

THE ARTS MEAN BUSINESS

Fund Raising Ideas That Work In Rural America



The Art of 
Leadership



montana **arts** council
an agency of state government

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Fund Raising Ideas That Work In Rural America

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Table of Contents

Introduction and Methodology	7
Observations	9
Some Jargon Defined	13
Special Events	15
• ArtSpace Community Arts Center-Greenfield, Massachusetts	16
• Art Machine, Inc.-Fort Mitchell, Kentucky	17
• Baker Arts Foundation-Liberal, Kansas	18
• Barnwell County Arts Council-Barnwell, South Carolina	19
• Capitol City Council on the Arts-Jefferson City, Missouri	20
• Caprock Cultural Association-Post, Texas	21
• Carbondale Community Arts, Inc.-Carbondale, Illinois	22
• Celebrity Concert Series-St. George, Utah	23
• Chequamegon Bay Arts Council-Bayfield, Wisconsin	24
• Churchill Arts Council-Fallon, Nevada	25
• Dahl Fine Arts Council-Rapid City, South Dakota	26
• Gallery One-Ellensburg, Washington	27
• Grand Teton Music Festival-Wilson, Wyoming	28
• Hannibal Arts Council-Hannibal, Missouri	29
• Janice Mason Art Museum-Cadiz, Kentucky	30
• Mimbres Region Arts Council-Silver City, New Mexico	31
• Moab Music Festival-Moab, Utah	32
• Monroe Art Guild-Monroe, Georgia	33
• Montgomery County Council for the Arts-Mount Sterling, Kentucky	34
• Paradise City Arts Festival, Northampton, Massachusetts	35
• Pioneer Valley Symphony-Greenfield, Massachusetts	36
• Raton Arts Council-Raton, New Mexico	37
• Rural Arts Council-Fairfield, Illinois	38
• Salmon Arts Council-Salmon, Idaho	39

- Sierra Arts Foundation-Reno, Nevada40
- Sitka Summer Music Festival-Sitka, Alaska42
- Southeast Missouri Council on the Arts-
Cape Girardeau, Missouri43
- Sun Valley Center for the Arts-Ketchum, Idaho44
- Sweet Pea Festival of the Arts-Bozeman, Montana45
- Thomasville Cultural Center-Thomasville, Georgia47
- University of Wyoming Art Museum-Laramie, Wyoming48
- Winfield Arts and Humanities Council-Winfield, Kansas49

- Annual Fund Drives51**
 - Allied Arts Group-Rapid City, South Dakota52
 - Friends of Middle Border Museum-Mitchell, South Dakota53
 - Piney Woods Fine Arts Association-Crockett, Texas54
 - Sautee Nacoochee Cultural Center-Sautee Nacoochee, Georgia ...55

- Membership Drives57**
 - The Anchor House of Artists-Northampton, Massachusetts58
 - Crisp Area Arts Alliance Inc.-Cordele, Georgia59
 - Custer County Art and Heritage Center-Miles City, Montana60
 - Juneau Jazz and Classics-Juneau, Alaska61
 - Minot Arts Council-Minot, North Dakota62
 - Moab Music Festival-Moab, Utah63
 - Montgomery County Council for the
Arts-Mount Sterling, Kentucky64
 - Old Jail Art Center-Albany, Texas65
 - Platte Valley Arts Council-Saratoga, Wyoming66
 - Raton Arts Council-Raton, New Mexico67
 - University of Wyoming Art Museum-Laramie, Wyoming68

- Capital Campaigns69**
 - Centralia Cultural Society-Centralia, Illinois70
 - Friends of Middle Border Museum-Mitchell, South Dakota71
 - Gallery One-Ellensburg, Washington72
 - Goodland Arts Center-Goodland, Kansas73
 - Nevada Museum of Art-Reno, Nevada74
 - Opera House-Stoughton, Wisconsin75
 - Western Folklife Center-Elko, Nevada76

Sponsorships .....	.77
• Berea Arts Council-Berea, Kentucky .....	.78
• Johnson Hall-Gardiner, Maine .....	.79
• Park City Jazz Festival-Oakley, Utah .....	.80
• Prairie Repertory Theatre-South Dakota State University, Brookings, South Dakota .....	.81
Author’s Notes and Other Notable Stories .....	.83
• Blue Ridge Mountain Arts Association-Blue Ridge, Georgia .....	.84
• Chamber Music Sedona-Sedona, Arizona .....	.85
• City of Paducah/Mark Barone, Economic Development Office- Paducah, Kentucky .....	.87
• Create in Newport-Newport, Washington .....	.88
Lessons Learned the Hard Way .....	.91
• Art Machine, Inc.-Fort Mitchell, Kentucky .....	.91
• Artspace Community Arts Center-Greenfield, Massachusetts .....	.91
• Barnwell County Arts Council-Barnwell, South Carolina .....	.92
• Carbondale Community Arts, Inc.-Carbondale, Illinois .....	.92
• Chequamegon Bay Arts Council-Bayfield, Wisconsin .....	.92
• Friends of Middle Border Museum-Mitchell, South Dakota .....	.92
• Goodland Arts Center-Goodland, Kansas .....	.93
• Grand Teton Music Festival-Wilson, Wyoming .....	.93
• Janice Mason Art Museum-Cadiz, Kentucky .....	.93
• Montgomery County Council for the Arts- Mount Sterling, Kentucky .....	.93
• Nevada Museum of Art-Reno, Nevada .....	.94
• Piney Woods Fine Arts Association-Crockett, Texas .....	.94
• Platte Valley Arts Council-Saratoga, Wyoming .....	.94
• Sierra Arts Foundation-Reno, Nevada .....	.94
• Southeast Missouri Council on the Arts- Cape Girardeau, Missouri .....	.95
• Western Folklife Center-Elko, Nevada .....	.95
• Windover Center for the Arts-Fond du lac, Wisconsin .....	.95
Acknowledgements .....	.97

Introduction and Methodology

ABOUT THIS STUDY

As part of a Wallace Foundation grant to the Montana Arts Council to build arts participation, the council commissioned this study to examine rural community arts organizations' "best practices" in fund raising. The study is neither a scientific analysis nor a treatise on what organizations should do; it is intended to be a snapshot of current techniques--as well as some valuable lessons rural organizations in twenty states learned along the way.

WHO'S IN THIS PUBLICATION

Recommendations on organizations interviewed came from state arts agencies, arts assemblies, advocacy staff, and other professionals in the field. Arts organizations serve their communities, whether in "dirt poor" southern counties or in the wealthiest rural northwest counties, so this study sought a range of population and budget size.

This study did not look at each organization's overall fund raising strategy or mix of techniques. Its intent was to ask rural arts organizations what they believed worked well for them, what did not, and why. Participants answered the primary question, "What is your single most successful fund raising effort, not including grants?" It was a specifically open-ended question so respondents could self-define what success meant to them; a few organizations responded with more than one example.

WHAT RURAL MEANS IN THIS PUBLICATION

“Rural” is an elusive term: according to Bob Frankel, National Endowment for the Arts Director of Museum and Visual Arts Programs, “Some places are more rural than others.” For example, Vermont might be considered the most rural state in America, because it mostly has small towns of populations around 1,700 located two or three miles apart—but it is also within easy driving distance of New York City and Boston. By contrast Montana is a vast sparsely populated state with some counties the size of Vermont. Hobson, Montana, is a town of 244 with population density of approximately one person per square mile in the immediate area. For this study’s purpose, the definition of “rural” is a community with a population under 50,000. However, for perspective, the researcher included some organizations in cities that have greater populations, but are located in predominantly rural states, Nevada and South Dakota, for example.

REFERENCING IDEAS THAT WORK

For ease of reference, this study groups ideas that work by fund raising categories: membership and annual fund drive, for example, then alphabetically, by the organization’s name. The final section shares some lessons learned the hard way.

Observations

DEFINING SUCCESS

One of the major definitions of success is financial, but some did not measure it in financial terms. In fact, one of the most effective fund raising techniques was not to ask for money immediately. (The political parallel is James Carville's "Multiplication by Subtraction" theory, or, "saying more by saying less.") In this approach, a team of two to three people from an organization meet with individual community business leaders and tell them their success stories--specific examples of how the organization made a positive impact in the community--then thank them for their time and leave. When the organization needs help with a subsequent project, the door will be wide open; often, unsolicited checks from the businesses follow.

FAVORED APPROACH

The special event seems to be a favored approach, representing well over half of all responses, but this technique is a double-edged sword. One organization used a special event to overcome a sizeable debt that it incurred from a previous ill-conceived special event.

Special events also appear to have a life span that depends on how long it takes to reach an audience saturation level. Some last only a few years, but others are still going strong and still growing after several decades.

Many special events involve artists. It is important to remember that artists are among the most frequently solicited contributors to all philanthropic organizations. Organizers should be sensitive to not exploit artists and their generosity; artists who donate works to tax-exempt organizations for resale can only deduct the cost of materials, not the market value. Rather than asking individual artists for an outright donation of work, always ask the artists if they would share in the proceeds from their donation

THE AUDIENCES

The majority of respondents do not consciously target new or specific audiences or attempt to increase attendance or participation with the organization in their fund raising efforts. They launch fund raising efforts with the general public for the primary reason of increasing revenue; the goal is to make money, not lose it. That information seems to suggest that new variations on old themes for more specifically targeted audiences might increase or amplify results. Some events were not designed to make money, but were “friend raisers” instead.

DEMOGRAPHICS

Demographics taken from current U.S. Census data largely reflect popular conceptions of Rural America. Populations served are predominantly Caucasian, but several communities have significant Black, Hispanic, Native American, Asian or Pacific Islander populations. There is a key concept used in integrating various populations within a community into successful projects. That concept is to create projects “with” the target audience and not “for” them. This can mean anything from including audience members as volunteers to inviting representatives on the board of directors for help guide planning future events and programs that will be beneficial and meaningful to the people served.

COMMON FRAMEWORKS

Successful fund raising stories have common frameworks. The old axiom “people give to people” remains true today. Repeatedly, organizations said board participation was an important key to success, especially with annual campaigns, business sponsorships, and capital campaigns. Board members also lend crucial support by taking the lead in making new fund raising contacts on behalf of the organization. Paid staff members do not make initial contacts because they will be perceived as simply looking for their salaries—which has no direct relationship to either filling a community need or the organization’s mission in the potential donor’s mind. Board members make initial contacts as volunteers, have no financial interest in the request, and make the link between the community need to be filled and the organization’s mission. Board members’ peer relationships, and the fact they made personal cash contributions to the organization and/or project, not only open doors but

also pave the way for major contributions. A paid staff member may participate in the process as resource who answers donor questions and provides specific examples—but “The Ask” must come from a peer. An executive director may initiate contact for renewal contributions, but it is always a board member who initially opens the door with the first contact.

