



Co-production in microfunding:

Resources for Individuals and Community Groups



1. Tips for working together with your community when making the application and running the activity

Find out who the microfunding is aimed at (e.g. activities in a particular neighbourhood, for people of a certain age etc.)

Talk to people from this target group

Find out:

- If they are interested in your activity idea – don't just assume!
- Find out what their needs and priorities are. Explore what the activity could look like (e.g. time, place, frequency, cost, breaks, cultural considerations). Be willing to adapt or completely change your initial idea, within the criteria for applying.
- Think about how you can make your activity unique so that it doesn't duplicate what is already available and is open to a wide range of people.
- Ask if they would like to help you with the application or with setting up and running the activity. Encourage people by asking them what resources they feel the activity needs or what they would like.
- Remember to get their contact details so you can invite them along to the activity if your funding application is successful.

Suggestions for how to meet and talk to your target group

- Find existing community groups and ask for a slot to speak with their members.
 - Contact local community workers and see if they can put you in touch with any individuals or groups.
 - Seek support from your local council services, library staff and larger non-profit organisations. They may be able to promote the activity, provide free services (e.g. venues) and link you with other groups in your area.
 - Use social media and local WhatsApp groups.
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-Ask the funder if previous applications have found successful ways of doing this.

-People who are already in groups/activities may see you as a competitor; introduce yourself as wanting to 'supplement', 'compliment' or 'support' the current activity or fill a newly identified need.

-Remember to listen to the views of people who are quieter and who may not usually come forward to give their opinion; listen to the silences and have some conversation starters available.

Suggestions for how to promote the group/activity once an application is successful

-Re-contact everyone you spoke to before when you were making the application.

-Ask existing community groups if you can have a slot to promote your group/activity. Do not turn up to a group or venue empty handed, take leaflets or postcards in case people do not have time to listen.

-Build a network – contact local enablers / community workers / prominent members of a community and ask them to spread the word.

-Use word of mouth - once the activity has started, ask attendees to tell others about it or bring along a friend/neighbour.

-Contact local newspapers/radio stations.

-Use social media and WhatsApp groups.

-Invite the local media to an event/activity and have them write a piece, the benefits are two fold.

-Visit the local doctor's surgery and libraries to display posters, talk to staff about your activity.

-Take videos or photos of your group/activity.

-Know the benefits of your activity and link these to the target group.

-Make sure that both the activity itself and your communications about it are accessible.

Talk to your council services – they may have long memories and can

remember what has been successful in the past and also what has failed.

2. Jargon buster! Key words used in funding applications

Asset-based – A way of working which views individuals and communities as having a variety of existing strengths, skills and experiences which can be brought together to make the community stronger.

BAME – Black, Asian, Minority ethnic groups.

Co-production – working together to design an activity/service alongside the individuals who the activity/service is aimed at. Funders will often ask to see evidence of co-production, which means that people from the target group have been actively involved in creating the plan for the project you are applying for funding for.

Impact – The longer-term changes you expect to happen as a result of an activity.

Indicators – Information that tells you whether your expected outcomes (changes) have happened.

LGBTQ+ - Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer or Questioning (the plus sign refers to being inclusive of a range of other identities and communities for example intersex, asexual, pansexual, gender queer, and many others).

Micro-funding – Small amounts of funding issued to organisations or individuals (these can be grants or loans).

NGO – Non-governmental organisation (usually non-profit).

Outcome – The short and medium term changes you expect to happen as a result of an activity (the changes you want to create, not the work you are delivering).

Output - The activity or service being delivered, i.e. what you actually did.

QA framework – Quality Assessment framework. It is something used to measure the quality and achievements of a project or activity.

Qualitative – information or data that uses words.

Quantitative – information or data that uses numbers.

SLA – Service Level Agreement. A contract agreeing to provide a certain activity for a certain length of time.

Stakeholders – groups or individuals with a vested interest, for example activity participants are stakeholders as they have interest in when, where and how the activity is run, and funders are stakeholders as they have targets to meet (such as improving participants' health and wellbeing or reducing dependency on other services) to achieve the intended outcomes of the funding stream.

Sustainable – to be sustainable a group or activity should be able to exist on its own without external support, a grant might kick start the group but then they must look at ways to sustain after the grant has ended, an example would be to charge a small fee and build a kitty or look at sourcing a free venue or free materials.

