

Establishing a need for your project

For any funding application you will have to show that there is a need for your project, and that your proposal represents a good way of meeting that need. Many applicants believe there is a need for their project, but your chances of funding are poor if you can't show this clearly to your Lottery funder.

You should explain to your Lottery funder:

- the needs your users have, or the gap you are aiming to fill
- how you know they have these needs
- how your project will meet those needs
- what will change or improve for the users of your project.

Without this, the evidence of need can be considered weak, as it will appear to come solely from your own viewpoint.

The level of evidence you are expected to show will usually depend upon the amount of funding that you are requesting. If you are looking for a relatively small grant you could conduct a survey among your existing users, asking them for their views on a new proposal. For a larger grant, you may need to do a full options appraisal.

This will look at the different ways of meeting the need and identify which option is the best and why.

These are some of the ways of gathering information to show the need for your project.

Research

Research can be carried out in a number of ways and to different depths. To start your research you should first look at previous research reports that are relevant to your project. These will show what need for your project has already been shown and help to identify what further information you require.

Following this you should target your research at the gaps identified, and consult with your potential project users to clarify their needs. You may want to carry out consultations or questionnaires to help identify their real needs, for example through focus groups, interviews, workshops and questionnaires. In your application, describe who was involved in the consultation, for example, staff members, external experts or project users.

Context – what else is happening?

You should show that you have considered the work of other individuals, groups and organisations when looking at the need for your project. This should include identifying any similar work in your area or with your users and what plans there are within statutory, voluntary, regulatory and/or funding organisations to meet this need. You should also consider the work of strategic partnerships or networks within your locality or field of work, for example, local authorities, health care trusts, the police. This may also include Lottery funders who have specific priorities within your area.

Evidencing the need

When explaining the need for your project in your application, you should assume that the Lottery funder you are applying to has no knowledge of your field of work, explaining each point clearly and concisely. A good way to test this is to get someone independent of your organisation and with little or no knowledge of the field you work in to read through your case for your project. Your project should directly address the need that you have identified.

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Pilots

If your project is a new way of working then it may be worth considering running a pilot first. A pilot gives you an opportunity to test your method of working. It is important that you evaluate your pilot so that you can be sure your method of working is effective. If you want to develop your project following a pilot, the evaluation report will be important.

Top tips

You should always ask the people who will benefit from your project what they think their needs are and how they should be addressed

Don't assume that your Lottery funder knows about the need of your project – you need to explain it clearly

Further help

Your local helper agencies and specialist agencies for your area of work will know what research has already been carried out to support the need for your project.