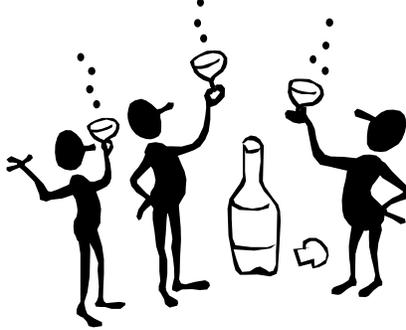




Bidding Successfully



By Rachael Knowland



Overview



- Who we are
- Before you start: what should be in place
- Finding funding for your project
- Finding a project for the fund
- Who should be involved
- The bidding process
- Top tips

Impetus Consulting Ltd

We are an environmental consultancy with offices in London and West Sussex. Our vision is to help create the environment for change to a sustainable society and we recognise that local authorities have a key role to play in achieving this.

- We have lots of experience working with local authorities – for example we run a national advisory service for local authorities and we also work with individual local authorities on various projects;
- We spend a lot of our time writing (successful) funding bids for our own work; and
- Our directors have significant experience of evaluating bids:
 - Chair the eaga partnership charitable trust (which provides funding);
 - Sat on the EST innovation programme advisory panel; and
 - Evaluated bids to the HECAAction and Innovation funding programmes.

During this seminar session, I will give you some information on how to put together a successful bid, covering the areas listed above. But I want this to be interactive and helpful to you, so I will then get you to do a bit of thinking, talking and sharing of information.

Some of the information I give here today, may seem obvious and may seem simple, but it really is the key to bidding successfully.



Before you start: what should be in place?



- Funding sources
- In-house expertise
- Partners / consultants
- Projects
- Procurement processes



Bidding for funding should be an ongoing process of coming up with ideas, putting systems in place and developing partnerships.

To successfully bid for funding, it is a good idea to have some basic tools, resources and understanding in place, so that if a project or funding opportunity comes up, you can move swiftly and don't have to duplicate your efforts.

Funding sources

- It's always a good idea to keep an up to date list of funding sources. You can always use the Energy Saving Trust's funding database, but you may want to tailor your own to include potential local sources of funding.

- You should also be aware of different types of funding (not just grants) that may be available. For example credit unions which offer interest-free loans, or private finance initiatives. The Energy Saving Trust has a briefing note that provides more information about this.

A list of your in-house expertise

- What can you do well without any help?? What skills and expertise do you have in the local authority? For example, if you are applying for funding for some community engagement work, do you have the facilitation skills required, or would you need to use an external consultant? Don't forget to look at other departments in the local authority who may have the necessary skills that you can draw upon. Where you do have skills and include them in bids, don't forget to provide evidence that you can do it!

Partners and consultants

- Who do you like to work with and what are their areas of expertise (both in terms of skills and subject areas)?

- It is worth building up relationships with those in relevant areas so that when the opportunity to bid comes up, you are not starting from scratch.

- Some funding schemes will have specific criteria about who can access the funding, in which case you are likely to have to work in partnership to access the funding. For example, a lot of funds only provide money to charities, so as a local authority you would have to work in partnership with a charity to be eligible for funding.

Projects

- Have a set of projects that you would like funding for that you can pull off the shelf when a new fund is announced. You will need to be flexible with the projects and may have to adapt them slightly to match the criteria of a new funding source.

Procurement processes

- You will need a good understanding of your procurement processes, in particular their limitations. There's no point spending time researching a project or a funding opportunity, if it's not going to get passed through your procurement process. This is most important for when a potential fund crops up with a tight deadline for which you will need to move quickly.

- It's also a good idea to build up a good working relationship with the authority's procurement team and the legal team to ensure a smooth bidding process.



Finding funding



- Define the project
- Look for the money
- Choose carefully



If you know what you want to do, but you don't have the money or the people to do it, you need to find funding for the project.

Define the project

• Firstly you need to define the project before you start looking for funding. It is important to do this well and set out a clear definition, otherwise you will waste time looking at pots of money that aren't right for you.

Look for the money

- Look at the pots of money to see which ones would fund all or part of your project.
- Remember you are likely to have to apply to several pots to get the whole thing covered. You will need to double check that the funds you selected are compatible i.e. you can use them for match funding.
- You can always submit an enquiry to the Energy Saving Trust's Practical help team to see if they're aware of any funding that you might be able to get.

Choose carefully

- Choose the funds whose aims most closely align with what you are trying to achieve. There's no point submitting a bid to a project where it doesn't meet the funding criteria. You simply won't be successful.
- Even if it's an absolutely fantastic and worthwhile project and the people evaluating the bids agree with you, if it doesn't match the criteria they will not be able to give you the money.

Finding a project



- Unless there is time to:
 - *Define it*
 - *Build partnerships*
 - *Get match funding*
 - *Get it through procurement processes*



Finding a project for a fund. You're maintaining your list of funds and come across one that sounds really interesting – but you don't have a project defined yet...

STOP!

Ask yourself the following questions:

- Is there time for you to define it before the application deadline?
- Is there time to build any partnerships that you may need?
- Are the partners that you'd need available?
- Is there time to look for and get match funding?
- Is there time to get it through your procurement processes?

Unless the answer to all of those questions (and be realistic) is yes, then do not apply – you will not be successful.



Who should be involved?



- You
- Bid project manager
- Stakeholders
- Internal partners
- External partners
- Fund manager



Developing a bid should be treated as a mini project in itself. You cannot look at it as an inconvenience that you have to go through before you can get on with the work.

OK, so you've got a project, and found a fund (or more than one) for which the project meets the criteria. What next?

