

GAA Club Fund-raising

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The GAA is amateur but uses increasing amounts of money to help develop and deliver its work. As a result many Clubs have taken the step of appointing a 'fundraising' unit whose remit is focused on ensuring that the Club has a healthy revenue stream that fulfils the financial needs of the club. This unit works in conjunction with the Finance Sub-Committee and is headed by the Club treasurer. However, the make-up of this unit can be diverse and usually contains volunteers who may not ordinarily be involved at committee level but share an interest in securing the financial sustainability of the Club.

As most GAA Clubs have strong traditions of fundraising and regularly devise innovative fundraising methods, this note looks at some of those and highlights the key lessons learned to date.

Traditional GAA Fundraising Methods:

Good practice tips for a number of these are outlined below:

Membership Fees

This is an often under-rated way of raising funds, for example 200 adult members paying just a £25/ €25 membership fee will bring in £5,000/ €5,000.

Some tips for maximising membership fee income are:

- Keep making the point that GAA membership isn't free gratis.
- Keep highlighting what the GAA delivers for its members and its communities.
- Don't allow people to vote if they haven't paid.
- Appoint a Club Registrar whose sole job is to look after membership and fees.

- Place an emphasis on membership fees early in the year; have cut-off date after which people can't become members.
- Make sure all adult players are paid-up members; many Clubs do not however charge underage players membership fees.
- Look at the possibility of family membership schemes.
- Tie certain benefits into membership, e.g. access to big match tickets.
- Consider how gift-aid may be incorporated into voluntary donations towards a club membership fee.

Gates

Again this is something that's often allowed to go by default, leaving financial gaps that have to be filled in other ways. A Club with ten adult home games with an average attendance of just 50 people at each and an admission fee of £4.00/€4.00 has a potential income of £2,000/€2,000. To prevent this going by default Clubs should:

- Agree and implement a Club admission pricing policy.
- Adopt the principle that all our games have value and therefore attract an admission fee, however small.
- Put in place a team of people who will look after gates.
- If at all possible, put turnstiles in place: turnstiles make sure that every entrant pays their admission.

Lotto

The weekly Lotto has become the fundraising mainstay of the majority of GAA Clubs. Experience built up over the years tells us that the best Lottos:

- Are managed by a dedicated person/team of people within the Club.
- Take place week-after-week, without fail.



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- Facilitate people who want to pay in/lump sums or by standing orders/direct debits.
- Make sure their whole Club catchment is covered in terms of sales.
- Hold the draw publicly, in a set place at a set time.
- Publicise the weekly winners in local press/parish bulletin/social media pages.
- Increase the jackpot by a reasonable amount each week ...and re-start it at a reasonable level when it's won.
- Have tickets available in shops and other public places for casual buyers.
- Sell Lotto tickets at Club events and games.
- Acknowledge Lotto sales people in some small way at the end of each year.
- Make sure adult players in particular attend Club events.
- Make sure your events are well-stewarded.

Draws

Most Clubs will at one time or another run a draw. Experience to date tells us that we should:

Events

These are another stalwart of the GAA Club scene, covering a huge range of things such as concerts; nights at the races; sports days; golf classics; gala dinners, coffee mornings, Fight Nights, Strictly Come Dancing.

Among the things to watch out for are:

- The Club should have a dedicated Events Committee in place.
- GAA events should always reflect the GAA ethos and core values.
- Put some thought into how you schedule your events: some things are naturally seasonal (e.g. golf classics work best in the summer) whilst others (e.g. gala dinners) will be undertaken only once every few years.
- Have an events plan for each year with maybe one event per quarter.
- Make sure there's variety in what you do: a good year's calendar of events will include something for everyone.
- Watch out for new and innovative things, e.g. "Who Wants to be a Thousandaire", "Biggest Loser" competition and so on.
- Always try to get the right balance between enjoyment and profitability: the best events achieve both.
- Always be aware of what's affordable in your local community.
- Selling tickets for events has to be well-organised: like nearly everything else the GAA Club does, it needs to make sure it covers its entire catchment area with its sales.
- Be clear about why we're running the draw and how much we want to raise: ticket buyers will want to know this.
- Put a person/team in charge of the draw.
- Spend time working out the right pricing strategy: there are times/places when £10/€10 tickets are appropriate and times/places when £50+/€50+ tickets are appropriate.
- Don't keep waiting for the perfect time, i.e. when there's no other big competitor draws out there in the market; that time will never come!
- Talk to other Clubs about what they have done. Clubs which have recently run successful draws will be delighted to be asked to share their experiences with others.
- Publicise the draw well.
- Work out a sales plan: most GAA Club draws involve selling large numbers of tickets outside our own area, sometimes far beyond it.
- Get a good balance between the price of our tickets and the value of our prizes.
- Invest in good, well-designed tickets: something that looks good will sell better!
- Timetable the draw: set a final date for it and change this only in the most extreme circumstances.
- Allow enough time for the target amount of tickets to be sold.
- Set up sales teams: tickets are easier sold by pairs/small groups of people than they are by individuals.
- Publicise the results of the draw and the amount it raised: ticket buyers need to know this, and most feel good about having been associated with successful draws. Use local and national press outlets to announce your winners also.
- Acknowledge your sellers in some small way after the draw is over.

