

Funding Top Tips

Fundraising is a vital part of creating a sustainable and long-lasting organisation – not to mention a great way to help build up your community connections and even recruit! Spanning sports and community development, there are many options available, often discrete to your area. Applying for grants has become increasingly more competitive and may seem like a daunting process. Don't be put off because we are here to help.

This document contains some of BaseballSoftballUK's top funding tips. We provide information on how to approach an application, ways of improving your chances of success and advice on best application practices. If you want to know more about this important area or are thinking of applying for grants, get in touch with your Relationship Manager for further support.

Keys to success include:

- Choose your funder and scheme carefully.
- Don't bend your project to breaking point to fit a funder, find a different funder.
- Emphasise and include your unique selling points.
- Allow plenty of time.
- Know your funders' priorities and tailor the proposal accordingly.
- Offer evidence for your cause.
- Get the right partners.
- Less is always more.
- Give the funder what they want.
- Have a clear and realistic budget.
- Emphasise the contribution from volunteers.
- Avoid jargon.
- Be aware of deadlines and plan accordingly.
- Not successful? Ask for feedback.

A Funder's Typical Priorities

Problems funders might be looking to solve could include projects that:

- Encourage inactive people to become more active.
- Use sport and physical activity to bring people together from different backgrounds, cultures and faiths, or to help socially isolated people feel better connected to their local communities.
- Directly benefit disadvantaged women and girls and support their mental health and wellbeing.
- Give young people an opportunity to get involved in positive activities – like sport – to deter at-risk young people from violence and crime.

Choose your funder and scheme carefully

Carefully choosing the right grant to apply to is important. If you are unsure, speak to the funding organisation. Many have helplines and this is a great way to understand what they are looking for in an application.

Once you have the guidance, check it carefully to make sure your project fits their criteria. In most times, funders are looking to make one-off grants, rather than starting a longer-term dependency or contributing to day-to-day running costs. Most often, they are looking to boost capabilities or solve a specific problem.

If you are hoping to secure funding to help cover day-to-day running costs, you could incorporate some of

your existing costs alongside some new activity. You might introduce a female-only session that takes place at the same time and venue as your existing training session. You could include venue hire fees for the female session in your application, but as the sessions take place at the same time, the funding would contribute to both sessions.

Don't bend your project to breaking point to fit a funder, find a different funder

Even though finding funding is highly competitive, don't compromise your project to fit a funder's priority. If you don't meet the funder's guidelines, look for other funding streams that recognises the problem/s you are trying to address.

Emphasise and include your unique selling points

The most important element from the outset will be to establish and articulate *why* people should invest in your organisation and what will they receive in return. Baseball and Softball have a number of unique selling points that would appeal to funders. Make sure you highlight some of these in your application to help build the case for your project.

- It's fun (73% of our current players stated fun as the reason why they take part).
- Broadens the appeal of competitive sport to a new cohort of people.
- Particularly appeals to girls (43% of our current players are female).
- You can play at any age.
- Different versions available to attract different age/target groups i.e. Baseball5, MLB's Softball60 and Fun at Bat.
- Requires no prior sporting experience or high level of physical ability.

- Offers social opportunities (36% of people's motivation for playing were to meet new people and 34% was to catch up with friends).
- Baseball/softball is the most social sport, according to Sport England's most recent SQSE report.
- Wellbeing motivations (our annual players survey highlighted that the reasons they played were reduction of stress 20%, improving overall health 17%, feeling better about myself 11%, maintaining/losing weight 11%, improving flexibility 5%).
- Inclusive – people with disabilities can easily get involved and 14% of our playing community identify as part of the LGBTQ+ community.

Allow plenty of time

Completing grant applications can be time consuming. Even applying for small grants takes longer than you think so be prepared to make lots of drafts of your application before the final version is ready.

Know your funders' priorities and tailor the proposal accordingly

Don't assume the funder knows all about you, especially if you are applying for a local grant. Tell them all about your organisation, outline what you do and how your project links to the funding you are seeking.

Address the key questions that funders will ask:

- What is the issue?
- Why is it a problem and how do you know this (evidence of need)?
- What will you do to address it (activities and outcomes)?
- What will you not be able to do (scope)?
- Why are you best placed to address the problem (track record)?

- What difference will their funding make (how you're meeting their objectives)?
- How will you measure success (monitoring and evaluation)?

Sell yourself! Why should the funder pick your project over another project?

- What is unique about your project?
- How does your work fill a gap?

Offer evidence for your cause

Make sure you support any claims with evidence. For example, using government statistics, data you've collected from surveys or market research, monitoring information or extracts from reports by relevant agencies.

Funders will also want to see how you have consulted with your local community to prove that the need for your project exists. Funders don't like assumptions!

If you have them, use examples of short case studies and examples of how people have been helped so far and what they have gone on to achieve as a result.

Get the right partners

People involved in your project are just as important as the project you're proposing. Funders will want to see that you have the relevant and appropriate partners on board to successfully deliver your project.

Less is always more

Remember to keep your application clear and concise and use bullet points if necessary. If there is a word limit to questions, never exceed it.

Give the funder what they want

Funders will have a set process for completing applications. Make sure you follow it, checking that you have completed the form correctly and you have answered all of the questions carefully and

thoroughly, addressing the key information asked for. If a question does not apply then write 'Not Applicable', never leave a blank.

Make sure you send any additional information that the funder asks for. Funders often request:

- A governing document or constitution and a management committee, trustee board or steering group (including a chairperson, treasurer, secretary).
- A bank account with two cheque signatories.
- Latest accounts.
- Annual report.
- Insurance documents (public and employer's liability).
- Key policies and procedures such as DBS checks, Equality & Diversity, Health & Safety, Safeguarding. Ensure these are current and dated.

Have a clear and realistic budget

Make sure your budget is realistic, getting quotations and estimates rather than guessing how much things cost. Break down the costs so the funder understands how you have arrived at the final numbers. Funders want to know how their money will make an impact, as well as offer value for money.

Emphasise the contribution from volunteers

Don't forget to tell the funders about the great contribution your volunteers will make to your project and what the volunteers themselves will gain from their involvement, such as training opportunities and transferable skills.

Avoid jargon

Always use simple language so an outsider can understand the issues and ensure you speak the same language as your funder. Use the key words and phrases that they use.

Be aware of deadlines and plan accordingly

It is always good practice to get someone from outside your project team to read your application before you send it. They can look for errors or inconsistencies and ask for explanations.

Make sure you are aware of the closing date. Don't submit your application last minute in case you have any IT issues and keep a copy of the application so you can refer back to it when needed.

Not successful? Ask for feedback

If your application is not successful, ask if you can have some feedback to find out why as this will help you improve your future applications.

Remember that sometimes you may have made the best application you can but because there were more applications than the funder could fund meant you were not successful this time. Don't be disheartened, the best bid writers are not always successful, look for another funder!

In conclusion

Grant funding can be transformative for your organisation but having a clear plan and dedicating time are key to being successful. Whether you are looking for £500, £5,000 or £50,000, the process is the same. Make sure your project fits with the funder's criteria, make a good case for your project backing it up with evidence and statistics and highlight how your project will make a difference. Don't be put off if your first or second attempt isn't successful. Perseverance is key and all of your hard work and commitment will be worth it in the end.

Remember, your Relationship Manager is ready to support you throughout the process from identifying funders, informing your application, sharing examples of successful bids or providing official endorsement!