

Explained in 60 Seconds: Getting Started in Fundraising for Astronomy Outreach

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COVID-19 has seen significant shifts in the funding landscape, with resources diverted towards fighting the global pandemic. While this can be challenging, it also presents an opportunity for new initiatives and existing organisations to reassess their goals and priorities, seek new partners and build towards sustainability. We explore some top tips on how to maximise your chances of success.¹

Vision and Mission

Take time to review your vision, mission and goals. What is your purpose? What is your organisation here to achieve? Who are the key stakeholders you need to involve in this? Who are the partners you can collaborate with? Look at long-term objectives over a series of five to ten years and move away from short term objectives. Be mission driven and not donor driven.

Organisation Message

Once you've identified where you want to go, develop your strategy and write your Theory of Change and Case for Support. Identify the problem, the solution and where your organisation fits into delivering that solution.

- Develop appropriate communication channels such as social media or videos; get creative
- Be sure you're ready to persuade people in a couple of minutes or even less!

Telescope vs Impact

In fundraising, we have what we call the minibus analogy: 'why will no-one fund my minibus?'; let's replace that with a telescope. Think about the impact that telescope creates. What does it do? Why is it necessary? It could boost science education for children, encourage girls

into STEM, help combat science denial or improve education outcomes, leading to higher levels of employability.

Impact needs to be front and centre of your message. A set of numbers on how many people you've reached, or events held, isn't what donors are looking for. Have these actions led to behaviour change? Use a framework to help you identify and measure your impact. The UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)² are the best known and most recognised by funders, and you can use the SDG indicators to help you understand how you can contribute not just to global efforts, but at a national and regional level as well.

Be Strategic, Not Transactional

Fundraising in itself is a transaction, a mechanism. Raising money is not the purpose of your organisation. Fundraising is one means among many to help you achieve your vision and should align with your goals. There are some common traps, such as assuming companies are generous donors. They aren't. Move away from short-term funding cycles by looking at the range of financing options which work to strengthen your vision. Consider whether you can earn your own income and look at social enterprise models. Build relationships with other nonprofit organisations. Look to the people you already have. Major donor fundraising is possible and powerful, but will take time. Crowdfunding and movement building are excellent ways to engage your community. For larger trusts and foundations, identify ways they can invest in your organisation so you can then build your sustainability in the longer-term.

Takeaways

- Can you earn your own income? Diversify income across a range of sources

- Look to your existing networks and donors first for support. They are far more likely to give to you. 'Cold' recruitment of donors is much more difficult
- Always assume people don't know what you're talking about! Be sure to explain the 'why' of what you're doing and the change that will effect
- People give to people! Through influencing, the money will come

Notes

¹ To learn more, view the IAU-OAD fundraising webinar (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nA12KsdsXhU>) and the CAP Conference 2021's oral presentation on fundraising (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y-rYgR6ZZ6i4>).

² UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>