Fundraising Mini-Toolkit:
Turning Dollars into Progressive Power

California Grassroots Alliance

This guide was produced by the California Grassroots Alliance.

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Invitation to Fundraising

When volunteers throw down for elections, they almost always get involved in field methods to directly engage voters (canvass, phonebank, textbank, write postcards). Vols don't usually think about fundraising – or if they *do* think about it, their thought is often: "ask someone for money?!? Hard pass!" (or similar).

If this is something you or your group members might say, allow us a few bullet-points to see if we can change any minds:

- **By channeling resources to in-district, community-led organizations, you will fund vital infrastructure that helps strengthen durable progressive power, and that lays the foundation for achieving Congressional victories.** Each of the Congressional districts the Alliance is targeting has organizations that build power year-round. They engage the community, develop volunteer leaders, and mobilize residents for progressive change. And when elections roll around, they can turn out their constituency because they've developed relationships. A phone call or a door-knock from staff and volunteers working with these in-district organizations is far more likely to result in a vote than is outreach from a stranger from out of district. So the better-funded these groups are, the more community power they build, and the more likely we are to win in the Congressional districts where they get out the vote. [For a compelling argument about why we should channel resources to community-led organizations, watch this two-minute video from the Movement Voter Project.](#)
- **Fundraising is a great team-building activity!** Want a way for your Election Team to bond and learn how to work well together? Organize fundraisers! Often fundraisers are parties – which of course put the "fun" in "fundraiser."
- **Fundraising uses a much wider range of talents than does voter contact, so more people can bring their mad skillz to the table and shine – in other words, fundraising can be an excellent way to activate more volunteers!** Voter contact is generally about having conversations with voters. And while everyone can do that with practice, vols might want to stretch their wings in other areas as well! The type of roles that fundraising can use is vast: party planning (and other types of project management), writing, baking, network-activating, location-scouting, art-making, space-decorating (and cleaning up), graphic design, marketing, outreach to local businesses, and on and on. And while pitch-making is a skill that one or two folks on the team should cultivate, team members can go an entire season without ever making a fundraising pitch!
- **Fundraising is easier than you think!** It's not all about big events (although events can be easy too!). Fundraising is as easy as sending an email, making a phone call or just talking to a friend. or a relative who shares your values.
- **Fundraising is less awkward than you think!** Remember that not everyone involved in fundraising is making an ask for money – there are *lots* of ways to help out. But for the people who *do* make the fundraising pitch: it can be wonderful. Consider that giving people a chance to take values-aligned action is a gift to *them*. Most people want to help but don't have the time or skills needed to thoroughly research all the options. That means that many people truly appreciate it when you do the research *for* them, and show them how to make the most of their contribution dollars. So making a fundraising pitch is actually a way to help the people who want to help out. After contributing to your fund they can unsubscribe from hysterical emails and texts, and they can feel food about their giving plan.

- **Fundraising is more fun than you think!** Fundraisers are often (essentially) parties – and what could be more fun than planning and throwing a party? Plus, you can do things however you like, so if you want to make sure to put the "fun" in "fundraising," go for it!

We offer lots of supports for you as you embark on your fundraising adventure!

The California Grassroots Alliance is here to help! Reach out if you'd like thought partnership, support, or cheerleading. Write to us at Team@CAGrassrootsAlliance.org and put *Fundraising* in the subject line.

In addition, Donor Organizer Hub – a California Grassroots Alliance partner – is here for you as well! DO Hub is a launchpad and support network for donor organizers: people who fundraise for movement causes from their communities: their friends, family, and extended networks.

The Hub's mission is to build the leadership of lifelong donor organizers who support a resourced and thriving progressive ecosystem. The DO Hub provides comprehensive training, coaching, resources, and a network of experienced donor organizers to expand organizing capacity, develop leadership skills, and promote collaboration for impactful fundraising actions.

DO Hub led a comprehensive fundraising training for CGA network members (watch the training here; check out slides here). This toolkit plagiarizes with abandon from that training, and passes along to you the tools shared after the training (explore the resource goodie bag here).

We urge you to check out the DO Hub and the resources it offers.

Ready? Let's get into it!

We hope you're intrigued, feeling supported, and are willing to give fundraising a shot! Here's what you'll find in this mini-toolkit:

- Fundraising tactics to try
- Guidance on how to build your fundraising team
- Nuts and bolts: groups to fundraise for (in order to sweep critical California House districts in 2024), and using ActBlue

Fundraising tactics

Beyond the gala

There are lots of ways to raise funds – it's not all about throwing huge fundraisers. You *can* throw fundraisers (of *many* sizes), but there are other options too. The DO Hub training called out different types,[1] three of which are shared here:

- **Asking people**
- **Social gatherings**
- **Selling**

(There's also a fourth type: "quirky fundraisers." 😉)

Asking people

Your team members can reach out to folks in their networks and make personal asks; you can also consider a "dialing for dollars" approach.

