

Bid writing support and guidance: Applying for funding

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Introduction

There have been various funds made available to voluntary organisations and community groups affected by the coronavirus pandemic, largely for two kinds of support:

1. Funding the cost of providing immediate relief for people who are shielded or vulnerable for other reasons
2. Help to sustain organisations which have lost income due to the lock-down restrictions on fundraising or other income generating activities

In both cases funders are likely to ask for details of:

- **Your organisation:** where it operates, when it was founded, its legal status (eg. registered charity, company limited by guarantee, community interest company, none of these - other), how many paid staff and volunteers it has and its annual income.
- **Your work:** who benefits from your organisation's support and what their needs are, your usual activities and how they meet these needs, the outcomes you aim to achieve and how you capture them, and how you work with other organisations.

Questions to ask yourself

Providing relief to vulnerable people	Sustaining organisations
Who do you aim to help and why are they in particular need during the pandemic?	What income did you forecast you would receive and how were you going to raise it? – Fundraising events? Trading? What were your projections based on? (A calendar of events? Last year's income?)
Are these your usual service users or are you being asked to support more people?	What are your plans for sustaining the organisation in the longer term?
What help are you / have you been providing during the pandemic?	What are your reserves as a percentage of annual turnover?
How are you complying with Government guidelines?	What is your reserves policy?
What are your increased costs in providing this service?	Have any of your costs increased during the pandemic?
Have you lost any forecast income which could otherwise have funded this work?	

Whatever you are applying for, the funder will want to see evidence of how your plans will help them to meet their own priorities, and where else you have applied for funds.

Top tips

- As with all funding applications, read their guidance and eligibility criteria before you start.
- Use word counts to the full to cover as much detail as possible (but don't waffle!)
- Make sure that you address the question fully and your answer is clear.
- Make sure that that your budget is reflective of what you'd like to do and adds up correctly.
- Draft all responses in an offline document first, so that you can copy and paste into the online form.
- Ask somebody else to read through it before you submit.
- Don't leave it until the deadline before you submit!
- Make use of all the support available to you - investigate if the funder has Q&A sessions and read their FAQ's thoroughly.

The application questions in more detail

Your organisation

You will usually need to be working in, or for the benefit of the specific region you are applying to, and be:

- A registered charity (with a charity number)
- A voluntary or community group which is charitable in purpose
- A not for profit organisations such as CIC with a clear social purpose

In some cases but not all, you may also need to be:

- A national charity where the local branch is independent and locally constituted and funding will be used to support work in the area.
- A faith group – where the project clearly benefits the wider community

You must have:

- A management committee, usually of a minimum of three unrelated people
- A signed constitution (or set of rules)
- A bank account in the name of your group which requires two signatories/dual authorisation
- A Financial Policy (a document which lays out how you manage money and payments)
- A safeguarding policy for working with vulnerable adults or children.
- You may also need a diversity and inclusion policy.

Your work

1. Who do you support and what issues do they face?

For example, if you are aiming to tackle digital exclusion, you can use statistics to show how many people in your area are not online at home, but also describe the opportunities they miss out on due to this. Do they have additional needs, such as poor mental or physical health, learning disabilities, facing discrimination, or limited knowledge of English? See Good Things Foundation research and publications for useful research.

2. The outcomes you aim to achieve and how you capture them:

Outcomes are positive changes, such as:

- Increased confidence
- Improved wellbeing
- Increased access or involvement
- New skills
- Enhanced employability
- Increased cohesion
- Reduced isolation

Be as specific as you can. Examples of how you can capture them are:

- Feedback from the people intended to benefit
- Your own observations

- Witness statements from third parties
- Anonymised case studies showing individuals' progress
- Qualifications achieved
- Before and after tests
- Increased levels of use or interaction

3. How you work collaboratively with other organisations:

This could be:

- Formal partnerships
- Sharing information and good practice through a forum or network
- Arrangements to refer to each other's services
- Publicising each other's services

The main point is to show that you are aware of other agencies and work constructively with them so that your service users can access the support they need.

4. Providing relief to vulnerable people:

- Who do you aim to help and why are they in particular need during the pandemic?
- Are these your usual service users or are you being asked to support more people?
- Are you experiencing increased demand?
- Are other agencies asking you to help their service users?

