



Right on the Money

How to keep the doors
of your nonprofit
organization open in good
times and bad.





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Financial Management

Facing the Economic Downturn Head-on

In the midst of widespread panic about the economy comes some measured advice for nonprofit managers. In an on-demand webinar Hilda Polanco, managing director of Fiscal Management Associates, and Kristin Giantris, vice president of Nonprofit Finance Fund, outline practical steps for surviving these trying times. They say nonprofit leaders can take action in the following ways:

- Know how much cash, credit and savings the organization has.
- Talk regularly to their bankers.
- Prioritize programs based on how well they match the nonprofit's mission and how much income they generate.
- Consider ways to partner with other groups to consolidate programs or reduce administrative costs.

“Current times have called for drastic changes in our strategic and everyday action plans,” says Polanco.

The webinar—originally a workshop sponsored by the Clark, Robin Hood and Tiger foundations—is accompanied by a host of tools, including a recession checklist, a list of questions to discuss with bankers and strategies for cutting costs.

The webinar is available on the Fiscal Management Associates website (<http://www.fma.online.net>). The Nonprofit Finance Fund also offers a guide to navigating the recession on its website (<http://nonprofitfinancefund.org>).

Staying on Course Amid the Recession

Nonprofits and charities, particularly those that assist hard-hit youth and families, continue to face the challenge of serving more people while bringing in fewer dollars. A November 2008 online survey by the Bridgespan Group, a consulting source for nonprofits, found that nearly all of their more than 100 respondents had already seen a simultaneous decrease in gifts and increase in community need; the Community Foundation of Utah, in a yearlong survey of the state's nonprofits, has found that the same concerns still loom large a year later.

A new year presents a fresh opportunity for youth-serving organizations to reassess their priorities, infrastructure and preparedness for tough economic times, says Fraser Nelson, president of the Utah Nonprofits Association and executive director of the Community Foundation of Utah. "Corporate and individual giving has been down but will recover with the economy," she says. "But foundations award grants and other assistance on a rolling, more long-term basis, so directors need to be thinking creatively about what's likely to be a decline in foundation giving over the next two years."

Nelson gives the following advice for ensuring that your organization stays afloat as the economy continues to recover:

Reassert your core mission—serving youth and families. Above all, Nelson says to stay focused on helping the families and youth who need your organization. "Find efficiencies, be sure to document them and always be looking for new ones," she says.

Cut programs strategically. Nelson advises managers and board members to "cut entire programs that are less impactful" rather than making sweeping, across-the-board cuts. She adds that this can be a good time for boards to focus their goals on the biggest needs—say, lowering their community's runaway youth population or assisting adolescent mothers. Boards should make sure to communicate any changes in programming to donors.

Embrace collaboration. Nonprofits are collaborating more than ever before, says Nelson, and that will only continue. "We may see more shared office space and administrative staff—like accounting, human resources and marketing—because it helps everyone to combine forces." Engage other youth- and family-serving organizations in shared buying strategies, even for little things like office supplies, which add up. Consolidating helps save money.

Establish a savings plan. Among the community foundation's most startling discoveries was the fact that 35 percent of Utah nonprofits have no savings at all: 26 percent never had savings to begin with, while 9 percent have depleted the ones they had. Nelson stresses the value of establishing endowments if possible, to safeguard organizations' finances against the economy's ups and downs.

Tough Times Mean Belt Tightening for Youth Programs

In spring 2009, Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Washington, in Silver Spring, Md., was staring at a \$7 million deficit, declining membership and outdated facilities. To stay afloat, the organization began the arduous task of making cuts to staff, programs and services.

In the end, the group changed its business model so it could focus less on repairing roofs and more on serving young people. Clubs were closed, buildings sold and services moved into schools and recreation centers. The 100 programs the organization operated were trimmed to 25.

In addition, senior staff took 10 percent pay cuts, some employees were laid off and other staff took furloughs.

Like Washington's Boys & Girls Clubs, many youth-serving agencies are facing thorny decisions about what to cut when ends don't meet.

"What worked for us is that we always stayed mission-focused," says Leah Lamb, the clubs' chief development officer. "We put together a restructure plan that focuses on freeing up resources to reach more youth in the future."

In addition, the organization used the following principles to guide the process:

Involve everyone. "This was not a top-down process by any means," Lamb says. Staff from all over the organization were kept informed and allowed input. Clearly, morale is an issue, so making decisions inclusively is instrumental, she says.

Check the balance sheet. Financial statements not only help organizations decide which programs best fit their missions, they also serve as a crucial tool for communication with board members, staff and donors. Moreover, analyzing statements can give executives a clear sense of where costs are getting out of control and help organizations change their practices to meet emerging needs. Well-funded programs could be streamlined to make room for new programs. Or managers might determine the costs of running a program are too great given its outcomes or the number of youth being served.

Aim for measurable results. Lamb says every cut made had to be justified in terms of the net effects it would have on the organization's mission and how many youth would be served. With the goal of striving for higher-quality programs, the groups' leaders devised a number of measures each program would have to meet to be retained.

Avoid knee-jerk decision making. Taking the long view helps leaders avoid succumbing to "the sky is falling" mentality and making cuts that will ultimately undermine the organization's future.

At the same time, don't delay decisions. It's easy to make the mistake of waiting for more information before making the difficult decision to slash a program. In a crisis, a group's leaders ultimately have to pick the best moment to *decide*.

Keep an eye on the future. A healthy nonprofit sets aside reserves, diversifies its funding sources and builds long-term relationships with community partners and donors. And from each crisis, it learns to operate more efficiently to be prepared for the next storm.

Preventing ‘Mission Drift’

When Huckleberry Youth Programs in San Francisco lost state funding for a mental health program for youth in crisis, the organization’s first reaction was panic. The group’s leaders felt they needed to save the program at any cost, even though it was serving fewer and fewer teens.

“Instead of evaluating why the program was not useful to a broader range of clients in need, HYP patched together different streams of funding to keep paying the therapist and supporting the small number of clients still using the program,” says Bruce Rice, Huckleberry’s fiscal director.

The financial scramble led to a realization: Supporting the dwindling program at the expense of other programs was not in line with the organization’s mission to fully support underserved youth. In the end, Huckleberry cut the program.

Rice calls what happened “mission drift,” a situation in which a charity strays from its fundamental purpose. Any nonprofit responding to a budget crisis, deciding whether to cut or keep a troubled program, or launching a new initiative can face the possibility of mission drift. Each of these situations requires youth-serving agencies to ponder two basic questions: “Who are our clients and how can we best serve them?”

Recognizing mission drift is the first step to avoiding it. In addition, Rice has the following advice:

“If no one talks about it, it’s not a focus.” Don’t let your mission slip out of view. At program, management and board meetings, always ask how each decision will impact the community, whether it meets the needs of the community, and how it fits into your overall mission.

Know your community. Stay on top of the most pressing issues by hiring staff representative of the community of underserved youth and talking regularly with community leaders, youth and families.

Reach out to other charities. Seek the opinions of other nonprofit leaders to gain fresh perspectives on your challenges. And partner with them to bring your combined expertise to community problems, rather than trying to do more than you’re equipped to do.

Decisions can’t be reduced to formulas. Each organization is as unique as the community it serves. If a funder requires you to deliver services in a way that doesn’t fit your community, propose an alternative and explain why it might make more sense.

Know when to stray. Rice says that in certain cases, modifying your mission—and making the reason for doing so clear to your staff and community—can be the best way to respond to new problems.

“During the early days of the AIDS epidemic, there was nothing in HYP’s mission at the time about adolescent HIV prevention, a rising need in the community,” he says. Huckleberry hired a residential counselor who was HIV positive and used a Centers for Disease Control and Prevention grant to open an HIV clinic and peer education program for teens.

You Get What You Pay for When You Hire a Volunteer Coordinator

Each year, hundreds of volunteer tutors, trainers, fundraisers, painters, handypersons and gardeners keep programs running smoothly and facilities in tip-top shape at Project for Pride in Living, a social service agency in Minneapolis, MN.

That donated time is worth a lot to PPL: about \$21 an hour per volunteer, according to a recent estimate of the value of volunteer time in Minnesota. But while the pro bono services of neighbors can save youth-serving organizations money, volunteers can also drain staff time and energy or drop out because they don't feel appreciated.

To get around those problems, many charities turn to paid volunteer coordinators. Managing all the helping hands at PPL takes not one but two full-time staff members. In consultation with program staff, they determine what support departments need, then recruit, train and assign volunteers.

“Our staff wouldn't be able to [manage a volunteer program] and serve people at the level they're serving them at without coordinators,” says Laura Bohlen, who oversees PPL's AmeriCorps and youth-program volunteers.

Coordinators also keep volunteers from feeling like they've been thrown to the wolves. “Many of them have never worked with youth before or they have but in different capacities,” says Sara Iragorri, who manages special events and communications at the Mentoring Partnership of New York and serves on the New York Association for Volunteer Administration's board. A volunteer manager, she says, has interviewed every volunteer, knows each one's skill set, and can place them in (and train them for) the position that best enables them to forward the organization's mission.

If you're starting a formal volunteer program, hiring a coordinator is a good first step. Here are some key qualifications and skills to look for:

Knowledge of and experience with nonprofits and volunteering. Volunteer coordinators need a good grounding in the values and budget constraints of the nonprofit world. Coordinators also must understand what fulfills volunteers and gets them to stick with an organization. Bohlen, who served in AmeriCorps, suggests looking for a veteran of charity work, volunteering or national service.

