Queensland Tourism and Events Grants Guide 2018

TOURISM & EVENTS
Queensland

Contents

THIS PAGE: Big Red Bash, Outback Queensland
COVER: Maleny, Sunshine Coast

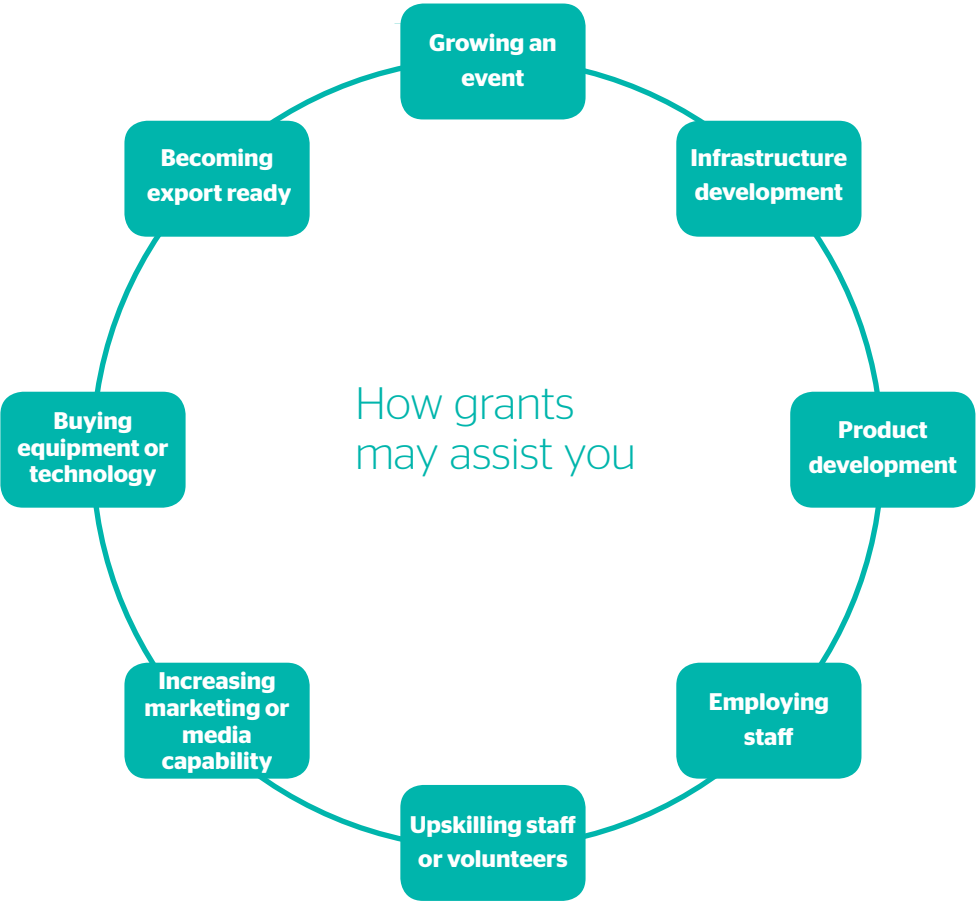# Introduction

Purpose of the Guide

Finding grant funding opportunities and successfully applying for funding can be daunting and time consuming. The grants available change often and there are different grant providers including government departments, corporations and philanthropic organisations.

The Grants Guide (the guide) seeks to give you as a business owner, association or local council the know-how in sourcing relevant grants and writing competitive applications. Whether you are new to applying for funding or you have submitted applications before, this guide outlines how to build a clear and compelling case for funding.

What Grants Can Offer You

The aim of many grant programs is to help fulfil the objectives and policies of the funding agencies and seed development. If you have a project idea that aligns with a grant program's aims and priorities, the grant may allow you to undertake a project you would not have been able to otherwise afford. The types of projects a grant may assist with are highlighted in the figure below.

How grants may assist you

- Growing an event
- Infrastructure development
- Product development
- Employing staff
- Upskilling staff or volunteers
- Increasing marketing or media capability
- Buying equipment or technology
- Becoming export ready

Grants typically range from $10,000 to $2,000,000, with some requiring your business or organisation to provide matched funding. Grant funding is usually awarded up front for a project that you have not yet commenced.

All funding programs are highly competitive. To prepare applications requires time, attention to detail and commitment to see the process through. You will also need skills or access to them in gathering information and writing the application components. Successful applicants often have applied for grants previously, highlighting that an unsuccessful application can be a valuable learning experience.

