



Pathways for Addressing Social Needs: Fundraising, Grants, and Other Sources of Revenue

Identifying the Financial Resources to Support and
Sustain the Program/Project





Overview

- The key to starting and sustaining a program/service to address community needs is having the financial resources available to support it.
- To do successful fundraising the organization needs to engage and excite people and foundations regarding the work it is doing.
 - Organizations should be able to clearly communicate why the work is important.
 - Demonstrate what is the key need the organization is addressing and how it aligns with the interest of the donor/foundation.
 - Identify what is unique about your organization and its approach to addressing the need.



Overview

➤ Consider what options exist for your organization to generate revenues to sustain its work.

- Individual and Corporate Donors

- Major Donors

- Grants

- Campaigns

- Special Collections

- One Time vs. Ongoing Donors

- Fees for Services

- In-Kind/Nonmonetary Support

- Events



Engaging Donors in the Work

- In order to be successful with your fundraising efforts, you must connect with donors and engage their interests in your program/project.
 - How does your program/project connect with what the donor is passionate about or interested in?
- Show how your program/project addresses a specific need in the community.
 - Researchers at Yale discovered that when people see how a nonprofit's work can contribute to solving an issue, they are more likely to engage with or donate to the organization.¹
- Provide data (e.g. from a community needs assessment and other sources) to back-up your request for support.
- Connect at the emotional level by sharing stories about how people will benefit from your program.
- Discuss how your organization is uniquely positioned to address the need.
- Try to meet with donors in-person and offer options on the levels of support they can provide.



Key Steps for Successful Fundraising

- Develop realistic budgets, projections, and fundraising goals.
 - Be clear on how much your organization will need to keep the program/project operating.
- Develop a good strategic plan for the project.
 - Some foundations require the organization to submit a copy of their strategic plan to be considered for funding.
- Use the governing board to help make connections and open doors.
- Take advantage of all opportunities to network.
- Look at possible collaborations with key partners.
 - Funding agencies increasingly prioritize initiatives demonstrating collective impact, making collaborative efforts a key element of successful proposals.²
- Build relationships in the community.



Building a Donor Base

- Donors can be individuals, families/groups, organizations, and corporations.
- Donors might be one time or sustaining (ongoing supporters).
- Donors may start with small gifts but over time increase their level of support to become major donors.
- Keep donors engaged in the work the organization is doing.
- Maintain an updated database of your donors.
 - Key information to track includes name of the donor, contact information, amount given and their history of giving, area(s) of interest to support, potential giving capability, and dates contact has been made with the individual/organization.



Annual Appeals

- There are key factors to consider in conducting an annual appeal to your donors seeking their financial support.
 - Format of the appeal (e.g. direct mail, phone, online)
 - Duration of the annual campaign (e.g. few weeks, month, several months, etc.)
 - Set a dollar goal for the campaign and keep people updated
 - Be clear on the purpose/cause for the appeal
 - Monitor the results
 - Evaluate the annual appeal's successes/misses at the end
- Annual appeals offer a good opportunity to build a sustaining donor base (e.g. repeat donors).
- Consider the timing of when you will initiate the appeal and look at past results from previous activities to assess the best time.



Major Donors

- Major donors usually happen when an organization builds a relationship with individuals who support the work over time.
 - Major donors may have started with smaller gifts to the organization.
- It is important to keep major donors engaged in the work of the organization.
- What a major gift looks like for an organization will likely depend on a variety of factors, such as the company's size, fundraising history, and average donation amount.³
- Major donors serve as champions for the organization with other donors.
- Major donors might be interested in establishing an endowment for a program or supporting a major fundraising campaign.



Grants

- Grant sources include private foundations, institutional giving, and governmental agencies.
- A key question to answer before applying for a grant is does the organization accept unsolicited requests for funds?
- Some organizations require a letter of intent before the organization is invited to submit a full grant proposal.
- Provide all of the information requested in the grant guidelines.
- Before writing the proposal, does the organization have the skills to administer the grant if it is approved?
- Tell a good story in your grant proposal and how your organization is unique.
- Be realistic with the grant budget and deliverables (e.g. people served).
- Try to speak with a program officer at the organization if you have questions regarding the grant proposal or if your program is a fit with their interests.



Special Campaigns and Endowments

- Special fundraising campaigns are targeted to raising money for specific programs or projects (e.g. building/remodel, new program, major equipment, etc.)
- Be clear in rolling out the campaign in terms of how much you need to raise and how people can get involved.
- Provide updates on the progress of the campaign to the donors and broader community.
- Endowments are funds that an organization sets aside in investments where they accrue value to ensure the long-term financial stability of an organization or program.⁴
 - Endowments might be restricted for a specific purpose/program or unrestricted to help support operations or other organizational needs.
 - The proceeds from the core investment can be used by the organization.



