



## **VAN Web Briefing**

### **Increasing your chances of Grant Success**

Not every community group will apply for some form of grant funding. But for those that do, one common mistake made by many grant-seekers is that they limit where they look for financial support. The reality is that many groups underestimate their own enormous contribution to the communities in which they operate.

When your organisation is looking for funds it pays to take a wide and generous view of your operations. Thinking broadly about your activities, your members and supporters could make you eligible to apply for many more grants from governments, foundations, philanthropic organisations and councils. Organisations that take a broader or more lateral view of the overall benefits they produce in the local community will open up a whole new range of funding options.

Traditionally, sports clubs tend to look for funding from sports funders, health bodies tend to seek funding from health departments and so it goes. The reality is that many groups underestimate their own enormous contribution to the communities in which they operate.

#### **Think again - what else do you achieve?**

Another way of looking at it, is to think about what other important things your organisation actually achieves. For example, it can easily be shown that you work to (for example):

- Build community spirit through providing a rallying point for an otherwise disparate community. The organisation offers a range of community events and activities such as dances, games nights, weekends away and day trips to places of interest.
- Provide opportunities for young people in an area of low employment -e.g. offering supervised training sessions builds self esteem and team-work by involving all members in some aspects of the play and competition.
- Maintain and develop community facilities by keeping venues in excellent working condition
- Provide opportunities for people in far-flung rural areas that might not normally have access to any leisure facilities, opportunities for residents from non-English speaking backgrounds as well as programmes that offer coaching and participation for children with disabilities.

In other words, your organisation is much more important to the community than they (or you) probably previously imagined. It is these additional community benefits that will extend their opportunity to access the grant-making programs of many more Government and philanthropic organisations.

## **An example**

Now let's think about a hypothetical situation. A regional choir has decided to take its Under 16 group to compete in a national competition. Many of the young people have never been away from their region, in fact some have never been to their capital city. The trip itinerary includes spending some time touring the city and some of its major attractions. It is hoped, of course, that the trip will result in a gold medal performance by the team but there may be other spin-offs.

Some of the young people may have their eyes opened to other possibilities other than in the local area. It may even provide them with the impetus to stay at school and complete their education. In other words, the trip aims to redress disadvantage in the local area by providing increased opportunities for young people. Your organisation will fundraise to help pay for the trip but you are not hopeful that the amount raised will be anywhere near the amount required for the trip.

First thoughts limit the search to finding arts grants. This results in disappointingly a few grants for which your organisation is eligible. However, extending the search to include the categories of Youth and Health, Community and Disability has increased the number of potential grants to 89.

Depending on the sort of program or project you are wishing to fund, instead of just searching the usual sources and money just for 'arts', you could be eligible for grants under other categories e.g. Youth; Regional Development; Health, Community and Disability; and Environment, Conservation and Heritage categories.

## **Think outside the square!**

Reflect on the additional benefits your club or society offers. If your club is amateur dramatic society, your primary interest category is Arts and Culture. Think about the other benefits that you offer. You may work with the local schools to give drama classes to students, you may have a policy of including disabled actors or put on plays written in other languages. Or you might have a program where part of your season is devoted to providing entertainment for elderly people in your community. This will allow you to search for grants under the ethnic and multicultural and the Older People's interest groups

It's actually true that strong local organisations contribute to the health of a community and its members, and you will be easily able to find supporting evidence and references to demonstrate the positive benefits your organisation generates in your community. Think about the gaps that would occur in your community if your club no longer existed. What would happen to the venues you practice or perform in, the kids who come in to train each night, the retired people who coach, the local businesses who supply your canteen and equipment?

Try to think outside the square, think of the bigger picture, actually look at what you do and the "add-on" value for the community. How do your activities help change your community for the better - it is not just about arts or community - it is about changing behaviour, supporting healthy minds/healthy lives, encouraging children to take up build their self-esteem through learning co-operative and positive team-work and building their decision-making capacities.

## **Extending what you do for a different audience**

So far, we have assumed that your grant-seeking has been extended to include applying for grants that will support the positive side-effects of your work. The next step is to see how far you can extend your areas of common interest with the grant-makers' by customising or extending what you do for a different audience.

You may consider what new audiences or new groups of players you could involve in the club's activities. Could you get credit and funding from reaching out to different groups?

- Working with older people
- Working with people from other cultures
- Working with women

Or the same group viewed in different ways?

- Working with young people at risk of mental illness

There are also things that you can do with your current membership that could bring you into the area of interest of other sets of grant-makers. Does your club have a policy on:

- Reducing alcohol use?
- Reducing injury?
- Removing discrimination against gay and lesbian people?
- Promoting healthy eating through participation?
- Promoting racial tolerance?

## **Oh, but won't this make more work for us..?**

There are groups interested in funding all these things, and they may be able to help you. Diversifying your activities may mean that you have to use up more of your resources on drafting applications, planning and managing programs, running evaluations, reporting. You could have to carry out special outreach programs, advertise, or organise.

You should also ask yourself, though, whether these aren't things that it's worth doing anyway. A wider audience is a good thing in itself, and may pay for itself over time in increased subscriptions or donations.

You may be able to link up with other groups with particular interests in the area of the grant and put in a joint submission. Again, building links with other interest groups is an excellent way of building your membership and subscription base and can open up many new possibilities.

At times it can also double your chance of gaining funding for the joint projection. A joint submission between an art society and a regional tourism association could see both access funds for a project that may not have got off the ground if they tried to do without each other's support.

The secret to successful grant-seeking is twofold -careful execution of projects, yes, but also lateral thinking about possibilities.