

Getting the Money We Need

A 101 guide on fundraising for small grassroots organisations

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Introduction

Welcome to your 101 Guide on Fundraising for Small Grassroots Organisations.

We know fundraising can feel intimidating, especially if you're a small team, a volunteer-led group, or an organisation navigating complex realities on the ground with little time or resources. But here's the truth: your work matters, and it deserves to be resourced sustainably.

This guide is designed for you: activists, organisers, and community leaders across the Global South. Whether you're new to fundraising or looking to deepen your strategy, we're here to demystify the process, challenge extractive funding norms, and help you feel more confident, informed, and ready to take action.

Let's build a funding culture that reflects our values: collective care, transparency, and justice.

You don't need to sound like a polished consultant or have a perfect English grant proposal to deserve support. You need tools, clarity, and space to build relationships with donors who align with your mission and this guide will help you do just that.

Chapter 1: Why Fundraising Matters for Grassroots Organisations

Fundraising is more than just asking for money, it's building the conditions that allow your work to grow, last, and have the impact your community needs.

Grassroots organisations often carry out some of the most critical, transformative work with the least support. And yet, traditional funding systems are not designed with you in mind. They tend to favour large NGOs, fluent in the language of budgets and logframes, with dedicated fundraising staff.

That's why reframing how we approach fundraising is key.

It's not about becoming more like the big organisations. It's about bringing your clarity, values, and political grounding into the process—and using strategies that make sense for your reality.

In this guide, we'll show you how to:

- Identify aligned donors who actually care about your cause,
- Communicate your impact in ways that feel honest and grounded,
- Develop your fundraising muscles in simple, strategic steps.

You don't have to do it all at once. You don't have to do it alone.
Let's begin.

Chapter 2: Understanding Different Types of Funders

Before you can find the right funders for your organisation, it helps to understand who's out there. Not all funders are the same, and knowing the differences will help you save time, approach the right people, and build stronger connections. Each type of funder has its own logic, expectations, and application processes. Understanding this can help you prepare smarter and use your time strategically.

Here's a breakdown of the most common types of funders and income sources that support social justice work:

1. Private Foundations

These are organisations (usually created by wealthy individuals, families, or corporations) that give money to causes they care about. Some are very structured, with clear application processes. Others work more informally, through relationships. Some funders accept proposals through open calls; others only fund groups they already know, so it helps to look for board members, partners, or advisors who may have a connection.

Example: The Ford Foundation, Mama Cash, Urgent Action Fund

Look for: Mission alignment, clear criteria, application deadlines, regional focus

Tip: Make your own list of local or regional private foundations that support work like yours. This is where personal and community knowledge is essential.

2. Public Foundations / Intermediary Funds

These are nonprofit organisations that receive money from various sources (governments, philanthropies, individuals) and re-grant it to grassroots groups. Many feminist and social justice funds fall into this category. Some of these funds are also movement-led—created by activists to support movements directly, such as *Thousand Currents* or *Fondo Semillas*. These funds often use participatory and trust-based approaches.

Example: Global Fund for Women, Fondo de Acción Urgente América Latina, FRIDA | The Young Feminist Fund

Why they matter: They often support unregistered groups, use participatory grantmaking, and understand grassroots realities better than big institutions.

3. Government / Bilateral Donors

These are official bodies from one government that fund work abroad, like embassies or international development agencies. While they can offer larger amounts, their processes are often bureaucratic, and they may require legal registration or reporting formats that are hard for small orgs. These funders often publish calls for proposals with very specific requirements and deadlines, so it's important to track their websites or sign up for updates.

Example: USAID, GIZ (Germany), Sida (Sweden), Global Affairs Canada

Tip: Some embassies have “small grants” programs that are less demanding, worth checking.

4. Multilateral Donors

These are large institutions funded by multiple governments. They support big programs across countries and regions, often working with intermediary organisations.

Example: United Nations agencies (like UN Women), the World Bank, the European Union

How to access: Usually through partnerships with larger NGOs or coalitions, they rarely fund small orgs directly. Many times, they channel funds through large NGOs like Oxfam, Care International, or Plan International, who may then sub-grant to smaller partners or local coalitions.

5. Individual Donors

These are people (sometimes activists, artists, entrepreneurs) who choose to donate part of their income to causes they care about. Some might give one-time gifts, others might become monthly supporters or major donors. While there’s no “process” in the formal sense, building relationships with individual donors is still a long-term strategy, think of them as part of your wider community.

Example: A supporter who attends your event and offers a recurring donation.

Strategy: Tell compelling stories, make donation easy (e.g. via a link or QR), and stay in touch.

6. Corporate Donors

Companies often donate to social causes through their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programs. Some are truly aligned, others might just want visibility. Be cautious and assess if their values match yours. Some companies have structured application processes for their CSR programs, while others may support informal partnerships through visibility and events.

Example: Patagonia, Ben & Jerry’s, or local businesses in your region

Watch out for: Greenwashing or pinkwashing (using your cause for their PR)

7. Crowdfunding Platforms

These are tools that help you reach many small donors at once: friends, allies, and strangers online. Great for urgent needs, pilot projects, or creative campaigns. Read chapter 13 to better understand crowdfunding.

Example: GoFundMe, GlobalGiving, Indiegogo, Donadora (Latin America)

Best when: You have a compelling story, visuals, and a supportive community to share it

Watch out for: Most platforms charge service fees (from 3% to 8%), so factor that in when setting your fundraising goal.

8. Autonomous Income Streams

Also known as “earned income”, these are self-generated ways to fund your work. Many grassroots organisations are building sustainability by creating their own income: offering services, products, or experiences. This might look like consulting, training, artwork, educational materials, or even events. While it doesn’t replace the need for fundraising, it gives you more flexibility and reduces dependency and risk.

Example: Selling zines, offering workshops, community cafés, language or tech support services

Benefits: Helps cover unrestricted costs, keeps your work rooted in the community, lowers financial vulnerability

9. In-Kind Support (Non-Monetary Donors)

Not all donations are in cash; some supporters may offer services, subscriptions, skills, or time that reduce the costs for your organisation. These are especially useful for small orgs with limited budgets.

In-kind donations can include goods, pro bono services, or access to platforms and tools that support your mission. Many large companies offer this type of non-monetary support. Google, for example, provides up to \$10,000 per month in free advertising through its Ad Grants program; Microsoft offers donated or discounted access to software like Office 365 and Azure; and Canva grants free premium accounts to eligible nonprofits. These contributions can significantly strengthen your organisation’s capacity without affecting your financial resources.

Example: A volunteer graphic designer, a free Zoom account, or someone donating printing services.

Tip: Track and value in-kind donations, they count as real support and can help you focus your core funds on other needs.

