

Writing your bid

- ✓ Whether it's a grant application or a bid to deliver services, there is likely to be a form to fill in. This is so that the evaluators receive the same information from each bidder, and are able to assess applications against set criteria.
- ✓ The essential thing is to answer the question. This may sound obvious, but it is so easy to get carried away with trying to squeeze all your positive stories into the application. These will count for nothing if you haven't answered the question.
- ✓ Watch out for word limits. Some electronic forms will stop you entering too many words; others will let you go on. Evaluators will often only read information up to the word limit.
- ✓ Don't assume that the evaluators know anything about you or your organisation. Be concise, but do explain anything that is not common knowledge.
- ✓ If you are doing this on behalf of an organisation, write collectively rather than alone. Maybe hold a planning session where everyone can contribute under each question or heading. It's amazing how this can spark new ideas!
- ✓ Increasingly, you will find that bids and grant applications require you to focus on outcomes. These are the end benefits of the service you are delivering or the project you are funding. When you find yourself writing something descriptive, ask the question 'so what?' Focus on *why* you do what you do and *how you know* you're doing it well.
- ✓ Be positive in your writing. However, do not over-inflate achievements without evidence to back them up. Be realistic about weaknesses and lessons learned.
- ✓ Look for 'Help' and 'FAQ' sections. If you're not sure about something, ask the organisation behind the form. It's better than misunderstanding the question or giving an incomplete answer. You should also be able to see answers given to other people's questions - and these might relate to things you hadn't thought of.
- ✓ Share your application with colleagues or ask a friend or indeed a professional to check it before you submit it. Make sure it is clear, accurate and easy to read. Check you have attached all the supplementary information and documents required. Don't leave it till the last minute: to be fair to all applicants, bids will have a strict closing time. If you are completing a form online, leave some contingency time for system problems and make sure you actually click on the send/submit button!
- ✓ Whether or not you are successful in your application, ask the evaluators for feedback, which you can then apply to your next bid.