



# Fundraising Ideas Manual

for

## Small and Medium Counties

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# MAJOR DONORS

**Definition:** Individuals, corporations and foundations that give a significant gift - as defined by the overall goal of the county as well as the capacity of individuals to make gifts – in support of the county-wide effort. Major donor gifts are generally in the range of \$1,000 - \$5,000 per individual in a given year-long time period and should be defined on a county-by-county basis.

**Goal:** The goal for the major donor effort should be at least 50% of the overall county goal.

As you are developing relationships with major donors, multi-year gifts should be asked for and encouraged to ensure long-term support and sustainability of your efforts.

## Strategies for Securing Support from Major Donors

- Step 1:** Develop a list of 25-50 potential major donors by:
- Reviewing list of current financial supporters and identifying those with the capacity to give more, those with an interest in the Imagination Library and/or those with someone that someone involved with the Imagination Library effort knows personally.
  - Asking friends of the effort to identify other potential contributors.
  - Researching potential supporters from the community.
  - A good potential major donor candidate is an organization or individual that:
    - Has a passion for the cause.
    - Has the capacity to make a gift at this level.
    - Is personally involved with and/or connected to another person that is personally involved.
    - Has personally benefited from the program (i.e. has a child who receives books).
- Step 2:** Once the list has been developed, determine key contacts and relationships with each potential major donor to establish an “in” or connection with that person and leverage relationships to secure a meeting and a gift.
- Step 3:** Using the key relationships and connections, meet with each person on a one-on-one basis to tell them about the Imagination Library and ask them for support of the effort.

### **Making the Solicitation Call – Agenda**

- Spend time with your opening and rapport building
- Describe your program including:
  - Current work
  - Major successes
  - Story or two to highlight
  - Future goals and objectives of the effort
- Ask questions and ensure the flow of the conversation
- Ask for advice and feedback on your goals and plans
- Ask for a gift:
  - Ask for a specific amount
  - Tie it back to children served
  - Highlight challenge or matching grants
  - Highlight recognition opportunities
- Secure commitment or determine the next steps
- Thank them and restate commitment or next steps

Step 3B:

If you cannot get a meeting with the individual or if there are several individuals involved, host a reception/event/open house for major donors and potential major donors. During the meeting:

- Provide an overview of the need for the Imagination Library including statistics to clarify the need and the opportunity to help and serve. Balance the need for reading and early literacy with the hope that the Imagination Library will be adopted so that children will be better prepared to enter school and read at grade level. Studies on early literacy efforts show that results often also bring enhanced economic contributions made by a better prepared workforce, decreased crime, and better public health.
- Talk about the goals and objectives of the program.
- Tell stories to “put a face” on the program and make it real.
- Ask for a gift in support of the effort.
- Encourage individuals to check with their employers to see if the company provides a matching gift for their contribution. If so, complete all necessary paperwork to secure this important gift, allowing their gifts to go twice as far.
- Follow up with those who attended who made a gift and thank them for their support.
- Follow up through phone calls, e-mails and personal visits with those that attended who didn’t make a gift and answer questions and ask them again to consider a gift in support of the Imagination Library.

Step 4:

Secure support from local sponsors such as United Ways, civic organizations, Chambers of Commerce and/or county governments:

- Ensure relationship with or connection to leader of the organization.

- Get a meeting with the leader and present the Imagination Library to him or her.
- Tell stories to make it real.
- Ask for support.
- Highlight impact of their investment and recognition opportunities.
- Ensure follow up and adherence to stated guidelines and timeframes.
- Build an ongoing relationship to secure future support.

Step 5: Focus on relationship-building and year-round communications with each donor to clearly show him or her the results of his or her investment and encourage continued support in the years to come. Develop a calendar of contact for each individual donor. As appropriate, work to have at least monthly contact with major donors to thank them for their support and update them on the results of their investments including:

- Send a thank you note/receipt each time you receive a gift from a donor.
- Send monthly updates about plans, programs and progress for Imagination Library.
- Call at least two times in the year to personally thank them for their support and answer any questions they might have as well as provide them with updates about plans, programs and progress.
- Arrange an in-person visit at least once a year for coffee, lunch, or dinner to thank them for their past support, answer any questions they might have as well as provide them with updates about plans, programs and progress.
- Get people personally involved with the effort by asking individuals to register (or asking companies to involve their employees in registering) their own children in the program and helping to educate and/or register others in the program. Once people are involved, they will better understand the impact and value of the program and will be more likely to support it financially.
- For companies, develop relationships and creative connections for their support to be tied to specific “results.” For example, ask hospitals to pay for the first year of the program for each child born in the hospital.
- Tell stories of children reached and touched as a result of their investment in and work of Imagination Library.

