

FUNDING FOR CHURCH BUILDINGS: MAKING A GOOD GRANT APPLICATION

FUNDING SHEET 5

There is no shortage of advice on how to apply to grant-making trusts. Unfortunately, any trustee who has waded through a pile of applications will tell you that many parishes still have a long way to go in the art of presenting their needs.

Making a grant application calls for a careful and patient approach, and must be done by someone who is well-organised and who understands the need for clarity, accuracy and brevity.

Using the Internet

One cannot stress too much the advantages of being able to research and to check details via the Internet.

Bookmark the Charity Commission website www.charity-commission.gov.uk, and before applying to any trust, have a look at its entry, which should include the last annual report.

The latter may give a better idea of the trustees' funding policy than you will find on the charity's website. There is a quick search facility and in most cases a keyword will take you to the charity in question.

With that and anything else you can glean from a Google search, you have a wealth of information, enabling you to check everything before you start work on the application. You can save yourself a lot of time by doing this and, dare one say it, you will be well ahead of the field. It is rather amazing that so many people now have access to the web, yet do not seem to use the treasure trove of up to date information at their disposal.

Getting the approach right

Several points should be noted for your dealings with grant-making bodies:

- 1 On the whole, a written or emailed approach seems best. A busy administrator may give a knee jerk negative response to an exploratory phone call.
- 2 Most approaches will now be by e-mail, but if you are writing, the small cost of enclosing a stamped addressed envelope with appeal letters is well worthwhile. It is appreciated by hard-pressed charities and is generally regarded as a courtesy. (Use a good sized envelope ie A5 format).

- 3 The appeal letter should be carefully and clearly drafted. The purpose of the appeal and the extent of local effort should come across. The recipient should be quite clear that the parish is not just sitting there waiting for handouts from all and sundry.
- 4 When putting together your applications, make sure you have given all the necessary information, but without going into excessive or tedious detail. Your application will be one of many and will be seen by the trustees or grant committee of the charity for only a few minutes. A few good photographs are really helpful, but each must tell its own story. Trustees do **not** want a dozen different photographs of crumbling stonework.
- 5 Incomplete or inconsistent information will often lead to instant rejection, as grant making bodies have neither the time nor the inclination to seek clarification or additional detail.

If you are not too good at doing tables, find someone to help you. A well-set out table of financial information, perhaps with key lines such as the funding gap highlighted in colour, will make a good impression.
- 6 Use clear round figures, perhaps to the nearest fifty or hundred pounds or even the nearest thousand in larger cases. Use of exact pounds and pence is very tedious to the eye when you have stacks of applications to plough through. The grant-making trustee does not for the most part deal in detail – he or she is trying to get a general feel of probably several dozen cases and more than likely is beginning to run out of reading time and temper.

What's your funding gap ?

What the trust really needs to know is how much you still need, as of when, and what you took into account when calculating that figure. This is often referred to as the **funding gap**. This is a good opportunity to show what other efforts you have made, by including proceeds (actual or predicted) of fund-raising events, a list of the grants you have already had and the bodies you are still waiting to hear from.

There is no right or wrong way of setting out this information, but it really does need to be clear. For example, make sure that the date of the statement is obvious eg “Latest position as at 1 December 2012”.

To put it another way, the trustees want to know whether your funding gap is (say) £5,000 or £25,000, and, if they give you a grant, how likely you are to find the remaining money so that a start can be made on the project.

If something really significant happens after you submit this information, eg you are notified of a legacy of £25,000, then you should inform the trust to whom you are applying. But don't trouble them with minor variations, eg if your 50/50 auction produced £5,000 profit instead of the estimate of £3,000 which you put on your submission, or if you got an unexpected £750 from a local trust. There are always small swings and roundabouts, and trusts take a reasonably broad view.

If you need further advice in relation to this guidance sheet, please contact us at Church House on 01452 410022 or by email at dac@glosdioc.org.uk