

Chapter 4: Local Fundraising and Special Events

Introduction

From printing costs for flyers and fact sheets to rental fees for meeting venues, most campaign work will require some degree of financial support.

Some grassroots organizers feel like fundraising work is not a part of their “real” program work, and don’t look forward to doing it. However, doing fundraising for your group will not only make it easier for you to meet the needs of your campaigns, it is also a way for people in your community to literally become more invested in your work. Some people are not able to give time to the work of your group, but they may have money they can contribute. As you work to maximize the number of people in your community who are involved in and feel like a part of this movement, doing local fundraising is a good way to widen the net and bring in new community members.

Money can also bring an infusion of energy to your campaigns. It is empowering to feel supported by your community in the work you are doing; having a chunk of money in the bank is one way for group members to be able to quantify the support you are receiving for your work. Also, if you are able to pay some of your group members for the time they devote to this cause, you can free them up from other work obligations and bring more concentrated energy to the movement.

There are many ways to raise money for genetic engineering work. One common yet sometimes exhausting way of raising money is from foundations. Grant writing can be a time-consuming process, but it may be right for your group to begin looking for support from foundations. Quite possibly, there may be foundations that exist to support efforts in your specific community or state. One place to research foundations is at your local library, which will likely carry *The Foundation Directory* in their reference section. Although grant writing is not covered in this chapter of the toolkit, there are numerous resources on grant writing available. A couple of links to start researching on the web are:

<http://www.seanet.com/~sylvie/grants.htm>

<http://foundationcenter.org/getstarted/tutorials/shortcourse/index.html>

While groups often think first about writing grants for fundraising, getting financial support from local people can be even more effective. In fact, most non-profits receive 80% or more of their contributions from individuals, not foundations.

Seeking out local donors is effective for a number of reasons:

- The work you are doing to protect your community from genetic engineering will be particularly compelling to the people who live in your area, as they may feel most directly impacted by your efforts. They have a direct stake in the place you are working to preserve.
- Your group already has connections to people in your community who have resources to give. Fundraising is largely about relationships, and local fundraising can build on the networks your members and supporters are already a part of to secure support.
- Seeking individual financial support can be less time-consuming and has a higher rate of return than grant writing.

- If you develop a careful plan for developing local donors and nurturing them over time, you will lay the foundation for funding that can be sustained over time and security for your group's projects as a result.

There are a lot of ways to engage in local fundraising efforts. Individual meetings with donors can be particularly effective in raising larger amounts of money. House parties cannot only help you secure funding, but will also help you identify new volunteers for your campaign work. Public fundraising events are fun ways to both raise money and raise awareness of the issue in the community. T-shirt, book, movie, and bumpersticker sales can also raise modest amounts of money while helping advertise your efforts and educate your community. All of these local fundraising efforts will help bring more local people into this movement and will bring your work the financial support it needs to carry out its campaigns.

Remember that asking community members for money is not a burden to them; you are providing people with another way to support this movement and to resist genetic engineering. And your group and group members deserve to be financially supported. Recognize your worth by feeling empowered to ask for the funds you need. You may be surprised by how many people are thankful to be given the opportunity to contribute.

This chapter of the toolkit provides tools and lessons on fundraising from individual donor supporters and special events.

The Ten Most Important Things You Can Know About Fundraising

1. IF YOU WANT MONEY, YOU HAVE TO ASK FOR IT

While there are some people (may their kind increase) who will simply send an organization money or offer money without being asked, there are not enough of them to build a donor base around. Most people will not think to give you money unless you make your needs known.

This is not because they are cheap or self-centered; it is because most people have no idea how much it costs to run a non-profit, or how non-profits get money. If you don't ask them, they will simply assume you are getting the money somewhere. They have no reason to think your group needs money unless you tell them, the same way they have no reason to know if you are hungry, or unhappy, or needing advice.

Millard Fuller, who founded Habitat for Humanity, says, "I have tried raising money by asking for it, and by not asking for it. I always got more by asking for it."

2. THANK BEFORE YOU BANK

Once you receive money, you must thank the person who gave it to you. I have found that disciplining myself not to deposit checks until I have written the thank you notes has forced me to make thank you notes a priority. I am not rigid about this rule because if I get behind in my thank-you notes and then don't deposit the checks for a while, the donors may wonder whether we really needed the money.

Thank you notes do not need to be fancy and should not be long. If at all possible, they should include a personal note, even if it is from someone who doesn't know the donor. You can add something as simple as, "Hope to meet you sometime," or "Check out our website," or "Happy holidays," or even, "Thanks again — your gift really helps."

Many organizations have created note cards for staff and volunteers to use when writing thank you's. The front of the card has the logo of the group, on the top half of the inside is a relevant meaningful quote from a famous person, and the bottom half of the inside is used for the message. It is a small space, so you really can't say much. Many databases will print out a thank you note after you enter the information about the donor — saving valuable time. These are best if accompanied by a personal note at the bottom. Late thank you's are better than no thank you at all, but photocopied form thank you's are almost the same as no thank you.

The long and the short of thank you's is: if you don't have time to thank donors, you don't have time to have donors.

3. DONORS ARE NOT ATMS

A survey of donors who gave away more than \$5,000 a year asked, "What is your relationship with your favorite group?" Several gave similar answers, even though they did not know each other and did not give to the same group. All the answers were on this theme: "I would love to be considered a friend, but I am more of an ATM. They come to me when they need money, they tell me how much, I give it to them, and the next time I hear from them is when they need more."

This is a terrible indictment of much of what passes as fundraising. When I have described this common situation in trainings, people have often asked, "How can we make sure our donors don't feel this way?" The answer is very simple, "Make sure you don't feel that way about your donors." All groups have a few "high maintenance" donors, and may be forgiven for wishing them to go on a long trip to a place without phones or e-mail. But the majority of donors require practically no attention. They have the resilience of cacti — the slightest care makes them bloom.

Thank you notes, easy-to-understand newsletters, and occasional respectful requests for extra gifts will keep people giving year in and year out. Think of your donors as ambassadors for your group. Design your materials so that donors will be proud to give your newsletter to a friend or recommend your group when their service club or professional association is looking for an interesting speaker, or forward your e-mails to several of their colleagues.

By treating your donors as whole people who have a number of gifts to offer your group, including their financial support, you will have more financial support from existing donors, more fun fundraising, more donors, and the peace of mind of knowing that you are not treating anyone as an object.

4. MOST MONEY COMES FROM PEOPLE, AND MOST OF THOSE PEOPLE ARE NOT RICH

There are three sources of funding for all the nonprofits in the United States: earned income (such as products and fees for service), government (public sector), and the private sector, which includes foundations, corporations, and individuals. For the nearly 60 years that records about who gives money away have been kept, at least 80% of this money has been shown to be given by individuals.

