

CAPE/SKEP Conservation Marketplace 2009

Tips for projects seeking funding

- Conservation in SA has moved away from the old style of excluding people and is now often about people benefiting from nature. This excites many donors who have not been involved with conservation previously.
- Projects are appealing when they can show that they are increasing access by previously disadvantaged people to skills, knowledge and technology, as well as socio-economic opportunities.
- Donors with a conservation emphasis need the intended biodiversity impacts of a project to be spelt out clearly and in a way which enables the actual project impacts to be measured.
- Donors from the private sector are often motivated by enlightened self interest – seeking projects that relate to their staff and client base and that will build their business in the long term.
- Projects with a well planned double dividend of conservation wins and livelihood gains may find it easier to get support.
- Projects are appealing when they are clearly situated in terms of the sustained efforts over time of larger partnerships of organisations working towards common strategic environmental and/or developmental goals – hence the importance of CAPE and SKEP.
- Organisations should do thorough research on donors' criteria before approaching them and tailor-make their applications to meet these criteria and areas of focus where appropriate (or look elsewhere when there is not a good match).
- Donors look for an element of innovation that shows the project proponents are approaching the work in a new way, learning from the experience of the past in this area of work.
- Projects are not appealing when the proponents appear to be unaware of a significant amount of work that has already been done or is currently being done by other role-players in the same or similar field.
- Donors want to make good investments, but often have limited capacity. Building a personal relationship with the donors means you can work together effectively in shaping the project.
- Donors are sometimes in a position to add value by putting organisations with related work in touch with each other and giving feedback on lessons learnt in a particular area of work. Organisations should be flexible and willing to engage on alternative approaches to project design.
- Pitching a project verbally is often a good start, and donors are impressed by the passion with which a project idea is conveyed, but it needs to be concise and clear. Written documents should also be brief and to the point.
- Donors need to be thoroughly briefed on and convinced of a project idea before they can sell it to their own board / trustees.

- Donors look for integrity and are interested in projects that are designed to spend resources wisely and efficiently and have thought through realistically how they will be implemented and what the deliverables will be.
- All projects should have traceable and measurable outputs and outcomes. Donors will look to see how a project's impact will be measured and whether there is a monitoring and evaluation system in place.
- A project is appealing when it shows that clear thought and planning has gone into the question of how its gains will be sustained after the period of the funding, and what aspects of the work are likely to be taken up by other role-players.
- Organisations should show that they have thought through the potential risks associated with a project and how these can be mitigated.
- Projects should explain in an application for funding who else they have approached. Evidence of planned co-funding of a project in cash and/or kind adds to its appeal.
- It is important for projects to keep up good communication with donors – reporting back on progress, keeping a dialogue open and admitting when there are problems.
- Donors are usually understanding about changes in the way a project is implemented and resources are spent, as long as the intended changes and the reasons for them are communicated immediately and fully by the project implementers.
- Many donors are open to learning from projects and appreciate organisations who consciously learn from their work, taking time to reflect on their practice and improve it.