



Guide to Fundraising

Welcome to Fundraising!

The thought of fundraising \$1,500 to \$5,000 can seem like a daunting task. We provide this [Guide to Fundraising](#) not only to help you achieve your financial goal, but also because the process of asking for donations is a critical part of educating our friends and family about the work we do. If you are excited about your trip with Bridges to Community and committed to helping make a difference in the world, you should have no problem asking for support from friends, family and strangers. You are offering them a way to get involved in creating a more just and sustainable world—a cause most people won't argue with!

Some tips to help you get started:

Be confident: Know why you are raising money and where the money is going. Become comfortable talking about Bridges to Community's mission and projects. Feel good about what you're fundraising for. Conquer the fear of asking for contributions. Studies have shown that seven out of ten Americans give to worthy causes when asked, so be proud that you are giving people the opportunity to help their world. People may give you money for many reasons. They might give because they are concerned about social injustice, because giving makes them feel good, because they care about you and support your ambitions, or because it is tax-deductible (for U.S. residents). No matter what the underlying motives are, the only way they will give is by being asked. It is your dedication, conviction, courtesy, persistence, and your creativity that will get people to donate to you. And remember, the worst thing that can happen is that they say no, but you'll be surprised how many say yes.

Seek support: We know how challenging fundraising can be, but you don't have to do it alone. Enlist your family and/or dedicated friends to join your "fundraising committee" which will help you strategize and carry out your plan. Extend your financial reach by enlisting them to approach their contacts at their work, school, etc. This is a great way for family members and friends to support you in a non-monetary way.

Strategize: After you've reviewed this guide, put together a fundraising plan that outlines your goals, timeline, and strategies. Then, post your plan someplace where you see it daily to inspire (and remind) you of your goal and how to reach it. The most important thing is to *start now*. An early start and consistent work are the best ways to assure success in your efforts.

Practice: Write a rough "script" for face-to-face and phone conversations. Talk it out to yourself (even stand before a mirror) or to a friend. Keep your presentation varied and energetic, and realize you are giving a potential sponsor an opportunity to invest in something extremely worthwhile. Be clear about your message.

Ask, ask ask: You raise money when you ask for it, not when you don't. Ask a lot, raise a lot; ask a little, raise a little.

Give Back: Fundraising is an exchange. People will be more likely to give to you if they know they'll get something out of it. Emphasize that you'll share pictures and stories with them when you return.

Techniques for Fundraising

Make a fundraising plan: Set some high but realistic fundraising goals, and establish a detailed plan that charts your strategies to achieve those goals. Keep in mind that certain activities, such as a letter-writing campaign or working with the local media, will take a good deal of time to plan and execute before they generate any income. Therefore, you should start working on these programs early in your campaign. Also, it is important to realize that no single method will allow you to reach your fundraising goal, and that a combined strategy is best. Maintain records of your efforts, and concentrate on the strategies that seem to be the most successful.

Make a list of contacts: Make a list of people that you know (family, friends, acquaintances, neighbors, co-workers, people you work with in the community, parents of friends, friends of parents, professors, high school teachers, local shop owners, activists, your food coop, friends on your sports teams or community leagues, your lawyer, dentist, doctor, holiday card lists, people at church, temple, or mosque, etc.).

Draft a letter: In it, explain what a Bridges to Community trip is all about, why you are participating in one, and what your fundraising goal is. Enclose a donation form. Ask for a very specific amount, adding that if the donor would like to give more, you would be delighted. Consider carefully how much you will ask for from each person. You will usually receive close to the minimum you set, so set your sights high. Keep the letter short but speak from the heart.



Ask local businesses: Go and ask local businesses to donate to you. You may be surprised by how many people will help. If you frequent their business, be sure to mention that.

Contact local media: Your local media, however big or small, can help get the word out. Reach out to newspapers, radio stations, local TV, and whatever else is available. Ask them if they will run an article about you and/or your group. If newspapers or magazines are unwilling or unable to do an article, letters to the editor are often good ways of getting your message out.

Get friends involved: We can't stress enough the importance of getting the support of friends and family who know and trust you. They will help make the process much easier and more fun. Ask friends to throw a benefit party. Get your musician friends to hold a concert. If someone you know can't provide financial assistance, ask if they can provide you with the names of people they know who might support your endeavor.