Step 6: Ensure appropriate recognition and appreciation for major donors to include:

- Listing in local publications (where appropriate and where confirmed with donor).
- Take advantage of the partnership between the GBBF and the Tennessee Press Association. Issue a press release about significant gifts and donations to thank the donors, promote your efforts and leverage these relationships. You can secure template press releases from the GBBF to assist you in this effort.
- A special Imagination Library-specific gift such as a picture, letter from a child who is receiving books, thank you letter signed by a key community leader.
- Attendance and recognition at a special event or reception.

## Special Events

**Definition:** Event or series of events to a) raise awareness about the Imagination Library in the general public, b) highlight the need and opportunity, c) showcase past successes and d) ask for financial support.

**2005 Goal:** Establish a goal that is no more than 50% of the overall goal for the county.

Where possible, ask for and encourage multi-year and/or ongoing support (i.e. bank drafts, monthly gifts, recurring credit card gifts) from individuals that attend the events to build a strong and sustainable base of support.

## Strategies for Special Events

- Step 1:** Ask friends and current supporters to serve as table hosts for the event and/or to pay for a table and invite 8-10 friends to come and learn more about your efforts.
- Step 2:** Invite other friends and potential donors to come as paying guests to learn more.
- Step 3:** Recruit sponsors or patrons to help underwrite the costs of the event. Utilize connections and contacts among committee or Board members to secure support from sponsors.
- Step 4:** ASK FOR support during the event, and highlight impact of \$27 to fund two children for one year. As an example, Jefferson County created their own fundraising flyer seeking donations from the community. The flyer shows different donation levels and how many children each level pays for in a year.
- Step 5:** Make it a meaningful, fun, annual event that people look forward to attending and supporting.

### Event Ideas

**Weakley County** held a “No Show” Gala Event. Through this effort, townspeople bought tickets for a banquet with no food and no music that they didn’t have to go to. Through this “non-event,” they raised nearly \$11,000 for their Imagination Library. For more information, please contact Johnny Vincent at 731.587.3824.

### Event Ideas (continued)

**Obion County** conducted a “Celebrity” Spring Fling Banquet. Through this effort, “celebrities” were responsible for filling their tables with eight guests each. Celebrities then served as the wait staff for the event, serving their tables and collecting tips. The tips were donated to the Reading Railroad, the local Imagination Library initiative. Running totals of donations were projected on the wall throughout the night, and the celebrity that raised the most money received an autographed picture of Dolly Parton. To round out the evening, a local Dolly impersonator served as a greeter and hostess, and a program of music, comedy and information was presented to all guests. Through this event, Obion County raised \$30,000 for the local Imagination Library effort. For more information, please contact Clay Woods at 731.885.7559 or [claywoods@charter.net](mailto:claywoods@charter.net).

**Obion County** also created a caboose similar to the ones that you find at Dollywood to promote its Reading Railroad. This caboose is used to generate awareness and raise funding for the local Imagination Library effort. It is included in events around town including the annual Christmas parade. For more information, please contact Clay Woods at 731.885.7559 or [claywoods@charter.net](mailto:claywoods@charter.net).

**Perry County** conducted an “Imaginary” Train Ride through which people purchased tickets for a train ride that they took in their imaginations only (similar to the “No Show” Gala Event presented by Weakley County). Different priced tickets were available for “coach” seats, “overnight compartments,” etc. and the local newspaper published an account of the itinerary and local points of interest “visited” in a travel log. For more information, please contact Betty Barber at 931.589.5278 or Renee Siderio at 931.593.3111.

- Step 6: Encourage individuals to check with their employers to see if the company provides a matching gift for their contribution. If so, complete all necessary paperwork to secure this important gift, allowing their gifts to go twice as far.
- Step 7: Identify top potential donors who attended the event and either didn’t make a gift or made a small gift. Conduct one-on-one follow up calls on these donors to tell them more about the program and encourage increased and/or continued giving.
- Step 8: Ensure that everyone who gives is thanked and receives a receipt for the gift.

## Take Advantage of Existing Support

- Take advantage of the existing partnership with the Tennessee Press Association (TPA), a trade organization of the vast majority of Tennessee's daily and non-daily newspapers and the parent organization of Tennessee Press Service and Tennessee Press Association Foundation. TPA has partnered with the GBBF to increase public awareness of and participation in its statewide implementation of the Imagination Library. This partnership will benefit local counties by:
  - 📖 Providing print media coverage and support of local Imagination Library efforts, initiatives, fundraising campaigns, etc.
  - 📖 Encouraging editorial support of local efforts.
  - 📖 Providing placement of local county program ads, contest announcements and fundraising pledge card ads made available for downloading from the TPA website, [www.TNPress.com](http://www.TNPress.com).
  - 📖 Call the TPA toll free: 1-800-565-7377.
  
