

# 4 Steps to Start Your Fundraising

Starting to fundraise for a campaign can be daunting. It doesn't matter if you're experienced or running for the first time. Everyone gets a little nervous when they're asking for money. **Remember, you are not begging like Oliver Twist. Instead, you are finding donor partners who want to see change happen.** These donors are excited to have someone running they can support (*see page 2 for more info*).

Here are four steps you can take in January and February to jump-start your campaign fundraising.

## 1 Calculate the Minimum Number of Donors You Need to Win

(See page 3 for more)

First, estimate how much money you need to raise. You can ask a successful candidate how much their campaign cost. A state house race might cost \$50k-100k, and a school board race could cost \$20k.

Next, calculate the minimum number of donors. Take the total you need to raise and divide it by the maximum donation amount. When there's no max donation, use \$2,000 or \$3,000 since it's close to the federal contribution limits, and many donors have given that amount.

## 2 Make a List of 35 Potential Donors

(See page 4 for more)

There are three different types of potential donors to put on your list.

- **Previous Donors** - If you've run before and raised money.
- **Friends and Family** - People who know and trust you and want to see you succeed.
- **Known Political Donors** - People in your district known to give politically.

## 3 Create Your Fundraising Pitch

(See page 5 for more)

The key to a good fundraising pitch is brevity. Your pitch should be <300 words, so you can say it in under two minutes. A simple, short pitch answers these questions:

- **Who are you?**
- **Why are you running?**
- **How are you different?**
- **What is your fundraising ask amount?**

## 4 Get Your First Dozen Major Donors

Ask each one of those 35 prospects for a donation. Either call them or set up a meeting in person. Statistically, if you ask 35 prospects in person or over the phone, about 10 to 12 will say "yes" and give a donation.

## The Bottom Line

Have a strong launch to your campaign fundraising by completing these 4 steps by the end of February.

**Remember, fundraising is just a skill you can learn.** Follow these steps to raise the money you need to win.

# A Poverty or Partnership Mindset?



Imagine you are boarding a flight. As you slowly move through first class, you envy those wider seats and free drinks. Then you notice something. A prominent nonprofit leader is sitting there in first class.

What would you think?

If you were flying from Calcutta to the UK or America in the 1990s, this might have been your experience. Because sometimes seated in first class was Mother Teresa.

She would go from helping some of the poorest people in the world to traveling and sitting next to some of the wealthiest.

Why? Because Mother Teresa was sitting where the money was. During the flight, she would fundraise and raise thousands more than the cost of a first-class ticket.

Mother Teresa showed us that while she worked to help those in poverty, she didn't have what's called a Poverty Mindset.

## What's the Poverty Mindset?

The Poverty Mindset is the term we use to describe people's negative thoughts or beliefs about fundraising. The thoughts might be:

- Why would someone give to my cause, or my campaign?
- Donors won't give if I ask.
- I'm not good at fundraising.
- I need to do (insert task) before I start fundraising.

Or sometimes, people think of fundraising like Oliver Twist reluctantly asking "Please, sir, I want some more?"

The problem with this view of fundraising is it positions you as less than the donor and assumes the donor is giving to you out of pity. But the reality is donors don't give out of pity. They give because they want to see change happen.

## What's the Partnership Mindset?

Instead of having a Poverty Mindset, effective fundraisers adopt the Partnership Mindset.

In the **Partnership Mindset**, you understand that both the donor and the candidate are needed to make political change happen. Neither one is above the other, and instead, both are partners. The candidate needs money and wants to get elected, and the donor has money and wants to see change happen. But neither the donor nor the candidate can do it alone. Both are partnered together to make change happen.

## Fundraising with the Partnership Mindset

Think about where you might have the Poverty Mindset. What are the thoughts holding you back from making the ask?

Example: You think, *"I'd be interrupting the donor if I made the call now?"*

Next, think about this thought from the Partnership Mindset. If someone you knew ran for office and called you, would it feel like an interruption? Likely you'd be glad they called and want to see them succeed.

### The Bottom Line

Reject the Poverty Mindset and instead think of your donors as partners in your campaign. You want to run and get elected, and they want to see political change happen. Both of you are partners together to win.

