

GUIDE

# Is Your Organization Ready for a Record-Breaking Fundraising Campaign?

A guide to assessing your campaign readiness, messaging strategy, and donor engagement



**MISSION MINDED**  
AMPLIFY THE GOOD

# Major donor campaigns don't fail because donors aren't generous enough.

**They fail because somewhere along the way, the story got murky.** The leaders couldn't quite agree on the messaging for the campaign. Or the campaign felt so much like every other campaign that donors couldn't find a reason to care more about yours.

After helping organizations raise over a billion dollars in the last five years, we know the difference between campaigns that move slowly and campaigns that ignite.

**It comes down to six questions—six areas your organization can assess right now before making a single ask:**

1. **Case for Support:** Do we have a clear, compelling vision—not just a list of needs?
2. **Leadership Alignment:** Can everyone tell one confident story?
3. **Donor Values:** Do we understand what motivates our donors as well as we understand our mission?
4. **Boldness:** Does our message stand out?
5. **Resources:** Have we budgeted 5–10% of our goal for donor communications?
6. **Partnership:** Would external expertise help us move faster and with more clarity?

**This guide will help you answer these questions and understand where your campaign communications are strongest—and where they may need more clarity. So grab some coffee. Let's walk through this together.**

# 1) Do You Have a Clear and Compelling Case for Support?

**Most campaigns start with someone saying, “We need to expand,” or “We need new facilities,” or “We have this gap to close.”**

But that’s not reason enough for donors to give. Because donors don’t give to needs—they give to vision. Be honest, when was the last time you got excited about someone else’s budget problem?

The campaigns that work—the ones where donors lean in and say “Yes, I’m in”—tell a story that’s urgent, emotional, and credible all at once. You can feel the WHY—and the possibilities all at once.



## 1) Do You Have a Clear and Compelling Case for Support?

### A Quick Case Study:

University of British Columbia's Faculty of Applied Science set out to raise \$300M for a new facility. But early donor feedback was clear: people weren't inspired to fund "a building."

Through donor research and reframing, we helped the campaign shift to something much bigger—a bold vision for a new *model of collaborative education*, where engineers, architects, planners, and community partners work together to solve society's biggest challenges. Suddenly, donors weren't funding a building—they were fueling a movement. They could see themselves in that impact, not just the project. Momentum grew, and UBC is now on track to exceed its goal. [Read the full case study here.](#)

### Ask Yourself:

- Does our campaign lead with a bold, emotionally resonant vision—or just a list of needs?
- Would a donor "get it" in the first 30 seconds?
- Can every board member, staff person, and volunteer repeat our story with confidence?



### The Key Take Away:

**Donors don't fund what you need. They fund the future they can help create. If your case leads with internal needs instead of inspiring vision, that's your first fix.**

## 2) Is Your Leadership Aligned and Ready to Champion Your Story?

### Let's talk about what happens when leadership isn't aligned.

A board member meets a potential donor at a dinner party and tries to explain the campaign. They fumble through it. They're not quite sure if they should lead with the new building or the programs or the scholarships. They end with, "Well, you should really talk to our development director."

Meanwhile, your Executive Director is out there telling a completely different version of the story. Donors can feel that uncertainty. And when they do, they hesitate. They wait. They say, "Let me think about it."

### When your leaders aren't aligned, donors won't be either.

But when your leaders speak with one voice—when everyone from the board chair to your program staff can tell the same confident story—that's when donors feel momentum. That's when they think, "Something real is happening here. I want to be part of this."



## 2) Is Your Leadership Aligned and Ready to Champion Your Story?

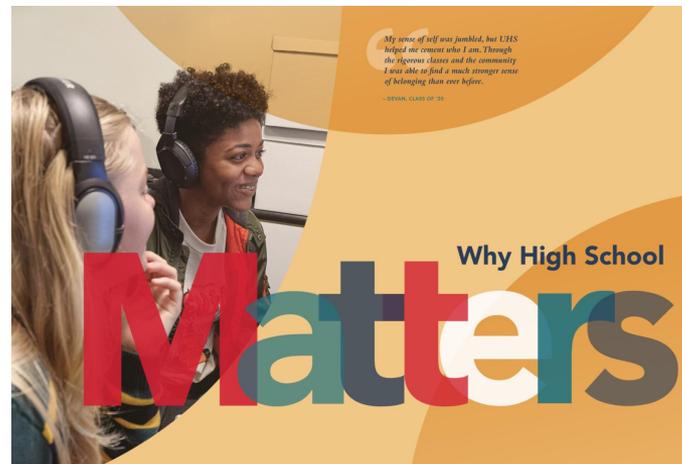
### A Quick Case Study:

When San Francisco University High School set out to raise \$65 million to level up their campus, they knew they needed more than a compelling case—they needed every stakeholder, from board members to parents to alumni, telling the same confident story.

