

# How to Raise Funds for Children's Play

## Introduction

This factsheet is designed to act as a guide to help you to secure funding towards a project on children's play. It covers the essential steps you need to think about in order to get your funding application beyond the funder's wastepaper bin. It also looks at the way you should aim to structure your application and identifies the principal sources of funding available.

The fundraising environment today is increasingly competitive and volatile. It is vital therefore that you know about your potential donor's needs and have a clearly defined strategy: the more planning and homework you do, the better the chances of success.

## The Stages

1. *Plan ahead* as far as possible in advance of when you need the funding: many funders can take several months before giving a decision.
2. *Package your project* :
  - identify the 'USPs' (unique selling points) of your project and your organisation;
  - think about what the real need is : focus on the needs of your beneficiaries, not
  - your organisation - do not just say we need a new play area or piece of equipment, but back up the statement with facts and figures and/or letters of support;
  - consider the outcomes: are they likely to be long-term and sustainable?; also consider the short and medium-term outcomes,
  - define the benefits, both to the children and the community;
  - make sure you know exactly how much funding you need.
  - think beyond the funding, and how the work will continue after current funding ends.
3. *Research*: the single most important factor to successful fundraising. (Please see the section on 'References' to find out the main sources of information.) It is vital to learn:
  - what are the funder's policies and priorities ?

- whether the funder has any special area of current interest?
  - if it will support revenue (salaries) core or capital projects?
  - how much is it likely to give? Use this as a guide for how much to ask for.
  - when is the right time to ask and what format is needed (e.g. application form)?
  - do they accept telephone calls to discuss the application? This can save you a lot of unnecessary time, if you can find out more from an administrator, they are generally quite helpful and you can sometimes get a better steer for the project aim and how much to ask for.
4. *Plan your Proposal* : this means gathering together and organising all your information and then deciding on how you are going to structure your funding proposal.
  5. *Write your Proposal* : you should now be in a position to communicate your messages as clearly as possible. See the section below on structuring an application.
  6. *Maintain Relationships with the Funder*: if they agree to support you, always thank them immediately; keep them informed and report back on how their money has been spent, updating them with key stage completions; invite them to see your work or to any event you may be planning; if it

is part of the agreement, ensure that all work that you produce includes their logo; always alert the funder to any problems that may occur, or if you want to make any changes. This relationship is vital if you are ever to ask the funder for continuance funding for this or a different area of work.

Always bear in mind that funders are looking for a proposal that is very focused and specifically targeted to their needs and priorities. The project should be properly costed and represent value for money. If your project is distinctive and innovative, and if a real sense of commitment and enthusiasm is conveyed in the proposal, then it is more likely to stand out from the crowd.

NB Note that many funders will only give grants to registered charities. Where there is an exception to the rule, you will need to have a written constitution, your own bank account, and audited accounts/annual reports.

### **How to Structure a Funding Application**

There is no magic set formula. Each application must be tailored to the requirements of the funder. Always avoid sending a circular appeal to a host of different funding organisations. And, always complete the application form if they ask for it: if no form is necessary, a rule of thumb is to aim for two sides of A4 (excluding a detailed budget which is generally treated as separate unless otherwise stated). Use specific headings and, where necessary, bullet points to avoid reams of text.

The following provides a suggested framework:

1. *The Issue or Problem or Challenge* : it is good to bring out 'punchy' facts, e.g. 'x' no. of children in the area have lacked 'y' facility/service for 'z' no. of years. It is important to identify the issue you are looking to tackle and, ultimately, what you are asking the money for. Remember, funders respond to causes not organisations.
2. *Your Response*: how you plan to tackle the issue etc. - subject to getting the funding! Be careful of duplication of work – who else is working in the same field?
3. *Your Organisation*: summarise your aims and objectives; your track record and past successes; the type of activities you carry out; and how you operate.
4. *The Project*: describe the project itself and what it will deliver as clearly and concisely as possible. What are its 'USPs' ? What will happen and when?
5. *The Benefits and Outcomes*: relate these to the funder's interests. How many children will directly benefit and in what way? Bring out as many tangible impacts as possible.
6. *Monitoring and Evaluation*: what systems are in place to monitor the project; how will you know if it will be a success? Monitoring is about **measuring** – use specific

benchmarks. Evaluation is primarily about **judgement** – did the project have the desired effect?

