

[illegible]

(AND HOW TO EXPLAIN IT TO A FUNDER)

Many great projects are accomplished with little or no money. When people come together and work collaboratively, form partnerships, build networks, share, ask, do and persuade, extraordinary things can be achieved. However, every so often your project may need an injection of funds in order to take the next step.

When it comes to getting the support and funding you need for your idea, understanding how to tell your story and who to tell it to are essential. This helps turn ideas into reality and it can help you to plan further ahead, making your project sustainable in the long term.

The following guide is a useful way to piece your story together and get you started with mapping out the individuals, groups, communities and organisations that may be able to fund and support your project.



You have an idea for a project that you think is going to make a difference to your community, and you are at the stage where the only thing stopping it from moving forward is money. But while approaching an organisation for money can be overwhelming, organisations are made up of people, and one of the best ways to connect with people is through stories. Approaching fundraising as storytelling will help you to bear in mind that your main task as a fundraiser is to build connections with your supporters.

You already have many of the skills you need to develop your story. In both your personal and professional daily life you use your personal intuitions and attributes (soft skills) and learnt expertise (hard skills). You maintain healthy relationships and successfully manage tasks through communication, honesty and negotiation; you budget, organise, and plan.

Successful fundraisers blend soft skills and hard skills to develop their complete project story and share it with funders and supporters.

YOU ALREADY HAVE THE SKILLS TO BE A FUNDRAISER

YOUR FIRST STEP:

HOW TO TELL YOUR FUNDRAISING STORY



The easiest stories to relate to are those in which readers can see the challenges of their own lives reflected in the characters' experiences. Your job as a fundraising storyteller is similar. Your goal is to tell the story of your project and the people who your activities will directly help to funders and supporters so that it resonates with their purpose – as we're talking about a professional project, there are parts of the story they'll want to know that you wouldn't normally share with a mate over a cuppa!

Creating a Fundraising Story Canvas will help you to outline your fundraising story. Knowing the different parts of your story enables you to have a clear understanding and way of explaining what you are trying to do, how you are going to do it and what it is going to cost. A clear fundraising story can also help you get volunteers on board, persuade partners to help and obtain pro bono support. That's why you need to tell a story which involves every aspect of your project idea and your plans for what success looks like, even if you don't share all of these elements with everyone. Completing a Fundraising Story Canvas is a useful exercise regardless of what stage you are at with your project idea.

Working through the canvas helps you test the viability of your plan as well as explain it to others, it might highlight gaps you'll need to think about, or bring to light opportunities you hadn't thought of. Before you start to fundraise, research needs to be done to ensure that you fully understand the problem your project addresses and the feasibility of your solution. You should have also secured the support of any partners you will depend on to make your project a reality.

Some funders will require you to be officially registered as an organisation before you can receive a grant but the Fundraising Story Canvas is also a tool you can use to structure and describe a future project before you register as an organisation.

YOUR SECOND STEP:



IDENTIFY
YOUR
AUDIENCE

Once you have your fundraising story outlined and you have a clear description of your project and its beneficiaries, it's time to consider who to approach for funding and support. Which parts of your story are you going to share and with whom?

You shouldn't change your story to meet the needs of a funder. Instead, use your story canvas to help identify funders who have similar missions to yours and persuade them to fund your project by explaining how it works and who it benefits. What are their needs and how will your project help to meet them?

There are lots of people and groups that are connected to your project – whether they know it or not. They may be directly associated with a key part of your project or it could be through a broader connection. You are likely to be talking about a future project so you have to identify prospective funders and supporters whose interests and needs align with your project. Think laterally. Your aim is to develop a rich, mixed portfolio of donors and supporters. It's not just about identifying the usual suspects.

Mapping out stakeholders can help you to build a list of potential funders. But not all stakeholders you identify will support you financially, some will be beneficiaries, others may act as influential advocates who can introduce you to others who can fund you, or may offer you pro bono support in the form of space or advice you would otherwise have to pay for. Getting different kinds of help from different places can show funders that you have local support and demonstrates the value of your work to the wider community. Wide ranging support can demonstrate different aspects of your project, enabling you to appeal to different needs of prospective funders. The more varied your group of funders, the more you can spread your financial risk.

