



## Fundraising Like a Pro: Tips for New School Fundraisers

### Fundraising and Your Charter Petition

You do not want to submit a budget to your authorizer that relies on fundraising dollars in order to balance. Therefore, do **not** include fundraising unless:

1. Fundraising is documented (e.g. pledge letters included in the Appendix, historical fundraising data that illustrates the team's ability to achieve the stated goal)
  2. Fundraising amounts are conservative (e.g. no more than 3% of total revenue)
- p.s.: Don't forget fundraising **costs** such as research databases, consultants, etc.

#### Incorporation & 501c3

- Incorporation: Designates that you have filed as a non-profit for the purposes of operating a California charter school with the CA Secretary of State.
- 501c3 Status: Obtained from the IRS after you are incorporated
- Need to be incorporated *and* have tax-exempt status in order to:
  - Be eligible to receive most grants, additional revenue sources
  - Avoid paying income tax
- Get more information from the CCSA Knowledge Brief "[Incorporating Your Charter School.](#)"

### Individual Giving

#### *Identify/Qualify Prospects > Cultivate Relationships > Ask at the Right Time > Engage in Stewardship*

- Invite them to see you in action: hold community meetings, invite for school visits once open
- Meet 1:1 as appropriate (including your board and other team members)
- Communicate regularly – include hard numbers with success stories and get social

#### Individual Campaigns can work well – Giving Tuesday in December (year-end timing important)

- Social media: keep the community up to date; include hard numbers with success stories
  - Set up a Facebook nonprofit page ([Facebook](#))
  - Learn how to share your Facebook page ([FirstGiving](#))
  - Get volunteers to help you with social media ([Sparked](#))
  - Email and manage supporters with a free Mailchimp account ([Mailchimp](#))
  - Build a website with giving integration ([NationBuilder](#))
- Create online campaigns
  - Tools include: [Crowdrise.com](#), [indiegogo.com](#), [donorschoose.org](#)
- Create systems to accept checks and online donations, send acknowledgement/thank you letters
- Include direct links to giving pages on all appropriate communications materials (make it easy)

### Private & Family Foundations

#### *Identify Potential Partners > Cultivate Relationships > Ask at the Right Time > Engage in Stewardship*

#### Key documents to prepare to before reaching out to Foundations:

- General Letter of Inquiry (LOI)
  - Contains key data about your school, students, and community
  - Customize for each foundation before sending
- **Three** ideas for programs/projects you would like to have funded
  - Include overall strategy, timeline, and costs for each in a paragraph
- Gather your organization's financial documents
  - Current year's board-approved budget, YTD income statement and/or balance sheet, Recent Form 990, your 501(c)(3) status letter, last year's audited financials

## Competitive Government Grants

- Know the program's funding history and competitiveness
  - Review the list of past grantees for types of organizations and funding amounts received, contact past grantees if you have a connection
  - Attend the pre-application webinar/session if at all possible (send a colleague)
  - Note that competitiveness for awards varies across program types
- Understanding and complying with ALL guidelines and processes is critical
  - Read all resources available online (the grant program and CCSA's)
  - Attend workshops/webinars
  - Talk to someone at the administering agency
- Understand the review timeline, plan for delays in receiving funds and delays in 'setting up shop'
- Contract with an experienced federal grant writer when you're undertaking your first competitive federal application or before applying for any large, competitive award (\$1M and above)

## Corporate Giving

- Conduct research to find companies headquartered in your region, or with a significant presence nearby. Corporate giving is almost always tied to a company's location.
- Understand and match your potential partner's concerns and priorities. For example, their interests may be in improving public perception of their brand, accomplishing a community goal, providing volunteer opportunities for employees, and/or building infrastructure in the community
- Applications are either online or take place via personal connections, consult the company's website for their preferred avenue/contact information
- When approaching corporations, it's best to find a shared goal (see above) and position yourself as an opportunity for the corporation to meet its stated philanthropic goals
- Be aware corporate grants/contributions can move quickly, have a big-picture plan before reaching out

## Comprehensive Resources

### **Strategic Fund Development: Building Profitable Relationships that Last** by Simone Joyaux

*A comprehensive approach to planning ALL potential fundraising avenues (foundation/corporate grants, individual giving, community events) and how to build a relationship-based rather than transactional view of fundraising*

### **The Ask: How to Ask for Support for your Nonprofit Cause, Creative Project, or Business Venture** by Laura Fredericks

*Helpful for expanding your individual/major donor fundraising as well as how to get started with directly asking for money if you have no experience*

### **Asking Styles: Harness Your Personal Fundraising Power** by Andrea Kihlstedt

*Strengths-based fundraising advice that gives a suggested structure for fundraising meetings*

### **CCSA's Charter School Resource Library:** <http://www.ccsa.org/sections/library/>

*Guides and toolkits for all areas of charter school development & management, over 500 resources in 20 categories*