

Where to Focus Your Fundraising

Match your funding sources to your stage of development

The most successful fundraising starts with three honest answers: **what stage are you in**, **where will your message fit best**, and **which funding sources fit both?** Work through them in order, before you build a plan or set a goal.

1. What stage of development are you in?

STAGE 1

Startup

A dream or early plan. A problem has been identified and a solution proposed. You have a modest proof of concept and some initial results.

STAGE 2

Scale-up

The program is being implemented. The proof of concept is producing results, but scope and scale are limited. A team is growing the service, and results show growth over multiple years.

STAGE 3

Program

Mature and growing. Clear results over a span of years, at a clearly defined scale.

2. Where will your message find the greatest fit?

Mission

- What problem or issue are you addressing?
- How easy is the mission to understand?
- How broad or narrow is the focus?
- How many people can be impacted?

Solution

- How is the problem being addressed?
- How easy is the solution to understand?
- How likely is it to address the cause?
- How large is the potential impact?

Results

- Does the solution work?
- Is there a basic proof of concept?
- What is the demonstrated impact?

3. Which funding sources can you target? *Best fit by stage*

SOURCE	WHO DECIDES, AND HOW	WHAT THEY LOOK FOR	BEST FOR
Major gift Individual, couple, or family	The donor decides, with no committee or staff. The decision rests on a conversation with your leader.	Compelling need and solution, and the personal relationship. Results matter less, if the mission is easy to understand and the impact looks significant.	STARTUP SCALE-UP PROGRAM Quality of relationship counts more than a history of results.
Corporate, mid-level About \$10K to \$50K	Mid-level staff decide, based on corporate giving initiatives. Clear case material is needed.	Need, solution, and success stories. Results show the program works, but the key is message and potential.	STARTUP SCALE-UP PROGRAM The key is alignment, with a clear proof of concept and strong potential.
Corporate, major \$100K and up	Mid-level staff start it, but higher-level staff decide, on a different basis.	Need, solution, stories, and outcome metrics showing significant impact. Expect a focus on impressive numbers.	STARTUP SCALE-UP PROGRAM Alignment plus a record of results, and ways the company can gain visibility.
Major foundation	Foundation staff decide, based on the foundation's areas of interest.	Need, solution, stories, and outcome metrics , with a clear case for alignment with the foundation's interests.	STARTUP SCALE-UP PROGRAM Depends on the foundation. Some fund start-up and growth; others focus on mission and results.

Early on, lead with *relationships and mission*. As results build, add funders who reward *alignment and impact*.