

## Funding the LIVE Campaign

Why include funding in a Toolkit about community engagement? The truth is that many of us who talk deeply and passionately about end-of-life issues have a hard time talking about money. We scrimp by on the proverbial shoestring, doing remarkable programming with little or no budget. However, we have a sense that we are making a fraction of the impact we could make if only we had the resources.

**The good news is that successful fundraising is strikingly similar to successful community engagement.** Both community engagement and fundraising invite people to get involved, ask people to take action, and have the potential to create meaningful change. With a clear vision for improving end-of-life care in your community, a primer on fundraising essentials and a thoughtful plan, you can transfer your outreach and engagement skills to secure all the resources you need to fund your campaign.

This section of the Toolkit is designed to help you explore the fundraising landscape, develop fundraising skills, and formulate a sustainable funding plan. It includes 7 guideposts to fundraising success, 7 strategies for engaging donors, 2 templates for funding your efforts, and a collection of resources for additional learning. By the end of this section of the Toolkit, you will have the beginnings of a successful fundraising plan for your LIVE campaign.

### **Seven Guideposts to Fundraising Success**

People new to the fundraising world often describe it as mysterious, complicated, or unknown. In reality, the fundraising landscape is refreshingly familiar and understandable for those of us who focus on finding meaning in life, creating positive change, and sustaining relationships. Here are 7 familiar guideposts that point the way to successful fundraising:

**1. Tap into your Strengths:** The single most important quality for any fundraiser is a true heart for the cause. Ask yourself: Do I care deeply about helping people in my community cope with serious illness, end of life, and grief? Am I passionate about improving the resources and support available in my community when it comes to pain management, caregiving, health care choices, or accessing hospice care? Do I dream of a day when people in my community are fully engaged in helping others LIVE fully?

If your answer to one or more of these questions is “yes”, then you have the most significant quality a fundraiser needs. Know yourself, your story, your motivations, and your commitments. Keep the best of your passion for better end-of-life care at the core of your fundraising.

**2. Assess your Potential Impact:** The LIVE Toolkit helps you do all the preparation you need to assess your potential impact. By creating a vision for community engagement through partnerships, presentations, events, services, marketing

campaigns, media campaigns, and program evaluations, you build a clear picture of the change you plan to create.

Define the change in terms of the impact you will have in the lives of individuals, families, organizations, and the community. Identify the resources you need to create this change. Do not underestimate your costs. Then link your plans and potential impact with your costs. This gives you a clear picture of the costs involved and helps you look ahead to fundraising goals.

**3. Understand the Nature of Giving:** As you prepare to ask others to support your efforts, it's important to understand the nature of giving yourself. Ask yourself: What is the most meaningful contribution I have made to any group or organization? Who was involved? How did it happen? What made it so meaningful?

Giving a significant gift to a cause that is important to you feels like an investment. It is an opportunity to accomplish something you do not have the time or expertise to accomplish yourself. Ultimately, it feels good. As you prepare to ask for money and resources, remember that you are not begging or bugging people; you are inviting them to invest in something meaningful. You offer them the opportunity to be connected with something of value.

**4. Capitalize on Your Relationships:** Fundraising grows out of your relationships with individuals, organizations, and foundations. First and foremost, people give to people they know and trust for causes they believe in. Your best individual prospects are people who have a direct connection to your work: coalition members, staff, and volunteers. Your next best individual prospects are the family, friends, and people connected to your core group of people. Anyone who has attended your programs, used your services, or contacted you for information is also a strong prospect. Your best organizational prospects are your coalition partners. The next best organizational prospects are "peer" organizations in the community – organizations with similar goals or functions. The best foundation prospects are grantors whose interests align with your intention for end-of-life community engagement and change, including state health foundations or corporate sponsors.

Create the most comprehensive and complete database of individuals, organizations, and foundations related to your community engagement efforts that you can. If you don't have one, start one now! Ask coalition members and other partners to provide contacts for your list. Include your own personal and professional contacts in your database. Collect rosters of attendees at every event and add them to your database. By mapping out your coalition's relationships you will start to see potential funding relationships emerge.

