

How to Guide

# Writing Better Fundraising Applications

A practical guide

Fourth edition



*Dear Sir*  
*Dear Sir*

Mike Eastwood &  
Michael Norton

DSC

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DIRECTORY OF SOCIAL CHANGE

Published by the Directory of Social Change  
(Registered Charity no. 800517 in England and Wales)  
Head office: Resource for London, 356 Holloway Rd, London, N7 6PA  
Northern office: Suite 103, 1 Old Hall Street, Liverpool L3 9HG

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First published 1992  
Second edition 1997  
Third edition 2002  
Reprinted 2006  
Fourth edition 2010  
Reprinted 2012 and 2015

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ISBN 978 1 903991 97 8

**British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data**

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Cover and text design by Kate Bass  
Typeset by Keystroke, Wolverhampton  
Printed and bound by Page Bros, Norwich

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# Acknowledgements

We are immensely grateful to Dave Casson for his excellent work on this fourth edition. He has successfully brought his wealth of fundraising experience to bear and the book is all the better for it.

# Preface

This is the third edition of the practical guide on how to write good fundraising applications. Since it was first printed in 1992 many funders have come (some have gone), but the key elements of a good fundraising application remain the same. Therefore, the key elements of this book have stayed the same.

The book covers much more than the actual writing of an application. It shows you what information you will need to have available before you put pen to paper – or finger to keyboard – and how to get it. Good fundraising isn't simply about bashing out a stream of letters to possible funders. You need to build your credibility, develop good ideas, marshal the facts and figures you will need, and construct a realistic budget which will not leave you short of money at the end of the day. This book looks at all of that. It also suggests some things to do once you have sent your application off.

Writing applications is an art, not a science. There is no 'identikit' for making a good application. What works well for one organisation, or one fundraiser, may not work for another. So if your current efforts are bringing you the desired results, there is no need to change your style or approach to match the advice given in this book. But there are general lessons which are well worth learning, and it will almost always be possible for anyone to write a better fundraising application.

A good application will not in itself lead to fundraising success. Donors want to know that you are a successful organisation and are able to spend your money cost-effectively on a good project. It is your work they are paying for, not a nicely written and prettily presented proposal. But a good application is one part – and an important part – of a successful fundraising approach.

Occasionally, and this is particularly the case with grants from statutory sources and the National Lottery, you will need to complete an application form. The same principles apply as for writing an application; you simply have less freedom as you are restricted to keeping within the structure of the application form. And you may find that you have to provide a lot more detailed information.

Finally, don't give up easily. Just because you are turned down once does not automatically mean that the application was poor, or the project is unfundable. Learn any lessons you can, and keep at it. Even the best fundraiser doesn't get money every time.

Good luck!

Michael Norton and Mike Eastwood

# About the authors

## **Mike Eastwood**

Mike Eastwood is currently Diocesan Secretary in the diocese of Liverpool and Director of Operations for Liverpool Cathedral. He is also a trustee of Merseyside Community Foundation and the Church Urban Fund.

Mike was chief executive of the Directory of Social Change from 1995 to 2001, chair of trustees for the National Association for Voluntary and Community Action, a member of the Advisory Council to the Charities Aid Foundation and a trustee for Liverpool Council for Social Service.

Mike is author of two of DSC's publications: *The Charity Trustee's Handbook* and *Writing Better Fundraising Applications*.

## **Michael Norton**

Michael is founder of the Centre for Innovation in Voluntary Action (CIVA) through which he is currently promoting and supporting a number of projects including MyBank, Otesha UK and FoodWorks. He also runs literacy and library programmes in India.

Michael is the founder of the Directory of Social Change and was its chief executive until 1995. He established Changemakers, is a founder of Youthbank UK and founder and trustee of UnLTD. He also helped to set up UnLtd India, and is currently working on parallel initiatives in South Africa and Canada. He received an OBE in 1998 for services to the voluntary sector.

