

John Humphrey Centre for  
Peace and Human Rights

*Ignite Change Now:  
Youth Action Toolkit*



**John Humphrey Centre**  
*for Peace and Human Rights*  
*pour la paix et les droits de la personne*



**ACGC**   
Alberta Council for Global Cooperation



## JOHN HUMPHREY CENTRE FOR PEACE AND HUMAN RIGHTS

The John Humphrey Centre for Peace and Human Rights, named in honour of the Canadian-born principal writer of the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights, was established in Edmonton, Alberta in June 2000 as an outgrowth of the Human Rights Education Foundation, established in 1998.

The Centre envisions a world that manifests a culture of peace and human rights in which the dignity of every person is respected, valued and celebrated and aims to support such a world through educational programs and activities, community collaboration and relationship building guided by the principles enshrined within the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The underlying belief is that many social problems such as poverty, conflict, bullying, racism, civil strife and other ills may be relieved through a commitment to human rights.



From August 1 - 4, 2007 young delegates from around the world gathered in Edmonton at the Global Youth Assembly (GYA) to discuss local and global issues, exchange ideas on how best to address local and global problems and challenges, and begin to develop individual and collective action plans that represented concrete measures for improving individual lives and communities.

Participants at the 2007 GYA were inspired to become global citizens - learning about the problems facing local and global communities, developing the skills and collaboration necessary to work individually and collectively towards a culture of peace and acting to affect positive change in diverse areas such as environmental protection, sustainable development, gender equality and racial harmony. The Arts served as an important focus. Young people were invited to consider how music, photography, film, dance and other forms of artistic expression could be used to transmit important messages or to inspire others to take positive action. Delegates had access to numerous workshops presented by leaders from Canada, Africa, Latin America and South Asia.



## John Humphrey Centre for Peace and Human Rights Coordinators:

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Special thanks to Rob Hagg, Eryn Fitzgerald, Wayne Lavold, Robert Gardner, Dev Aujla and DreamNOW, Jon Rivero and Michelle Anderson for their contributions to this toolkit.

## Special Thanks to the following sponsors for making this toolkit a reality:



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# YOUTH TAKING ACTION

*a toolkit for change*



*Is there something happening in the world or your community that inspires or frustrates you?*

*Have you wanted to become active in making change but don't know how?*

Then this resource is for you!

Taking action for change in your community or around the world requires a lot of thought and preparation. We know that it can often be incredibly overwhelming to figure out where to start and this resource toolkit has been devised to help you get started! Don't give up hope if you think problems are too large for one individual to make a difference... you can do it! Just think about small steps.

You may have an issue you are passionate about, or something in the community that makes you want to step up and make change. This kit is an effective tool to address the "now what". It offers a step-by-step guide on how to positively make change and take action.

# Getting Experience and Understanding the Issues: Taking a Small Step

Without feeling like you have to take on the world yourself, if you are passionate about an issue but not sure how you can make a contribution or are not ready to start your own project, consider taking the time to volunteer at a local organization that may be addressing your concerns. There are a number of local organizations in communities that work to improve the quality of life of individuals at home or overseas. There are also groups that work to advance other causes, such as creating a sustainable environment or providing a safe home for abused animals. Whatever your interest, there is likely an organization out there that you can volunteer with not only to learn more about the issue and have an impact, but to gain valuable experience! Don't underestimate the value of this experience in your future searches for jobs for example— it can have a huge impact.

Go to your local town council to find out about the organizations in your community. Surf the provincial government website – they will often have Ministries that can direct you to organizations that may interest you. Get out and talk to people, ask around... you are bound to find something that may surprise you!

## Some links that could get you started include:

- Alberta Council for Global Cooperation [www.acgc.net](http://www.acgc.net)
- Canadian International Development Agency [www.acdi-cida.gc.ca](http://www.acdi-cida.gc.ca)
- Charity Village [www.charityvillage.com](http://www.charityvillage.com)
- TakingITGlobal [www.takingitglobal.org](http://www.takingitglobal.org)
- Youthone [www.youthone.com](http://www.youthone.com)

# pick an issue



Think you are ready to take a bigger step than simply volunteering? Let's get started!

