

**150**

**ways**

**to raise money**

**(when you don't  
have any money)**

by  
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Layout by Rebekah McGrady



## Let's get started!

This guide includes 150 (mostly) simple ideas for raising a little (about \$150) more money than you have right now. By taking advantage of one or more of these ideas two things will happen:

### 1. You will have more money.

Obvious, I know. The subtle part is you will have money that you weren't counting on before. *Don't put it into your general operating fund.* Even if you don't have a sustainability plan (yet), earmark the money now. If you don't, when you have an opportunity to start creating your plan, the money will be gone.

### 2. You will have a successful fundraising experience.

This is probably more important than the money. Most people who really hate fundraising have never actually done it successfully. By raising small amounts of money in easy ways now, you are preparing yourself to raise larger amounts of money in more involved ways later.



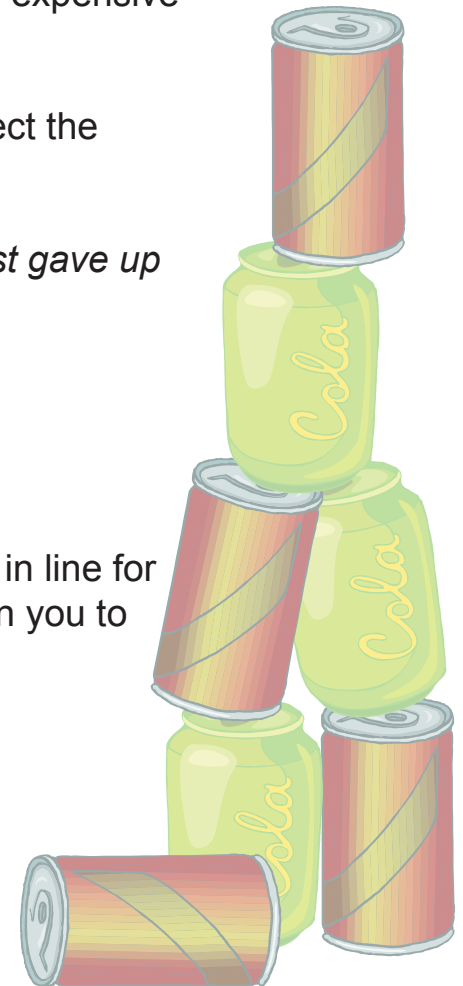


# Quick and Easy:

*These ideas require little specialized knowledge, planning, or start-up capital.*

1. Make a personal donation of \$25 and ask 5 friends to match it.
2. Hold a garage sale -- by yourself or with other supporters of your cause.
3. Mow lawns/shovel driveways in your neighborhood.
4. Get 15 friends to support your cause at \$10 each.
5. Get 1 friend invested enough in your organization to give \$150.
6. Get 150 friends (*or random strangers*) excited enough to give \$1.

7. Wait tables and donate your tips -- quit after a week.
8. Give plasma.
9. [Donate your birthday gifts.](#)
10. Babysit.
11. Stop eating in restaurants for a month, or order water instead of an expensive drink. Collect the savings in a jar (*actual or virtual*).
12. Cut an expensive element (*like meat or soda*) from your diet. Collect the savings in a jar (*actual or virtual*).
13. Collect and sell your aluminum cans (*takes slightly longer if you just gave up soda*).
14. Ask your neighbors to give you their cans as well.
15. Pick up odd jobs on Craigslist.com.
16. Arrange to “camp” overnight for someone who wants a good place in line for Black Friday sales. You will need at least 5 people (*at \$25 each*) to join you to get to \$150. This will make the camping more fun anyway.





17. House-sit for people going on a long trip.
18. Be a pet-sitter for a weekend.
19. Sell homemade baked goods to people who need to take them to parties, but don't have the time to bake themselves.
20. Get a donated prize from a local business and raffle it off.
21. Ask local churches to take up a special collection for your cause.
22. Open a checking account during a "[\\$100 checking account bonus](#)" promotion.
23. Set up an alternative swear jar in an office or community setting. Every time someone begins a sentence with the word **like**, they put a quarter in the jar.
24. Walk dogs.
25. Lapdance for a night! *(Maybe not a first choice, but I'm leaving it here to make sure you are still paying attention!)*
26. Sell used clothing at a consignment shop.
27. Go caroling with a donation box. Make sure to let listeners know where the money will go. It doesn't have to be Christmastime for this to work.