**5. Tell your Stories:** Facts, figures, strategies, and plans are all important in making your case. However, stories are primary. While statistics and plans inform people, stories move people. People want to know that their gift changes peoples' lives. Stories help people connect with the impact you are making and inspire people to give. Your stories can contribute to three goals: 1) inspire your community to take action, 2) enhance the evaluation of your programs and 3) connect with prospective donors.

Consider which stories illustrate the impact you are striving to create in the community. Remember to include stories about your impact on both individuals and on organizations. Stories can illustrate community engagement and inspire change!

**6. Ask for Support:** The number one reason individuals and organizations give money is because someone asked. This does not mean that if you ask, your prospective donors will automatically say “yes;” “no” is also a perfectly acceptable and honorable answer. However, to hear the word “yes,” you must make what’s called “the ask.”

The ‘ask’ is seldom your starting place. It usually comes as an extension of your relationship and your conversation. The best ask is one where the person or organization you are asking has an understanding of your cause, a strong sense of your passion and commitment, a clear picture of why you need support, and a definite ask. While there are different strategies and ways to make the ask, the ask itself is essential.

**7. Develop your Strategy:** Just as a good community engagement plan relies on a coordinated plan, a good fundraising plan also requires thoughtful coordination. Individuals, organizations, and foundations can each provide different types of support. Consider the best sources for each need and plan accordingly. The 7 strategies for approaching prospective donors outlined in the next section will help you think through different types of funding.

Set goals for securing funding and resources. Keep in mind that the more diverse your funding streams, the more sustainable your funding. Even if you secure a large grant to underwrite your work, use your time with that grant to develop other funding streams. When that grant ends, you will be glad you did!

Finally, if you are not a free-standing organization, be sure you have a fiscal agent who will handle funds for you. Think carefully about whose name people will put on the check! Establish clear systems for receiving funds, thanking donors, and tracking your results. Remember that a donation is not the end point in your relationship; the donation is a guidepost itself, a sign of a deepening relationship. A donation is an ongoing investment in your work!

## **Strategies for Engaging Donors**

### **Strategies for Organizations**

Organizations can provide various types of resources for your community engagement work: in-kind support, financial support, and event underwriting. Ideally, any given organization will provide all three during the course of a year. However, organizational contributors, like individual contributors, often start in one place and may grow in support as your relationship with them grows.

Begin by listening carefully for what organizations have to offer. They may not be able to make a financial contribution this year but they may be able to provide in-kind support. In that case, discuss the in-kind support and find out if financial support might

be possible during the following year. Explore what it would take to get included in next year's budget or discretionary spending and follow up as they suggest.

Partners in your community engagement campaign are the most natural organizations to approach first. They are the most likely to say "yes." Their support can provide a much-needed boost and confidence builder. Partner organizations can also open other doors on your behalf with other organizations. Ask the representative to approach their colleagues in similar organizations with an 'ask,' saying in effect: "We are supporting the LIVE campaign and ask you to support the campaign too."

In working with organizations, you will need to make your case for support. Making this case may include not only a face-to-face meeting with your contact but also preparing a written proposal that describes your request for "the powers that be." The written request may move up the chain of command with a recommendation from your contact.

Should you need a written proposal, use the organizational template in this toolkit as a starting place to tell your story, make your ask, and explain the benefits to the donor organization. You may want to have a draft ready to go before your meeting with your contact and customize it based on the meeting. Get the written proposal to your contact as soon after your meeting as possible.

Each of the three following organizational strategies has its own benefits and limitations. Keep all three in mind as you begin to form your fundraising plan with organizations.

### **1. In-Kind Donations**

In-kind donations can provide your LIVE campaign with benefits like goods, services, and space without giving you money directly. In-kind donations may range from providing meeting space or food for an event to designing and printing materials to offering on-going use of an office space. These donations can help you conserve your funds for other costs that cannot be covered in-kind.

Whenever you ask for an in-kind donation, remember that ultimately it is a donation. Think strategically about when you ask and how often you ask. Thank your donor promptly and follow through on any donor recognition you promise. Track the value of your in-kind support. Remember that the value of in-kind donations can vary dramatically, depending on the cost you would incur to pay for something comparable.

Finally, remember that sometimes an organization cannot provide the donation you request in-kind but might be able to offer it at a discount or at cost. Remain open to the options and accept if it seems to be a good fit.

