

## Fundraising tips for heart patient advocates

### *How can cardiovascular patient organisations fundraise sustainably?*

No one likes asking for money. However, securing funding is essential for advocacy organisations to achieve their goals. This applies to small volunteer-led groups as well as professional foundations with staff and offices. There are a number of income streams, ranging from funds raised in the community by people with a personal connection to the disease (bake sales and charity runs) to professional givers and large foundations. Unrestricted donations allow organisations to allocate funds as they wish (e.g. staff salaries, a website or information brochure), while restricted donations are given for a specific purpose.

### Top fundraising tips

1. Don't be afraid to ask for money, but don't expect instant results
2. Identify 'prospects': companies, foundations and individuals active in the area
3. Plan a campaign with a clear 'ask' and match this with a suitable prospect
4. Cultivate relationships with prospective donors; invite them to events/meetings
5. Work with people who are grateful for what you do and be sure to thank them

Fundraising is about building relationships. The first step is to map potential donors who have a tangible connection to your mission. These can be matched with requests to support specific projects. This can be a multi-step process: it can take an average of nine meetings before a donation is secured. Each prospective giver is unique: some like to attend large public events, like a gala dinner. Others are low key, preferring one-to-one briefings with experts in your area. Connecting donors with leading clinicians or researchers can help to strengthen the emotional ties between an investor and the issue you care about.

When a donation is made, it is vital to acknowledge it and report how the funds are used. Not only is this good etiquette and, sometimes, a legal requirement, it is an opportunity to generate repeat donations. 'Developing a culture of thanking is about building affinity with your organisation,' says Christopher Clinton Conway, President, Gobel International. 'Some large donors like to be recognised in writing, with a plaque or a special mention at your annual event. This encourages them to continue giving and inspires others to donate.'

Careful stewardship of gifts is appreciated by corporate donors and philanthropic foundations. Good financial reporting details how funds are used and should be complemented with narrative reporting to illustrate impact, says Mr Clinton Conway: 'Show a visual or present a story to tell people how they are changing lives.'

*Resources for identifying prospective donors*

The Foundation Directory: [fconline.foundationcenter.org](http://fconline.foundationcenter.org)

Guide Star: [www.guidestar.org](http://www.guidestar.org)

Chronicle of Philanthropy: [www.Philanthropy.com](http://www.Philanthropy.com)

Philanthropy News Digest: [philanthropynewsdigest.com](http://philanthropynewsdigest.com)

## **The power of partnerships in fundraising**

Joining forces with other organisations, including hospitals, research institutes and charities can help to develop a holistic approach to addressing a problem. The potential for partnerships to multiply the impact of a project is particularly valuable when applying for government support or to large philanthropic foundations. For smaller advocacy organisations, partnerships can also add credibility. ‘Trusts and foundations like to see that we have worked with the National Health Services and other high-profile partners,’ says Joel Rose, Chief Executive, Cardiomyopathy UK.

While the equation is a little different when partnering with industry, mutually beneficial collaborations can be developed which advance a charity’s mission while protecting independence. ‘Don’t frame industry partnerships as a solely fundraising relationship,’ says Mr Rose. ‘There is a lot of value for patient groups in understanding the research landscape and the available medicines.’ Not-for-profit groups are also advised to think about what level of industry support they are comfortable with and how it might influence the way other funders perceive them. In general, diversity of funding sources is best. This can include public and private donations, as well as earning fees for conducting research and gathering patient insights.

## **Think big, start small**

Advocacy groups must be ambitious and bold from the start. When resources are limited, an organisation’s best asset is its own creativity. At the same time, new or early-stage organisations are well advised not to overreach. ‘If you are going to have a fundraiser, make it fun and don’t be afraid to try new things,’ says Jodi Smith, Program Director, The Mended Hearts, Inc, USA. ‘Begin by raising awareness of your issues in the community and build on that. Start small with a t-shirt fundraiser or a local event to get money coming in the door. Don’t plan a gala event until you have built a community.’

This is echoed by David Evangelista, President and Managing Director, Special Olympics Europe Eurasia. He advises not-for-profit organisations to be patient and take a long-term view of delivering on their mission. ‘There are no shortcuts,’ he says. ‘Transitioning from a volunteer organisation to a professional operation is not an overnight process.’ Mr Evangelista’s tip for advocacy groups is to focus less on income and more on relationships. ‘What we want is not simply to raise funds but to create connections,’ he says. ‘If you develop a great relationship and align your needs with theirs, money happens.’

Seasoned fundraisers and not-for-profit leaders agree that sustaining relationships is the foundation of sustainable income generation. As the old saying goes: ***‘If you want money, ask for advice. If you want advice, ask for money.’***

*Inspired by discussions at the Global Heart Hub UNITE Summit 2022*