

Chapter 9: Fundraising

This chapter covers:

- ✓ Development of a strategic approach to fundraising
- ✓ Resources to assist with fundraising

Introduction

For municipal library boards fundraising is not part of the job description. However, it is a major role for the boards of directors of nonprofit (501c3) organizations. Library boards must ensure the fiscal health of their libraries and that often means that fundraising is increasingly part of their job description. In difficult economic times fundraising might be essential to maintain programs and services—while visits and circulation typically increase, funding usually decreases. When economic times improve, fundraising can allow the library to become extraordinary. Fundraising is also important during other times when money is needed to maintain operations.

A study¹ funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation explored attitudes and perceptions about library funding in order to evaluate the potential of a large-scale marketing and advocacy campaign to increase public library funding in the U. S. Among the findings:

- Library funding support is only marginally related to library visitation.
- Perceptions of librarians are an important predictor of library funding support.
- Voters who see the library as a “transformational” force as opposed to an informational source are more likely to approve an increase in taxes for its support.

1. Perceptions of libraries and information resources : a report to the OCLC membership. Principal contributors Cathy De Rosa et al. , c2010. ; OCLC:
https://www.oclc.org/content/dam/oclc/reports/2010perceptions/2010perceptions_all.pdf

With this in mind it is easy to see that fundraising is intertwined with the mission of the library and patron satisfaction and should be part of the overall strategic planning of the library including circulation, technology, collection and programming policies.

Strategic Approach

By using a strategic approach to fundraising, the library board's effectiveness and efficiency will be increased. The strategic approach includes:

- Defining goals
- Developing a team
- Identifying stakeholders and evaluating targets
- Developing a message
- Determining a plan of action
- Evaluating the results

Defining goals

Donors will not give to an organization with poorly defined fundraising goals. The first step is to ask basic questions that will help determine why and how funds will be raised. Questions to consider include:

- What is to be accomplished?
- How much money is needed?
- Is it for a single use or an ongoing need such as capital, programming or operating expenses or endowment?
- What is the time frame in which the funds are to be raised?
- How will the library distinguish itself from other fundraisers?
- Who are potential donors?

Once these questions are answered the board or development committee should put the goals in writing, making sure each includes the following components:

- **SPECIFICITY:** What is to be accomplished is described with as much detail as possible.
- **MEASURABILITY:** The goal is described in terms that can be clearly evaluated.
- **REALISTIC OUTCOME:** The goal selected is one that the board is capable of reaching.
- **STATED COMPLETION DATE:** After determining the end date, longer-term goals are broken into shorter objectives with completion dates.

- **RESPONSIBILITY:** Each goal and/or objective is assigned to specific board members, staff or volunteers for completion.

Sample of written Goals and Objectives:

Goal/Objective	Time Line	Committee	Completed
1) Fundraising needed to complete a 2021 expansion.			
a) Assess plans and determine the exact amount needed	March 2019	Development/ Building Committee	
b) Establish a detailed plan for completing fundraising that includes a timeline and forecast of funding	April 2019	Development	
c) Develop and send a community mailer	May 2019	Development	
d) Create a list of potential grants with application information including dates and contact information	June 2019	Grants	

Developing the team

To be successful at fundraising the board needs to have the right people on the team, starting with leadership of the committee. A successful fundraising chairperson:

- Is goal and task-oriented
- Demonstrates strong attention to detail
- Is organized and able to meet deadlines
- Possesses leadership skills
- Maintains a positive attitude toward accomplishing the goals
- Is able to recruit committee members and work with the library director
- Has good oral and written communication skills

- Is able to make the necessary time commitment

Once the leader has been determined the team should be appointed. Each board must follow the by-laws and town/city charter for its library in determining who is eligible for serving on the development committee. When possible, going outside the board for volunteers may make it easier to find the skills needed on the committee. In addition, recruiting volunteers from throughout the community increases the circle of influence. Having members from outside the normal group of those who work with the library opens up new opportunities for fundraising. Additional characteristics and responsibilities for fundraising committee members include:

- Familiarity with the library's mission and current fundraising goals
- Ability to coordinate with the library staff to plan, execute, complete and evaluate fundraising activities and special events
- Ability to identify and cultivate potential donor opportunities
- Ability to make the time commitment to attend meetings, events and community outreach functions
- Ability and willingness to ask for donations
- Willingness to contribute to the drive

Identifying stakeholders and evaluating the community/audience

Evaluating the community will give information on sources of funding and may provide direction for fundraising activities. This information is also useful for long-range planning and programming. The process should begin with a simple demographic analysis including population, number of households, income per household, number of students, education level, age breakdown, number of taxpayers, lists of businesses and percentage of active and inactive library card holders. Much of this data is available at www.census.gov. The town clerk's office and board of education can provide additional information. Once a basic knowledge of the community's demographics is established, a plan can be developed using this information. Individuals give money to organizations that do something of interest to them, so interests and trends should be noted. Statistical information that helps tell the library story may be found at: <http://www.ctstatelibrary.org/dld/pages/library-statistics-connec/>

Developing a message

The core message depends on goals and audience which have already been determined. All team members should know and understand the message which can be fine-tuned for different groups. The following may be included in the message:

- What will be accomplished with the funds raised?
- Why is this important to the community/audience—that is, why is it important to the person receiving the message?
- What is the impact if the goal is not achieved?

