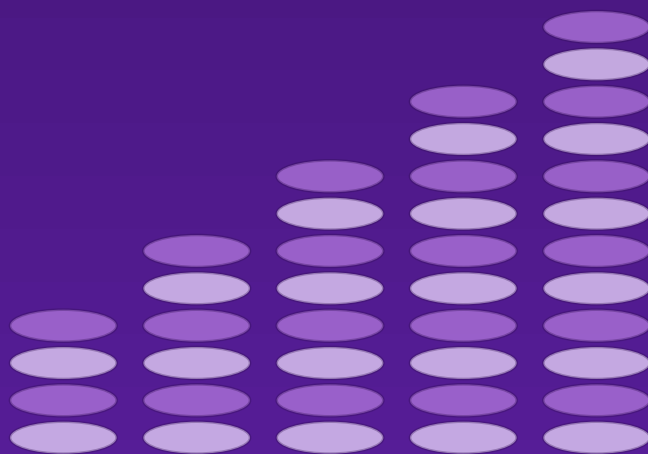


RESIST. REVOLT.

A FIELD GUIDE FOR ORGANIZERS & ADVOCATES

Grassroots Fundraising

Whoever pays for the movement shapes the movement. Let it be us.



01 Who Pays, Decides

Grassroots fundraising means raising money from the people the movement serves and their allies, many small and regular contributions, instead of depending on a few wealthy donors or institutions.

Why it matters

- **Independence.** Money from members can't be pulled when the campaign gets too militant or targets a funder's friends.
- **Ownership.** People who pay dues feel, rightly, that the organization belongs to them.
- **Stability.** Hundreds of small recurring gifts are steadier than one big grant that might not renew.
- **It's organizing.** Every ask is a conversation that deepens commitment. Giving is a rung on the ladder of engagement.
- **It proves power.** A base that funds itself shows targets and allies that the movement is real.

Read through a class lens

Philanthropy is often wealth that was taken from working people, returned on the donor's terms. Foundations and big donors can do good, but they rarely fund their own undoing. The labor movement was built on dues: workers pooling small amounts to build power no boss could buy off. Grassroots money is a material expression of solidarity and the foundation of a movement that answers to its members.

A healthy goal: most of your budget from members and small donors, so no single source can make or break you.

Who pays the piper calls the tune.

OLD PROVERB

If the movement wants to call its own tune, its members have to pay for it, together.

02 Where the Money Comes From

Build a mix. Lean on sources that grow your base and your independence.

Member dues

- The backbone. Small, regular, often sliding-scale.
- Builds ownership and a predictable budget.

Recurring donors

- Monthly gifts from supporters by card or bank.
- Ask everyone who gives once to give monthly.

Events

- Dinners, parties, shows, raffles, potlucks.
- Raise money and build community at once.

Personal asks

- Face-to-face asks to members and allies for larger gifts.
- The single most effective method.

Digital & crowdfunding

- Email, text, and social appeals around moments.
- Peer-to-peer pages where members fundraise from friends.

Merch & sales

- Shirts, posters, buttons, zines.
- Spreads the message too. Watch your margins.

Allies & coalitions

- Unions, congregations, and partner groups.
- Often fund specific campaigns or events.

Grants (with care)

- Useful, but never let them set your agenda.
- Avoid depending on any single funder.

03 How to Make the Ask

People give because someone they trust asked them. Most people who don't give were simply never asked.

1

Prepare

Know who you're asking, their connection to the issue, and what they might give. Decide on a specific amount before you go.

2

Connect first

Start with the relationship and the cause, not the money. Ask how they're doing and what they care about.

3

Tell the story

Share why the fight matters, what you've won, and what's at stake now. Make it concrete.

4

Ask clearly for a specific amount

"Would you be willing to give \$25 a month to keep this fight going?" A specific number is easier to say yes to than "whatever you can."

5

Then be quiet

Let them think. Don't fill the silence or lower the amount on their behalf.

6

Respond to the answer

Yes: thank them and make it easy to give right now. Not now: ask what would work, or a smaller amount. No: thank them sincerely and keep the relationship.

