

POWER ^{UP} YOUR PANTRY

RAISING MONEY FROM INDIVIDUALS



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Raising Money from Individuals is part two in a series of three guide sheets that discuss options for raising funds for your food pantry. The others include Fundraising Options and Grant Writing.



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This series is intended for food pantries and other hunger relief groups looking for ways to enhance their current operations and better meet the needs people who use their services.

The information provided is based on survey and other research conducted by the Interdisciplinary Center for Food Security at the University of Missouri.

Asking people for money can be intimidating. It goes against our notions of independence and self-reliance. Yet, within the context of food pantries (and all non-profits, for that matter), fundraising is a vital activity that helps your organization keep the doors open and provide assistance to the community.

Where to begin? First, consider different ways to raise funds from individuals. Each method has pros and cons.

In-person/Face-to-face. This is regarded as the most effective way to get donations from an individual. People are more likely to give to people they know, so it helps if the person being asked for money knows the person who is asking. It does require an investment of time and the ability to be personable and direct.

Phone calls. This method is nearly as effective as asking someone for a donation in-person, especially when the person being asked knows the person who is asking. One con is that it may be easier for someone to say "No" or "I need to think about it" over the phone. One benefit is that phone calling makes efficient use of time. Multiple calls can be made in a short time period. Phone calls are more effective when they are followed by a personal letter.

Personal letter. A personalized, hand-written (typed is fine) letter is another proven way to raise funds. Again, it works best when the person being receiving the letter knows the person sending the letter. Personal letters are more effective when they are followed by a phone call or in-person appeal.

Special events. Most groups new to fundraising may gravitate to this method. Unfortunately, special events often cost more in time and money than they generate in actual funds. However, special events are valuable for "friendraising" or donor cultivation. They allow you to showcase your organization, meet with people face-to-face, and make friends who can be asked for money at the event and at a later time. Any special event should include a few minutes for a representative to make a presentation about the work of the organization. Ideally, this will include a testimonial from an actual recipient of services. Another important point: the contact information of attendees needs to be collected at all special events.

Direct mail. This involves the mass mailing of a standard letter. For small organizations, this is likely the least effective method of fundraising. Part of the challenge is the cost of the mailing relative to the return. Also, if you've ever received direct mail, you know how impersonal it is and how easy it is to put the letter straight into the recycling bin.

Once a decision has been made about your preferred fundraising method, the actual fun begins. Below are some steps to follow to both prepare for launching your effort and ensure its long-term success.

- 1. Figure out who you want to ask.** Gather staff, volunteers, and those who receive services from your organization to do some brainstorming. Consider a broad range of people including family, friends, coworkers, clergy, professional contacts, and others with whom you already have a professional relationship. To cultivate donors, host an inexpensive open house or related event to showcase your organization.
- 2. Draft your message.** Develop a common message with brief talking points for people to use when asking for money. The message doesn't have to be followed word for word. Practice in small groups to work out any kinks and become comfortable with the process.
- 3. Make the ask!** Prior to sending people forth on their mission, create a list of potential donors and have people sign up to ask certain people. Have your fundraisers keep track of who they contacted and the response they received. If using the phone calling or personal letter method, consider hosting a small calling/letter writing session party where fundraisers can get together to work side by side.
- 4. Receive, Record, Acknowledge.** As the money comes in, log checks in your donor tracking system, record them in your accounting system, and deposit them. Follow up on all donations with a handwritten, personalized thank you letter. In addition to a well-crafted message that includes the date of the donation and the amount donated, the letter should contain some variation of the following: "[Organization Name] is a 501(c)3 organization. Your contribution is tax-deductible to the full extent of the law. No goods or services were received in return for this gift." For more about gift acknowledgements, including legal considerations, see the National Council for Nonprofits at bit.ly/thankstodonors.
- 5. Stay in touch.** Most people appreciate receiving periodic updates about the organizations they support. Include donors on newsletter and special event mailing lists.

Adapted in part from *Soup Kitchen and Food Pantry Best Practices Guide*, New York City Coalition Against Hunger, 2010.



For more information:
foodsecurity.missouri.edu