

Board Fundraising Functions

Fundraising is one of the fundamental responsibilities of the board of directors. In many cases, however, the board will delegate certain functions to staff because of the specific skills and more in-depth knowledge they possess. This does not remove the responsibility from the board, but merely shifts it from a role of implementing key programs to overseeing their implementation.

Regardless of the level of delegation given to staff, the board will always have a key role in the fundraising process. This role draws on the board member's unique position as a community volunteer and leader. Below is a list of activities that board members can do as part of their ongoing fundraising responsibilities:

1. Make a cash donation to the organization that for them represents a "significant contribution." A "significant contribution" could be defined as the largest single donation to a nonprofit group for the year (with the exception of religious contributions). If a board member belongs to more than one nonprofit, the donation should at least be equal to other gifts given to other groups.
2. Commit to and participate in effective planning efforts that develop both strategic plans and specific fundraising plans. Develop the organizational structure to support planning efforts, including the development of an effective Fundraising Committee.
3. Personally make requests to funding sources (individuals, foundations and corporations), usually as part of a team supported by staff or another board member. Not every board member is suited for this task, but at least some of the board should have experience asking for money and be prepared to do so for the organization.
4. Provide support and advice to staff involved in fundraising to help them complete their duties. Remember that in this role, the board member is simply an advisor and volunteer and has no supervisory responsibilities.
5. Participate in or observe programs to develop a thorough understanding of the specific program objectives and benefits to the community.
6. Contribute names and/or lists for direct mail acquisition mailings. Sign letters on personal letterhead for solicitations to personal contacts.
7. Participate in special events and other "friendraising" activities that expand the number of prospects who can be solicited for donations.
8. Diligently oversee the organization's budget to assure that the needs of the organization are being met. Don't let the financial needs of the organization get lost in the other details of governance.