



British Columbia
Museums Association
SINCE 1957

Best Practices Module

GRANTMANSHIP AND FUNDRAISING

**Prepared By: Alecia Greenfield
(This and That Consulting)**



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Suite 204, 26 Bastion Square, Victoria, B.C. V8W 1H9
www.museumsassn.bc.ca

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The BC Museums Association gratefully acknowledges the financial assistance granted by the Government of Canada, through the Department of Canadian Heritage under the "Canadian Arts and Heritage Sustainability Program (CAHSP) - Capacity Building Component for Heritage Organizations.



Introduction

While it is easy to get caught up in our work, our project, our point of view, the most important part of fundraising is successfully listening to a potential donors' reasons for giving. It could be that they want positive publicity, to build community, or to preserve pieces of their past (museums and art galleries can do that and more). It is essential to find out why they are thinking of giving and talk to their needs, not yours.

Because people and organizations who give have usually thought about what they want, they often have created a series of "rules" around their giving. Follow the rules. The questions they are asking might not give a perfect picture of the museum's project, but the questions themselves will provide a great outline of what funders want and need.

Once it is established that the project or organization can match the needs of a donor, sponsor or granting agency, show your passion. Museums and art galleries are doing the work of creating the type of society we all want to live in and your cultural institution is offering that donor the opportunity to share in the great work you do! Let your passion show.

Then, remember there are people on the receiving end of your request. Their desks are just as messy with unfinished work as yours. Try to get to know them as individuals. The person you share your plans with can also get excited about the project and can often provide suggestions about how to make a better proposal or hints on how to improve a project. Remember as you start this relationship, you need to speak to their needs.



Tips and Traps of Fundraising

Tips

Follow the instructions. Potential funders go through piles of letters, applications and requests. If they give you instructions, they do so for a reason. Not following those instructions is annoying and not a good start.

Keep it simple. Don't make funders dig for the point. If you want \$1,000 by April for an exhibit, say so first and then go into details about who you are and why it's important.

A picture is worth a thousand words. Happy children, exciting train wrecks or a fantastic picture of a company's logo being examined by potential customers helps motivate your busy funder to read on.

Only promise what you can deliver. We can all think about enticing additions to our core program. The Premier might come to the opening, or the award winning local artist might design the logo. Until you are 110% certain you can deliver, don't promise.

Traps

What is the return on investment? If you spend 160 hours creating a dinner dance and silent auction to fund the restoration of an artifact and only raise enough money to fund 100 hours of restoration work, was it worth it? Same with soliciting sponsorship. You could spend 10 hours costing \$200 working with one potential partner for a one time \$50 donation. Make sure you know a donation is worth it before you get too far in.

Do you really want to do that job? Your top priority might be creating a new exhibit, but you can only find funding for digitizing the old exhibit. Be sure you are really ready to change priorities. On the other hand, if you do get that \$500 to do a Canada Day celebration, but all the staff and volunteers would rather be at the park with their families, it might not be worth it. Be sure you have the right resources available.

Is your whole organization as excited about the job as you are? On paper, it seems so easy to create an exhibit about communications in the North and you get all fired up. Your passion shows and you get the grant. Now you have to do the exhibit and it turns out you are the only person in your organization who is at all excited. You can spend a lot of weekends on your own putting the exhibit altogether. Be very certain the whole organization wants to pitch in.



Donations

(Donations refers to the contribution of money by private individuals who voluntarily give to your organization, project or event)

Across Canada the group that gives the most are private individuals or families. This is great news, because it means you probably already know a few potential donors and a little alarming because now you actually have to go ask them for money.

TIP:

Stop thinking that you have to beg for money. Consider this: your potential donor wants to make a difference in the world and you are gift-wrapping that opportunity for them.

TIP:

*When donors are asked why they did not give, the most common answer is, **THEY WERE NOT ASKED!** Asking is not begging, so make sure you **ASK!***

Identifying Targets (Who do you ask?)

Friendraising

Start close to home, with your board, your members and your volunteers. If they won't invest (as they are able) reconsider your project. If the group that is most passionate about your work won't give ten bucks, you might need to reassess the project. Starting close to home also creates an opportunity to practice your pitch.

