Countdown to Fundraising: *20 Steps to Fundraising Su*

The 20-step process outlined below is a "road map" to implementing a major fundraising campaign like those th
Development agencies periodically conduct to renew the private sector portion of their funding. While not in
conducting "annual fund" or business as usual fundraising, much of the information here can also be profitably

20. Develop a clear vision for your organization's future going out 3 to 5 years. Ideally this is done as a written strategic plan. Identify types and level of resources needed to implement your vision. Determine if existing resources from traditional sources will be sufficient.	15. Develop a fundraising "case statement" that describes your agency, programs and plans in terms and a format that will resonate with prospective donors. Decide whether to raise funds "year-by-year" or seek multi-year funding (generally 3 but sometimes 5 years) of your agency operations.
19. If more resources will be needed, explore options *other than* private fundraising. Implement or increase fees for services? Seek State or Federal Grants? Explore opportunities for earned income? (In the minds of many donors, you should engage these sources *before* asking them for money!)	14. If needed, conduct a feasibility analysis to test your vision with prospective supporters and gauge their willingness to give. *Costly formal "feasibility studies," however, are <u>not</u> always necessary when your fundraising advisor has extensive in-market experience and/or your needs are modest.*
18. If funds needed will ultimately have to be raised from private donors (corporations, foundations or individuals), first address regulatory issues. Is an IRS determination of tax-exempt status letter available? Are you a Michigan Nonprofit Corporation? Is your Michigan Charitable Solicitation License current?	13. Make a "go/no go" decision for your campaign. If it is a "go," get organized! Set a goal. Plan your campaign. Recruit volunteer leadership. Define volunteer roles. Establish your principal fundraising support systems (gift processing/record keeping, prospect research, and stewardship/donor recognition).
17. Decide whether to "go it alone" or seek outside consulting assistance. If you decide to get consulting support, explore possible relationships with different types of fundraising consultants. Grant writer. Campaign "Counsel." Annual Fund Consultants. Alumni/Membership Specialists.	12. Recruit campaign chair(s) and volunteers. The ideal campaign chair or volunteer: 1) Has access to the affluent and influential people of your community, 2) Is seen as a peer by decision makers at local companies and foundations, 3) Has already made (or represents an organization that has already made) a substantial gift.
16. Interview/select consultant. **<u>Must</u>** have a Michigan Professional Fund Raiser license; check license status with Michigan AG's Office (517) 373-1152. Fees and services vary greatly, billing practices less so. Although performance components are becoming more common, mainstream fundraisers still bill primarily on a fixed fee basis - any "incentive" component of compensation generally being modest.	11. Working with your volunteers, identify and research prospective "early," "lead gift" or "leadership" donors. Start with your agency's own past donors. Ask your Board and fundraising volunteers to identify additional prospects. Look at the published Donor Honor Rolls of other local causes. Keep identifying, researching, and cultivating prospects throughout your campaign.

5. Call volunteers after their meetings. Ask: 1) How the meeting went, 2) If the prospect needed/wanted any additional material, and, 3) When a decision should be expected. Encourage volunteers make their own follow-up contacts.

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4. Staff follows up on requests arising from solicitation calls. They answer questions, provide materials, write letters and do pretty much whatever needs to be done to help prospective donors make a (hopefully positive) decision on your request for support.

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3. Get your volunteers, however, to call their prospects and "close" the deals. This second peer-to-peer contact will greatly increase both your success rate and also the gift size.

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2. "Steward" gifts as they are received. At a minimum, this means sending donors Thank You letters and listing them on a "Donor Honor Role." The back pages of annual reports are the traditional place for these but putting Donor Honor Rolls on websites is growing in popularity. In the case of very large gifts, press releases and presentation events (the "Big Check") may also be appropriate. The very largest gifts, however, sometimes should be accorded special recognition in the sense of "sponsorships" (of events and programs) or "naming" (of facilities and other permanent things).

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1. The leadership phase of your campaign is now done. In the typical organization, 50% or more of your goal should have been raised. During the remainder of your campaign you will be seeking larger numbers of smaller gifts using approaches that are similar to those used in the leadership phase.

Return to Step Eight and take your next group of prospects through the solicitation process. Keep doing this until you have reached your goal and/or are "out" of viable prospects. In some cases, agencies "finish up" their campaign with a broad-based solicitation (generally by mail) of their smallest and/or least-likely-to-give prospects.

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applied in that context.
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10. "Rate" all prospects to identify appropriate "ask" amounts. Who can contribute - by themselves - 20% of the campaign goal? ...10%? ... 5%? Examine prospect needs/interests to determine appropriate ask targets. Organize prospects into tiers (by likely level of giving).

9. Create prospect-specific cultivation/solicitation strategies for your top accounts. These strategies need to be pretty explicit. Who is going to make the contact with the decision maker? How, step-by-step, do you plan to bring this person or organization into the life and work of your organization?

8. Assign top accounts to volunteers for solicitation. Be careful, however, in making assignments. Some people overestimate their access and influence. As a result, the person who volunteers first to make a given solicitation is not always the best solicitor for that particular prospect. Establish accountability devices to assure progress.

7. Train your volunteers and support them through the solicitation of top accounts. The most important thing many fundraising volunteers need to learn is when to stay quiet. After they have put the "ask" (for a gift) on the table, they should remain *silent* until the prospective donor speaks - no matter how long it takes!.

6. Help volunteers as they solicit your top accounts. Ideally this is done as much as possible in face-to-face meetings. While agency staff can (and often should) go along on these calls as "expert witnesses" to explain your agency and programs, the actual request for a gift - "the ask" - needs to be made by the volunteer solicitor.

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20 Steps to Fundraising Success

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