In 2002, total giving by the private sector was almost \$241 billion, and 84.2 percent of that (\$202 billion) was given away by individuals! These people are *all* people — there is no significant difference in giving patterns by age, race, or gender. Income is not nearly the variable that one would think: middle-class, working-class, and poor people are generous givers and account for a high percentage of the money given away. In fact, a study by Arthur Blocks of the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs at Syracuse University showed that 19% of families living on welfare give away an average of \$72 a year!

Too often, people think they can't raise money because they don't know any wealthy philanthropists. It is a great comfort to find that the people we know, whoever they are, are adequate to the task. Seven out of ten adults give away money. Focus your work on these givers, and help teach young people to become givers.

5. PEOPLE HAVE THE RIGHT TO SAY NO

One of the biggest mistakes I made early on as a fundraising trainer was not balancing my emphasis on the need to ask for money with the reality that people are going to say no. No one is obligated to support your group — no matter what you have done for them, no matter how wealthy they are, no matter how much they give to other groups, how close a friend they are of the director, or any other circumstance that makes it seem they would be a likely giver.

While it is possible to guilt-trip, trick, or manipulate someone into giving once, that will not work as a repeat strategy. People avoid people who make them feel bad, and they are attracted to people who make them feel good. When you can make someone feel all right about saying no, you keep the door open to a future yes or to that person referring someone else to your group.

People say no for all kinds of reasons: they don't have extra money right now; they just gave to another group; they don't give at the door, over the phone, by mail; a serious crisis in their family is consuming all their emotional energy; they are in a bad mood. Rarely does their refusal have anything to do with you or your group. Sometimes people say no because they have other priorities, or they don't understand what your group does. Sometimes we hear no when the person is just saying, "I need more time to decide," or "I need more information," or "I have misunderstood something you said."

So, first be clear that the person is saying no, and not something else like, "Not now," or "I don't like special events." Once you are certain that the person has said no, accept it. Go on to your next prospect. If appropriate, write the person a letter and thank them for the attention they gave to your request. Then let it go. If you don't hear no several times a week, you are not asking enough people.

6. TO BE GOOD AT FUNDRAISING, CULTIVATE THREE TRAITS

A good fundraiser requires three character traits as much as any set of skills. These traits are first, a belief in the cause for which you are raising money and the ability to maintain that belief during defeats, tedious tasks, and financial insecurity; second, the ability to have high hopes and low expectations, allowing you to be often pleased but rarely disappointed; and third, faith in the basic goodness of people.

While fundraising is certainly a profession, people who will raise money for any kind of group are rarely effective. Fundraising is a means to an end, a way to promote a cause, a very necessary skill in achieving goals and fulfilling missions.

7. FUNDRAISING SHOULD NOT BE CONFUSED WITH FUND CHASING, FUND SQUEEZING, OR FUND HOARDING

Too often, organizations get confused about what fundraising is and is not.

If you hear that a foundation is now funding XYZ idea, and your organization has never done work in that area nor have you ever wished to do work in that area, the fact that you are well qualified to do such work is immaterial. To apply for a grant just because the money is available and not because the work will promote your mission is called fund chasing. Many groups chase money all over and, in doing so, move very far away from their mission.

Similarly, if your organization seems to be running into a deficit situation, cutting items out of the budget may be necessary but should not be confused with fundraising. When deficits loom, the fund squeezing question is, “How can we cut back on spending?”; the fundraising question is “Where can we get even more money?”

Finally, putting money aside for a rainy day, or taking money people have given you for annual operating and program work and being able to put some of it into a savings account is a good idea. Where savings becomes hoarding, however, is when no occasion seems important enough to warrant using the savings. I know a number of groups that have cut whole staff positions and program areas rather than let money sitting in their savings be used to keep them going until more money could be raised. I know groups that overstate what they pay people, what price they pay for equipment, what they spend on rent, all to get bigger grants from foundations or larger gifts from individuals, and then put that extra into savings — savings that they have no plan for.

A group that saves money needs to have a rationale: Why are you saving this money? Under what circumstances would you spend it? Without some plan in mind, the group simply hoards money. Fund chasing, fund squeezing, and fund hoarding need to be replaced with an ethic that directs the group to seek the money it needs, spend it wisely, and set some aside for cash-flow emergencies or future work.

8. FUNDRAISING IS AN EXCHANGE — PEOPLE PAY YOU TO DO WORK THEY CANNOT DO ALONE

Hank Rosso, founder of the Fund Raising School and my mentor for many years, spoke often about the need to eliminate the idea that fundraising was like begging. Begging is when you ask for something you do not deserve. If you are doing good work, then you deserve to raise the money to do it. What you must do is figure out how to articulate what you are doing so that the person hearing it, if they share your values, will want to exchange their money for your work. They will pay you to do work they cannot do alone.

9. PEOPLE’S ANXIETIES ABOUT FUNDRAISING STEM FROM THEIR ANXIETIES ABOUT MONEY

Anxiety about money is learned, and it can be unlearned. If you are ever around children, you know that they have no trouble asking for anything, especially money. In fact, if you say no to a child’s request for money, they will simply ask again, or rephrase their request (“I’ll only spend it on books”), or offer an alternative (“How about if I do the dishes, then will you give me the money?”).

Everything we think and feel about money we have been taught. None of it is natural; none of it is genetic. In fact, in many countries around the world, people talk easily about money. They discuss what they earn, how much they paid for things, and it is not considered rude to ask others about salaries and costs.

We have been taught not to talk about money or to ask for it, except under very limited circumstances. Many of us are taught that money is a private affair. Having too little or too much can be a source of shame and embarrassment, yet money is also a source of status and power. Most people would like to have more money, yet most will also admit that money doesn't buy happiness. As adults, we have the right — in fact, the obligation — to examine the ideas we were taught as children to ensure that they are accurate and that they promote values we want to live by as adults. Most of us have changed our thinking about sex and sexuality, about race, about age, illness and disability, about religion, about marriage, about how children should be raised, what foods are healthy, and much more. We have done this as we have learned more, as we have experienced more, or, as we have thought about what we value and what we do not. We need to take the time to do the same work with our attitudes toward money. We can choose attitudes that make sense and that promote our health and well-being. Our attitudes toward fundraising are a subset of our larger attitudes toward money. The most important change we can make in our attitudes toward fundraising is to remember that success in fundraising is defined by how many people you ask rather than how much money you raise. This is because some people are going to say no, which has got to be all right with you. The more people you ask, the more yes answers you will eventually get.

Finally, if you are anxious about asking for money or would rather not ask, this is normal. But ask yourself if what you believe in is bigger than what you are anxious about. Keep focused on your commitment to the cause and that will propel you past your doubts, fears, and anxieties.

10. THERE ARE FOUR STEPS TO FUNDRAISING—PLAN, PLAN, PLAN, AND WORK YOUR PLAN

Though humorous, this formula that I learned from a community organizer underscores the fact that fundraising is three parts planning for one part doing. I learned this later in my career, after having gone off half-cocked into many fundraising campaigns and programs. I meant to plan, I planned to make a plan, I just never got around to planning. I have learned (usually the hard way) that an hour of planning can save five hours of work, leaving much more time both to plan and to work. Planning also avoids that awful feeling of “How can I ever get everything done,” and that sense of impending doom. It moves us out of crisis mentality and means that we are going to be a lot easier for our co-workers to get along with.

