Written Aug 2020 for Into The Wild ~ all from my own experiences & to the best of my knowledge, focussed on arts funding. Feel free to share far & wide but know this is not gospel + feel free to add to the end. I will add as I remember/discover things too.
Sophie Chapman :)

WHAT ARE YOU APPLYING FOR?
Sounds obvious but working out exactly what it is you need the money/support for is key to writing a convincing application. Some useful questions to ask yourself are:

1. What is my idea? What is it that I want to make and why? What do I want to find out by making it? What is motivating me?
2. What would be involved in making this happen? What would the process be to get there? Break it down into as much detail as you can, even if you are speculating, you won't be held to it to a T.
3. How would I go about making that happen? Would I need help to do it? What kind? Where would it be? What steps would be needed? What is the process in making it happen?
4. Who would be interested in it? Either taking part in it or viewing it, hearing about it, reading about it etc?
5. How much time would it take to make all this happen? Helps to use the process as a guide, or work back from what the finish line would be. Always add in periods between moments for reflection / space (I learnt that the hard way).
6. How much money would I need to make it happen? Write one budget as if you have just robbed a bank & money is no barrier, then use that as a benchmark to write a more reasonable 1, or 1 that fits the amount you are applying to, & a worst case scenario skint 1. What would still be possible of your project, if anything at all, if you only had a 10th of the money? This helps you work out what is essential to the project & what would just be a bonus to have, which will vary project to project.

Once you have this mapped out, even loosely, it will be easier to work out where to apply to. It might take you some time so don't beat yourself up if you can't think of all the answers at once, take your time if you can, let it develop.

WHAT TYPE OF FUNDING?
There are different types of application you may be writing, including & not limited to:
- Grants
- Bursaries
- Competitions
- Open Calls
- Commissions
- Support Schemes

They each have slightly different slants or criteria:
- Grants usually ask for specific outputs including engagement

- Bursaries are more for a period of support
- Competition may be for a pot of money to make something specific
- Open Calls & commissions may ask you to respond to a brief or need
- Support Schemes may be more interested in what the £ will do for your development

The kind you want depends on the project you have in mind or/and you may want to apply for a combination of things, depending on the scale of what you want to achieve. It is perfectly fine to apply for different pots of £ for different aspects of the project. Multi-strand funding is sometimes easier if the project has a number of different aspects, but harder to manage in terms of record keeping & reporting & keeping sane. It works quite well if you are working with a partner or organisation that could manage 1 pot of funding & you another.

For example, last summer Kerri & I did a residency in Leeds where we made a number of new artworks & lived there for 4 months. This was funded by the following:
- East Street Arts: organisational funding, they hosted the residency, gave us some £ for R&D plus the support of 1 of their producers.
- Arts Council England: the bulk of the £, paid for the majority of our time, materials, expenses, other creatives/actors that we worked with etc.
- Leeds Inspired: a local pot specifically for arts activity in areas of Leeds that might not usually get it, we used a similar app to the ACE one but focussed on the workshops we hosted & local engagement.
- Huddersfield University: we worked with an architect to build a table, hosted meals at the house with different local community organisers + invited speakers.

When you decide what you are applying for, download the questions & criteria & it can help to just pour as many bullet points in as you can, make yourself a skeleton to work from.

TIPS & TRICKS
Really great advice I got recently which will really really help you break down what the most important elements of your idea are, to return to when you answer other questions:
- Sum it up in 150 words
- 1 paragraph
- 3 sentences (hard!)
- 1 sentence (really hard!)

This might be very difficult to do before you have written a whole load of other crap you don't need first, it is a process in itself. Once you have it I would use that 1 sentence as your 1st sentence of the application (if it makes sense with the question). It will be tight, & punchy, & immediately give the person reading it a clear idea of what you want to do & will be talking about in the rest of the app.

The more your answers to those initial questions link up & tell a story, the easier it will be for someone reading it to grasp what you are going for, & imagine you are capable of delivering it.

Try to incorporate the order of the process into the order you write about it in - so that whoever is reading it can see how one step would lead to the next, what ideas underpin different actions etc. For example:
- Does the finished form make sense with the process, if it is a collaborative community piece about local plant life: would it be shown in a museum that no one goes to? Or would it be shown in the community garden?
- Does it sound manageable, you want to make a 50ft sculpture of a polar bear out of wood on your own out of your back bedroom: do you actually need to include more people, expertise, money & space to make it the best you can?

