



TOOL KIT #2

BOARD FINANCIAL GOVERNANCE

FAQ – FUNDRAISING

1. My Board has parents who have complicated financial challenges and priorities. Should they be expected to contribute?

Yes, to their own capacity. A Board member cannot make an ask effectively if they don't give. Foundation funders will expect 100% Board giving. And the culture of support you are building requires that each member have your organization as a top priority.

2. Who writes the annual development plan?

Your development or fundraising committee should contribute to the development of the plan, although it's usually actually written by the ED or development director. Because this plan articulates roles and responsibilities to achieve the revenue goals in the strategic plan and budget, it is essential that it be endorsed and owned by the entire Board.

3. What are the key differences between staff roles and Board roles in the fundraising process?

Staff are responsible for providing Board members with the tools they need to be effective ambassadors and fundraisers for the organization. The Board sets fundraising policies and goals.

In smaller nonprofits, Board members often take on the role of "staffing" fundraising events and may even help with research and solicitation of grants.

4. Can our PTI or CPRC Director help with fundraising?

If they have sufficient "unrestricted" time and resources. Fundraising, while essential for the sustainability of the organization, is not a function that can be conducted on time allocated to the PTI, CPRC, or other restricted grants.

For this reason, in smaller organizations, volunteer Board members may have a more "hands-on" role in fundraising than in organizations with more capacity and resources.

5. Should we hire a development director? What is the relationship of the development director to the Board?

Having a dedicated development person is a meaningful investment in the future of your organization. To start, consider adding specific, well-defined development responsibilities to a program staff member who has the temperament and enthusiasm to help build a successful fundraising program.

Fundraising is a process. It takes time, persistence, and energy. A development professional is a step in that process, but not the entire answer. Think carefully about what duties and responsibilities are highest priority. Are you more interested in administrative support for development? Tracking and reporting? Researching foundations and corporate opportunities? Database management?

One of the mistakes that nonprofits make is to expect that a development director will make individual solicitations. Board members may be relieved to be "off the hook" because "we now have someone whose job is to raise money." That inevitably ends poorly!

The development director will provide the Board members and ED with tools and information, but generally do not make "asks." They are not expected to bring a "rolodex" of



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past donors. Rather, their job is to help the Board leverage their contacts and networks on behalf of the organization.

6. How do a Board member's personal networks relate to fundraising?

One of the truisms of fundraising is that people don't give to organizations, they give to people. Unless your cause is already at the top of someone's list, a personal ask from someone known and respected is the most powerful.

Donors to Parent Centers generally begin because they have a direct relationship with someone affected by disability issues, or because they know and respect someone on your Board or staff who has had direct experience with our issues, or because they have been helped by (or know someone helped by) your organization. The goal is to move that donor to a relationship with the organization over time.

7. Can we talk honestly about fundraising events?

Fundraisers take a great deal of time, energy, and focus, and even money. The Board should review and approve the budget (including staff time, all other expenses, and projected revenue) for a proposed fundraising event. Think critically about whether "the juice is worth the squeeze." There may be more efficient ways to bring in money.

Parent Center folks like to be inclusive – it's our brand. But, fundraising events that are designed to be inclusive generally do not raise significant funds. You will make more money from sponsorships and auctions than ticket sales. Each unpaying guest is a direct hit to your bottom line. If you don't have sponsors underwriting at least your out of pocket costs, consider alternatives to the fundraiser.

That isn't to say that you shouldn't have annual celebrations, awards, and outreach events. Just don't consider them to be money-makers: consider them to be community-builders (that break even or better!). Consider small cultivation events at the homes of Board members to introduce their circles to your work.

In smaller nonprofits, volunteer Board members may produce and staff special events, while in most larger organizations this may be a shared staff and Board responsibility. It is the responsibility of Board members to help with planning, attend the event themselves and to invite people with capacity to give: so even if the people in the room are not yet major donors, they should have the capacity to be!

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