

Philanthropy for Municipal Building Projects

With the upcoming federal budget and economic stimulus package, municipalities are counting on funding for infrastructure projects. For many communities, fundraising campaigns to generate community giving and sponsorship dollars are part of the funding mix. Even in tough economic times, individuals, service clubs and businesses continue to give to worthy projects. So what can municipal leaders, recreation staff, volunteers and community user groups be doing now to get ready?

According to Sue Egles, Partner in Inspire, a Toronto-based fundraising firm that works with many municipalities, there are a few key common factors to all successful fundraising campaigns for projects such as arenas, libraries and community complexes.

Define the project (in fundraising lingo – build your case for support). In other words, be prepared to inspire your community with the following details: what are the key features of your new building project, how will the project enhance community life, what is the economic impact, what are the health benefits and how much will it cost.

Why do you want community fundraising support? It's not inspiring or compelling to ask your local businesses, community groups and families to give to projects that are fully funded or solely to reduce taxes. Would this motivate you to give? Not likely. Be prepared to position the need for community support as value-added, that community giving will make a significant difference. If you didn't have \$2 million from the community, would you build? Why is the community partnership important?

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Sue Egles, CFRE

Sue is a partner with Inspire and has a diverse fundraising background both in and outside of the company. Since joining Inspire in 1997, her broad fundraising experience has resulted in extremely creative and successful programs for municipalities across Canada.

Inspire is a Canadian philanthropic consulting firm that has, in its 20 year history, helped over 1,000 organizations raise more money.

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Get your leaders involved. People give generously to projects they are passionate about and the more people involved the better. To do so, create a fundraising steering committee made up of senior staff, select politicians and a few key community leaders. In particular, look for young entrepreneurs, husband and wife teams and blend these with your founding leaders that have been part of building your community over the last few decades – the mentoring of old guard and new is a wonderful side benefit.

Develop your strategy (in fundraising lingo – writing the campaign plan). This document is the blueprint for success for any campaign. It guides both volunteers and staff on the “art” and “science” of how to do good campaign fundraising, the timelines for the campaign phases, who does what and financial milestones along the campaign timeline.

Get out and talk. People love to be asked their opinion and give advice on worthy projects. Consider undertaking a fundraising planning study that focuses on gathering advice so that you can put together a winning plan. Firms, such as Inspire, work in communities across Ontario helping municipalities to conduct Planning Studies to ask some key questions, such as - What do you like about our new community centre project? Do you have any concerns? Who might the top donors be? Who might the key fundraising volunteers be? How much can be raised? These questions, plus many others, help define the success factors and form the basis of a fundraising plan that is built around the DNA of each community.

By positioning your need for community support carefully, asking for advice (fundraising lingo for this is “cultivation”) and building a plan that looks at your unique strengths and character, major fundraising for municipal infrastructure can be very successful.

For more information about Inspire or our services, including Feasibility Planning Studies or Campaign Strategy Development please contact Sue Egles, CFRE, at segles@inspireinc.ca or (416) 544-9700. Visit Inspire’s website at www.inspireinc.ca.

Some of our projects...

- Aurora Public Library, Aurora, Ontario
- Barrie Public Library, Barrie, Ontario
- Belleville Public Library, Belleville, Ontario
- Bradford West Gwillimbury Leisure Centre, Bradford, Ontario
- Grand Bend Beach Enhancement, Grand Bend, Ontario
- K-ROCK Centre, Kingston, Ontario
- East Elgin Community Complex, Aylmer, Ontario
- North Huron Westcast Community Complex, Wingham, Ontario
- Orillia Public Library, Orillia, Ontario
- The Shores Recreation Centre, Forest, Ontario
- Toronto Public Library, Toronto, Ontario
- Village of Forestburg, Forestburg, Alberta
- Waterloo Public Library, Waterloo, Ontario
- YMCA of Chatham-Kent, Chatham, Ontario