 **FUNDRAISING TOOLKIT**

# Achieving Success in a Fundraising Program

Fundraising has deep roots and a long history. While philanthropic traditions vary from nation to nation, results of generosity have been exceptional in many parts of the world. If sound fundraising principles are followed and practice is based on successful experience, much can be accomplished for nonprofit organizations.

The following is a brief description of different types of fundraising activities and the basic steps involved in a successful program:

## Understand basic marketing principles

Begin the fundraising process by realizing that it is a reciprocal relationship. Fees and other income rarely meet the budgetary demands of nonprofit services. Consequently, a nonprofit organization such as a sister city program, cultivates and solicits its clients and friends, many of whom become donors. A sister city program must remember that a donor has a right to expect something in return for a gift. When donors provide funds for programs or operating needs, they expect gratitude and recognition, as well as some intangible rewards such as a sense of belonging and making a difference.

## Types of Fundraising

There are different types of fundraising activities that a sister city program can use. Some are very targeted to a specific type of donor. Others are more broad-based. The following is a brief description of the primary types of fundraising programs commonly used by sister city programs.

**“The Ask”**

This type of program asks donors to contribute to a specific project or program such as student exchanges. This is typically a targeted group of donors who are being asked to donate. It is often short in duration and once the need has been met, that specific fundraising program ends.

**Events**

Events can be used for large fundraising efforts and are used to raise money and for donors to be recognized at the event. Examples of event-based fundraising are the SCI Inaugural gala and member dinners to recognize a city or program. If you need to raise funds for a large, ongoing program, an event may be a good option.

**Grants**

Local sister city programs that are qualified 501(c)(3) organizations can apply for a variety of grants that can be used to fund a specific need such as grants to address climate change, clean water for a sister city or an artist-in-residence program. The granting entity will ask for regular reports on how the money is being spent so it is important to keep track of all monies spent.

**Consider the environment and climate for fundraising**

An organization’s environment has an impact on the feasibility of fundraising. If government regulations, current economic factors, changing demographics and other factors are not considered, a sister cities program may find it difficult to meet its fundraising goals. Internal circumstances also dictate success or failure, such as an organization’s readiness to raise funds. Are appropriate personnel in place? Is there a financial accounting program in place? Has strategic planning been done? These and other questions need to be answered before donors are approached.

**Create and examine the case for giving**

A case includes the reasons someone should give money to an organization or a program. Making a case means sharing the mission, goals, objectives and prospects to potential donors. It includes describing programs and evaluation procedures and providing financial reports. It includes a statement of needs. What kind of financial support is required to carry out the programs and plans of a sister city program?

**Involve your board and other volunteers**

Board members are charged with securing and managing financial support. Therefore, boards of sister city programs should be involved from the inception of planning for programs and fundraising. Board members, as well as other volunteers, are the most effective persons to ask for funds because they represent commitment to a cause. The board should validate the needs and case before any further planning or activity takes place. Is the case representative of the sister cities program? Are the needs genuine? Is there an appropriate match between what the organization can do and what potential donors must have?

**Determine markets**

Potential funders include foundations, corporations, associations, government, churches and, most importantly, individuals. Which are the best ones for the organizations to develop? Have all feasible funding sources been considered?

**Select programs and strategies**

How will the prospects be solicited? For what programs? Programs for resource development include capital, annual fund, special projects, endowment campaigns and major gifts. Each of these should be evaluated as to its purpose, and the appropriate one(s) selected. Strategies for approaching donors include mail, telephone, special events and face-to-face solicitation. The more personal the approach, the more effective the solicitation.

**Research prospects**

A sister city program’s constituent groups should be determined through research. Minimal research is required for those prospects who will make up the donor base; these include first time givers and repeat donors whose gifts are small. Individuals who will be asked for larger gifts will be more fully researched in order that they might be cultivated and solicited appropriately.

**Create, use and solicit the plan**

Planning is a mean to determine what must be done, how it will be accomplished and who will do it. By now, prospects and donors have been selected and matched with strategies for solicitation. The fundraising vehicle has been chosen, the case has been prepared, board members and other volunteers have been involved in all steps, and the organization's readiness to raise funds has been determined. Now it is time to create a plan. A plan should be a workable and dynamic part of a fundraising program. Constituent groups, which include prospects and donors, must be told about the sister cities program and its needs, as well as achievements and opportunities. Communication lays the groundwork for successful solicitation, and can take many forms. Communication also includes feedback from constituents, which provides a basis for wise decision-making.

**Solicit the gift**

After all this preparation, the time has finally come to ask for the donation. Thorough preparation, which may vary in intensity, time and detail, ensures the likelihood of success. Appropriate and timely recognition paves the way for the next step.

**Renew the gift**

The best prospect for a charitable gift is the person who has already given. The opportunity to give and give again should be provided to all who are prospects and can be attracted to support a sister cities program’s cause.

Fundraising is a highly integrated management process. Each step in a successful fundraising program may not require the same emphasis for each organization, but no steps can be missed without diminishing the likelihood of favorable results.

It is a privilege to raise funds for a worthy cause. Those who are willing to be engaged in such activity and do it with some level of success deserve a special honor because they have helped bring about needed and valuable results.

[Adapted from an article by Lilya Wagner, Fundraising School in the Center of Philanthropy, Indiana University.]