Chapter 3: How to Build a Prospect List

A prospect list is your personal fundraising map. It helps you keep track of potential funders, understand who might be a good fit for your work, and plan your next steps with clarity.

Why build a prospect list?

Because relying on memory, bookmarks, or scattered notes just doesn’t work, especially when you’re juggling a million things. A prospect list helps you:

- Keep your research organised
- Prioritise funders who match your values and focus
- Avoid wasting time on donors who won't fund your kind of work
- Track progress and follow-ups over time

Having a clear “wish list” (what kind of funding or support you’re looking for) can also help you make the most of chance encounters with potential donors, especially in events, webinars, or solidarity spaces.

What should it include?

There’s no perfect format. It can be a Google Spreadsheet, a Notion table, a physical notebook, whatever works for your team. What matters is what’s inside.

Here’s a version of what to include:

| Funder Name | Focus Areas | Region/Countries | Eligible Groups | Alignment with Our Work | Previous Grantees | How to Apply | Deadline | Contact Info | Trusted Contact / Introduction Possible | Notes / Next Steps |

You can duplicate [this Google Sheet template](#) and adapt it to your needs.

To make this template your own, just follow these quick steps:

1. **Click “File” and then “Make a Copy.”** This will create your own editable version in your Google Drive.
2. **Rename the spreadsheet.** You can give it your org’s name, for example: Prospect List – [Your Organisation’s Name] → *Prospect List – Casa Futuro*
3. **Start replacing the example rows.** The first row is an example, including one from a fictional donor called Rising People Foundation. You can delete or overwrite them.
4. **Fill it out with your real prospects.** Use the columns to keep track of who you’re reaching out to, how they align with your work, and what your next steps are.

Tip: If you’re mapping individuals (not institutions), you can change the fields to include things like: "Name", "Affiliation", "Connection to us", "Interests", etc.

We’ll go deeper into how to find aligned funders and evaluate fit in Chapter 4.

Add layers as you go

Over time, your list can grow to include:

- Your history with that funder
- Who introduced you or connected you
- What materials you’ve sent them (proposal, intro email, etc.)

- What stage you're in (e.g., researching, contacted, waiting, funded). This helps turn cold leads into warm relationships—and helps you stay consistent, even if people on your team change.

If you're storing personal contact information or internal notes about funders, especially in Europe, make sure your system respects basic data privacy practices (like GDPR). You can find free templates or policies online to guide you.

Keep it alive

Your prospect list is not a one-time exercise. Update it every few weeks or months. Add new names, remove funders who aren't aligned, and track what's working.

Here's how to make it useful long-term:

- Make a habit of adding funders every time you hear of one
- Schedule a monthly check-in to review your list
- Share it with your team or collective if you work in community
- Keep track of key movement events and networking spaces (like online forums or regional convenings). Even if you can't attend, knowing when they happen and who's there can help you plan future engagement.

Tip: You can also create different tabs or colours for categories like: “Warm leads”; “To research more”; “Currently applying”; “Follow up in 6 months”

Bonus: Prospecting = Power

Mapping funders is not just admin work, it's political. It helps you:

- See where the money flows (and where it doesn't)
- Understand patterns of power in philanthropy
- Position your work in a broader ecosystem of justice and resistance

When done collectively, this process can also become a way to share knowledge, demystify funding, and build solidarity across movements.

Chapter 4: Finding the Right Funders for Your Cause

Not every funder is for every organization, and that's okay.

Sometimes, grassroots organisations spend hours applying for funds that were never meant for them in the first place. This chapter is about helping you focus your energy on funders who are more likely to support your work.

What does “alignment” really mean?

When we talk about a funder being “a good fit,” we're not talking about perfection. We're talking about strategic overlap between what you do and what the funder wants to support.

Here are three main areas to look for:

1. Thematic alignment

Do they fund the kind of work you do?

Look for signals in:

- Their mission or values
- The types of organisations they've supported in the past
- Their focus areas or funding themes

Examples:

- If you work on trans health and rights, look for funders focused on gender justice, LGBTQIA+ rights, bodily autonomy, or intersectional feminism.
- If you're a youth-led collective creating digital tools, look for innovation or tech-for-good funds with a youth focus.

2. Geographic alignment

Do they fund in your country or region?

Some donors are global, others are region-specific. If they don't fund in your location, don't spend your energy trying to convince them otherwise (unless it's a direct connection or an invitation).

Check:

- If they have a country list
- If their past grantees are from your region

3. Structural alignment

Do they fund organisations like yours?

Look at:

- Whether they support unregistered groups
- Whether they prioritise grassroots, community-led, or small organisations
- Their grant sizes and whether they match your current capacity

If they only fund INGOs or groups with a \$1M USD budget, and you're a three-person collective, that's not a match, and that's okay.

Tip: Some donors only give to legally registered organisations (often called 501c3s in the U.S.). In those cases, you can explore working with an intermediary or a fiscal sponsor, another organisation that receives the funds on your behalf and helps you manage the grant. Just make sure you trust each other and have clear agreements in place.

Where can you find these signals?

- On their website: Especially in sections like "Who we fund," "Grantees," or "What we support"
- In annual reports: These often include grantee names and project summaries

- In their social media or newsletters: Look at who they feature
- By asking around: Other organisations in your field can tell you who they've applied to, what worked, and what didn't

Red flags to watch out for

- Vague or overly broad mission statements that make it hard to tell what they actually support
- No grantee list or transparency around who they've funded
- High demands for reporting, metrics, or legal status without flexibility
- Funders with extractive or saviourist language (watch for tone!)

If it feels off, trust your instincts. You deserve funders who respect your time, your context, and your leadership.

Partnering for Greater Impact

Sometimes, joining forces with another organisation can open doors that might not be accessible alone. Many funders are more open to partnerships because they:

- Expand reach and impact
- Bring together different strengths (e.g., one org has deep local knowledge, the other has admin capacity)
- Show collaboration and movement-building

You can:

- Apply together for a grant as co-leads or with one as fiscal host
- Build a shared project and divide responsibilities and budget
- Reach out to a group already in the funder's network and explore working together

Tip: Just make sure you clarify roles, responsibilities, and expectations in advance; and include space for political alignment, not just logistics.

Final thoughts

Fundraising is less about “convincing” a donor and more about finding alignment, and that means being selective, thoughtful, and clear about what you’re looking for too.

There are funders out there who care about justice, who want to support grassroots work, and who understand that systems change doesn't come in neat packages. Your job is to find them and connect intentionally.

Chapter 5: How to Strategically Contact Funders and Maintain Relationships

Reaching out to funders can feel intimidating, especially if you're from a small or underfunded organisation. But connecting with funders isn't about being “perfect”, it's about being clear, authentic, and strategic.