TIP:

I have a couple of groups that I present to first. They tell me what worked, what didn't, and how to do better next time. Then, because they are friends of the museum, they often donate.

Work with your board, members and volunteers to find more people who would like to contribute. They are probably the best source for like-minded, interested donors. Then just like you would follow up in a friendship, follow up with your potential donors. For this reason many successful fundraisers call fundraising "friend raising".

Formal Networking

This is all those chamber of commerce lunches, tourism gatherings and city council wine and cheeses. Nope, you are probably not going to get as much cash out of these folks as with your "friends," mostly because this group is asked by absolutely everyone. But this is a great group to know because they are probably sitting on the local granting committees and they probably know someone who would like to make their mark in the world by contributing to your project. But, they will need to trust you to treat their friends well.



Donations, cont'd...

Writing the letter

You talked to your board and asked them to support the project. They all contributed \$20 dollars. You and your board member sat down with a friend and pitched the project. They're interested! So are a couple volunteers. Now you need to give them something. Write a letter. Make it short and to the point. If possible add pictures, draw one if necessary, and ask for what you want.

Stewardship of donors

Success! The organization now has an established group of "friends" that it can ask for money. How do you manage that donor? The same way you would manage a friendship, on an individual basis. Get to know them. Everyone gets thank-you cards and most people want to be invited, even if they do not choose to attend. Then some friends want to know what's going on (a brief email to let them know how the project is going) while others want to have a big plaque on a prominent wall recognizing their contribution. Some friends want to be asked for little bits a couple times a year (imagine a board member); others want to contribute, but don't want to feel you are dependant – so ask every couple years (imagine a prominent local family). Take some time to remember your donors' individual needs.

Just like with a friend, it is thrilling to see a note in the mail, but the friendship is based on personal contact. It is NOT enough to send out letters about your project and see what the wind brings in. Your friends and potential friends want to see you. They want to visit. They want to tell you a little about themselves as well as hear about you. At the very least call, but it is much better to go and talk to them. If you find this intimidating consider this: would you rather balance the checkbook or sit down and have a visit with someone who is doing something really neat! Even if they don't choose to support your project at this time, that visit was infinitely more fun than the filing they might have done otherwise). An additional bonus to the visit approach is that the next project you bring to them, you'll know them well enough to know they'll love it.



Sponsorship

(Sponsorship refers to the contribution made by companies that give to your organization, project or event in return for a specified activity such as an advertising opportunity).

Unlike asking a donor (person) for money asking for sponsorship is asking a company for money. A company has specific needs. Most are business related, i.e. raising awareness of that business in the community or making the companies employees and clients happy. It is important to know the donor's needs.

Identifying Targets

Again, start with your friends and the companies that your board, volunteers and members own, work for or with. Branch out to the companies your museum or art gallery does business with, your bank, your construction company, your uniform provider.

Know what you can offer in return for their support

Once you have identified who you will offer the amazing opportunity of sponsoring your event to, identify what you can offer them. Could you give them free passes to your museum, to your gallery opening, to a special lecture? Could you name the event after them, name the building after them, or name the lunch after them? Then group what you can offer into packages and offer that to sponsors. Remember to consider time limits. A million dollars might be worth changing the name of your main gallery, but it might be \$500 every year for their logo to be shown prominently on your program. Clearly communicate your limits. For \$2,500 the sponsor will be hung on your sponsors wall for one year and get a private rental of the main gallery, but they will need to find and pay for their own caterer.

TIP:

Many of these same privileges may be of value to your donors.



Grants

(A formal process where people or companies let you know how to ask for their money and fulfill requests in order to provide organizational support).

Some people and companies are committed to giving so much money towards creating a better world that they have created a formalized process ie the granting process. This process ensures their needs are met and they do not have to sift through too many exciting projects that do not meet their objectives.