Communication and customer service skills. A volunteer coordinator must make your cause known and win over potential volunteers, who may also be future donors or board members. Ask yourself of candidates, “Are they someone you'd want to use as your face for the organization?” Iragorri says. A candidate who speaks eloquently and listens well during the job interview, calls or e-mails to follow up and has experience working with a wide range of people likely has the skills to be a good volunteer coordinator, she says. Coordinators have to be attentive to the needs of volunteers and staff, respond promptly to e-mails and phone calls, resolve disputes and make time for volunteers when they just want to talk.

Events planning experience. Coordinators plan happy hours to recruit volunteers and awards luncheons to thank them. Look for someone who has planned large and small events and managed committees.

Training experience. Volunteers who receive proper training and orientation from the get-go are more likely to stay on, Iragorri says. And training guarantees that volunteers, like staff, give families and youth

the highest level of service. Look for someone who has teaching, curriculum design, training or public speaking experience and is comfortable designing and running training sessions that last anywhere from an hour to several days.

You'll find Independent Sector's estimates of the value of volunteer time nationwide and in each state at http://www.independentsector.org/volunteer_time. A sample job description is at http://www.ehow.com/facts_5188182_volunteer-coordinator-position-description.html.

Fundraising 101

Knowing Your Organization's Needs Key to Fundraising

With rare exception, nonprofit organizations of all stripes have to raise money to keep their operations going and to fulfill their missions. But rather than build a strategy linked to their missions, many nonprofit leaders mistakenly see fundraising as an end in and of itself, says Justin Pollock, managing director of programs at the Maryland Association of Nonprofit Organizations.

“Oftentimes people will come in and kind of jump the gun, wanting to raise money before they’ve done their own needs assessment,” Pollock says. Taking stock of the resources a nonprofit needs to function effectively not only informs fundraising planning, he says, but also can strengthen the fundraiser’s pitch. You can say that \$1,000 will help start a much-needed GED program or pay for a new training program for volunteer mentors.

Pollock suggests taking the following steps to assess a charity’s needs and begin drafting a fundraising strategy:

Start with your board. It’s their responsibility to ensure your organization has the money, supplies, people and other resources it needs to fulfill its mission. For that reason, board members ideally should take the lead in identifying the charity’s needs and deciding how to meet them.

Consider the three types of resources. Every nonprofit needs goods, services and cash to run, Pollock says. Make a list of the things your program or organization requires. For instance, an after-school arts program would want to itemize what supplies, facilities, staff and insurance it needs and how much all of that will cost.

Think about what you can get “in kind.” There are a lot of things nonprofits might not have to pay for, if they get creative about it, Pollock says. For instance, that same after-school program could approach an art store about donating supplies, ask teachers or parents to volunteer and look for someone who wants to donate a used van to transport students to and from activities.

Figure out how much cash you need. Even with many generous in-kind donations, you’ll most likely need cash to pay salaries and utility bills and to fill up that van with gas. Simply put, Pollock says, “The gap between what you can get in kind and what you need is your fundraising goal.”

Devise a strategy. Think about who can help you, either as partners (volunteers, clients and board members who might tell your story, make connections or ask for contributions) or as funders (government agencies and local foundations, businesses and community members, including your board). Will individuals have an interest in your mission? (If your organization directly serves youth and families, the answer is likely yes.) In addition to raising money, are there ways the organization can earn income, such as charging sliding-scale membership fees or starting an odd-job service that employs clients? One fundraising pitfall to avoid, Pollock says, is relying on a sole source of funding, such as a single government or foundation grant that may run out.

Get Your Board to Lead the Way on Fundraising

David Sternberg, a fundraising consultant and author of “Fearless Fundraising for Nonprofit Boards,” has a simple message for nonprofit leaders in search of new funding sources.

“Most of the money that goes to nonprofits comes from people,” he says, not from governments, foundations or corporations. To build those relationships, charities should tap a built-in fundraising team: their boards.

“People give money when they are individually asked and have personal connections,” Sternberg says. “The only way to stay competitive and raise money is to have a board that’s engaged in the process.”

Board members should work together to identify potential donors and organize charitable events like parties or dinners, as well as raise money on their own. Sternberg suggests the following steps to making a charity’s board its best fundraising asset:

Structure the board to encourage fundraising. Sternberg recommends that every board have three committees: a governance committee, a finance or audit committee and a fundraising committee. Part of the last group’s role is to ensure that the entire board—not just the fundraising committee—has philanthropic assignments, he says, such as helping to identify and approach prospective donors. With the right structure in place, ask the board to make fundraising a priority. Start by winning over one or two influential board members; then initiate a discussion with the others about the organization’s needs and the role board members could play.

Recruit board members committed to philanthropy. Sternberg suggests asking current board members to list their personal connections to potential sources of philanthropy, whether individuals, foundations or corporations. He also recommends meeting with the boards and CEOs of other nonprofits and asking for their help pinpointing potential board members. Perusing the board and donor lists in the annual reports of other charities is also a good start. Set expectations for new and returning board members and ensure that everyone understands their roles. Create a board member job description that includes both giving and getting financial contributions. (You’ll find a sample on the website <http://non-profit-governance.suite101.com>.)

Train board members in the basics of fundraising and support their efforts. Board members should receive training on such topics as how to ask for gifts, how to identify potential donors, how to give an elevator pitch and how to be comfortable in the role of fundraiser. Finally, ensure that they have the staff assistance they need. For instance, help them prepare for meetings with potential donors, brief them about prospects’ interests and backgrounds, and accompany them on visits, if they request it. (For information about where to find training, contact your state’s nonprofit association, which you can find at <http://www.councilofnonprofits.org/salocator>.)

Diversify, Diversify, Diversify

When youth-serving organizations rely on just one source of funding, they can find themselves at risk during tough economic times. “An organization must diversify its funding streams in order to survive and thrive,” says Ann McCaw, principal consultant at One Bright Bird Consulting, which advises nonprofit organizations on fundraising. “No donor will be around forever.”

In addition, McCaw says, donors—whether foundation, government or individual—often put restrictions on how an organization spends its money. “The more different kinds of donors you have, the more flexibility you have in how you spend those precious dollars,” she says. “If one donor won't support advocacy or infrastructure, another kind of donor will.”

Seeking multiple sources of funding is a long-term strategy—not a quick fix in a difficult economy. “Relationships take time to build and tremendous energy to sustain,” McCaw says. “By carefully thinking through the most fruitful kinds of relationships for the organization as a whole, you will be growing the organization—maybe not in six months, but definitely over a year or two years or three.”

To get our readers started on the road to diversification, NCFY has put together a few tips:

- **Government funding** is a start—not an end—to meeting your program's needs. Try to get funding from federal, state *and* local sources to stave off the effects of budget cuts. Most state budgets set aside funding specifically for programs serving youth outside of school, including mentoring programs and those for runaway and homeless youth. Numerous cities, towns and counties do the same.
- **Private funding** includes donations from individuals and grants from foundations and corporations. Building strong long-term relationships is key to raising money from private sources. In addition, when thinking of how donors can help you, don't think merely of their pocketbooks, McCaw says. Consider, as well, the ways they might help you build your programs and your fundraising strategy. “If you're providing job training skills to at-risk youth, is there a kind of business where you would like to place them?” she says. “Then work with those businesses on building program and on fundraising activities.” Some foundations offer technical assistance and training to their grantees; individual donors can be powerful spokespeople and volunteers for an organization.

What you can do:

- Determine your current funding mix from all sources.
- Consider the restrictions placed on each stream of funding.
- Consider how long each funding stream might last.
- Forecast where a gap might exist in the future.
- Create a strategic plan that joins your programmatic priorities and your fundraising needs.

Make a Plan for Financial Sustainability

New Hampshire's Child and Family Services, a statewide charity with headquarters in Manchester, has weathered the recession without any layoffs or reduction in services thanks to diverse revenue sources—including an endowment, private and corporate donors, the United Way, and state, local, and federal funding—and staff-wide commitment to financial sustainability.

CEO Michael Ostrowski stresses collaboration and teamwork when formulating and enacting the organization's sustainability plan, which he uses as a blueprint for keeping the organization financially stable. "A sustainability plan should be a consensus of board and staff about what type of organization you want to be from a funding viewpoint," he says.

Reaching consensus about long-term, shared goals and how to fund them can make tough financial decisions easier over the years, especially during economic downturns like today's. Ostrowski outlines a five-step process for implementing a thoughtful financial plan:

1. **The CEO prioritizes and sets goals.** Ostrowski recommends posing questions to identify your organizational needs, always keeping your mission in mind: "Do you want to do government contracts? Will you respond to federal RFPs? Should part of your services be funded by the city because you impact municipal goals?"
2. **The CEO collaborates with other leaders to come up with a plan.** As CEO, Ostrowski took responsibility for setting the tone and scope of the deliberations that helped formulate his organization's plan. Then, working with the chief financial and operations officers, Ostrowski polished the strategic plan based on the organization's priorities and his co-leaders' advice.
3. **The plan is presented to the board and staff.** Ostrowski presented the draft sustainability plan to Child and Family Services trustees at a retreat, then further revised it based on board members' input. The discussion was then opened up to all levels of staff, who were expected to be knowledgeable and mindful of the organization's goals once the plan was implemented.
4. **The new policies are implemented at all levels of the organization.** Following the CEO and the board's lead, Child and Family Services employees—from direct service providers to managers to administrators—are expected to help save money and maintain a balanced, diverse revenue stream. Administrators monitor funding levels for each program with a weekly dashboard that tracks how client referrals compare to budget expectations, while staff stay attentive to any changes in government policy or referral numbers. Additionally, staff are trained to work in more than one department, which ensures that managers can assign staff to the programs that most need help, depending on the number of youth and families needing assistance.
5. **Everyone works to track progress and adjust goals as necessary.** "We revisit our priorities constantly," says Ostrowski. In addition, the plan calls for a significant review of the organization's priorities every two to three years, and for staff to actively monitor the cost effectiveness, quality and accessibility of their programs.

