

Source: Bowls NSW, Football Victoria, Our Community

Each year hundreds of millions of dollars are given in grants funding for all sorts of projects and for all sorts of groups, including many Australian bowling clubs and sports-related projects.

Grants are a source of money that can enable your club to tackle projects, renovations or events that may not have been possible if you were relying on the usual methods of fundraising.

It is not just the dollars that benefit the club. Grants can provide an endorsement of what your club is doing, and that itself can bring wider recognition, publicity and support. It can also provide an important morale-booster to all within your club involved in the funded project.

Some clubs are very organised in their grantseeking. Others rarely apply for grants. Some have never applied for grants funding.

Whatever your level of grants expertise, this guide is filled with tips, ideas and best practice examples to help you successfully find suitable funding for your club.

This guide will assist Australian bowling clubs in finding the answers to the three major questions in successfully winning grants funding.

- **Where** can we find out what grants funding is available and suitable for my club?
- **What** do we need to do to prepare a funding application?
- **How** can we increase our chances of funding success?

This guide answers those questions and provides an explanation of the basic elements that need to be addressed if the club is to access grants funding.

Why grants funding?

Some clubs ignore grants funding because they think it represents too much extra work and too much time spent preparing applications. In fact the opposite is true.

A successful targeted grant application pays for itself because it:

- **Saves time and money.** Some applications take only a few hours to knock into shape. How many hours and how many people do you need to run a successful raffle or special event to raise \$5000? Or \$50000?

- **Brings new money into the area.** Clubs, particularly in small towns have a limited pool of individuals and businesses that they can keep “hitting on” for support. Grants funding means new money comes into the area without coming out of the pockets of regular supporters
- **Is accessible.** There are no barriers stopping you from applying for funding programs where your club meets the criteria
- **Is easy.** Thinking about preparing a grant application is the hard part. Doing it is as simple as identifying a suitable grant where your club meets the criteria, answering each question posed and explaining why your club deserves funding
- **Costs nothing to undertake.** It’s effectively “free” money to help you expand, run an event, build or improve facilities or undertake capital works projects you have been funded to complete
- **Puts you ahead of the pack.** Those clubs that know where the funding is and are confident enough to put in a winning application tend to apply for and win further grants

The main sources of grants funding:

There are three main sources of grants funding available in Australia.

- 1. Federal, State and Local Government** – through their departments such as Sport and Recreation, Department of Health (State), Department of Family and Community Services, Department of Transport & Regional Services (Federal), and also through quasi-Government bodies such as the Australian Multicultural Foundation which has been set up through Federal or State law. The vast majority of local councils also now have a community grants program.
- 2. Philanthropic Foundations** – takes in organisations such as the Myer Foundation, the Reichstein Foundation, the Potter Foundation, The Foundation for Regional and Rural Renewal, the Gardiner Foundation etc. These are usually either managed or strongly influenced by the original donor or members of the donor’s family.
- 3. Corporate Foundations** – are foundations that have grown out of business itself and include funds such as

the Telstra Foundation, the ANZ Staff Foundation, the Mazda Foundation, the Rio Tinto Foundation etc.

Where does grants funding fit into the overall fundraising?

Grants funding is not a magic bullet, or the complete financial answer for a bowling club. It is only one source of funding – but it can be a vital source of new money coming into a club, providing the instant funding to move forward.

All community groups – bowling clubs included – need to establish a diversified fundraising strategy so that they are never reliant on a single source of income.

Too many clubs that have relied on a single funding stream have withered and died when someone decided to pull funding.

While this guide concentrates on seeking grants funding, ask yourself how many of these other methods your club uses to raise money.

- Sponsorship
- In-Kind support
- Special events
- Match day sales
- Product sales
- Merchandise sales
- Raffles, auctions
- Bequests

Setting up a successful grants process

Being successful at grants is a bit like being a successful bowler or running a good bowling club – it takes commitment and it takes practice.

As one grantseeker stated:

“the more applications I prepare, the more I learn – and the luckier I get.”

In the same manner as top bowlers have a set routine that increases their chances of bowling accurately, bowling clubs can set up a winning grants process that ensures they:

- Identify all the possible grants opportunities
- Have all the background information usually required on hand

- Are able to develop a strong case for funding that is tailored to meet the needs of the funding agency

Ensure the grants process fits within your priorities

It is important to have a plan or process in applying for grants, but it is just as important to ensure that the process sits within a wider vision or strategic plan or list of club priorities.

