

Community Fundraising



Community Fundraising is a great way to raise income, awareness of your cause, attract new supporters and involve the wider community. But it can also be resource intensive, when compared to other types of fundraising. Therefore, in order to get the best results, the following suggestions may help.

Set clear and realistic objectives

Be very specific about your goals for your community and events programme and how you will measure this. If generating income is the sole purpose, then make sure all involved are aware of that. If it is about increasing awareness of the cause, ensure that you have a mechanism for measuring success. The most important aspect is to be honest about what you want to get from your community and events programme and assess whether your current activities are the best way to achieve your objective.

Put together a simple marketing/promotions plan

Identify your target audience and make sure your marketing and promotions are appropriate to that audience. Social media is a great and simple way to communicate your event and create a real buzz. But if your audience doesn't use social media it won't work for you. Just "getting your message out there" isn't enough. If your purpose is not clear at the beginning you may get your message wrong. For example, a sponsored music marathon or music festival will have a very different marketing plan and materials compared to a black tie gala dinner. Throughout all of this, don't undervalue the importance of explaining the benefits of the end result, rather than just talking about the work which needs to be funded.

Be creative with your resources

Identify specific roles for your fundraisers and volunteers. The formation of an organising committee for a major event reduces need for a paid resource which in turn pushes up the net return. Also identify other key resources that you need in order to make your event a success, and shop around for the best value. Is there anything on your list that might be donated as a gift in kind? Think about what you can offer in return, for example free tickets, free marketing or logo placement (something which is often attractive to corporate sponsors).

Thank all supporters, sponsors, donors and volunteers

Stewardship is vital to maximising the impact of your event/activity. If you have ever organised an event where people gave support and you didn't thank them, or you had a gift from someone and didn't follow up afterwards to continue the engagement, then you are guilty of having missed huge opportunities! Research shows 87% of donors would give again on the back of good stewardship. Make a list of all those who have been involved, and find an appropriate way to thank and recognise every one of them.

Evaluate, Review and Debrief

This is a vital step that many charity organisations and fundraisers ignore, but it is a hugely important step. Review the success of each and every event or initiative you undertake against your planned objectives. Sometimes vital lessons can be learned which will inform future fundraising activities, for example, “how could you improve it next time” or “what would have made it even better”. A debrief with all staff, including fundraisers, volunteers and project implementers should take place as soon as possible after the event to capture key success factors and learning points. This should be recorded so it can be easily found for when the next planning cycle begins.

Advertising

Taking the traditional form of posters, billboards, radio and television announcements, advertising is a notice designed to attract the attention of the public. When done well and used alongside other marketing activities, it can be a successful fundraising tool. The key to successful marketing is to keep your messaging simple and memorable. Online advertising can also be used in place of this as a more cost-effective alternative.

Website

If your church has a website this can be used to very good effect, not just for advertising but also for the task of fundraising itself. Your website is a window into your organisation – setting out what you do, how you do it and the impact you achieve. For many charities, their website is a vital tool in securing online donations. However, if your church doesn't already have a built-in online donation portal on your website, there are many free tools available, including CAF Donate. Your church's website should allow donors to make one-off donations and provide the options to set up regular payments through Direct Debits, with a clear donate button visible on your webpage.

Crowdfunding

This refers to the practice of using the internet to solicit funds for goods or a service that may or may not yet exist, with the understanding being the donor is funding its development. This has a lot in common with traditional charity sponsorship, but the key difference is that the organisation raising money must set a target amount of funds it wants to achieve to deliver its project. As a general rule, crowdfunding is culturally much more oriented towards individual projects such as repairing a building or upgrading facilities rather than for funding core costs.

Social Media

Social media is an effective resource, which if used strategically, can help you to reach your target audiences to achieve your fundraising campaign objectives. As Social Media requires time, energy and investment to deliver, take into account which platform would help you reach your target audience and best achieve your campaign objectives.