7. *Dissemination*: set out how and when you intend to do this, and to whom?
8. *Funding Need*: 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.
9. *The Budget*: make this as clear and unambiguous as possible. Is everything included? Try to avoid terms such as 'salary' and 'overheads'. Don't forget, you can't go back and ask for more!
10. *Summary*: end off by summarising how a grant or donation will make a real difference for children and/or the community.

## General Sources of Funding

Before searching out sources of funding, think creatively and laterally about how your project might be packaged to match the interests of potential funders. A scrapstore, for instance, could be just as attractive to an environmentally-focused funder as to a funder interested in children.

### **Statutory Funds/Local Authorities**

Central government departments and local authorities can give grants to voluntary organisations. Details of information on grants available and application procedures can be obtained from the respective government offices departments and your local council's Chief Executive's department (ask for the local authority funding/grants adviser).

### **European Funding**

There are two areas of funding that may be relevant to children's play: ERDF (European Regional Development Fund) and ESF (European Social Fund). But, be wary that European funding can be very difficult to understand and to access. Projects invariably will require collaboration with European partners - e.g. play projects in other EU Member states, and many will require matched funding. For further information, contact your local authority's European funding officer or your regional Government Office.

### **Companies**

Companies can support voluntary organisations in a variety of ways, ranging from cash donations or sponsorship to gifts in kind. Increasingly today, companies are moving away from pure philanthropy towards community involvement/ community investment. They like to be seen as creating goodwill in the community and also amongst their workforce. They also want to be associated with particular causes that have clear relevance to their business. It is very advisable therefore to do your groundwork before making an approach. The

company's website is often a valuable source of background information. Another tip is to find someone who has a link with the local company to make the approach for you.

### **Individuals**

This is an area that needs a bit of time nurturing the relationship, but once you have someone 'on board' you will normally have a long-term funder dedicated to your cause. Research is the key to success, and it is worth exploiting your organisation's contacts to see who and how they can get funders signed up.

### **Lottery Funders**

If you want to find out about the different grants available the Lottery Funding website allows you to search information on current funding programmes across the UK.

[www.lotteryfunding.org.uk](http://www.lotteryfunding.org.uk)

### **Arts Council**

Whilst there is not a specific priority on projects for children, these may be eligible if they have an arts focus. Funding is for capital projects only, not running costs.

**Tel: 0845 300 6200**

[www.artscouncil.org.uk](http://www.artscouncil.org.uk)

### **Awards For All**

This is a joint Lottery funding programme, designed to help small groups to run projects that will involve people in their community in art, sport and heritage, and projects that promote education, the environment and health in the local community. Grants of

between £300 and £10,000 are awarded in a simple and straightforward way.

**Tel. 0845 600 2040**

[www.awardsforall.org.uk](http://www.awardsforall.org.uk)

### **Big Lottery Fund Children's Play Initiative**

The Children's Play Initiative is a new strategic programme for children's play funded by the Big Lottery Fund. The initiative is made up of three elements:

#### *1. Children's Play programme*

£124 million is allocated to local authorities across England to provide free, local and inclusive play opportunities. Local authorities are invited to work with partners to develop a play strategy and portfolio of projects as the basis for an application for their allocated sum.

#### *2. Playful Ideas Programme*

£16 million is available on an open bidding basis for innovative projects in planning, design or delivery of free play opportunities. The voluntary and community sector is particularly encouraged to apply.

#### *3. Regional support and development programme*

£15 million has been awarded to the National Children's Bureau to establish Play England. Play England will provide information to support applications to either of the above programmes, and offer specific guidance, advice and enabling services to local authority play partnerships working to produce play strategies.

[www.biglotteryfund.org.uk](http://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk)

[www.playengland.org.uk](http://www.playengland.org.uk)

### **Heritage Lottery Fund**

The heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) has a number of grant giving programmes, including Parks for People and Young Roots. Some children's play and playground projects have received HLF funding.

