

How Many Donors to Win?

The first fundraising challenge is having the right mindset. Think of yourself as a partner with your donors, not Oliver Twist begging for donations.

The second challenge is creating a plan for your fundraising. How to 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 raise?

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 about calculating the fewest 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

You need to raise \$100,000 for your campaign. How many donors do you need?

Using the \$3,300 federal campaign contribution limit is an easy back-of-the-envelope estimate. Divide \$100,000 by \$3,300.

$$\frac{\$100,000}{\$3,300} = 30 \text{ Donors}$$

You'd need only 30 donors if you got each to give \$3,300. Think about that for a second. You could raise \$100k from just 30 people.

Close with a Range

Focus on potential donors who can give large donations, and always ask potential donors for the max 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 the ask:

To win this campaign, we need to raise \$100,000 and are asking 30 families to be partners with us with a gift between \$2,500 to \$10,000.

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

The Bottom Line

If you're considering running, don't overcomplicate fundraising. Find out how much an average similar campaign costs. Then figure out the minimum number of donors you need and use a range to make the ask.