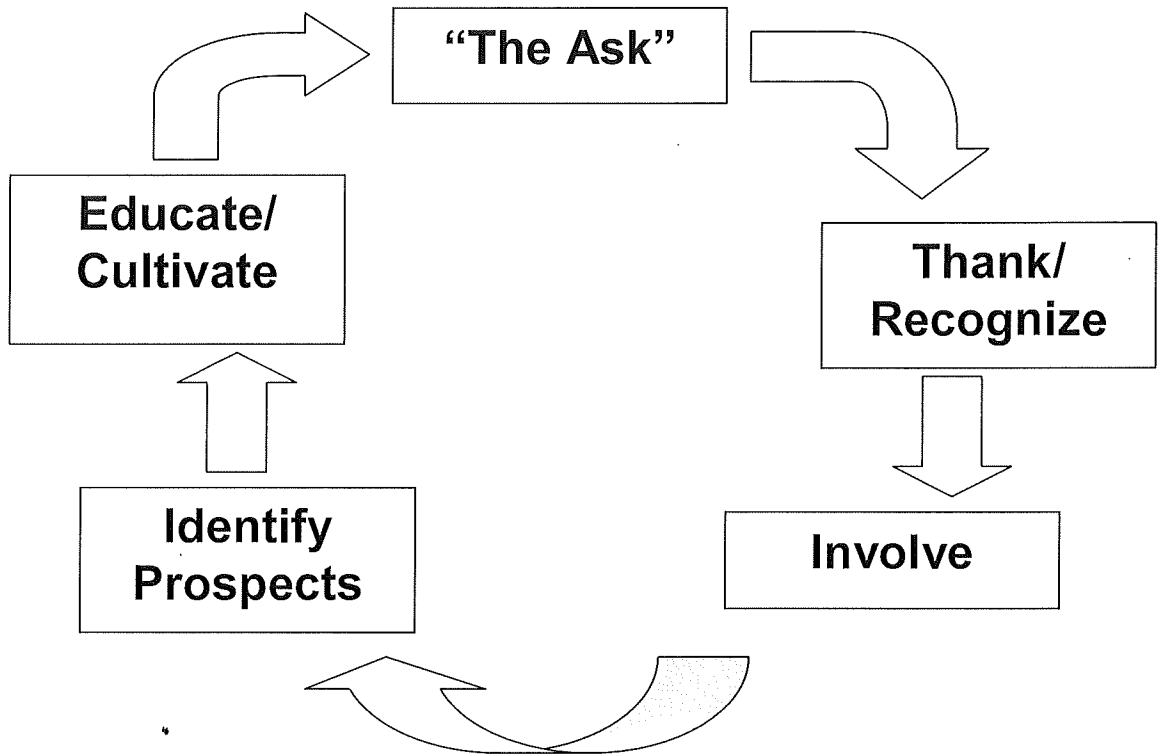


# Cycle of Fundraising



Involvement at any point in this cycle is part of fundraising,  
and involvement at every point is needed!

# Philanthropy in America

**2008: \$307 billion in private money was given to nonprofits. (Does not include government funds or earned income.)**

***Where did it come from?***

- **13% Foundations**
- **5% Corporations**
- **75% Individuals**
- **7% Bequests**

**More than half of this money came from middle class, working class, and poor people – in other words, people like you.**

- **68-70% of households contribute**
- **The typical household supports 5-10 organizations per year.**
- **The median amount contributed per household is \$1,300-\$2,000 per year.**

Sources: *Giving USA*, [www.givingusa.org](http://www.givingusa.org); *Grassroots Fundraising Journal*, [www.grassrootsfundraising.org](http://www.grassrootsfundraising.org), National Center for Charitable Statistics, [nccsdataweb.urban.org](http://nccsdataweb.urban.org).

# Income sources for nonprofits

## Grants

- \* Foundations
- \* Corporations
- \* Public charities
- \* Government
- \* Service clubs
- \* Faith-based

## Individuals

- \* Membership
- \* Major gifts
- \* Monthly giving
- \* Benefit events
- \* Workplace giving
- \* Planned gifts

## Earned

- \* Goods
- \* Services
- \* Publications
- \* Investment income
- \* Cause-related marketing

Adapted from Andy Robinson, *Selling Social Change (Without Selling Out): Earned Income Strategies for Nonprofits*, Jossey-Bass, 2002.

# Your Income Diversification

Organization: \_\_\_\_\_

Year founded: \_\_\_\_\_

	<i>Last year's actuals</i>		<i>Current year budget</i>		<i>Goals for _____</i>	
	<i>Amount of income:</i>	<i>Percentage of total:</i>	<i>Amount of income:</i>	<i>Percentage of total:</i>	<i>Amount of income:</i>	<i>Percentage of total:</i>
<i>Foundations</i>						
<i>Corporations</i>						
<i>Government</i>						
<i>Membership dues and donations</i>						
<i>Board giving</i>						
<i>Major donors<sup>1</sup></i>						
<i>Benefit events</i>						
<i>Earned income (sales, fees, etc.)</i>						
<i>Investment and interest<sup>2</sup></i>						
<i>Other (specify):</i>						
<b><i>Total:</i></b>						

<sup>1</sup>You define "major."

<sup>2</sup> Includes income from endowments.

## BASIC PRINCIPLES OF FUNDRAISING

1. Identifying your prospects. In general, prospective donors must meet at least two of the following three qualifications:

- Ability** – Do they have any available money to give?
- Belief** – Do they care about your issue, programs, etc.?
- Contact** -- Do they have a relationship with any of your board members, staff, or major donors?

2. The closer you get, the more you raise. As the old saying goes, people give money to people, not organizations. Therefore, you want as much human contact with the donor as is reasonably possible. In terms of solicitation strategies, the following list descends from most effective to least effective:

- A. Personal face-to-face; team of two preferred over one
- B. Personal letter on personal stationery; telephone follow-up will improve results
- C. Personal phone call; follow letter will improve results
- D. Personalized letter
- E. Impersonal letter (direct mail)
- F. Impersonal telephone (telemarketing)
- G. Fundraising benefit/special event
- H. Door-to-door canvassing
- I. Media/advertising

3. The gift range chart. In a typical annual campaign – the money that organizations raise each year for general support –

- 10% of the donors yield 60% of the money;
- 20% of the donors yield 20% of the money;
- 70% of the donors yield 20% of the money.

In other words, most organizations rely on a handful of major donors to generate the majority of their unrestricted income. Using this principle, you can set your goal and then calculate how many donations at each level you'll need to meet that goal. For example, for a \$50,000 annual campaign:

<u>\$ Gift Range</u>	<u># Gifts</u>	<u># Prospects</u>	<u>Total \$ per Range</u>
\$2,500	2	10 (5:1)	\$5,000
\$1,000	5	25 (5:1)	\$5,000
\$ 750	10	40 (4:1)	\$7,500
\$ 500	15	60 (4:1)	\$7,500
\$ 250	20	60 (3:1)	\$5,000
10% of donors			50% of goal
\$ 100	100	300 (3:1)	\$10,000
20% of donors			20% of goal
under \$100	350	700 (2:1)	\$10,000
70% of donors			20% of goal

This is an idealized chart; reality is never so orderly. Use this tool to plan, guide, and evaluate your fundraising campaign.



**Goal: \$100,000**

Gifts Needed	Gifts In Hand	Gift Amount	Category Total	TOTAL
1	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <i>F. Smith</i>	\$10,000	\$10,000	\$10,000
3	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>C. Goldstein; D. Lee</i>	\$5,000	\$15,000	\$25,000
7	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	\$2,500	\$17,500	\$42,500
12	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>M. Cook; R. Rodriguez; A. Bielecki; R. Robinson; B. Fields</i>	\$1,500	\$18,000	\$60,500
22	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>M. Fischer; R. Waterman; L. Jones; S. Nguyen</i>	\$1,000	\$22,000	\$82,500
35	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	\$500	\$17,500	<b>\$100,000</b>

*P. Patel; J. Hermann; M. Smith; A. Farnham; F. Murphy; K. Saenz; P. Newman; F. Gold; J. Davenport; S. Jayapal; R. Muhammed; D. Cohen; J. Miller; F. Yamamoto; C. Hickock; R. Schmook; I. Bean; K. Lieu; K. Delmarva; R. Washington; D. Best*

Adapted from Toxics Action Center; names have been changed. Used with permission.