This chapter will help you feel more confident initiating contact and building relationships that last beyond one grant cycle.

When & How to Reach Out

Once you've identified funders that align with your work (see Chapter 4), it's time to make contact.

You can reach out:

- By email (the most common and appropriate way)
- Through LinkedIn (especially for smaller funds or individuals)
- At events, webinars or community spaces
- Through an introduction from a mutual connection (ideal)

If you're writing an email, keep it:

- Short and clear
- Focused on alignment
- Polite and professional (but warm)
- Ending with a soft call to action (e.g., "Would it be possible to connect for a short call?")

Tip: Don't start with an ask for money. Start with an offer to connect or explore alignment.

Who should you contact?

Larger institutions often have multiple program officers, regional leads, or thematic specialists.

Look for someone who manages the **region** or **issue area** your work relates to (e.g., "Program Officer for Latin America" or "LGBTQI+ rights").

In smaller foundations or funds, you might write directly to a **co-director**, **executive director**, or someone listed under "Contact" or "Team" on their website.

If it's unclear who the right person is, don't worry—send a polite message to the general contact email asking: "We'd love to know who the best person would be to contact about our work related to [topic] in [region]."

What to Say: Be Strategic, Not Generic

Funders receive lots of messages. To stand out:

- Mention something specific about them: a program they fund, a value you share, or a grantee you admire
- Keep your message focused: Who you are, what you do, why you're reaching out
- Make it clear you've done your homework

Lead the Donor Dance

If you're looking for a deeper dive into how to build donor relationships with care and strategy, we highly recommend reading [Leading the Donor Dance by Black Fox Philanthropy](#)

This open-source guide shares powerful insights on:

- Asking meaningful questions (instead of pitching right away)
- Listening deeply to what funders care about
- Co-creating a relationship based on mutual vision, not charity

Here are some principles from the piece:

1. Lead with Curiosity, Not Desperation

Start by listening. Ask them what drives their giving. What kind of work inspires them. What outcomes they care about. Show genuine interest in their journey.

"Seek first to understand, then to be understood." Stephen Covey, quoted in the guide.

2. Prepare Your Questions

Don't just talk about your organisation. Ask strategic, heart-centered questions like:

- "What is your ultimate vision for the issue we're both working on?"
- "What kinds of partnerships have been most impactful for you in the past?"
- "What inspires you to make a long-term commitment to a cause?"

3. Share Your "Why"

People don't just fund projects, they fund people and stories. Share why this work matters to you. What's personal, what's political, what's rooted in your community. Let your commitment show. Having a short brochure, one-pager or a simple pitch deck ready can help you explain your work clearly. It doesn't need to be fancy, just honest, focused and visually easy to skim. It shows that you're ready and helps potential funders share your work with others internally.

4. Reflect Their Vision Back

Once you've listened, reflect what they've shared: "So if I understand correctly, what you're looking for is..." and then connect it to what your organisation is doing.

Follow Up = Relationship Building

Whether a funder says yes or no, stay in touch. Fundraising isn't a transaction, it's a long-term relationship. You can:

- Send updates about your work, even when you're not asking for anything
- Celebrate their work too, reshare a blog post or highlight a grant they made that aligns with your values
- Invite them to events, webinars, or storytelling spaces (if you're hosting any)

Don't disappear after the grant ends.

Many funders value long-term partnerships and trust. Keep them in the loop with occasional updates, even if you're not asking for new funding. A quick message sharing your progress or a thank-you note can go a long way in building lasting solidarity.

Reciprocity and Power

You don't need to present yourself as "less than" or in need of saving. You bring value to the relationship: experience, knowledge, networks, and stories that funders don't have access to.

Approach the relationship as a collaboration: different forms of contribution, same shared vision.

Chapter 6: Where to Look: Databases, Donor Lists & Peer Networks

Featured Resource: The Who Can Fund Me (WCFM) database

A recently launched resource: [AWID's new Who Can Fund Me database](#). This is a searchable funders' database that captures about 200 funders that are supporting and sustaining diverse feminist movements across regions and globally. Built for feminist collectives, grassroots organizations, and intersectional movements, it provides movements an opportunity to curate a unique list of funders for resourcing their work, based on a variety of filters.

For easier navigation, the database includes smart filters that you can apply to adjust your search based on, among other things, funders' geographical focus, thematic priorities or the type of funding.

Who Can Fund Me? database is a living crowdsourced database that will be updated on a regular basis and ask for your help in identifying funders to add to the list. Whether you move money and/or you know of funders that support feminist organizing and are not yet part of WCFM, please [fill this form](#) to share this vital information with the global community of feminist movements.

Funders Databases & Platforms

Finding funders isn't always the hardest part. Filtering the ones that truly match your context and values often is. That's why curated lists tailored for grassroots organisations in the Global South are essential.

Here's a breakdown of relevant platforms, tools, and databases:

- Justice Funds: Curated list, Free, Tailored to Global South, updated monthly. justicefunds.substack.com
- ImpactMapper: Online Database, Free Subscription Based, Database of Funding Commitments to deal with global funding cuts. [Subscribe here to access Impact Mapper Database](#).

- CIVICUS Donor Finder: Searchable database, Free, Focuses on civil society support; global scope with Global South presence. [Check CIVICUS Donor Finder here.](#)
- Kuja Grants Database: Open grant directory, Free, Global South-friendly. Website in English, Spanish and French. [Check Kuja Grants Database here.](#)
- Segal Funder Directory: Open directory, Free, Focused on Africa; shows who funds what. [Check Segal Funder Directory here.](#)
- Funds for NGOs: Articles & alerts, Free & Paid, Updated list of open calls; basic access free. [Check Funds for NGOs here.](#)
- Strategy Netherlands' Fund List: Curated funder page, Free, Includes some funders open to Global South groups. [Check Strategy Netherlands' Fund List here.](#)
- Fondos y Convocatorias: Blog, Free, Sharing open calls for LatAm in Spanish. [Check Fondos y Convocatorias here.](#)

Some platforms like Candid, Instrumentl, Blackbaud, or Foundation Directory Online require payment and are mostly geared toward large NGOs or US/European contexts. We've chosen not to focus on them here.

That's why curated tools made by and for the Global South are so essential. They speak our language, reflect our realities, and cut through the noise.

Chapter 7: Social Media, Google Alerts & Word-of-Mouth: Unusual Allies

Sometimes, the best leads don't come from donor databases or long application cycles. They come from a tweet, a webinar, a WhatsApp group, a post shared by a friend. In other words, the informal channels.

In this chapter, we'll explore how to use social media, Google Alerts, and peer recommendations to identify aligned donors and amplify your visibility, especially if you're a small or emerging organisation.

