Grant Applications – A How To Guide
I am pleased to be able to have this online resource available to the Mount Coot-tha community on my website. The development of this online toolkit is in response to the overwhelming need for schools, sporting and community groups, religious institutions and other organisations to plan, coordinate, write, package and submit a successful grant proposal to secure much needed funding opportunities.

The thought of applying for a grant can be overwhelming for organisations that can’t afford to pay for the services of a professional grant writer. This online resource will cover how to organise a successful grant writing strategy and how to put together a complete proposal package. It’s not as hard as you think!

My office is always available to assist your organisation in any aspect of the grant application process. So let me help you get started in getting the funding your organisation needs.

Hon Steven Miles MP
Member for Mount Coot-tha
Minister for Environment and Heritage Protection
Minister for National Parks and the Great Barrier Reef
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Developing a strategic approach

Grants are a valuable source of money for community organisations – equal to or even greater than amounts raised through fundraising.

However, unlike fundraising, grant money must be spent according to the terms of the grant. Different grant programs offer money for different focuses – capital works, program funding, the purchase of goods or services. Grant rounds also arise in relatively short time frames, meaning that decisions around what to prioritise need to be made quickly.

To gain maximum benefit from grant funds, and to ensure money is spent most effectively in the longer term, community organisations need to develop a culture of leadership around grant applications, including a three to five year plan for how grant money should be spent.
The ‘keeper of the knowledge’

The nature of community organisations is that members and volunteers change over time – for some, like kindergarten parent associations, it may be that the majority of members change every 12 months. For a five year plan to be successful, organisations need a ‘keeper of the knowledge’ – a person who is with the organisation on a long term basis, who has the authority to make decisions on behalf of the organisation.

For many organisations, this person can be a paid employee – for example, a parent association’s fundraising plan can be overseen by the school principal. For organisations which are solely volunteer, someone from the organisation’s executive (chair, secretary, or treasurer) may be appropriate.

Developing a long term strategy

Opportunities to apply for grants tend to arise within short time frames, so decisions about what to apply for and how to spend money need to be made without much lead time.

Having a plan in mind about how money needs to be spent means organisations can fit individual grants into a broader strategy, ensuring best use of funds. Fundraising or other sources of revenue can then be used to fill gaps around grant projects.

Developing a strategic plan can help organisations identify what infrastructure or services they are required to maintain or increase, so can actively pursue funding that will benefit the organisation. Different efforts can then be focused on other essential but non-value adding projects (for example, working bees to repaint buildings.

Five year plans also reflect confidence to the grant giver – regardless of core focus, grant givers want to see that their funds are bettering the community. If an organisation appears to be sustainable and projects considered within long term contexts, funding that organisation is a value for money investment in the community.

Having a number of possible grant projects partly planned means grant applications can be completed in time when grant rounds open.

Information you can prepare ahead of time includes:

- Site plans – have up to date, accurate site plans prepared. Site plans can take some time to draft, and accurate site plans are a critical part of project planning when construction or renovation is involved.

- Rough costings – get some preliminary quotes for projects you’d like to complete within the next 3-5 years. You will need to obtain up to date quotes when preparing a grant application, but having rough costings on hand means you can match projects to grants easily. It’s also worthwhile having a few alternate project costings – for example, what it would cost to complete individual stages of a larger project, or ways you could adapt a project to fit different funding levels.

- Standard answers - most grant applications will ask variations on a few standard questions, for example, ‘What does your organisation do?’ or ‘How does your organisation benefit the community?’

- Having your organisation’s missions, aims, and values clearly written out ahead of time means that you can quickly tailor these answers to specific applications.
Building relationships with your project team

If you build relationships with contractors and other professionals, they can provide project plans and costings in line with the grant funds that are available. For example, your organisation might build relationships with a draughtsman, landscape architect, builder, plumber, and landscaper on team ready to work with.

Project completion time should be non-negotiable, and builders must be aware of and willing to work to strict time timelines.

Always use registered builders to manage risk – not just safety risks, but bigger organisations can often absorb tight timelines if everything doesn’t go to plan (for example, grant money may take longer to be released than expected).

Be aware that project acquittal will require work to be done on a commercial basis – you will need registered plans, relevant forms completed and commercial invoices. Utilise volunteers for grant writing and for other kinds of practical assistance (‘working bees’), but project work should all be paid.