## Sample ask language

### Asking a friend:

"As you you might know, Sally, I'm involved with [name of group] and one of my roles is fundraising -- so I'm contacting my friends to see if they can help. Asking for money is a little awkward, but I'm really excited about the work and I want so much for our group to succeed. If you're willing and able to make a donation, that would be great. If you have other priorities, I respect that -- you and I will be friends regardless of whether you say yes or no. But I sure hope you can help."

### Asking a friend for a practice session:

"Sally, I just got back from this fundraising workshop where we learned how to ask for money face to face. It's a bit scary, but I'd really like to learn how to do it well -- so I'd like to come and practice on you. It's a real ask -- I hope you'll contribute -- but frankly, more than the money I need your feedback. I trust that you'll give me good advice. When can we sit down together?"

### Framing the ask:

"As you know, I had three goals for this meeting. I wanted to give you and update on our work, and we've done that. I wanted to learn more about your interests and concerns, and I thank you for sharing that with me. And, as you know, this is a fundraising visit -- I'm here to ask for your financial support. We were hoping you would consider a gift of \$\_\_\_\_. What do you say?"

### House party ask:

"Jane, that was a terrific presentation. Every time I hear about our work, I feel more enthusiastic. It's a privilege to be connected to this organization. As you can imagine, I would not have opened up my home unless I felt deeply about the value of this work -- and I do.

"As you know, this is a fundraising party, and we've set a goal tonight of \$\_\_\_\_. That sounds pretty ambitious, but I'm looking around the room and I count \_\_\_\_ people -- which means that if each of us gives an average of \$\_\_\_\_, we can reach our goal. If that's more than you can give, please contribute what you can. If you can give more than that, terrific. The amount is up to you -- my only request is that whatever you planned to give tonight, give a little more. It will make a big difference.

"I'm going to start things off with a gift of \$\_\_\_\_. Let's get out those checkbooks and pledge cards, and I hope you will all embarrass me with your generosity."

# Who's a prospect?

**Ability:** Do they have any money to give?

**Belief:** Do they care about your issues, programs, constituency, etc?

**Contact:** Do they have a relationship with any of your board members, staff, donors, or key volunteers? Are they already contributing money, time, or both?

If people meet these three criteria, they are **PROSPECTS** and should be asked to contribute (or perhaps to contribute more).

# RURAL FUNDRAISING:

## *Looking Beyond the Locals*

BY ANDY ROBINSON

Fundraisers in rural communities working on local causes face a number of unique challenges, including fewer services, higher costs, and less advanced technology (for example, limited high-speed Internet access). In many rural areas, jobs are few and wages are low. For fundraisers, however, the biggest problem is the most obvious: fewer people to ask for contributions.

If you live and work in a rural area, your fundraising probably begins and ends with the locals, with good reason: These folks are most affected by the problem you're trying to solve. They're the ones most likely to use your services. In many cases, you've got the strongest relationships with your neighbors. (Of course, this is one of the *advantages* of raising money in rural areas — people tend to know their neighbors.) Savvy organizations solicit local residents for contributions, ask often, and do everything they can to involve them in the work.

Rural activists sometimes raise concerns about this approach. They say, "We've already approached our neighbors a dozen times," and, "Everybody around here already gives to everything," and, "We've tapped each other dry." While it's wise to take these complaints with a pound of salt — after all, how often do we get to see our neighbors' financial information? — the problem of "not enough neighbors to ask" is a genuine barrier.

By necessity, fundraisers based in out-of-the-way communities must reach out to a wider audience. Here are seven other places to look for donors and for help raising money.

**Former locals.** About twenty percent of Americans move each year, but many retain ties to their former homes. Children grow up and move away, but still feel

connected to the places they were raised. Even if they see no direct benefit from your work, these people appreciate what you do from a distance.

Sometimes nostalgia is the motivator; in other cases, the desire is to give something back to a place where they learned a new skill, fell in love, felt connected, participated in important work, were touched by the landscape, or built lasting friendships. For all of these reasons, I continue to support several nonprofits based thousands of miles from where I currently live. Millions of other donors behave the same way. E-mail makes it fairly easy to keep track of those.

**Friends and family elsewhere.** Since all fundraising is based on relationships — the most powerful motivator is one friend asking another for help — bring the work of your group to the attention of family and friends who live somewhere else. They might surprise you.

Some years ago, I was helping a group in rural California with their fundraising plan. When pressed on this point — "Who do you know *out of town* who might be supportive?" — the executive director said, "I grew up with this fellow who now lives in Virginia. His family has a foundation. I never thought to apply, since they're clear across the country, but now that you mention it..." He sent a letter to his friend, outlining the work of his group and why he cared so much about their mission, and received a \$15,000 grant.

*Since all fundraising is based on relationships... bring the work of your group to the attention of family and friends who live somewhere else.*



This protest by members of Kentuckians For The Commonwealth (KFTC) is aimed at the coal industry practice of lopping off the top of a mountain to remove the coal inside — a violation of the Clean Water Act because it leads to the burial of hundreds of miles of streams. KFTC raises money from a broad base of donors (individual and foundation) from both in and outside of Kentucky to support their work.

**Part-time locals.** Many rural areas include owners of second homes. Some of these folks spend long periods in their second home: Florida all winter, Maine all summer, and so on. Others visit their vacation home nearly every weekend and holiday. Many second-home owners intend to move or retire there and identify strongly with the landscape, people, and values of their adopted community. Given their financial circumstances — it's not cheap maintaining two residences — these people are also candidates for major gifts.

As always, involvement is the key. To draw these folks in, schedule events, house parties, and facility tours during the appropriate season. If fitting, ask them to join your leadership. They can fill an important role by bringing an outside perspective to your work.

For example, a grassroots group in Vermont recently recruited two part-time residents for their board. Both new board members have extensive governance and fundraising experience, including service on the boards of large, national groups. When they're in-state, they participate in person; when out-of-state, they participate through conference calls. Since so much of the board business is managed via e-mail, it often doesn't matter where the board members are at any given moment.

**Future locals.** With so many people moving each year, some are bound to land in your community. New arrivals want to be connected with a new peer group, and one of the best ways is through volunteering and donating to local nonprofits. Well-organized groups keep track of new arrivals in a number of ways:

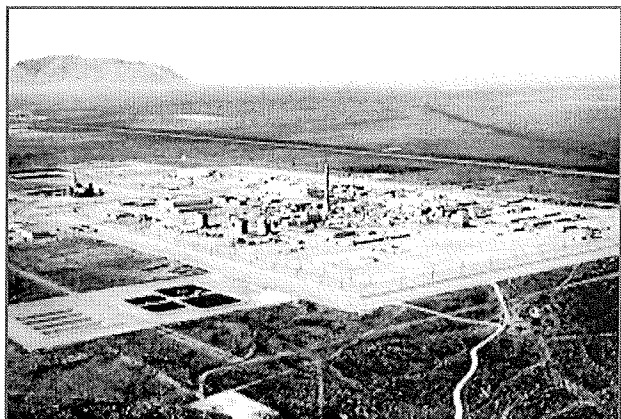
- Making friends with local realtors and mortgage lenders
- Talking with clergy; people of faith tend to “shop around” for a congregation before they move
- In places where it still operates, participating in Welcome Wagon programs.

