

LGBTI Fundraising Campaigns 101: The 5 crucial elements to raise funds effectively

[Blog](#), [Fundraising](#), [Strategic Communications](#)

Do you want to start a fundraising campaign for your LGBTI organisation but are unsure of where to begin? We got you. In today's blog we bring you the main learnings from our latest Skills Boost session, case studies and examples of the work done by participants.

All around the world LGBTI organisations face a lack of resources, particularly funding that can be used for flexible needs. One of the ways to tackle this issue is for activists to start or boost their own fundraising campaigns.

Our latest LGBTI activism Skills Boost session looked at how to create effective fundraising campaigns targeted at individual donors, exploring some good practices and examples. Here's what our participants learned.

Getting started

One of the most common questions we received from activists is around how to get started: what are the first steps to take if you've never done individual donor fundraising before? ILGA-Europe's fundraising guide for LGBTI activists, [It Shows That People Care](#), provides a practical list of elementary steps.

First, to map your network of potential donors, ask yourself who you know. List categories like past event guests, mailing list subscribers, followers on social media, Pride?goers, friends and family of staff members, contacts of board members, friendly journalists and politicians, and so on.

Secondly, map your resources. Getting started with fundraising will require some investment, at least time and effort. List the resources, not only money, that you have to work with. Do you have access to a free venue, the support of an artist or performer, contacts at a private sector company, a volunteer with graphic design skills?

And thirdly, work out your elevator pitch. To inspire anyone to donate, practise describing in a concise and simple way why you need money: what is the problem your community faces and how can donors be part of the solution? Make it understandable for people outside of LGBTI activism. Think about how you'd explain your need to your grandmother or a random neighbour.

The power of story

People want to help other people. This is why people respond more strongly to stories than statistics. When asking for money, try to avoid being too abstract. Don't only describe the issue, but show how it effects real people in your community and how lives can be improved through the support of donors. Tell your story through a character with whom your audience can empathise.

In a [well-known study](#) on the impact of story-telling in fundraising involving Save the Children, people who were given the story of one seven-year-old girl and her family facing hunger donated on average double compared to those who were given factual information about food shortages affecting three million people. The fact that people

would more likely support one person than three million people shows that people are more likely to support when they can identify with and empathise with another person.

But how can we tell our stories in the LGBTI movement?

In the Skills Boost we looked at some great examples of how LGBTI activists have told their fundraising stories. Last year Prague Pride, raising money to continue a community centre, shared stories of people from the local LGBTI community and what the centre means to them. For example, [the story of 17-year-old Adam](#), who couldn't be open about his trans identity at home or at school, and for whom the centre was the first safe haven where he felt acceptance. This is also an example of sharing a real story in an anonymised way, which is something you might have to do, so as not to put community members at risk.

Another success story is that of Transgender Network Switzerland (TNS). In December 2021, TNS launched a crowdfunding campaign to raise money for an important court case for legal recognition of non-binary people. The fundraising campaign, rather than focusing on too much legal jargon, featured community members sharing what legal recognition would mean for them, like [Miyako](#), who explained that having the correct gender marker in their documents would have a positive impact on their mental health and make them feel more protected.

Press emotional buttons

Creating a fundraising message is not an easy task. Not only do you want people to stop and take in your message, you want them to be inspired to take the action of donating. People give from the heart, not the head. Empathy, solidarity, joy, outrage or fear are some of the feelings that make people tap on that donate button. You want people to think: *"that's terrible! How can I help?"* or *"I want to make sure others like me get the help they need"* or *"I want to be part of this positive change"*.

However, in order to do fundraising ethically, we must not victimise people in our communities or sensationalise their circumstances (these are particularly relevant considerations in [crisis situations](#)). Be mindful that the stories you tell are ultimately empowering ones. In the Skills Boost we took some inspiration of how [LGBTI-themed TV commercials](#) aim to change hearts and minds by pressing emotional triggers, whether through powerful stories, humour or empowering queer joy.

Think about who your audience is – local community members, parents of LGBTI people, diaspora communities, LGBTI communities in other countries – and what story or emotion would move them.

Clear and direct ask

If you have a powerful story to tell packed with an emotional punch, but don't actually ask for money, you'll have created a lost opportunity. Don't forget, or be shy, to include a clear call to action. Supporters want to feel needed and that they are making a difference, so show them how they can be a key part of improving lives for LGBTI people however you are going about doing that.

Testing our messages

Skills Boost participants had the opportunity to receive feedback on fundraising posts they had created for social media. *Overcoming Together* group from Russia created an [Instagram post](#) inviting followers to support by making a purchase in their online store. The post featured cute and appealing graphics of the items available to buy, and explained clearly how support goes towards their work helping helping community members experiencing intimate partner and domestic violence. *Queer Svit* created [social media posts](#) as part of their crowdfunding campaign to help queer and BAME (Black, Asian, and minority ethnic) people in Ukraine get to safety. They used eye-catching graphics, testimonials from people the group has already helped, and compelling figures of how many others could

be helped with the campaign's target amount.

There are often fears around individual donor fundraising, and asking for money can seem like a big step. One of the biggest take-aways from the Skills Boost session was to simply go ahead and give it a try. Finding out what works and what doesn't is often a process of trial and error, and even if you don't see big results immediately the steps you take to get started will strengthen your organisation and plant seeds for future fundraising success.

If you didn't catch the Skills Boost live, you can watch the recording [here](#). You can also have a look at how to [make great videos at home](#), [graphics](#) with free tools, and [building media relations](#) if you didn't have the chance to attend previous Skills Boost sessions. Remember that if you are an LGBTI activist in Europe and Central Asia, you can [join our private communications support group on Facebook](#) where you can vote for the theme of the next Skills Boost session. And, if you haven't joined [The Hub](#), ILGA-Europe's free resource centre yet, do it now! There are plenty of great, practical fundraising resources available there at the click of a button!