

Free web advertising subsidised by Google

NICK BECK, managing director of **Tug**, explains how charities should make use of Google's free advertising facility.

Let me start by asking a simple question. Have you heard of the Google Grant? Chances are you haven't. If you have, but you're not claiming it, my next question is why not?

Google grants free advertising budgets to eligible non-profit organisations using its popular AdWords platform. The maximum initial AdWords budget is \$10,000 per month (around £6,200).

This grant is made in kind, not with actual money but with online advertising services from Google. That's free advertising on Google!

DO YOU QUALIFY? Firstly you must be operating as a not for profit organisation and you must be eligible.

Eligible non-profits include, but are not limited to, organisations which serve communities in art, education, health, science and technology, and volunteerism

Ineligible non-profits include, but are not limited to, those whose websites or missions are identified in the "Restrictions" below. Note: there is no information as to why these are chosen as restricted.

revenue

COMMERCIAL/GOODS AND SERVICES.

This means car, boat and real estate donation websites; and websites with a primary focus on selling goods, products or services. It also means organisations generating more than 50% earned, commercial revenue, and consumer credit counselling.

COMMUNITIES AND GROUPS. This category is also restricted where it



Tug's Nick Beck – the Google Grant is definitely worth applying for and could go up to as much as £25,000 a month.

undertakes programmes requiring membership and/or providing benefit solely to members, such as clubs, sports teams, alumni, networking and other membership organisations.

Restrictions in this category also apply where there is religious content or proselytising on a website as well as when organisations use religion or sexual orientation as a factor in hiring or serving populations.

political

Groups serving a primarily political function – such as lobbying, think tanks and special interests – are also within this restricted category.

OTHER RESTRICTED SITUATIONS. These are where there is promotion of illegal or

disruptive tactics, or websites serving solely as a portal or directory, or websites participating in the Google AdSense programme.

YOU ARE ELIGIBLE, SO HOW DO YOU APPLY? Here's the tricky bit.

It can take around 4-5 months to process a Google application. However, it can take considerably less time. Arthritis Research UK applied for a grant and received confirmation within 6-8 weeks.

There is no clear information about the criteria used to review applications – only that it is judged on a case by case basis by a Google Grants Committee, which is made up of Google employees.

YOUR APPLICATION IS SUCCESSFUL.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT? Let's look at the objectives. What do you want to achieve from your Google advertising?

“There is no clear information about the criteria used to review applications...”

In the case of Arthritis Research UK, their objectives were clear. They were looking for a way to increase: traffic to their website; website conversions, including registrations, the number of people sharing their stories and donations.

As Google's advertising platform (Adwords) revolves around a pay per click (PPC) basis the challenge is not just being accepted for the grant, but having the expertise and creativity to get people to click on your ads and actually spending all that free money.

According to Google the average grantee clocks up only around £180 per month in clicks.

You can only advertise in the search engine results pages (SERP), not within Google's content network. You can't bid more than a dollar (around 62p) per click – many keywords will cost more than this and would therefore be unavailable.

Target keywords must be relevant to your charity and services.

The ad copy has to reflect the mission of the charity as part of the ad – difficult when you're only allowed 70 characters in the description, including spaces. You need to be skilled in writing ad copy.

“You can only advertise in the search engine results pages...not within Google's content network.”

You must demonstrate that you're optimising your campaign – i.e. logging in regularly, responding to Google emails, managing the campaign properly.

Here are some tips to help you win and

then manage a Google Grant AdWords account. Make sure that the right keywords are used to bid on to ensure that your ads appeared for all relevant searches.

Create a comprehensive account structure to ensure the best possible quality score, the best use of budgets, as well as ensuring that every PPC ad served was 100% relevant to the search term used.

testing

Carry out regular ad testing to ensure the highest possible click through rate (CTR).

IS IT WORTH THE EFFORT? Yes, without a doubt! In the case of Arthritis Research UK, the charity generated 25,000 new users, 30 Arthritis Research UK registrations, 15 data captures – this is where a user leaves a story about how Arthritis has affected their life, and multiple donations.

It's worth noting that if you can legitimately spend the entire amount of money each month, Google is willing to raise the grant to a maximum of £25,000 per month. This happened to Arthritis Research UK.

success

The account has been such a success that they have now decided to budget some of their own money into a new PPC account

which focuses on the Google Display Network (GDN) – spend on the GDN is not permitted within the Google Grant.

This new account will use banners, text ads and click to play video ads to target users on the GDN.

All of this extra traffic and website engagement comes at no extra cost from Google to Arthritis Research UK.

“You must demonstrate that you're optimising your campaign...”

CAN YOUR GRANT BE TAKEN AWAY?

Any violation of programme guidelines and policies, or misuse of the grant will cause the grant to be terminated (e.g. if you started to host revenue generating ads on the landing pages).

In conclusion, the Google Grant is definitely worth applying for. The amount of money being spent via the grant shouldn't be used as a success metric – it's more about whether your ads are being frequently clicked on when they are served (i.e. click through rate) and what the extra traffic is actually doing for the charity. ●●●