Universities: Contact student groups and clubs that are interested in the area you're visiting or the type of work you'll be doing. Ask them to sponsor you for \$25 to \$100 in return for a report from your trip. Contact professors that you know (and those you don't) and ask them to sponsor you. Lots of them will be encouraging. You might want to schedule class presentations. You would have a captive audience and it is generally easy to get students to donate right then and there or just pass a hat around. Who knows, you may even do some recruiting for the trip!

Tabling: Setting up a table can be a very effective way to gather donations. You can do this at shopping centers, community centers, college quadrangles, dining halls, churches, in front of high traffic stores, or at community fairs (Earth Day, Cinco de Mayo, etc.). Get a table. Have Bridges brochures, self-made flyers, and pledge forms available. Stand in front of, not behind, the table. Talk to people and have fun. If you are setting up a table outside a store, go inside and ask the manager if she might be willing to make a donation or allow you to put up a jar (with your name and cause clearly and attractively marked).

Community groups: If there are organizations in your community working on social and economic justice issues, go to their meetings and speak and ask for community contacts. And if time permits, get in touch with local officials such as the mayor, city council members, etc. and ask them to help as well. Enlist the help of community leaders. If you do get local support like this, be sure to mention it when trying to get media exposure. It should help. Elks, Rotary Clubs, American Legion, Kiwanis, Optimists, League of Women Voters, Physicians for Social Responsibility, local Sierra Club, League of Conservation Voters—all these are potential sources of funding. Ask them if you can speak at their next meeting, and if they would consider making a donation. Don't stop at asking the club for donations from group funds. Try to speak at a meeting so that you can ask members to sponsor you individually. When requesting to come to a meeting, call or write a letter that is personal, clear and to the point, explaining who you are and what you are asking. Emphasize that this is an international service and community development program.



Churches, temples, and other religious affiliates:

Churches, temples and other religious affiliates are often key supporters of Bridges to Community. Call the minister, priest, rabbi, or imam, explain who you are, and ask them to help. Make a presentation to the congregation, seniors group, women's organization, etc. Ask them to mention you and your trip in their newsletter. Ask if they might be willing to take up a collection for your cause. Explain that after the trip is over, you would be willing to write an article for their newsletter or give a presentation to the congregation. (If you live away from home, don't forget to contact your hometown group as well.)

High schools: If you're a college student, go back to your old high school and drum up support from faculty, favorite teachers and student groups in which you were active. Seek out ways of contacting your school's alumni. Also ask the school if there are any funds set aside for alumni. Some schools have money reserved specifically for the purpose of supporting alums. You may even be able to plan an event or get the students to pledge you. You could also recruit some future participants in the process.

Garage sales: Get together with some friends one weekend and hold a garage sale. Advertise in a local newspaper. Talk your friends into contributing some of their stuff to your cause. A lot of people like this method of fundraising because there is an exchange for a contribution. It is also a great way to encourage reuse/recycling.

Have a house party: Find a co-host to work with you to cut down on the work and make it more fun. Mail a large number of invitations. Include a self-addressed return envelope—up to half the money you raise may come from people who don't even attend, but send in their contribution. Call people and remind them to attend. House parties are usually most successful when planned for a two-hour time slot. Start with 15 to 30 minutes of conversation and refreshments, then have two to five minutes of introduction, 20 to 30 minutes of presentation on "What is Bridges to Community and why am I going on a trip with them?," and five minutes of "the pitch"—asking people to get involved by contributing and writing a check to sponsor your trip. The final 20 to 30 minutes can be used for continued



conversation and questions. (If you invite 20 people and they each give \$10 to \$30, that could be anywhere from \$200 to \$600 raised and a fun evening with coffee, snacks and good conversation). You can also ask a friend or family member to do the pitch for you. This allows them to brag about you and say all the wonderful things about your efforts that you may be too shy to say yourself.