Imagine that you're about to relocate to a new community. A month or so before you move — or a few weeks after your arrival — you receive a warm, personal welcome letter from a local organization. Then you get a phone call inviting you to be involved. Which group is likely to be first in line for your money and your time?

**College students.** Many small towns are enriched by the presence of colleges and universities. Students tend to be transient and don't have a lot of disposable income, but one thing they have is time. (I know, they're supposed to be studying, but...) Furthermore, they're already organized into service clubs, fraternities, and sororities that seek community projects.

Try to identify a campus club that will adopt your group and help raise money for it. Invite them to assist with your fundraising events or, even better, organize their own. Campus events tend to be the “tried and true” — car wash, yard sale, fundraising meal, etc. — and they reach a completely different audience. If student volunteers do most of the work, so much the better.

**Tourists.** If your area gets a lot of vacationers and visitors, think creatively about how to appeal to their tastes and their wallets. Many rural arts organizations depend on tourist support and schedule their seasons to coincide with the visitors. Other nonprofits organize community



Pictures like this one can make your issues come alive and inspire people to give to your organization — even if they live far from your community. This photo of a nuclear facility that is leaching radioactive waste into Idaho's key source of drinking water is part of a PowerPoint presentation produced by the Snake River Alliance. They use the presentation in speaking engagements throughout Idaho to raise money for their work.

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festivals and events to capture the tourist dollar. Many environmental groups have created eco-tourism programs to educate travelers about the wildlife, while earning money for their conservation work.

Can you reach tourists through the businesses that serve them? The Alaska Wilderness Recreation and Tourism Association ([www.awrta.org](http://www.awrta.org)) provides an interesting example. Thirty-five outfitters and wilderness guiding companies participate in their "Dollar a Day for Conservation" program. Customers pay an extra dollar for each day of their trip; the money is then aggregated and granted to environmental groups working to protect Alaska. Last year, this program generated more than \$25,000 in grants while providing a marketing tool for participating outfitters. "It's not only been good for raising funds," says Kirk Hoessle of Alaska Wildlands Adventures, quoted on the AWRTA Web site. "It's been good for business, too. People like the opportunity to get involved."

**Wannabe locals.** It's a sad fact that many people are dissatisfied with the town they live in. It's also sad but true that, due to family commitments, financial limitations, legal restrictions, or sheer inertia, many will never leave. These folks often have fantasy relationships with other countries, states, communities, or landscapes. Perhaps they visited once and fell in love with the place. Perhaps a friend moved there and raves about it. If your locale is the object of their affection, these people can be loyal and generous donors.

Alaska provides another fine example. The overwhelming majority of Alaskan conservation funding is raised outside of the state. Many of these donors have never been there, but — thanks to the magic of television, radio, video, the Internet, and the astonishment of their friends just returned from vacation — they feel a strong connection. Many will never get there, but they understand — in a deep, personal way — that Alaska's biodiversity and wildness should be preserved.

How do you reach the wannabes? Some are disguised as tourists, so you connect with them through tourist events and the businesses that serve them. Others can be found reading publications such as *Arizona Highways* and *Vermont Life*. You might identify these people on the donor lists of other organizations whose mission and geography overlap yours.

All fundraising is based on good planning, diligence, and fearlessness. To be successful, rural fundraisers need a few additional attributes: the willingness to look beyond the obvious prospects, and the creativity to reach out to everyone else. Use the ideas in this article to expand your prospect list — then get out there and ask! **GFJ**

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ANDY ROBINSON IS THE AUTHOR OF *GRASSROOTS GRANTS AND SELLING SOCIAL CHANGE (WITHOUT SELLING OUT)*, PART OF THE CHARDON PRESS SERIES PUBLISHED BY JOSSEY-BASS. ANDY IS OUTREACH AND TRAINING DIRECTOR FOR THE NEW ENGLAND GRASSROOTS ENVIRONMENT FUND IN MONTPELIER, VERMONT.

## Fundraising: Who Does What?

<u>Development Director</u>	<u>Executive Director</u>	<u>Board Members</u>	<u>Volunteers</u>
1. Draft fundraising goal, budget, plan	Review and revise goal, budget, plan	Review, revise and approve goal, budget, plan	-----
2. Create and manage fundraising calendar	Understand fundraising calendar	Understand fundraising calendar	-----
3. Donate money	Donate money	Donate money	Donate money
4. I.D. prospects; coordinate and compile prospect research	I.D. prospects	I.D. prospects	I.D. prospects
5. Prepare fundraising letters	Approve and sign letters	Sign letters	Sign letters
6. Coordinate solicitors; solicit prospects	Solicit prospects	Solicit prospects	Solicit prospects
7. Thank donors; coordinate thank yous	Thank donors	Thank donors	Thank donors
8. Oversee donor database	Know how to use database	-----	-----
9. Coordinate fundraising events	Participate in fundraising events	Organize fundraising events	Organize fundraising events
10. Manage fundraising expenses	Oversee fundraising expenses	-----	-----
11. Conduct proposal research; manage funder relations; write proposals	Participate in funder relations; oversee proposals	Participate in funder relations; approve grant-funded projects	-----

prepared by Andy  
Robinson for the  
TREC Project, 1/99



Board of Directors

## *“2006 Menu of Opportunities”*

*This is an “all-you-can-eat” menu!*

*Please circle as many items as you like—but at least one per category.*

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

### *Appetizers*

- Provide names of donor prospects
- Attend and mingle with donors on a “Real Ohio” Tour
- Invite donors to attend “Real Ohio” Tours
- Sign & personalize letters to current and prospective donors
- Attend and mingle with donors at a House Party
- Help to develop a plan to solicit major gifts
- Advocate for OEC and serve as an enthusiastic community relations representative (be an ambassador)
- Write a newsletter article for the *Watch!*

### *Entrées*

- Make a significant gift
- Include the OEC in your estate plan
- Host a House Party
- Accompany staff on visit to major donor
- Make thank you calls to donors
- Recruit Annual Reception sponsors
- Recruit new board members with capacity and connections

### *Desserts*

- Help gain access to workplaces for Earth Share
- Promote and attend OEC Lobby Day
- Collect other organizations’ annual reports, donor lists & programs
- Promote and attend OEC Annual Reception and mingle with donors
- Acquire or donate silent auction item donations for Annual Reception
- Forward emails and newsclips featuring OEC to current and prospective donors



2006-2007 Development "Menu of Opportunities"

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

*We All Set the Table Together*

I will contribute \_\_\_\_ names and addresses from my Rolodex (snail mail and e-mail) for these folks to receive a solicitation and newsletter

I will make 25 calls as part of a giving-season major donor campaign

I will make a significant gift

*This is "all-you-can-eat", so please circle as many items as you like—at least one per category.*

*Appetizers*

Bring Grassroots' educational and promotional materials to the conferences I attend. Distribute them, collect business cards or names on a sign up sheet and deliver them to Grassroots

Speak on Grassroots' behalf in a community or business forum

Write for Grassroots' electronic newsletter

*Entrées*

Host a House Party or work with a friend, neighbor or colleague to host one

Forward Grassroots' e-appeals to my e-lists

Recruit new board members with fundraising capacity and connections

*Desserts*

Make thank you calls to donors

Visit \_\_\_\_ major donors in my city and during my travels

Secure speaking engagement for Grassroots at a strategic venue

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# Finding Major Donors by Mail

By ANDY ROBINSON

**M**ost grassroots groups tend to focus their fundraising on two inefficient and risky strategies: grant proposals and benefit events.

Grants are problematic for at least two reasons. Foundations and corporations, which distribute grants, provide only 12% of the private-sector money available to U.S. charities, so groups that rely on grant funding are chasing a small piece of a very large pie. Furthermore, fewer than 15% of all proposals submitted are actually funded, which makes for lousy odds.