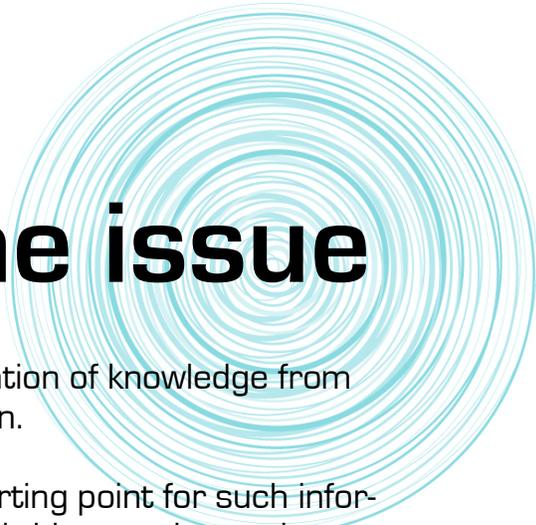
What is something that you know about or have heard about that you believe requires action or that you want to learn more about?

Make sure that you try to get specific with an interest or concern. Problems seem overwhelming when you don't try to break them down into smaller pieces that are easier to address. Try to hone down what it is about your issue area that frustrates or motivates you.

- If you are interested in addressing poverty, how can you break that down into smaller chunks? Perhaps addressing homelessness in your community? Perhaps building awareness of social programs that exist for the poor? Perhaps considering school lunch programs for children from poor families?
- If you are interested in the environment, what are the smaller pieces? Is it deforestation? Is it the declining quality of our air and smog that covers our cities? What is it about the environment that drives your motivation? For example, if you care about the environment, does your city have a recycling program that people are actually using?
- If it drives you crazy that no one seems to care about issues that are important to you, what issues are these? Who needs to be involved? Who should care? For example, are students in your school voting in your student elections? If not, why? What ways can we communicate to let people or government representatives know about these important matters?
- If you think that all people should be treated equally, in what sense? Does it make you mad when you experience or see racism or discrimination? How do you feel when you see persons with disabilities? Do you have a friend who is gay and afraid of being him or herself?

## STEP ONE

# understanding the issue



To be an active global citizen, you need a foundation of knowledge from which to draw when you plan ways to take action.

The internet is a great potential source and starting point for such information. NGOs rely on the internet to spread their ideas and organize action in support of change. Take the time to investigate but keep in mind some important questions when reviewing a website:

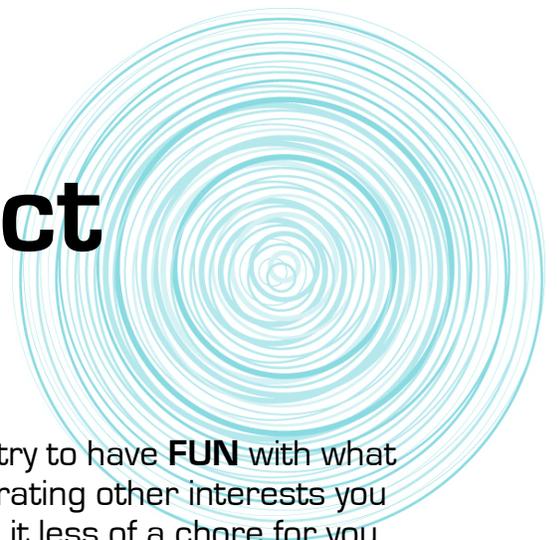
- Is the website reliable?
- Is it potentially biased?
- Does the site state fact or opinion?
- Is the source of the information clearly stated?
- Is the source reliable?
- Is the website comprehensive or does it only consider specific aspects of a problem?
- Has the website been updated recently? Does the topic require current information?

In addition to website research, consider learning more about the issues through connecting with relevant local organizations; exploring the websites of the various levels of government (or even better yet, contact your local members of government); connecting with your local librarian; or, talking to your social studies teacher or any other teacher that may be interested and knowledgeable in your area of interest.

