

Advancing Your Skills: Creating an Effective Fundraising Plan

Do you feel like you are being pulled in too many directions? Not sure how to prioritize your fundraising efforts or evaluate for potential success? To get started, check out these helpful tips:

TIP: Where to Start?

A good development plan should start with an analysis of your development activities, either a formal audit or informal survey of the current state of your program. An audit allows you to understand and take advantage of your strengths, avoid or improve in areas that are weaknesses and identify opportunities for future growth. Most importantly, an audit puts everyone—your board, executive leadership, volunteers and fundraising staff—on the same page as to the current fundraising situation in your organization.

TIP: Focus on Individuals

According to the 2018 GivingUSA report, individual giving represents 70% or about \$287 billion of the \$410 billion in charitable gifts made annually. If we add in the 9% of gifts that came as bequests, almost 80% of all charitable gifts come from individuals. Compare that to the 15% of gifts from foundations and 5% from corporations. When developing your fundraising plan compare your allocation of time, effort and resources to the giving chart. Are you investing 80% of your time on generating support from individual donors? For nonprofits of all sizes and missions, building relationships with individual donors and prospective donors should be a priority to help ensure the long-term sustainability of your organization.

TIP: Build in Accountability

Don't forget to assign responsibility in each section of your fundraising plan—goals, solicitation strategies, cultivation strategies and evaluation. Engaging everyone in the planning process helps to create a sense of ownership. Establish opportunities for accountability when results will be reviewed and evaluated for return on investment. Who should be involved in creating your fundraising plan? Everyone who plays a role in fundraising—fundraising staff, board, development committee, volunteers, executive leadership, chief financial officer and program staff.

TIP: Pay Attention to your Existing Donors

When developing your fundraising plan, start with those closest to your organization—your loyal donors, your board, staff, volunteers and potentially recipients of service. These are the individuals that are most committed to your organization. Are you intentionally asking them for their financial support? Are you asking them in a way that reflects their personal commitment to your mission? It costs significantly less to retain an existing donor than to identify, cultivate and solicit new donors. Are you incorporating strategies for donor retention and stewardship in your plan?