



BRINGING
NEIGHBORHOOD
PROJECTS TO LIFE,
BLOCK BY BLOCK



GUIDE TO Making it Rain

5 ioby Leaders
Share Their Top 5 Tips
to Fundraising for Larger
Budget Projects



The average budget for ioby projects is around \$4,000, but many are bigger.

Crowdfunding large amounts of money on ioby is totally doable, but it does take some extra planning. If you have your sights set high, your budget — and fundraising skills—will just have to rise to the challenge.

WHO ARE THE #IOBYRAINMAKERS?

Many ioby Leaders have successfully crowdfunded larger-budget projects, and they want to share what they've learned with you. You can visit ioby.org/rainmakers to read their stories in full. In this guide, we distill the findings and tips these leaders most commonly described and said they found most helpful when they were fundraising.

READ ON TO LEARN HOW FIVE SUCCESSFUL IOBY LEADERS MADE IT RAIN, AND HOW YOU CAN, TOO!



FRAMPTON TOLBERT

Brooklyn, NY

Project: Bronx Students Investigate Transit Pricing

Raised: Over \$12,000

A youth education project through the nonprofit Center for Urban Pedagogy enabled 15 high school students to investigate a social justice issue in their community through hands-on research and interviews.



TIM KOVACH

Cleveland, OH

Project: Cleveland Refugee Bike Project

Raised: Over \$13,000

Tim and his team of volunteers are working to improve physical and social mobility for the city's refugee community by providing bicycles, tools, and training necessary to become safe and self-sufficient riders.



LEE FORBES-BELUE

Memphis, TN

Project: Trinity Playground Revitalization

Raised: Over \$14,000

Graphic artist Lee Forbes-Belue led a campaign to revitalize a beloved neighborhood playground that had fallen into disrepair. Trinity Playground was part of a preschool that had closed, so had no official caretaker although it was well used by neighborhood families.



AYLENE MCCALLUM

Denver, CO

Project: Arapahoe Street Protected Bike Land

Raised: Over \$35,000

Aylene led the Downtown Denver Partnership in bringing the city's Arapahoe Street protected bike land from vision to reality. The initial budget of \$155,000 was partially covered by grants, but her team was tasked with crowdfunding the remainder of the project.



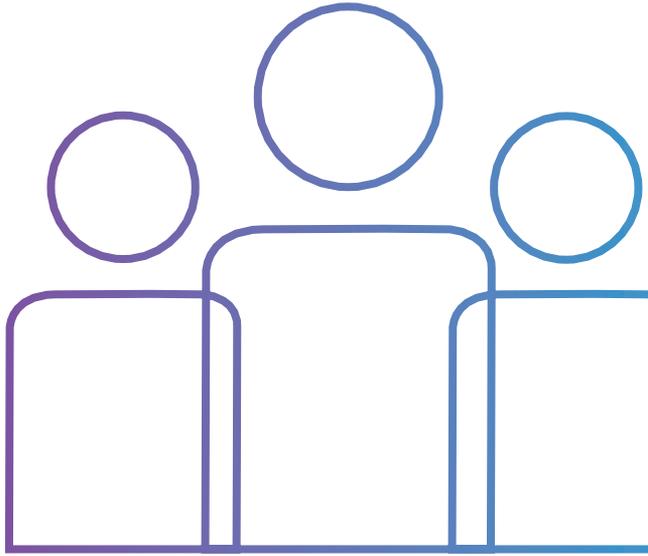
JOHN BAILEY

Saint Paul, MN

Project: Saint Paul Tool Library

Raised: Over \$13,000

This community tool library gives neighbors low-cost access to over a thousand home improvement tools, skill-building classes, and workshops.



1.

Build your team carefully

Make your fundraising team as **large and diverse** as possible: two of our Rainmakers assembled crews of 20 people or more, with backgrounds ranging from commercial airline pilot to church pastor to real estate developer to bicycle co-op director. The more varied your team's backgrounds, skills, and connections, the more bases you'll be able to cover.

That said, **don't ask just anyone** to join you for diversity's sake. Make sure everyone on your team understands your project, is genuinely interested in it, and is game to help you reach your goal.

Don't discount people with little or no fundraising background. According to these leaders, **enthusiasm** can take your campaign just as far or farther than prior experience.



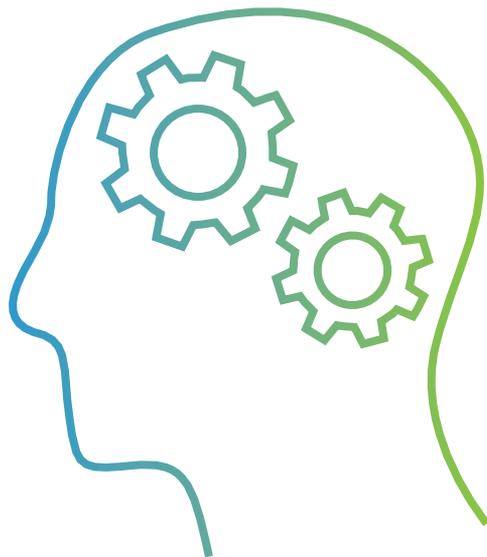
“A large fundraising team helps you tap into more networks, spread the word, and build support more widely. **More people equals more opportunities.** If you have five best friends on your committee, they’ll probably know all the same folks!”