Good Stewardship Equals Good Management

In the vernacular of nonprofit fundraising, stewardship means building and maintaining good relationships with donors and volunteers. The hope is that they'll make additional contributions of money, time and effort to the organization in the future.

While stewardship at some institutions consists of hanging up plaques and throwing parties to recognize benefactors, effective donor relations is far more basic—and inexpensive—than that, says Julia S. Emlen, author of “[Intentional Stewardship: Bringing Your Donors to Their Highest Level of Philanthropy](#)” ([Council for Advancement and Support of Education](#), 2007).

“Good stewardship is the fundamentals of a well-managed organization,” she says. “It’s not something that happens after a gift has been given.” She suggests that charities [assess](#) (PDF, 62.44 KB) how well they follow the recommendations of the “[Donor’s Bill of Rights](#)” developed by four national fundraising and philanthropy associations. She also recommends following three steps to good stewardship:

1. **Deliver your message well.** Staff and board members should know and be able to communicate your organization’s mission. “If you have a clear idea of who you serve and how you serve and that it makes a difference, that’s a stewardship home run,” Emlen says. Donors and volunteers will know that their investments of time, money and effort are needed and well-spent.

Emlen says concrete things you can do to communicate well with donors include:

- coaching or preparing a script for anyone, from board members to administrative assistants, who speaks with donors on behalf of the organization
 - preparing an annual report (it can be electronic, and it doesn’t have to be fancy) that demonstrates how the charity has advanced its mission
2. **Develop meaningful relationships with people.** Talk to potential and current volunteers and donors about their interests and how those interests might intersect with your mission, Emlen says. Then, if they make a contribution – whether of time or money – thank them in meaningful ways. “An organization that has a strong board that’s willing to call people and say thank you when they send in a small gift goes a long way in promoting philanthropy,” she says.
 3. **Build trust by handling donors’ information with care and keeping them informed.** Be sure you have rules about how your organization accepts, handles and acknowledges gifts. (You can find model policies online.) Include information in your annual report and in communications with individual donors about how you are using gifts. Honor confidentiality and keep donors informed about how their gifts are being used. In addition, have zero tolerance for errors in your donor database. Simple things, such as spelling a donor’s name correctly, go a long way toward establishing trust, Emlen says.

Collaborations Can Broaden Your Reach and Help Save Resources

The Homeless Youth Resource Center, a Family and Youth Services Bureau grantee in Salt Lake City operated by Volunteers of America Utah, is always looking for ways to serve youth better. So when a 2005 survey of young people at the center revealed that a large fraction of regular visitors identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or questioning, staff members had a moment of self-examination.

Collectively, they had almost no expertise on the specific needs of homeless sexual minority youth, says Zach Bale, the resource center's director.

A desire to learn more led Bale and his colleagues to the Utah Pride Center, a social service agency for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people. Because many young people were already using the services of both centers, "We knew it'd be beneficial to have a link between our staffs," Bale says.

The resulting collaboration has helped both organizations save money and resources, bolstered their existing services through an increased volunteer force, improved their word-of-mouth marketing and created a more extensive and accessible support network for homeless youth in the area.

"I don't think any agency can exist in isolation—collaboration is what allows us to help our youth," Bale says. His experience bears out some useful advice for creating successful, long-term collaborations:

Listen to youth. After learning that so many youth in the program identified as sexual minorities, Bale's staff asked youth, "Who do you trust? Where do you go?" Many young people mentioned the Pride Center.

Locate gaps in your services. A partnership with the Salt Lake City school district, which sends a representative to the drop-in center once a week to give youth advice on attaining a GED, came out of a recognition that youth "weren't going to schools themselves, but they're coming to our center," Bale says. "So we put someone from the schools right in here."

Train each other's staffs. In addition to training Bale's staff to better address the specific concerns of sexual minority youth, Pride Center staff have ridden along on street outreach shifts. "We teach them how to reach kids on the street, and they teach us how to really connect with LGBT kids," says Bale.

Share staff and supplies. Having friendly staff in multiple locations means a higher comfort level for youth, whichever facility they visit. "When youth are in our facility they feel comfortable talking about who they are," Bale says. "And when they see staff members from other places at the [resource center], they're more inclined to feel comfortable at those places as well." Furthermore, when staff at the resource center's weekday drop-in program need an expert opinion or an extra tent to give a homeless youth, there's a good chance that someone from the Pride Center is nearby.

Look for new communities to reach. In a welcome but unforeseen consequence of their relationship with the Pride Center, the resource center has experienced increases in volunteers, donations and visibility among advocates for the rights of sexual minorities. "There are very few agencies in any city that provide resources to these youth," Bale says. "So we've been opened up to a new type of volunteer—people who now see that we recognize LGBT youth as a big part of our community."

Test Your Knowledge of Fundraising Terms: A Quiz

1. Your organization receives a gift of \$50,000 from a local philanthropist. The donor wants the gift to go into an **endowment** for your afterschool program. How much of the money can you spend?

- a) all of it
- b) half of it
- c) none of it

2. Which of the following are examples of a **private foundation**?

- a) Pew Charitable Trusts
- b) Wal-Mart Foundation
- c) Paul G. Allen Family Foundations

3. Which of the following are examples of a **public foundation**?

- a) New York Women's Foundation
- b) Cleveland Foundation
- c) American Indian College Fund

4. You've applied for a grant from a well-known foundation, and a program officer informs you that you have not qualified. However, the foundation would like to offer you a **challenge grant** instead. What's that?

- a) A grant you win by arm wrestling with the foundation president
- b) A grant you win by arm wrestling with an applicant from another nonprofit organization
- c) A grant that is made only if you are able to raise a certain amount of money from additional sources within a specified period of time

5. You've been told your organization relies too much on government funding, so you hire a full-time staff member to raise money from other sources. The fundraiser says you need to focus on asking donors for **unrestricted gifts**. What does she mean by that?

- a) Blank checks
- b) Cash donations that are not earmarked for a particular use

6. You're lucky enough to have a grant writer on staff, but you can't understand him half the time. He keeps mentioning **RFPs** and **LOIs**. What's he talking about?

- a) Realistic funding priorities and lack of insurance
- b) Two local bands called Rockin' Fuschia Pants and Loud Octopus Instrumentals
- c) Requests for proposals and letters of inquiry

7. You're starting a nonprofit tutoring program in collaboration with a local school district, but you haven't yet acquired official tax-exempt, nonprofit status. To apply for a foundation or government grant, you will need one of the following:

- a) A patron
- b) A fiscal sponsor
- c) A corporate sponsor

8. A local music store lets you use its back room for a youth group meeting. The owner wants to know if loaning you the space might qualify his business for a tax deduction. What do you tell him?

- a) Yes. It's an in-kind donation.
- b) No. It's just a favor between friends.

For definitions of additional terms, see the very comprehensive AFP Fundraising Dictionary, developed by the Association of Fundraising Professionals.

Answers: 1, C; 2, A-C; 3, A-C; 4, C; 5, B; 6, C; 7, B; 8, A.

Finding Grants and Writing Proposals

Ten Ways to Find Foundation Funding

Before youth-serving organizations apply for funding, they have to pinpoint likely donors. How to do that with no fundraising staff and barely enough time to get your to-do list done each day?

We turned to Helen Brown, president of The Helen Brown Group, a Boston-area consulting company specializing in fundraising research, and to NCFY's own youth policy researchers. They had the following tips for readers setting out to identify promising foundations:

- 1. Be focused.** Be clear about your specific financial needs and identify programs that are most likely to be fundable (based on their success rates, the unique populations they serve and so forth). Don't chase after funds that take you away from your core mission (for instance, providing emergency shelter when your mission is to teach nutrition). But do think outside the box a bit—if you run a basketball program, could you use a grant for computers or for training volunteers?
- 2. Consult your board.** Talk to your board and find out if they have any connections with foundation funders, even if that foundation's guidelines don't match the type of program you seek to fund. "You may discover hidden funding sources or a chance to speak with a foundation officer," Brown says.
- 3. Check out your "competition."** Which foundations have funded *them*? You may be able to develop a good list of foundation candidates by noticing the funders that support similar organizations in your geographic and program area.
- 4. Go to the library.** Besides offering libraries at its five locations, the Foundation Center (<http://foundationcenter.org>) cooperates with local libraries and nonprofit resource centers nationwide to provide reference materials, training courses and networking opportunities.
- 5. Hop on the Internet.** Many foundation directories can be accessed online. The Foundation Center and GuideStar (<http://www2.guidestar.org>) both have free and paid searching options.
- 6. Get training.** Look for free or low-cost training in your community or online. The Foundation Center offers a wide variety of free and low-cost web seminars including Grantseeking Basics for Nonprofit Organizations and Getting Ready for Foundation Fundraising.
- 7. Consider asking for help.** An experienced volunteer or research consultant can save you a lot of time. "While paying someone to do the work may seem expensive, their experience can hone in on the right funders, eliminate ones that just aren't right and eloquently make your case in a proposal in language the funders need to hear," Brown says. Make sure you hire someone who has a proven track record of success and knows your particular funding market.
- 8. Start local.** Local funders are more likely than, say, the Gates Foundation, to make grants to groups that serve a specific community. Once nonprofit groups have local individual, company and foundation support, then they can make a much stronger case to national funders, Brown says. "Of course, the national funders will want to see how the program or service can have an impact or be replicated nationally."

