



Eurosoma Cultural Centre- Fundraising through donations and events

Background information about the RCO

Eurosoma Cultural Centre is a representative body of Horn of African refugees and immigrants people elected from diverse refugee communities in inner-city and outer-city Birmingham. As such, we support all arts and cultural programmes by marketing events to and seeking feedback from local communities. In addition, we constantly engage and consult with other young people to represent their concerns and aspirations at our management meetings, and inform our network in Birmingham.

We have been established for three years, and have 5 management committee members and 15 volunteers; we have no paid staff at the moment.

Our aims:

1. To promote any charitable purposes for the benefit of the community in West Midlands for the Horn of Africa community, in particular but not exclusively the advancement of education, the protection of good health both mental and physical and the relief of poverty and sickness.
2. To provide or assist in the provision of facilities in the interest of social welfare for recreation or other leisure time occupations of individuals who have need of such facilities by reason of their youth, age, infirmity or disability, financial hardship or social circumstances with the objects of improving their conditions of life.
3. To promote culture and create skills for the communities.
4. To set up a media project within the community.
5. To set up research projects to investigate the problems of young people in the communities.

Summary of activities

We support refugees and asylum seekers in and around Birmingham, particularly by the provision of advice on various issues such as welfare, housing, immigration matters, education, health care, employment and training and youth development. We also provide an after school club, play scheme, sport activities including football and basketball. Our aim is to enable refugees and asylum seekers to access services provided by the government and other agencies. We aim to give them accurate and up to date information about the issues that are affecting them. Many refugees are in confusion as to what to do next when they arrive in Birmingham. Our aim is to direct them to the right place where they can get support, we also give them the appropriate advice that they need.

We approach these services to build up the community's confidence to achieve higher things. In most cases we support our service users directly by making direct telephone calls, drafting letters, dealing with the services providers, presenting appeals and reviews. In some cases we also use signposting to other organizations or agencies such as Job Centre Plus, CAB, different Law Centre organisation, IAS, and local neighbourhood offices.

Summary of experience

We would like to focus on how we settled the office rent and utilities costs through donations and fundraising with Eurosoma members, management committee and local Somali businesses.

Describe what your RCO did, and what came out of this

We use three main ways to fundraise from community members and local businesses:

- In the holidays or weekends we organise fundraising events – for example comedy, quizzes, fun and games. The families and young people really enjoy these. We provide soft drinks, tea, coffee, sandwiches etc. We charge a small amount – for example around £5 per family, £2 for older people. This makes the people very happy to come together and share with each other and enjoy, it also gives the young people something to do and keeps them out of trouble. The young people choose the programme as they know most about what young people and families like- they design the sessions and events so it is suitable for them. They also enjoy raising money and organising sessions and it gives them useful experience.
- We collect donations from business people in the community such as cafes and shops. They know that we will organise useful activities for the community so they are happy to contribute. Some may give £50, £20, £100. This can make a big contribution towards our rent.
- Our members and management committee give members contributions. In our constitution they have to pay at least £10 a year, in reality it depends on commitment and on the money that they have. We don't expect the poorest people in our community to pay; it depends on their financial situation.

In this way we survive and cover our office rent and utility bills.

When we organise events we talk about where we have collected money and if we have collected money from a business we thank them publically. There are usually 100 or 150 people at our events, they applaud and the people who donated hear this and appreciate it. They are happy that we are recognising their contribution and they can see that we are doing useful things with the money.

People come to us if they have problems, for example with the school or the neighbourhood, and we call the offices on their behalf and help them, write letters for them, so they know we are using the money for what they told us because they have a good connection.

What problems and barriers did your RCO face in doing this, and how did you overcome or try to overcome these?

We haven't faced many difficulties as it is a small amount that people give, and the people come to our events in the area where most Somali people live so they feel connected to our

organisation. People know where we are and what we are doing so they are happy to donate money if they can.

We haven't asked people from the wider community to give money so far.

What are your tips for other RCOs considering doing something similar?

- Have a direct connection with young people in your community- they often know a lot about what people want and how to organise successful fundraising activities.
- You need skills and talent in organising attractive events that the community like. You should consult with members of your community to find out what events and activities they will want.
- Have simple marketing activities. For example, invite business people to free events, give them refreshments to bring them together, make sure it is enjoyable and attractive to encourage them to want to donate money. Explain the activities you are organising and why they are important.
- Communicate how you are spending the money people are giving so they know that you are using their money wisely.
- Make sure you say thank you to people or businesses who give money for example inviting them to free events. Publically acknowledge people who have donated to your organisation at the events.

© Eurosoma Cultural Centre 2010

This information has been produced by Eurosoma Cultural Centre, and was commissioned by the Basis Project, run in partnership by the Refugee Council and Refugee Action, supported by the Big Lottery Fund (BIG). It is not intended to be comprehensive or to provide legal advice. No legal responsibility is attached to the publisher. It can be reproduced free of charge for non-commercial use, but credit must be given to Eurosoma Cultural Centre, the Basis Project, Refugee Council and Refugee Action.