Funding

TMN Guideline

D11.4 –
Toolbox for
SMEs Innovation
Ecosystem

HOW TO APPLY FOR FUNDING: TO CREATE OR STRENGTHEN A NETWORK

An example from the National Mermaid Network based in Trondheim, Norway

Blue Competence Center were with the support from the European Commission and the BRIDGES project, proud to be able to further develop a project that aims to strengthen women's positions in the work life. The Mermaid Network's mission is to bring women from the fishery and aquaculture sector together.

The Mermaid Network wants to create an inclusive arena that will enable and enhance diversity and equality, and thereby contribute to better possibilities, new perspectives and enhanced competence and innovation.

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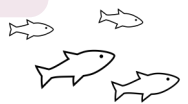
THIS GUIDELINE

This guideline can be used by anyone who is planning to apply for funding to create or further strengthen an existing network. Please note that this guideline is based on creating a specific networking event for women in the fisheries and aquaculture sector, but you may use the elements showcased in this guideline based on your local context. In preparing this guideline we chose to use the experiences we have gained along the way combined with inspiration from Open AI – ChatGPT*, to create the best plug and play. In addition to these points, we will encourage you to use search engines (like google) or Open AI to find good solutions and sources.

*ChatGPT is an artificial intelligence generator and can be utilized to enhance productivity in a wide range of topics. Its versatile applications make it valuable for tasks such as drafting different texts, brainstorming ideas and learning new concepts. At the bottom of this guideline, you will find a step-by-step explanation of how this tool can be used, generated by ChatGPT.

CONTEXTUAL SUMMARY

The aim when applying for a grant or to get sponsors, is to get additional funds that will contribute more time and/or money into a project. Such funds will allow you to work systematically with the development and progress of the project. There are a variety of options when deciding to apply to get funding or when reaching out to get different sponsors. The best way to succeed is to find a grant or sponsors that suit the type, aim and vision of your project. Getting announced funds from the public sector or funds from sponsors can help elevate your project to the next level.

Funding

SUMMARY OF THE APPLICATION /SPONSORSHIP PROCESS

When applying for a grant or when planning to get sponsorships, there are some important steps to take into consideration

1. DEFINING THE FUNDS

There are different types of grants available both from the public and private sector.

- **A public grant** will usually be linked to a strategy to solve a societal challenge. Therefore, it is important that you do the necessary research to map out if your project will bring the solution to a certain societal challenge.
- **Funds from sponsors**, when applying a grant from sponsors the proposal should match the company's strategy. When approaching a company for sponsorship deals, it is important to note that they have a greater need to understand "*what's in it for me?*"

Common to both processes are that it is important to extract the essence and value that your project will contribute, and how the project's impact aligns with the public or private strategy.

Example: from the Mermaid Networks proposal for funding.
NIKK (Nordic Information on Gender) administers two funds on behalf of the Nordic Council of Ministers. The fund we decided to apply for and that matched our project was the Nordic Gender Equality Fund, who finances Nordic collaborations that promote gender equality.

2. CAREFULLY REVIEW THE APPLICATION GUIDELINES OR COMPANY STRATEGY & GATHER SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Pay attention to the funding source requirements such as required documentation, submission format, strategies, eligibility, and evaluation criteria. Collect supporting documents such as project plans, financial statements, and references. Ensure that all documents are up-to-date, organized and aligned with the application requirements.
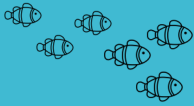
Example:
The first step was to do some research on NIKK's call for proposals and to join a meeting arranged by NIKK, where they informed all possible applicants about the funds. We also revied the Guide for applicants thoroughly.

Tip!
In addition to include the selection criteria in the proposal, you might consider checking the website for enlisted applications that ended up getting funds. It might benefit your application to look at which key elements previous funded projects, contain.

3. PROJECT PARTNERS

When applying for funds, some funding sources might request that you team up with partners to have a collaboration. When you want to get a sponsorship, you might offer a collaboration or to become partners.

Example:
When joining the meeting arranged by NIKK, we got to present our project to the other participants to see if there were other projects that aligned with ours, and we gathered contact information. The criteria were to have tree Nordic partners in the collaboration.

After the meeting we contacted some of the other applicants that had projects that seemed to align with ours to see if they would partner up for a collaboration.

We decided to reach out to The International Women's Association in Malmö (IKF) who's vision is an equal world where everyone takes responsibility, shows mutual respect and be able to reach their full potential. We found out that we could merge our knowledge and competence together and we decided to collaborate on the application.

We then went on to contact The Association of Women in the Marine Industry in Iceland (KIS), who wanted to join the collaboration.

The application process then became a collaboration between BCC, IKF and KIS. It was important to showcase that each partner would bring unique ideas and competence into the project and to assign roles.

4. DEFINE THE NEEDS FOR FUNDING

Be clear in the description of the purpose of your project, and why it needs funding. Determine the specific amount of funding requested to achieve the goal. Note that some applications guidelines provided by the funding source demand to see the planned budget that include both direct (material cost) and indirect costs (administration costs). A detailed budget entails an outline of all anticipated expenses and how the requested funds will be used.

Example:
When applying for the funding provided by NIKK we made a project plan. This was in addition to writing a proposal that explained the projects need for funding.

The project plan entailed:
- A short and introduction to the project
- Problem description
- The main goal of the project (solution)
- Information about the partners
- Project timeline that showcased the details of the projects work-packages
- The Nordic benefits of the project
- The added value for gender policy
- The sustainability benefits of the project
- The goal of the project implementation
- The project partners economic contributions in addition funding
- A budget draft to showcase the divide of the funding between partners

5. PREPARE THE PROPOSAL WITH A COMPELLING NARRATIVE

Craft a concise and well-structured proposal that highlights the importance of your project with its aim and potential impact (the solution to a societal challenge or what the project will provide the company and/or company strategy).

