

GARY GOOSMAN • CGR 1998

KAREN BESS • JCG Fall 1984

## MONEY FOR COMMUNITY GARDENS

**RAISING MONEY IS VERY MUCH LIKE GARDENING.** It is all about growing – growing relationships. It has everything to do with conveying the importance of your work and finding ways that many people can contribute to the success of your program.

Above all, remember this: You have something to offer – to your community, to your donors, to organizations, and to politicians. Do not beg for support. Invite involvement.

Fundraising challenges are nothing new for community gardeners. Back in the early 1980s, ACGA pioneer Karen Bess attended a workshop on “alternatives for dealing with increased service demands and financial realities”. Her workshop leader, a very savvy minister-turned-manager of a large, well-run social agency, delivered a memorable lesson about fundraising attitudes and the differences between profit making and not-for-profit enterprises. As Bess reported in the *Journal of Community Gardening* back in 1984:

“It’s high time we nonprofit managers quit pooh-poohing the profit-making motivation and mentality and begin to learn some of the secrets of their success. The purpose and end value of the profitmaking organization is profit, which tends to focus and unify the efforts of its managers. The purpose of the not-for-profit, in contrast, is to “render a service,” and the basic values tend to be diverse and changing, based on funding sources and needs of clients, members, and volunteers. This creates a fuzzy atmosphere that makes effective measurement of performance difficult. Worse, it breeds a bleeding heart mentality and an unquestioning belief in the inherent goodness and immortality of the institution.

We, as nonprofits, have to cease crying about our needs. We don’t “have” needs – we are “addressing” them, and therefore have “opportunities to share”. Not-for-profit organizations must learn to make marketing a way of life, and realize we can not be all things to all people. We each must find a need and fill it well!”

As a sidebar to this section, you’ll find an amusing and thought-provoking list Bess brought back from her 1984 workshop – **PROVEN WAYS TO FAIL AT FUNDRAISING**. Know any community gardeners who, with the best of intentions, have tried any of these “proven” strategies? (I’m afraid you’ll have to include your editor in this group.)

# DONORS



**WHO ARE THE PEOPLE** or companies that give to nonprofits? Why do they contribute and what do they want, if anything, in return for their donation? These are good questions to ask before considering any kind of funding approach. People contribute to causes usually because they have a personal connection to that cause. You need to discover what their connection is to your effort. Do donors care about children, the environment, poverty, hunger, social justice, botanic education, a specific neighborhood, public image or some other issue?

Once you understand a donor's interests, you can talk about the impact your program has in the community. You can also ask contributors to give advice or input about your plans and strategies to create a positive change. (Be careful how you ask. If they make suggestions you don't want to follow, then you run the risk of losing a donation.) People who are active in creating solutions are more likely to become volunteers and then contribute money. Do not lie or guess about the effectiveness of your project. Show statistics about the benefits your program has created. Give success stories with personal appeal about people or families who have experienced positive change because of your efforts.

Donors can be individuals or companies. It is best to focus on individuals as a starting point. Statistically, individuals also contribute more money as a group. Even when you remove churches from the national statistics, individuals are still responsible for more than 70 percent of donations to nonprofit organizations in the US. Keeping a business as a donor depends upon the relationship you build with your contact in the company. Speak frankly with businesses about what goals they have for their involvement with your program.

## DIVERSIFICATION

Fundraising for any nonprofit should include a well-rounded slate of campaigns. You cannot survive solely on grants or events. Though a holistic effort may take some time to achieve, it is essential that you start early and incorporate a variety of fundraising activities. A balance of activities includes events, grants, mail campaigns, direct requests, and government or municipal contracts. Diversifying your sources will create a stable organization with the capacity to remain viable for a long time.

PROVEN  
WAYS  
TO FAIL AT  
FUND-  
RAISING

BE NEGATIVE.

AVOID ANY-  
THING NEW OR  
DIFFERENT.

**MOTTO 1:**  
"We never did it  
that way before."

**MOTTO 2:**  
"We tried that  
before and it  
didn't work."

**WRITE YOUR  
LOCAL  
NEWSPAPER**  
— tell them how  
hard times are  
hurting your  
agency.

**PROVEN  
WAYS  
TO FAIL AT  
FUND-  
RAISING**

**WRITE  
PROPOSALS  
FOR  
GOVERNMENT  
MONEY.**

Spend your time lobbying if you don't get it, spend your time entertaining auditors if you do get it.