– AYLENE MCCALLUM

Remember that it doesn’t matter how much money the individuals on your fundraising team have themselves. What matters is that they’re committed to your cause and **will step up to ask others** to give.

Try not to rush your selection process. Take the time to introduce your project to lots of people and see who shows sustained interest. Also dedicate some time to clearly describing what your campaign will entail and what will be expected of team members. Providing a realistic outline at the start will help ensure that the people you choose stick around.

In addition to people, consider what **organizations you could partner with** to help you fundraise. The prospect of supporting an awesome neighborhood project—by giving advice, spreading the word, or donating money—is appealing to many nonprofits and foundations.



2.

Work around your (or a teammate's) fear of fundraising

If you're petrified of making face-to-face asks, consider being your campaign's megaphone in the media and having your more gregarious teammates pick up the in-person slack. ioby leaders have found media-based fundraising success by sharing **personal essays** on Facebook, engaging their neighbors on Twitter, and reaching out to local blogs and other news outlets for press coverage.

Make **accountability** part of your plan. Since all of your work is likely to be volunteer, and life happens, check in with your team regularly to inquire how their asks are going. **Set goals**, stay organized, and **shout out each success** to the whole group to up morale. Staying involved will keep your team energized and set a tone of "we're all in this together."



“ The advice we gave our team was: **‘No gift is too small.’** There’s always that hesitancy and concern: ‘I can’t ask my friends; I don’t feel comfortable...’ But it’s not usually a big deal to ask someone for five dollars, and if your team can get enough donors to give five dollars apiece, you’ll still reach your goal. This attitude made our [team] feel more comfortable making asks, and made donors feel better about giving, even if they weren’t giving a lot.”

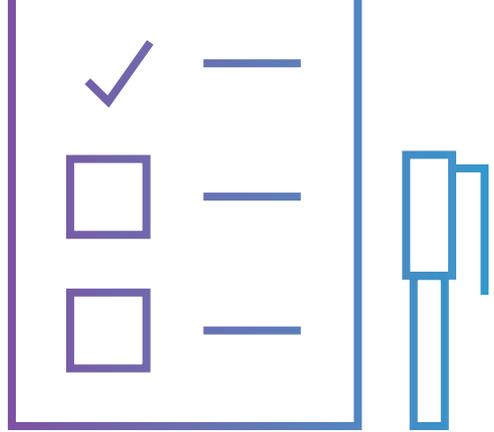
– FRAMPTON TOLBERT

Donors give for different reasons, so structure your asks accordingly. For example, it might be easier to ask a friend to support you than to get them on board with a project they don’t feel strongly about. On the other hand, detailing your project’s coolest points to a potential donor who likes its premise might be a more compelling tactic for them than relating your life story.

Fundraising is not a hard science. Remind yourself and your team that you don’t need a degree in development to do it well. The best fundraisers are just people who are good at **making and maintaining connections**.

Keep in mind that most **people like being asked** to give to a worthy cause by someone they know. It’s a flattering gesture that indicates you respect them, believe they want to do good, and are considerate and generous. Who wouldn’t like that?!

3.



Outline a realistic budget and fundraising plan

Ask as many people as you can to help **review your budget** to ensure it seems reasonable. This could include your fundraising team, any partner organizations or institutional funders you're working with, and any of your peers who have experience in the area you're working in.

Pay attention to **timing**. Year-end is when a lot of organizations send out asks, so you might not want to compete with them. Also, if possible, plan for your project to kick off as soon as your fundraising period ends. This close proximity helps **keep momentum up** throughout the campaign (think of a countdown clock), and strengthens the **sense of continuity** between the fundraising campaign and the project itself.

While getting lots of small donations is heartening from a community buy-in perspective, it's usually worth your while to **spend extra time cultivating bigger donors** you think could give more. That could mean setting up a coffee date with them to ask in person, sending a heartfelt handwritten letter, or offering them special recognition as a star donor.

Fundraising takes energy: **plan your asks in waves** so your team doesn't lose stamina.



“Support comes in many forms. Not everyone can give \$250, but maybe they can give \$25. In our case, some folks said they couldn’t give anything, but they appreciated the idea and wanted to come help us with the physical work. People will respond differently.”