Benefit events, on the other hand, are great for identifying new donors and increasing the visibility of your group, but as a pure fundraising strategy they're terribly inefficient. Consider the "work-to-profit" ratio: If you applied the same number of staff and volunteer hours and the same expense budget to other strategies, could you raise more money hour-for-hour and dollar-for-dollar? In most cases, the answer is a resounding yes.

So where should you put most of your fundraising effort? Find and cultivate individual donors, especially potential major donors. In a typical annual campaign — seeking unrestricted individual gifts that all groups need to survive and prosper — just 10% of the donors provide a whopping 60% of the money. If you identify the right people and approach them in the right ways, you can build an effective major donor program to cover a big piece of your budget.

## PUTTING THEORY INTO PRACTICE

To understand how this works, consider The Wildlands Project of Tucson, Arizona, a nonprofit conservation group working to establish a network of linked wilderness reserves across North America.

When I began working with Wildlands in January

1996, the organization had an annual budget of \$300,000, most of which came from three foundations. Board and staff were understandably nervous about relying on such a narrow funding base, and sought help both to diversify foundation support and to build a major donor program that would increase their small donor pool.

In designing a fundraising strategy to reach individual donors, we were restricted by two factors:

- *The Wildlands Project is not a membership group and, for two reasons, did not want to become one.* First, it is not equipped to manage and service a large membership base of \$25 donors. And, perhaps more important, because one of the organization's primary goals is to improve cooperation among national conservation groups, the board chose to avoid mass mailings and the perception of competing with other groups for their members.

- *The project could not solicit many major gifts in personal meetings.* The Wildlands Project works throughout North America and has an international board that meets just twice each year. Given the vast geographic distance between staff, board, and prospective donors, and the relatively low buy-in they had decided on for the major donor program (\$100 and up), it would have been too costly and logistically difficult to solicit many prospects in person.

As a result of these considerations, we decided to build the campaign around small, personalized mailings. Our goal: 200 individuals donating between \$100 and \$5,000 each, for a total of at least \$50,000 in 1996.

## WORKING THE "HOUSE LIST"

For starters, we reviewed the group's donor list and found 265 people who had given \$50 or more during the previous two years. This was the first, and best, pool of prospects for major gifts.

To solicit them, we mail-merged their names into an appeal letter using the office laser printer. The mail merge allowed us to personalize each letter with name, address, and salutation: "Dear Fran" instead of "Dear Friend." The letter also requested substantial gifts: "Whether you can contribute \$100, \$1,000, or more, we need your help."

The letter was a page and a half long — front and back on board letterhead — and included signature spaces for both the chairman and the board president. (One is a prominent biologist, the other a nationally known conservation activist.) Both men signed all letters by hand in colored ink.

So far, so good — personal letters signed by real human beings. We took this stack to the next board meeting and read off the names with the request, "If you know any of these people, raise your hand and add a note." The blank half-page on the back would accommodate their personal greetings.

At least 100 of these letters ended up with personal notes. A few contained five or six notes, which makes for a compelling request (talk about peer pressure!). Board and staff enjoyed this exercise and were eager to learn which of their contacts contributed.

As a final touch, we hand-addressed the envelopes and applied a first-class stamp. Hand-addressing is the most effective way to ensure that the envelope is opened; a "live" stamp also helps. We included a response envelope and a remittance card, with check-offs beginning at \$100 and going up to \$2,500, to indicate that we were serious about receiving a substantial gift.

This appeal generated an impressive 33% return and nearly \$30,000, including one gift of \$10,000 and another of \$5,000. After subtracting these two big contributions, the average donation (including 34 gifts of less than \$100) was \$164. This one mailing produced more money from individuals than everything Wildlands had tried during the previous two years. This group of donors was solicited again in December, seven months after the first letter, and the checks continued to come through March, generating more than \$20,000 in additional gifts.

## BRING US YOUR NAMES

Once the first mailing was completed, we asked board members to go through their personal address books, Rolodexes, and databases to identify prospective donors. Their instructions: Put aside any concerns about whether these prospects can afford to give \$100, and focus on their relationship to you and their concern about the environment.

We also contacted several national conservation

groups (The Nature Conservancy, National Audubon Society, The Wilderness Society, etc.) to request copies of their annual reports. These booklets contain pages and pages of major donors, sorted by the size of their gifts. After photocopying these donor lists — 62 pages of names — we distributed packets to all board and staff and asked them to check off anyone they knew.

We reasoned that these people would make excellent prospects because they had a relationship to the solicitor, they had proven their concern about conservation issues, and they had proven their ability to make a big gift. The process of reviewing these lists "triggered" other names, which increased our pool of prospects.

Needless to say, list screening is miserable work: boring, time-consuming, and seemingly pointless. One board member was embarrassed to review more than 5,000 names and find only five people he knew — but one of those five came through with \$1,000. Now he doesn't need to be convinced.

In the many cases where board and staff knew prospects but did not have an address or phone number, we used a CD-ROM product available at the public library. PhoneDisc, an electronic compilation of most phone books in the country, provided good addresses for at least two-thirds of our "missing persons." As an alternative, try one of the many online databases. Our local library's Web site — [www.lib.ci.tucson.az.us](http://www.lib.ci.tucson.az.us) — links to several directories, including AnyWho, Switchboard, The Ultimates, WhoWhere?, and Yahoo. Click on "Web links," then "directories."

After gathering names and addresses, we again mail-merged them into an appeal letter signed by the person who knew them best. After the signer added a personal note, other board and staff were asked to add notes where appropriate. As before, we hand-addressed the envelopes, affixed a first-class stamp (from the Endangered Species commemorative series!), and included a response card and remittance envelope. For these new prospects, we also enclosed a brochure about The Wildlands Project.

Through this process, board and staff identified and solicited more than 400 additional prospects; most received two letters six months apart. The result: Forty donors provided \$11,650 in large gifts, with two dozen sending smaller donations.

All told, we contacted 700 major donor prospects; 177 responded with nearly \$65,000 in contributions of \$100 or more. About one-third of these gifts were received from board members and at benefit events, and a few others were unsolicited, but the rest were raised through the mail.

## WHAT WE LEARNED

**1. Personal attention makes a big difference.** The old cliché is true: People give money to people, not organizations. The more personal the contact, the more effective our fundraising. Next year, we plan to approach selected donors and prospects by phone and, when feasible, in person.

**2. You don't need rich people.** Most of our contributors are college faculty, non-profit staff, doctors, activists, teachers, homemakers, retired people, etc. We have very few "name" donors.

**3. Small is beautiful.** Big national groups will not give this much attention to \$100 or \$500 donors, but grassroots groups can and should. This is the strategic advantage of being small.

**4. Don't try for more major donors than you can service.** Our goal was to enlist 200 major donors in 1996. Given our limited staffing, we figured this was the largest number we could maintain strong relationships with. We continue to send them personal notes and treat them as part of the family.

**5. You can't save time.** Every stage of this process—screening lists, mail-merging and hand-signing the letter, writing notes, hand-addressing envelopes, etc. — is time consuming. If you want to build a successful major donor program, you can't take shortcuts.

**6. It works.** This successful major donor strategy tripled income from major donors of The Wildlands Project within one year. Try these techniques with your own organization and watch what happens.