CAPITAL CAMPAIGNS

This study includes capital campaigns; a process most would define as raising “serious money,” and, although there is no one correct way to run a capital campaign, those responding generally followed conventional wisdom. They conducted their initial campaigns quietly and relied heavily on board members’ personal relationships in the community to gain the biggest pledges first. The one variation is that when campaigns “went public” they did so with less of the goal in hand than would be expected. Successful capital campaigns usually do not make a public announcement or kickoff unless 70-80% of their goal is already in hand—because the final 20-30% is the hardest to find and usually comes in the form of many small contributions. An exception to this rule of thumb would be universities that have a large well-developed alumni base.

SECRET FORMULAS

If there are “secret formulas” to successful fund raising that could be gleaned from this study, they would appear to be:

- having a board of directors that is active on behalf of the organization and socially well-connected;
- finding a means to capitalize on local heritage and/or resources;
- involving fun, food and refreshments for the public;
- promoting strategically, based on mission, and never giving up!



Some Jargon Defined

Budget = total annual organizational expense - not gross revenue - either provided by the respondent or from the most recent and available IRS Form 990 (source: www.GuideStar.org).

Cash raised = gross amount received for the endeavor, unless “net” is listed, then just subtract cash expenses to arrive at the “profit.” If only “net” appears, that is the total profit from the event or activity.

In-kind = expenses an organization normally incurs for goods and/or services, but are paid or contributed by someone else.

Fundraiser = an “event,” not the person who raises money.

PR: Public Relations = “buzz” = word-of-mouth advertising.

N/A = not available: either the responding organization did not know, did not track, or did not wish to share this information.



Ideas That Work Special Events



ArtSpace Community Arts Center Greenfield, Massachusetts

Population: 10,000-25,000

Annual Budget: \$100,000-\$250,000

What is your single most successful fundraising effort?

Annual pottery “seconds” sale.

Local ceramic artists, primarily, plus a few glassblowers and woodworkers, sell their seconds and discontinued items (and sometimes firsts) at this two-day event. Most of the sales take place on Friday night and before noon on Saturday. There is a 10% off sale from noon to 2:00 p.m. to keep people there and buying; the percent off comes from the organization’s share, not the artist’s. No admission is charged, but the organization takes 35% and the artist keeps 65% of sales. About 1,000 people attend and they are looking for bargains to save for gifts.

How much money did it raise?

Cash: \$40,000

How much did the project cost?

Cash: \$32,000

If applicable, who comprised the target audience?

Buyers from the previous three years.

Exactly which factor(s) made it successful?

Items are not cracked or broken, but may have a glaze defect, or the artist just wants to move the inventory so the items sold are of good quality. People wait for this sale. Buyers are primarily local, but come from as far away as Boston and New Jersey. The mailed sales announcement does not go to the entire membership, but targets buyers whose addresses can be gleaned from checks from the previous three years and successfully relies on additional word-of-mouth advertising.

Anything else to share?

“A Leap Into the Arts” event was held during leap year; it most closely resembled a board party and talent show. Tickets were \$25, although many were given away, and the audience numbered about 50. One board member who was an aspiring comedienne used the event for her debut and another musician board member also performed. Everyone agreed it was a lot of fun and should be done again.

Art Machine, Inc. Fort Mitchell, Kentucky

Population: 5,000-10,000

Annual Budget: under \$25,000

What is your single most successful fund raising effort?

Adopt Children's Art.

Art Machine hosts the Art Scholastics, which has 4,500 initial entrants. A law firm chooses 30 pieces as finalists. The firm pays for framing, which the organization does itself at a reduced rate, then hangs the works in their law offices for six months. At the end of the period, works return to the students, but the firm has the option to purchase individual pieces from the artist.

How much money did it raise?

Cash: \$4,000

How much did the project cost?

Cash: \$2,000

Did it also result in increased audience attendance or participation for your organization?

Yes. The initial exhibition involves children and their parents and increases attendance.

Exactly which factor(s) made it successful?

There is a need for artwork in businesses that have empty walls. It helps kids get their work shown (grades 7–12). The firm selects the age range it wants.

Anything else you wish to share?

There was lots of free retail space in town and lots of in-kind support pre-9/11. Since that time there is less space available and people are more reluctant to give their support. However, there is the possible involvement of a former NFL player with the organization later this year and that would provide crossover support from sports to expand the audience.

Baker Arts Foundation

Liberal, Kansas

Population: 10,000-25,000

Annual Budget: \$100,000-\$250,000

What is your single most successful fundraising effort?

Festival of Trees auction.

It has been held for eight years and reaches out to other nonprofit organizations. Examples include the Quilt Club and sororities. Each group donates a decorated Christmas tree, but as groups grow smaller they turn more to businesses to sponsor trees and employees spend a weekend decorating one. It proves to be fun. In conjunction with the trees, they auction off contributed treasures and packages. Pizza Hut offers a summer package that has a \$3,000-\$4,000 value of water skiing, camping and horseback rides. A winter package includes skiing and a carpenter building an arbor. They are things not available in stores. A jeweler will offer a one-of-a-kind item in exchange for advertising. The cable company offers a mystery gift briefcase full of interesting things. The auction has both a live auction for trees and a silent auction for packages and treasures. There is a \$25 entry fee that includes food and drink.

How much money did it raise?

Cash: \$18,000

How much did the project cost?

Cash: \$6,000

In-kind: Building, food, trees, packages.

Exactly which factor(s) made it successful?

Southwest Kansas is fairly isolated and this provides a festive-to-formal social event. People look forward to it.

Barnwell County Arts Council

Barnwell, South Carolina

Population: 5,000-10,000

Annual Budget: Under \$25,000

What is your single most successful fundraising effort?

Art auction and dinner.

Eighty people attended and 30 donated local arts items that had special appeal to people: for example a painting by an elderly painter who taught many of the audience in school. They began with a silent auction during dinner, then moved to the live auction.

How much money did it raise?

Cash: \$5,000

How much did the project cost?

Cash: \$1,500

In-kind: art works.

Exactly which factor(s) made it successful?

Having items of special local appeal led to a bidding war over several of them.

Anything else to share?

Another successful event, which the organization plans to expand, is hosted family dinners. There is minimal cost because eight different hosts donate their dinners for about 50-60 people. The arts council's cost is about \$200 for marketing and gross revenue is about \$2,200.

Capitol City Council on the Arts Jefferson City, Missouri

Population: 25,000-50,000

Annual Budget: Under \$25,000

What is your single most successful fundraising effort?

“Take A Seat” auction.

The organization invited 50 local artists to paint or create a chair, then donate it. The chairs were then auctioned to the public.

How much money did it raise?

Cash: \$21,000

How much did the project cost?

Cash: \$4,000

In-kind: 50 chairs.

Exactly which factor(s) made it successful?

This was a special event held to eliminate the organization’s debt. In 1998 a special event lost \$25,000 and in 1999 an event broke even, so a bank loan was necessary to cover the loss. A new executive director launched the successful Take A Seat auction. Local artists were the key to success in this event, as many were well-known and had a following, so bids went up to \$1,000. Board relationships in one way or another with the local bank were crucial to success because the bank forgave a substantial amount of its loan.

Caprock Cultural Association Post, Texas

Population: Under 5,000

Annual Budget: \$50,000-\$100,000

What is your single most successful fundraising effort?

1.) Ballet in Cowboy Country and, 2.) Rendezvous of the Arts.

1.) Twenty years ago there had never been a ballet performance in the community, so the board brought in a dance company from Lubbock 40 miles away. They scoured the area and convinced dance students and their parents they should attend a performance of "Nutcracker" in a 500-seat theater. It worked.

2.) The art show is a spin-off of another art show and was a first effort to fill up empty buildings in the downtown. They arranged for access to seven buildings, then filled them with western art, furniture, poets and musicians. As the economy picked up, buildings were not available the next year, so they moved the event to the community center where it has remained for six years. It will be held in conjunction with the OS Ranch reunion in October with art sales and a cowboy breakfast. It will be a fun activity.

How much money did it raise?

1.) Cash: \$3,000 2.) N/A

How much did the project cost?

1.) Cash: \$2,500 2.) N/A

Exactly which factor(s) made it successful?

An active and involved board of directors who planned and worked directly on the events.

Carbondale Community Arts, Inc. Carbondale, Illinois

Population: 10,000-25,000

Annual Budget: \$100,000-\$150,000

What is your single most successful fundraising effort?

Performing Arts Concert.

The organization brought six-time Grammy Award winner Shawn Colvin back to town for a concert. Since she grew up in Carbondale, she contributed her fee for the concert, so the only expenses were airfare, hotel, and promotion.

How much money did it raise?

Cash: \$12,000

How much did the project cost?

Cash: \$2,000

In-kind: artist fees.

If applicable, who comprised the target audience?

Students and young adults.

What is the age range of participants?

15-35 and 50-65

Did it also result in increased audience attendance or participation for your organization?

Yes, it helped attract the younger audience.

Exactly which factor(s) made it successful?

Timing is everything, partnerships with Main Street and Southern Illinois University helped tremendously. In terms of business support, return depends on the energy put in: board members who contribute to everything and ask others to help are very hard to turn down.

Anything else to share?

The business Annual Campaign provides the majority of funding for the year.

Celebrity Concert Series

St. George, Utah

Population: 25,000-50,000

Annual Budget: N/A

What is your single most successful fundraising effort?

Special event dinner.

On October 4, 2004, the organization held a \$100-per-plate black tie dinner at 5:00 p.m. on stage before a concert that began at 7:00 p.m. There was a soloist at 5:00 p.m., the meal was nicely presented, and there was also music in the lobby. A donor paid for all 150 dinners, so there was no cost to the organization.

A second event was also successful: a southern California art and music weekend retreat to the Disney Concert Hall and Los Angeles art museums. This event cleared \$8,000.

How much money did it raise?

Cash: \$15,000

How much did the project cost?

Cash: - 0 -

In-kind: donor purchased the dinners so there was no catering cost.

Anything else to share?

Luncheons break even, but that is what was expected. Look at how organizations do fundraising: do they involve the board, guild, or a development committee as they should?

Chequamegon Bay Arts Council

Bayfield, Wisconsin

Population: 10,000-25,000 (Summer 16,000/ Winter 12,000)

Annual Budget: \$24,254

What is your single most successful fundraising effort?

A theme art auction.