1. Social Media: Show Up with Intention

Social media can help you build visibility and find aligned funders, but it's not about being everywhere or posting constantly.

Start by observing:

- Follow funders, movements, and peer orgs on Instagram, X (Twitter), and LinkedIn
- Look for open calls, donor values, grantee spotlights
- Search hashtags relevant to your region and cause (#feministfunding, #grants2025, #SRHRglobal)

Engage when it's meaningful:

- Leave thoughtful comments
- Tag organisations in quotes or event takeaways
- Reshare content that aligns with your work

Tip: Be intentional, not pushy. If every comment or message is a fundraising ask, you may be ignored, reported, or perceived as spam. Focus on building relationships, not extracting attention.

2. Google Alerts: Let the News Come to You

Google Alerts is a simple, free tool that emails you when something new is published online based on keywords you choose. It helps you discover new funding calls, events, or updates from donors.

How to set up Google Alerts (quick guide):

1. Go to google.com/alerts
2. Type in a phrase like: "call for proposals" + "youth" + "Latin America" or "grant opportunity" + "climate justice"
3. Set your email preferences and receive notifications straight to your inbox.

Use it to stay informed without having to manually check ten websites every week.

3. Word-of-Mouth: Solidarity Is Our Strategy

Forget the competitive mindset imposed by Global North funding structures. Grassroots movements thrive in solidarity. We don't just grow by getting individual support, we grow by lifting each other up.

Ask for recommendations, but also:

- Offer to introduce other orgs to funders you've worked with
- Share funding opportunities with peers
- Co-apply for funding as a partnership between multiple groups

Example: You might not meet all the eligibility criteria for a grant alone, but a joint proposal with another organisation could increase your chances, and secure support for both.

This is how we shift the ecosystem. From scarcity to abundance. From isolation to collaboration.

4. Webinars & Online Events: Scope with Purpose

Many funders speak or attend public webinars, conferences, and panel events. These are great places to learn, but also to connect if you do a bit of preparation.

How to make the most of these spaces:

- Research speakers and attendees in advance
- Take notes on what funders say about their values and priorities
- Follow up with a brief message referencing something specific

Example: “Hi [Name], I attended your talk on participatory grantmaking and appreciated what you said about resourcing trust over metrics. Our collective works on similar principles, would love to stay in touch.”

Tip: As with social media, don’t message every speaker with a donation request. That’s a fast way to be seen as spam. Build trust first, crowdfunding is Chapter 13’s topic for a reason.

Final Reflections

Visibility doesn’t have to mean going viral. It means being clear, consistent, and grounded in your values.

Use the tools you have. Show up in the spaces that matter. And remember: our greatest strength has always been each other.

Chapter 8: Crafting a Strong Case for Support & Theory of Change

Fundraising is about helping people understand your mission, feel its urgency, and believe in your capacity to create change.

That’s what your case for support and theory of change are for.

They’re also for your team, your community, and yourself. They help you sharpen your message, align your strategy, and invite others into your work with honesty and strength.

What is a Case for Support?

A case for support is a document created to show potential donors:

- Why your work matters
- How your work creates impact
- Why they should support you, specifically

A strong case does three things:

1. It clearly answers the 3 big donor questions: Why this? Why now? Why you?
2. It places those answers in a compelling story that creates urgency.
3. It communicates that success is possible, with a credible plan and funding need.

In other words, it’s not just about explaining what you do. It’s about making your case: confidently, emotionally, and strategically.

Tip: Don’t forget to highlight what you offer in return. While you’re not selling a product, partnerships go both ways. Your organisation can offer visibility, stories from the field, learning opportunities, and even grassroots-level access that helps donors stay connected to the realities they care about. For corporate donors, this might include employee engagement, shared campaigns, or local branding opportunities only if they align with your values.

Six Key Elements of a Strong Case for Support

Here’s a simple and powerful structure you can use to build your case:

1. Emotional Hook. Start with a powerful story, quote, or moment. Make it real, make it human.
2. Introduction to Your Organization. Share your mission, vision, and what makes your org unique briefly but with heart.
3. The Problem You Solve. What's at stake? Who is impacted? Why is this urgent? Use real stories and data.
4. Your Solution & Programs. How does your work respond to the problem? Be clear, grounded, and focused on your approach.
5. Fundraising Goals. What are you asking for? How will it be used? Be specific. Use visuals or examples if you can.
6. Call to Action. Tell people exactly what they can do to support you: donate, share, introduce, etc.

Bonus Element: What You Bring to the Partnership

Think beyond the ask: what do you offer that makes this relationship meaningful for both sides? Don't forget: Your case should also answer why your organization (not just the cause) is uniquely worthy of investment.

Connecting Through Your “Why”

Donors don't just fund strategies, they fund people and vision. That's why sharing your “why” is essential.

- Why is this work yours to do?
- What personally brought you to this mission?
- What makes you keep going when things get hard?

Tip: Use this internally too. Ask your team or collective why they do this work. It's a beautiful way to build trust and clarity.

What is a Theory of Change?

A Theory of Change (ToC) is a tool that maps how your work leads to long-term change. It goes beyond “what you do” and shows the logic of how and why it works. It helps donors (and you!) see the steps between your day-to-day activities and your bigger vision.

1. Problem: What injustice are you addressing?
2. Activities: What do you do about it?
3. Outputs: What happens short-term?
4. Outcomes: What changes for people?
5. Impact: What changes in society/structures?

Remember: You don't need a communications degree or an external consultant. You need your truth, your clarity, and your voice. Your work is powerful. Tell the story like it is and don't be afraid to own your brilliance.

Use Your Case and ToC to:

- Write stronger, faster grant proposals
- Pitch to donors in emails, meetings, or events
- Align your team on the purpose behind each project
- Push back on donor demands that don't fit your strategy
- Celebrate and communicate your impact clearly

Here's an invented Theory of Change example

Organisation: Raíces Vivas Collective

Mission: To empower rural youth to lead climate solutions and protect their communities through education, advocacy, and ancestral knowledge.

1. Problem: Rural youth in Chilean Patagonia lack access to climate education, are excluded from environmental decision-making, and face threats to their land and livelihoods.
2. Activities: Train youth climate leaders; integrate ancestral farming knowledge with environmental education; host local forums and radio campaigns.
3. Outputs: 25 youth trained; 5 climate education kits developed; 4 community radio programs aired.
4. Outcomes: Youth lead environmental actions in their communities; ancestral knowledge is valued and revived; climate adaptation practices increase.
5. Impact: Rural youth are seen as key actors in climate justice, and their communities are more resilient, informed, and organised to defend their territories.

