



# The Complete Schools Fundraising Handbook:

How to make the most money ever for your  
school, pre-school or kindergarten

This publication is one in a series of practical guides published by Our Community – a world-leading social enterprise that provides a national gateway for Australia's 700,000 community groups and schools.

Through our online Centres of Excellence, our publications, and our training institute, Our Community provides the A to Z of practical resources to empower community groups to raise funds, win grants, attract supporters, and improve their governance, marketing and management.

Our Community also provides advice and tools that allow community groups to link up with the general public, business and government to achieve better partnerships, more donations, more board members, policy impacts and grants management improvement.

Central to Our Community's work is the conviction, backed by research, that community groups are absolutely vital for the development of a thriving and vibrant Australia, helping us weather the transitions in work, learning, technology, demographics, and social roles that shape our experiences and have a profound impact on our lives from cradle to grave.

Our Community is helping community groups from every corner of Australia to deal with the challenges they face by ensuring that even the smallest group from any part of the community sector is assisted to become more viable and sustainable, which in turn strengthens the entire community sector and its ability to impact on the health and wellbeing of every Australian.

[www.ourcommunity.com.au](http://www.ourcommunity.com.au)

The Complete Schools Fundraising Handbook: How to make the most money ever for your school, pre-school or kindergarten

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## Foreword

My mum was a teacher, and when I played teacher as a kid I played it with real chalk, real blackboards, and (if I bossed my friends hard enough) real students, until I could get through uni and finally start getting paid for it. Life shunted me in other directions later, but I've never been tempted to speak lightly of teaching, and I've never underestimated how much support we as a community owe to our schools.

I sincerely believe that every dollar raised to add to a school's core resources does make a difference to the quality of the education our children receive, and as a nation we can never give too much. In Australia, practically everybody out there agrees with this proposition, in principle. It only remains to translate that general principle into the minds of people in your neighbourhood – and that's where this book comes in.

At Our Community we've transformed seven years of consultations with schools, pre-schools, and kindergartens of every variety into the **Our Community Fundraising Formula**, based on the Six Pillars of Raising Funds – donations; grants; community-business partnerships; supporters; special events; and earned income – and keeping them up through the Six Essential Fundraising Actions.

Don't think it's just for the big kids, either. In some ways it's the other way round – the statistics show that in both the government and the non-government sectors small schools raise a higher proportion of their income than big schools. They may be small, but they try harder. Any school, of any size, in any community, can raise more money than they thought possible, if they take the task seriously, learn to do it right, and don't apologise.

Taking fundraising seriously means not treating it as if it's hack work. Many of the people involved with Australia's 14,096 fabulous schools and pre-schools make a distinction between fundraising and the "real work" of the school, looking after and teaching children. No. I'm sorry, but that's not how it works. Getting the resources is what makes the teaching possible. You can't have one without the other.

Once you accept that it has to be done, fundraising can be a creative, exciting, fabulous job, a job that allows you to have a real and long-lasting impact on the health and effectiveness of your school and the community it serves.

But it's not a job that should be left on one person's shoulders.

When your school asks itself "Whose job is it to raise the money?" the answer has to be "Everybody" – not just the principal, or the school council, or the parents' committee, or the person who wasn't at the meeting when all the jobs were handed out. You need to create a culture of fundraising for the entire organisation.

And it's not that hard. In fundraising terms, schools have the wind behind them. Nobody thinks that schools are unnecessary, or a rort, or a beat-up. The public sees schools as they are – unselfish, friendly, and invaluable.

Nobody's going to greet you with insults or slam the door in your face. Everybody likes schools. All you have to do is to move them from there to the point where everybody's OK with chipping in a little for them. How hard can that be?

If the public thought as highly of your school as you did, they'd be willing to contribute. The only thing that stands in the way of them thinking that is that they don't know what you know. Share with them, and they'll share with you.

**Dr Rhonda Galbally AO**  
**Chief Executive Officer**

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# I. Introduction

Schools are without a doubt the most important social institutions in Australia, and when teachers are ranked higher (and paid better) than judges, generals and politicians we'll really have a society worth living in.

We haven't reached that happy time yet, though. As it is, schools are often under-funded, under-loved, and need all the help they can get.

This is one of life's great injustices, and here at Our Community we're doing what we can to mitigate it by helping schools learn how to get some of that money they so much deserve.

## The Only Easy Fundraiser

Schools with little in the way of resources or volunteers often ask for fundraising ideas that don't involve much work or time or money.

There is only one easy fundraiser, and this is it:

1. Close your eyes.
2. Hold out your hand.
3. Wait for someone to put money in it.

If this approach has a flaw, it's that it doesn't actually bring in any money.

It does, however, contain a valuable lesson. There's no such thing as easy money. All you can hope for is easier money.

This guide is intended to help schools take an overview of their fundraising potential over and above the standard Education Department funding – to see where there's outside money available and what has to be done to get it, and to design an effective strategy to fit their needs.

It's about empowering schools to take control of their destinies by putting in place a strong, ambitious but achievable fundraising strategy.

