

This guide to Community Fundraising has been developed by the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) and is available to download from their website. Clicking on the links below will take you to the relevant sections on the NCVO's website.

Community Fundraising

Community fundraising means raising money with volunteers. This often takes the form of events such as coffee mornings, cake-sales or concerts but can also include sponsored events such as marathons.

The most important asset in community fundraising is the community – your supporters, volunteers and their families, friends and neighbours. Engaging this audience is therefore just as important as putting in place any technical-know-how you may need.

The following pages offer an introduction to community fundraising for those with little experience of the topic, or who need to consider how community fundraising could play a role in their Sustainable Fundraising Strategy. At the end of the section we will sign-post you on to more in-depth sources of information if you would like to learn more.

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Why Community Fundraising?

While all fundraising is about bringing new income to your organisation, it is incredibly important to establish exactly why you want to pursue community fundraising.

Think about some of the following possible reasons for pursuing community fundraising:

1. **To raise cash.** The events themselves need raise money. So you'd measure this by a simple profit-and-loss account.
2. **To introduce more donors to your organisation** – many organisations, in particular the large national charities, use community fundraising to increase their profile and encourage more people to sign up to give regularly. You could measure this by the number of people who have signed up to receive more information, or go further and monitor how those people who set up regular donations were introduced to the organisation. The former can be measured immediately, the latter may take months or years to give you an accurate picture of the impact of your event.

3. **To gain publicity** – perhaps you need to tell people about your services or raise awareness of an issue. You could measure this by media coverage, number of hits to the event page on your website or number of people attending the event (or all three).
4. **To get your beneficiaries involved.** Many beneficiaries of a charity's services enjoy being able to get involved in a positive way to give something back. You could measure this by the numbers who were involved or by their feedback

It can be hard to make money from individual community fundraising events – but some events are phenomenally successful at raising money for charities, just not on the actual day! These 'loss-leaders' can be very valuable – but you need to measure how they are doing and ensure that your organisation is able to absorb the initial financial (or resource) outlay.

It is worth mentioning that although all the suggested reasons above look appealing, you should concentrate on one as your primary target. Although you could achieve all four at once, under some circumstances they could undermine each other and aiming for several outcomes is certainly likely to increase your workload and the complexity of your strategy!

What resources do you have?

When planning your community fundraising activities, you need to consider what resources are available to you.

Time and people

Organising events can be very resource heavy – particularly for the staff and lead-volunteer (if there is one). Not only are there the list of obvious things-to-do, but there are countless other issues and queries that are likely to come in during the run up to the event that take time to resolve. Then after the event, someone needs to make sure that any donations are properly dealt with and volunteers are thanked. And however good your volunteer is at organising events, you need to make sure you set aside the time to support them.

Cash

Community Fundraising is a great fundraiser for small organisations as it can often bring in money for very little financial outlay. Often it is possible to negotiate venues for free or for little cost, get gifts-in-kind to help with catering or a raffle and run the whole thing with volunteers. And sponsored events and activities may be organised by a company at little cost to you.

One cost you cannot skimp on – insurance. Make sure you take advice from your insurer and your venue about whether or not you need insurance for this type of event.

Don't forget postage and printing, often a cost that is hidden amongst the general office expenditure – make sure you have both in the budget if needed.

Finally, leave a 10% contingency fund in your budget (or, if your budget is very small, a reasonable amount to protect you from unforeseen circumstances). Hopefully you won't have to use it – but you need to know the cash is there should the need arise.

Assets

Many of the most successful community events make the most of the assets a charity already has – these could be anything from a building to an unknown talent of one of your members of staff or volunteers. Your volunteers themselves are an asset – and one that could lend or donate other assets, such as a garden or an introduction to a local celebrity. Make a map of your assets and work out if they can be useful to you. For instance, in our case study on Bath Cats and Dogs Home [\[link\]](#), the home runs an annual ‘open day’ that is a successful fundraiser, important event for maintaining contact with supporters and recruits volunteers.

What types of events could you run?

The number of community fundraising events that you could run is staggering. But don’t forget – before deciding what event to run assess who your [audience](#) are, what [resources](#) you have and involve your volunteers.

Here is a list to get you started:

art fair	five-a-side football tournament
auction	games evening
boat party	karaoke evening
bowling tournament	open garden
bring and buy sale	plant sale
cake sale	pub quiz
Can't Cook Won't Cook themed event	sponsored silence
car boot sale	sponsored walk
coffee morning	raffle
concert	theatre evening
dinner and dance	treasure hunt
dog walk	treasure hunt by car
fashion/catwalk evening	Or, buy places in a national sporting event such as a marathon .
fete	

Once you've decided on your event, check whether there are any [legal or insurance issues](#) and draw up a rough budget.