Finding Grants

Starting Local

Your city and regional district have grants. Ask someone you know at your city or district offices, or check out their web page. You can get to know these granters and probably should. Ask around. In your region, there are probably a few other museums, art galleries and other successful cultural organizations. Ask what grants they apply for. Ask them what they think might meet your projects needs. Yes, grants are a competitive process. If the museum next door does not feel comfortable helping, call up a similar organization in a different area. For example, the Railway and Forestry Museum in Prince George could talk to the Railway Museum in Squamish.

The Internet

The Internet has lists of granting agencies (see Resources for lists). When looking at lists of grants consider two traps. One, it is easy to spend a lot of time collecting options and not have enough time to write them. And, two, that foundation in Toronto is easy to ask because their rejection means nothing to you, but it is equally easy for them to reject you because they don't know you. That said, your project may perfectly fit the mandate of some far off foundation and the Internet allows you to find that fit.

Purchased Resources

Beyond the publicly available Internet lists, there are some groups that make a living by finding all granting agencies and providing up-to-date contact information. BIG Online is an example. They do make the search easy. However, you still need to sit down and spend the hours making "the ask". Your chance of success is infinitely better if you can get to know who you are asking, even just a little bit.



Grants, cont'd...

Writing Grants

First, read the objectives. If your organization or project does not fit the objectives, STOP. Next, read the instructions. If your organization or project does not fit the instructions, i.e. they want you to have half the cash and three partners and you don't yet, STOP.

Next, follow the instructions. The best way to start is at the beginning. Let the process guide you. The granter has set up a process for finding out what they want to know. Answer their questions. If you are having difficulties finding the right words, pretend you are talking to a friend and answering their questions. Once you have written the whole thing like you were talking to a friend, go back and edit it to make sure it is what you want to say in public. Double check your answers to the grant's objectives. Make sure you have explained how this project meets their criteria. Then read the whole thing to a friend and make sure your project shines.

TIP:

If your project really fits the granters' objectives than the granting process will probably help your project sound really good. If the questions asked by the granting agency do not allow you to make your project make sense (they keep asking how the children will be active and you keep wanting to answer that the seniors will be very artistic) then re-read the objectives and make sure they match your project.

A Picture is worth a thousand words

Maybe the grant doesn't ask specifically for pictures. You can still add a covering page, or add pictures between questions.

Asking for help

Asking for help can be good first step in establishing a relationship. Assuming you have read the application process and your project clearly fits with the objectives, call and (very) briefly explain your project. Confirm that the project fits with the criteria. Explain that you have read the application and it makes sense (or ask for clarification) and then ask if there is anything else you should know. The staff person collecting and verifying your application then has a chance to hear your enthusiasm and to offer any advice they may have. All sorts of helpful hints can come your way or, worse case, the busy staff person has no comments and quickly ends the conversation, so they can get on with their busy day.

Sending it in

That busy staff person is going to be tasked with verifying your application. Send it in all at once, so they do not have to collect pieces here and there (i.e. have all your letters of support included). Send it in on time, so that your request gets added to the right pile.

TIP:

Know and respect all the deadlines. The deadlines for a letter of intent, for your application and for your final report are all important.



Events

(You can create an event or product that can be sold to raise revenue for your organization).

Many associate fundraising with an annual ball, a charity auction or the sale of cookie dough in schools. This can be an effective way of raising both money and awareness of your organization.

Types of events

An annual golf tournament, a pledged read-a-thon or a lecture series are all examples of types of events. This list of what you can do is almost endless. The difference between this and your regular events is that you are committed to doing this event because you plan to raise money.

A great plan

Essential to the success of an event fundraiser is great planning. Most of these events only make money if you do a lot of the fundraising before hand. For example, a golf tournament where you have to pay the green fees for the day, pay for all the hole prizes, and pay for all the advertising will not make the same amount of money for your project as one that has had advertising, green fees and prizes donated.

Know your outcomes

It is possible to spend an alarming amount of time and money on an event fundraiser and then be surprised that it raises very little money. Work out the whole process on paper and make sure it works in theory. Then, if you cannot match your goals, do not be afraid to stop. If your formal ball plan requires that the ballroom and catering be donated and they are not donated, do not assume you can make the money up elsewhere.