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Sponsorship

This is now central to most Clubs' fundraising. Many GAA Club sponsors are involved to support their Club rather than for commercial reasons. But that's all the more reason why we should be business-like with them and treat them well:

- Always make sure your sponsors fit with the ethos of the GAA and your Club.
- Plan your sponsorship: work out what's available for sponsorship and at what price and also identify potential sponsors.
- Tell your potential sponsors about your Club and what it does. Send them a full colour brochure containing all the relevant information promoting the advantages of being associated with your club. Send them your Club Development Plan, if appropriate.
- Make it clear what's up for sponsorship and for how long. Spell out for them the benefits they'll get from the sponsorship ...e.g. name on shirts; other branding; access to tickets; places at Club events; etc.
- Spell out in turn what the Club expects from them ... payment amounts; dates; etc.
- Treat your sponsors well: promote their sponsorship; greet them at Club events; honour the commitment they make.
- Invite them to be part of any community consultation being undertaken by the Club; e.g the planning workshop as part of the Club Planning Programme.

Grants

Grants from sources other than the GAA itself are increasingly important for GAA Clubs. Contrary to what some think, GAA Clubs do not have to compromise any core principles to obtain significant grant funding from places like the Lottery or government. Over the past decade or so, Clubs have learned a lot about grants and how to get them. That learning tells us:

- Never chase a grant just because it's there: always start by working out your needs (through the Club Planning Programme), and then look around to see if there's grant aid to help you meet them. Don't build a second pitch because there's a grant for it: instead look for a grant to help fund that second pitch your Club badly needs.
- Read the funders' criteria very carefully: remember you have to fit with what they want, not with what you might think they should want!
- That said, funders always want to spend, not keep, their money: you need to show how you can help them do that.
- Funders look closely at Who they're giving their money to as well as at What it's for: it's essential that Clubs can show that their governance arrangements are top class.
- Funders also like to see where their grant might fit in your overall scheme of things. It's vital to have a good Club Development Plan that spells that out for them.
- Always keep thinking about who will benefit from your project.
- Try to find out what assessment criteria the funders use and match your application to them.
- Look at how your project will deliver on wider issues such as equality; sustainability; partnership with others; the environment; etc. Does your project cater for under-represented groups – females, children, older people, people with disabilities. Can your project tackle issues centred on obesity, mental health, community relations etc.
- Be clear in your own mind what the ongoing costs (added maintenance for example) and benefits (increased participation) of your project will be: funders will want to see that.
- Spell out your competence in terms of developing and then managing projects: make sure your Club is credible in the eyes of the funder.

- Put in a quality bid. If it's form-based, answer every question you're asked, openly and honestly: if it's not form-based, tell them What you want to do; Why you want to do it; How you'll deliver it; When and Where you'll do it; Who will benefit; and How it meets their criteria.
- Always assume the funder knows nothing about your Club; its work; or the GAA: spell it out for them.
- Try and differentiate your bid: make it stand out from the crowd.
- Talk to other GAA Clubs which have been successful in getting grants.
- Be prepared to meet funders face-to-face, either in a meeting or to make a formal presentation to them.
- Consult with your County Development Officer

Structured Giving at Club Level

Many GAA Clubs have put in place planned giving schemes as a core part of their fund-raising strategies. These replicate very successful approaches that have been developed at County level, e.g. Club Aontroma; Club Derry; Club Down; and Club Tyrone.

The basic principle is very simple: you ask people who have the welfare of the GAA in your Club area at heart to commit to paying a set amount to the Club. The commitment can be open ended or for a set period. In most cases the payment is of the order of £20/€20 per month.

