

# Friend and Fund Raising at Biological Field Stations

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Empowering Friends to Become Donors at Field Stations

Our concurrent session on *Field Station Friend and Fund Raising* is geared toward helping participants to plan and complete the next step in their development pathway by our next OBFS annual meeting in September 2024. We all have different starting points and we are encouraging and expecting you to move forward on your development journey. We will present subtopics on identifying and communicating with your field station audience, empowering friends to become donors, funding sources for international field stations, and closing the deal with donors at a variety of events. Our small group of concurrent session leaders is from a variety of field stations. We will each present a short summary on our individual topic, but our goal is to facilitate a group discussion to provide you with immediate feedback and direction to empower you to take the next step on your development journey.

## Tools to Identify, Develop, and Communicate with Your Audience (Brian)

Identification: where to look for contacts to connect?

- 1) University/College donor databases and alumni contact information
  - a. Tools such as Raiser's Edge
- 2) Friends of Field Station membership lists
- 3) Weekly or monthly seminar series email lists
- 4) Current and previous field station course student enrollment and faculty teaching lists
- 5) Collaborative Organization memberships: garden clubs, mountain biking teams, home school networks, etc.

Communication: who is your target audience?

- 1) Age 50+: email, web pages
- 2) Age 35 to 50: text, web pages, email, social media
- 3) Age 20 to 35: social media, text, zoom, web pages, email

Development: what to do to initiate and build relationships?

- 1) Science cafes and science taverns to build relationships and collaboration
- 2) Weekly/monthly seminars/virtual seminars and information sharing to grow knowledge
- 3) Special Events such as hiking tours, bird watching, canoe trips, etc.

Follow-up with Regular Communications

- 1) After identifying audience members and receiving feedback from your audience (hopefully positive), distribute a quarterly, semi-annual, or annual newsletter or annual report
- 2) Text summaries are great, but photos of people, projects, research installations, and research organisms are much better

## **Empowering Friends to Become Donors at Field Stations (Carlos)**

There is a science to donor development!

1. Keep a database of friends and donors. Include information on their backgrounds and interests, and if known, their history of giving and other involvement with your organization and its work. Prospects may be peers of people in your organization and could have history.
2. Have a plan to follow up, including a plan for showing recognition if they do give.

Have a plan for the “ask”

1. Know what you are going to ask FOR! Have different projects for different interests. Have multiple price entry points available. Your ask must be sincere or people will see through it.
2. Who is going to do the ask? Are you the asker, or the talent?
3. Do not be afraid to show the need, warts and all. Sometimes friends are very willing to become donors, but they do not know there is a need because they only see the polished version of things.

Avoid viewing people through a transactional lens

1. Many people view their giving as a way to support something they cannot do, e.g. I give money to SPLC because that is work that I cannot do, but I can support their work financially. Give your donors a reason to feel good about supporting your organization.
2. Remember the platinum rule: treat others how they want to be treated
3. Protect people’s dignity when putting together events, seating arrangements, etc. When people do give, no matter how much or how little, make them feel great about it.

Develop a station-based travel and environmental education program - Personal experiences can lead prospects to become friends and friends to become donors through differentiated affinity-based opportunities to

1. Get close to nature.
2. Share experiences and network with peers and key staff.
3. Understand importance of the work in context.
4. Promote engagement in a purpose-driven community - OTS examples (Costa Rica, South Africa)

## Some Funding Sources for International Field Stations (Paul)

The [Terra Viva Grants Directory](https://terravivagrants.org) is a clearing house that develops and manages information about grants for agriculture, energy, environment, and natural resources in the world's developing countries.

<https://terravivagrants.org> .

