

Fundraising for Activists

Raising Cash and Writing Funding Applications

All campaigns and projects need some materials and resources to keep them running and to expand. It is a really good idea to consider fundraising a part of your campaign right from the start and to make it enjoyable. There are many different ways of raising money and getting materials and equipment. You'll find some of them in this guide together with general tips.

Three things to bear in mind:

- ★ The more inspiring your campaign the more likely it is that people want to support you.
- ★ You don't get what you don't ask for.
- ★ Don't forget you only need to get enough money to do the job you've set yourselves. It's not a campaign aim to raise money.

A fundraising plan

First of all you need to work out how much money you need and by when. This will give you your fundraising deadline.

A good way to do this is to get everyone together and do a brainstorm on things the group needs. A brainstorm is a way of quickly gathering a large number of ideas. Start by stating the issue. Ask people to say whatever comes into their heads as fast as possible - without censoring it. Write these ideas on a large piece of paper and discuss them. Which things are most important to get? When do you need them by?

Once you've got the list of things you need, do a second brainstorm on how to raise the cash/get the materials. Discuss these ideas and see which are most likely to work. Are there any ways in which you can get services/materials for free or cheaper? Do you have the necessary skills and the people to carry them out? The type of fundraising you do will largely depend on the skills of the people involved. For example you might not find anyone to write a funding application, but you may know some artists who are willing to organise an auction of their artwork in support of your campaign.

Fund-raisers not only help to raise resources but are also a great way of publicising your campaign and getting new people involved. If you are putting on any events make sure people know what it is about and how they can get involved in the campaign or project.

Bank accounts

Depending on the type of fundraising it can be very helpful to have a bank account in the name of your group/campaign/project. People writing out cheques feel a lot more comfortable if the money doesn't go into an individual's bank account. You will almost certainly need an account if you are applying to a funder for larger sums of money. The account doesn't need to cost anything - building societies' savings accounts (pass books) are often a good choice. To open an association or society account you will need to show the building society/bank a constitution and an excerpt of minutes of a meeting enabling you to open one. You can get a standard constitution from the Council for Voluntary Service (CVS) or ask another local group. You will need to insert your own objectives.

Some Fundraising Ideas

Getting things for free / cheaper

Before buying anything think about ways of getting it for free. Can you get stuff donated, on loan or through sponsorship? Here are some ideas:

Skips are a great source for things like wood, plastic sheets, carpets and even furniture. Once you start looking, the amount of perfectly good stuff thrown out, particularly in wealthy areas, is overwhelming. If you spot something you want outside someone's house, knock on their door and ask. They often come up with even more stuff they want to get rid off. Similarly ask anyone working on a demolition site, or at the end of the day at a market if it's OK to take stuff from their skip. They'll probably say yes as it's cheaper for them than emptying it. Leave skips looking tidy. Freight hauliers may have old tarpaulins which you could ask for.

A Wish List is a list of all your needs with a plea for donations. It is a very easy way for people to help who cannot be there. Circulate the wish list as widely as possible. It is amazing how much useful stuff is lurking in people's attics and garden sheds - paint, wood, tools, cookers, stationary etc. This does not apply to Boney M and Bay City Rollers LPs. Make the wish list as beautiful, eye catching and charming as possible. Put everything down, including the boring stuff like socks and photocopier paper (and don't forget to put a photocopier on the list - it may happen!). Also ask for skills such as artists and welders. Send it to any mail enquiries you get, distribute it to your mailing lists and put it on your stalls.

Discounts - Businesses may offer discounts to regular customers or people whose actions they support. Bulk orders of goods like whole foods, building materials, trees will be cheaper. Army surplus and junk yards are a good source of cheap clothes, boots, sleeping bags, tools, tarpaulins and other equipment.

