How to: Fund your group or project

Chris Grice, Fundraising Officer, Sheffield and Rotherham Wildlife Trust, March 2022

First, identify an appropriate source for funding for the project you wish to carry out. There are four main sources to consider for local projects:

1. Local authorities

Local authorities have small pots of funding directed by local councillors. They generally pay out a few hundred pounds to projects which meet one of a set of priorities which are specific to each ward, so check first what the priorities for your ward/Local Area Committees (LACs) are to ensure you fit.

www.sheffield.gov.uk/home/your-city-council/ward-pots

www.sheffield.gov.uk/lac

www.rotherham.gov.uk/community-grants

2. Non-governmental bodies

The first non-governmental body to consider is the National Lottery. The Awards for All scheme will fund local projects from £300 to £10,000 via an online application form here:
www.tnlcommunityfund.org.uk/funding/programmes/national-lottery-awards-for-all-england
The National Lottery are particularly keen on funding organisations who haven't applied before.

South Yorkshire Police and Crime Commissioner makes grants to local projects using the proceeds of crime. In certain areas and for some projects, you may be eligible to apply for up to £7500.
https://southyorkshire-pcc.gov.uk/what-we-do/grants

If you have a windfarm within 2-3 miles of your project, check out the relevant operating company's website. Many have a community fund as a condition of their being able to operate there and usually have an environmental priority.

3. Company grant schemes

Many companies run small grant schemes as part of their commitment to Corporate Social Responsibility. Check out your local supermarket as these often have customer-voted schemes.

https://tescocommunitygrants.org.uk/

www.onestop.co.uk/community-partnership-page/

www.asdafoundation.org/foundation-grants

Sainsbury's also ran a similar scheme but it doesn't appear to be on their website any more. Perhaps a visit to the store is necessary.

The Co-op runs a different type of scheme which opens to applications in spring and makes grants as directed by their customers twice a year. There's an online application form to complete when the fund is open. https://causes.coop.co.uk/

You can also find shops which will donate surplus goods to community projects. It's worth asking B&Q, for example, to help out with materials for environmental projects.

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4. Charitable Trusts and Foundations

There are literally thousands of charitable trusts in the UK. These are often set up by philanthropists or bequests as an efficient way of channelling money to good causes. Some of them are centuries old and still operating. (Sheffield Town Trust was established in 1297, for example.)

All charitable trusts are different – they all have their own criteria and priorities, they may grant millions of pounds every year or just a few hundred, they may operate worldwide or specify a defined region, county or even just a village. Some have fancy online application forms, others are more 'freestyle' and just require you to make a compelling appeal. Finding the right Trust to apply to is the interesting bit.

Visit South Yorkshire Funding Advice Bureau – SYFABwww.syfab.org.uk/

Register on this page and use the funding search facility – it's free! You can also sign up for a newsletter which will inform you of new funders or important changes.

There are other funding websites, but many of these charge for their service and won't be good value if you're looking for one-off grants.

If you're in Rotherham, sign up for Voluntary Action Rotherham's newsletter inwww.varotherham.org.uk/ It includes a section of funding news which can be useful.

A few general tips

- Read the funder's guidelines (if they exist) *carefully*.
  Make sure you are eligible for the funding pot. Some funders will insist you are a registered charity, others are happy to fund all community groups. Some have an upper income limit for applicants. Some funders won't fund organisations who have paid workers, others won't fund if you haven't.
  Ensure that your project meets the funders stated priorities. A lot of funds, especially local ones, will fund any type of project – what the Charity Commission calls General Charitable Purposes – but others have specific priorities or have a preference for certain types.
  Be sure to include any further information that the funder requests –e.g. accounts, budgets, quotes. But don't send them if they don't ask. You can easily put them off by sending a load of bumph they didn't ask for.

- Go for wow factor! You are passionate about what you do – you wouldn't do it otherwise. Put that passion on the page so the reader feels it too. Remember it's a person reading it, not a machine. Add pictures, if you can, or quotes from people using your project.

- Keep in mind, the person reading your bid is a nice person who wants to give you the money, but they might have a pile of similar pleas in front of them. They probably can't fund them all and they have to make choices. Make sure yours is the one that stands out and is the one they choose.

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- Keep it simple, and don't make overambitious claims that a funder might hold you to.

- Don't use jargon. (A favourite I once saw in a bid – 'Proxy-counterfactual longitudinal self-reported polling'. No, I don't know what it means either.) If you have to use acronyms, spell it out in full the first time you use it, with the acronym in brackets.

- Be bold and use direct language. ('We *will…'* – not 'we hope to' or 'we would like to'.)

- You can't *receive* funding twice for the same things, but there is no rule against applying to more than one funder for the same stuff, so don't wait to hear the result before trying again elsewhere. If you are lucky enough to be successful at more than one, you can always return the funds, or better still, explain to one funder that you have been successful elsewhere and ask if you could use their funds for something else instead. You may be lucky.

- And lastly, don't be put off by rejection. Most funders are oversubscribed and receive applications for more money than they have to award – you can't win them all.