

Tips on Resources for Newly Established Activist Organizations or Collectives

by FRIDA | Young Feminist Fund



As an emerging grassroots organization, often led by young women or Trans youth it is not always easy to access traditional funding sources. There will probably be some requirements from donors that are difficult to meet.

Some Common Challenges & How to Address Them

✎ Even though all the members of your group may have years of activist experience behind them, to be successful with funding, sometimes your organization needs to exist **at least 5 or more years** and have a **history with donors**. Unfortunately, in some cases there is mistrust from some institutional donors of whether young and grassroots organization can manage funding and reporting requirements or donors are not easily convinced in the capacities of a newly established group to deliver the work. However, some funds do specialize in supporting newly established groups (check out the resource section below for more details)! Another option is to consider **partnering** with more established organisations with experience in accessing funds to do collaborative work and apply for funding together.

✎ Often donors will request that your organisation is **registered** in order to receive funding, however some groups/collectives/networks choose to stay informal for a variety of reasons. It may be linked to their politics, or due to issues of corruption or safety in the country they work in. One way to respond to this is to consider finding a **'fiscal sponsor'** - a more established organization that you trust to receive funds on your behalf. This is a common practice in many places and can be a great way to collaborate with another organization. Make sure to create a Memorandum of Understanding with your fiscal sponsor.

✎ Some donors only provide restricted support for specific projects. Don't be afraid to be an advocate for **'core support'** that will cover your basic operational costs, as we all need to educate and convince more funders of the value of core support. Core support is general support for your organizations that is not restricted or necessarily linked to a specific project, it can cover costs for staffing, rent or anything related to your work. Check out the resources below on this.

✎ When applying to funders, you may be asked to provide a **reference**. Even if you are a new organization, it is important to have someone who believes in you and can vouch for the experience and

skills of the members of your group. Don't underestimate the importance of a good reference. If no one can give a reference for your group, ask for references for individuals in the group with emphasis on each person's skills and abilities to start a new group and **move it forward**.

Despite all the hurdles that can keep young grassroots organizations from accessing more traditional sources of funding - dynamic, flexible and accessible funds do exist. Below we have listed some examples of youth and women's funds - but many more exist. Always ask organisations who they are funded by so you can increase your networks.

Alternative Ways of Mobilizing Resources

Often our work is heavily dependent on the flow of money from large foreign agencies in more developed countries. We know it can be difficult to access funding from traditional donor agencies so it is always good to turn to alternative ways of fundraising.

As an activist organization, you are committed to addressing power inequalities, challenging stereotypes, and building progressive communities. Don't forget to apply these values to your fundraising! Mobilising resources is an inherently political and meaningful thing. Reaching out to funders who do not openly state they fund newly established groups with core support is still an important strategy to not only expand resources, but also advocate for donor engagement and accountability with the movement. Write coherent brief letters to funders to inquire if they consider funding your type of group by providing key messages on "what, how, and why" your group does the work, as well as why support to groups like yours is important for larger movement building and achieving of human rights standards.

A healthy budget is a sign of strong support – and one that is financed by your own community is even stronger because it rallies people to contribute to social change! In addition, research has shown that individual donors (especially women) can sometimes be the most valuable and sustainable sources of funding. Even though they may donate much smaller amounts, they tend to give consistently for much longer periods of time. While 'donating' in some contexts may feel 'new' or 'foreign', try to focus on the ways your community already has a culture and history of giving – thought it may be in different ways and forms, like giving time and goods rather than money. Of course public fundraising depends on the security situation in your country, as to whether you want to publicly fundraise, as well as whether the financial systems in your country are set up in a way that allow online donating.



Here are Some Approaches to Consider

Membership and Affinity Fundraising

Raising funds from your members is a fairly traditional practice, but can yield regular and timely support. Having a membership program for your supporters allows you to reach a large network through [monthly giving](#) and [end-of-year giving](#) (don't forget [donation level perks](#)). Affinity fundraising is about bringing people together who share something in common. This is one of the best and cost-effective ways to collect some basic resources for your organization, not just financial ones, but also human resources, office space, equipment etc., engaging people involved in the same cause, and spreading the word through your friends and colleagues, and other contacts. Research shows that peer-to-peer fundraising is on the rise, meaning that people are more inclined to give because they see other people in their own network giving. In other words, giving can be wonderfully contagious! [Giving circles](#) are on the rise: they bring together a group of dedicated individuals who want to fundraise for a particular cause. You can start your own giving circle and support people to think of creative ways to mobilize resources for your work.

Online Fundraising, Social Media, Crowd Founding Platforms

Social media is a great tool to reach many people in different parts of the world that could support your group and send your message without having to invest much financial resources. By producing an effective fundraising campaign by using different digital media you can inform people about your work. You can create your own fundraising campaign and showing your work in a form that quickly sends out your message it's a great way to stand out from the crowd and collect some resources. Online crowdfunding is a new popular trend, and it is useful to read about the different platforms available and find one that suits your needs and values. For example, [Indiegogo](#) remains one of the most popular crowdfunding platforms, and is used by business entrepreneurs, artists, and social activists. Meanwhile [Catapult](#) is a platform dedicated exclusively to women's human rights, while [Fundly](#) is focused on social good. However, remember like all strategies, [crowdfunding is not always perfect](#) and can still require a lot of time and effort.

