



Grant Writing Guide



Writing a grant is like building a nest. The more complicated the grant the more clever and original is the nest.

Think of a bower bird's nest. Unique, painstakingly crafted and works of beauty. An engineering feat which makes you marvel every time you see one in the bush.

The bower bird building a nest is like a business that is seeking money and support (resources) through a grant submission. Like the bower bird you need to build a strong picture through words and figures to be clear about what you want.

You need to know your goal. What's your immediate need? What do you want the grant for? A marketing plan? A new toilet block? Some help for you to research and plan out a new business idea?

The bower bird's immediate need is to attract a mate. His big picture (his strategy) is to create the next generation. Building a nest will help him get a mate and this will lead to chicks.

What's your immediate need? How does it fit into your big picture, your overall strategy?

We are all familiar with a Stealing bird nest. The careful selection and placement of sticks. The to and fro to gather all the materials needed to build it and then colourful and shiny objects to make it look good.

Similarly, when writing a grant, you have to collect a lot of information and evidence like quotes, plans, budgets – your sticks, stones as well as colourful things, shiny objects – your support letters, illustrations – graphic design even – to tell your story as to why the funding body should give you the money – not someone else.



Female bower birds are demanding. Several male bower birds may be building a nest for them and they are in fierce competition for the female. Only the best nest wins! So too is grant writing; it's very competitive.

To write a successful grant you have to spend hours and hours working on it. Sometimes more than 30, 40 or even 50 hours for a grant of \$20,000 to \$100,000 plus. For a grant of around \$20,000 make sure you start at least 5 to 7 days before the grant is due. Especially if you need to get quotes from trades people, marketing people, or any other business, plus you may need support letters from other organisations. Of course 2 weeks is better!

For grants bigger in size add on another week for each \$50,000. A grant of \$400,000 may take you 2 months – writing it up, getting all the evidence you need – quotes, letters of support, plans, etc etc. The whole of each month won't be devoted to writing a grant – no one usually has the luxury of that amount of time. However, spreading it out over a few weeks, or months, allows you time to spend 1, 2 or 3 half days a week working on it. Leaving it, reflecting on it and coming back to it.

Of course not everyone does this. There are times when it's left to the last few days and this makes it very hard for you or the grant writer to do a good job. You have to be very experienced at grant writing – and familiar with the funding body – to get away with doing it like this. Not recommended! A beautiful nest can't be rushed.

Like the bower bird you have to carefully place your sticks (information) in order and you may need to keep going back and forth moving your sticks carefully, tucking them into place, adjusting them in order for the nest to be strong and look good. This takes time; even young bower birds need to practice before their nest becomes perfect.





The Write Stuff

A grant needs to be ordered. That is, it needs to flow and read well. It needs to make sense to someone who doesn't know your organisation or business well. Always assume your reader has no idea about you or your business. Be clear about what you are asking for.

Cut out unnecessary words. Your message needs to be clear, and concise. Do not throw all your ideas onto the page at once in the hope that something sticks in the mind of your reader!

To write in plain English does take practice and many grants have word limits meaning answers need to be contained. Nevertheless, practice makes possible. Remember words are powerful AND they need to be to the point.

Like the shiny lids, shells and colourful objects that the bower bird places at the entrance to the nest as a final hurrah, "look at my bower", so too does a grant need to be well presented – no spelling errors or incorrect adding up in the budget.

White space and bold headings can make proposals easier to read, as can illustrations. Avoid basic mistakes like spelling errors, poor grammar and lengthy proposals that exceed word limits. Those kinds of mistake can cast doubt on how good you will be at using the grant money. If you can, get someone else to check it.

Applicants should put themselves in the shoes of grant reviewers, who might be from another cultural group, or have to read dozens of applications about complicated subjects that lie outside their own fields of knowledge. Make it as easy as you can for them to understand your idea and overall strategy.

Like a bowerbird nest your grant submission needs to stand out. Be proud of your work and be clear what your submission is about. A grant is about convincing an agency/assessor that your ideas are worthy and exciting.

If all that sounds hard. Well, that's because grant writing can be....and it is a good idea to seek skilled help to begin with. Having said that its worth giving it a go as you can learn so much – even from an unsuccessful grant – but always ask for feedback if you get a knock back.