Identify core focuses

Grants usually focus on particular aims or outcomes. For example: sustainability, indigenous education, sun safe outdoor areas, or community inclusion. Many projects can overlap several of these core focuses, so identifying these potential outcomes ahead of time makes it possible to match projects with grants.

For example: It may be that a project to build a new learning centre could match a grant intended for upgrading facilities, but if the new learning centre is for environmental studies or will reduce energy consumption, it could also match grants that fund environment and sustainability.

Stakeholder management

Share strategic plans with the community – consult with community and other stakeholders early so that planning discussions don’t derail time critical projects. The sooner consultation starts, the better.

Identify who or what might pose barriers to growth and development – consult sensitively and thoroughly with these people.

Keep applying!

A grants strategy should recognise that grant money is not a foregone conclusion. Having grant applications in regularly increases the chance of success – and unsuccessful applications offer important knowledge.

When an organisation is successful in obtaining a grant, it’s important to keep looking ahead and continue to apply for relevant grants.
Identifying grants

There are a number of places you can access information about available grants, including government, community and corporate websites.
Government Grants

The Queensland Government publishes a comprehensive grants guide which is updated quarterly. The guide lists grants that are open for applications in the current quarter, and can be downloaded from the Queensland Treasury website. The Queensland Government also has an online search tool listing all grant programs offered.

Grants are offered across a wide range of areas including sports and recreation, environment, community, and housing.

Of particular interest to community groups are the Gambling Community Benefit Fund grants which open four times a year (more info here).

The Federal Government also offers a number of grants to support business and community services. Grants available to assist businesses can be found here, while grants available to community service providers are listed here.

Most Commonwealth grants will not apply to smaller community organisations – but it’s worth checking!

Local government authorities are another source of grant funding, and the Brisbane City Council has a wide range of grant programs available to individuals and community organisations across several project areas.

Tip: Grant programs are often advertised in the media (including social media), particularly for once off programs. Keep an eye on local papers!

Online community resources

Larger community organisations often collate grant information on their websites relating to particular areas, such as sport, arts, or community grants. Community Door is a website from the Queensland Council of Social Services (QCOSS), and it lists a number of grants and funding sources for not for profits and community organisations.

Grant finder websites

Grant finder websites are sites that do the searching for you. Many of these require paid subscriptions.

Most searchable database of grants and funding available to not for profits and community organisations require a paid subscription, but Grant Ready is a free option.

Corporate grant programs

Large companies have an obligation to give back to the wider community, so it’s worth checking out websites for large companies (softdrink manufacturers, transport companies, waste management companies, IT firms etc) to see if they offer grants to community organisations.

There are a wide range of community grants available from corporations – it can be useful to search online for individual companies and browse their websites for grants programs, or use search terms like ‘(company name) corporate responsibility’.

The Australian Parliamentary Library also has a great list of non-government and corporate grants listed here.
Community grants are intended to build community – to make communities healthier, more inclusive, more active, more resilient, friendlier places to live.

When reading a grant application, grant givers want to know how the money they are offering will benefit the community. Facts and figures are important, as are measurable outcomes – but outcomes should demonstrate value to the community, not just to the applying organisation.
Looking through the ‘lens of community’

Sometimes, outcomes that primarily benefit a community organisation have flow on effects that benefit a community – but it’s important to demonstrate this to the grant giver.

It can also be useful to demonstrate a community need or support for the project. You can do this through facts and figures – the ABS is a great resource for all kinds of local statistics. Another way to demonstrate community support is through conducting interviews or surveys.

If your project can link in with established community organisations, systems or processes, this not only demonstrates a community focus - grant givers will have more confidence that your project will result in successful outcomes and would therefore be worth funding!

For example, a school tuckshop run by a parenting association may apply for a capacity building grant to hire a tuckshop convenor full time for a year. The expected outcome of hiring a tuckshop convenor full time might be so that the tuckshop can sell more food and make more money. This is not directly a community benefit: the benefit is to the tuckshop and school parent association.

However, that money may be spent on upgrading school sporting fields, and those fields could be used by local community sporting clubs as well as the school. The community benefits through an increase in access to sporting facilities, leading to better health outcomes and improved social inclusion.
Back it up with facts - where to find numbers

There are many ways you can gather evidence for a grant application, both quantitative (statistics, numbers) and qualitative (experiences).