The proposal should include an executive summary, project description, budget, timeline of the activities and expected outcomes. Make sure that the proposal addresses each of the selection criteria outlined in the application guidelines.

If research is mentioned it is imperative to provide specific examples and evidence. Data as such is a good way to demonstrate the projects alignment with the funder's priorities.

Tip 1: Write a persuasive narrative that conveys the project's goals, the anticipated outcomes, and the impact it will make.

Tip 2: When writing the proposal, use engaging language and storytelling techniques to capture the funders or the sponsor's interest.

Example:
With the aim to improve diversity, equity, inclusiveness and gender-equality (DEIG) into ocean related workplaces we designed an application that had different paragraphs that contained:
- The requested funding, we needed for the project
- A brief and compelling project description
- The timeline for the project's activities (work-packages)
- The problem formulation (how we answered the strategy)
- The projects originality and relevance
- The Method and implementation
- Paragraph that explained how we would communicate the results
- Assignment of roles
- Paragraph that explained the Nordic Benefit.
- Paragraph with expected impact/long term view
- Paragraph explaining interdisciplinary perspectives
- Applicants and contact info

6. REVIEW, FEEDBACK AND EDIT

Make sure to proofread the application for grammar or spelling mistakes, and coherence. Arrange a review with coworkers to seek feedback and to get another observation on which parts of the text that will enhance the application. This might entail headlighting unique selling, to check if the application is coherent to the criteria and to point out the parts of the text that should be taken out.
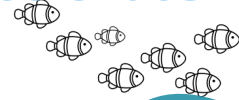
7. SUBMIT APPLICATION

Submit the application by the specified deadline. When submitted you might consider following up to confirm that the application has been received and is under review. If you receive request for additional information, respond promptly and professionally. Regardless of the outcome, express gratitude. It is important to preserve a positive relationship with the funder as they may consider future applications.

GOOD LUCK!

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A step-by-step guide on how to use ChatGPT
(generated by ChatGPT)

NB!

It is important to be critical of the information provided by ChatGPT or any other AI language model. While these are powerful tools, they are not infallible and can sometimes generate incorrect or biased information.

1. Access the platform:
Visit the platform or application that provides access to ChatGPT. This could be OpenAI's official website, or any other platform integrated with the ChatGPT API.

2. Initiate a Conversation:
Start a new conversation by typing a message or prompt in the provided text box. This can be a question, a request, or any topic you want to discuss.

3. Send Your Message:
Once you've entered your message, send it to the ChatGPT system. The system will process your input and generate a response based on the context of the conversation.

4. Receive the Response:
ChatGPT will generate a response based on the input you provided. The response will appear in the conversation window shortly after you send your message.

5. Continue the conversation:
You can continue the conversation by responding to ChatGPT's messages. Ask follow-up questions, seek clarifications, or request more information to engage in a meaningful conversation.

6. Review and Edit:
After receiving a response, you can review it to ensure it meets your needs. If necessary, you can edit your previous message or provide additional context to get a more accurate response.

7. End the Conversation:
When you're done with the conversation, you can simply stop sending messages. If you're using a platform with a chat interface, there might be a specific button to end or close the conversation.

ChatGPT Example

From the Mermaid Network and the use of ChatGPT

ChatGPT is known to be efficient in the search of knowledge and in giving tips to streamline a process. We wanted to see how ChatGPT worked as a tool, so we asked if it could make a summary from a longer text, and if it could help us produce ideas for a project name.

We first put in a quite long text about the partners from the NIKK application and how we would like to divide our roles, then we asked ChatGPT this question:
Can you shorten this text to 1000 characters and highlight the most important aspects, and still keep the different parts that showcase each partners unique role:

This was ChatGPT's generated answer:
The three partners, KIS, IKF, and TMN, are working to promote inclusiveness, equality, and diversity in the blue sector and Nordic workplaces. KIS conducts monthly networking events and has conducted two studies on women in the Icelandic fisheries sector to support inclusiveness and equality. IKF has produced a practical handbook on creating an inclusive and equal workplace with an intersectional perspective to be disseminated among the Nordic network. TMN aims to change attitudes towards women's position and diversity in the industry, strengthen diversity competence, and demand sustainability goals related to diversity, decent work, equality, and social sustainability. The low representation of women in the industry leads to issues such as harassment and lower pay, making integration and inclusion important parts of the project.

After a while we had written quite a lot of info about the project and asked ChatGPT different questions, and learned more about how it works. Then we asked Chat GPT (in the same chat):
What could be a good and also catchy name for the project we want to apply funding for?

This was ChatGPT's answer:
Sure, here are some ideas for a catchy name for the project/network:

1. Women in Nordic Seas (WINS)
2. Nordic Empowerment Network (NEN)
3. Diversity Across Borders (DAB)
4. Nordic Diversity Collective (NDC)
5. Breaking Borders for Women (BBW)

I hope these suggestions help!

HOW WE USED THIS INFORMATION

The answer generated by ChatGPT contained a good summary and some nice suggestions for a project name. We decided to use the project names generated as inspiration. We used the base of the summary text and altered it to align with our project.

Sources:
Boss ladies
Chatgpt: website
NIKK: website
NIKK: Guide for applicants
The International Women's Association in Malmö (IKF)
The Association of Women in the Marine Industry in Iceland (KIS)