9. Go corporate. Look for corporate foundations that might be interested in reaching the populations you serve and pitch your funding ideas as “cause-related marketing.” For instance, you might ask a soft-drink manufacturer or a local grocery store to sponsor a talent show or fundraising gala in return for advertising at the event.

10. Network. Once you’ve identified potential foundations to which to apply for funding, ask for informational interviews or attend attending public forums hosted by foundations in your area. Meeting grant officers in person will help you gather information about what foundations look for in organizations that they fund. Brown notes an added bonus: “As with any profession, foundation officers network, too, and tell each other about interesting programs.”

Going After Grants—Are the Time and Effort Always Worth It?

Nothing in life is free, and that holds true for grants. When deciding whether or not to seek funding from a foundation, government agency or corporation, busy youth-service professionals need to weigh the costs and benefits of writing the grant proposal, managing the project and reporting back to the funder, says John Porter, executive director of the American Grant Writers' Association.

In fact, putting together a grant proposal might not be worth the time and effort if the award is small and the grant maker requires a lot of documentation. “Estimate the man hours to both write and administer the grant,” Porter says. “In a few cases, the hourly wage may actually exceed the amount of the award.”

When considering whether or not to go after a grant, take the following steps:

Read the grant announcement or RFP (request for proposal) closely to learn what is expected of groups that will receive the grant. “The best place to find funders' RFPs is the Foundation Center Directory,” Porter says. The directory is available for free in a number of locations across the country. In addition, he says, “Nearly every local library will have at least a few other sources of local funding in print form.”

Determine if your organization and your clients (who will receive the services made possible by the grant funding) are eligible. “Even though one could argue that all youth are deserving, the RFP may stipulate that only a certain sector of youth are eligible for a particular award,” Porter explains. “This group might be identified by income, at-risk, health, school district, etc.”

Ask yourself the following questions:

- Is your organization ready to receive grant funding? In other words, do you have the people, connections and expertise to do the work a grant maker will ask of you?
- Do the purpose, activities and goals of the grant fit your mission?
- Will you be able to keep the project going after the grant runs out? If so, how?

Get Everyone in on Grant Writing

In these tough economic times, hiring a full-time grant writer or using a consultant may not make the most financial sense. As an alternative, small nonprofits can tap into the talents of their staff to put together grant proposals.

“What you ultimately want is to use your staff’s greatest strengths,” says Kristen Valentine, chief fundraiser for Bread for the City, a social service agency in Washington. “You want to find out what people do well and have them do it.”

Following are some tips she offered on training staff to write grant proposals.

Assess the staff. Who are the best communicators, organizers, strategic thinkers? Who’s good with graphics? These individuals should be on your grant-writing team.

Assemble a grant-writing team. Appoint a single point person to manage the project, set deadlines, create the file system and marshal team members along. Assign writers to support the point person. Rotate team members for each grant proposal to avoid burnout and to give various staff members the opportunity to develop grant-writing skills.

Host a training. At an all-hands staff meeting, teach the basics of proposal writing and give staff an idea of the types of grants your organization will seek. Here are four important themes to cover:

1. Measurable outcomes rule. Don’t try to measure things that are too hard to measure, says Valentine. If it will take years to reach a goal, or a goal is hard to quantify, start with smaller, identifiable things such the number of meetings or communications.
2. Sound financial statements that can back up your program are critical. Smaller programs have trouble with this, but plan ahead so that the person who will be doing the back-end reporting is the one putting together the statements in the proposal. “Foundations are poring through these sections more, and there’s much more of a push toward transparency than ever before,” says Valentine.
3. Brevity and bullets ensure your proposal gets read. Funders read hundreds of proposals each day. You’ll do well to teach staff to make their points in short, clean, jargon-free language and to visually convey as much information as possible. Valentine says to use logic models, graphs and bullets points. “Cut back on adjectives and stop congratulating yourself so much,” she says. “If you can say it in 10 words, use 10 words.”
4. Translate the mission. A crucial part of the writing will be aligning the program’s mission with the requirements of the grant. Foundations are giving away mostly targeted dollars, says Valentine. The writers will need to be coached to talk with program managers and work out creative ways to explain how your nonprofit will fulfill the requirements of the grant.

The Secret Life of Foundation Officers

As Told by Lee Draper

To gain insight into the process of seeking foundation grants, NCFY sat down with Lee Draper, a management consultant who works with grant makers and nonprofit agencies. Draper has 25 years' experience working with and for philanthropic organizations. In the following interview, she provides FYSB grantees with tips on how to best approach private funders.

NCFY: We'd like to make our grantees more familiar with private foundations. Can you start by talking about who is a foundation officer? What kind of background do they have? Are they real people? What do they do every day?

LD: The program officers, program directors, executive directors and trustees of foundations are real people. And most of them have gone into this kind of work because they care about the mission of their foundation, and those missions are much akin to the kind of mission statements that nonprofit organizations have, really focused on trying to help people.

The second thing is, they are like nonprofit leaders; they are many times overworked. Because the competition is increasingly rough, and many more nonprofits are applying, program officers and executive directors of foundations are sitting at desks with huge piles of proposals in front of them. They don't have much time to read them. They don't have much time to talk with people who are submitting them. And they don't have much time at all to get out there and actually see the nonprofits work. And that is as sad to them ultimately as it is to the nonprofit. So, one of the really important rules for the grant seeker is to know that the person behind the desk is a human being who—if you've done your homework right and you've identified a foundation that has a program interest like your nonprofit—cares about the same thing.

The thing about them being overworked is you have to prepare yourself as a grantee to be concise and to be clear with what you want. A lot of times, a new grant seeker will think that they need to tell the possible funder everything about their organization in order to prove that it is a good and worthy organization. Instead, you really have to think, how can I, in five or six sentences, say a good overview of what we do, who we serve, how long we've been doing it and what our impact is?

NCFY: Stepping back a little bit, before people even start crafting those five to six sentences, what do they need to think about as they are designing a program to make it interesting to a foundation?

LD: The first thing is to really know what you need and identify that before you even go out to find potential funders. The wonderful thing about the funding community is that there are all kinds of funders. If you need transitional housing, or if you need programs that serve homeless youth with mental-health counseling and life-skills building, say that and don't waver.

Don't run after any funder that comes across your radar screen and try to bend yourself into a pretzel. So that's the first thing: What do you need? The second thing is how much does it cost bare bones? Not pie in the sky, but how much do you really need, bare bones, to make something meaningful happen? And it's better to find three to five funders who could bite off a part of that rather than going to one funder and asking them for the whole thing.

NCFY: Do you tell the funders that you're dividing it up in that way?

LD: Absolutely. Because if I'm Funder A, and I know that you're asking me for a third or half the money, and I know that you're going to three or four more funders to make up the rest of that money, I know right then that you're not going to be dependent on me. I also know that you've done your homework, because I know some of those funders, and I know that they're good, strong, potential ones. And thirdly, if I like what you're doing, I might even give a call—and you'll never even know about it—to one of those other funders and say, "Listen, I'm thinking about doing half. Will you do the other?" So they'll actually think you're really entrepreneurial and smart.

NCFY: What are other ways that you can distinguish yourself in that huge pile of proposals beyond having your five- or six-sentence concise synopsis? For example, does good writing matter?

LD: Well, here are a few things about the writing. First, put the request in the first paragraph. A common mistake is for a grant seeker to put it at the very end or to not say it at all and just say, "Could you fund this?"

Number two, think of how much you want to ask them for. You don't want to ask for something outlandish. So, do your homework. Find out what size of grants they make to organizations that are like yours.

The third thing about putting the money right up front is it makes you proud. Because when you say that right off the bat, the rest of the proposal is going to be reinforcing your request. And you're going to do that with a lot more confidence than if you put it at the end and are trying to lead up to it.

The next thing about writing is proof it. Have somebody else read it over before you send it out, maybe even a friend or a family member in addition to a staff member at the organization. Because they will be able to read it with an eye to whether it makes sense to a layperson. Many of the people who read these proposals are generalists, not experts.

Proofing it is really important. Because many grant makers will tell you that they will automatically decline a proposal that has misspellings or grammatical or punctuation errors. Because that says you don't know what you're doing.

NCFY: You mentioned a couple of common mistakes. What other things are cringeworthy, things you recommend people never say?

LD: There are certain words that grant makers cringe at. And many of them are about over-promising. "We are unique. We are the best. We are the only." Watch out for that. That shows you don't know your own field. Because they are likely to read proposals from other organizations that may be quite similar and just as good. It's just as good to say "high quality" as it is to say "the best." Or to say a "special approach" rather than saying a "unique approach."

Another thing about the written request is, follow their guidelines. Do not, do not, do not send out 80 proposals to a list of 80 funders you've gotten somewhere. Because then you will get 80 declines. And you will create a bad relationship with 80 funders who think you are rude to not have done any homework. So put a little extra time into looking at websites, into going to your local library for research tools and funder directories that can help you know the funder.

Many foundations have websites now and their application guidelines are online. Follow those to a T. And their tax returns are on GuideStar.org. A foundation is required to give a list of the organizations they have funded on their tax returns. Most often, they give not only the organization name, but the amount of the grant and what it was for. So do that homework.

NCFY: Is there room for an applicant to call a foundation official and ask questions or follow up if they haven't been funded to find out what went wrong?

LD: Absolutely. In fact, remember, these are people. And these people get just as tired as any of us of dealing with paper all day. It is always good before you submit a request, but after you've done your homework, to call a funder and ask if the kind of request you are making is appropriate.

And that's when your little five-sentence thing on what you do, followed by "and we are wanting to apply for this amount, for this purpose" will come in really handy. So, preparing yourself for a 3- to 5-minute conversation with a program officer before you submit is a wonderful way of creating a relationship and getting valuable feedback. And if you don't get funded, do call in and ask about that. Say that you're learning and you want to find out how you can improve your request in the future.