Case Study

Cape Hillsborough Nature Tourist Park – Accessing the critical support for business growth

Grants can be instrumental in helping to expand your business or achieve project outcomes that would not be possible otherwise. Cape Hillsborough Nature Tourist Park recognised that to remain competitive, a website that was responsive across mobile phones, tablets and computers, would facilitate online bookings and payments, and link to their social media activity, was vital. They also needed to upskill in digital and social marketing. Running a successful tourism business is what they know well, so from the outset they realised bringing in external expertise would be essential.

They applied for and received about $3,500 in matched funding from the Queensland Government's Small Business Digital Grants Program to assist them in contracting the technical experts required.

"The impact on the business has been tremendous," says Renae Atherton, owner of Cape Hillsborough Nature Tourist Park. "We are already seeing a steady increase in online bookings and we are saving staff time spent on the booking process. Plus, it is easier now to track where our visitors are coming from, our best markets for yield and where we need to put in extra effort to increase overnight stays."

The application process was not an easy one for Renae as a first time grant applicant and unfamiliar with the project's technical elements. Figuring out what to include and then writing a clear and succinct application was particularly challenging. After completing the process, Renae believes she is now better equipped to take advantage of future grant opportunities.

Case Study

Big Red Bash – Making the remote possible

Rocking out under the open skies of the Simpson Desert, 35km west of Birdsville, the Big Red Bash is the world's most remote major music festival. The three-day event has become a 'must-do' bucket-list experience expected to attract 8,500 visitors in 2018 from around Australia and the globe.

The site's remoteness is both a strength and challenge. Event organiser, Big Run Events, must bring in the site infrastructure each year at significant effort and cost but they know it's worth it as the event's popularity grows steadily.

"Big Red Bash has been recognised as much more than a music festival – it draws people together to experience our spectacular outback in an unforgettable way," says event founder and Managing Director, Greg Donovan.

Big Run Events successfully secured $70,000 per annum for three years through the Queensland Destination Events Program – Significant Event Funding. This funding will be used for event marketing and promotional activity and improving site infrastructure and facilities for visitors.

Now in its sixth year, the event has become an important contributor to the regional economy, with about 80,0000 visitor nights and $5.7m in Overnight Visitor Expenditure last year.

"With grant funding and sponsorship support, the Big Red Bash is on track to increase the economic benefits by up to 40 per cent this year," says Greg.

Quick Tip - Think outside of the box

If you are seeking a grant don't just think of tourism grant programs. For example, if you want to provide training workshops to tourism businesses, the Queensland or Australian governments may have grants available to support business upskilling. Or if you want to develop an innovative app to improve the visitor experience, look at grant funding for smart innovations. Think laterally so you do not miss an opportunity.

Useful links for potential tourism and other funding opportunities:

- Tourism and Events Queensland Industry Resources
- QTIC Grants Gateway (free to members or paid subscription)
- Grant guru (free or paid subscription options)
- Queensland Government tourism business grants
- Funding Centre, Our Community (paid subscription for not for profit organisations)

Step 1: Being Eligible

Define Your Project Idea

The best funding applications are based on projects which:

- are genuinely important and reflect a real need or will solve a problem
- will deliver clear outcomes and benefits
- have the commitment of all partners
- are by organisations with the project capability to deliver
- have the support of the community and other stakeholders.

Planning is important in putting your project idea together, getting support from other organisations and your local community and gathering all of the relevant information. In this phase it is wise to get clear of:

- WHAT is the project, its broad purpose, outcomes and potential risks
- WHO are your project working group and steering committee members, your target audience, your main stakeholders and who will be responsible for delivering the project
- WHERE it will be located and the reach of the project outcomes and benefits
- WHY the project is important, the need it will meet or problem it will solve
- WHEN the project will commence, be delivered and the results known
- HOW the project will be implemented, progress monitored and measured, and the associated costs and funding.

It is easier to find funding for a well thought out project than to try and fit a project into funding criteria. You may find however, you need to slightly modify your project to meet the criteria.

These changes should not affect the project as a whole. It quickly becomes clear to assessors when a project has been created to fit into funding guidelines and lacks a solid rationale and methodology.

Find the Best Grants

One of the biggest challenges in winning grants is finding the grants that offer you the best chance of success for your project idea. There are a number of websites with information on grant programs.

