



## COMMUNITY ACTION MONTH | TOOLKIT

MAY 2018

### *Fundraising During Community Action Month*



You can use Community Action Month as a fundraising opportunity to reach out to your donors and other supporters and stakeholders. In your fundraising letter or email, you can provide them with information about the purpose of Community Action Month and then reflect upon the positive outcomes and lives your agency has changed over the past year. Community Action Agencies give their time, energy, and passion to help people help themselves, and those who are inspired by the dedicated efforts of your agency may wish to offer their support for your programs.

A good fundraising appeal tells the story of an agency and the individuals it serves. It uses specific examples of success stories to illustrate the needs in the community and explicitly states how your Community Action Agency is meeting those needs and assisting families to achieve self-sufficiency. While fundraising can often seem intimidating, once you make your initial ask, you'll often find that there are many people in your community who are motivated and happy to contribute to your cause.

Even as you ask for funds, Community Action Month can also be a time when you thank your donors, both individuals in the community who have contributed to your work as well as to foundations, businesses, and government grantmakers who support your agency and its anti-poverty programs. You can also communicate your gratitude to volunteers who give their time and talents and who may further along also be motivated to give financially. People always appreciate thank-you notes, and by showing your appreciation for your donors and volunteers, you can strengthen and affirm your relationships with them.



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### ***Sample Fundraising Letter / Email***

Dear [Insert Name of Individual],

We are excited to announce that May 2018 is Community Action Month, a celebration of the accomplishments of Community Action Agencies across the country who are a robust state and local force—reaching children and families in 99 percent of America’s counties with life-changing services that create pathways to prosperity. As a Community Action Agency, [insert name of your agency] is committed to the Promise of Community Action: *to change people’s lives, embody the spirit of hope, improve communities, and make America a better place to live. We care about the entire community, and we are dedicated to helping people help themselves and each other.*

In the past [month/year], [insert name of agency] served [number] of families with low-income and transformed their lives by helping them become self-sufficient. We are particularly excited to share the story of [name of individual served], who participated in [name of program]. [Insert brief anecdote about how the person was helped by the program and give a tangible example of how his/her life has improved.] But [name of individual] is not the only person positively impacted by [insert name of agency]. [Insert relevant facts that demonstrate your agency’s success to show how you are having a positive impact on the region.]

As [insert name of agency] improves the lives of people in our community, we also need our community to help us. We request that you make a special Community Action Month gift of [insert suggested amount, appropriate to audience and link to online donation form, if an email]. Your generosity will allow us to continue to change people’s lives in [name of community].

We very much appreciate your generous contribution!

Yours truly,  
[Insert name of Board President]  
Board President  
[Insert Name of agency]



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### ***Fundraising Appeal Tips***

**Emphasize the need in your community** –Inform your donors about the problems in your community that your agency is working to solve. Using specific facts and statistics about poverty in your region is helpful because it shows that there is a need that your Agency is responding to.



**Emphasize individual stories**—There’s a saying in fundraising that people give to people. Pick one or two customer stories that showcase how their lives have been significantly and positively changed by your work. What was their situation before they found Community Action? What programs did they participate in and what do their lives look like now that they have completed these programs? How did they feel before they found Community Action and how do they feel now? Just make sure that you have your customers’ permission to use their stories.

**Emphasize your agency’s role in solving the problem**—After you’ve shown the need in your community, make sure that your donors clearly understand how Community Action is addressing and meeting that need. Present data that demonstrates the difference you are making, whether it’s the number of individuals you have served in a year, the number of individuals who have successfully completed your programs, or the number of individuals who are self-sufficient because of your help.

**Emphasize the ask**—Don’t be shy about directly asking your donors for money. Your fundraising appeal should include a section where you ask donors to give a gift. You may even want to provide suggested donation amounts, which should be appropriate to your audience. (You probably don’t want to ask former customers for large donations, and you probably don’t want to ask wealthy philanthropists in your community for small donations.)



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### ***Other Community Action Resources***

Looking to get press coverage around Community Action Month? Follow these [“Ten Media Relations Tips for Your Nonprofit”](#) to get your story covered in the news.

If you need help getting started on social media, check out our webinars with basics on how to use Twitter. We also have a more detailed webinar about sharing your stories online [here](#).

Nonprofit Quarterly also has a great article about how nonprofit organizations can most effectively use social media, [“Social Media Effectiveness for Public Engagement.”](#)

Community Action Partnership branding materials, including the specific colors, high-res image files of our logo, the Huggy Heart and other elements of the Community Action brand, are available online [here](#).

If you're thinking about using Community Action Month as a way to boost fundraising and need some ideas to start off with, try GuideStar's [“Top Ten Fundraising Tips.”](#)

[“A Beginner's Guide to Fundraising”](#) also has some helpful links and resources to kick off fundraising campaigns.

If you're looking for customized data and mapping, you can access our [Community Needs Assessment Tool online](#).

For detailed information about the successes of CSBG funded Agencies in the past year, please consult [NASCSP's 2016 Annual Report](#).