THE AMATEUR CULTURE APPLICATION GUIDE

THE AMATEUR CULTURE AND VOLUNTEERING GUIDE

This set of folders contains advice on how to handle challenges faced by volunteer programs and amateur arts associations.

Previous editions of this guide are on the subject of Recruitment.The brochures in PDF format are available for downloading at:
**www.amatorkultur.no**

BERGEN
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Amatørkulturrådet i Bergen

We have an awesome idea – but how shall we finance it?

This guide offers an introduction to writing grant applications to cover the costs associated with projects, activities and operational expenses. Sufficient finding is crucial for the continuing operation of most organisations. The target group is comprised of clubs, organisations and associations in the volunteering sector and amateur arts associations.

Turnover in clubs and organizations

13%	27%	19%	41%
Under 20 000 kr	20 000 kr - 99 999 kr	100 000 kr - 200 000 kr	Over 200 000 kr
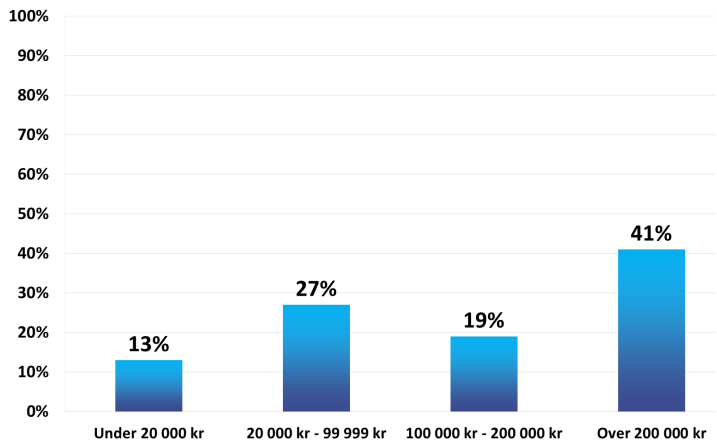
Source: Amatørkulturundersøkelsen 2018

Volunteer organisations receive financial support from a number of sources. Some find it sufficient to rely on membership dues, ticket sales and volunteer work to bring just enough income, while others are also dependent on public grants, gifts and sponsor funds. External funding is available by **application** that must be submitted in advance.

Funding available by application may be roughly divided into three categories:
Public grants from municipalities, counties, or the State.
Corporate grants and donations from large businesses such as banks, power companies, etc., as well as grants and gifts from foundations, endowments, and private individuals.
Sponsorship funds from small and large businesses.

Public grants and gifts are awarded for specific purposes. There are clear regulations on eligibility, the types of expenses that may be covered and the amounts available. It is mandatory to submit a final report and a financial statement.

Corporate grants and charity donations from major companies do not require reciprocity, as opposed to sponsorship funds. The recipient has no obligation to send in a final report and a financial statement. However, certain charitable foundations and

Some online application forms have text boxes allowing a set number of symbols. Start writing the application in a Word document to make sure you do not exceed the limit. It is often possible to upload attachments, such as a file with a more detailed proposal in Word format.

endowments will ask for receipts and other documentation of expenses before transferring funds.

Generally, there are few rules for sponsorship funds. Sponsor companies are driven by publicity opportunities and by the wish to present themselves as partners committed to the benefit of the entire community. Many corporate sponsors would like to demonstrate social responsibility and contribute to projects and activities run by the local volunteer organisations in the light of serving the local community.

Corporate sponsor funds may also be available in the form of tangible objects or as discounts and services that would normally cost money. A newspaper might print an ad for free in exchange for displaying its logo on the marketing materials, or for being mentioned as a sponsor supporting to the event.

Prior to receiving sponsorship aid, one signs an agreement stipulating the sponsor's contribution and the obligations imposed on the recipient. Keep the sponsor company informed of your progress and remember to send a thank you letter on behalf of all those who benefited from the sponsor's generosity.

When filling out online application forms, use the organisation's email address as your username. This will allow several members access to the application, not to mention make it easier to reset the password if necessary.

Getting started

It all begins with an idea. A common characteristic of all good ideas is that they will make it possible to improve the activities or to reach new audiences. Sometimes a new idea does not exactly fit your organisation's profile, and additional funding will be necessary. Applying for a grant will be the first step towards making it happen.