Grants funding works well where it is instrumental in helping clubs achieve goals they want to achieve such as:

- Improving the quality of the playing surface/s
- Adding or expanding the clubrooms or facilities
- Providing activities that encourage people to take up the game
- Establishing initiatives that build the club and its impact in the community (and therefore the community support for the club)

Generally bowling clubs that are successful at accessing grants funding have a medium to long-term plan and match grants funding opportunities to activities within the plan. They don't chase money if it means they need to conduct activities that are not aligned with their priorities or strategic plan.

Before preparing a grant application, ensure the funding program.

- Applies to your club
- Is consistent with your club's medium and long-term priorities
- Fits in with your club's timeframes
- Matches a particular need your club has
- Isn't forcing you to do something you don't want or need just to get funding

12 STEPS TO FINDING A SUITABLE GRANTS SCHEME FOR YOUR CLUB

Step One:

APPOINTING A GRANTS OFFICER AT YOUR CLUB

Appointing a specific person to manage the grants process is an important first step and signals that you are:

- Serious about putting grants on the agenda
- Being proactive in seeking suitable funding opportunities

Get everyone in on the job. Ask your club members if they have any experience in applying for grants. If you find someone with experience, but they don't want to be grants officer, ask if they will mentor and provide the benefit of their experience to the person who is appointed.

It's important that this person regularly reports to the committee (or President or the Secretary) and that they oversee or are aware of all funding applications – to avoid the embarrassing situation where your club puts in two applications for the same funding program.

The first task for the newly-appointed Grants Officer is to approach your local council community development officer or sports and recreation officer to ask for their assistance and guidance in seeking grants. As we mentioned earlier, council grants funding is often the most accessible so find out when and how and for what you can apply.

Also ensure the Grants Officer is the person to first receive the Easy Grants newsletter and any newsletter or alerts from funding agencies, Government departments, or the local council.

Step Two:

ASK YOUR MEMBERS IF THEIR EMPLOYERS HAVE A SCHEME TO SUPPORT LOCAL CLUBS

Many companies such as BHP, Telstra, the National Bank, Westpac and IBM, to name only a few, have funding, matched funding or volunteer programs to support organisations that their employees and their families are actively involved with.

It is a way of ensuring that the money they give goes to the groups that support the families of their employees or the communities in which those families live. In many ways, it is an alignment of interests and values.

When you send a membership form out, ask your members if they have access to such a scheme and if they would be prepared to work with your club to prepare an application either for funding or to access volunteers to help your club with a particular project.

Step Three:

ADD GRANTS TO THE CLUB AGENDA

Keep grants funding on the agenda for your club.

Make it an agenda item at your committee meetings so that there is a report of what has been applied for, what new grant funding opportunities are coming up and what might be relevant.

Doing this:

- Enables you to tailor initiatives to funding opportunities
- Ensures your committee considers grants funding for every new initiative or project
- Ensures grants funding becomes a topic in your clubs overall planning process

Consider holding a brainstorming session to identify the main grants that you should be applying for and work them into your planning calendar for the next year

Step Four:

FIND OUT ABOUT WHAT GRANTS FUNDING IS AVAILABLE

There are a number of steps you can take in keeping up to date with the funding opportunities that are available to your bowling club.

- **Talk** to your local government community grants or community development officer and pick their brain on relevant grants funding programs
- **Talk** to other bowling clubs, other sporting clubs and peak bodies in the area and look at what programs they have identified to apply for funding. Is it any different to what you do?
- **Identify** a contact person inside the various funding agencies that deal with sporting clubs or groups in your area and ask them for suggestions on programs that would suit your club and when the funding opens
- **Call** your local federal or state parliamentarians and ask them for advice on suitable funding programs
- **Keep** an eye on the newspapers and state government websites (although only about 5 per cent of all grants are advertised in newspapers) for all relevant grants
- **Subscribe** to easy grants, the monthly newsletter that keeps you informed of all grants funding opportunities available to your bowling club

Step Five:

ONCE YOU HAVE IDENTIFIED A GRANT, CHECK TO SEE IF YOU MEET THE CRITERIA

This is very important. The vast majority of bowling clubs are run by hard-working volunteers so you want to ensure your time is not wasted on applications that have little chance of success.

