



FRACTURED ATLAS

Guidebook

FUNDRAISING APPEALS

Monthly Giving Appeals

FUNDRAISING BASICS

What is a fundraising appeal anyway?

A **fundraising appeal** (or donor appeal) is a direct, persuasive, and engaging email or letter that directly asks an individual to donate to your project. It also provides a deadline for the donor, a suggested donation amount, and specific instructions for how to give.

Why should I write an appeal?

Let's follow the first rule of appeal writing, and not bury the lede. **You need money.** And like artists everywhere, from the Metropolitan Museum of Art to your local community theater, you're going to need the support of individual donors to make art happen. Many donors are ready and willing to support artists and arts organizations, especially if they can get a tax receipt thanks to either your own nonprofit status or **your fiscal sponsor.**

Fiscal Sponsorship allows individual artists and arts organizations to leverage some of the benefits of another nonprofit's tax-exempt status to access discounted space, solicit tax-deductible donations, and apply for funding from corporations and foundations. To learn more about Fractured Atlas's program, head to [this page!](#) For a database of fiscal sponsors across the US, check out the [National Network of Fiscal Sponsors.](#)

OK, that all sounds fine, but I was planning on just applying to a bunch of grants!

We get it. Many artists are understandably squeamish about asking individuals for money. However, individual donors are going to be **one of your most important sources of revenue, especially if you're just getting started**. In fact, many grant funders will want to see that you have a significant amount of seed funding from individuals before considering you as a competitive applicant.

Helpful Hint: This actually is why Fractured Atlas has a grant eligibility requirement in place, asking that projects raise at least \$1,000 before applying for grants. To learn more about why this is in your best interest as an applicant, check out [this article](#).

However, there's no need to be nervous! **Grant applications can be complicated, frustrating, and can require a great deal of work for a small award, but individual fundraising is often as easy as writing a well-worded email.** People like to support art they see as valuable. From the Renaissance to Patreon, people have enjoyed supporting artists whom they admire and want to see grow. Remember that you are **not** begging for money. You are inviting the donor to be a part of something exciting: your project!

Activity: Mapping Your Network

In one sentence why should donors give to your project?

Write down 3 people near and dear to you (such as your best friend, your mom, your mentor) who could become potential donors.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Write down 3 former or current collaborators who could become potential donors.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Write down 3 people who have engaged with your work, but whom you do not yet know well who could become potential donors.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Now that I've mapped my network, how do I write a strong appeal letter?

Let's take a look at what separates the strong appeals from the ones that get archived after a 15 second skim.

7 Habits of Highly Effective Donor Appeals:

- ☐ Direct, clear, and concise
- ☐ Positive—an invitation to be a part of an exciting artistic endeavor
- ☐ Donor-focused
- ☐ Important sections are **boldfaced** or in *italics*
- ☐ When appropriate, uses bullets, numbers, or other ways of breaking up the copy
- ☐ Includes a specific ask amount and a suggested deadline for donations
- ☐ Easy-to-understand donation instructions

7 Habits of Appeals Headed for the Recycling:

- ☐ Beats around the bush, cagey about asking for money
- ☐ Overwritten or lengthy
- ☐ A cry for help that stresses financial hardship or catastrophe
- ☐ Highlights only the artist's vision, and does not mention the donor's impact
- ☐ A giant wall of text with no boldface or italics
- ☐ Does not include an ask amount or a donation deadline
- ☐ When, how, or how much to give is unclear

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

All of our donor appeal guides have three sections. Here's how to use them effectively:

1. **Before You Write:** This section will ask you questions about the **what, who, when, why, and how** of your appeal. Though this guide offers you customized templates, most successful pieces of writing do not come from simply plugging details into a pre-written formula. Ask any hiring manager who has thrown away countless generic cover letters!
2. **Real-World Examples:** Examples of strong appeals, written by real arts organizations and artists on our staff.
3. **Customized Templates:** Each topic will come with a customized template, which you can use to write your own appeal!

In each “**Before You Write**” section, you’ll be asked the following questions:

What?

What kind of appeal are you crafting? A Crowdfunding Launch announcement? A Gala invitation? Your annual new year’s ask letter?