**Tel. 020 7591 6000**

[www.hlf.org.uk](http://www.hlf.org.uk)

### **Sport England**

Children's play activities are not usually considered unless they are sports-based projects that benefit children.

**Tel:08458 508 508**

[www.sportengland.org.uk](http://www.sportengland.org.uk)

### **Charitable Trusts**

There are around 9,000 charitable trusts in the UK, giving out over £1bn. per year. Some operate at a very local level; others are regional and national. Most tend to prefer specific projects, e.g. 'one-off' pieces of work, and not to contribute to ongoing running costs. Competition for grants is extremely high: on average, less than 10% of applications are successful. Detailed research into the trust's policies, priorities and procedures is therefore strongly recommended. Some of the larger charitable trusts that may be relevant for children's play and recreation include:

**BBC Children In Need** (but note the emphasis on disabled and disadvantaged children)

**Tel:020 8576 7788**

[www.bbc.co.uk/pudsey](http://www.bbc.co.uk/pudsey)

**Lloyds TSB Foundation for England & Wales**  
Tel: 0870 411 1223  
[www.lloydstsbfoundations.org.uk](http://www.lloydstsbfoundations.org.uk)

**The Esmée Fairbairn Foundation**  
Tel. 020 7297 4700  
[www.efct.org.uk](http://www.efct.org.uk)

**Tudor Trust**  
An independent grant-making charitable trust which exists to enhance people's quality of life. The majority of grants range between £10,000 and £100,000.  
Tel. 020 7727 8522  
[www.tudortrust.org.uk](http://www.tudortrust.org.uk)

**Bridge House Trust**  
Makes grants in excess of £17 million a year to charitable projects in Greater London.  
Tel: 020 7332 3710  
[www.bridgehousegrants.org.uk](http://www.bridgehousegrants.org.uk)

**O2 Community Fund**  
Awards of up to £1,000 to support local environmental, urban renewal and conservation projects. Funding is available for both groups and individuals.  
[www.o2.com/cr/community\\_fund.asp](http://www.o2.com/cr/community_fund.asp)

## Funding Websites

**Association of Charitable Foundations**  
The UK's national membership and support organisation for grant-making trusts and foundations of all types.  
[www.acf.org.uk](http://www.acf.org.uk)

**Charities Aid Foundation**  
Information on tax-effective giving on the internet.  
[www.cafonline.org](http://www.cafonline.org)

**Government Funding Website**  
An online portal to grants for the voluntary and community sector from government departments.  
[www.governmentfunding.org.uk](http://www.governmentfunding.org.uk)

**Grants Online**  
Access to information on funding opportunities from the European Union, the Government, the Lottery and regional grant-making bodies and trusts.  
[www.grantsonline.org.uk](http://www.grantsonline.org.uk)

**Profunding**  
An online fundraising information resource for charities, voluntary organisations, community groups, local authorities and social enterprises. Subscription only service.  
[www.fundinginformation.org](http://www.fundinginformation.org)

## General Sources of Information

**The Directory of Social Change**  
The DSC provides the UK's largest source of publications, guides and directories for the voluntary sector. Its main publications are:

*The Directory of Grant-Making Trusts* (containing details of over 2,500 trusts)

*A Guide to the Major Trusts* (Volumes 1 & 2)

*A Guide to Local Trusts in Greater London* (versions are also available for the North of England; the South of England; and the Midlands), and  
*The Guide to UK Company Giving*

Tel: 08450 77 77 07

[www.dsc.org.uk](http://www.dsc.org.uk)

**National Association for  
Voluntary and Community  
Action (NAVCA)**

Local associations may have information on local trusts or other sources of funding.

Tel: 0114 278 6636

[www.navca.org.uk](http://www.navca.org.uk)

**National Council for Voluntary  
Organisations**

NCVO provides a range of information and advice for national and local groups.

Tel: 0800 2798 798

[www.ncvo-vol.org.uk](http://www.ncvo-vol.org.uk)

The Children's Play Information Service produces factsheets and student reading lists on a variety of play topics, and can also provide customised reading lists in response to individual requests.

Children's Play Information  
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