Queensland Tourism Industry Council's (QTIC) provides the Grants Gateway; online information on relevant funding programs and grants for the tourism industry. This Gateway links to Grant Guru, an Australian company that provides details on grants at state and national levels. You can also find useful information on grants and business support on the Queensland Government's Business and Industry portal and the non-profit Our Community grants website.

When you have found possible grants, talk to other businesses or organisations in your region that may be considering grant funding for a project idea and identify if there are opportunities to collaborate. Program administrators find it frustrating if they receive multiple applications for funding from similar groups from the same region that have not coordinated or collaborated on their activities, especially when the project will serve the same demographic. Working together may increase your chances of success and increase the funding for your region.

Meet the Requirements

When you find a grant program that you believe meets your needs, review the available information to determine if your project idea is a good match with the funding agency's requirements. Most funding programs will produce program guidelines and specific eligibility criteria as well as fact sheets, the application form, contractual requirements and details of previous successful applicants.

There is no point in pursuing an application that does not fit the guidelines. In the case of both government and philanthropic grants, the guidelines allow you to see how the application will be assessed and what is required of you in the way of supporting documentation.

It is important not to grow so close to the project that you become blinkered or enamoured and cannot be objective about how well you fit the funding program's aims and guidelines. Remember, it's not about you – but the needsof the funding agency.

While grants differ in their requirements, the following checklist will help you in determining your eligibility and whether you should proceed with your application. If you answer No to any of these points, you may want to do further research to find a better match for your project.

Quick Tip - Do some background research

Look for recipients of previous funding rounds to see what the funding agency tends to fund. Also, before you proceed, do your own cost benefit analysis on the funding available and the time your application will require.

	YES	NO
Organisation's legal status – Grant programs will vary as to whether they are for local government bodies, not for profits or private businesses. Most grant programs will require the applicant to be an incorporated body; a legal entity with an ABN or ACN. Many types of philanthropic organisations require you to either be non-profit or have a charitable status as recognised through the Australian Tax Office (https://www.ato.gov.au/Non-profit/).		
Closing dates - Some programs are always open but others operate in rounds and may only be open once or twice a year, with a non-negotiable closing date to receive applications. Try to find out early when a funding round will open because the closing dates are often short.		
Industry type - Funding schemes are often designed for the development of a particular industry or industry clusters. If your organisation is not a natural fit but the project will benefit the industry, consider bringing in a project partner that is recognised within the specified industry.		
Location - Many grants are location specific or have locational restrictions. The amount of funding available to you may depend on the area you plan to develop or implement your project.		
Grant purpose – Grant programs have aims and priorities, for example, to support the strategic development of proven flagship events as drivers of tourism. Your project will be eligible only if it matches the grant's purpose and scope.		
Eligible and ineligible activities – Programs will list the activities that will be funded and may list those that will be excluded. Ensuring the project support you need matches with the eligible activities is vital.		
Funding contribution – Funding applicants can be required to detail secured and committed cash and in-kind contributions.* Having different funding sources offers some security to the funding agency and shows your commitment to the project and ability to achieve the project goals.		
Minimum funding level – In the case of the requirement for matched funding, your ability to contribute to a minimum funding level where one is set will determine if your project is eligible.		
Assessment criteria – With most grant programs over subscribed, an inability to provide a robust response to each of the criteria is a must.		
Project timing – Delivery of your project will need to meet the timing deadlines for the grant program. Ensure completion of your project within the program deadline is realistic.		
Contractual obligations – Government grants in particular come with specific terms and conditions to ensure accountability. Your organisation must have the capability to fulfil these obligations.		
Stage of business – Some grant funding is for start ups, while others may specify the length of operation and may require financial statements to demonstrate viability. Ensure your organisation meets the requirements.		
Other grants - Some grants may preclude you from applying for others at the same time, while others may allow you to seek grants for different stages of the project. Check the funding guidelines and any restrictions.		

In-kind contributions have a monetary value but are provided as goods or service rather than cash. They may include property, donated materials and equipment, expert advice, personnel and volunteer labour time. These contributions should be valued at the market rate or the cost per hour you would be required to pay otherwise.

Know Your Audience

Once you have read both the grant guidelines and the application form for the grant opportunity you have identified, contact the funding agency. It is better to ask them questions directly rather than guess what they are after. As well as bouncing your idea off fresh ears, you will get a sense of whether similar projects have been funded before, or if there are particular parts of your project that are more appealing to them than others.