Chapter 9: How to Build a Communications Strategy that Attracts Donors and Builds Credibility

Your communications are more than a megaphone. They're how you shape your narrative, build trust, and invite others to support your work, including donors. You don't need to be everywhere. But you do need to show up with clarity, purpose, and rhythm.

Why Communications Are Key for Fundraising

Donors, like anyone, want to feel confident about where their money goes. That confidence comes from seeing:

- What you stand for
- How you work
- What impact you're making
- That others respect and support your work

And here's the good news: you don't need a huge following to build credibility. You need a plan that helps people trust and understand your mission.

Remember: donors don't just want data, they want to feel the heartbeat of your work. Authentic stories, even if they're imperfect or raw, are more powerful than glossy reports. What builds trust is your honesty, your voice, and the lived experiences of your community, especially when told in their own words.

Start With a Simple Strategy

Let's keep it simple and realistic. Your first communications strategy doesn't need to be complex, it just needs to be doable and aligned with your goals.

1- Choose Your Channels

Instagram - Why Use It: Great for visual storytelling, emotional impact, and community engagement. Easy to use from mobile. Who You Engage: Supporters, younger audiences, activists, donors who want to "feel" your impact

LinkedIn - Why Use It: Builds credibility with funders, professionals, peer orgs; good for storytelling and updates. Who You Engage: Donors, foundation staff, allies, institutional partners

Email / Newsletter - Why Use It: Direct channel that builds long-term trust. Great for sharing updates, calls to action, and funding needs. Who You Engage: Committed supporters, individual donors, partners

TikTok - Why Use It: High potential for viral, youth-led storytelling. Can humanize your work and reach new audiences fast. Who You Engage: Young people, movement builders, digital creators

Facebook - Why Use It: Still widely used in many regions. Good for community building and posting event info. Who You Engage: Local community members, older audiences, rural or regional networks

Bluesky / X (formerly Twitter) - Why Use It: Used for sector commentary, political statements, funder visibility, and activist solidarity. Who You Engage: Journalists, researchers, policy allies, donors who follow debates

WhatsApp / Signal / Telegram - Why Use It: Great for direct updates and community organising in places with low connectivity. Who You Engage: Volunteers, program participants, core community

Blog / Medium / Substack - Why Use It: Space for deeper reflections, reports, or campaign stories with context. Improves visibility on Google too. Who You Engage: Donors, researchers, org partners, engaged public

Discord / Slack - Why Use It: Useful for managing internal communities or engaged networks (e.g., volunteers, advisory panels). Who You Engage: Team members, collectives, peer activists, co-creators

Tip: We recommend starting small with Instagram, LinkedIn, and email (or a simple newsletter). These three channels cover visual storytelling, donor credibility, and direct updates, everything you need to begin communicating impact clearly and consistently.

2. Set a Sustainable Rhythm

You don't need to post daily. In fact, doing less consistently is better than burning out fast. Start with 1–2 posts per week. Choose a format you enjoy: images, reels, quotes, stories, newsletters. Reuse content across platforms with small edits (e.g. a quote on Instagram can become a story in your newsletter).

Tip: Use Canva's free templates to create beautiful, on-brand visuals in minutes. No design skills needed. Tip #2: For LinkedIn, post during weekdays (Monday through Thursday) for best engagement.

Key Messages to Communicate

Your communications should help people understand:

- What you do – Make it clear, not complicated
- Why it matters – Speak to emotion + systemic change
- Your unique value – What sets you apart? What's your "why"?
- How to support you – Make your ask visible and easy

Build Visibility Over Time (Without Losing Your Voice)

Communications aren't just for broadcasting, they're for connecting. Here's how to build visibility that actually supports your mission:

Share Your Knowledge (Thought Leadership)

You don't need to be a TED speaker to be seen as a leader. Share what you learn from the ground:

- The challenges your community faces
- What solutions you're trying
- Your perspective on systemic change

Start Conversations

Don't just post, engage. Respond to comments, ask questions, share others' work. Join relevant discussions in activist or nonprofit circles on LinkedIn or Instagram. Use stories or carousels to invite interaction.

Collaborate for Reach

- Partner with other organisations to cross-promote content
- Co-create posts with community leaders or volunteers
- Invite allies, funders, or even influencers to repost your calls to action

Visibility doesn't always mean "going viral." Sometimes it means being known and respected by the right people.

You might explore approaches like Hope-Based Communications, especially if you're working with communities often portrayed only through crisis. This method helps shift from “what’s wrong” to “what’s possible” centering hope, agency, and dignity in every story you tell.

Wrap-Up: Show Up with Purpose, Not Perfection

You don’t need perfect visuals, viral posts, or daily updates. You need a real voice, clear values, and consistent presence. Whether you’re posting a story about impact or sending a simple newsletter, remember: your communications are an extension of your political work.

So use them to: Make your values visible, Tell stories that matter, Build the kind of trust that opens doors.

Chapter 10: How to Collect and Communicate Impact Data

You’re already creating impact every time you accompany someone, mobilize a group, hold a workshop, or push back against injustice. But for funders to support your work, they need to understand and believe in that impact. That’s where data comes in, not just numbers, but stories, voices, and proof of transformation.

Why This Matters - Impact data helps you:

- Build credibility and trust with donors
- Advocate for the value of your work
- Improve your programs through reflection
- Make your case for support more powerful (see Chapter 7)

What Counts as Impact?

Impact doesn’t always mean “we changed the law” or “we reached 1 million people.” It can be:

- Quantitative data: How many people you reached, how many workshops held, how many materials distributed
- Qualitative data: Stories, testimonies, quotes, changes in confidence, behavior, or awareness
- Systemic signs: Shifts in community dynamics, visibility of your cause, changes in public discourse or media coverage

If your work saves lives, creates safety, shifts narratives, or builds collective power, that’s impact. But remember: not all impact is measurable in numbers. Healing, empowerment, safety, visibility, these matter too. Real change often happens in the quiet, relational spaces, over shared tea, in voice notes, in the confidence of a community member who finally feels heard. That’s impact too.

What to Track (Even With Limited Resources)

Start small. Choose a few key things that show what your work is doing:

1. **Outputs:** For example, number of events, attendees, materials shared, services provided. **How to collect it:** Keep a spreadsheet, form, or WhatsApp log.
2. **Outcomes:** For example, increased safety, skills gained, confidence built, better access to services. **How to collect it:** Ask simple reflection questions in follow-ups or interviews.
3. **Stories:** For example, personal testimonies, community shifts, quotes from participants. **How to collect it:** Voice notes, short written stories, anonymous surveys.
4. **Media & Visibility:** For example, mentions in press, social media reach, public recognitions. **How to collect it:** Save screenshots, links, or coverage in a folder.