For your research you should explore a few areas. Consider what is already being done about the issue, what the government policies and programs are around the issue, and what other groups exist that share your interest. This will give you good resource information when you start to consider an action plan!

## STEP TWO

# making the project meaningful



In order to make an impact, you should always try to have **FUN** with what you are doing. You may want to consider integrating other interests you may have into your plan for change so it makes it less of a chore for you and more about fun!

Consider how you can use art, music, sports or whatever other interest you may have for change.

Begin by brainstorming your interests and/or problems or concerns. It can be done in either order... let your mind flow!

For your **interests** think about:

- What are your interests?
- What are your hobbies?
- What do you like to do in your spare time?
- What do you do for fun?
- What are you good at?

## STEP THREE

Again, try to get a bit more specific with your interests. For example:

GENERAL INTERESTS	SPECIFIC INTERESTS
Dance Music Guitar	I like songs with a political message.
Basketball	I like basketball tournaments where I play teams from across Alberta.
Video	I like learning about issues faced by youth through watching documentaries.
Art	I like to design images for t-shirts.

For **problems**, put in the ideas you thought about in Step One. Some things to think about are:

- What concerns you?
- What makes you angry?
- What needs to be done in the world?
- What challenges do you want to take on?

**GENERAL PROBLEMS OR CONCERNS**

**SPECIFIC EXAMPLES OF PROBLEMS OR CONCERNS**

Pollution	Tailing ponds of oil sands sites contain toxins that are hazardous to wildlife.
Poverty Violence against women and youth	Taliban insurgents are killing school children in Afghanistan.
Civil War Lack of Human Rights	Child soldiers
Apathy	Idle or alienated youth

Now are you ready? The fun is about to begin....

# creating your action plan

After you have thought about your interests and concerns, brainstorm possible ideas that link the two together and create a unique and creative plan for action! Here are some examples:

INTEREST	PROBLEM OR CONCERN	IDEA FOR ACTION PLAN
Dance	Child soldiers in Africa	Plan a hip hop fundraiser to donate money to Warchild Canada.
Video	Idle or alienated youth	Make a documentary about student activism to show to classmates or friends and family.

Once you come up with some action ideas, try to select one that stands out to you that you would like to put your focus into. It's time to start fleshing out the details of the action plan and consider what kind of resources (like materials or human capacity) may be needed, how long the activity will take, whose permission is required etc.

Two important questions you need to ask yourself before you start are:

1. Who will benefit from this action plan?
2. What do you envision at the completion of your action plan? What is your goal in implementing this action? What ideally do you see coming from this action? The answer to these questions will be your **PROJECT GOAL.**

Grab a blank piece of paper and try to explain or represent your project goal. Draw it out, jot it down, write a poem... whatever works for you to express your vision of what the project can achieve.

## STEP FOUR

With your project goal in place, it's time to begin creating a specific plan of action. This plan will be something you can continue to come back to as you implement your project and can be revised, but it will help to keep you on track to meet your goal!

On the next page is a worksheet format you can use to start planning your actions to reach your goal. If you have managed to recruit some friends to help with your project, it would be a good idea to brainstorm ideas together.

A process you can use could be:

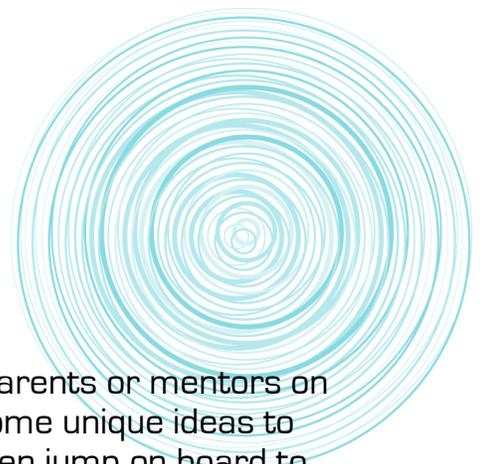
1. Take 5 minutes individually to write all of your ideas for action on your project goal on sticky notes.
2. Take 10 minutes to start grouping these ideas together on a wall —which ones are similar and can be put together?
3. As a group, prioritize what actions need to happen before the others. Think about what needs to come first before all the other actions will fall into place.
4. Once you have prioritized your actions, fill them into the worksheet format and start filling in the rest! You can do this on flipchart paper—be sure to record the discussion well so you don't miss anything!

