

**So, You Want to be a Fundraiser**  
Communication Studies Department  
<http://www.mnstate.edu/cmst>

**Overview:** Fundraisers, usually called directors of development, find the money and other gifts needed to keep nonprofit organizations thriving. Nearly all charitable or nonprofit organizations, in addition to institutions of higher education, must use donations from individuals or organizations to bridge the gap between income and costs.

There are five primary ways fundraisers get donations: asking for large gift from individual donors, soliciting bequests, hosting special events, applying for grants, and launching phone and letter appeals. In small nonprofits, the director of development does all these things; in large ones, fundraisers specialize.

*Large-gift directors* look for big money. The gifts they solicit are often used for major expenses or new projects. Large-gift directors meet potential donors at fundraising events or find them through contacts with colleagues and other donors. Being able to listen to people and meet them in a variety of situations is important for this job. *Directors of planned giving* specialize in helping people make charitable endowments and bequests—gifts the organization will receive later or over time. They nurture relationships and solicit donations. *Event coordinators* plan events with the purpose of raising funds for an organization. These may include black-tie dinners, walk-a-thons, tournaments, and other gatherings. *Directors of mailing and direct marketing* send form letters and make phone calls to potential donors. Directors of mailings often write the letters and buy lists of names and addresses from marketing organizations.

**Education and Training:** Most fundraisers have a bachelor's degree. Often they major in marketing, public relations, English, or communications. Planned giving specialists must understand the latest gift and tax law. They have often have law or finance training. More than ninety percent of fundraisers began their career doing something else, transferring to the career from public relations, sales, or marketing.

**Other Qualifications:** Good fundraisers are outgoing, confident, and service oriented. Fundraisers need to be persuasive communicators so they can convince others that a cause is worth supporting. A fundraiser's communication skills must also include the ability to write well.

**Job Outlook:** Employment of fundraisers is expected to grow as organizations struggle to raise funds in an era of economic downturn.

**For More Information:** <http://www.bls.gov/oco>

**Source:** U.S. Department of Labor, Occupational Outlook Quarterly