There are a lot of articles and books on planning —I recommend reading some of them. However, the easiest way I have found to plan something is to start by defining the end result you want and when you want it to happen, then work backwards from that point to the present. For example, if you want your organization to have 100 new members by the end of next year and you are going to use house parties as your primary acquisition strategy, you will need to schedule five to seven house parties that will recruit 10 to 15 members per party. To set up one house party will require asking three people to host it (only one will accept), which will require identifying 15 or 20 possible hosts to carry out the number of house parties you want to have. The hosts will want to see materials and know what help they will have from you. The materials will have to be ready before the first phone call is made to the first potential host, and the first phone call needs to occur at least two months before the first party. So, the materials need to be produced in the next two weeks, hosts identified in a similar timeframe, calls made over a period of two or three months, and so on.

When you are tempted to skip planning, or to postpone planning until you “have some time,” or to fly by the seat of your pants, just remember the Buddhist saying, “We have so little time, we must proceed very slowly.”

By Kim Klein, Grassroots Fundraising Journal
www.grassrootsfundraising.org

Develop a Fundraising Plan

Five Steps to Develop a Grassroots Fundraising Plan:

- 1) Develop a budget.
- 2) Determine the total amount of money to be raised from individual donors.
- 3) Set income goals for different groups of individual givers.
- 4) Decide how many donors you need to meet your goals, and select the best strategies.
- 5) Put the plan onto a timeline and fill out the tasks.

Veteran fundraiser and organizer Gary Delgado says that there are four steps to successful fundraising: plan, plan, plan and work.

Because there is so much truth to this advice, it may surprise readers that this “how to” is relatively short. That’s because planning for fundraising is not difficult to explain, nor is it difficult to do. Not only is planning fully three-fourths of what makes for successful fundraising, it is also true that one hour of planning can save three hours of work. But the final and most important truth is that planning does not take the place of doing.

Given that an organization is going to have to work its plan in order to raise money, how can a workable plan be created? There are five steps:

1. Create a budget.

The first step in developing a fundraising plan is to develop a working budget. A budget is simply a list of items on which you will spend money (expenses) and a list of sources from which you will receive money (income). A budget balances when the projected expenses and income are equal.

There is a simple process for budget preparation that most small nonprofit organizations can use effectively. The process takes into account the largest number of variables without doing extensive research or developing elaborate spread-sheets. In some organizations a single staff member prepares the entire budget and presents it for board approval, but this is a large burden for one person. Therefore, the method presented here assumes that a small committee will undertake the budget-setting program.

Task One:

Expenses Versus Income

The budget committee should first divide into two subgroups: one to estimate expenses and the other to project income. When these tasks are completed, the subgroups will reconvene to mesh their work.

Estimating Expenses

The group working on the expense side of the budget prepares three columns of numbers representing “bare bones,” “reasonable,” and “ideal” expense figures. The “bare bones” column spells out the amount of money the organization needs to survive. Items here generally include office space, minimum staff requirements, postage, printing and telephone. This column does not include the cost of new work, salary increases, additional staff, new equipment or other improvements.

Next, the group prepares the “ideal” column: how much money the group would need to operate at maximum effectiveness. This is not a dream budget, but a true estimate of the amount of funding required for optimum functioning.

Finally, the committee prepares the “reasonable” column: how much money the group needs to do more than simply survive but still not meet all its goals. These figures should not be conceived of as an average of the other two columns. For example, an organization may feel that in order to accomplish any good work, the office needs to be larger, or in order to maintain staff morale, the organization must raise salaries. Because higher rent and increased salaries aren’t necessary to a group’s survival, they will not be included in the group’s “bare bones” budget; however, they are important enough to the organization’s work to be included in the “reasonable” budget.

The “bare bones,” “reasonable” and “ideal” columns, then, give the range of finances required to run the organization at various levels of functioning. The process of figuring expenses and income must be done with great attention to thoroughness and detail. When you don’t know how much something costs, do not guess. Take the time while creating the budget to find out.

Projecting Income

At the same time that the expense side of the budget is being prepared, the other half of the committee is preparing the income side. Crucial to this process is a knowledge of what fundraising strategies the organization can carry out and how much money these can be expected to generate. The income side is also estimated in three columns, representing “worst,” “likely,” and “best.”

To calculate the income projection labeled “worst,” take last year’s income sources and assume that with the same amount of effort the group will at least be able to raise this amount again. In the case of foundation, corporation or government grants it may be wise to write “zero” as the worst projection. The “best” income projections are drawn up next. These figures reflect what would happen if all the organization’s fundraising work was successful and every grant proposal submitted was funded. Again, this is not a dream budget. It does not assume events that will probably not occur, such as someone giving your group a gift of a million dollars. The ideal budget must be one that would be met if everything went absolutely right.

The “likely” column is a compromise. It estimates the income the organization can expect to generate with reasonable hard work, expanding old fundraising strategies and having success with some new strategies, yet with some things going wrong.

All income categories are figured on the basis of their gross: that is, the amounts you expect to earn from each strategy before expenses are subtracted. The expenses must be included in the expense side of the budget. Be sure that the committee developing the expense side of the budget includes expenses involved in carrying out fundraising strategies in the total expenses of the organization.

Task Two:

Meet, Compare, Negotiate

Once income and expense projections have been completed, the two parts of the committee can share their results. When the income and expense sides of the budget have been figured separately in this way, there is less chance of giving in to the temptation to manipulate the figures to make them balance.

When the entire committee reconvenes, you hope to find that the “reasonable” expense column and the “likely” income column are close to the same. In that happy circumstance those figures can be adopted as the budget with no more fuss. Occasionally groups are pleasantly surprised to

discover that their "likely" income projections came close to their "ideal" budget. However, compromises usually need to be made. In these cases the expenses need to be adjusted to meet realistic income potential, not the other way around.

When no two sets of numbers are anywhere near alike, the committee will have to find solutions. There is no right or wrong way to negotiate at this point. If each committee has really done its job properly, there will be no need to review each item to see if it is accurate. However, with more research, committees may discover other ways to delete expenses or add income.

2. Determine the amount to be raised from individual donors.

From the amount of money you determine you must raise, subtract any amounts that will be raised from strategies not involving individual donors, such as income from foundation, corporate or government grants, product sales, fees for service, interest income, etc. The amount that remains is the amount that will form the basis of your fundraising plan for individual donors. The other methods of income generation will be added to your plan during the last step.

3. Set income goals.

Now divide the amount of money that must be raised from individuals into the proportions you can expect from different groups of givers.

- 60% of your money should come from 10% of your donors – major donors.
- 20% of your money should come from 20% of your donors – habitual donors giving through your retention strategies.
- The remaining 20% of your money should come from 70% of your donors – first time donors giving through acquisition strategies.