You may find there are some actions that you all brainstormed that don't fit in the project anymore. Don't throw them away! Make sure to keep track of them in case they come in handy later on.

**Project Goal:** \_\_\_\_\_

the HOW	the WHO	the WHAT	the WHEN	the OUTCOMES
This will include the specific steps or actions needed to achieve your goal. If you are wanting to raise money for an important cause, how will you do this?	This is who will be responsible for implementing this action or playing the leadership role. Just in case it's more than you— it is important to assign responsibilities to actions don't get lost! Also think about other people or organizations which may be of help in this action!	This is the resources you need to implement your action. Say you are planning a fund-raising event—what will you need to make this a success? Posters for advertising? Volunteers?	It's always important to set some timelines for completing tasks and projects. What will be the date of your event? When do you need the posters printed and put up by?	This is the result of your actions. What does success look like for you when implementing your action? Do you want to have 200 people attend your event? Think about ways you can measure your success. This can act as a tool to keep your planning on track and motivate you to keep moving forward!

# getting feedback



Consider getting feedback from friends, teachers, parents or mentors on your project goal and action plan. They may have some unique ideas to add to your action plan and who knows, they may even jump on board to help you out!

After you integrate this feedback into your action plan, it's time to begin. When you get your feedback, consider seeing if there is an adult that is particularly supportive and who may be willing to act as a counsellor or mentor to you as you continue on your planning and implementation. Having someone to talk to as a sounding board when you are struggling or when you want to give up is a valuable thing.

There's one important thing for you to remember when you are getting feedback:

*Don't let anyone steal your excitement or your dreams. If someone tells you that you can not do this, don't let them get you down. Often people can be negative or respond out of their own fears of becoming involved or making change. It's always important to remember the power of one and don't let anyone take away your dreams!*

## STEP FIVE

You see things and say, "Why?", but I dream things and say, "Why not?"  
**George Bernard Shaw**

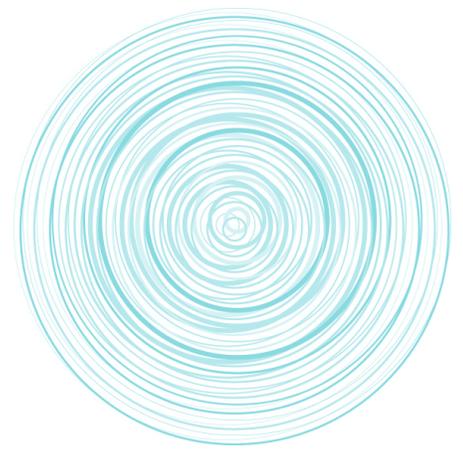
Our dreams come true when you act to turn them into realities.  
**Anonymous**

It may be that those who do most, dream most.  
**Stephen Butler Leacock**

Man, alone, has the power to transform his thoughts into physical reality;  
man, alone, can dream and make his dreams come true.  
**Napoleon Hill**

The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams.  
**Eleanor Roosevelt**

# tools for change: inspiration



Creative energy flowing through our veins.  
A new collective conscience being shared by our brains.  
Tap into this beauty, you will never be the same.  
There's no time like the present, it's time to change.

No more just watching from your comfortable chairs.  
Quit judgin', disrespectin', start givin' a care.  
No more talkin', need more walkin',  
This is what we must dare.  
To be a global citizen who doesn't sit back and stare.

