

# Geography Outdoors

- Fundraising to Join an Expedition
- Based on article by Catherine Lucas

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## INTRODUCTION

Fund-raising is hard work and time consuming, but it has one important aim: to enable you to go on an expedition, journey, or project of your choice. You must be inspired and committed by your chosen project and be able to communicate your enthusiasm to those who might give you the money you need. The money is out there, but as with hidden treasure, your task is to find out where it is, who has the key to the treasure chest, and how to persuade that person to open it. This will need, above all, your imagination and determination.

You are not alone in this task. There are many different people who can offer you help and advice and you should make the most of this resource. Ask those who are organising your expedition what methods have been successful in the past, and if any charities are especially sympathetic to your chosen project. With well-established organisations ask if you can meet someone who successfully raised funds for previous projects - speaking to a person who has undertaken a similar task is a great help. There are many books devoted to the subject of fund-raising; there is a list at the end of this chapter. These are either relatively cheap to buy or should be available in your local library.

This paper is intended to give general guidance on how to start your fund-raising campaign, but to succeed and make yourself stand out from the many others trying to raise money you must make your approach a personal and distinctive one. In general, the people most likely to give you funds are those who believe in you as an individual with potential and want to give you a chance of a lifetime to take part in an expedition.

## BEFORE YOU START

### The Project

Before you begin to fund-raise you must have done your homework:

- Be sure you know all about the expedition you are joining. Is it organised by an established charity? Who are the leaders and what will you be doing in the field?
- What are going to be the effects of your project on the environment that you are going to and on the people who live there? Make sure these are not adverse effects.
- Who is going to benefit from your project? Is it science (social and/or natural), the host country, the local people, fauna and flora, yourself or something else?

You need to have these answers at your finger tips as they are questions potential donors will be continually asking.

### Yourself

Consider why *you* should be given the opportunity to join this project and not someone else. Draw up a list of your strengths and weaknesses, and how you see yourself benefiting from the expedition experience. Prepare a short curriculum vitae, perhaps with a photograph of yourself. Don't make it too long; one side of A4 should be more than sufficient. Donors will be interested in you as well as the projects you are doing. Many charities are established specifically for educational purposes.

### The Money

#### *Budgeting*

Before you start asking people for money you must find out exactly how much you will need in total. Any potential sponsors will want to know how their money is to be spent, and you need to

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establish a target. For many people, this will simply be the expedition fee, but don't forget any hidden/extra costs (insurance, film, vaccination costs, a personal medical kit, transport to the departure point, any specialist clothing, etc.). You don't want any nasty last minute surprises.

It might be helpful to draw up a budget - simply a list of items of income and expenditure, with a balance equal to your fund-raising target. This can be monitored throughout your fund-raising campaign, to check that targets are being met and expenditure is not becoming excessive.

Constantly working to reduce expenditure is productive. Before you buy anything (postage, printing, insurance, kit, air tickets, food etc.) be sure that you cannot get it at a better price or even free. Wholesalers, or friends of friends (you cannot lose by asking), may help or you may be able to negotiate a favourable price because of what you are doing.

#### *Using your bank or building society*

It might be helpful to open a bank or building society account specifically for your fund-raising. This means donations can be made payable directly to the expedition or project and separate from your own money. It also provides contact with a potential ally - the bank/branch manager. He or she can advise you on:

- investing your funds in a high-interest account (quite significant if your fund-raising continues for, say, a year)
- making a loan, if necessary
- currency and banks in the country you are visiting
- contacting local individuals or organisations who might be able to contribute

If you will be dealing with very large sums of money, it is possible that you will benefit from the advice of an accountant.

### **WHERE TO GO FOR MONEY**

There are many sources of funds which you may be able to tap. Look at as many aspects of yourself and the project as possible, and try to identify those points which might be of interest to potential donors. Perhaps try asking yourself: on the strengths of my personal qualities and of what I am doing, who could possibly give me some money? And conversely: what is there about any particular organisation that would make it want to give me money?

This should bring to mind a huge variety of potential sponsors. Use any personal connections that you have, and think carefully through everyone you know. It is also important to think about where you live; how you structure your fund-raising will be affected by this. If you live in a village or town it is easier to create local interest about what you are doing, especially with fund-raising activities and the media (see below). In large cities this "local boy or girl" image is more difficult to create, but there will be more firms etc. to write to.