Who?

This is maybe the most important factor. Who are you writing to? How well do you know them? Have they given to your project before? What is their **capacity**? Part of writing a **donor-focused** appeal is knowing your audience. The more you can personalize the appeal by emphasizing your donor’s role in your project, the more successful your appeal will be. Remember, you’re not writing a grant application, or pitching your new idea to a potential producer—you’re reaching out to an individual who wants to know how **they** fit into the picture.

Capacity is a donor's ability to give based on their connection to your cause, their philanthropic propensity (do they give to other nonprofits, or sit on the board of another group?), and their wealth markers (for example, how much is their house worth on Zillow?).

When?

Timing is everything! **When are you sending out this appeal, given your current fundraising circumstances?** By when do you need this donor to give? Are you working with a tangible deadline, such as a crowdfunding campaign end date? What time of year is it, and what else could be going on in the donor's life? For example, summer tends to be a bad time to send fundraising appeals, as many donors are on vacation.

Why?

Obviously, you are writing because you want the donor to give. But appeals are not just about getting a quick buck—they are about **donor cultivation**. What type of relationship are you trying to create with this individual? Is there anything that you want from them besides a monetary donation, such as attendance at an event, volunteer labor, or noncash gifts such as food?

Donor cultivation is the process of creating and growing relationships with your supporters so that they become invested in the work that you create. Donor events, galas, monthly newsletters, and social media shout outs are all different ways to make your donors feel like they are a part of something. We also recommend taking individual donors out for coffee, hearing their thoughts on your work, and asking them for their

advice—this can often lead to them connecting you to even more potential supporters!

How?

How do you plan to send out this appeal? What does this method of delivery say about your relationship with the donor and the image of your project that you are trying to present?

Beating writer's block is as easy as 1-2-3...

1. Use these guiding questions to brainstorm the Who, What, When, Why, and How of your appeal.
2. Check out our real-world examples to get a sense of what yours should look like.
3. Use our customized templates to get started on your own appeal.

MONTHLY GIVING APPEALS: Before You Write

What?

Context, context, context. Know what you are writing before you sit down with your laptop.

- ❑ A **Monthly Giving Appeal** is an attempt to turn a new, one-time, or occasional donor into a consistent, recurring supporter.
- ❑ Before sending this appeal, you'll want to make sure you're either fiscally sponsored by Fractured Atlas or have some sort of a monthly giving feature set up on your website, if you're a 501(c)(3).

***Monthly giving or monthly pledges**, are automated recurring donations that will charge your donor's credit card the same amount each month, until they choose to cancel. This is a great way to get donors to support your project.*

Who?

Identify your audience before you write.

*For these appeals, you should primarily target **donors who have given a few times in the past**, who you think may want to take their support to the next level. You'll want to consult your **CRM (Customer Relationship Management)** to figure out which donors to target.*

- Is this an email blast or a more personal appeal to a single donor?
 - Email Blast
 - Specific Donor

- If you are writing to one specific donor, how well do you know them?
(Check all that apply)
- Never met
 - Distant acquaintance
 - Friend-of-a-friend
 - Acquaintance
 - Friend
 - Collaborator or former collaborator
 - Fellow artist
 - Coworker or boss
 - Close friend
 - Family member
 - Other _____
- How much and how frequently have they given to your project in the past?

Number of times they've given: _____

Largest donation to date: \$_____

Total Amount Donated: \$_____

- What events (if any) have they attended? List them below.

- What is their financial situation? Do you have a sense of their **capacity**?
 - Do they have any **wealth markers**, such as an expensive home? You can easily look up the value of their house on [Zillow](#).
 - Do they give to other nonprofits and/or arts organizations? If so, which ones?
 - How strong is their connection to your cause?
 - Weak
 - Medium
 - Strong

When?

Timing matters! Make sure your appeal comes at the right time.

- When was the last time this person engaged with your project by donating or attending an event? This can help you determine when to make your “ask.” For example, if they donated 6 months ago, and just came to a show last week, this attendance could be a good way to follow up and ask them to get more involved.