It will make it possible for your school to get the maximum income for your input – but it's always going to be true that the more work you put in, the more money you'll get out. That's one of the basic rules.

There are others.



## The Rules

1. If you don't ask, the answer is always no.  
*Rule Number One. Tattoo it on the back of your hand.*
2. Diversity equals strength.  
*The more the sources of funds you have, the stronger the organisation.*
3. People don't give to causes, people give to people (I).  
*People give when someone they like and trust asks them.*
4. People don't give to causes, people give to people (II).  
*People give when they're able to identify with the eventual recipient.*
5. The first time is to make mistakes, the second time is to make money.  
*Don't change for change's sake – you'll lose your hard-won experience.*
6. The magic word is "Thanks".  
*Let your donors know how very, very, very grateful you are. Often.*
7. Just because they didn't give yesterday doesn't mean they won't give today.  
*Be persistent up to the maximum limits of politeness.*
8. Great oaks from little acorns grow  
*People give tentatively at first; you have to make it meaningful for them before they'll give meaningful amounts.*
9. Make your donors your friends. And make your friends your donors.  
*Building relationships is your most important job ... and a pleasure.*
10. There's no such thing as easy money.  
*The more you put in to it, the more you'll get out of it.*

We can't promise that you won't have to put in some hard work, but we can promise that if you follow the advice in this guide, your hard work will pay dividends for your school.

Australia is a rich, rich nation. While these riches aren't evenly distributed, by any means, even the average Australian family has considerably more discretionary spending power than their parents or grandparents, and they can afford to give significant amounts to any cause that captures their interest, including schools. If you can speak to their ideals, their affections, and their satisfactions then you can draw on this account.

If your school really commits itself to rolling up its sleeves and getting serious about fundraising – and getting serious about diversifying your funding base – you can increase your income security, take a more independent stance, bring in other players, and, of course, buy the stuff you need to have your school achieve its academic and social goals.

## 2. The Our Community Fundraising Formula

Schools raise money by holding fêtes and other special events, by renting things out, by selling things, by getting grant monies, by getting company money, by maintaining relationships with past staff and students, by being given money, and through a number of other means

Your school's fundraising committee has to review all these options, without being biased by tradition or squeamishness about asking people for money.

Think laterally. What other fundraising concepts haven't you tried yet? And what ideas could you take and adapt to your own circumstances?

Think carefully. You want an idea that works and that brings in more money than it costs in time, money and resources to set up and administer.

And you want as wide a spread of ideas as possible. In fact, you need your school's money to be coming from as many sources as you can manage, raised by as many people as you can coordinate.

The healthiest and most sustainable fundraising plans rest on six pillars. These are

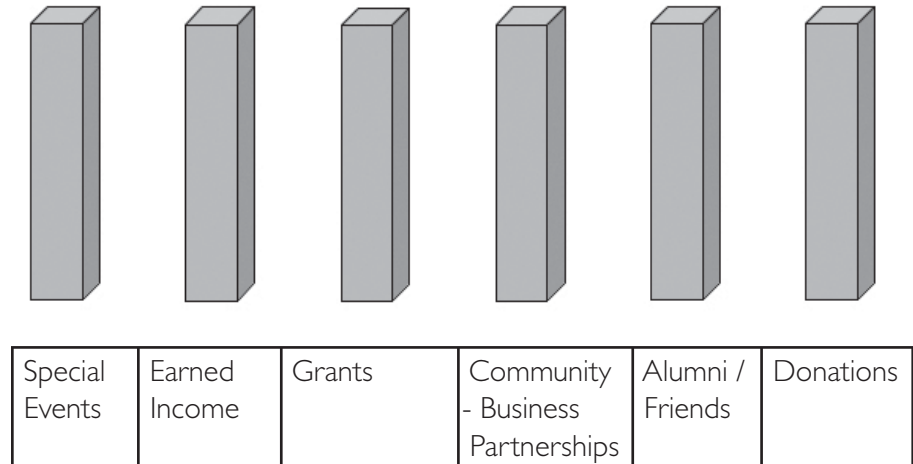
1. Special Events
2. Earned Income
3. Grants
4. Community-Business Partnerships
5. Alumni / Friends
6. Donations

You need to build a structure that is supported by enough of these props for it still to be able to stand even if one or more major funding sources suddenly dry up.

# The Our Community Fundraising Formula

The Our Community Fundraising Formula consists of the Six Pillars of Raising Funds and the Six Essential Fundraising Actions.

## The Six Pillars of Raising Funds



## The Six Essential Fundraising Actions

### 1. Pinning down the actions

How much will you raise? What actions will you undertake to go about raising it?

### 2. Identifying the players

Who's going to carry out the various actions?

### 3. Clocking the timing

How long will each activity take?

### 4. Setting deadlines and checking for progress

Pinpoint the spots where work will need to be monitored to ensure targets are being met. Draw up a timetable and highlight major deadlines.

### 5. Weighing your resources

Which actions will require what resources?

### 6. Adding it all up

How will you know if your plan has worked? How will you capture the lessons?