Some good questions to ask include:

- What sorts of projects didn't get funded last round and why?
- How many applications were received last round and how many were successful?
- What type of projects are they really seeking?
- What don't they want?
- What value of grants do they expect to award?
- Is it possible for someone in the agency to review your draft application?

Hints:

"Speak with the funding agency to get a good understanding of what they are looking for from the project funding and any weighting applied to the criteria. By establishing a good working relationship with the funder, you can also learn how they operate and give them confidence that your organisation will deliver quality outcomes and meet the targets." Greg Donovan, Managing Director, Big Run Events (Big Red Bash)

"Don't try to write your application in isolation. Talk to the funding body to find out what they want from the program. Then maintain a good working relationship regardless of the outcome. If you receive funding, you may work closely together in the planning and delivery of your project. If you are not successful, their advice on how you could present a better application next time will be invaluable." Genevieve Windley, Regional Events and Promotions Coordinator, Scenic Rim Regional Council

Step 2: Being Competitive

Know the Rules

Before you start writing, get clear of what the assessment criteria are asking and how to link your project to the criteria. You will need to respond to each of the selection criterion.

Include clear facts backed by statistics and case studies. Assessors are looking for compelling, evidence based content. If you are applying for government funding programs, be mindful taxpayer funds are contributing to your initiative and you need to articulate the economic and social returns on the public investment.

Present the case for the project and its viability with details of the following:

- project objective – what you are hoping the project will achieve
- rationale for the project – why it needs to happen, what will be the cost of not taking action
- project partners – the contribution and commitment of any collaborators or financial supporters
- outcomes you expect – results and benefits (local, regional, state and national) with quantitative and qualitative measures
- methodology – project elements, marketing and communications, project milestones, governance arrangements and project budget
- evaluation – what information you will collect and how you will monitor the project's progress and achievement of the objectives and the target outcomes.

Philanthropic organisations can be more 'heart felt' in their application as the funding provider, while looking for sound financial planning, will usually be motivated also by community good-will, and social and cultural outcomes.

Quick Tip - Have the right resources

Before you continue, do you have the right people available and the time to organise and write a successful grant application? Also, do you have the expertise to make your proposed project work or external partners to assist you? If not, look to augment your resources so you can proceed. A consultant could be used to help develop the project concept and strategy, wordsmith after you have written the application, or to mentor you and your team in becoming better grant writers. Alternatively, wait until you have the resources that give you the greatest chance of success.

Sell Your Project

There are usually more applications received than money available so you need to make your project standout from the others. Provide a positive, punchy description as this sets the first impression and the tone for your project. Capture the imagination and inspire the assessor to read on with a compelling goal and rationale. Then follow through with the intended outcomes and impact of your project, and demonstrate how the project is feasible and realistic and will achieve their funding aims.

The selection criteria are not the only way you will be assessed. A large part of the assessment of an application is against your capability to deliver the project. Be prepared for your organisation to be assessed in relation to your:

- management capabilities
- Budget and turnover
- Tax status (if you are a non-profit, it is usually best to have Deductable Gift Recipient tax status)
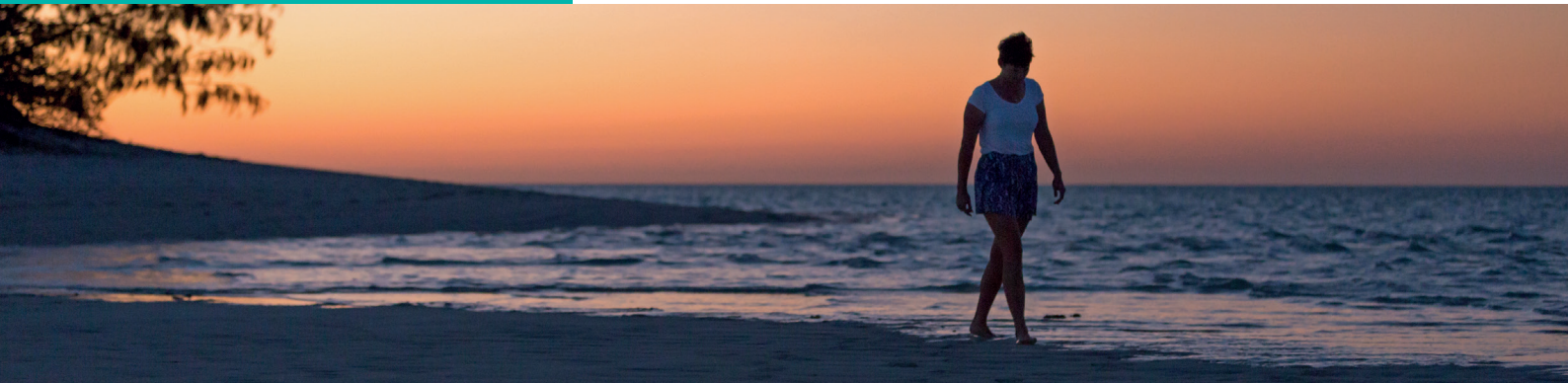- Outcomes and achievements to date.