Next, analyze your current donor list to answer the following four questions:

- *How many donors do you have now in each of these three categories?*
- *What is your renewal rate? (It should be around 66%.)*
- *What is the organization's strength in working with donors?*
- *Has the number of donors to your organization grown, decreased or stayed the same in the last three years? If it has decreased, you are definitely not doing enough acquisition and you may also have a problem with retention of donors. If the number of donors has stayed the same, you are either doing a good job with retention or acquisition, but not both, because otherwise you would see an increase.*

This analysis will give you a clearer sense of the strategies you need to employ to meet your financial goals.

How to Develop a Fundraising Plan

4. Decide how many donors you need.

Match the number of donors you need to make your goals in each category with strategies that work best for reaching those donors.

5. Put it on a timeline.

Put the entire plan, including all methods of income generation, onto a time line and fill out the tasks. Voila! A fundraising plan is born. (This is not to underplay the amount of time it will take you to do these five steps – a planning committee of the board will need to meet two or three times to get a plan of this specificity accomplished.) By using these steps, the planning process can be both simple and accurate.

Drawn from Western Organization of Resource Councils, www.worc.org

Support from Individuals

Individuals should provide the core support for practically any kind of nonprofit endeavor. Such support is important for a number of reasons. Individuals are, beyond a doubt, the most reliable, consistent source of income for nonprofit organizations throughout the world. Their investment in your work will rarely waiver as long as you fulfill your mission adequately and acknowledge the individual supporters for their aid. Individuals form very personal relationships with the charitable organizations they support. As long as you encourage, recognize, and nurture that relationship, you can count on retaining most of your individual donors year in and out. They serve as your life insurance policy for the future, for they will be around even if institutional supporters withdraw their support.

Nevertheless, some organizations scoff at the idea of reaching out to individuals for support, believing that the public is apathetic to their issues or that their immediate constituency is too poor or hard-pressed to provide any significant help. Other groups simply don't know how to petition the public effectively for financial support and find themselves bewildered by the variety of techniques available for securing contributions from individuals.

But the nonprofits that overcome these obstacles will be rewarded in the long run with a growing base of individual supporters who outlast practically every other form of support and who may be even more responsive than institutional sources to pleas for certain types of programs that otherwise would languish. The most modest start at soliciting gifts from individuals may soon prove worthwhile and, ultimately, create a substantial level of support.

Encourage Donors To Become Members

Membership is the most common method that groups use to encourage individual support. Membership sometimes carries certain rights within an organization, such as voting for officers and board members, but in most cases membership simply gives a donor a sense of belonging to an organization.

People who make donations without becoming members do not seem to feel that their gifts establish a mutually understood commitment, nor do they have any real incentive to repeat their gifts in the future — unless they are solicited again. However, people who join an organization tend to recognize that they have made a commitment.

Organizations that encourage individuals to become members benefit in other ways. A membership is generally perceived by both donor and institution as something to be renewed. This allows donors to project their annual membership as a regular part of their yearly budget while allowing the institution to project a specific amount of income from membership support (taking into account some attrition, of course).

Donors can be encouraged to become members at a level commensurate with their interest and means. A pattern of graduated perquisites ("perks") can give donors an incentive to increase their giving, and so be upgraded from one category of membership to another.

Some groups strive to make their membership invitations more attractive by offering concrete benefits to individuals who join. Even small groups can offer such perks as T-shirts, buttons, discounted admissions to special events and educational programs, and invitations to members'

parties. Actually, your imagination and knowledge of your own constituency can help you design a membership package of benefits to suit almost any organization.

Don't lose sight of the fact, however, that while tangible membership benefits serve as an incentive to give, and to give more, they rarely provide the primary stimulus. Individuals become members and make contributions for a variety of other, usually intangible, reasons. You can best decide if you need to sweeten your membership program with distinct benefits, for you know your constituents best.

If they feel a strong sense of kinship with your organization, your constituents will inevitably respond well to requests for funds, whether received through the mail or at their doorstep. When your donors are already quite loyal, you may not need to sweeten your membership offer to elicit the desired response. You can, however, still consider motivating your supporters to increase their level of support by offering specific benefits tied to different giving levels. For example, you can offer a silkscreen poster signed by the artist to all contributors who give, say, \$250 or more. If your organization's claim on the conscience and wallets of your public is less strong, then benefits can serve as a greater incentive to prompt individuals to respond to your requests.

If you're considering offering tangible benefits, be sure to stay within the guidelines given by the Federal Accounting Standards Board (FASB). If your perquisite has market value — that is, it could be sold outside your organization — then you must deduct the market value of the product from the donation, and only the remaining portion may be claimed as a deduction by the member. T-shirts, mugs, and tote bags bearing your organization's logo are not items that generally could be sold in a regular store, but art could be. These regulations are not entirely cut-and-dried; but they must be kept in mind.

Identify Likely Supporters

The first step in tapping individuals for membership is to identify the particular constituencies most likely to be committed to your work — your board, volunteers, and even your staff members. This may seem offensive to some of these individuals, who already give generously of their time and feel that this sufficiently demonstrates their commitment. And in part, that's true. Still, there is nothing like a commitment of money to signal to others the importance donors ascribe to their organization. Since many of your board members, staff, and volunteers will, at some point, ask others to give to your organization, they will be able to say to a prospective member, "I joined because I felt that what we are doing is critically important. Won't you join, too?"

Now that you are ready to go beyond your own organization for support, your task becomes one of identifying and targeting which individuals are most likely to develop an interest in, and extend support to, your work. Undoubtedly, you will be able to develop some sense of how to identify these individuals and to decide what constituencies they might belong to. Brainstorm with other members of your organizing committee, board of directors, or fundraising committee.

If your organization already receives support from individuals through a variety of ways, start out by analyzing those supporters. List them by their common denominators, such as occupation: Are they teachers, social workers, lawyers, parents, activists, doctors, or computer programmers? Demographics: What is their age? Gender? Political affiliation? What distinguishes them? You are not trying to stereotype your supporters, only to differentiate them so that you know how you can reach them most effectively.

If you decided to undertake a direct mail campaign, you'll need to select lists of names to mail to. The more you know about your current members, the more readily you will be able to identify other kindred souls. For example, which magazines do most of your members subscribe to, and which newspapers do they read? This information will help you target your public relations efforts.

You may be surprised at who is giving you money and who is not. On the one hand, you may realize that a certain segment of the population you had thought would contribute has provided only minimal support; you should reach out to them. The opposite may also be true. For example, a shelter for battered women used to routinely delete men's names from direct mail lists they used until they examined their donor base and learned that 20 percent of their supporters were men. And the Gay Men's Health Crisis in New York City was very surprised to discover how many of their individual donors were lesbians.

Determine Ways To Approach Individuals for Support

The sharper your sense of your current and prospective donors, the easier it will be to select the most productive way of approaching them — which brings us to the second step: brainstorming a variety of ways to ask individuals for support.

