Grants

A grant is money that is provided to community groups or organisations in order to carry out work that benefits the community and meets identified community needs. This is different to a tender, where the funding body determines the services that are to be delivered and invites organisations to tender to deliver these services.

A grant application requires the applying organisation to identify the community need and propose a project which will assist to meet this need or overcome the problem.

Main Sources of Grants

Government (Local, State or Federal)
Money is set aside in government budgets to drive particular policy objectives. Criteria that determine which types of projects will be supported by grants are defined and community organisations are invited to apply. Those projects which best meet the criteria, and seem likeliest to fulfil the policy objectives, are then funded.

Philanthropic Trusts and Foundations
These are organisations, often set up from a bequest (e.g. Ian Potter Foundation) or by a corporate (e.g. Telstra Foundation) to distribute monies to projects undertaken by community groups and organisations. Like government funding bodies, philanthropic trusts have specific agendas and develop criteria to help them determine which projects to fund. Most philanthropic trusts work in specific areas, for example the Myer Foundation supports education and mentoring projects, and the Caltex Foundation supports environmental projects.

Corporates
Some corporate entities do not have an attached philanthropic foundation and will provide funds directly to community groups. They may have a specific application process for groups seeking grants, or they may need to be approached with a proposal for partnership or sponsorship (discussed later in this section).

Applying for Grants

There is fierce competition for funding. Many other organisations will also be seeking support. Writing grant applications is time consuming and often requires competent writing skills.

If your organisation is smaller, or does not have the internal capacity to write succinct grant applications, consider engaging the services of a virtual volunteer specifically for this role.

The criteria for grants can be limiting. Your application needs to fit the priorities of the funding body. Organisations need to be very careful that they don't get distracted from their main objectives by trying to adapt what they do to fit grants program criteria.

Grants are generally offered at set times and may not fit in with your schedule. Government grants usually require a long lead time, so good advance planning is essential. You will need to acquit government grants. This means planning and undertaking an evaluation and writing a detailed report. So you need to assess whether you have the capacity to manage these requirements.

How do you find out what is available?

There are many ways that you can find out which grants are available.

- The internet is a great starting place. A very useful site which gives you access to a database of detailed information about grants is **www.grantsearch.com.au**. For Queensland government grants see **www.qld.gov.au/grants**.
- Contact relevant government departments and ask for grants information handbooks or look at their websites.
- Visit your local council. Speak to Community or Economic Development Officers who work in the arts, cultural development, community development, heritage or recreation sections depending on the activities you have in mind.
- Ask people who are involved in similar organisations which grants they know about.

See also: Grant Preparation