Fundraising events

Fundraising events can be a lot of fun for everyone involved. They include benefit gigs, jumble sales and garden parties. If well planned, publicised and attended, these events can raise lots of money and publicity for your group. Sometimes, however, they are a lot of effort and at the end of the event you will only have covered your costs, or even lost money! Here are some points to help you avoid that:

Publicity is the key to any good event: fly-post extensively, hand out flyers at other events, try to get into the events listings of local media. Be creative and try to put a campaign spin on your fundraising. Also think about the **timing** of the event. Are any other local events happening at the same time? What about school holidays, bank holiday weekends and big sporting events such as the World Cup?

Make sure that people realise the objective of the event is to raise money so they don't try to free-load their way in! Think carefully about the **admission fee**. It must be enough to make money for the campaign, but not too expensive. Consider having a concessionary rate.

Fundraising events are a good way of getting new people involved, so make sure that you have an **information stall** at the event, with leaflets and displays, campaign merchandise and a collection tin for donations. You can also have these stalls at events organised by other people. If any sympathetic band is due to play in your area, or there is a regular club night at a local venue, approach them and ask if you can run a stall. Ask the band or DJ to point out your stall.

Benefit gigs - Most benefit gigs involve local bands or DJs. You will probably have to pay for the venue and a PA system. Find a band that is happy to be paid expenses only or you won't make a profit. Make sure that people realise the objective of the event is to raise money and don't try and blag their way in!

Sponsored events - An old favourite and good for publicity, but can take a lot of organising. You could have a sponsored sports event, treeplanting or litter pick in a local park. Think up more creative ones and they will attract more publicity, people and money.

Raffles are easy to organise - you can make them part of any fundraising event you are organising. First of all you'll need to source some prizes. They don't need to cost a lot and you can often get them donated. Find a friendly local business to give you a food hamper or two, gift tokens or free tickets to a local event. Ask some artists or crafts people to donate prizes. Or bake some delicious cakes.

You will also need raffle tickets. You can buy books of raffle tickets at many post offices and stationers. Then sell them for a pound or two at your event and a little later draw the prizes.

Sales - Consider having a stall at a fair or local fete, a car boot sale, plant sale, jumble sale or theme market. Get together well in advance to collect items to sell. Publicise and promote the stall as much as possible. On the sale make the stall look as attractive and welcoming as you can. Think about putting up a banner, so people know that they are supporting your campaign.

Other ideas - A folk evening, a ceilidh, a story-telling evening, a bingo night, a raffle, a mediaeval banquet, a fete or fair, an auction, a jumble sale, or anything else that fits in with the local culture and community.

Campaign Merchandise

T-shirts, badges, posters and postcards spread the message as well as raising money. (But remember there's not much point in having T-shirts sewn in sweat-shops in China and printing a Fair Trade message on the front...)

Donations

Appeals through your mailing list - In every newsletter or leaflet, mention the fact that your campaign needs money. Some people assume that if you are producing a newsletter then you must be doing alright. The truth is that campaign funding usually comes out of personal pockets. Always give clear instructions on how to donate, i.e. who to make cheques and Postal Orders out to. Be aware that if you overdo it people may doubt your need. If the situation is really bad, you could put in a special leaflet stating your financial situation and ways that people could help. You could also put specific urgent appeals for money or goods on your info line.

Giving examples can help people identify with your situation and illustrate how every little helps. For instance: "This newsletter cost us £100 to print and £200 to post out. This has all come out of our pockets. If everyone on the mailing list sent just £5, this would raise £2,500. £5 would pay for the costs of mailing you this newsletter regularly."

Always write personal thank-you letters to people who have sent money. Keep a record of all donors on your database. If you do a fundraising mailout to these people, remember to thank them for their past generosity and give examples of what their donations have achieved.

Bucket rattling - At every event make sure you do some bucket rattling. Small change soon

adds up and there are always people who will chuck in notes! Don't overdo it, or do it aggressively. Keep hold of your bucket. Don't do it at other people's events without asking first.

Pub Collections - These are very easy. Just go round pubs rattling a bucket! Ask permission from the licensee first and choose your pubs carefully.

Benefactors - You may be fortunate enough to have a "benefactor" approach your campaign. People like this are rare and often prefer to remain anonymous. They may ask for a funding proposal or they may give freely.

