



Using professional grant writers

Writing grant applications is time consuming. It's one of those things that always ends up at the bottom of your to-do list. Usually because you have other things to do.

Because most grass-roots community groups are run solely by volunteers, many are now turning to paid professionals to assist with tasks such as grant and submission writing, proposal development and even writing comments in response to government policy and community consultation processes. Clearly there are issues which need to be weighed up before you head down this path – as using consultants for any type of work can be costly if you don't have a good idea of what it is you're buying and how they will deliver it. Here are a few tips to make the journey more pleasant:

- **Make sure your application is being targeted at the appropriate funding body** – when we are so passionate about the environment and the work we're doing, it's easy to assume everyone will feel the same way. Government funding programs have very specific outcomes they need to achieve and if you don't think your project is a perfect match, it probably isn't. If you're going to be paying a professional grant writer to pull together your funding submission, you need to make sure you've done your homework in the first place. Is the funding program a suitable match? Have you fully developed your project? Do you have all of the necessary partners on board? Do this legwork first and you'll save yourself time and money in the long-run.
- **Agree on the costs and fees** – most professional grant writer's opt for a set upfront fee and an additional commission if the grant is successful. Make sure you understand what the fee structure is and when you need to pay it. Most funding programs will not allow you to take a grant writers fee out of your grant, so you need to be able to pay for this out of your own funds or out of the administrative component you include in your grant budget. Don't be afraid to set a cap on the amount you will pay.
- **Agree on the tasks each of you will complete** – it is not possible for a grant writer to write a grant for you from start to finish without your input. Agree at the beginning what tasks you need to complete. Some of these tasks will include the collection of supporting documentation (including certificates of incorporation, insurance certificates of currency, bank statements), arranging letters of support and working out the budget. Basically the grant writer will compile the grant application from the information you supply them so your application will only ever be as good as what you contribute in the first place.
- **Know your whats when hows whos and whys** – before you even consider engaging a consultant, you must understand all of the elements of your project and be able to articulate them. Being able to write these succinctly is the realm of a professional grant writer, but you still have to be able to brief your consultant on what it is you want to do. Remember, external grant writers don't have the corporate memory that you do. That means you need to make sure you brief them as comprehensively as possible.
- **Find a good grant writer** – professional grant writers often specialise in the types of grants they prepare. Some will focus on building and infrastructure programs, some on employment and training programs, some on rural development. Try to find a grant writer that specialises in the area your project sits. You can find grant writers listed online at websites such as www.ourcommunity.com. But as with most consultants, the best way to find a good grant writer is by word of mouth. So, ask your consultant for references, a list of grants previously submitted, and even samples of their work.
- **Always review the final submission** – the submission will come from your organisation and might even have your own name on it. It's important to ensure you set aside time to read the final proposal, check it for accuracy and make sure you're not over-committing.

Wombat Creative has more than 15 years experience writing grants and submissions.

Wombat Creative helps communities to achieve sustainability goals. We do this by providing services in event management, submission and grant writing, strategic planning and facilitation. Visit www.wombatcreative.com.au for information about grant writing and other services.



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About Wombat Creative

We reduce our impact on the environment by using public transport, purchasing sustainably produced products and services and keeping air and car travel to a minimum. Our offices and homes use minimal energy and water and we keep waste to a minimum. We encourage our clients to do the same and we only run events for clients that agree to these principles.

Wombat Creative contributes 5% of all profits to community environmental and social welfare programs. And our staff donate at least 5% of their time pro bono to meaningful community initiatives.

**We don't have a work / life balance.
We just have a life.**

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