Both kinds of evidence are useful for supporting a grant application.

**Sources of quantitative evidence include:**
- Your own records: for example, a sporting club could refer to membership figures.
- The Australian Bureau of Statistics
- Reports from government departments or not for profits.

**Sources of qualitative evidence could include:**
- Interviews or surveys
- Media sources – from traditional media or social media.
- Public meetings and forums
- Personal experiences

More information on how to provide strong evidence for a grant application can be found in this fact sheet from the Australian Department of Social Services.

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**The Australian Bureau of Statistics**

*The Australian Bureau of Statistics is a fantastic resource for facts and figures, and it can help a grant application to refer to ABS data.*

To find data relevant to your local region, select ‘Data by Region’ from the right side of the page. You can then navigate through the statistical areas (SAs) provided to find information, from larger areas (SA4) through to smaller, more local areas (SA2). Local government areas can also be selected.

Clicking on ‘view data’ will provide a range of statistical data related to that area.

It’s possible to combine data – for example, comparing the percentage of people over 65 who have access to the internet at home with the number of people over 65 who live in the area could demonstrate the number of older people who might benefit from a project offering internet classes.*
Writing in plain English

When applying for a grant, it’s important to remember that funders usually have hundreds or even thousands of applications to read and consider. For the best chance of success, it’s important to write clearly and concisely.

The goal is to demonstrate the benefit your project will have to its intended audience – how and who it will help. The people who are reading your application need clear information to understand this – not flowery or formal language.

Grant writers who have a professional background in legal or government careers often write great grant proposals – but anyone who can write clearly and to the point can put together a successful application.

Tips for writing

To explain the benefits of your project, you first need to be clear about it yourself. Take some time to think about exactly what you want to say.

The following questions could be useful:

- **Who are you?**  
  *Can you describe your organisation, what you do (or what you want to do), and who you work for or with?*

- **What do you want to do?**  
  *What is your project? Can you describe exactly what you want to build or do or make?*

- **Why do you want to do it?**  
  *What drives your organisation (your mission)? What needs do you want to address with this project?*

- **What do you expect to achieve?**  
  *What outcomes do you expect from this project, and who will you be helping?*

- **How much will it cost?**  
  *Have you sought more than one quote for the work you need done? Are your quotes reasonable?*

- **How much money are you asking for?**  
  *The full cost of the project, or part?*

- **How much will you contribute?**  
  *Will you contribute some of the costs, or will your contribution be in kind? Who else will contribute to the project?*

- **How long will it take to complete, and when will you need to start?**

This is the information you need to communicate in your grant application – so having the answers clear in your mind is the first step.
Dot points can help you keep things simple – and you can use dot points in your application, too. Choose straightforward language as word counts can be quite restrictive. Grant funders do this deliberately: they have many applications to read, and they don’t want to spend a lot of time reading every proposal.

**Example:**

*Our organisation expects that we will be able to complete the project by December 31st.*

*Better:*

*We expect to complete the project by December 31st.*

*Better still:*

*We will complete the project by December 31st.*

*Not only is this sentence the most direct, it’s also confidence inspiring – ‘will’ says you have a plan, and you’re going to follow it.*

Keep your sentences short – on average, sentences shouldn’t be any longer than 15-20 words. Consider breaking long sentences into two or more shorter sentences.

Use active voice rather than passive where possible.

Sometimes it’s tempting to use the passive voice because it sounds more formal, but it uses more words and is less clear than active voice. Active voice also sounds more confident – and confidence is important when asking for money!

Passive voice is not wrong – but when writing grant applications, active voice results in clearer communication.

**In active voice, someone does something. It’s a direct, punchy way to write.**

*For example: ‘We will build a new facility.’*

*Passive voice is the other way around: something is done by someone.*

*For example: ‘A new facility will be built by us.’*
Don’t be afraid to use ‘you’ and ‘we’.

A grant application is not an academic essay, it’s a request for money. ‘You’ and ‘we’ are clear and concise – and personal. It can help to sound real: the people reading your application are real people, and are often members of the community.

Avoid jargon.

Use technical terms when required, but remember that the grant funder may not have the same technical background as you. You may need to provide technical details to explain your project, but grant funders are more interested in how your project will benefit your community.

Be positive.