You are better off concentrating on four or five grant applications that suit your needs and where your club is able to meet the criteria than by taking a shotgun approach where you apply for 25 grants where you have a marginal or zero chance.

Make sure your intended project or proposal – or your club – fits within the eligibility criteria.

If you are still unsure after reading the guidelines, phone the grantmaker or funding agency and explain what you are intending to do and ask if it fits within their funding criteria as well as alerting them to your project this also enables you to “tweak” aspects to better fit the criteria.

Step Six:

SET TIMELINES TO MEET DEADLINES

Check the deadlines for the grant application. Consider:

1. When is the cut-off day for applications?
2. What day do I need to send the application to ensure it makes the deadline?
3. What day do I need to have it written so I have enough time to check and re-check?
4. What day do I need to have all appendices or attachments completed?

These may include:

- Annual reports
- Detailed budgets
- Concept drawings
- Your constitution
- The details of current directors etc.

A perfect application is of little use if it fails to make cut-off date and is not considered.

Grant seeking checklist

As you look at each potential funding source, use this table to check your eligibility.

GRANTSEEKING ELIGIBILITY CHECKLIST

Does it fit within our bowling club's priorities?	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
Do we meet the criteria?	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
Will this funding meet a need or specific project that the club wants to do?	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
Can any organisation apply?	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
Are there any geographical restrictions on grant recipients?	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
Have we established what the grantmaker's overriding goals are?	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
Do those goals match our own goals?	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
Will our project help the grantmakers in achieving their goals?	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
Are there any funding priorities and does our project fit in?	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
Do they exclude certain types of proposals?	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
Is there a certain style or application format for the proposal?	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
Are we able to prepare an application in the required format?	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
Do the deadlines for funding fit with our needs?	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
Are we comfortable with the contractual obligations required if successful?	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
Is our club realistically able to meet these obligations	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
Is there any funding limit for projects and or organisations?	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
Is our proposed project sympathetic to others funded by the organisation?	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
Will this funding provide an overriding benefit to our club?	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO

Step Seven:

CREATING A WINNING GRANTS APPLICATION TEMPLATE

One of the frustrations in applying for grants is that every grantmaker or funding agency has a different idea on the specific information they require from applicants. While the format often changes there is generally some consistency in the type of information required.

Most groups or clubs develop:

1. A standard grants funding template that they can then tailor to fit each new grant application.

This will answer:

- a) Who you are?
- b) What are your goals/objectives? (think broadly)
- c) Where do you operate? (area of urban growth, high youth population, disadvantaged, rural/remote etc)
- d) When you were established and why you were established?

2. A folder which contains copies of all the official club documentation that might be needed to apply for funding, including:

- a) Details of Club management & CVs
- b) Achievements
- c) Incorporation details
- d) Australian Business Number
- e) Constitution
- f) Annual reports
- g) Annual budgets
- h) Previous projects

The benefit of getting this information together is:

- You don't have to chase the documents each time you find a grant
- You can respond quickly to any new grant program
- You have more time to concentrate on meeting the criteria and answering the questions

Building your Grants Funding template

For every new application you need a new, tailored and specifically targeted application that provides each

specific grantmaker with exactly what they require and exactly what they asked for. An application prepared for the local council won't work for a philanthropic foundation because they have different priorities – **and each one wants to see exactly how your club intends to meet those priorities.**

While it's good to get in the habit of preparing a new tailored and targeted application for each grant you apply for, you don't want to do all the work from scratch. A Grants Funding Template on file provides the backbone of any new funding application.

Who you are

It needs to be a short, sharp summary of your club, its reach into the community and a brief explanation of your mission.

Your goals and objectives

This is a chance to expand on what your mission is and what you offer the community. Goals and objectives help to focus the club's energies and also gives a direction to work towards.

Where you operate

Here you can expand on the history of the club, and put some flesh on the bones of your supporter base and commitment to the community as well as to on-field success.

Your future

This is a chance to re-state your values and also provide an indication of where the club can go with the support of the grantmaker.

Your relationship with others

Expand on your relationships with the community and the fact that any grant funding has wider benefits than the direct benefit to your club.

