



The Four Horsemen of the Grant-pocalypse

David Burgess



Through A Funder's Eyes:
The Interactive Grant-Making Experience for Fundraisers
FundersEyes.com



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What you THINK it's like:



What it's ACTUALLY like:



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FAMINE

A scarcity
of time



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Time is not on your side

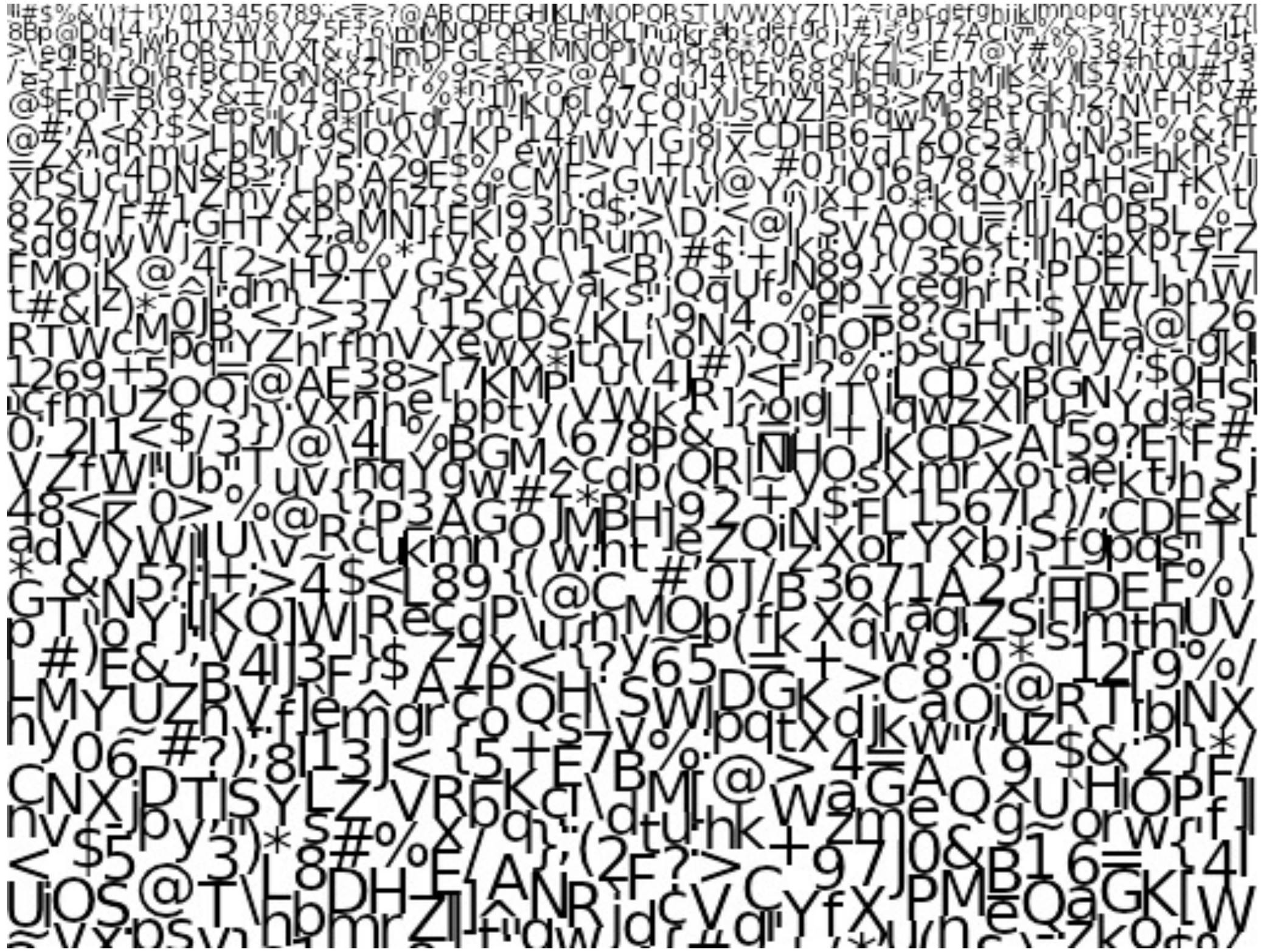


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What can you do about it?

- ④ Short - only say what you need to say
- ④ Top and Tail with key points
- ④ Highlight key points with bold text, headings & image captions
- ④ Don't rely on attachments or external links





Make it easy to read

- ④ Protect the White Space!
- ④ Use short sentences and simple language
- ④ Use left-justified text
- ④ Accessible font and size
- ④ Get your proposal in early



You Retweeted



Paul Ramsbottom @PaulBRa... · 51m

Exactly one week today until the [@wolfsonfdn](#) funding deadline. The team have a soft spot for those who get their applications in early!