There have been three consecutive themed art auctions held in the summer for the tourist market. First year was Art of the Chair, second year was Art of the Table, then Art of the Chest. The event is held annually on the Friday prior to the community Art in The Park event. Used pieces are donated or purchased, sponsors pay \$50 per piece up front; artists may request a \$50 fee per piece or donate their labor. Works are completed a month in advance, then displayed at the sponsor location. The arts council publishes a map and supplies refreshments and snacks for the auction.

How much money did it raise?

Cash: \$21,000

How much did the project cost?

Cash: \$5,000

If applicable, who comprised the target audience?

Summer tourists

Exactly which factor(s) made it successful?

Timing of the event--done in partnership with the Chamber of Commerce, which sponsors and organizes Art in the Park. New board members brought a great template for the event when they joined; the event map is great publicity for the artists.

The summer event augments an annual contribution request made by letter in early December. The request letter raises about \$1,800 beyond cost and will probably never raise much more than that, but it is important to remind local residents of the council's activities.

Churchill Arts Council Fallon, Nevada

Population: 5,000-10,000

Annual Budget: \$150,000-\$250,000

What is your single most successful fundraising effort?

Annual fundraiser.

It is a dinner with silent auction, and has been done for the past 18 years; limited to 300 tickets and it is sold-out. As an additional attraction there is also a speaker who is a local personality.

How much money did it raise?

Cash: \$40,000

How much did the project cost?

Cash: \$11,000

In-kind: art works.

Exactly which factor(s) made it successful?

It is a sought-after social event in town.

Anything else to share?

The organization renovated an old building for an art center and during construction had an "art bar" fund raising event. Patrons bring their own refreshments and hors d'oeuvres, then buy them back. It a fun social event and people leave whenever they want.

Dahl Fine Arts Council Rapid City, South Dakota

Population: Over 50,000

Annual Budget: \$250,000

What is your single most successful fundraising effort?

Wine and Roses event.

Held at the center, tickets are \$85, there is a silent auction and a live art auction, place settings are elegant and designed by artists.

How much money did it raise?

Cash: \$40,000

How much did the project cost?

Cash: \$13,000

If applicable, who comprised the target audience?

Age 40 and up, primarily higher-income individuals.

Exactly which factor(s) made it successful?

It is a social event and seems upscale—and that is the attraction. The theme is different each year, but it is tied to summer arts camps. Alice in Wonderland was this year's theme.

Gallery One

Ellensburg, Washington

Population: 25,000-50,000

Annual Budget: \$50,000-\$100,000

What is your single most successful fundraising effort?

Paint Ellensburg Art Auction.

It did not start as fundraising, but as an event to bring art to the people and people to the art, as well as a way for artists to meet each other. Sixty-five to 80 regional artists take one day to capture the essence of Ellensburg, then auction the finished piece.

How much money did it raise?

Cash: \$25,000

How much did the project cost?

Cash: \$15,000-\$18,000

In-kind: board contributed wine and hors d'oeuvres

Exactly which factor(s) made it successful?

It is an interactive approach as people watch the artists while they paint.

Grand Teton Music Festival Wilson, Wyoming

Population: Under 5,000

Annual Budget: \$1.9 million

What is your single most successful fundraising effort?

Music in the Hall.

The event is held by a classical music organization; tickets are discounted, not free. Staff and board members talk with businesses about what the event means in the community, how people feel about the event, and how the event affects the community. It is not just a business transaction (and they do not usually ask for a donation). The visit is followed by a personalized mailing.

How much money did it raise?

Cash: \$60,155

How much did the project cost?

Cash: \$200

Exactly which factor(s) made it successful?

Opening the door with what the community is giving and getting, then the follow-up mailing that talked about everything. It is possible to raise more money by not asking—informing about benefits and listening go a long way, so ask later.

Anything else to share?

Wine auction takes place in odd number years and in the fall. It is small in size and brings people together for great food and wine.

Focus on education and benefits to children in speaking with donors.

Hannibal Arts Council

Hannibal, Missouri

Population: 10,000-25,000

Annual Budget: \$50,000-\$100,000

What is your single most successful fundraising effort?

Annual Folk Arts Festival (28 years old).

This is a traditional folk arts festival with both performing and visual arts; a mid-1800's theme, and it takes place in the fall with 100 vendors.

How much money did it raise?

Cash: \$28,000

How much did the project cost?

Cash: \$10,000

If applicable, who comprised the target audience?

General public and cultural tourists.

Exactly which factor(s) made it successful?

Revenue streams: artist fees, food vendor fees, commission of 10% of sales, advertising booklet, sponsor underwriting and exclusive rights to drink sales.

Janice Mason Art Museum Cadiz, Kentucky

Population: 10,000-25,000

Annual Budget: \$80,000

What is your single most successful fundraising effort?

A dinner dance.

A band/orchestra that performs for nonprofit organizations was hired to play at the Barkley Lodge. An excellent dinner was served, photos were provided, there was dancing and a silent auction of upscale items. Tickets were priced at \$100 per couple and fifty to sixty couples attended.

How much money did it raise?

Cash: approx \$6,000 net

How much did the project cost?

Cash: N/A

If applicable, who comprised the target audience?

Older generation, age 45 and up.

Exactly which factor(s) made it successful?

People get to enjoy themselves, eat a fine dinner and dance. In other words, they get something out of it that is appealing, especially the food.

Anything else to share?

A big auction item that would generate revenue is hard to find. We are currently also using a golf tournament, gift shop (sales), and continuing education classes for revenue.

Mimbres Region Arts Council

Silver City, New Mexico

Population: 10,000-25,000 (City 12,000, County 30,000)

Annual Budget: \$250,000-\$500,000

What is your single most successful fundraising effort?

The Millie and Billy Ball.

This event is based on two notable local historical characters: Madam Millie, who ran a house of ill-repute, and Billy the Kid who was born in Silver City and lived there with his mother. The event is a costume ball with western music, barbeque dinner, a raffle (\$100 tickets for a chance to win the original reward of \$20,000 for Billy the Kid), and an opportunity to purchase photos and souvenir products.

How much money did it raise?

Cash: \$40,700

How much did the project cost?

Cash: \$17,000

Cost does not include raffle prize.

If applicable, who comprised the target audience?

Miners and ranchers who do not otherwise participate in arts activities, but who have an interest in the community and history.

Did it also result in increased audience attendance or participation for your organization?

Yes

Exactly which factor(s) made it successful?

The event is unique, very local by emphasizing community interest and history, is a grassroots effort and not something brought in from outside. It is multi-faceted, a lot of fun, and promotion made it sound like a lot of fun. Sponsorships, tickets at the door (raffle tickets were separate), and contributions helped with financial success.

Anything else to share?

It was a lot of work, but it created a buzz in the community: people who did not attend said, "I can't imagine how I missed that!" This was the first year, but it created so much interest it will be an annual event.

Moab Music Festival

Moab, Utah

Population: Under 5,000

Annual Budget: \$250,000-\$500,000

What is your single most successful fundraising effort?

Special event concert.

The Colorado River concerts are the most effective special event. One hundred people float down the river in boats to a secluded spot where an outdoor concert takes place (musicians and equipment precede them). It is an exclusive affair and people enjoy it.

How much money did it raise?

Cash: \$40,000

How much did the project cost?

Cash: \$20,000

Exactly which factor(s) made it successful?

A good database and knowing the people in that database who are most likely to participate.

Monroe Art Guild

Monroe, Georgia

Population: 10,000-25,000

Annual Budget: \$25,000-\$50,000

What is your single most successful fundraising effort?

Art Walk, Garden Tour and auctions.

Mother's Day weekend: Friday night Art Walk: put art in downtown stores and have them stay open late to 8:00 p.m. so folks can stroll through the downtown. Although this is more of a PR event than a fundraiser, it served as a great introduction to the fundraising event the next day, the Saturday Garden Tour.

The Garden Tour included 11 downtown gardens, plus a bonus garden for members and people who joined that day. Tickets were \$20 and included a boxed lunch donated by the local hospital. Tour hours were 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. There were 75 paid admissions netting \$661.

How much money did it raise?

Cash: \$1,500

How much did the project cost?

Cash: \$839

Anything else to share?

Halloween: If you have a building with a basement or other appropriate place, do a Haunted House with your local art and drama students from the high school. We charged \$4 a head and made \$500 for our group and the high school. We do auctions every other year in the fall and make about \$8,000.

Montgomery County Council for the Arts Mount Sterling, Kentucky

Population: 10,000-25,000

Annual Budget: \$100,000

What is your single most successful fundraising effort?

Mardi Gras Celebration.

The Mardi Gras Celebration is a party that includes a silent auction, food, a band and cash bar. It's held in February or March, depending on when Ash Wednesday falls. 125-150 people attend and 30 volunteers work the event—and most of them are board members.

How much money did it raise?

Cash: \$8,000

How much did the project cost?

Cash: \$2,000

Exactly which factor(s) made it successful?

The silent auction is key. Tickets at the door cover basic costs, but the auction provides the actual revenue.

Paradise City Arts Festival Northampton, Massachusetts

Population: 25,000-50,000

Annual Budget: N/A

What is your single most successful fundraising effort?

Silent art auction for a hospice group.

The auction was held in conjunction with the festival at the county fairgrounds. The festival is a commercial venture and conducts two shows in Pennsylvania and four in Massachusetts. It is not a local nonprofit organization, however, it partners with nonprofit organizations. For example, organizations provide festival hat checking and gift-wrapping and 60 –80 volunteers who help with the festival—for the mutual benefit of publicity. There are also 270 artists who participate in the festival. Of these, 100 contribute to the silent auction. There is a cross-listing of contributing artists in the color program.

How much money did it raise?

Cash: \$12,000

How much did the project cost?

Cash: - 0 -

In-kind: contributed works of art.

Exactly which factor(s) made it successful?

Volunteers and festival coordination.

Anything else to share?

This is a for-profit entity that organizes and holds a half-dozen art fairs in three states.

(Author's Note—Many years ago, as a young arts administrator entering the field as a newly-minted art center director, I asked another art center director in a different city for advice on fund raising. He said, "If you want to make money, hold an art fair.")

Pioneer Valley Symphony Greenfield, Massachusetts

Population: 10,000-25,000

Budget \$150,000-\$250,000

What is your single most successful fundraising effort?

Art of the Violin raffle.

The organization purchased 12 old or generic student violins, then turned them over to local visual artists to turn them into works of art. They raffled finished pieces at the end of one of the season performances.

How much money did it raise?

Cash: N/A

How much did the project cost?

Cash: N/A

Exactly which factor(s) made it successful?