How you operate

This is where you show that your club has the personnel, capacity, management and commitment to be able to carry out the project. (A committee list – name, position, contact, experience)

Your achievements

Expand on your impact within the community, demonstrating both your professionalism as a sporting club but also your community credentials. Include:

- Sporting achievements

- Council or government awards or community honours
- Accreditations or certifications the club has earned
- Major community achievements (organisers of a major local event, etc.)

Other documents

Some funding agencies will want to see proof of your non-profit status, so it is important to have handy any of the particulars that may be needed. Copies should be kept in a folder so it is a case of compiling what is needed and attaching your application.

They could include:

- Incorporation details
- Australian Business Number
- Constitution or articles of association
- Annual reports
- Annual budgets
- Previous projects
- Public liability insurance coverage

Step Eight:

INCREASE YOUR CHANCES OF SUCCESS

Through preparing a template on your club you have already started to take a much wider view of your club and its positive impact on the whole community, not just the football-supporting community.

Now it is time to tackle the process for applying for funding from a specific funding agency or grant maker. The main lesson is that each application **MUST** address the specific questions, guidelines and requests of each program.

Following are five tips to increase your club's chances of success.

Tip 1:

READ THE GUIDELINES

The biggest tips for organisations seeking grants funding are:

1. **Read** the Guidelines.
2. **Read** the Guidelines **again**.
3. **Follow** the Guidelines.

It is so important to pay attention to every single aspect of the guidelines and to follow the instructions on what they want, and how they want it. You must meet the criteria.

You need to:

- Ensure your project meets the criteria
- Answer every question, even if only to say "Not applicable". Answer in the required format
- Follow directions on the format of the application, including directions about page limitation, font size and number of copies required
- Include all attachments and information requested

Some funding agencies are quite generous and will ring and tell applicants they have forgotten to answer questions or include required material. Some funders who receive hundreds or –in the case of some Federal programs – thousands of applications, will immediately cull applications that haven't followed the guidelines. You want your proposal judged on its merit, not on the fact you haven't supplied some basic information requested.

Tip 2:

Research the agency that you are applying to

The more you know about the funding agency, the more you know about what they are looking for – and more importantly – why.

You can:

- Look through their website and note their mission or vision statement
- Find out what are their stated priorities for the coming year/funding round
- Read through annual reports and note any examples of projects funded in previous years
- Get a taste for the language and phrasing they use (then try and mirror it in your application)
- Contact someone from a club that has previously won funding and ask their advice
- Phone the grantmaker or funding program coordinator and ask whether your group and/or project would be likely to be considered

Before you contact the grantmaker:

- Make a list of the information or questions you want to ask
- Check to see if that information is not already available on their website/brochure/etc.

Tip 3:

ESTABLISH EXACTLY WHAT THE FUNDING AGENCY IS TRYING TO ACHIEVE

You need to know what their priorities are, what their agenda is, and what it is they are trying to achieve by funding projects.

Whether the grantmaker is a local, State or Federal Government program or a philanthropic fund, there will be a mission or purpose behind the program that is stated in the guidelines.

It might be:

To support the improvement of sporting facilities and ensure that all local residents have access to programs and equipment that can help them realize their potential.

OR

To encourage local community organisations to attract new volunteers from diverse backgrounds and create new volunteering opportunities.

Look through their aims or goals or the purpose of the funding program and work out exactly what is it they want their funding to do.

Taking the last example, you know they want to focus on:

1. Local community groups.
2. Projects aimed at bringing **NEW** volunteers (not just supporting current ones).
3. Projects aimed at attracting volunteers from **diverse** backgrounds.
4. Projects aimed at creating **new volunteering opportunities**.

How does your project fit in with their missions?

In this example you need to show how your project will achieve those aims.

You need to demonstrate how your project will achieve those stated aims of attracting new volunteers from diverse backgrounds, creating new volunteer

opportunities and increasing the overall number of volunteers.

Tip 4:

TAILORING YOUR APPLICATION – IT'S ALL ABOUT THEM

Some groups may have a project that they seek funding from a range of different sources. As mentioned earlier, it is vital that each application is tailored to the funding agency it goes to.

In the case of grants funding, a "one size fits all" approach doesn't work. The chances of success of sending the same photostated application to a dozen grantmakers is virtually zero.

