

Raising Funds for your Neighborhood Association

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 the fundraiser that is most 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 501(c)(3) nonprofit, you can work with SE Uplift to coordinate a fiscal sponsorship 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.

Both individual and business donors like to see the value in the money they've contributed. 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 and number of volunteers, the amount of money required up front and time available.

Planning a Fundraising Event

Special events require a great deal of 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 lines; create a timeline, planning backwards from event.
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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. Consider selling t-shirts, canvas shopping bags, mugs or stickers with your neighborhood logo.

Remember- Have fun, get creative and sell items that will help to build a sense of pride in your community!

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 with 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 this need. If you think of your story prior to the grantwriting process, you will be well prepared when opportunities arise.

Grantwriting: Tips for Success

1. Research potential funders. It's important to see which groups 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!
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