

# Fundraising: A Summary for Specialist Groups

## Introduction

Securing financial resources to carry out priority activities requires aggressive and creative approaches to both traditional and non-traditional sources of funding. It is also important to ensure that a fundraising plan incorporates coordination and accountability.

### 1. Coordination

There are currently some 120 SSC Specialist Groups, five other IUCN Commissions, nearly 40 IUCN Regional and Country Offices, and another 12 technical programmes. All are in need of, and are pursuing, funds.

**Coordination is essential!** Donors do not want to receive multiple uncoordinated queries and proposals from the same institution. They are sometimes willing, however, to consider more than one request from IUCN **if the process has been well coordinated.**

Specialist Groups are therefore requested to contact their assigned IUCN Programme Officer prior to approaching any donors. Most such approaches will be cleared quickly. However, a few might require discussions with other IUCN entities, and the development of joint strategies.

### 2. Accountability

Specialist Groups must be accountable for any funds raised. It is recommended that Specialist Groups establish auditable accounts with IUCN member organisations. Management of such funds is frequently offered by NGOs as a contribution to SSC.

Specialist Groups must be accountable to individual donors. The foundation, corporation, government agency, or individual has made an investment in your Specialist Group, and **must be kept informed about project progress and expenditure of the funds.** Always provide the donor with all required reports, both narrative and financial, **by the due date.** When a grant is received, be sure to provide a financial reporting schedule and requirements to the financial manager for your account.

## Elements of successful fundraising

Raising funds for Specialist Group operations, Action Plan development, or Action Plan implementation requires careful thought and planning. Fundraising does not begin or end at a particular point, but is a continuous process evolving along with the programme or organisation to which it is attached.

To successfully secure funds, the following elements must be present:

- A clearly-defined programme
- Potential funders
- Clear, concise solicitation materials
- Strategies for solicitations
- Ongoing communications with donors

### 1. A clearly-defined programme

A clearly-defined programme is basic to successful fundraising. The goals and objectives of the Specialist Group, defined within the context of IUCN and the Species Survival Commission, are essential. Objectives must be measurable.

When developing goals and objectives for your Specialist Group, or for a specific project, think about answers to the following questions:

- What problem(s) are we addressing and what do we intend to accomplish?
- Who are our constituents or users, and what do they need from us?
- What makes us unique in the conservation community and well-suited to address the described problem?
- What conservation need(s) are we meeting that would otherwise not be addressed?
- What are our (clearly defined and measurable) outputs going to be?

### 2. Potential funders

There are two main types of funders:

- **Natural constituents:** Might be direct beneficiaries of your programme (e.g., a government agency or NGO in need of the information your NGO is producing) or indirect beneficiaries (e.g., an industry with an interest in protecting a particular species).
- **Philanthropic donors:** These either have personal interest in your work (i.e., individual donors), a mandate to support the type of work you do (i.e., independent foundations), or an interest in assisting the community or communities in which you do your work (i.e., corporate foundations).

Government and multi-lateral agencies might fall into either category.

### **3. Clear, concise solicitation materials**

Solicitation materials will need to be tailored to fit the interests of the individual donors, although the following are recommended for inclusion:

- Talking points for telephone conversations - information about your project that is important for the donor to know. List these points prior to calling so that you cover all the relevant details in your conversation;
- Cover letter;
- Formal proposal;
- Letters of support from recognised experts;
- Conservation Action Plans;
- SSC and IUCN brochures; and
- Journal articles or other printed materials to further understanding of the importance of the request.

### **4. Strategies for solicitations**

Donors need to be "cultivated" through informal conversations, meetings and general communications about your programme. It is important to put the strongest case forward by the person(s) with the strongest relationship with the prospective donor, and at the most appropriate time.

**Develop a relationship with the potential donor:** Include members of the Specialist Group, or other individuals that support your programme, who know the donor. Talk with the donor about your needs. Donors often provide the best guidance about what information they need from you in order to respond positively to your request.

**Cite other donors to your programme:** Knowing that another donor has expressed confidence in your work can help to legitimize your programme in the eyes of a donor.

**Thank the donor:** If the donor grants your request, formal acknowledgement (in writing) and informal acknowledgement (in conversation) are both essential to maintaining a positive relationship with the donor.

**Do not end communication if a donor turns down a request:** A follow-up call might reveal that there was considerable interest in your proposal but insufficient funds during that grant cycle. Explore with the donor future funding potential.

## 5. Ongoing communications with donors

A successful grant application is only the beginning of a relationship with a funding source. The importance of keeping donors informed of the programme's progress cannot be over-emphasised.

Similar to cultivating a relationship before you formally request funds, ongoing communication with the donor continues to build the relationship. Send newspaper, journal and newsletter articles with a short note, or phone about an exciting accomplishment.

If the project design or budget needs to be altered, inform the donor **immediately**. Few projects are so predictable that changes do not occur. Make sure that adequate accountability is built into your project. Donors want to know how their money was used.

If the donor has been kept well informed, is pleased with the outcome(s) and has confidence in your ability to deliver a product (with clearly defined and measurable results), it is likely that he/she/they will donate again.