USAID's Office of American Schools and Hospitals Abroad ([USAID/ASHA](https://www.usaid.gov/work-usaid/business-funding/grant-programs/american-schools-and-hospitals-abroad)) provides assistance to schools, libraries, and medical centers outside the United States that serve as study and demonstration centers for American ideas and practices. <https://www.usaid.gov/work-usaid/business-funding/grant-programs/american-schools-and-hospitals-abroad>

U.S. National Science Foundation [www.nsf.gov](http://www.nsf.gov)

Office of International Science and Engineering <https://www.nsf.gov/dir/index.jsp?org=OISE>

Partnerships for International Research and Education ([PIRE](https://www.nsf.gov/pire)) The PIRE program is currently **paused** for revision of the solicitation. NSF anticipates releasing a new solicitation in August-September 2020, with funding in Fiscal Year 2022. Details will be available when the updated solicitation is published.

International Research Experiences for Students ([IRES](https://www.nsf.gov/ires)). The International Research Experiences for Students (IRES) program supports international research and research-related activities for U.S. science and engineering students.

Directorate for Geosciences (GEO) also supports international collaborations and partnerships.

[https://www.nsf.gov/geo/adgeo/intern\\_l.jsp](https://www.nsf.gov/geo/adgeo/intern_l.jsp)

## Closing the Deal with Donors at a Variety of Events (Sarah)

### Setting the Table:

- Offer a variety of events at different price points to include people of all ages and interest levels. Do not limit it to science events: art shows including nature photography, historical events, film festivals, farm to fork dinners outdoors, active events like bike rides, stand up paddle races, and fun runs, kid's programs (kite competitions), and film screenings can attract new donors and new fans.
  - *COVID-19 adaptation:* consider "**non-events**" some organizations are doing this brilliantly: Often people really don't want to come to something else, especially now, but you can have fun with it: examples:
    - <https://www.valeomarketing.com/the-non-event-fundraiser-throw-an-event-your-alumni-want-to-attend/>
    - [Lassen Park Foundation Leap Day Non-Event](#); encouraging people to give the amount they would give a baby-sitter, or pay for a new outfit, or buy a ticket, or buy a table. Funny and effective.

- Virtual events: online cooking events are especially fun- mail ingredients to households and hold a cooking webinar; can also do virtual bird-a-thons or walk-a-thons. *Virtual donor zoom with scientists have worked very well for the Center for Coastal Studies.*
- Online auctions
- Outdoor events
- Crowdfunding is on the rise. [[“Be a Gator Donator”](#)]
- Consider setting membership levels that give annually to your organization (5 K, 10 K per year) that let those members attend exclusive events and have special access to scientists (Bird banding, geology tours, lake water chemistry). Do not forget simple yearly membership people and treat them to yearly updates and newsletters as well as at least one yearly event.
- Remember people are busy and have many competing requests for their time and money.
- Tax Incentives: Make sure to provide info on IRA tax benefits, donations of solar power, new laws related to charities etc.

### **The Main Course: How do you convince people to donate to your organization?**

- Get to know what they are interested in scientifically and in the world
- Help them understand what your organization is doing and why that is important to the community and to them. Communicate urgency authentically.
- When possible, link your work to humans and human health and current events
- Make sure you communicate fiscal responsibility, vision for the organization, and the value of the donation. Make sure they understand it is an investment and express that return in tangible numbers (# of projects done, economic opportunities, grant funding leveraged, jobs created, students supported)
- If you are not passionate and enthusiast, they will not be; get across your motivations for supporting the project or field station, tell them why you are doing this (personalization).

### **After the Meal: Welcoming donors to be part of the family**

- Check back in with the donor by phone and via letter
- Ask them what types of events they liked
- Ask their advice when appropriate for strategic planning, include them in “town Hall” type updates, send them newsletters and blogs and help them feel like part of the family.
- **Adversity brings people together:** Check in on them more frequently for health checks ups, **or regarding natural disasters like floods, fires, and hurricanes.** Share with them how you and your organization are adapting to equity issues, COVID-19, fires, students learning remotely, or other issues in the news when appropriate (like providing shelter or polling places).
- Consider holiday themed parties as a yearly thank you (and reminder to donate)