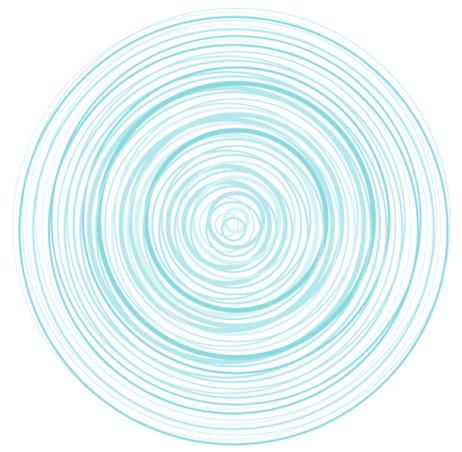
Inner peace and wisdom, the path is not violent.  
Breathe in the love broth; chicken soup for the souls.  
Open up and let the sun in.  
Inspiration being filled by the divine spirit.  
Live with passion and meaning just reap the benefit;  
Unlimited potential, all the candles lit.  
Follow the light of your soul and find your bliss.

Mother Earth is asking all its daughters and sons  
To listen to her call.  
Revolution's just begun. Fight using dance, art and self-  
expression;  
A powerful way to be a global citizen.

Creative energy flowing through our veins.  
A new collective conscience being shared by our brains.  
Tap into this beauty, you will never be the same.  
There's no time like the present, it's time to change.

CHICKEN SOUP FOR THE  
GLOBAL CITIZEN'S SOUL: Jon Rivero

# tools for change: advocacy letters



Does your project revolve around raising awareness about an issue?

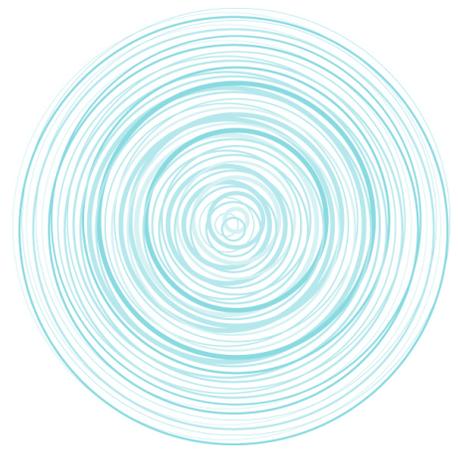
One option for inducing positive change in your community is through campaign letters. They can get your government officials or community leaders to pay attention to an issue that concerns you.

Here are some tips for writing an effective campaign letter:

1. Keep your letter short, one page is sufficient and preferred
2. Keep your letter simple and stick to one topic per letter
3. Make your point clearly and early in the letter
4. Use informed facts and include some statistics to strengthen your arguments
5. Be polite. It is okay to offer solutions and raise awareness of critical issues, but do not threaten or name call
6. Use proper grammar and check for spelling errors.
7. Write a personal letter rather than forwarding a form or chain letter to make a bigger impact.

There is power in numbers, so consider asking friends and colleagues to write a personal letter as well!

# tools for change: fundraising 101



Are you planning to raise funds for an initiative? There are a number of reasons to host a fundraiser... this may involve needing to raise funds for the costs of your project or to donate to a charity that supports an issue that you are passionate about. Regardless of the reason, there are a few key points to keep in mind while planning to ensure that your fundraiser goes smoothly and is a success.

Consider talking to your friends, parents or guardians, or teachers to get ideas and to get organized.

Some idea for raising money include:

- Benefit event – concert, brunch, wine and cheese, BBQ etc. (see below for a checklist for planning your event)
- Raffles
- Silent or Live Auctions
- Product sales – for example, magazine subscriptions, chocolate sales, or from home based business products that sell spices, candles etc.
- Direct donations or sponsorships – these can come from businesses, individuals or foundations (see below for more details on how you can approach this)

These are just examples though – try to think outside the box and be creative with your fundraising ideas so you can reach a broader audience.

Some other resources for ideas are:

- Check out [www.fundraiserhelp.com](http://www.fundraiserhelp.com) for a list of great ideas for events
- Check out [www.justfundraising.com](http://www.justfundraising.com) for a list of continuous fundraisers
- Another site for fundraising ideas is [www.fundraising-ideas-centre.com/free-fundraising-ideas.html](http://www.fundraising-ideas-centre.com/free-fundraising-ideas.html)
- Think about your passion and hobby – how can you turn this into a fundraiser?

