



Are You Ready for Foundation & Major Donor Fundraising?

Major donor and foundation fundraising is rarely the first step - usually it's the second or third. An organisation grows from the inside out, the way a tree grows in rings: without an existing core of fundraising infrastructure - a donation account, tax-deductible status, ongoing campaigns - it doesn't hold yet. This checklist helps you assess whether that core is already in place before you approach foundations or major donors directly.

1. Legal Status & Existing Fundraising

Major donor work builds on infrastructure that needs to exist first.

- ☐ We are a registered nonprofit or equivalent legal form - not an informal initiative
- ☐ Donations to us are tax-deductible, or we have at least applied for tax-deductible status
- ☐ We already have active fundraising in place (e.g. individual donations, membership fees, campaigns across various channels)

2. Financial Foundation

Funders expect clarity about your finances.

- ☐ We have a dedicated donation account, kept separate from our day-to-day operating funds
- ☐ We can show clean, audited financials from our last fiscal year
- ☐ We have at least three full budget cycles behind us (36+ months of operation)
- ☐ We know our true cost per project, or per person we help
- ☐ Someone on our team, even part-time, owns fundraising

3. Positioning & Your Case for Support

The case for support needs to be precise, not just inspiring.

- ☐ We can describe our mission in one sentence a stranger would understand
- ☐ We name the specific problem we solve, and who it affects
- ☐ We have at least one real, measurable result we can point to
- ☐ We know which 2-3 types of funders (foundations, corporates, individuals) fit our work

- ☐ We have at least one written one-page case for support - not just a general brochure

4. Digital Presence & Credibility

Funders typically check your website and public profile before making first contact.

- ☐ Our website clearly says what we do, who we help, and how to give
- ☐ We have a visible annual report and an impact summary
- ☐ We're active on at least one platform funders are likely to check (LinkedIn, website, etc.)
- ☐ Our legal status, policies and values are easy for an outsider to verify

5. Practical Implementation

Without capacity to execute, even a good strategy stays theoretical.

- ☐ Someone in the organisation can answer questions about the details of a funder's request within one to two weeks
- ☐ Our leadership treats fundraising as a real priority, not an afterthought
- ☐ We can commit real time - not just money - to building relationships with funders

Reading Your Results

Mostly checked? You're likely ready to start a targeted foundation and major donor strategy. Trust that - and let's talk about where to aim first.

About half checked? That's completely normal - most organisations are. Focus on closing the gaps above before putting energy into inquiries; most rejections at this stage come from missing fundamentals, not a weak mission.

Only a few checked? That's not bad news - it simply brings clarity. Foundation and major donor fundraising is probably premature right now, and most organisations need 12-24 months to build the fundamentals first. Better to know that today than after a string of quiet rejections.

I built this checklist because I keep seeing the same issues that separate organisations from the funding they could reach. If you'd like a second opinion on where you stand, I'm happy to talk it through.

Corinna Dietrich - The Global Fundraiser

Corinna M. Dietrich has spent 18+ years working alongside NGOs and donors across Europe and internationally, helping turn strong missions into fundable ones.

Want monthly, practical insight on international philanthropy and fundraising strategy?
Subscribe to "The Global Fundraiser" on LinkedIn.

And if you'd like to talk through your own situation, reach out: die-dietrich.com/contact