

# Fundraising from events

**Aim:** This document provides an overview of how to choose and plan a fundraising event. It also highlights how to ensure you have adequate marketing and publicity, and the main issues you need to consider when running a successful fundraising event.

# **Fundraising from Events**

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## **Choosing Your Event**

First and foremost you need to decide on the type of event you would like to organize.

Your choice of event could be led by two options;

1. You have an audience in mind that you would like to organise an event around.
2. You have an event that you would like to put on, and will therefore need to find the appropriate audience.

If you have a target audience in mind, then ensure the type of event will interest them. For example if you have identified a large number of American ex-patriots as potential donors, you may decide to hold a fundraising Independence Day themed event.

Alternatively, you may have a member of staff who is particularly keen to try out a certain type of event or a supporter who would like to sponsor something new. In which case, you will then need to identify your potential audience.

Choose an event that you know people will enjoy, and that you'll enjoy too. Remember to think about your target audience – who are they are, how many there are and what their interests are. Start small; you can always develop the event later on.

Naming your event can be key to promoting it. Make your event name clear and if it is a fundraiser ensure people know that you are holding this event to raise money for your organisation.

## **Be clear about what you want to achieve**

This might be a specific fundraising target or something that will create a lot of awareness about your work. If you clearly communicate the objectives of your event and the difference that you believe it will make, others will feel inspired and support you.

## **What is your budget?**

When organizing events, costs can add up very quickly and it is very easy to spend more money than you make. So draw up a realistic budget; how much do want to raise, how much can you spend?

Get local businesses involved. Ask for sponsorship, prizes or the loan of equipment or premises and in return offer to publicise their company. Always try to add extra little fundraising activities at your event - raffles, competitions, refreshments etc.

## **Planning your event**

Depending on the size and scale of the event it may be a good idea to put together an event committee to share out the work. Make sure that the committee is established formally, with clear roles and responsibilities. Delegate to make sure everyone feels involved in the planning process and to spread the work. Recruit the help of volunteers. Events often take more time to organise than you think. In case of sickness or unexpected problems it's always advisable to have additional people to help you.

Produce a fundraising events plan. Give everyone involved a copy with names, dates and responsibilities clearly marked and agreed. Update the plan as decisions are made. An example is shown over the page:

<b>FUNDRAISING EVENT</b>				
<b>Activity</b>	<b>By whom</b>	<b>By What Date</b>	<b>Completed?</b>	<b>With what results</b>
Identify target audience	Committee	December 2009	Yes	Local business leaders
Choose fundraising event	Committee	January 2010	Yes	Golf Day
Select a venue	Committee	January 2010	Yes	Local Golf Club
Choose the date	Committee	February 2010		
Etc.				

A longer example plan can be seen at the end of this document.

## Selecting a venue

You might be able to book a school, community hall, church or public park free of charge if you say that it's for charity or it will support your organisation.

Check that the venue is appropriate for your event and is big enough? Is the venue available on the date and at the time required? Are there enough seats and tables? Does it have disabled access? What toilet facilities do they have? Do they provide catering facilities; if yes how much is it and what choices do they give?

Do you need to get permission to use the venue or chosen area for the event? Will you need a fundraising permit to collect money at the venue? Is a deposit required?

Confirm your reservation nearer the time to avoid double bookings. Make sure that the venue staff knows exactly what your event is and ask what they can help you with - equipment, publicity etc.

## Choosing the date

Choose the date of your event carefully, give yourself time to organise everything so that your event is a success. Think about your personal time commitments and be realistic about how much time you and everyone else involved has available to spend on this event.

Avoid competing with other local or national events. Or think about whether you can tie in your own event with an existing event, or co-host an existing event.

Think about holding your event on a significant date, for example during World Animal Week or on your organisation's anniversary.

Avoid holding your event when the weather is very bad, or during the holiday season when people are less likely to attend.

## Secure Sponsorship

Why not see if there a local company or individual that would be willing to sponsor the event through cash or product donations? This can significantly reduce costs and could yield some great prizes.

If you need items to auction, sell or give away as prizes, approach companies or stores that may be able to donate items of interest.

It is important to publicly acknowledge the sponsors of your event. You can do this in print, or as part of your marketing and publicity. Or you can let the sponsors promote themselves at the event.

## Marketing and Publicity

Organising the event is only the first part - to ensure your event's success you will need to promote it. You need to ensure a good number of people turn up at your event, and that you can use the event to publicise your organisation.

Firstly think about who you are trying to attract to the event, and what is the best way of reaching this audience?

Some people would rather attend something exclusive, with printed invitations, but little publicity or perhaps just a spread in a glossy magazine. Other events open to the public will require as much publicity as possible. Flyers, posters and emails are all effective, although a combination of methods usually works best. Publicity posters can be reduced in size so they can also be used as flyers to hand out.

Ask volunteers to put up posters and flyers at work, in supermarkets, community centres, libraries, sports centres, schools, clubs etc. Do something to grab people's attention; it really can be as simple as using coloured paper.

Keep your messages short and sweet. Be clear in your marketing and publicity what you are raising funds for, but remember potential attendees will not read pages and pages of text. If you are raising money for something in particular, a new office or shelter, then all the money raised will have to be spent on what you tell people you will spend it on.

Write and send a news release about your event to a wide range of media outlets such as community newspapers, national papers, radio stations and local television news. Contact these agencies and find out the name of reporter who covers 'animal or environmental' issues or local events. Sending your new release to a reporter who is interested or specialises in the topic will mean greater success.