While the general thrust of your application will remain the same, you still need to:

- Align your language to match theirs
- Ensure you are targeting the same audience as they are
- Align your outcomes to the outcomes and wider community benefit they are seeking
- Tailor each application to the specific needs of each individual grantmaker
- Answer all the questions they want answered in the style they have requested
- Include all the extras supporting material they request

If the grantmaker is talking about drug education, promoting youth leadership or mental health, then you need to talk about how encouraging people to play bowls or take part in a sport-related activity can help to spread the anti-drug message or promote opportunities for young people to learn leadership skills or improve the mental and physical wellbeing of young people.

Tip 5:

COLLABORATION AND COOPERATION

Grantmakers now want to see a greater level of wider community benefit. One way of doing this is to join with other clubs so that the benefits of any grant are shared across a wider number of people. Consider joining with, for example, the:

- Local school or youth club to increase participation
- Local environmental group or Reserve committee to plant trees around the grounds of the club

- Local council to expand facilities
- Local welfare agency to promote the anti-drug message

Consider what other clubs or groups

- Share your goals
- Benefit from your project
- Bring in their own expertise, time and resources to improve the project
- Fit into the target audience of the grantmaker

Put it in writing

In any collaboration, you need to be clear from the outset as to who will be doing what, when and how and who will be paying for it. Before you put any application in, make sure both groups are agreed on:

- Who is supervising the project?
- Who is responsible for each element of the project?
- When each element of the project will be completed?
- Who will supply the time, resources, money to complete each element?
- How the project funding will be split between the two groups?
- When you will meet to discuss progress and issues?
- How you will settle disputes should any arise?

Except in really major projects you will probably not need a legal document drawn up, but it is important that you have written down somewhere an agreed outline of the project.

Step Nine:

STRUCTURING YOUR APPLICATION

Some grant application guidelines require applicants to fill out the funding body's own highly structured application forms. Others suggest a few headings under which organisations should organise their proposals.

Despite the diversity of their interests, grantmakers really need to be convinced of two things.

- The application must prove that a significant need exists
- The application has the capacity to meet the need in a creative, appropriate and financially responsible manner

The main thrust of your application is to clearly answer those questions, ensuring they know exactly what you are offering and how your club can help them achieve their aims. Don't hide overall benefits or the headline news on the last page of the application. Make sure it is up front, it is the covering letter, it is in the executive summary and it is referred to throughout your application.

Making the Case Most grant applications seek submissions that include (some, if not all) of the following:

- An executive summary or covering letter
- A description of your organisation
- A case for support outlining the need
- A description of the proposed project
- Your evaluation strategies
- A budget
- Indications of future sustainability

Cover or Covering letter

The cover letter is particularly important where the application itself has to be put in on a form that breaks your project description up into a lot of different sections that don't give you a chance to make a coherent argument. Use a couple of paragraphs giving the hard (and fast) sell. However, some grantmakers don't include it in the material circulated to assessors, so if anything is really vital put it in somewhere in the body of the application as well. Don't be afraid to repeat the key elements.

The Executive Summary

The Executive Summary is arguably the most important part of the proposal. It needs to capture the imagination of the grantmaker – and quickly – and convince them that the proposal is definitely worth considering and that they need to read further.

Try and align your vision with their objectives – so it is clear that what you are proposing matches the overall goal they are trying to achieve.

Some online application forms will require an executive summary that is less than 200 words long so you need to discipline yourself to be brief.

The executive summary needs to include:

- An introductory paragraph, giving an outline of the project, its intended audience and the requested funding amount
- Your organisation's mission and how it will be enhanced by the proposed project
- The statement of need, summarizing why you're asking for assistance from this particular grantmaker
- A demonstration of how the project meshes with both the mission of the funding body and your overall goals
- One or two key statistics to highlight the extent of the problem and the need for the service, providing some evidence that your organisation has undertaken some relevant data collection and research in the development of this proposal
- Specific details on how the requested grant money will assist in developing a solution to filling the identified gap, and describing the ways particular groups of people will benefit
- An assessment of the total cost of the project, the amount requested from the grantmaker, and other funding sought and committed, including that provided by your own organisation (which may be in kind)

Basically it needs to answer these questions:

1. **WHO** is applying for the grant?
2. **WHERE** is the proposing organisation located?
3. **WHY** is the grant needed?
4. **WHAT** will the grant money be used for?
5. **WHEN** is the funding requested?
6. **HOW** much money is being requested?

