

Fundraising Assessment Checklist

Given the vital role that the development function serves in your organization, it is important to step back occasionally and be certain that your department is as effective as it can be. Periodic assessments of your development functions will assist you to respond to such key questions as:

- *Are our annual and long-term fundraising goals the result of systematic and comprehensive planning?*
- *Do we know – and agree on! – the most compelling reasons for charitable support of our organization?*
- *Are the responsibilities of our governing board and other key volunteer groups well-defined and understood?*
- *Are we effectively acquiring, maintaining, and using information on potential donors?*
- *Is the generosity of donors to our organization recognized adequately and appropriately?*
- *Do our administrative systems and procedures support and enhance our fundraising efforts?*
- *Do we have any “gaps” or duplications in professional staff positions that affect our fundraising effectiveness?*
- *Is our overall fundraising cost-effective?*

The objective of this assessment is to lead your organization in a process of self-examination. To that end, the assessment highlights the key issues and questions that need to be addressed in order to ensure an effective and successful fundraising operation.

The following Checklist had been designed to assist organizations selected by our firm to assess the cost/result effectiveness of their fundraising programs and activities. The Checklist is divided into the following sections:

- **Financial Overview**
- **Fundraising Overview**
- **Major Funding Needs**
- **“Case” Statement**
- **Volunteer Leadership**
- **Potential Major Donors**
- **Administrative Systems and Procedures**

5. Our organization's primary funding needs, with related projected dollar amounts, which are being represented to encourage gift and grant support:

\$ _____ for: _____

\$ _____ for: _____

\$ _____ for: _____

\$ _____ for: _____

\$ _____ for: _____

6. Additional financial information which may be helpful when assessing fundraising costs and effectiveness:

FUNDRAISING OVERVIEW

1. The names and position titles for our current fundraising professional and support staff (fulltime (f/t) and part time (p/t) :

2. Current fundraising staff positions we are/are not currently seeking to fill:

3. Nomenclature we currently use for "sizing" our gift levels, i.e. major, special, general:

| <i>Gift Nomenclature</i> | <i>Gift Size/Range</i> | <i>Est. Number of Donors at the Level</i> |
|--------------------------|------------------------|---|
| _____ | \$ _____ | _____ |
| _____ | \$ _____ | _____ |
| _____ | \$ _____ | _____ |
| _____ | \$ _____ | _____ |

4. The largest gift(s) our organization has received over the past 3 years for the indicated specific purpose(s):

5. The principal way(s) we seek to identify new potential donors are:

6. Our fundraising revenues are generated through the following fundraising methodologies:

*Est. Percentage of
Total Fundraising Revenues*

| | | |
|----------------------------------|-------|----------|
| Personal/Major Gift Solicitation | _____ | % |
| Direct Mail Solicitation | _____ | % |
| Telephone/Telemarketing | _____ | % |
| Special Events | _____ | % |
| Foundation Grants | _____ | % |
| Other | _____ | %: _____ |

7. Our organization has received the following significant estate planned gifts over the past 3 years:

| <i>Type of Planned Gift</i> | <i>Face Value</i> | <i>Current Present Value</i> |
|-----------------------------|-------------------|------------------------------|
| _____ | \$ _____ | \$ _____ |
| _____ | \$ _____ | \$ _____ |
| _____ | \$ _____ | \$ _____ |
| _____ | \$ _____ | \$ _____ |

MAJOR FUNDING NEEDS

1. The following are major funding needs for which we are currently seeking gift and grant support, or intend to do so within the next few years.

| <i>Major Funding Need</i> | <i>Estimated Funds Required</i> |
|---------------------------|---------------------------------|
| _____ | \$ _____ |
| _____ | \$ _____ |
| _____ | \$ _____ |
| _____ | \$ _____ |

2. Our organization has conducted a major fundraising campaign within the past 5 years, with the following results:

| <i>Campaign Years</i> | <i>Major Funding Needs Represented</i> | <i>Funds Raised</i> |
|-----------------------|--|---------------------|
| _____ | _____ | \$ _____ |
| _____ | _____ | \$ _____ |

"CASE" STATEMENT

1. The most compelling reasons we give to potential donors to encourage their gift and grant support are:

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

2. Our current donor recognition categories along with privileges and benefits are:

| <i>Donor Recognition Category</i> | <i>Privileges/Benefits</i> |
|--|-----------------------------------|
| _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ |

VOLUNTEER LEADERSHIP

1. Our organization's governing board (Trustees Directors Governors Other) is authorized to have _____ members, of which we currently seat _____ members.