# tools for change: fundraising event checklist



Make sure to give yourself enough time to start planning, but not too much. You want to ensure you can organize the event properly and advertise the event in your community. Don't advertise too far ahead of the event that people may forget about it. Depending on the event, 3-5 weeks is suggested.

Set a goal:                                 \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
Establish a budget:                     \$ \_\_\_\_\_

## **FOR A ONE DAY EVENT:**

### 3-5 weeks prior to event:

#### Select a date

- Things to keep in mind when selecting a date include weather, who will be available to help and consider if there are any other major events occurring on that day. Your date may often be reliant on your venue.

#### Advertising

- How will you announce the fundraiser?
- Get a group of people willing to promote the fundraiser, have them print and distribute flyers or posters advertising the event.
- Who will you target?

#### Venue

- Consider the availability, size, deposit, seats or table requirements.

#### Volunteers

- Do you need people to help out? If so, do you have anyone ready to help?
- Will the volunteers be working alone or in teams?
- Develop a volunteer task list and allocate a task to each volunteer or team.

#### Permits and Regulations

- Most school fundraisers will not require any permits, the exceptions are raffles and bingos which may require a letter from your principal. Consider talking to your principal or someone who has been involved in fundraising before to determine if you need any special permits for the event. If the event is being held outside of a school, check with the manager of the venue for rules.

## Finances

- Who will collect money at the event?
- What is your goal?
- What budget do you need? What resources do you need? What are the up front costs to run the fundraiser?

### **One Week prior to the event:**

- Ensure all volunteers are still able to attend. Send them a reminder and be sure to tell them what they will be doing, where you want them to meet and what time.
- Confirm the venue
- Ensure you have all your necessary supplies
  - Tables/chairs
  - Cash box/float
  - Posters/signs

### **Day Before the event:**

Consider meeting with your volunteers to run through the event's program and schedule and to address any questions.

### **Day of the event:**

Set up, have fun and raise some money!!

### **TIPS TO CONSIDER: THE EXTRAS COUNT**

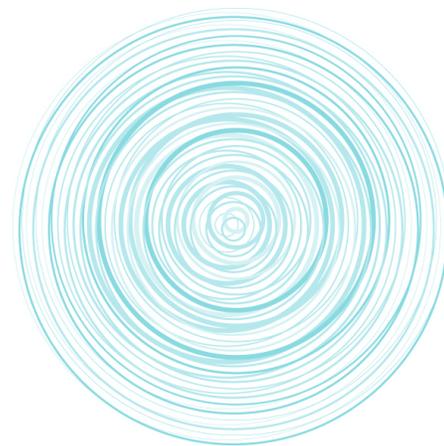
You may want to put together a program for participants and attendees. A good idea is to offer local businesses the opportunity to advertise in your program in exchange for a small fee that will help with the costs of the event or that can be directly donated. This benefits both your group and the business!!

After any fundraiser, ensure you send thank you letters to all individuals or groups involved. Remember it would not have been a success without their help. Also, those who receive acknowledgement for their hard work or contribution are more likely to support you in the future. Some tips for thank you letters include:

Promptness – ensure your thank you letter is sent in a timely manner. No matter how busy you are, remember the donor or volunteer is busy too and still took the time to offer the time or donation. It is important to acknowledge the donor.

Handwritten letters or cards – in this fast paced world, a hand written card or letter lets donors and volunteers know that their contribution is important and worth your time.

# tools for change: direct donations



The following are some suggestions for organizations that are often very supportive of youth led initiatives. Consider writing a letter to these groups or contacting them to find out more information on their funding programs.