Make sure to look at what the funders are looking for, most of them these days make it quite clear what their £ is for, & what they want to spend it on. How well does your project match up to their aims? It can help to copy them into your working doc & make bullet points under each 1 where you can. For example:
- ACE are all about engagement & now more on diversity recently: how does your project meet these criteria? What kind of experience will people have when they interact with your work? Who is it that will be seeing it/in it? How will you make sure it aint just the pale male & stales? (I joke but for those of us that are white - we need to do a LOT better with this 1)
- Development £ is often about what it will do for you so that your work & practice are advanced as a result: what would be different after you got the £ to do this? Where would you be that you can't get to without it? How will you make sure that you get there if you got the £?
- Open Calls often have a specific remit: i.e. an early career artist working in sound to make a new piece for an online exhibition. What about your project relates to these ideas? Why would it be most interesting for them to pick you? What about your sound works well for an online exhibition? Why would it make a big difference for you at this moment in your practice?
- This can feel sometimes like you are a contortionist, moving yourself into weird shapes to fit what they want, if it changes the project beyond recognition - maybe this specific funding / opportunity isn't for you? Can you find 1 where you don't feel like you are making rabbits appear out of hats?

It can feel a little chicken & egg, especially when you get started, in that the more you have been funded in the past the easier it is to get more funding, but how do you get that first break? Starting with smaller amounts of money is probably a good idea anyway in getting the hang of things, & can often look more reasonable to funders in terms of your experience level. It can also be a good way to stagger projects - get some £ to begin it, reflect, apply for some more, & so on. This can also feel LOOOONG though it may be better for you in the long run, as you develop as you go.

Don't use too much jargon. It may work with some organisations or institutions, but with others it will read like you are clouding your ideas & haven't thought it through. It is really boring reading

something full of jargon & makes people switch off. Totally fine to use particular terms, just qualify what you mean when you do use specialist terminology, & never assume that because its an arts fund they will know about specific or niche theory etc.

The next 2 points contradict themselves I'M SORRY
I'm in 2 minds whether to say this as it can also begin to feel a bit soul destroying - but if it doesn't feel too much of a stretch - it can often help to use the funders own language. For example you might not really call what you do engagement, it creeps you out - you might be able to explain it in much better terms, but if you don't want to have to explain that aspect of your practice to them in only 150 words when you have a lot more to say about the project - you might call it engagement for this time. And not feel bad about it. I feel weird writing that because language is so very important, but also so is getting the £ to make your thing & change things for us all in how we describe art when you have the cash. I'm not going as far as to take the money & run, but make your life easier, get the £ then do it your way...?

Having said that - also use language that <u>excites you</u> to describe it. The word limits or character counts are brutal, & can leave you feeling like where has my idea gone? After telling them all the bits & pieces they want. It is a real skill, but good to go back over once you have it to a good point & ask yourself - does this still have all the juicy bits in it that excite me about doing it? It can be a more poetic way of phrasing something, or take a particular tone, you don't have to write like a robot. Even when it is summed up - does it still have the knotty, strange, interesting questions that you haven't worked out yet? This helps keep your soul, the soul of your project & is much more interesting to read as the person reading 1 Million applications that day.

Once you've got your writing to a good place - it is a great idea to read it outloud to yourself or someone else, helps you check how things flow, whether it sounds like you want it to sound and where sentences might be a bit too long, different grammar needed, you are repeating yourself (all easy mistakes when your head is in the application) etc etc.

WRITING BIDS IS A SKILL / WRITING BIDS CAN BE HELL
Don't beat yourself up or kill yourself over doing it, especially if writing isn't generally your thing - you express yourself in art for a reason, & this aspect of being an artist feels like one of the least creative parts. There are a lot of problems with the models by which we get funding, it can be very inaccessible if you don't have the know how, or nepotism etc, it can feel like a lottery sometimes so there's nothing wrong with you as an artist if you find it a nightmare. I'd like to say - just sack it off, but increasingly it is how we make our money & can give you amazing autonomy to do your thing. A couple ways round this are:
- Support each other! Swap applications, read each others, make good notes. You can return the favour another time. It is a hell of a lot easier to write about other people's work than your own, could you even help each other out by writing the 3 sentence thing after they describe what their idea is for you? It can be really useful to hear what others hear when you talk about your work.