Silent, art, and service auctions: There are lots of creative ways to raise money from an auction. Silent auctions are the most common. Some local businesses or friends will be more willing to donate items for auction rather than give money. You can also get food, lunches at local restaurants, and other items donated pretty easily. Art auctions and service auctions are also a fun way to have a themed event. Ask the local artists in your community, friends, and family to donate their work or create a list of services that you and/or your group are willing to donate (like babysitting, dog walking, tutoring, landscaping, painting, etc.). Set up tables with the items donated, putting their real cost down. Give a base line figure for people to start their bidding, i.e. \$25, 50, \$75 and invite people to walk around the table bidding on items. This usually involves writing their name on a piece of paper with the amount they're pledging to buy the item. It's a win-win situation. The people who bid the highest walk away with something they want and also know they contributed to a great cause. Have food, drinks, and music so people will browse longer and bid higher. This may be something to combine with your house party to get people to give more.

Other Creative Fundraisers

- **Organize a bake sale or candy sale.** Everyone loves homemade sweets!
- **Do odd jobs** (wash windows, mow lawns, paint) for local businesses and neighbors in exchange for their pledges.
- **Talent shows.** Ask students, teachers, friends, family, and anyone else you know that likes to be on stage to participate by singing, dancing, reading poetry, playing an instrument, etc. By charging an admission fee, you are not only raising money, but are guaranteed to have a good time.
- **Host a "Sitter Saturday."** Provide all-day babysitting service to the parents in your community. Many parents of young children could use a day off to run errands, go Christmas shopping, etc. Get members of your group, friends, and anyone who likes kids to donate their time (and house or church) to host a "Sitter Saturday." This event works well in churches where the children already know each other and would enjoy spending the day together.

- **Buy a brick.** “Sell” bricks for a reasonable price to your friends, neighbors, church members, etc. It takes about 500 bricks to build a Bridges house. Set your goal for how many bricks you want to sell. People may be more willing to help you meet your goal of ‘building’ a house by buying a brick from you rather than just giving you a donation. Offer to give them a picture after you return of the family that you worked with and the house you and they helped build.
- **Sell shares and stocks.** Many groups have had success selling shares or stocks of their trip to friends and supporters. After the group returns, they host a dinner for their shareholders to thank them for their support and share stories and pictures about their trip.
- **“Change for Change.”** Organize a penny or small change drive at your school or church. It’s a great way to educate younger kids while having them support your cause.

Use of Bridges to Community’s Name and Logo

Some organizations encourage volunteers to set up “chapters” or branches of their organization, which act as official representatives of that organization. That is **not** the case with Bridges to Community. We want you to use our name and logo on the materials you produce – that’s a great way to get the word out about Bridges! But please keep your group’s name separate, and make sure your donors know to whom and to what they’re contributing. If you are raising funds for a trip, you need to make that clear to your potential donors. If you’d like to raise funds for Bridges’ projects, you can tell them that. For example, instead of saying you’re raising funds for “Springfield Elementary’s Bridges to Community” say that “Springfield Elementary is raising funds for a trip to Nicaragua with Bridges to Community!”

Also, please note, only Bridges to Community can issue receipts for donations, and only donations made directly to Bridges qualify as charitable contributions. Gifts-in-kind (goods or services) can only be donated to Bridges. If you have any questions about these matters, please call our office, and we’ll be happy to answer your questions and help you out with your fundraising ideas.

Donation Procedures

Let us Know: before you start raising money, let us know what you have planned so we can be ready to accept and track your donations. Let us know what people or group will be raising funds, and let us know what you’d like those funds to be used for. Finally, let us know what kind of materials you’re using, and how you’ve asked donors to make donations. Some contributions are sure to come in with no note or message connecting it to you – the more you tell us beforehand, the easier it is to catch those!!

Checks and Cash: Please have all checks made payable to “Bridges to Community.” If the check is not made payable to Bridges, we are unable to deposit it. If you collect cash, have donors complete a donation form so we can send them a thank you and a receipt.

Credit Cards: We can accept AmEx, Visa, and Mastercard transactions as long as we received a signed donation form which says (a) how much the donation is for; (b) what group and/or project the donation is supporting; (c) the donor’s name and address; (d) the credit card account number and expiration date; and (e) a signature. Again, using donation forms is the best way to be sure you have all the information you need.

Send donations to the Bridges to Community office:

Bridges to Community | 95 Croton Avenue | Ossining, NY 10562

Online Donations: Donors can also contribute to your fundraising through our website. In the “note” section of the gift, they should write your name or the name of your group.

