

10 Tips for Successful Fundraising

Source: The Stop and Community Food Centres Canada

From developing plans to saying thank you, here are some tips to help inform your fundraising efforts. Beyond the following tricks of the trade, remember to engage with the wider issues that matter to your community. Never be shrill or partisan, but strive to link your front line knowledge with broader public policy conversations. This makes you a relevant part of the conversation and interesting to potential funders.

1. **Develop a Relevant Strategic Plan.** Be clear on where your organization is going and why your work matters in the world (metrics help). Once this is done, invest time in writing clear and compelling communication materials that clearly articulates what your organization does, explains its programs and services, its impact, and shows donors how their support will help your organization benefit the community, city, country or beyond. Stay true to your plan and don't get caught chasing funds that don't align.
2. **Have a Fundraising Plan.** Put all of your fundraising activities – mailings, events, foundation asks, etc. into a plan with timelines and revenue goals. Refer back to your plan regularly, and chart your progress toward your yearly fundraising goal. This will help you identify what's working and not working and will keep you on track.
3. **Diversify Revenue Streams.** Build support from as many different sources as possible: individuals, corporations, foundations, events, etc. Develop a mixed fundraising economy and don't leave all your eggs in one basket.
4. **Invest in Infrastructure:** From investing in a photographer to take pictures of your programs in action (ensuring that those photographed agree to have their picture shared), to sound contact management (CRM) systems, it's important to adequately resource your fundraising program.
5. **Use your Volunteers.** Your volunteers and especially your board should be integral to your fundraising, whether it's through personal donations, opening up their networks, or helping to sell tickets to your events. Engage your board in your fundraising plans and ask for their help. Events sub-committees can be a good way of casting a wider net with your board and also serve the additional purpose of recruiting new members.



community food centres
CANADA good food is just the beginning



6. **Practice Donor-Centred Fundraising:** Put your donors' philanthropic aspirations at the centre of your conversations. Listen and don't spend the whole time talking about your organization. Find out what your donor/potential donor's philanthropic interests are, and what inspires them to give.
7. **Personalize as Much as Possible.** Handwritten notes on direct mail letters to key donors, thank you phone calls, holiday cards, etc. are all small things, but help foster strong donor relationships.
8. **Fundraising is a Contact Sport.** There is nothing like personal contact. Find reasons to meet your donors, have them for a tour, invite them to events, meet them for lunch (don't get trapped behind your desk). Fundraising is all about relationships, so take the time to build and strengthen relationships with your donors through regular contact.
9. **Say "Thank you" Promptly.** Not only is it the right thing to do, it's key to building strong relationships with donors. All too often donors report that they were never thanked for their gift, and subsequently never donated to that cause again.
10. **Think of yourself as an opportunity ambassador.** Fundraisers are the link between a donor's philanthropic desires on the one hand, and their organization's need for support on the other. Don't think of it as "asking for money." Consider it your job to present opportunities to people who have a desire to make the world a better place through their philanthropy.