

Tips for Grassroots Project Organizers

What does it take to organize a grassroots project? Here's what past project leaders said they've learned about running Calgary Foundation supported projects in their neighbourhood/community.

Keys for success

Relationships

Build strong relationships in the community with individuals, groups, organization and businesses. "When you have trusting relationships in the community, people are willing to help."

A Clear & Compelling Vision

A clear vision will help unite your group and maintain focus. "I learned that a compelling vision is necessary to keep volunteers engaged."

Communication

Build and maintain a strong team by clearly communicating roles and expectations.

Focus on the process not just the product

"...final products are important and a huge benefit to the community, but the process can be equally as rewarding."

 **Think about ways to increase opportunities for people to meet at your event.**
Have a dedicated time for mixing & mingling. Give any door prize out at the end to encourages people to stick around and visit with each other longer.

Leaders learned that they have to be:

- *Creative* - with limited time and budget
- *Flexible* - because plans are bound to change
- **Supportive** - providing mentorship and building on the leadership of others in the group.
- A **Cheerleader** - encouraging those who are involved especially if times get tough
- **Available** - grassroots organizing takes a lot of time and energy!

Believe in people!

Many past grassroots leaders said the most important thing they learned was that the people in their community are:

- **Generous**

"If you give people the opportunity to volunteer, they will."

"Many people were willing to donate bottles, food and prizes."

- **Talented**

"There are so many talented and skilled people in our community who are generous with their time and skill."

- **Interesting**

"... many great people live in our neighbourhood. We all have interesting lives, families and ways to contribute."

- **Seeking**

"Community members are looking for meaningful ways to give back and make a difference..."

- **Surprising**

"I learnt that you cannot always depend on people you were sure you could, and that others will surprise you and support you beyond your dreams."

10 Ideas for Promoting Grassroots Projects

Calgary Foundation asked our grassroots project leaders what they found to be the most effective ways for promoting their projects so that people had the chance to get involved. Here's what they said:



1 Connect with your local Community Association

- Put an announcement in the community news letter or magazine.
- Ask for an announcement to be made at the next community meeting.
- Ask your community association for additional ideas for promoting your project.

4 Social Media

- Make a Facebook page or event.
- Use other social media platforms such as Twitter, Instagram or snapchat
- Create an Eventbrite
- Ask your project partners to promote using their social media platforms, website or e-newsletters.

7 Encourage Volunteer Involvement

- Have a list of specific volunteer ideas ready so when people offer to help, they can sign up right away.
- Include in your project advertisement a clear invitation for involvement and input.
- Don't be afraid to ask for help! Giving people a role will make them feel part of the community.

2 Face-to-face Advertising

- Tell your friends and family and ask them to spread the word!
- Attend other community events and share the word there.
- Try door-to-door canvassing in your community. Come prepared with a hand out to give more information.

5 Involve Local Organizations/Groups

- Invite local groups or charities to come set up information booths.
- Invite businesses or restaurants to set up as vendors or maybe even to give away samples.
- When meeting with organizations be sure to talk to the owner, manager, or key decision makers. Come with creative ideas for how they might be able to participate in the project/event

8 Think Inclusion

- Try to involve a diverse group of people in the earliest stages of your project.
- "...create a neutral and safe space where all levels of skills and talent are welcome."
- What do you have that kids can do/give? Seniors? People with various disabilities?
- How can you live out the cultural diversity of your community?

3 Posters, Fliers & Signs

- Ask to hang posters at local businesses, restaurants, schools, library, etc.
- Send out postcards throughout your community.
- Rent bold signs, billboards or make a sandwich board

6 Get Creative

- Get people involved through a logo or name competition.
- Make maps, models or prototypes to help people understand your project.

9 Take Time

- Try to leave plenty of time before the event for promotion. People feel disappointed if they hear of your event only after it's over.

10 Capture Hearts

- When people can feel the passion behind a project they are more likely to get involved. "...a project that engages people's hearts is totally worth the effort."