Busking can raise a lot of money and entertains the local community.

Going to Work

Going to work is often easier, quicker and more lucrative than any of the above, but more often forgotten. Rather than spending twenty hours working on a mad scheme to get money, it's sometimes better to just go and work in a pub collecting glasses for twenty hours...

Writing Funding Applications

Applying for a grant is often the only way to get larger sums of money. You could ask for funding for newsletters, organisational costs for an event or action, office and staff expenses, action and communications equipment. Funding proposals for outrageous things are always worth a go - a hot air balloon or the use of a helicopter perhaps...

Which Funder?

There are many different organisations that give grants to small campaigns and projects. Your first step is to make a shortlist of those that are most likely to support your project or campaign.

Nearly all funders have guidelines for giving out their money. These cover the kind of groups and activities they will fund, how much they will give and how to apply. There are a number of directories that provide information about funders such as the Directory for Social Change. Have a look in your library and ask your nearest Council for Voluntary Service (CVS) for advice. (Check your phone book or www.nacvs.org.uk/cvsdir/index.shtm for your nearest CVS) Your best bet however is to talk to other groups similar to your own to find out where they got their funding from. For example for local environmental projects you can often get money from the council's environmental grants programme.

Gathering Information

Once you've got your shortlist, find out as much as you can about these funders. What kind of activities do they fund, what are their criteria for giving out money, deadlines, forms, how much do they give. Is this the right funder to approach? They vary greatly in the stuff they require and how much money they give. If they've got a website or printed publicity materials, read them very carefully. Talk to people who have been able to get money from that funder but also to those that were turned down. Find out what works and avoid other people's mistakes. Most funding applications are rejected because they did not follow the guidelines or forgot to send

something, not because the funder didn't like the idea.

You also need to find out about deadlines for applying. Some funders only allocate funds once or twice each year, so find out when the next deadline is and how long it takes for them to decide. If you are looking for money to print leaflets next month then a funder who takes six months to make a decision is no good. If there are deadlines then make sure you keep to them!

Writing the application

There are basically two types of applications: either the funder provides an application form to fill in or you have to write a free style application (but even then they often have guidelines about how long and what it should contain). If you are dealing with an application form, make sure you understand the questions you are supposed to answer. Always read the accompanying guidelines. Make sure you fill in all the boxes. If in doubt, phone the funder and ask!

If you are writing a free-style application, find out what you should cover in it and how detailed and how long the funder expects it to be. For smaller sums a cover letter, a one-page project description and a one-page budget is usually enough. For more info please read the section on free-style funding applications below.

Although each funding application should be individually tailored to the funder, there are basic rules that apply to all. A funding application should be clear, concise and convincing. Like a press release, you will need to catch the potential funder's attention immediately. They may receive loads of proposals and yours will have to stick out.

Below is a checklist for writing applications.

Before you start writing...

- ★ Have you got the up to date application forms? Forms and guidelines often change several times a year - so double check that everything is up to date!
- ★ Have you read the up to date application guidelines? Do you fall into their funding criteria?
- ★ Have you made a list of keywords from their publications (words that crop up several times e.g. training priority, information, community empowerment, accessibility).
- ★ When is the deadline? Stick to it!

When You're Writing

- ★ **Never write Dear Madam/Sir.** Always find a name and check the spelling.
- ★ **Project title.** Think of a snappy name for your project.
- ★ **Grab their attention** - and keep it! Funders are going to see hundreds of proposals - make sure you stand out. The places to grab them are the cover letter and the summary.
- ★ **Use the funder's language** - be sure to use the same key words as they do. Confusion often results from using different words for the same ideas.
- ★ **Be positive** - never use "would", "could", "should", "might", or "may". Always use "will". If you don't have confidence in yourself and your project, they won't either.
- ★ **Clear and easy to read.** Organise the text in a clear structure so that everything flows smoothly. Avoid technical jargon and be concise. Get a native English speaker to proof read it for grammar and spelling. Do not rely on a computer spell-checker.
- ★ **Be realistic** - do not try to do too much. The best projects are often small with measurable results which can be pointed to as a success. Show the proposal to others for a "reality check".

