



Top Tips



Building relationships with funders

Mission and Values

This guide will be useful for: organisations wishing to develop relationships with existing and potential funders.

What you want to achieve:

Ongoing relationships with funders are developed, strengthening connections that could potentially lead to future funding.

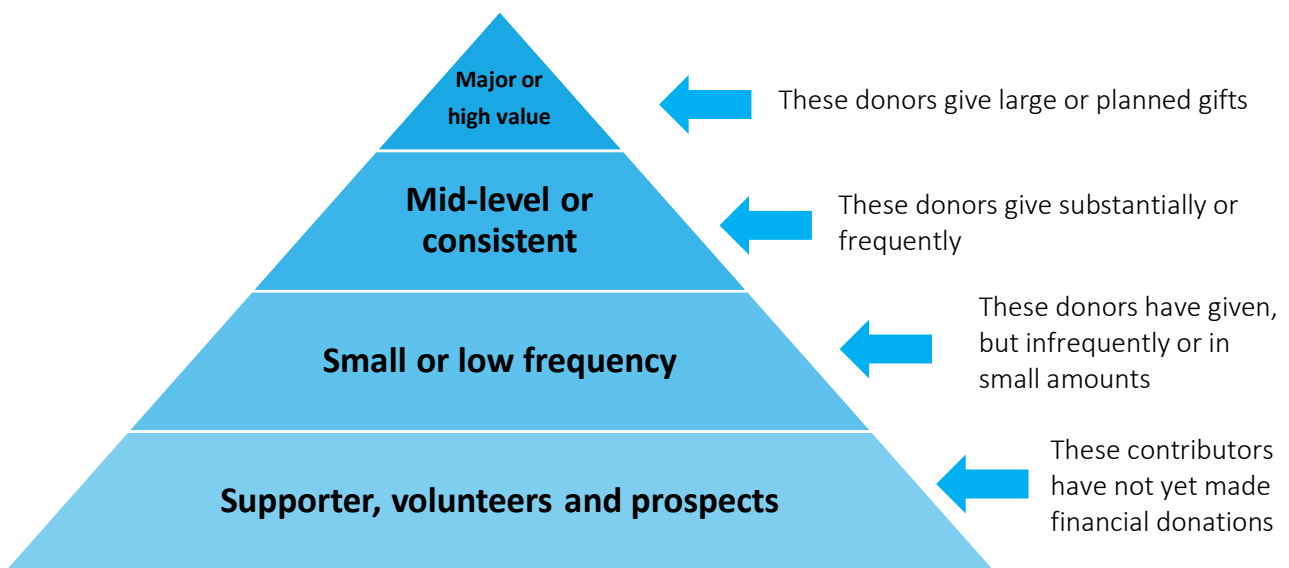
What you'll need:

- Staff / trustee time to build relationships
- Positive attitude to involving funders in your work
- A bit of creativity in considering how to involve them

How you'll do it:

- Identify who are your **'prospects'** – your potential funders, donors and supporters. Map out your involvement with, and links to, existing and potential funders / donors / supporters. Start with those closest to your organisation e.g. trusts and funders who have given before, and then work outwards to explore individuals, groups, businesses, or charitable trusts who may be interested in engaging with you **because your cause or project relates to their interests or activities.**
- Research – before you approach potential funders, find out as much as you can about them first. Use the **'3 Cs'** as a way of assessing how responsive they may be to your approach: **connection to you; concern for your cause; capacity to give.**

- Plan your approach – decide who should approach your potential funder. Your organisation may have dedicated fundraising staff members, you may rely on volunteers, or look to your Board. **Decide on specific roles and responsibilities for everyone involved and maintain excellent communication within your organisation.**
- Could you use the *donor pyramid* to think about how you can move people from the bottom of the pyramid to the top through engagement opportunities such as site visits, open days, corporate social responsibility volunteering offers (for local or larger businesses) or community fundraising events, and **build a plan of action around the opportunities most relevant to your project.**



Example of a 'Donor Pyramid' – there are different models so see what fits your organisation best.

- Involve – **how can you bring your potential funders closer to your work, cause or project?** Consider ways you can help them to better understand your mission and vision, the impact that your work has, and how their support will contribute to that. Offer them a 'behind-the-scenes' tour or site visit to your vehicle depot, suggest they may want a short journey in one of your vehicles to chat to passengers, invite them to your AGM, share specific information such as your annual report. Ask permission to include them on mailing lists for newsletters, e-bulletin or other communications.
- Ask – you may need to 'make the ask' by a written proposal, application form, letter, phone, or at a face-to-face meeting. Do your research. Make sure you've established the 3 Cs (*connection, concern, capacity*) for any potential funder. **If meeting a grants officer, decide who from your organisation is the best person to attend** – this may be based on their existing connection, experience or expertise. Arrange a follow-up to the meeting such as a phone call or full proposal.

- Thank – thanking someone for their support is important, and should be done as soon as possible after receiving a grant or donation. **Acknowledge a funder’s support but check first – some funders have set ways they would like to be acknowledged (such as through use of their logo on your website and annual report) while others may wish to remain anonymous.** You could consider issuing a press release about their support, adding a news item or blog to your website, featuring them in your newsletter or e-bulletin, or crediting them through a presentation or speech or at an event, or you could provide a certificate of thanks to display in their workplace.
- Respond – **if a funder has asked for further information, supply it promptly.** If they have sent you an offer letter, make sure you and trustees fully understand the details in the offer letter. Check any ‘*Conditions of Grant*’ information as, it is essential to comply with these. Seek advice from the grants officer if you need to clarify anything.
- Plans can change – if they do, it’s vital to keep the funder informed of any changes to the project, especially the project budget. **If you wish to alter the spend of the project grant, seek (written) permission from the funder before proceeding, otherwise funders may clawback some funding.** If you don’t keep them informed, you could jeopardise current or future funding. Return any monitoring report before the deadline. Funders want to see your project developing, so welcome open communication about any learning from the project.
- Maintain – it takes less time and costs less money, to retain the funders you already have than it does to recruit new ones. Existing funders are good prospects for future donations so make sure you look after them through **thoughtful and effective ongoing engagement and maintenance, also known as ‘stewardship’.**
- Monitor and analyse the impact of their support and report back to them. Keep records of press and media coverage that you can share, follow up with further proposals that are tailored to their interests and keep your funder engaged through regular communication. **Evaluate your relationships with funders, and take any learning into new relationships.**

Connecting Communities in Wales

This top tips guide was put together as part of the Connecting Communities in Wales project run by the Community Transport Association. The project is funded through the Welsh Government Rural Communities Rural Development Programme 2014-2020, which is funded by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and the Welsh Government, and aims to support community transport in Wales through creating new partnerships, bringing funding into the sector and creating new transport networks. Find out more at ctauk.org/cciw

