



ALEXIS I BROWN

Fundraising Sample

How do nonprofits achieve sustainability?

The most important factors for sustainability, in general, are strong leadership and good program and financial management. A strong leader builds solid relationships with clients, staff, board, and donors. They are good public speakers who can relay the mission easily, and they have a strong sense of how to manage the organization. A good leader regularly reviews systems to ensure the programs are still effective and that the organization is delivering services in a cost-effective manner. A good leader provides direction, and is inspiring, motivational, visionary, and strategic.

Organizations also must have clearly articulated mission and vision statements, as well as strong communications about the organizations standing and needs. Have a Case for Support/Statement for Support to share with donors, as well as a three-year Strategic Plan. Be willing and able to adjust that plan as necessary. Adaptability is important for sustainability.

From a fundraising perspective, the key to building sustainability is developing strong, long-term relationships with funders and to decrease their attrition as much as possible. This requires regular communications, the method and frequency being dependent on the level of donor. Donors need to be connected to the mission. They should not only receive their solicitation, but also receive regular updates, testimonials, and news throughout the year. Donors should also be invited to participate in some way, such as volunteer opportunities or requests for advice on specific issues.

It is also important that there be diversity in your revenue streams. Do not rely too heavily on one large form of income, such as a specific event or a few major donors. When an organization has a strong base of donors at many giving levels, multiple events, a variety of grants from different sources and in different amounts, and earned income then if one of them is unsuccessful in a given year it does not have a drastic impact on the annual revenue.

Whether the board is a working board or not, it is imperative that every board member participate in some aspect of donor cultivation, solicitation, and stewardship. They can volunteer, share invitations to events, join the Development Director and Executive Director on donor visits, sign letters, or say thank you to donors.

In short, the keys to sustainability at a nonprofit are strong leadership, diversification of funding, board involvement, and relationship building through transparency and engagement.