There are a number of people that need to be involved:

You / bid project manager

• Obviously you (i.e. the person whose idea / project it is) do! If you are not going to be the bid project manager, you need one of those too. A bid project manager should have the following attributes:

- Good at project management so that they can deliver to tight deadlines;
- Enthusiastic about the project; and
- Have the authority to hand out tasks and ensure they are completed.

Stakeholders

• Consult with those who might be affected by the project. Initially this may just be a quick phone call or chat to see if it's worthwhile, but some stakeholders will need to be involved in the bid. This is so that the project that you end up doing is successful and worthwhile.

Internal partners

- Whose expertise do you need (refer back to your list of in-house expertise)?
- Who is good at coming up with 'bright ideas'? They don't have to know much about the project, but they need to be creative and be able to input fresh ideas. You might not like all their ideas and they might not be included in the final project, but they can sometimes come up with a whole new angle.
- Who needs to be involved in terms of the practicalities (e.g. a member of the procurement team, or a member of the senior management team who will have to ultimately sign-off the project)? Having these people involved early on will ensure that you meet their requirements, as well as obtain their buy-in to the project.

External partners

• If there is a part of the project that you won't be able to deliver well, either through lack of resources, or through lack of expertise, then bring on board someone who can. If there is potential for fee earning for them, they will be happy to help you write the bid. Again, having these people involved early on will ensure that you obtain their buy-in to the project and make it realistic for them.

Fund manager

• Some funds offer the services of a fund manager who can review an early draft of the bid and give you advice, or are available to answer any questions you may have. Take advantage of this wherever possible. An example of this is the Energie Helpline UK who support UK organisations applying for specific EU funds such as Intelligent Energy Europe.



The bidding process



- **Build your team**
 - *People who understand and agree*
 - *Someone who can write well*
 - *A good project manager*
- **Find the money**
- **Assess chances**
- **Check deadlines and plan the project**



- **Build your team around your idea. You need:**
 - People who understand and agree with what you are trying to do;
 - Someone who can write well – the bid evaluation team will like your bid more if it is easy and enjoyable to read; and
 - Someone who is a good project manager – they will be able to develop a sensible and realistic budget and project plan.
- **Find the pot(s) to which you want to apply.**
- **Assess the chances of success and decide how much effort to expend. You will need to think about:**
 - How well your project matches the criteria for the funding projects;
 - Whether or not there are areas where it doesn't match the criteria, and whether they are areas that you can change and adapt;
 - Whether or not you have enough resources to deliver the project;
 - Whether or not you have enough time to put together the bid;
 - Whether or not you have enough time to get partners on board;
 - Whether or not your partners have the capacity to work on this (do not assume this is the case); and
 - Whether or not the fund offers information about the percentage of bids that get funded. This links in to how well your project matches the criteria. For example if only one in 20 projects get funded it may seem like long odds, but if your project really matches the criteria then it could well be worth going for.
- **This might seem like a lot of work, but having things in place (existing partnerships, procurement processes etc.) will make this much quicker. You can also pull in as many others to work on it as is sensible – both internal and external partners, and be creative. Working with neighbouring authorities is often a good idea.**
- **Look carefully at the deadlines and plan the bidding project accordingly.**
 - Be realistic and if working in partnership, allow plenty of time for liaising with partners and obtaining information from them.
 - Set internal deadlines ahead of the funding deadline in order to pull everything together.
 - Allow more time than you think you'll need for pulling together all the relevant documents, checking, formatting, proofing and polishing your bid.



The bidding process



- Get partners on board
- Brainstorm ideas
- Read bidding guidelines
- Clarify uncertainties
- Outline ideas
- Draft and cost your bid



- Get your partners on board.
- Brainstorm ideas to refine the project.
- Read the bidding guidelines carefully and check that you follow them to the letter.
- Clarify any uncertainties with the fund manager. If you're not sure – ask. Do it as soon as you have any questions, so that they have the maximum amount of time to get back to you.
- Outline your ideas and send them to the fund manager for comment if appropriate. Remember to take their comments into account!
- Draft and cost your bid. (See top tips on the later slides).



The bidding process



- Check against the fund guidelines
- Revise as appropriate
- Proof read it
- Check the budget looks sensible
- Check the numbers in the budget
- Submit **BEFORE** the deadline



- Get someone else (who has not been involved in the bid writing) to check the bid against the fund guidelines – are you ticking all the boxes?
- Revise the bid as appropriate.
- Get someone to proof read it.
- Get someone to check that the budget looks sensible.
- Get someone else to check that the numbers in the budget actually add up.
- Submit it – and try not to get too close to the deadline!

Top tips



- Don't

- *Submit it if it doesn't meet the criteria*
- *Promise more that you can deliver*
- *Think too big or too small*
- *Be discouraged by rejection*



Don't submit a bid unless your project meets the funding criteria.

Don't promise more than you can deliver: you want to build a track record.

Equally don't limit the scope of your project too much.

Don't be discouraged by rejection: it happens to everyone.

Top tips



• Do

- *Use partners*
- *Use the right people to write it*
- *Make it interesting to read*
- *Be realistic*
- *Stick to the point*
- *Follow instructions*
- *Answer questions fully*
- *Approach potential funders*
- *Listen to and act on feedback*



- Do use partners to help you.
- Do use the right people to write the bid.
- Do make the proposal interesting to read.
- Do be realistic about what you can deliver both in terms of resources and in terms of time.
- Do stick to the point: don't supply lots of information that isn't asked for, and don't exceed word limits.
- Do answer the questions fully ('I believe this bid fully meets your criteria' is NOT an answer to the question 'explain how your project meets the aims of the fund').
- Do approach potential funders (do you have a local 'star' business that might want to be seen to support you?): if you don't ask, you don't get.
- Do listen to the feedback on unsuccessful bids and act on it.



Thank you



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