Is this grant critical to the future of your organisation? Instead of saying, ‘Without this project, we can’t continue,’ try ‘This project will ensure our future sustainability.’

Avoid using verbs or adjectives as nouns.

For example, instead of writing ‘we came to the decision that...’ you could say ‘we decided that...’ – it’s simpler and to the point.

Use lists.

Dot points are an acceptable way to communicate information in a grant application – and they can help you stay within the word limit. Dot points can be full sentences, or fragments – just be consistent, don’t mix and match.

If you write a dot point list, the sentence leading in should end with a colon:
• Your list might contain full sentences, finished with a full stop.

Another option for a dot point list involves sentence fragments:
• start in lowercase
• continue with fragments
• complete the list with a full stop.
Use precise language, and ensure your grammar and punctuation are accurate. Ask someone else to proof read your application – and if possible, print a hard copy for proof reading. You may find errors in printed material that you don’t notice on a screen.

Organise your information so that important information is easy to find. Depending on the information you want to communicate, there are different ways to structure your writing. Two models which can be useful when applying for grants are the inverted triangle and the problem-cause-solution models.

**Inverted triangle:**

Put the most important information first, followed by the next most important, and so on. The idea is that if a person only reads the first two or three paragraphs, they will have read the critical information.

**Problem-cause-solution:**

State the problem, state the cause, and offer the solution – which of course is your project! For example:

‘Children waiting to go in to class get wet during rainy weather because there is no awning over the verandah. A new awning would keep them dry, and fewer children would get sick.’

Remember that although good writing matters, the most important aspect of grant writing is to communicate clearly. A polished document written by a professional grant writer should contain all the information a grant funder needs to make a decision, but an application written in plain English can contain exactly the same information.¹

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¹ Information adapted from ‘Plain English: Good Practice Guide’

Some final tips
• Before you even start, check that you’re eligible to apply – if you’re not sure, get in touch with the grant giver first. Some grants are only open to organisations, not individuals; though individuals can be sponsored (‘auspiced’) by an organisation.

• Make sure you allow enough time to complete the application, and check that your application is tailored to the individual grant.

• Ensure you attach any supporting documents – and if you need to supply a budget, make sure your figures are accurate.

• Keep to the word count: word counts exist for a reason.

• Keep a record of your application in case something goes awry, but also so you can refer back to it later. Past applications, whether successful or not, help build future success.

Further reading

The [Queensland Government’s Business and Industry Portal](#) provides information for individuals, business and community groups on how to apply for grants.

The [Funding Centre](#) also provides a good template for how to undertake a grant application. The template details each major stage in the application process, and a checklist for organisations to look at prior to commencing their application.

[Youth Central](#), an initiative of the Victorian Government, provides tips for writing grant applications, including, a step-by-step procedure to follow in the application process.

The [Australian Government’s Department of Social Services](#) provides support for developing and submitting a grants application. While the information is predominately referring to Social Services grants, [this page](#) does provides generally helpful information regarding preparation of the application, guidance on how to address selection criteria and relevant financial information.
List of recent and regular grants

The following is a list of a number of grants which open regularly, or have been awarded within the last two years and may be offered again in future.

Community Benefit Fund Grants

Of particular interest to many community organisations is the Gambling Community Benefit Fund grants, which are offered four times a year (closing dates in February, May, August and November) and can be applied to a broad range of projects from $500 to $35,000.

Tip: The GCBF staff are always happy to talk through the application process with you, or offer feedback on applications. Get in touch with them on 07 3247 4284 (or freecall 1800 633 619 if you’re outside Brisbane), or email cbf@justice.qld.gov.au.

Information about the Gambling Community Benefit Fund grants, along with the online application form, can be found here.

Other grants related to community organisations can be found through the Department of Communities website.

The following grants are also relevant to community organisations. Many of these grant rounds open annually, so it’s worth checking periodically to find out when these grants re-open for applications.

Economic Participation Grants

Economic Participation Grants help local government and non-government organisations deliver projects that support economic independence and participation for Queenslanders from culturally diverse backgrounds. In particular, grants aim to support newly arrived immigrants and humanitarian entrants.

The 2014/15 grant round provided 17 grants of amounts ranging between $30,000 and $150,000 to projects to be held between 1 July 2015 and 30 June 2017.

The timeline for the next funding round has not been finalised. Once determined, it will be published on the website of the Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services.