Remember that donations are non-refundable if you raise more than your goal. In those cases, you may request that the funds be donated to someone else’s fundraising efforts or put towards one of our project areas. If you don’t contact us in writing about the extra funds we receive, the money will go to fund our projects.

The Importance of Thank-you notes

A quick response to donors is important and always appreciated. In addition, you might consider sending a letter after the trip that shares pictures and some of the highlights. The people who supported you will appreciate knowing what happened during your trip and how their contribution helped. Sending thank you notes also helps establish an on-going relationship that can lead to the continued support of Bridges to Community’s projects, or perhaps even your next trip!



About Bridges to Community

Many people will support your fundraising effort just because they know you or are related to you, or both. However, many people will also want to know more about Bridges to Community. Here are some quick answers to use as a guide.

What is Bridges to Community?

Bridges to Community, Inc. is a nonprofit community development organization that takes volunteers to developing countries to work, learn and reflect. Through the process of living and working with local communities on construction, health and environmental projects, Bridges promotes cross-cultural learning, a deepening awareness of our global interdependence and a commitment to the common good.

What do you do on a trip?

Trips with Bridges to Community are typically a week long. Groups of volunteers live in a rural community and work with community members on a development project (i.e. house construction, school construction, farming, reforestation, etc.).

Where does my money go?

Eighty percent of every dollar contributed to Bridges to Community goes directly to our programs – to buy building materials for our projects, to pay the coordinators who live in Nicaragua year-round so they can guide you effectively on your trip, for the vehicles and accommodations and food you’ll use while you’re there. The rest is used for the administration and planning of all that – the people who help put your trip together, and raise the funds necessary to complete the projects you’ll work on.

Why are you doing this?

Upon reflection, each of you will discover your reasons... here’s an example: *By traveling to _____, I will see first hand the realities of poverty in the developing world and learn about important issues facing that community and region. I am excited to have this opportunity to learn from the community where I*

will be staying and work with them on a development project. I hope to bring what I learn back to my community here in the US and be an active leader for social change.



For skeptical contributors:

People may be wary of donating money to a group they have never heard of. This is understandable—after all; there are many “unsavory” groups out there that play on people’s sympathies. You can feel confident about raising funds for Bridges to Community. We’ve been organizing groups and doing community development work since 1992 and we have a solid reputation. We are registered in the U.S. as a 501(c)3 not-for-profit organization, and we are incorporated and registered in the state of New York.

We are happy to provide supporting materials to any member of the public if they have questions about our status or finances. Or have them call us or check out our website (www.bridgestocommunity.org).

Bridges to Community’s History

Bridges to Community, a non-profit community development organization, was founded in 1992 when a small group of friends took a trip to Nicaragua to learn more about it and the problems the people there faced. Inspired by the warmth and generosity of the Nicaraguans, they began to recruit more volunteers to come and to organize more projects for them to work on. Bridges has grown every year since then, almost entirely by word-of-mouth from the people who’ve been on our trips.

Bridges to Community has taken thousands of volunteers to Nicaragua to live and work with local communities, changing the lives of thousands of Nicaraguan families through our various community development projects. Some of these projects included the construction of houses, schools, clinics, wells, latrines, community centers, and micro-enterprises. In 2008, we took over 700 volunteers and 60 groups to Nicaragua to work with communities on these ongoing projects.

Current programs and activities

Bridges is currently working with five municipalities and many small communities in Nicaragua. We work in five program areas: cross-cultural education, community construction, community health, community education, and community economic development.

Sample Fundraising Letter #1

Dear family and friends,

Throughout the years, you have been very encouraging of my educational pursuits. I look to you again for your support, this time for an amazing opportunity to learn first-hand about poverty in Nicaragua with the people who are dedicated to overcoming social injustice.

While I have studied Central America in school, I believe that a true understanding of life in this unique part of the world begins through a first hand experience. While factually Nicaragua is the second poorest country in the western hemisphere (Haiti is the first), I can't possibly conceive of what that must really mean as I am so fortunate to be blessed with an abundance of support and opportunity! I am looking forward to traveling with Bridges to Community on one of their trips. I will be living and working in a rural community, volunteering my efforts to aid on a development project. Through this experience, I will be able to personally witness poverty. I know I will be impacted by what I see. I am most excited about being able to make a difference working alongside local leadership and community members.