3. Keeping your activity going after the micro-funding ends

There are lots of different things to consider when planning how a group or activity will be able to continue in the future. Once you begin an activity, you have a responsibility to the other members to try and keep it going; for some people, joining an activity and then it stopping can have a more damaging impact than not joining in the first place.

You should not rely on getting future funding in order to continue; this might be possible but in many cases it is very unlikely. You should therefore think about other ways to continue...

Building and sustaining member numbers

- How will you ensure participants feel safe and comfortable joining the group/activity?
 - Making sure that both the activity itself and your communications are accessible.
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- Making sure that as soon as they come through the door they feel comfortable, included and not threatened.

- Being welcoming of new members, not developing cliques – being inclusive not exclusive.

- Continue to promote the activity when needed so that there is a steady group size.

- Striking the right balance between being formal and informal.

All members contribute and feel a sense of ownership, for example by making decisions collectively as a group.

Providing the activity and training up volunteers

Have a back-up plan (e.g. if a tutor is ill, if there are unexpected travel or equipment costs etc.).

Spreading out roles and responsibilities (not just relying on one or two people).

- Developing the skills of participants and motivating them to build on these skills by taking on a role within the group.

- Empowering all members to take on a role or lead the group if needed.

Have a risk assessment – be aware of any health & safety or data protection considerations. What essential information might you need to get from participants the first time they attend? Asking for too much information at someone's first session can put them off attending again in the future.

What does sustainability look like given Covid-19? How will you adapt the activity so that it can continue during a pandemic?

- How will you ensure participants feel safe and comfortable to attend?

- Who can you go to for advice about how to adapt your health & safety measures? (e.g. local community workers, Council, Covid-19 section of Health & Safety Executive website)

- Are there any ways the group can continue by telephone, post or online?

Reducing or minimising costs

Good community links and relationship building – knowing cheaper/free venues, useful for guest speakers etc.

Consider how you can tap into these different community resources for free (e.g. a free tutor) and when you might need to pay.

Other bridging options could include encouraging regular participants to take on the role of facilitation in the future (where the facilitator does not need a formal qualification for health and safety reasons, e.g. creative writing), or designing your activity from the outset with training for volunteer facilitators rather than fees for a professional.

Consider whether it would be feasible to charge a small amount – e.g. per session, or an annual amount which means participants can come to as many activities as they like.

Applying for funding in the future

Knowledge of different types of funding streams – lots of different types of funding you can tap into (e.g. if you only need one item), not just looking in the same place all of the time. Try to work with the larger NGOs and get them to provide an umbrella structure that supports the smaller community groups.

Do not wait until the end of your microfunding period before applying for other funding – consider this early on.

Relying on gaining funding from another funding source is very unreliable and not always likely – need to find ways the activity or group can continue without future funding.

Other

Follow best practice by establishing a network and learning from other groups/activities – research other successful groups, go out and visit them to find out how they have kept going for so long.

4. Where to get information and advice about micro-funding

Local support and signposting to specific pots of funding:

- Your local third sector or VCSE support organisation
- Local community development workers
- Local council
- Get Grants

Be aware of different national funding streams e.g. Neighbourhood Network Schemes, National Lottery, your local Council, Tesco, Comic Relief, Arts Council, supermarket charities, Crowdfunding.

Recommendations when applying

- Use our toolkit!
 - Approach the funder with questions to make sure you understand what they are looking for.
 - You can apply for multiple things simultaneously, but remember to tailor each application to the fund you are applying for.
 - Be confident and passionate.
 - Be mindful that grants are not donations, align your application with the aims of the funder.
 - Choose the right funder for your project.
 - Consider how you might deliver your project activity in the context of Covid-19 or other major disruption (e.g. can you involve technology?) – read more in our learning about sustainability.
 - Consider the groups/characteristics that funders might want to focus on including (e.g. carers, long term conditions, asylum seekers/residency status, young people / intergenerational, substance misuse).
 - Research the activities already happening in your local area and where
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relevant mention them in your application to demonstrate your knowledge. Ensure your activity or service is not duplicating those already available to your target participants, and make clear the unmet social need your project will address. Explain how you will work with other organisations and groups to benefit your participants.

