Successful fundraising is not just a matter of luck or who you know. A well-written application is central to your chances of success.

This new fourth edition explores the changing fundraising climate. It examines what today’s funders are looking for and explains developments in application processes and requirements, including the move towards funding outcomes rather than just a charity’s activities. It shows you:

- how to write a really good application
- how to cost a project
- how to improve your communication skills.

This best-selling handbook will help you produce punchy and effective applications that get results.

“The best book I’ve read on fundraising applications, indispensable.”
Rebecca Bentham, Fundraiser, Liverpool Cathedral

Mike Eastwood & Michael Norton
How to Guide

Writing Better Fundraising Applications

Fourth edition

Mike Eastwood & Michael Norton

DIRECTORY OF SOCIAL CHANGE
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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.

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.

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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
In our digital world, fundraising emails are an increasingly effective way to engage with current donors and connect with new ones. Here are five principles (with examples) to guide you in composing the best fundraising emails: 1. Write a Compelling Subject Line. The subject line has only one purpose, and that is to make your users open the message. Avoid listing dates, times and places in that line, and instead think in terms of the reader’s curiosity and self-interest. Results 1-24 of 2798 for search term “writing better fundraising applications”. Composing a fundraising request by means of writing a fundraising letter, is not a difficult task. However, it is important. If you want to successfully raise few dollars for your organization, then writing an effective donation or a fundraising letter is important. When you are asking for money for a good cause, make use of decent as well as polite language but this does not mean that you have to plead or beg for money in front of the reader. What are your goals? It is important to state your goals and stories related to it in a fundraising letter so that the reader can find it easy to take a donation related decision.