

# GRANTMAKER ACTION LIST

This list has been informed by analysis of the *Grants in Australia 2017* research study, an output of Our Community's [Innovation Lab](#).

The 2017 survey is the ninth conducted by Our Community since 2006. A total of 1227 people completed the survey, which was conducted online from November 2016 to February 2017.

The survey, the biggest of its type in Australia, is part of an ongoing research project that charts the development of the field of grantmaking in Australia from the grantseeking community's perspective.

The production of this takeaway list reflects Our Community's aim to ensure that the data we collect is not just interesting but useful.

> Download the full survey report here: [www.ourcommunity.com.au/grants2017](http://www.ourcommunity.com.au/grants2017)

## 1. Reduce the rate of un-submitted forms

### Finding:

Not-for-profit organisations are wasting a huge amount of time on applications that are started but not submitted. A total of 54% of the grantseekers we surveyed said they'd started an application in the previous 12 months that they didn't end up submitting. (Not all of this is down to a grantmaker fault – many just ran out of time – but you can play a part in bringing down this rate.)

### Action:

- Audit your processes to help reduce the number of grantseekers who waste their time starting applications that they don't complete:
  - Ensure your program is open for long enough to give grantseekers time to plan and complete the application process. Factor in time they may require for board meetings and approvals.
  - Ensure your guidelines are clear, comprehensive, and readily available.
  - Insert an eligibility test into the earliest possible phase of your application process.
- Read the [December 2015 edition of \*Grants Management Intelligence\*](#) on this issue, with stats to help you benchmark yourself against others in your sector.

## 2. Provide grants for core costs

### Finding:

Grantseekers report that grants for core costs are getting harder to get, despite the reality that not-for-profits can't get by without them.

### Action:

- Read our [help sheet](#) to find out more about why grants for core costs are so important, and [this article](#) about why some feel they're a great tool. If you can't provide grants exclusively for core costs, make sure you allow a portion of your project grants to be used for overhead.

### 3. Provide multi-year grants

#### Finding:

Multi-year grants are also getting scarcer, grantseekers report, despite the fact that not-for-profits say longer-term funding makes them more effective.

#### Action:

- Consider whether you could make some or all of your grants longer-term or recurrent. Recurrent funding is among the issues discussed in this [AIGM article](#) on program design.

### 4. Provide funds for outcomes evidence

#### Finding:

More than half of our respondents believe that grantmakers are putting more emphasis on outcomes measurement and reporting/evaluation, but only 12% of respondents have received specific funding for this purpose.

#### Action:

- If you're asking your grantees to provide evidence of the outcomes of their funded projects, make sure you're also offering to fund it. (While you're at it, read [this article](#) and [this article](#) on why most charities *shouldn't* be asked to evaluate their work.)

### 5. Get online

#### Finding:

A majority of grantseekers favour electronic online forms (the preference-switch was fully realised around 2013), yet 31% say the forms they most commonly encounter are PDFs or Word-based.

#### Action:

- Not fully online yet? It's past time to make the shift.

### 6. Improve form functionality

#### Finding:

Our survey uncovered a number of irritants and inefficiencies created by deficiencies in the electronic forms used by some grantmakers.

#### Action:

Ensure your forms:

- Allow grantseekers to save their form and return to it later;
- Provide instant acknowledgement that a form has been received;
- Allow users to copy in information from other documents;
- Provide a warning before timing out.

## 7. Improve your form design

### Finding:

Poor form design is hampering not-for-profits' grantseeking efforts.

### Action:

- Reconsider the word limits in your forms – they're driving grantseekers nuts – and make sure they're logically ordered as well.
- The AIGM's 2016 conference included a session that mined grantmakers' knowledge of what makes for a good form. You can read the hotspot report [here](#), while the AIGM's help sheet on application form design is [here](#).

## 8. Don't ask for it if you don't need it

### Finding:

Not-for-profits are, in the main, cash-strapped and time-poor. And, they really hate being asked for information and reports that they suspect are not really needed and never used.

### Action:

- Think critically about every piece of information you ask for in every form you administer. Make sure you can explain why you need it, both to yourself, and to your grantees (you may even consider providing this information to grantees right on the form – “we use this information to ...”).
- Read this [AIGM article](#) on right-sizing your grants program.

## 9. Don't lock out small groups

### Finding:

Large organisations are not just winning large grants, they're scooping up many of the small grants (less than \$5000) on offer as well.

