



Fundraising for Vietnam War Stories and LZ Lambeau

Here are some tips and suggestions for fundraising for a Vietnam Veterans project; it's all basic fundraising stuff. Funders look for good ideas with impact. This project had that and it wasn't difficult to capture prospective funders' attention and spark their imagination for what could be accomplished. Wisconsin Public Television took a campaign approach to fundraising that included all the elements that everyone knows about a campaign. We raised \$1,350,000 from 44 donors, including two gifts of more than \$150,000. \$1,000,000 came from gifts of \$25,000 or more.

We began with:

- A clear articulated plan and case for support with financial goals and service goals. ([access proposal](#))
- TIME to:
 - o Engage advocates to open doors and lend credibility
 - o Cultivate donors – who lead to other donors
 - o Meet the funders timelines
 - o Solicit lead funders. Four funders contributed 45% of our dollars.
- Feasibility work including conversations with our board members and with key donors about an interest in such a project, followed by a continuing loop of projecting what was feasible to raise and helping shape the ambitions of the project

Here are some of the tools that we used to get started:

- [Funding proposal \(pdf\)](#)
- [Letter of introduction to a funder \(pdf\)](#)
- [Sponsorship Components \(pdf\)](#)
- [Sponsorship Levels with marketing deliverables \(pdf\)](#)

Finding Funders

While veterans groups do a lot of fundraising, we found that their model was not especially helpful to raising large dollars. Veterans groups typically raise small amounts of money from lots of people. But looking at their sources of support – especially businesses – we were able to identify philanthropic people and companies with a strong interest in veterans' issues. So we suggest that you start, as in any campaign, by looking at the "usual sources." Because this was such a big idea we approached our usual donors with larger asks. With help from board members and other advocates, we were able to reach additional "usual sources" that hadn't supported WPT in the past.

Look for the usual philanthropic sources in your area: funders of veterans' projects that you know have giving capacity, military contractors and companies active in the National Guard and Reserve. Companies active in the National Guard will likely have lots of veterans in their employ and management interested in veterans' issues. If you make a friend in your state's National Guard, they might share information on the largest employers who are strong supporters. But it is important to tread carefully in this area, because you want to keep the focus squarely on the Vietnam veterans. It would be unfortunate and distracting if a funder's program credit or



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request for an exhibit opened your project to accusations of promoting war, supporting military recruitment or trying to make money off of the veterans.

Helpful Hint: Although we raised the money for almost all aspects of the project, there were occasions when veterans came to us with proposals that we felt were beyond the scope of what we could fundraise for. In some cases we said no, but in others we encourage them to proceed if they could raise the money themselves. In those cases we controlled who they solicited so that it would not conflict with our own fundraising, and we supported their significant asks.

Don't forget In-Kind

While you want to balance the work that you do for what you receive in return, a project like this can open the door to tremendous support in the form of in-kind contributions. Many of the companies we worked with on LZ Lambeau significantly reduced their fees for or offered gratis such services as trucking, shipping, printing and others, as well as materials.

Helpful Hint: With so many veterans and community groups involved in organizing LZ Lambeau, we knew that they would invariably be seeking support for their individual projects. Generally that wasn't a problem because they were mostly looking for in-kind donations from local businesses which didn't conflict with our fundraising. But having an event director working with each group was essential in helping us communicate and coordinate all fundraising activities.

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