

# Your Go-To Guide to P2P Fundraising Events

Practical advice for charity leaders looking to raise more,  
reach new donors, and build lasting community.



# The Peer-to-Peer Advantage

Peer-to-peer fundraising—or P2P for short—is a style of fundraising where individuals raise money on behalf of a cause they care about by leveraging their personal networks. Over time, these events can help deepen relationships, build trust, and turn one-time participants into lifelong champions of your organization.

WALK-A-THON



FUN RUN



BIKE RIDE



TALENT SHOW



DANCE MARATHON



BIRTHDAY FUNDRAISER



SWIM-A-THON



DESSERT AUCTION



## Why It Works

Why is peer-to-peer fundraising so powerful? Because it's about people giving to people, not to a charity. Participants join because someone they know—a friend, family member, or colleague—asks them to be part of something that matters to them. It means they join for the friend first, and discover the mission along the way.

That personal connection turns a simple donation into an act of support and belonging. By empowering supporters to fundraise within their own circles, charities make their cause more relatable and significantly broaden their reach.



## The Multiplier Effect

Each captain



Recruits 7+ friends



Who each finds 10 donors



\$20K+ raised!

## Building a Culture of Fundraising

A strong fundraising culture happens when teams feel inspired to raise money, not just attend an event. Peer-to-peer turns supporters into ambassadors who fundraise through their own networks. They blend the best parts of traditional fundraising events with exponential reach. Think of it this way: you're building a fundraiser with an event, not an event with a fundraiser. It's personal at its core, social by nature, and built for impact.

# Should You Host an In-Person P2P Event?

Before jumping in, take an honest look at your organization's readiness. These questions will help you decide if now's the right time.

## ● Do you have a clear fundraising goal?

Successful P2P events require a meaningful goal of at least \$20K. If that feels unrealistic, it may be too early to move forward.

## ● Is there room in your event calendar?

Host only if your team has the time and focus to make it successful. Be prepared to pause other major fundraising 60 days before and 30 days after the event.

## ● Does your team have capacity?

You'll need a capable, organized event lead and a solid team of staff and volunteers (dedicating about 150 hours for a \$20K campaign) to share responsibilities and keep things running smoothly .

## ● Can you recruit strong Team Captains?

Can you think of 12–15 people right away (board members, volunteers, or passionate supporters) who can lead teams and rally others? Strong Team Captains are the #1 driver of success.

## ● Is leadership on board?

Your CEO and leadership team should actively champion the event. Their support sets the tone for the staff, volunteers, and donors, and has a huge impact on your charity's fundraising culture.

## ● Do you have a culture of fundraising?

P2P only works in organizations where fundraising comes first. If your revenue relies mostly on grants or endowments, build that culture before taking on an event.

**If you answered “Yes” to the above, it's time to build your signature event!**

# Building Your Signature Event

The most successful in-person P2P fundraising events are signature gatherings held annually. They're all about creating a memorable day for supporters—an experience that deepens community bonds and grows more meaningful each year. Over time, these events become beloved traditions that participants look forward to, rally around, and share widely.



## Signature Event Essentials

Here's what you'll need to set up your event for lasting impact.



### Compelling Idea

Your event activity should tie directly to your mission in a way that sparks empathy and participation.

Coldest Night of the Year has been so effective because participants are asked to walk in the cold, imagining what it's like to not have a warm bed or hot shower waiting at home. The Ride to Conquer Cancer resonates because it's a daunting nod to the uphill battle of fighting cancer.

Ask yourself: Which physical challenge, symbolic act, or shared experience could meaningfully connect people to your cause?



### Bold Fundraising Goal

Set a target that feels exciting yet achievable. We recommend starting with \$20,000 as a number that signals real impact and motivates your community to get involved.



### User-Friendly Tech

Your website should make it simple for participants to register and fundraise, and for others to find information and donate. Prioritize clear design, smooth payment processing, and automatic receipting.

## Signature Event Essentials, Continued



### Safety and Structure

A great event requires thoughtful planning, including permits, insurance, risk management, signage, and a strong staffing and volunteer plan.



### Signature Touches

From start to finish, your event should feel organized, safe, and fun. Swag can help participants feel connected, just remember to keep any branded swag or gifts aligned with your mission, event, and overall budget.



### Ongoing Communication

Build momentum with consistent updates, stories, and social posts before, during, and after the event. Focus on Team Captains, who will then motivate and communicate with their team members. Nudge participants along the way, keeping messages uplifting so they feel proud of their impact and eager to return next year.



### Realistic Budget

Fundraising events typically deliver an ROI between 2:1 and 3:1, meaning for every dollar spent, you can expect to raise \$2 to \$3. While Blue Sea events often exceed these averages, it's important to plan with realistic expectations.

**Remember:** prioritize hosting a fundraiser that includes an event experience, not just an event with a fundraising component. This approach supports smarter budgeting and sets the stage for long-term, scalable success.



# Introducing the Blue Sea Way

## Mobilize Your Community With One of Our Signature P2P Fundraising Events

For more than 20 years, Blue Sea Foundation has partnered with local charities across Canada. We simplify the process by providing a ready-to-go model backed by national brand recognition, a complete fundraising platform, and the guidance of experienced peer-to-peer specialists.