To cover the costs of my trip, I need to raise \$1,295, plus another \$800 for airfare. I have already raised \$300. I would be so grateful if you supported me in this endeavor by contributing \$50 to \$100. Bridges to Community is a non-profit organization with 501(c)(3) status, so all donations toward the cost of the trip are tax-deductible. My departure is April 5 and I hope to raise the funds by January 15.

Please help me in one or all of the following ways:

- Send me a check to help fund my trip.
- Give me names of people you know who might be interested in helping to fund my trip.

For all my generous sponsors, I promise to send you a letter telling you about my trip and sharing my pictures with you. Thank you for all your continued support!

Sincerely,

Dave Smith

P.S. I've included a donation form and a stamped envelope addressed to me to make donating easy.

Sample Fundraising Letter #2

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

I am so excited to tell you about a trip that I'm taking to Nicaragua this spring. The trip is with Bridges to Community, a non profit organization that facilitates volunteer service experiences in conjunction with community development projects in third world countries. I am traveling with a group of students and one faculty member from my school. Though I've never been to Nicaragua with Bridges, I hope to have the same kind of life-changing experience that so many of my friends from school have talked about.

We will be living in a rural community about 20 km. outside the capital of Managua. During our week in the community we will be working with local leadership, masons and a family to build a cinderblock home. This will replace their current house made of scrap wood, metal sheets, and plastic providing them better protection against flooding, earthquakes, and disease.

The cost of this home is \$3,500. Our group's fundraising goal is \$6,000. Please help me reach my goal of sponsoring one home and helping make this trip possible for everyone in my group. Your contribution is greatly appreciated and will go directly towards impacting the life of a Nicaraguan family. A gift of \$50 or more would be wonderful!

Please make your check out to Bridges to Community and send it to me in the enclosed envelope. I will collect and forward them to Bridges once I have reached my goal. Bridges to Community is a registered 501 (c)(3) non profit organization, so all contributions are tax deductible.

Please feel free to call me if you have any questions. I look forward to telling you about my trip when I return. Thank you in advance for your kindness and generosity.

Sincerely,

Sarah Jones

P.S. If you would like to learn more about Bridges to Community, please visit www.bridgestocommunity.org

SAMPLE DONATION FORM

YES! I WANT TO HELP CONTRIBUTE FOR A SERVICE TRIP TO NICARAGUA!

I will make a tax-deductible contribution of \$35 \$50 \$100 Other \$ _____ to
Bridges to Community in honor of:

Fundraiser or Group Name: _____

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Please charge my credit card: VISA MasterCard AMEX

Card # _____ Exp Date _____

Signature _____

Please make checks out to Bridges to Community and return along with this form to the participant.
Bridges to Community is a registered 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. Our tax ID is 13-3731405.
Contributions are tax-deductible (in the U.S.) in accordance with section 501(c)(3) of the IRS code.

YES! I WANT TO HELP CONTRIBUTE FOR A SERVICE TRIP TO NICARAGUA!

I will make a tax-deductible contribution of \$35 \$50 \$100 Other \$ _____ to
Bridges to Community in honor of:

Fundraiser or Group Name: _____

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Please charge my credit card: VISA MasterCard AMEX

Card # _____ Exp Date _____

Signature _____

Please make checks out to Bridges to Community and return along with this form to the participant.
Bridges to Community is a registered 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. Our tax ID is 13-3731405.
Contributions are tax-deductible (in the U.S.) in accordance with section 501(c)(3) of the IRS code.

Sample Press Release



Bridges to Community
95 Croton Ave., Ossining, New York 10562

For more information contact:

[YOUR NAME]

[YOUR PHONE]

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

[Personalize a Title: i.e.
**High School Students Travel
to Nicaragua to Make a Difference]**

[Your town, State] – [Date]

On Sunday, March 21 a group of twenty students from Byram Hills High School will be traveling with Bridges to Community to the small community of Las Conchitas, Nicaragua where they will build two homes for families currently living in plastic shacks. The trip will last eight days and will not only make an enormous difference in the lives of these families, but will also impact the students in ways they cannot imagine. The volunteers will live in the community where the houses are being built, working alongside the future homeowners who will take an active role in building their new home.