**WRITE  
PROPOSALS  
TO THE SAME  
HANDFUL OF  
FOUNDATIONS**

as everyone else. If possible, use an out-of-date directory.

**BERATE  
FOUNDATIONS**

that turn you down. State publicly that they are insensitive.

**BE TOO BUSY**

to write thank-you notes.

**BE TOO BUSY**

to make a long-range plan for fundraising.



## THE CASE STATEMENT

**BEFORE THINKING ABOUT** any fundraising activity, an organization should make sure it has a clearly stated mission, goals, objectives, and business plan. All these items combine into a document called the *case statement*. If you cannot describe to someone what you do and why you do it, you're unlikely to succeed in raising money for your effort.

The case statement describes everything a donor might want to know about your organization – who you serve, community problems and needs, your successes in addressing these needs, how you measure your success, and how your future goals and strategy will continue to make a positive difference in your community. The case statement describes the who, where, how, and why of your program. Armed with various versions of this document, you can begin your

appeals to people, companies, and government in your city or region.

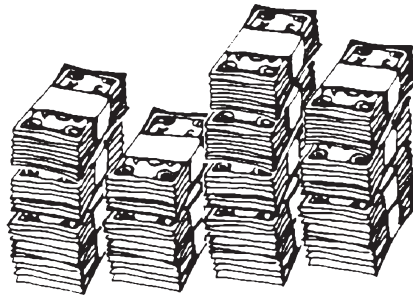
The *mission statement* is your philosophical vision or reason for being. It tells what human or community needs your program addresses; for example:

“The community garden program exists to empower neighborhood residents through gardening.”

*Goals* should define what you want to accomplish: “To provide access to gardens, education about gardening techniques, and resources to sustain neighborhood-directed gardens.” Lastly, objectives are refined statements of what measurable outcomes you hope to achieve, for example, “To present six organic-gardening training sessions achieving an average increase of five new skills per attendee.”

# GRANTS

start-up money



**GRANTS FROM FOUNDATIONS** – private, corporate, or community – provide money for start-up funding of new projects. Begin with research of local foundations that have a history of giving to programs like yours, i.e. children’s projects, environmental programs, or neighborhood development. Write to these foundations, ask for their guidelines for proposals, and express your intent to seek funding.

Many foundation directors will gladly give you advice on what they are looking for. Do not be afraid to ask for this information. Also, most public libraries have grant resource centers, providing extensive information on foundation contributions and histories.

Once you have the grant guidelines, began working on your proposal. It should be very similar to your case statement. The proposal should define a community need and how your group plans to address it. You can find supporting data about poverty, crime, and literacy rates at your library or on the Internet. Describe what your objectives are for the period of the grant. These objectives should be concise, specific, and measurable. Foundations will expect some form of reporting to determine how effective your project has been at creating the desired changes.

When writing any proposal, remember to have many different people proofread the grant proposal. Get as much feedback about style, content, statistics and organization as possible. Remember to include solid supporting documents (budgets, history statements, board of trustees, facilities inventory and letters of support) to show organizational sustainability. (These may all be in your case statement.) List other sources of

<b>+ PLUSES</b> <i>Low cost, minimal time, aids research accumulation, helps build case statement</i>
<b>- MINUSES</b> <i>Usually non-renewable, doesn't build public awareness, doesn't diversify funding</i>

funding that are being sought. Most foundations do not want to shoulder the entire cost of a new project. They want to know that other companies and individuals are investing in your community efforts. In documenting what other support you receive, do not forget to mention volunteers and in-kind contributions. A donation of equipment is often a good idea for a company. It can relieve inventories and does not expend valuable cash.

Last, describe how you will find funding for the project after grant funds run out. Showing a long-range strategy for sustainability will increase your chances of funding and give you time to create other ways of getting resources.

Government grants are another source of funding for your program. Funding is often available through city departments – human services, housing, development, or environmental services. Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) and other funding can be acquired on a recurring basis, but require extensive documentation to become an ongoing recipient. The guidelines are similar to other proposals, but lobbying with public officials to acquaint them with your program is necessary. Government, United Way, or other sources usually require greater reporting than foundations and often have stringent limits on the use of funds.