**28.** Save the “cash back” or award points from your credit or bank cards.

**29.** Donate your spare change. Some banks will take your change from every transaction and put it in a savings account to promote savings. Use your savings to support your cause.

**30.** Do a friend's dishes for a week -- or a month -- depending on the friend.

**31.** Clean for a cause: Offer to clean a potential supporter's house for \$150 -- let them know the profits will go to the cause *(If you sell this right, you might not have to actually clean, but come prepared to do the work)*.

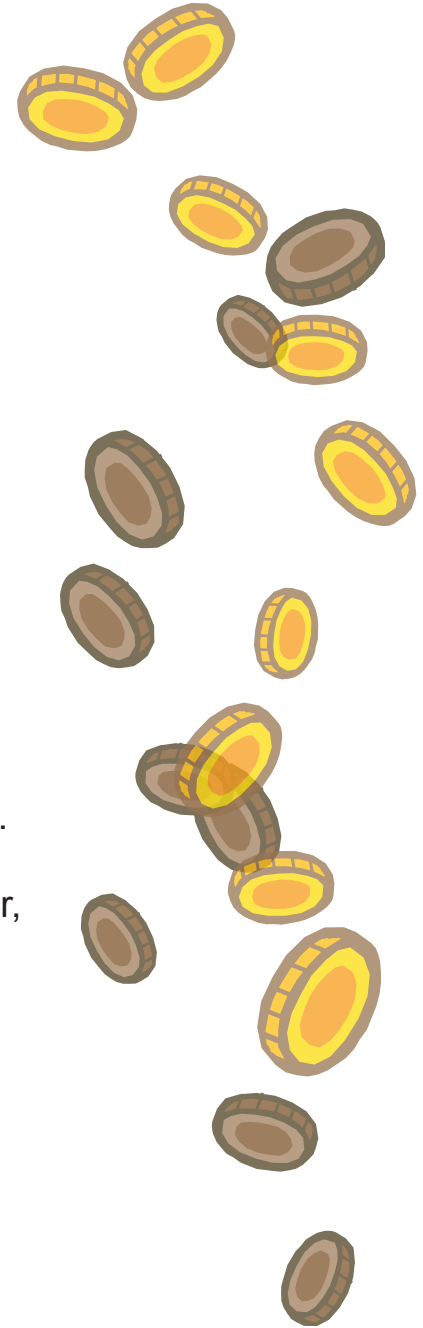
**32.** Ask your friends for ideas. *(Almost all of the ideas in this guide came from the fabulous people listed in the [acknowledgement section](#)).*

**33.** Make up a silly award and sell votes for \$1-\$5 a piece. This can be a “coveted” award where people vote for themselves, or an “anti-award” where it's more of a joke. Depending on your group, either way can work.

