

September 2025

# Community grants and AI

How AI can *help* or *hinder* your application

COMMUNITY  
FRIDGE  
*Network*



Registered charity no. 1158700

# A word on AI

---

Finding the time to fundraise is an on-going struggle for busy community fridges. That's why Hubbub is committed to the [IVAR principles](#), keeping our grant applications short and only asking for what we really need.

We know that AI tools like ChatGPT can be a huge help. Used well they are great for spotting spelling mistakes or making a piece of writing clearer.

However, in our most recent round of funding, we were surprised by how many applications were either fully written or heavily assisted by AI.

We want to hear from you! Your voice, your perspective and your reasons for needing funding matter to us.

A simply worded, passionate description of why we should support your work is worth much more than stale or generic AI-speak.

To help you get the most out of AI tools, while keeping your application personal and authentic, we've put together a few tips and watchouts for writing grant applications.

# Red flags

## Where AI can negatively impact your score

### AI likes to use...

- Unusual use of capitals for phrases like Community Cafes or Community Champions.
- Repeated use of em dash [—].

### Lacking specificity

- 'This funding will significantly enhance both the social and environmental impact.'
- 'This innovative expansion will allow us to reach more people, offer more nutritious food options, and run additional activities that connect people and reduce waste.'

### Formulaic sentence structure

- Sentences identical or similar to this were found across multiple applications:  
'We are seeking funding to enhance our community fridge initiative by implementing educational workshops. This will boost the social and environmental impact of our fridge.'

### Vague buzzwordy phrases

- 'Empowered to build a brighter future'
- 'This will enhance community engagement'
- 'Develop our offering'
- 'In order to deepen connections'
- 'Socially we'll foster stronger community bonds'

### No mention of locations, community partners, number of sessions, duration of project

- A mix or list of lots of activities or general areas of the organisation that the funding would support
- 'We'll collaborate with a range of key partners.'
- 'We'll work with external providers to make our project a success.'



# Green flags

## Signs of authentic applications

### Unique insights

- '100% of attendees over the past year said that they are more likely to cook from scratch'
- 'Since 2022, our 74 volunteers have saved 19.4 tonnes of surplus food.'
- 'We have 3 beautiful outdoor spaces, our flower farm, our roundhouse wellbeing hub site.'
- 'Our volunteer team takes in nearly 70 individuals aged between 12 and 80.'

### Personal experience

- 'We piloted this activity in April 2025... Quotes from the session: 'Loved it and saves money.'
- 'Survey feedback from 32 of our volunteers shows clear enthusiasm for food-focused workshops: 20 votes for growing food, 16 for eating healthily on a budget, and 15 for preservation.'
- 98% of our members said they think about food waste more since using our service.

### Local context

- 'This is one of Sheffield's most deprived wards and where 34% of people identify as Pakistani.'
- 'We partner with our local school Redgrove Avenue and the Wortham parish council.'

### Storytelling

- 'In March 2025 we were lucky enough to be offered a new community growing space and we need funds to transform this space by installing raised beds to boost local food growing and access to fresh food.'
- 'We would like to continue and expand our food initiative, Food 4 Thought, a project we have been piloting for the past eight months. By promoting healthy eating and confidence by using variety of ingredients, including often-overlooked items like 'wonky' vegetables and surplus produce, we've seen a marked increase in the use of our community fridge.'

# Applications with personality

*We plan to host twenty two-hour cookery classes, each on a different theme. Participants can sign up to the classes they think sound interesting or most suited to their level of experience and confidence. Themes could include:*

- One pan and one hob cookery: Useful for anyone but aimed at those living in supported accommodation, or similar spaces where access to kitchen equipment is limited.*
- Things on toast: A simple way to prepare breakfast, lunch or dinner, great for using up various veg and tinned beans/pulses.*
- Unsexy veg masterclass: Delicious dishes using lesser appreciated veg from the community fridge! E.g. a class on cabbage, making kimchi, dolmas, shredded-leaf salad, etc.*
- Easy pizza: Save money by learning to make healthier pizzas at home – in a pan, under a grill, in a regular oven.*
- Safe space baking: A welcoming bread-making session especially for members of the LGBTQ+ community, who are currently facing increased ostracization from public spaces in our town.*