## PROVEN WAYS TO FAIL AT FUND-RAISING

**BE TOO BUSY**  
to meet with each person on your board of directors to find out what he or she wants to do.

**BE TOO BUSY**  
to evaluate last year's fundraising.

**DECIDE YOU CAN'T AFFORD TO TAKE ANY CHANCES.**

**WAIT TO WRITE GRANTS UNTIL THE LAST POSSIBLE MOMENT,** preferably the night before they are due.

**UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES READ INSTRUCTIONS** and application materials carefully. Be creative! Do not observe any instructions beginning "you must..."

**PROVEN  
WAYS  
TO FAIL AT  
FUND-  
RAISING**

**MISS  
DEADLINES.**

Preferably, show up two minutes after deadline for submission, so you can have the door slammed in your face. Blame 1) your slow printer, 2) the 'rigid' people giving the grants.

**NEVER ASK  
CURRENT  
DONORS**

for money more than once a year because you think it is not polite.

**NEVER ASK  
YOUR BOARD**

for money because they already give you their time.

**NEVER ASK  
YOUR  
VOLUNTEERS**

for money because they already give you their time.

**NEVER ASK  
YOUR FAMILY  
OR FRIENDS**

for money because it is too personal.

# EVENTS

building awareness, gaining contacts

**THE GREATEST "BENEFIT" OF BENEFIT EVENTS** is all the attention they bring to your organization. The down side is the enormous amount of time, energy, and coordination required to create a successful event. An effective committee is the key to success. Planning should start as much as a year in advance. An event should be novel (to stand out), and interesting enough to appeal to most of your supporters and potential contributors.

Successful events are fun. They allow folks to eat, listen to music, or buy something and feel their support is of benefit to the community. Events can activate your Board of Directors, bring in new volunteers, and draw attention to your cause.

Events are a good way to start cultivating relationships with donors. You can open the door by asking for in-kind donations to help with the event. In-kind contributions are often easier to get than cash. Companies like their products to be front and center at an event.

When planning a fundraising event, do not reinvent the wheel. Get outlines or timelines from other groups holding regular events. Set firm deadlines for tasks to be accomplished and have clear, strong leadership. – the buck has



**+ PLUSES**

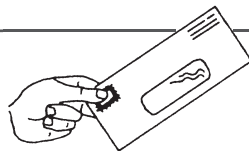
*Builds public awareness & support, fun, gains volunteers, provides in-kind support*

**- MINUSES**

*Long-term, loads of coordination & PR to succeed, low monetary returns at first*

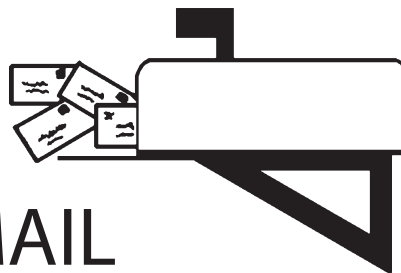
to stop somewhere. Start with a small event: a block party or a neighborhood barbecue. It doesn't have to be a fancy affair. Start simple, and assume you will build the event over several years.

## letter basics



- People must open the envelope, so make it something different.
- Know your donors and treat them intelligently; never cry wolf.
- Get to the point: Why are you writing to this person?

- Acknowledge the reader. Bring them into the letter.
- Thank donors for their previous help.
- State community needs you plan to address.
- Suggest solutions generated by your organization. Give examples.
- Ask for money – being specific is better.
- Include a return envelope and response card. Use the response card to restate your need and solutions.



# DIRECT MAIL

letters and the annual campaign

**DIRECT MAIL** is the basis of many development programs. Usually, it's a letter asking for financial support of your organization. For this effort, begin building a list of names of possible donors, such as attendees to special events, volunteers, board members and friends of board members. Other possibilities include mailing lists from other groups and purchased lists.

Acquiring new names is an ongoing job and is a key area for involvement from your Board of Directors. Every year you will probably lose up to 10 percent of your donors through moving, loss of interest, or support to other charities. Existing donors should respond 10 to 25 percent of the time to requests. When you mail to potential donors, known as cold calling, you can expect about a three percent return rate. Under these conditions, your goal is to acquire supporters who will become increasingly loyal to your efforts. Once they contribute, you need to send out newsletters or other materials to further inform and keep them involved. Follow up with additional requests for money as other needs emerge.