There were enough volunteers to handle the project, active giving from the board, and the right mix of people who understand the arts as well as the community. We depend on incredibly talented people in the area.

Anything else you wish to share?

Branding should be a consideration with any fundraiser. The event branded the organization and resulted in lots of good publicity. It started as a small event with a pre-event cocktail party shindig, but grew anyway; the idea was unexpectedly popular and artists had to be turned away. The event will be repeated, but the violins will be auctioned and NOT raffled.

The area is rural, but not really. There is competition for audiences from the strong academic community; arts festival circuit, and Boston, New York City and the Berkshires are also a draw. Therefore, the symphony has to position itself as an affordable high quality experience so audience members do not feel they have to leave town for similar events.

One challenge to the field is "the arts are plagued by our own success." How do we quantify all of the volunteer time and money that go into making an organization and its services to the community successful? Because the same people have been involved for so long, how do we build the infrastructure to support organizations when key volunteers, staff and donors move on?

Raton Arts Council Raton, New Mexico

Population: 5,000-10,000

Annual Budget: \$150,000-\$250,000

What is your single most successful fundraising effort?

28th International Art Exhibition.

This “International” was a visual arts exhibition of 241 entries (fee of \$6.00 each) and was held in the International Room of the International Bank in Raton.

How much money did it raise?

Cash: \$20,000-\$26,000

How much did the project cost?

Cash: \$5,500-\$9,000

Exactly which factor(s) made it successful?

Advertisements are mailed in advance for show; and the organization is careful about getting (and writing four of six newspaper stories) news coverage and press releases. Having time to write press releases and create a “drumbeat” or “buzz” about the show. Let people know what you are doing!

Anything else you wish to share? A successful event does not happen over night. In addition, over the past three years, people have been working to build the arts in the community and to attract young volunteers. Remember to say “thank you” a lot to members, donors, and visitors.

Rural Arts Council Fairfield, Illinois

Population: 5,000-10,000

Annual Budget: \$5,000-\$10,000

What is your single most successful fundraising effort?

Patrons' participation in special events.

Patrons provide earned income and sponsorships. At fundraising dinners/lunches each girl volunteer is responsible for waiting on one table and makes certain patrons receive their pie and cake. At the Women's Club/Art & Bluegrass Festival, there are booths, a fine arts show, and porkburgers.

How much money did it raise?

Cash: "Some"

How much did the project cost?

Cash: "Not much"

In-kind: volunteer time

Exactly which factor(s) made it successful?

Volunteers—they provide everything but money. (It is a challenge in a small town where everyone knows you, so why should they pay to see you?)

Salmon Arts Council

Salmon, Idaho

Population: Under 5,000

Annual Budget: \$50,000

What is your single most successful fundraising effort?

Wine & beer tasting and (visual art) auction.

The event is biennial to avoid market saturation and to assure a good response. Restaurants, distributors, and businesses donate items: food, liquor, airfare, outfitter trips, massages, for example, in addition to a few art works. Food is included in the \$15 per person admission price. One of the distributors provides the liquor license and the organization believes its public liability insurance covers the event.

How much money did it raise?

Cash: \$6,000

How much did the project cost?

Cash: \$500

In-kind: contributed auction items and liquor.

Exactly which factor(s) made it successful?

People like the fun of it and the opportunity to try out new wines and beers. It is not an exclusive event, and not just art.

Anything else you wish to share?

A "Chair"ity auction of chairs designed by artists or other focused event is held in intervening years

Sierra Arts Foundation

Reno, Nevada

Population: Over 50,000

Annual Budget: \$500,000-\$1 million

What is your single most successful fundraising effort?

BrewHaHa party and raffle.

It is described as the “biggest kegger in the West,” and has been held for the past 10 years in January or February; a slow time for the hotel venue. The organization pairs a hotel/casino with a beer. Each of the local microbreweries donates three kegs. Mumbo Gumbo, a band from Sacramento that has a local following, plays for the event. A local band opens the evening. Twenty-five hundred of the most intimate fans pay \$25 each and buy beer for \$3 a pint, for which they get a free glass with the event logo and sponsors listed for the year. The event runs 7:00 p.m. to midnight. There are 25-35 different beers. The first band plays at 8:00 p.m. and Mumbo Gumbo at 9:30 p.m. for the first of two sets. People dance; volunteers sell raffle tickets on the floor and raise enough to cover cost of the band (\$6,000). Raffle prizes are unique and coveted. For example, the Porsche dealer donates free use of a car for a month. Cost and profit are split with the hotel/casino.

(Author’s Note - Organizations contemplating an event involving alcohol should check with their attorney and public liability insurance carrier to see if the policy covers events serving alcohol as many companies specifically exclude coverage. “Dram shop” laws vary by state and liability risk may or may not extend to an organization and its board of directors as individuals for any injuries or deaths that occur as a result of serving alcohol at a public event.)

How much money did it raise?

Cash: \$50,000

How much did the project cost?

Cash: \$15,000

In-kind: barrels of beer.

If applicable, who comprised the target audience?

Mainly age 25-35 crowd, but there were also many in the 45-65 range.

Exactly which factor(s) made it successful?

It is community-oriented, affordable, fun, and it builds on itself. Nobody is there pretending to be somebody they are not. The wackier the prize, the more it is coveted in the raffle.

Anything else you wish to share?

The arts don't have enough in marketing budgets. Detroit spends millions on advertising to sell cars and succeeds with message repetition. The arts cannot afford enough frequency to market special events. You can have quality, but you can't force people to buy tickets. Fundraising also makes for some interesting bedfellows: the Reno Rodeo Association and Reno Philharmonic got together for an event of cowboy poets and western music. The two boards worked together to sell tables and dinner, and made it a very successful event.

Sitka Summer Music Festival

Sitka, Alaska

Population: 5,000-10,000

Annual Budget: \$250,000-\$500,000

What is your single most successful fundraising effort?

Crab Feed.

It is a community picnic featuring all-you-can-eat crab. It takes place on a Sunday afternoon and is a family event. Approximately 500 people attend; it requires about 20 volunteers (many of them board members) to work the event and the executive director coordinates. There is no music and no auction, just good food.

How much money did it raise?

Cash: \$6,000

How much did the project cost?

Cash: \$4,000

In-kind: discount on crab.

If applicable, who comprised the target audience? Families.

Did it also result in increased audience attendance or participation for your organization? No

Exactly which factor(s) made it successful?

It is informal, not black tie, and is intended for families. Organization purchases crab from the sponsor, but sells it at a reasonable rate to attendees. Without business sponsorship, the event would not be financially successful.

Southeast Missouri Council on the Arts Cape Girardeau, Missouri

Population: 25,000-50,000

Annual Budget: \$100,000

What is your single most successful fundraising effort?

Large annual crafts fair in November.

The council rents two large venues, the university basketball arena and community center. Vendors are limited to 300 of the highest quality. All works must be hand-made. The council charges vendors a booth fee and a \$3 public admission, but no commission on sales. Attendance is about 10,000 and the event has been going on for over 30 years.

How much money did it raise?

Cash: \$50,000 net

How much did the project cost?

Cash: N/A

If applicable, who comprised the target audience?

Primarily women of all ages. Seventy-five percent of attendees are female.

Exactly which factor(s) made it successful? Timing is everything. It is always the weekend before Thanksgiving and is promoted for holiday shopping. The event is city-wide with three other venues involved, but the council's is exclusively hand-made items. The event draws people from as far away as St. Louis.

Anything else to share? In 2001 the state arts agency lost a huge amount of funding. Consequently, state funding for this event dropped from \$25,000 to \$5,800. But none of this event's programs were cut because the community stepped up to the plate with increases in corporate sponsorships. The key was continued communication with potential donors and sponsors, and a personal appeal to each.

Sun Valley Center for the Arts Ketchum, Idaho

Population: Under 5,000 (10-12,000 service area)

Annual Budget: \$2.1 million

What is your single most successful fundraising effort?

Annual Wine Auction.

The annual Wine Auction is a four-day event. Day One is a kickoff picnic for previous high bidders. Day Two is a set of 14 dinners with exhibits. Day Three is the auction with 50 items for the live auction and 200 wine-centered items in a silent auction. Day Four is a wine tasting and closing picnic.

How much money did it raise?

Cash: \$1.7 million

How much did the project cost?

Cash: between \$500,000-\$600,000

In-kind: Ninety percent of the wine is donated, but some specific vintages had to be purchased. Also, Ralph Lauren donated \$250 designer T-shirts to those who worked on the dinner.

Did it also result in increased audience attendance or participation for your organization? Yes. The event draws a wealthy clientele that attracts support from businesses and corporations wanting to be associated with it.

Exactly which factor(s) made it successful?

Success did not happen overnight; 20 years of buildup paved the way for this event. Wine Spectator ranked the event 10th on its list of charity auctions a year ago (2003), so it will probably be ranked higher this year. There are 220 volunteers who assist and 1.5 full-time-equivalent staff (of 12 working for the organization) who are dedicated solely to working on the event.

Sweet Pea Festival of the Arts

Bozeman, Montana

Population: 25,000-50,000

Annual Budget: \$200,000

What is your single most successful fundraising effort?

Annual Sweet Pea Festival of the Arts.

This event has grown from its inception in 1978 as an opportunity for local artists to show and sell their work to a multi-faceted event that now involves up to 2,000 volunteers. It has 1.5 full-time-equivalent paid administrative staff and a board of directors that can number up to 50 volunteers, 13 divisions and 35 committees. The organization is an independent 501(c)(3) corporation that exists only to present the festival and is not a fund-raising event for another group. However, the amount fluctuates. Nine percent of last year's revenue flowed back into the community in the form of grants to arts organizations, artists, arts education and for community beautification projects. Planning begins more than a year in advance for the week of events that take place each August. These events include an opening ball, T-shirt and poster contests, an art and craft fair, Main Street parade, children's activities, art shows, family entertainment (no alcohol is allowed in Lindley Park), non-profit organization food vendors, performing arts (dance, theater and music), and church services, plus liaison events: Chalk on the Walk and Bite of Bozeman. Attendance last year was 19,300 based on the number of admission buttons sold.

How much money did it raise?

Cash: \$200,000

How much did the project cost?

Cash: \$182,000

In-kind: at least as much in volunteer time.

Exactly which factor(s) made it successful?

The biggest factor is the number of volunteers who step forward to work on the event. Administrative staff do not run or coordinate the events. All that work is done by volunteers. The event is also built on the honor system at all levels and that is the model for the level of cooperation expected. For example, there was only one bad check received for all of last year. Seventeen other non-profit organizations sell food and soft drinks, including traditional Tater Pigs and "Arnold Palmers" (iced tea and lemonade), in Lindley Park on the festival weekend. They pay only a booth fee and keep the profit to benefit their operations.