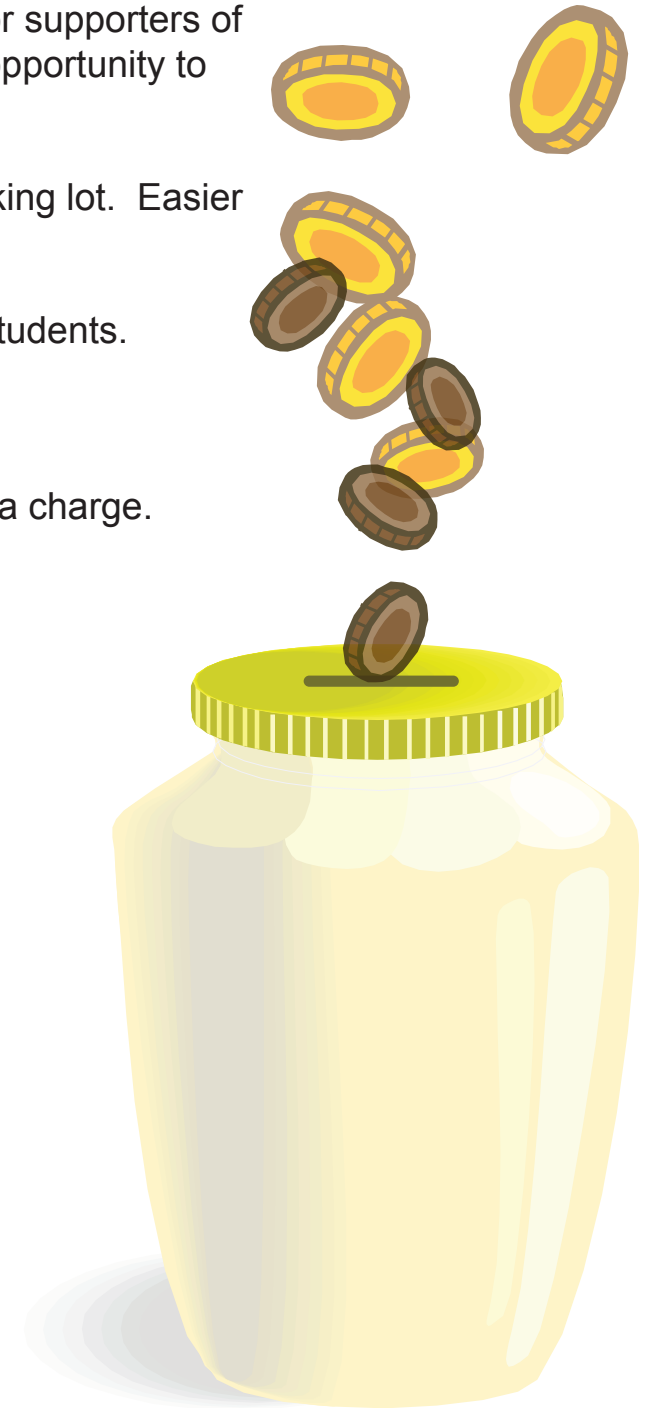
**34.** Sell 50-50 raffle tickets for \$5 each. 1/2 the proceeds go to the winner, 1/2 go to the organization.

**35.** Sell bottled water outside events on hot days. *(Make sure you have, or don't need, a permit).*

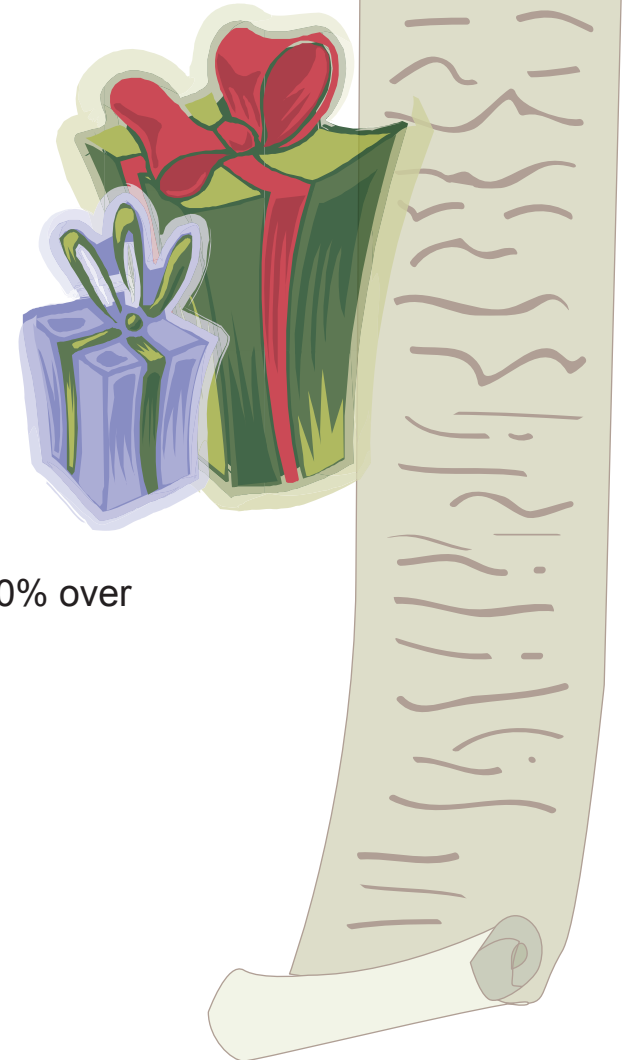
**36.** Sell advertising space on the side of your car.



