



Top 10 Tips to Ask for Donations in Aging



American
Society
on Aging

'Tis the Season... for Your upcoming giving campaign!



About $\frac{1}{3}$ of your annual gifts will be donated in the month of December. How are you making your ask?



Often times, we find that development appeals push out what actually appears to be a hopeless agenda. Yet, we know that individuals and funding organizations are inspired by hope and possibilities. That means that compelling fundraising appeals should make hope feel possible.



As Raymond Williams said,



*“To be truly radical
is to make hope
possible rather
than despair
convincing.”*



How often have you seen an appeal that sounds like this:

"Cathy will be without food this holiday season unless you contribute now" following a story about Cathy living on small amounts of social security because she never was able to save money on her minimum wage job.

OR

Our country is facing a silver tsunami, and poor vulnerable seniors will be out on the streets because of a shortage of senior housing.

OR EVEN...

Please bring joy into lonely senior citizen's life by donating now.

And let's not even talk about the images that accompany these asks. OK... Actually, let's talk about them because we all know that a picture is worth 1,000 words.

Have you ever seen fundraising collateral with images of lonely older people staring out their windows as though they are simply hoping for someone to walk by?

So many of us working in aging are accidentally propagating ageist themes with messages like these and images that reflect them. They reinforce a cultural story about aging that teaches us that aging is a time of decline, deterioration, depression and dependence.

Additionally, they create a crisis mentality that turns donors off. Donors generally look to fund opportunities with long-term effects. The “sad senior” narrative that frames aging as hopeless actually turns off your potential donors.

But perhaps, worst of all, they only present a problem.

DONORS WANT TO SUPPORT SOLUTIONS

Whenever we teach fundraising and development, we remind nonprofit professionals that people want to help and feel like their gift matters.

Our holiday asks are actually a favor to them. They provide simple and fast access for our donors to feel like a part of the solution to problems that they feel are important.

If we only tell them there is a problem without telling them how we are solving it, in essence we are asking them to solve the problem. If they wanted to do that, they'd be working for us instead of donating to us.



Remember: Anytime you make an ask, you should be showcasing your work as the solution to the problem that they care about.



Of course, if aging is a hopeless process that simply is a pathway to deterioration, decline and death, then there is no hope. There are no solutions. And if that is true, then what are we all doing?

If instead, we reject that ageist notion and accept that aging is not, in fact, a downward spiral, but rather another stage in our lives, then the solutions that we all offer should drive the discourse about the diverse aging experience.



We encourage you to showcase your efforts as transformative, long-lasting and a part of an intergenerational experience that benefits everyone. Let's face it, simply focusing on the fact that the people we serve are old does not do justice to our work or our needs.

As you put the final touches on your end-of-year ask, perhaps think about these 10 tips to help direct your work.

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TIP #1

Connect your mission (or your work) to what your donors care about beyond just older adults.

How does aging intersect with the issues your potential donors value? For example, housing affordability in most communities is an issue for people of all ages.



TIP #2

Frame your ask in a way that feels inclusive and intersects with all the demographics and issues that your work impacts.

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TIP #3

Portray the people.

We often forget that older adults are people with whole lives and stories that can be shared. Their age is just a part of that story.

Avoid ageist language and visuals that depict the “sad senior” narrative.

Show the opportunity your work offers and its success, rather than the hopelessness of the situation.



BONUS: As you think about this portrayal, consider following our guide “Fighting Ageism in Imagery” and utilize the images available in our co-branded and designed age-inclusive library of images from Shutterstock.

TIP #4

Widen the lens to move beyond individual stories to what is going on in the community.

For example, digital divides affect not only older people, but people of all ages—such as K-12 students who have a hard time accessing educational services and many rural communities.

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TIP #5

Help funders see the investment in the future.

Working on issues pertinent to today's generation of older adults can also impact future generations.

TIP #7

Look at the biggest issues of today and talk about them through an aging lens.

For example, if you work on economic security issues, pointing out that older women, and especially older women of color, are disproportionately affected by age discrimination and that —coupled with historic race and gender discrimination— leaves them less prepared for retirement.

TIP #6

Show the demographics and how this population is growing, while avoiding silver tsunami language.

Changing demographics create tremendous opportunity to effect change.



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TIP #8

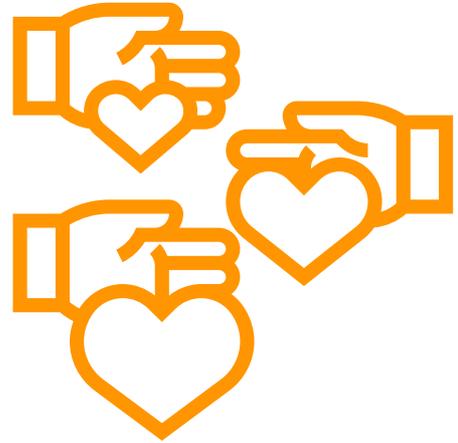
Describe how dollars can be leveraged with federal or state funding, a matching grant or other funding opportunities to expand impact.



TIP #10

Focus on concrete, innovative solutions.

Explain how you are working with partners to create communities in which people of all ages can thrive. Donors want to invest in success.



TIP #9

Start small.

Consider age-friendly efforts first and then continue to build public support for more innovative, larger projects.



GOOD LUCK AND HAPPY FUNDRAISING!

**ASA WISHES EVERYONE SUCCESS AT THIS
VERY IMPORTANT TIME OF YEAR.**



**American
Society
on Aging**

**ASA VICE PRESIDENT OF COMMUNITY
ENGAGEMENT, CINDY MORRIS, ALONG WITH
ASA MEMBERS JODI WATERHOUSE, JANINE
VANDEBURG AND CHANDRA MATTHEWS WILL
PRESENT MORE ABOUT THIS AT THEIR
WORKSHOP AT ON AGING 2023 IN ATLANTA,
“AGING IS EVERY FUNDERS’ BUSINESS...NOW WE
JUST HAVE TO TELL THEM THAT.”**