NATIONAL LOW INCOME HOUSING COALITION

# NLIHC's Training Institute Fundraising & Sustainability 101

June 26, 2025

# Agenda

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**Welcome & Intro**

- Dee Ross, Tenant Leader Fellow, NLIHC

**Fundraising 101**

- Benja Reilly, Development Coordinator
- Cecily Thomas, Development Coordinator

**Next Steps**

- Dee Ross, Tenant Leader Fellow, NLIHC

# Welcome & Intro

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**Dee Ross**

*Tenant Leader Fellow*

National Low Income Housing Coalition

NLIHC

www.nlihc.org

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# Fundraising 101

By Benja Reilly and Cecily Thomas

NLIHC Fund Development Coordinators

# Session Takeaways

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This session seeks to:

- Provide an overview of how to start fundraising.
- Give insights into the types of fundraising you can pursue.
- Share best practices in cultivating long-lasting partnerships with your donor base.
- Provide creative ways to engage and involve your community and stakeholders.

This session will not:

- Discuss recovering lost funding from government grants.
- Discuss the logistics for grant compliance.

# Addressing the Elephant in the Room

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Funding cliffs are everywhere due to massive funding pulls and cuts.

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# What is Fundraising?

# What is Fundraising?

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- Securing the resources needed to achieve a shared vision.
- Fundamentally, fundraising is all about building relationships.
- We must recognize that there are different roles to be played within a movement. Fundraising holds an important role, but not the only important role.

# Relationship Building

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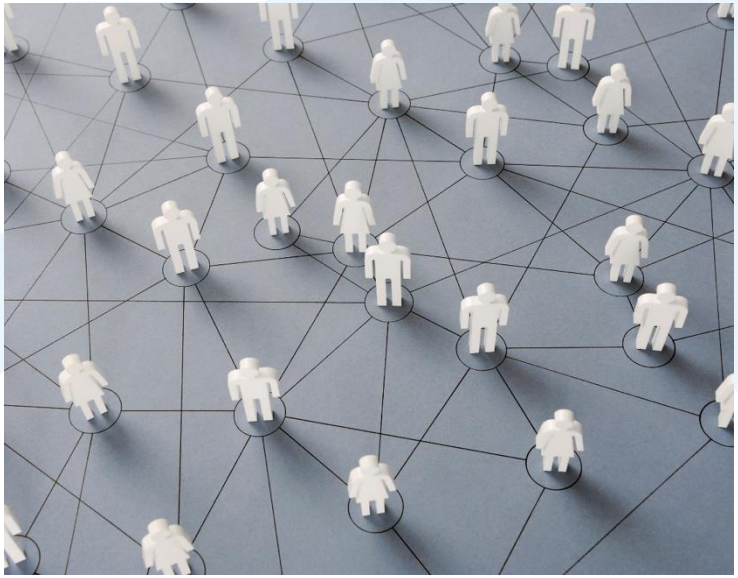
- Networking and relationship building are translatable skills from organizing to fundraising.
  - Treat current and prospective funder relationships as partnerships, not transactions.
  - Build strong relationships to navigate difficult times with funders and donors.
- Know your audience
  - Research
  - Identify



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# Fundraising 101

## Fund the movement!

# Before You Fundraise

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- Clarify Your Mission
  - What is the problem you seek to solve?
  - Why is this problem important?
  - How do you seek to solve it?
  - Why are you the best positioned?
- Set Realistic Programmatic Goals
  - What does success look like?
  - Measuring impact.
- Know your Ask
  - Understand the impact of new funding.
  - Set-up infrastructure to receive funding.

# Know your ask

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- Set your budget.
  - How much will it cost to run your program?
  - What potential roadblocks do you need to budget for?
  - Why is the funding necessary for you to accomplish the mission?
  - What is your organization's "Secret Sauce"? Why are ***you*** the best equipped to accomplish the mission?
    - This will help you justify the necessity of the funding.

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# Revenue Streams

# Types of Funds to Raise

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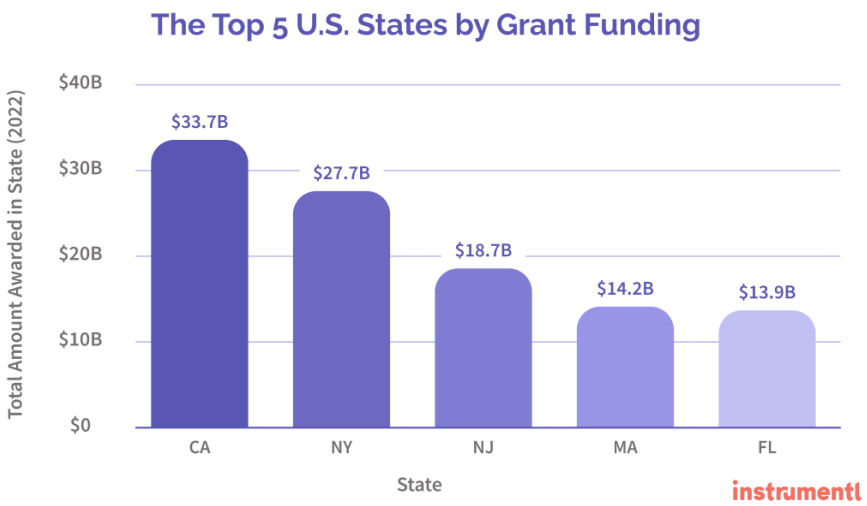
- Grants
  - Restricted funds (grants) - Can only be used for that program
  - Unrestricted/general operating donations and grants – Can be used for all operating expenses/least limitations
- Important to Note: 501(c )(3) vs 501(c )(4) compliance for all funding is very different.
  - C4's can fund C3's with limitations