Amongst those sources which have often been tapped with success are educational charities and businesses.

Remember that it is not just money that can enable you to go on an expedition, journey or project. Think what each contact can best help you with e.g. camera shop with free film, camping shop with expedition equipment, pharmacy with medical kits, brewery with beer for a fundraising party.



## **Trusts and charities**

Many British charities are established for educational purposes. There are a number of key directories which you should find in the reference section of your local library. Some such directories are listed later, along with a *selection* (by no means all) of appropriate grant-giving organisations.

The fund-raisers' bible is *The Directory of Grant-giving Trusts and Charities*, published annually by the Charities Aid Foundation. Set aside time to get to grips with this huge book. It has a number of separate indexes to enable you to find appropriate charities. Remember to read carefully the conditions specific to each charity to find out who they are interested in funding - expeditions or individuals. Look out for charities in the area where you live; some give only to the inhabitants of specific districts or towns, and if applicable to you, these should certainly be approached. Do not write to trusts and charities if you are outside their terms of reference: you are wasting their time and yours. Some have application forms and closing dates for applications; make sure you use the forms if required and submit applications on time.

Some may also ask you to go for an interview. You may already have had experience of interviews. The main points to keep in mind were covered in the "Before you start" section, but remember that this is a great chance to present the benefits of a grant to you and show your enthusiasm and commitment.

## **Business**

Local and relevant national businesses are worth approaching for donations in the form of cash, discounts, or "in kind". Do not write indiscriminately. Find companies which have an interest in your local community, which have supported expeditions from your area before, or have an interest in the country or type of work you will be carrying out. The names of local businesses can be obtained from directories (e.g. Yellow Pages, *Directory of Directors*, *Stock Exchange Year Book*, Thompson's) in your local reference library, and from the local Chamber of Commerce and trade associations (addresses from library again). The Department of Trade and Industry's British Overseas Trade Board has offices in many cities and these can advise you on firms that are working in the country you intend to visit.

Small local firms or local offices of larger firms are often more responsive than the large international or national offices which receive many thousands of requests every year. A local firm, for example, may appreciate media coverage which highlights their involvement in the community. Many companies have a yearly budget to distribute so try and get your applications in early. Don't forget to search out business contacts through family and friends, the local Round Table, or just about anyone else you are in touch with. Walk around with a fresh eye - you will see money sources sprouting everywhere!

## **Other institutions**

It is also worth approaching your local council, the Education Department, Departments of Leisure and Recreation, your old school, university, college, youth group, local MP and famous people may also be helpful. If they do not directly give you funds they are likely to give advice and contacts in exchange for a the advertising that you can bring them.

## **The media**

It is unlikely that you will get money directly from the media (newspapers, radio, television). However they may be willing to publicise what you are doing, raise local interest and awareness,

and possibly attract a sponsor. Some people sell photographs or a story about the expedition when they come back, but do not rely on this as a source of funds. *Local* newspapers, radio and television are more likely to give coverage than the nationals. Fund-raising events often have good local appeal.

### **Fund-raising events and activities**

There are endless opportunities to use your personal qualities and imagination with this type of fund-raising. However you must be honest about who you are raising money for: it is for you, to take part in a particular expedition. Be enterprising. Here are some possible ideas but the more original you are the better:

- Sponsored events (e.g. walks, swims, parachute and bungee jumps) are very popular, but wouldn't it be better to do something which also benefits others? So how about a sponsored litter pick, bulb-planting, car washing, etc. All are time-consuming to organise so make sure that it is going to be worthwhile (and not dangerous). The success is in getting as many people as possible to sign up *before* the event, and if possible leaving the money with you on trust, so that you don't have to chase up all the promises afterwards.
- Raffles. Try to get local firms and shops to donate prizes so you get all the profit. If you are operating outside the confines of a supporting institution such as a school or college, you are legally obliged to register the event with the local council.
- Fetes, jumble sales, bazaars, discos, etc. Also take a lot of time but if you can get friends to help they are worth doing.

### **Trading activities**

The sale of T-shirts, badges, postcards, sweets, popcorn (or any thing you can think of) is only worthwhile if you can get the items donated or at very low cost. Be careful to calculate that the profit is worth the effort. Try to get as much donated or free or get help from friends makes this easier. Unless you have a trading licence (from the local council, and not easy to obtain), these activities must take place on private premises with the permission of the owners (e.g. school, university, parish council etc.).

