

Making fundraising a win-win in early childhood education and care settings

BY MARY ECKHARDT, MOVE WELL EAT WELL – EARLY CHILDHOOD

Financial sustainability and systems that support fundraising occupy much of the time and energy of directors, managers' committees and boards in the not-for-profit and for-profit community sector.

For some early childhood education and care services, fundraising takes up significant space in the yearly calendar; for others, there is a nervous reliance on increased enrolments, fees and government funding.

Many early childhood education and care services will consider fundraising not only to strengthen their operational budgets, but equally to support the children in their care, their families, community and specific causes.

Developing a centre-based fundraising policy is always a good place to start, with guidelines that support your organisation's mission and goals.

The Funding Centre is an enterprise at OurCommunity.com.au, Australia's Centre for Excellence for the nation's 600,000 not-for-profits and schools providing advice, tools, resources and training. This online resource has a policy bank that includes a template for an ethical fundraising policy.

The top tip from this resource for successful fundraising is to mix and match, and select multiple forms of fundraising to suit your needs:

'Many organisations run into trouble because they only have one or two sources of funding, or because they only have two or three people really involved in raising money. If any of the sources or any of the people go away, the organisation will likely find itself in trouble ... The trick is to be creative and make the fundraising initiative work for you.'

Whether your service is raising funds for the budget or for charitable purposes, the following types of fundraising options can be pooled together.

Fundraising options to mix and match

- Special events – fairs, celebrations, sports events, dinners, concerts
- Sponsorships – cash, goods, services, facilities

- Memberships/alumni
- Community/business partnerships
- Sales – auctions
- Crowdsourcing campaigns (for examples, visit GiveNow.com.au)
- Donations – family, community, corporate (for example, computers, cameras, gardens, excess fruit and vegetables, herbs, furniture, bikes and active play games)
- Bartering – goods and services
- Raffles/games of chance
- Discounts – services, goods, cash
- Grants: government, local, state and federal
- Philanthropic – corporate/foundations.

Select fundraising options that take into account your centre's mission and its curriculum, and that support your calendar of events and ensure buy-in by staff, families and the community. Promotion of your fundraising event should include the motivation behind the event and, if appropriate, link the event activities to learning outcomes for the children within your service.

The following three examples are from early childhood services that have joined the Tasmanian *Move Well Eat Well* – Early Childhood Program. As you will see, the outcomes achieved went far beyond improving their budget.

Cygnets Community Children's Centre

Cygnets Community Children's Centre is a small, rural, community-run early childhood education and care centre, where healthy food always has been an important issue. The centre joined the Tasmanian *Move Well Eat Well* – Early Childhood Award Program, and over the past three years 'has really started to get it going!'

We developed a specific plan for the outside growing area and for the kitchen. We realised not every educator has green fingers.

We applied for a grant with the Myer Fund to develop a practical seasonal growing handbook for our age range (six weeks to 10 years). We were successful and

this resulted in our own handbook (to share around, of course!). We also upgraded our garden through a range of grants: The Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal, for which we allied with the local kindergartens of two primary schools, paid for new vegetable beds. The joint grant also resulted in yearly visits to each other's gardens, which also helps our children to be 'school ready'. A successful grant from the Huon Valley Council paid for fruit trees and plants, wine barrels, re-landscaping, water hoses and an extension of the storage shed for putting away garden tools. All works have been done by our children's parents. The Centre allied with three local schools to put on the table a fundraiser called 'Cygnet on a Plate'. Local chefs and cooks came together to cook a gourmet dinner with local produce, and most of our local businesses were involved in one way or another. It became a massive success, with a profit of \$20,500, of which 10 per cent went to our Centre. It also resulted in stronger relationships between all schools and the Centre for other events, like a theatre play and chess contests.

At the moment, we are organising the second 'Cygnet on a Plate', which will pay for a renovation of our kitchen, and will fund kitchen equipment for small hands so cooking with our children will be even more fun! The outside playground is one of our biggest assets. We strongly believe in imaginary play and have designed the playground accordingly. Whenever the weather permits, the children are outside enjoying themselves with skate cars, balance bikes, climbing frames, balancing planks and sandpits. The Centre has been successful in a grant with the Tasmanian Community Fund to upgrade the sandpits. We have big, deep sandpits that are great for real digging. And when it rains or the sun is too hot, a grant with the Bendigo Bank has paid for blinds and shade sails, so children can be outside no matter what!

Coastal Family Day Care

Coastal Family Day Care Scheme set out to address some lunch box problems that they were having and developed a booklet, 'Lunch Box Ideas at a Glance'. We now distribute nationally to childcare services and schools. (Currently, we have sold 20,000.) All our families get one free in their registration packs and our educators use them in their practice. I never expected them to be so successful, but the simplicity of it and the useful pictures seem to be what works. You can see it on our website, Coastal Family Day Care.

Scottsdale Child Care Centre

Scottsdale Child Care Centre has been highly motivated to raise funds for cancer research and support. This is partly due to a child at the service who is fighting cancer, another

family of two who had lost their mother after a four-year battle with cancer, and, most recently, the Centre has a mother who has been diagnosed with breast cancer. We hosted a family fun night featuring a netball game and skills. Our community is very sports- and activity-driven, and we tried to tie in an activity that would spark the support of many families. The night was all about raising funds through fun events and physical activity for all ages. The event was not about competition; it was about having fun with families in a fun and healthy way. We all warmed up, had a small game of mixed ages netball and finished with some warming down. We had a barbecue with donated meats and wholemeal breads from local businesses. We also had bottled water donated by a local supermarket. The night was a huge success, with about 15 families attending and a total of about 70 people enjoying the fun. As we are a small service of around 40 enrolled families, we were very happy with result. We had lots of feedback about the night, including the following testimonies:

- 'It was great to have a family fun night that involved the children in sport'
- 'Maddi (who is three) loved being able to play real netball!!!'
- 'It is nice to have a fundraiser that doesn't always just involve food. Great night for all the family'
- 'The face painting was good but I loved the push-ups with Sarah.' 🍷

Fundraising links and resources

- Our Community – GiveNow.com.au
www.ourcommunity.com.au
- Junior Landcare Yates Garden Grants
www.juniorlandcare.com.au/grants-2/yates-creative-gardening-grants
- Junior Landcare Coles Garden Grants
www.juniorlandcare.com.au/grants-2/coles-grants
- Complete Schools Fundraising Handbook – How to make the most money ever for your school, preschool or kindergarten
www.fundraisingcentre.com.au/book/book-schools-fundraising
- Brain Child A-Z List of Fundraising Ideas
<http://brainchild.org.au/support-us/fundraising-ideas>
- Move Well Eat Well Fundraising
www.movewelleatwell.tas.gov.au/families/limit_sometimes_foods/fundraising
- Healthy Fundraising – Careforkids.com.au
www.careforkids.com.au/childcarenews/2013/october/22/fundraising.html
- Healthy Fundraising Ideas – Cancer Council Fundraising Ideas
www.cancerCouncil.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2010/11/09271_CAN3042_HealthyFundraising_FINAL.pdf-low-res-for-web.pdf

Mary Eckhardt is Manager of Move Well Eat Well – Early Childhood Award Program, Department of Health and Human Services Tasmania. You can get in touch with Mary by emailing mary.eckhardt@dhhs.tas.gov.au.