Welcome to the second issue of the Tender Bridge Quarterly where we ask selected seekers and granters of funds for their views on how to be successful.

Last quarter I introduced you to Emma and I and why we started the Tender Bridge. This quarter we’d like to introduce you to our colleagues from ACER’s Cunningham library. These colleagues provide the knowledge, skills and expertise to design and set up our database of 720+ funds (and growing), and undertake various searches. Their expertise and ACER’s infrastructure provides a solid base from which to grow and develop the Tender Bridge. In this Issue, read a ‘tip’ from our Library colleagues about how to improve your search skills.

Our passion to make the Tender Bridge the best it can be for funders and schools/organisations alike is what drives the work that Emma and I do. With this in mind, the other exciting news is that the Tender Bridge is expanding its services. Read about our four tiers of service in this Issue.

A number of you emailed us telling us you enjoyed reading the first edition of the Tender Bridge Quarterly. Thanks! We hope you find the second edition as useful and engaging! Don’t forget, if there is anything you’d like to raise for the next edition, just give us a call.

Dr Michelle Anderson
Project Director, The Tender Bridge
Australian Council for Educational Research
Tender Bridge Cases of Success: Case 2

New to the Tender Bridge are evidence-based storied accounts of practice. This series aims to provide readers with concrete examples of how to grow and resource ‘great ideas’ for maximum impact. Each account portrays key elements that are needed if ideas are to take hold and flourish. Particular attention is paid to peoples’ experiences of seeking and securing funds (and other resources), evaluating ‘success’, and lessons learned along the way.

This quarter, read about how ‘Books in Homes’ successfully used the Tender Bridge to help them identify a relevant fund for one of their projects (not-for-profit model).

Books in Homes is based on a simple concept: Make sure that every disadvantaged child has their ‘own’ books to read. Kim Kingston is the Manager, and this is her story of growing and resourceing a ‘great idea’.

Books in Homes

Sixteen years ago we saw Books in Homes ‘in action’ in New Zealand. I can still see the joy on the children’s faces as they received their books. We thought; why not start up a Books in Homes in Australia.

Getting started

In 2001, we first got our legal and tax status sorted. We wanted to set ourselves up as a not-for-profit with Deductible Gift Recipient status. This would maximise our potential to apply for a variety of grants; especially in the philanthropic sector. It actually took a year for our DGR status to be approved; there was much to-ing and fro-ing between the ATO, our pro bono solicitors, and Books in Homes but persistence paid off. In this first year, we also set up our Board of Trustees which is the governing body of the Foundation made up of a minimum of three people; employed an administrator to run the Programme and spoke to the then Federal Minister for Education about what we were trying to do and why they should fund us to do it. This was possible because we sought the help of many of our friends to get things started and as it happened a friend of a friend played tennis with the then Minister for Education – if you’re passionate about your cause, talking about it with your mates is often the best networking because they WILL want to help!

We secured Federal funding for a pilot in 94 schools and ran the program for two terms. An independent evaluation identified the pilot as a “roaring success”. By 2003, the Federal Government was funding Books in Homes in 50 schools in outback New South Wales. This equated to 5,000 children receiving 45,000 books of choice in that first year!

Books in Homes is now a national Programme with 25,000 children choosing and receiving their own books. Getting to this point and sustaining success is not easy. My advice is to step back for a moment and have a good look around at your peers and existing connections; ‘look’ at them again,

What is Books in Homes?

Books in Homes provides new books of choice to disadvantaged kids who typically grow up in “bookless” homes. The Programme results in improving literacy and attendance rates in participating schools.

The Process

The Books in Homes Book Selection Committee, is presented with 72 titles by Scholastic Australia – the publisher contracted to supply and deliver all books and materials for the Books in Homes Programme. This Committee is made up of professional educators from all States and jurisdictions. They meet 4 months prior to the start of each term to choose the 48 titles in 4 reading levels that will make up the Books in Homes Book Catalogue. A quarter of these books must be written by Aboriginal authors. A Preview Pack including all 48 books and enough Book Catalogues for each student is sent to the participating school’s Librarian or Books in Homes Coordinator. The books are displayed so the children can pick them up and check them out prior to making their 3 choices - 3 books in each of the 3 terms. The orders are collated and sent to Scholastic, and within 48 hours sent out to the schools. Funding is sourced through grants and sponsorship for (or with) a school to enable them to participate in the Programme. To personalise the experience for the children, each book contains a printed label that states, ‘This book belongs to …’ Many schools distribute the books at a special ‘Book Giving Assembly’ to add to the experience and to elevate the status of reading for fun. Often, the donor or sponsor is also invited to the assembly. Scholastic Australia then invoices Books in Homes for the books chosen.

1 This case was written by Michelle Anderson from an interview with Kim Kingston, edited by Emma Curtin and verified by Kim prior to publication.
but this time with your ‘great idea’ lens on. It is amazing what you will see when you really look with a specific purpose in mind. Here are two examples of what I mean:

**Example 1:** We run an annual fundraiser which happens to be a golf day. We happen to be golf ‘tragic’. These are great ‘events’ in themselves, but more than that, these days give current sponsors and donors the opportunity to meet face-to-face with the beneficiaries of their generosity. The day also often results in participants identifying other people who *Books in Homes* should connect with.