Free Tools You Can Use

- Google Forms / Typeform – Free and easy to use for feedback or surveys
- WhatsApp / Telegram – Collect voice notes or comments
- Notion / Airtable / Google Spreadsheet – Organize your data and stories in one place
- Canva – Turn data into visuals for reports or social media

You don't need fancy M&E systems. What matters is consistency, consent, and intention. Sometimes a notebook, a shared spreadsheet, or a folder of screenshots and voice notes is all you need to honour the work you're doing.

Ethics & Accessibility in Data Collection:

Always ask for informed consent, especially with photos or testimonies. Respect people's privacy and don't extract stories just to "prove" impact. Consider offering something in return like sharing results or involving people in what data gets used and how. Include your community in defining what *they* think impact looks like. Ask: what matters to them? What feels like success?

How to Communicate Impact

Once you have the data, tell the story behind it. Use a mix of formats:

For Donors:

- Combine data + storytelling narrative in grant reports
- Include simple visuals or infographics
- Use quotes from participants to add emotional weight

For Social Media:

- Turn one stat into a post (e.g. "70% of rural youth trained by us now know how to defend their land rights")
- Share behind-the-scenes of your work (who's involved, what you're learning)

- Post short testimonials or quotes (with consent)

For Your Community:

- Use newsletters to update progress
- Host feedback circles to share results
- Create posters, zines, or videos that reflect their impact

Final Tips: Don't wait until you have perfect data. Start small, learn as you go. Be honest. It's okay to share when things didn't go as planned, what matters is what you learned. Data is power. When it's in your hands, you control the narrative.

Chapter 11. Participatory Grantmaking: What It Is and Why It Matters

If you've ever felt that the way money moves in philanthropy doesn't make sense for your work, you're not alone. Traditional funding models often expect grassroots organisations to adapt to systems that were not designed with them in mind.

That's where Participatory Grantmaking comes in. It offers a different way of thinking about funding, one that many grassroots groups already practice in their internal work, but haven't always had the language to name when negotiating with funders.

What is Participatory Grantmaking?

Participatory Grantmaking (PGM) is an approach to funding that puts decision-making power into the hands of the people and communities most affected by the issues being addressed.

Instead of donors deciding everything (from priorities to selection and evaluation) PGM invites activists, organisers, and community leaders to participate in shaping the funding process itself.

In full PGM models, this includes:

- Setting priorities for what gets funded
- Designing the application process
- Reviewing and selecting proposals
- Defining how impact is measured
- Giving feedback to the funder

This isn't just a nice idea, it's a political commitment to shifting power, recognising that the people doing the work are best placed to decide how money should flow.

What's the difference between traditional funding and PGM?

- **Who sets priorities:**
 - o Traditional funding: Foundation staff.
 - o Participatory grantmaking: Movement actors, community members.
- **Who designs the process:**
 - o Traditional funding: Funders.
 - o Participatory grantmaking: Collectives and grassroots groups.

- **Who makes decisions:**
 - o Traditional funding: Donor boards or panels.
 - o Participatory grantmaking: Peer reviewers or affected communities.
- **What gets funded:**
 - o Traditional funding: Projects, deliverables.
 - o Participatory grantmaking: Long-term work, operations, care.
- **How impact is measured:**
 - o Traditional funding: KPIs, numbers, reports.
 - o Participatory grantmaking: Community-defined change, stories, healing.
- **Duration of funding:**
 - o Traditional funding: 6–12 months.
 - o Participatory grantmaking: Multi-year, flexible support.

You may not always have access to a fully participatory fund. But knowing about this model gives you tools to ask for funding on your terms.

Why should you know this?

Because most grassroots groups are used to being told:

- how to structure their team,
- how to write their project goals,
- how to “prove” impact in numbers that don’t reflect reality.

PGM helps shift that dynamic. If you’re negotiating a grant, this framework can help you:

- Ask for flexible and multi-year support, not just short-term project funding
- Propose to measure impact in your own terms, not only donor metrics
- Push for reduced or simplified reporting
- Suggest working in the territories and formats you choose, not what fits into donor templates
- Include operational costs, salaries, and care work in your budget
- Request ongoing dialogue, not one-off interactions

You’re not just applying. You’re co-shaping a funding relationship.

Knowing this model helps you frame your asks with legitimacy and confidence.

How to bring PGM values into your grantwriting

Even if a funder doesn’t identify as participatory, you can apply the logic in your proposals:

Language to use:

“Our work is rooted in community-defined priorities, and we measure success based on outcomes identified by those most impacted.”

“We are requesting core funding to strengthen our long-term impact and sustainability, not just short-term project outputs.”

“We ask that reporting requirements be adapted to our organisational reality. We’d be happy to offer feedback to support a more equitable process.”

Propose alternatives:

Audio or visual reports instead of written formats

Collective reporting written by team members or partners

A shared project between organisations, each receiving direct funding

Participation in designing the evaluation process

Changing how we relate to funders

Knowing about PGM empowers you to name the power imbalance that often exists—and propose a different way of relating.

You can say:

“We appreciate your support, but we want this relationship to reflect our values: collaboration, trust, and long-term care.”

And you can ask:

“How open are you to adapting the funding process to better reflect community-led decision-making?”

That kind of clarity doesn’t weaken your position. It shows you know your worth.

Want to learn more or name aligned funders?

Some examples of PGM-aligned donors include:

Black Feminist Fund; Red Umbrella Fund; Disability Rights Fund; Fondo de Acción Urgente para América Latina y el Caribe.

These funders may include activists in their decision-making, fund unregistered groups, and support collective reporting formats.

Chapter 12: How to Write a Solid Grant Proposal

(And Stay Sane While Doing It)

Writing grant proposals can be overwhelming—especially when you’re juggling community work, team meetings, and three other deadlines.

This chapter is here to help you simplify the process, prepare in advance, and use what you already have, so you don’t start from scratch every time.

What Makes a Good Proposal?

A good proposal doesn’t have to be perfect English or full of technical language. It needs to be:

Clear: Explain the problem and what you want to do

Grounded: Rooted in your context, community and reality

Strategic: Tailored to the funder, but without losing your voice

Realistic: Shows that your plan and budget match your capacity

Common Sections in Most Grant Proposals

While formats change, most donors ask for similar things. Here's what you'll usually need to prepare:

About Your Organisation: Mission, values, who you are, history

The Problem: What issue are you addressing? Why now? Why here?

Your Approach: What will you do? How? Who is involved?

Activities: What concrete actions will you take? (e.g., workshops, campaigns, trainings, materials)

Impact: What do you hope will change? For whom?

Monitoring/Evaluation: How will you know if it worked?

Budget & Timeline: How much will it cost, and how will the money be used?