Let's take a hypothetical example to illustrate how an organization can identify its key individual supporters. Members of the core group of Art in Schools (AIS) asked themselves the following question: Which individuals are the most likely supporters of our work to help ensure that music, drama, and fine arts programs are included in schools' curricula?

As a result of their brainstorming, AIS found that they had many constituencies, owing to the community's deep concern about the quality of education. These included:

1. Core group members, especially artists. (including their families and friends)
2. Other politically aware or socially concerned artists
3. Socially concerned members of the arts-oriented public in their community
4. Art, music, and drama teachers
5. Parents, particularly those parents who had themselves enjoyed art as part of their education
6. Liberal arts professors, particularly those who teach undergraduates, who were dismayed at the lack of cultural awareness of many of the incoming freshmen
7. Teachers union members and officials
8. Members of dinner theaters, art clubs, book groups, and the like

Clearly, AIS has many potential constituencies to turn to for support. Let's list the possible ways each of these groups of prospective supporters can give support, or how to best ask them for support on a regular basis:

Constituencies

All constituents can be asked to:

- Make personal contributions
- Become members through the annual fund
- Purchase raffle tickets, buttons, bumper stickers, etc.

1. Core group members
 - Attend and sell tickets to fundraising events
 - Identify and approach local business, government, federation, association, religious, and labor contacts to explore fundraising possibilities
 - Ask friends and other artists to donate works of art (or other related or appropriate items) for an annual auction
 - Arrange for exhibitions of student artwork
2. Other politically aware or socially concerned artists
 - Donate works of art for sale or auction
 - Design special art postcards as a source of earned income
 - Attend and sell tickets to fundraising events
 - Solicit their dealers and galleries
 - Make personal contributions, and become AIS members through annual fund
3. Socially concerned members of the arts-oriented public
 - Buy tickets to special events and purchase postcards
 - Host exhibitions of donated art in their homes to sell to other friends
4. Arts, music, and drama teachers
 - Organize house parties
 - Provide names of parents who might be concerned
 - Provide access to other teachers not in the arts who might give money
 - Attend events
 - Help promote the political message of AIS to students, school administrators, and other teachers
5. Parents
 - Provide access to PTA meetings and mailing lists
 - Post notices in newsletters
 - Host houseparties
 - Attend events
6. Liberal arts professors
 - Write articles for journals
 - Provide interviews to the media
 - Provide names of professors and alumni who might be sympathetic
7. Teachers members union and officials
 - Provide mailing lists for a direct mail solicitation
8. Members of dinner theaters, arts clubs, book groups, etc.
 - Provide names for direct mail appeals
 - Announce events at their performances

As this hypothetical case illustrates, there are many ways individuals can support a particular nonprofit undertaking. This group, just like your own, can expand its list by sharing it with others. In many cases, you will observe that the strongest members of your group will be people who cross several lines. For example, university professors who were also members of amateur theater groups, who had children in the public school system, and who were active in the PTA or their own union, are most likely to become committed AIS members and donors.

Furthermore, anyone who was identified as someone who could come to an event could also be approached by mail or phone. People who would donate art can be approached to donate cash, and people who buy art at auctions should be asked to become members of the group. If you do a thorough job in analyzing your constituency, you will soon be overwhelmed by possibilities and realize that you can raise funds successfully as long as you plan your work and work your plan.

Choose Your Approaches

The third step is to choose from your lists those approaches or methods your core group wants to pursue. Ask your planning committee, which is responsible for your fundraising efforts, to suggest which approaches you should use — perhaps three or so to start with. Let's put this task before our hypothetical organization.

The core group of Art in Schools decided to focus on a campaign to sell specially designed art postcards to the memberships of other sympathetic organizations through direct mail; asking famous socially concerned artists known to them to donate works of art for an annual auction; and conducting a phonathon to ask teachers and professors to join. Note that these approaches include a mix of face-to-face solicitation, direct mail, special events, telephone solicitation, and earned income.

AIS chose this particular mix of approaches to individuals for several reasons. As artists, they realized that they had access to something of value to others — their work and the works of other artists. They also knew that their targeted constituencies were regularly solicited by other more established organizations. As a result, they decided to raise money by selling art postcards in lieu of simple solicitation for support. They were also capitalizing on the knowledge and skills of their core group. Some of their members had personal relationships with famous artists, and one member had experience in designing and marketing postcards for sale.

After discussing their plans with more resource people outside their immediate circles, including the local art auction house and several gallery owners, they were able to make reasonable estimates of projected income from these activities. They decided to drop the tour of artists' studios, for others did not find the concept very appealing. They discovered that their friends were not members of any existing human rights organizations, so they decided to institute a membership program. Since their friends included both struggling and successful artists, they developed a two-tiered membership program to enable both groups to give according to their means.

Estimate Your Proceeds

The final step before the actual fundraising gets under way is to make some conservative estimates on how much each of the chosen efforts can net in a year. Art in Schools came up with the following summary:

AIS decided to list all the artists who joined as members and patrons, or who contributed their own work, in a full-page ad in the local arts newspaper each year to thank them publicly for their support.

Acknowledge Your Supporters

Finally, you want to make sure that you recognize your supporters both privately and publicly for their contributions. Private acknowledgment should always begin with a personalized thank-you note. Further private recognition can take the form of mailing newsletters, "insiders' memos," annual reports, and other publications to donors to keep them posted about the work that they have made possible. Let them know regularly that your flourishing, ongoing work would be impossible without their help.

Public acknowledgment can be as simple as listing your new members (if they aren't too numerous) in a newsletter on an ongoing basis. If you offer different categories of membership, you can list supporters by the categories they have chosen. You've seen these lists of benefactors in the playbills of nonprofit theater groups and on the walls of buildings of nonprofit facilities. Just as a university recognizes major donors by naming buildings or other facilities after them, smaller nonprofits can express their appreciation to supporters through some form of public listing.

In choosing your approaches to individuals, remember to look for ways in which to ask them for money regularly and to provide them with opportunities for personal involvement in your work.

Since membership contributions do not preclude people from making additional gifts to an organization, you can solicit support from members more than once a year. If you can make a good case for needing financial help, you should certainly not hesitate to make an appeal to your membership. There is no magic rule about how many times a year you can ask the same people to give, but most groups find that they net a decent return without alienating donors when they ask three to four times a year. Some groups are able to ask up to twelve times, but most find that they lose money if they ask more than twelve times or less than three. Your membership may forget about you if you solicit less than three times a year.

The bottom line is, you can mail out as many appeals as will net consistent positive responses and cover more than their printing and mailing costs. Again, use your own judgment: How many solicitations would you be willing to receive? If each appeal had merit on its own, you would probably feel differently than if each appeal sounded exactly like the one preceding it. Beware of crying wolf more than once! You can go to your membership once for funds to meet a crisis or emergency, but success the second time around is unlikely.