Send your news release to this person and then follow it up with a phone call within 24-hours of sending. This will give you the opportunity to discuss the reporter's interest and possibly lead to further opportunities such as photos or coverage of your event.

Depending on the size of your event, it is a good idea to publicise the event 4-6 weeks before the day. But maintain the promotion of your event right up until the day.

## Legalities

Depending on the type of event that you are planning to organise or where you are going to hold it, you may need to get official permission or a particular licence. You should investigate this at the outset as you do not want to risk investing money and sending out invitations if your event will be cancelled before it starts. Raffles can be considered a gambling activity and subject to strict guidelines – ensure you check any such regulations.

## Insurance

Check insurance requirements and ensure you have adequate insurance. Events such as art exhibitions and concerts might require additional cover.

## Risk assessment

This is where you try and think about absolutely anything and everything that could go wrong and work out solutions. The chances are that you won't need to employ your worse case scenario contingency plans; however it is always better to be prepared. The fact that you provided shelter for your guests when it unexpectedly poured down with rain at your summer outdoor concert is much better than guests getting wet and leaving early, because you hadn't thought about it.

## Final check list

Prepare a checklist and ensure that everything is in place. Do not leave anything to chance.

Check that you have enough volunteers to help on the day. Check that they know what their jobs are and re-confirm their commitment to help. Don't forget to thank them after the event.

Ensure that all equipment and needed items are at your venue or at a central collection point the day before the event. Do not rely on people to drop things off or collect items on the day. Ensure that you have everything you need: a TV, video, CD player, microphone etc.

Ensure you have somewhere safe to keep the money you raise. If you are collecting money, do you have someone to witness you counting it?

If you have animals attending your event, ensure that there are adequate water provisions and bowls for them. You may also need to supply 'poop scoops and bags' or have a notice asking people to clean up after their dog. On-leash signs are also useful at events that have animals in attendance as this can reduce the chance of canine chaos!

On the day, arrive at your event early to ensure everything is in place. Enjoy your day and remember to acknowledge those who have either sponsored the event or have given up their time to help.

## Follow up after the event

Follow-up is an important aspect to any event, and will ensure that your community, volunteers and sponsors will work with you again. Write a letter of thanks to everyone involved. Tell them that without their generosity of time, money or goods your event would not have been the success that it was. Let them know what you were able to achieve and what this will mean directly to the animals. It's a good idea to follow up with your local media and thank them for their support. A little thank you can go a long way and people like to know that they have helped to make a difference.

## Case Study

### Queensland RSPCA

The Million Paws Walk was inaugurated in Queensland in 1994. The idea came from Dr Cam Day, who was the RSPCA Queensland Operations Manager and Veterinarian at that time.

Dr Day believed a special event involving animals of all types walking together could provide a fun day out for pets and their owners, while promoting responsible pet ownership and raising much needed funds for the RSPCA.

Dr Day's vision for the Million Paws Walk was that it would one day become a national event for animals and their 'families', with one million paws walking together - belonging to 250,000 animals.

The first Million Paws Walk was held in Brisbane's New Farm Park in October 1994 as the main focus of Pet Week celebrations. The major sponsor was Hills Science Diet, beginning a tradition that continues to this day. In that inaugural event, five hundred people took their dogs and cats for a stroll around suburban streets, the owners gathered sponsorship for their pets, and the event raised almost \$10,000 for the RSPCA.

In following years the event grew, and began to be held in other towns in Queensland and then in other states across Australia. By 2006 there were more than 70 walks around the country and every state and territory of Australia participated, with around 45,000 people and 31,000 animals taking part. And for the first time in 2007, the Million Paws Walk went international with walks being held all over New Zealand.

Dr Cam Day, who is no longer working for the RSPCA, is still heavily involved in the Million Paws Walk and is its proud and enthusiastic Brisbane compere each year.

## Sample Events Plan

Date	Action	By Whom	Done?	Results?
03 Mar – 07 Mar	Notify staff needed			
	Decision made on the budget and the theme of event			
10 Mar – 14 Mar	Write and agree budget			
	Select venue and choose date			
17 Mar – 21 Mar	Find sponsor - will there be one?			
24 Mar – 28 Mar	Check stationery stock			
31 Mar - 4 Apr	Draw up an invitation list			
7 Apr - 11 Apr	Write invitation letter and design response forms			
14 Apr – 18 Apr	Compile invitation list, set up mail merge and print invites			
	<b>MAIL INVITES</b>			
21 Apr – 25 Apr	Send out extra invites if necessary			
28 Apr – 02 May	Book in briefing, preparation time, speech writing if needed			
	Allocate time in staff and volunteer diaries			
02 May – 05 May	Write and send news release			
	Contact reporters and the media			
05 May - 09 May	Deadline for responses from attendees			
	Contact key individuals to ensure attendance			
	Prepare profiles of important attendance			
12 May – 16 May	Follow up calls to non responders if necessary			
19 May - 23 May	Send maps, if needed, and confirmation to guests			
	Confirm staff needed			
	Write staff briefing			
	Write presentations and speeches			
	Finish profiles			
26 Apr – 30 May	Verbal briefing for staff on the schedule			
	Re-contact reporters and media			
	Prepare all documentation and equipment to take to event			
02 Jun	Day of event			
08 Jun	Thank staff, volunteers, donors, key attendees, media etc.			

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