



Mounting a Fundraising Strategy

Asking for money is never easy, but it is nonetheless a necessity for most community groups.

Although it's undoubtedly hard, fundraising can – and should – be a fun and exciting experience. It is also an experience that should be shared. For leaders of community organisations one of the challenges is ensuring that all Board members – and in fact everyone in the group – have some involvement in raising money.

Designate a fundraising coordinator

As a first step, it is important for an organisation to assign the overall responsibility for fundraising activities to one person. Even if you have a fundraising committee or outside consultants, one person in your organisation still needs to be in ultimate control of what you are doing in fundraising.

While everyone seems to acknowledge that getting money into your organisation is important, the role of the fundraiser is often under-valued. It shouldn't be. Without sufficient funding coming in, groups can struggle to get their important message across, provide their services or indeed survive as a group at all.

Establish a fundraising strategy

The development of a fundraising strategy needs to be an annual exercise and should be evaluated and tweaked throughout the year as well. A fundraising strategy needs to have the flexibility to react to new opportunities or to curtail activities that are either not practical or not profitable. The best thing is to schedule some time for your Board or those interested in fundraising to get together and thrash around some ideas and establish some goals.

First steps:

- Outline your goals. What do you hope to achieve?

- Research past fundraising activities – what has worked? And just as importantly, what hasn't?
- Work out who your friends and potential friends are and who is willing to support your organisation – businesses, government departments, individuals, families, philanthropic trusts and foundations.
- Conduct market research with members, friends, etc., collecting their good ideas and examples of what has worked in their groups to raise money.
- Detail a case to support each prospective fundraising activity.
- Describe and decide on the methods you plan to use to raise funds.
- Set an estimated target for each method.
- Set a timeline and a year planner noting good times for the organisation to raise funds. Pay attention to grant deadlines.
- Document your progress so that if you are struggling, the bells start ringing early enough to change tack.
- Establish an evaluation strategy.

Remember, if you are asking for money, it is easier to raise money for a specific project or activity than for the organisation as a whole. Most people would rather know exactly where their money is being spent.

What are the options for fundraising?

There are a number of sources of funds that your community group might be able to tap into. These include:

- **Grants** – identify federal, state or local government, philanthropic and corporate grants programs open to your group (use Our Community's Easy Grants newsletter and database; [click here](#) for more information).
- **Sponsorship** – identify possible major and minor sponsorship arrangements your group could pursue. This could include naming rights for your team, building, uniforms, scoreboard, events, players, trips, newsletter, lunches, etc. (Click here for more information about sponsorships and other forms of community business partnerships.)
- **Membership fees** – introduce different levels of membership or association fees – standard, family, non-playing, "friends of" or associate membership, "Angels" or "Gold" membership, lifetime members, three-game members, etc. – and charge a fee for each.
- **Bequests** – provide general information or personal approaches to long-time benefactors and supporters about how they can provide an ongoing gift for your organisation.

- **In-kind support** – you might be able to get donations of everything from a venue or office to office supplies, printing and photocopying, transport, entertainment, pro bono work (legal, accounting, IT, marketing/public relations, auditing), gifts, subscriptions, uniforms and so on. ([Click here](#) for more information about in-kind support and other forms of community business partnerships.)
- **Donations** – set up your organisation to receive online donations ([click here](#) for more information on how you can do this for free). Pursue personal donations, general appeals, direct mail, appeals to your email database of all former players, members and supporters, etc.
- **Special events**, including:
 - Sales, fetes.
 - Trivia nights, fashion parades, talent contests, art shows with a local retailer or gallery, dances and discos, film nights, restaurant functions.
 - Various 'athons, with club members and players gaining sponsorship for a walkathon, readathon, skipathon, workathon or skillathon.
 - Games' nights using casino-type games and "play" money.
 - Sponsored record attempts or other similar quests.
 - Fun runs (carefully check legal requirements with local authorities)
 - Raffles, competitions, auctions – major items, memorabilia, services, travel, gifts, tickets, etc.
- **Merchandising** – sell your club clothing, office products, sports products, glasswear etc.
- **Sales** – sell your goods and services.

Your group will need to explore which of these fundraising avenues are feasible, achievable, and profitable. The trick is to be creative and make the fundraising initiative work for you.

For each event or initiative, try to incorporate other fundraising initiatives. For example, if you have a special event, set up a stall to sell your organisation's merchandise, or conduct a raffle, and always make sure programs or invitations have a donation form attached as well as information on how people can join as members.

Legal obligations

When making an appeal for public funds there are certain laws you must abide by. There are different rules for each state and territory applying to different methods of fundraising. These rules are separate from the tax and incorporation laws that you are also obliged to observe.

To find out how fundraising rules will affect you, [click here](#).

What next?

- Send your draft fundraising strategy to the Board and a cross-section of the organisation before a final version is signed off. Incorporate comments and suggestions into the final strategy.
- It is important that the strategy is not drawn up and then forgotten. Have regular updates at committee meetings and ensure your newsletters and communications carry articles featuring various milestones or fundraising activities.
- Ensure the strategy is updated and changed as circumstances are.
- Ensure your organisation and leadership team are alert to new fundraising ideas and lessons learned from your own experience. If you see an idea that works, grab it and try to adopt and adapt it to work for your own club. Subscribing to [Easy Grants](#) will ensure you never miss a grant and [Raising Funds](#) will get your ideas bubbling.
- In your planning, ensure that you have the ability to walk away if something is not working or looks as though you will lose money. It is better to walk away and lose a small amount than go ahead with an event and ensure you lose a far larger amount. If you have planned well and have a strong risk management plan the alarm bells will start ringing long before it gets to that stage.
- One of the main lessons of fundraising is to ensure that you appropriately acknowledge those that have assisted you, either as volunteers, donors or sponsors. Acknowledgement can be expressed in your newsletters, on your tickets, in advertising, or in a personal letter from the CEO or Chair. If the donation/sponsorship is significant, consider providing a plaque, framed certificate or some form of permanent acknowledgement (signage, dedication).

Fundraising activities can determine the future of your organisation. A strong fundraising effort can ensure there are adequate funds to support all of your activities; a poor performance can drain money and threaten the very survival of your organisation.

Our Community has a huge array of information and tools that can help community groups move their fundraising efforts up a notch or two. Among them are:

- More free help sheets ... [Click here](#)
- Funding tools and newsletters ... [Click here](#)
- Top 10 fundraising ideas ... [Click here](#)
- Fundraising Wizard ... [Click here](#)
- Practical "how to" books, including 50 Ways to Raise up to \$5000 ... [Click here](#)
- Grants database ... [Click here](#)

- The Our Community Funding Centre ... [Click here](#)

[Click here](#) for more help sheets.

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