## The Wildlands Project

### PROPOSED GIFT-RANGE CHART FOR \$50,000 MAJOR DONOR CAMPAIGN

RANGE OF GIFTS	NUMBER OF GIFTS DESIRED	NUMBER OF PROSPECTS (RATIO) NEEDED	TOTAL DOLLAR AMOUNT PER RANGE EXPECTED
\$5,000 +	1	10 (10:1)	\$5,000
\$2,500-\$4,999	3	15 (5:1)	\$7,500
\$1,000-\$2,499	10	40 (4:1)	\$10,000
\$500-\$999	15	45 (3:1)	\$7,500
\$250-\$499	30	90 (3:1)	\$7,500
\$100-\$249	125	250 (2:1)	\$12,500
<b>TOTALS:</b>	<b>184 donors</b>	<b>450 prospects</b>	<b>\$50,000</b>

### RESULTS FROM MAJOR GIFT CAMPAIGN

GIFT AMOUNTS	NUMBER OF GIFTS	TOTAL DOLLAR AMOUNT RECEIVED
\$10,000	1	\$10,000
\$5,000	2	\$10,000
\$1,500	2	\$3,000
\$1,243	1	\$1,243
\$1,000	10	\$10,000
\$600	1	\$600
\$500	17	\$8,500
\$400	4	\$1,600
\$350	1	\$350
\$300	5	\$1,500
\$250	18	\$4,500
\$225	1	\$225
\$200	18	\$3,600
\$150	4	\$600
\$125	2	\$250
\$100	90	\$9,000
<b>TOTALS:</b>	<b>177 donors</b>	<b>\$64,968</b>

1997

# House party overview

## ***Defined***

- Intimate; 15-50 people
- In a private home
- Brief; 2 hours maximum. Includes a 10-15 minute presentation and (perhaps) an ask; see below
- Quick to organize; 4-6 weeks to plan and do
- Volunteer-driven

## ***Decision points***

1. Host or host committee
2. Venue (whose home?)
3. Fundraising goal; typically \$2,500 - \$10,000
4. "Hook" – What will attract the participants? A celebrity? Menu? Venue? A request from a friend?
5. Invitation list
  - 25-40% of invitees will attend *if you phone them* after sending the invitation
  - 50/50 model: Half the list from host, half from the organization
6. How to ask for the gift
  - Fixed price in advance
  - Ask at the event (most efficient for time spent)
  - Treat it as a "friend-raiser" and follow up individually with those who attend
7. Who asks?
  - The host
  - Someone introduced by the host

# 1. **KEY ELEMENTS OF A SUCCESSFUL HOUSE PARTY**

## 1. **An Enthusiastic Host/Hostess Who has Made a Significant Gift**

- ✓ Willing to host the event in their own home (not a restaurant or theater or third party location);
- ✓ Willing to provide a mailing list of friends and acquaintances;
- ✓ Willing to make follow-up phonecalls to get people to the party;
- ✓ Willing to make a direct ask for gifts or alternatively, willing to make a strong statement of support for your group's work;
- ✓ Willing to write thank you notes;
- ✓ Not essential but it's nice if the host is willing to cover the costs of food and beverage.

Where might you find some of your best host prospects?

Also, consider having folks co-host events—this divides the work between two or more people and makes it more doable.

## 2. **Give Yourself Plenty of Time**

A successful house party requires planning, scripting, phonecalls and logistical arrangements. Give yourself at least 6 to 8 weeks to put together the necessary materials and identify your host. Also put together a timeline of when things need to get done.

## 3. **Set Specific Goals**

Set two goals for your house party in concert with your host/hostess: (a) dollars to be raised; (b) # of people to attend; (c) # of invites to be mailed; (d) # of additional hosts to be identified.

## 4. **The Event Should Last Roughly 2 Hours**

A good time to host events is right after the work day from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. before people have had a chance to go home. The formal presentation itself should last no more than 40 minutes. Get the formal part of the evening underway about 30 to 45 minutes after the start time.

## 5. **Be Sure to Invite 3 to 4 Times as Many People as You Want to Attend**

The rule of thumb is that if you want 20 people at your event you need to invite somewhere between 60 and 80 people.

6. **Make it Clear on your Invitation that the Event is a Fundraiser**

Include language on your invitation like “Donations gratefully accepted” or “Please bring your checkbooks” so that no one is surprised or offended by an “ask”.

7. **Make Follow-Up Phonecalls**

**This is crucial.** Many house parties have failed because invitees were not contacted by phone and asked to attend the party. It’s much harder to turn down an invitation from a friend on the phone than it is to simply send in a “No” RSVP. Make your calls a week after you’ve sent the invitations—approximately two weeks before the party. As with major donors you want to reach the person directly on the phone so it may take 2 or 3 tries before you do so. If you need to, write out a script for these phonecalls or list reasons why it’s important that the person attend the party – yes, you’ll need to do a little convincing here!

8. **Identify the Person Who Is Best Qualified to Make the Ask**

Generally speaking your host or hostess is the best person to make the ask because it is their friends and acquaintances who have come to the party. What you need to keep in mind is that it should be a peer who is making the “ask”. If the host isn’t willing to do so, then a Board member from your organization is a good candidate. Ideally, the “asker” should be someone who can speak passionately about your organization’s work and someone who has already made a significant investment in your group. If you need to, script out the “ask” and help coach the “asker”.

9. **Make a Direct and Compelling Ask**

Mention amounts and tell people what their gift will enable your organization to do. Avoid words like “support” and “help”. Be specific and direct and make eye contact with your audience as you speak. Be sure to let people know that you can accept different kinds of gifts.

10. **Give People Time to Contemplate Their Gift**

Immediately after the “ask”, give people 3 to 5 minutes to contemplate their gift and deposit envelopes in baskets around the room. One thing that can help spur people to give, is to arrange before the party for one person to stand up and publicly commit to making a donation that night. This donor might say something like: “When I came here tonight I was prepared to give \$100, but now that I’ve heard Michael and understand how important this project is, I’m going to write a check for \$250 and I urge all of you to do the same or more.”

11. **Thank People as They Leave**

Have someone stationed at the door to thank guests for coming to your party. Someone who didn't make a gift that night may turn out to be an individual who wants to make a stock donation the following week.

12. **Write Thank You Notes**

Write thank you notes for gifts the next day. Where necessary, make follow-up phonecalls to individuals who needed more time to contemplate their gift or who wanted questions answered.

**Other Little Pointers From My Own Experience**

1. Make sure to collect names at the door. Ask people to sign in. This will enable you to do follow-up after the event.
2. Don't put a gift basket by the front door. Certainly, this may encourage someone to make a gift but it won't be a stretch gift nor will it be one that's informed by your organization's compelling presentation.
3. Make it fun for people. Provide lots of good finger foods. Unless you are MADD or AA or the host is sensitive about serving alcohol, make it available to guests. Include some entertainment if you can (music). Remember that there has to be some incentive for invitees to come to the party.
4. Offer challenges where possible. Perhaps you can offer a Board challenge or a Host challenge. Create a thermometer like the United Way and continue to update it as the evening progresses—towards your fundraising goal. This also gives you an opportunity to convince people to make a gift—ie., "we've only got \$250 more to raise before we reach our goal tonight".
5. Depending on the size of the crowd have a minimum of 2 and perhaps as many as 4 or 5 people representing your organization at the event. Make sure to identify yourselves by wearing specially marked nametags.
6. Have information available about how to make gifts of stock or pledges over time.

## NIGHT OF THE PARTY OUTLINE

1. **HOST WELCOMES GUESTS AND INTRODUCES AND CREDENTIALS**  
**SPEAKERS:** Audience must know speaker's connection with the campaign, job title and responsibilities so that they are perceived as a credible and authoritative voice for the campaign.
2. **SPEAKER THANKS HOST** for having the party and thanks everyone for coming.
3. **CIRCULATE SIGN IN SHEET** (so we know names and addresses of those who attended the party) and mention that campaign materials are available for folks to take with them.
4. **PURPOSE OF THE HOUSE PARTY AND AGENDA:** Tonight I will tell you about our goals, conduct a slideshow presentation of the lands we want to protect, give you a chance to ask questions, and ask for your help.
5. **CONDUCT FORMAL PRESENTATION** which should last no longer than 30 minutes.
6. **QUESTION AND ANSWER PERIOD** (5 to 10 minutes).
7. **THE CHALLENGE (this is a sample from NWEA's Loomis Forest Fund Campaign):**
  - (a) As you can see, we have an ambitious goal in front of us, with precious forests on the chopping block this year that we must protect now.
  - (b) To be successful, we will need your help in three ways:
    - Give generously to this campaign;
    - Host a house party so we can continue to expand our effort;
    - Write a letter to one of our key congressional allies in support of the Partnership campaign.
  - (c) Tonight, our goal is to raise enough money to protect 5 (or whatever you think appropriate given the audience and size of the party) acre—that's \$2000.
  - (d) Moreover, we have a great opportunity to double your investment with a challenge grant from the Paul Allen Forest Protection Foundation. This means your dollars will go twice the distance tonight.
  - (e) In order to meet tonight's goal, we need all of you to stretch beyond what you thought you'd contribute. Just a reminder: we need to raise \$25 million in private money to save these lands. 10% of that is going to come from grassroots gifts—including parties like these. That's \$2.5 million. That's a lot of money and to get there, we need you consider making these largest conservation gift you've ever made.