Maggie Smith, principal of Byram Hills High School views this trip as an “exciting opportunity for the children to gain a new and unique viewpoint of the world in which they are living. Most of us living in Westchester are extremely privileged making it easy to forget to be grateful. A trip like this will expose these students at a very impressionable age to the suffering of material poverty and the beauty of another culture. The experience will certainly build upon their classroom learning.”

Stephanie Smith, a student at Byram Hills High School said, “I am so excited about going to Nicaragua. I have never traveled in the third world and believe this trip will have a lasting impact on my future. I hope to grow from this experience and in the process learn more about the culture of Nicaragua and help address the poverty there. I am grateful for the chance to make a difference.”

Bridges to Community, Inc. is a nonprofit community development organization that takes volunteers to developing countries to work, learn and reflect. Through the process of living and working with local communities on construction, health and environmental projects, Bridges promotes cross-cultural learning, a deepening awareness of our global interdependence and a commitment to the common good.

Toward this end, Bridges offers educational, service-oriented travel opportunities to Nicaragua. Bridges identifies and supports community-initiated projects that are aimed at empowering the local community to build a more promising future. Bridges organizes around sixty trips each year with approximately eight-hundred volunteers. Volunteers come from High Schools, Colleges and Universities, Corporate Groups, Churches and Temples, and family groups.

For additional information about this particular trip or about Bridges to Community in general, please contact the office at 914.923.2200.

Things to Consider When Planning a Silent Auction

I. Planning the Auction:

- a. **Consider your audience:** Are they students, parents, teachers? Have items available that they will want to buy.
- b. **Don't have too many items.** Less is more. Focus people's attention by having them move items up to higher bids.
- c. Ask everyone in your group if they have **connections to local businesses** (restaurants, stores, spas, family entertainment places, etc) or if their parents have connections to event tickets, etc.
- d. **Write an introductory letter** to local businesses asking for a donation for the auction.
- e. **Follow up, follow up, follow up.** Call first and then stop by. Bring a copy of the letter with you in case you meet someone new. Don't get discouraged by rejections. Local businesses get many requests for donations. Move on to the next business.
- f. **Set a goal** for how much you want to raise. Consider this goal when setting your starting bids.
- g. **Bid sheets:** Item name (number if you like), description, starting bid, increase amount, name of bidder, phone #, name of donor and/or donor company.
- h. Consider doing a **live auction** for one or two of the items. It may help break up the evening a bit and get the energy up.
- i. Be sure to **thank your donors!** Send them a note thanking them for their donation and telling them how successful your event was. Also be sure to thank them in person or with a phone call. This type of follow up assures that they will donate for you again in coming years.

II. Publicizing the Auction:

- a. Now that you've planned everything, **you want people to show up!** Having parents and teachers attend is a great start. Also try to get local community members to attend. Have the local business owners or your friends from churches and civic groups attend.
- b. Handing out **flyers** or posting them in public places is a great way to spread the word.
- c. **Challenge each group member to bring 4 people.** The more people that attend, the more bidding you'll have!
- d. Send a **press release** to your local paper a few weeks before the event to encourage them to publicize the auction. List interesting items that will be up for bidding if you have them.

III. Running the Auction:

- a. Consider **displaying items in a creative way.** If you don't have the item to display, have another item there to represent it. For example: tickets to a ML baseball game. Display a baseball mitt and ball.
- b. Have food and drinks available. **Free food** always encourages people to stay longer and wander around more. Have music playing too if you think it will help the atmosphere.
- c. **Make announcements** during the event. Be playful. **Encourage competition** between bidders and remind them that it's for a good cause.
- d. **Give bidders a warning of how much time is left** for bidding. When time is up, collect the sheets and announce the winners.
- e. **Set up a table where winning bidders can pay** for the item they've won and collect their treasures.
- f. **Don't give the bidder the item until they pay for it.** Also try to receive payment before the bidder leaves. It's much easier to get things taken care of that day rather than trying to track everyone down.

Most importantly...

Remember to thank everyone for coming to the event and supporting your cause!