The Comic Relief Community Support Programme - Top tips

Making an application to any fund can be a daunting task, especially if this is your first application to the Community Foundation, or perhaps your first application where you are looking for a sizeable award. The Foundation seeks to continuously improve how we do our grant making, and by providing some top tips that we have learned through listening to applicants and our own experience, we hope that these tips will provide you with the information and the confidence to make an application to the Programme:

Pre application:
● Our first and perhaps the most important tip is to read the guidance notes on the Programme to confirm you are eligible to apply and that your project meets the funding criteria.

● If you are in any doubt please contact Michael Hughes who is the lead for the Programme by sending him an email to the following address: mhughes@communityfoundationni.org
Please don't think that your query might be silly or might not make sense to us. In helping the group talk through their eligibility and indeed other application queries the Foundation believes that there are no silly questions to be asked if this gives you the information that you require to make an application. In our response we will as far as possible confirm eligibility and address any queries you may have.

● Before the final closing date of the Programme which is **1.00pm on Friday 18th September** make sure you have all the required supporting documentation. Please note that should we find that the Programme is oversubscribed we may bring forward the closing date so keep a check on our website and social media. When uploading please upload each document as one item rather than separate pages. For the Comic Relief Community Support Programme we require a copy of your governing document, e.g. constitution - this must be in the name of the applicant organisation unless governed through an umbrella organisation, a copy of the group's most recent accounts, a copy of your safeguarding policies, a current account bank statement dated within the last three months, a copy of your equality policy. From our experience the Foundation strongly recommends that you should complete the upload of the documents no later than 30 minutes before the close of the Programme should you be submitting your application on Friday 18 th September. This will give you time to contact the Foundation should you experience any problems with the uploading process.

During application:
● Check your budget calculations and ensure you can deliver on spend and project targets. Please note that you will have to be able to demonstrate that you have spent 75% of the grant by 31 st March 2021 and that the project can be completed within a year of an award being made. In January/February 2021 we will verify all awards over £10,000, as well as a sample of other projects under £10,000, to ensure projects are on target to spend on time.

● Keep your answers concise and honest. For most of the questions there is a maximum word limit, which is important to keep to.

● You will be asked to tell the Foundation how the project you are looking us to invest in meets the fund criteria and objectives.

● It is important that you complete all the questions on the application form and do this honestly, accurately and concisely, e.g. committee details.

● It is important that you submit all of the required documents per the guidance notes. We would recommend that when you are uploading the documents that there are two members of the group present one to upload and one to verify that each document has been uploaded. By doing this, the group is enhancing wider group accountability and governance.

● Again please remember there are no silly questions or queries that can be asked – if you are struggling, if you need advice please make contact!!!

Section 1: Organisation
● In this section the group is asked to provide the overall aims and objectives of your organisation, and provide a concise summary of the activities/services your organisation provides

Section 2: Project
In many ways this is the most important part of the application as this is the group's opportunity to put its best foot forward, giving the Foundation a real flavour of what the project is about, what it will address and/or opportunities it will take and most importantly the positive changes that it will make. This section focuses on the project at the heart of your application.

Please detail the project you are seeking support for from the Community Support Programme (maximum of 300 words)

This question gives you the opportunity to explain what the project is about and please do not feel the need to include jargon or huge amounts of statistical information on disadvantage and/or deprivation. The details you put into the section should give the assessor a real feel for what you, your community, what you want to do, why you want to do it and what difference this will make. It would be useful if you could set out your description in this format. You should at the end of this section have a very brief summary of the project. It may be useful to show your description to some-one that might not be connected to the project or indeed the group, ask them to read it and get their feedback as to how they understand the project. If they are able to grasp what the project is about this is a good indicator that this should make sense to the Programme assessors. On the other hand if they don't grasp the idea of the project this is an opportunity to amend prior to application submission.

Please indicate what theme or themes will your project address (You may tick one or more boxes)

There will be list of the themes that are open for application under the Comic Relief Community Support Programme and the group is required to tick at least one of the themes. It is important that the theme or themes you tick are absolutely relevant to the project description that you have detailed in the previous information box. If either do not match up then it is very unlikely that the project will be considered for funding. Whilst the group has the opportunity to tick more than one box you should bear in mind what is asked in the next information box.

Please detail how the project will address the theme(s) that you have indicated (maximum of 200 words)

You have now indicated what the project wants to do, why you want to do it and the difference it will make to your community. You are now asked to provide additional details as to how the project will address the theme or themes you have indicated. Please note the word limit as the more themes you indicate the less words the group now has to explain the "how". This does not need to be a detailed weekly plan of action/activity but a general description of the actions that would be carried out across the time-period of the project. This allows the Programme assessors to get a sense of the extent of the programme, what might be needed to make this happen and if what is being proposed is valuable in terms of being considered for an award. It would be helpful if you could detail the information in bullet point format with a short one line description of the activity which should include when this will take place and if possible where.