An introduction for your organisation

This section of the proposal allows you to establish your credibility and qualifications for funding and to give a brief overview of your club and its purposes, your long-range goals and achievements.

Earlier in this guide we spoke about creating a template so you will have most of this to hand. Depending on the requirements (space etc) you may have to cut down the description but at least you already have the starting point.

You will need to establish confidence in your organisation's capacity to deliver. This will include short descriptions of the qualifications and experience of key volunteers in the area for which program funds are being sought and other more general project management competencies that demonstrate your organisation's ability to make the project a success.

Identifying the challenge or problem

This section is sometimes called the statement of need, and its purpose is to build the justification for your proposal and why it is deserving of funding. It must convince the grantmaker that there is a significant but not an impossible gap to be filled.

The dimension of the problem or need to be addressed should be realistically achievable by your club and not overblown.

The statement of need might be:

- Explaining the member and extent of injuries that have occurred because of concerns over the surroundings of your greens
- Pointing out the unmet demand for spots in your junior teams ("There are 25 young people who might be lost to sport if you can't expand your junior program")
- Documenting the issue facing local youth in relation to drugs or dangerous behaviours that could be alleviated by offering a wider bowls/fitness program

Remember to:

- Keep the human face on any problem
- Use simple case studies where possible
- Use accurate statistical data to scope the dimensions of the challenge
- Assume the reader has little knowledge of the challenge you are addressing

This is a good time to remember the techniques of persuasive writing and debating. Without using highly emotional language or one sided impressions, you must create a brief yet powerful argument for funding.

Useful statistics to back up any claims made for your application can be found in many places and a good example of this is the Bowls Australia Publication -'National Bowls Census Report'.

Outlining the Solution

This is where you need to explain that you have developed a clearly defined, creative, achievable and measurable strategy to address the issue/s previously described.

Your proposal needs to:

- Make a clear and consistent argument for the project
- Give some reason why you think your approach will work
- Outline the specific project objectives that you hope to achieve. They should be realistic, achievable, and measureable
- Establish (and quantify) the benefits that will flow from the project to the beneficiaries and to the grantmaker

DON'T simply say we will put up lighting around the green/s.

DO explain how erecting the lighting around the green/s will impact on the local community and why it will be an asset to the wider community, as well as the club.

Methods

Each of your stated objectives needs to be matched with a set of clear strategies or actions. These should flow naturally from your objectives and tell the reader how you're going to achieve them, by whom, and by when.

- Begin with a rationale for why the particular approach was chosen at this time and for this community
- Set out the project's methods clearly, and show why these methods were adopted and alternatives rejected
- Include a timeline describing and sequencing the planned activities for each objective for the reader

Support

Ideally, you should be able to demonstrate constructive partnerships with all other groups with interests in the area. A proposal co-signed by two or more organisations will enhance your capacity to deliver, and will prove to potential funders that you're aware of what other clubs or groups are doing.

If you do decide to work collaboratively with another agency or organisation, ensure that the relationship

is formalized and documented. All collaborative work needs to be described in the proposal and with agreed responsibilities and timelines for each partner clearly defined. It's important, however, not to be pushed into partnerships that aren't a good fit, distract your club from its main objectives or impose methods for delivery that don't sit easily with your philosophy.

Consultation

If you're claiming that your activities benefit the community, then you need to get the community to say so.

Seek support from other groups, other residents, other partners, local council, local community leaders and local politicians. You don't want them just saying that your group is great. You want them to support your actual proposal, explaining why it will provide wider community benefit.

While many grantmakers don't require evidence of community support, having it ensures that the grantmaker knows the wider community knows about your proposal and supports it. For some funding programs, a demonstration of wider community consultation and support could make difference.

Budget

The required presentation of the program budget can vary significantly, from a simple one-page statement of income and expenses to a more detailed set of budget papers that include explanatory notes for various items of revenue or expenses.

All grantmakers, however, require an honest, frugal budget that demonstrates the ways your organisation will maximize the resources available.