Sustainability: What happens after the funding ends? (can be long-term care or movement continuity)

Team or Governance: Who is involved and what are their roles?

Attachments: Often includes financials, org registration (if needed), letters of support, etc.

Even if you're not asked for all of these, it helps to have them ready. You can copy, adapt, and paste them into new applications with less stress.

Checklist: Documents to Prepare in Advance

Having these materials ready saves you hours down the line, and makes you more confident when applying. Think of it as your "grant writing survival kit."

- Case for Support (see Chapter 7)
- Theory of Change (Chapter 7)
- Budget template (with categories like personnel, operations, travel, etc.)
- Short description of your organisation (1–2 paragraphs)
- Team bios or org structure (even if horizontal)
- Impact examples or success stories
- Quantitative impact data (e.g., # of people reached, events held, materials distributed)
- Copy-paste paragraph on your methodology or political approach
- General project timeline (in months or quarters)
- Letter of support (optional, can be from allies, peer orgs, or community leaders)
- Most recent report or visual material (if applicable)
- Bank details or fiscal sponsor info (if required)
- Copy of registration certificate (if applicable, or a short paragraph explaining why you're unregistered)

Store these in a shared folder (Google Drive, Dropbox, etc.) so anyone on the team can access and update them.

Tailoring Without Burning Out

You don't have to reinvent the wheel every time.

What to keep constant:

- Your values
- Your approach
- Your core team, context, and theory of change

What to adjust:

- Language (tone, format)
- Emphasis (some funders care more about impact, others about innovation)
- Specific numbers, dates, or outputs
- The "why us?" or alignment section

Tip: Create a master proposal document that you update every few months. Then copy sections from there to paste into each new application and tailor as needed.

Tip 2: If the funder gives you a downloadable Word or PDF form, copy the questions into your own doc first. This helps you draft with your team and avoid losing answers if the platform glitches.

Final Tips Before Submitting

Re-read the eligibility criteria before investing time

Check word count or character limits (some forms cut your text)

Ask someone else to proofread if possible

Submit with time to spare, platforms often crash close to the deadline

Keep a copy of what you submitted (screenshot or PDF)

Chapter 13. Is Crowdfunding Right for You?

When and How to Mobilize Collective Support

Crowdfunding can be a powerful way to raise money, but it's not a magic solution.

It takes time, strategy, and a clear understanding of your audience. If done right, it can help you mobilize collective support and raise awareness. If done without preparation, it can leave your team burned out and disappointed.

This chapter will help you figure out if crowdfunding is right for you, and how to do it with intention.

What is Crowdfunding?

Crowdfunding is when you raise small donations from a large number of people, often online. You can use platforms like GoFundMe, Donadora, GlobalGiving, or even social media and your website.

It can be used to:

- Fund a specific campaign or urgent need
- Launch a project
- Cover operating costs or emergencies
- Gather flexible support when institutional funding is limited

Self-Assessment: Is Crowdfunding Right for Your Organisation?

Ask yourself these questions:

Support base:

Yes: We have a base of people who already support or follow us (online or offline).

Not yet: We are unknown outside our immediate circle.

Storytelling:

Yes: We can tell our story clearly and emotionally.

Not yet: Our message is confusing or hard to explain.

Capacity:

Yes: We have the capacity to plan, post, reply, and share content consistently over 2–4 weeks.

Not yet: We are already overwhelmed and short on time.

Network:

Yes: We have people in our network who would amplify and share our campaign.

Not yet: We are relying only on ourselves to spread the word.

Funding need:

Yes: We are trying to fund something specific, urgent, or easy to explain.

Not yet: Our need is long-term, complex, or abstract.

If most of your answers are No, consider building your base first or start small and local.

What Not To Do

Many campaigns fail because they're launched too quickly or without strategy.

Common mistakes:

- Spamming every contact you've ever had
- Mass messaging your LinkedIn or WhatsApp list without context
- Posting only donation asks without storytelling
- Using generic language with no emotional hook
- Expecting money to come in just because the link is live

People don't give because you ask. They give because they feel connected to your work and trust how you'll use their support.

What You Need Before Launching

A good crowdfunding campaign usually includes:

- A clear, compelling goal (what are you raising money for?)
- A strong message or emotional hook

- A short video or visuals (photos with text overlays work fine)
- A landing page or platform that's easy to use
- A team or plan to promote it over 2–4 weeks
- Regular updates, gratitude posts, and transparency
- A timeline: start date, milestones, and end date

Canva (free version) has great templates for storytelling posts and donation visuals.

Your Campaign Strategy: 5 Key Steps

1. Define your goal

Be specific. Are you raising \$3,000 for abortion accompaniment kits? \$500 for community internet? \$7,000 to pay rent and salaries for 2 months?

2. Segment your audience

Instead of posting the same thing everywhere, adapt your message. The more tailored your message, the more trust and engagement you build. People support what they feel part of.

WhatsApp: Personal ask with voice note

Instagram: Visual storytelling + updates

Email: Longer explanation and donation link

Allies: Ask them to share to their own networks

Foundation staff or known donors: A more professional or strategic version of the ask

Volunteers/community members: Emphasize collective power and progress

3. Use stories, not just needs

Tell real stories (with consent) of what your work has changed and what's at stake if you don't reach your goal.

4. Engage during the campaign

Post updates. Share milestones. Thank donors. Show progress. Keep momentum.

5. Close with care

Once the campaign ends:

- Share the final result
- Thank everyone (even non-donors)
- Report back later on what the money made possible

Online or Local?

You can do crowdfunding through:

- Online platforms (GoFundMe, Donadora, GlobalGiving, GiveButter, etc.)
- Social media posts with bank links or QR codes
- In-person or hybrid events (like bake sales, art shows, raffles, community gatherings)

- WhatsApp chains with a trusted contact asking their network

Sometimes, local offline strategies work better, especially when your work is deeply rooted in territory or you have strong community networks.

Before You Decide...

Crowdfunding can be a powerful tool when:

- You already have a community
- You know how to tell your story
- You can dedicate energy and consistency

But it's not always the best fit and that's okay.

Use this chapter to assess, prepare, and move intentionally. And remember: asking for support isn't begging, it's inviting people to fund the future you're building.

Chapter 14. Fundraising Glossary

Understanding the Words That Shape the World of Funding

The funding gap that affects small grassroots organisations is often made worse by a language gap. This isn't just about English being dominant in fundraising spaces (often not the first language of those doing the work) but also about the **specialized terms** that donors, intermediaries, and platforms use every day.

Learning these terms is more than conforming to donor logic, it's about reclaiming your power in the conversation. When you understand the language, you can advocate for your needs more clearly, propose alternative approaches, and navigate proposals, calls, reports, and negotiations with more confidence.

