

## **Nine Strategies for Building a Fundraising Board**

### **1. Board Engagement**

- A board that is generally disengaged is very unlikely to get involved with fundraising. Lack of help for fundraising may be a symptom of a bigger problem.
- Two quick tips to engage board members generally:
  - Spend a major part of each board meeting discussing big picture items, such as the challenges your organization is facing/will face in the next few years. Don't let board meetings become boring presentations that are in the weeds.
  - Communicate with board members regularly and in ways that encourage them to communicate back. Don't over-rely on email.

### **2. Clear Expectations**

- If you ask board members what fundraising responsibilities board members have for your nonprofit, they should all give the same (or a similar) answer.
  - That means putting the responsibility in writing and using it during recruitment and bringing it back to their attention afterwards.
  - Expectations can vary significantly, from a dollar specific give/get to a more general expectation to be involved in the process.
- Individual board members should also have clear expectations of their own responsibility for any given year. Consider using a yearly individual fundraising plan for every board member.

### **3. Options**

- Don't have a one-size fits all approach. Provide options for both beginners and more experienced fundraisers.
- Meet individually with each board member to assess how their skills, talents, and connections can be best utilized.
- But take into account staff time – you can't afford to spend lots of staff time for a board member who'll only raise a few hundred dollars. Consider focusing staff time into a "campaign" with the board in one quarter of the year rather than spreading it out.

### **4. Training**

- Provide basic "asking 101" training. People don't learn this in school.
- Provide board members a written "case statement" and other materials to provide donors
- Write up organizational "stories" board members can use
- Provide outside fundraising expertise to validate the Executive Director

## 5. **Board Leadership (and Cheerleading)**

- Find 2-3 board members who'll champion the board's role in fundraising. This should include the board chair.
- Find specific opportunities to use those board leaders as cheerleaders to celebrate successes and as mentors for newer board members.
- Either use a fundraising committee or ad hoc fundraising committees around specific strategies. While the fundraising committee should help lead and plan, those not on these committees should still have a role.

## 6. **Accountability**

- The flip side to leadership (and cheerleading) is accountability. There should be some consequence for failure to participate in fundraising.
- Accountability can be as simple as your peers knowing your failure, to a barrier placed on your ability to serve in leadership, to a barrier placed on your ability to be nominated to the board for another term.
- In addition to individual accountability, consider *group* accountability. A board giving/fundraising campaign can be its own line in the budget so that the board sets it in adopting the budget and sees how it did in the financial statements.

## 7. **Transparency**

- For accountability to be possible, board fundraising can't be a black box where the staff knows how board members did, but the board members are all in the dark about each other.
- Consider a range of levels of transparency from complete transparency (everyone knows how everyone did) to transparency to leadership (the Executive Director, Development Director, board chair and board fundraising chair knows how everyone did).

## 8. **Prioritize fundraising in board recruitment**

- In board recruitment, prioritize those who are: (1) passionate about your mission, (2) have the time to participate, and (3) are able/willing to access their personal networks to assist with fundraising. Anyone who meets those three criteria should go to the front of the line.

## 9. **Plan for board fundraising and implement the plan for the long haul**

- Don't approach board fundraising as an ad hoc exercise.
- Determine how board fundraising fits on your calendar. Consciously choose between a 6-10 week, once per-year campaign v. ongoing over the course of the year v. something else.
- Openly discuss the concepts in this handout with your board and have them agree upon which tactics to pursue and under what timeline.
- Don't try to change everything at once. Boards tend to evolve into fundraising boards. It doesn't happen overnight as a result of a single meeting or even in a single year.