You will need to outline your experience and capacity to make this project a success. Identify your project lead, steering committee and the project team that will be responsible for delivery, as appropriate, and the skills and experience they bring to the project. Provide evidence of successes with previous grants and/or projects. Good quality video of previous work, easily accessed via web links (for example, YouTube, Vimeo) is an effective way to demonstrate the nature and quality of your work.

Supporting documentation is a great opportunity to paint a strong picture. This content tends to have less weighting for assessment but is judged by the assessors on robustness. The supporting documents required can include, but not be limited to:

Supporting documentation	
• Proof of organisational status (company, not for profit, local government)	• Annual reports and financial statements
• Letters of support	• Financial models
• Risk management plan	• Project management plans and Gantt charts
• Marketing plan	• Diagram of the project's governance framework
• Communications strategy	• Resumes of the project lead and team members
• Summary of previous grants won	• Copies of brochures/programs and evaluation reports for projects that received grant funding previously

Your risk management plan is an opportunity to build the assessor's confidence with your project and your organisation's commitment to achieving the program's aims. Consider what you would rather see in a Risk Management Plan: a one line summary saying "We see no risks to this project", or a five page document detailing the methodology, assessment matrix for the main risks and their likelihood and your action plan to mitigate and resolve them.

Letters of support from local and regional councils, other businesses or organisations that outline why the project is needed can help to substantiate your application's claims. General testimonials or references not related to the project will not add value to your application.

Present a Budget that Inspires Confidence

Provide a commercially sound and accurate project budget. The project budget is one of the most important parts of your application. Getting it right will provide evidence of the viability of your project as well as your professionalism and the ability of your organisation to financially manage the grant if successful. It is also an opportunity to demonstrate your need for funding to enable the project to proceed and achieve the program's aims. Make sure to include well-argued reasons for the requested equipment, infrastructure, expertise, consumables or other items. The project budget should highlight the short fall between your project income without grant funding and expenses.

Funding is rarely given retrospectively. If you have completed the project or part of the project, it is likely to be ineligible. Plan your project's commencement to take into account the funding requirements.

What to include? Every grant program will vary in their project budget requirements. Some may require in-kind contributions to be included, others will exclude. The program guidelines on what activities can be funded and those that are ineligible will help you determine the activities and their associated costs to include.

Typical elements of project budgets include:

- Your cash (e.g. capital, loans, sponsorship) and in-kind contributions (e.g. staff and volunteer time, borrowed equipment, property)
- Cash and in-kind contributions from project partners and other sources
- How the value of in-kind items has been calculated
- Project income expected
- Costs for eligible project activities
- Costs for project activities to be funded by the organisation or other sources (specified)
- Personnel costs
- Administrative costs such as insurance, reporting and audit of grant expenditure, IP protection and travel costs if eligible
- All expenses (do not include miscellaneous or contingency categories)
- Balanced project income and expenses with inclusion of the required grant funding
- Minimal detail in your budget to maintain some flexibility.

The guidelines will indicate whether you should include GST in the budget. If you are unsure, then do not include GST. Speak with your accountant about the tax ramifications of receiving the grant funding.

Deliver Value for Money

Show clearly your own cash contribution and that of your partners in your project budget, as well as any in-kind contributions. The more diverse (and realistic) your income sources, the more competitive you will be. Grant-funders want to see great results and cost-efficiencies.

Sometimes minimum co-contributions are required. If you fail to meet these minimums your application is likely to be rejected. Even where minimums are not stated it is good practice to show at least some contribution as this gives the funding agency confidence that you have commitment to the project's success and the project will deliver value for money. For instance, if the grant offered is $10,000 and you put in $10,000 in cash and a project partner contributes $5,000 in cash, then the funding agency is getting $25,000 worth of project for their $10,000 investment, plus in-kind contributions.