NCFY: How data-heavy do proposals need to be? Do you have to have a lot of supporting data and facts about your community or the population you're serving?

LD: That depends on the funder, period. The application guidelines will generally say what kind of data they want. Some of them might say, "Please describe the population you serve" or, "Please provide evaluation results."

NCFY: Where is the best place for a grantee to start a funding search?

LD: When they're thinking about potential funders, they should think of themselves in the middle of an onion. And around them are the rings of the onion. The first funders that they should target should be local, then regional, then state, then national. Do not go to the big foundations that are national first, even though they have a lot of money. Start local. And that means a local community foundation, local family foundation, local corporations or businesses that are active. Go local because local people can make site visits. Local people know the problems and issues of the community they're living in, too. And they're usually much more accessible and don't have so many piles.

NCFY: Is it worth trying national foundations?

LD: For a small community-based organization, unless you have garnered local support from foundations that are close by you, your chances will be very reduced. Because they want to see that foundations in your neighborhood who are close to you and who can actually go out there and visit you have invested in you. It's a rare example that a national funder would support an organization that didn't have local funder support.

NCFY: What about a grantee who is just starting out? Is there room for someone who doesn't have the "how long have we been doing it?" part of the five-sentence summary?

LD: There is. Here's where you need to read the guidelines. Many foundations will not support organizations until they've been up and running for 2 or 3 years. But some funders are open to newer organizations.

NCFY: Often, when you look at a foundation's priority list, it is really vague, like "we fund youth development projects." Does that mean, if you craft something that fits into that really broad category, it will be of interest to them?

LD: That's why you want to use multiple sources of research. Because if you go to the website alone or get their brochure or something like that, they might say, "We fund youth services." And you think, "Oh, goodie! They'll fund our community-based homeless youth program." But then you go to Guidestar and you print off the list of who they funded. And their grants list is all grants to the YMCA, Girls and Boys Club, the United Way and the Metropolitan Museum. If they aren't funding any small or mid-size organizations, don't waste your time. Who are you to convince them? Because the next one you look at, chances are they'll be funding homeless shelters and community-based efforts, and you'll go, "Okay, here we go. We've found a friend."

NCFY: Where do you see the future of funding? Do you sense that human services funding is increasing, decreasing?

LD: In the future, of course there is going to be dynamic change. But who can predict this? The main thing is, Americans are extremely generous people. And foundations are there to fulfill their mission, which is to serve the nonprofit community and the people that the nonprofit community serves. So that's not going away. The thing is that more and more people are competing for that money, so you have to be smarter at it.

NCFY: Do you think it makes sense for people to have a dedicated grant writer? Is it possible to do your grant writing in house and do a good job of it?

LD: I think you can do it in house. You can have a part-time or a full-time staff person doing it. You can also hire consultants or contract workers to do it. It really depends on what your resources are. You may have staff stretched thin. Then it's good to hire a consultant. If you are just getting started and you have a big learning curve, a consultant can help you avoid the trial and error. Many consultants will do it with you and teach you how to do it, which can be a good way of starting so that you don't spend a lot of time and get frustrated and not get any return.

There are also lots of workshops and classes. Look for ones that are longer than a day. It's better to go to the workshops and classes that last multiple days, even though they might be more expensive, because they go deeper.

One other thing is, when you're successful, write a thank-you note within 2 or 3 days. The number of nonprofits that do not thank their funders is very high. And what does that say to the donor? That says you are ungrateful. When you send a thank-you note, it makes the funder feel appreciated. They feel you care. And they will be receptive the next time you come with a new proposal. I cannot tell you how frequently I hear my colleagues who are grant makers say, "A third to half of our grantees never send a thank-you note. And they think that we're going to fund them next year. Ha, ha, ha." So that gets back to the fact that those are people behind the desk. And when they have helped you, it's important to remember to thank them.

Get to Know Your Friendly Neighborhood Community Foundation

For community-based organizations, community foundations can be a lifeline. Unlike big national grant makers, these public charities define their missions according to geography -- benefiting nonprofit groups in a particular city, county, state or region. So though no potential source of funding is a sure thing, community foundations are a good bet for nonprofits with a strong history of serving their communities.

Securing much-needed funding is not the only reason to court your local community foundation. Many of these foundations offer training and other non-cash support, such as mentoring and workshops on management and fundraising. And community foundations sometimes serve as “matchmakers” between charities in search of funding and individual donors with a passion for a particular cause, says Heather Larkin, president of the Arkansas Community Foundation in Little Rock.

We asked Larkin and Michael Stoffregen, executive director of the Community Foundation of Johnson County, in Iowa City, Iowa, to share tips for nonprofit leaders wishing to build a relationship with a community foundation:

Do your research. Start by reading the foundation’s website, Stoffregen says. “Understand what they’re about because grant makers have all sorts of different missions,” he says. Look at the grants the foundation has made in the past and determine if your work fits its focus.

Introduce yourself. Call the program officer in charge of youth and family issues and ask for a face-to-face meeting. Larkin says staff at her foundation often meet with nonprofit groups in 45-minute “getting to know you” sessions. “Community foundations make it their business to know what’s going on at nonprofits and in the community,” she explains. She recommends bringing a packet of information about your organization. Follow up by inviting the program officer to visit your charity and see it in action.

Stay in touch. “Don’t drive them crazy,” Larkin says, but strive to keep foundation officials up to date on your work. Invite them to events hosted by your organization. Send them your annual report when it comes out. Though staff don’t make funding decisions (that’s a role of the foundation’s board), “We see it as our job to help the nonprofit make a strong application,” Larkin says. “The better we know their work, the better advocates we can be.”

Apply for a grant. Read application guidelines carefully to ensure that the grant you are applying for matches your needs and the work you do. Stoffregen recommends writing short, to-the-point, clear requests “without a lot of puffery.”

If you get a grant, meet your deadlines. The community foundation will ask you to report on your grant periodically. If you miss a deadline, you’re nixing your chances of being awarded another grant in the future, Larkin and Stoffregen say.

If you don’t get a grant, it doesn’t hurt to ask why. Whether you get an answer depends on the foundation. The Johnson County foundation’s grant-review committee prepares critiques, which Stoffregen passes on to unsuccessful applicants. But Larkin says that unless a nonprofit lost out because of a technicality (missing a deadline, for example, or failing to have its board chair sign the application), her foundation probably won’t divulge its reasons for not awarding a grant. “There’s always unlimited needs and very limited resources,” she says.

A good question to ask is whether foundation staff recommend that you apply for another grant later. “That lets them off the hook to say yes or no, this is something they may fund in the future,” Larkin says.

Beyond Grant Writing: Other Fundraising Strategies

In-Kind Donations Provide Much-Needed Resources in a Cash-Strapped Economy

Lots of well-meaning folks—and businesses too—want to “give back.” But in these tough economic times, budgets may be feeling the squeeze. That’s why some prospective donors may be better equipped to provide “in-kind” support, rather than cash donations.

In-kind donations are a kind of charitable giving in which, instead of giving money to buy needed goods and services, people (or businesses) donate the goods and services themselves. Items could be things a program uses, like a refrigerator, computers, furniture for residential facilities, food, or clothing for young people. Or the donor could give something the program could use to raise money, like concert tickets or auction items.

In-kind giving offers businesses and individuals the opportunity to help programs focus their primary sources of funding – and attention – on the youth they serve.

NCFY spoke with fundraisers from two FYSB grantee organizations to get their advice about soliciting in-kind donations. Here’s what they told us:

Make a list. A “must have” for any organization seeking in-kind donations is a current—and very visible— “wish list,” says Heather Rist, development coordinator at Avenues for Homeless Youth in Minneapolis, Minn.

Rist suggests including the wish list in every newsletter (online and in print), displaying it on the agency’s website and having copies on hand at the organization and community events.

Think creatively when you’re putting the list together. For instance, Rist worked with a local real estate agency to help landscape Avenues’ housing facility one summer. Edina Realty bought everything needed—shrubs, mulch, weed killer—and volunteers from the company worked together with the youth to beautify the outside of their home.

Decide who to ask. Start with people and businesses that are already invested in or connected to your organization. “You can do the cold call approach. But it’s ideal to get your board or [fundraising] committee to figure out who they know,” says Rebecca Johnson, development manager at Family Support Services of the Bay Area, a mentoring children of prisoners program in Oakland, Calif.

Ask for the things you need. Once you have your wish list and your list of contacts, your board or committee members can go down the list of potential donors and spread the word about your organization’s need for specific items, Johnson says.

You can also approach prospective givers yourself. You might set up a time to talk on the phone with a person from a business you know, or invite them over for a site visit, Rist says. Describe the needs they could help meet. Be very clear. Tell the business exactly what you are looking for and how they can help.

If you are approaching a business your organization has no connection to, Rist suggests finding a “hook.” For example, ask a local dental office to donate toothpaste and toothbrushes, or ask a local salon to cut client’s hair one day a month.

Larger corporations and foundations usually require applications for in-kind donations. If you can't find the information you're looking for online, contact the corporation's community relations department and ask them how to make a formal request.

Many schools and faith-based organizations also want to get involved in community service. Ask them to do a drive for your organization, like a food drive, hygiene products drive, or school supply drive at back-to-school time.

Create policies to avoid getting stuck with items you just can't use. Even after putting together a specific wish list and being clear about guidelines for donating items, programs inevitably receive items they don't need. Rist suggests listing a contact person for questions about in-kind donations and insisting that donations are approved before they are dropped off. To facilitate approval, schedule a drop-off time and have someone responsible for checking all donated items.