*Settling into a new country is a challenging experience from knowing their surroundings. The movement away from a normal social network and familiar support and very often from families has a massive impact. All these setbacks are multiplied when someone's immigrant experience intersects with other traits of marginalisation such as gender, race, and religion.*

*Our network drawn from over six nationalities asked for the means to grow herbs and vegetables so that they can cook for their families the tastes from back home. We want to use the outside space at the centre to plant, nurture and grow. The sessions also bring the children into the garden to learn about nutrition, sustainability and how they can have a positive effect on the environment. Food grown can then be shared in the Community Food Hub.*

*We will also be holding cooking sessions with the garden produce and discussing health issues we need to look out for. This activity has been requested by our members and we would love to be able to offer them the chance.*



# Applications with personality



*We want to extend and develop our on-site community garden to create more growing space, some under-tree seating, and a more sustainable system for watering. We want to share organic and permaculture-inspired food growing skills through seasonal events and fortnightly guided gardening sessions. Since we are close to a play park and a popular walking route, we'd also like to encourage more safe public foraging, and create a nature-filled spot with rustic seating for rest and reflection by our customers and curious passers-by.*

*Several fridge visitors have expressed interest in helping to tend the garden but we're not yet set up to offer the tools and regular supervision to support that. The public response to someone gardening is always curiosity, interest, sharing gardening tips and stories, offers of plants and seeds, and complementary comments on how important such spaces are to the community. We neighbour a play park and parents / carers often bring their children to the garden to show them what is growing.*



# Applications with personality

*We plan to rent a new growing space from our local Development Trust: 12 raised beds are available along with polytunnel space within the community garden we occupy. While we already have one smaller growing space in a private garden, this would be a much bigger new site which would be accessible to all. This would allow us to grow food without food miles, packaging or industrial process. All work would be carried out through sustainable means with environmental impact at the forefront. Produce would go straight to the Larder to be distributed to our members, providing healthy, locally grown food. This is the ultimate community-led, sustainable food system; it enables more volunteer opportunities offering social inclusion and skills development. We want to create a lasting legacy of food growing here and use it as a demonstration site for community workshops and education in permaculture principles. We will also grow seed to restock our Seed Library.*



*We will provide weekly cooking sessions for young people ages 8-16 years old specifically using items from our community fridge so that we can further save food from being wasted. Within these sessions we will enable young people to explore different cultural foods, each week with dishes from different parts of the world. Through using items from our community fridge this will see the young people learn new skills in reducing food waste and raise an awareness on the importance of this. It will provide an opportunity to try new things, increase cultural awareness and increase social networking opportunities for young people, bringing them together from different schools. It will engage them in a safe and supportive environment with adults who are positive role models within their lives, helping them to feel part of the community in which they live. We have previously run this before and are repeatedly asked if we can do more cooking sessions as they enjoyed them so much. They have also requested to try meals from other countries. Cooking isn't covered on the school curriculum and we feel this is a vital life skill for young people.*



# Applications with personality



***Our Local Larder project aims to bring members of the community together to learn how to grow their own vegetables and cook with produce from our community garden and community fridge.***

***In response to interest within our community, we want to deliver a project that will encourage people to develop the skills and confidence they need to adopt a more sustainable, environmentally friendly approach to food.***

***We will use the existing resources we have within our community to give local people opportunities to harvest and cook with locally grown produce, learning about and growing their own vegetables. Using a combination of the produce grown within the community garden and available from our community fridge, we will plan and deliver an initial block of cooking sessions that will give people the opportunity to cook nutritious, budget and environmentally friendly meals. Our menus will be carefully tailored to maximise flavour, whilst promoting a sustainable approach to cooking.***

***In February/ March we aim to launch our sow and grow sessions, which will give people the chance to sow and grow their own vegetables within our community gardens. Our final block of sessions, in late spring, will give people the opportunity to harvest and cook using the vegetables that they planted earlier on in the year.***