- ★ **Everything should be in bite-size pieces**, small enough to swallow in one bite, but big enough for the reader to have to think about it. Use this especially in your expected results section. Use action words such as increasing, reducing, maximising, saving, decreasing, assisting.
- ★ **Use the Funders' guidelines** - the funder wrote them for a reason, so follow them closely. If the guidelines say that they only fund nature conservation projects then don't submit an alternative energy proposal. Follow the organisational structure they want the application in.
- ★ **Focus, Focus, Focus** - if you are doing an alternative energy project, don't start writing about saving the whales. Again, remember: manageable size.
- ★ **Credibility** can be emphasised through the overall appearance of the application. A nicely designed and printed logo for the cover letter does wonders. If appropriate you could also enclose CVs of project staff and letters of support from other NGOs or institutions etc.
- ★ **Comprehensiveness** - Make sure you provide all the information required. If you do not understand a question in the application form, phone up and ask the funder. Also if they ask for three copies, provide three copies. Make a checklist of all the bits of paper the funder requires and then go through it just before you send the application off.
- ★ **Relevance** - prove why the project is important in general and how it fits in with the funder's policies. For example, 1995 was declared the year of Nature Conservation by the EU Council of Ministers, therefore, donors (especially the EU) were more willing to fund nature conservation projects that year.
- ★ **Never send form letters** or general funding requests to funders.
- ★ **Make contact with the funders** - let them know you'll be applying, don't be afraid to ask questions. But think about what you are going to say beforehand Appear professional and remember to be nice to them.

After You've Sent Your Application Off...

- ★ Phone up and check they've got it (and haven't lost it yet). Sometimes they'll let you know of any minor changes they'd like you to make (which obviously improves your chances).

Got the money?!

If your application is successful the hard work can begin. First of all send a thank you letter to the funder. Building good relations will help you get more funding. Check whether you have to sign a contract with the funder. If so, read this carefully. It usually says things like you have to keep records and receipts for all the expenses and that you have to write a report at the end. Do make sure you fulfill these conditions within the set deadlines. If you don't the funder might demand the money back or at the very least never give you any again.

If there are any problems with the project or the figures in the budget change, always let the funder know and ask their advice. They are usually ok about it and sometimes can offer help. It is best if it is just one or two people dealing with the funder to avoid confusion.

Writing free style applications

The following is a basic outline of an application for a funder with no standard application form. This outline is however not exclusive - rather it is a guide. Each funder has their own guidelines, so find out what they are and then tailor your application to each individual funder. For more detailed information and help ask your local Council for Voluntary Service and check out the resources mentioned at the end.

Cover Letter

This is your best chance to catch the attention of the funder, so make it concise, snappy and exciting. The cover letter is the first document the funder will read and it is often the basis for either consideration or rejection. The cover letter should state the name of the project, the proposed start date and length of the project, the goals of the project and how it fits into the guidelines of the funder, the total budget, the type of support requested and the names of any other funders contributing to the project. Don't forget to include your organisation's name and address. A well designed letterhead helps as well.

Project Summary

Sometimes called project description, this part is optimally only one page, and never more than two. It is a concise, hard-hitting, informative page which describes in brief who, what, where, why, when, how and the expected results. It should contain the following elements:

- ★ **Needs statement:** an overview of the needs (problems) your organisation wants to address with the project/campaign. Describe briefly the overall context - this will help the reader to get a more complete picture of the scope of the problem. Use relevant facts, examples from the community or statistics to underpin your statement, but make sure all the data is correct. Identify who will benefit from you tackling these needs.
- ★ **Goals and objectives:** this section outlines what you will do to address the identified needs. This is where you set out your goals and objectives for the project. The objectives should be specific, tangible and measurable results.
- ★ **Methods and timetable:** How and when are you going to achieve the objectives of the project? Be very clear and realistic.
- ★ **Evaluation:** How will the success of the project be judged / measured? For example you could have regular evaluation meetings to monitor progress, you could count the number and types of people who participate in your events or get people to fill in questionnaires.
- ★ **Why they should fund you:** how does your proposal fit in with their funding policy? Have they supported you before? You may need to emphasise different aspects of your work for different funders, for instance some might be interested in you because you fall within their geographical area, others because the project falls within their sphere of interest.