Most of these schemes are essentially "one-way" ... i.e. the person gives the money but gets nothing (or very little) tangible in return. Some schemes offer subscribers a specific branded bit of Club merchandise, e.g. a coat. Some will offer a bit of hospitality once a year. But these aren't like draws or corporate tickets. The fundamental idea is that they're a means for interested, committed people to support the GAA at local Club level in a very effective way.

These schemes will only work in your own catchment area. They're not like draw tickets – you don't go elsewhere to sell them. However this means that every Club in a

County could have such a scheme in place, and no-one is treading on anyone else's toes. People who have moved away from their home area can also be signed up to make a contribution "back home".

Absolutely central to the success of such a scheme is persuading people to come on board. There are no shortcuts to this but equally it's not a hard task. Clubs just need to spell out what they offer, or plan to offer, the local community and particularly what they provide for young people. Virtually every Club has a great story to tell in terms of what it has/does in terms of:

- Facilities: pitches; gyms; halls; changing rooms; etc.
- Teams
- Coaching and the "Go-Games" model.
- Games for boys and girls of all abilities
- A hub for the local community.
- Good, robust healthy activities
- Cultural activities such as Scór
- Work with the local schools
- A "whole family" ethos
- A contribution to GAA activity at County level.

It's vital to get these stories across because most people want to be part of positive things like the GAA. Usually we get the stories across via a well-designed brochure. Clubs can then call people together and do a formal presentation of what they are and what they're trying to do. If taking this approach, put a good effort into the presentation, i.e. use power-point etc. Equally you can approach individuals on a one-to-one basis. But a good brochure gives the message, loud and clear, that you're serious; business like; and respectful of your potential subscribers.

In terms of rolling out such a scheme in your Club, experience elsewhere tells us:

- Signing up to such a scheme doesn't suit everybody so don't approach everybody.
- These schemes should not be seen as competing with weekly Lottos: they're different things aimed at different markets.
- Many people sign up because it's the only way they can make a real contribution to the Club (e.g. they don't have the time to do "hands-on" work).

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- Asking people to sign standing orders/ direct debits makes the administration much easier.
- A specific Club bank account for the scheme helps emphasise how it's additional to other traditional fund-raising methods.
- It is appreciated by subscribers when the Club demonstrates that this income will be ring-fenced for a specific task, e.g. for development; a second pitch; youth coaching; etc.
- If there's no tangible return or "reward" subscribers may become demotivated in continuing their donations.
- All you have to do with most people is ask. If they're aware of what the GAA does locally (and that's up to you to tell them!) then most people are keen to make a contribution.
- Get a small dedicated group to run the scheme.
- Use IT to help manage it. It's important to have all your members on a simple database. That makes sure you know who's on board and what they have contributed. It also eases the workload when it comes to mail-merges for writing out to people.

It's absolutely vital to keep in touch with members. At least once a year go back to them, usually via a well-produced annual report, and tell them:

- How much they have contributed
- Where their money went
- How their Club performed overall
- What their Club's plans are
- How important they (as subscribers) are to their Club and therefore to the local community.

Registering for CASC (Community Amateur Sports Clubs) and Section 235 status: (See Advice Note 5)

This monetary scheme, managed by the

Inland Revenue, was devised to encourage communities to support their local voluntary sports club.

With a Structured Giving Scheme (Friends Of.../Monthly Direct Debit) in place, many clubs can re-claim an additional 25p in every £1 donated by their members who have signed up to such schemes and are registered tax payers.

There are a number of considerations and requirements that Clubs should be aware of before registering for CASC status. More information can be found on www.hmrc.gov.uk

Clubs in Cavan, Monaghan and Donegal can receive tax exemption on eligible projects, from eligible donors under Section 235. More information on this can be found on www.revenue.ie

In order to be deemed eligible for CASC and Section 235 registration clubs should be able to answer yes to all the points below:

- Is Club Membership open to all?
- Are Club Facilities available to all sectors of the community?
- Does the Club's Constitution prevent profits being distributed to members?
- Does the club provide facilities and encourage participation in eligible sports?
- Does Club Constitution state that on dissolution of Club Assets are to be applied to Sporting or Charitable Purposes?
- Does the Club have a full set of audited accounts?
- Has the Club an up to date Constitution and Deeds of Trust in place?

Clubs should contact their County Development Officer of the Community Development Department within Ulster GAA should they have any queries regarding this.