. Which grant?
3. Appoint a 'grants guru'
4. Understanding the grant maker
5. Support for your application
6. Getting ready to write

Pre-planning – why are you applying?

Having a project in mind is the best way to start the process of accessing funding.

Your project is more likely to be supported if it is well thought through.

Working out the actions required and timing is an important part of pre-planning your project. It is particularly important when the project includes on-ground works or other events.

This pre-planning will help you determine if your project looks achievable, what resources it will require and when things need to happen for it to be successful.

It is also recommended that the group develop a strategic plan (to set the vision and future course of the group) and an action plan (that breaks down the range of activities). These will help guide your group's decisions about what activities the group will do and which grants to apply for.

Collecting information about the project

Most applications are divided into key areas, so you could use these headings as a guide start the writing process for your project:

- Who you are
- What the problem is and what you will do, (provide, protect or enhance)
- What you want to do
- Why you want to do it
- What support you have for the idea
- How you plan on doing it
- What will be the result of doing the project
- How much it will cost, and the time it will take
- What happens when it is finished?

Which grant?

There are a range of grants available to groups and individuals working in the environment. Each organisation (funding body) has its own set of criteria and requirements.

It is important to read the requirements and follow up with a phone call to the organisation



Landcare Notes

Landcare Note 3.4
September 2010

if you have any questions and to get a good sense of what the funding body is trying to achieve.

You must also read the criteria and requirements to make sure your organisation is eligible to receive the funding, the funding can be used for what you want to buy and your plan fits with the aims of the funding body.

Most funding bodies require the recipient, in this case a community group, to be incorporated. Otherwise your group will need to get sponsored by an incorporated body who will receive funding on your behalf. Refer to the eligibility section of the grant guidelines which should include this information.

Many funding bodies also ask for at least an equal dollar contribution from the applicant. This might be represented as cash, in-kind or other support. Check these budget and contribution details before you apply as each grant is different.

Community development grants

It is worthwhile thinking broadly about your group and what role you play in the community. Your grant applications need not be limited to environmental grants. If your group is contributing to other aspects of community cohesion, such as working with particular sectors of the community, building social networks, educating people, increasing skills and involving people then there is a wider range of grants you could consider.

The internet is a great source of information about what grants are available as well as your local government, CMA and other community groups.

Appoint a 'grants guru'

It is good to have someone in your group to lead development of the projects, sourcing possible grants and writing grant applications. This will help your group be on top of what the group wants to do, the suitable grant opportunities available and what grants are coming up. This group member or members

can get a process in place to help you apply for grants efficiently. The group should also consider how to manage the project if successful with the grant.

Understanding the grant maker

What is the main theme or purpose of the organisation you are applying to? If the funding body was to invent their ideal project, do you know what that project would be? What are the benefits to the organisation by funding your project?

The grant makers are looking for projects that suit their aims and objectives, are well thought through, are clear, fit the guidelines and represent good value for money. Don't give the funders a reason to put your application aside because you haven't answered the questions properly or followed the instructions correctly. Identify where the aims and interests of your group overlap with the funding body and how your activities can help it achieve its goals. With one phone call you could make sure your idea fits with the priority of the funding organisation and whether it fits the criteria. You might also get some ideas from the organisation on how you can strengthen your application.

If the grant you are considering has been awarded in the past, it would pay to do some research on which projects have been successful. This will give you a good idea of what they are likely to fund. Be aware that grant guidelines often change slightly from year to year so make sure you refer to the current information when preparing your application.

Support for your application

Showing your project is supported could include a description of how the aims of your group fit into the bigger picture plans in your region or area of interest. For example, contributing to the implementation of relevant regional and local plans adds weight to your application. It shows the problem you are trying to solve is a recognised problem in your area and is contributing to goals beyond your

Landcare Notes

Landcare Note 3.4
September 2010

group. In your application it's important to describe your problem in the context of these local and regional plans. Attach letters of support from other relevant organisations. Contact these supporting organisations while you are developing your project to gauge their interest and support for your idea.

Support can be described as in-kind, cash contributions or community and partnership support. In-kind support is usually included in the budget as a dollar value to represent goods or services provided instead of cash.

For example volunteer hours at working bees, use of equipment, committee project planning meetings, and preparation time. Don't underestimate the value of this in-kind contribution. Make sure you include this amount in your application budget. The grant guidelines will suggest how this in-kind contribution should be represented – generally there is a set per hour rate for volunteer time.

Are you ready to write?

Start with a draft

Even the simplest of grant applications takes time to write and will need more than one attempt, so start with a draft based on the list provided to help you get a sense of what information you might need to gather for the full application.

Once you are clear on what your project sets out to do, start on the application. You will find there is information you will have to gather so give yourself as much time as possible between starting the draft and when the application is due.

How much is too much?

Supporting documentation with your application is important but it is a balancing act. You do not need to supply more than is asked of you. For example, if you are applying for a grant of only \$1000, you will not need to include a 50-page supporting document. However, for larger grant applications such as amounts of \$100,000 or more, supporting documentation with your application may help.

