nonprofit
LEADERSHIP LAB
Because the World is Counting on Us.

FUNDRAISING PLAN TEMPLATE

INTRO

A "Fundraising Plan"[1] is a document that **explains how much money you expect to attract in the future, and how you're going to do it.** It is used to:

➔ Organize your fundraising efforts
➔ Serve as a reference for your board and your staff
➔ Help you understand what worked and what didn't, so next year's plan is even better

Before we get started, we want to acknowledge a few realities.

First: You probably face a lot of pressure to raise money. Fundraising Plans are often compiled at moments when the pressure is on to raise a lot MORE money.

We want to take the pressure off.

This template is intended to walk you through writing your first Fundraising Plan. **You'll end up with realistic fundraising goals, and a plan that shows your board and staff how they can achieve those goals.**

This is an opportunity to organize all of the planning you HAVE done and acknowledge the planning you still need to do. Later, you can use this Fundraising Plan framework to build strategies to double your revenue. [Disclaimer: This template does not offer specific strategies to double your revenue! Here, we focus on the framework.]

Second: This isn't a "quick win." You will need to invest some time in this process. We promise, it will be time well spent.

THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND

- This tool has to be useful for YOU: your Executive Director, your board, your development staff. Mold this suggested process and template to suit your needs.
- The board MUST be involved in the planning process, or at least, must be told that it is happening and receive a presentation when complete.
- Compiling your first Fundraising Plan will likely take you somewhere between a couple of days and a couple of weeks, depending on your organization's size and revenue sources.

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[1] Also known as a Revenue Development Plan, Fundraising Strategic Plan, or Development Plan.

- You can start your plan at any time during the year. Schedule quarterly meetings to review your progress and make updates. Of course, this plan will inform (and be informed by) your board-approved organizational budget. After a year of practice, you'll learn when to optimally schedule Fundraising Planning meetings so they inform your org budget.
- Finally, a Fundraising Plan will be useful for organizations of all sizes, from those with annual budgets of $20,000 to $30 million.

FUNDRAISING PLAN OUTLINE

A solid Fundraising Plan has five components:[2]

1. **3-year Fundraising History**

2. **Summary of Current Organizational Goals or Strategies**

3. **Fundraising Goals and Plans to Achieve Them** *[by far, the longest section of your plan]*

   a. **Summary of Next Year's Revenue Goals**

   b. **Goals and Explanations by Source and/or Campaign**
      i. Activities/Strategies to Achieve Goals
      ii. Other Fundraising Indicators to Track
      iii. Resources Needed

   c. **"Windfall" opportunities: Low probability, high pay-off (not included in revenue goals)**

4. **Roles of Board, Board Development Committee, Executive Director, Development Staff**

5. **Fundraising Calendar by Month**

NOTE: Inside the Nonprofit Leadership Lab, you can download an Excel template that you can customize for your own purposes. Look for it in the same place you downloaded this Fundraising Plan template.

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[2] Many Development Plans start with your Case Statement (i.e., a concise narrative about why people should support your organization). My strong suggestion: DO NOT INCLUDE A CASE STATEMENT IN YOUR PLAN. Unless you have a Case Statement that is complete and thoroughly vetted and beloved by everyone (a rare scenario), it is going to be a distraction from the Plan itself. Writing a perfect case statement is a separate project - save it for another day.

PROCESS FOR COMPILING A FUNDRAISING PLAN

This process assumes one person – the Executive Director, Development Director, or board member – is responsible for compiling the Fundraising Plan, ideally with a small team of helpers.

STEP 1: Consider the questions or challenges that you hope your Fundraising Plan will help you to address. Simply write them down and keep them handy.

- Should we hire a major gifts officer to support individual donor fundraising?
- The board suggested that we double our budget. Is that even possible?
- I really need my board members to fundraise.
- I think we might need a drastic change in strategy – what are the underlying revenue reasons and implications?

Use these as a reference while you're writing the plan and thinking about what information to emphasize.

STEP 2 is to compile information about your past few years of revenue development activities. How much did you raise in previous years, and what did your organization do to raise it?

In addition to the quantitative details, record a narrative that offers explanation. What contributed to your success? What held you back? What could you do differently? You may need to interview others to gather these stories. Reflect on the lessons about your strengths, weaknesses, and future opportunities.

STEP 3: Now, start setting goals for the next 12-18 months. If you are starting this process at the beginning of your fiscal year, this might be a plan to achieve/exceed the revenue targets in this year's organizational budget. If you're starting mid-year, you might project your revenue for the remainder of this year and next fiscal year to inform next year's budget.