Soft Skills – talking with people; talking up your idea with the right people

For successful grant writing there is a real need for soft skills. Yes, you need to 'know your stuff', however, soft skills are those skills that enable someone to interact effectively and harmoniously with other people. In other words, personal qualities like good communication and the willingness to discuss an idea – again and again. Relationship building is also very important – with the grant writer, the funding agency, industry bodies, everyone involved. So is being available and contactable – by email and phone – to explain your funding proposal and respond to ideas.

Say your idea out aloud. Talk it through with a trusted adviser. Write your idea down. If need be, get help with this but try and do it yourself first. A genuine attempt is more powerful than you realise. There is power in your own story/idea. People will be interested.

Some more tips:

- You could start with a 'soft pitch' that outlines your project or idea. These pitches should cover several main points: "Here's what I'm trying to do. Here's why it's important. Here's a little bit about me and the people I'm collaborating with. Would you like to talk further?"
- Ideas can take time to evolve and become comprehensible to a wider audience. Be patient
- Allow yourself time to go through the idea and plenty of time to liaise with the grant writer if that's not you.
- Sometimes you need a business plan for a grant (especially for an infrastructure grant) but not always. There are grants that can assist with business planning as a first step to you getting some money for say a building (infrastructure). You can also get help from your local Kimberley business advisers first – such as Kimberley Birds, Many Rivers, Morrgul and KSBS
- These organisations have business development people. A good development officer is worth their weight in gold, make friends with them.
- Reflections from "the other side" – ask grant assessors what they are looking for (many of the things they will look for we have already discussed)
- Show confidence in your idea – again practice makes possible. If you are not excited no one else will be!
- Think about the risks of giving you the money or supporting your idea – from your side, from the 'other side'. And address these risks in your submission – subtly or explicitly.
- Trust your Intuition and gather facts and figures to support your idea (evidence).
- Look at case studies of past successful grant recipients. Talk to them if you can.





Tourism Grants

Given the impact of Covid on the tourism and hospitality industry there are a number of support programs and grants around for new, emerging and established tourism businesses. Both State and Commonwealth Government have agencies that assist with grants.

Tourism Western Australia is the State government agency that can help you. Go to their website www.tourism.wa.gov.au and subscribe to their newsletter for updates, resources and information. For Indigenous tourism businesses www.waitoc.com can also assist. At the Commonwealth level there are upcoming grants through the National Indigenous Australians Agency specifically targeting the tourism sector – www.niaa.gov.au as well as support from IBA.

Some key points when going for a tourism grant are

- Is your tourism experience located in a compelling landscape? Do you have interesting stories to tell? Great! You are over halfway there.
- If it's an infrastructure grant you are more than likely to need a business plan. The business plan needs to tell the story of what your business is, how you plan to operate it and who is going to run and work in your business. And it needs to include financial information.
- If its a grant requesting help for existing businesses due to Covid, or business development support, you may only need 1 quote from your suppliers not 3 quotes from different businesses as there is an understanding that the tourism business has been developing a brand and will use their existing suppliers and marketing contacts. Check this first so you don't waste time chasing unnecessary quotes.
- Covid has really impacted on tourism businesses reliant on the international visitors and the inter-state visitors from NSW, Victoria and other states outside WA. Food and hospitality have really suffered too when a lock down is imposed on the area. Make sure to emphasise how your last year or two has been when describing the progress of your business – at the appropriate question.
- Think strategically about your tourism idea or product. This can be hard to do especially if it's a new idea. Speak to someone about it. WAITOC, TWA, ANW, Kimberley Birds, KSBS, Many Rivers etc all have experienced advisers who can be a sounding board and offer suggestions. Speak to industry specific people – WAITOC, TWA and TCWA and get their take on what you want to do. Remember you are like a stealing bird...you will gather lots of shiny pieces (advice) from all over the place but ultimately at the end of the day you will be the one to decide what to include in your nest to make it look special and you will be the one to back yourself. You will be the bird building the nest (yes, I know its male but you get what I'm saying!)





Tourism Grants continued...

