

EVALUATING YOUR CAMPAIGN



Whether you just hosted your first few small events or completed a lengthy, multi-faceted campaign, evaluating the results is an important step in the fund development process. Much like **Recordkeeping and Tracking**, reflecting on past efforts will inform your future plans. Even if an event or campaign was quite successful, there are always areas in which to improve and new goals to be set.

Strengths

Begin with a general listing of positive outcomes, achievements, and what went well.

- Which staff members did an excellent job?
- Who were the strong volunteers?
- Did someone bring in a significant number of new donors or invitees?
- Who contacted the most people?
- Which activities seemed most popular at your events?
- List some praise or positive feedback that you received along the way.
- Were there certain outside entities who made a real difference – generous rental spaces, a community member who championed the cause, a discount on supplies from a business?
- Which areas ran smoothly with good organization?
- Which ideas came to fruition most easily?

Areas to Improve

Move on to brainstorming.

- Was the goal set too low or too high?
- Did some people carry the bulk of the responsibility while others had little to do?
- What aspects took excessive time or effort, yet resulted in minimal payoff?
- Did any portions feel disorganized or inefficient?
- Did you have poor attendance at any events?
- What feedback did you receive that can help you identify areas of improvement?
- Did anything fall through the cracks?

Survey Others

Once you have done a preliminary examination, you might **analyze further by collecting external opinions and perspectives**. Tailor each set of questions to different people depending on their level of involvement in the event or campaign. To gather a comprehensive assessment, considering asking:

- Staff
- Board Members
- Volunteers
- Clients or program participants
- Event attendees
- Long-term donors
- Brand new donors
- Event service providers (e.g. printer, caterer, web designer)
- Community members who didn't participate

Survey questions might include:

- What was the most challenging part of cultivating new donor relationships?
- How likely is it that you'd attend this event again next year?
- What was your family's favorite part of the Fall Fundraiser?
- How did you feel about the amount of volunteer time this project involved?
- Was there enough staff support for the tasks you were assigned to help plan this event?
- How do you think the community impression of our organization has changed with this campaign?
- Would you set higher or different goals for next year's fund development?
- What would you like to see us incorporate into our next plan?
- Do you think that certain sponsors or partners stood out as exceptional supporters?
- How do you think we could improve our planning and organizational processes?
- Did anyone give you feedback – good or bad – about interacting with us on this campaign?
- How do you feel this fund development might help our services?
- What do you wish the money could be spent on?
- Where are we having the hardest time making progress?
- Did any activities, events, or processes seem wasteful or redundant?
- What are our best talents as fundraisers right now? Worst areas?
- Did you feel valued and appreciated for your help on this project?
- How do you think we could involve more people in the future?

If you conduct this survey in person or over the phone, remember to have an open mind and be calm if people are giving criticism. **You want honesty**, even if it is tough to hear about the areas for improvement. If you want to receive truly honest responses, especially from staff members, conduct the survey anonymously on paper or online.

Examine Themes

Just as you compiled survey information before beginning your campaign, you'll organize the evaluation data and begin noticing themes.

- Flag items that are consistent across everyone surveyed because those will be prioritized when you begin to plan for the future.

- Pay attention to obvious conflicting group opinions, e.g. if all staff members indicated an event was too time consuming, but most volunteers ranked it as easy, you might look closer at your division of duties.
- Take special note of people's responses about their experiences helping out, as your planning for the next round of fundraising is dependent upon an eager and satisfied workforce.

Dig Deeper

If themes emerged showing clear successes and failures in your campaign or event, you'll need to spend time examining those even more closely.

Find out:

- Why did this seem to work well/not so well?
- What could we do to replicate/change this for next time?
- Did we foresee it would turn out in this manner?
 - If not, what made it a surprise?
- Are there people we should be thanking for a positive outcome or to whom we should apologize for a mistake?
- Who will be responsible for ensuring this is either continued or fixed?

Use Data

Couple the findings of your larger evaluation with the quantitative data you've been collecting about your donors, amounts, expenditures, and gains (See [Recordkeeping and Tracking](#)), and begin to make preliminary decisions about new goals. If some results are disappointing, stay positive and remember that many events must start small and slow, but have potential to grow into a success for your organization. Conversely, remain logical and do not become attached to a plan that clearly failed and does not show much promise. **Evaluation of your fund development is how you learn from both accomplishments and challenges, just as you do every year with your service programs.**

Look Ahead

Before moving on to new plans, some areas should always be considered regardless of survey answers or initial brainstorming results.

- **Time.** Look closely at the calendar to determine periods more suitable for fundraising efforts.
- **Trends.** Is there something changing in your field, community, or within your grant funding that may affect your plans to develop new funding in the near future?
- **Capacity.** As you move ahead, stay aware of the other projects and program events in which staff and might be heavily involved.
- **Budget.** If your organization will have significant changes in budget for the upcoming period, this will clearly impact your fund development plans. Consider potential expenditures or sources of income that might be unusual or cause change.