- **Personal asks.** Doing outreach to people you know – by phone, by zoom, by email, by snail mail, in person – to ask them for money in a one-on-one context can be very fruitful. It is hard to say no to someone when they are your friend, and *especially* when they are standing right in front of you or talking to you on the phone or Zoom! As you grow your fundraising team, you can grow the number of people in your team's personal network. In order to do this well, your team members may need trainings on how to make personal asks.
- **Phone banks.** Your group may have a large list of members who are not very active; perhaps they are newsletter subscribers. Your fundraising team can phonebank them making real-time asks over the phone. While your contact rate will not be too high, this gives you a long list of people to make the ask of! BONUS: you can also tell them about what your fundraising team is doing, and they may want to join you!

Social gatherings

Asking people in a one-on-one context might be a bit intimidating at first. Your team may want to do something more social! Here are three options.

- **House parties.** House parties are a very light lift; they can be carried out by even just 1-2 people – you don't need a whole team. And they can raise a lot of money in a short period of time! It's helpful if someone on the team has a good house for it (comfortable for a crowd, and in a good location), and if the organizers have pretty big networks they can tap into. And it's good to have co-hosts: people who invite *their* friends (they don't need to help throw the party).
- **Pledge-raising events.** Another fun event type is one that involves asking for pledges. For example, you might hold a walk-a-thon – or *any* type of "a-thon," really. People may find it easier to ask for pledges (e.g. for each mile walked) than to ask for donations directly. Donations can scale up *fast,* because each person participating has multiple people who are pledging. This type of event is more work than a house party, because the "a-thon" tends to have more moving parts and (and so take more planning) than a gathering at someone's home.

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[1] The DO Hub training credited <u>The Accidental Fundraiser</u>, by Stephanie Roth and Mimi Ho.

- **Pitching at events.** Your team can piggy-back onto other events by having a team member or two who makes fundraising pitches at events organized for other purposes. You can event make a fundraising pitch at you regular membership meeting!

Selling

You can also sell (donated) goods and (donated) services! A few ideas for this are below.

- **Workshop or class to sell services.** Is there anyone on your fundraising team, or in your fundraising team's network, who has a valuable service that people would pay for? This might be a cooking class, an art class, or a crafting workshop. People will pay for "tickets" to attend, and you can also make another pitch at the event itself for additional donations. You can also have ticket levels (e.g. bronze, silver, gold) so that you can raise more funds from people who feel like they can afford to donate more up front. The downside of selling services is that people tend to think: "I already paid to participate; I don't want to donate more." And they might be more interested in the service than in the fundraising aspect!
- **Garage sale.** A garage sale is a good option when you don't have enough people in your network to invite to a workshop, house party, etc. If there is someone on your team with a house in a good location, you can attract a lot of passersby. However, most garage sale items don't sell for the big bucks, so if you want to make more than a few hundred dollars, you should get many people to bring things to sell!
- **Auctions, both silent and noisy.** You will need donations of high-quality goods and services – this takes a large network and a lot of planning and follow-up! This is easier to do if you have a large network with plenty of well-off people in it who can donate goods and services that will fetch decent donation sizes. For a noisy (traditional) auction, you'll need at least 25 guests to gain momentum, and a skilled auctioneer.

Quirky fundraisers

Use your imagination to design a fundraiser that's off the beaten path! For example, check out the balloon pop and the human slot machine! We hope this inspires your own creativity! 💥

Building Your Fundraising Team

In this toolkit we keep referring to "your fundraising team." As with all organizing, fundraising takes a team! A fundraising team is a "structured group of volunteers with shared purpose, norms, roles, methods for meeting and coordinating to fundraise for particular causes with a specific goal." The really good news is that this team can work fine with as few as three people!

You've no doubt organized tons of teams and are very good at it – and rest assured that all your team-building skills are transferable. Even so, the DO Hub has lots of great tools to help you launch *this* team! (All of these tools are from DO Hub's goodie bag.)

Steps to building the team (and tools you can use)

Identify your people

Your core team can be as small as just three people! But in finding the original core team, see if you can find people who share your mission and are excited about diving in. You can add more people over time. Use this **list-builder tool**: a worksheet that helps you identify people that you'd like to invite to the team, and keep track of your outreach.