7

Thank within 48 hours

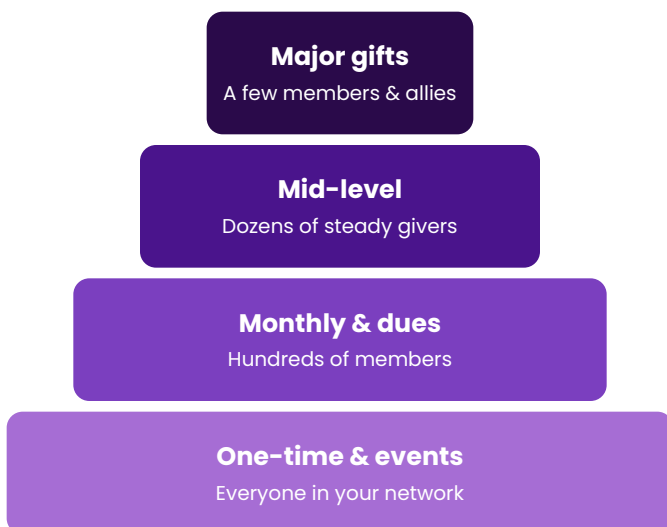
Send a personal thank-you by text, call, or card. Tell them what their gift will do.

8

Follow up and report back

Share wins and how money was used. People who feel thanked and informed give again.

04 Grow the Pyramid



THE GIVING PYRAMID: MOVE PEOPLE UP OVER TIME

Build the base

Most people start at the bottom. Your job is to keep asking, keep thanking, and invite people one step up: from a one-time gift to monthly, from monthly to a bigger annual pledge, from giving to fundraising from their own networks.

Sliding-scale dues

Set dues as a small share of income or a simple scale, with a low-income option and a way to waive them in hardship. No one should be priced out of membership.

ONE-ON-ONE ASK SCRIPT

"Hi **[name]**, thanks for making time. How have you been? **[Listen.]**"

"You know we've been fighting **[the issue]**. Since **[when]**, we've **[a win or progress, e.g., forced 40 repairs and stopped two evictions]**."

"Right now we're facing **[what's at stake and the next step]**. To win, we need **[what the money pays for: an organizer, legal defense, buses to the hearing]**."

"You've been part of this. Would you be willing to give **[specific amount]** **[one time / per month]** to help us win?" **[Pause. Wait for an answer.]**

"Thank you. Here's how to give right now: **[link, card form, or cash with a receipt]**. And who else do you know who might want to support this?"

05 Dues, Events & Digital

Running a dues program

- Make joining and paying easy: online, automatic, and in person.
- Every new member gets a dues ask during their first conversation.
- Assign people to follow up on lapsed payments, kindly and personally.
- Report regularly to members on how dues are used.

Great fundraising events

- Set a money goal and a turnout goal.
- Keep costs low; get food, space, and prizes donated.
- Have a short program with a story and a clear ask.
- Collect contact info from everyone, and follow up within 48 hours.

Digital fundraising

- Tie appeals to real moments: a deadline, a vote, an attack.
- Short messages, one ask, one link.
- Show a goal and progress toward it.
- Default to monthly giving; thank donors immediately.

A fundraising calendar

- Plan the year: dues drives, signature events, end-of-year appeal, campaign moments.
- Avoid asking only in emergencies.
- Spread asks out so supporters aren't overwhelmed.

06 Accountability & the Law

Members' money is sacred. Handle it so carefully that no one can ever question it.

Track every dollar

- Record every gift, dues payment, and expense the same day.
- Use a separate organizational bank account, never personal accounts.
- Require two people to approve spending and count cash.
- Give receipts.

Be transparent

- Share a simple budget and regular financial reports with members.
- Let members vote on major spending.
- Publish what you raised and what it paid for after campaigns.

Know your legal status

- Your structure decides what you can do and whether gifts are tax-deductible.
- In the U.S., charities (501(c)(3)), advocacy groups (501(c)(4)), unions, and informal groups each follow different rules, especially on political activity.
- Unincorporated groups can use a fiscal sponsor.
- Talk to an accountant or lawyer before you raise significant money.

Ethics: money with strings

- Decide in advance what money you won't take, for example from the target, its executives, or its allies.
- Never let a funder change the demand.
- Don't pressure low-income members to give beyond their means.

07 Fundraising Plan Worksheet

Annual fundraising plan

SOURCE	GOAL (\$)	LEAD	DEADLINE	RAISED (\$)	NOTES

Prospect list: people to ask this month

NAME	CONNECTION	ASK AMOUNT	WHO ASKS	DATE	RESULT

**Pool our money.
Build our power.
Answer to no one but us.**

Ask boldly, thank warmly, report honestly, and build a movement that its members own.

RESIST. REVOLT.

Further reading

Kim Klein, *Fundraising for Social Change* (multiple editions).

INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence, *The Revolution Will Not Be Funded* (2007).

Grassroots Institute for Fundraising Training (GIFT). grassrootsfundraising.org

This guide is general information, not legal or tax advice.

Companion guides: *Relational Organizing*, *Data & Lists*, and *Collective Care* (Resist. Revolt.)