If you are able to make a gift of 2 or 3 acres—a gift of \$800 to \$1200—then please do so now.

If you can protect 1 acre at \$400, that would be extraordinary.

If a \$100 gift is what you had in mind, please write a check to protect half an acre at \$200.

If you came here tonight thinking you'd give \$50, please consider giving \$100.

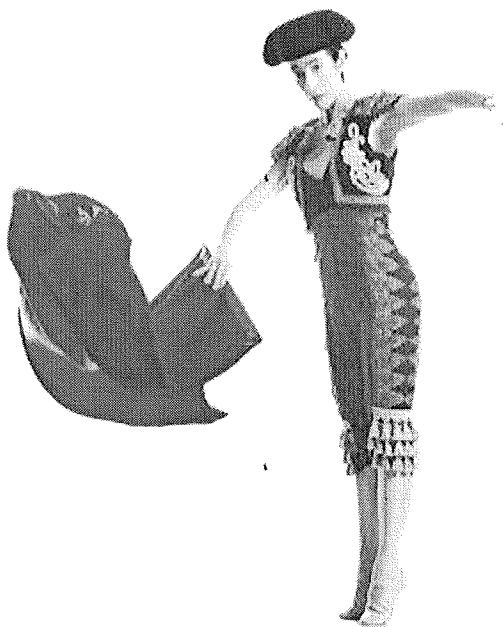
8. **HOST SUPPORTS THIS PITCH WITH A PERSONAL TESTIMONIAL, ANNOUNCEMENT OF HIS/HER CONTRIBUTION AND A STATEMENT ENCOURAGING HIS/HER FRIENDS TO HELP REACH THE STATED GOAL.** (1 to 2 minutes).

Now I'm going to give you a couple of minutes right now to contemplate your gift. I want you to know that you have some giving options to consider:

- (i) You can write a check tonight;
- (ii) You can give via credit card – VISA or MASTERCARD;
- (iii) You can make a pledge over two years;
- (iv) You can make a gift of appreciated stock.

I'm also going to distribute pledge forms along with pens and envelopes. Please deposit your gift in the baskets (point to where they are). I'd ask you to remain seated for just a few more minutes so I can tell you about two additional ways that you can help us. Then the formal part of this evening's program will end although I'll certainly be available to answer any questions that you might have.

9. **NOW STOP TALKING: It's important to give people time to consider the amount of their gift (3 to 5 minutes). THEN THANK PEOPLE FOR THEIR CONTRIBUTIONS – LET THEM KNOW HOW MUCH YOU APPRECIATE THEIR GIFT.**
10. **THE CLOSE:** You've been a wonderful group of people to meet with and I want to thank our host for getting us all together. We've accomplished a lot here tonight thanks to your generous support. Again, thank you for coming. Now, please, enjoy the fine food, beverages and company. **HOST CAN SAY SOMETHING HERE IF HE OR SHE LIKES.**



The Latina Dance Project invites you to a Fund Raising  
House Party

Thursday July 9, 2009 7 to 9 pm

At the home of Judith xxxxxxx & Aaron xxxxxx  
xxxx xxxxx xxxxx Dr. LA, CA 90027

Come drink sangria, enjoy spicy nibbles  
and preview an excerpt of the Latina's new work ---  
El Sueno de la Razon -- The Sleep of Reason  
Based on Goya's Caprichos  
Premiering Spring of 2010!

Bring your checkbooks/cash and help Latina Dance Project  
match a grant from the **Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs**  
Donations are tax deductible. Please consider a minimum contribution  
of \$25 or up to your heart's desire! \*\*

RSVP by Monday July 6, 2009. Attendance is limited to the first 50 guests.

Licia xxxxx -- [xxxx@flash.net](mailto:xxxx@flash.net) or 323 xxx-xxxx  
or Judith xxxxx -- [xxxx@sbcglobal.net](mailto:xxxx@sbcglobal.net) 323 xxx-xxxx

\*\*If you are unable to attend, please consider a contribution to support  
this premiere. Contributions can be made out to the Latina Dance Project and mailed to the address  
above.

The Latina Dance Project originated in 2002 through the creative efforts of four Latina  
choreographers/performers: Licia Perea, Eluza Santos, Juanita Suarez and Eva Tessler. The Latinas'  
work conveys their personal experiences through modern dance, theater, ethnic dance forms, aerial  
dance, music, video, and performance art. Latina Dance Project is a company devoted to a multi-  
cultural and multi-disciplinary approach to social, feminine, political, spiritual, environmental and  
cultural issues. Since its inception, the Latina Dance Project has toured the United States, Portugal  
and Canada and has conducted residencies at numerous universities across the United States.

## **SAMPLE SCRIPT FOR HOUSE PARTY ASK**

Thank you Michael for that thoughtful and compelling presentation. As you can all see, Solar Electric Light Fund has a number of ambitious goals for 2004—fostering scientific research and protecting endangered species in Brazil; improving health care clinics in the Solomon Islands of the South Pacific; providing individual solar home systems for a remote village in war-torn Sri Lanka and more. To be successful the Solar Electric Light Fund needs you to give generously to these campaigns. Tonight, our goal is to raise \$2,500—enough money, for instance, to properly light health clinics in the Solomon Islands for three months. Moreover, you have a great opportunity to double your investment because I've decided to make a challenge gift of \$2,500. This means your dollars will go twice the distance tonight.

In order to meet tonight's goal, I need all of you to stretch beyond what you thought you'd contribute. If you came here tonight thinking that you would make a gift of \$50, I'd like you to consider doubling your investment with a \$100 donation. If \$100 is what you had in mind, please consider stretching your gift to \$250. If you are in a position to make a gift of \$250 or more, please do so. All gifts this evening will be enormously appreciated. Please note that the Solar Electric Light Fund accepts both cash and credit card gifts. You can also pledge your gift over time or make a gift of appreciated stock. Please speak to either Michael or myself directly if you wish to take advantage of these latter two options.

I want us all to take a few minutes right now to contemplate our gifts. The baskets that are presently circulating contain both envelopes for you to enclose your gift and gift response forms. I'd ask that you remain seated for just a few more minutes so that I can tell you about two additional ways that you can help us.

### **Additional Ways to Help**

Very quickly, there are two additional ways that you can help. If you know others who would be interested in supporting SELF's work, please provide us with those names by filling out the Friends and Family forms available on the table by the front door. Also, if you'd be willing to host a house party just like this one—and believe me it wasn't that hard—please speak to Michael. SELF is always looking for host recruits.

**Sample letter:  
Setting up the face-to-face ask**

Martina Jones  
123 Main Street  
Des Moines, IA 55555

Dear Martina:

It's that time of year again – we're doing our annual fundraising campaign in support of (brief description of your mission). Last year, you made a very generous donation of \$500, which is a big gift for us, and we really appreciate your support. Contributions from people like you helped us to accomplish the following:

- (Big, impressive accomplishment)
- (Not so big, but still impressive)
- (Something interesting the donor is unlikely to know about)

This year, we face a number of challenges:

- (Big, scary challenge – maybe increased demand for your services?)
- (Not so big, but still impressive)
- (Perhaps something related to organizational development, rather than external factors)

To meet these challenges, we are asking our most generous supporters to consider doubling their gifts, which in your case would be a contribution of \$1000. I appreciate that this is a big commitment, so before you decide, I would love the chance to meet with you, give you an update, learn more your interest in our work, and ask for your support.