If you have funds or could use human resources in your community, create a website where you could also have a Donate tool. There are [free sources on how to do this by using free website layouts](#). The more cost effective tool are social networks such as Facebook, Twitter etc. where you can install a donate tool and promote your fundraising campaign. It is important to be aware that this can also be more complicated than you think. For example, if you need a separate bank account to link the online donations and only one bank is providing this service, your options can be limited. It is important to check the terms and conditions and realities within your context and talk to other organisations to see if online fundraising will work for you!

Fundraising Events

You could try organizing fundraising events in your community or participate in a joint event where you could present your work, spread the word about your group, gather people involved in the same cause and inform them on how they can support your work. Remember that one of the most defining characteristics of donors today (especially, young people) is that they want to be engaged when they donate. So get creative and be inviting, whether it's a flash mob, dance party, or community gardening! Just remember that this might require some additional costs and resources. One example of a low cost event is a flea market, where members can sell their own things or those of their friends and families, or have such things donated from others and then sell.

Entrepreneurship, income generation, and private sector funding

If your organization fundraises money from products you make you can also present them in your fundraising events, online campaigns and collect resources that way too. You could also rely on the entrepreneurship of others and look for partnerships in the private sector. For example, check out [Buy1Give1](#). You can also consider reaching out to local businesses or larger companies working in your communities to donate money or goods or services. For example, for events, if you partner with a local grocery store, maybe you get all the food for free? Or the store has a donations program where customers can choose to donate small portion of their change to your group.

Some groups start their own businesses to support their work. For example, [Nasawiya](#) in Lebanon is a non-profit, volunteer-run activist space and all money raised goes to financing important social justice initiatives. Another example is [Bahay Ni Isis](#), a women-friendly space providing lodging, meeting rooms and facilities for workshops, conferences and events in Philippines. Starting these income-generating projects will require significant resources of its own, so don't forget to pitch this idea very well to some of your major donors who can provide initial support.

Different Kinds of Resources You Need to Raise

Sometimes we need resources that are not just financial, and they are there but we don't always know the best how to get to them. When it comes to building the capacities and knowledge of your group there are free online sources you could use to get training in certain fields, guides and tool that might be valuable to your organization. You can also try to use the expertise of your feminists activists in your community to help you build the capacities of your organization, just by sharing their knowledge. Most organizations need more human capacities, so you can get help from volunteers, but just have in mind that this person should feel like a part of your group and have learning benefits.

For some groups it might not be that difficult get free space from their community, just by researching what are the best ways to do it, or share space with another feminist organization. You can use social networks to ask for resources directly from your community for instance computer and digital media equipment.

Share skills – group members and their friends/families have skills that they can teach each other and use for their work. For instance, group members can make DIY posters, banners, brochures, etc., to use for a demonstration (instead of spending a lot of money on print).

Remember:

1. Fundraising and resource mobilization is a key part of your work and sustainability.
2. Don't forget to budget for your fundraising activities and the resources it will require as it takes a considerable amount of time and energy.
3. When you apply for grants from women's funds and other progressive donors, consider including a budget line item for fundraising so that you can continually build your own capacity and experience in it, and demonstrate to your donors that you are committed in doing so!
4. It is always useful to have a fundraising strategy/tool for what you are seeking funding for and how to reach that goal amount.
5. Think about how documenting your work every step of the way by using digital media that will communicate your message quickly and tell more about the work you do and why it is important. This will make your work more transparent.
6. Lastly, all of these tips are suggestions to inspire you! A lot of resources are directed towards North American audiences, so we're interested in getting your examples and tips from around the world!

Resources

Understanding Core Support and Politics of Fundraising

- AWID. Watering the Leaves, Starving the Roots <http://www.awid.org/Library/Watering-the-Leaves-Starving-the-Roots>
- Global Fund for Women, Trust in Women http://www.globalfundforwomen.org/storage/documents/where-we-stand/gfw_gensupport.pdf
- Starr, Kevin. "Just Give 'Em the Money: The Power and Pleasure of Unrestricted Funding". Stanford Social Innovation Review. August 3, 2011. http://www.ssireview.org/blog/entry/just_give_em_the_money_the_power_and_pleasure_of_unrestricted_funding

General Resources on Fundraising

- AWID. Where is the Money for Women's Rights? <http://www.awid.org/Our-Initiatives/Where-is-the-Money-for-Women-s-Rights>
- Funds for NGOs. Grants and Resources for Sustainability <http://fundsforngos.org>
- Grassroots Institute for Fundraising Training <http://www.grassrootsfundraising.org/why-gift/political-framework>

Crowdfunding

- Catapult. <http://www.catapult.org>
- Crowd Crux. Top 10 Crowdfunding Sites for Nonprofits <http://www.crowdcru.com/top-10-crowdfunding-sites-for-nonprofits>

Women's Funds

- International Network of Women's Funds <http://www.inwf.org/womens-funds>
- Women's Funding Network <http://www.womensfundingnetwork.org>

Youth Funders

- Alert Fund for Youth <http://www.alertfonds.nl/>
- Solidarity Fund XminusY <https://xminy.nl/englis/>
- The Free Child Project <http://www.freechild.org/funds4progress.htm>
- The Global Fund for Children <https://www.globalfundforchildren.org>
- The Inspiring Enterprise <http://www.inspiringenterprise.rbs.com/inspiring-youth/grant-funding/the-2014-fund>
- UN Habitat Urban Youth Fund <http://www.unhabitatyouthfund.org/Default.aspx>