Some organizations develop a case for support that includes all the reasons that a potential donor may have for giving to the library.

Determining a plan of action

After defining the goals, developing the team, identifying stakeholders, evaluating targets and developing the message, it is time to execute the plan. Strong leadership and good time management are needed to move forward at this point. Many committees do well with the planning and evaluating phases but struggle with taking action. The action steps are called the objectives. At this point it is time to return to the goal-setting worksheet and add specific objectives/tasks to help meet each goal. The development committee should charge specific individuals with specific objectives to be completed within a certain time frame.

The development committee may want to set up the following subcommittees to assist with the division of tasks:

- **Personal Solicitations.** This sub-committee asks individuals for donations. All board and committee members should be asked if they have personal connections to those targeted for personal solicitations. They may not be comfortable making “the ask” but can provide an introduction.
- **Grants.** This sub-committee researches and applies for grants from government entities and private foundations.
- **Events.** This sub-committee is responsible for events such as dinners and dances with silent auctions, plant sales, etc. This group should work with the Friends of the Library to coordinate activities. The public will not easily distinguish between the groups.

These subcommittees should meet regularly and review goals/objectives and time frames. Each subcommittee should have a regular meeting schedule. Each member should leave meetings with a task list to be completed by the next meeting. The subcommittee should hold each member accountable for completing these tasks. A task list may be added to meeting minutes which should be completed and distributed to each member within a few days of the meeting.

DURING A SOLICITATION VISIT TO A POTENTIAL DONOR:

1. Ask for the gift.
2. Ask for a large enough gift.
3. Listen—avoid talking too much.
4. Determine why this individual is interested in giving.
5. Ask intelligent and considerate questions.
6. Emphasize benefits that giving to the library will bring the donor.
7. Be flexible by offering alternative ways of giving.
8. Have prearranged signals between visiting team members.
9. Ask for the gift toward the end, not at the beginning.
10. Remain silent after asking for the gift.

Source: Massachusetts Public Library Trustees Handbook

Evaluation—measuring success

The ultimate measure of any fundraising effort is whether the money needed has been raised. However, regular evaluation will assist the development committee to meet the intended objectives during the process. There are a number of ways to evaluate the success of development activities, such as:

- **Events/Meeting Summary:** After each event or meeting with a potential donor, what worked and what could be improved can be identified.
- **Goals/Objectives Checklist:** This helps to determine if the goals are being met in the established time frame. Reasons can be established as to why certain goals are being accomplished and how these successes can be applied to areas that may not be working as well.
- **Financial Review:** It is helpful to determine what is being spent on fundraising activities and what the return is for these activities. Activities that cost a lot and do not contribute significantly to the end goal should be reevaluated, redesigned or discontinued.
- **Committee/Member Review:** Such an assessment determines if committee members consistently completed tasks, contributed to the committee and had needed resources. Perhaps more or fewer members are needed and/or tasks can be realigned for greater success.

Resources

General fundraising

The **Simone Joyaux** web site provides information on fund development, board and organizational development and strategic planning:

[Simonejoyaux.com](http://simonejoyaux.com)

- The **ALA Frontline Fundraising Toolkit** covers the basics of annual funds, memorials and tributes, online giving and planned giving. It also teaches how to deepen relationships with donors and move them from being one-time givers to long-term library supporters:

<http://www.ala.org/advocacy/advleg/frontlinefundraising>

- The **Association of Fundraising Professionals** Tools and Resources tab is especially helpful:

www.afpnet.org

Connecticut chapter: <https://community.afpnet.org/afpctchapter/home> .

Grants

- The **Connecticut State Library Division of Library Development** has information on grants from federal, state and private sources:

<http://www.ctstatelibrary.org/dld/pages/grants-and-reimbursements>

- **Federal Government Grants:**

Grants.gov

- The **Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance** is the primary source of information on federal grants and non-financial assistance programs:

<https://beta.sam.gov/>

- **FirstGov for Nonprofits** is a portal for nonprofit organizations to information about federal grants, loans, and other assistance:

<https://www.usa.gov/#grants>

- **Foundation Center** is a gateway to information about the grant-seeking process, private funding sources (including national, state, community and corporate foundations), guidelines on writing a grant proposal, addresses of state libraries with grants reference collections and links to other useful Internet websites:

www.foundationcenter.org