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Deadline = 5pm...

...so what happens to this one?





WAR

Two
opposing
views collide



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~~How do we
give away
£1m?~~

How do we
best achieve
our mission?



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What do Trusts need to know?

- ④ How does this meet our aims?
- ④ What is the need for this work?
- ④ How much money do they need? And when?
- ④ What impact will our gift have? Value for money?
- ④ What are the risks?

Why should **we** support this over other projects?

Out of 256 applications, what percentage specifically referenced the Foundation's aims?

50%



Ask not
what this
Trust can
do for you...

...but rather
what you
can do for
this Trust



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What can you do about it?

- ⊗ Be picky about who you apply to
- ⊗ Make sure you fully understand the funder's aims
- ⊗ Be explicit about how your project will help the funder meet those aims
- ⊗ Quantify the tangible impact their grant will have against those aims
- ⊗ Use the funder's language...but show you know what it means/how it is relevant to you



PESTILENCE

Confusion
plagues your
writing



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Most proposals are gobbledygook

what are other
words for
gobbledygook?



gibberish, rubbish, balderdash,
drivel, bull, bunk, mumbo jumbo,
nonsense, baloney, poppycock





Draw a picture
of a Gerenuk

Draw a picture of a Gerenuk

- ⊗ A Gerenuk is 80–105 centimetres tall
- ⊗ It weighs between 28 and 52 kilograms
- ⊗ It has a long, slender neck and limbs
- ⊗ It has a flat, wedge-like head, big ears and large, round eyes
- ⊗ Its back is reddish brown
- ⊗ Its sides are fawn to buff
- ⊗ The horns measure 25–44 centimetres
- ⊗ The horns curve backward then slightly forward

A Gerenuk is an antelope with
a long neck.



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The Curse of Knowledge

“Once we know something, we find it hard to imagine what it was like not to know it.

Our knowledge has “cursed” us. And it becomes difficult for us to share our knowledge with others, because we can’t readily re-create our listeners’ state of mind”.

Chip and Dan Heath, Made to Stick



What can you do about it?

- ④ Assume they know nothing — paint them a picture
- ④ Get an “outsider” to review it
- ④ Look for connections with things your reader will know / have experienced
- ④ Avoid jargon - and remember we don't always know what's jargon