I will be calling you next week to set up an appointment.

Again, thank you for your generous and loyal support. I look forward to speaking with you, and meeting with you, very soon.

Warm regards,

If you're uncomfortable naming a number, consider language like this:

We're asking for gifts of between \$500 and \$5000 toward a campaign goal of \$50,000. To be honest, I have no idea how much to ask you for, so let's sit down together, discuss it, and you can tell me how much would be appropriate.

If you're soliciting a new prospect, the relevant paragraphs might be:

As you might know, I'm on the board of Everybody Loves Everybody, which works to (brief description of your mission). Our organization has a long history of success, including (insert bulleted items here).

One of my tasks as a board member is to identify new supporters for our work. We've set goal of \$\_\_\_\_\_ and we're seeking donations of between \$\_\_\_\_\_ and \$\_\_\_\_\_ to help meet that goal. I'd like to arrange an appointment so we can discuss the work and see if you'd like to contribute.

Use these letters as templates by adapting the language and tone as you see fit. In writing the letter, keep the following points in mind:

- **It's brief** – no more than one page.
- **It says “thank you.”** It acknowledges past support or, in the case of new prospects, it thanks them for considering a gift.
- **It's explicitly about fundraising.** It doesn't hint or use code words – your intentions are clear from the start.
- **It includes numbers.** It mentions the amount you seek or suggests a range of gifts.
- **The purpose of this letter is not to get money, but rather to get a meeting.**

It's not necessary to craft a piece of great literature – after all, this is a one-page “I want to meet with you” letter – so don't strive for perfection. It might make sense for one person, perhaps a staff member, to prepare a standard letter that board members and other solicitors then customize. Get it done and mail it out.

## **Do I Hear Any Objections?** **Responses to common put-offs**

Sooner or later you will have this experience. After a few words of explanation – “Hi Leroy, this is Andy. I’m following up on the letter I sent about our fall fundraising campaign” – the person on the other end of the phone will say, “Sure, I’d love to get together. When’s a good time for you?” Until that day, however, you must learn to respond to the most common objections.

*I don’t mean to imply that this is one conversation and you have to handle eight or nine put-offs in a row.* However, the general rule is that you should respond to at least three before you give up.

*Objection: “I don’t have time to talk right now.”*

Response: “When would be a good time to call?”

*Objection: “You sent me a letter? What letter?” (Or alternatively, “There’s a pile of mail on the kitchen table – bills and such – and I’ve been avoiding it.”)*

Response: “Well, let me tell you about the letter.”

*Objection: “I don’t really have the time to meet. Can’t we just do this over the phone?”*

Response: “That’s up to you. The meeting takes about twenty minutes, and I’ll make it as convenient as possible – I can come to your home or office, whatever works for you. This just works better if we meet face to face. But if you’d prefer, we can talk about it now.”

*Objection: “I can’t afford the amount you’re asking for.”*

Response: “The amount is completely up to you. Let’s sit down together, discuss it, and then you’ll decide.”

*Objection: “You know, I generally make charitable decisions with my spouse/partner/financial advisor/eight year old child/psychic friend.”*

Response: “Is it appropriate for the three of us to sit down together? If so, when would be a good time? If not, how can I help you to have that discussion – maybe the two of us could meet first?”

*Objection: “You know, I support so many other groups and I’m tapped out for this year.”*

Response: “I know the feeling. Tell you what – let’s take the money off the table. I’d still like to meet with you because a) I’d like to thank you for your generous support last year, and b) when you’re budgeting for next year, perhaps you could remember us then. So let’s assume you won’t be giving now – I hear that. But I’d still like to meet. When would be a good time?”

*Objection: “I gave because of your work on \_\_\_\_\_, but I don’t like the position you’ve taken on \_\_\_\_\_.”*

Response: “You know, I’d like to hear more about your concerns. Frankly, I don’t like everything the organization does, but overall I believe that the mission and the work are very important. Let’s get together and talk about it; then you’ll decide. If you choose not

to give, I certainly respect that. When would be a good time to meet?”

*Objection: “We’re down to one income and we don’t have the money.”*

Response: “I’m sorry to hear that. Is there some other way you’d like to be involved in our work?”

*Objection: “This is just not a priority right now.”*

Response: “Well, your past support has meant a lot to us. Shall we keep you on the mailing list? Is it appropriate to contact you again in the future?”

You’re probably thinking, “What’s wrong with this guy? Can’t he take ‘no’ for an answer?” My response: “When people say no – “*We don’t have the money*” or “*This is not a priority right now*” – I hear them say no. But when they say, “*That’s more than I can afford,*” or “*I have to talk with my spouse first,*” that doesn’t mean that they don’t want to give – it means that they want to choose the amount or would prefer to consult with someone else before making a decision.

### **The Three Rules of Telephone Appointment-Making:**

- 1. Whatever the objection, take it literally.** Rather than making assumptions about what other people mean, take them at their word. The corollary is this: if they say no – a clear, explicit no – you have to honor that.
- 2. Assume success.** Don’t say, “Do you want to meet?” Ask, “*When* do you want to meet?” This is a subtle distinction, but it makes a big difference.
- 3. Keep bringing it back to your agenda.** “When do you want to meet?”

You have to find your own comfort level. If these suggestions seem a bit too assertive for your taste, back off a little. Strive for a balance between assertiveness and humility, between boldness and fear. If you give in to the fear – if you backpedal at the first objection – you do a disservice to yourself, your group, and your donors. Be bold and watch what happens.

## Major gifts visit: Structuring the conversation

**1. Build rapport.** Chat a little. Start with topics that have no bearing on your organization or fundraising campaign. “How’s your job? What are your kids doing these days? I notice you’ve got your garden in; what are you growing this year?” Don’t spend a lot of time on idle chatter – the meeting might get away from you – but it’s good manners to ease into the topic at hand.

**2. State your goals for the meeting.** This step is optional but recommended. You might say, “Margarita, I’ve come today with three things on my mind. One, I’m here to tell you about our work. Two, I want to learn more about you and your interests. Three, it’s my responsibility to ask for your financial support. To tell you the truth, I’d like to know why you’re interested in our organization, so let’s start there.” This provides a clean segue into the next item.

**3. Uncover the person’s needs and interests.** Find out why he or she cares about your work. For a donor, the questions might be, “You gave us \$500 last year, which is a big gift for us. Why did you do it? Why do you care about this issue?” When talking with a prospect who is considering a first gift, perhaps you can ask, “What’s your experience with our work? Why does it interest you?” Initiate a dialogue by asking questions. Get the prospect talking.

**4. Present your organization: your goals, programs, and financial needs.** Tell stories. Where relevant, cite statistics. Keep it brief; don’t overwhelm the person with a blow-by-blow description of your 14-point strategic plan. If you have visuals that tell your story – maps, graphs, photos, charts, or site plans – this is an opportunity to use them. Encourage questions.

**5. Ask for the gift.** Be clear, explicit, and straightforward. “Sally, as I mentioned in the letter, we were hoping you’d consider a gift of \$1,000 to support our work. It would mean a lot to us. What do you say?” As an alternative, “As I mentioned in the letter, we’re looking for gifts of between \$500 and \$5,000. I appreciate that this is a wide range, and to be honest, we don’t know the appropriate amount to ask of you. How much would you like to give?”

Once you’ve asked for the gift, wait – *keep your mouth closed*. Don’t make excuses or start to backpedal before the donor has a chance to respond. Just sit quietly and wait.

