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# SOLICITING IN- KIND SUPPORT

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For the Alberta Healthy School Community Wellness Fund

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# Soliciting In-kind Support

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## What is meant by In-kind Support?

In-kind support is a way for your group to collect resources other than money. Instead of buying everything with cash, you can look for donations from community members. In-kind resources, or non-cash contributions, might be things you'd otherwise pay for, or they might be things that money just can't buy. When someone volunteers to give you a service, supplies, or free help, you're receiving in-kind support. You can look for in-kind support both from within your organization's members, and from your local community. In-kind support should not be seen as a second best to direct monetary donations, but as an equally important part of the resource pool available to your group. Seeking in-kind support should be an integral part of your plan for action and sustainability. If your group is going to succeed, you'll want more than just money: you'll want goods, people, and services, too.

## Types of In-kind Support

**Goods** are just about anything that isn't money. Goods are a money substitute. Cash and in-kind resources such as goods make up a total resource package. Some examples:

- Equipment and furniture, including computers and photocopiers
- Supplies, including paper, filing folders, and other necessary office supplies
- Space, including maintenance and utilities
- Food that people donate

**Services** are often grouped with goods as in-kind gifts. Corporations are the best-known contributors, but the giving of services is undoubtedly a community-wide practice. Small businesses, vendors, colleges, other nonprofits, individual professionals, and trades people all have services to offer. Everyone providing services for a fee is probably also providing it free, or at a discount, to some worthy cause. Examples of services include:

- Construction/renovation
- Printing
- Website hosting
- Transportation

**People** are the key to all resources in most service-oriented non-profit groups. People resources are persons giving their time free of charge, for a small fee, or for payment by a third party on a non-profit's behalf. People resources are not only volunteers. People do volunteer their services, but employers may "loan" their paid employees to work on community efforts. Because people are everywhere, know everyone and do everything, their resource potential is unlimited. The challenge is to discover how to use the most people, in the best combination, to your organization's greatest advantage. Some possible ways – besides volunteering to help provide services, as they may in an educational or recreational organization, for example – that people can help your operation:

- Providing expertise, ex: parent volunteer/dietician

- Child care for special events
- Fundraising
- Legal, accounting, or other professional services

## Why should you solicit contributions and in-kind support?

- To increase your overall resources
- To help build community support for your work
- To find other sources of support, sources you might not have known about before
- To acquire resources that come with no strings attached
- To obtain items, equipment, etc., that you might otherwise have no access to
- To increase your local match (Many public and foundation funders require that organizations provide matching funds from the community or other sources in order to be eligible)

## How to Solicit In-kind Support

### Before You Begin

During a meeting of your organization, discuss your non-cash resource needs. Think about soliciting in-kind support in order to replace your current money spending. What kinds of things could you ask for rather than pay for?

### Planning to Solicit In-Kind Support

- Plan how you will approach various members of your community and ask for non-cash resources. Do your members have good contacts with particular businesses, companies, institutions, or individuals?
- Create a list of local groups, businesses, service clubs, etc. Start in your local community and expand broader. Seek out those business and corporations that have an interest in your project, many companies have policies pertaining to the types of initiatives they will support (ex. Youth, Arts, Health, etc.). Focus only on those businesses that have mandates that align with your project.
- Be specific about what your project is asking for from organizations you approach (ex. Food, labour, facility).
- Balance the costs to your organization (how much time and money you will spend) with risks and benefits of the search (potential loss or gain of resources or good will). If your risks are too great, revise your plan to solicit less.
- Determine the best method for contacting each individual organization you wish to approach (letter, phone call, email, face to face or a combination). Log who has been contacted, when they responded or whether follow-up is required. If you have not heard from a business about your request follow up with a phone call or e-mail to ensure that they have received it.
- Think positively and creatively! The worst someone can tell you is "No!" Although you might feel scared at first about asking corporations for donations, in some ways, seeking in-kind support is less intimidating than asking for cash. At least some businesses, corporations, or larger organizations are looking for smaller groups to donate to. Why? Often it's a tax write-off, and it shows their involvement and generosity to their host community. And after all, if they are going to be making donations anyway, why not have them be to you? *(Use Tool #2 attached to this*

*document – the in-kind donor prospect profile. Prepare these worksheets before you make your pitch to potential donors, and you'll be better prepared and focused).*

- Develop key messages about your project that you can easily convey to organizations you will approach. They will want to know, who and what your project will impact as well as its strengths and vision. Be sure to describe how an organization's contribution to your project will enhance and make a difference in its capacity for success.
- Set clear goals for your group's campaign. If you don't know where you're going, you won't be able to congratulate yourselves when you get there! Assign specific people to solicit particular groups, particularly those where they already have contacts. A lot of in-kind support you get will come from local contacts. In other words, the support will come from the relationships you've already established with people in your community. If they know and trust you, they will want to support you. The moral is to take the time to develop and cultivate such relationships, and to make them reciprocal. Everyone will profit in the long run.

### **While Soliciting**

Your group will want to regularly discuss its progress in building resources. If your proposal doesn't work with a particular group, try it with someone else. Keep track of your successes and failures, and measure your progress.

### **After Soliciting**

- When you receive an in-kind donation, put a dollar value on it! When parent volunteers offer a yoga class for staff, estimate what it would cost to have a yoga instructor offer such classes to you.
- Many grants require that your group raise a certain number of matching dollars -- they'll give you \$5,000 if you can earn \$5,000 on your own. Often you'll be able to count in-kind donations (sometimes called "soft money") as at least part of this sum. Even if your grant applications don't ask for matching dollars, in-kind contributions are an impressive demonstration of community support for your group. When funders see that people in your community are willing to donate services and goods to your group, they know your group has strong local support. You're also showing that your group feels that it owns itself and is ready to manage its own affairs.

Information in this document has been adapted from: Community Tool Box <http://ctb.ku.edu>