

FUNDRAISING

FUND ADVISOR TOOLKIT

Northwest Minnesota Foundation



How to Write a Fundraising Letter

The key to many successful fundraising campaigns is writing a strong solicitation letter. This may sound intimidating at first, but fundraising letters contain many of the same elements as any good sales letter.

First, know your donors. **Beginning with an updated list of past donors is key** - they will likely give again and may even increase their donations over time. Make sure to have a good, well-targeted, updated mailing list for new prospects as well.

In order to get people to read your letter, they must first open the envelope. **Include teaser copy on the outside** of the envelope. This can be as simple as a printed line saying, "We need your help."

Early in the letter, **make your case quickly**. Don't beat around the bush. Tell about your organization or project at the top of the letter and get to the point right away. What problem will this project solve? **What need will it fill?**

Appeal to your donors' hearts first with descriptions and anecdotes, then to their heads with facts and figures.

If you are writing to previous donors, **be sure to thank them first** before you ask for more money. Such as, "Thank you for being such an important influence on our fund in the past. Last year's fundraiser was such a success, we're inviting you to help again ... "

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Lose the hype. Don't exaggerate or over-extend yourself. Nothing will destroy your credibility faster than sounding like a used-car salesperson when raising funds for a good cause.

Don't forget to **ask for the money!** Don't just tell them about your program, ask directly for their help.

Tell them how much to give so they have an idea of what is needed. Such as, "Our program needs 25 computers, at \$2,000 each. If you can't afford a whole computer, a donation of only \$200 will buy a printer." This will make them feel like they are contributing to something tangible.

Appeal to readers' sense of urgency by providing a deadline. Such as, "We need these funds by January 1 in order to carry out our spring awards event." If you don't get them to act right away, they probably won't act at all.

For the maximum reply, **you may want to include** a QR code that links to your NMF giving page or a link directly to the giving page. Make it easy for people to donate by telling them how: "Just check the box on the reply card and mail it with your check." or "Scan the QR code to be directed to our online giving link." People respond to clear instructions.

Remember to **include a P.S.** at the bottom. The bulk of your letter will go unread by most of your readers. A post script is a last-chance effort to summarize your whole letter and get your readers to act on it.

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As with any direct mail piece, it's good to **make follow-up phone calls or send a text or an email** one or two weeks after you mail the letter. Ask if the letter was received and if you can answer any questions. Your follow-up will greatly increase your chances of getting a donation.

Writing a successful fundraising letter isn't too difficult. These tips are based on years of trial and error; if you follow them wisely, your campaign will be successful. Plan early, be organized, and the letter writing will take care of itself!

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