Along the way, our partners typically:

- ✓ Raise \$20,000+ in just a few months
- ✓ Reach 100+ new donors for every \$10,000 raised
- ✓ Strengthen local sponsorships and corporate partnerships
- ✓ Build an event their community looks forward to each year

## Impact at a Glance:

▶ TOTAL RAISED:

**\$130M+**

▶ AVERAGE PER PARTNER:

**\$58K**

▶ COMMUNITIES ENGAGED:

**280+**



# Community Fundraising in Action

An in-person peer-to-peer fundraising event can feel like a big job, but the rewards are often even bigger. Think: new donors, significant fundraising, community buzz, corporate sponsorships, and lasting connections.

Success also requires the right expertise. Without it, it's easy to lose sight of the real goal: stellar fundraising. That's where Blue Sea comes in. With the right partner, you can access the plans, processes, and people needed to host your own signature event—all with your existing staff or a passionate volunteer.

## Our P2P Approach

Here's how the Blue Sea way can unlock P2P fundraising events for your organization.



### Proven, Popular Events

Our in-person events take place nationally on the same day, with partner charities hosting in their local communities. All funds raised stay local, while you benefit from our national brand, website, communications, media coverage, social media reach, and more.



### Plan and Resources

Gain access to a complete roadmap for success. Our online WAVES portal and Event Guide provide everything you need to plan, promote, and host an unforgettable in-person event.



### Support and Training

Benefit from regularly scheduled webinars, one-on-one coaching, weekly emails, and a comprehensive sponsorship program, all designed to guide your team toward event day with zero upfront investment.



### Online Tools

Enjoy secure registration and donation pages for participants, along with our WAVES portal to manage your event. Everything is automated and streamlined, and you can track long-term campaign metrics year over year.

## The Blue Sea Way, Continued

### **Swag and Signage**

Deliver an exceptional event experience with high-quality swag and signage, without the financial risk. With zero upfront investment, you'll have access to everything you need to delight your supporters on event day. Think: t-shirts or toques, lanyards, buttons, stickers, signage, and more.

### **Receipts and Financial Administration**

Rely on our full-service financial administration, including tax receipting, reconciliations, payment processing, and \$10M in liability insurance.

### **Customer Service**

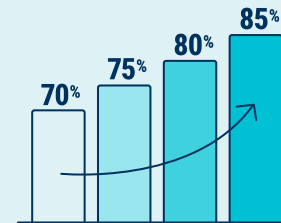
Count on dedicated support for your participants, donors, and sponsors. Our team provides prompt email and phone assistance for any event-related questions, meaning you can stay focused on planning and recruitment, and let us handle most of the other queries.

### **Long-Term Growth**

Build campaigns that are repeatable, scalable, sustainable, and designed to grow.

## Fast Facts

▶ In 2023, the **average payout was 78%**, outperforming typical event returns.



▶ Charities who gather **\$10K in sponsorship and \$20K in donations** (or more) receive **85% of funds raised**.

▶ BSF partners have raised between **\$20K and \$200K+** in a single three-month campaign, with **100% of net proceeds staying local**.

▶ Nearly **50% of funds** are raised in the final **8-12 days before event day**.



# Choose Your Campaign

Our three signature events—Coldest Night of the Year, Ride for Refuge, and The Grand Parade—each offer a distinct way to bring your community together and raise support, so you can decide which one is right for your charity.



## Coldest Night of the Year

Canada's largest family-friendly winter fundraising walk for charities serving people facing hurt, hunger, and homelessness.

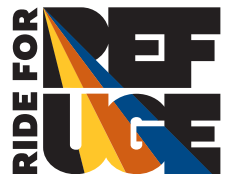
- ▶ **CAMPAIGN:** December - February
- ▶ **EVENT:** Last Saturday in February



## The Grand Parade

A family-friendly fundraising walk supporting Canadian charities that provide essential care and services to seniors.

- ▶ **CAMPAIGN:** May - September
- ▶ **EVENT:** Third Saturday in September



## Ride for Refuge

A fundraising bike ride and walk supporting charities providing hope, safety, and freedom to those in need.

- ▶ **CAMPAIGN:** June - October
- ▶ **EVENT:** First Saturday in October

▶ Since its inception in 2011, Coldest Night of the Year has raised **\$100 million** across **230+ communities**.



# Local Impact

Every community tells its own story of impact. Since 2010, we've seen hundreds of local charities across Canada turn fundraising events into real, measurable change: raising vital funds, connecting with supporters, and strengthening the work they do day in and day out.



## Home Horizon

📍 **Collingwood, Ontario:** Home Horizon is a \$1 million transitional housing charity that has partnered with CNOY for 8 years. Their small but mighty community has grown their campaign from \$30,000 to \$200,000, allowing them to complete a recent renovation which increased their capacity by 40%.



## Youth Impact Jeunesse

📍 **Moncton, New Brunswick:** Youth Impact is a \$10 million dollar multi-service youth charity serving the greater Moncton area for many years. They've worked with Blue Sea in both Coldest Night of the Year and the Ride for Refuge events, collectively raising \$925,000 since 2010.



## Sherwood Care

📍 **Sherwood Park, Alberta:** Sherwood Care is a continuing care facility dedicated to providing high-quality, home-like support for seniors. Through its participation in The Grand Parade, the organization raised over \$70,000 in less than three years.

# Reach Out to Blue Sea Foundation

We're here to guide you from day one, so you can focus on your cause while raising more for the people you serve. Let's start the conversation.

✉ [talktous@blueseas.org](mailto:talktous@blueseas.org)

☎ 1.877.743.3413

🌐 [blueseas.org](https://blueseas.org)

