



FUNDING FOR COMMUNITY BUILDINGS – GETTING STARTED

Fundraising for the major refurbishment or construction of a community building is a big challenge. It can take 2 – 5 years from the initial plans through to getting the money and starting construction.

You may need to invest a lot of time, energy and some cash in the project before you know whether you can raise the money needed. So you need to be clear that the building is going to be used and that there is demand for community facilities. Funders will want to know that the building will be well used and that the community has access to it.

Step 1 – Preparing You Organisation

If you are *buying* a building, you need to consider the many responsibilities involved in owning a building and establish strong arguments for why you need to own, rather than rent, a building. Funders will want to be reassured that the management committee can comply with all the legal requirements of managing a building open to the public, and employing staff.

Your management committee may need training to develop the new skills and knowledge needed to manage a building. A group taking responsibility for a building and staff need to get legal advice from their local CVS or law centre about becoming a company limited by guarantee.

If you are *renting* a property, funders will want to know that if they give a grant it will be your group that benefits from the improvements to the building. They will expect you to hold a lease over a certain period of time, usually for a minimum of five years, depending on the amount of money you have asked for.

Step 2 – Develop a Funding Strategy

You need to consider a strategy and action plan for a 2 - 5 year period that identifies different stages of the project. This may include producing a community audit, organising surveys and feasibility studies and a scheme of work for the construction phase.

You may need to approach three or four different funders in order to secure large funds and you will need to reassure them that you have enough resources to

complete the building work. Not many charitable trusts are big enough to be a major funder for a building project.

If you are approaching the larger European or regeneration funds you will need to have links with training, employment, childcare, education or community enterprises.

Approaching funders at the right time is very important. If you make an application too early, funders may feel that you will not start building for a long time and reject your application. If you make your application too late they may not have time to consider your application before building work starts.

Your strategy should also include information on how you will get the money to keep the building open in the next few years.

Step 3 – Gather Information

After you have worked on your funding strategy for the building scheme, you need to think about the documents and plans you will need to submit. Each funder will require different information on your building plans and you may need to spend time researching the different documents that you have to send to funders.

Remember always to tailor your applications to each funder and never send out general appeal letters.

Step 4 – Start Local

Some groups start by approaching members and groups within their community. Do-it-yourself fundraising can encourage your local community to get involved and provide much needed publicity for your project. You will also be able to demonstrate to funders that you have the support of the local community.

You may know local trusts and companies who you can approach. They may be happier to start making smaller grants in the first stages of your project and this will encourage larger funders to give grants at a later stage.

Useful Contacts

You will need a range of support when fundraising for a community building. Talk to other groups that have just been through the process about what they found most useful.

- **Community Matters** runs national training courses and produces useful publications on community buildings.

Managing Your Community Building by Peter Hudson, £14.95. Information on all aspects of running a community building and advice on good practice.

Occupying Community Premises edited by Jonathan Dawson, £13.95. A book about the legal basis on which community organisations occupy buildings where they are owned by local authorities or other bodies.

Contact: Community Matters, 12-20 Baron Street, London. N1 9LL.

Advice Line: 08707 272373

Website: www.communitymatters.org.uk

- **The Big Lottery Fund** publishes a specific **Property Applications** booklet and organises workshops for local groups applying to them for building costs.

Tel: 0845 791 9191 (for application pack and guidance booklet) OR 0113 224 5300 (for workshops).

Taken from the South Yorkshire Funding Advice Bureau Information Sheets