Funding for operational expenses, a project or an activity
Generally, grants or donations may not be used to finance operational expenses, such as rent, electricity and telephone bills, and office supplies. Normally, projects and activities have the best chances of receiving financing. Therefore, most organisations use fixed membership dues to cover operational costs instead of relying on grants, donations and sponsorship funds.

However, most applications allow for up to 5 – 10% of the total amount in the budget to cover administration costs. Read the rules carefully and check whether the grant money may be used to finance operational costs, a project or an event.

The project description
How significant will the project be for improving the quality of your activities, and how can it attract a wider audience?

Once you have reached clarity on this part and prepared a concise description, your work on the application is well under way. For example, if you invite a professional performer to participate in an amateur concert, this event will be an improvement on the quality of your activities and give you an opportunity to reach a larger audience. A well-considered idea and a project description must be ready before you start filling out application forms.

Share the username and password to the relevant application sites with several members of your organisation, so they can work together. The more people get a chance to polishing the application, the better chances it will be accepted

It may be a good idea to give others in the organization the log-in access to your application for funds. Then you can work on the application with other members. The more people involved in adding finishing touches to the application, the better the result!

The budget

Quoting the overall cost of an activity or a project off the top of your head is next to impossible. However, a realistic budget is an absolute must. Grant-givers and potential donors go through multiple applications, and usually have a good eye for projects most likely to succeed.

If you have little or no experience setting up budgets, you might want to get in touch with others who have organised similar events before. The municipal Culture Office may also contribute with advice and help.

Very few projects are paid for by a single donor. Normally, most financing will come from a number of sources, each covering a certain percentage of the total budget. Your application must include a plan showing how you will raise the remaining amount. Some expenses may be covered by revenue from ticket sales, by the organisation's own funds or by volunteer work. Include a list of other benefactors.

However, some grant-givers, endowments, or charity foundations may fully finance the realisation of a good idea in full – for instance, by providing financial support for new equipment.

Where to apply

With a complete project description and budget in hand, you may now start looking for possible sources of financing. Municipal and county administrations publish information on grant applications on their web sites. The same goes for corporate sponsors, donors and charity foundations. Some deadlines are set once a year, others welcome applications all year round. Processing times vary and it may take from a few weeks to a few months before you receive a reply.

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1. Describe the project and explain your needs. How significant is the project for your organisation and the general public?
2. Fill in the application form correctly. Provide all the required information.
3. Set up a budget and list all the other financial contributors.
4. Find the right grant-giver / donor and check application deadlines.
5. Submit the application well in advance.

If you wish to submit a paper application, check whether it will be accepted. Bergen Municipality normally requires all applicants to use its online application portal, but in certain cases paper applications will also be processed.

Writing the application

Once you have found a possible source of financing, you will proceed to write the application. Use this simple memory trick known as "five-W" to make sure all the relevant information is in place: "What, Who, Why, Where and How." Start out with **what** you need funding for. Here is an example of how the "five W" is helpful when structuring the application text:

Application for project support of NOK 15,000 to establish a digital photo archive **(What)**.

Bjørgvin Historical Society **(Who)** is dedicated to preserving historical materials relating to our city's history by making source materials accessible to the public **(Why)**. Over the course of many years, the society has been collecting old photographs, many of them unique, thus creating a historical narrative of our city's growth and development from a farming community to its modern state.

Today, Bjørgvin Historical Society has more than 15,000 paper photographs on paper that are inadequately stored in "drawers and cupboards." We wish to make these photographs available to the general public in an online searchable image archive **(Where).**

When the digitised materials are uploaded to a server, they will be widely accessible free of charge. **(How)**.

Bjørgvin Historical Society has set up a budget for the total amount of NOK 45,000 to finance the start-up phase of the digital archive project aimed at preserving these photographical treasures.

Kind regards,
Bjørgvin Historical Society

Make sure you have relevant up-to-date digital materials. Most online application forms allow attachments, including documents, pictures and audio files that you may use to introduce your organisation.

The above example shows how relevant information should be organised so that nothing is left out. Incomplete and hastily written application run the greatest risk of rejection.

The budget is no less important than the application itself. It must be accompanied by an explanation of how you plan to raise the remaining amount. The budget must be balanced, that is, the incoming funds must equal the projected expenses. Do not budget more than 5% of the total for "miscellaneous expenses."

Consider how to match your budget to the rest of the application. A budget that is too complicated will make end-of-project reporting difficult.