37. Invite people to pay \$10 to become “charter” members or supporters of your cause. Send them special updates and give them the opportunity to feel part of it. It’s also a good way to find volunteers.
38. Wash car windows inside and out in a grocery store parking lot. Easier and more useful than a full car wash.
39. Type papers. Especially useful if you live near college students.
40. Address wedding invitations or Christmas cards.
41. Paint numbers on curbs, add specialty stenciling for extra charge.
42. Clean gutters out in the fall.
43. Sell cookie dough.
44. Kill weeds in sidewalk cracks.
45. Wash sports uniforms for parents of teen-aged athletes.
46. Shine shoes for prom or other local dress-up events.
47. RV wash.



48. Set up gift-wrapping service in local shopping center.
49. Freeze and sell complete homemade meals to busy families.
50. Ask coworkers to donate \$1 a day for one week just to be awesome people.
51. Save your change at the end of each day in the proverbial jar.
52. Get Black Friday (or other crazy-shopping seasons) wish lists in advance and do people's shopping. Charge 10% over the total cost of their purchases.
53. Clean out garages.
54. Put together IKEA-style furniture.
55. Create and sell a holiday cookbook.
56. Grocery shopping service. You take the list, do the shopping and deliver groceries to client's kitchen. Charge 10% over grocery bill. (\$10 minimum)
57. Sponsor a tailgate party.



58. Sell picnic baskets for Independence Day (or other summer holidays).
59. Sell fireworks. Don't forget to get permits.
60. Sell care packages for parents to send to college students.
61. Decorate Christmas trees or put up/take down holiday decorations.
62. Plant your neighbors' flowers in the spring or bulbs in the fall.
63. Rent a chainsaw and trim bushes or small trees.
64. Provide entertainment at a child's birthday party.
65. Rake leaves.



# Requires some planning:

66. Host a Swing Dance and charge \$5-\$10 for admission.
67. Host a [Charity Poker Tournament](#) -- 20 players pay \$10 to play and compete for \$50 worth of non-cash (*keeping you legal*) prizes.
68. Convince a local bar or restaurant to give you 1/2 their profit for a night in exchange for the increased business they will have due to your publicizing the the event and making them look good.
69. Organize a Charity Music Fest where the musicians play for free and attendees make donations. Sell drinks at the event to make even more money.
70. Tip for terrible service: Find a local restaurant willing to have amateur servers for one evening (for free). Publicize it like crazy and make sure all the customers know what's going on, and raise money on tips. Great PR for the restaurant.
71. [Host a cake-walk](#).
72. Invite local businesses, including grocery stores, to donate gift cards. Then re-sell the cards at face value (or a small discount) to your supporters.
73. Wash things -- cars, pets, RVs.





**74.** Rent a power-washer. Knock on doors and ask people if they want their house washed for \$25. (*Probably good to practice on your own house first*).

**75.** Connect donors to your cause. For example, nonprofits serving at-risk youth could auction time or services donated by the clients they serve. e.g. cookies baked by the actual kids, a kid and mentor coming over to make dinner for the family, etc.

**76.** [Host a casino night](#). You can rent blackjack tables, get a few people to be dealers, have attendees buy chips, and then have a few prizes donated by local businesses. If you can also sell donated food and beverage, even better. Remember, beverages don't have to be alcoholic.

**77.** Host a Hula hoop contest, with a \$1 entry fee. (Find a [professional hooper](#) to help you stock the contest. If you want a more artistic connection, consider [hoop dance](#)).