Meetings with Donors

Face-to-face meetings are a very effective way to get larger donations from funders, and to continue building relationships with people who are able to give your group financial support over time. If one or two members of your core group are able to have a well-planned meeting with a prospective donor in person, you have a good chance of not only receiving funding from them, but will also develop a new or deeper connection between a member of your community and your movement. Research shows that 50% of the people who are asked for money in a face-to-face meeting will give, the highest success rate of any of the major grassroots fundraising methods.

Research possible donors

The first step in reaching out to potential major donors is research and planning. Sit down with your group and think about people you know who support your work and who may be willing to give a larger contribution. Brainstorm a list of names. Then work through that list and figure out who is most appropriate to do outreach to that person, and the best method of approach (letter, phone call, personal visit, etc).

If you have done fundraising events or received donations in the past, look over your list of donors. Have any of them given multiple times? Which of these givers do you think are invested enough in the movement to give a more substantial gift? Remember that those who are willing to give larger donations are not necessarily the most wealthy people in your community; they are people who believe strongly, or could believe strongly, in the work you're doing.

Once you've narrowed down your list of prospective major donors, do some research about those you will approach. Where do they work? Are they involved in other community groups? What connects them to your movement? Location, particular interests, close friends who are involved in the issue?

Depending on your relationship with the funder, it may be a good first step to write them a letter or make a phone call introducing yourself and the group, and asking for the opportunity to meet in person. Let them know that the purpose of the meeting is to talk with them about the work you're doing and to ask for their financial support; it's important to be up front about this so they know what to expect.

Prepare your talking points

There are a number of things you can do to prepare for the meeting itself. It's a good idea to write down an agenda and the main points you'd like to make during the meeting. Include a specific amount of money you are going to ask for.

One suggested format for a donor meeting goes like this:

- Introduce yourself (or yourselves if there are two of you)
- Engage the donor in the conversation right away: ask them a little bit about themselves, what concerns them about this issue, their involvement in the community, etc.
- Present information about your group, your campaign, and your financial needs; be careful not to go on too long here. Shoot for presenting this information in 5-10 minutes.

- Ask for a specific contribution, and then *stop talking*. This can be the hardest part. “The best way you can support this movement is giving \$3,000 to underwriting the cost of our farmer outreach program.” And then close your mouth. There can be a strong temptation to keep going on and on after you’ve put the figure out there, but it’s best to just stop, let the donor think about it, and hear what they have to say.

You will also want to consider which written materials you’d like to bring along: a brochure about your group, a fact sheet about the issue, an information sheet about your current campaign, clippings of letters to the editor or other articles written about your group and your work in the local paper, etc.

Practice, practice, practice

Once you’ve figured out what you want to say, spend plenty of time practicing. This is very important; getting comfortable with the words you will say to funders will help you go into these meetings with confidence.

Ask another group member to do a role-play with you; have them play the part of the donor, and you play yourself. Run through the whole meeting, from walking into the room to the “ask”. The most important piece to practice is your presentation of your work, your needs, and your ask. Then, when the role-play is over, have a conversation with the person who played the donor. Talk about how it felt for you to present your “ask,” find out what felt persuasive or ineffective to your partner, and try it again. Ideally, trade roles, so you play the donor and your partner plays the member of your group. This will help you see how it feels to be in the donor’s shoes.

Mentally prepare

And finally, before a personal meeting with a donor, mentally prepare yourself to make your presentation. Remember that asking this person to contribute to your campaign is not about you. You are not there representing yourself. You are there representing this movement and this issue. Take your ego completely out of the equation. Tap into why you are passionate about this cause, and hold that in your heart when you go into the meeting. The more you are connected to why this issue is important to you, the more that will come across to the funder. The more confident you are in asking for funds, the more likely they will be to give. The less you feel like you’re being a burden on this person, and the more you feel like you’re giving them an opportunity to participate in something that is important and that can make positive change in your community, the more fun and successful this meeting will be.

During the meeting

Now that you’ve practiced what you want to say, compiled good written materials to share, and mentally prepared, you’ve set yourself up for a successful meeting.

A few tips for during the meeting:

- Be on time. This will show your respect for the person you’re meeting with and a level of professionalism.
- Try and let the funder do the majority of the talking. While it can be tempting to talk a lot about your group, the issue, and your work, make sure that you give the donor plenty of opportunities to ask questions and talk about their concerns about genetic engineering.

- Don't expect the donor to cut you a check right then and there. They may need some time to think about what they're willing to give. Know that this is okay, and be sure to make it clear to them how they can give later (give them materials with your group address printed on it and point that out to them, or your website address if you have ways to donate on-line).
- Provide them with other opportunities to contribute. If they give or not, let them know how they can be more involved in the movement: up-coming meetings or events, action steps they can take, ask if they want to be added to your listserv or action alert list, etc. Remember that donors are not just there to provide you with money; they are an active part of this movement.

Follow-up

To develop donors who are willing to give to your group over time, you must treat them respectfully. A general rule of thumb is that all donors should be thanked at least 7 times. Thank them when they offer to meet with you, when you arrive at the meeting, and before you leave. Right after the meeting, even if the person you met with did not choose to contribute, sit down and write a thank-you note to them for their time and put it in the mail. You can't be too grateful to people for their gifts to your campaign.

Stay in touch with your donors over time. Send them notes or emails when big things happen in your campaign; send them your newsletters; help them know that the victories you secure are their victories, too. If you only approach donors when you're asking for money, you are likely to lose their support. If you include them in your campaign outreach, you are more likely to continue receiving their financial support, and you will have gained another supportive community member who feels like a part of this movement.

Fundraising Letters and Phone Calls

One good way to introduce your group and your campaign to potential donors is to write a letter and to follow your letter up with a phone call. You can send fundraising letters to friends, family members, individuals you've identified as potential funders, or local businesses. You can write letters either requesting financial contributions or "in-kind" donations, like food from your local co-op for a public education event, or printing from a local copy shop.

Spend time with your group thinking about different individuals and businesses you can reach out to for funding and in-kind support. Decide who in the group is best to do outreach to those people or companies, and the best way to approach them. Personal meetings, phone calls, or letters are some of the options to consider.

If letter-writing is the best method of approach, be sure to start the letter off in a way that makes it clear that this is an appeal for support. If you are asking for money, state a specific dollar amount early in the letter. If you are asking for in-kind support, be clear about exactly what you're seeking. Make your letters no more than 2 pages long; include information about genetic engineering, what your group is doing to address these hazards, and why their support is important.

Most letters will not be enough to secure funding. To vastly improve your chances of receiving donations, follow up your letter with a phone call a week or so after the recipient has received the letter. The phone call will help be sure they received the letter, give you a chance to answer any questions, and find out if they are interested in giving. It can be helpful to write out what you want to say when you make your follow-up calls, either in bullet form or in script form. Attached is a sample "phone rap" for following up the Cal GE-Free fundraising request letter to natural food stores.

As with all fundraising efforts, always follow up your outreach with a thank-you. If a person or business donates, write send them a thank-you note right away. Ask if they'd like to be included in your listserv or mailing list. Keep them posted with campaign victories. Make sure to include them in your movement in as many ways you can.

