

Mental Health Sustainability Programme

Grant Fundraising Webinar with Samaritans | FAQs



These questions came from our Grant Fundraising webinar – they have been edited and/or condensed for sense-making purposes.

Answers are a collaborative effort between Samaritans (co-host of the webinar) and the Mental Health Sustainability Programme team.

The answers both here and in the webinar; given by the Association or Samaritans are given in good faith. It's best to make use of the content delivered in the webinar if in doubt.

Resource links will be made available and are best used to check nuances of situations and to clarify specific points made.

1. Are subscription funder lists/databases worth it?

Instead of purchasing yourself, you may find your local Voluntary Action/CVS have these subscriptions and that they can search this for you, bypassing the cost to your organisation.

Free funding search engines are www.charityexcellence.co.uk and www.myfundingcentral.co.uk (the latter is free if income <30k).

Our feeling is you can be better off making bespoke applications to smaller numbers of funders found freely online.

2. We are a counselling charity, so numbers of direct beneficiaries tend to be small relative to cost. The impact we have for those we work with is life changing. Despite the impact of our service on families lives, we've found the small number to be an issue. Any tips for addressing this?

Funders should already understand your work is worthwhile – but the specific project details and its impact to those beneficiaries is what funders want to hear about.

Where you do not have large numbers to report on, case studies will have a great impact when included in grants for organisations like yours. Most funders understand quality over quantity and your work may have small numbers but it has big impact.

3. I manage to receive funding where the grants are around £1000, it's the larger grants I never seem to be successful with. Any tips?

Smaller grants pots have a higher success rate and they require less effort. It takes a lot more work to complete an application form for larger pots and so you'll want to consider this and perhaps break down a large request into smaller requests to a number of funders. You should also avoid funding applications for amounts that are larger than half your turnover, as this would be considered risky for most funders.

4. As a micro charity are we more likely to be overlooked when it comes to receiving funding, what can we do to improve our bids? / As a small, relatively new charity how can we make our applications for funding stand out in a "crowded market"? / What are funders looking for in a bid proposal?

Our webinar addresses how to stand out in much more detail but in brief:

Make sure you are responding to the funder's criteria

Make sure to include great detail on the need that you meet for individuals supported

Use SMART outcomes when writing the proposal and include a detailed budget

Say thank you – when given feedback or news of a successful grant

5. [Do you have any] guidance on how to develop core cost applications? / Could [I] apply for funding to cover my role – [which is the] day to day management of the organisation [and therefore] separate from any project costs? / What can we do when funders won't fund salaries but you need a project worker to run the project/support service users?

Core cost applications are difficult to get through grant fundraising, as well as those for ongoing salaries. Grants are good for specific items and project costs – but your income generation mix should support overheads costs in some way.

You can sometimes present your core work as a project. For example, next year we need £XYZ in order to be able to deliver XYZ outcomes.

Grant funders like to cover project costs and where something new is happening. But should these projects require someone to 'do the work', make sure to include it in a proportional salary for the costs otherwise accounted for. A well-rounded project will build in all time (workforce) spent, even if you don't ask for it from a funder.

Otherwise, make sure you only approach for core costs if funders advertise covering them or else risk you wasting your time.

Moreover, on occasion you can also include 10% overheads to grant proposals, this isn't always guaranteed to be successful.

6. Are enough grant makers responding to the growing awareness of young people's needs by supporting wellbeing projects, both for direct mental health 'clinical services' and models that fuse aspects of therapeutic practice?

There is a shifting narrative to include mental wellbeing as well as mental health in explicit grant funding target areas. This can encompass the ways of delivery as outlined above.

But the biggest drive currently is diversity: so if you can amend your project to include and address diversity and inclusion in some way, try to do so.

7. Are there funders who would help [connect] charities [to] things like better IT?

Organisations like Charity Digital Exchange (www.charitydigitalexchange.org) and Computer Aid (<https://www.computeraid.org/get-computers>) offer affordable IT/computers to charities.

These are also good asks for corporates for pro-bono meeting room/IT support offers.

As well as this, your Voluntary Action and CVS are a really good starting point for setting up structures like IT that a non-profit needs.

8. What would you suggest when the funder has restrictions that are too niche and a very limited word count on their application form?

A limited word count can be counteracted by reducing the use of jargon and getting someone to review your work.

If the funder and their criteria feel niche firstly establish they are the right funder for you - avoid 'fitting a square peg into a round hole'. If they are the right funder for you, try to use their language back to them in your application to show your understanding of the nuanced area/idea/issue.

9. Should I scale up the grant request amounts as the company grows?

Provided the request you make is less than what you've spent in the last year, you can definitely scale up the asks; just make sure it doesn't look too large for your organisation to manage.

Your chances of success are as good for the full pot (say, £5k of £5k) that a funder will grant as it is for the smaller proportion (say, £2k of £5k).

10. I want to set up a partnership with another organisation we know; I've got as far as asking for an informal meeting, do you have any tips on the stages of getting this prepared?

Partnership working is popular with funders – by sharing the best of both organisations, the funder is given extra reassurance to delivery of objectives and outcomes.

Treat your partner a bit like a funder when you approach them to articulate why you need them to solve the problem, help outline the need and contribute to positive outcomes. Make sure it's clear why they add value to your idea and remember, flattery might help!

Before you start a partnership bid, make sure there is clarity on roles and how the duties are split.

11. How [do you] ... secure statutory funding?

Applying for statutory funding is usually the same as applying for any other grant funding. If you identify a statutory funding source you will then either need to compete an application or draft a case for support. The same principles about addressing need and SMART objectives apply.

12. What level of reserves do funders typically expect to see for CICs?

Most funders consider a prudent level of unrestricted reserves to be above 3 months running costs but below 12 months. This is the same for charities, CICs and constituted community groups.

13. What's the essential for newly incorporated CICs and organisations to include on forms?

It is obviously important to provide whatever the funder asks for.

Other than that, it is important to clarify what need your project is addressing and what the impact and outcomes will be and exactly how much it will cost.

14. What grants are best for new not-for-profits?

It is generally harder to secure funding for a new non-profit organisation.

You can improve your chances by only applying for a small amount or perhaps trying a partnership funding bid joining with a well-established non-profit. If a funder states that they don't support new organisations then don't waste your time or theirs and move on to another funder.