

## 10 Top Tips for Completing a Funding Application

Many RDA Groups will have spent many hours completing forms for grants. As we all know, there are no absolutes in this process, but in our opinion, there are some easy things to consider when completing an application. The following are our top 10, based on experience both of applying for grants and (perhaps more importantly) as a donor to RDA Groups.

**1. Make sure your application fits the criteria.**

We recognise that it is frustrating when grants are only available for specific purpose – such as growth or development. However, applying for a grant for something that does not meet the requirements of the funder is always going to fail. Make sure you read and understand the criteria and if you're not sure call the funder and ask; most will be very happy to talk it through with you. 10 minutes on the phone establishing that your project doesn't fit will save everyone time and effort; but 10 minutes talking through a project that does fit will put your project into their mind before they have even seen the application.

**2. Make sure the numbers add up.**

Believe it or not, most funders look closely at the figures! So some golden rules: Make sure you are applying for a realistic sum. If you are trying to buy a horse £100 or £20,000 are both likely to be dismissed; include any evidence that you have for costs – a builder's quote or a brochure price for equipment show you have done your homework; Make sure any budget adds up; Make sure your accounts are presented and clear.

**3. Providing too much information.**

Although the application form for many grants gives you the opportunity to add extra pages think very carefully about this. The total pile of applications for the RDA Telegraph grants in 2012 was 11 inches thick – a lot of reading. It means that those applications, which were succinct and got their message across quickly are more likely to succeed. If you do need to add extra pages, make sure you continue to keep it as brief as possible. The RDA outcomes tracker results enables information to be replied quickly and easily in clear concise figures enabling you to save precious words trying to explain how RDA helps riders.

**4. Answer the Question**

This sounds really obvious, but make sure the answer is obvious. The funder is asking each question for a specific reason so make sure you give a straight answer. For our Telegraph grants the more successful Groups were those that clearly stated the answer to the question at the start of an answer. Make sure you answer the actual question and not what you think you want to say.

**5. Avoid jargon and buzz words.**

All charities may be tempted to throw in a few of the latest buzz words or phrases. Even though we think RDA probably does less of this than many, remember that we have our own jargon. For example, not everyone will understand what a "weight-bearing horse" is, so make sure you explain what things mean.

**6. Read the small print carefully**

Make sure you read all of the detail in the background documents. There is a lot of subtle help in there that explains what the funder is looking for. In the background documents for the Telegraph application, the word "evidence" is used 5 times; so inevitably, those Groups which provided evidence did better. This also means you may pick out the key words, which you can then use in your answers.

**7. "So what?" and Can you prove it?**

Make sure that your applications explain what you will achieve and not just, what the numbers will be. If a project means you, will have 10 more riders – so what? Try to explain why that is important and what the effect on those 10 lives will be. Again, the tracker can be a great tool for this!

Back up any claims, ideally with evidence, or, if not with a clearly reasoned argument. If you are buying a mechanical horse, how will this allow you to work with more people? It may be the logic that says you have double the number of school children as some will be able to use it while others ride real horses, or it may be based on evidence of other Groups.

**8. Check it.**

Make sure that you have carefully checked the form and, ideally, ask someone to proof read the application that has little knowledge of the project you are applying for funding.

**9. Call the funder first**

It may seem unnecessary, but a telephone conversation with the person you are applying to can really help. First, it ensures that this is the right thing for you to apply for and, if it is it outs your project into their minds. It is also another great way to get advice about what you need to be saying.

**10. Small but important**

There are a number of small points that we picked up which we felt were important. They may seem trivial, but they might make the difference between a good and an excellent application:

- a) Typed is best, but if you need to complete form longhand, practise on a spare copy first to make sure you have enough space
- b) Think about formatting – using bold type or bullet points for the key points really helps draw attention to them
- c) Avoid writing in capitals; especially when typed
- d) Spell check the application
- e) Avoid retyping the application form
- f) If you are typing the application, stick to the same font and same font size
- g) Try not to staple things together – often the plan will be photocopied and staples make this harder
- h) Photos are good – if you can put in a relevant, colour photo, it brightens the form and may make your application more memorable
- i) Don't include more than you are asked for.