Gift Aid

For certain community fundraising events such as sponsored activities, it is possible for donations to be made using the Gift Aid scheme. The scheme is for donations by individuals who pay UK tax. If donations are given in this way, your church/parish can claim an additional 25% from the HMRC for every pound donated. For example, if a taxpayer donates £100, the church will actually receive in total £125. So this can be a very

simple and effective way of boosting income generation for minimal effort expended, and at no extra cost to the donor.

Top Tips for Fundraising Events

- Choose events which you are likely to enjoy and that people will want to attend or take part in.
- Find suitable venues for such events. If the church hall is not available, consider someone's home, a local hotel conference room or even the great outdoors!
- Choose carefully the date on which special events will take place taking into consideration holidays and other regional events which might be happening on the same day.
- Make sure any planned event is both legal and safe. Health and Safety is all about common sense. If you are not sure about this, take advice beforehand to ensure that appropriate safeguards and insurances are in place.
- For concerts and ticketed events, set an agreed entry fee. Before you promote your event you need to know how much to charge, which also means having a good understanding of all the costs you are likely to need covering. Think about how much people would be willing to pay and what else you would like them to spend money on whilst attending the event.
- Tell **EVERYBODY** about the event or activity, including church members, local businesses, family & friends, work colleagues and associates. Make good use of Social Media by raising awareness through your website, Facebook and Twitter. Also inform your local newspaper and radio station.
- Maximise your income (individuals only) by creating an online giving page and email it to your friends and contacts who are too far away to pledge money on a sponsorship form. Also take advantage of Gift Aid (individuals only) where people offer to make donations at specific events. Please note, however, that money spent in return for a concert ticket (or any other item of value) does not qualify for Gift Aid relief.
- Some companies and employers will reward an employee's fundraising efforts by matching the amount they raise. This is an excellent way of doubling individual fundraising income and can serve as an added incentive for securing sponsorship for events.
- Take plenty of photographs of fundraising events and use Social Media outlets and your website to share the pictures. This will demonstrate to others the fun and success which can be derived from such activities. It is also important to take photographs if possible which demonstrate the need for the project. For example, if money is being raised to repair a building, take "before" and "after" photographs. These will show why the money is needed and the positive difference the project has made.
- Remember to thank everyone and let them know how grateful you are for their kind support. When you know the total sum raised from a specific event, let them know the figures. If the event in question is just one of many, let people know the revised grand total raised so far towards the overall project cost.

Specific Fundraising Ideas

Coffee Morning

This is probably the most popular fundraiser and certainly among the easiest to organise. It is just a matter of naming the time, date and venue, advertising the event, and then organising the comestibles. Home-made cakes are traditionally served at such events which makes them very popular and generally well-supported.

Quiz Night

This type of event can take many forms and can vary in size depending upon the type of venue used. This type of event is also very popular, especially if accompanied by food which can consist of either light snacks or a full meal (takeaway curries or fish & chip suppers seem to be amongst the most popular).

Bake a Cake Sale

Set up a stall at the village fete or after church coffee time and sell some cakes. A homemade cake, decadent brownie or a tasty pastry is always a most welcome treat.

Barn Dance or Ceilidh

Making a comeback in church and village halls around the country, the old-fashioned barn dance is an evening of fun and frivolity for all the family. The same also applies to the Ceilidh which is now one of the most common evening events at wedding receptions. All that is needed, apart from the venue, is a good “caller” and a music band. Usually the two work, and are booked, together. Food and drink are also usually an important part of such an evening.

Sponsored Walk

This represents a fabulous opportunity to enjoy the great outdoors whilst also raising funds for the cause. It is important to offer both longer and shorter walks in order to attract as many participants as possible. Let them know the route and the terrain before signing up, and maybe also include a lunch somewhere ‘en route’.

Open Garden Event

If someone is known to you who has a really attractive garden, why not ask them if they would be prepared to open it to family and friends to visit and admire. Maybe a strawberry tea or other refreshments could also be served. It could even be turned into a garden party depending upon the size and location of the garden.