	In-kind Contribution	Funding Contribution	Total
Project applicant	$5,000	$ 10,000	$15,000
Project partners	$2,000	$ 5,000	$ 7,000
Funding agency		$ 10,000	$10,000
Total	**$7,000**	**$ 25,000**	**$32,000**

Value for money can also be demonstrated by your long term plans and the benefits expected beyond the grant funding term. Funding agencies want to see that you are serious about remaining competitive in your sector, with their funding used effectively.

Budget spreadsheet example – Regional Tourism Upskilling Workshops

Income		Expenditure		Grant Breakdown	
Earned income	3,750	Salaries, fees and allowances			
Workshop class fees		Trainer fee	10,000		10,000
		Project management	2,000		-
Other grant income requested		Direct project costs			-
Local government	5,000	Flights and accommodation	3,500		
		Filming/recording	5,000		1,750
Your contribution		Promotion/Marketing			
Marketing	5,000	Online brochure	3,000		
Project management	2,000	E-newsletter	2,000		
Partner contribution		Administrative costs			
Training room hire	500	Phone/online	1,000		
		Office space	1,500		
TOTAL INCOME	**$16,250**	**TOTAL INCOME**	**$28,000**	**GRANT**	**$11,750**

In other instances you may be required to only provide a breakdown of the project budget items and the allocation of the costs across cash contributions and the grant funding. Here is a budget spreadsheet for the fictional construction of an amphitheatre for a visitor attraction.

Budget item	Grant funding	Cash contribution	Total $
Planning fees		20,000	20,000
Engineering plan		35,000	35,000
Site works	50,000	50,000	100,000
Construction	100,000	50,000	150,000
Fit-out (seating, lighting)	10,000	10,000	20,000
Signage	10,000		10,000
Marketing		20,000	20,000
Administration		5,000	5,000
TOTAL INCOME	**$170,000**	**$190,000**	**$360,000**

Quick Summary - How to tick the boxes for assessors:

- Articulate the clear need or demand for the project
- Demonstrate project feasibility and the level of return on investment
- Show that the project has been well thought out with solid planning
- Outline the potential impact of the project locally, state-wide and nationally
- Provide a concise and accurate budget where income equals expenditure and much of the income is confirmed
- Include confirmed partnerships (cash or in-kind) and how they will contribute to project outcomes
- Meet the supporting documentation requirements with quality, relevant material.

Write Your Way to Success

As mentioned, grant funding is highly competitive. To give yourself the best chance of success, you will need to describe your organisation and activities in a clear and consistent manner, and make a convincing case for why you should receive funding.

Preparing your application is not rocket science, but a certain amount of skill and experience certainly helps. Also, ensure you allow sufficient time to write, review and gain feedback from peers and project partners and supporters.

Hints:

"If you know the subject matter well and believe in your project, your application will be easier to write." Tony Beynon, Deputy CEO, Winton Shire Council

"Take the time to read and understand the funding program guidelines and then ensure you have enough time to get feedback and advice from peers unfamiliar with the project. You want to ensure your submission provides clear and logical arguments that answer the criteria and present a persuasive case for support." Genevieve Windley, Regional Events and Promotions Coordinator, Scenic Rim Regional Council

"Writing your application is not something you can rush. Make sure you have time to draft your application as well as time to come back and review and have other people read and provide feedback." Greg Donovan, Managing Director, Big Run Events (Big Red Bash)

"Don't become bogged down in the finer detail. Write simply, using dot points often to present a clear, succinct case for funding." Renae Atherton, owner, Cape Hillsborough Nature Tourist Park

Use the following checklist to make sure your application is well written and presents a positive image of your organisation and your project idea.

