

Fundraising for Community Granges

It seems many Granges are looking for M&Ms. Money and Members. As someone who has been Treasurer at two community Granges and a non-profit Foundation and spent some time attempting to raise funds, I can offer some personal experience.

In the past three years, Marys River Grange #685 was confronted by roof leaks, and our woodstove and wood furnace were over sixty years of age and had deteriorated enough to require replacement. Despite our Grange having some savings and investment, the cost of these replacements far exceeded our financial capacity to pay for them.

Loans were an option, but members felt this would encumber the Grange with long term payments. Instead, members decided to attempt to raise the funds themselves. Two years and almost \$40,000 later, Marys River Grange's finances are nearly back to the level when we began this effort, and we have a new roof, a new stove and new furnace.

We would like to share some of our experiences with other Community Granges, so they might learn from our mistakes and hard earned knowledge. What we learned can be distilled into a few simple categories and we hope our hard earned lessons can make the efforts of others easier and more successful.

Community

If your Grange resorts to fundraising, it will need to reach out to your community for support. If you invest in your community before asking for support, your target audience will be more receptive. In our case, we were able to approach local businesses and individuals and emphasize what Marys River does for the community, such as provide low cost medical clinics, host community events and support Philomath Community Services Food Bank as reasons why they might wish to support our efforts. **Being known in your community for doing good works is perhaps the single most valuable asset your Grange can possess**, and this takes time and effort that must be spent well in advance of any fund raising endeavor.

Seek partnerships. It is a lot of effort to organize a large fundraising event if it involves multiple activities. Marys River hosts an annual Harvest Fest, where we sell space to vendors, and sell fresh pressed cider. Vendors pay a small amount and make money from sales. The Rebekahs from I.O.O.F. provide kitchen service and raise money from that activity, and Marys River provides the space and kitchen rent free. Likewise, we invite Philomath Community Services a free space for a bake sale. Last year, they allowed the local 4-H Small-bore champion to run the bake sale using their goods, and utilize the funds for travel to National competition. We have also, in past Festivals, provided raffle space for Summit Grange and its quilt raffle. Having multiple organizations work together to raise funds benefits all involved, and furthermore, creates bonds and opportunities that will benefit your Grange in the future. You might even get some new members!

Individuals

Not everyone enjoys fundraising. At its core, it involves asking other people for money, and a lot of disappointment. Many people are uncomfortable with this. The best fundraisers are those who can promote your Grange with pride, feel the cause is worth taking on, and are optimistic. You cannot force this on someone, it must be undertaken willingly. You must not be afraid to ask to be a good fundraiser.

Perseverance

Be prepared to be disappointed. You are going to hear 'No' a lot more than you hear 'Yes.' The best baseball hitters in the world succeed about one time in three. If you were able to obtain one grant in three or get 33% of your requests for donations to be fulfilled, you would be doing far better than most fundraisers. After several months of working on raising funds for the roof, I was quite discouraged and the goal seemed insurmountable. Frankly, I was very discouraged, and about ready to toss in the towel. But then I went to State Convention and took the Fifth Degree. It was a transformative process for finding the determination to reach our goal. There will be stretches like this. Do not quit, you can do it. Just one small step at a time, until you are done.

Events

The internet is full of fundraising ideas, and your members can be a great source of ideas as well. Raffles, bake sales/benefit dinners and auctions are some of the most common ideas, and there are many variations on these themes.

One idea that worked well for Marys River was what we called our 100 Envelopes raffle. Instead of selling all tickets for the same price, there are simply 100 tickets for sale. One for one dollar, one for two dollars, one for three dollars all the way up to one ticket for \$100. Prizes are assigned to tiers, and the best prizes can only be won by the purchase of the most expensive tickets. In our case, we drew only from numbers 81-100 first, then added numbers 61-80 to the drawing for tier two drawings, added 41-60 for tier three prizes until the final tier when numbers 1-20 were added. If you can sell all one hundred tickets, that generates \$5050! You must be careful when conducting raffles like this so the same number is not sold twice. You can raise or lower the number of tickets (10 tickets will raise up to \$55, 20 will raise up to \$210, 200 will raise up to \$20,100). You will want to offer multiple prizes across the reward tiers if you sell more than twenty or thirty tickets. The one issue we discovered with this is coordination of sales. You can not simply give each member tickets to sell, as each is a different value.

Many traditional Grange crafts provide opportunities. Summit Grange creates and auctions a quilt annually. Marys River has developed a community reputation for our Pie Auctions, and we have sold member jams and jellies at our Harvest Fest, in addition to fresh pressed cider. A free Grange Hall rental is a prize that is quite inexpensive to provide.

Community Granges should also be aware there are state laws and regulations concerning raffles, Bingo and other fundraising ideas based on chance.

Regulations can be found here (there is also link on this page to resources under Getting Started - <https://www.doj.state.or.us/charitable-activities/charitable-gaming/charitable-gaming-statutes-and->

rules/

Grants

Applying for grants is a lot of effort, but can result in substantial gains. Each agency providing grants has a specific mission. It may be serving minorities, restoring historic buildings, supporting agriculture, support for rural communities or something else. Your chance of successfully being awarded a grant will benefit from being aligned with the specific mission, so do not use a cookie-cutter approach with your applications. Tailor each one to the granting organizations stated goals.

Applying for grants will involve collecting a lot of information. Each varies, but usually you will need a project budget, showing costs and where funding is coming from. You may need a copy of your Grange budget. You will need to explain your project, and this is where you wish to make your project align with the granting organization as much as possible. For example, even though we were seeking money for our roof, we applied to the Meyer Memorial Trust Fund by explaining that the roof repairs were necessary to continue the operation of our Farmworker Medical Clinic, as the MMTF is interested in underrepresented rural communities and also health.