They might be people at particular risk from the virus because of underlying health conditions or from a minority ethnic group where infection rates are above the average. They might be struggling with food and fuel poverty due to being on low incomes. They might have mental health issues which are being made worse by isolation, or be experiencing domestic abuse.

5. What are your increased costs in providing this service?

- Have you had to take on additional staff?
- Are you making home deliveries to people who are shielded, increasing your travel costs?
- Are you buying items for people such as fuel top-up vouchers?
- Are you requesting capital funding (for equipment, vehicles or building costs) or revenue (running costs)? Make sure the costs are eligible for this fund.

Purchasing devices or data?

Devices would normally be considered as capital expenditure. Most funding opportunities will fund capital expenditure to support remote working, or to provide devices on loan. Some, but not all, will provide funding for you to buy a device for someone else.

6. Example costs

Keep the description of what you will do and what you will buy simple:

- **Device** (estimated at £140)
- **Data** (e.g. £50 20GB pay-as-you-go data package, no contract, to last 3 months)
- **Learner Support** (£45 - time and costs to help people to gain basic digital skills)
- **Other costs** (adapting your services, management, data gathering, safety training, volunteer recruitment etc.)

Here are two examples of how this could break down depending on the amount of funding you're applying for:

Item	Cost per item	Quantity	Total
Device	£140	20	£2,800
Data package	£50	20	£1,000
Support for a learner	£45	20	£900
Other costs	£300	-	£300
Grand total			£5,000

Or

Item	Cost per item	Quantity	Total
Data package	£50	10	£500
Support for a learner	£45	10	£450
Other costs	£50	0	£50
Grand total			£1,000

You **must** be able to show a papertrail for each device you transfer to avoid risk of fraud. You will need to be able to confirm :

- the purchase [receipt]
- delivery [signed receipt] and
- transfer of ownership [signed Ts&Cs].

Top tip: If the funder won't pay for devices, you could still ask for funding for data.

A funder may ask why you can't use refurbished devices - the main reasons are:

- Knowing the device is clean - hygienically but also content, apps etc
- There is a cost to refurbish, you also need to buy data
- Transferring ownership of the device can be difficult and time consuming

7. Sustaining organisations which have lost income:

Lost income:

- What income did you forecast you would receive and how were you going to raise it? (Fundraising events? Trading? Be as specific as you can.)
- **What were your projections based on? (A calendar of events? Last year's income?)**
- What are your plans for sustaining the organisation in the longer term?
- **If you usually run a calendar of regular fundraising events, explain this, with examples and the amounts you raised from them in previous years.**
- If you normally run services you can charge for and have had to stop this during lock-down, explain what they are and how much income they usually generate.
- **Do you forecast being able to resume your trading or fundraising after lockdown?**

Reserves

- What are your reserves as a percentage of annual turnover?
- **What is your reserves policy?**

If your reserves are a high percentage of your annual income and expenditure you should explain why you need to keep them at that level instead of using some of the money to fund this work. This may be because you forecast a high level of risk in the foreseeable future, or you project increased costs and decreased income.

Make this explanation as detailed as you can.

Timescales:

Most emergency funds will need to be fully spent in **3 months**. It's a short time so be realistic about what you can achieve and how many people you can support. If what you are doing is new to you, work out a delivery plan with your assumptions about how long things will take. Here are some points to consider:

- How long will it take for the grant to be approved? (4 - 6 weeks) When will your start date be?
- If you are purchasing devices, allow around 30 days to purchase and get a device and data to a user. There can be shortages of devices in the marketplace.
- How long does it take for remote learning support? Longer than usual?
- Do you have volunteers ready to go? Do they need training?
- When will you have gathered learner forms to provide feedback?
- When do you need to start writing a case study or impact report

Critical Friend bid writing support service:

This is a new and exclusive free offer to people who are members of the Online Centres network. As a Critical Friend, our experts will offer you telephone and remote support to ensure your bid is the best it can be, although we cannot guarantee your application will be successful by using this service.

.To find out more about this opportunity, [please visit our website](#).