- Tennessee Technological University, consistently ranked among the Top Public Universities in the South, is assisting the Governor's Books from Birth Foundation through its Business Media Center where leaders developed [www.GovernorsFoundation.org](http://www.GovernorsFoundation.org) and other innovations to promote the effort and to provide valuable tools, information and resources for each county's Imagination Library initiative. Consider working with your local colleges to create support materials or a Web site for your county's Imagination Library program.
  
- Active supporters are vital to the success of the Imagination Library. The following groups and organizations support the state-wide effort and can be sources of volunteers for registering children, promotional endeavors and fundraising activities:
  - 📖 County School Directors – Department of Education Commissioner Lana Seivers has expressed to these leaders the importance of their involvement.
  - 📖 Head Start Program Directors
  - 📖 Tennessee Board of Regents Schools
  - 📖 P-16 Councils/Local Education Foundations
  - 📖 UT Extension Services
  - 📖 Local Utilities and Power Companies
  - 📖 Tennessee Business Roundtable
  - 📖 Tennessee Chamber of Commerce
  - 📖 Tennessee Hospital Association and Hospital Alliance of Tennessee - THA and HAT are encouraging the state's maternity and children's hospitals to register newborns and other children on site. Some hospitals have agreed to donate an amount for each child born there. Others have allowed for a donor card to accompany Imagination Library signup brochures.
  - 📖 Community Action Agencies
  - 📖 County Mayors Association
  - 📖 County Technical Assistance Service
  - 📖 Estate Planners and Funeral Homes. They may be willing to display donor cards.
  - 📖 Friends of the Library
  - 📖 Girl Scouts of Tennessee – Statewide CEOs agree that registering children for the program will be an excellent project for the Girl Scout Troops.

- 📖 Human Resource Agencies – HRAs are providing information and technical support to the counties in their service areas.
  - 📖 Rotary Clubs
  - 📖 Tennessee County Services Association
  - 📖 Tennessee Municipal League
  - 📖 Tennessee Primary Care Association
  - 📖 United Way and the child literacy agencies it supports
  - 📖 Other civic clubs such as Kiwanis Club and Lions Club
- Take advantage of partnerships established by the GBBF through which organizations and associations are offering a range of support and services. This is an evolving and growing list. Please visit the GBBF website ([www.GovernorsFoundation.org](http://www.GovernorsFoundation.org)) and check GBBF Signpost newsletters for regular updates and details about these partners.
- Work with local companies such as UPS, Wal-Mart and Kroger that provide financial, volunteer and promotional support to local, community-based initiatives if you develop a relationship with the local contacts.
- Get comments and quotes of support from local community leaders and/or local “celebrities” to draw attention to the effort.
- Recruit a fund-development committee of 3-5 individuals to assist with the fundraising efforts and requests for support; provide all necessary training, resources and support. Committee members should:
  - 📖 Make personal gifts in support of the Imagination Library effort.
  - 📖 Identify potential donors to and supporters of the effort.
  - 📖 Make solicitation calls on donors and potential donors to educate them about Imagination Library and ask for their support.
  - 📖 Invite friends to key events and functions (i.e. galas, fundraising efforts) for Imagination Library.
  - 📖 Serve as spokespersons for Imagination Library.
- Develop comprehensive tracking systems to fully track and assess contributions as well as progress toward segment and overall goals. Utilize this system to track and ensure follow up and ongoing relationship-building efforts.
- Utilize support from The Governor’s Books from Birth Foundation®:
  - 📖 GBBF staff will help you develop and determine ask amounts and key messages for any calls and visits you might make on key potential donors.
  - 📖 Key messages and sample talking points.
  - 📖 Materials such as brochures, videos, books, Signpost newsletters, GBBF presentation materials, Web site and PowerPoint presentations.
  - 📖 Staff leadership to troubleshoot and assist.
  - 📖 Training opportunities.
  - 📖 Web site and chat rooms for exchange of ideas.
- Ensure ongoing communications with the GBBF to ensure support of each other’s efforts and avoid duplication of efforts.

**Don’t hesitate to call the GBBF staff toll-free at (866) 368-6371 if we can assist in your planning and implementation efforts.**

## Appendix - Ways to Blow the Ask

- Don't tailor the ask for financial support to the individual or company.
- Don't sufficiently prepare the prospect for the ask.
- Pick an unsuitable setting for the ask meeting.
- Exclude important people from the meeting (i.e. staff, spouse).
- Wing it during the meeting.
- Stick to your agenda at all costs.
- Don't listen.
- Promise more than you can deliver.
- Waffle when making the ask.
- Pressure the donor for a quick response.
- Announce the gift prematurely.