Please detail how you have involved those with the lived experience of the issues to be addressed in the design of this project (maximum of 200 words)

This is crucial to the application given that the Foundation and Comic Relief wish to see that the project being brought forward for an award has been done so with the involvement of those who have the lived experience of the issues that need to be addressed or indeed the opportunities that could be taken. The information you provide will demonstrate the group's commitment to #ShiftThePower by placing those with the lived experience at the heart of the application. It would be helpful to the application if you can detail the level of this involvement by setting out your information in the following format:
- How they were involved
- When this involvement took place
- Where this involvement happened
- What those with the lived experience told you would make a difference

With a maximum of 200 words for this whole section, the information required under each of the above is minimal but will give the Programme assessors a good indication that the group has made efforts to ensure the involvement of those with the lived experience in the development of the project for which support is being sought.

How will the project contribute to the process of building an equitable and inclusive society with those who will benefit from this work (maximum of 200 words)?

The Covid-19 crisis has unearthed new or further revealed inequalities and exclusions within our society. #BuildingBackBetter which this Programme seeks to make a valuable contribution to, will be seeking to support projects that both acknowledge the inequity and exclusions that exist and that then actively address them in a way that is relevant and appropriate to the local community. The project's contribution to making our society more equitable and inclusive is important at that local level, as the local action has the potential to be a driver for change through the Foundation's work in developing our Practice to Policy documents and our wider social justice work.

Please detail how the group will ensure that there will be equality of access to and benefit from the work across religious and political beliefs in your community. (maximum of 200 words)

The project to be supported must be able to demonstrate that the group will ensure that all within the community can access and benefit from the activities that would be supported relevant to the theme that has been indicated. The Foundation is aware that in all communities there is a mixture of religious and political beliefs which have led in the past to exclusion by design. The Foundation seeks to shift the emphasis to inclusion by design where everyone irrespective of religion and/or political beliefs/connections has a right and an expectation to be able to access and benefit from any investment secured by the group for the project through this Programme.

Have you secured or are you seeking any other funding for this, or a similar project?

Please note that it is not a requirement to have secured or sought any other funding for this or any similar project. It is important not to undersell your project and if from your calculations you estimate that the project will cost for example £10,000 you are entitled and indeed encouraged to apply for this amount. If you indicate that it costs £10,000 and the group is applying for £7,000 then there is an assumption that other funding has either been secured or being applied for. In this case you are expected to tick the yes box.

Please provide details of the other funding you are seeking, including what this funding is for, and who you have sought funding from.

If you tick the yes box the group is now asked to provide details on this other funding as it is important that the Programme is not being asked to provide support for the same thing. This helps to minimise the possibility of duplication of funding and your group is making a valuable contribution to ensuring that scarce resources available from all funders is used in a way that maximises reach, benefit and impact.

Section 3: Impact
● Information in this section should reflect the group's conversations with those with the lived experience whose knowledge of what difference the project will make, brings to life the impact the project will have. The Foundation and Comic Relief recognise that there will be people who will directly benefit from the project but also people who by extension will be secondary beneficiaries. For the purposes of the Comic Relief Community Support Programme we are interested in those who will be the direct beneficiaries. Your group may feel that the impacts appear small and trivial but it is important that the impact is what those with the lived experience have told you and this section should reflect the information that has been provided under Section 2.

Think about the number of people you hope to support. It is very important to be realistic and please be assured that this is NOT a numbers game but is entirely rooted in your community and also the group's involvement with those with lived experience as part of project development. Be realistic and as far as possible ensure that you do not overestimate these numbers.

Section 4: Budget
● Be clear and concise in budget headings and they should reflect the details you gave on what you want to do and how you will do it. By doing this you are demonstrating to the Programme assessors the relevance of the budget to the project that you are applying for.

● Consider eligible and ineligible costs by referring to the guidance notes and be mindful that a MINIMUM of 50% of what you are seeking the Programme to support must go towards activities/programmes. If you are in any doubt please contact mhughes@communityfoundationni.org to discuss.

● The Programme will support operational costs which include contributions to salary, small capital equipment and running costs (office/overhead and premises) you need to allow the project to happen. The total amount of the operational costs which are to be funded by the Programme MUST NOT exceed 50% of the total award being applied for. It is important that any capital costs are for the purposes of the project and the Programme assessors will be making a judgement if these are relevant and appropriate given what the project will do and how this will be carried out.

● Please ensure your bank details are added correctly and in line with the details on your bank statement that you are uploading as part of the supporting documentation. It is important that the group is clear as to who the bank signatories are, and identify any that are related. Should any of the bank signatories be related the Foundation may request additional information as to the group's internal financial management procedures.

Supporting documents:

Please ensure that you have all documents submitted alongside your full application. Each document must be saved as one file. If you have any queries around whether your documents have been submitted correctly, or not, please check with the Grants Team. The Foundation strongly advises that you should have completed the submission of the application and the uploading of the supporting documentation at least 30 minutes before the Programme closing date which at present is **1.00pm Friday 18th September.** By doing this should a problem be encountered the group can communicate with the Grant's Team well in advance of Programme closure.

Declaration:
Please be aware of the terms and conditions of this award. We want to ensure you are happy with how we will hold your personal information, and make you aware of any clauses that you will have to abide by, if you are successful in receiving funding.

For queries please contact mhughes@communityfoundationni.org

Apply [here.](here)