



# FUNDRAISING ESSENTIALS

Fundraising is an organisational issue but the work of researching and writing applications often falls to one person. Whether you're new to fundraising or looking for new inspiration, THCVS Development Manager **Gemma Cossins** has some useful guidance.

## BEFORE YOU START:

### UNDERSTAND YOUR COSTS

Before you even decide where to apply for funding, investigate the real costs of your current and planned work and check you have included everything you'll need. Consider:

- **The cost of running organisation as a whole** (sometimes called core costs or overheads). This might include rent, energy, public liability insurance and also the costs of certain key staff functions like finance and management.
- **The costs of the project for which you will be seeking funds** (sometimes called direct or project costs). These will include things like staff wages and national insurance contributions, volunteer expenses, refreshments, transport etc

### KNOW WHAT YOU NEED & WHY YOU NEED IT

It is likely that your fundraising will be a mixture of planned effort (with a well evidenced fundraising strategy) and opportunistic applications (where you see that a grant is available and apply in the hope that your project will be a good enough fit). Try not to stray too far away from your organisation's main mission:

- **Consider writing a short 'case for support'**, describing the history, mission, experience and status of your organisation, the needs of the people you serve and why you are the best organisation to be doing the work. Having this readily available will help when applications with short deadlines come up. It is also a good way to practice.
- If you are raising money to keep existing services going you will need to **demonstrate why this is the best course of action for your clients**. If you are proposing a new piece of work, perhaps in a new area or with a different group of people, you will need to **show that there is a gap in the market** for the project you're hoping to run.
- **Develop some key principles and priorities** about where to focus your fundraising energy and when NOT to apply for something.

### GATHER YOUR INFO

Once you've decided what to raise funds for you will need to describe the detail of the work and what it will achieve. Before you get into writing an application, consider creating:

- **A project plan** showing how activities will happen over time with key milestones and review points.
- **A summary of the outcomes and outputs** that your project will produce.
- **Job descriptions** for any posts needed.
- **A project budget**. The text should tell the same story as your budget so you need to know how much you're asking for and how it will be spent before you fully step into the writing process.

### RESEARCH

Good research is key to fundraising, and it needs to be an active process. Sign up for funding bulletins (including ours!) by all means, but don't wait for the information to come to you.

- **Visit and register with online funding databases** and work out the best search terms for you.
- Once you build up a list of potential funders, read the information and visit their websites to **check whether your organisation and project are eligible for funding**.
- **Make sure you read funders' guidance and information carefully**. Look at past grants, the size of the total pot, when and how decisions are made and the likely grant award to help you decide whether your project might have a chance.
- **Don't be afraid to speak to funders**; they too are organisations with aims to fulfil and they want to get good quality, appropriate applications.
- **Focus on creating a strong shortlist of funders** and rule out any 'maybes' that seems like too much of a reach otherwise it'll be hard to find time to actually write any applications.

### WHERE TO LOOK:

[www.fundingcentral.org.uk](http://www.fundingcentral.org.uk) lists thousands of funding opportunities. It's free to use and regularly updated.

**Tower Hamlets 4 Community** - <http://bit.ly/1VNo1U2> is a grants listing service available via Tower Hamlets Council.

### EVERYTHING IS FUNDRAISING

Funders don't just read the information you send to them; they also look you up online and check their own records for details of past bids. As you start an application, remember to consider:

- **Your organisation's entry on the charity commission website** – is it up to date? Are the right trustees listed? Are the accounts looking healthy?
- **Your website** – is it working? Has out of date information been removed? Are contact details correct?
- **Social media** – if you have social media accounts, are they appropriately used? What comes up when you google your organisation, or search for it on Twitter?
- **Your reputation with partners & clients** – if you say you have worked with another organisation would that partner have good things to say about you? What would other funders think of your record in meeting deadlines or delivering targets?

It's also worth considering your wider organisation in terms of your fundraising efforts. Your team can help you by:

- **Providing ideas and evidence** for the application
- **Developing plans and budgets**
- **Proofreading and commenting**
- **Offering support**, covering your other work and giving you space to get everything done

THCVS offers free fundraising support and advice. Over the next few months we will be setting up some small support groups for fundraisers.

We will also be running our 'New to Fundraising' workshop on Friday 29th January 2016, see our pull-out training brochure for details.

## BID WRITING TIPS:

### 1 KEEP IT SIMPLE

Applying for funding can sometimes feel very formal and academic but funding bids don't need to read like essays or speeches. Keep your language simple and your sentences short and clear. You know your project better than anyone, so write in your own voice.

### 2 READ IT OUT LOUD

If you get stuck try answering the question out loud. Can you summarise the project to your colleagues? To a friend? To me? If you can say it you can write it.

### 3 DON'T WASTE WORDS

Too many words? Take out absolutely everything you don't need, like you're packing a suitcase that won't close. 'Also', 'therefore', 'as such' and 'in terms of' are rarely necessary. Ask someone to go through your drafts and cross things out, or email them to me and I can make suggestions.

### 4 FOCUS ON IMPACT NOT UNIQUENESS

Focussing on why something is special or different rather than explaining why and how it works can detract from your message. Very few things are truly unique or innovative, so avoid these terms unless you're certain you can prove them.

### 5 SHOW YOUR LOCAL KNOWLEDGE

Mentioning other organisations or projects (including competitors) doesn't weaken your own position – it shows you are knowledgeable and well connected.

### 6 BE AMBITIOUS BUT REALISTIC

Funders need to be assured that you are capable of delivering the project you're describing.

### 7 KNOW WHEN TO STOP

Collecting up piles of blank application forms or lists of potential funders seems useful at first but it can feel like building yourself into a fortress. Sooner or later you have to pick one and start writing.

### 8 SEND YOUR APPLICATION IN

An obvious point, but eventually you will need to send the application in to the funder. A surprising number of fundraisers get all or most of the way through the bid writing process and then stop.

### 9 GET SUPPORT WHERE YOU NEED IT

Fundraising can feel like a lonely role sometimes, especially when the news is not good. It is ok to have feelings about this, and to share them with those around you.

### 10 WE CAN HELP

THCVS can help – call or email me (Gemma) for an informal chat, bid feedback, or a more in depth advice appointment: [gemma.cossins@thcvs.org.uk](mailto:gemma.cossins@thcvs.org.uk) or 020 8980 8427

## WANT MORE?

For fundraising resources please visit: [www.thcvs.org.uk/support/fundraising](http://www.thcvs.org.uk/support/fundraising)  
Or for upcoming trainings: [www.thcvs.org.uk/training](http://www.thcvs.org.uk/training)

To receive funding bulletins, register at: [www.thcvs.org.uk/join-our-mailing-list](http://www.thcvs.org.uk/join-our-mailing-list)