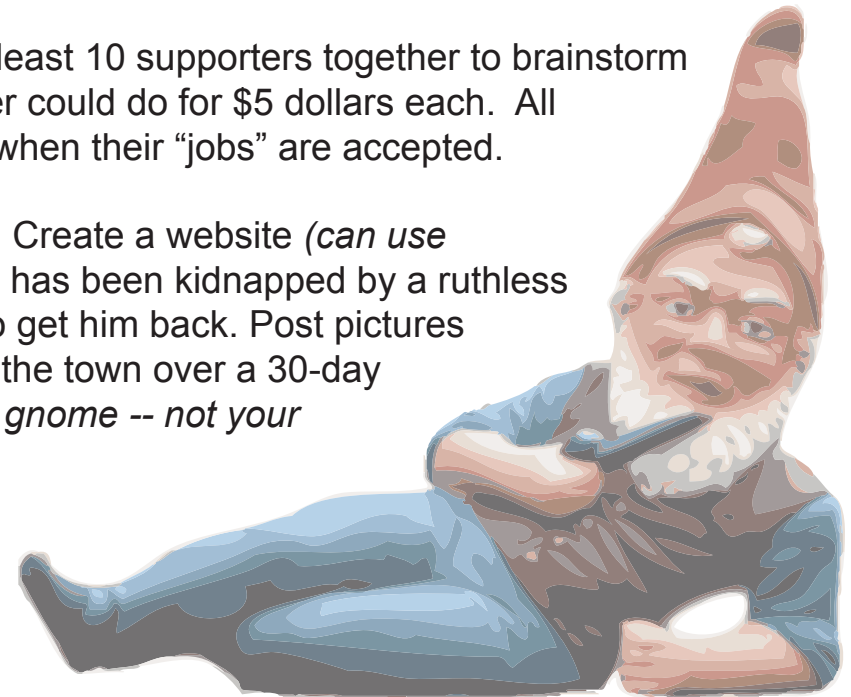
**78.** Ask 2-3 local bands/acts to donate their usual cover charge to your cause. You may be able to get the venue for free as they will keep the bar takings. The promotion of the event can be done for low or no cost via social media.

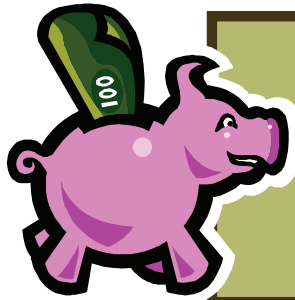
**79.** Host a Pancake Breakfast. Use local cooks, or hire the local equivalent of [the Pancake Man](#). Fish fries, soup suppers, and spaghetti dinners all work about the same way. If you have access to a community center or high school cafeteria, and volunteer cooks, you have most of what you need. These events are very popular in small towns, but could also work in a city, especially if you highlight the nostalgia and community building aspects of the event.





80. Car bash. Charge \$5 for the opportunity to swing a sledge hammer at an old car. Liability releases are probably a good call.
81. Jeans to work: If you have pull in an office environment, exchange the right for your employees to wear jeans for a \$5 donation to your cause.
82. Host a tweet-a-thon. Here are [two examples](#) of how it might work. *(If it takes off you will raise way more than \$150. If not, you may make less.)*
83. Host a \_\_\_\_\_a-thon (hack, rockband, dance, tv, walk). Use the entry-fee to raise money and award donated prizes if you can get them. If you can do it, connect your “blank” to the work of your organization.
84. Set up a photo stand to take pictures of the Easter Bunny or Santa Claus with little kids.
85. Hold a used book sale at the local community center.
86. Hold a “[fiverr.com](#)” party. Get a group of at least 10 supporters together to brainstorm and post 3 things apiece the individual supporter could do for \$5 dollars each. All participants then donate the money they make when their “jobs” are accepted.
87. “Kidnap” and then ransom a garden gnome. Create a website (*can use [wordpress.com](#) for free*) about how your gnome has been kidnapped by a ruthless band of squirrels, and you need to raise \$150 to get him back. Post pictures of the captive gnome in different places around the town over a 30-day period. *(Note: you should only kidnap your own gnome -- not your neighbor's)*





## Requires planning & some start-up capital

88. Throw a party. Provide food and charge for alcohol. Make sure your guests know what the money supports, and make sure you have a place for them to give additional donations.
89. [Host a Charity Run/Bike Ride.](#)
90. Sell Avon. (or Mary Kay, or Tupperware, Pampered Chef, or Party Lite). If you aren't already a consultant, this may work better if you partner with a friend who already has product available to sell.
91. Get a group of at least 5 people or families together and give each \$40 to create their own fundraiser. At the end of a set period of time each group returns the original money plus what they earned. If you are working with a Christian cause you can connect the exercise with the [Parable of the Talents](#)
92. Hold an on-line [charity auction](#). You can also set up your own auction-site using a [wordpress blog](#).

