

The Fund Development Series of ONEpages provides three levels for growing your fundraising program. This ONEpage goes to the next level, providing guidance to deepening your fund development program while setting the stage for becoming a major community force.

Formalize your donor pipeline

As more people get involved in nurturing donor relationships, you need a formal way to document key relationships and the significant content shared in meetings. This will include finding a donor management software that meets your needs and building the formal procedures to govern data entry and report generation.

The entire fund development effort hinges on relationship building. While individuals on your staff and board will build relationships, it's important that they also broker the relationship with the organization and its purpose. Getting donors hooked on the cause is critical to ensure they don't exit when the board member they know ends his/her term.

Major gifts

Now that the annual fund campaign is part of your standard operating procedure, you can identify loyal donors and major donors. A loyal donor is anyone who has given for three or more consecutive years. A major donor is someone whose gift is in the upper tier of giving (generally the top 10%). Defining a major gift is something that each organization decides for itself.

Major donors may eventually make up about 80% of your annual fund giving. So, your fund development activities should target these individuals: meeting with them regularly, listening to what they say, inviting their continued involvement and support. Also, include loyal donors in this, even if they aren't major donors. Many loyal donors simply need a bit more nurturing to move into the major donor category.

Grant

It's likely that you will have organically developed a funding niche for grants: some may be for general operating and others for specific projects. Just like with major donors, you need to continue to nurture your relationship with area grantors, even if you haven't submitted a recent proposal. When the right time comes, you want to have the groundwork laid for a successful proposal.

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Events

If you have been doing fundraising, donor recognition, and/or friendraising events, you may find that a niche event is beginning to present itself. A niche event is something uniquely yours that does a great job connecting guests with your purpose and cause while leveraging individual donations and sponsorships.

If you do not have a niche event, it's OK. Don't force it, just keep experimenting. If you do have an emerging niche event, it's time to invest more into it. Over the next few years, talk with frequent guests and sponsors to find out what you can do to increase the relationship building and fundraising power of this event. Let it develop over time. If/when it ceases to be effective, then be prepared to move on.

Policies

At this point, it's likely that you're doing more and more on social media. If so, then it's time for a Social Media Policy (if you don't already have one). This policy provides needed guidance to staff relative to their use of social media on behalf of the organization. It also sets expectations regarding the organization and staff's personal use (e.g., criticizing the organization or its practices). This is an emerging field, so be sure to check into latest practices regarding social media use and the workplace.

Board involvement

At this point in your fund development, Board members need to go beyond donating and take a greater role in relationship building. Board members can make introductions to potential sponsors, thank and nurture renewing sponsors, carry the organization's message to their business and social circles, and advocate for the organization in the community. Staff and board leadership work together to develop each board member into an organizational ambassador.

Donor Communications

The organization's leadership (board members, executive director, development director) should be increasing their interactions with donors and sponsors, especially top donors. These relationships deepen the roots of the organization so it will withstand the inevitable bumps and curves in the road ahead.

Staff-driven communications extend to appropriate social media which means greater attention needs to be given to a consistent message across all channels. Using a strategic marketing plan and a 3-month or 6-month editorial calendar ensures that all our communications are intentional and coordinated.