Michael is widely published and author of three of DSC's publications: *The Worldwide Fundraiser's Handbook*, *Writing Better Fundraising Applications* and *The Complete Fundraising Handbook*.





# 1

# Introduction: what makes a good application

## **Fundraising is selling a good idea**

You have a good idea, but not the resources (often money) to make it happen. You therefore need to get those funds or other resources from somewhere. Fundraising is about selling your idea to people who have the means to help you make it happen. You have to make them interested in your ideas. And if they are interested enough, they will want to help you. If you are successful, you will get the money, sponsorship or support in kind that you need.

There are many ways of asking. You can ask directly in person. You might make a presentation at a meeting or to a group of potential supporters. You might use the telephone (a key and vastly underrated fundraising aid). You might fill in an application form (online or on paper) or send a written proposal – by post or email.

In practice, the more direct and more personal your approach, the more likely you are to be successful. Many successful fundraisers comment that when they have persuaded a potential funder to visit the project, they have rarely failed to get a donation.

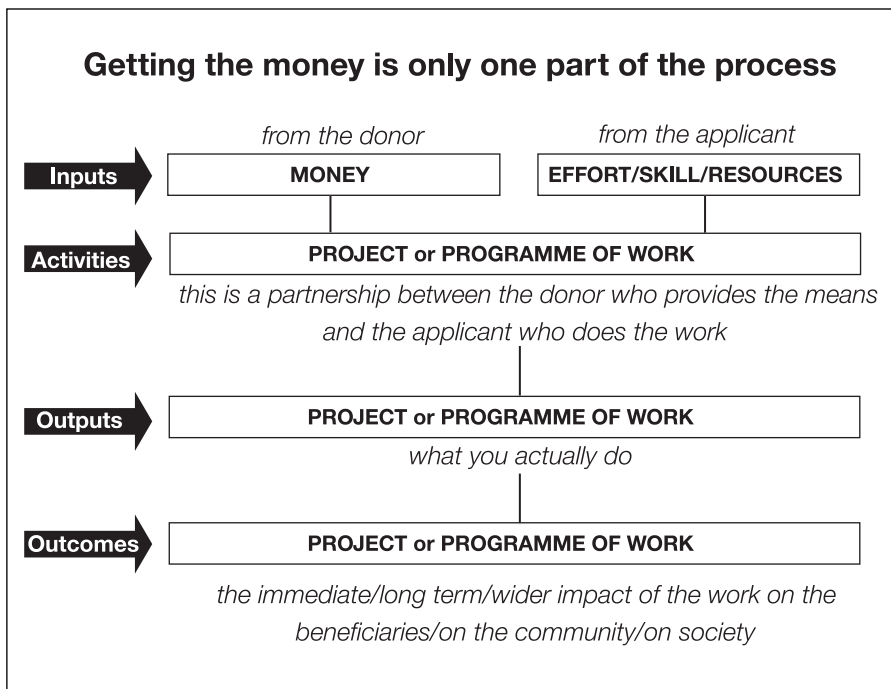
## **The importance of making a good case**

There are many ingredients in a successful fundraising approach: a clear need or problem, a good project, the positive impact of the work, the

involvement of users, the credibility of your organisation, the individuals involved in the work and the interest of the person being approached will all be crucial. But it is important to remember that the approach itself is an opportunity for you to make a good case, state your need and ask for support.

A good proposal may not get a bad project funded. But a poor proposal might considerably reduce your chances of success, however good the project. It is important to put forward the best possible case when you have the opportunity to do so. People fail to do this surprisingly frequently, as some of the worked examples in chapter 10 show.

By improving your proposal you will improve your fundraising effectiveness. You are more likely to raise the money your organisation needs – and you will do this with greater confidence, with less effort and at lower cost.



## The importance of building good relationships

It is very important when putting together proposals to remember that getting the funds is only one part of the process. It can be helpful to view