

## Establishing a Fundraising Strategy

For leaders of community organisations one of the challenges is ensuring that everyone in the group has some involvement in raising money. Fundraising can – and should – be a fun and exciting experience. It is also an experience that should be shared.

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.

### 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.

### 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 those interested in fundraising to get together and thrash out 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.
- Research with members and friends, collecting their good ideas and what they are prepared to support.



- Detail a case to support each prospective fundraising activity and get it approved by the committee.
- Set an estimated budget and target for each activity.
- Set a timeline and year planner noting good times for the organisation to raise funds without creating volunteer fatigue.
- Document your progress and regularly report back, so you can change tack if necessary.
  - Evaluate each activity and identify improvements.

Remember, 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.

If you are fundraising for a significant item which requires a large amount of money – such as constructing a new building or renovating an existing one – it pays to break your funding goal down and stretch the plan over a number of years. For example, you may allocate initial funding goals towards planning, drafting and feasibility studies; pursue significant grant funding for construction; seek sponsorship and in-kind assistance for internal fit-out and a number of major annual events held to contribute towards general costs.

### Funding sources

Your organisation needs money to be coming from as many sources as you can manage, and to be raised by as many people as you can coordinate. Relying on

one or two sources of funding or one or two people to fundraise can get your organisation into trouble. It is suggested that a good fundraising plan rests on a combination of the following areas:

- **Grants** are a very important source of funds for most not-for-profits. Billions of dollars is provided each year by local, state and federal governments, as well as philanthropic, community and corporate trusts and foundations.
- **Donations:** Set up your organisation to receive online donations. Pursue personal donations, general appeals, direct mail, appeals to your email database of all former members, players and supporters, etc. Ensure you have clearly marked and accounted for collection / donation buckets at key events.
- **Bequests:** Provide general information or personal approaches to long-time benefactors and supporters about how they can provide an ongoing gift for your organisation.
- **Crowd-funding:** a relatively new, innovative way for community groups to fundraise using the Internet and social media. Groups may make requests for donations using websites such as [www.pozible.com](http://www.pozible.com), promoting to their networks and beyond to harness potentially global support for their cause.
- **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.
- **Community-Business Partnerships/Sponsorship:** Identify possible major and minor sponsorship your group could pursue. This could include naming rights for your team, building, uniforms, scoreboard, events, players, trips, newsletter, lunches, etc.
- **Membership Fees:** Introduce different levels of membership or association fees – standard, family, ‘friends of’ or associate membership, ‘Angels’ or ‘Gold’ membership, lifetime members, etc. – and charge a fee for each.
- **Special Events**, including:
  - Sales, fairs and fetes.
  - Trivia nights, fashion parades, talent contests, art shows, dances and discos, film nights, dinner functions.
  - Various ‘athons’, with club members 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.
- Raffles, competitions, auctions – major items, memorabilia, services, travel, gifts, tickets.

Remember to check any legal requirements and/or permits required for raffles, fun runs, etc.

- **Earned income** refers to the money you make through selling what you know, what you do, what you have, or what you can sell
  - Merchandising: sell your club clothing, office products, sports products, glass-wear etc.
  - Sales: sell your goods and services, skills and expertise.

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. Your group will need to explore which of these fundraising avenues are feasible, achievable, and profitable. Remember to be creative and make the fundraising work for your organisation.

## What next?

- Send your draft fundraising strategy to the Committee of Management 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.
- 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.
- 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 (signature, dedication).