- 93.** Host a wine tasting event. This can work in your home (with donated wine) or by making arrangements with a local wine bar.
- 94.** Host a [mini-golf tournament](#). If you are feeling ambitious, you could host a regular [golf tournament](#).
- 95.** Sponsor an in-person silent auction with donated auction items.
- 96.** Buy roses from a flower shop/street vendor and sell them individually for profit.
- 97.** Host a themed (like VA Reel) dinner/dance. Works really well if you have a barn.
- 98.** Host a vintage fashion show. Enlist the help of a local celebrity--especially if he/she happens to be a clothing collector.
- 99.** Auction a \$100 bill. The catch is the last two bidders have to pay.
- 100.** Throw an amazing party. Rather than charging admission, sell souvenirs. Like [spray paint space-art pieces](#) you created while they watched.
- 101.** Sell t-shirts promoting your organization.



# Requires some expertise (or specialized equipment)

102. [Sell your possessions on E-bay.](#)
103. Create and sell t-shirts with general appeal on [Cafepress.com](#) or [Zazzle.com](#)
104. Sponsor a dunking booth, if you can find a good candidate to sit on the seat. and you know where to get a dunking booth.
105. Work with local art students to create and sell “hungry bowls” or “empty bowls.” Patrons buy a ticket, go to a meal, and get to keep their bowl. Get local businesses (or individuals) to donate the food to increase your profits.
106. Sell used books -- and increasingly, other used items -- on [Amazon.com](#).
107. Sell homegrown / homemade products at your local farmers market.
108. Open an [Etsy.com](#) store.
109. Become a [mystery shopper](#).



110. Submit articles to magazines. ([Or a blog](#)).
111. Sell other people's stuff on E-bay. Charge them a fee for the service.
112. Proofread papers or other writing.
113. Teach the local language to non-native speakers.
114. Create and sell [photo-books](#).
115. Develop a compelling street performance. Don't forget the donation box.
116. Register for an affiliate sales program. [Amazon.com](#) is a good place to start.
117. Sell your old electronics on [gazelle.com](#).
118. Rather than just asking for general donations, set sponsorships based on some of your actual needs. A theatre might have a \$14 "tie line sponsorship." A music program could offer music stand or microphone sponsorships. A soup kitchen could offer a "feed a family of 4" sponsorship. This sort of ask connects the funds to your work better than "um, yeah, we need money to pay for staff and stuff." The money goes to the same spot, but "support a kid for a year" is much more compelling for donors.
119. Add a donate button to your website. Send a compelling story, with a link, to all of your followers explaining why they should click on it and how much they should give (*You will probably make way more than \$150 this way*).

[Donate!](#)



- 120.** Don't have a website? [Pledgie.com](http://Pledgie.com), [Chipin.com](http://Chipin.com), and [Facebook Causes](https://www.facebook.com/causes/) all work in similar ways.
- 121.** If you have a cow yard, you can sell lottery tickets to a ["first poop" bingo event](#).
- 122.** Give \_\_\_\_\_ lessons. (knitting, baking, origami, guitar, photoshop etc.) You can charge for the class or take donations at the end.
- 123.** [Create and sell spray-paint space art.](#)
- 124.** Paint murals on buildings.
- 125.** Make quilts or crafts to sell at craft fairs or farmer's markets.
- 126.** Host a scrapbook day. You bring the supplies so that students who pay for the class leave with their own scrapbook.
- 127.** Teach someone how to use their new computer.
- 128.** Provide In-home IT consulting services.
- 129.** Set up [wordpress.com](http://wordpress.com) blogs for hobby users.
- 130.** Write and record personalized songs for special occasion gifts. Sell them for other people's special occasions.