You might also be able to combine different events to increase the chance of making money. For instance, including a plant sale at an open garden is a good idea, as both target people with the same interests. You could also add to this a raffle – perhaps for gardening-themed prizes and serve tea and cakes. This means that you have potentially convinced your guests to give you money four times – without needing to add very much to your overheads.

Finally, there are some online companies who can help you to run a virtual (or virtually-assisted) community event. Here are three – but new ones are being created all the time.

www.missionfish.org.uk - runs the Ebay for Charity scheme (in partnership with Ebay)

www.dinner4good.com - a way for supporters to organise fundraising dinner parties.

www.jumbleaid.com - online jumble sales.

Advertising events

How you advertise your event will depend on three things:

1. How much money you have
2. How great the need for advertising is (will most people hear of your event via word-of-mouth?)
3. What type of event it is

When you have considered these three issues, then you can look at a marketing strategy and timetable that may include some of the following elements:

Electronic Advertising

By far the cheapest form of advertising available to you, electronic marketing can be highly effective. It is likely to take three main forms

1. Email marketing – send emails to your contacts, and perhaps urge them to forward the email on. If you do this yourself then it is free, if you use a third party to send the email out for you (and, perhaps design it) then the cost varies by volume. Be careful how you use your database though – you don't want to alienate your supporters. Always give them an option to 'opt out' of any future emails of this type.
2. E-Newsletters and websites - if you can think of some relevant e-newsletters, can you get your event mentioned in those? Are there any listings websites in your area? Many 'what's on' type websites will allow charities to post events for free.
3. Banner-adverts – bought adverts on specific web pages. These can range in cost and can be a fixed amount or an amount per-click/impression (so you pay every time someone clicks on the advert, or every time it is displayed on the screen). You might, for instance, be able to buy a banner on the home page of your local newspaper.
4. Generic internet advertising – the most widely used at the moment is [Google Adwords](#). You write a very short advert, include a link to a webpage and set up some 'keywords' that you think are related to your advert. You then decide an amount to bid 'per click' or 'per impression'. You compete against other people who have chosen the same keywords for position on the page, and Google charges you accordingly. These adverts can appear on Google search result pages and also on their 'content network' (other sites that have agreed to allow Google to display adverts on them). [Facebook](#) is another popular place for 'pay per click' advertising.

If you have a presence on social networking sites, such as [Facebook](#) or [Twitter](#), you may also be able to use these to get your event noticed – especially if your target audience is under 35.

Printed advertising

Magazines and newspapers - some local papers will advertise community events for free, so do check with them. Otherwise adverts aren't normally too expensive for charities – and discounts are often available if you fill a last-minute gap.

Posters and flyers - there is still a lot of value in asking your supporters to display posters in their local area. Libraries and other public buildings will often have somewhere to display posters or leave leaflets. Local business may also help you by displaying information. Don't forget to take advantage of other local events to hand out information. You can also have flyers inserted in magazines or delivered with the post. The cost of this may be prohibitive for smaller events.

When producing printed material don't forget – some people may pick up a leaflet who haven't heard of your organisation before, so explain (briefly) what you do. And always give people a way to donate even if they cannot come to your event. Is there a way they can find out about future events?

Sponsored events and challenge activities

Sports events

Whilst you may wish to organise a sponsored sporting event yourself, if you have no prior experience of doing so then it is not advisable. There are a huge number of events you can take part in now – from the London Marathon to local 5k runs. A quick search on the internet will find you many companies that specialise in organising runs that you can buy places on for your runners. Some are unlikely to sell out, so will not be expensive and you can always buy extra places if you manage to recruit more runners than you expected. Others are so popular that you will need to go on a long waiting list to get places – The London Marathon and The Great North Run are two such races.

The advantages of taking part in an event someone else has organised are largely practical – they should take responsibility for the health, safety and insurance. You will also benefit from a larger crowd and therefore better atmosphere.

Choose what type of event to take part in is tricky. If you choose a less well-known event then you will probably need to recruit your participants from your supporters, so think about what is likely to interest them. However, although you may find it easy to fill spaces on the larger, more popular events, your participants may not be particularly engaged with your cause – or fundraising for it.