**Example 2:** My proposal writing is succinct. This was definitely not the case in the beginning. One of our closest mates is a Bush Poet, Murray Hartin. Now if anyone knew how to convey a persuasive message using as few words as possible, it is him. In a previous life, he was an editor of a newspaper. Murray taught me about the importance and power of the first paragraph: Capture the reader’s attention, anticipate their questions, and above all make it readable. So many times we forget that using simple language does not mean the idea is simplistic. In the rest of the proposal expand and elaborate your introductory paragraph.

### Finding a fund listed on the Tender Bridge and writing for success

Searching for funds is a never ending pursuit. There are over 800,000 children in schools who do not currently have their own books. The Tender Bridge makes searching for education funds easier. Last year we used the ‘Hot Funds’ feature of the website and came across The Andrew’s Foundation grants. One of their grants was a perfect match for a school in Victoria that needed books. The school had been participating in the Programme a number of years ago but their funding had ceased. How did we know we had a good ‘fit’? We made sure before we put pen to paper that we met all their criteria. For example:

- beneficiaries of the grant had to live within a certain geographic region;
- the dollar amount requested had to fall within a certain range;
- our tax status had to match the Foundation’s eligibility requirements;
- the target audience had to be disadvantaged children.

Most times, it takes one or two days to write a grant. In this case, that’s all the time I had before the funding round closed! There is nothing like a deadline to focus the mind! Our grant application was successful and these children will start choosing their first tranche of books in Term 1, 2011. Sound simple? Well, yes and no. To conclude, what follows are some lessons I have learned about preparing grants over many years of trial and error.

### Lessons learned

1. **Be succinct:** Don’t ramble
2. **You must be passionate about the project you are trying to get resourced**
3. **Use publically available data to support why your idea helps address a key problem or need for a group (e.g. the Australian Early Development Index (AEDI) website)**
4. **If you are not clear about the funder’s criteria or scope then call them (i.e. we wanted to apply to Maxi Grants listed on the Tender Bridge website. But in this case, only schools could apply not us)**
5. **Highlight value for money. This can be in social, emotional or economic terms (e.g. We buy our books in bulk and at a significant discount)**
6. **Get someone to read over your application before you submit it. [Nb. The Tender Bridge offers this service]**
7. **Grant seeking is a not a short term strategy, it can take time to find the right fit for your idea and setting.**

... **And my final words are:**

> Keep submitting grant applications! I guarantee, from first-hand experience, that many times you will miss out (even if you seem to have ticked all the boxes!). But then you WILL get one and regardless of the dollar amount, it will feel AWESOME! This is the time to ask, ‘What’s different about this grant to my other grant submissions?’ The lesson? Refine, refine, refine.

*Books in Homes* is a subscriber (seeker of funds) and a resource for schools listed on the Tender Bridge website. Their website is: [www.booksinhomesaustralia.com.au](http://www.booksinhomesaustralia.com.au)

TIER 1: ACCESS TO FUNDS (BRINGING SCHOOLS AND FUNDS TOGETHER)

Subscribers will have exclusive access to an up-to-date website of education-related fund information from a range of sources including:

- Government
- Philanthropic
- Business
- Not-for-profit

Additional Value-added Services

My State Alert and My Organisational Alert:
These tailored Email Alerts issued every week include all funds added to the database in the last 7 days which a) relate to your state/territory and b) will match with one or more of your school’s specific funding needs.

(Cost: 12 month organisational subscription GST inclusive: $295 for existing Tender Bridge subscribers – pre 30/06/10; $395 for school and not-for-profit subscribers)

TIER 2: CAPACITY BUILDING IN SEEKING AND APPLYING FOR FUNDS (LEARNING TOGETHER)

The Tender Bridge will offer a suite of learning opportunities for subscribers and non-subscribers*:

- 1 day Tender Bridge seminars providing expert information, analysis and advice relating to your organisation’s legal status, and insights from funder and successful applicant perspectives
- 2 hour Master Classes providing in-depth expert information, analysis and advice to help you build ‘Great Foundations’ so you make informed decisions when seeking funds and new organisational relationships.
- 1.5 hour Through the Funder’s Lens facilitated Q&A seminars to answer your queries when seeking, securing and acquitting funds.

