

# GRANTSEEKER ACTION LIST

This list has been informed by analysis of the *Grants in Australia 2017* research report, an output of Our Community's Innovation Lab.

The 2017 survey is the ninth conducted by Our Community since 2006. A total of 1227 people completed the survey, which was conducted online from November 2016 to February 2017.

The survey, the biggest of its type in Australia, is part of an ongoing research project that charts the development of the field of grantmaking in Australia from the grantseeking community's perspective.

The production of this takeaway list reflects Our Community's aim to ensure that the data we collect is not just interesting but useful.

> Download the full survey report: [www.ourcommunity.com.au/grants2017](http://www.ourcommunity.com.au/grants2017)

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

A huge amount of time is being wasted on applications that are started then abandoned. More than half (54%) of the organisations we surveyed said they'd started an application that they didn't end up submitting. On the flipside of that trend, grantseekers who'd won six or more grants boasted the lowest rates of unsubmitted applications. Among those that abandoned an application, 38% cited "running out of time" as the main reason.

**The takeaway: start early; hit the deadline**

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

Another common reason that grantseekers cited for not getting their forms in was discovering that they were ineligible or that the program was unsuitable. Read more about that finding [here](#).

**The takeaway: the work you do early on to make sure you tick all the boxes will save you time later.**

## 3. Build your relationships with grantmakers

Successful grantseekers are much more likely than unsuccessful grantseekers to form relationships with grantmakers. Almost 80% of groups that had won six or more grants in the previous 12 months said they had "sometimes" or "often" developed a connection with the grantmaker.

**The takeaway: Pick up the phone.**

## 4. You've got to be in it to win it

It's clear from the survey results that those who apply for more grants get more grants. It seems obvious, but the message is clear.

**The takeaway: apply for more, get more.**

## 5. Ask for help

The study shows that larger organisations are more likely than smaller organisations to seek help from a grantmaker, while small organisations much more frequently cite lack of knowledge about funds, and lack of expertise and training, as reasons for failing to apply for more grants.

**The takeaway: There's no shame in asking for help. If you need more information, ask for it. If you need training get it. (We can help.)**

## 6. Ask grantmakers to help you improve

Grantseekers have continually highlighted a lack of feedback from grantmakers as a key problem they face. And while the proportion of grantmakers rated as "bad" in this department has dropped over the past decade, the figure still hovers above 50%. The good news is grantmakers are improving.

**The takeaway: Keep asking for feedback. Your good-natured advocacy will help keep that trendline moving upward.**

## 7. Tell grantmakers how they can do better

... Which brings us to giving feedback to grantmakers about their performance. Our research shows that where grantseekers are given the chance to comment on performance, about 80% are confident the funders will take action.

**The takeaway: If you're asked for feedback, grasp the opportunity. Be constructive and offer practical solutions for grantmakers who need to lift their game.**

## 8. Push to be paid to measure your results

It's clear that grantmakers' enthusiasm for outcomes measurement is not matched by their enthusiasm for funding it, with grantseekers still overwhelmingly funding their own outcomes measurement. But if your funder wants "evidence-based" practice, it can't hurt to ask them to cover your costs in producing the evidence.

**The takeaway: Include an evaluation component in your budget proposal. If the grantmaker wants it, they should be prepared to help fund it.**

## 9. Brace for an online future

Grantseekers continue to favour online electronic forms, with about 60% preferring these to offline (i.e. fillable PDFs and Word documents) electronic forms. Support for hard copy forms and other types of applications is negligible. Survey respondents told us they like having the ability to save partially completed forms, to reduce their environmental impact, and to get an instant receipt when an application is lodged. Frustrations with poor form design and function, however, continue.

**The takeaway: During the process of applying for a grant (by whatever method is offered or chosen), take notes about what's working and what's not. Look for opportunities to provide that feedback to the grantmaker at the conclusion of the process.**

## 10. Read the report in detail, and benchmark yourself

If you want a better idea of how the best grantseekers are performing, and the challenges facing those supplying the funds, we urge you to look closely at the *Grants in Australia* report and benchmark yourself against similar organisations, to see how well you're faring.