To receive information on the grant programs, interested parties are advised to register by filling out this online form.

Celebrating Multicultural Queensland Grants Program

The Celebrating Multicultural Queensland grants program funds initiatives that celebrate and promote Queensland’s multicultural identity, increase community awareness of benefits of multiculturalism, foster community cohesion, and support equal access to opportunities by people from diverse cultural backgrounds.

The 2015-16 grants will allocate funding to diverse multicultural events and needs based projects across Queensland that align with the purpose of the grants program. A total of $1,000,000 is available for events and projects to be held within the 2016 calendar year.

Funding will be allocated in 3 categories:

- Signature events - maximum grant of $20,000 per event
- Cultural events - maximum grant of $10,000 per event
- Multicultural projects - maximum grant of $25,000 per project.
Show Societies Grant

The Show Societies Grant Program provides state government funding to show societies towards the cost of running agricultural shows.

For 1 July 2014 to 30 June 2015, the program had funding allocation of $2 million.

For more information, interested groups are directed to email the Department of Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning at: lgfundingunit@dlgp.qld.gov.au or 07 3452 6725.

Litter and Illegal Dumping Community and Industry Partnership Program

The Litter and Illegal Dumping Community and Industry Partnership Program aims to help community and industry stakeholders tackle these issues through activities that change behaviour.

Single eligible organisations can seek up to $50,000.

Proposals from two or more organisations may seek up to $100,000.

Sports Grants

There are a number of grants available for community organisations involved in sports through the Get In The Game grants, including:

- **Get Out, Get Active** – aimed at involving more girls and women in sport
- **Young Athletes Travel Subsidy**
- **Get Going Clubs** – funding to help clubs grow
- **Get Playing Places and Spaces** – funding to improve facilities
- **Get Playing Plus** – new or major upgrade to an existing place or space that supports participation in sport and recreation activities
- **Get Started Vouchers** – funding to help young people participate

The Get In The Game grants involve a number of funding rounds spread across three years – for more information, see: https://www.qld.gov.au/recreation/sports/funding/getinthegame/

Lord Mayor's Suburban Initiative Fund

The Lord Mayor’s Suburban Initiative Fund provides a grant of $250 up to a maximum of $10,000.

The projects must contribute to the Brisbane Vision by helping to achieve the aspiration to be a friendly and safe, active and healthy, clean and green or vibrant and creative city.

Eligible projects include projects such as:

- Community events including Australia Day ceremonies, fetes and those events that charge an entry fee, for example fundraiser with a cover charge and festivals with a site entry fee.
- Equipment hired for the purpose of a community event.
- Community facility improvements and equipment.
- Funding towards community sporting organisations equipment and activities within the Ward.

Health and Physical Activity Grants

The Health and Physical Activity Grant provides funding of between $5,000 up to $20,000 for local non-profit community groups who actively increase participation in community sport, recreation and physical activity in Brisbane.
Community Development and Capacity Building Grants
The Community Development and Capacity Building Grant provides funding of between $2,000 up to $10,000 for local non-profit groups that:

- Increase community identity and connections.
- Increase social inclusion.
- Build innovative and effective responses to emerging community needs and social issues.
- Increase the skills, knowledge and understanding within the community sector to respond to community issues and needs.

Men’s Shed Grants Program
The Men’s Shed Grants Program provides funding from $2,000 to $20,000 for Men’s Shed programs in Brisbane.
A list of Men’s Shed groups in Brisbane can be located on the Australian Men’s Shed Association website.

Community Sport Clubs Grant Program
The Community Sport Clubs Grant Program provides funding of up to $10,000 for sports clubs.
The program is offered in three categories:

- Community facility upgrade.

Access and Inclusion Community Partnership Program
The Access and Inclusion Community Partnership Program provides funding from $2,000 up to $50,000 to incorporated not-for-profit organisations, or unincorporated associations under the auspices of an incorporated not-for-profit organisation.

Partnering for Public Netball Courts Program
The Partnering for Public Netball Courts Program provides financial assistance to community netball clubs to construct new, or upgrade existing netball facilities for community use.
The funding is available for up to 50% of the total eligible cost, to a maximum funding amount of $50,000 per court.

Community Support Funding Program
The Community Support Funding Program provides funding to community groups experiencing financial hardship, or, providers of affordable housing in Brisbane.
The program is run once a year.