

Charity Law Information Program

FUNDRAISING FUNDAMENTALS SERIES

Fundraising Readiness Board
Checklist

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FUNDRAISING READINESS BOARD CHECKLIST

There are a number of factors that need to be in place to be really successful and accountable in Fundraising. Whether your program is in its infancy or it's well under way, reviewing this list may improve your preparation or help you identify what's missing. Readiness depends on board members who understand their roles and responsibilities as 'champions' of the cause in which they serve. This includes:

- Ensuring there is a clear mission statement that is within your charitable objects in the letters patent. The organizational mission is your charity's reason for being and requires ownership by its stakeholders
- Setting long range strategic directions from which operational plans evolve (with appropriate costing), thus identifying the annual priorities that inform your case for support and define your financial need
- Allocating the necessary financial resources to fundraising efforts, while recognizing initially, your investment could cost more than is raised (a well-known leap of faith but all the more reason to ensure lasting relationships with your donors!)
- Accepting that successful Fundraising is a team effort that relies on everyone playing some role in identifying and strengthening relationships with your donors - explore who's willing do to what
- Making an annual gift (within each board member's budget) before asking outsiders for support
- Committing leadership and time to cultivate relationships with volunteers and donors and with appropriate training for those willing, soliciting gifts from suitable friends, colleagues and acquaintances
- Ensuring there is a motivated and impassioned Fundraising Committee, chaired by a strong trustee or leader who reports progress and brings recommendations to monthly board meetings
- Understanding the need, and assisting to recruit 'external' members to the Fundraising Committee who receive clear Terms of Reference, comprehend their role in revenue generation and willingly ask people for money (these individuals may later join the board if effective and interested, thus reducing the search for suitable nominees - you've already 'auditioned' them!)

- Accepting that Staff primarily facilitate and support volunteer efforts (particularly in grassroots organizations where there is no dedicated fundraising position)
- Understanding fundraising compliance issues especially prohibited fundraising and indicators of concern as discussed in the CRA's Guidance on Fundraising (<http://www.cra-arc.gc.ca/chrts-gvng/chrts/plcy/cps/cps-028-eng.html>).
- Committing to ethical fundraising and financial accountability, through timely and transparent reporting to stakeholders (http://www.imaginecanada.ca/files/en/ethicalcode/ethical_code.pdf)
- Anticipating and adopting appropriate fundraising policies
- Acting as an ongoing ambassador on the organization's behalf, to raise public awareness about the difference your work makes in the community by promoting deeds versus needs
- Recognizing there may be a need to retain a fundraising expert for training and guidance, and assisting in that selection, if your organization lacks the skills internally

In addition to the above-mentioned Board duties, you'll need:

- A fundraising plan that guides your efforts
- A compelling case for support, based on the Leadership's defined strategic priorities and identified budgetary needs
- A well-connected and responsive Fundraising Committee committed to a diversified funding base - seeking funds from a variety of sources using the most effective methods
- Proof of follow-through on goals and objectives, establishing a track record of your past achievements, resilience and ability to address challenges (to build your reputation) and help current and potential donors understand they are 'backing a winner'
- Clear financials that outline how much is required, how much you intend to invest to show your commitment to the effort and how much you expect to acquire from which other sources (foundations and businesses don't like being the sole funder on any project)
- An efficient tracking system for donations and strategy to ensure transactions are entered and donors are thanked promptly (for more information on software, you can search "Compare Fundraising Software" or "Canadian Fundraising Software" to help you find options)

- A Communications/Stewardship Strategy to ensure the prompt thank you that reports back to the donor the difference their gift is making, with other reports to them between 'asks'. This can happen by ensuring your Newsletter tells readers about the good things occurring thanks to the generosity of your funders and supporters
- Conduct prospect research to obtain some sense of your audience and who is the most likely to respond to your requests. Use linkage (between the candidate and your existing team of volunteers, are there *any* personal contacts within who are willing to 'open the door') then match ability to their budget and your request and ensure their interest coincides with the mission of your organization - these three steps define the difference between a prospect and a suspect

Source:

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