A Quick Guide to Fundraising

To some fundraising is all about grants and writing applications, whilst to others it involves something slightly wilder and wackier. The variety of methods can be overwhelming but careful planning and preparation can help to make things more manageable, effective and enjoyable.

Worm charming in Liverpool

Wiggenhall St Mary Magdalen's Scarecrow Festival

There is sometimes a tendency to rush into things, particularly community events which can then lose money, or just take so much time and energy that your fundraising campaign loses momentum before it really starts. So, before you begin, check you are ready to start asking for money by answering the following questions.

1) What are you doing?

Start with a clear vision of what you want to do and summarise it in just one or two sentences. Avoid statements like "our QI has pointed out that the roof needs repairing"-   a Quinquennial Inspection Report is not a vision, it is more like a to do list.

Research shows that people prefer to give to something specific rather than to a general appeal.

Your vision should be both internally and externally focused; think carefully about what you want to achieve for both the church community and the wider community. Try to balance these, if your project is too internally focused, it can appear unwelcoming to others.

2) Why?

Fundraising is essentially about selling. You need to be able to share your vision and inspire others to support your project.

Most people, certainly external funders, will want to know why your project is needed, why it has to happen in this place and in this way, and why it has to happen now. More importantly they will be looking for the benefit, the difference it will make to people and communities.   It helps if you can offer a human story, an example of the people your project will help/continue to help, to show the impact of your work.

3) When?

Don't be in a hurry to start fundraising. Allow plenty of time for planning and preparation and start actively fundraising only when you know the full costs.

Momentum is key – it secures the belief that you will be successful.

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Fundraising takes time, some Trusts only meet once or twice a year.

4) Who is making the ask?

You need the right people, in the right place, at the right time, doing the right thing.

Writing applications can be a laborious task and a big responsibility for just one person. Even on smaller projects the workload should ideally be shared; on larger projects it is advisable to have one person in charge and at least two or three people to research and contribute to completing application forms.

Fundraising experience is great, but if that is unavailable look for individuals with administration and writing skills, a buildings background, education, marketing or charity experience and remember to look outside the congregation.

In addition to skills, people need to know the project inside out and be able to communicate what you are trying to achieve in a way that is inspiring and motivating.

Chemistry and diversity are often better than a group of friends who might not challenge and push each other. If someone isn't doing what you need, you must not be afraid to find someone else who can.

Ask for 12 months of people's time.

Consider setting up a Friends Group. Ensure clear terms of reference and communication to avoid simply 'handing them the building'.

Professional Help: this is worth careful consideration for multi-million-pound projects, but approach with care as it does come with significant costs and does not guarantee success. It can be better value to hire someone to manage parts of your fundraising campaign rather than the whole thing e.g. writing applications or negotiating with local businesses. Be very clear on what they are doing and your expectations. Regularly review/approve and evaluate their work – it's still your project and you are still accountable.

5) Who are you asking?

Most fundraising projects start with an approach to their 'warmest donors' i.e. the people who already support an organisation, for a church this is your congregation. Make use of any contacts or links people have.

Research external funders carefully, making sure your project meets their criteria and pay close attention to application deadlines and decision-making timeframes.

Find out what other churches in your area have achieved.

Make sure your local fundraising activities appeal to as wide an audience as possible.

6) How and Where?

Once you have quite firm costs you can plan your fundraising. Think about what funds you already have, what you anticipate getting from Trusts, Foundations and other external sources and what you will be left to raise.

Think carefully about where your fundraising activities will take place, link them to your audience and what your team can realistically achieve - will they be in the church, wider community or online?

Most online Donation sites will charge commission so do a bit of research to decide if it is worth setting up an online giving page.

7) Communication

Share your plan with people at the beginning of the project so they have an idea of what to expect.

Let people know your key milestones but avoid committing yourself to providing a running commentary such as a monthly newsletter. If things aren't going well or you just don't have any updates, people will start to question where the newsletter is, which can send out a negative signal and reduce confidence in the success of the project.

Share successes and ask for help when needed.

As previously noted, fundraising is essentially about selling your project, but it also presents an opportunity to raise awareness of issues and activities and to build relationships with the community and within the church.

Communication must be maintained between all parts of the project.

Top Tips for Local Fundraising

- Money from local fundraising is a great way to provide evidence of local involvement and commitment in your project, which many funders expect.
- Make sure objectives and outcomes are realistic and achievable. As previously mentioned, some events can absorb time, effort and money and be counterproductive. Carefully consider all the costs incurred in your fundraising campaign/activities.
- Keep your project fundraising activities separate from regular parish fundraising.
- Insurance, safeguarding and risk assessments - make sure that you have someone who is carrying out risk assessments and ensuring that safeguarding and GDPR policies are adhered to. Do you need to let the police know or will you need St John Ambulance to be present? Also be aware of providing alcohol and securing a license if you plan to sell it.
- Refer to the Code of Fundraising Practice when necessary. The National Giving Team have produced a helpful guide: [Guide for Churches on the Code of Fundraising Practice](#)
- Supervise your fundraisers making sure that roles and expectations are clearly defined and that reporting and communication procedures are in place.
- Don't forget support in kind - local businesses will often donate prizes and gifts in kind, as will your congregation and community. Others might sponsor your publicity costs if you feature their logo on your flyer. Don't be afraid to get out there and start asking people. The lower your costs, the more you will raise.
- Remember to monitor and evaluate your activities.

When it's done….

Whilst fundraising for churches never really ends, for major projects you need a cut-off date and no matter how brilliant your team has been, let them go, they will need a well-earned break. Finally, always remember to thank people no matter how small their donation, in an appropriate way – a celebration event and/or service is often more inclusive and cost-effective than sending individual letters.