

Fundraising from local businesses

Tips to help community groups to attract donations from local businesses.

Try your local businesses

Small businesses, such as greengrocers or local convenience stores, may want to help improve their local community, especially if it will help them to attract customers. Even some chain stores and supermarkets prefer to donate to groups based very near one of their branches.

Try businesses that share your interests

Some shops are keen to support projects that involve an activity that is relevant to their business. For example, a gardening shop might like to donate to a gardening group, or a cookware shop might donate to a group that runs cookery classes. Use the internet or the yellow pages to find relevant local businesses. You could ask them for donations of items rather than money – for example, if you need spades, ask your local garden shop to donate them, rather than the cash to buy them.

Use your connections

Some companies like to encourage their staff to get involved in community activity, so may be more likely to donate to a project that is recommended by someone who works for them. Don't be shy about using any connections you have.

Ask in person

A small business is more likely to donate to your group if they have actually spoken to you in person. While sending a letter is a useful way of giving information about your group, it is important to also visit the business, or phone them up, to explain who you are and why you would like them to donate. This makes it more personal and gives you a better chance of persuading the business that your group is important and needs their support. Take a letter with you so that they can read more after you've gone. (There is a sample letter on page 3).

Put your request in writing

When you go into a shop or phone up a business, you may find that the person who makes decisions about donations is not available to speak to. They may also be too busy to consider your request right then and there. It is a good idea to have a letter that you can give or send to them, to follow up your request.

This should:

- ♦ Be on headed paper
- ♦ Be no longer than one side of A4 if possible
- ♦ Be addressed specifically to the person you are writing to – try to find out their name before writing the letter.
- ♦ Include details of what you want the money for, how much you need and who it will benefit

There is a sample letter below. If you don't hear back after sending your letter, follow it up with another phone call or visit. People running businesses can be very busy and may need reminding about the donation you have asked for.

Offer something in return

One reason local businesses may donate to your group is if they think this will lead to them getting more business. Offering them publicity in return for their donation will encourage them to support you. Offer to include their logo on your publicity or tag them on social media. If you are running an event, offer to announce their support at the event so that everyone knows that they donated.

Use established donation programmes

Some big companies have established donation programmes that community groups can apply to. You usually need to fill out an application form.

Companies that have this type of grant programme are probably less likely to make an on-the-spot donation to your group – instead they will suggest applying for one of their grants. For ideas on who to apply to, have a look at our Favourite Funder pages¹. You can use our information sheet *Writing a funding application* to help you write this kind of application.

Tell businesses how their donation was spent

If you have received a donation once, the same business may be interested in donating again in future. They are more likely to do this if you write to them, thanking them for their support and letting them know how your event or project went.

Send a short report, saying what you did and how many people took part. Include photos and any press cuttings if you have them. (See our information sheet *Taking photos at community events* for tips about when and how to get consent to take photos).

Keep a record of the businesses that have donated to you, and the contact name you have, so that you can write to them again in future.

¹ www.resourcecentre.org.uk/information-category/raising-money/

Sample letter

Your name

Your address

Your phone number

Date

Dear (their name)

East Brighton Family Fun Day

I am writing as a member of East Brighton Primary School Parents and Teachers Association to ask for your support for the East Brighton Family Fun Day.

The Fun Day is a great local event which has been running for many years. Last year it was attended by over 1000 local residents. It is organised in partnership by several local organisations, including the three local tenants' associations and the four primary schools. These are: (list organisations).

Fun Day 2019 will have activities for every age, to bring the whole community together. There will be games for children, plus music, food and entertainment for everyone. This year we are planning a bouncy castle and a music stage with local bands.

The Fun Day would not happen without the energy and enthusiasm of the local people who organise it. Unfortunately, enthusiasm in itself is not enough, and the Fun Day costs a considerable amount to put on. Around £6,500 has to be raised to cover expenses, which include publicity, insurance, entertainers and bands.

I am writing to ask if you would be able to make a donation towards the 2019 Fun Day. Your contribution will be very much appreciated and acknowledged in our publicity and the Fun Day programme.

If you would like to talk more about the Fun Day and how you could help, please feel free to give me a ring on xxx.

Yours sincerely

Your name

More information

For more help with raising money, see the following information sheets:

- ♦ *Fundraising ideas*
- ♦ *Planning a funding application*
- ♦ *Writing a funding application*