

## **Community Fundraising**

Advice from Community Fundraiser Eileen Hammond's own experience from Charity Fair 2010

Community fundraising can require higher resource costs than other methods. There are usually 4 ways to do this:

- Profile: You are seeking to raise the profile of your organisation and activities locally and raise funds to support them.
- Organise events: to give something back to the local community and show how the work they have been supporting is being used etc
- Charity shops: selling donated items
- Working with volunteers.

### **Profile**

- Raise awareness – make friends and turn them into funders
- You need a unique selling point
- Be aware of local support networks; faith groups, parent and toddler groups, schools, fitness groups, walking associations etc
- Be aware of key national and local issues and piggy back onto them
- Be a speaker at local round tables groups or associations to raise your profile
- Befriend local journalists and provide them with good news stories – not cheque handovers! Use any opportunity to engage with them
- Be seen and be known locally – attend local events, leave literature in coffee shops, pubs or libraries
- Make it easy to be found – provide phone numbers, email addresses and websites in your publicity info
- Get out of the office and get out and about to know your area. What kind of event or activity would work well in one place? What would work well somewhere else within your area?
- For every 10 approaches you are likely to get 2 positive responses.
- Get support in kind – agree to speak at an event if they will host an event for you in the future, or circulate publicity to their own networks etc, or make you a company's charity of the year

### **Organise events**

- This is to give a return to local supporters

- Be reasonable about ticket prices – not too expensive and not too cheap (depends on area and target groups)
- A low key involvement can develop into a great earner – asking permission to collect donations at the races developed into a charity becoming the charity of the year where all profits from one day were given to the charity and publicity was given all year round.
- Be creative where you can. Do you have free space on your site? Could another charity or local crafts group make use of that space and increase the footfall to your premises?
- Drop unsuccessful events – if they are not working then try something else! Get new ideas from newspaper articles of other groups, sector events etc – anywhere you can.
- Have a mascot! Mascot races are popular at the moment as part of a wider event, or get a children's entertainer at an event to draw in families and attract publicity
- Get sponsorship from companies keen to develop their CSR – they may want to get involved but may not be sure how to – fancy dress days etc where all proceeds go to your organisation, and you provide a certificate of thanks in return for them to display (and to further promote yourself to their customers/anyone who sees it)

### Charity shops

- If you do not already have a charity shop, you may like to test the feasibility at local fates etc – test the water before committing to shop rent etc
- Swapshops can be successful, especially in areas with school children or students passing has been a successful venture by a charity – they keep 20% of the resale value
- Invite local charities or crafts people to use part of your shop as an exhibition space, in return for spending half a day or a day in the shop demonstrating and selling items – this limits cost of staff and ensures passionate people at front of house – be creative with your use of space and staffing methods!
- Be realistic – you may need volunteers but they need to be committed and reliable.

### Volunteers

- Get to know why they are volunteering and what they want to get out of it:
- A young mum wanting to meet more people: don't put her in the kitchen, put her in a front of house role where she can realise these aims
- Someone wanting to support the charity who may have been personally helped or have friends or family supported by you: ask to promote you at events, or be the case study of a press release on your organisation and why it should receive support
- People wanting to update their skills and develop their confidence after long term unemployment: get them meeting people, selling raffle tickets, providing customer service
- Match their aspirations!
- Be positive and recognise the contribution they make to the environment and society through volunteering their time

- Allow volunteers to increase their involvement over time. A parent of a scout invited to camping trips and experiencing the fun of the activities and aims of the movement are more likely to want to have more involvement should a member of staff leave – there is a magnetic attraction by people who have enjoyed previous activities who will want to become involved

### Learning from experience

- Be sure everyone understands the rules: if there is a raffle and committee members are asked to sell tickets, state that they are not allowed to enter themselves, if you do not want them to win – the prize may be withdrawn if this happens – it has happened before!
- Plan an exit strategy – stick to rules and don't make exceptions that might cause problems: during the famine in Ethiopia a charity requested donations to help those affected. The donations were in money, not in kind such as clothes. A fundraiser turned many offers of clothes away then gave in to one person and said yes – she was a member of a local school PTA who gave a plea to school children and parents and generated a ground floor of the fundraiser's house full of bin bags of clothes!
- If you are asked by a national body to run an event, ask whether it is appropriate for your local community, i.e. swimathons may be popular in the southwest, but the northeast may be more appropriate for sponsored hill walking etc – there is likely to be more local buy-in.
- Make use of local resources? Do local stately homes have tennis courts? If so, ask to hold a tennis tournament!
- It is not always about money – profile is just as important. A request for a fundraiser to raise £4,000 to buy sewing machines and provide training for a blind women's association in Africa was taken from a different angle: it became a local radio feature asking for unused sewing machines to send to this charity in Africa. It generated 65 machines (where 50 were needed) and also raised the £4,000 becoming the charity of the year for the local inner wheel – give fundraising an angle if you can to differentiate it from other people asking for donations – it is more eye catching
- Fundraising is not a 9 – 5 job. You will need the support and understanding of your family in being away some evenings and going to events at weekends, and potentially having donations given at all hours and stored in spare rooms...etc!
- Keep it fun – it is important to maintain a positive motivation and pass on your enthusiasm to people who could fund you.
- Challenge the status quo – change your strategy if it isn't working and generate new ideas to raise money – this will achieve new results and give you a fresh image
- Take your time and do not be discouraged – some fundraising takes time and can develop into very successful ventures over time
- Focus on what events or activities generate the most money – the speaker recommends not getting personally involved with any project that raises less than £500 – get a volunteer involved in this to develop their own skills while you concentrate on activities that generate higher income.
- If you are asking for funding from a local company, use an address of a member of staff nearest to them – this adds local impact! Using a head office address can seem too far removed. This can be a way of integrating your organisation into the local community through



a local company, rather than through flyers or events. Always think of new angles and diversify your income streams.

- You are working for the same cause as the operations team who run the organisation from day to day – stay in close contact with them.
- Remember why you are doing this – to help a local organisation helping local people and the environment – this can be a very rewarding job
- Invite funders and important/influential people to your events, send them newsletters or celebrations of success, Christmas cards etc to keep your organisation in their minds and to show how existing funds are having an impact.
- New and innovative fundraising ideas can come from outside the sector so keep your eyes open for quirky or clever methods you could utilise.
- Ideas trigger ideas – get together a group of people with different experience and background and write some ideas down together – you might come up with a few winners!
- Think about what you are already doing and how this could be made better – get together everyone involved and ask for their feedback – different people recognise different ideas and opportunities and it is a great way of making more people feel involved in supporting fundraising activities within their organisation.
- A charity should invest funds widely, so minimise the risks, but try out new ideas. Some may not be successful but some will! Learn from these (either way) and develop some great fundraising ideas.

**I hope this information is useful, and good luck with your fundraising ideas – if you would like to discuss any ideas just call 01733 317 480 5 and ask for the Heritage Regeneration Officer.**