Through values-driven messaging and clear campaign tools, Mission Minded helped the school create a campaign theme and narrative that everyone could rally behind. The result? They exceeded their \$65 million goal, and their community felt genuinely excited to be part of the transformation. [Read the full case study here.](#)

### Ask Yourself:

- Are our leaders communicating a unified message, or would donors get different stories depending on who they ask?
- Does our board genuinely understand and support the campaign story?
- Do staff and volunteers feel confident talking about this vision?



### The Key Take Away:

**When leaders speak with one confident voice, donors feel momentum. When leaders tell different versions of the story, donors hesitate. Alignment isn't optional, it's the foundation.**

### 3) Do You Understand Your Donors' Values as Deeply as Your Own?

Here's a mistake almost every organization makes: They assume they know why donors give—because our programs are excellent, because our mission is important.

But the truth is more beautiful: **Your best donors give because your campaign expresses their values.** Belonging. Legacy. Justice. Community. The chance to be part of something that outlasts them.

Your feasibility study gives you crucial capacity data which is essential. But it doesn't tell you the *why* behind the numbers: the emotional drivers, personal stories, and values that make someone say, "Yes, this is my campaign too."



### 3) Do You Understand Your Donors' Values as Deeply as Your Own?

#### A Quick Case Study:

As the Rhodes Trust at Oxford University prepared for a historic fundraising effort, they faced an uncomfortable truth: to invite truly global support, they needed to acknowledge their colonial past with honesty and clarity.

**That's hard. Most organizations would have sidestepped it.** Instead, through a values-driven process, the campaign shifted toward what united their supporters—a *shared belief in elevating diverse, brilliant scholars who can tackle the world's toughest challenges.* By openly addressing their history and grounding the campaign in inclusivity and global impact, Rhodes built a story donors felt proud to champion. That clarity and courage helped fuel a campaign that's now on pace to surpass its £200M goal. [Read the full case study here.](#)

#### Ask Yourself:

- Do we truly know what donors value, or are we too focused on our own?
- Does our campaign reflect donor motivations, not just organizational goals?
- Does our story make donors feel seen, respected, and essential?



#### The Key Take Away:

**Your donors aren't buying your programs. They're buying the world they want to help create. Values-driven insight isn't extra, it's the difference between a campaign that connects and one that falls flat.**

## 4) Are You Ready to Be Unapologetically Bold?

**Let's talk about boldness, because this is where a lot of campaigns get stuck.**

We're operating in a landscape where people are overwhelmed, government support is shrinking, and misinformation is everywhere. Donors either tune out completely or double down on the causes that feel most urgent and meaningful.

**Unapologetic boldness is what cuts through that noise.**

Remember, boldness isn't about being flashy. It's telling the truth about your mission in a way that's clear, confident, and impossible to ignore.



## 4) Are You Ready to Be Unapologetically Bold?

### Here's what boldness looked like for one of our clients—a quick case study:

The Save the Redwoods League launched an ambitious \$120M campaign when many longtime donors had been giving for decades—donor fatigue was real. The breakthrough came from reframing the entire campaign. Instead of “saving what’s left,” they told a bold, science-backed story about restoring ancient forests that had been lost over the last century.

The theme—*Forever Forest*—captured both urgency and possibility, showing donors how their gifts could shape the future for generations. This clarity and emotional boldness reignited excitement and helped the League exceed their goal, ultimately raising more than \$139M. [Read the full case study here.](#)

### Ask Yourself:

- Does our campaign feel distinct, or could it belong to any organization?
- Do we sound bold enough for donors to believe this moment matters?
- Do our creative tools reflect courage and clarity—or are we playing it safe?



### The Key Take Away:

Donors don't fund what you need. They fund the future they can help create. If your case leads with internal needs instead of inspiring vision, that's your first fix.

## 5) Do You Have the Resources to Do This Work Well?

**You already know this: A transformational campaign deserves communications that match its ambition. That takes planning, focus, and yes—a real investment.**

When communications are underdeveloped, campaigns stall with your fundraisers feeling under-equipped, volunteers feeling uncertain, and donors politely saying they'll "think about it."

When your campaign strategy and story is strong, donors move faster and with more confidence and generosity.