Most charities now ask for a deposit from participants when they sign up for an event. This is to reflect that you will probably have had to pay a fee to secure the place. You may wish to offer to return their deposit if they raise a certain amount of money. Whilst this deposit may not cover the full cost of the place (charity places in some popular half-marathons are over £100) it will offset some of the risk if your participant doesn't raise their target amount.

Challenge Activities

'Challenges', such as mountain climbs or treks, are normally organised by a specialist company due to the amount of expertise needed and the risk involved. There are different ways charities can secure places, depending on how confident you are about recruiting people to participate and how much money you are willing to pay up-front. Some providers will allow individuals to book on to an event individually, whilst others prefer a charity to reserve a number of places on a specific event – or even all of the places for that event. These different approaches will have different financial implications but will also result in a different experience for participants – think about the difference between joining a group of people who are all raising money for one cause, compared to a mixed group. If you are a small organisation, then it may be prudent to try to find a group of engaged supporters first and discuss with them what sort of event they would like to do, then help them to organise it.

Remember, Challenge events can be very expensive – for participants to raise enough money to cover their costs, let alone generate income for the charity, they need to be very committed. As such they will be some of your most valuable supporters – now and in the future, so do everything you can to make sure the experience is a good one for them. This may include helping them to get coverage in a local paper and, if possible, organising a group from the charity to cheer them on.

As part of their fundraising your participants may well be introducing people to your charity for the first time; make sure they have the resources to do this well – you will make their

fundraising easier and you may find you gain some more supporters, especially if the participant enjoys themselves.

Ideas for collecting sponsorship

There are loads of ways that your supporters can raise money for a sponsored activity – make sure you give them all the support and resources they need.

Sponsorship forms - these should include a gift aid declaration column and a box to tick if the sponsor does not want to receive any more information from your charity.

Online sponsorship - although online sponsorship companies usually take an administration charge, this method of sponsorship is fast becoming the norm because it is so easy for both supporters and charities. Once you have registered with an online sponsorship site and told your supporters they set themselves a target and ask friends and family to donate money to help them to reach it. This money is then passed on to you – including any Gift Aid. Take a look at <http://www.bmycharity.com> and www.justgiving.com, which are the two biggest sites for collecting sponsorship in the UK. (Note: you will require a charity registration number to register with online sponsorship websites, which could prevent smaller charities using this method.)

Many of the ideas for [community fundraising events](#) could also be run by a supporter to raise their 'sponsorship' money.

Just as for organisations, individual should think about what will appeal to their target audience (colleagues, friends, neighbours etc) and what will make the most of their resources. Someone who has a talent – such as music, art or DIY skills - may be able to auction that talent to raise money. Other people may be able to take advantage of working for a large company or membership of a church or community group.

Match-giving

Many employers offer match-giving, or will at least consider a contribution to an employee's fundraising. Encourage your participants to find out whether their employer can help.

Legal checklist

The top line is that, before getting too far down the planning-process for your event, you ought to check whether you are

- a) covered by insurance
- b) complying with any relevant local or national legal requirements

Below we outline some of the main areas you may need to consider. These do not take the place of proper legal advice.

- [Insurance](#)
- [Health and Safety](#)
- [Food Hygiene](#)
- [Dietary Requirements and Food Labelling](#)
- [Temporary Event Licenses and Alcohol Licensing](#)

- [Data Protection](#)
- [Sponsorship of an event by a company](#)
- [Public Collections](#)
- [Raffles and Lotteries](#)

Insurance

Your organisation should have insurance, which may include some 'public liability insurance'. Check whether this covers you for events and what you need to do to comply with it. Often you will need to have undertaken a risk assessment as a minimum.

It is also worth noting that whilst events organised by staff are likely to be covered, events organised by volunteers may not. This will depend on how much control the organisation has over the event. For instance, if your relationship with the volunteer is much like they are a member of staff and you are ultimately responsible for what they organise, then it is much more likely your insurance will cover their event. If, on the other hand, your volunteer organises an event by themselves, perhaps just informing you when and where it is happening and no more, then it is unlikely your insurance will cover them. Their event may, however, be covered by the insurance of the venue they are holding it in – so it's worth checking this.

Health and Safety

- Every event, no matter how large or small should have a health and safety risk assessment. This doesn't have to be complicated – you need to identify any potential risks (such as trip hazards) and take steps to guard against them (for instance, by putting up a sign by a hidden step, or taping over loose carpet) and identify what you will do if the risk is realised (maybe nominate a first aider).
- Larger events may need to have St Johns Ambulance or similar in attendance.