Special Collections

- Faith-based organizations (FBO) have a readily accessible group of individuals who are interested in the work the FBO is involved in.
- FBOs may consider organizing an annual collection day or doing special collections on a regular basis connected with worship events.
- FBO members can be engaged in the work of the program/project by:
 - Providing updates in the newsletter
 - Inviting the FBO community to events
 - Providing opportunities to volunteer
 - Offering in-kind donation opportunities
 - Providing testimonials and stories from those people involved with the program



One Time Versus Ongoing Donors

- Financial support for an organization might be from individuals or organizations who donate just one time.
 - These donors might have an interest in a particular project/program or want to support multiple organizations in the community.
 - With proper outreach and engagement, one-time donors could be converted to ongoing donors for the organization.
- Ongoing/sustaining donors provide continuous financial support for the organization and its program.
 - These donors may contribute on a regular basis (e.g. monthly), participate in annual giving campaigns, or give to endowments and capital campaigns.



Fees for Services

- Fees for services provide ongoing sources of revenue to the organization.
- As part of the organization doing business, are there products or services that it can sell to generate revenue?
 - Some examples include consultant fees, hosting workshops/conferences that charge registration fees, providing learning resources, and charging for certain services/products the organization produces.
- In considering generating revenues from fees and programs, do people find value in what the organization has to offer?
- Offering the organization's products/services to help raise revenue may help to raise awareness of the organization.



In-Kind Support

- In-Kind support usually does not involve direct cash donations but still represents a financial benefit to the organization.
- In-Kind support may include:
 - Professional expertise (e.g. legal advice, marketing support, accounting services, fundraising advice, etc.)
 - Products (e.g. food, clothing, materials, etc.)
 - Printing/Graphics
 - Volunteer Help
 - Space
 - Equipment/Furniture
 - Items for Fundraising
- Organizations should acknowledge both financial and in-kind support.
 - Sending an acknowledgment letter, at the very least, is extremely critical to establishing long-term relationships with donors and improving brand image.⁵
- Assess the monetary value of the in-kind support.



Fundraising Events

- Estimate the expense and time involved to the organization to host the event versus the revenue to be generated from it.
- The key to having a successful fundraising event is by encouraging engagement while still keeping it fun.⁶
- Assess the organization's readiness to host an event.
 - Resources
 - Staff/Volunteers to support the event
 - Base of Supporters
- Some examples of fundraising events include:
 - Lunches
 - Receptions
 - Fairs/Festivals
 - Concerts
 - Fan Oriented Events
 - Dinners
 - Themed Events
 - Auctions
 - Sporting Events
 - Art Shows
- Events can help recruit and build a future donor base.
- Events must be well executed to reflect well on the organization.



Conclusion

- Organizations have options when trying to raise funds to support its programs, projects, and services.
- The financial needs should be accurately assessed and which fundraising approach is the best fit for the organization.
- It is important to build and maintain good relationships with the donors.
- Donors can be individuals, groups, organizations, foundations, and the government.
- Keep donors engaged in the work the organization does.
- Implement good networking skills to build your donor base.
- Use current supporters/donors to be a champion in the community for the work the organization does.



Online Resources

Online Resources to Assist With Fundraising

- <https://fundly.com/>
- <https://www.nonprofitready.org/>
- <https://www.qgiv.com/blog/free-nonprofit-resources/>
- <https://www.councilofnonprofits.org/running-nonprofit/fundraising-and-resource-development>
- https://www.fra.org/fra/Web/FRA_Docs/Over-50-Fundraising-Event-Ideas.pdf

Reference Notes

¹ Yale Center for Customer Insights. “Understanding Donor Behavior: Insights for Increasing Engagement and Charitable Giving.” <https://som.yale.edu>, August 14, 2024. <https://som.yale.edu/story/2024/understanding-donor-behavior-insights-increasing-engagement-and-charitable-giving> (accessed 09/07/2025).

²Funds for NGOs. “Building Partnerships and Collaboration in Grant Proposals.” www.fundsforngos.org, September 2025. <https://www.fundsforngos.org/how-to-write-a-proposal/building-partnerships-and-collaboration-in-grant-proposals/> (accessed 09/05/2025).

³DonorSearch Team. “Major Gifts: A Guide to Securing Large Donations.” www.donorsearch.net, November 10, 2022. <https://www.donorsearch.net/resources/major-gifts-guide/> (accessed 09/08/2025).

⁴Charity Navigator. “What is Endowment and Why Should Donors Support It?” www.charitynavigator.org, 2025. <https://www.charitynavigator.org/donor-basics/giving-101/what-is-endowment/>. (accessed 09/07/2025).

⁵Springly. “How to Write the Ultimate In-Kind Donation Letter.” www.springly.org. <https://www.springly.org/en-us/blog/how-to-write-in-kind-donation-letter/>. (accessed 09/06/2025).

⁶Mobile Cause. “Fundraising Event Ideas for Nonprofits.” www.fra.org. 2025. https://www.fra.org/fra/Web/FRA_Docs/Over-50-Fundraising-Event-Ideas.pdf. (accessed 09/10/2025).