Once you have started a list (and have a good computer system to keep these records), then you can construct a letter asking for a contribution. The letter should be personal, not statistics. It should describe success stories, even gardeners' statements or testimonials. It should clearly define community needs and your efforts to positively affect these challenges.

Lastly, you must actually ask for money. Do not be cute or vague. Tell people why you need

<p><b>+ PLUSES</b></p> <p><i>Grows your program, moderate costs, builds awareness, establishes constituents, generally creates unrestricted monies</i></p> <p><b>- MINUSES</b></p> <p><i>Low monetary returns, requires significant tracking systems, impersonal</i></p>
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their money and what you will do to be a good steward of their investment. When people follow through and contribute, do not forget to thank them and let them know about your progress in your efforts. If you have a newsletter, you may be able to acknowledge them publicly.

Clearly, the solicitation letter is the least flexible and least personal form of annual campaign. However, a mail campaign is a reasonably low-cost, simple start to gaining donors and attention. Follow-up calls to larger donors are especially useful to supplement direct-mail requests.

**MEMBERSHIPS** are a subset of direct mail. It allows donors to receive benefits for their involvement with your organization. Memberships offer services in exchange for a contribution. For IRS purposes, a membership is not totally tax deductible. It means you must provide some benefits for the membership fee. Benefits can include access to classes for reduced rates, use of a library, regular newsletter mailings or other reduced-rate services. Review and choose carefully the items you offer through membership; they can drain energy from the general operation of your organization.

**PROVEN WAYS TO FAIL AT FUND-RAISING**

**NEVER ASK SENIOR CITIZENS**

to raise money because they are too old.

**NEVER ASK YOUTH**

to raise money because they are too young.

**NEVER ASK LOW-INCOME PEOPLE**

to raise money because they're poor.

**NEVER ASK RICH PEOPLE**

for money because you don't know them well enough.

**NEVER ASK ANYONE NEW**

for money because they don't know the agency well enough.

**NEVER ASK THE OLD-TIMERS**

for money because they never gave before.

**PROVEN  
WAYS  
TO FAIL AT  
FUND-  
RAISING**

**NEVER IN-  
CLUDE TERMS  
OF OFFICE**

in your bylaws. Keep all your deadwood on the board forever and let new energetic people participate somewhere else.

**NEVER TELL  
A CANDIDATE  
FOR THE  
BOARD**

that an important part of the job is asking for money. Wait until they are on the board, then surprise them. Preferably, throw a tantrum in front of the entire board after the first financial report showing a deficit.

**NEVER ASK  
FOR ADVICE.**

**NEVER ASK  
FOR HELP.**

**NEVER ASK  
FOR MONEY.**

# THE BIG GIFT



**A PERSONAL VISIT** to potential donors, with people they know, is the most effective form of request. This requires more time and research – knowing the donors' giving history, and their concerns, and support of other issues. Direct re-

quests for support to individuals or companies can only come after there has been a relationship and history established. Regular, consistent donors clearly have an investment in your organization. They want you to succeed. Because they have a stake in this investment, they are a candidate for a direct request for funding.

Companies can be approached for large donations as sponsors. Sponsorship can be acknowledged through newsletters, garden signs, at events, in annual reports, and many other ways. They should have volunteers active in your efforts, a history of previous contributions, and a desire to work collaboratively to build your public awareness as well as theirs. Don't forget that direct requests can also include in-kind donations, such as office equipment or plants, fertilizer and other garden supplies.

## FINAL WORDS . . .



**TO CREATE SUSTAINABLE PROGRAMS** you need more than money. You need friends and supporters. This occurs when you look beyond your short-term needs. You must share your vision and enthusiasm with the community around you. Do not try to do this all yourself. Use your board of directors, volunteers, and other community contacts for assistance. Bring many ideas and views into the equation. It takes the germination of many ideas to find a model that can sustain each program.

## RE\$OURCE\$

Check out the local chapter of the National Society of Fundraising Executives (NSFRE). Try the grants resource center at your public and university libraries. For demographic data, the Internet offers the US Census Bureau ([www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov)) and your local Chamber of Commerce site. Look for information about foundations at [www.fdncenter.org](http://www.fdncenter.org) (an independent public organization established by foundations to increase public understanding of the foundation field) or other charity profiles at [www.guidestar.org](http://www.guidestar.org) (a database of comprehensive reports describing the programs and finances of more than 40,000 American charities and nonprofit organizations).