

Winning Edge #14 – How Many Donors to Win?

This is Trevor Bragdon with Commonwealth Partners' *The Winning Edge*: Tips to help conservatives persuade and win.



Often, people look at fundraising like it's a black box.

Something mystical some people are born good at and other people, us mere mortals, have to endure. But it's not true. Fundraising is just a skill that anyone can learn.

We've mentioned previously, that the first fundraising challenge is having the [right mindset](#). Think of yourself as a partner with your donors, not Oliver Twist begging for a donation.

The second challenge is creating a plan for your fundraising. How do you make a plan? Start by figuring out two numbers:

1. How much do you need to raise?
2. What's the minimum number of donors you need to win?

How much do you need to win?

The amount is different for every campaign and district. Ask people who have run for similar seats (and won) how much it will take. You'll get various answers, and then go with a rough average.

The key is not to overcomplicate this—it's just an estimate. You can adjust as you get some fundraising momentum. For example, a House campaign can average \$100,000 or more. Local small races like school boards can cost less than \$20,000.

What about the minimum number of donors you need to win?

This question is all about calculating the fewest number of donors you can get for your campaign and still win.

Why the fewest? Because the only thing that's truly finite in a campaign is your time. While it's great to be fundraising, it is more important to go out and talk to voters. The more time you can talk to voters instead of fundraising, the more votes you'll win.

Example

If you need to raise \$100,000 for your campaign, how many donors do you need?

With no campaign fundraising limits, like in PA, the minimum number of donors is actually one – you could have one person write a \$100,000 check. However, realistically you need more than one.

An easy back-of-the-envelope estimate is to use the \$3,300 federal campaign contribution limit. That's the limit you can raise from an individual person if you are running for President, Senate, or Congress.

How many donors would you need to raise \$100,000? You simply take \$100,000 and divide it by 3,300. You'd need only 30 donors if you got each to give \$3,300. Think about that for a second. You could raise \$100,000 from just 30 people.

The key is to first focus on [those potential donors](#) who can give large donations, and always ask potential donors for the maximum amount. Don't put a limit on them. You don't know how much they can give, so ask and let them decide. When there are no contribution limits, an easy way to maximize a donation is to ask for a range.

[You could end your pitch](#) with an ask:

To win this campaign, we need to raise \$100,000, and we're asking 30 families to be partners with us with a gift between \$2,000 to \$10,000.

Will you be one of the 30 families to make this happen?

When you set a clear target of the minimum number of donors, it focuses your attention on what's most important. In this example the target is to find 30 people who can give a donation between \$2,000 to more than \$10,000.

If you are considering running, don't overcomplicate your fundraising. First, find out how much an average campaign like yours will cost. Second, figure out the minimum number of donors you need by dividing that number by \$3,300. Finally, use a range to ask potential donors.

Do this, and you'll be well on your way to raising the money you need to win.