## 5) Do You Have the Resources to Do This Work Well?

### Here's what your fundraising team actually needs to succeed:

- ✓ A story so clear and magnetic they can tell it with confidence
- ✓ Communications tools that make donors lean in, not tune out
- ✓ Language that feels natural to say out loud
- ✓ A visual identity for the campaign that feels cohesive and inspiring
- ✓ An experience that makes donors feel like they're part of something that matters

### Ask Yourself:

- Do we have the internal capacity to develop campaign messaging and materials that are truly excellent?
- Have we budgeted realistically for strategy, writing, design, and donor tools?
- Do our materials match the scale and ambition of our goal?

**Think of campaign communications not as an expense, but as the infrastructure that makes every ask possible.**



### The Key Take Away:

**The general rule: 5-10% of your fundraising goal should be invested in donor cultivation strategy, tools, and implementation.**

**If that hasn't been factored into your budget, now's the time to revisit it with your board as a critical success factor.**

## 6) Would Your Campaign Benefit From a Partner?

Some campaigns have everything they need in-house. The team is aligned, the case is sharp, the capacity is there, and your irresistible donor cultivation tools are ready to roll. If that's you, that's wonderful. Go forth and break records.

**But many campaigns reach a point where things feel...stuck.**

Maybe your feasibility study raised more questions than answers. Maybe your leaders are excited but can't quite agree on the narrative. Maybe your donor conversations feel promising but unfocused. Maybe the quiet phase was successful, but the next phases may be more challenging.

Or maybe your internal team is stretched thin juggling ten other priorities, and building a full campaign communications engine feels impossible on top of everything else.

If any of that sounds like you, this might be the moment when bringing in a partner makes sense.



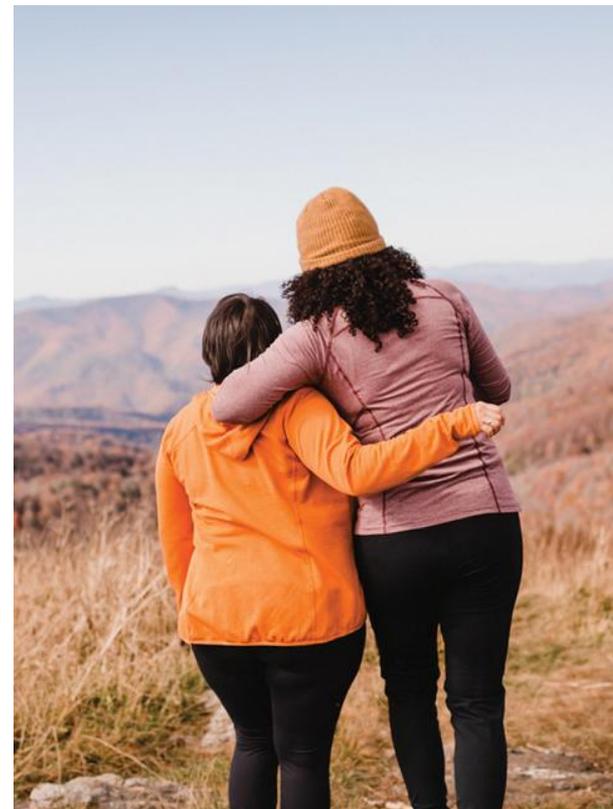
## 6) Would Your Campaign Benefit From a Partner?

### What a partner actually does:

A campaign communications partner complements your fundraising counsel—they bring your strategy to life through story, tools, and creative clarity. They help you:

- Translate feasibility study insights into a compelling, donor-centered story
- Develop messaging and tools that equip your team with clear language that fuels their confidence
- Make sure donors experience an inspiring narrative from first touch to final ask

**And guess what? You don't need to be raising hundreds of millions to benefit from strategic campaign communications.** Whether you're raising \$500,000 or \$50 million+, strategic communications make the difference between a campaign that feels tired and one that feels urgent.



## 6) Would Your Campaign Benefit From a Partner?

### A Quick Case Study:

When Season of Sharing Fund, a Bay Area organization providing crisis support, wanted to evolve their legacy brand to inspire a new generation of donors, they partnered with Mission Minded to clarify their message and create tools that united neighbors around life-changing support. The result was a refreshed brand that honored their history while inviting new donors into the work.

### Ask Yourself:

- Do we have the internal capacity to create a donor-centered, values-aligned campaign experience?
- Would an external strategist help us clarify our case and message faster?
- Do our board, staff, and volunteers have the tools and language they need to invite generosity?

**Remember, you don't need a partner for every campaign.** But on the campaigns that matter most—the ones that shape your organization's future—you shouldn't do the communications alone. The right partner brings clarity, creative boldness, and steady support at the exact moment when campaigns often feel overwhelming.



