

Before an RFP or tender can be prepared for a municipal project, all the funding sources must be in place.

This article suggests that one source of funding may be being overlooked or underutilized.

Tap ALL your resources

philanthropy for municipal building projects

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by Sue Egles

With the federal budget and its economic stimulus package plus matching funds from their province, municipalities are counting on funding for infrastructure projects. For many communities, fundraising campaigns to generate community giving and sponsorship dollars are part of the funding mix. Even in tough economic times, individuals, service clubs and businesses continue to give to worthy projects. So what can municipal leaders, recreation staff, volunteers and community user groups do to capitalize on this source of funding?

Below are a few key common factors to all successful fundraising campaigns for projects such as arenas, libraries and community complexes.

Define the project (in fundraising lingo – build your case for support). Be prepared to

inspire your community with the following details.

- What are the key features of your new building project?
- How will the project enhance community life?
- What is the economic impact?
- What are the health benefits?
- How much will it cost?

Why do you want community fundraising support? It's not inspiring or compelling to ask your local businesses, community groups and families to give to projects that are fully funded or solely to reduce taxes. Would this motivate you to give? Not likely. Be prepared to position the need for community support as value-added – that community giving will make a significant difference. If you didn't have \$2 million from

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the community, would you build? Why is the community partnership important?

Get your leaders involved. People give generously to projects they are passionate about and the more people involved the better. To do so, create a fundraising steering committee made up of senior staff, select politicians and a few key community leaders. In particular, look for young entrepreneurs, husband and wife teams, and blend these with your founding leaders that have been part of building your community over the last few decades – the mentoring of old guard and new is a wonderful side benefit.

Develop your strategy (in fundraising lingo – writing the campaign plan). This document is the blueprint for success in any campaign. It guides both volunteers and staff on the “art” and “science” of how to do good campaign fundraising, the timelines for the campaign phases, who does what and financial milestones along the campaign timeline.

Get out and talk. People love to be asked their opinion and give advice on worthy projects.

Sue Egles, CFRE is a partner with Inspire (www.inspireinc.ca), a Canadian philanthropic consulting firm that has, in its 20 year history, helped over 1,000 organizations raise more money. Sue has a diverse fundraising background both in and outside of the company. Since joining Inspire in 1997, her broad fundraising experience has resulted in extremely creative and successful programs for municipalities across Canada. For more information about Inspire, please contact Sue at segles@inspireinc.ca or (416) 544-9700.

Consider undertaking a fundraising planning study that focuses on gathering advice so that you can put together a winning plan. Firms, such as Inspire, work in communities helping municipalities to conduct planning studies to ask some key questions, such as: What do you like about our new community centre project? Do you have any concerns? Who might the top donors be? Who might the key fundraising volunteers be? How much can be raised? These questions, plus many others, help define the success factors and form the basis of a fundraising plan that is built around the DNA of each community.

By positioning your need for community support carefully, asking for advice (fundraising lingo for this is “cultivation”) and building a plan that looks at your unique strengths and character, major fundraising for municipal infrastructure can be very successful. 



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