### **2. Event Underwriting**

Underwriting educational and engagement events may be the next most natural way to develop organization support. Many corporations and institutions have marketing, public relations, or education budgets that will give you money to help support educational efforts. In designing events, consider all the costs attached. Think about underwriting not only the clear costs of publicity, speakers, materials, refreshments, space and so on but also the time it takes to create, organize, and promote the event.

In approaching organizations for event underwriting, it is typical to create a sponsor packet. You may use the organizational template found in this Toolkit as a foundation for creating this packet. Also ask a development professional to show you a sample sponsor packet if you are not familiar with them.

Design your sponsorship opportunities carefully. Will you develop sponsor levels with different benefits at each level? Will you have different types of sponsors: a sponsor for the well-known speaker, a reception sponsor, book sponsors, table sponsors, and/or exhibitors? Whatever approach you use, be sure each sponsor is thoughtfully recognized, publicized, and thanked. Event sponsors are also your donors.

Keep in mind that events can generate money, depending on your approach. Some organizations fully fund events with corporate sponsors upfront and use any event fees from participants as income to fund other engagement efforts. Event sponsorship can be a natural starting place for many organizational donors.

### **3. Financial Contributions from Organizations**

Some organizations may provide financial contributions to help support your community engagement work, depending on the type of organization and its alignment with your mission. For example, several hospices working together as part of an area-wide end-of-life care coalition may match each other's annual donation to the coalition as a sign of their shared commitment and message. (Have you asked?) Other types of organizations may do the same. Faith communities involved in your coalition may contribute from their community outreach funds. Non-profit retirement communities may contribute from their community responsibility funds. Through conversations with representatives of all types of organizations, you will learn what is possible. As with individual major donors, these donations develop in relationship over time.

#### **Strategies for Individuals**

While organizational giving is an important income stream for your fundraising plan, individual giving holds tremendous potential for underwriting your community engagement. According to The Independent Sector, a group that studies trends in giving and volunteering, corporations give 5.8% of charitable contributions in the U.S. each year and foundations give 10.4%. Individual donors provide 75.6% of charitable contributions annually. More than 80% of these individual contributions come from families with an annual income of less than \$60,000. Studies show that 7 out of every 10 Americans give to one or more charitable causes every year. Based on the current corporate and foundation landscape, any strategy that overlooks individual giving may not be sustainable.

While there are a number of strategies for developing income from individuals, the most accessible strategies for your community engagement campaign are direct mail, face-to-face requests, and program fees. As with the organizational strategies above, one may lead to the next. A person who attends a program may decide to make a donation after experiencing your engagement first hand and receiving a direct mail request. Later, you

may approach them for a gift in person. This individual then becomes a major donor. As with all fundraising, the relationship you build with this person becomes the key.

Direct mail may be the easiest way to offer all of your constituents the opportunity to become donors. For this reason, it is listed first and explained in some detail. It is also a great opportunity for you to hone your skills at creating the ask. Direct mail can help you build confidence in working with donors as you prepare for face-to-face meetings. Finally, program fees are an often overlooked way to build financial support in addition to individual support. Consider adding them to the mix.

Other areas that could be explored include product sales, special events, capital campaigns and bequests. All of these require significant planning and/or investment. While they can be fruitful, they may not be your strongest starting place.

Consider all three of the following strategies as important aspects of your fundraising plan:

### **1. Direct Mail**

Direct mail allows you to tell your story to hundreds or thousands of people and ask for their financial support. Your goal is to connect with recipients in a meaningful way and move them to send money to support your good work. Done effectively, direct mail is a significant fundraising strategy that can put your group on the road to great donor relationships!

The direct mail tips and template included in this Toolkit are designed primarily use with people already connected with your engagement campaign in some way. See Guidepost 4 above (Capitalize on your Relationships) for ideas on creating an effective mailing list. People connected with you in some way will produce the highest return rate, varying anywhere from 5% to 50%, depending on the individual's connection. Direct mail to this group will also help you identify willing donors.

If you decide to rent or purchase mailing lists for direct mail, your letter will need more fine-tuned design. With rented lists, you can expect a return rate of 1% to 3%. If you chose this strategy, be sure to consult a fund development professional for advise on selecting lists and writing the appeal.

