

20 tips for churches applying for grants

1. Meet the deadlines for submission of your application.
2. Check what the organisation will and will not fund: for example, if they will fund salaries, mission projects and new initiatives but will not fund building projects, do not apply for building project funding!
3. It is a good idea to make contact with the funder and ask if your project qualifies and if they have any advice to your application. Building relationships is very useful.
4. Develop your project, have a well-defined vision, goals and boundaries. You are unlikely to get funds for something general like "youth work" but may get funds "to employ a youth worker to run a Friday night programme - job description and performance goals attached". Create SMART projects - specific, measurable, achievable, reviewable, time bound.
5. Set up a master file with sample documents: project proposals, annual reports, audited financial accounts, letters of support, IRD status letter, IRD/GST number, Charities Commission certificate, photos of your people, budgets and so on. That way, for each application you only need to photocopy the relevant documents.
6. Be very clear in community funding applications that you are NOT asking for money for your church, but for a community programme. Explain how and why your project will benefit your community. If you can persuade your finance people to keep separate the income and expenses for your church's community outreach programme, this will be helpful to funders. Be sure to state what all the assets you have in your accounts (in the PIF etc) are targeted for. Often churches are refused funding because funders have the impression that the Church is very wealthy and parishes have lots of reserves, but in reality these funds are not available for community outreach projects.
7. Attend meetings with funders. COGs have meetings each year to help people fill out their forms.
8. If you are doing building of any kind, check early with the Church Property Trustees; they may give you a letter to use saying that they support your application.
9. You should always be able to show how your church is supporting the project you are applying for funding for. This should include not only a proportion of funding, but also paid and volunteer hours you will contribute, support in "kind" etc. Funders are more willing to support a project that has obvious community support.
10. Do your research. Write a short report on why your project will be necessary and helpful to your community, who it will help, what need it will meet.
11. Make sure you pass a recommendation in your church council that specifically names the funder you are going to apply to, what the project is and how much you will be asking for. Make this an "extract from the minutes" verified by your church council chair person, the minutes secretary and have it dated.

12. Prepare the kind of information a funder may wish to see and that can strengthen your case for funding. Compile a chart showing the volunteer and paid hours your church gives to your community.
13. Compile a chart showing the use of your facilities and the foot traffic it gets. Headings could include: church events, community events run by the church and community events that happen on our premises.
14. Always make copies of your applications and compile a spreadsheet of grants applied for, application dates and the results (date and amount or reason declined). You may want to apply every year; some grants like COGS are simply renewed online.
15. Be meticulous about acknowledging grants received and completing feedback requirements. Remember that some other church might want to benefit from your good relationship with the funder. If you receive a large amount, ask the funder to the opening/launch.
16. Keep very good financial records of how grant money is spent, and ensure it is only used on the project you have specified. In most applications you are agreeing to submit to being audited, and the paper trail will need to be very clear.
17. If you don't use all of a grant, write and ask if you can redirect it – the funder may allow this. Otherwise, return the extra funds.
18. Be open about your budgeting and be up front about what other grants you have received. Include hidden costs, such as auditing fees and administration costs.
19. Make sure your grant application stands out for its legibility, clarity and vision. Remember that good photos tell stories. If the application form states that the funder does not want additional information attached, then don't send it. Be succinct and they will appreciate it.
20. Remember that if you are applying to the Lotteries Commission, the Church Property Trustees will need to approve this, as will your presbytery. See www.presbyterian.org.nz/for-parishes/grants/lottery-grants for more information.