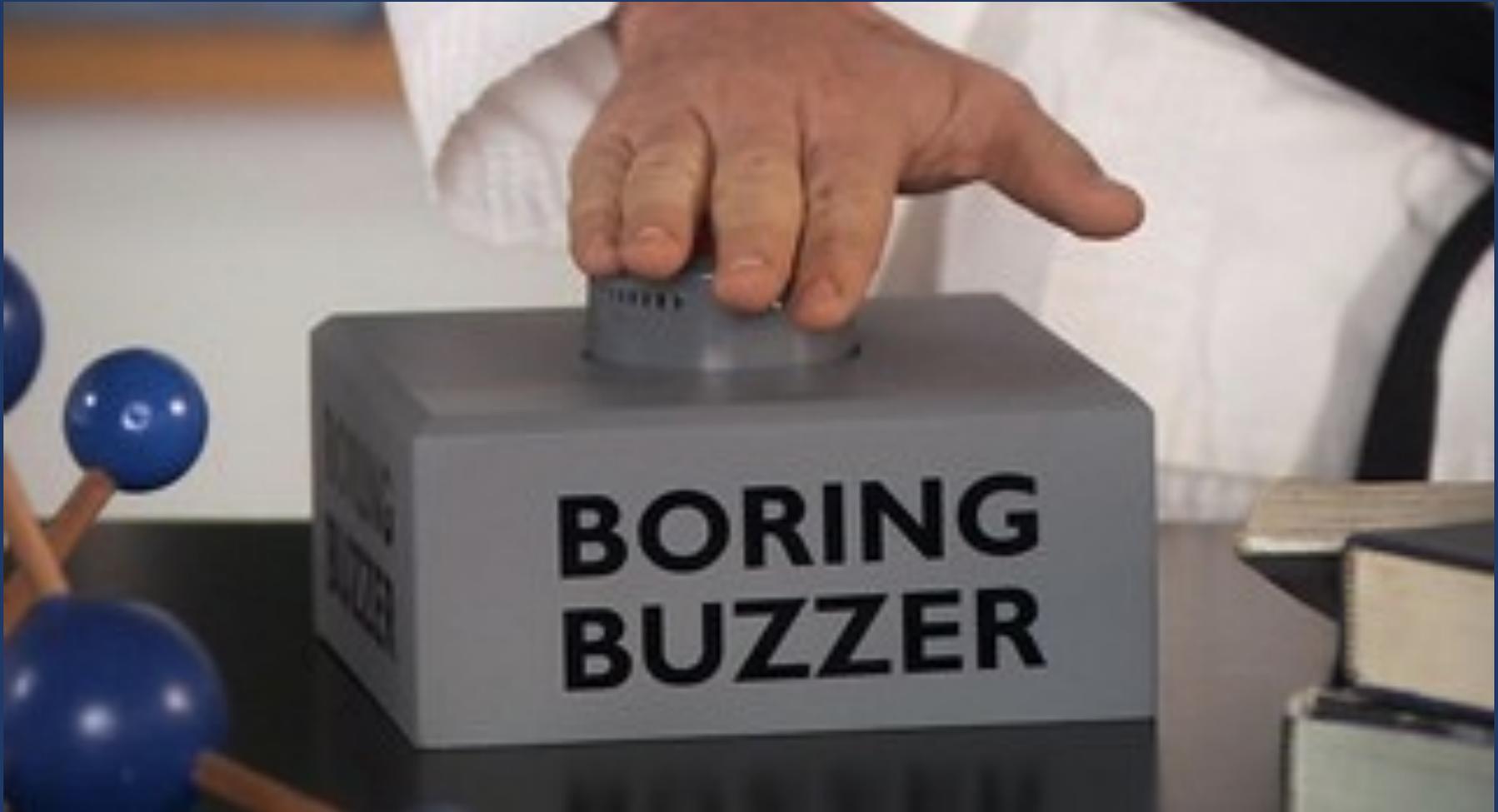
DEATH

...by
boredom



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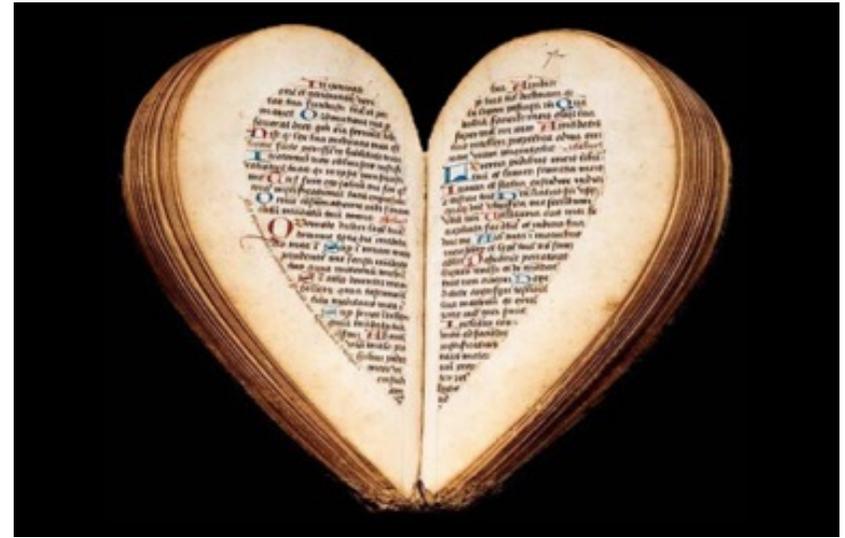
Most applications are painfully boring to read



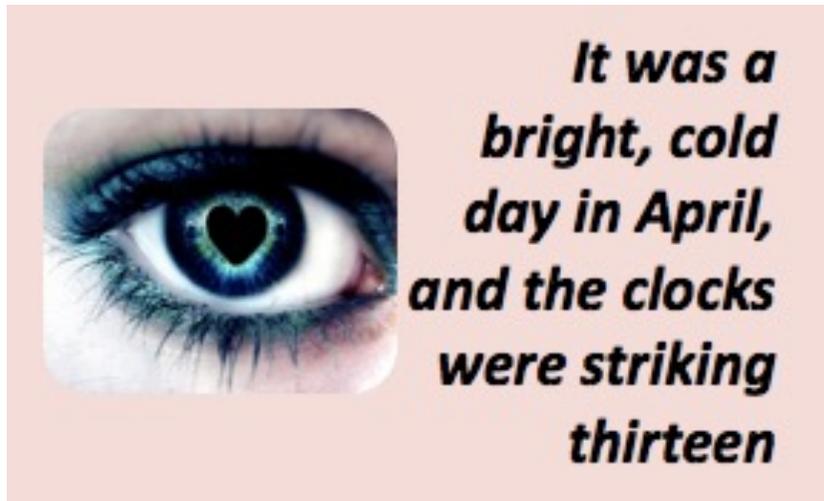
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Be Passionate!



