

GIVING TIME BACK TO CHARITIES

Practical, time-saving techniques for finding grants,
writing proposals and managing everyday
charity administration.



MY NEW FUTURE

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A practical route from time pressure to manageable next steps

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WELCOME

Your time is part of your mission

Every hour saved on routine work is an hour that can be used where it matters most

Charities are built around purpose, but purpose creates paperwork. Funding searches, applications, volunteer records, reports, policies, newsletters, events and project plans all compete for the same limited hours. For a small team, one unexpected task can push important work into the evening or the following week.

This guide brings together practical ways to reduce that pressure. It does not assume that your organisation lacks experience. You already understand your beneficiaries, your community and the difference you want to make. The aim is to help you complete familiar tasks more efficiently and give you a dependable starting point when a blank page is slowing you down.

You do not need to use every suggestion. Choose one task that regularly consumes time, try the relevant technique and judge it against your own standards. A useful tool should make the first draft quicker, improve consistency or reveal an option worth investigating. Your knowledge and judgement remain essential.

How to use this guide

- Read the section that matches the task currently on your desk.
- Use the short preparation lists before you begin writing or searching.
- Treat examples and draft wording as a starting point, then adapt them to your organisation.
- Check names, figures, dates, eligibility rules and legal requirements before anything is submitted or published.

IMAGE SUGGESTION *A charity worker closing a laptop on time and joining colleagues or beneficiaries, conveying time returned rather than technology.*

CHAPTER ONE

Start with the work that consumes most time

A small improvement to a repeated task can save more time than a dramatic change used only once

Before looking for new systems, identify where time is actually going. For one charity it may be finding suitable grants. For another it may be rewriting similar information for different funders. Others may lose hours producing social posts, trustee reports or volunteer documents from scratch.

A simple time check

For one working week, make a quick note whenever an administrative task takes more than 20 minutes. Record the task, who completed it, how long it took and whether similar work had already been produced elsewhere. Do not turn this into another burdensome form. A note on paper or a shared document is enough.

Task	A useful first step
Repeated writing	Create an approved bank of descriptions, outcomes, figures and standard answers.
Searching	Agree the criteria before searching so unsuitable results can be rejected quickly.
Chasing information	Use one checklist that states what is needed, who holds it and when it is due.
Starting from blank	Keep a good previous example and use it as the structure for the next first draft.

Choose one result

Pick one improvement that would be noticeable within a month. Examples include reducing a regular report from three hours to one, producing a first funding draft in a morning, or preparing a week of social posts in one sitting. A clear result makes it easier to decide whether a new method is genuinely helping.

IMAGE SUGGESTION *A simple illustrated weekly diary with several administrative blocks becoming one shorter, organised block.*

CHAPTER TWO

Find suitable grants more efficiently

A focused search begins with a clear picture of the project and the type of funder you need

Searching for grants can consume hours because funding information is spread across many websites and eligibility rules vary. The quickest search is not the one that produces the most results. It is the one that produces a manageable shortlist of opportunities your organisation could realistically pursue.

Write a search brief first

Before opening a funding database or search engine, write down the essential facts. This prevents attractive but unsuitable opportunities from taking over your attention.

- The location and communities the project will serve.
- The main need or issue the project addresses.
- Who will benefit and approximately how many people you expect to reach.
- The amount required and whether you need revenue, capital or core funding.
- The earliest project start date and the latest useful decision date.
- Any restrictions created by your legal structure, annual income or previous funding.

Create a shortlist rather than a long list

For each possible grant, record the funder, programme, amount, deadline, main eligibility points and the web page containing the current guidance. Add a brief reason why the opportunity fits. If that reason is difficult to write, the grant may not deserve more time.

Always check the funder's current website before investing in an application. Programmes close, priorities change and older listings may remain visible after the relevant round has ended.

IMAGE SUGGESTION *A funding shortlist shown as four clear cards labelled strong match, possible match, future opportunity and unsuitable.*

CHAPTER THREE

Prepare before writing a funding proposal

Good preparation reduces rewriting and helps every answer tell the same story

Many applications become difficult because the writing begins before the evidence is gathered. The writer then has to stop repeatedly to find figures, confirm costs or ask a colleague how an activity will work. A short preparation stage creates a much faster route through the form.