Be aware, that at the completion of your project, or grant cycle, you will very likely need to make a final report detailing expenditures and results. This is important, not only does it help the granting institution, many of them will not award future grants to an organization which has not completed a previous grant, including this step.

Be aware that some grants will only award a portion of your costs, usually 10-25%, while others may be willing to completely underwrite the cost of a single event or program. When Marys River initially applied to the Ford Foundation for a \$5,000 God neighbor grant for our roof, we were told that we not close enough to our goal at that time and were denied. But remember the advice about not giving up! I contacted them and was told they liked our grant and want to approve it, but would only do so after we were much closer to our goal. A few months later, we resubmitted and that grant was what carried us over the finish line.

Many grants are only given to 501c3 organizations. Community Granges are 501c8 organizations. However, you can use the Oregon State Grange Foundation to apply for the grant on behalf of your Grange, for a two percent fee. You should calculate this fee into your grant application as an administrative fee cost. Marys River and Willamette have both used this ability to qualify successfully for non-profit grants several times. It greatly increases your pool of grants to apply for.

Willamette Grange #52, where I currently server as Treasurer, is in a unique position. Their Grange Hall has been declared a historic building, and historic building preservation is a legitimate IRS non-profit activity. We have formed the Willamette Community and Grange Hall Historic Building Foundation. While it is possible to do this without a lawyer, it probably is not appropriate for most Granges. It requires a IRS non-profit activity and does incur fees, including licensing the Grange name. If you need to raise a substantial amount of money for a qualified activity however, it could be a consideration.

A discussion of all grant opportunities would be beyond the scope of this, but I would like to mention, the single easiest grant to apply for is the Oregon State Grange Matching Grant. This program awards up to \$5,000 to a Community Grange, which must match the awarded amount in money, donations or labor (counted at roughly \$22 per hour). The information and forms for this grant program, due September 1 of each year (The forms may still state September 15, that is not correct). May be found at

Information - http://orgrange.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/SKM_C654e20081311190.pdf
and http://orgrange.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/SKM_C654e200813111082.pdf
Application - http://orgrange.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/SKM_C654e20081311180.pdf

The Ford Foundation, Meyer Memorial Trust Foundation are common choices for Grange applications. The USDA may help with grants to buildings, but the determination is based on the average income of the area served by the Grange, so those near locales such as Eugene, Corvallis, Salem or Portland, with higher median incomes would not qualify. I believe that Walthville Grange was able to use this for their roof.

Also, there may be opportunities for local grants at the town or county level. As an example, we have used the Benton County Cultural Coalition grant to help enhance our Hall stage. Be sure to search for any such grants when you begin your search for opportunities.

There are some additional opportunities here, and there are many more available with diligent online searching.

https://nonprofitoregon.org/resources/funding_opportunities

The Grange as a source of Fundraising

Many Grange members are more than happy to donate to their own Grange, or even other Granges, recognizing the value of the Grange. While Grange members are a valuable option, there can be a danger in returning to the same well too often. Be aware that asking members to provide raffle prizes for free incurs a cost for your members. When Marys River held our 100 Envelopes Raffle, we offered to purchase prizes from our members and local community. In most cases, they were provided for free, but everyone appreciated the Grange was willing to support them.

For some smaller projects, and, when our Hall was built, in the 1930s, Marys River Grange members purchased shares (\$25 in the 1930s and \$50 recently) to help cover costs. These shares are then paid back as the Grange funds allow. They are, in effect zero-interest loans provided by membership, and in addition to meeting financial needs, allow members to develop a more personal interest in our Hall.

If your project is large, don't be afraid to ask other Community Granges, in your Pomona meeting, or in the Oregon State Grange Bulletin.

Crowdsourcing

This is the day of the Internet, and online fund raising is a thing. The two most common platforms are Kickstarter and GoFundMe.

Kickstarter is targeted toward entrepreneur funding – starting a new business, producing a record, game or book, or art, while GoFundMe is more aligned with requesting money, often for victims of accidents, help with legal costs, or repairs. Kickstarter uses a rewards program, where you supply a scale of rewards to donors (for a album creation product it might be \$1 a thank you, \$15 a CD, \$25 a vinyl album, \$50 signed CD, \$75 signed vinyl, \$100 signed whatever plus t-shirt, \$500 house concert at your house, etc), while GoFundMe merely solicits funds. I suspect in most cases, GoFundMe would be the best choice, but if your Grange is hosting a music event or play, or releasing a CD or some sort of book, and willing to provide pledge rewards, Kickstarter might be the better choice.

Both platforms will, of course, take small cut of donations, and also the electronic transfer system will want their cut too. I've found Marys River ended up with just a slight amount under 95% of the stated donation amount.

Merely establishing crowdsourcing is not enough. No one will donate unless they know about it. So post to Facebook, mail to your friends, ask them to post to Facebook, share it on timelines. And then repeat this until everyone you know is sick of seeing it, and then share it some more. The more it is shared and spread, the more likely someone will see and contribute. Marys River generated a little over \$1,000 from GoFundMe for our roof, and currently Willamette just passed over \$500, and still working on it.

I hope the above recollection of our experiences, is able to help other Granges with raising money. While it can seem overwhelming, especially for large projects, it really is not. Take it in small pieces, stay focused and upbeat, and in time you will not only find yourself at your goal, you will also have promoted your Grange and raised awareness, and maybe even collected some new members along the way. And, the frustration, stress and disappointment you encountered at some stops along the way will all fuel the joyous euphoria you are going to feel when you cross the finish line.