Additional Value-added Services:

- Tailored workshops to suit your organisation’s needs (by quotation)
- ‘Special Events’ (e.g. international guest speakers)
- ‘Pitch Expo’ (i.e. Funders and potential applicants exchange ideas, insights, and network to improve the quality of idea formation, execution and match)
- Self-help resources from the Tender Bridge website (free to subscribers)

(*Cost: determined according to such variables as location, mode of delivery. Tender Bridge subscribers receive a discount to these services)

TIER 3: ‘ONE ON ONE’ (IDEA FORMATION AND CLARITY)

One-on-one sessions with a subscriber to crystallise their ‘great idea’ and clarify what they are seeking funding for (Cost: by quotation)

TIER 4: MAXIMISING YOUR SUBMISSION POTENTIAL (GETTING FUNDS INTO SCHOOLS THAT NEED IT)

- An editing service to help a subscriber ‘polish’ their proposal (i.e. typos, grammar, spelling, syntax and punctuation; readability and ‘flow’, and identify any gaps or silences. Words or sentences may be added, cut or rearranged) (Cost: 1200 words @ $136 plus GST)
- Comprehensive one-on-one consultancy to help a subscriber every step of the way (i.e. to identify their organisational tax status, to crystallise their ‘great idea’, to identify a potential funding match(s) and apply to a funder(s)) (Cost: by quotation)
**ACER Cunningham Librarians – the ‘team’ behind the Tender Bridge team**

Back row left to right: Pat Knight, Lance Deveson (Manager). Front row left to right: Jenny Trevitt, Tine Grimston and Jenny Barnes.

**Tip:** Use of the Advanced Search option on the Tender Bridge website.

**Issue:** Closing Dates

If you are interested in funding opportunities that don’t close until next year then in the Advanced Search box on the Tender Bridge website first select ‘post 2010’ from the Closing Date drop down box and click ‘Submit Query’ and review the funding opportunities your search retrieves. Next, to ensure you pick up all ‘post 2010’ funding opportunities, repeat your search using “ongoing” from the Closing date drop down box. ‘Ongoing’ means applications can be submitted at any time and will include funding opportunities from 2011.

**MyBidGuide™**

An additional area of support we offer within Tender Bridge’s Tiers 3 & 4 services are ‘MyBidGuides’. Ros King and Sharon Foster are the consultants. Recently, Michelle Anderson interviewed Ros King about how she got involved in this line of work and why.

**Excerpt:**

Michelle: Thanks Ros. What’s your final word on the issue and importance of relationships?

Ros: Partnering with another school or organisation implies entering into a relationship with each other. We all know that good relationships develop gradually over time and need to be nurtured. The stronger the relationship the more likely you are to see your ‘great idea’ successfully through from concept, to implementation and acquittal.


**Quarterly review of funds**

You may be aware that we have recently completed another quarterly review of our database (the fourth to date). The review involves double-checking every entry in our growing database against the funding source website (from which the information came); making sure information is correct and reflective of any changes that may have already been requested by the funder; and removing outdated information or broken links. Once completed, we advise the granters of funds of our review and give them an opportunity to provide further information. We have received terrific feedback from many funders and are excited by the fact that a number are now contacting us directly to advise us of new funding rounds. As the Tender Bridge grows, we hope to continue to forge such strong collaborative relationships with funders to ensure a better service for you.

**From the mouths of funders – key learning points**

Noemi Simaki (Systems and Program Manager, Landcare Australia - http://www.landcareonline.com.au) has these key tips when it comes to writing a good application:

- **Be succinct** – Assessors read so many applications, the easier it is to get a quick idea upfront of what the application is about, the better (e.g. Use dot points if it brings your point across easier)

- **Read questions carefully to avoid repetition** – Questions may appear similar but will have a different focus (e.g. Some might ask about the benefits of the project to the environment, and another might ask for benefits to the students, or the school). Keep to the point of the question to avoid repetition.

- **Specify what you need the funding for** – A good clear budget allows the assessor to identify exactly where the funding is going, and see that the applicant has done some research into the project and is familiar with all the requirements. If there are aspects of the project not being funded through the application, it is still good to include them so the assessor knows you have considered those items. Indicate you are receiving funding from elsewhere for those components.

- **Apply only for the amount the grant is for** – Your project may have a total budget of $15,000 but the grant you are applying for has an upper limit of $1,100. An assessor needs to know exactly where you intend to spend the $1,100. They will also need to know where the remaining $13,900 is coming from. Should you be successful for the $1,100, the project may be on hold for a very long time, while you fundraise the remaining funds. Funders need to know the ‘whole’ story to help them make an informed decision.

**my Say**

As a subscriber, the Quarterly gives you the chance to have ‘your say’ on the shape and direction of Tender Bridge topics and services. Last quarter we asked ‘Should the Tender Bridge also include ‘scholarship’ opportunities in its database?’ The overwhelming response was ‘Yes’ and so we have been adding many scholarship opportunities (both for students and teachers’ professional learning) to the database. There are many more still to capture! But we’re on it to!

**my Alert**

Every subscriber receives their own relevant weekly state or territory alert. In addition, we have recently introduced a further alert service: An organisational alert. In October, every subscriber was emailed a proforma to fill out and send back to us. The organisational alert allows you to provide the Tender Bridge team with a ‘refined’ list of priority areas. Our expert ACER Library staff use this information to set up your organisational alert. Every Sunday night your ‘search’ is run for both your state/territory and organisational alert, in readiness for the Tender Bridge team to forward these to you on the Monday.

**Tip:** Tick only those areas of interest on your organisational profile to set up your organisational weekly alert. The idea of the organisational alert is to refine your search (i.e. if you tick everything, your organisational alert will be identical to your weekly state/territory alert). If you’re not ready to refine your search, we recommend you stick with the weekly state/territory alerts for the time being. We can always set up an organisational alert for you down the track.