

The 10 Golden rules of applying for Grants:

1. Keep yourself informed about which grants are available

You cannot apply for a grant if you are unaware of its existence! Grants are constantly being introduced but there is no system, which lets you know automatically. You have to keep yourself informed.

2. Do not start your Project before you make the Application

If you start a project and then apply for a grant to help complete it your application will certainly fail. Not unreasonably the awarding body will take the view that by starting the project without a grant you must have had sufficient funds to complete it without assistance. Grants are only given for projects, which need them in order to go ahead.

3. Make sure your application is in respect of a Project

Usually, grants are given for specific projects, not for the normal organic growth of a business. If, for example, you need new equipment to launch a product, make sure your application emphasises the Project, not the equipment. State the advantages of the Project's success (for example, it will safeguard or create jobs) and explain that the purchase of the equipment is a pre-requisite for that success.

4. Apply as soon as possible

The chances of a successful application are always highest just after a scheme is launched. That is when there is the most money "in the pot", and it's also the time when those administering the scheme are keenest to get applications in and grants awarded. Competition is likely to be less fierce. Try to keep an eye on new scheme launches and get in early!

5. Write your application proposal to match the Awarding Body's objectives

We don't mean that you should be untruthful or misleading in your application, but it should show your proposals in the best possible light. Make sure you mention the benefits the project will bring. These benefits should fit in with the objectives of the awarding body and the grant scheme itself. If there are benefits to others, such as the local community, or the country in the form of potential exports, for example, make sure these are included.

6. Use your Imagination!

Again we don't mean you should be untruthful or make things up! By using your imagination we mean you should consider all the consequences of your project. In your mind it may be a project to increase revenue and profits, but that is not the way to make a grant application. Will you create employment opportunities? Will your staff need retraining? Could you use help in marketing? Are larger premises required? Will the project create export potential? Can you develop the project in a depressed or "special area"? By thinking in these terms you could find you are eligible for several grants.

7. Have a Business Plan.

Most grant applications require the submission of a Business Plan. You may have one already written, perhaps to raise bank finance. Alter the Plan slightly to emphasise the project and its importance to your company.

8. Demonstrate that you cannot proceed without a Grant

It is a pre-requisite with most schemes that the project be dependent on grant funds in order that it proceeds. This is not unreasonable since those who will donate the monies have a duty to ensure it is spent in the public interest. You will therefore need to show the Project is dependent on the grant being made.

9. Make sure you have matching funds available

It is extremely rare for a grant to finance 100% of the costs of any project. Typically nowadays a grant will contribute 15% - 50% of the total finance required. Those making the decision about the grant are spending public money. They have a duty to ensure it is spent wisely and they will need to be absolutely convinced that you have, or can raise from other sources, the balance required.

10. Talk to the Awarding Body before you apply

Make personal contact with an individual responsible for administering the scheme. This has a number of advantages - you will be given advice on whether it is worth while your applying, before you start spending time and money on making the application; you may get some help and advice on completing the application form; you may get an "insight" into how you should shape your application and, finally, as in any business situation it is helpful if you can strike a good personal relationship.