Anything else to share?

Attendance is growing faster than the rate of volunteer growth, so the organization specifically does not promote the event outside the community and has turned down national television interview requests. The fastest growing and most volunteer-intensive portion of the festival is children's activities. All artist applications are juried anonymously, so the panel does not know if the applicant is local or from out of state.

Thomasville Cultural Center

Thomasville, Georgia

Population: 10,000-25,000
Annual Budget: \$1 million

What is your single most successful fundraising effort?

Plantation Wildlife Arts Festival.

This is an art show and sale with 60 artists in an intimate venue that also has room for demonstrations and plenty of parking within 100 yards. Thomasville is the “Quail Capital” of the country and 5,000 people attend the event held after Thanksgiving. Of the 60 artists, six are master craftsmen, and have works for sale under \$500 but can range up to \$50,000. There are also lectures and demonstrations, plus different special events related to quail hunting that help draw a crowd like the Purina Dog Team, members of the Baretta family who also brought their top engraver from Italy. There are children’s events and a lemur cage.

How much money did it raise?

Cash: \$300,000 to \$330,000

How much did the project cost?

Cash: \$175,000

Who comprised the target audience?

Hunting plantation owners from around the country.

Exactly which factor(s) made it successful?

We attract a consistent number of artists, limited to 60, and take care of underwriters. We make it so they can attend with the greatest of ease and feel comfortable to buy art. There are a lot of young people in their thirties involved. The buzz is for them to start buying an art collection. Attendees include a Who’s Who in the community, much of the advertising is word of mouth and based on peer relationships. The event is only nine years old and we feel it has not peaked yet.

Anything else to share?

We want to keep it small; yet maintain slow, steady growth.

University of Wyoming Art Museum Laramie, Wyoming

Population: 25,000-50,000

Annual Budget: N/A

What is your single most successful fundraising effort?

Black Tie Gala.

The membership drive includes a black-tie event with a good dance band. (Author's Note - It has become an anticipated social event: a good excuse to get dressed up and have a good time.)

How much money did it raise?

Cash: \$179,000

How much did the project cost?

Cash: \$40,000

Exactly which factor(s) made it successful?

The art museum is a little different because it has no alumni, therefore it must develop a network of friends and supporters. The annual social event is an effective way to build this network, but is capital intensive.

Anything else to share?

For capital campaigns, a university is in a different set of circumstances from other non-profit organizations and can announce the campaign with only 50% pledged (instead of the usual 70-80%) because of the university's resources, alumni base and ability to raise funds.

Winfield Arts and Humanities Council Winfield, Kansas

Population: 10,000-25,000

Annual Budget: \$100,000-\$250,000

What is your single most successful fundraising effort?

Evening for the Arts dinner auction.

This auction is the biggest event of the year. Eight to 15 local people contribute up to 40-50 dinners each. Then, generally at a luncheon, the council auctions off the contributed dinners at prices up to \$175 a plate.

How much money did it raise?

Cash: about \$10,000

How much did the project cost?

Cash: \$200

In-kind: Meals.

Exactly which factor(s) made it successful?

It is a relatively small town and restaurants are fast food, with none in the truly nice category.

Anything else you wish to share?

The council held a very successful doll show for about 10 years. They brought in professional judges for the event and 10-15 doll-related vendors. It was an event for kids and had a different theme each year. But over its lifetime the event pretty well saturated the market and interest in dolls, so they quit while they were ahead.



Ideas That Work

Annual Fund Drives



Allied Arts Group

Rapid City, South Dakota

Population: Over 50,000

Annual Budget: Above \$250,000

What is your single most successful fund raising effort?

Annual campaign.

It is a United Arts Fund campaign focused on businesses and individuals. The committee divided and made the cold calls. There was a kick-off dinner. Eighty-five percent of funds raised were re-granted to nine organizations. Each organization is represented on the board.

How much money did it raise?

Cash: \$253,000

How much did the project cost?

Cash: \$26,900

Exactly which factor(s) made it successful?

Started in 1972, the committee meets twice each year. Individuals who donate \$1,500 or more receive two free tickets from each of the benefited organizations. Donors also get to direct where their contributions go.

Anything else to share?

The public still struggles with identity: it is not the Dahl Center and not the community theater. Branding would help resolve the confusion.

Friends of Middle Border Museum Mitchell, South Dakota

Population: 10,000–25,000

Annual Budget: \$250,000-\$500,000

What is your single most successful fund raising effort?

Business members.

Adventures in Art and History, held in the fall, includes businesses that sponsor scholarships for students. Levels are: \$500, \$1,000 and \$1,500; benefits increase for each level and include private tours of the museum, free passes to distribute, and a Back to Business Week in which there is a reception at which employees tour the museum free. There are also school recognitions, banners at the entryway, and press releases in the newspaper recognizing the business sponsors.

How much money did it raise?

Cash: \$15,000

How much did the project cost?

Cash: \$5,000

If applicable, who comprised the target audience?

Local businesses.

Exactly which factor(s) made it successful?

Board involvement in making business contacts and introductions.

Anything else to share?

Do printing in-house as much as possible to reduce costs. Think through events and fund raising appeals very carefully.

(Author's Note - For example: consider how they are designed, who they are intended to reach, how potential donors will view them, who will work on them, and how to reach specific audiences more effectively.)

Consider growth of funding base and don't have too many sponsor-dependent events.

Piney Woods Fine Arts Association Crockett, Texas

Population: 5,000–10,000

Annual Budget: \$100,000-\$250,000

What is your single most successful fund raising effort?

Face-to-face meetings.

Once a year, board members conduct face-to-face meetings with business leaders and other influential people in the community on the importance of arts education and kids, but more is included. They use the meeting to assure donors “the payout is OK” (the activity is legitimate and worthy) and their funds were used wisely. It is an opportunity to give and most escalate their contribution. This is also a two-part activity; visits in July and August, then a follow-up party the last Saturday in April that includes a silent auction.

How much money did it raise?

Cash: \$40,000

How much did the project cost?

Cash: negligible

Exactly which factor(s) made it successful?

It is essential for board members to make the first few contacts with new prospects, then they turn over renewals to the executive director. Of course this executive director has socially “eaten out of the refrigerators” of most of the prospects over the past 40 years, so it is almost the same as sending a board member.

Anything else to share?

Would be interested in learning if any other rural organizations in the country have had success obtaining hotel/motel tax support. (Author’s Note - Hotel/motel tax or “bed tax” support for the arts appears to be an urban phenomenon, but benefits may be available to rural organizations through local or regional convention and visitor bureaus—CVBs—that receive some of this money in some states. However, local arts agencies in Texarkana, Texas, and Fairbanks, Alaska, receive some bed tax funding.)

Sautee Nacoochee Cultural Center

Sautee Nacoochee, Georgia

Population: Under 5,000

Annual Budget: \$250,000-\$500,000

What is your single most successful fund raising effort?

Annual fund campaign.

Eighteen board members take responsibility for increasing the annual campaign (up 15% last year). They identify and cultivate personal leads in their social group.

How much money did it raise?

Cash: \$95,000

How much did the project cost?

Cash: \$700

In-kind: board time.

Exactly which factor(s) made it successful?

The key is board members who are actively involved and committed to the organization's success. The center has three parts: arts, historical museum, and environmental education program. Each area has a volunteer committee to solicit the community and follow-up on board suggestions. Board members look at the board's current composition, identify areas lacking, and recruit accordingly.



Ideas That Work

Membership Drives



The Anchor House of Artists Northampton, Massachusetts

Population: 25,000-50,000

Annual Budget: \$50,000 – \$100,000

What is your single most successful fund raising effort?

Direct solicitation.

The Anchor House of Artists serves a community of 2,000 artists living with mental illness in western Massachusetts and beyond; the organization subsidizes studio space for these artists. They raise funds to support this program by using fund raising letters generated in-house to targeted mailing lists and have 500+ members.

How much money did it raise?

Cash: \$22,000

How much did the project cost?

Cash: \$500

If applicable, who comprised the target audience?

Socially conscious and culturally aware citizens of western Massachusetts.

Did it also result in increased participation?

Yes, our contributors have frequented our openings.

Exactly which factor(s) made it successful?

It marries the project to the community: they see the need and therefore give support directly. It brings the arts and social services together in a way that is healthy for both.

Anything else to share?

Artists at the Anchor House are boosted by our successes. This January we are trying an art auction in NYC.

Crisp Area Arts Alliance Inc. Cordele, Georgia

Population: 10,000-25,000

Annual Budget: \$25,000-\$100,000

What is your single most successful fund raising effort?

Membership.

There are approximately 300 members. Time to renew notices go out by mail. A month later a reminder postcard goes to those who have not responded. Then the board divvies up the list and makes a personal call or visit to encourage renewal. Their success rate is rather good. The board also takes responsibility for getting new memberships.

Special events are for visibility, not much money comes in. A dance does well to break even; we do not have the hope of making money that way.

How much money did it raise?

Cash: \$13,000-\$15,000

How much did the project cost?

Cash: under \$1,000

Exactly which factor(s) made it successful?

38% of residents are below poverty level in this dirt-poor county. Key to success is board members and their peer-to-peer relationships. People join for the benefit to kids through the arts-in-schools education program.

Anything else to share?

The organization is nine years old and gets public funding from the state and county to provide services, but private support is the key.

Custer County Art and Heritage Center

Miles City, Montana

Population: 5,000-10,000

Annual Budget: \$200,000

What is your single most successful fund raising effort?

Membership drive.

It is our most consistent source of earned income. Expanded outreach into rural areas helps and is beginning to pay off through increased membership support. We try to capture the walk-ins, but a membership committee does most of the work in soliciting renewals and new members with mailings, then personal calls. We have an annual goal of 500 members and 100 or so receive personal phone calls asking them to join. Also, expanding exhibitions to include historical material created an opening for an entirely new audience.

How much money did it raise?

Cash: \$20,000

How much did the project cost?

Cash: \$500

In-kind: time to make calls.

Exactly which factor(s) made it successful?

Personal contact. The board knows it has to replace the small natural attrition each year and to expand beyond that. There is also staying in the public eye, so we spend at least 10% of the annual budget on advertising. People see and hear about us a lot and it is therefore easier to gain members because of this visibility. Also, our presence through educational service in areas outside the city limits (up to three hours away) helps. If we are doing a good job, people reward us with their membership.

Anything else to share?