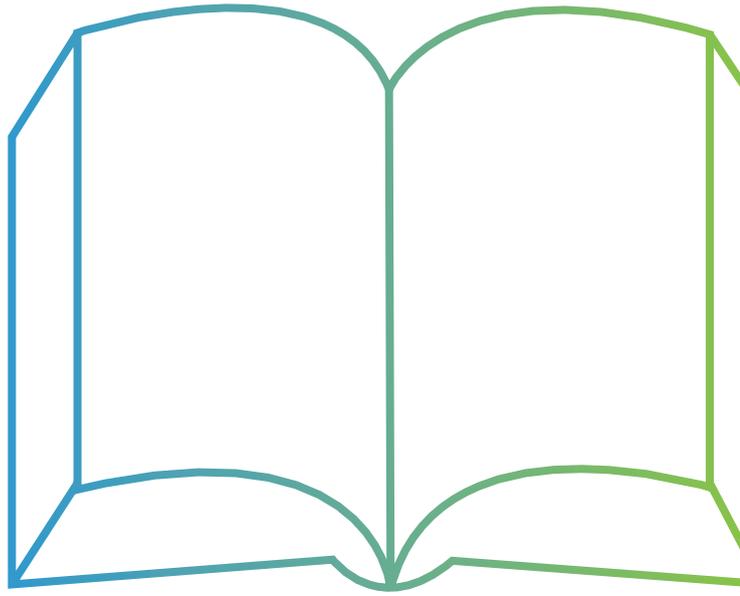
– LEE FORBES-BELUE

Be concrete and forthcoming about your plans and progress. Let donors know exactly what a \$5, \$50, or \$500 gift will provide for your project. Report to your team regularly about how much money has come in and how much there is left to raise. When people feel more informed, they feel more ownership.

Consider doing a round of **seed funding** offline before launching your campaign online. Showing your first ioby donors that you already have some backing can make them feel more confident about giving.

Face-to-face asks, phone calls, personal and mass emails, boosted Facebook posts and promoted tweets, fundraising parties... Use all outreach methods at your disposal—both to **thank and stay in touch with prospects and donors** as well as to solicit funds!

Most of our iLs agreed that, while each fundraising format has its own strength, **nothing beats the personal ask.**



4.

Behold the power of story.

The story of a project can be told from many perspectives, including:

- Your life experience and what makes your project important to you
- How you imagine other people benefitting from it
- A common point of pride for your community that relates to it
- Your neighbors' thoughts about and hopes for it

Whatever narrative direction it comes from, incorporating a story into your campaign will help you **forge common ground with donors** by illustrating why they should care, and help you **make the abstract idea of your project tangible** by sharing what it actually looks and feels like.



“Have a story to tell. People want to hear it. If people know where you’re coming from and see you’re sharing something personal with them, they’ll feel like they have a stake in what you’re doing.”

– TIM KOVACH

Similarly, there are many great formats you can use to tell your story:

- **Share photos and narrative text** through your ioby campaign page, social media, emails, and every other available channel.
- Consider investing some time (and possibly money) in a short, quality high-quality **video** or video series. Hiring a pro if there are no experienced videographers on your team can save you from the turnoff of an amateurish final product.
- Go for **earned media**. Pitch your story to local news channels, radio shows, blogs, and other outlets.
- Plan a **benefit event** and ask your neighbors to share their own personal reasons for supporting the project with all attendees.

However you employ the story of your project to connect with donors and reach your fundraising goals, remember: **don’t stop once the fundraising phase is done!** Keep your backers in the loop as your project progresses past the campaign stage.



5.

Fundraising & community buy-in go hand in hand

Crowdfunding for a local project is a great way to **bring neighbors together**. Any project offers several different angles for supporters to be attracted to: for example, Tim Kovach's Cleveland Refugee Bike Project found fans among cyclists, refugee and immigration advocates, and Cleveland's urban planning community. As you seek both approval and financial support from your neighbors, keep in mind how you can appeal to different people's interests.

Pay attention to donor feedback. When you tell your story or post updates on your campaign page or social media, study people's comments to learn what's most interesting and inspiring to them. If they loved the photo with all the kids in it, post more of those! If they wanted more details about the budget revision you just announced, give it to them.



“ We always sold this as a community endeavor, a community project: **much more transformational than transactional**. One of the easy ways to think about it is: If you like the project, great—then you’ve got to donate money to make it happen. There’s a very clean segue between liking the idea and the motivation to give.”

– JOHN BAILEY

Consider planning a **non-fundraising event** to keep donors engaged after your campaign is over. A thank you party in your backyard, a ribbon cutting event (if your project involved refurbishing a site), a six-months-in presentation about the progress you’ve made so far... There’s no end of ways to keep your backers interested in your work after they’ve given initial support.

Sending your donors **personal thank-you notes** always makes a lasting positive impression and stresses the human relationship that exists beyond your financial transaction.

Crowd-resourcing is about **tapping into community energy as well as money**. Do the future a favor and don’t think of your campaign as “one and done,” even if you don’t expect to do another. The awareness you raise and support you earn for this project could be leveraged to bolster other efforts down the road.



About ioby

ioby mobilizes neighbors who have good ideas to become powerful citizen leaders who plan, fund and make positive change in their own neighborhoods. We are creating a future in which our neighborhoods are shaped by the powerful good ideas of our own neighbors.

Read more at ioby.org/rainmakers.



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