Budget

It's possible to be too detailed and too vague with budgets. Each funder has different expectations so do ask. The budget consists of two parts: Costs and Income.

Costs: Main sections could include: staff and consultants' fees / salaries, publishing, equipment, running cost such as rent, telephone, heating, electricity and office supplies, insurance, travel, training. Don't forget the little things such as repairs on a photocopier every four months, etc. You may wish to just keep these topics without any more detail, but be sure to work everything out on another more detailed budget so that you can answer questions that may come up. Don't be afraid to ask for too much (within the published guidelines). If a funder likes a project but thinks it is too expensive they will quite often give you a percentage of what you asked for, or tell you to revise your figures. An application won't be rejected because of the budget, it will however be rejected if it is viewed as a bad investment. Do remember that you will have to keep receipts for all your spendings - many funders want copies of these at the end of a project.

Income: List all the different bits of income that you expect. Some funders fund all the costs of the project, but many expect to you find up to 50% of the money from elsewhere. This could for example come from another funder, donations or membership fees. Luckily most funders accept contributions in kind - that is stuff/time people donate to the project. So if someone lends you a van for free, you estimate how much it would have cost you to hire it and put it down as

contribution in kind. You can even put a monetary value on volunteer time, say £5 per hour per volunteer.

The budget is often the basis on which a funder decides whether you are experienced and organised enough to handle their money. So make sure that all your figures add up. Get someone else to check it over. Also the total of the costs and the total of the income have to be the same figure.

Appended information

Append any relevant supporting evidence such as: a time line and detailed work plans, your latest annual report, facts and figures supporting your case, letters of support from other organisations, an organisational chart, photographs and press cuttings. Choose these materials with care, make sure they support your application rather than undermine it! A letter of support from some organisations, and letters from political parties usually signal 'political' activities which funders often refuse to support.

Budget	
Costs	
Printing (600 leaflets at £0.10 each)	£60.00
Telephone & Internet	£15.00
Van hire	£50.00
Petrol	£30.00
Total	£155.00
Income	
Donations from benefit gig	£37.00
Benefits in kind (Van Hire)	£50.00
Funding requested from Dosh Trust	£68.00
Total	£155.00

Useful resources

South Yorkshire Funding Advice Buro has produced a comprehensive range of Funding guides. They are available for downloading on their website: <http://www.shef.ac.uk/~oip/syfab/infosht.html>

Contact your local Council for Voluntary Service (CVS) for advice on funding matters. They also have a database called **FunderFinder** which you can search for suitable funders. Check your phone book or this website to find out where your nearest CVS is: <http://www.nacvs.org.uk/cvsdir/index.shtm>

It's also worth checking your library for the following books:

Directory of Social Change publishes excellent funding guides and directories.

Writing Better Fundraising Applications, by Michael Norton and Mike Eastwood, DSC, 3rd edition, 2002, £14.95 A really useful practical step-by-step guide to getting your application letters right, with lots of worksheets and checklists.

Avoiding the Wastepaper Basket by **Tim Cook**, London Voluntary Service Council, 2nd edition, 1998, £5.50. A brilliant practical guide about applying to grant making trusts, with real life examples of common mistakes and lots of helpful tips.

Organising Local Events, by Sarah Passingham, DSC, 2nd edition, 1995, £9.95. Very useful and easy to use guides with lots of handy hints, checklists and aids to planning events from dog shows to outside concerts.

**For more briefings on grassroots activism and to find out about free workshops and training
have a look at our website: www.seedsforchange.org.uk, or contact us:**

Seeds for Change Lancaster
Tel: 0845 330 7583
lancaster@seedsforchange.org.uk

Seeds for Change Oxford
Tel: 0845 458 4776
oxford@seedsforchange.org.uk

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