DOCACCESS PLAYLISTS FOR CHANGE

FUNDRAISING

Slide 1:

Welcome to the DocAccess playlists for change – this is the Fundraising Module!

Slide 2:

In this video we will first cover:

- General fundraising information and principles, including:
  - An overview of the philanthropic sector
  - Your ask, pitch, and case for support
  - Fundraising research and outreach
  - Supporter stewardship

Before we go into more detail about:

- Fundraising for your screening or event
- Fundraising at your screening or event

Slide 3:

So, what does the philanthropic community look like in Australia?

The sources of philanthropic giving are quite diverse. You can raise funds philanthropically through organisations, corporate giving, crowdfunding, individual donors or bequests and there are also grants and other types of support like in-kind support or impact investing.

What do they all have in common?

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The answer is revealed in the origins of the word Philanthropy itself, or Philanthropia - 'the love of humanity'.

That is, philanthropists are often change makers who have built their wealth and would now like to invest for good.

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Before we launch further into WHAT philanthropic donors give to and WHY, let's first reflect on what you give to.

Think about a time you have donated, whether it was donating money, time, food or clothes.

- How did you find out about it?
- When did you give? After seeing it once, or many times?
- What made you choose to donate to that particular cause or initiative, in that particular moment?

In general, people give what they can, when they are moved to and when they trust how the money will be used to add value. Remember this when you are aiming to raise funds for, or from your audience after, the screening or event.

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Fundraising can often seem daunting, so it is good to remember that philanthropic funders are people with motivations just like you.

Some of the key factors that motivate donors include relationships with the people they are supporting, outcomes they can envisage – or a combination of the two.

For some donors, their passion areas are historical or related to prior business activities, for others they are focussed on responding to current and pressing needs.

Regardless, philanthropists will view their donations as their personal investment in programs or activities for some kind of social benefit or change. Many will expect an explanation of how a project is expected to achieve positive change, as well as some form of reporting.

They will want to understand how their interests align with the project outcomes, and how their contribution will actually create benefits and add value.

This is why it is very important to be clear on how you will communicate your ask for support of your screening or event, the outcomes you hope to achieve through engaging your audience, and what difference their investment will make.

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So how do you communicate a clear and compelling ask to potential funders?

This is where your plan to deliver an impactful screening or event becomes important.

When you are asking for funds to support your screening or event, you will need to be able to communicate your vision or what you are hoping to achieve through this activity, the key messages you are aiming to share, the goals you are hoping to achieve through reaching and engaging audience members, and your planned activities or actions as a part of your screening or event.

REMEMBER: it is great to have a general understanding of the way in which you want to frame your ask, but it should and must always be tailored to the donor you are speaking to!

If you are interested in learning more about developing an impact strategy to support of your screening or event, you can learn more in our 'Understanding Impact' and 'Creating Your Impact

Strategy' modules.

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There are many ways to present your ask in a compelling pitch and case for support.

One method we recommend using to clearly communicate is "The Three Whys"

- Why you? (Because funding is about relationships as well as projects)
- Why this project? (As opposed to other initiatives they could consider supporting - how is your initiative unique or valuable?)
- Why now? (Donors understand problems, so framing your initiative in terms of current social, economic and environmental needs is a powerful way to communicate the need and benefits of your project)

As well as:

- How much is required?
- For what impact?
- Where?
- When?

If you are fundraising to host a screening or event donors will also want to know:

- What a film screening/event can make happen
- Who will benefit
- What their investment will achieve

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When creating a fundraising pitch, remember to tick off on the following key pieces of information that most donors will want to know.

- What are you offering, and what is its value?
- How does this relate to the interests of the funder?
- What are you asking for and why? Remember - donors want to be engaged, not enticed.
- What are the alignment, shared purpose and goals?

Fundraising is a relationship – a give and take on both sides, so remember to do your research and use "partnership" language.

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Fundraising doesn't end when you have received a donation.

Continuing to foster your relationship should be seen as a critical component of your project - this is called stewardship.

As you can see in this cycle, excellent donor stewardship involves ongoing communications, reporting and gratitude before and after your final acquittal or report.

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So, now that we have provided an overview of the best fundraising practices, let's discuss the ways in which you could approach finding donors to support your documentary screening or event.

Fundraising for your event will require some research and leg work to identify potential donors to approach.

A great starting place is to investigate your local council and government grant offerings, as many provide community-based grants to support arts and cultural screenings and events within local communities annually.

Consider also investigating and leveraging funding opportunities that run alongside existing festivals and events, for example NAIDOC or Children's Week.

We also recommend researching aligned donors who have a demonstrated interest in the issue area you are addressing through your documentary screening or event.

You can do this by conducting a basic google search, by finding similar initiatives that have occurred in similar contexts and looking at who supported them, and by talking to people and asking them if there is anyone they would recommend for you to reach out to. A personal connection can go a long way.

For example, to seek funding for a program about the environment or wildlife, research who contributes to conservation and wildlife projects or organisations. For an Indigenous story, look for the list of donors of indigenous festivals or other programs with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander content.

Consider how people may be able to support your screening or event in other ways - for example, searching for event sponsors or partners who can provide pro bono, in-kind or promotional support.

For example, you may connect with a well aligned corporate organisation with a shared mission that provides a monetary contribution in exchange for acknowledgement as your event sponsor, or you may be able to arrange accessible venue hire by partnering with a local community organisation who can also support the promotion of the event.