Bjørgvin digital archive budget
Income:

Financial support from Bergen Municipality:	15.000,-
Bjørgvin Historical Society own funds:	10.000,-
Sponsorship funding, Bjørgvin Shopping Centre:	15.000,-
Donation from the Bjørgvin Foundation: 5.000,-	
Total:	**45.000,-**

Expenses:

Computer, scanner and software:	21.000,-
Professional services from UIB Photography Collection:	5.000,-
Digital archive software:	5.000,-
Other IT-related expenses:	2.000,-
Server rental for 10 years (approx. NOK 1,000 per year):	10.000,-
Miscellaneous (approx. 5% of the total budget):	2.000,-
Total:	**45.000,-**

Commentary:

The Bjørgvin digital archive project requires funding to cover the initial costs, including computer hardware and software, a professional photo scanner, and server rental necessary for the storage of high-resolution image files. We will engage the services of Professor X. at UIB to guide us through the start-up phase.

Bjørgvin Historical Society will be investing NOK 10,000 from its own funds, partly coming from membership dues. All scanning will be done on a volunteer basis. We have already secured funding from Bjørgvin Shopping Centre and The Bjørgvin Foundation.

Use an email address that is checked frequently. The grant-giver might need additional information and will expect a prompt reply. Keep your web site / Facebook page updated regularly, grant-givers Grant-givers may want to check it when reviewing the application.

Applications advice:

Your application must demonstrate an understanding of the donor's mission and objectives and how the project is relevant in this context. There is no point applying for a grant to finance a new sound system, when this year's grants are intended to support outdoor activities for children and teenagers.

Small regional and national associations often have both general and project-based funding that organisation may apply for. They can also be helpful in finding partners and refer to successful projects and activities (The Norwegian Choir Association and others).

Compile an overview of the organisation's expenses for the upcoming year. Separate the regular operational expenses from costs associated with the planned projects and new activities.

Some companies have internal funds open to employee applications. Do any of your members work for companies that may sponsor your organisation in exchange for a performance at a corporate event?

Even though amateur arts and culture usually are volunteer-based, in certain cases one may use volunteer work as a contribution towards the total project cost. Check if it is possible to include work hours invested by volunteers as a part of the organisation's own contribution to the financing. If this is the case, ask the grant-giver how volunteer work hours should be costed and entered in the budget.

Grant-givers usually prioritise projects where their money will benefit as many participants as possible. The event or activity must be local and not-for-profit. Consider the potential audience and apply for financial support to a donor in the municipality where the activities or events will be located.

Very few donors will support a project if your budget is in surplus. Expect your application to be rejected.

Point out that the project will increase your organisation's recruitment potential and visibility. Many donors wish to encourage wide participation in volunteer work in the local community.

Share your thoughts and ideas for a project with the municipal Culture Office. Let them be your discussion partner. They may provide valuable feedback and point out potential sources of funding.

- Write in a clear and simple language and avoid slang, humour and irony. If you need to use specific professional terms, provide an explanation.

- Be precise in your writing. Words like "possibly," "maybe," "presumably," "should" might lead to uncertainty and doubt in those who will be reading your application.

- If an amateur arts project involves professional participants it is the volunteer organisation, not the professional performer, who must submit the application.

- When the draft version is ready, give it to someone from the outside to read. One might uncover points you haven't considered, or questions that remain unanswered.

- An application that has been rejected may be resubmitted on the next deadline. It it important to find out why it was rejected, and what improvements should be made. Ask the grant-giver about the reasons for rejection.

- There is no shame in turning back. The project may be cancelled for a variety of reasons. If this happens, the allocated funds must be reimbursed. If the project is under way, but with some changes, keep the donor informed.

Writing a good application:
1. The project description should be concise and easily understandable for those who will be evaluating the application. Ask yourself if there is anything that the applicant takes for granted, but that must be explained to those not familiar with the project or the subject area.
2. The budget must show how the rest of the costs will be covered, and what the organisations's own contribution will be.
3. Make sure that the project description is harmonised with the grant-giver's mission and objectives. Study the guidelines carefully!
4. New funding is made available periodically. Keep up with the public plans of cultural activities and the volunteer community. Check the grant-givers' web sites regularly. Mission statements, objectives and evaluation may change as often as every year.

Present a brief inspirational project description to the organisation members. Let the idea process run alongside budget work, explore financing opportunities, and last, but not least, ask: "Do we have the TIME for this?" However, it's been known that enthusiasm compensates the lack of time.

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