

FINDING FUNDING

Obviously it's good to be as self-sustaining as possible, to avoid having to spend time and effort raising funds from elsewhere. Most groups do this by keeping their costs low and charging at least something (if not always full cost) for the lunches they provide. Nonetheless, you will probably still need to find some funding to support your group at some point, particularly if you want to offer speakers, wellbeing activities, transport, trips out and more.

Possible Funders

- Somerset Community Foundation are administering some funding from Somerset County Council to support groups. Grants are not guaranteed as it's a competitive process, but they are certainly a good place to try. The application form needs to be completed online but Spark Somerset are happy to assist if you'd like some help
- If you are looking for smaller sums of money it's worth talking to local businesses, Rotary Clubs etc. as they often like to support initiatives that benefit the local community. In any case advertising is expensive and if a donation to you buys the company good publicity it can be a good investment for them! A number of groups are supported by their local pub.
- Low key fundraising via raffles, competitions, sponsored events etc. can bring in small amounts whilst also having a really positive impact on your group's local profile which can lead to more support in the future.

Charitable Trusts and Foundations

If you can't get the amount you need from the sources above, or you need a more significant amount – you may need to approach some charitable trusts or foundations. Spark Somerset has access to the Grants Online database so you can always ask us to do a 'funding search' for you, to find a list of relevant Trusts you could apply to. We can also offer support with completing applications.

If you are happy to get on with making applications yourself you might want to bear in mind the guidelines overleaf – based on those offered by the Directory of Social Change.

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1. Do your research

Spend time identifying the funders who are interested in your type of project or the groups of people who use your service. This might mean looking beyond the larger and more well-known grant-makers to smaller local funders. Local grant-makers may have less resources, but they are also likely to receive far fewer applications.

2. Make sure you're eligible

Don't waste your time! - Check the eligibility criteria carefully - most sites are really clear if you check.

3. Give them a call

A quick phone call to double-check that yours is the type of project that the grant-maker would be interested in supporting, can save an enormous amount of time. Even if you are sure that your project will be eligible, a brief conversation can give insights into how you could tailor your application to maximise your chances of success.

4. Tailor your application

Generic sounding applications for funding are unlikely to persuade trustees to part with their cash. A good proposal imitates the language of the funder whilst making sure that your organisation's culture is clear.

5. Be clear and concise – but include everything requested

If the funder does not provide an official application form keep your proposal short – no more than two sides of A4. Remember to be clear about your aims, reach, the outcomes you are trying to achieve, who will benefit and how much funding you are requesting. Make sure you include any annual accounts, policies or other documents requested.

6. Exit strategy

Include in your application how you'll manage once their funding comes to an end to demonstrate to the funder that you're mindful of how you will continue to support your beneficiaries and your group's sustainability.

7. Appearance matters

Funders don't expect a funding proposal to be a work of art, they know that resources are tight, but ensure that the documents are professionally presented. Make sure that all important sections are clearly labelled and that the contents are laid out in a logical order.

8. Ask someone to read through your application

No matter how closely you check your work its really easy to miss simple errors if you've been looking at it for too long. Another pair of eyes can pick up mistakes and recommend changes to make it clearer.

9. Ask for feedback

If your application isn't successful, find out why by asking for feedback from the grant-maker. This can be invaluable for developing future fundraising strategies and improving your proposal writing skills.