### The Key Take Away:

**If your team is stretched, your message is unfocused, or your leaders need better tools, or you have a future-shaping campaign in mind, this might be the moment to bring in expert support.**

# What Mission Minded Brings

**After 20+ years of supporting campaigns of every size—from \$50K community efforts to \$600M global campaigns—we’ve learned this: the best campaign communications don’t just inform donors, they inspire them. Our approach blends strategic clarity, collaborative creativity, and an equity lens that keeps your story grounded in truth and aligned with your values.**

## **We’ve walked in your shoes.**

Our team includes former nonprofit leaders, founders, fundraisers, and board members. We bring both strategic clarity and deep empathy because we’ve lived the reality of tight budgets, complex board dynamics, and urgent timelines.

## **We bring an equity lens to everything we do.**

From process to language, we’re intentional about helping you avoid reinforcing stereotypes or harmful narratives—with ongoing learning and accountability built into how we work.

## **We create “aha” moments that get implemented.**

Our collaborative sessions lift up every voice, sharpen big ideas, and result in clear language your team will actually use. We don’t hand you a deck and wish you luck—we co-create with you and stay through implementation.

## **We get results.**

Over the past five years alone, organizations guided by Mission Minded have collectively raised more than \$1 billion. We specialize in messaging and strategy that connects head and heart, giving donors every reason to say “yes.”

## **We’re with you for the long haul.**

We don’t disappear once the deliverables are done. We stay close—checking in regularly, making sure your tools are working, your team feels confident, and your story is landing. When questions come up or you need a quick gut-check, we’re there. Always.

# What Would Fees and Timeline for this Work Look Like?

We mentioned earlier that campaigns should reserve 5–10% of their fundraising goal for communications. So what does that actually buy you? Here's what our clients typically invest when they bring in a partner like Mission Minded. (And just so you know—there's no one-size-fits-all here. We tailor every project to your goals, culture, and capacity. But to give you a starting point, here's what a partnership might look like.)

## Campaign Research, Strategy, and Case for Support:

Audience research, audience values profiles, case narrative strategy, key messages and sound bites, case content development  
\$35,000 – \$48,000 (8–12 weeks)

## Case for Support Brochure Writing & Design:

Based on the strategy work above  
\$28,000 – \$42,000 (8–12 weeks\*)

## Campaign Tools:

Microsites, digital donor presentation decks, videos  
\$20,000 – \$65,000 depending on scope and goals (8–12 weeks\*)

\*These phases run concurrently

**In short:** once your strategy and case are set, we typically develop your full suite of campaign tools concurrently over the next three months, which means you'll have everything you need in hand within 4–6 months from kickoff, (with incremental gains along the way.)

And if what you need right now is simply a writer to refine your case or strengthen what you already have, we can support that too at a lower investment. We also know that the most powerful tools come from pairing strong strategy with bold creative—so when it makes sense, we'll help you explore that wider lens.

And no matter the scope, we don't just hand off deliverables—we stay in close partnership, checking in, making adjustments, and helping your team use the tools with confidence. **Every partnership is custom.** So if you have a goal and a budget in mind, [reach out and we'll build a plan that actually works for you.](#)

# What Readiness for This Work Really Means

**Readiness isn't about having everything figured out—it's about committing to do this right.** You've assessed yourself across six critical areas and know where you're strong and where you need support. So what happens when organizations invest in getting these six things right? Here's what we see consistently:

- **Faster donor decisions.** When your case is clear and your tools are compelling, donors move from “let me think about it” to “yes” in weeks, not months.
- **Larger average gifts.** Donors who deeply understand the vision and feel emotionally connected give more generously (often more than their initial inclination).
- **Easier asks for your team.** When fundraisers and volunteers have confident language and beautiful tools, solicitations feel natural instead of awkward.
- **Campaigns that exceed goals.** When story, alignment, and boldness come together, campaigns “don't just meet their targets, they blow past them.

We've partnered with organizations of every size and scale, and our approach is always the same: Start by asking “What if?”, get creative with the resources you have, and build the tools that help your donors say yes.

At Mission Minded, we believe the organizations making our world better should be unapologetically bold about what makes you unique. We'll help you balance **emotion and rationale with the urgency** your mission deserves—so your campaign doesn't just reach its goal, but strengthens your brand and your impact for years to come.

**If you're exploring what your campaign could look like—or if you just want a thought partner as you map out next steps—grab 30 minutes with us [here](#) or email us at [amplify@mission-minded.com](mailto:amplify@mission-minded.com) We're here to help you think it through.**

If this guide was useful for you, download our bonus guide: [\*\*How to Get Your Board on Board with Campaign Communications.\*\*](#)