With the membership drive we also have three other fund raisers spaced about quarterly throughout the year: annual art auction, benefit dinner and "trash and treasures" sale. You have to go where the money is, but that can lead to a perception of elitism, so we have the rummage sale to counter that image, serve the entire community, and bring people into the building who might not otherwise come in. The first step is to get them in the door.

Juneau Jazz and Classics Juneau, Alaska

Population: 25,000-50,000

Annual Budget: \$100,000-\$250,000

What is your single most successful fund raising effort?

Individual donors and members.

Everyone who has any contact with the festival, and whose address can be harvested either from a check or on-line transaction, receives two letters. The first is from the artistic director (and founder), the second is from the executive director. Both letters make the case for becoming a member/donor and contain a return envelope. The festival staff makes it a goal to convert 40 ticket buyers into members or donors each year.

How much money did it raise?

Cash: N/A

How much did the project cost?

Cash: N/A

If applicable, who comprised the target audience?

Festival attendees.

Exactly which factor(s) made it successful?

The high quality product of the festival makes it possible to turn ticket buyers into donors. In addition, they are offered an incentive of a free commemorative mug from the festival. This incentive also reduces unsold mug inventory left over from the event. The staff sets small goals each year to convert buyers into donors—and has success working in incremental steps, rather than taking a giant leap and failing.

Minot Arts Council

Minot, North Dakota

Population: 25,000-50,000

Annual Budget: \$100,000

What is your single most successful fund raising effort?

Membership drive through personal calls.

Board and staff examined contributor lists from past several years and chose names to contact. Each was then asked for an increase in contribution.

How much money did it raise?

Cash: \$500-\$1,000 additional

How much did the project cost?

Cash: -0-

In-kind: time to make calls.

Exactly which factor(s) made it successful?

The key to success was the personal touch...board and staff took names each knew.

Moab Music Festival

Moab, Utah

Population: Under 5,000

Annual Budget: \$250,000-\$500,000

What is your single most successful fund raising effort?

Direct mail.

Please describe it:

Mailings are targeted to friends, those who understand the festival and its organization and already have a connection to it. This technique is not effective to develop new members.

How much money did it raise?

Cash: \$10,000

How much did the project cost?

Cash: \$500

Exactly which factor(s) made it successful?

Having a good database and knowing the people who comprise that database.

(Author's Note - Most organizations build their databases from information they capture or have provided to them: names and addresses from checks, surveys asking voluntary contact information, newsletter requests for referrals, registrations for a free gift promotion, and commercial list purchases, to name a few. However, a database is only as good as the information it contains. For example, donor-tracking software is available to keep track of everything from membership renewal through major donor development. Qualifying non-profit organizations can purchase, for an administrative fee, database, donor tracking software, or a variety of heavily discounted or contributed off-the-shelf programs from www.TechSoup.org which is the official designated distributor for Microsoft and other major corporations' contributed software.)

Montgomery County Council for the Arts Mount Sterling, Kentucky

Population: 5,000-10,000

Annual Budget: \$100,000

What is your single most successful fund raising effort?

Membership drive.

The annual membership drive is a mailing to all county residents some years, and selected lists in other years. These lists include current membership, chamber of commerce, and clubs. There is a follow-up mailing to non-responders, but there is no telephone follow-up.

How much money did it raise?

Cash: \$8,000

How much did the project cost?

Cash: \$1,500-\$2,200

Exactly which factor(s) made it successful?

Information about what the organization is doing, the numbers affected, how money was spent help make the case. A color brochure (with a discount from the printer) also helps tremendously.

Old Jail Art Center Albany, Texas

Population: Under 5,000

Annual Budget: \$500,000 (\$155,000 is from an endowment)

What is your single most successful fund raising effort?

Membership.

Individual memberships provide core support. There is no set time for renewal, people can join anytime and their renewal date is annual. Names are collected for new members and they are mailed a brochure, but there is minimal follow-up. For the annual fund, board members do the follow-up personally with businesses on the list.

How much money did it raise?

Cash: \$25,000

How much did the project cost?

Cash: N/A

Exactly which factor(s) made it successful?

Board involvement.

(Author's Note - A number of respondents provided this answer which generally means board members are an integral part of fund raising from start to finish. Board members help plan, if not come up with an idea in the first place, participate in carrying out the project, and help evaluate its success. A key idea is that board members have to get something out of their involvement. Although they cannot benefit financially, they can gain prestige in the community and they can have fun at the same time. If board members do not want to be involved, reconsider the project and find out what would interest them and find a way that they can contribute their individual skills and talents—as well as their cash. Board members who give a cash contribution in addition to their time to an organization find it far easier to ask others to do the same.)

Platte Valley Arts Council

Saratoga, Wyoming

Population: Under 5,000

Annual Budget: Under \$25,000

What is your single most successful fund raising effort?

Membership.

There were changes made to the traditional approach that resulted in a 33% return rate on offers that were mailed. The change was to list what the benefits of membership were at each level and to have different advantages for each level: \$10, \$25, \$100, \$200 and \$500. Great care was taken to personalize letters and that helped bring in \$2,000 more than the previous campaign.

How much money did it raise?

Cash: \$6,300

How much did the project cost?

Cash: \$200

In-kind: volunteers printed letters and envelopes at home.

If applicable, who comprised the target audience?

Businesses, patrons and the Chamber of Commerce list.

Exactly which factor(s) made it successful?

A great volunteer board, 100% now attend meetings. Talk to the board first, then they can speak with prospects on a peer-to-peer basis. Teachers are excited about getting art in the schools. Get the "Old Baldy Club" to support the arts and when they know positive things are being done, they ask to get involved.

Anything else you wish to share?

We listed our organization's website as a ".com" not a ".org" and it appears in the top five listings on Google.

(Author's Note - For additional--and now more reasonable--fees organizations can register a domain name under a variety of .com, .biz, or other identities. It might also be a good idea to register several variations to protect your image. A classic example from the 1990s would be whitehouse.gov as opposed to whitehouse.com: the former being US government and the latter a porn site.)

Raton Arts Council

Raton, New Mexico

Population: 5,000-10,000

Annual Budget: \$100,000-\$250,000

What is your single most successful fund raising effort?

Membership campaign.

Staff identified those who had interest in the organization in the past and those who might be interested in it in the future. Then staff creates a package showing what was done programmatically and how money was spent in the past year. The package then mails to the identified list, plus current members; current members are encouraged to move up one level when they renew.

How much money did it raise?

N/A

How much did the project cost?

Negligible amount, mostly in-kind and staff time, some printing and postage.

Exactly which factor(s) made it successful?

Board added a \$250 membership category, raised the top category from \$1,000 to \$2,000, and gave permission to accept pledges in addition to cash for upgrading memberships. Follow-up calls were made to people who did not respond and that helped increase the number of new members.

University of Wyoming Art Museum Laramie, Wyoming

Population: 25,000-50,000

Annual Budget: N/A

What is your single most successful fund raising effort?

Annual membership drive.

Held in conjunction with a black-tie gala, this friend-building portion asked wealthy prominent local people to host dinners; there is minimal cost, but maximum return.

How much money did it raise?

Cash: \$8,000

How much did the project cost?

Cash: \$250

In-kind: dinners

Exactly which factor(s) made it successful?

The art museum is a little different from the rest of the University because it has no alumni, therefore it must develop a network of friends and supporters. This approach is labor intensive, but the hosts provide the meals and the art museum sells the tickets. The friend-building approach is labor intensive, but the hosts provide all meals and the art museum sells the tickets. By comparison, their Black Tie Gala is very capital intensive. (See Special Events section, page 30.)

Ideas That Work Capital Campaigns



Centralia Cultural Society

Centralia, Illinois

Population: 10,000-25,000

Annual Budget: \$25,000-\$100,000

What is your single most successful fund raising effort?

Mailing to build a trust fund (endowment).

The organization needed \$100,000 to match a contribution. They used letters and brochures, as well as an art auction to reach the goal (artists were given the option to receive a portion of the sale). The approach was the need to keep the building open by providing a trust for operating support from which only the interest would be used. Then they stressed the idea of community participation and the value of the arts.

How much money did it raise?

Cash: \$100,000

How much did the project cost?

Cash: less than \$500

Who comprised the target audience?

Patrons and citizens in immediate area, age 40 and up.

Did the project result in increased participation. Yes, there is a pride derived from being a participant and being listed as a contributor on the donor pillar.

Exactly which factor(s) made it successful?

The auction was something unique to the arts. The secret is in not asking too often. It all comes about by building relationships and helping others as well. Have a meal and entertainment with the auction—everyone likes to eat and to give. For the organization, keep raising money, but not spending more than you raise by giving back special “gifts” to donors and by hiring fund raising experts who take a percentage of all profits.

Friends of Middle Border Museum Mitchell, South Dakota

Population: 10,000–25,000

Annual Budget: \$250,000-\$500,000

What is your single most successful fund raising effort?

Individuals to match an endowment.

An effort in progress, individuals are being asked to match contributions to an endowment fund. The board set a \$30,000-\$50,000 goal and \$20,000 has been pledged thus far. These are 200 primarily long-time supporters, board members are making the direct appeal themselves then doing the personal follow-up for 15 significant potential donations; for the middle level donor there is a letter follow-up, and for donations under \$1,000 there is minimal follow-up.

How much money did it raise?

Cash: \$20,000

How much did the project cost?

Cash: under \$1,000

If applicable, who comprised the target audience?

200 long-time supporters.

Exactly which factor(s) made it successful?

Board involvement in planning and carrying out the campaign.

Gallery One

Ellensburg, Washington

Population: 10,000-25,000

Annual Budget: \$100,000-\$250,000

What is your single most successful fund raising effort?

Capital campaign.

We hosted a series of small informational meetings after hours for not more than 20 people at a time for capital campaign pitch.

How much money did it raise?

Cash: \$50,000

How much did the project cost?

Cash: negligible

Exactly which factor(s) made it successful?

Low work and high social commitment. A lot of thought was given to whom to invite to meetings: i.e., building a compatible group and not including individuals who might be competitive or not a good mix within some groups.

Careful planning.

Goodland Arts Center Goodland, Kansas

Population: Under 5,000

Annual Budget: under \$25,000

What is your single most successful fund raising effort?

Carnegie Library renovation over a five-month period.

How much money did it raise?

Cash: \$150,000

How much did the project cost?

Cash: Negligible cost, mostly in-kind time from volunteers.

Did it also result in increased audience attendance or participation for your organization? Yes.

Exactly which factor(s) made it successful?

This was a very hands-on project for those involved with it. The most successful technique: person-to-person meetings using hand picked volunteer individuals who are experienced in what they do and believe in the cause.