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The first step in setting up a funder database is to research and create a list of potential supporters.

Gather as much information as you can about their interests, philanthropic goals, how you should contact them and any dates for applications or submissions. Use a simple spreadsheet to help keep all this information organised.

Steps:

1. Google your screening and documentary film issue area + philanthropy and see what you find!
2. Think about your own networks – is there anyone you know who works in philanthropy or may be able to connect you with people who do?
3. Are there organisations who are doing work on your issue area? Look at their website and annual reports to see who and what foundations give to them.

4. Search through online directories to see what philanthropic and government funding rounds are coming up and their areas of interest.
5. Put all the information in a spreadsheet, where you can track who you have contacted, when and their responses.
6. Now that you have a wide range of potential supporters to approach, it is important to look at the different types of funders and understand how to approach each one, whether through a grant application or direct approach.

You can prioritise your approaches according to:

- When the grant rounds close
- How well aligned your project is - start with organisations that will be easier to convince!

Now you are ready to reach out with your case for support, or to apply!

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If you do decide to identify and apply for potential grants, you can assess the grant suitability for your documentary screening or event with the following questions:

Is the event aligned with the foundation's stated interests and goals? How?

- Check the mission, vision and objectives outlined on the website or portal and ensure that the focus of your screening or event aligns with their aims and key areas of interest.

Do you meet the foundation's specific grant criteria and objectives? How?

- It is important to drill down further into the particular interests of the foundation and ensure your screening or event would meet the specific criteria, usually outlined in the Grant Guidelines.

For example, do they require the applicant to have ATO Deductible Gift Recipient (DGR Charity) status? If you don't have DGR status you could always consider an auspicing partner (aligned charity).

Are there any administrative or process requirements before you can apply for the grant?

- For example, do you need to call and discuss your project with a grant officer before you can apply?
- Are there any specific geographical requirements? Do you meet them?

It is important to be mindful of geographical specifications. Examples of this include grants that will only be awarded if:

- You are located within a particular state.
- The project will target a particular area or directly benefit the people within a particular community, e.g. Geelong.

Check the exclusions!

- Sometimes these are straightforward and have little relevance, but sometimes they will specifically exclude activities for example one-off events (which may include screenings).

Does the Foundation state it won't accept unsolicited applications, or that the grant is by invitation only?

Many clearly state that they won't accept unsolicited applications. If this is the case, you will need to be invited before you can apply.

Is the Foundation currently administering grants? Are there identified grant rounds?

There are a number of reasons why Foundations may not be actively providing grants even if you believe you have a well aligned project.

Has the Foundation funded similar screenings or event projects before?

If not, this of course doesn't mean that the Foundation won't support them now or in the future, however it is still extremely useful to get a sense of what they have funded before.

Looking at what has been previously funded provides additional information on interests, which can inform whether you choose to go for the grant but also how you might frame your application.

Pay specific attention to whether they have funded a film, creative project, event or screening, or social issue campaign before. If published, also take a look at the funding levels they have previously provided to inform your own expectations.

Overall, consider what makes your project a good fit for this grant and whether there is anything that makes you think you might not be eligible for this grant.

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Documentaries move people and inspire them to act.

Bringing people together to donate to a cause directly after your screening or event provides a perfect window of engagement.

If you need to, funds raised can also cover costs of your event. Popular ways to fundraise at an event include:

- Building in a donation into the ticket sale price
- Signing people up for pledges on the night
- Raffles and prizes auctioned
- Gold coin donations

It's essential to make sure you put together a budget that lists all your outgoings, including speaker fees, venue, catering, film licence fee and other items.

Then you can work out how many tickets you need to sell or funds you need to raise to cover the cost of the night and reach your fundraising goal.

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Here are some tips on how to make the most of the opportunity to fundraise at your event:

Have a clear fundraising goal that you communicate with your audience. People like to understand how their donation fits into the bigger picture and either helps you kick start a fundraising campaign or get it over the line.

Engage your audience with a narrative about how their donation will make a positive difference in a related area to the documentary you just watched, and explain how their donation will be of value (remember the key motivations for donations covered earlier).

Don't be shy! Could you make an explicit ask? It's OK to put it out there!

And as they say, pop while it's hot, and make sure you provide options for your audience to make an immediate contribution, whether through an instantaneous online donation, cash donation or sign-up pledge form so they can provide their details for a follow-up.

Speaking of follow-up, sometimes engaging someone at your event is the beginning of a courtship. It could be the first step in developing a relationship which will blossom in time following this initial engagement point. So don't forget to follow up with all your invitees (not just attendees), inviting them to learn more or continue the conversation.

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In Summary

- Australia's philanthropic community is diverse - but it is united by their desire to support projects and causes that will drive positive social impact.
- Donors want to be engaged, not enticed. So, make sure you create a narrative around your ask and case for support which connects people with the issue area of the documentary.
- Each donor and organisation will have different motivations and goals, so do your research to find their alignment with your event and tailor your case for support.
- Donor stewardship is vital - allowing for more fruitful relationships that extend past monetary support of your event.
- When fundraising for your event, there are various sources of support you can leverage. So, create a funder database to keep information organised, track applications and key conversations.
- Always assess your suitability for grants to ensure you maximise your chances of success and limit time wasted on application you are not eligible for.
- Documentaries are emotive and informative - creating a great opportunity for you to fundraise at your event from audience members and create ongoing connections.