

We all have great ideas but before any organisation will fund them there is a lot of work to be done. Identifying a funding opportunity is the easiest part. Grants are becoming more and more competitive. So how do you ensure your application is on top of the pile? Here's our top 10 tips.

- 1 Think of the **project first**, then identify funding possibilities. Don't try to come up with a project because you know some funding is available. While you may come up with something good – it shouldn't be about getting the cash.
- 2 **Do your research.** Every funding organisation has goals that it wishes to achieve with the money it grants. You need to be able to clearly articulate how your project will help the funding body meet its goals. Make sure you have read the guidelines, understand the criteria and clearly identify how your project fulfils them. Look at projects they have previously funded. Is it a good fit? Don't be afraid to contact them and discuss your project.
- 3 Write up a 1-2 page document about your project, **a succinct explainer**. Include reason for doing it, short paragraph description, potential partners, potential funding applications and closing dates and rough time-frame. This will become the basis for your application, get your thoughts on paper. Also useful for giving to potential partners or supporters.
- 4 **What makes your project exciting**, innovative or fresh? Remember the assessment panel may be reading 100s of applications. What will make yours memorable? Is it the same project from last year? Is it another mural project? Whatever your project is, keep the language simple and clear. The moment you make it difficult to understand, is the moment that you could lose the assessor.
- 5 You need to clearly articulate how you intend to spend their money if they give it to you. You need to make sure that you are not trying to spend it on things they don't fund. Read the guidelines. Again. **Make sure your budget balances**
- 6 Know what is going on in your community? Has somebody else already done a similar project? Are there other people or groups who might want to work with you or provide support. How can you **demonstrate the need** for the project in your community? Is there evidence of the demand? Your council's cultural and social plans are great places to look for information.
- 7 Get someone not connected with your project to **proofread your application**. If they can't understand it, the assessment panel won't either
- 8 Increasingly you need to demonstrate your own or other sources of financial contribution. While **in-kind counts, hard cash is better**. Are you able to generate any revenue from the project?
- 9 There is an increasing move towards **partnerships**. Arts funding bodies are wanting to move towards sustainable projects/programs not just one offs. What are your strategies for projects having a life beyond the grants?
- 10 Always **acknowledge your funding**. Make sure you put the logo on everything. You have a contractual obligation. If you don't, you may disqualify yourself for future funding

