

Inspiring Projects



with

STOBS MILITARY CAMP
HAWICK IN THE SCOTTISH BORDERS

Tuesday 7th November at Howden Park Centre

LEADER Workshop Report

Questions: Attendees at the Inspiring Projects workshop were asked 'What are the hurdles to applying for funding for a large scale project?' Below you'll find the top 8 responses from the Group.

Answers: The groups were then asked to come up with how we can overcome these hurdles. The answers are supplied below the questions.

Q1. Splitting Projects to Suit Funders

Different funders may only fund certain parts of your project making it necessary to split the project into parts. This can make things complicated when it comes to making claims. For instance, lets imagine Funder A. will contribute to the whole project at an intervention rate of 50%, Funder B. will only contribute to the elements of the project that contribute to a low carbon economy and Funder C. is only paying for capital costs. This leaves you trying to work out what you need to claim from each funder with the very real possibility that you'll make a mistake!

The first step is to find the right funder and not change your project too much to suit them: Don't be afraid to walk away if the funder isn't right for your project.

However, you will need to be prepared to write more than one version of your application and project plan to suit each funder. It's a good idea to have a masterplan and spreadsheet that shows the wider project and who's funding what. Most funders will ask for evidence of where your match funding is coming from and being able to demonstrate you know whose paying for what is important.

If you can, get the funders to meet. They can help by discussing with each other, as well as you, if the evidence they require is the same and what each of the different grants can cover. It's much easier than going back and forward between them and it will help you all save time in the long run.

Q2. Clear Focus/Purpose and Competing Priorities

You've got together a great team of enthusiastic and skilled volunteers but their goals are different and are pulling the project in different directions.

As above the easiest way to resolve issues is to get people together and talk. Discuss what your ultimate outcome is: this should encompass your long term goals and whilst it's likely that different people will have different ideas of how to achieve this and what your priorities should be, they should all be working to the same purpose. It might be that smaller projects branch off from the main one and different people apply for different funding streams, as long as they are all working towards the same purpose it shouldn't matter. Get together and map out your goals and put together an action plan that encompasses all the different strands of your project to make sure everyone understands how their part of it contributes to the overarching objective.

Q3.Funding for Feasibility Studies

The first step in a big project is often finding out if it's feasible but will a funder pay for a feasibility study and what happens if it turns out to be unfeasible?

There are lots of funders including LEADER and the Heritage Lottery Fund who will pay for feasibility studies if the outcomes fit with their objectives. Although feasibility studies might not be listed under a 'what we fund' section it's always worth phoning and asking if a funder will consider it. So rather than searching for 'feasibility funding' look for a funding that fits with your goals.

Two of the best resources for finding out about funding are SCVOs Funding Scotland website and your local Voluntary sector interface:

<http://fundingscotland.com>

<https://www.voluntarysectorgateway.org/>

The purpose of a feasibility study is to find out what, if anything, is possible. Therefore, if the answer turns out that the idea isn't workable then the study has still been a success as it's told you what you needed to know. However, many organisations ask us for funding for feasibility along with money to take things forward once the study is complete. They often outline actions that assume their study finds in favour of their plans, and in this case LEADER wouldn't support the second part. To fund the actions you would need to reapply to us, or another funder, with a practical plan of how you will progress the suggestions the study made.

What we would allow in the first application is the inclusion of research into the next stage as long as it didn't rely on particular outcomes. You could even allot time to look into which funders you should apply to. In this case, if the feasibility study shows your original ideas have to be shelved you can still employ someone to look into what can be done.

Q4.Capacity: Time, training/skills, confidence , technology

You have a great idea for a project but you don't have the time or skills to put together a funding package or maybe you aren't great with online applications and lack the confidence to take it forward.

The Stobs Camp project was an excellent demonstration of how a big project can come out of ideas from a small community. Without the capacity to take forward the work themselves the community approached Archaeology Scotland who applied for funding for a Project Officer to pull together the community's thoughts as well as the organisations that could get involved. Funders understand that not everything can be done by volunteers so if you have an idea but lack the capacity to take it forward you can ask for funding for a development officer or a project manager to take your ideas forward for you.

Another way of finding the skills and capacity you need is to talk to organisations that are a good fit with what you want to do. Archaeology Scotland were the ideal project lead for the Stobs Camp project and also helped to train up and create capacity within the community. Think about what organisations have a remit that covers what you want to do.

Another great way to find the resources you need is to do a skills audit. Put together a survey to send out to your volunteers and members of your community to find out what abilities they have. Many people might not be able to give up time regularly and become a board member but they might be willing to help out occasionally, as and when they are needed. Ask people what skills they have and if they mind giving you their details so you can call on them for specific pieces of work. Most people are more willing to do this than commit themselves to regular meetings.

Lastly, find out if what you want to do has been done before in another area and ask for help. An internet search can be a great way to find similar projects that have taken place locally, nationally or even internationally. Most places are more than happy to share their experiences with you over the telephone or email or you could even arrange a trip to learn from other organisations. More of information on finding out about similar projects can be found below in Q5.

Q5. Costing/Sizing Up a Project

Putting together a project often takes you way outside your comfort zone. Maybe you know how to run a community café but you have no idea how much it costs to build one. Where do you start?