Tell Stories!



Be Gripping!



Be Different!



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The Apollo (Sutton) Foundation

Hello! To kick things off, please could you tell us a little about your organisation?



Chapter

Certainly! Chapter provides support to people with severe and enduring mental illness in Cheshire West and Chester. Our tailored programme of one-to-ones, group activities, training and voluntary work placements help our service users grow in confidence, improve their mental health, make new friends, and feel hope for the future.



The Apollo (Sutton) Foundation

When you say "severe and enduring", what does that mean?



Chapter

It's an NHS-based term which refers to any diagnosis with very life-limiting symptoms and which lasts a long time, if not a person's whole life. Diagnoses include bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, personality disorder, psychosis, eating disorder and self-harm. To explain the effects of such an illness, here's Lucy!



Hi, I'm Lucy and I have bipolar disorder. My thoughts race, I have trouble sleeping and I sometimes behave erratically, including making bad financial decisions and spending myself into debt, which causes anxiety. My medication helps a bit, but it also makes me forgetful and jittery, which can make me worried about going out in public. I was very low when I got involved with Chapter.



Chapter

Thanks Lucy. Joining Chapter has really worked for Lucy. She's grown in confidence to the point where she is not only able to leave her house every day... She is now delivering some arts and crafts classes herself!



The Apollo (Sutton) Foundation

I see... How many people like Lucy are there?



Chapter

Estimates vary, but something like 1 in 100 have a severe mental illness. That would mean that in Cheshire West and Chester – where we work – there are more than 2,000 working age people with such a diagnosis. We know there's a real need for our work because for the first time in our 25 year history, we have a waiting list.



The Apollo (Sutton) Foundation

Thanks. Can you tell us about your group activities?



Chapter

We run 5-6 different activities every week which offer our service users the opportunity to meet new people, learn new skills and get out into the community. Activities include countryside walks, board games, cooking, photography and many more. In 2019, we have held 116 sessions, engaging 64 different people. Your £500 grant will go towards materials and room hire for these activities.

For more about how our activities help, here's Joe.



APOLLO
FUNDRAISING

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**The Apollo (Sutton)
Foundation**

Thank you for your time. Just one more question – isn't this conversational format just a gimmick to make you stand out?



Chapter

Of course we hope it makes us stand out, but talking is very important to Chapter! One-to-one communication is the backbone of our support, so we thought there was no better way to showcase our work than by having a chat. Thanks very much for listening to us!



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Sometimes there is nothing
else you can do

**You're perfect
in every way,
just not for me.**

SCOOP
WHOOOP



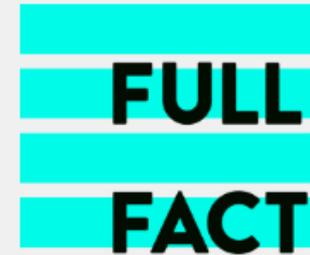
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Steel buckles under weight of applications

The Steel Charitable Trust has announced that they will no longer be taking applications for their “United Kingdom Under-26 Fund”, due to a persistent high volume of applications.

Speaking exclusively to BBCON News, a spokesperson for the Trust said “Applications to this fund are currently running into several hundreds each quarter, but **budget constraints mean only about 2% can be made an award.** This is unsustainable. Somewhat reluctantly, the Trustees have made the decision – based on considerations of fairness, time and cost-effectiveness for all parties – that, from 2026, applications to this fund will be by invitation only.”

Full Fact fights bad information



Bad information ruins lives. It promotes hate, damages people's health, and hurts democracy.

fullfact.org



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"It's already influencing how I approach creating an application...If you're a fundraiser wondering whether to sign up for the course, I'd book your place today!"

"It was a truly beneficial and worthwhile experience, and one I would recommend to anyone working in a charity, not just fundraisers!"

"It was a really fantastic, genuinely useful training experience that was incredibly engaging and interesting. Highly, highly recommend!"



Online: (£75 per person)

Friday 30th January – 10am-1pm

Thursday 5th March – 10am-1pm

Book your place at
FundersEyes.com

In-person: (£95 per person)

Bristol - Tuesday 24th February – 10am-1pm

London – Tuesday 24th March – 10am-1pm



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