Fundraising for Volunteer Projects

Many people believe that because volunteers do not get paid, volunteer programs don't require monetary resources. Unfortunately, this is not true. Volunteer programs are cost effective but not cost free. Financial resources may be needed for anything from advertising upcoming events to purchasing materials to complete the project. Fundraising is the key to ensuring your project is built to last. Here are some things to keep in mind before getting started.

Determine Your Budget

What's your "ask"? Determine how much money is needed to pay for necessary materials and what other resources could benefit the project, such as donations of equipment or specific skills.

Apply for a Grant

Don't assume that your chapter could not successfully secure grants to support a stream project. There are a multitude of available grant resources. For grants from local organizations, the application process may be as simple as submitting a basic budget and request letter. There is work involved in applying for any grant, but your chances of success are greater than you might imagine.

- Funders are often very clear about what they will and will not fund. Find a match and pursue it, but don't spend time trying to make your project fit a funding opportunity that is clearly not a match.

- Do not get discouraged if your first proposal is turned down – you can always ask the funder for feedback to help you improve your application for the next time.

- Applying for more than one grant will help ensure you receive the full funding you need.

- Follow the application directions exactly. Highlight your program's key goals and how they align with specific grant goals.

- Partner with other organizations on grant applications and provide letters of support for the project from those partners as part of your application.

Ask for Help!

As Ikes, it's often not in our nature to ask for help or support. But you don't know what potential help is available if you don't ask!

- Most businesses (big and small) want to be good neighbors and support good causes. If a business cannot provide financial support, ask whether the company's employees can participate in a volunteer day. Or ask if the company can donate supplies or lunch for a project.

- Offer incentives for corporate partners. You can advertise the event as "co-sponsored by" a company, include their logo on your handouts, and even ask them to share a few words at the event kickoff.

- Find the right person to ask. At a local business, you may be able to walk right in and speak with the owner. Larger businesses may have a more defined process and require a certain lead time for receiving support requests.

Resources

There are plenty of resources available to help nonprofit organizations identify potential funders and write grant applications. Our most important tip: start locally. Community and family foundations all across the country are focused on specific towns, counties, or localized issues and projects. The application process for many of these foundations tends to be less complex than for large foundations, and it is usually possible to interact personally with foundation staff or family members. If you are not sure about local and family foundations in your community, start with a simple Internet search.

The Izaak Walton League of America Endowment is another potential funding resource. The Endowment is a separate nonprofit organization that funds League projects and programs at the chapter, division, and national levels. The Endowment has a simple application process and makes grant awards annually.

Following are a few resources for groups looking to fund stream monitoring activities.

- **IWLA Endowment** (to support projects tied with the League's mission): www.iwla-endowment.org
- **Foundation Center** (general resource on grants and grant writing): http://foundationcenter.org/
- **Understanding, Managing, and Applying for EPA Grants:** https://www.epa.gov/grants
- **Introduction to Grant Writing** (from Purdue University): https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/981/1/

Follow the League on social media and check our website (www.iwla.org) for webinars and other volunteer outreach tips and ideas.

Contact the Izaak Walton League at sos@iwla.org with questions specific to stream monitoring partnerships and fundraising.