- Give yourself enough time / set a time limit. It is easy when you really care about something to spend weeks, months, years on 1 application, but be pragmatic - what is the success rate? How many grants are they giving out? Have a look on their site or email them to ask. If there are only 3 places available for a really prestigious opportunity - don't waste your time & heartache on it for too long, spend a couple of hours & wack it in. Sometimes that kind of energy can get you a long way. Equally I always find I learn something about the idea with each (failed) app anyway that helps me in the future somehow.
- Get support: Artsadmin advisory service is good. If you have money / access to 1 / a friend to skill swap with - working with a producer is BANGIN they can turn your mind into apps much easier as they have to do it all the time. If you have an access need (physical or educational) more & more funds are giving resources for this, you can get an access support worker to help write it with you & you get to pick who writes your app. This can be someone who does it for a living OR if your mate is really good at it - they can get paid to help you out. Win win.
- Ask for feedback where possible if you are unsuccessful, this can be annoying like 'you were so close but no cigar' or it can be really good for the next 1 i.e. your supporting material wasn't clear & it didn't match up with how you described your work - an easy fix, better photos.
- Remember: it often takes a few tries to get the £, recycle ideas for different opportunities if you can so your work writing isn't wasted. Also let yourself be angry, it is annoying.

ETHICS

This is tricky, it feels like it shouldn't be but it is. Sometimes it is easy i.e: don't apply to the Zabludowicz Collection for anything they are arms dealers, or the Freelands Foundation set up with £ from the Murdochs. Sometimes it feels harder to pinpoint i.e: Elizabeth Murdoch is on the ACE board of trustees, Project Grants are funded by the lottery & ACE also govt funded & our govt are arms dealers too sooooo…….. It can feel like a head fuck but ultimately it is up to everyone to decide for themselves, on a case by case basis, for what feels right for you/the project at the time. Don't judge yourself / each other on your decisions, just make sure you spend some time thinking about it first.

Additionally as arts funding gets squeezed & neo-liberal models more & more internalised by social practice in particular - artists are encouraged to look to other kinds of pots for funding, usually health & wellbeing for example, or community infrastructure from local authorities etc. I have used this funding before, supported other artists to utilise this funding, some of which I now regret, others I can see the clear value & use. 1 thing I wish I'd asked myself during those instances was: who would this be going to if not me / us? Am I taking resources away from anyone that doesn't have the other options for funding things as me? This is not always black & white, but something to keep in mind. As precarious as being an artist can feel, we do have access to specific networks & opportunities.

I've put some ACE templates into the drive, they have recently updated their apps v slightly however so use their website to check. I would work on it in a g doc as you can go back to older versions & track changes if you get someone to look over it for you. Always write it in a doc 1st rather than straight into their app sites as the internet can be a cruel bastard. ACE have also added some more info on caveats under the current situation with covid here: https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/download-file/ACNLPG_supplementary_note_31July_2020_0.pdf **NB they aren't asking for match funding until April 2021, so could be a good time to apply!**

Laura Sweeney is an EXCELLENT producer, if you do live stuff & you ever get £ for 1 she is TOP. She also puts a lot of information & resources on her website, whenever she attends any info sessions etc she writes up notes & shares them, i.e. on the HMRC stuff under covid http://www.laurasweeney.co.uk/recently

Rachel Dobbs also some really generous resources about getting funding, including an ACE cheat sheet on her site, plus really short digestible videos on getting funding, running workshops etc https://rachel.we-are-low-profile.com/blog/arts-funding-grants/

Good sites to look for funding: Art Quest, Follow orgs you like on social media as they will post about their funds open calls when they are open, Artsadmin e digest, Flamin, Jerwood, Art Rabbit. Also local Universities - good to have a look on their sites / sign up to newsletters etc as they sometimes have specific research grants or people looking to partner on projects.

Feel free to add more!!!