

★ Tips for applying for funding

The application is the most important tool in project financing. A formal, correct structure and compelling content will make a positive impression on the decision-makers. But simply fulfilling formal criteria is not enough: the project must also be persuasive in terms of quality. In addition, the perfect application can be rejected if, for example, it does not meet the funder's criteria or the key points of an institution's funding policy.

There are no all-encompassing guidelines for the perfect application. The following tips are therefore general and subjective. An important principle is that the application must always follow the demands of the funding authority and be adapted accordingly.

Procedure and attitude

- Act in a goal-oriented way. Write only a few applications, but tailor each one to the individual institution. The scattergun strategy doesn't work at all. You will irritate the institutions and spend a lot on postage.
- Be business-like and friendly. Don't crawl and beg. Bluffing or making aggressive demands are also not advisable.
- Be yourself: in the end, it is you as a person that is important. Don't play the pseudo-professional and don't include third parties. Foundations seldom accept that commissions will be paid from their contribution.
- Don't give up. Accept refusals in a professional manner. They are aimed at your project, not at you personally.

Preparation

First do the research. Find out which institution suits your project best:

- Which category does your project fit into? Which regional connections can be established? What is special or innovative about your project?
- Look for funders that list the characteristics of your project in their funding criteria. Valuable addresses can be found at www.kulturfoerderung.ch and from your own research on the internet and among your personal network.
- Find out detailed information about the funding institution: what exactly does it promote? What is the application process? Are there submission deadlines? Do special application forms exist? Which documents are required? Can applicants ask questions by phone in advance? The better you know your funding institution, the closer you can target your application. A fish is attracted by tasty bait – the funding institution has to be irresistibly tempted.

Tactics

Before writing, think and make decisions:

- What similarities or points of contact with the funding institution is your application based on? Define the unique arguments you have to persuade your funders.
- How much funding are you applying for? Is it based on your deficit or on the financial resources of the funding institution? Work out specific and realistic figures. If your amount varies too much from the target, your project will lose credibility.
- Have you applied to other institutions and for how much?

Components

Increasingly, funding institutions accept applications only electronically, and specify the form and content of the application. However, the cover letter remains an essential part of your submission.

Cover letter

A personally addressed letter, maximum A4 in length, and which fully summarises your dossier. It must contain the key questions: Who wants How much money for What and Why? Don't forget contact details (address, telephone, e-mail, etc.).

culturalpromotion.ch is an address database funded by the Federal Office of Culture and the Migros Culture Percentage.



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
Confederaziun svizra

Swiss Confederation

Federal Department of Home Affairs FDHA
Federal Office of Culture FOC

MIGROS
culture percentage

Project description

Dossier of 5 to 10 pages introducing the project:

- Project title: clear and understandable, possibly with indication of category and regional connection.
- Project: idea, artistic concept, project aim. State your arguments here. What is innovative about the project; why exactly does your project deserve funding? Write with passion and convince them.
- Short biography: education, special qualifications, awards, etc., of the people involved.
- Marketing: target audience, performance dates, plans for marketing and PR.

Budget and financial plan

- Expenses: fees, infrastructure, marketing, administration.
- Income: own financing, for example through ticket sales, support requested from other funding sources. List all the positions and specify how much has already been promised. Also give the amount expected from the funding sources you have applied to.
- Voluntary work: list unpaid work separately. Specify how many hours have been worked on a voluntary basis. In order to present the work in francs, multiply the hours by an hourly rate of CHF30, for example. Do not, however, include the voluntary work in the budget by booking the amount in both outgoings (fees) and earnings (income).

Appendices

- Image and sound material of the current project and former projects.
- Statutes (in the case of associations).
- Reviews of previous work.

Writing

The sense of a message is established by the receiver. Write in such a way that the reader can recognise the essentials quickly. Your message will be better understood if you keep it short, form simple sentences and state your intentions specifically. Flowery prose does not make for popular application reading.

- Do the Elevator Pitch before writing: explain your project to someone not involved in three minutes maximum. Then check if the message has come across.
- Restructure the content: count the main statements of the application on your fingers.
- Check your text again after taking a break. Sometimes it helps if you give the text a different layout. This creates more distance to your sentences.
- Have your text proof-read by a third person.

Design

- Design your application clearly. Form paragraphs, make sure that the font is of an adequate size and the line spacing corresponds.
- Design a title page for your project description. Make sure it looks professional. Avoid amateur creativity and be sparing in your use of Clipart.
- Incorporate images or graphics where appropriate.
- Applications must often be photocopied. Keep the A4 format, print on one page and avoid using fixed spiral bindings. Clamp folders with a transparent cover and card backing are suitable.

Maintaining contact

Stay in contact with the funding institution:

- Inform them if your project changes significantly during the preparation stage (staff changes, new content direction, etc.).
- Inform them if financing changes arise or, for example, if you receive funding of a substantial amount.
- Clarify if and how the funding institution will be mentioned in the case of a positive decision.
- Invite the funding institution to your opening or premier performance.

Further tips

- Many public institutions give support only on a subsidiary basis, i.e. in the form of a supplement. Therefore some cantons make their support dependent on a contribution from the local municipality.
- Applications by legal entities (e.g. associations, institutions) need to be signed by two responsible persons.
- Many funding institutions prefer to give their support on a project basis rather than committing to

- fixed or operating costs.
- In the case of some funders, in particular public institutions, commitments extending over a number of years are not permissible for legal reasons.
 - Foundations, public funding institutions or Migros Culture Percent have nothing to do with sponsorship. Sponsorship is a sub-discipline of marketing in which the ROI is the focus. In the case of funding institutions, corporate responsibility and accountability are the focal points.

(Text: Christian Zwinggi 01.2012 on the basis of "Das perfekte Gesuch" by Larsson/Hiltbrunner 2004. Help us to update and optimise these tips on an ongoing basis by mailing your experiences and comments to info@kulturfoerderung.ch.)