- Conviction is key here. What do I mean by that? Well, YOU have to believe that it is possible. Entrepreneurs have a vision well before they had the resources to deliver on that vision.
- Build relationships – before you submit a grant speak to the funding body. Let them know it's your first time applying (if it is). If it's your second or third time then let them know what's different about your submission this time around.
- Writing is hard, and experienced grant writers recommend devoting plenty of time to the task. Scheduling should include time for rewrites, proofreads and secondary reads by friends, colleagues and family members, experts say.
- Don't work right up to the deadline. This can undo all your hard work. Get organised and do it early.
- Grant writing doesn't necessarily end with a proposal's submission. Applicants might receive requests for rewrites or more information. Rejections can also come with feedback, and if they don't, applicants can request it.
- Negative feedback can be one of the best learning experiences.
- Grants are tricky because they can be hard to get right and there is no shortcut to experience. Be prepared for your first or maybe second time to not succeed. Having said that if you prepare properly and speak to people you trust and who have knowledge you can get somewhere first time.
- Try and give a grant submission a shot yourself ...at least 2 to 3 weeks out from the submission date and then ask someone for help. Doesn't matter how well – or badly – you think you have filled in the submission form; people are more likely to help you out if you have genuinely tried. Sometimes funding bodies are not allowed to receive a draft of a grant in written form but they can listen to you describe it over the phone and give you feedback. Don't underestimate how much help that can be!
- Most importantly if they give you feedback listen to it! And then include the feedback in your grant! DON'T IGNORE the funding bodies advice!
- A successful proposal must closely align with the grant body's strategic goal.





Art Works/Design

There are a number of key agencies who supply funding for the arts. This too is a very competitive space. And has been greatly impacted by the Covid pandemic.

There are a number of programs and grants around for art businesses. Both State and Commonwealth Government have agencies that assist with grants. The Department of Local Government, Sport, and Cultural Industries is the State government agency that can help you. Go to their website www.dlgsc.wa.gov.au.

There is also specific funding for Aboriginal arts businesses, Connecting on country as well as regional arts. For Indigenous art businesses www.waitoc.com can also assist. At the Commonwealth level there are grants through the Office for the Arts – www.arts.gov.au and www.australiacouncil.gov.au National Indigenous Australians Agency has funding programs specifically targeting the tourism and art sector – www.niaa.gov.au

A couple of key points when going for an arts grant are:

- Do you have a portfolio of work/reputation in the industry? Include examples of your work as evidence to support your submission
- Is your art going to be located in a compelling landscape? Do you have interesting stories to tell? Great you are over halfway there.
- If it's an infrastructure grant then you are likely to need a business plan. The business plan needs to tell the story of what your art business is, how you plan to operate it and who is going to run and work in your business. And it needs to include financial information.
- If it's a grant requesting help for existing businesses due to Covid, or business development support, you may only need 1 quote from your suppliers not 3 quotes from different businesses as there is an understanding that an art business has been developing a brand and will use their existing suppliers and marketing contacts. Check this first so you don't waste time chasing unnecessary quotes.
- Covid has really impacted on art businesses reliant on the international visitors and the inter-state visitors from NSW, Victoria and other states outside WA. Make sure to emphasise how your last year or two has been when describing the progress of your business – at the appropriate question.





Art Works/Design continued...

- Think objectively about your idea or product. This can be hard to do because it's your idea! This is a very competitive area so take time to learn from the setbacks and successes of others – there will be an art centre or art gallery in your town or community. Go and see the arts administrator and ask for some tips – and a support letter! Check in with your local development commission also.
- Conviction is key here. What do I mean by that? Well, YOU have to believe that it is possible. You have to believe the art will deliver a public good/great experience/be provocative whatever your angle is.
- Build relationships – before you submit a grant speak to the funding body. Let them know it's your first time applying (if it is). If it's your second or third time then let them know what's different about your submission this time around.
- Writing is hard, and experienced grant writers recommend devoting plenty of time to the task. Scheduling should include time for rewrites, proofreads and secondary reads by friends, colleagues and family members, experts say.
- Don't work right up to the deadline. This can undo all your hard work. Get organised and do it early.
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- Try and give a grant submission a shot yourself ... at least 2 to 3 weeks out from the submission date and then ask someone for help. Doesn't matter how well – or badly – you think you have filled in the submission form; they are more likely to help you out if you have genuinely tried. Sometimes funding bodies are not allowed to receive a draft of a grant in written form but they can listen to you describe it over the phone and give you feedback. Don't underestimate how much help that can be!
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Consultancy Grants/Cultural Awareness Grants

This type of funding support doesn't fit as neatly into one space as tourism or the arts. However, both tourism and arts funding agencies – mentioned previously – will have elements of their programs that fit the funding of cultural awareness and leadership programs.

Often those same agencies are also looking for consultants to provide advice. A consultant is an agent of change. A consultant is a person who gives specialist advice and acts in an advisory capacity on professional matters. This includes professional advice on increasing people's cultural competency. If you fit these criteria then agencies like www.dpir.wa.gov.au and www.niaa.gov.au and www.iba.gov.au have consultancy registers as do many other government agencies.