Build a project information pack

- A two-sentence description of your organisation and its purpose.
- A plain-language explanation of the need, supported by recent local or service evidence.
- The people who will benefit and how they have influenced the proposed work.
- The activities you will deliver, where they will happen and who will deliver them.
- The changes you expect to see and how you will measure them.
- A realistic budget with a note explaining each significant cost.
- Relevant policies, accounts, registrations, partnerships and previous results.

Separate need activities and outcomes

These three parts are often mixed together. The need describes the problem or gap. Activities describe what the project will do. Outcomes describe the changes that should follow. For example, a weekly advice session is an activity; more residents resolving benefit problems is an outcome. Keeping the distinction clear makes the proposal easier to assess.

Keep evidence reusable

Save approved facts, figures and descriptions in one shared place, with the source and date attached. This gives future applications a reliable starting point while reminding the writer to check whether the information remains current.

IMAGE SUGGESTION *Three connected panels titled Need, Activity and Outcome, using a community advice project as the visual example.*

CHAPTER FOUR

Write a stronger grant proposal

Answer the funder's question directly and make it easy to see why your project fits

A strong application is not necessarily the one with the most impressive language. Assessors need clear answers, credible evidence and a realistic plan. Their criteria should shape the proposal, even when you already have good wording from an earlier application.

Use a reliable drafting process

- Copy every question and word limit into a working document.
- Highlight what the question is actually asking, including any separate points within it.
- Place the relevant facts and evidence beneath each question before writing full sentences.
- Draft the answer in plain language and lead with the most important point.
- Remove repeated background information unless it is needed to answer that specific question.
- Check the final answer against both the question and the published assessment criteria.

Make every figure understandable

Numbers are more persuasive when the reader can see what they mean. “We supported 240 people” is useful, but “We supported 240 people last year, 68 per cent of whom resolved the immediate problem within four weeks” gives the assessor more to evaluate. Use only figures you can explain and evidence.

Allow time for an independent check

Ask someone who was not closely involved in drafting to read the application. They should be able to identify the need, the proposed work, the expected difference and the cost without making assumptions. Complete the funder's final checks, then save a copy of exactly what was submitted.

IMAGE SUGGESTION *A proposal page moving through four stages: evidence, first draft, independent review and submission.*

CHAPTER FIVE

Plan a fundraising campaign

A clear purpose and a specific ask make it easier for supporters to respond

A fundraising campaign works best when people quickly understand what their contribution will help achieve. Begin with the outcome, not the organisation's internal need. "Help us provide 100 warm meals this winter" is easier to picture than "support our running costs," even when the money contributes to the same essential work.

Set the campaign foundations

Task	A useful first step
Purpose	State the specific change or service the campaign will support.
Target	Choose an amount linked to a real budget and explain what different gifts can provide.
Audience	Identify the people most likely to care and the relationship they already have with the cause.
Story	Use a real, consented example or a representative scenario that protects identity.
Channels	Choose a manageable mix such as email, social media, local press and partner networks.
Follow-up	Plan thank-you messages and an update showing what happened next.

Prepare content in one sitting

Create the campaign page, launch email, social posts, reminder messages and thank-you wording together. This keeps the message consistent and reduces the time lost returning to the same task. Adapt each item to its channel rather than posting identical text everywhere.

IMAGE SUGGESTION A campaign planning board with purpose, target, audience, story, channels and thank-you stages.

CHAPTER SIX

Recruit and support volunteers

Clear expectations save time for volunteers and for the people who manage them

Volunteer recruitment often begins with an urgent need for help, but a rushed advert can create more work later. A good role description helps the right people recognise the opportunity and allows unsuitable applicants to decide early that it is not for them.

Write a useful volunteer role

- Explain the purpose of the role and the difference it will make.
- List the main activities in clear, everyday language.
- State the likely time commitment, location and any flexibility.
- Separate essential requirements from skills that can be learned.
- Explain training, supervision, expenses and the application process.
- State any checks required and why they are necessary.

Create a consistent welcome

A short induction checklist prevents important information being missed. It might cover introductions, the organisation's purpose, the role boundaries, safeguarding, confidentiality, expenses, who to contact and what to do if a problem arises. Keep the checklist proportionate to the role.

Make support routine

Regular, brief contact is usually easier than dealing with problems after a long silence. Agree how volunteers can ask questions, how feedback will be given and when the role will be reviewed. Keep only the information you genuinely need, store it securely and follow your organisation's data protection procedures.