Art by Greg Moran



131. Deliver sing-a-grams on Valentine's Day
132. Make balloon animals during community events.
133. Paint houses.
134. Make and sell bird houses.
135. Sell "blooper" dvds with funny back stage and rehearsal moments.
136. Knit and sell feather scarves.
137. Write and sell an ebook.
138. Sing (or play an instrument) outside the grocery store.
139. Become an [affiliate marketer](#) and donate a portion of sales.
140. Find 10 lottery-ticket addicts and ask them to give you \$15 instead of wasting it on the lottery.
141. Create a useful, free resource and sell sponsor ads. (see the last page of this [blogging calendar](#) for an example).





# I thought there were 150 ideas?









**Sweet. My fundraising problems are solved! I'll just use these ideas to fund our mission work directly. . .**

Not exactly. These ideas are a great way to raise a little bit of money fast. They aren't designed to support your organization for the long haul. As soon as you stop giving them 100% of your focus, the funding will dry up.

In addition, many of these ideas work really well in the beginning but lose their impact over time, which means you will have to work harder for less money.

If, however, you use these techniques to raise funds to buy the time, space, and expertise you need to develop sustainable systems to grow and nourish your organization, you will not only develop the capacity to raise far more money than is possible through these start-up ideas, you will ultimately spend less time and energy doing it.

**You keep talking about “sustainability” and “capacity building”**

I'm glad you noticed. The methods used to raise money fast are different from the methods used to raise money consistently. If you rely on “fast” ideas too heavily, or for too long, you run the risk of burning yourself out, driving your organization into the ground, or both.

To become sustainable, you need to raise money consistently. The best way to do that is to create systems for the three elements of your work -- programming (*mission-centered work*), outreach (*all the things you do to reach your right people*), and fundraising plans to work together so when one element advances, the other two move forward as well.





## That sounds great! How do we do that?



Hi, I'm Maureen Carruthers from Low Hanging Fruit Communications and I am developing resources to help you build systems that will get the three elements of your organization working together in just such a manner. Some of these resources will be free and others will be for sale. If you want to be among the first to know when I release new material be sure to visit [Low Hanging Fruit](http://Low Hanging Fruit) often and sign up for [my newsletter](#). Newsletter subscribers will also get a discount on premium content.

*I'll never sell, rent, or abuse your e-mail address, and if you change your mind you can easily unsubscribe at any time -- no hard feelings.*



## Before you go, let me say thank you. . .

First, to you for the important work you are doing to make your part of the world a better place to live. You are making a difference.

Then to all the people without whom this guide would not have been possible:

My colleagues in [Sonia Simone's Remarkable Marketing Blueprint](#), especially [Mike Korner](#), [Beth Wodzinski](#), [Stacey Cornelius](#), [Rachelle Strauss](#), [Willie Hewes](#), [Jen Waak](#), [Michelle Howard](#), [Karen Tiede](#), [Mary Flaherty](#), [Iain Gray](#), [Carole Brown](#), and [Sherice Jacob](#) who helped me brainstorm and [Stacey Cornelius](#) and [Mike Korner](#) who helped make sure I completed all my thoughts and spelled all (ok, most) of the words correctly.

My friends and fellow board members at [Mach 30](#) who have allowed me to test my ideas out on them, especially J. Simmons, Andy McGrady and Greg Moran who contributed ideas to the list, and [Rebekah McGrady](#) whose graphic design skills I count on to make everything more beautiful. Without her, this book would have been a link to a Google Doc.

And finally to my mom, [Lucie Carruthers](#), who contributed over 30 ideas, edited early drafts, and most importantly, constantly encourages me to keep working even when projects turn out to be harder than I thought.

Thank you!!



### A final note

If this book was a help to you, please return to [the Low Hanging Fruit website](http://lowhangingfruit.us/) and tell us about your organization, how much money you raised and how you did it. It may be just the encouragement your fellow world-changers need to get started.

