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Funding bids with AI: 8 prompts that keep your voice

Nearly half of charities now use AI for funding applications, and funders report more bids that repeat each other. These eight prompts use AI as an editor and a critic, so the bid is still yours.

The honest way to use it

The Charity Digital Skills Report 2026 found that nearly half of charities now use AI for funding applications. Don't ask AI to write your bid. Ask it to read the guidance, question your plan, tighten your words and check your sums. Funders can spot a bid nobody at the charity really wrote.

Three rules keep you safe. The facts, figures and stories are yours and true. Nothing that identifies a person you support goes into the tool. And if a funder asks whether you used AI, you say yes and explain how.

CHECK THE FUNDER'S OWN GUIDANCE FIRST

Some funders welcome AI help, some ask you to declare it, and a few ask you not to use it for certain answers. Their rules come before this guide.

Before you write

PROMPT 1

Read the guidance for you

The funder's guidance is twenty pages long.

> Here is a funder's guidance: **[paste the text]**. Tell me in plain English: 1. Who and what they fund. 2. What they will not fund. 3. The questions I must answer and their word limits. 4. What a strong application shows, in their own words. 5. Deadlines and documents I need. Quote the page or section for each point so I can check it.

Tip: Published guidance is public, so it is safe to paste.

PROMPT 2

Are we a good fit?

You're not sure this fund is worth the hours.

Based on this funder's priorities: **[paste the priorities]** . And this description of our project: **[describe it in general terms, no names]** . List where we clearly fit, where we partly fit, and where we don't. Be blunt. Then suggest three questions I should ask the funder before applying.

PROMPT 3

Plan each answer before writing it

You're staring at an empty box.

The question is: " **[paste the question]** " with a limit of **[number]** words. Don't write the answer. Give me a bullet-point plan: what the funder wants to learn, the three or four points I should cover, and what evidence would make each point convincing. Then ask me questions to get the details only I know.

While you write

Write the first draft yourself, even if it's rough. Your rough draft has the details and the voice that no tool can invent.

PROMPT 4

Tighten my draft, keep my voice

Your answer is honest but too long.

Here is my draft answer: **[paste your draft, with no names of people we support]** . Cut it to **[number]** words. Keep my voice and my specific details. Remove jargon and repetition. Do not add any facts, numbers or claims that are not in my draft. Show me what you cut.

PROMPT 5

Be the assessor

You want to know how it reads from the other side of the desk.

You are assessing funding applications against these criteria: **[paste the criteria]**. Here is my answer: **[paste]**. Score it against each criterion out of 5, explain why, and tell me the one change that would improve the score most. Point out anything vague, any claim without evidence, and any sentence that sounds generic.

Tip: This is practice. It is not the score the funder will give you.

PROMPT 6

Turn numbers into outcomes

You have activity figures but the question asks about difference made.

Here is what we did last year: **[your real figures, e.g. 40 sessions, 120 people, 85 feedback forms]**. Here is what people told us changed: **[themes from feedback, with no names and no quotes that could identify anyone]**. Help me word two or three outcome statements that are honest about what we can and can't prove. Do not invent any numbers.

Tip: Use your real totals. Never ask AI to estimate or invent figures.

Before you send

PROMPT 7

Does the budget tell the same story?

The words and the spreadsheet were written on different days.

Here is my project description: **[paste]**. Here are my budget lines: **[paste the lines and amounts, with no named people's pay]**. List anything described in the project that has no budget line, any budget line the description doesn't explain, and anything a funder might question. Do not change my figures.

PROMPT 8

The last read-through

It's nearly the deadline.

Proofread this application answer for spelling, grammar and clarity. List each change you suggest and why, rather than rewriting it. Flag any sentence over 30 words and any acronym I haven't explained. Text: **[paste]**

After you send

- Save your best answers in one document. Next time you start from your own words, not a blank page.
- Write down how you used AI on this bid, in two lines. If the funder asks, you're ready.
- When you hear back, ask for feedback either way, and add it to the same document.

Spend your time on the work, not the paperwork

Tell doingit.today a job you do every month, such as a funding bid or a trustee report. We'll map it into plain steps, mark where AI can help, and teach you each one in a short lesson.

Free to start. No tech background needed.

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Read more

- Our template: A one-page AI policy for a small charity
- Our checklist: What never to paste into AI

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