Anything else to share? Auctions also work well, as long as they follow the rules, "are clean business-wise," and organized properly. Consider all age ranges in projects; good to include children's activities. Always be thinking of unique approaches to your fund raising. Diversify and enhance.

Vary the type of fund raising--e.g.: for the arts, a golf tourney would bring in new people who might not otherwise participate in this type of fund raising. Diversify fund raising to reach more people.

Nevada Museum of Art Reno, Nevada

Population: Over 50,000
Annual Budget: over \$2 million

What is your single most successful fund raising effort?

Capital campaign for a new building.

It was a \$24 million campaign for a new building, began in 1998 and concluded in 2003. It was a fairly typical capital campaign, but it was publicly announced with only 50% of the goal pledged.

How much money did it raise?

Cash: \$24 million

How much did the project cost?

Cash: \$600,000 over six years

Exactly which factor(s) made it successful?

1.) There was a well-researched and demonstrated need. It was launched with statistics to prove the capacity was no longer there to meet the community's needs. 2.) The change was revolutionary, not incremental. The old building was to be torn down and replaced by a completely new design. People rallied around the new design as a point of civic pride for the community. Revenue for the first year in the new building doubled that of the last year in the old building.

Anything else to share?

Everyone is a fund raiser: capture that enthusiasm but temper it with experience. Do the basics (simple approaches to fundraising) 100%, stick to the knitting, then attempt something new. When considering a business program, do not launch it without the information needed to make it work. There are many assumptions about what businesses want, many are not true. Test it first, or try a focus group approach to find out what businesses want and expect.

Opera House Stoughton, Wisconsin

Population: 10,000-25,000

Annual Budget: \$100,000-\$250,000

What is your single most successful fund raising effort?

Opera House Theater capital campaign.

Connections!!! Collected alumni lists of Stoughton High School graduates; treated everyone alike, listed all without amounts. Started a newsletter related to the project, two per year. The auditorium is city-owned, but a nonprofit organization paid for renovation, dressing rooms, fire escapes and new clock tower. Professional fundraisers wanted 30% of the goal, so volunteers took on fund raising, but hired a professional by the hour for specific tasks. A \$16,000 loan from the city was paid back.

How much money did it raise?

Cash: \$567,000

How much did the project cost?

Cash: negligible

If applicable, who comprised the target audience?

Anyone with a connection to the theater.

Exactly which factor(s) made it successful?

Did not sell seats and did not know if they had enough. Instead the donors were asked to give what is fair and the best that they could do. The newsletter arrived the day after Christmas and May 17 (Syttende Mai, which is Norwegian Independence Day), both important dates for Stoughton, psychologically, so timing was everything. The group also had credibly formed relationships and therefore trust.

Western Folklife Center Elko, Nevada

Population: 25,000-50,000

Annual Budget: over \$1 million

What is your single most successful fund raising effort?

Dinners at board members homes.

We carefully selected a list of donors, then invited 30 people to complimentary dinners at board members' homes where they were asked to match a \$150,000 NEA Challenge grant.

How much money did it raise?

Cash: \$150,000

How much did the project cost?

Cash: -0-

In-kind: Dinners.

Exactly which factor(s) made it successful?

Board involvement in selection of whom to invite, then hosting of dinners.

Ideas That Work Sponsorships



Berea Arts Council

Berea, Kentucky

Population: 10,000

Annual Budget: \$50,000 - \$100,000

What is your single most successful fund raising effort?

A public art project, "Show of Hands."

Berea is the Folk Arts and Crafts Capitol of Kentucky. Patterned after the Chicago cows, the organization had twelve six-inch high fiberglass replicas of a sculpture, by an art professor in an Eastern Kentucky University (in Berea's county), of a hand decorated by artists who have a connection to Berea. Everyone else involved is local. For example, a fiberglass boat company made the molds. There was a \$4,000 sponsorship fee for each sculpture, which is fairly steep, so some nonprofit sponsors combined fees. Decorations had a business or community theme. Artists, chosen by jury, submitted designs, then sponsors chose from among the juried submissions. We specifically did not limit the scope of designer possibilities. The sculptures were not auctioned off at the end of the project, as some cities did, but went to the sponsors. \$3,600 of the total project profit was set aside to invest in a future similar project, \$2,000 from each sponsorship went to the artist who decorated it.

How much money did it raise?

Cash: \$48,000

How much did the project cost?

Cash: \$24,000+

Exactly which factor(s) made it successful?

It was a unifying event for the community; art and commerce linked at a different and more accessible level. There was local involvement and therefore ownership. Three board members were on the steering committee of 12 and these board members helped arrange sponsorships.

Anything else to share?

Postcards of the hands were produced and sold separately as a fundraiser. An unintended collateral promotion showed up; photos sprang up of the sculptures, the Boys and Girls Club painted hands on fireplugs, an elementary school made small sculptural hands, artists were invited into the schools to talk about the project. Hands were part of an exhibit at the Kentucky Horse Park in Lexington during the holiday season.

Johnson Hall (performing arts center) Gardiner, Maine

Population: 5,000-10,000 (City 6,000 - Area 30,000)

Annual Budget: \$110,000

What is your single most successful fundraising effort?

Business sponsorships. This activity is key to the organization. Volunteers and the executive director contact members of the business community and communicate the value of the arts. The Maine Arts Commission helped raise visibility of this value through a Governor's Conference on the Creative Economy. Maine is a small state without a manufacturing base and businesses now see the contribution the arts make to the state's economy and how it is in their interest to provide support through sponsorships. For example, Maine General Hospital is a major sponsor of the chamber music concert series this year. The hospital sees the need to provide intellectual challenges and cultural experiences for their doctors so they remain active in the community and are not be lured away to a bigger city. Feeding the minds and souls of employees is in this employer's interest.

How much money did it raise?

Cash: \$25,000

How much did the project cost?

Cash: negligible.

In-kind: volunteer and executive director's time.

Exactly which factor(s) made it successful?

With businesses there are two pots of money: philanthropic and marketing; marketing is by far the larger. The organization provides prospects with a list of benefits received for level of support given, i.e. the specific means by which a sponsor will be recognized: the larger the amount, the greater the visibility and therefore benefit. It also helps the organization in the community to be associated with a respected business and the legitimacy that comes with this association.

Anything else to share?

Successful fund raising is so much a question of having multiple revenue streams and not depending on any single source. The City of Gardiner is for the first time directly supporting the organization through its Community Development Block Grant.

Park City Jazz Festival Oakley, Utah

Population: 5,000-10,000

Annual Budget: \$500,000 - \$1 million

What is your single most successful fund raising effort?

Sponsorships for the festival.

Board members and staff approached businesses to sponsor specific aspects of the festival. There was a menu of selections for various levels of sponsorship that would interest each prospect.

How much money did it raise?

Cash: \$200,000

How much did the project cost?

Cash: N/A

Did it also result in increased participation: Yes. Talking up the event plus its educational component attracts donors and sponsors.

Exactly which factor(s) made it successful?

Businesses should give a certain amount back to the community. So, the question is not necessarily one of whom to ask, but of matching interests and priorities of business people with projects related to the festival. We seized on every aspect and promoted it to the business community. For example, education plays an important role and the festival is interested in minority outreach, so it is a sponsor of the state High School Jazz Festival. The White Horse School from a reservation in southeast UT attended the festival and were invited back to perform in the Park City Festival. It was a tremendous honor for the school and did much to promote relations with Native Americans in Utah.

Anything else you wish to share?

Hammer on the sense of conscience in target businesses. It is a slow, difficult process to cultivate individuals who have a passion for music.

Prairie Repertory Theatre South Dakota State University, Brookings, South Dakota

Population: 10,000-25,000

Annual Budget: \$300,000

1. What is your single most successful fund raising effort?

Sponsorships for statewide tour.

Raised money for a statewide tour of Prairie Repertory Theatre from 140 patrons in the \$100 to \$1,000 range. Eighty percent of funding comes from outside the university.

How much money did it raise?

Cash: \$140,000

How much did the project cost?

Cash: N/A, mostly in-kind time.

Did it also result in increased participation?

Yes—with new financial supporters.

Exactly which factor(s) made it successful?

Kept in strong contact with patrons via letters. Good demographic survey: most important to donors is a spring flyer with the schedule. Visibility goes hand-in-hand with fund raising; maximize the money by spending 15% of the budget in advertising and promotion.

Anything else to share?

In poor economy, people still attend. You can raise the ticket price, but...



Author's Notes and Other Notable Stories

(Things that did not precisely fit elsewhere,
but were too good to discard.)



This is an excellent example of the importance of board member motivation and involvement with an organization. A single board member took responsibility to immediately follow up personally with a prospect:

Blue Ridge Mountain Arts Association Blue Ridge, Georgia

Population: Under 5,000

Annual Budget: under \$25,000

What is your single most successful fund raising effort?

An individual contribution because of board involvement.

One of our board members was checking out after visiting her dentist. At the payment desk she began a conversation with the women in the office about the upcoming 28th Annual Arts in the Park Festival. The dentist inquired about the festival and the conversation turned to community spirit and fund raising. He wanted to do something for the community, but does not live in our town, and did not really know how to go about making a contribution. She mentioned our upcoming courthouse renovation project and talked about the Blue Ridge Mountain Arts Association with much enthusiasm. When this conversation was finished the board member went to lunch with her husband.

The executive director happened to talk with this same couple over lunch and learned the dentist wants to help but does not know how. This board member agreed to go back to our office after lunch so that we could produce a letter to the dentist telling him how he could help this community. She also agreed to hand deliver the letter.

Today we received a check for \$1,000. In fund raising we all know people give money to people. Everything we do is about relationship building and maintaining. This is a prime example of someone wanting to do something good for the community and once shown how to make that happen turned into a philanthropist.

How much money did it raise?

Cash: \$1,000

How much did the project cost?

Cash: - 0 -

In-kind: board member time

Although the approach is duplicated elsewhere, the following example is about the only one that included the important concept of planned giving:

Chamber Music Sedona Sedona, Arizona

Population: 10,000-25,000 (Area, 12,000)

Annual Budget: \$250,000-500,000

What is your single most successful fundraising effort?

Dinners and lunches with individual donors

Executive Director Bert Harclerode wrote an article for Chamber Music America's magazine, *CMA Matters*, titled "Fund Raising is a Contact Sport" detailing his approach. An organization will have several different revenue streams, however, the real money lies with private donors and requires personal contact for successful development. The organization has a three-prong approach to fund raising: 1.) a membership drive with rolling renewal (one year from the date of becoming a member), 2.) annual campaign and 3.) year-end campaign. For additional four- to seven-figure contributions, the board president and executive director make a concerted effort with a carefully refined thought process and organized presentations at private lunches and dinners with donors. In these presentations they emphasize the Legacy Society (endowment) and acknowledge their contribution and presence in the musical family through listing in each printed program (seen as an encouragement to others to consider planned giving). Reflecting administrative and board cooperation and understanding, it is the organization's goal each year to add 50 new members through exemplary customer service. They recruit during private lunches and dinners.

