

Achieve more with funding:  
think big, make  
space for ambition





Achieving success in the charitable sector is not a one-size fits all solution – a local children's charity is not going to strive for the same goals as a national sports charity. However, no matter the size, location, or area of support, one thing that unites all organisations is the drive to deliver successful outcomes that benefit the communities they support.

If the past few years have taught us anything, it is that with the unknown looming we have to be adaptable and learn lessons from the past to progress to the future. In uncertain times it is more important than ever that community projects remain innovative and ambitious to ensure they are meeting current complex social needs in the best possible way.

One of the main factors of achieving success is securing funding to help bring those ambitious projects to life.

This article looks at how charitable organisations can achieve more through funding to help them to accelerate their projects to success.





## Finding the funds

Once organisations know what funding they need, it is time to find their match. However, this most crucial stage in the funding process is proven to be problematic.

In October 2021, the Charity Commission published research which found that charities would like more guidance on how to find funding.

Focusing on the impact of COVID-19 on the charitable sector, *COVID-19 Survey 2021* reported that while nearly a quarter of respondents have already accessed funding support, many more are calling out for further clarity on where to find funds. The report stated that:

- 20% have accessed Local Authority funding, and 14% have used UK Government funding
- Half (50%) would find more information on financial support helpful.

It is clear that how and where to find funds remains a huge barrier to the charitable sector. This does not begin to factor in the need to find relevant funds which both the organisation, and their project, will be eligible to apply to. With funds ranging from multi-million pound national programmes to small local grants it can be hard to know where to begin.

The Trussell Trust partners with local communities, working to prevent hunger across the UK. In order to realise its vision of bringing communities together to end hunger and poverty, The Trust required a solution to help it identify funding in a hassle-free manner. While the internet and paper directories could be scoured, they failed to offer a method that was accurate and quick enough for the team's needs.

The Trussell Trust partnered with GrantFinder to help it identify a greater number of funding streams and maximise its financial potential. Delivering access to thousands of funding opportunities, the platform provides real-time updates and advanced search capabilities, allowing the team to quickly and easily identify relevant funding programmes that could otherwise be missed.

Richard Bolton, Charitable Trusts Fundraiser at The Trussell Trust comments:

"Using the solution, we're able to triage grant opportunities efficiently. I use it daily to monitor new funds as they appear, and I'm now able to quickly share information about important funds to head office and Area Managers. Back in the day, I used paper directories and a number of search machines – none of them even come close to the features offered by GrantFinder."

In the first three years of their GrantFinder subscription, the Trust secured more than £1 million in funding. In one financial year, trust fundraising alone contributed almost £1.2 million to the wider £6.63 million funding pot, with Richard reporting GrantFinder as being integral to that success. He continues:

"The solution functions as a one-stop shop of funding information for us – so much so, it's helped us identify a multitude of smaller funders. In the last financial year, over £100,000 of opportunities were sourced this way. We've also submitted several significant applications based on GrantFinder information – the largest being for more than £3 million which we hope will have a positive outcome."

## Impact of COVID-19

The pandemic has seen a change for those searching for funding, with many organisations now tasked with having to diversify and locate a range of suitable funding.

Cunninghame Housing Association is a leading not-for-profit social landlord and charity operating in North Ayrshire, East Ayrshire, and Dumfries and Galloway. In 2020, Cunninghame Housing Association started working together with Raydale Community Partnership and Gretna FC 2008 to create a new community sports hub in the heart of Gretna to promote well-being of the community by providing more opportunities to stay active through football, and other sports. The project included the installation of a new all-weather synthetic 11-a-side 4G football pitch, together with a new community gym, multi-purpose fitness room and changing facilities.

The entire project was estimated to cost £650,000, so the task for the Housing Association was to secure the funding necessary to complete the project. Hugh McGhee, Head of Social and Economic Development at Cunninghame Housing Association said:

"Compared to years gone by, it's highly unlikely you can source £650,000 from a couple of funding sources anymore. In the past, we could have sourced £200,000 or £300,000 from one particular funder. But due to the pandemic, most funders have limited their funds to lower amounts as they've shifted their priorities to helping communities that have suffered in one way or another because of COVID-19. We've, therefore, had to think more creatively about how we can source the funding we need for our community projects. There's a lot more research and work required to identify and pull together the necessary funds from a patchwork of sources."

Cunninghame Housing Association had to widen its funding search to tap into resources it might not have considered previously. To help the regeneration team create the funding plan for the project, the association invested in GrantFinder. By offering real-time grants and funding information from diverse range of funders, GrantFinder helped the association find the right funding relevant to its project needs in Gretna.





## Flexibility making space for ambition

COVID-19 had an obvious impact on funders and those seeking funding alike. However, many funders are now re-strategising to move on from the initial emergency funds provided during the worst of the lockdowns, to a more long-term strategy based on recovery from the pandemic and building towards the future.

As the charitable sector starts to move on from its critical phase, those organisations that are in a position to, are now being encouraged to ‘think big’ again. Whilst many funds still maintain rigid eligibility criteria, some funders are building on lessons learnt over the past two years and are providing flexible funding programmes in response to the ever-changing needs of the sector. For example, many funders have simplified their application process, helping applicants to get the application submitted quicker, and also meaning the funder can cut down on decision-making time.

Other funders noted the importance on partnerships during the pandemic, either through encouraging local partnerships as part of the eligibility criteria in their grant programmes, or by identifying similar projects and suggesting organisations work together.

There is also a noted increase in unrestricted funding – a more flexible way of funding organisations without having to meet stringent eligibility criteria or project outcomes. This flexibility in funding is enabling the sector to be more ambitious in what projects they deliver and is allowing organisations to develop problem-solving initiatives to benefit the specific issues their communities face, rather than modifying the project to fit into what the fund wants.

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Cunninghame Housing Association



With this shift in the funding landscape, searching for funds based on a specific need, such as ‘installing public toilets’ could mean that organisations are missing out on other relevant grants which have more open criteria and don’t have a set list of eligible activities. Instead, charities could broaden their approach when searching and use factors such as their geographic location, target beneficiaries, or the amount of funding needed instead.

GrantFinder presents filtered results from thousands of funds – detailing the latest opportunities which can be ordered and displayed by deadline or status. These multiple filters and search options enabled Cunninghame Housing Association to source not just sports-related funds but also other funds that were available for that geographical location. Hugh comments on using GrantFinder to widen their funding scope:

“GrantFinder had a big role to play in helping us deliver the project in Gretna. We assembled a capital package of £650,000 with contributions from 16 different funds. Without GrantFinder, the task of piecing all this together would have been protracted and painstaking but thanks to the solution, we ended up sourcing funds from places we would have never thought of initially.”

It is also worth noting that many funders are keen to discuss project ideas with organisations before an application form is submitted. So, while on paper a fund’s criteria might not be an exact fit, it would be beneficial to make contact with those funders who offer direct discussion as it may still lead to funding – for example through partnership opportunities or through another funding programme the applicant was not previously aware of.







As the UK's largest funding database, GrantFinder helps its clients in the charitable sector to dream big and achieve their vision via the tools to identify, apply for and manage funding.

**Call us now on 0333 011 1200 or email [marketing@idoxgroup.com](mailto:marketing@idoxgroup.com) for more information about Idox's funding services.**

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