- **Match the budget to the activities.** Be realistic. Don't try to bolster the budget to pay for other activities and don't put in less than what you realistically need. Under-costed budgets are just as damaging to your credibility and your chances of receiving a grant, as budgets which are inflated. It could mean you run out of funds and are unable to finish the project
- **Match your timelines to the budget.** Go through the timeline of activities in your strategy. Get quotations from suppliers for necessary major items to make sure that each of these activities is properly costed and listed

- **Create the framework.** List all items of expenditure separately under clear, logical headings such as building supplies, salaries and wages, administration, publicity, permits etc.
- **Consider a percentage of overheads.** Work out what percentage (if any) of your regular running costs (telephone, petrol, postage etc) will need to be spent or even increased for this project. Budget fairly and honestly for these items
- **Consider if a Contingency Fund is necessary.** A contingency category is now commonly accepted by grantmakers for larger budgets. This should be no more than 5% of the total project budget and should detail the sorts of things you anticipate it might need to cover
- **Factor in what your contribution is (In-kind support and volunteer hours).** You need to include the amount of resources your organisation is committing to the project. It is critical that you show how your own club is supporting the project through either volunteer hours (costed at \$25) and in-kind donations of goods and services
- **Account for other proposals.** Any additional resources committed by other organisations or groups also need to be listed. These include other funders, sponsorship, large donations etc.
- **Include Budget Notes (where necessary).** Budget notes may sometimes be required to explain unusual items of expenditure. These can be displayed like numbered footnotes at the end of the budget
- **Make sure your budgets add up.** When you have finished your costings, go back over them and see that all the line items have been added up and that the final figure is right
- **Check all the figures in the document.** Go through wherever a figure is mentioned in your proposal and make sure they are consistent

Evaluation

As the pressure increase on grantmakers to justify their funding priorities, so is the pressure increasing on grant recipients to demonstrate that their project did achieve what it set out to do.

Or if not, why not.

You should have some method of documenting that you have done what you said you would do and also some method of measuring the benefit or change, even if it is a simple measure of usage or attendance.

Even if the grantmaker doesn't require you to evaluate the benefits, doing it can:

- Increase your own accountability
- Strengthen claims for future funding
- Provide figures for a media story highlighting your project

Future Sustainability

Set out how the project or proposal will continue after the funding has ended. Again, with limited grants funding pools, agencies are looking at ideas that can grow and live on beyond the term of the funding.

It is necessary for each club to look at what they are getting into and evaluating whether they will be able to afford to keep the project going in some shape or form beyond the life of funding commitment.

This helps to show that you have considered the issue of sustainability and consider the proposal so important that you are already looking beyond the funding period.

Layout

As we have said before, a vital element of putting together an application is to follow the guidelines to the letter. If you are asked to provide information in a particular format or length, then ensure you keep to those restrictions. If a page limit is specified, keep to it.

As the competition for grants increases, grantmakers are becoming tougher with those applications that have ignored their requests.

Here are some tips on presenting your application:

- Ensure your proposal looks professional (e.g. laser printed, consistent font/type size/headings)
- Use simple headings as signposts to guide your reader through the logic of the proposal
- Number the pages
- Use Plenty of white, rather than being a forbidding block of text
- Make sure it is easily readable
- Break up the layout with bullets, italics, headings,

subheading, boldface type, colour, borders, charts, pictures etc.

- Any acronyms should be spelled out in full at first use

Language

- Your language should be specific, accurate, concise and clear
- Write mainly in short simple declarative subject-verb-object sentences
- Use positive, exciting headings that inspire
- Write in the active voice ("We will collect data on...") rather than the less forceful passive voice ("Data will be collected on...")
- Write in the first person ("We will establish the program...") and not the less emphatic third person ("The committee will establish...")
- Be positive. Don't be too tentative
- Don't use bureaucratese or any professional jargon (unless it's explained)
- Check and recheck for typographical errors, misspellings and poor grammar
- Convey something of your enthusiasm, your passion and your interest
- Assume you're talking to someone who knows little about your club or your work

Once you have finished the application, get someone from outside your group or outside your committee to read through it and see if they:

- Understand what you are trying to achieve
- Believe you have made a compelling case
- Spot any typographical errors
- Offer any changes to strengthen your case
- Are excited by your proposal

Step Ten:

CHECK BEFORE YOU SEND YOUR APPLICATION

You've done all the hard work, now you want to make sure you don't undo all the effort by leaving out some important information. Run over this checklist before you put the application in the mail, just to make sure that everything is ready to go.