To start cultural competency training and delivering cultural awareness workshops it is a good idea to team up with a collaborator who has already delivered some. This can increase the chance of a successful delivery – and getting the work in the first place – as well as build your confidence. Importantly real-life experiences will only strengthen grant submissions you put in for resources to develop your consulting business.

You may have the cultural content, the expert cultural knowledge but it's good to seek advice on best ways to deliver or share that knowledge. For example, there are many experienced Aboriginal tourism operators in the Kimberley who excel at what they do. They know how to hold a group's attention; they know about taking people safely out on country and the rules and regulations that go with that. They know how to deliver cultural content and share knowledge. They are a great resource. And often they are looking for collaborations themselves or adding on another product to their portfolio. Adding on a cultural awareness day could be a great way of you getting experience and there being more options to offer their customers. Win win!

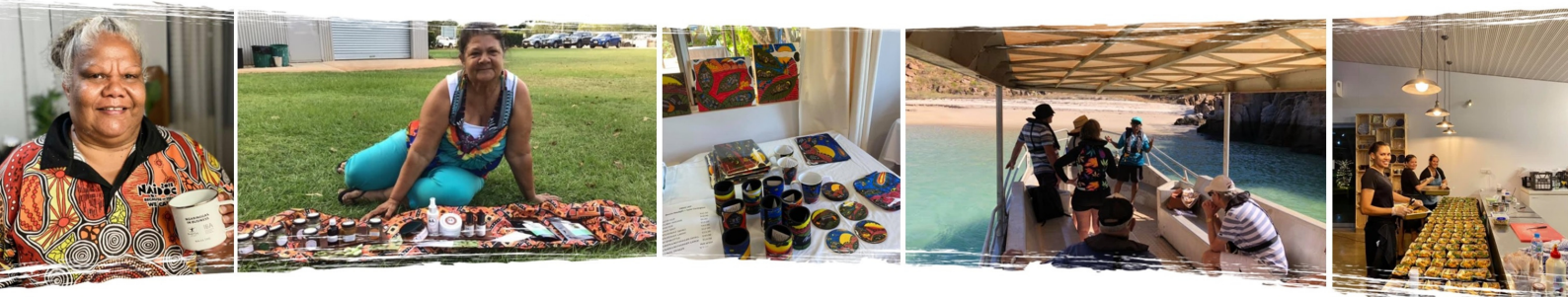
Again, for grants (as well as tendering for consulting work) you need evidence of your experience in this area to be successful. So grab opportunities as they arise.

You can also get practical help from your local Kimberley business advisers – such as Kimberley Birds, Many Rivers, Morrgul and KSBS. They can help you fine tune your idea and apply for grants for equipment or vehicles or other items you may need to do your cultural competency work.

They can also “advertise you”, that is let other service providers and corporates know that you are available for work. There are always corporations and local government bodies and businesses looking to increase their cultural competency and train their staff in this important area.

These organisations have business development people. It's worth repeating – a good development officer is worth their weight in gold – make friends with them.





Consultancy Grants/Cultural Awareness Grants

If you are looking for a grant to help you provide consulting services such as paid mentoring work, you will need to include specific examples where you have been successful doing this type of consultancy before. Ideally you would describe the project, the value of the project and the outcomes from the project.

If you are working with someone else to prepare your grant you will find that you will need to spend 4 to 5 hours at least twice during the grant submission process going through the document with the writer and collator of your submission. Don't expect just to ask someone to do it and then magic it happens.

Last – but not least – credibility is important. First impressions do count. Put your best foot forward. Don't put in a grant that has been rushed and is not finished properly doesn't fit the criteria. It can be damaging to your reputation.

If grant funding is not available for your idea. Here is a table outlining sources of funding.

Source of Funding	Description
Fund through Operations	So-called bootstrapping - Getting cash from Customers in advance of delivery. Collaborating with existing business to get paid experience and a foot in the door
Strategic Investing from Partners/Suppliers	From Suppliers / Partners / Other Stakeholders - Corporate Venture Capital (CVC)
Non-dilutive Capital	Lending (bank loan)/ Philanthropy/ Grants, etc.
Public Capital	Crowdfunding, DPOs, Accredited Investor Crowdfunding
Private Capital	Private equity, Venture Capital, Angel Investors, etc.

Good luck!

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