IMAGE SUGGESTION *A welcoming volunteer journey from clear role description to induction, support and appreciation.*

CHAPTER SEVEN

Create useful communications

One clear message can be adapted across several channels without starting again each time

Charity communications serve different purposes. Some messages ask for support, some explain impact and others provide practical information. Before writing, decide what the reader should understand or do after reading. That decision will usually reveal what can be removed.

Create a simple message brief

- Audience: who is this for and what do they already know?
- Purpose: what should they understand, feel or do?
- Evidence: which fact, example or result supports the message?
- Action: what is the single clearest next step?
- Safeguards: do you have consent and have you protected personal information?

Work from one source

Begin with a short approved core message. Turn it into an email, a website paragraph, a press note and several social posts. This approach saves time and reduces conflicting wording. Each version should still suit its setting: an email can explain more, while a social post needs one clear point and a link.

Build a small content library

Keep approved photographs, logos, service descriptions, key statistics, short case studies and standard contact details together. Record consent and usage restrictions beside each image or story. A well-maintained library makes regular communications quicker and safer.

IMAGE SUGGESTION *One central approved message branching into an email, website update, press story and social post.*

CHAPTER EIGHT

Show your impact clearly

Useful reporting connects activities with the changes experienced by people and communities

Impact reporting should help your charity learn as well as demonstrate accountability. Counting activities is important, but it does not automatically show what changed. A report becomes stronger when it connects delivery information with outcomes, feedback and honest reflection.

Collect evidence as the work happens

Task	A useful first step
Reach	Who took part, how many people were involved and whether the intended groups were reached.
Activity	What was delivered, how often and at what level of participation.
Change	What improved, reduced or became possible, using suitable measures.
Experience	What participants, volunteers, partners and staff said about the work.
Learning	What worked, what did not work as expected and what will change next time.

Use stories carefully

A short story can explain what a number means, but it should never be used without appropriate consent or in a way that exposes someone to harm. Change identifying details only when doing so does not misrepresent the facts, and explain that a case has been anonymised when necessary.

Write for the reader

Trustees may need risk, finance and strategic learning. A funder may want progress against agreed outcomes. Supporters may respond best to a concise story and a few verified results. Start from a reliable evidence base, then select what each audience needs.

IMAGE SUGGESTION A balanced impact dashboard combining a people reached figure, one measured outcome, a short quote and a lesson learned.

CHAPTER NINE

Keep reports and policies manageable

A planned review cycle prevents essential documents becoming last-minute emergencies

Annual reports, trustee papers and policies often become stressful because several people contribute at different times. A simple timetable, clear ownership and agreed source information can remove much of the repeated chasing and rewriting.

Plan recurring reports backwards

- Confirm the approval or submission date.
- Allow time for trustee or management review.
- Set one deadline for figures and another for narrative contributions.
- Name the person responsible for each section.
- Use the same reporting headings throughout the year where practical.
- Keep a final approved version and record any follow-up actions.

Treat templates as starting points

Policy templates can save time, but they must reflect how your organisation actually works. Check responsibilities, locations, services, legal references, review dates and escalation routes. A policy that describes an imaginary organisation may create more risk than having no template at all.

Maintain a policy register

Record the policy name, owner, approval date, next review date and where the approved version is stored. Review sooner when your services, risks, guidance or legal duties change. Staff and volunteers should know which policies affect their work and where to find them.

IMAGE SUGGESTION *A calm annual calendar showing report deadlines and policy review dates spread across the year.*

CHAPTER TEN

Plan events and projects

A shared plan turns a good idea into clear responsibilities, realistic costs and manageable deadlines

Events and new projects create many small tasks that depend on one another. Writing them down early reduces last-minute pressure and makes it easier to see where a delay or missing decision will affect the rest of the plan.

Start with the result

Describe what success will look like before listing activities. For an event, that might include attendance, income, community involvement or increased awareness. For a service project, it may include reach, participant outcomes, partner involvement and learning. Choose measures that your team can realistically collect.

Build one working plan

Task	A useful first step
Outcome	The change or result the work is intended to achieve.
Activity	The specific task or piece of delivery required.
Owner	The person responsible for moving that task forward.
Deadline	The date needed to protect later work, not simply the final event date.
Cost	The expected amount, basis of estimate and whether it is confirmed.
Risk	What could prevent delivery and the practical response.