Direct mail is designed to inspire your recipient to send you a donation. Here are some tips to help your direct mail stand out:

- **Entice recipients to open your mail:** Your recipients receive your piece of mail along with dozens of other unknown pieces of mail. In our world of automated, generic mail, the more personal your letter appears, the better chance you have that your recipient will open it.
- **Connect recipients with your message:** Your letter must be well-written and well-designed. You must connect with them quickly and personally so that they understand the impact of your work.

- **Open with emotion, something moving that will draw people in.** It may be a story about a person or family's life you helped change. It may be a specific challenge you see in your community.
- **Close with something short, direct, and effective.** The closing is your opportunity to make the 'ask.' You must ask for their financial support in a clear and compelling way. Tell them what their donation will fund.
- **Finish with a postscript that zings.** It may suggest some action, tell a story, or make a final appeal.

Use the rest of your letter to describe what you have accomplished, the impact you are making in your community, and your plans for the future. Offer a picture of how your LIVE campaign will have an impact on people's lives.

**A Special Note:** Perhaps the most controversial question for community groups concerns the length of the letter. Direct mail research shows that recipients actually prefer a four to six page letter. Most recipients read only the first paragraph, the closing, and the postscript. They then may pick and choose what they read after that. Your longer letter lets them know you have something significant to say, whether they read all of it or not.

- **Provide the tools they need:** If they decide to give you a gift, your prospective donor will check to see how easy you made that process for them. Along with the letter, include a self-addressed reply envelope. Donation information may be printed on the envelope or on a separate sheet for them to enclose. The envelope will dramatically increase your response rate.

Through direct mail, you create a whole new group of supporters for your community engagement campaign. You also create a pool of donors whom you can later approach face to face if you choose.

## **2. Major Donor Gifts**

Meeting face to face with donors to ask for a major gift is perhaps the single most significant fundraising strategy you can adopt. While it may seem daunting at first, it is the best way to convey your passion, tell your stories, respond to questions, and sense how the individual's interests fit with your community impact. Face-to-face meetings allow you to customize your approach to the individual. Most importantly, face-to-face meetings allow you to ask questions and listen to your donor's ideas about effective community engagement and impact.

Many people are frightened by the thought of a face-to-face meeting with a prospective donor. For this reason, it's helpful to work with a partner, a fellow leadership volunteer or staff person. It's also helpful to practice your approach in advance with other fundraising volunteers to build your confidence. Remember, before you ask anyone else for a gift, it's crucial for you to make a meaningful gift yourself!

Face-to-face meetings begin with a letter thanking the individual for support and letting them know you will call to set up an appointment. Next, you make a phone call to set

up a time together. Finally, you meet face to face. For every 10 letters you send out, you may get three meetings. However, these three meetings are your opportunity to request significant funding for your important community engagement work.

There are a number of excellent books and articles that explore all the ins and outs of asking for major gifts. Several are included in the resource guide. Perhaps the two best suited for people new to major donor requests are Jerry Panas' book Asking and Andy Robinson's book Big Gifts for Small Groups. Both books will walk you through the process eloquently.

### **3. Program Fees**

Program fees for participants offer another way to bring in funding for your community engagement. Do not overlook this strategy in developing your funding plan. Program fees, especially those collected in advance, commit participants to your event. They raise expectations and communicate value. In addition, they generate much needed income to help underwrite community outreach efforts.

To ensure equal access and affordability for events with fees, you can create scholarship fund. You can ask an organization to underwrite any number of partial or full community scholarships and give the scholarships away to anyone who asks. The majority of participants will still pay. For people who cannot afford the cost, provide scholarships with no questions asked. Organizations will have another opportunity to support your work. You will generate more income to support your community engagement. Everybody wins!

## **Strategies for Foundations**

### **1. Grants**

Foundations make meaningful contributions to community engagement work. However, unless you are working with a unique population or creating a demonstration project, it is wise to focus your grant writing efforts on local and regional foundations. The key again is creating relationships. Get to know foundation officers and leaders. Meet with them and explore their priorities just as you meet with corporate leaders and major donors. Look for funders that support capacity building and community change. In addition, many communities have community foundations where individuals direct their giving through donor-directed funds. These funds can be a great source of support.

Remember that no grant is permanent. Funders change projects and priorities. If you secure a grant to support your work, begin on Day One building other means of support for the future.