## **Elks Clubs**

Elks of Canada homepage [www.elks-canada.org](http://www.elks-canada.org)

Elks of Canada directory [www.elks-canada.org/pages/directory.htm](http://www.elks-canada.org/pages/directory.htm)

## **Lions Clubs International**

Lions Clubs International homepage [www.lionsclubs.org](http://www.lionsclubs.org)

## **Rotary Clubs**

Rotary Clubs International homepage [www.rotary.org](http://www.rotary.org)

Rotary Clubs International club locator [www.rotary.org/support/clubs/index.html](http://www.rotary.org/support/clubs/index.html)

## **Community Foundations**

Community Foundations of Canada homepage [www.cfc-fcc.ca](http://www.cfc-fcc.ca)

Community Foundation finder [www.cfc-fcc.ca/who\\_we\\_are/finder.cfm](http://www.cfc-fcc.ca/who_we_are/finder.cfm)

**Municipality** – most municipalities have funding programs for community development projects.

**Schools** – if you are a student, approach your secondary or post-secondary institution.

**Local businesses** – businesses often have a vested interest in supporting human rights related causes in their community and it gives them an image of good social corporate responsibility.

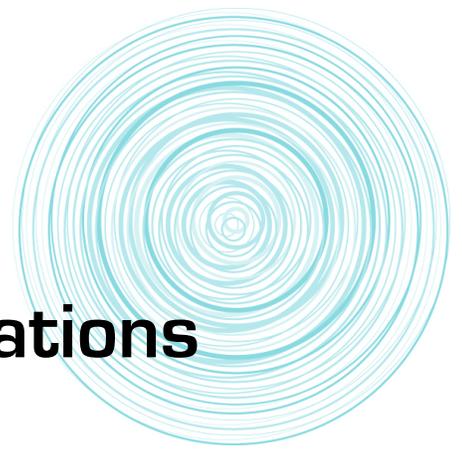
**Religious groups** – (ex. Churches, youth groups, etc.)

**Cultural organizations** – (ex. Chinese Association, German Club, etc.)

**Newspapers** – your local or school newspaper could be willing to cover a portion of the cost of your attendance at a conference in exchange for an article written about the conference upon your return.

**Community groups** – there may be other non-profit or youth organizations in your community that take an interest in youth development.

# tools for change: sample letter for direct donations



Below is a draft template you can use when writing a letter to seek direct donations to your project. Make this your own and tell them about your project, but remember to keep it short and simple and to let the donors know what they are supporting, who it will benefit and how it would benefit them as a donor as well.

*Dear <insert name of donor contact or use 'To Whom it May Concern:'>*

*I am writing today to inform you of an important project in our community and to explore the possibilities of support from <insert the organization's name>. I am a youth representative in our community that is hoping to make change and need some help in making this a success.*

*<Use this space to explain your project. Tell them your project goal and what key activities you will be doing to meet your goal. Keep this brief and simple. One short paragraph will be enough. For example:>*

*I have been working to develop and implement a project called The Homelessness Initiative which aims to reduce discrimination against homeless people as well as to advocate for more beds in shelters. The project will involve a public awareness campaign to improve understanding of the homelessness issue in our community through a poster campaign and public fundraising and awareness event with a keynote speaker and entertainment.*

*<Use this space to indicate why you think they would be interested in this project and why you are approaching them. For example:>*

*The Homelessness Initiative project which I have been working on addresses an issue that fits with the mandate of your organization. We believe that to address homelessness requires public awareness on the challenges of homeless people based on the fact that it is a basic human right to have shelter. As your organization works to promote human rights and support the homeless, we feel our work is contributing to your organizational purpose.*

*<Use this space to tell them what you need. For example>*

*To make this project a success, we are needing to print 500 posters that will be distributed in the community. These posters will highlight Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights showing that shelter is a basic human right as mandated by the United Nations. To print these posters will cost \$200 and we would like to request the financial support of your organization for this cost.*

*<Use this space to let the donor know how you will recognize their contribution. For example:>*

*In return for your donation, you will be acknowledged in all marketing materials for the event and on all posters for the campaign. We will include your logo on these materials as well as verbally acknowledge your contribution at the event.*

*<Use this space to wrap up your letter and give your contact information. For example:>*

*I truly hope you will see that this is an important project and that you will support this effort to make our community a better place. Please feel free to contact me at **<insert email and phone here>** if you have any questions or to confirm your support. I will follow up with you shortly.*

*Sincerely,*

*<insert your name>*