Stop

Be clear on the difference between the activities you do to celebrate culture and the activities you do to fundraise. Our goal is to celebrate culture. If you can raise the money you need by asking the friends of the organization for donations, you might not need to put together that charity auction and softball tournament. Instead, put your energy into the best possible gallery exhibit, event or other core activity.

Other

What else we do for money?

Museums and art galleries also run gift shops, rent out our halls and boardrooms, and sell our expertise to create more revenue opportunities. There can be great opportunities to expand revenue without creating dependencies on fickle friends. However, like events, these activities can accidentally take many more hours and resources than they return. Have a great plan and be clear on your goals. For more information see *Revenue Generation (Creating Profit Centres)* by David Hall, another BCMA Best Practices guide.



Conclusion

Stop worrying that you need to learn more and more about fundraising. You won't get any money reading another book about how to write a grant. At some point you have to jump in. Go to a funding agency's web page and read a). are you eligible b). how to apply and c). follow those instructions and give it a try. Then, either enjoy your success, or call them up and learn about how to do a better job next time.

Keep in mind the biggest single source of cultural funds are private donors. Start with the people who are already your "friends:" your board, volunteers and members. Develop and expand these relationships like a circle of friends. Treat your donors with the same courtesies of your friendships, write thank-you cards, call them up and keep them up to date on your activities and ask them about theirs. Share your passion about arts, culture and heritage, but then listen to their wants and needs to ensure a long-term friendship.

And have fun. Just like your friends are excited to hear about your latest personal project, your organizations' projects are exciting additions to the community. That potential donor is lucky to have the opportunity to work with you to make it happen!



Resources

General

Ilona Bray, *Effective Fundraising for Non Profits: Real World Strategies that Work*, 2005
An American book, but clear and easy to read.

Charity Village

A little bit of everything, grant writing, sponsorship, asking for donations. Easy to look up your special interest.

See: <http://www.charityvillage.com/cv/research/rfundraising.asp>

Fundraising Events

A complete description of fundraising events and how to's.

See: <http://www.canadianheritage.gc.ca/progs/pc-cp/pubs/e/Specev1.htm>

Grant Writing

A concise guide with a lot more detail.

See: www.npguides.org/guide

Grant Lists

(Start her, but make sure to contact the organizations and ensure information is up-to-date):

Culture, Heritage and Recreation, Government of Canada

See: www.culturecanada.gc.ca/museums.cfm

Heritage Resources Online

See: <http://www.nwheritage.org/heritagesite/links/heritageResourcesOnline.htm#grants>

Heritage Links, Funding Sources

See: <http://www.heritagecanada.org/eng/links/fund.html>

Civic Info BC

See: <http://www.civicinfo.bc.ca/18.asp>

Agencies

The BC Arts Council supports arts and culture in BC. These programs include an operating assistance program, project assistance program, touring assistance program, arts awards for individuals, and a sustainability program. Within each of these programs there are various individual grants available. The Council has specific programs for museums as well as numerous "Arts" programs that may also be applicable.

See: www.canadacouncil.ca/grants



Resources, cont'd...

The Direct Access Grant Program is a BC government program that provides grants to eligible organizations with funds from government gaming revenues. Direct Access grants provide funding to eligible non-profit organizations for direct delivery to their communities of approved, ongoing programs. The Arts, Culture and Sport sectors are one of the designated topic areas that may apply for funding.

See: www.pssg.gov.bc.ca/gaming/grants/index.htm

The BC Arts Renaissance Fund, administered by the Vancouver Foundation, is a program assisting British Columbia's non-profit arts and culture organizations to build permanent endowment funds by providing matching grants.

See: <http://www.vancouverfoundation.bc.ca/GrantInformation/BCRF/BCRF.shtml>

The Medici Fund, administered by the Vancouver Foundation, is a program to assist arts and culture to develop internal abilities, i.e. fundraising.

See: <http://www.vancouverfoundation.bc.ca/GrantInformation/GrantInformation.shtml>

ArtsNow, this may not support your latest project but if you are looking to create long-term expertise within your organization this is a program to look at.

See: <http://www.2010legaciesnow.com/Content/ArtsNow/Arts%20Now%20Home.asp>