- Do you have some sort of upcoming project? A new show you are working on? A new piece you're commissioning? A community event coming up? Sharing this new information with your donor can be a good way to make your "ask."

Why?

What do you want from this donor?

- Why should this donor become a monthly supporter? What about monthly support will help them become more engaged with your project?
- How much are you asking them to pledge monthly? According to [Network For Good](#), the average monthly donation is \$52. However, the amount depends on your donor! Their past gifts can be an indication of an appropriate ask amount. If they gave you \$50 once, you may not want to ask for \$100 a month. \$10 a month may be a better place to start. However, if this is a high capacity donor, who clearly has means and contributed \$1,500 to your project last time around, \$100 a month may be a good ask.

My ask amount will be \$____/month

How?

How does this appeal get from your laptop to the donor?

- ❑ Since monthly gifts are primarily made online, **email is the best way to send this type of appeal**. That way, the donor just has to click on a link.

Helpful Hint: *The more effort a donor has to put into making a donation, the less likely they are to give. Make it as easy for them as possible with hyperlinks and clear instructions.*

REAL-WORLD EXAMPLE: Monthly Giving Appeal

***The Context:** Lee has donated a few times to Maria's visual arts education organization, Kahlo Kids, which provides art history and education, from the perspective of queer artists of color. With the start of the school year right around the corner, Maria reaches out to ask for Lee's monthly support.*

Dear Lee,

Thank you so much for your support of Kahlo Kids. Last year, with your help, we held 50 workshops, in 5 different school districts, serving over 6,000 kids across Northern California! Next month, we'll be starting another exciting season of programming. **And today, we're asking you to take your support to the next level by becoming a monthly donor.**

Your donations have already been crucial to our success. Last year we developed alternative art history workshops for elementary schoolers that focused on the work of queer artists of color. We offered interactive classes that allowed kids to explore their creative side. And thanks to donors like you, we were able to provide these services to public schools in the Bay Area **completely free of charge**. This year we want to offer even more classes, events, and workshops. But we can't do it alone! **Would you be willing to contribute \$20/month, to help us provide consistent arts education to Bay Area public schools?**

Your support is what has gotten us to where we are today. **You can become a monthly supporter by signing up here [\[Link\]](#)!**

Thank you again for your support. I hope to see you at our next donor event!

Warmly,

Maria Yang

Executive Director, Kahlo Kids

Template: Monthly Giving

Dear **[Donor Name,]**

Thank you so much for your support of **[Project Name.]** Thanks to your donation, we were able to **[list recent achievement]**. **[Include a 1-2 sentence pitch for your newest idea, project, event, or show.]** Today, we're asking you to take your support to the next level by becoming a monthly donor.

Your support has already been crucial to our success. Last **[year/season/month]** we are able to **[insert achievement]**. This time around, we're **[list 1-2 goals for your new endeavor]** and we're going to need for raise **[\$fundraising goal]** to cover expenses such as **[list a few of your crucial expenses.]** Recurring donors are absolutely essential to the success of our work. Would you be willing to contribute **[\$XX]/month**, to help us **[list your desired impact here, such as "restage forgotten texts"]?**

Your support is what has gotten us to where we are today. You can become a monthly supporter by signing up here **[hyperlink monthly giving page]!**

If you're not able to give today, there are still other ways that you can support us. **[Include other forms ways that they can engage with your project, such as volunteer opportunities, noncash donations, or upcoming events]**

Thank you again for your support. **[End with a personal note, such as "I hope to see you at our next event!]**

Warmly,

[Your full name]

[Your relationship to the project]

[Your project's full name]

*Helpful Hint: **Bold will be your best friend!** Remember to put the most important lines (such as your “ask” and your donation deadline) in boldface! The donor will likely skim this letter, so you want them to see the most crucial bits of information first.*

What’s next?

Get out there, use this guide, share your vision, and find supporters. Your network is full of people who want to be a part of your work!

Thanks for supporting our Workbook series. [Fractured Atlas](#) helps individual artists and arts organizations at every level of the cultural ecosystem, in every creative medium, through several programs. Let us help you [raise funds](#), [find space](#), [sell tickets](#), and [track fans](#).