Examples of support documentation include:

- Site maps
- Results of online search registers for protected sites of significance
- Approval letter from the landowner and/or sponsoring organisation
- Support letters
- Quotes from contractors or consultants
- An up to date Certificate of Currency (to show you are insured)
- Audited financial statements
- Financial details (ABN, Tax status).

Some more tips!

1. Partnerships add value to your project; they help by pooling a range of ideas, skills and resources. A partnership also shows that the group is not working in isolation and has good connections in the community.
2. Successful groups follow the rules. They hold community meetings to develop their projects. They express their needs in clear, easy to understand terms and always report on previous projects back before applying for their next project.
3. It never hurts to pick up the phone and try to make contact with a real person. It's likely you will have a better chance of success if your application is good, meets the criteria, and you have talked it through with someone from the organisation.
4. Become familiar with the grant makers jargon commonly used for grant applications. Using the appropriate jargon will mean your application is easily understood by the people assessing it.

Some do's and don't's

DO:

- Follow the instructions and check eligibility
- Provide current and accurate contact details

Landcare Notes

Landcare Note 3.4
September 2010

- Use positive words
- Avoid words like *may* or *could*, and use words like *will*
- Keep it short and to the point
- Use language describing the project as an investment rather than the expectation of a gift
- Provide realistic timeframes and budget, and check they add up
- Mention the community benefits as well as benefits to the funding body such as media coverage, recognition on signage, brochures, contribution to local plans, etc.
- Seek technical advice where appropriate.

DON'T:

- Send generic applications to funding bodies
- Assume you have a right to funding
- Use emotive language
- Change the format of the forms or budget tables provided
- Promise more than you can realistically deliver in the time and with the funding sought

Finalising your application

A final checklist:

- Get the signatures required
- Check and double-check the budget and all columns add up properly
- Check your application is clear on the problem, what you want to do, and how you will go about doing it
- Get someone to read over your application to check it reads well, makes sense, for spelling mistakes, and so on

- Make a copy of the application before you send it off, and/or save an electronic version if you can
- Get the application in by the due date.

And finally...if it happens that you are not successful with your application, it is worthwhile contacting the grant maker to see if you can find out why. There may be something you can do differently next time which will result in success.

Further references

Victorian Landcare Gateway – Resources
<http://www.landcarevic.net.au/resources>

Our Community Website
<http://www.ourcommunity.com.au/funding/>

Port Phillip and Western Port CMA Website –
Calendar of Grants and Incentives
http://www.ppwcm.vic.gov.au/resources/docs/Final%20CatchmentCare%202009%20Calendar_080409_WITH%20COVER.pdf

North Central CMA Community Grants Guide:
(2010)
http://www.nccma.vic.gov.au/What_We_Do/NRM_Assets/CommunityCulture/Community/StrategiesPlansandReport/index.aspx?itemDetails=3442&objectType=kms&searchfields=cs_ItemName

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Related Landcare Notes

This Landcare Note is one of a series. These notes provide an excellent guide for the ongoing operation of your group.

Acknowledgements

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Landcare Notes

Grant language explained

ABN	An Australian Business Number is required for all funding applications for all organisations.
Assessment/ Selection Criteria	This is what the grant maker will use to decide which grant applications will be funded, so make sure your grant meets as many of the criteria as is possible.
DGR	A Deductible Gift Recipient (DGR) is an organisation that is entitled to receive income tax deductions when donating money to a non-for profit organisation. This status is granted by the Australian Tax Office.
Evaluation/ Feedback	This will be your interim or final report. The report will need to be measurable, and will need to show that you have spent the grant on what you said you were going to.
Inputs/Outputs	Inputs are what is required to be done to complete the project and Outputs are what is going to be done or achieved during the project e.g. how many Ha of land will be fenced.
Methodology	How are you going to complete the project? By putting in basic timelines and check points, you are proving that you have thought the project through.
Milestones	Milestones are significant points in your project that can be used as reporting tools. These can also sometimes be called performance measures or indicators and they will be used as part of a report.
Objectives	Your objectives are the overall things you want to achieve with this grant. They should be able to be measured, and used as a basis for a final report.
Outcomes	What the grant will achieve (long term benefit) and how it will affect the community or group.
Performance Indicators	How will you know that the program was successful? This needs to be demonstrable and measurable.
PPF	A Prescribed Private Fund is a trust to which businesses, families and individuals can make tax deductible donations. The fund may make distributions only to other deductible gift recipients that have been either endorsed by the Australian Tax Office or are listed by name in the income tax law.
Project/ Applicant Viability	Before a grant maker will give you money they will want to know about your organisation, whether you are financial, and whether your organisation will stay operational during the life of the project, so give them a brief history of your organisation.
Rationale	In simple terms, what do you want to do with the money
Retrospective Funding	This is funding for a past event. It is rare for a funding body to fund anything that has started prior to the application. The project must not start until the grant making organisation has approved the grant.
Sustainability	Most grant makers want to know how your project will continue once the money runs out
TCC	Tax Concession Charities. The holder of this tax status is exempt from paying income tax, removing the need to lodge income tax returns. You must apply to the Australian Tax Office to receive this status.

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