

What Works: Success Stories from the Field

It's a perennial challenge: appealing to donors' specific interest areas, while still ensuring the funds your nonprofit receives are budget-relieving and as minimally restricted as possible. General operating funds are of course the most flexible: They can be used for everything from keeping the lights on and paying the cleaning crew to purchasing state-of-the-art medical equipment or feeding the hungry. So often, however, we see nonprofits carve fund-development efforts into such small, discrete pots that they are reinventing the wheel with every request they create.

One of our recent **success stories from the field** offers an example of how to maximize both fundability *and* the flexibility of the funds received. We recently worked with a major nonprofit medical institution in Los Angeles County as they embarked on funding outreach for important activities related to nursing excellence.

In close collaboration with our client, here are some of the major steps Thurlow/Associates took:

- **Consolidating program elements:** The nursing-related activities at this medical institution were diverse — including (for example) scholarship assistance for nurses to pursue higher education; nurse-led research; a preceptor program providing bedside training for new nurses; and more. We worked with the client to identify multiple nursing-related activities that could be merged under one overarching program, which we then named.
- **Developing the fundraising budget:** Thurlow/Associates interviewed client staff, gathering information about the program activities in need of funding and the estimated annual cost of each. We then created a fundraising budget that consolidated the various program elements — thus supporting requests for larger and less restrictive gifts.

By organizing the budget into several distinct categories, we were still able to carve out tailor-made gift options for donors with more specific interests, at varying gift levels. In addition, the budget we created included one-year, three-year and endowment costs for each category, providing still greater flexibility for funding outreach.

- **Creating a fund-development “catalog”:** Thurlow/Associates also developed case statements for the overarching program and for major service categories within the budget. The resulting gift catalog supported outreach for gifts into the eight-figure range.

Creating an umbrella initiative that “housed” this institution’s diverse nurse-related activities helped increase fundraising efficiency, supported requests for larger gifts, and strengthened fundraising flexibility. With this strong template in place, fund-development planning for future years is now also further streamlined.

What we're reading

Third Space Studio's 2014 Individual Donor Benchmark Report compares the fundraising goals and results of more than 80 organizations with budgets less than \$2 million. Specifically, the report aims to help small nonprofit organizations understand how their individual donor support compares to that of other similarly sized organizations. To learn more, visit <http://www.thirdspacestudio.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/2014-IDB-Report1.pdf>