**6. Deal with any objections.** Some of the objections you answered by phone are likely to come up again now. Think in advance about these objections and how you might respond. Practice your answers and bring notes to the meeting. For example, if the person says, “You’re asking for more than I can afford,” you can reply, “How much would you like to give?” In response to, “I’m unable to give right now,” you could say, “Do you want to make a pledge now and pay later? If that works for you, it works for us.” Most of these responses are nothing more than common sense, so:

- Take a breath,
- Ask yourself, “What’s the logical response to this concern?”
- Respond accordingly.

**7. Close the meeting.** Restate any agreements you’ve made so both parties leave the room with the same expectations. Once again, be clear, explicit and straightforward.

## **"The Ask"**

### **Meeting with your prospect**

**The purpose of this role play is to help you:**

1. Develop confidence and clarity in your "pitch" -- how you present your work
2. Develop empathy for the person on the other side of the relationship -- the prospective donor
3. Improve your listening skills

**Dramatis personae** (Shakespearean for "the parts to be played"):

1. **The asker (or solicitor).** A volunteer or staff member who helps with fundraising.
2. **The prospect.** A current or prospective donor who is known to the asker -- in other words, they have a direct personal relationship.
3. **The observer:** who gets to watch and comment (after the role play is over).

By the end of the exercise, everyone will have the opportunity to play all three roles.

### **Setting up the role play**

The asker reviews the prospect list that he or she filled out earlier and chooses one person on the list. The asker then trains the prospect to "be" that person by describing the prospect's current level of knowledge and involvement with the organization.

For example, the asker might say, "I want you to be my Aunt Rita. She always talks to me about my work and seems very interested. She came to our open house event last year but has never given. I know she attends church, which makes me think she is charitable, and when I was at the theatre I saw her listed in the program as a \$250 donor."

*Where to meet:* You decide. Your options include the prospect's home or office, your home or office, or a neutral location (such as a restaurant).

### ***Asker***

**Your goal is to:**

1. Introduce the work of your organization.
2. By asking questions, find out what the prospect cares about and how your work might address his or her interests.
3. Encourage the prospect to agree to a next step; this could include:
  - a. Make a gift or a pledge.
  - b. Suggest other prospects.
  - c. Volunteer to help with program or fundraising needs.

**Bonus points:** show and tell (visual aids)

## ***Prospect***

### **Your goal is to:**

1. Learn more about this group without spending a lot of time.
2. If you can, identify one aspect of the group, the project, or the presentation that grabs your attention.
3. Provide a few objections or obstacles for the solicitor to address.
4. Based on the conversation, decide if you will:
  - a. Contribute or pledge today.
  - b. Delay your decision ("I'd like to think about it.")
  - c. Decline to donate.
  - d. Become involved in some other way.

**Bonus points:** Unexpected distractions (phone calls, pagers, other people going in and out, etc.) are allowed.

## ***Observer***

### **Your goal is to:**

1. Watch, listen, take notes, and be prepared to talk about what you see and hear.

**Bonus points:** Save your comments for the debriefing period.

## **Structure of the meeting** (instructions for the asker)

1. Briefly build rapport with the prospect by discussing any mutual interests, friends, etc
2. Uncover the prospect's needs and interests. Why does he or she care about your issue or programs? If the prospect were to give, what would s/he want in return?
3. Make a brief presentation about your work, allowing the prospect to participate and ask questions.
4. Ask for the gift, naming a specific amount or a range. After "the ask," keep quiet and wait for the prospect to respond.
5. Deal with any concerns or objections.
6. Close the meeting by re-stating and clarifying any agreements or next steps.

## **To "debrief" this exercise**

1. The asker goes first. S/he says *two things about the meeting that went well and one thing that could have worked better, with an idea for how to improve it.*
2. The prospect goes next, following the same format.
3. Finally, the observer offers comments, following the same format.

**Timing:** Each side of this triangle (role play plus debriefing) takes 15-20 minutes. Then all participants rotate to a new role. Total time: 45-60 minutes. The facilitator will keep track of the clock and announce when it's time to switch roles.

## Sample board job description

Adapted from *Great Boards for Small Groups*  
by Andy Robinson, Emerson and Church, 2006

What board members provide	What board members can expect in return
1. I will give my best effort to “hit the ground running” when beginning my service with the board.	1. The organization will provide me with a full orientation, including background information on work accomplished to date.
2. I will learn about the organization’s mission and programs, and be able to describe them accurately.	2. The organization will provide me with relevant materials and education.
3. I understand that the board meets ___ times per year, plus one annual full-day retreat. I will do my best to attend each meeting, with the understanding that three consecutive unexcused absences will be considered resignation from the board.	3. I expect that board meetings will be well run and productive, with a focus on decision-making and not merely reporting. I understand that agendas will be distributed at least one week in advance. If I wish to add items to the agenda, I will contact the chair at least two weeks in advance.
4. I accept fiduciary responsibility for the organization and will oversee its financial health and integrity.	4. I expect timely, accurate, and complete financial statements to be distributed at least quarterly, one week in advance of the relevant board meeting. I also expect to be trained to read and interpret these financial statements.
5. I will provide oversight to ensure that our programs run effectively.	5. I expect monthly reports from the executive director, program updates, press clippings, etc.
6. I accept ethical responsibility and will help to hold fellow board members and the executive director (and, by extension, the full staff) to professional standards.	6. The organization will provide me with relevant training.
7. I will serve as an ambassador to the community to educate others and promote our work.	7. I will need materials and may need training (public speaking, etc.) to do this job effectively.
8. I commit to increasing my skills as a board member.	8. The organization will provide me with appropriate training and support.
9. I will participate in fundraising to ensure that our organization has the resources it needs to meet its mission. I commit to making a personal donation; our organization will be one of the top three charities I support each year that I am on the board.	9. I will be able to choose from a range of fundraising activities, and I expect relevant training and support to help me fulfill my obligations. I will have the option of fulfilling my personal pledge in monthly or quarterly installments, if I so choose.
10. I will evaluate the performance of the executive director.	10. This evaluation will be based on goals developed jointly by the board and the E.D.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Board member signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Board chair signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## Board / Volunteer Fundraising Agreement

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

*To support the mission of our organization, I agree to take on the following:*

**1. My gift:** \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Payment completed by (date) \_\_\_\_\_

Terms of payment (check, credit card, installments, etc.) \_\_\_\_\_

**2. Prospects.** I will provide names and contact information for \_\_\_\_\_ prospects by (date) \_\_\_\_\_. Even if I am unable to follow up with all of these people personally, I will still add names to the list for mailings, event invitations, etc.

**3. My fundraising support tasks** (*taken from our fundraising menu*):

**a. Activity** \_\_\_\_\_

Date(s) \_\_\_\_\_ Projected revenue (if applicable) \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Help / support needed from staff or board \_\_\_\_\_

**b. Activity** \_\_\_\_\_

Date(s) \_\_\_\_\_ Projected revenue (if applicable) \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Help / support needed from staff or board \_\_\_\_\_

**c. Activity** \_\_\_\_\_

Date(s) \_\_\_\_\_ Projected revenue (if applicable) \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Help / support needed from staff or board \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of board member or volunteer

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of board chair

## Action Planning Form

**Desired change number 1:**

**Benchmarks** (how will you measure this change?)

**Allies** (who will you get to help?)

**Action steps:**

Over the *next week*, I/we will:

Over the *next month*, I/we will:

Over the *next three months*, I/we will:

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**Desired change number 2:**

**Benchmarks** (how will you measure this change?)

**Allies** (who will you get to help?)

**Action steps:**

Over the *next week*, I/we will:

Over the *next month*, I/we will:

Over the *next three months*, I/we will:

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**Desired change number 3:**

**Benchmarks** (how will you measure this change?)

**Allies** (who will you get to help?)

**Action steps:**

Over the *next week*, I/we will:

Over the *next month*, I/we will:

Over the *next three months*, I/we will:

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