**The takeaway: Take your time to examine the full report and resource links, and discuss the findings with your organisation.**

> **Benchmark yourself: [Click here to compare your grants performance](#)**

> **More research: [Past Grants in Australia survey results](#)**

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## ABOUT OUR COMMUNITY

The *Grants in Australia 2017* research report is an initiative of Our Community, a social enterprise and Certified B Corporation that provides advice, connections, training and easy-to-use tech tools for people and organisations working to build stronger communities.

Our partners in that work are not-for-profit organisations and social enterprises; government, philanthropic and corporate grantmakers; donors and volunteers; enlightened businesses; and other community builders.

A Certified B Corporation and multi-award-winning social enterprise, Our Community's offerings include:

- **OurCommunity.com.au** – Australia's centre for excellence for the nation's 600,000 not-for-profits and schools: where not-for-profits go for help
- **Institute of Community Directors Australia** – the best-practice governance network for the members of Australian not-for-profit boards, committees and councils, and the senior staff who work alongside them
- **FundingCentre.com.au** – the best place to go to get information on grants and fundraising in Australia
- **GiveNow.com.au** – commission-free online donations for not-for-profits, and philanthropy education and tools for businesses, families and individuals
- **Good Jobs** – Connecting good people with social sector jobs, board vacancies and internships
- **Communities in Control** – Australia's most inspiring annual community sector gathering: thought leadership for the not-for-profit sector
- **Australian Institute of Grants Management** – information, inspiration and education for government, philanthropic and corporate grantmakers
- **SmartyGrants** – software and data science for revolutionary grantmakers
- **Australian Institute for Corporate Responsibility** – creating and facilitating authentic connections between enlightened businesses and their communities
- **The Innovation Lab** – the engine room for sharing ideas and mobilising data to drive social change

Our vision centres on social inclusion and social equity. Our dream is that every Australian should be able to go out their front door and stroll or wheel to a community group that suits their interests, passions and needs – or log on and do the same.

We want to help make it easy for people to join in, learn, celebrate, worship, plant trees, play a game, entertain and be entertained, care and be cared for, support others and be supported, advocate for rights and celebrate diversity. To get involved. To be valued.

## Our Community's grants agenda

The Australian Institute of Grants Management, a division of Our Community, has for more than a decade been at the forefront of innovation in grantmaking in Australia. As well as producing the country's only cross-sector best practice grantmaking publication, the AIGM also convenes and coordinates a number of grantmaking affinity groups and events, and has developed a best practice online grants management system, SmartyGrants, which is streamlining and standardising grantmaking across the country.

The AIGM is active in seeking and documenting best practice lessons and examples. We are codifying what we are learning through our website and tools, and embedding forward-thinking practices in our software.

Our Community also oversees Australia's most comprehensive grants listing newsletter and database, EasyGrants, and goes face to face with thousands of grantseekers across the country every year through an extensive grants training program.

## The Grantmaking Manifesto

We believe:

- 1. Grantmaking is an absolutely central element in the Australian economic system.** Not one dollar should be wasted on poorly designed, poorly articulated, poorly evaluated, or inefficient grants programs and systems. Grantmakers should maximise resources by sharing lessons, and seeking and learning from lessons shared by others.
- 2. Australia needs more and better professional grantmakers.** The job of grantmaking should be afforded appropriate professional status, training and recompense.
- 3. Grantmakers should listen to the communities they serve.** Grantmakers should be driven by outcomes, not process. They should trust and respect their grantees and offer programs, systems and processes appropriate to their needs and capacities.
- 4. Grantmakers should be efficient.** Wastage is indefensible. Skimping on systems, technology and professional staff is equally wicked.
- 5. Grantmakers should be ethical.** Grantmakers should ensure that the process of grantmaking is fair, unbiased, and transparent.



**ourcommunity.com.au**  
Where not-for-profits go for help