## **Your Fundraising Plan and Sustainability**

With the Seven Guideposts for Fundraising Success and the Strategies for Engaging Donors, you have the tools to create a funding plan. At its best, this plan will honor your relationships with individuals, organizations, and foundations. It will offer donors

participation and investment. It will tap into diverse funding streams. It will grow and develop over time as your community engagement efforts grow and develop.

Remember that your fundraising plan fits along with all of your planning for the LIVE campaign. It becomes an extension of your visioning, program planning, marketing, and evaluating. Attach costs to everything. Identify the best way to cover those costs. Set goals for each type of funding and tie those goals to the calendar the same way you would tie event planning tasks to a calendar.

Most importantly, do not take funding on all by yourself. Build a team of partners and share the commitment to fund this work. Begin your funding relationships with the people already around the table and grow from there!

As you look at sustaining your community engagement efforts, come to understand funding as a significant community engagement strategy in and of itself. In the process you will build not only financial support for your work; you will build meaningful relationships and community investment by individuals, organizations, and foundations that will sustain your efforts for years to come.

**See Section VI in Toolkit for templates of sample letters to prospective donors.**

### **Resources for Further Learning**

**Asking: A 59-Minute Guide to Everything Board Members, Volunteers, and Staff Must Know to Secure the Gift**, by Jerold Panas. Emerson & Church Publishers, P.O. Box 338, Medfield, MA 02052. 2002.

**Big Gifts for Small Groups: A Board Member's 1-Hour Guide to Securing Gifts of \$500 to \$5000**, by Andy Robinson. Emerson & Church Publishers, P.O. Box 338, Medfield, MA 02052. 2004.

**The Chronicle of Philanthropy**, 1255 23<sup>rd</sup> Street, NW, Suite 700, Washington, DC 20037 or call 202/466-1000. [www.philanthropy.com](http://www.philanthropy.com).

**The Foundation Center**, 79 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10003-3076 or call 212/620-4230. [www.fdncenter.org](http://www.fdncenter.org).

**Fundraising for Social Change**, by Kim Klein. Chardon Press, 3781 Broadway, Oakland, California 94611, 2001. [www.chardonpress.com](http://www.chardonpress.com)

**The Grassroots Fundraising Book**, by Joan Flanagan. Contemporary Books, 180 North Michigan Avenue, Chicago, IL 60601. Revised, 1992.

**Grassroots Fundraising Journal**. Grassroots Fundraising Journal, 3781 Broadway, Oakland, California 94611 [www.chardonpress.com](http://www.chardonpress.com)

**Grassroots Grants: An Activist's Guide to Grantseeking**, by Andy Robinson. Jossey-Bass, 989 Market Street, San Francisco, CA 94103-1741, 2004. [www.josseybass.com](http://www.josseybass.com)

**How to Produce Fabulous Fundraising Events: Reap Remarkable Returns with Minimal Effort**, by Betty Stallings and Donna McMillion. Building Better Skills, 1717 Courtney Ave., Suite 201, Pleasanton, CA 94588, 1999.

**Raise More Money: The Best of the Grassroots Fundraising Journal**, Kim Klein and Stephanie Roth, ed. Jossey-Bass, 989 Market Street, San Francisco, CA 94103-1741, 2004. [www.josseybass.com](http://www.josseybass.com)

**Raising More Money: A Step-by-Step Guide to Building Lifelong Donors**, by Terry Axelrod. Raising More Money Publications, 1414 Dexter Avenue North, Suite 200, Seattle, WA 98109 or call 888/322-9357. Revised, 2002.

**Secrets of Successful Fundraising: The Best from the Non-Profit Pros**, by Carol Weisman, ed. F.E. Robbins & Sons Press, Board Builders, 48 Granada Way, St. Louis, MO 63124 or call 888/500-1777, 2000. [www.carolweisman.com](http://www.carolweisman.com)

**Selling Social Change (Without Selling Out)**, by Andy Robinson. Jossey-Bass, 989 Market Street, San Francisco, CA 94103-1741, 2002. [www.josseybass.com](http://www.josseybass.com)

*The Funding Section of the Toolkit was written by James L. Brooks, M.Div. Executive Director, Project Compassion, Chapel Hill, NC.*