

11 Things That Funders Look For

1. Need:

Funders want projects that meet a genuine need, and for you to have evidence of that need, they'll also want to know exactly how their money will help improve things.

2. Clarity of purpose:

Ensure that your aims are clearly described. This means more than just listing your goals: funders will also want to know how you intend to achieve them. We see a lot of general statements and too much explanation of the need for the work, rather than explanations of the work itself.

3. A measure of success:

How will you measure the impact of your work? What would constitute a positive outcome? Most funders will want you to address these questions in your application – if you don't know what success looks like, then you're unlikely to instil confidence in those holding the purse strings.

4. A realistic budget:

Budgets should be realistic, transparent, and take into account any costs that might be incurred in the course of your project or work. Funders will also want to know that you can do your sums. "Ensure that your figures add up – check and triple check!"

5. Competence:

Proving that you can deliver is crucial. Make sure that your goals are realistic, and demonstrate competence by showing what you've achieved in the past.

6. Acknowledgement of potential problems:

Acknowledging where the risks lie, and more importantly what you've done to mitigate them, shows you understand that you're operating in the real world and you've thought through what you are planning.

7. Vision:

An application is an opportunity to communicate the distinctiveness of your work, your values, your passion, your success and your potential. Think about the competition you're likely to be up against: why should your organisation be the one that receives funding?

8. Flexibility:

That said, if you operate in a particularly competitive area, don't underestimate the virtues of potential collaboration. Funders may be impressed if you demonstrate that you're willing to consider working in partnership with other organisations in order to deliver best value, and you may consequently stand more chance of funding success.

9. An exit strategy:

Even if one isn't specifically required. If you make no mention of what you will do when their money runs out, [funders] will assume either that you haven't thought about it, or that your default exit strategy is to come back to them and ask for more – neither of which are likely to impress them.

10. Attention to detail:

Answer all the questions and provide all the necessary documentation. If a stamped addressed envelope then send one. Ensure that your final application is free from spelling and grammatical errors.

11. One more tip:

Always make sure your application is in the week before the deadline, it looks much better.