Special Events

Special events are often support-boosters as much as fund-raisers. They are a lot of work, and often result in relatively little money, but they're a lot of fun, and they can raise community awareness about genetic engineering while bringing more people into the movement.

Fundraising events can be major productions (auctions, benefit concerts, etc) or they can be smaller affairs (like house parties). A few ideas of some fundraising events your group can do:

- **Organize a house party:**
 - Invite a group of friends, colleagues, or neighbors to your home to educate them about the issue and ask them to donate to your group
 - This is a great way to find new volunteers, expand your base of support, and raise money
- **Ask group members, friends, and supporters to host house parties:**
 - This is a good way to help supporters and group members feel more invested in the group and in your fundraising efforts
 - Work with hosts to brainstorm guests to invite (co-workers, colleagues in community groups, fellow parents, neighbors, etc)
 - Provide sample invitation, group materials for them to have on hand, and sample thank-you cards to send to guests after the event
 - Remind them when inviting guests to let invitees know this is a fundraising event
 - If appropriate, offer to have someone in the group to come and give a talk to guests, moderate questions and answers, and explain about the group and your campaigns
- **Organize a benefit dinner**
 - Ask local farmers to donate GMO-free ingredients to a benefit dinner
 - Ask local chefs to prepare special dishes with these local ingredients
 - Advertise the event as an opportunity for community members to support local, GMO-free agriculture
- **Organize a benefit concert**
 - Ask a local band or musician to donate their time
 - Sometimes local concert venues will also be willing to sponsor a concert as a benefit for your group, sharing the proceeds made at the door with your organization
- **Organize a benefit auction**
 - Ask local businesses to donate items to an auction
 - Invite community members to attend
 - Have music playing, refreshments on hand
 - Find a local person to be an auctioneer and sell 10 or fewer bigger-ticket items; if you have other items to auction off, sell them in silent-auction style

Because house parties can be particularly effective and not too much work to pull together, we've included further information on organizing them in this section. If you choose to do a bigger fundraising event, like an auction or a concert, check in with other non-profits and community groups in your area who have done similar events. Find out what venues they used, how they advertised, where they sold tickets, and any other advice they have to share.

No matter what activity you do, remember to thank everyone who donates to your campaign, and keep track of your funders. Develop a good system for recording who has given to your group,

how much they gave, and where they donated (at a public education event, a fundraising event, on your website, etc). This will help you stay in touch with donors, determine who you will approach for bigger contributions, and get a sense of which modes of fundraising are working best for your group.

Organize a House Party

House parties are a great local fundraising tool. By bringing people in the community together in small, social gatherings to learn about genetic engineering and how they can get involved, you will help build new relationships in the community, raise awareness about this issue and visibility for your group, and find solid sources of local financial support for your work.

Money is only one asset the guests will bring with them. They also carry their own ideas and skills, have contacts with other groups of people at home and at work that could support the campaign, and carry new energy that you can bring to your group. Remember that having the house party and sharing information about genetic engineering is a successful event in and of itself, regardless of the amount of money raised. The money raised can only make the event MORE successful.

Thank you to the Organic Consumers Association and Californians for GE-Free Agriculture for developing many of these materials about hosting house parties.

House Party Tips

Invitations

Generally, only one out of four people who are invited to your house party will attend. The response rate is even lower (one of 10) if you use email only. The most effective way to get good attendance is to mail out invitations, and follow up a week later with a personal phone call.

Five to seven days before the party, make a second reminder call. It will greatly increase the attendance at your party.

- Be sure your invitations include the date, time, & address of the party. Include good directions to your house (a map is very useful).
- Include your phone number and email.
- Ask your guests to RSVP so you have an idea of how many people are coming.
- Be direct in mentioning that the house party is both for educational purposes and for fundraising this in your invitation so that people know they will be asked to contribute to your group/campaign.

Preparations

- Consider asking a few friends or other group members to help you plan. You can even list them as a “host committee” on the invitation to attract more people who will recognize the names.
- Send invitations in advance & ask for an RSVP.

Set a fundraising goal

- Set a goal for how much money you would like to raise at the event (\$100, \$200, \$500, etc.), and don't be afraid to ask for it!

Being Creative

- Consider making your house party an organic or GE-Free dinner or brunch; it can be an organic wine-tasting, organic chocolate-tasting, tea party, etc.
- The event can be in your home, or at a church or other community setting.

Cutting Costs

- Get organic food, drinks, etc. donated. You'd be surprised how many companies (restaurants, coops, natural food stores, etc) are willing to help.
- Have a 100% organic or GE-Free potluck with guests bringing the food.

Sample Planning Timeline for a House Party/Fundraiser

To help you ensure a successful event, we've provided a sample timetable for a small to medium-sized house party/fundraiser. Keep in mind that depending on when your event takes place, its size and its type, your timetable will be different.

What you need:

- Name tags and markers
- A clipboard or two and pens for guests to sign in
- Group/campaign materials and genetic engineering fact sheets
- Items to sell: books, movies, group t-shirts, bumperstickers, etc.
- If showing a movie, a copy of the film and the equipment for screening (TV/VCR/DVD player)

When you decide you want to host an event:

- Determine the where, when, who, why and what of the event.
- Decide what format you want your party to take: do you want to do a presentation about the issue and your campaigns, show a film, or invite a guest speaker?
- Write out an action plan and a to-do list.
- Create invitation list.
- Arrange for a friend to help or develop a committee.

Two weeks before:

- Mail invitations with directions and a request for RSVP.
- Reserve any necessary equipment.
- If showing a film, secure a copy of the DVD/VHS.
- Prepare your own presentation or remarks.

One to two weeks before:

- Plan the meal or refreshments.
- Purchase or secure donations for beverages and supplies.
- Call invitees you haven't heard back from yet and encourage them to come.

One to five days before:

- Call all invitees who said they wanted to come and remind them about the event and be sure they have directions.
- Obtain rented or borrowed equipment.
- Prepare make-ahead food.
- Set up the beverage area.
- Practice your statements/presentation

Day of event: The Party!

- Welcome guests, allow guests to mingle for 15-30 minutes.
- Welcome and Introductions (10-20 minutes).
- Begin the presentation

- If you or another group member are describing the issue:
 - Overview of genetic engineering and the threats of GE in agriculture
 - Place the local campaign in statewide or national context
 - Describe the local campaign using your primary messages
- If you are showing a film:
 - We suggest you show *The Future of Food*, either the whole film (90 minutes) or selected segments.
- Guests' reactions/Q&A (10-20 minutes).
- Call to Action (5 minutes):
 - Describe ways people can stay involved; emphasis on donations, but also volunteer needs
 - Make sure you've brought materials with you that can help people take action right then and there (your own group petition, talking points on your campaign for letters to the editor or to your target decision maker, etc)
 - Ask guests to sign up to become house party hosts, to volunteer, or to discuss gaining endorsements for your work from community groups, businesses, or organizations they are involved with
- Make sure everyone has signed in—pass around sign in sheet again.
- Thank guests for coming, wrap up (5 minutes).

