

# Methods of Fundraising

The methods of fundraising your commission uses will depend on the experience, talents, inclination, and availability of your commissioners or volunteers.

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## Direct Ask

You can directly ask individual supporters for money. It is best to clearly articulate what you are raising money for when you ask. When making your list, work outward from your closest, best-known potential supporters—former commission members, people you have worked with, recipients of awards, etc. You can use several direct-ask methods:

- **Direct Mail.** Write a fundraising letter. Provide an envelope and possibly an Internet address for online donations.
- **Email.** Send your ask by email. Include both a link for online donations and an address for those who prefer to send a check. Consider sending Facebook messages as well.
- **Call Time.** Divide your list of potential supporters up and call them on the phone. It is best to be able to take credit or debit cards on the spot. Alternatively, ask people to pledge a certain amount and then follow up with a stamped envelope to get the contribution.

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## Online

In addition to email, you can use the Internet to gather donations in other ways:

- Put a Donate button on your web site.
- Post your fundraising campaign on your Facebook page. Ask others to Like and Share it.
- Use an online crowdsourcing site to ask for donations. For this method, it is best to have a clearly defined project. Several crowd-sourcing sites that nonprofits can use appear [in this article](http://mashable.com/2011/10/20/crowdfunding-platforms-social-good/). (<http://mashable.com/2011/10/20/crowdfunding-platforms-social-good/>)
- Auction items. There are several websites that enable you to place an item at auction. They handle the bidding and financial transactions. Alternatively, you could set up an online auction on your own site, but you will need to connect to credit card processors. Be sure to advertise your online auction everywhere you can.

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## Events

Events can range from small to large. Large events provide more visibility, but take more effort to do well. Events can raise money from

- Lunches, brunches, or dinners. You can have a meal event. These can make money, but costs must be controlled rigorously. They also require a dedicated committee to plan and execute location and food contracts. These large events are great for exposure. You may even be able to get press.

There are a number of ways to raise money at events. You should make sure that the ticket price more than covers costs of the event. You can do a direct ask, have an auction, hold a raffle, or offer a premium.

- Small receptions. Small receptions don't require nearly as much work. You can have a coffee, tea, and lemonade reception or a cocktail party or wine tasting.
- House parties. House parties are an inexpensive way to raise money and increase awareness. These intimate gatherings are often very fun and give attendees time to interact.

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## Grants

You can seek grants from many foundations. Generally, you should have a well-thought-out idea of what you want to fund. Each organization has different criteria. Some information is available online from the [Oregon Foundation Databook](#). You can probably find a hardcopy of this book at your public library.

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## Other Ideas

Here are several other techniques for raising money. Many of these can be done in conjunction with an event or other type of ask.

- Raffles. You can raffle off a beach home stay, a basket of products, tickets to a game, or just about anything else people are interested in. You may need a license to conduct a raffle if the you take in over \$10,000, [according to state law](#).
- Auctions. You can do silent or live auctions at events or online. Large auctions can be time-consuming.
- At-event fundraising games, such as the heads or tails game.
- 50/50 draws where the winner gets 50 percent and the organization gets 50 percent.
- Wall of wine. Bottles are in bags so the buyer can't see them. You charge a standard price and the buyer gets to pick a bottle without looking at the label. It is often possible to get donated wine.