If you have completed a skills audit or searched for similar projects you might have already have found some of the answers to this question, if not they are good places to start. There are also case studies of previous LEADER projects on the Scottish Rural Network website: <https://www.ruralnetwork.scot/case-studies> and you can find out about projects from other areas by visiting their websites: <https://www.ruralnetwork.scot/funding/leader/local-action-groups>. Part of the ethos behind LEADER is about sharing experiences and learning from others so don't be afraid to contact other LEADER groups and ask about their projects. The Heritage Lottery Fund also has case studies <https://www.hlf.org.uk/our-projects> and loads more resources on their community page: <https://www.hlf.org.uk/community>. For local initiatives West Lothian Social Enterprise Network has case studies of some great social enterprises: <http://www.wlsen.org.uk/case-studies/>

Q6. Connecting People/Who to Ask For help?

Finding the right organisations and people to help out your project can be a challenge as well as connecting with the people you want to involve in the project.

The organisations listed at the end of this document are a good place to start when looking for advice but when speaking to the community it's often about context. Parent's evenings and other community activates can be great places to look for support but one of the things that was stressed most was considering how you ask people: Stobs Camp found that having 'open days' where people could learn about the project as well as get involved encouraged a lot more participation than running 'consultations'. Other suggestions were asking someone from your target audience to come up with ideas to encourage participation but it can still be difficult to connect with that target in the first place. Again, considering what you call an activity was stressed as important: asking young people if they want to

'volunteer' might not elicit a great response but offering young people 'skills development' is more likely to attract their attention. People also talked about who might be best placed to help you with what you are doing: offering young people the opportunity to be a Communications Officer for your voluntary organisation could mean you getting a social media wiz and them getting a great addition to their C.V.

To sum up, think about targeting the right type of person and consider how the language you use can help you do this.

Q7.Cash Flow/Match Funding/In Kind Ineligible

Being awarded a grant doesn't solve all your cash flow problems, many funders expect you to pay for the costs upfront then claim it back and very few funders will pay for 100% of the costs so you will need to approach a number of different grant schemes. Some grants programmes will accept 'in kind' support as match funding which means you can count up the volunteer's hours you put in and use it to match the cash funding; however, this is no longer eligible under LEADER.

Consider if you can partner with another organisation to support your cash flow, whilst a community group might not be able to take on a member of staff to deliver a project there may be an appropriate organisation that can do this on your behalf and become a partner in your project. Look at local and national organisations appropriate to your project. NGOs (Non-Governmental Organisations) are often a good place to start.

If you are financing the project through your organisation talk to your funder about how and when claims can be paid and put together a realistic cash flow ensuring that your closing balance after each payment doesn't leave you in the red. Bear in mind payments may be delayed over holidays, at the end of the financial year, and more often than not, because a piece of evidence is missing. Talk to your funder about what they require and put together a system for your claims before the project starts.

There are organisations that offer bridging loans such as Social Investment Scotland <http://www.socialinvestmentscotland.com/> but bear in mind most funders won't cover any banking or interest costs you incur on a loan.

Whilst West Lothian LEADER won't count in kind funding towards your match funding and project total but we will take it in to consideration. So whilst a project without in kind support may be funded at a rate of around 50-60% we might consider funding a project with in kind support at a higher intervention rate. However, this shouldn't stop you from applying to other match funders. Having match funding not only demonstrates your commitment to a project its spreads the risk should you project fail to draw down the money: Most funders will have a limited period to spend their money and anything that doesn't get spent in that time can be lost, therefore they don't want to put all their eggs in one basket.

Q8.Language/Acronyms/Terminology

The language used in applications and guidance can often put people off applying.

Acronyms and complex terminology can confuse applicants and mean that only the 'usual suspects' apply.

Most of the people you encounter when you apply for funds won't be the ones writing the guidance and application forms and so they will be aware that the terminology can be daunting. Ask them if they have a list of acronyms to help you through the guidance. If not

don't be afraid to note down the terms you don't understand and ask them to translate them for you.

When completing an application form first write up what you think your project will achieve and how it will do it in a separate document. Then compare it with the application questions and see what fits with under each different part. If you can, cut and paste it across to the application and then see if you have anything left in your original or any spaces in the application. This will stop you repeating yourself or finding that what you thought should go in one section actually belongs in another (Always read the application through in full before filling it in!). Most applications can be broken down into What? Where? How? and Why? Make a note next to each section telling you which of these they are asking for.

For all the barriers that were considered the most common solution was always to talk to people face to face. Even if you don't know the right person to ask, just talking to others can help you find someone who does.

And finally the most useful piece of advice given at the workshop was 'Start small, think big!'

Helpful Links:

Heritage Lottery Fund: <https://www.hlf.org.uk/>

Funding Scotland: <http://fundingscotland.com/>

SCVO: <http://www.scvo.org.uk/>

West Lothian Voluntary Sector Gateway: <https://www.voluntarysectorgateway.org/>

West Lothian Social Enterprise Network: <http://www.wlsen.org.uk/>

Social investment Scotland: <http://www.socialinvestmentscotland.com/>

SRN: <https://www.ruralnetwork.scot/funding/leader>

DTAS: <http://www.dtascot.org.uk/>

West Lothian Business Gateway: <https://www.bgateway.com/local-offices/west-lothian>