Define your "why:" develop team purpose and write a charter

Having defined your team;'s purpose will be motivating and give team members a sense of direction. You'll want to answer the questions:

- Why are we fundraising?
- How does this team serve the larger goals/purpose of our group?

Use the **reflection exercise to define your why.** Do this with your core team. Doing this work together will generate excitement by connecting your work to deep values, and will get you ready to build your team as you add new members.

Once you've defined your why, you'll really set your team up for success by writing a team charter, which you can do using this **team charter template**. The charter includes guidance for developing a purpose statement (to align efforts and motivate members), a team structure (to ensure a clear and efficient division of labor, as well as to establish norms for working together), and goals (which inspire the team). You might also consider working with your very small *initial* team to develop the charter, getting it ready *before* the kick-off. The charter gets revised periodically, so those who weren't part of the initial charter-creation can still offer feedback along the way.

Host your team kick-off!

You can kick off your team with only the core members who worked together on the team purpose and charter, *or* you can invite additional people to the kick-off. If you want to invite more folks to the kick-off, you can return to the **list-builder tool** to identify more potential team members. If you want to make a concerted recruitment effort at this stage, feel free to skip to use ideas from "recruitment" part of the next step: **Sustain your team: recruit and retain members.**

Also use this **team kick-off agenda template**! You want to launch your team with a bang! This template can help you design your team with intention from the beginning.

Sustain your team: recruit and retain members

While you can definitely keep your team to a very small number of hyper-dedicated volunteers, over time it would be wonderful to grow your numbers and to retain people. While some turnover is inevitable, it's great to keep it to a minimum so that team members can continue to deepen their skills and keep improving their ability to work together well.

To brainstorm good ways to recruit and retain members, use this **idea-generation exercise to address team recruitment and retention**.

Nuts and Bolts

The California Grassroots Alliance believes that money is better spent on in-district, grassroots power-building groups than on campaigns. In the organizing world, campaigns are understood as "sandcastles:" a lot of money is spent on standing them up, and then they wash away as soon as the election is over. We believe that the best investment is in long-term, durable progressive infrastructure. This perspective follows the Movement Voter Project model:

TARGET	INVEST	ORGANIZE	WIN
the most pivotal places and races.	in the best local voter organizations.	key voters with the power to tip the scales.	elections and transformative policy change.
Image: Georgia Latino Alliance for Human Rights	Image: Pennsylvania Working Familes Party	Image: Detroit Action	Image: Voces de la Frontera Action (WI)

To identify the best community groups working year-round in the six key House district, we've done the research. Ultimately, we selected grassroots organizations vetted by respected intermediaries (such as Movement Voter Project of course, as well as Blue Tent and the California Donor Table). We are confident that dollars donated to the organizations we've identified will position Democrats for wins in the target districts. Staff at each one are working year-round to empower families, engage with local issues that matter most, and register young people and other high-potential voters. All of this means they can turn out voters at election time.

GRASSROOTS POWER-BUILDING ORGANIZATIONS	DISTRICT					
	13	22	27	41	45	47
Antelope Valley Democrats for Change			✔			
CA41 Democracy in Action				✔		
Communities for a New California Action Fund	✔	✔		✔		
Dolores Huerta Action Fund		✔				
OC Action					✔	✔
Valley Forward	✔					

Setting up Your Fundraising Page(s)

Online fundraising with ActBlue

ActBlue is an incredible resource for the grassroots: it provides easy and free fundraising tools! ActBlue lets you:

- Fundraise for any group or candidate that has an ActBlue account
- Set up a fundraising page in minutes
- Fundraise for multiple groups or candidates – or a mix of groups and candidates – on a single page
- Easily track the donations that come in through the page you've set up
- Stay motivated (and motivate your donors) with a tracker that shows how much you've raised!

Guidance for page set-up

It's easy – here's how you do it!

- Set up an ActBlue user profile (you probably already have one because you've no doubt used it in the past to donate to a progressive candidate or cause)
  - This should be the person who will be checking the stats
- Decide who to fundraise for (if you take the CGA recommendations, the district(s) you focus on will largely determine the group(s) you fundraise for)
- Set up a fundraising page using "community forms" – easy step-by-step guidance from ActBlue here
  - Example of a fundraising page from a CGA member group (raising money for Communities for a New California)
- Set up a fundraising page with funds going to more than one place – easy step-by-step guidance from ActBlue here

What if you don't want to set up your own fundraising page?

You can absolutely fundraise without setting up your own fundraising page! If you want to fundraise but don't want to bother with ActBlue, you can use the CGA pages:

- Main page showing all six district funds
- District 13 page
- District 22 page
- District 27 page
- District 41 page
- District 45 page
- District 47 page