Thank your donors. Recognize every in-kind donation as you would a cash donation. (In fact, Rist says, always thank donors for thinking of your organization, even for items you can't take.)

Publicly thank individuals and businesses in your newsletters, on your website and in the agency's annual report. Include a business's logo for extra recognition. Also, be sure to write a more personal thank you letter to acknowledge the gift. Describe who received the donations, how the contributions were used and how people benefitted. Donors will feel appreciated, and the letter has a practical purpose, too, serving as a receipt at tax time.

Resources

Organizations like Gifts In Kind International (<http://www.giftsinkind.org>) and GlobalHand (<http://www.globalhand.org>) help match people who have things to donate to qualified charities who need them. Register with these organizations to take part.

Wish List for In-Kind Donations

Typical in-kind donations might include:

Individual Needs

- Socks and underwear
- Shoes, hats, coats, jeans
- Dress clothes for interviews
- Towels, washcloths
- Alarm clocks, watches
- Personal supplies, like toothbrushes, toothpaste, razors, lip balm, hair products, shampoo, conditioner, deodorant (women's and men's), combs/brushes
- Umbrellas
- Backpacks for school

Program/Building Needs

- Dry erase board
- Office folders
- Paper, office supplies
- Dish towels and scrubbers
- Non-breakable drinking cups
- Comfortable kitchen chairs
- Vacuums
- Irons and ironing boards
- Pots and pans
- Cooking utensils
- Laundry baskets

Arts and Crafts

- Easels
- Paint
- Sculpting clay
- Quilting materials
- Beading supplies
- Art paper, poster board
- Craft supplies, fabric
- Sewing machine
- Art brushes, art pencils, markers, chalk

Recreation

- Board games
- Books
- DVDs, CDs, music equipment

And some in-kind donations you may not have thought to ask for:

- Computer services or support
- Advertising or graphic design services
- Consulting services
- Public relations services
- Legal services
- Coupons
- Furniture or appliances
- Movie, event or concert tickets
- Vehicles
- Event management or event room space for functions
- Airlines miles, hotel stays or travel packages to be used as auction items

Ten Rules of Events Fundraising

Ever considered hosting a charitable event to raise money for your youth service organization? It sounds simple: Charge people \$75 a head to come to a great party (even more for a fancy gala), or host a walkathon and ask participants to contribute to your cause. Wind up with a ton of cash, good word of mouth, new supporters and a spot on the evenings news.

But veterans of events fundraising say it's not as easy as it sounds. Special events, they say, take careful planning, attention to detail, months of staff and volunteer time and, especially, an eye on the bottom line.

Add to that the fact that special events may not be the best way to raise a buck. In a 2007 study on events fundraising, charity watchdog Charity Navigator called events "an extremely inefficient way of raising contributions."

Still, a number of the nonprofit groups studied by Charity Navigator have disputed the report's methodology, and the report's authors themselves acknowledge the difficult-to-measure benefits of special events. These include boosting publicity, raising awareness of a cause and gaining potential new donors. The fact remains that many nonprofits think the monetary and nonmonetary benefits of events are worth the hassle.

With the assistance of two FYSB grantees and a regional youth service network, we've compiled the following ten rules to help you make the most of your special event.

No. 1: Ask if your organization is really ready for events

Events fundraising is not a good fit for every organization. If you have a small staff and have not developed a strong corps of volunteers, it may be better to find other ways to raise money.

"It takes a lot of time to do event fundraising," says Jim McWeeney, resources coordinator at Iowa Homeless Youth Centers, a Runaway and Homeless Youth Program grantee in Des Moines. "It takes less time to write grants or to raise funds from individuals."

If you do choose to plan a charitable event, he says, make sure it fits into your overall fundraising strategy. His organization's annual Reggie's Sleepout fundraiser—in which participants spend the night outdoors to raise money for homeless youth programs—is an adjunct to an annual fund campaign and a United Way campaign.

"Some people look at events fundraising as a cash cow," he says. "But if they don't fit it into their overall fundraising context, that cash cow can be a big old black hole that drains time and money."

No. 2: Set goals

When planning an event, says Rebecca Johnson, development manager at Family Support Services of the Bay Area, a Mentoring Children of Prisoners Program grantee in Oakland, California, "Ask yourself, 'What are your goals?' Then make the event meet those goals."

For instance, in addition to deciding on the amount of money you want to raise, you might aim to have a certain number of people attend, to build relationships with specific corporate sponsors or community leaders, or to gain media coverage, she says.

Once you've set goals, it's easier to know what tasks need to go into planning the event, Johnson explains. Each task should get you closer to your targets. If your main objective is to raise X number of dollars, but media coverage is not a priority this year, work hard to publicize the event to potential attendees, but don't waste time sending out press releases.

In the case of an annual event, adjust your expectations gradually each year and make sure you choose achievable goals. For its annual sleepout, Iowa Homeless Youth Centers sets a target for the number of people who sign up for rather than attend the event. McWeeny figures it's just as important for people to hear about and respond to the cause as to show up. Plus, he considers sign-ups a better measure of how well the event was marketed, because attendance can be affected by things out of an event planner's control. (See rule No. 8.)

No. 3: Don't lose sight of your mission and your message

McWeeny says his organization had experimented with different traditional fundraising events to varying degrees of success. But when his board heard about the sleep-out concept, they jumped at the idea.

"It inherently displays our mission," McWeeny says. Even the vagaries of Iowa's fall weather help the cause. When snow fell during the 2006 sleep-out, "It added to the message," he says. "We were whining and complaining about one night—but boy am I glad I don't have to do that every night."

Johnson advises event planners to take pains to make sure the message they want to convey doesn't get lost in the fun of the event. "Clarify your message so it gets repeated over the course of the evening: What's in it for donors and what are they getting back by giving to the program?" she says. "You want to ensure that it doesn't just turn into a big party with a lot of people talking without context."

It's more effective, she adds, to tell a story rather than give a rote recitation of your mission or a lengthy explanation of what your program does. For instance, at an afternoon concert that raised money for her organization's mentoring children of prisoners program, one of the musicians wove into the songs a poem about his own experience of having an incarcerated parent. His story drew people in and made the event one to remember, Johnson says.

Another way to get a strong message across is to feature your organization's leaders prominently. When supporters of the New England Network for Child, Youth & Family Services jump into the frigid, winter waters of the Atlantic to raise money for homeless youth in the annual Polar Bear Plunge, the network's swim suit-clad executive director is at their sides.

No. 4: Know your audience

Ask yourself who your main constituents are and whom you're trying to reach. Are they people who'd enjoy an afternoon jazz concert or a formal evening dinner? Or are they crazy folks willing to plunge into the Atlantic in February or sleep out in a snow storm? Would they be willing to pay big bucks for a meal, or would they be more willing to raise money from friends and family?

Look back to your goals, too. Want to reach the media? A sleep out, polar bear plunge, or walkathon could get you publicity, but a standard dinner and auction likely won't, unless you have a famous keynote speaker or entertainer. Want to appeal to corporate funders? Think about the kind of audience they would want to attract.

No. 5: Plan for efficiency

A successful event is all in the planning, Johnson and McWeeny say. With so many tasks to accomplish—from marketing to soliciting corporate sponsorships and in-kind donations, from securing a location to the logistics of the event itself, from designing invitations to writing thank you notes—events take a massive time commitment.

Badly planned events can hinder, rather than aid, the organization’s mission and fundraising. “If you don’t plan carefully, you’re taking people away from providing direct services, and that’s not acceptable,” McWeeny says. “And if you’re taking people away from more efficient ways of fundraising, that’s not acceptable either.”

To maximize the value of the time and money you spend—and to keep from overspending on things you don’t need—Johnson says to think about how you can run the event most efficiently. “Don’t include too many things,” she says. “Events always go longer than you think.” And little details that seem to matter when you plan them may go completely unnoticed by your guests.

But do pay attention to the things that will make the experience better for attendees. If your onsite registration goes smoothly, guests will come again next year. If they have to wait in line, they might not come back.

No. 6: Divide and conquer

Johnson estimates that she spends most of the 3 months leading up to her organization’s annual event, well, planning the event. “Which, if you think about it, is a quarter of the year,” she says.

Giving up that amount of staff time to event planning is unthinkable if you don’t have a dedicated fundraising staff. And even if you do, planning a major event can sidetrack them from their other fundraising duties, Johnson says.

Splitting duties up among staff, volunteers and board members can make planning go a lot more smoothly, as long as there is regular communication among them. Johnson and McWeeny recommend having an event planning committee or tasking your board with planning the event. Select committee members who can contribute expertise, connections, or visibility: graphic or Web designers, people with past event planning experience, community leaders, local business people, or members of the media. You’ll also want a balance of people with good strategic ideas and those willing to roll up their sleeves and help as much as they can.

Beyond your committee, recruit volunteers to help with office work, stuffing envelopes and making phone calls. On the day of the event, task volunteers with staffing your registration table, giving directions and helping to set up and clean up.

No. 7: Don’t plan an event on Super Bowl Sunday

In 2007, the New England Network accidentally planned its Polar Bear Plunge on Super Bowl Sunday. The event’s earnings dropped \$10,000 from the previous year’s high of \$45,000, says Cindy Wilson, the network’s director of training.

Wilson advises checking your calendar for holidays, large local festivals or conferences and other events that might clash with your own.

No. 8: Consider the weather

Yes, the weather is unpredictable. If you're planning an outdoor event, have a rain or snow date. Even an indoor event can be affected by the weather. If it's raining cats and dogs outside, people might decide not to come.