How much money did it raise?

The amounts vary each year, especially with pledges, but it is very successful.

How much did the project cost?

Difficult to quantify, but well worth the investment. The effort required is in the preparation. You can't value a meal with a client on what it cost, rather the investment you have put in. It may take additional meetings to finalize plans. You must give the donor time to prepare also, and family must be included in the process so no one is left out of the picture. The investment can be worth thousands of times the effort. This is not a used car sales presentation.

Exactly which factor(s) made it successful?

Planning, organization, the personal touch, and the concept of “musical family.” This concept continually emphasizes family first and often involves both parents and their children. It encourages parents to become members, then donors, and for their children to continue their support. SHARE THE VISION.

Anything else you wish to share?

Donor development is a 24-hour-a-day, seven-days-a-week job. Maintain the personal touch: send postcards and notes when out of town or on vacation, make personal phone calls for invitations to lunch/dinner. If you have sufficiently prepared the way, major donors will know what the meal is about. Keep your antennae out and make your organization distinct and different from others.

This example does not really fit anywhere else, but is a good measure of changes in society and what can happen when creativity, community, economic development and the dedication of a single individual artist join forces to improve a neighborhood and an entire city.

Mark Barone, Economic Development Office City of Paducah, Paducah, Kentucky

Population: 25,000-50,000

Artist relocation project (creation of a downtown arts zone).

An artist/activist, in 1989 Mark moved into former high-income neighborhood that had been in steady decline since World War II and hit bottom in 1999 with an influx of drug dealers. Property was either owned by absentee landlords or was abandoned and left to decay. He called other cities and found similar problems, but discovered a means to partner with a locally owned bank that would lend money for renovation, and a city program to facilitate zoning changes, then bring abandoned buildings up to code before turning them over to new owners: galleries and/or artists for homes studio spaces. The end result was a neighborhood renaissance to the point that Paducah became an arts destination.

Initial cost?

Cash: \$10 million in private investment.

In-kind: not measured, but considerable sweat equity.

Who comprised the target audience: Artists and gallery owners.

Exactly which factor(s) made it successful? A local bank that was willing to take the risk and loan money at an affordable rate with no down payment; an enterprise zone (art zone) that allowed for private property to be tax-exempt, and zoning that allowed artists to live and work in commercial spaces. See: Art Calendar article, February, 2001, ArtCalendar.com.

Anything else to share?

Stay away from state and federal funding as there are too many strings attached and too many opportunities for unforeseen stumbling blocks and legal distractions. One can move ahead quickly if all the investment and financial support is private. Understand politics, how the system works, and be a pit bull working within it; a little success brings people out of the woodwork.

This type of raffle is fairly common among small rural organizations, even though it is the only example mentioned in this publication.

Create in Newport Newport, Washington

Population: Under 5,000

Annual Budget: under \$25,000

What is your single most successful fund raising effort?

Raffle.

This is a 50-50 raffle in which nothing is sold, but the organization splits the pot with the winner. Sell 200 tickets at \$10 and each gets \$1,000. The drawback is, although the organization believes it is conducted legally according to state gaming law, people still question the practice.

How much money did it raise?

Cash: \$1,000

How much did the project cost?

Cash: negligible

Exactly which factor(s) made it successful?

It is quick and easy, though selling tickets is labor-intensive.

Anything else you wish to share?

Keep trying new things. An "open mic" event takes place every Friday and has for the past five years. \$2 admission at the door is steady revenue, and it is a good way for local talent to break into the music business.

Notes from the Field

Finally, here are some tips gleaned from the Montana Performing Arts Consortium whose members primarily live and work in really rural towns:

- If your event or activity involves schools, connect the school to home--but how to keep kids/parents from losing notes? The solution is to print your message on colored paper: it is slightly more expensive, but colored paper (salmon or pink) means “important.”
- Admit one kid free with one paying adult, or vice-versa; kids learn “value” of art. Or, print a coupon for a discount—then you can track and find out who reads what and where (expect up to 5% return).
- Know your demographics and market beyond the “choir” but board members should “make The Ask” for contributions to the “choir” because they care the most about the organization. And ALL board members must first make an annual CASH contribution before they ask others.
- Look for “strange bedfellows” in marketing events, e.g., social services and arts. This combination may also open up new sources of funding for a cooperative event or venture. Or, sell tickets for half-price (wholesale) to another organization that then resells them at full price (retail) to their audience, creating a win-win situation and perhaps attracting a new audience.
- Beware of costly fund raising events that will not pay for themselves. If you are not certain whether to proceed, conduct either a focus group interview, or have volunteers poll a significant sample by phone. Horse-trade goods and services where necessary!
- Print a “wish list” in your newsletter. And never allow a piece of paper (or electronic communication) to leave your organization without a return address, telephone number and e-mail/website addresses.
- Understand the difference between “friend raising” and “fund raising” in cash. Get ANY participation possible from the public, but be specific as to what you want.



Lessons Learned the Hard Way

Many of those interviewed were willing to share lessons learned from challenging fund raising efforts. Oftentimes those lessons learned “the hard way” can be more instructive than successes that are achieved easily.

Art Machine, Inc. Fort Mitchell, Kentucky

A few years ago, Art Machine arranged for three area high schools to have an exhibition of student work at the Cincinnati Art Museum. A business agreed to sponsor the project, the organization made the commitment, then two days later the business pulled out. All the eggs were in one basket, another sponsor could not be found, so the director became the major contributor.

Artspace Community Arts Center Greenfield, Massachusetts

The organization is an art and music school. Other music schools in the area successfully use their own students to raise money by playing in outdoor locations and seeking pledges from family, friends, and neighbors. The art school tried a variation on this idea by having a May Jubilee and placing music students in indoor venues (e.g., banks, shopping mall) to perform. The kids were not excited about it and not enough of an audience was there. If the project is done again it will be as a telethon on the local cable access channel and viewers can call in their pledges.

Barnwell County Arts Council Barnwell, South Carolina

The least successful event was an art sale, prints from collectors (signed prints by local artists) that became more of a “trash to treasures” event. There was a good turnout, but items did not sell well. People really like to have food or a dinner with the event.

Carbondale Community Arts, Inc. Carbondale, Illinois

Commissioned a project similar to the Chicago cows, but with Salukies, the mascot dog of Southern Illinois University, in 2001. Artists were to interpret and the organization would sell the mascot on E-Bay, plus a live auction that took place two weeks after 9/11. Attendance at the auction was down and only a couple sold, then only three of 12 sold on E-Bay. Again, timing is everything.

Chequamegon Bay Arts Council Bayfield, Wisconsin

There was a local “art and architecture” event that fell through for two primary reasons. Four architecturally interesting homes were filled with visual art, and then the organization sold tickets for the tour. First, the organization was not very good at publicity for the event, and, second, local people are not as curious about the inside of other people’s homes as people in urban areas seem to be.

Friends of Middle Border Museum Mitchell, South Dakota

A special event arts festival that had been successful in the past brought in 50% less than expected, primarily from business sponsorships. The problem is there is a limited number of businesses and they are being asked three or four times a year to support the same organization. Consequently, the museum is looking at combining benefits with sponsorships and looking at nearby communities in their service area for support.

Goodland Arts Center Goodland, Kansas

Three banks in town that supported the organization (bank "A" greatly so, and banks "B" and "C" marginally) went through a board of directors change; bank "B" ended up trying to solicit funds from bank "A," but did so unsuccessfully because of a bad approach to fund raising.

Grand Teton Music Festival Wilson, Wyoming

Direct mail for renewals should only be used with small donors. Do not use this approach with high-level donors, unless they request it, as they expect social benefit and therefore require direct personal contact for renewal.

(Author's Note - Again, know your donors, put yourself in their shoes, and ask yourself how you would want to be treated if you give a major expenditure with an organization each year.)

Janice Mason Art Museum Cadiz, Kentucky

A silent auction: there was not a large number of objects, or bidders, and minimums were set too high.

Montgomery County Council for the Arts Mount Sterling, Kentucky

About six years ago there was an auction/raffle of a New York City weekend, including a Broadway play, which took almost a year to sell sufficient tickets to cover the \$2,000 cost. It was difficult to find people to sell tickets, those who agreed then had trouble getting people to buy their tickets. It was a hard sell all the way around that nobody anticipated.

Nevada Museum of Art Reno, Nevada

Test a new idea on a small scale or in a way that does not “bet the farm.” Think it through, use a pilot project where it will be OK to lose \$1,000—but not \$100,000.

Piney Woods Fine Arts Association Crockett, Texas

It is a rural market and cowboys do not like “costume themes”—with the exception of an “Old South” event where they could wear Civil War uniforms—the “Space Oddity” fund raising event (based on the popular science fiction notion of nearby “Area 51”) attendance was way down and lost a significant amount. The lesson is to tie in local heritage and history rather than be too creative for the community

Platte Valley Arts Council Saratoga, Wyoming

There was an attempt to purchase an historic theater building, but the group’s intent did not meet public expectations. It was also an overwhelming task for volunteers. Wyoming Chamber of Commerce did a study on what the community wanted and that turned out to be a recreation and convention center. The project now appears on the county “penny tax,” the theater was wrapped into the convention center, where the organization will have office space there when it opens.

Sierra Arts Foundation Reno, Nevada

Partnered with American Institute of Architects on a Beaux Arts Ball once. Too many architects and not enough nonprofit people were involved—and costs went through the roof. Consequently, it never could bring in enough to pay for itself. The message is to start small and build from there: such as BrewHaHa, another fund raising event that started with only about 1,000 attending and now has over 2,500.

Southeast Missouri Council on the Arts Cape Girardeau, Missouri

Two years ago the organization scheduled a concert by a St. Louis group that did not sell enough tickets to cover costs. Reason was organizers did not check community calendar to see that other major events, University Homecoming for one, had conflicting schedules.

Western Folklife Center Elko, Nevada

There was a “Pioneer Dinner” usually held at the Pioneer Hotel. It was a “friend raiser” and was not in the building, but at a board member’s ranch. With the cost of the band and difficult logistics (hard to find) it was moved back to its original location.

Windover Center for the Arts Fond du lac, Wisconsin

Receptions were held in the facility to raise money, but they did not target the correct individuals; it is a blue collar community and the expectations did not mesh with reality.



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