Consider your revenue goals by source: (e.g., individual donors, foundations) and - *only if it's useful to you!* - by campaign (e.g., Summer Pool Party fundraiser, Facebook Giving Tuesday campaign, Cookie Sales). **Engage others in helping to set these goals.** Have your Foundation Manager present her own goals. Have your board members work on their own plans for give/get goals. Don't discourage ambition, but make sure every revenue goal is paired with a realistic, achievable plan.

> *NOTE: You can download a board member fundraising template here: https://nonprofitleadershiplab.com/courses/annual-fundraising-plan/.*

HOW to set your revenue goals? For each category of revenue, use this opportunity to gather any planning and analysis. Review last year's revenue totals, lessons you learned, and ways you could improve this year. Consider a goal that feels exciting AND achievable.

For each revenue source (and/or campaign), create 3 sets of bullets:

- **What activities/strategies will help you reach each of these goals?** Include any planning activities. Bullets could include: *"Work with board to write our elevator pitch." "Improve cultivation of existing donors and encourage them to make larger gifts." "To increase our Facebook followers, we will add a link to our email signature line and increase post frequency to 1/day."*

  NOTE: You can learn more about creating an effective elevator pitch here: https://nonprofitleadershiplab.com/courses/great-elevator-pitch/

- **Set targets for other drivers of your fundraising success.** *"The Executive Director will arrange 40 meetings with top donors." "We will increase our Facebook followers by 50%." "Total number of donors." "Total number of new donors." "Total number of lapsed donors re-engaged."*

- **Finally, list the resources necessary for each.** *"To write 10 grant proposals, we will engage our grant writer for a total of 100 hours, or $8,000." "To raise $___ at the Summer Pool Party, we need at least three board members to devote enthusiastic planning support every week in March through June."*

Remember that fundraising activities aren't just about meeting this year's revenue goals. Plan activities to help you grow and cultivate your universe of donors and prospects. What communications and outreach strategies can lay the groundwork for donors' continued support in future years? What else needs to be done this year? *Research foundation prospects. Investigate the costs of starting direct mail fundraising. Introduce a give/get requirement for your board. Upgrade your donor database.*

In your final plan, start with a Summary Table of Revenue Goals, followed by a page on each revenue source with your bullets for Activities/Strategies, Other Fundraising Indicators, and Resources Needed. Add any helpful color commentary about your assumptions and logic for each source. *If you plan your fundraising around campaigns (e.g., fundraising events, Giving Tuesday), add a section for each of these too.*

Finally, drop your numbers into your Excel template, so you have History and Future Goals all in one place.

THERE IS NO universal recipe for compiling this section of your plan! Remember: This plan needs to be useful for YOU: your Executive Director, your board, your development staff.

For each category, there may be "windfall" opportunities on your mind. *You know of a very large foundation that could double your annual budget with a single grant. Your Cookie Sales video could go viral, and a celebrity buys 100,000 boxes.* Address these in a separate section of your Development Plan. Some of these opportunities might be worth investing time and resources to nurture. But since you probably don't want to plan your organizational budget around them, consider them separately.

STEP 4: Once you have sketched revenue goals and activities/strategies for each source, **now consider the timing of all of this work**. As a team, plot your activities on a Fundraising Calendar, or you might consider web-based project management tools like Trello or Asana. Ideally, your Fundraising Calendar can be inserted into the rest of your Development Plan to allow your board and staff to easily review all of the information in one document.

The goal of the Calendar is not to serve as a work plan for every detailed task (although Trello or Asana would help with this). The Calendar will help you align the full scope of work next year: your fundraising events, your communications campaigns, your major donor asks, your volunteer opportunities, etc.

STEP 5: (The hard part is behind you!) Only two easy components are left to drop in to your final plan:

- A **Summary of Current Organizational Strategies** can provide context for your fundraising, but keep it short – a half-page, max. You might also want to insert your current organizational budget for context about how your fundraising dollars will be used.
- A summary of **Roles of Board, Board Development Committee, Executive Director, and Development Staff**, will document everyone's responsibilities for achieving the aforementioned goals, for easy reference.

OK! By now, you're exhausted. Maybe one of your team members wrote three pages about Giving Tuesday, and your plan is insanely long. (By the way, move any excess analysis or long narratives to an appendix for your future reference so you don't bog down the plan.) Revisit your questions from Step 1, and if they haven't already been answered by your analysis in Step 3, perhaps drop them into an appendix as inspiration for your next round of planning.

Your **FINAL STEP:** Print it. Review it with staff and board. Post the Fundraising Goals Excel Template and Fundraising Calendar near your desk. Congratulate yourself! And make this document work for you.