So you have a plan for going overseas and now you need to finance your project. The task of fundraising the necessary funds for your trip may seem daunting at first but can be quite painless if you organize yourself early enough. Early enough means four to six months or more ahead of time, depending on the amount of money you have to raise. Fundraising will require a little energy and creativity in addition to time.

**How to start**

There are many ways to raise money, from writing letters to governmental, non-governmental and private institutions, requesting financial contributions to organizing activities or presentations to raise money. It is also possible to get donations of equipment or supplies from donors who can’t offer financial support.

**Sources of funding**

- On campus: Student Affairs, AMS, student associations, Alumni, Faculty Deans, on-campus student groups and clubs.
- Community: charitable clubs such as Rotary International, Lions Club, Shriners, Kiwanis, churches, banks, media such as the local newspaper, radio stations, etc.
- Governmental Organizations: Your MP and MPP as well as other political parties, ministries, municipal government.
- Non-governmental organizations that may be interested in your project. (Refer to Who’s Who in International Development, a list of Canadian NGOs involved in international development).
- Private institutions: local and national corporations that may do business with the country you are visiting or are part of your community.
- Charitable organizations: refer to Canadian Directory to Foundations for an extensive list of granting agencies. Please note that many of these agencies do not grant to individuals and have specific requirements; read the instructions carefully.

**Letter-writing**

Once you’ve decided who you are going to write to, it is important to send your letters as soon as possible. Writing to request funds is an art and deserves the time it takes for careful wording. The most important thing to remember is that it is likely that many of the places you are contacting will receive a great number of requests for funding; word your letter genuinely and include the following details:

- who you are and what your project is about
- the length of time you will spend overseas
- the total amount of money you need to raise
- when you will be leaving
Keep the letter concise (three to four paragraphs) and in the first paragraph indicate the purpose of the letter (e.g., request for funds or other donations). Keep the tone professional: instead of "begging" for money, focus on what you can do for them. For instance, offer to do a presentation upon your return or emphasize how you will contribute the rewards of your experience to your community. You will most likely prefer to make a form letter; however, don’t hesitate to do a little research and try to include information that is most relevant to whom you are writing. Your letter will be better received if it shows that you’ve taken the time to learn about your potential funders.

After you have sent your letters, allow approximately one week for them to be received. You will need to phone the recipients to draw their attention to your request; otherwise you risk having your letter tossed on to a "to do" pile. Begin to make follow-up phone-calls. Make your call brief, identifying yourself and simply asking if your letter was received and if any additional information is required. Don’t press for an answer at the time of your call. Once you receive confirmation of funding, you must immediately send out thank-you letters - these may also be form letters and you need simply thank them for their support, stating the sum or specific donation they have made, and promising to contact them upon your return.

When you return, send out yet more form letters, briefly outlining your experience and thanking them again for their support. In the letter, arrange for the delivery of your promised presentation or report or offer to share your experience.

Fundraising Ideas

This is where your creativity comes in. The purpose of fundraising is not only to finance your trip but to inform and educate the community about the purpose of your project and the issues surrounding it. Organizing a community event to raise money can be a lot of fun and not necessarily take more organization than letter-writing and phone-calling. It is also a great way to raise a substantial amount of money all at once. Try to think of something original and as relevant to your project as possible.

IDEAS ~~~~~~~

• volunteer-a-thon (have people sponsor you for each hour you volunteer at a local organization)
• bingo
• bake sale
• open stages, concerts (especially if you have connections with a band!)
• hold a public slide/information/cuisine night of the country you are going to visit
• charge for admission or ask for donations
• design and sell t-shirts
• raffle (check the gambling regulations in your area first!)
• bike-a-thon, walk-a-thon, dance-a-thon, hockeysack-a-thon, etc.

** adapted with permission from the University of Guelph

Last updated: July 2009

All Study/Work/Travel Abroad Information Sheets are available in the International Resource Library or on the QUIC website.