

# How to fundraise in tough times

Fundraising is an important core income stream for all non-profit and community based organisations, especially in times of recession or financial constraint.

This guide gives you information and advice on what to do, and the best way to achieve your aims and objectives.

## Deciding which part of your business is expendable

The impact of recession is not usually felt by an individual until 18 months after the initial blow when confidence in the economy is at a low and when everyone's belt will need to be tightened. It is therefore beneficial to look at how these changes will affect your organisation in terms of lost income and where, in turn, you may need to make cuts and savings in order to survive. It is imperative that you continue to support your CORE costs, and keep these supported continually. Discuss any other costs strategically, to see if they can be reduced or

## You need a good fundraising strategy or plan

Having a simple fundraising strategy or plan will help, as it will provide focus and direction in your fundraising activities. The strategy should consist of a mixed portfolio, including income from funders, events, and donations from within the community or business. If you need help compiling a simple fundraising plan, then please contact Support Cambridgeshire at [info@supportcambridgeshire.org.uk](mailto:info@supportcambridgeshire.org.uk).

## Developing good relationships is vital

Income is unreliable. Funds come and go and you cannot rely on one consistent source of funding year on year.

However, a few choice decisions now about how to continue to network with existing and potential new donors will enable your organisation to gain its much needed funds.

Keep past and existing donors informed of what you are doing and how successful you are at doing it. Keep information current and simple., Send out regular newsletters or communications about your achievements. Do as much as you can with the resources you have.

Funders may reject you, but it is more likely that they will assist you when they can if they believe that your organisation is still fully active.

It is therefore also extremely important that when it comes to deciding what items need to be cut from the budget, advertising, marketing and publicity should not be included amongst them. You need to maintain visibility within the sector, not only by addressing past and existing donors, but also prospective donors as well.

## Where to look for funders

Do your homework. This is the time to find out exactly where you can go to find those individuals and organisations that are still able to give donations and grants.

- Corporate donations are not quite as freely available as they used to be. However, if you can prove to a corporation that your organisation's CORE business directly responds to the work that the corporation

wants to encourage as part of their business plan, then you are more likely to achieve the funding you need.

- Trusts are not likely to approve grants to the level they once did. That being said, some Trusts are more likely to support less popular or local causes. Support Cambridgeshire utilises Grant – Finder, a system which matches organisational need to potential funders. Please contact us if you want to take advantage of this service.
- Regular donations from individuals are likely to decrease unless you are consistently within the public eye, or work in a cause that donors will readily support because they or loved ones have needed to use your services. However do what you can in your community and locality. The beauty of raising funds is that you never know who might meet or speak to, and where talk might lead: Never give up hope.

## How about raising your own funds

Trading is the obvious route but is a process which is costly and time-consuming. What you wish to sell depends largely upon how much it will cost (particularly if you cannot buy in bulk). You will also need to store products, and provide a logistics chain around packaging and delivery. There may be ways that you can 'affiliate sell' products on behalf of other organisations, but make sure it fits within your organisation's core remit.

But goods are not the only things that can be sold. Services can be also. If you have particular expertise that you can use to train people, or help them build their own business, then you have an asset that you can sell. But think very carefully about how you are going to advertise and market this. Promote the organisation and not yourself.

Event fundraising has always been a good source of income but be warned, lavish show-stoppers are becoming unfashionable. However, if an organisation wants to be noticed there is no reason why it shouldn't consider including itself as part of an event run by an umbrella organisation such as ACEVO or NCVO where it can promote awareness for the organisation rather than as a quick fix to bring in much needed funds.

Finally, there is community fundraising. Considerable interest always surrounds local causes and concerns. Donors may be thin on the ground but that doesn't mean you can't get help in other ways. Loyal volunteers will go some way to help encourage donations from others. You can quickly add your volunteering vacancies at [www.do-it.org](http://www.do-it.org), although there is an annual premium and initial set up fee to use their software. There are also other organisations where you may be able to advertise vacancies for free including the KnowHow website [www.knowhownonprofit.org](http://www.knowhownonprofit.org).

## And lastly

- Fundraising is not about rational thinking: There are no hard and fast rules, and every opportunity should be researched if not always followed through to completion.
- Delay major capital investments, but do not stop planning them.
- Protect reliable income streams whilst withdrawing from those that are no longer viable.
- Plan for the future: Always.
- Never be embarrassed to ask for money or other forms of donation. You are a community based organisation and as such, this will be expected.
- Remain positive.