### **Personal contribution**

A personal commitment of your own money is advised, and expected by many donors. This might be from your savings or raised by getting a part-time job.

## **WHAT TO DO and HOW TO DO IT**

### **Strategy**

Having decided on your fund-raising methods, it is useful to write out your strategy on paper. Give yourself a timetable with specific tasks and financial goals (be realistic!). You can then work out how much time you want to allocate to fund-raising amongst your other commitments like exams. Start as early as possible - everything always takes longer than you think.

### **Research**

Spend time on research. If you are specific about what you are doing, and then target people and organisations accordingly, you are much more likely to succeed. If you don't you are just wasting everybody's time. Research is not just about libraries; it is also about asking friends and relatives, telephoning possible charities and organisations, asking for names of key people to write to, and finding out procedures on how they like to be approached for money.



## **Presenting yourself on paper**

As you are unlikely to meet all potential donors in person, you will want to use letters and perhaps some supporting documentation to present yourself to them. This may take many forms. An elaborate brochure or prospectus is probably unnecessary but you may want to have a short, interesting curriculum vitae about yourself and the project you are joining. You will probably want a good supply of these which can be photocopied in bulk (consider using recycled paper - with environmental projects especially it shows a consistency of approach). Always have some extras with you so that anytime you meet someone who expresses an interest you can show them something straight away.

These papers will give general background information about yourself and what you are doing, but it will be your *covering letter* that should have the most impact. Letters always form a vital part of fund-raising so spend time at the beginning getting the letter(s) right.

### *Presentation*

Although the letter's content is certainly most important, it will be only one out of many in somebody's in-tray, and has a brief time to convey its message. If it looks well ordered and interesting at first glance, it is more likely to get read. Invest some time therefore in presentation.

Letters should be neat, succinct, eye-catching, and no longer than one page. Although a word-processor can help in producing many similar letters, beware of making them look like anonymous circulars; these rapidly reach the bin. For the same reason, photocopied covering letters may not be effective. Try hand-writing or typing instead. Use as good a quality of paper as possible, preferably the standard A4 size (try to get this paper donated). Some people design logos or decorations for their paper, and although this can be expensive, it is sometimes effective. Finally, beware of looking *too* professional; people might think you have already raised enough money!

### *Writing to the right person*

Everybody you write to deserves a personal letter. A letter written to a specific, named person is far more likely to succeed than the usual "Dear Sir/Madam", especially when dealing with businesses. Consult company literature or ring the secretary first to find out who requests for help should be directed at. Double-check spellings and find out the position of that person - often the Managing Director or Public Relations Manager. Beware of old lists and directories which contain out-of-date names; it is embarrassing and wasteful to have a letter returned just because the person you sent it to left the company years ago.

### *Contents of the covering letter*

The letter should contain the following (not necessarily in this order):

- Who you are
- What you plan to do and why
- Your objectives and who is going to benefit from them
- Why you are writing to them in particular for help, and why they should consider helping you
- How much money you are trying to raise in total and what it will be spent on
- What it is that you want - try to be specific; don't be vague
- Anything you might have to offer in return: reports, slide shows, photographs of products in the field and of course publicity.
- A contact name, address and telephone number for a reply and who cheques are payable to - it is remarkable how often this is forgotten!

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If the project you are joining is a charity, mention this. Some grant-giving organisations only give money to charities, and companies can win tax advantages by charitable donations. Check first with the project leader about this.

Remember that mass letter writing is a waste of time and paper. Target who you send letters to. Finally, it is also important that you keep a careful list with dates of everybody you have written to, and a record of replies received.

*Following-up letters*

If there is no response after you have sent them a letter, always ring them up, check that they have received it, and ask them if they feel they can help etc. Offer to go and see them in person, because once you have met them face to face it is far more difficult for them to say no. It may also be easier to get the enthusiasm that you have over to them. Interest them and get them involved!

**FINALLY ...**

Remember to thank all those who help and sponsor you when you receive the funds and even a postcard from the field or a brief report on your return. This is essential. Not only is it polite, but others (or even you) may want to ask for their help again and they will be more keen if they know that their help or money was appreciated and recognised before. It is hard work to fund-raise, but there is that aim at the end of it all, so do not get exasperated if money is coming slowly. Careful planning, and an original and enterprising approach will hopefully ensure success.

GOOD LUCK!

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