Here's a glossary of commonly used fundraising terms:

Annual Giving - Recurring fundraising programs where supporters are asked to make yearly contributions, often used to cover an organization's operating budget.

Annual Report - A comprehensive yearly publication that details an organization's financial performance, key achievements, and overall progress toward its mission.

Bilateral Funding - Funding provided directly by one government to an NGO, typically to support development, infrastructure, or humanitarian initiatives.

Community Fundraising - Fundraising activities organized and led by members of a community to support local non-profit organizations or causes. This often involves events, sponsorships, and donations that bring people together for a common goal.

Crowdfunding - A fundraising method that gathers small contributions from a large number of people, usually through online platforms or social media, to support specific projects or causes.

Development Plan - A strategic document outlining goals and actionable steps for fundraising and resource development, designed to ensure financial sustainability and mission success for non-profit organizations.

Donation Matching - A strategy where a donor or organization pledges to match contributions made by others up to a certain amount or within a set timeframe, encouraging increased participation and generosity.

Endowment - An investment fund established by a non-profit to generate ongoing income. The principal amount remains intact, while the earnings are used to support the organization's programs and operations.

Fiscal Host / Fiscal Sponsor – A registered organisation that supports unregistered groups by receiving donations and managing funds on their behalf. This allows grassroots collectives to access grants, issue receipts, and ensure legal compliance without having to register formally. Fiscal sponsors usually charge an administrative fee (commonly between 5–15%). While this model is common in places like the US (501(c)(3)) or the UK (registered charities), it also exists informally in many countries through trusted local NGOs.

Gift-in-Kind - Non-cash contributions such as goods, services, or property donated to a non-profit. Examples include office supplies, equipment, or professional services provided free of charge.

Individual Giving - Donations made by individuals to non-profits or causes, ranging from one-time gifts to recurring donations or legacy contributions planned as part of an estate.

Joint Fundraising - A partnership between two or more non-profits to collaboratively plan and execute fundraising campaigns, pooling resources and sharing costs to maximize impact.

Letter of Inquiry - A brief letter sent to a foundation or corporation to introduce a project and ask if they would consider funding it or invite a full proposal.

Lobbying - Efforts by non-profits to influence public policy, laws, or regulations in support of their mission or community needs. This often involves direct discussions with policymakers, grassroots campaigns, or coalition-building initiatives.

Multilateral Funding - Financial contributions pooled from multiple governments or organizations, often managed by international institutions like the United Nations, to support large-scale development or humanitarian projects.

Philanthropy - In the context of funding for feminist movements, philanthropy is often used to describe private or corporate trusts and foundations. This is where wealthy individuals, families or corporations will use part of their wealth to support different causes. The structures and priorities of these foundations and trusts can differ greatly.

Pooled Funding - A collective funding approach where multiple donors contribute to a single fund managed by an intermediary organization, enabling efficient allocation to shared priorities or initiatives.

Prospect Research - The process of identifying and studying potential donors to understand their capacity, interest, and likelihood of contributing, helping organizations create targeted fundraising strategies.

Seed Money - Initial funding provided, typically by a foundation or individual, to help launch a new program, project, or organization.

Unrestricted Funds - Donations made without conditions on how they must be used, allowing non-profits the flexibility to allocate resources to areas of greatest need

(Restricted Funds: Funding that must be used for specific activities or projects defined by the donor.)

Chapter 15. Final Tips, Encouragement, and Additional Resources

Fundraising is an ongoing process that evolves as your organization grows. No matter where you are on your fundraising journey, remember: this guide is not a checklist to complete, but a toolbox to return to again and again.

Final Tips

You don't have to do it all at once. Start with what feels manageable: one grant, one donor, one campaign. Test and learn.

Build relationships before you need the money. Cultivating trust takes time, don't wait for a crisis to begin outreach.

Consistency matters more than perfection. Whether it's showing up online, reaching out to donors, or reporting on impact, do it regularly, even if it's not perfect.

Tailor your efforts but not from scratch every time. Have strong baseline materials (case for support, budget, theory of change, boilerplate descriptions) ready to adapt.

Ask for what you need clearly and confidently. Whether that's flexible, multi-year funding, or fewer reporting demands, be specific. Many donors are open to negotiation if you ask with clarity and purpose.

Collaborate, always. Partnerships, referrals, and collective proposals can take you further than competition ever will.

Documents You Should Have Ready

Preparing your materials in advance can save you hours when a funding opportunity appears. Keep these up to date and easy to access:

Case for Support: A narrative that explains who you are, what you do, and why it matters. Tailor it for different types of donors.

Theory of Change: A visual or narrative showing how your work creates change. Essential for donors who want to see a strategic approach.

Organizational Budget: Include both annual and project-based versions, with clear income and expense lines.

Most Recent Financials: Even if unaudited, have a simple overview of income, expenses, and reserves.

Project Proposal Template: Use as a base to tailor for each grant—include sections like objectives, activities, timeline, and evaluation.

Impact Data or M&E Framework: Basic metrics and/or testimonials that show your results. Include both qualitative and quantitative info.

Key Staff Bios: Short bios with relevant experience. Funders want to know who's behind the work.

Boilerplate Organizational Description: A concise paragraph you can use repeatedly in applications, newsletters, and pitches.

Elevator Pitch: A 30-second version of who you are and what you do. Everyone on your team should know it.

Concept Note: A short (1–2 page) document outlining your organization’s background, problem, solution, and proposed work—great for first-time introductions.

Additional Resources

To keep this guide practical and alive, we’ve moved the Additional Resources section to a living Google Doc where we’ll keep adding new tools, examples of documents, templates, and helpful links over time.

[Access the document here.](#)

We also want to hear from you: if you have a favorite resource, guide, or example that could support other grassroots organizations, you can submit it [here using this short form](#).

You can share in any language:

- Guides or handbooks you’ve found helpful
- Templates (budgets, proposals, communication plans, etc.)
- Examples of real documents (Theory of Change, Case for Support, etc.)
- Blog posts or videos that explain complex concepts in simple ways
- Tools or platforms you use for fundraising or data collection

Let’s build this library together.

About this Guide

This guide was written by Paz Romero, and co-created by members of [Justice Funds](#) and [AWID community](#) as part of AWID’s initiative Who Can Fund Me. It brings together collective knowledge, lived experience, and political reflections from the Global South to help small and local organisations navigate the world of fundraising with more confidence, clarity, and dignity. We hope this guide is one small step toward building more just, accessible, and community-rooted ways of resourcing our movements. This is an open-source tool, please feel free to share it, translate it, cite it, or adapt it in any way that supports your work. If you’d like to connect or share ideas, you can find Paz at pazromero.lp@gmail.com or [LinkedIn](#).