

## TIPS FOR DEVELOPING RELATIONSHIPS WITH FUNDERS

### **Fundraising begins at home:**

- Remember that fundraising is not only the job of the executive director or program director—get your board and volunteers involved as well.
- When you recruit board members, be sure to let them know they or their company/organization will be expected to make a contribution.
- Conduct feasibility studies to determine the potential for board giving.
- Ask board members to write a personal check; stress to them how other funders look for 100% board participation in giving.
- Involve your board in developing a balanced fund development plan.
- Remember, “friend raising is just if not more important than fundraising.”

### **Assess your current and future fundraising potential:**

- Develop a clear picture of your current sources of funding.
- Determine your future needs, both short term and long term.
- Determine what funding sources you can target—public funding, foundations, individuals, corporations and so on.
- Project when each funding source will end so you can plan ahead to engage new funders.
- Develop a three- to five-year plan; it often takes this long to cultivate and engage a new funder.
- Monitor the plan regularly.

### **Develop a fundraising plan:**

- Assess your needs.
- Assess your current fundraising plan and determine how well it meets your current needs.
- Set your goals.
- Plan your strategy—make sure it’s well diversified.
- Develop a one-year calendar.
- Assign roles and responsibilities to board or advisory group, volunteers and staff.
- Implement the plan.
- Evaluate the plan regularly.
- Reassess and revise the plan.
- Determine how you fundraise now.

### **Your fund development plan should include the following:**

- Face-to-face solicitation with individuals;
- Direct mail solicitation of your volunteers and stakeholders as well as the general public;
- Grant writing (federal grants, foundations, corporate foundations);
- Special events such as an annual dinner with auction;
- Telemarketing (*Note: be sure to find out what percentage of funds raised you will actually get. Consult your State Attorney General’s office regarding applicable state laws*);
- Sponsorships—for example, ads purchased during National Mentoring Month for which you get a percentage of the price
- Door-to-door solicitation; and
- Online solicitation—it helps to have the capability to accept charge cards.

**Your fund development plan should include the following:**

- Matching gifts;
- Product sales; and
- Planned giving.

**Why should you diversify?**

- A single source could dry up easily.
- You should never wait for a crisis.
- Building a stable, diversified base will give you breathing room.
- Prospective donors and funders will be impressed. They won't invest until they know you're financially stable.

**Tips on how to solicit corporate giving:**

- Research the corporation to determine its giving priorities, grant guidelines and when its fiscal year begins.
- On the basis of the subject matter, geographic focus, type of support and grant range, decide if your needs can be met by the corporation's grant making program.
- If your program fits corporate giving priorities, call six months before the fiscal year begins and ask to meet with the person who oversees this function.
- Send supplementary information about your program (i.e., articles, newsletters) to familiarize the decision makers with your organization.
- Cultivate employees by making efforts to integrate them into your volunteer base as mentors.
- Submit proposals during the first two quarters of the corporation's fiscal year (funding can run out in the second half of the fiscal year).
- Call to invite the contributions manager or appropriate designee to visit the program to be funded.
- Ask for an appointment to present your request in person (e.g., to Human Resources, Corporate Contributions, Community Relations).

**What if, in spite of all your efforts, the proposal is rejected?**

- Call to find out what could have been improved.
- Ask about a potential date to resubmit the proposal.
- Continue to touch base with the funder, informing it of your organization's milestones.
- Do not give in to their potential requests to alter your focus.