Follow Up

- Send thank you cards to all guests
- Talk with your group about how the process went, and refine for future house parties
- Add all attendees to your database of supporters
- Touch base with guests who expressed interest in hosting their own house parties

Drawn from the Organic Consumers Association www.organicconsumers.org and Californians for GE-Free Agriculture www.calgefrees.org

Sample House Party Invitation

You can print these on sturdy 8-1/2"x11" paper divided in half and mail them with a response card printed on 8-1/2 "x11" paper divided in thirds.

Please join us for an educational and hopeful presentation.

Jane Smith invites you to a house party sponsored by **GMO-Free Kauai**. We will be screening the award-winning film, *The Future of Food*, discussing the local movement to resist genetic engineering, and suggesting ways you can support the movement for a GMO-Free Kauai.

Where: Jane Smith's home, 81 Kamookoa Road in Kilauea (please call 828-xxxx for directions)

When: Sunday, August 23rd 7-9pm

What: 15-20 people, organic food and beverages, a 30 minute clip of the film, discussion of the local GMO-free movement, and a request for contributions to support our campaigns.

Hawaii is the world capital for the open-air testing of experimental genetically engineered crops. GMO-Free Kauai is a community organization working to move Kauai agriculture away from genetic engineering and towards sustainable, locally-based farming practices that are safe for our health, environment, and economy. Come learn more about this important issue and ways you can support GMO-Free Kauai's work to oppose genetic engineering and promote local agriculture.

Please RSVP to Jane by August 14th at 651-9603

Response Card

Please RSVP by August 14th

**I/we will attend the gathering at Jane Smith's home on August 23rd, and will bring
___ guests.**

**I/we are unable to come, but would like to be invited to future gatherings to learn
about GMO-Free Kauai.**

Please add us to your mailing list.

Sample House Party Thank You Note

Everyone who donates to your campaign should receive a thank-you note, to let them know their contribution is appreciated and important. Try and send thank-yous to everyone who attends a house party, but be extra sure to send them to donors.

Here is a sample letter, to be sent by the party host to donors who came to the party. Try and send these out no more than a week after the event, and ideally write them out by hand. Thanking your donors is an important step in building a relationship with people who contribute and forming a solid foundation of donors for your group.

**

Dear [first name],

Thank you for attending our house party last week and for your generous donation to GMO-Free Kauai.

A grassroots campaign like ours, with thousands of volunteers, relies on donors like you. Working together on Kauai, we will be able to stop genetic engineering and move local agriculture back towards self-sufficiency and sustainability for our island environment and for our health.

We hope you will continue to support GMO-Free by volunteering and spreading the word about this issue to your family and friends.

If you need further information regarding volunteering or hosting a house party, please call GMO-Free Kauai at 651-9603.

Looking forward to working with you in the GMO-free movement!

Sincerely,

Jane Smith

Organize a Benefit Concert

Benefit concerts can be a whole lot of fun and can help bring many new people in your community to this movement. You can find new volunteers, build visibility for your group, and raise some money while you're at it. Concerts can also be a celebration for group members, a reward for their hard work, and they give new sectors of the community (musicians, music-lovers, businesses, etc) a chance to get involved in your campaign in their own way.

That said, organizing a concert is a lot of work in itself. You'll need a committee of volunteers who are prepared to devote a fair amount of time to the event: a concert coordinator, a band liason, someone in charge of producing flyers, someone in charge of organizing an information/action table, someone in charge of publicity, someone in charge of collecting donations, etc etc. Only organize a big event like this if your group has plenty of energy and volunteers, and if it fits in with your group strategy to boost your publicity and bring in new volunteers at this stage in your work.

Many of the elements of organizing a concert are used to organize benefit auctions, dinners, and other big community events.

Prepare for the concert

- If you don't already have a fundraising team in your group, form a sub-committee to work on planning the concert
- Ask a good local musician, a band, or a few bands to donate their time and play a concert for your group
- Find a concert venue (many towns have public venues you can rent inexpensively or for free; call your town government, let them know you're a part of a community/non-profit group, and ask for venue suggestions)
- Decide how much to charge for tickets
- Publicize like crazy:
 - design eye-catching flyers and post them all around town
 - hand out invitations
 - post invitations on email listserves
 - contact all your members/supporters with a phone call, mailing, or an email and let them know about the event
 - post event details on your website
 - call into local radio shows and announce the event
 - get it advertised in the "community calendar" section of your local newspaper(s), radio station(s), and TV station(s)
- Make sure you have enough informational flyers, fact sheets, volunteer sign-up sheets, and petitions to have at the concert
- Pick an action or multiple actions that people can do at the event
 - Possible actions include letter-writing, postcards to sign, petitions to sign, etc.
 - if you don't have any current actions needed for your campaign, check www.organicconsumers.org or www.centerforfoodsafety.org for current national action alerts on genetic engineering
 - make sure you have all the materials needed for people to do those actions (pens, paper, clipboards, etc)
- Plan a follow-up event that attendees can come to

- Help carry on the momentum of the fundraiser by giving attendees an opportunity to get more involved in the campaign. Some possible follow-up events:
 - A group meeting open to the public
 - A guest speaker
 - A film showing
 - An action (rally, demonstration, etc)
 - A letter-writing event
 - Make small flyers to give to all attendees about the follow-up event
- Decide who from your group will be the “emcee”
- Decide who will be liason with the musician/band
 - Make sure they have the sound equipment they need
 - Make sure your donor-musicians know who to contact with questions

Optional:

- Ask local businesses for donations of food to have at the event
- Ask local businesses for donations of prizes you can raffle off at the event
 - Sell raffle tickets at the door

At the concert:

- Set up an informational/action table at the venue
 - Lay out articles, fact sheets, etc.
 - Have information about your group and how people can get involved
 - Materials for the action people can take that night
- Have musician liason ready to welcome musician(s) and make sure that the musician/band’s equipment is ready to go
- Decorate venue
 - If you have a group banner, hang it up in a visible place
- Have some people stationed at the door to collect/sell tickets
- Have some people at the information/action table ready to talk with guests
- Have emcee introduce the event:
 - Welcome attendees
 - Briefly explain about the issue
 - Briefly explain about your group
 - Let guests know where they can pick up more information, make further donations, and what actions they can take that night
 - Tell them about the follow-up event
 - Introduce the musician/band
- At the end of the concert, have emcee:
 - Thank the musician/band
 - Thank guests for coming
 - Remind them to take materials on the way out
 - Remind them about the follow-up event (a public meeting, a speaker, film showing, etc)

After the concert:

- Send thank you cards to all musicians and businesses who donated to the event
- Call people who signed up to volunteer at the concert; introduce yourself, find out what they’re interested in, invite them to the follow-up event
- Hold the follow-up event
- Celebrate with the concert planning team: go out for a team dinner, go dancing, do something to recognize the hard work put into the event and the success of the

event (raising money is just one goal; building visibility, finding new volunteers, and educating your community are other things events like this can do)