Harvest Produce Market & Bring and Share

It is easy to make a few extra jars of chutney or jam, and so invite people to do just that and have a harvest market with friends and neighbours. Homemade preserves are hard to resist and tend to sell very well. Bring & Share lunches can also raise useful funds. Simply invite people to bring some food and then set up a buffet meal, perhaps after a church service for example. Ask everyone attending to make donation as a gesture of thanksgiving. On the same theme, pudding parties are also now becoming very popular, although it might mean abandoning the calorie count temporarily!

Festivals

Flower Festivals and Christmas Tree Displays, for example, can be an excellent way of both bringing people into church and also raising funds. Both are quite labour-intensive and involve a relatively high level of expenditure to stage. However, such costs can be defrayed through corporate or local business sponsorship.

Other Sponsored Sporting Events or Activities

Nowadays, community fundraisers can engage in a huge variety of sponsored events ranging from swimming marathons to parachute jumping. Specific types of activity can be tailored to suit all ages and capabilities. For example, bungee-jumping might appeal more to teenagers and young adults, whereas a leisurely bicycle ride might be more suitable for an older target audience. Obviously the simpler the event, the higher the likely

return on 'investment'. For example, a sponsored walk or bike ride would involve very little cost to arrange, and the net surplus could be as high as 100%.

Card Craft

Many people who have creative and artistic skills enjoy card-making. Simply make cards and sell them at home, to friends, at local fayres and in church. Easter and Christmas represent the best opportunities for this type of activity.

Guess How Many

Guessing numbers or weights can represent an easy fundraising opportunity. For example, in return for a charge for each "go", one has to guess how many sweets are in a jar or how many pound coins are in a sock.

A commonly used fundraising scheme is to guess the weight of a cake or some other food or drink item, which might also then be used as the winning prize.

Caption Competition

Choose a funny or unusual photograph from a holiday or event and hold a caption competition. People taking part pay a charge for each caption they submit. The best judged entry wins a small (ideally donated) prize.

A Gift for Life

If anyone has a significant birthday or wedding anniversary coming up they could ask family and friends to give a donation to the cause instead of buying presents. This tends to work best if the project is based around welfare support programmes, rather than capital expenditure.

For Children

Bag Packing

This is best organised by an adult on behalf of the participating children's group which might include, Brownies, Cubs, Rainbows, Sea Rangers or Sunday School clubs. If a willing supermarket can be found, money is then raised by helping people at the check-outs with their packing in return for a donation (collection boxes or buckets will be needed). The best time of year for this activity is during the "run-up" to Christmas and Easter, although any Saturday during the year is good too.

Car Wash

First of all, permission needs to be obtained to use a specific venue which might be a school, supermarket or local car park. A good number of willing volunteers are needed including a number of adults to supervise the work. Cars can then be thoroughly cleaned in return for either a donation or a set charge and might vary depending upon the size of the vehicle (a 4x4 takes longer to clean than a smart car for example).

Easter Egg Hunt

Once a good location has been found, hide some delicious chocolate eggs and charge family members, friends and colleagues to search for them. Be inventive and use your imagination in hiding the eggs. Everyone loves a challenge especially when there is chocolate at stake!

Smarty Tubes

This is another fundraising scheme involving chocolate. Simply keep any empty Smarties tubes and ask family, friends and colleagues to fill them with pound coins. A Smarties tube will hold 27 one pound coins.

Sponsored Silence

Parents, teachers and youth leaders will usually pay good money for some peace and quiet. This activity only really works in a group setting, for example in a school classroom. Funds are usually raised through the sponsorship of family and friends of children taking part.

There are numerous other ways of raising funds, ranging from jumble sales to “high ticket” gala evenings and black-tie dinners. It is just a matter of choosing events which are suitable to the locality, the target audience and the level of funding required. However, it is important to remember that community fundraising is not just about the money. Group activities and special events can provide excellent opportunities for people to make new friends as well as learn more about, and build relationships directly with, your church.

This document is based on guidance originally produced by the Archdiocese of Birmingham.