YOUR THIRD STEP:

USING YOUR
FUNDRAISING
STORY CANVAS
TO APPROACH
FUNDERS
AND SUPPORTERS



You should now have a clear understanding of your project's aims and a list of stakeholders of different kinds. Next, you need to prioritise your stakeholder list and identify which of them have the means to give financial support. Concentrate on those stakeholders that are easy to contact, with available funds or an open funding round, whose criteria match your circumstances, and whose purpose resonates with your own. You'll be making your best guesses! The stakeholders who fall in the sweet-spot that mixes all four are the ones who are most likely to give. Don't pin your hopes on a single funder, be prepared to approach several and if necessary fund the project from more than one source, including pro bono support.

The Fundraising Story Canvas is a great tool for mapping out your story, but it's not suitable or appropriate to send it out in its raw format. Your Fundraising Story Canvas provides the information that you need to create storytelling materials. Use it as the foundation to pick out who to tell what to, and how. You may find that you need to create several different versions, e.g. a power point presentation; a website, a brochure, a grant proposal or notes for conversations.

A LITTLE HELP TO GET YOU ON YOUR WAY

HOW TO...

COMPLETE YOUR STORY CANVAS

- 1 Grab your diary and dedicate some time to completing your Fundraising Story Canvas.



- 2 If you are working in a team, bring everyone with key roles together to fill out the canvas. You need to be sure that everyone who has responsibility for fulfilling your project agrees that the story reflects reality.

3 Draw out a Fundraising Story Canvas on a large piece of paper (as large as you can find!), hang it on a wall or spread it on a table. Or have a sheet of paper for each section. Grab a pack of post it notes!

BELOW IS AN EXAMPLE USING THE FICTITIOUS GREEN THUMBS COMMUNITY PROJECT.

<p>MISSION Your mission should state the purpose of your project and connect all of your activities.</p> <p>Green Thumbs Community Farm's Mission: Green Thumbs Community Farm exists to ensure that all of our neighbours have access to affordable, local, sustainable food.</p>		
<p>PROBLEM What is the problem that you are trying to solve? Have you done any research? It can be helpful to offer data that confirms the problem exists.</p> <p>Due to a loss of local farmers, our region has seen a sharp rise in unemployment. Consequently, the local population has had to look for work in 1500s common land. However, the land has been a source of food for the community. There is a growing concern amongst the local population that the land will be lost.</p>	<p>VALUE PROPOSITION This is the heart of your story where you explain the benefits and unique features of your project idea.</p> <p>Green Thumbs will help to ensure that the local population has access to affordable, local, sustainable food. We will provide a source of food for the community, and we will ensure that the land is used for the benefit of the community.</p>	<p>OUTCOMES What will success look like? How will you measure your achievements? Strong outcomes are time bound and measurable.</p> <p>1. We want to see a reduction in the number of people who are unemployed in the local area by 15%. 2. We want to see a reduction in the number of people who are living in poverty in the local area by 10%.</p>
<p>SOLUTION How will you solve the problem that you identified? What is your project idea and how is it going to help? Is there any evidence you can use to reflect why your solution will work?</p> <p>The community has agreed to transfer the land to the community. The community has agreed to transfer the land to the community. The community has agreed to transfer the land to the community.</p>	<p>KEY ACTIVITIES What are the main things that you are going to do?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultivate the common land, plant with a variety of crops. • Grow and produce organic food. • Harvest and distribute the food to the community. • Harvest and distribute the food to the community. 	<p>KEY PARTNERS Who will help you to deliver your solution? Who can help? Who do you need to have on board?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local farmers, providing produce. • Local farmers, providing produce. • Local farmers, providing produce. • Local farmers, providing produce.
<p>BUDGET Identify the key areas of your budget. Remembering that your revenue is critical for the success of your project.</p> <p>£10,000 Farm £10,000 Farm £10,000 Farm £10,000 Farm £10,000 Farm £10,000 Farm £10,000 Farm £10,000 Farm £10,000 Farm £10,000 Farm</p>	<p>FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY How will you ensure that your project is financially sustainable? Think about who your audience is for each part of your story - you may need to use more than one approach.</p> <p>£10,000 Farm £10,000 Farm £10,000 Farm £10,000 Farm £10,000 Farm £10,000 Farm £10,000 Farm £10,000 Farm £10,000 Farm £10,000 Farm</p>	<p>COMMUNICATION CHANNELS How will you share stories, plans, and opportunities? Think about who your audience is for each part of your story - you may need to use more than one approach.</p> <p>Local farmers, providing produce. Local farmers, providing produce. Local farmers, providing produce. Local farmers, providing produce. Local farmers, providing produce. Local farmers, providing produce. Local farmers, providing produce. Local farmers, providing produce. Local farmers, providing produce. Local farmers, providing produce.</p>

4 Start with what you know. Use post-it notes to start with because you may have competing ideas for each section and you may move them around. That's normal, particularly in the early stages. Write different ideas down on different post it notes.

