

# The Change Toolkit

## Chapter 14. Seeking grant funding

Many CLCs will be reliant on additional funding if they are to undertake significant law reform and advocacy work. In order to secure funding, CLCs will need to identify a possible funder and make a persuasive case that their proposed work should be supported. This Chapter is an introduction to applying for grants.

The following advice is drawn from materials provided by the [Funding Centre](#) and we thank them for permission to base this Chapter on their materials.

### Grantseeking basics

The first and most important thing to know about grants is that they are generally given for specific projects or programs, not for your core funding – wages, administration costs, etc. are almost always excluded unless these are part of the project or program.

Grant funds are therefore generally “tied funds”, while money you draw in from membership fees, fundraising events or sale of products can be used any way your organisation wishes.

Relying on grants alone for your continued existence will put your organisation into a precarious position, reducing your flexibility and increasing your vulnerability to a sudden change of direction by a previously reliable funder or funding source. However, many effective CLCs are diversifying their funding, making sure that they build on their core funding and are not reliant on government funding to support **all** of their work. Grant funding can help you to achieve this.

The best way to negotiate the world of grants is to think about what you need before you begin looking at what grants are available.

### Types of grants

All levels of government – Federal, State, and local – distribute grants, as do many philanthropic and community foundations, some other not-for-profit organisations, and some businesses.

All of these types of funders have different drivers for their grantmaking (for example, government grantmakers are usually driven by policy outcomes, while corporate grantmakers may wish to create a better image for their company).

Make sure you understand the motivations of the grantmaker you are targeting for funds. It will help you to better target your grant application and reporting.

Grant budgets vary greatly from funder to funder and from program to program – one program may have only a couple of hundred dollars to give away; another tens of millions.

Each individual grantmaker will differ too in how they decide who is eligible for their money, and what they ask of grant recipients in return.

Before you accept any money from a grantmaker, you must be sure you have the capacity to carry out the terms of the contract, and after you receive the money you must deliver exactly what you said you would deliver in the timeframe that you said you would deliver it in. You must tell the grantmaker if you wish to alter the terms of the grant.

If funders believe you can deliver projects on time, on budget, and in the same form as they were approved, you'll have more hope of achieving a second or third grant, or even ongoing funding (though it's wise to treat every grant as a one-off).

### Before you start

Call the grantmaker before you start your application. Most, if not all, grantmaking bodies will be willing to discuss your application with you and may be able to provide advice about what they are looking for in an application. They may also be able to give you an indication about whether your project is something they are unlikely to fund (which could save you considerable amounts of time preparing applications).

### Writing a grant application

It is important to follow the application process the funding provider has laid down. Have a good look before you start and make sure you know what's required.

The most important part of any application is reading the guidelines. Follow them to the letter, and ensure that you do actually meet the criteria for the grant – some grantmakers receive up to 30% of applications that do not meet the eligibility criteria.

Follow the application format that the grantmaker asks for, answer the questions that

they ask and demonstrate how you are meeting their criteria.

The following provides a brief description of the sorts of information most grantmakers ask for, but be aware that the questions may be different or differently expressed for each and every one.

#### ***A brief description of the organisation***

Here, the grantmaker wants your organisation to establish its credibility and qualifications for funding, and get a feel for how your programs have been developed to meet identified needs.

They may ask you to include short, relevant descriptions of the qualifications and experience that your organisation (and its key staff) have in the area for which program funds are being sought.

Include information about past successes and use the results of any evaluations that you have undertaken.

#### ***The case for support***

It's vital to establish a specific problem or issue in a geographically (or interest-based – e.g. youth homelessness, rural depression, community building) identifiable area.

The problem needs to be one that you can prove your organisation can realistically address (or contribute to addressing).

1. **Use evidence to make your case:** in many cases, applications may be rejected because grantmakers have not been convinced that there is an actual need for the project or that your idea will solve a specific problem. By using reputable evidence to establish a need, you can add authority to your application.
2. **Tell the story:** an evocative case study illustrating the issue will drive your points home.
3. **Demonstrate support:** many funders ask for evidence that others support your proposed project.

4. **Match up:** show where the project fits into the funder's priorities. Check their websites and annual reports to get a feel for what they like to fund. Call up and speak to them about where your project might fit.

### ***The proposed project/program***

This is where you show that you've developed a clearly defined, creative, achievable and measurable strategy to address the issue/s previously described. Be as concrete as possible.

Include:

1. **The objectives:** clearly defined aims and objectives.
2. **The methodology:** how the objectives will be achieved.
3. **Evaluation:** how the success of the program will be measured.

### **Thinking beyond grants**

#### ***Pro bono***

A number of organisations are willing to provide CLCs with in kind and pro bono support. Private law firms, for example, have provided significant support to community legal centres in the past. This support has included: pro bono legal advice, representation if the law reform activity involves strategic litigation, administrative support, the use of venues, graphic design and printing. Pro bono partnerships on law reform may also involve

the private firm conducting research and working with the CLC to craft legislative or other solutions that the CLC can assess using their 'hands on' knowledge or contact with the affected communities.

### ***Fundraising***

A number of CLCs have undertaken effective fundraising campaigns to fund their law reform work. These campaigns may be general in nature or may be attached to a certain project (for example, 'help support our work representing client x'). CLC fundraising efforts have ranged from sponsorship requests (such as sponsoring a lawyer to compete in a fun run), to sophisticated appeals (such as large email appeals). Sophisticated fundraising appeals require a database of friends and supporters and are often resource intensive.

### **Sources**

Funding Centre:

<http://www.fundingcentre.com.au>

Our Community:

<http://www.ourcommunity.com.au>

Philanthropy Australia:

<http://www.philanthropy.org.au/seek-funding/how-to-seek-funding/> and

<http://www.philanthropy.org.au/tools-resources/publications/a-grant-seekers-guide-to-trusts-foundations/>

## **Acknowledgments**

**This chapter has been downloaded from <http://www.thechangetoolkit.org.au>. We recommend checking back to see if the content has been updated.**

The Change Toolkit was prepared by the Federation of Community Legal Centres. The Federation is the peak body for community legal centres across Victoria.

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