# Types of Funds to Raise

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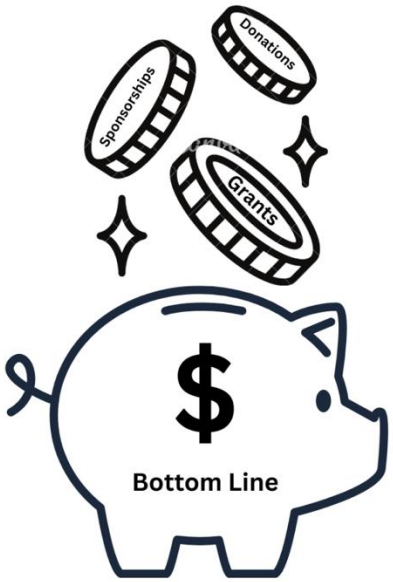
- Individual Donations
  - Estate gifts
  - Cash Donations via web or hard cash
  - In Kind Gifts
- Campaign – Restricted funds, requested by donor
- Unrestricted Funds – General operating donations



# Sponsorships

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- Financial
  - Fund it at different levels. Present your sponsorship packages to potential sponsors when it's time to pitch.
  - Example Sponsorship Package:
    - Gold (5k, 2 stage shout outs, banner at event, Logo on socials and ft on brochure)
    - Silver (2.5k, on back page of brochure, stage shoutout)
    - Bronze (1K, ft on brochure)
  - Find your local organizations! See who will want to sponsor by pitch one or the other!

- In Kind Gifts
  - Services/Time and Expertise
    - Lawyer (Pro Bono Services)
    - Doctor or Nurse (Volunteering as Medical staff for an event)
    - Graphic Designer (Designing a logo or posts for free)
    - Groceries (Ex. Wegmans donating groceries for volunteers for an event)
    - Catering (Ex. Corporate sponsor catering food at a deep discount or as a donation)
    - Venue (Ex. Church, Community center, etc. donating space)
    - Massages to auction off
  - Physical Items
    - Gift Basket for Auctioning
    - Wine from a Winery for consumption or auctioning
    - A car

# Example: The Auction

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- Step 1: Set your budget and plan your expenses for the event. Make sure it is legal to do an auction in your state. Choose between silent or regular auction.
- Step 2: Find sponsorships to fund the cost of the event (plus extra).
- Step 3: Get in-kind donations or deep discounts for your auction items.
- Step 4: Find out what other things (for example, flyer printing or program printing, flower decorations, etc.) you can get in-kind gifts for.
- Step 5: Host auction, set minimum bid at the value of the product.
- Step 6: See if you made your fundraising goal!

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# How to Fundraise

# Prospective Donors

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- Research your prospective donor base:
  - Look at who donates to organizations similar to your own.
  - Browse public information, such as 990-forms and foundation websites.
  - Sign up for newsletters from organizations and foundations that track trends in philanthropy.
  - Attend webinars and talk with other colleagues and organizers to understand the current donor landscape.
- Identify suitable funders and donors that align well with your work:
  - Design a system to effectively track each of these funders and conduct more in-depth research.
  - Work with your network and board members to identify any contacts.
  - Be creative to find opportunities to meet with program officers and staff.

# Concept Notes

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- Be concise with your wording and keep it high-level. Provide a comprehensive overview of your project.
- Be compelling and confident in your language. Approach it from the lens that matches best with the funder.
- Always remember who you are writing for, and the purpose of a concept note.

# Grant Deliverables and Prospect Tracking

- Do your best to automate grants tracking and prospect tracking.
- Keep an updated calendar that tracks due dates of concept notes, proposals, reports, and check-in calls.
- Keeping an “open channel” with funders helps to strengthen your working relationship.
- Be strategic about touch points with funders.

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# Grant Writers

# Grant Writers

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- When do you hire a grant writer?
  - After:
    - You have established your mission and know your ask.
    - You are an established nonprofit.
    - You have started prospecting new grants that would be a good fit.
    - You have the infrastructure to handle a growth period.
  - But Before:
    - You have the funds to hire a development team.
- Outside grant writers are excellent support, but are not replacements for an in-house development team.

# Grant Writers

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- Pros of a grant writer:
  - Able to help you get your funding pool started to fund the next stage of growth for your nonprofit.
  - Able to focus solely on writing grants and possible prospecting.
- Cons:
  - Not full-time staff and often have other clients to balance.
  - The time it takes to coordinate messaging and voice/purpose.
  - Overall cost.

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# Resources

# Resources – Donor CRMs

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## Free Platforms

Little Green Light

Givebutter (Transaction Fee)

Donor Box

Donately

## Affordable Platforms

Givebutter

Donor Box

Donately

## Expensive Platforms

Bonterra Products (EveryAction, etc)

Bloomerang

Salesforce

DonorPerfect

# Resources

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- Grant Tracking
  - Instrumentl (Paid)
- Grant Prospecting
  - Propublica (Nonprofit News site, Free)
- Donor Prospecting
  - Candid/Guidestar (free)
  - iWave (paid)
  - Donor Search (Paid)

# Resources

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- Project management tools
  - Trello (Paid)
  - Asana (Paid)
  - Instrumentl (Grant Tracking)
  - Monday.com (Paid)
  - Excel (Yes, but know when to scale)
  - Basecamp + Ganttify
  - Microsoft Planner (free w/ suite)
  - Adobe Analytics (paid)
- Know your KPIs
  - Don’t just track data to track it!

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# Q & A

Ask us questions!

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# Upcoming Courses

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## Marketing & Branding 101

- Discover how to craft powerful messages, build a strong brand, and amplify the voices of tenant-led movements. This session will guide you in using social media, storytelling, and visual identity to raise awareness, attract support, and grow your impact.