Writing Checklist

	Yes	No
Application form - Have the correct and up to-date application form. An old version may not be accepted.		
Audience - Be clear in your mind that the person reading your application knows nothing about your organisation or the project.		
Drafts - Expect to write a number of drafts until your application reads how you want it.		
Final version - Draft your response in a Word doc before transferring your final version into the application form.		
Language - Use simple to read business language, not conversational or flowery language or jargon.		
Format - Adhere to the format requirements (margins, font size, line spacing) and follow the sequence of questions as they provide in the application form (do not change the form in any way).		
Concise - Keep your answers concise and within the word count. If there is no minimum, still focus on keeping your content succinct.		
Tone - Avoid words such as believe, hope, expect, may, could, might and instead be bold in stating what your project will achieve if your application is successful, but avoid exaggerated claims.		
Key words - Use the same key words in the guidelines and assessment criteria in your content as appropriate.		
Targeted - Don't give the same answer to different questions. Even if the questions sound similar, the assessors are seeking new information about the project. Check the guidelines for clarification if needed.		
Headings - Include lots of headings as this allows the reader to skim the page to get the main points quickly. Dot points - Use short sentences and when listing items such as project outcomes and benefits, project elements and team members, dot points. Detail can be provided in the following paragraphs and supporting documents.		
Illustrations - Include maps, diagrams and images where possible to break up the text and illustrate a point.		
Complete - Leave nothing blank. Give a reason why a question is not relevant to you. If you are unsure, check with the funding agency that you understand what they are asking and confirm if it is pertinent to your application or not.		
Glossary - Include a glossary for jargon or acronyms if needed.		
Proof read - Ask someone who is not familiar with the project to proof read your draft and final copy including: • Check the spelling, grammar, labels on tables, graphs and pictures, page numbering and use of clear and consistent fonts. Poor spelling, grammar and formatting is sloppy and can be distracting for the assessor, resulting in a low scoring. • Check for consistency in content and writing style across the project aims, themes, answers throughout the application and supporting documentation, particularly if there have been different people providing input.		
Test - Ask your proof reader to explain the project to you and the outcomes it will deliver to test the clarity of your writing.		

Step 3: Lodging Your Application

The Final Details

Read all the details about lodgement in the grant program's guidelines because they do vary. Allow time for final signatures and approvals and entering electronically or printing and couriering. Always submit your completed application before the due date – better to be safe than sorry. Late applications are not accepted.

Any application that you submit will be confidential. If confidentiality is an issue, talk to the funding agency, particularly when patents or intellectual property issues are involved. In the case of government funding, a Minister will often release details of the project to the media as promotion for the funding program. Guidelines often ask for a short project description that can be used publically if successful, enabling you to influence what content is shared.

Grant agencies typically provide acknowledgement of receipt of your application. Most acknowledgements are sent electronically by email, particularly if you submitted your application online. If you don't receive notification, contact the grant agency to check they have your application.

Be Patient

Depending on the complexity of the program and the funding levels, you may hear nothing for up to six months as the assessors work their way through the multitude of applications. Some applicants can receive a request for further information. This is a good opportunity to reinforce the value of your project, so be helpful and responsive in providing the material needed.

No work should commence on the project until you have confirmation of funding and a contract has been signed. You are unlikely to be reimbursed for any payments you make before the grant is paid. If you are successful, the funding may take some time to come through, so be prepared for that in your project scheduling.

The Bad News

Unsuccessful applications may be notified by email or mail. If you are not successful, give the grant agency a call to gain feedback. Useful questions to ask them include:

• Did the project meet the guidelines? In what ways?

• What aspects of the application were missing or weak?

• Was the competition better? In what ways?

• Will there be future rounds? When?

If there are future rounds, use the feedback to improve your application and resubmit when the next round opens. Each time you prepare for and write a grant application, you will learn new tricks and skills. Importantly, value the application process as an opportunity to hone project ideas and enhance clarity about your organisation's direction. Grants are not the only way of building or consolidating a business—good business practice and planning will continue to be the drivers.

The Good News

Successful applicants are usually contacted with the good news by phone, with the contract sent in follow up. As mentioned earlier, the project funding may also be announced publicly. You will usually be consulted regarding the media release content, so make sure you are satisfied with the level of detail and accuracy.

With the funding outcome known, it is a good time to send a thank you to everyone who contributed in preparing the application and also to the funding agency.

Hints:

"Build a good working relationship with the funder. Call them and check they received your application and when you speak with them, it is always good to find a common link to build rapport. Having that relationship in place will help both sides if you need to apply for variations to the contract terms or milestones." Tony Beynon, Deputy CEO, Winton Shire Council

"Don't feel rejected if you are unsuccessful. Making contact with the funding provider is invaluable to get feedback for next time." Renae Atherton, owner, Cape Hillsborough Nature Tourist Park

Case Study

Winton Shire Council – Capitalising on change

Celebrating and sharing the story of the birthplace of Waltzing Matilda and the local outback characters is something Winton does well. The new architecturally designed Waltzing Matilda Centre provides a stunning centre piece for Winton to attract and engage with visitors. The region also has a new signature event in their calendar after the success of music festival Winton's Way Out West Fest, held to celebrate the Centre's opening and draw visitors.