And good weather is something to be prepared for, too, because it can boost attendance past your expectations. Even with snowy conditions, the 2006 Reggie's Sleepout had more than 100 walk-on participants.

No. 9: Rely on sponsors and in-kind donations

A good way to avoid the high costs of planning an event are to beg, borrow and—well, don't steal. But you can get a lot of things for free or at low cost: food, goody bags and door prizes, auction items, ad space, invitations and programs, speakers' and entertainers' fees, and venue costs. A committed corporate or individual sponsor might even be willing to cover all or most of your administrative costs for the event.

To solicit sponsorships and in-kind donations, Johnson says, "You can do the cold call approach. But it's ideal to get your board or committee to figure out who they know."

No. 10: Let sponsors, volunteers and participants know how grateful you are

McWeeny admits that one of his missteps as a novice event planner was not paying enough attention to sponsors. "You really have to look after sponsors and you have to treat them special if you want them to remain involved after the event's over," he says.

He suggests involving sponsors in marketing design and logo placement and "acknowledging the heck out of them." That means mentioning them prominently in invitations, programs and announcements and giving them a moment on the stage, if possible.

By the same token, don't ignore the hardworking volunteers and supportive participants who helped make your charitable event a success. Thank them as many ways as you can. Without them, your event would be a nonevent.

Is Your Nonprofit Ready to Raise Money From Individual Donors?

Foundation and government grants don't last forever. They often require strict reporting back to the granting organization. And grants can only be used for a particular purpose, leaving organizations strapped when emergency cash is needed.

Those are just a few of the reasons nonprofit groups might want to seek gifts from individual donors, says Patricia Hung, executive director of the Grassroots Institute for Fundraising Training in Oakland, Calif.

There are "people reasons," too, she says. "Grassroots fundraising gives the community a chance to get involved with the organization."

To determine whether raising money from individual donors is right for them, charities need to ask a few basic questions, Hung says:

Do we have a clear and inspiring mission? If your goal is to help youth and families, and you do it effectively, the answer is most likely yes.

Do we have a "base" of constituents? Hung defines constituents as "a group of people you regularly work with" such as clients (youth and families), volunteers, or neighbors. Even if you serve an impoverished area, having genuine relationships with people in the community makes fundraising easier, Hung says. "They won't necessarily be your major donors, but they can help you tell your story or raise money." Potential donors respond well when they hear from someone who has been positively affected by your organization, she adds.

Do we have an infrastructure that will support our fundraising efforts? Hung says groups should have the following:

- A database to input who made a donation, how much they gave and their contact information. An Excel file will work to start, but for the long term, consider investing in fundraising software, she says. (Learn about inexpensive donor databases by visiting <http://www.techsoup.org>.)
- Staff and volunteer time to solicit donations, thank people and do other follow-up
- A fundraising strategy that includes a basic plan about how much money you aim to raise from how many donors, a timeline and a budget.

Do we have support from people throughout our organization? Hung recommends that there be someone on staff willing to coordinate the fundraising effort and that the group's leaders, including board members and the executive director, be willing to pitch in.

Once you've determined that you're ready to raise money from individuals, Hung says your work will be easier if you integrate your fundraising into the work of your mission from the get-go.

"Fundraising feels more onerous when it's a separate action that has to be managed," she says. For instance, rather than planning a separate event for donors, invite them to an end-of-the-year party for clients or to a talent or fashion show. Not only will you avoid the costs of another party, but donors will get to see how their contributions are being put to work.

Matching Charities to the Donors Most Likely to Support Them

What motivates people to give to charity? That's the million dollar question for nonprofit organizations. To answer it, the Money for Good study, conducted by Hope Consulting of San Francisco, surveyed 4,000 people who make \$80,000 or more a year. Givers broke down into the following categories:

Repayers like to give back to organizations or causes that have benefitted them or people close to them.

Casual givers want giving to be easy, and they prefer to support established and respected organizations.

High impact givers support causes that don't get attention by giving to organizations that do a good job addressing those issues.

Faith-based givers count religion as their single most important motivator.

See-the-difference givers donate to small local organizations that serve the community because they feel their gift will make more of a difference.

Personal ties givers have a close connection to the organization or person who asks them for a gift.

Hope Neighbor, founder and CEO of Hope Consulting, recommends that nonprofits focus on two to three of the six groups, rather than trying to be all things to all people. "Identify the segments that are most likely to give to you, and shape your marketing and the donor experience around the motivations and needs of the segments you choose," she says.

With that in mind, we gave Neighbor examples of four hypothetical youth-serving nonprofits and asked what advice she would give to each. Her suggestions are laid out in the table that follows:

Organization	Donor Groups to Target	Key Messages
Small youth-serving nonprofit	See the difference	Gifts are used in your community Gifts make a big difference for the people we serve—and here's how A donation of \$X buys Y
Large social service organization that serves two counties	High impact Casual givers	Background: Here's the issue and why it's important Greater depth: Here's the impact we're having and the ways we're changing things We're among the best at working on this important issue We've been doing this for a

		<p>long time, and we have a great track record</p> <p>We're respected in the community</p> <p>It's easy to give to us by [giving at work, online, at one of our events]</p>
Education and job-training program or college-preparation program	Repayers	<p>Stay in touch with us</p> <p>We keep you in touch with your fellow alumni</p> <p>You can give back by making a donation or volunteering</p>
Youth-serving organization with strong religious orientation	Faith-based	Faith is integral to our work

The report “Money for Good: The U.S. Market Opportunity for Impact Investments and Charitable Gifts From Individual Donors and Investors” is available at <http://www.hopeconsulting.us/money-for-good>.

Squeeze Thy Neighbors

You're between federal grants. You need a new van. The roof is leaking. Cultivating private donors is an excellent way to create some financial flexibility for your organization in both good and bad times. Remember, 70 percent of Americans give to nonprofit organizations each year, and they give big: The median is \$2,000.

For some advice on how to expand your private donor base, NCFY spoke to fundraising consultant Andy Robinson and to Chris Baca and Tricia Hiser of Youth Development, Inc., or YDI, a runaway and homeless youth program in Albuquerque, N.M.

Be patient. When YDI began working to expand their donor base, they developed a 5-year plan that only really started paying off in the third year. "Perseverance pays huge dividends," Baca says. "You're in it for the long haul."

Make fundraising part of your culture. The most effective organizations encourage all of their employees to fundraise. "People have this fake barrier in their brain where the program work is on one side and the fundraising is on the other," Robinson said. He says that while CEOs or executive directors should devote at least 30 to 50 percent of their time to raising money, everybody in the organization should be pitching in. Ask board members, for example, to make a donation as part of their board service, or ask them to raise money from folks they know.

Start small. To build confidence, consider a small, short-term fundraising drive. Dedicate six weeks to raising \$1,500 for a garden or \$10,000 for a computer room.

Determine your level of engagement. Depending how much time and energy your staff can devote to fundraising, you can start by just sending letters or e-mail. If you have more time, consider making follow up phone calls. For the greatest impact, though, you need to meet with people face to face. Donors give 5 to 10 times more to someone sitting in their living room.

Stay close to home. Your best donors are likely already programmed in the cell phones of your staff. Encourage everyone in your organization to pick 10 to 15 people off their contact lists and start dialing. Similarly, folks who volunteer their time at your agency clearly care about your mission. If they haven't donated money yet, they may just need to be asked. Or they may be able to provide a donation in-kind. Though you should never make volunteers feel like giving their time is not enough, often, volunteers grow into reliable donors.

Study the faith model. Religious organizations have deep relationships with their constituents, which makes it easy to ask for support and ask often. They also don't discriminate between the rich and the poor. "Poor people give a higher percentage of their income than the wealthy do," Robinson says. "The first thing you have to do if you are going to be successful is stop assuming scarcity and start assuming abundance."

Teach your staff to tell your story. "You can't ask people to make donations if they don't understand you," Hiser says. And the best way to help people understand you is through an emotional connection. Explain why you are proud of what you do. Focus on what makes you unique. Talk personally about the young people you serve. Set up a "story bank" so that compelling anecdotes are saved and retold frequently.

Break out the hors d'oeuvres. Take a page from the political playbook and consider holding private house parties. Whether a barbecue, brunch, or sit down meal, the classic model includes 40 minutes of eating and chatting, a short presentation about the organization and a quick pitch. The whole event lasts 2 hours and takes less than 6 weeks to organize.

Say thank you. Show appreciation to donors in various ways and keep them apprised of how the project they donated to (or the whole organization, if they gave an undesignated gift) is faring. That way, they'll feel appreciated and be willing to give money to you again.

Stay fresh. There are plenty of great ideas about private fundraising on the Internet. The Grassroots Institute for Fundraising Training (<http://www.grassrootsfundraising.org>) is one good place to start.

Annual Funds Offer Unrestricted Possibilities

Like any grant-dependent nonprofit, The Oasis Center, a youth-serving agency in Nashville, Tenn., faces a financial challenge: Nearly every grant or corporate donation comes with constraints on how the money can be used. These are restricted gifts, in fundraising-speak, and can only be used for a particular program or purpose. But at the same time, the center needs to keep the lights on and pay for unforeseen needs.

So seven years ago, Oasis President and CEO Hal Cato launched an annual fund, which gives his organization a steady stream of dollars to use however they wish. In addition to freeing up money for unfunded administrative functions and programs, the annual campaign, which now accounts for one-quarter of the budget, is largely driven by gifts from individuals. That fact allows Cato and his staff to establish long-term, substantive relationships with their most consistent donors, who often enrich the center in more ways than one. “Donors may start by writing a check, but many of them eventually come in to work in our shelter or tutor our youth,” Cato says.