Food Hygiene

- Selling food is tricky – but if the food is being served on non-commercial premises, by volunteers who are doing it as a one-off then they should not need a license. This should cover most fundraising events.
- If you want to run an event on commercial premises, use paid staff, or wish to make it a regular occurrence (weekly or monthly for instance), then you may need to investigate the food regulations further and contact your Local Authority. Those preparing the food will need food hygiene certificates and the premises where food will be prepared will need to be inspected.
- However, even if your event does not need certification or inspection, everyone selling food in any capacity has an obligation to supply 'safe food'.
- It is good practice to try to make sure your volunteers are aware of good food hygiene – this website <http://www.eatwell.gov.uk/keepingfoodsafes/> is a good source of guidance.

Dietary requirements and labelling

- You are not required by law to label unpackaged food
- You also do not need to add ingredients labels to cakes or other packaged food items as long as they are sold as a one-off and not part of a business. If you are selling items regularly then you may need to add ingredients labels.
- However, it is good practice to always label foods to help those who are serving them to answer any queries – for instance, mark if they are suitable for vegetarians (no meat,

fish or by-products such as suet or gelatine) or vegans (no meat, fish, eggs, dairy or by-products). You may also want to think about kosher or halal labels if customers are likely to need them. This doesn't only apply to savoury food but also to cakes and confectionary and remember – if you are producing food for those with dietary requirements, then you need to keep that food, and its serving implements, separate.

- Never declare something as suitable for those with a nut-allergy unless you are 100% sure that every ingredient has been produced, prepared and packed in a nut-free environment.

Temporary Event License and Alcohol licensing

Not all venues are allowed to have events, or sell alcohol at those events.

- If you are running a fundraising event then you may need to have special permission granted by the Local Authority. Check with your venue whether they are covered and if not, contact your Local Authority's Licensing Officers in plenty of time to secure permission. A Temporary Event Notification (TEN) relates for events of 499 people or less where the intention is to make a profit.
- If you are planning on selling alcohol (running a bar) then it is best to hold your event in premises that already hold a license to sell alcohol. If you would like to run a bar elsewhere it is possible that occasional permission can be obtained through the licensing justices at the local magistrate's court. Clearly you need to leave plenty of time for this. If in doubt, consult your Local Authority.
- Serving alcohol at an event (rather than selling it) does not fall under the same restrictions – so if you are holding your event in unlicensed premises and you can cover the cost of alcohol with the ticket, do so.

Data Protection

Don't forget – information you collect about people who have bought tickets or attended an event is covered by the [Data Protection Act](#). Make sure you comply with it!

Sponsorship of an event by a company

If a company gives you money for an event on the understanding that they will receive significant publicity or gain from it, then this is trading – not a donation and as such may be subject to tax. It is safest to ask companies to support an event with a donation. You can still thank them in your publicity materials, as long as this thanks couldn't be construed as a benefit. It's a fine line...

Public Collections

You need a license from the Local Authority if collections are on public property. In this case, there are also some rules and regulations you must follow, which your Local Authority should be able to inform you of.

However, many collections for charity take place in shopping centres or outside supermarkets – this is usually private property and therefore only needs written permission from the owner.

Raffles and lotteries

We've split the rules and guidance for these on to a [page of their own](#).

Top Tips

Some top tips for making your community fundraising a success:

1. Don't forget to plan how to manage financial risk. Many community fundraising activities can easily make a loss. You could build in to the plan a target date by which you should have sold a percentage of the tickets and what steps you will take if that doesn't happen. You could also negotiate a date with your venue by which you can cancel and not lose your money, or have a back-up plan for how to run the event successfully with less people.
2. Be responsive to the needs of your volunteers. Some volunteers will need a lot of help and may be looking to undertake a specified task, others will want a lot more independence to organise their own event. The best events are often organised by enthusiastic volunteers bringing their own idea to fruition, with support – not instruction – from the charity.
3. Community fundraising is about relationships – so a missed thank you, or not taking someone's efforts seriously could have big consequences. Make sure everyone knows their contribution is valued.
4. Join up your community fundraising with other aspects of your fundraising strategy. For example, ensure that the route between attending an event and becoming a regular donor has been thought about. Contacts made through community fundraising may help you win support from companies. Could fundraising events provide you with a way to improve your relationship with other donors? Take a look at how [Bath Cats and Dogs Home](#) (pdf 778kb) tackled this issue. Attention to the detail of joining-up fundraising elements can make the difference between community fundraising making money for your organisation or not.
5. Don't forget to consider the potential publicity from an event – good and bad. Community fundraising provides very good photo opportunities – make the most of them!