2. Our governing board meets: monthly quarterly semi-annually annually

3. The current terms of office of our governing board members are _____ years.

4. The following are the titles of our governing board's current Standing Committees:

5. Our governing board's current method for evaluating board member performance as well as the entire board's leadership effectiveness is through:

6. The stated policy with respect to the governing board's involvement in fundraising is:

7. In addition to our governing board the following formal or informal volunteer groups are involved in fundraising for the organization: *(For example: Advisory Board, Auxiliary):*

POTENTIAL MAJOR DONORS

1. We have to date identified approximately the noted number of potential donors at the following gift “target” gift levels:

\$ 1 million and above: _____

\$ 100,000 and above: _____

\$ 10,000 and above: _____

\$ 1,000 and above: _____

2. The following are primary ways we personally engage potential major donors with the organization in order to eventually encourage their gift and grant support:

ADMINISTRATIVE SYSTEMS AND PROCEDURES

1. We currently have _____ "addressable" records in our computer database.

2. Our current fundraising raising software is: _____

3. Some features or capabilities of our software we would like to improve on are:

4. The manner in which gifts are acknowledged, and donors thanked includes:

Assessment Overview

As you review your responses to the questions and materials you've assembled, many strengths and weaknesses will become apparent.

As you review each key area, you may wish to consider the following points.

✓ **Financial Planning**

yes no Has there been a dramatic increase or decrease in a revenue source over the past five years?

If so, you may want to incorporate that information in your ongoing financial planning. For example, you may need to adjust fundraising goals for the future if you received a one-time windfall gift. Similarly, you may need to adjust both funding needs and fundraising goals from other sources if a single source of funding has ended.

yes no Are fundraising costs between 5% and 20% of fundraising revenues? *If not, you may not be operating as efficiently as possible. You may want to examine both your fundraising expenses as well as your sources of fundraising revenues (e.g., special events are generally less cost-effective than personal solicitation) to improve your organization's fundraising cost-effectiveness.*

✓ **Fundraising Overview**

yes no Do two or more major annual fundraising activities occur at roughly the same time each year?

If so, you probably already notice a strain on staff resources and volunteer energies. You may also be jeopardizing maximum gift potential from potential donors torn between multiple fundraising efforts. Consider rescheduling activities to take best advantage of staff time, volunteer commitments, and gift potential.

yes no

Do the costs of donor recognition and/or donor perquisites seem to claim too great a percentage of your fundraising revenues?

If so, you might wish to identify less expensive but equally meaningful ways to recognize donors. Donor recognition and perquisites are a means to thank donors publicly and prominently for their support of your organization – and often prepare the way for the next gift. Consequently, a certain level of expenditure can be justified. However, excessively expensive recognition undermines the goal of your donors' support: to fund the important programs and services that your organization provides to the community.

✓ **Major Funding Needs**

yes no

Are the cost estimates for your organization's identified major funding needs based on thorough and applicable research?

If not, the dollar goal identified may be unrealistic. Consider conducting research into the cost of similar construction, renovation or programming. Board members in related professional fields are often an excellent resource for this information.

✓ **Case Statement**

yes no

Was it easy to identify the most compelling reasons for support of your organization, or were you unsure about the most important reasons? Did key people agree on the most compelling reasons for support?

If it was difficult to identify reasons for donors to support your organization, or if there was significant disagreement among key board members and professional staff, you may wish to consider addressing this issue in more detail. A strong case for support is an essential element in encouraging contributions to your organization. If there is lack of clarity in this area, invest the necessary time and effort to develop a consistent and compelling case statement

✓ **Volunteer Leadership**

yes no Do board members understand their role and responsibilities?

If not, consider developing and distributing written policies that include the term of office for board members, meeting frequency, standing committee responsibilities, nomination procedures, fundraising policies, and other expectations of board members. The Focus on Fundraising Tutorial “Planning Board Retreats” includes more information on how to strengthen and inform your Board.

✓ **Potential Donors**

yes no Does your organization currently maintain the information on potential donors noted in the “Potential Donors” section above?

If not, you may want to consider logging this data as it is identified. Maintaining more complete profiles on potential donors will aid you to target fundraising and solicitation efforts and to maximize gift support.

✓ **Professional Staff**

yes no Are there significant duplications in responsibilities among members of your organization’s professional staff?

If so, you may want to revise job responsibilities and/or reporting relationships to eliminate duplicate responsibilities. Similarly, an area of fundraising activity that receives too little staff attention is also a signal that reallocation of responsibilities may be appropriate.

✓ **Administrative Systems and Procedures**

yes no Are the current procedures for handling gifts to your organization – from receipt of the gift to the final gift reporting – clearly articulated and appropriate?

If not, you should consider delineating a step-by-step procedure for the receipt, recording, deposit, acknowledgment, and reporting of gifts to your organization. Developing and communicating such a procedure in writing will ensure that gifts don’t “slip between the cracks.”

A CLOSING WORD...

An assessment of the Development Office is not a scientific exercise, but rather a comprehensive process that should reflect your organization's unique circumstances.

Identifying and addressing perceived weaknesses in each key development area is important. But the most important aspect of this process is the time and attention devoted to improving the fundraising effectiveness. By making periodic review a priority, a significant step can be taken in increasing the organization's fundraising effectiveness.