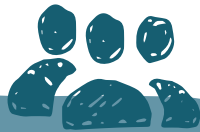


'Power to Change wants to support and develop new and existing community businesses across England in their missions to improve their local areas. Reading our criteria is the best way to ensure your project aligns with our aims. Prepare, do your research and ask us questions. If you feel you are not ready, wait, continue with your planning and submit when you've strengthened your project.'

Fergus Arkley - Programmes Manager, Power to Change

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Once you've mapped out the whole canvas, or as much of it as you can, go back and decide which ideas you think are going to deliver the most achievable solution. You may discover at this point that you have more research to do, that there's a critical partnership you need to shore up before you're ready to roll or that you want to park an idea for the second phase of your project. That's normal and part of the intention of this tool.



'People in the Lead' is central to The Big Lottery Fund's vision. People led means involving the people who will benefit from your project, their networks and the wider community in your idea, design, delivery and decision making. When you share your story, share your plan to engage people and how you will continuously build on learnings to improve your project.'

Christine Ord - UK Portfolio Officer,
Development and Engagement, Big
Lottery Fund



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When your team has sense-checked and agreed on all elements of the canvas fill it out or write it up. You're now ready to identify your supporters and potential funders.



HOW TO...

CREATE A

STAKEHOLDER MAP

- 1** Start by writing your project name and a short description in the middle of a large piece of paper. Then start thinking about everyone that your project impacts, directly and indirectly and write them all down. These could be businesses, foundations, other community groups, schools, professional groups, the council, interested individuals, etc.
- 2** Think about further connections. Do your beneficiaries have links to other organisations like community centres or social services? Are there local businesses that might provide in-kind support like materials or loan equipment in return for publicity? Do you know anyone with professional skills who might be persuaded to help for free – a lawyer, accountant or a designer for example?
- 3** Identify which groups have the means to provide you with funding. Do some internet research on the usual suspects; trusts and foundations are usually the first step. But you aren't going to figure out all the answers sitting alone behind a computer so network! Don't be afraid to ask potential stakeholders for advice to test your theories on how your project fits with their priorities. This will help you work out whether they are funders or influencers, or both.
- 4** Identify groups and individuals that could introduce you to others who could fund you. Sometimes people are on the list because they are influencers pure and simple. They can't or won't support you directly because of conflicts of interest or limited resources but they might be able to introduce you to others who can. Once you have identified all of your stakeholders, start to think about the different elements of your fundraising story you may need to share with them, and how you might need to share it.

HOW TO... USE YOUR CANVAS

- 1** Identify which parts of your fundraising story are most relevant to different stakeholders.
- 2** Make a plan to emphasize that part of the story when you send your introductory email or make a phone call to see if you can have a meeting, or submit an application.
- 3** Decide which format you will use to share your fundraising story before you have a meeting with your stakeholders.

For example, you could turn your Fundraising Story Canvas into a six-slide power point presentation like this

- The problem
- The solution
- How that solution adds value to the community
- The team that is delivering the project
- What success would look like during the next two years
- The total funds required



By following these steps and using the storytelling tools you will be able to map out your fundraising story, start identifying potential funders and supporters.

This is the first part of developing your fundraising plan, which doesn't stop with winning funding, building relationships will mean supporters increase their commitment to your project idea financially and/or as an advocate to attract other funders – dependent upon their capacity.

Relationships take work and building trust and rapport with funders takes time. If you're successful then you're at the start of what will ideally be a productive relationship with a funder. Don't be disheartened if you have a knock back or two – every story needs some editing and refining, and with the right approach yours will soon have another chapter to tell.



This has been produced for Eden Project Communities – Eden’s way of supporting and enabling people to become more active within their communities and deliver the social change they want to see.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Heather Thomas has spent 15 years working in fundraising, communications and strategy for not-for-profit organisations in the UK, Netherlands, USA and Denmark. She’s successfully met fundraising challenges for big organisations like Tate and the Royal Academy of Arts, community organisations like the Brighton Dome and Festival, digital organisations like YouthNet and small enterprises like her own sustainable food start-up, The Mindful Kitchen.

Over the years, she’s secured millions in funding from trusts, corporations, individuals, and run two successful Kickstarter campaigns. She’s currently head of development and fundraising at the Science Gallery Venice.



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