Cato and Vice President of Advancement T. Allen Morgan shared their tips for running a successful annual fund:

Make a schedule. “Summer is always a slow time for charitable giving,” Morgan says, so Oasis kicks off their annual campaign with an initial round of donor contacts in August, and finishes the year with a similar effort that coincides with their older youths’ high school graduations. Many organizations also make a marketing push in December, when holidays and the end of the tax year put a lot of people in the giving mood.

Fine-tune your message and marketing. “It’s really important to have a clear vision for what you want the fund to represent, and what message you want to send to the community,” says Cato. Oasis invested in the graphic design, writing and photography of their marketing materials, making sure that every piece effectively and clearly communicated why the Center would be worth a donor’s money and interest. “It shows you’re serious, and that you have a plan for the money.” He also recommends offering people multiple options for giving, like monthly deductions or donating stock.

It starts with the board. Existing donors, large or small, can be great first contacts for setting up a new year-round campaign, but board members can help find a new group of potential philanthropists. Oasis put together a committee of board members who suggest people to contact, write thank-you letters and introduce the CEO to people who want to know more about the program.

Create lasting relationships between donors and your organization. To build those strong connections, Morgan says, a nonprofit has to have its CEO and front line staff on the fundraising team. “If a person is considering a major gift, they want to either speak to the person who makes it all happen, or to the people who help the kids that we serve,” he says. Cato makes sure to take a personal role as lead fundraiser for the organization: “It’s not just ‘You send me a check, I send you a thank-you card.’ For me, it’s about connecting with donors on a personal level, making sure that there’s a lot of interaction and that they really understand our work. ... That’s when you really get someone who’s going to stick with you.”

More Than Flowers Blossom When Youth Become Fundraisers

After fire fighters visited the Deborah Rothe Group Home in Oklahoma City to talk to the girls there about fire safety, the residents wanted to do more than send a “thank you” note.

In fact, the fire department had been helping the girls whenever they needed them for a long time – to take a lock off a door or cut a bike chain when a girl lost a key.

To do something more meaningful for the firemen who had helped them out so many times, the girls wanted to make the firehouse—the firemen’s home away from home—a little more pleasant. They decided to plant some flowers in front of the firehouse.

“The whole thing, from start to finish, was really the girls’ idea,” says Dianne McDaniel, program supervisor at the group home, which provides long-term care for teenage girls in state custody.

The girls wrote a grant proposal to get money for the project; they went before a panel to explain why they wanted to plant the flowers; and after the grant was awarded, they visited garden centers to compare prices on flowers, fertilizer and soil.

When the girls learned they needed approval from the city before planting flowers on public property, they went to a city council meeting to make their case. A councilwoman familiar with the girls’ project told them how the meeting would go, and McDaniel helped them prepare their remarks.

On a warm fall day, neighborhood association members came out and helped the girls plant the flowers. Now the colorful tulips and bright, yellow daffodils are the community’s first signs of spring.

But the girls weren’t finished. “Once they had a taste of success, they just wanted more,” McDaniel says. So they wrote another grant proposal for money to buy Oklahoma centennial benches commemorating 100 years of Oklahoma’s statehood. Now community members have places to sit in the neighborhood park and outside the firehouse to enjoy those new flowers.

Planting the Seeds of Sustainability

There are lots of reasons to involve young people in your fundraising efforts. In addition to their energy and enthusiasm, young people can offer creative ideas for raising money and fresh perspectives on those annual events or more traditional fundraisers.

Beyond the immediate benefits, you also provide training for young people to take on leadership positions within your organization or community; you position your organization as strongly committed to young leaders and their development in your community; and you cultivate a core group of young leaders to become long-term supporters of your organization. That is, by investing in young people, they, in turn, become invested in you.

How do you get young people to participate in your fundraising efforts? According to a study by the Association of Fundraising Professionals, young people are more likely to get involved when they learn new skills, develop their leadership abilities, experience personal growth and engage in critical thinking. They also want to see tangible outcomes for their efforts, to know that they are appreciated and to feel that they are making a difference.

McDaniel found that young people are most effective when they believe in what they're doing. "The girls have really blossomed as a result of the project," McDaniel says. Even the neighbors have noticed the girls' improved attitudes and higher self-esteem. "Now, wherever they go, they will take with them that sense of pride and belonging," she says.

Tips for Cultivating Young Fundraisers

- Include young people in every aspect of planning and decision making. Ask young people for their input at the beginning. Get their ideas on how they would like to raise money.
- Make it fun! Don't let young people worry about the finances. That's your job! The point of getting young people involved is to help them build skills, gain confidence and feel more connected to their community.
- Train young people and adults so they can learn to work well together. Help adults consider the assumptions they hold about young people. Think about setting up a buddy system, pairing a seasoned staff member with a young person for questions, advice and general support.
- Recognize each young person's strengths, and consider different ways for young people to contribute. Some young people are savvy with computer graphics, others are more comfortable speaking to groups. Find a role for everyone who wants to help.
- Celebrate your successes, no matter how small they may seem. With money left over after planting flowers, the girls organized a pizza party at the firehouse.

Raising the Roof: Building and Funding a New Youth Facility

When Synergy Services, a youth- and family-serving organization in Kansas City, Mo., began planning to build their new Youth Resiliency Center four years ago, they weren't expecting a collapse in the economy.

At the time, they simply wanted to create "the perfect drop-in center," says Rachel Francis, who runs Synergy House, a residential center on the Synergy campus. The center would provide youth with a positive place in which to hang out *and* get services such as health care and nutritious meals.

Synergy paired their concrete vision with an ambitious goal of raising \$8.4 million in four years. And the Kansas City community and other Synergy supporters responded by giving generously, enabling the organization to meet its goal even after the economic crisis hit with full force in 2008.

The result is a state-of-the-art, youth-friendly, 24,000 square-foot, award-winning, certified green building that opened its doors in March. The center includes a clinic, an art program, a gym and indoor basketball court, a recording studio and a kitchen – soon to be used to prepare delicious meals with foods from Synergy's community garden.

"It has been very challenging, but we're very grateful for community help -- it showed that homeless kids were a priority," says Executive Director Robin Winner.

Here's what Francis, Winner and other Synergy staff members told us about how to successfully plan and raise funds for a new facility:

A building for youth needs input from youth. Staff at Synergy Services made a concerted effort to seek out youths' ideas about what they wanted in a drop-in center and what services best fit their needs. Many aspects of the new building's design and function came directly from the minds of youth: the modern style with bright colors, the multiple services available in one building and the space for activities such as music and art. Synergy also involved youth in raising funds, by sharing with potential donors letters and personal testimonies from current and former participants. "Potential donors can see the impact their contributions can have on clients," Francis says.

It won't happen overnight. Expect the effort to plan, raise funds for and build a new facility to take several years. "We developed a specific plan and kept moving forward," Winner says. Synergy's fundraising committee made up of community members, staff and former clients stayed energetic over the four years of the campaign, keeping the momentum of annual giving going. And Synergy gave donors the option of contributing over a number of years rather than in one lump sum, easing the financial burden on their supporters and enabling Synergy to stay the course through the worst of the economic doldrums.

Collect eggs from many baskets. Consider all of the funding options available that you may be qualified for: corporate giving, community foundation and other private grants, individual giving and endowments are all areas of fundraising that you may think about. Synergy made use of "challenge grants," which required them to raise money from additional donors before securing a promised donation. "They may seem daunting but they help to meet the funding goal," Winner says.

Stay in the spotlight. Holding events throughout the year keeps the community's focus on Synergy's causes, Winner says, and underscores the need for new facilities. Synergy's annual night of comedy, Stand Up for Synergy, featuring famous comedians such as Wayne Brady, Wanda Sykes and Jay Leno, brings its fundraising to a wider audience. But the organization also gets serious, staging an annual student sleep out that raises awareness about the plight of homeless youth.

Learn More

Tools

Financial Management Self-Assessment for Nonprofit Organizations (Nonprofit Assistance Fund)
<http://www.nonprofitsassistancefund.org/files/MNAF/ToolsTemplates/FinancialManagementSelfAssessment05.pdf>

A checklist for assessing financial management practices and identifying areas for improvement.

Scenario Planning Worksheet (Nonprofit Assistance Fund)
http://www.nonprofitsassistancefund.org/pages/scenario_planning

A step-by-step guide to preparing for possible losses of funding.

Steps for Considering and Creating an Alliance (Fieldstone Alliance)
http://www.fieldstonealliance.org/client/tools_you_can_use/07-22-09_forming_alliances.cfm

Outlines a five-step process for partnering with other organizations.

Tools for Success Online Self-Assessment (Cass Centre for Charity Effectiveness)
http://www.knowhownonprofit.org/tools-for-success/self_assessment

Identifies a nonprofit's strengths and weaknesses.

Resources

The following websites include information on fundraising. Some also list funding announcements.

Afterschool Alliance

<http://www.afterschoolalliance.org>

The After-School Corporation

<http://www.tascorp.org>

Afterschool.gov

<http://afterschool.gov>

The Bridgespan Group

<http://www.bridgespan.org>

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance

<http://www.cfda.gov>

The Community Toolbox

<http://ctb.ku.edu/en/tablecontents>

FASTEN

<http://www.fastennetwork.org>

Foundation Center

<http://foundationcenter.org>

Grants.gov

<http://grants.gov>

Grant Proposal.com

<http://grantproposal.com>

The Grantsmanship Center

<http://www.tgci.com>

Grassroots Fundraising Journal

<http://grassrootsfundraising.org>

Idealist

<http://idealist.org>

MENTOR/National Mentoring Partnership

<http://www.mentoring.org>

National Mentoring Center

<http://www.nwrel.org/mentoring/index.php>