

Fundraising can be a challenging process, but with the right planning and execution, fundraising activities can be both fun and effective! When planning, be sure to identify your neighborhood goals and values and then choose a type of fundraiser that is appropriate. Consider how funds will be used and why it's important to your neighborhood. Be sure to integrate the value upon the community when publicizing your efforts.

If you aren't a 501c 3 nonprofit, you can work with SE Uplift to coordinate a fiscal sponsorship arrangement so that contributions to your organization or project will be tax deductible. Fiscal sponsorship with a nonprofit like SE Uplift will also allow you to apply for a larger pool of grants.

Contributors, whether individuals or businesses, like to see the value in the money they've donated. Tell your contributors, in advance, how they will be recognized and follow up with thank you letters, specifically indicating how their donation was used. Keep donors informed of your progress to develop a partnership for continued support.

Fundraising Strategy 1: Special Events

Special events are social gatherings that can expand the reputation of your group, generate publicity, make money for your organization or project and give those attending an entertaining experience. The biggest benefit of holding a special event is raising awareness by word of mouth, which will in turn increase donations and volunteers!

Choosing an Event

Several criteria should be considered when determining which fundraising event to plan. A few items to consider include the appropriateness of the event, the energy of

Preparing to Fundraise

Identify your fundraising goals

- What are you trying to accomplish?
- What tasks are involved in achieving this goal?
- How much will it cost- long and short term

Consider your existing resources

- Do you need money up front? How much?
- Do you need volunteers? How many?
- Do you have a list of past donors?
- Have you done any successful fundraisers?
- Do you have the necessary outreach materials?

Determine your fundraising strategy

- Which fundraising activities are best to raise the necessary resources?
- What resources do you need? Volunteers, time, etc

volunteers, the amount of money required up front and planning time for the event.

Here are a few examples of fundraising events, with the approximate amount of planning time needed:

Events that can be planned in 1-2 months

- Barbeque, picnic or neighborhood block party
- Progressive dinner, with courses at several homes in the neighborhood
- House party
- Breakfast, lunch or dinner event (try a simple menu, for example, a pancake breakfast or a spaghetti dinner)

Events that can be planned in 2-3 months

- Book sale
- Craft or art fair
- Halloween haunted house
- Open house
- Plant sale
- Wine & chocolate tasting
- Historic homes or heritage tree tour

Events that can be planned in 5-6 months

- Silent or live auction
- Music or dance concert
- Neighborhood-wide garage sale

Planning a Fundraising Event

Special events require a great deal of planning time and energy in order to be successful. The key to a great fundraising event is the planning.

- Event planning committee: In order to prevent burnout of the lead organizer of an event, select a core committee of 3-4 volunteers. Larger committees can often be counterproductive, making the planning process longer. The job of the committee is to plan and coordinate the event, identifying tasks that can be undertaken by additional volunteers.

- Committee chair: It's important to pick the right leader who can energize and support the other members of your committee. They must have the time to commit as well as excellent people and communication skills.
- Committee tasks: Create a master task list with the labels: "what", "when" and "who"; Prepare a budget from this master list with both expense and income line items; Create a timeline, planning backwards from the event date

Event Spotlight: House Parties

One of the simplest and often most effective events to plan is a house party. In essence, a house party is an event where someone in a group invites friends to a party in their house. At this event, the party organizer educates their friends about a project or group and then asks participants to make a contribution. The party is also an opportunity for people to network, and eat food and drink in a welcoming and entertaining environment. House parties are a great opportunity for a group to spread the word about their cause and gain both monetary and volunteer support.

Five Steps for a Successful House Party

1. Find someone willing to have the event at their house and take on event-related responsibilities.
2. Prepare a list of people to attend. If possible, invite local celebrities or politicians to draw in more participants.
3. Design, print and send the invitations.
4. Choreograph the event: prepare a slideshow or presentation and, most importantly, the pitch to ask for support.
5. Follow up with those in attendance to keep donors aware of progress and activities and to ensure future contributions and support.

Fundraising Strategy 2: Business Partnerships

One of the most effective ways for a neighborhood association or community-based organization to fundraise is to approach businesses for support. Like you, businesses, in particular local businesses, are committed to the community and want to support activities to make the neighborhood a better place to live and play.

Ask grocery stores to donate gift certificates for events or restaurants to donate proceeds for one night to support your organization. If there's a business association in your neighborhood strike up a partnership for future collaborations. Apply as partners for grants to undertake a community project or make improvements to a commercial corridor. Post flyers in businesses and on community kiosks to spread the word about your efforts and increase donations and volunteer capacity!

Fundraising Strategy 3: Swag Sales

Selling organizational items can be a great way to raise awareness about your group or project, while raising funds.

Remember, have fun, get creative and sell items that will be most effective in your neighborhood!

A few items to sell:

- T-shirts or sweatshirts
- Canvas shopping bags
- Coffee mugs
- Bumper stickers
- Baked goods

Fundraising Strategy 4: Direct Donations

Asking a friend or someone you know for money is the most effective way to fundraise. Unfortunately, for many, the thought of asking for money brings fear and anxiety.

Remember the following tips when making the ask:

- You are not asking for yourself- you're just a volunteer from the group. If a donor says "no", it could be for a variety of reasons. Try not to take the "no" personally.
- People don't give money away- they invest in their community. Showing people how your organization or project can improve the community is a critical step in gaining support for your cause.
- Storytelling is key to securing donations. Share your personal story and reasons why you became involved in this project or effort. It's this personal connection that will inspire people to help.
- You're not begging, you're simply giving donors a chance to help.

Fundraising mailers

Unlike direct asks, which are done on a person to person basis, direct mail letters enable you to reach dozens or hundreds at once. A standard mailing typically includes the outside envelope, the fundraising letter and the return envelope or pledge envelope. The aim of the letter is to catch the reader's attention and invoke a sense of need and urgency. Most readers will ask these two questions, "so what?" and then "now what?" As you write your appeal letter, keep these two questions in mind and be sure to craft a letter that is concise, provocative and meaningful to the reader. Direct email and e-newsletters are another great way to solicit donations from the community!

Fundraising Strategy 5: Grantwriting

Grantwriting is storytelling. Throughout the entire process, your neighborhood or organization should be telling the story about who you are, what need must be addressed, and why you are the best group to meet the existing need. If you think of your story prior to the grantwriting process, you'll be well prepared when opportunities arise.

Grantwriting: Tips for Success

1. Research potential funds. It's important to see who they've funded in the past, what their typical range is for funding and their mission and objectives.
2. Build a relationship with the funder. Request to meet with a staff member to discuss the project in advance. Funders are more likely to accept grants from recipients that are familiar.
3. Follow the grant guidelines exactly. Be sure to note font and margin sizes and use the exact numbering and headings listed in the application.
4. Always have at least one additional person review and edit your proposal!

Digging Deeper: Additional Resources

Fundraising Books & Websites

- Carlson, M. *Team-Based Fundraising Step by Step: A Practical Guide to Improving Results Through Teamwork*. 2000.
- Flanagan, J. *The Grass Roots Fundraising Book: How to Raise Money in Your Community*. 1995.
- The Grassroots Fundraising Journal: www.grassrootsfundraising.org
- Fundraising forum library:
- www.raise-funds.com/library
- Fundraising ideas: www.fundraisingideas.com

Grantwriting Books & Websites

- Hall, Mary and Susan Howlett. *Getting Funded: The Complete Guide to Writing Grant Proposals*. 2003.
- Oregon Foundation Databook: www.foundationdatabook.com
- Oregon Community Foundation: www.ocfl.org
- The Foundation Center: <http://foundationcenter.org/>