

PRINCIPLES OF FUNDRAISING

➔ People Power

A grassroots fundraising model taps into our greatest resource: our people's commitment to a more just world

➔ Independence

Grassroots fundraising is essential to building a social movement where everyone's rights are valued and respected. The people who believe in and are committed to a movement of change are the best assets to achieving social change.

➔ Investment

You can use grassroots fundraising to grow members' sense of investment in the financial health and well-being of the organization

➔ Growth

Grassroots fundraising revenue is unrestricted funding that can be used for any organizational needs, including programming and overhead

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THE POWER OF SUSTAINERS

By Brianna Mayo

For a ten-week period, I have had the opportunity to work with one of the nation's leading immigration advocacy organizations, Tennessee Immigrant and Refugee Rights Coalition. TIRRC, as it is known in the community, works with immigrants, refugees, and allies to build a more welcoming and inclusive Tennessee. Their work is done across three different avenues: organizing, legal services, and legislative advocacy. Some of their most notable work includes working to register the 120,000 naturalized citizens eligible to vote in Tennessee, pressuring the state legislature to grant tuition equality to undocumented college-aged students, and crisis intervention for those affected by ICE raids and family separations.

During my time at TIRRC I've been able to work in development, a crucial aspect of any nonprofits operational efforts. Through this experience I have learned about sustainer programs, also known as monthly giving. A monthly giving program involves preauthorized or recurring gifts. These are gifts that the donor has authorized you to deduct directly from their bank account or charge to their credit card every month on a recurring basis. In monthly giving, the donor makes a pledge to give a certain amount to your organization each month, and then provides you with a credit card or bank account number, or some other means to directly deduct the money from their account. Sustained donations massively increase an organization's capacity, as sustainers (those donors who give on a monthly basis), are 440 times more monetarily valuable than one time donors on a long term basis.

Why Organizations Need Sustainers

The development team at TIRRC realized that for the organization to work at the capacity everyone intended, we would need to build a consistent, broad base of donors who cared deeply about our mission. In thinking this way, we identified four reasons why donor recruitment efforts would need to focus on cultivating longstanding sustainers.

Monthly Donors Give More

Once a donor signs up for a monthly giving program, they tend to stay more loyal to the non-profit and give more than they otherwise would. This can be attributed to a few different reasons. If properly cultivated, monthly donors build stronger relationships with the non-profits they support, and that relationship won't be stopped just because the donor forgets to put a check in the mail. Stopping a monthly giving relationship takes a proactive step from the donor, one they are unlikely to take unless they really mean to stop their support for a particular non-profit.

Monthly Giving Programs Build Strong Relationships

One of the most counterintuitive but amazing things about monthly giving is that once a donor signs up for a monthly giving program, you can actually stop asking them for money. When a person becomes a sustainer, they have already made a commitment to giving your organization money each and every month. Instead of making regular asks as you would with on-time donors, you can focus 100% on stewarding your donors.

Monthly Giving Programs Provide a Stable Foundation for Your Non-Profit

Good monthly giving programs build a nice monthly income that your organization can rely on, month in and month out. Instead of anticipating the arrival of donor checks, or worrying about whether or not a donor will make a gift each quarter, you know that you are starting every month with a nice-sized deposit in the bank.

Monthly giving is one of the very few strategies you can use in the non-profit fundraising world to provide your organization with predictable income.

Monthly Giving Programs Lower Fundraising Costs

Overall, the larger your monthly giving program becomes, the lower your fundraising costs will be. As donors sign-up for monthly giving, you can stop sending them direct mail solicitations and stop worrying about scheduling asks and follow-up calls. Additionally, because monthly givers are more loyal to your organization, you can spend less money trying to find new donors to fill in for all of the donors who lapse each year.

Launching a Sustainer Program

Once an organization recognizes the inherent value of monthly sustainers, they must begin thinking about how to effectively launch a longstanding sustainer program. This requires a strong organizational vision that can be conveyed to potential donors, commitment, necessary infrastructure, and capacity. It must be communicated that partaking in a sustainer program is an opportunity to show commitment to the work by investing in its success, and that a range of donations is acceptable. For TIRRC specifically, membership is \$35 a year. One can become both a member and a monthly sustainer by donating the small amount of \$3 a month! Other things to keep in mind when launching a sustainer program are:

1. An organization-wide commitment to thank sustainers in a timely manner
2. Regular communication tools to keep sustainers informed
3. A database to track monthly donations
4. Ability to accept online donations
5. Adequate resources (time and people-power) to manage the program .

How to Ensure your Program is Successful

The most effective way to attract sustainers and retain them is to make sure their own values align with the work of the organization. This can be done by creating a culture of fundraising as organizing. This requires a cultural shift to view fundraising as a critical element in building power and strengthening organizing. It is an extension of the organization's overall work, and the only way to increase organization capacity. This directly relates to another key element of a sustainer program's success: engagement. Your organization must be committed to the communication, via email, mail, phone, and social media. You must keep them in the loop about the crucial work your organization is doing, and always communicate how their financial commitment is aiding in those efforts. You can also engage sustainers by coordinating fun and engaging events exclusive for monthly donors, and writing personalized, hand-written thank you notes. Finally, you must maintain sustainer data to maintain sustainer relationships. Ensure that all contact information is up to date, and regularly monitor those who have lapses in payment so that you can reconnect.



TENNESSEE
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& Refugee
Rights**
COALITION

For any non-profit organization, sustainership is a crucial way to engage the community and increase operational capacity. You may turn members into funders and connect donors to something they believe in fighting for. To become a sustainer is to become a donor, member, and supporter so that everyone can be a part of your organization's cause. As fundraisers, we must reconceptualize fundraising so that it is not thought of as an administrative hassle, but fundamental to powering the movement



You give me hope TIRRC. I know TN will remain strong as long as you exist and keep doing the beautiful work that you do -Monthly Sustainer

