SolidariTee - General Feedback on Grant Applications

We've put together the following guidance based on common themes within the grant applications we review. We hope this is helpful to organisations who are seeking funding from grant-making bodies, but please note that some of this feedback is likely to be specific to SolidariTee and may not apply in all cases to other grant applications. If you have any questions about this document, please email boardoftrustees@solidaritee.org.uk

Strengths from the Best Applications

- **Displaying information graphically.** This makes it much easier to understand trends and breakdowns. Some examples of graphical representations included:
  - Line charts showing trends in number of beneficiaries over time
  - Stacked bar charts showing disaggregated data on beneficiaries per year
  - Pie charts showing met needs and unmet needs in terms of budget
  - Theory of change – best displayed graphically through pillars
  - Staffing - generally best shown through organograms

- **Clear layout that is easy to navigate**
  - Technology can help with this - hyperlinking to reports and making automatic tables of contents really improve clarity

- **Including budgets which demonstrate funding which has already been secured**
  - Consider using a table with colour-coded in what activities (and budget lines) have been committed to by other donors and which haven't been

- **Demonstrating knowledge of best practices within the sector**
  - Strong applications referred to best practice such as the Sphere Handbook, Global Protection Cluster, etc.

- **Including a well laid out theory of change**
  - A clear explanation of how your activities contribute to your overall mission and vision helps donors to understand the impact of your work

- **Using statistics to show impact** - for e.g. % of how many asylum seekers were successful in their applications

Common Pitfalls

- **Not checking the grant-making policy** carefully before applying, as many NGOs applied who were not eligible under our criteria (e.g. budget far outstrips £300,000)

- **Lack of safeguarding policies** - it is rare for us to see an application where there are no such policies and for the justification to be agreed with

- **Lack of clarity on what our contribution would mean for the NGO**. For example, would we be contributing to operational costs? Would we be expanding already existing projects? Would we be funding a new activity?

- **Confusion between accountability vs. safeguarding**
  - Accountability is how you ensure that beneficiaries take part in the strategic direction of the work which is intended to benefit them
  - Safeguarding is about ensuring your work does no harm or have unintended negative ramifications.
  - For both, monitoring is important but that also represents a different sphere – we are interested in the policies you have put in place as well as how you track their effectiveness

- **Confusion of terminology between localisation vs nationalisation**
  - Localisation refers to establishing local pathways for work, and capacity building community based organisations
  - Nationalisation refers to using national staff as much as possible

- **Lack of clarity in logical matrix layout**
  - If you are not comfortable with this format then using an alternative representation may be better

- **Applications which did not fully describe the extent of their impact**
  - for e.g. if you are a community space, and you offer a livelihood project, how much do you pay per hour? For a beneficiary, does this provide a monthly salary or is it only part-time? How does this compare to national monthly salary? What are the eligibility criteria?

- **Monitoring and evaluation which is donor-driven only, without being service focussed**
  - It's important to outline how your NGO is continually learning and improving its services as opposed to purely complying with donor requirements which may not be directly helpful for your services

- **Lack of clarity regarding co-operation with other actors**