"We now have a tremendous opportunity to capitalise on our iconic Waltzing Matilda Centre and the calibre of events we offer," says Tony Beynon, Deputy CEO Winton Shire Council. "But we need to do this right." After the three year closure of the Centre due to fire and a prolonged drought in the area, stimulating economic growth is critical to the region's resilience.

Winton Shire Council received $46,350 in funding through the Community Investment Stream of the Australian Government's Building Better Regions grant program to assist with their planning. The funding is being used for two critical projects:

- *A Waltzing Matilda Centre Business Plan outlining the processes and steps to ensure the facility's potential is fully achieved*

- *A Marketing and Events Strategy identifying events and marketing activity to put the region on the map as a serious event destination.*

The Community Investments Stream was a good fit as it supports projects that deliver sustained economic and social benefits to regional and remote communities. "The Business Plan and Marketing and Event Strategy will be instrumental for us in growing our visitor economy and helping to reverse a declining regional population," says Tony.

These projects were not the original intention though. Due to the tyranny of distance, the funding application's proposal for the development of a tourism and economic strategy for the shire could not be delivered within the grant program's timing requirements. The Council sought the funding agency's support to modify the deliverables. The decision was made to proceed with the two smaller projects that are critical elements in the region's tourism and economic planning and meet the agency's aims and requirements. Having established a good relationship with the agency from the outset proved invaluable in reaching a win-win outcome.

Step 4: Meeting Your Commitments

When you receive the funding contract, it is important to read it thoroughly to be aware of your obligations. The contract will outline what is often referred to as the 'acquittal process', including the frequency of payments and the project reporting, compliance and auditing requirements. The contract requirements are not negotiable and if you do not comply, you may have to pay the grant back.

Payments are usually linked to the completion of milestones and submission of reports. A clear action plan with key milestones as part of your application will make reporting easier. Also, maintain good records of project expenditure and monitor your progress with data, statistics and feedback from users to provide factual outcomes.

Make sure to send in reports and audits complete and on time. An audit is a review of spending, carried out by a specially trained accountant to demonstrate that the project funds have been spent in the way agreed in the project contract. Audits can be expensive if the project is complex, and it is important to budget for this as part of your project costs.

Quick Tip - Create a lasting relationship with your grant provider

Consider inviting the grant provider or the appropriate Minister to your site for the launch or to experience the results and success of your project. If a site visit is not possible, keep them informed of major milestones with photos and updates. Here is where you can write from the heart and develop a long lasting relationship with the grant provider.

Ensure you notify the grant provider of any delays or changes in the project, such as:

- Change of contact details for your organisation, including any changes to key staff who have been nominated on the contract

- Delay in commencing or completing activities, any alterations to timelines or milestones

- Delay in providing project reports. There must be a good reason for a delay so an extension should not be applied for lightly.

- Changes to prices or quotes that will affect the project budget.

Checklist for a Winning Proposal

	Yes	No
STEP 1: Being Eligible		
Define the project idea – Defined your project idea and established it is feasible and realistic (what, who, where, why, when and how)		
Find the best grants – Sourced relevant grant opportunities		
Meet the requirements – Determined if your organisation and project meet the grant program guidelines and eligibility requirements (see Eligibility Checklist)		
Know your audience – Contacted the funding agency to seek more information or clarification as needed		
STEP 2: Being competitive		
Know the rules – Responded to all of the selection criteria, backed with facts, figures and a clear project rationale and plan		
Sell your project – Created a positive first impression and demonstrated how your project matches the program's aims and is competitive		
Demonstrate your capacity to deliver – Outlined your experience and capacity, and that of any project partners, to make the project a success, backed by robust supporting documents		
Present a budget that inspires confidence – Provided an accurate project budget which includes the elements required by the grant program		
Write your way to success – Ensured your application is well written and presents your organisation and project idea persuasively (see Writing Checklist)		
STEP 3: Lodging your application		
The final details – Submitted your application on time		
Be patient – Handled any requests for additional information		
The bad news – Sought feedback on where can improve next time		
The good news – Congratulations! Sent out thank you letters and awaiting contract		
STEP 4: Meeting your commitments		
Your reporting commitments – Ensured you can satisfy the acquittal and audit processes		