# 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:

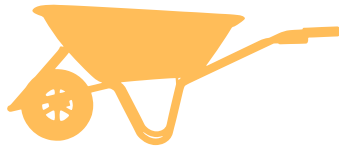
*To win this campaign, we need to raise \$100,000 and are asking 30 families to be partners with us with a gift between \$2,500 to \$10,000.*

*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.

# Who are the Best Donors?



Imagine you need to raise \$20k for a local campaign to be competitive. You can think of an empty wheelbarrow to represent this fundraising goal.

If you had to fill this wheelbarrow, which tool would you use— a spoon or a shovel?

You could fill the wheelbarrow with a spoon without breaking a sweat, but it would take you all day.

A shovel would be more effort, but it would take only about a dozen scoops to fill the wheelbarrow.



**Option #1** - Find small donors who each give \$100. Using the spoon approach, **you'll need 200 donors** to fill the wheelbarrow.



**Option #2** - Find major donors who each give \$2,000. Using the shovel approach, **you'll only need about 10 donors** to fill the wheelbarrow.

## Why Major Donors?

Time is the one thing that's finite in a campaign. The more time you spend fundraising, the less time you can spend talking to voters.

It takes just as much time to ask someone for \$2,000 as it does to ask someone for \$100—just as bending down to scoop with a spoon takes about the same time as using a shovel.

Here's the other truth. In fundraising, not all shovels are the same size. You can ask for a range; for example, *"I'm asking 15 families to partner with me with a campaign donation ranging from \$1,000 to more than \$10,000. Will you be one of the 15 donors who make this happen?"* Some donors will come in higher than you expect and help fill that wheelbarrow faster.

To start fundraising for a campaign, focus first on major donors. Just a few dozen donors can fund most local or small campaigns.

## Types of Potential Donors

- 1 Previous Donors.** If the candidate has run before, start with previous donors. Previous donors have the highest response rate. Even if the donor gave a small donation in the past, the candidate can ask for more. Make the ask using the range and let the donor decide. Expect 2 out of 3 previous donors who are asked to give again.
- 2 Friends and Family.** These folks know the candidate best and want to see them succeed. Expect about 1 out of 3 friends and family asked to come through with a donation.
- 3 Known Political Donors.** These are people in the district who are known to give politically but have never given to the candidate. Expect about 1 out of 4 to give when asked directly by the candidate.

### The Bottom Line:

Major donors give over 80% of all the money raised on most campaigns. For successful fundraising, find major donors and make the ask.

Fill your wheelbarrow with as few scoops as possible.



# How to Ask for a Donation

When you are asking for a donation, there are 3 questions you need to answer:

1. **WHO** are you?
2. **WHY** are you running?
3. **HOW** are you different?

## 4 Part School Board Pitch

*I'm a mom with three kids under 10 and work full-time as a nurse, and I never expected to be running for the school board.*

*But the problem with our school board is that normal parents like us don't have a voice. The board today is about indoctrination, not education.*

*I'm running to turn around the school board and refocus our schools on what they should do – educate our kids.*

*Here's my promise, when I'm elected, I will first [insert one thing you'll do]. Second, on every vote and decision, I will ask, "Does this put kids and parents first?" I'm voting no and will fight to stop it if it doesn't.*

*I'm stepping up to run because we need a change, but I can't do this alone. I'm asking 15 families to partner with me with a campaign donation of \$1,000 to more than \$10,000.*

*Will you be one of the 15 donors who make this happen?"*

*[Pause, don't speak, and wait for the donor to respond]*

### WHO

Donors give to people they know and trust and people who share their values. Add one or two sentences about your background if the donor doesn't know you.

### WHY

Tell donors why you are running. A short three sentences show you know why you are running and can tell it in a crisp, succinct way.

### HOW

Show you have a plan once you get elected. A great plan can be simple:

**Your plan = Promise + Principle**

**Promise:** Start with one specific action you promise to do when elected.

**Principle:** Your way of making decisions.

### ASK

**Always ask for the max amount or a range.** You don't know how much people have and how much they want to see you win.

You can have a well-funded campaign with only a few dozen donors.

If there are no contribution limits, ask for a range and let the donor decide. *"...with a campaign donation between 1,000 to more than 10,000 dollars?"*