### Action:

- We're not saying that you should rule large grantmakers out of your program (your choice of recipients should be driven by who will best deliver your outcomes) but make sure you're not inadvertently excluding small groups from your program. Read the [Hotspot Report](#) from the 2016 Grantmaking in Australia Conference to get some tips on how to make your program more accessible to small and emerging grantseekers.

## 10. Provide more and better feedback

### Finding:

As a field, grantmakers are doing a terrible job of providing feedback to unsuccessful grantseekers. This should come as no surprise – this finding has been coming up as a top irritant since our survey began in 2006.

### Action:

- If you think you're a high performer in this area, let the AIGM know how you do it so we can spread the good word. Log on to the AIGM forum and [add to the thread](#).
- If you think you're one of the offending grantmakers, follow the [forum discussion](#) and/or read [this article](#) on why and how you can improve.

> Download the full survey report here: [www.ourcommunity.com.au/grants2017](http://www.ourcommunity.com.au/grants2017)

# ABOUT OUR COMMUNITY

The *Grants in Australia 2017* research study is an initiative of Our Community, a social enterprise and Certified B Corporation that provides advice, connections, training and easy-to-use tech tools for people and organisations working to build stronger communities.

Our partners in that work are not-for-profit organisations and social enterprises; government, philanthropic and corporate grantmakers; donors and volunteers; enlightened businesses; and other community builders.

A Certified B Corporation and multi-award-winning social enterprise, Our Community's offerings include:

- **OurCommunity.com.au** – Australia's centre for excellence for the nation's 600,000 not-for-profits and schools: where not-for-profits go for help
- **Institute of Community Directors Australia** – the best-practice governance network for the members of Australian not-for-profit boards, committees and councils, and the senior staff who work alongside them
- **FundingCentre.com.au** – the best place to go to get information on grants and fundraising in Australia
- **GiveNow.com.au** – commission-free online donations for not-for-profits, and philanthropy education and tools for businesses, families and individuals
- **Good Jobs** – Connecting good people with social sector jobs, board vacancies and internships
- **Communities in Control** – Australia's most inspiring annual community sector gathering: thought leadership for the not-for-profit sector
- **Australian Institute of Grants Management** – information, inspiration and education for government, philanthropic and corporate grantmakers
- **SmartyGrants** – software and data science for revolutionary grantmakers
- **Australian Institute for Corporate Responsibility** – creating and facilitating authentic connections between enlightened businesses and their communities
- **The Innovation Lab** – the engine room for sharing ideas and mobilising data to drive social change

Our vision centres on social inclusion and social equity. Our dream is that every Australian should be able to go out their front door and stroll or wheel to a community group that suits their interests, passions and needs – or log on and do the same.

We want to help make it easy for people to join in, learn, celebrate, worship, plant trees, play a game, entertain and be entertained, care and be cared for, support others and be supported, advocate for rights and celebrate diversity. To get involved. To be valued.

## Our Community's grants agenda

The Australian Institute of Grants Management, a division of Our Community, has for more than a decade been at the forefront of innovation in grantmaking in Australia. As well as producing the country's only cross-sector best practice grantmaking publication, the AIGM also convenes and coordinates a number of grantmaking affinity groups and events, and has developed a best practice online grants management system, SmartyGrants, which is streamlining and standardising grantmaking across the country.

The AIGM is active in seeking and documenting best practice lessons and examples. We are codifying what we are learning through our website and tools, and embedding forward-thinking practices in our software.

Our Community also oversees Australia's most comprehensive grants listing newsletter and database, EasyGrants, and goes face to face with thousands of grantseekers across the country every year through an extensive grants training program.

## The Grantmaking Manifesto

We believe:

- 1. Grantmaking is an absolutely central element in the Australian economic system.** Not one dollar should be wasted on poorly designed, poorly articulated, poorly evaluated, or inefficient grants programs and systems. Grantmakers should maximise resources by sharing lessons, and seeking and learning from lessons shared by others.
- 2. Australia needs more and better professional grantmakers.** The job of grantmaking should be afforded appropriate professional status, training and recompense.
- 3. Grantmakers should listen to the communities they serve.** Grantmakers should be driven by outcomes, not process. They should trust and respect their grantees and offer programs, systems and processes appropriate to their needs and capacities.
- 4. Grantmakers should be efficient.** Wastage is indefensible. Skimping on systems, technology and professional staff is equally wicked.
- 5. Grantmakers should be ethical.** Grantmakers should ensure that the process of grantmaking is fair, unbiased, and transparent.



**ourcommunity.com.au**  
Where not-for-profits go for help

