



Funding advice.

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Funding Advice



Step one .

In advance of your application it is important to identify and build your Project Funding Team. Include and involve your team members from and throughout the early stages of the application and project. A successful application will come from the result of the combined efforts of your team. Give your application a community face. Think about whether your application would benefit input and backing from community groups, schools, parent and teachers associations, staff and parents. More often than not involving the community would demonstrate to your funders that this is backed by the community, that there is a requirement for the project and that you have done your research. Try to gather support material from those who wish to participate, support or will benefit from the project. It is important

to include all those who have views in your submission and make sure you have their agreement to do so. Remember the funding body may want to talk to the stakeholders during implementation of your project, it's good to advise your stakeholders that they may be contacted. Most funding organisations will expect as part of your submission to include a credible and achievable project plan. Highlight if any of your stakeholders has valid experience in delivering similar projects, try to include case studies in your application and make sure this is highlighted.



Step two.

When you've made the decision to develop your play area(s), it may be tempting to dive straight into building your funding plan. However, if your project plan relies on obtaining external funding, one of the first things you'll need to decide is which funder to approach. Funding procurement can be a long, involved and complicated process. Plan well ahead before you need the funding in place for, many funders can take several months before giving a decision. Give yourself as much extra time as possible and try to build in an allowance for delay.

Researching, identifying, evaluating and comparing avenues of funding may become an arduous task. However, this will be time well spent. Not all of the funding organisations you consider will be suitable for your specific needs but applying to an appropriate source from good research will increase your chances of success. When you are at the stage of comparing your selected funding organisations, you will then need to consider issues such as the size of grants they may award. Funders may offer various types of funding, Award Grants, Matched Funding or Revenue or Capital Projects.

Try and base your decision on whether the organisation would see your project proposal as an addition to their funding portfolio. Take the time to learn their key policies; don't choose the organisation that appears to offer the largest grants or the one that is located nearest to you. At this stage it may be a good idea to identify if your project can be broken down into smaller sub-projects. This will allow greater flexibility in your overall project and may open the door to applying for different grants to suit multiple play areas.

Make sure you carefully read through the "small print" of your applications agreements, terms and conditions and any other related documents. This may highlight aspects of your application you have not considered and potentially avoid your application being ruled out for failing to meet certain criteria and regulations.





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Step three.

Having selected an appropriate funding source for your project, you will then need to focus on creating a funding plan for your application. The research you will already have carried out should mean that you will have good knowledge for the main elements that your plan will include.

Also, your research on finding a suitable funder should help you to build your application using the correct tone, language and certain aspects of your project that your funder may relate to.

Each application must be tailored to the requirements of the funder, different applications may benefit from different emphases but as a generic rule there needs to be a clear, thought through structure to your plan with good reference and support material. Try to avoid sending a circular appeal to a host of different funding organisations.

Try and present your application in a clear easy to read format, use specific headings and, where necessary, bullet.



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Approach similar organisations who have bid successfully and learn from their experience.

- Talk to your Local Education Authority. Can they offer advice on submission completion?
- When considering case studies, try to identify the key factors that helped specific bids to succeed. Can these be adopted in your plan?
- Collate the evidence, support material and inputs of all those involved.
- Check your work; does the content of your application support the plan?
- Make sure you know exactly how much funding you need.
- Generate a working draft of your Funding Plan – include your team.
- Distribute some of the project work load, involve your team.
- Do your research.
- If forms are not required for your application, keep the structure of your proposal clear and concise.
- Align the content to the criteria and structure your application towards the funding body you are applying to.
- Consider what else you can add to make your application stand out.
- Remember to include forecasted costs for maintenance and ongoing development. Think beyond the funding, and how the work will continue after current funding ends.
- Circulate for comment within your team and have the final draft proof read.



Step four.

Outline your overall plan and your vision for play environments. Try to describe the project and what it will deliver as clearly and concisely as possible. What are its unique selling points, what will happen and when? Demonstrate the needs of your project involving the site and community. Bring out 'punchy' facts, for example 'x' no. of children in the area has lacked 'y' facility/service for 'z' no. of years. Consider the requirements and priorities of the funding body. Summarise the scope and key elements of the project to be funded. Highlight the key points of your Funding Plan. Define the benefits, both to the children and the community.

Try to relate these to the funder's interests. How many children will directly benefit and in what way? Demonstrate why should they award funding to you? Play Devil's Advocate! Identify the evidence to support your application and project. Offer to talk to or meet with the funding body so they can gain a better understanding of their requirements and priorities. Be clear about why you need the money and what it is needed for. Is it for a specific piece of play equipment or service? How long do you want the grant for? Many funders like to see specific unit cost benefits, e.g. a grant of £x will pay for y people to do z Summary: end off by summarising how a grant or donation will make a real difference for children and/or the community.

After having created your project plan review where you ended up and compare this to your original plan. Does your proposal continue to represent a clear picture of where you want the project to go? Make sure your project ambitions have not evolved into something which may not suit your funder. Before you submit your proposal, review your plan, check your sums and discuss the project as it stands with your team. Try to have the plan looked over by both stakeholders and proofreaders.

Submit your project when you are sure it's ready!



Step five.

Not all funding bodies make decisions in the same way or within the same timetable, some funders have defined notification periods of awards. By the time you submit your application, you should have a feel for when you are likely to know the outcome of your application. Keep your team, stakeholders and community aware of progress and notify them of any changes to the decision making timescales. Consider setting up an information point through a website and remember your local press are always looking for editorial, try to use them as a platform. If you are successful in your bid and awarded funding from an external body, additional fundraising will often be required (especially if matched funding is being used). Try to set targets for additional fundraising and then schedule your fundraising efforts throughout the year and across the project timescales. Again try to involve your local schools and community groups.



Step six .

If your funding application has been successful, celebrate the news with all those who have been involved but get your project team focused on implementation. Let everyone know both how far you have come and how far you still have to go. Identify a point of contact within your funding organisation and consider inviting them on to your project team.

Try to involve the community as much as possible and even local press; your funder will appreciate good news stories raising their profile.

Continue to update them and report back on how their money has been spent with key stage completions throughout the project. Perhaps invite them to see your project on site or to any event you may be planning. If your funder has agreed try to ensure that all work that you produce includes their logo.

Try to keep the funder up to date with any development and make sure to make the funder aware of any problems that may occur, or if you want to make any changes to the project. This is vital towards your relationship with your funder as you may need continuance funding for this or a different area of work. Try to communicate good and bad news where and when applicable, this will demonstrate that you are aware of and on top of the project.

When the project is complete, celebrate by holding an opening event and involve the media as much as possible. Ask your school and community to get involved and make it an event to remember.

