

Bringing Community-Centric Fundraising Practices Into Your Event

Inclusivity & Accessibility Check:

Use your imagination! Experience your event as if you were each of the following:

- ... a person using a wheelchair/cane/walker/crutches (check your floor plan to make sure it is navigable, and have seating available as soon as possible)
- ... a person caring for a young infant (provide a lactation room and make sure all bathrooms have diaper-changing facilities)
- ... a person who is not drinking alcohol (delicious non-alcoholic drinks, available without waiting at the bar)
- ... a person with low vision (check your floor plan for easy movement, assign a helper to assist this person in finding their way, check all your digital and printed materials for proper contrast, provide spoken descriptions for things happening onstage)
- ... a person with hearing loss (captions! and ASL interpreting if requested)
- ... a person whose preferred language is not English (captions! and language interpreting if requested. Also if there is another language that a majority of your community prefers, consider building all of your event communications, program, etc. bilingually from the start, rather than reacting to a request.)
- ... a person in a larger body (check your floor plan for comfort and make sure your seating is sturdy, armless chairs)
- ... a person with a non-binary gender identity (check your bathroom signage)
- ... a person who doesn't drive (check your transit access at the venue)
- ... a person with neurodiversity or autism (review all the ways you are communicating, and make sure there's a space for that person to find tranquility/quiet when they need a break)
- ... a person with food allergies or a specific diet (menu choices of course)
- ... a person who is an introvert (are there fun things to do without talking to people?)

NOTES: When in doubt, make your party MORE accessible than you think you need to! Many of these things are not items you necessarily know about until that guest arrives at your party. For instance, the person who arrives on crutches because they sprained their ankle yesterday, or the person who decided to be mindful about alcohol this week. Other accessibility areas are totally predictable, such as every American over age 40 has some degree of hearing loss. Others you will need to gather specific information about in order to move forward, such as a guest with specific language needs. Also, give yourself time in the planning process to add accessibility questions to your signup / ticket sales forms, and time to actually book interpreters or other needs as they come up, rather than scrambling at the last minute.

Equity Check:

- Is there anything in your event that causes “othering?” Are there any groups or individuals with “special benefits”? Remember that everything you design to make some people feel extra-special, by definition, will make those that don’t receive it feel less welcome.
 - Danger zones:*
 - VIP receptions
 - Gifts and perks that some people receive and others don’t
 - Visible tokens such as tiaras, ribbons, medallions, sashes for some and not others
 - Seating, if proximity to the stage reflects only assumptions about wealth
 - Listing donors and sponsors in ‘tiers’ according to the size of their gift
 - “Upgraded” drinks, foods, desserts for some, and not for others
 - Unique decorations on some tables and not others
- Have you provided tiered or sliding-scale tickets, so that people with varying personal budgets can find a doorway “in” to the party?
- Is there any group at your event who are being treated with “less care* than others? (Hint: take a look at the experience you are creating for staff and volunteers ... these people may need to work to make the event go smoothly, but how can they have a joyful time too?)
- Is there anything “baked in” to your event that celebrates wealth and privilege, or celebrates and reinforces white culture while ignoring other cultures? Check your dress code, your menu selections, your music, your entertainment choices. Check any and all assumptions about what makes a “good party”.
- Related to the above: Who makes decisions about the style and elements of the party? Who is invited to be on the ‘event committee’ and why? What personal backgrounds and lived experience do these decision-makers represent?
- If your organization has a mission to amplify or partner with specific communities, are people from those communities being given leadership roles onstage in the event, to talk about the work you do and the impact you make? (Please note: telling their personal story as an example of a ‘problem’ your org solves, or saying “thank you” to your org for support, or receiving an award from your organization, are the opposite of a leadership role).
- If someone *is* sharing a personal story, are you committing to following ethical storytelling guidelines?
 - Are they being given agency in the way they share their story - such as offering to have them share on video instead of live in the room if they prefer?
 - Are they involved in writing (or at least reviewing) the other program/speeches?
 - Do they have final (ie, “veto power”) in any video editing process on a video about them?
 - Is their story framed in order to celebrate who they are *outside of their connection to your organization*?

- Are you appropriately compensating them?
- Are you preparing them for success by working with them on their talking points, getting them a hotel room if they have traveled far, giving them a timeline for the program so they are comfortable and know what's happening when?
- How mindfully are you spending your event budget? You are spending real money! You may find that, especially for the big-ticket items in your event – A/V, catering, and venue – all your dollars are flowing to large corporate entities who may not be aligned with your organization's goals. Consider seeking out local, independent, BIPOC-, woman-, or LGBTQ+-owned businesses, or perhaps businesses with union workers, to intentionally support next year.
- Related: if you are hiring talented people from any historically-marginalized community to perform or otherwise provide services at your event, are they being compensated with equity in mind?

Fundraising check:

- Are you asking for donations in a way that allows everyone to participate without potentially shaming people for “small” gifts and/or turning larger donors into “heroes”? Anonymous giving, whether on paper forms or via online giving, can be a good way to do less harm as you collect your donations.
- Are you asking for sponsors to join you at sponsorship levels in scale with their finances?
- Have you removed transactions from your event, so you can focus on transformation? Is your event focused on personal connection, storytelling, direct philanthropy, and celebrating the strengths that every member of your community brings?

Mindset check:

- Have you allowed yourself to make choices about your event because “that’s how we’ve always done it” or “we know this works because we saw so-and-so doing it?” **Now is the time to check: does it really “work” for all the people you hope to invite into the room?**

Resources for Community Centric Fundraising Event Planners!
Here are some helpful articles to inspire your event planning journey.

[Sponsorship Inspiration](#)

[Why tiered sponsorships need to go](#)

[CCF doesn't mean we stop talking about money](#)

[Collaborations: values alignment, not transactions](#)

[Talking to donors](#)

[Clear ideas about donor engagement and acknowledgement](#)

[Vu Le on events](#)

The organizers of this session will be using their conference speaking fee to make donations to Northwest Immigrant Rights Project and Community-Centric Fundraising. Please, consider joining us with a donation to the CCF group, as this continues to be a great source of learning!
<https://communitycentricfundraising.org/donate/>

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