

## Arts Funding in Aotearoa

As those working in the arts sector know, it's difficult to raise money for creative projects and the small pool of funding means that sometimes very worthwhile initiatives lose out.

**However, ensuring you make the very best job of writing your funding application will increase your chances of success in a competitive market.** I have seven main tips to make your next funding application stand out from the crowd, whatever fund you are applying to.

Most funds have criteria that applications must meet, so my first tip is to ensure your initiative is a good fit for at least one of these criteria. Talk to the funder before you even start – they know the strategic outcomes they want to achieve and can provide invaluable information to strengthen your approach. If it's difficult to fit your project into their criteria, consider looking for a more suitable funder.

You don't need to write a book when applying for funding. Assessors have limited time to go through each application, so you need to be able to sum up your project clearly and concisely, including the idea, the key stages, who is involved in delivery, and who will benefit. Keep the criteria or goals of the fund front of mind and emphasise how your project will meet the desired outcomes throughout the application. Don't forget to include your experience delivering similar projects if they have been successful. Lastly, get your application checked, ideally by someone that doesn't know the project, to ensure it makes sense.

The budget is a crucial part of the success or failure of an application. I recommend you start with the budget as it will test important parameters such as how your project will roll out and whether the financial constraints of the fund will limit what you want to do. Funders want to see that you have thought through all costs and income streams to give them confidence you can bring the project to fruition. Make sure your budget is actual, not aspirational, and that it provides value for money. Triple check to make sure your budget adds up - if it doesn't, your credibility will be at risk.

Support documentation is required by many applications and it is a good idea to include them even if it's not mandatory.

Get all your documents together in one place first – they can be used for multiple funding applications. Leave plenty of time to get letters of support and make sure you let your supporters know if there are key points you want them to emphasise. Make sure you include quotes for key items of the budget.

If you find yourself frequently applying for funding, set up a database of potential funders and their criteria, adding to it each time you make a new application. This will take a little time up front but will save time for future applications. This will also ensure the research on different funds stays within your organisation. If your project is held regularly, consider whether there is an opportunity to develop relationships and value propositions where you can source multi-year funding support.

It's important to ask for feedback from the funder, whether your application is successful or not. This will enable you to refine your approach if you decide to reapply in future. Keep in mind that sometimes applications are unsuccessful purely because of the merits of other applications. The circumstances of the funder may also change in future and your application may be seen in a more favourable light. Sometimes it's just a matter of ensuring the project is ready to be delivered, rather than at concept stage.

My last tip is to say thank you. Make your organisation memorable after the decision, even if you are unsuccessful. Make sure you acknowledge your funders every time you promote the projects they have supported. Don't view funding applications as a one-off; rather, try to create a longer-term, mutually valued partnership. Get on the mailing lists of philanthropic organisations and attend their AGMs to show your support for them. If you make the funder feel valued, they will remember you next time you are seeking support.



**BIO:** Annie works for Creative Bay of Plenty, the arts, culture and creative umbrella organisation covering Tauranga and the Western Bay of Plenty district. In her role as Funding & Capability Advisor, she supports creative practitioners and organisations by helping them make valuable connections both within and outside the sector, identifying funding sources and assisting with funding applications, developing and delivering capability building workshops and mentoring programmes, and advocating for arts, culture and creativity in public consultations and forums. Annie also supports the delivery of strategic projects, participates in community planning and submission processes, and delivers research outcomes to underpin programme development, investment and advocacy. Her background is in communications, project management and facilitation, where she has worked in roles in the business, not-for-profit, local government and tertiary sectors in New Zealand and overseas.