

## Seven Key Tips for Grantseekers

People often ask us for hints and tips on what might help them be more successful in securing funding for their project proposals. In the spirit of learning and sharing, we have had a close look at the past three releases of the *Training and Work Pathways Program*, and have noted seven key tips for grantseekers that emerge from the assessment and feedback processes.

While this is by no means a definitive collection, the tips do reflect the most common themes we see when considering what did (and did not), receive funding.

### 1. Don't waste your time and effort: get your forms in!

**What we learned:** Lots of time was wasted on applications that were started, but then abandoned. When asked, most of our potential applicants said “running out of time” was the main reason.

**The takeaway:** Start early and aim to beat the deadline well in advance of closure. If your project will involve collaboration with other organisations, try to get your written agreements or letters of support in place as early as possible.

### 2. Do the reading (make sure you're eligible)

**What we learned:** The next most common reason for submitting forms was applicants discovering that they were ineligible or that the program was unsuitable while writing their applications.

**The takeaway:** Make sure that the project is the right fit before investing your efforts. If in doubt, ask the Contact Officer.

### 3. Build your relationships with grantmakers

**What we learned:** From the last three TWPP releases, it is clear that a better connection with the grantmaker – through asking questions and discussing your project proposals well in advance of submission – will increase your chance of success. **ALL** 77 successfully projects funded so far either attended an Information Session or discussed the application with the Contact Officer (in all but two cases, it was both).

**The takeaway:** Make sure that you attend an Information Session, and do not be shy. If you cannot attend one, e-mail or phone the Contact Officer to discuss your project.

### 4. Ask for help!

**What we learned:** Generally, larger organisations are more likely to seek help than smaller ones. This is despite the fact that small organisations much more frequently mention a lack of knowledge about funds and lack of experience and training as reasons for not applying for more grants.

**The takeaway:** There is no shame in asking for help. If you need more information, ask for it. To help, we have developed a few new resources for applicants to help build their project. Use them! We want to fund all sorts of organisations to do their good work. Do not forget to have a look at past projects – <http://www.skills.tas.gov.au/funding/trainingandworkpathways> – and have a think about talking to other project owners about their experience in building and delivering projects.

## 5. Ask for feedback to help you improve

**What we learned:** One of the worst things about the whole grant process can be a lack of useful feedback on unsuccessful applications. While feedback can be uneven at the best of times, we have gone to great effort in TWPP to try to ensure that our processes produce helpful, targeted feedback.

**The takeaway:** Keep asking for feedback. Ask where you can strengthen your project proposal. We have funded a number of projects that were unsuccessful initially, but sought feedback and returned with a fine-tuned application that received an offer of Grant.

## 6. Tell us how we can do better

**What we learned:** We are always keen to improve the quality and value of our programs to the community. We know that applicants and project owners are great sources of advice for these improvements.

**The takeaway:** If you are asked to give us feedback, take the opportunity. If you are not asked, but have ideas, share them anyway! Constructive and practical solutions are always welcome, and we will try our best to implement them.

## 7. Remember to appropriately structure (and cost) your project to measure your results

**What we learned:** TWPP is designed to support projects that address very complex problems. We know that this is hard! New and innovative approaches are encouraged, and we want to learn as much as possible about what works (and what does not). Understanding the results of your efforts is important to us, and we are prepared to pay you for it! In the world where 'evidence-based practice' is key, thinking hard about how you measure your outcomes is critical.

**The takeaway:** Spend time on determining what your project intends to do, and what impact you would like to make. Consider including an evaluation component in your project design, and cost it accordingly in your budget. We **LOVE** to hear about the medium and longer-term impact in the lives of participants, so you might think about budgeting for follow-up research six, twelve or 24 months after your project closes to assist both yourself and us better understand outcomes.