ACTION

Is the club fully behind the proposal?	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
Do we meet all the eligibility criteria?	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
Have we read and re-read the guidelines?	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
Have we answered all the questions on the form?	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
Have we answered all the questions in the format they requested?	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
Do we outline the need that we are trying to address?	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
Do we make the case for how our project will address the needs?	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
Have we demonstrated wider community benefit?	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
Have we demonstrated wider community support?	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
Have we included the figure of how much money we are requesting?	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
Have we provided the budget information and background on our club?	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
Have we included all the attachments required?	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
Have we checked that all the figures in the document match the budget?	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
Have we included what we will contribute?	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
Have we provided all the information and background on our club?	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
Have we attached all the information requested by the grantmaker?	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
Have we demonstrated the project is sustainable?	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
Has someone read our application and suggested improvements?	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
Have we got it in plenty of time ahead of deadline?	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
Have we included enough passion in the application?	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO

Successful applications are a result of thorough planning and considerable effort over a period of time. Rarely are rushed, last minute applications approved.

As we mentioned, most funding bodies are happy to field calls. Most encourage it. Some don't and will be less than accommodating a word of warning: "Don't overdo it. There is a fine line between an enthusiastic applicant and an annoying nuisance.

Step Eleven:

WHAT HAPPENS AFTER THE DECISION?

a. If you're successful

You've successfully won funding but it's not the end of the road – It's the beginning of what you hope will be a long-term relationship.

For starters you need to set up a project management timeline to get your project up and running. And you need to include in that all the regular reporting dates that the grantmaker requires. That is the bare minimum that is required under the funding agreement.

You want to do better than that. You hope to go back to the well again at some stage and get more funding so – just as you do with your sponsors and major donors or corporate backers – you want to keep them onside.

You should:

- Have your president/chairman send a formal thank-you note to the CEO/Minister/Program Leader of the funding organisation
- Invite all those people to all your special events/functions, even if they are not directly related to the funded project
- Send regular reports of the project to the funders with real examples of how it has made a difference. If you have delays or challenges, let them know at the time. Don't wait until after the date you should have had it finished to let people know
- Acknowledge the support of the grantmaking body on all project print and electronic publicity and on other appropriate materials
- Invite them to speak at the launch of the project
- Keep up the communication channels through emails, newsletters and annual reports

- Offer your expertise to them. If your project is a huge success, offer to brief them on the findings in person or offer to spread the word to other groups or clubs they fund

Once you have done the hard work of getting them to know who you are, what your club does, and why it is deserving of support, you want them to know that your club continues to be at the forefront of sporting and community innovation and "community building".

You want to create a strong partnership where they see you as an equal partner in achieving your joint aims in the community.

It is also easier – if there is a problem or a delay – for you to work with the grantmaker to understand and accommodate any changes to your original submission.

One other aspect of being successful is you need to celebrate that success it is an important achievement and an indication that your club has come up with an innovative idea that has support.

b. If you're unsuccessful

Ask for feedback on your application. Every application is a chance to learn and a chance to improve your ability to source grants funding.

Be careful not to harangue but ask for feedback on improving your next application.

Ask:

- Should you have included more information?
- What other things could you have done?
- Would they be interested in considering your application at a further date?

And generally:

- Don't take it to heart
- Don't give up
- Don't put all your eggs in the one basket

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Step Twelve:

FIND MORE GRANTS FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

Hopefully this guide has given you the encouragement to go out and find some grant funding. Here is a reminder of where you can find out about funding opportunities.

- Local council funding. If you apply for no other funding in the year, you should still approach your local council and see what funding is available. Most councils have information online – if not, seek out your local sport and recreation officer or community development officer for advice
- www.dsr.nsw.gov.au. NSW Department of Sport and Recreation
- www.grantlink.gov.au. For Federal Department of Family & Community Services Volunteer small equipment grants

And to subscribe to the monthly Easy Grants newsletter, which provides a summary of all the available grants funding (Federal, State & Local Government, philanthropic and corporate) for your bowling club, you can:

- Visit www.ourcommunity.com.au or www.ourcommunity.com.au/easygrants
- Email service@ourcommunity.com.au
- Call (03) 9320 6800 and ask for a brochure