

Community-Centric Fundraising

LifeBridge commits to practicing these guiding principles in our fundraising efforts.

1. Fundraising must be grounded in race, equity, and social justice. The conversations around fundraising must move beyond diversifying donors and tapping into marginalized communities to give. It must move toward sometimes uncomfortable discussions regarding race and wealth disparities, and more.

2. Individual organizational missions are integral to the collective success of the community. Our missions are interrelated, but we have all been trained to prioritize our organization's mission first, to raise as much money as possible for our individual mission. The community is best served if we see ourselves as part of a larger ecosystem working collectively to build a just society.

3. Nonprofits are generous with and mutually supportive of one another. Nonprofits need to see and treat one another not as competitors but as critical partners with the common mission of strengthening the community. We must not let fear, scarcity mindset, or survival tendencies drive our decisions and actions when relating to other organizations. We must collaborate with organizations whose missions are interconnected with ours and support them to ensure they are also strong.

4. All who engage in strengthening the community are equally valued, whether a volunteer, staff, donor, board member, or nonprofit peer. We must respect, appreciate, recognize, and build relationships with all stakeholders, including peers in the community, donors, staff, board members, volunteers, and clients.

5. Time is valued equally as money. Time is the only resource we cannot make more of, and thus, the donation of time must be valued as much as the donation of money. We must appreciate those who contribute time, and talent, and connections to the communities we serve as much as we appreciate those who contribute money.

6. We treat donors as partners, and this means that we are transparent. We must have honest, respectful conversations with our donors to be effective. We must create opportunities for donors to further their understanding of the complexity of our work.

7. We foster a sense of belonging, not othering. We must be careful to avoid "othering" the people we serve and reinforcing the savior complex. We must use fundraising to ensure everyone feels a sense of belonging. We must be thoughtful of the impact on our community members when we ask them to share their stories for fundraising purposes. We must be thoughtful about what images we use on channels such as our website, brochures, and social media to avoid reinforcing the existing archetypes and stereotypes. We must use "we" language, the "we" that includes the donor as part of the community doing this work.

8. We promote the understanding that everyone (donors, staff, funders, board members, volunteers) personally benefits from engaging in the work of social justice – it’s not just charity and compassion. Some call it “enlightened self-interest,” this belief that by investing in others and in the common good, we also personally benefit. It’s not just compassion or a sense of pity. Whether donor, staff, board member, or volunteer, our families personally benefit from our contributions. We must avoid creating a sense of charity or pity toward other community members and instead see how we and our families also benefit from the work.

9. We see the work of social justice as holistic and transformative, not transactional. We strive to help others see the work as a whole and not reinforce transactional thinking. We must encourage others to understand and support core mission support, also known as “overhead” or “indirect” expenses. We need to appreciate that many elements are needed to make things run.

10. We recognize that healing and liberation requires a commitment to economic justice. This involves grappling with and addressing the root causes of inequity, including the zero-sum aspects of our communities and how we may be complicit in furthering this through our practices.