Update the plan as decisions change

A plan is useful only when it reflects reality. Review it briefly and regularly, record completed actions and highlight decisions that are holding up other work. Keep the latest version in one agreed location so the team does not work from different copies.

IMAGE SUGGESTION A simple project timeline with tasks, owners, deadlines and costs aligned on one page.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Use digital assistance safely

Technology can prepare and organise material quickly, but your organisation remains responsible for the result

Many of the techniques in this guide can be supported by modern digital assistants. These tools can search information, organise notes, suggest structures and prepare first drafts. They are most useful when you provide clear information and treat the output as material for review rather than a finished answer.

A safe working method

- Remove names and sensitive personal details unless you are using an approved system designed to handle them.
- Give the tool a clear task, audience, purpose and word limit.
- Provide verified information about your organisation and project.
- Ask for a first draft or shortlist, not a final decision.
- Check every factual claim, figure, date, link and eligibility condition.
- Review the wording for accuracy, dignity, bias and your organisation's voice.
- Use the organisation's normal approval process before submitting or publishing.

What digital assistance should not decide

A tool should not decide whether a person is safe, eligible for support or suitable for a sensitive role. It should not replace professional, legal, safeguarding, medical or financial advice. It may help organise information or draft questions, but accountable people must make and record the decision.

When used carefully, digital assistance can remove some of the effort involved in reaching a first draft. The experience of your staff, volunteers, trustees and community is what turns that draft into something dependable.

IMAGE SUGGESTION *A human review pathway showing draft, fact check, safeguarding and privacy check, approval and publication.*

CHAPTER TWELVE

Your thirty minute action plan

Choose one task, prepare the right information and test whether a new approach genuinely saves time

The first ten minutes

Choose one repeated task that is due soon. Write down what a good result must include, who will read it and what must be checked before it can be used. Find one approved previous example if you have one.

The next ten minutes

Gather the facts, figures, dates, source links and standard wording needed for the task. Remove confidential information that is not necessary. If important information is missing, name the person who can supply it rather than guessing.

The final ten minutes

Use the relevant checklist or digital assistant to create a shortlist, structure or first draft. Read the result against your original requirements. Mark anything that needs evidence, checking or approval. Record roughly how long the task would normally take so you can judge the saving later.

Questions to ask afterwards

- Did this reduce the time needed to reach a useful first draft?
- Was anything important missing or misleading?
- Which instructions produced the most useful result?
- What still required human knowledge or a formal decision?
- Is this method worth using again, adapting or rejecting?

The aim is not to change everything at once. One dependable improvement, repeated throughout the year, can return a meaningful amount of time to your organisation.

IMAGE SUGGESTION *A friendly thirty-minute clock divided into Choose, Gather and Draft, followed by a human review tick.*

NEXT STEPS

How My New Future can help

Twelve practical assistants support common charity tasks while keeping your team in control

My New Future has brought these activities together in one place. Each assistant focuses on a specific task and guides the user through the information needed to produce a useful starting point. No technical knowledge is required. If you can complete an online form or write an email, you can use the service.

Grant and Fund Finder	Search for relevant funding opportunities and create a manageable shortlist.
Grant Application Writer	Turn verified project information into a structured first draft.
Fundraising Campaign Builder	Plan a campaign purpose, audience, messages and follow-up.
Volunteer Recruitment	Prepare clear volunteer roles and recruitment messages.
Volunteer Management Pack	Develop practical induction, support and administration materials.
Social Media and Content	Adapt an approved core message for regular communications.
Press and Media Pack	Prepare press releases, media angles and supporting information.
Impact Report	Organise evidence and explain the difference a project has made.
Annual and Trustee Report	Structure recurring reports for review and approval.
Policy and Compliance	Prepare policy drafts and review prompts for your organisation.
Events Pack	Plan activities, responsibilities, communications and practical arrangements.
Project Budget and Timeline	Set out tasks, deadlines, expected costs and dependencies.

Charities and not-for-profit organisations can try all twelve assistants free for 14 days. After the trial, membership is £29.99 per month and can be cancelled. The purpose of the trial is simple: use the tools on real tasks and decide whether they save enough time to be worthwhile for your organisation.

Before publishing the final edition, this page will include the website address, a QR code and current contact details.

IMAGE SUGGESTION Final-page QR code panel linking to the free trial, alongside a small preview of the twelve assistants.