



Fundraising News

Greater New York Chapter Association of Fundraising Professionals

A Timely First... The AFP Tri-State Summit on Philanthropy: Fundraising Success in the New Economy

Co-sponsored by the AFP Chapters of Greater NY and NJ

By Cathy J. Sharp

The data remains sobering:

- The 5.7% drop in giving for 2008 was the second worst reduction since data has been tracked.
- In 2008, corporate giving showed its largest drop—8%.
- Close to two-thirds of surveyed foundations predict further reductions in the size and number of their grants in 2009.
- Unemployment claims have reached a 26-year high.

The tag line of the first-ever AFP Tri-State Summit on Philanthropy on September 24, 2009 at the New Jersey Performing Arts Center in Newark could have been *What's a Fundraiser to Do?* Fortunately for the over 100 participants, that question was answered with some practical, take-home tips and encouraging words of support from the three distinguished panelists and moderator.

Bradford Smith, President, The Foundation Center, **Sharon C. Taylor**, Chair, The Prudential Foundation, and **Laura Fredricks, JD**, fundraising consultant and author, provided invaluable insight into the current "state of philanthropy" for foundations, corporations and individuals—three key sources of financial support for nearly any non-profit. **Roberta (Robbe) A. Healey**, Chair, Board of Directors, International Association of Fundraising Professionals (IAFP), served as moderator and presented data compiled from the most recent survey of the IAFP membership. For those who don't know, IAFP is the worldwide "parent" of AFP chapters.

Although the news remains grim, the reason the Summit was so important and timely is so that we, as professional fundraisers, can move forward strategically—armed with facts and not fear. Such knowledge is powerful and gives us the ability to adapt short-term fundraising efforts and project realistic and successful long-range plans.

As the points above illustrate, foundation and corporate giving were dramatically affected in 2009 and the outlook for 2010 looks similar.

According to Bradford Smith, and the most recent findings by a Foundation Center survey, only 14% of foundations project increased giving for 2010. However, this will be tempered by a range of innovative strategies devised by foundations that exemplify their responsiveness to grantees. These include dipping into their endowments to sustain giving commitments for 2009, and engaging in more non-grant-making activities and special initiatives. Non-profits can sustain these important relationships by opening a dialogue with their funding partners about new options for working together. Examples—not to mention a stunning amount of additional data and resources available to fundraisers—can be found on the [Foundation Center's website](#) in a special section, "Focus on the Economic Crisis."

Sharon Taylor was direct about the diminished giving capacity of the company foundation but was adamant that their commitment to supporting the non-profit community has *not* diminished. She also stressed that non-profits can develop new relationships with corporate funders by integrating volunteers and skilled human resources into your activities. In the current economy, a conversation with many corporate representatives will inevitably include mention of the next gala. Some organizations and companies will continue to hold galas and will do them quite successfully. But with reduced financial and human resources on both sides of the table, organizations need to carefully weigh the cost of a major event vs. investing resources in other fundraising methods that could prove more effective in the short term and in this economic climate.

This strategy was emphasized by Laura Fredricks, a well-known speaker and author on the topics of major gifts and individual giving. Once again, the data on the loss of wealth by individuals was all too familiar but Laura took away some of the "sting" by offering tangible actions any fundraiser can undertake during these challenging times. A few selected suggestions include:

- 360 degree fundraising is a must—year-round cultivation, asking and stewardship.

- Know your organization's priorities and get everyone at the organization on board conveying the same message.
- Quantify the need and keep it simple and focused.
- Employ small cultivation events with a strategy before, during and after the big event.
- Visit as many people as you can now.
- Have a stewardship plan in place for each donor.
- Lead up—YOU are the fundraising expert; make well-thought out suggestions and follow-through.

The data and ideas presented by the three panelists were substantiated and enhanced by the Summit's moderator and final speaker, Robbe Healey. Robbe offered additional encouragement to stay the course and take advantage of this time by implementing steps to ensure your organization comes out stronger in the future. The resources available to AFP members on the improved website (www.afpnet.org) include the eWire and eWire Skill Builder, Ready Reference publications, and Resource Center, among many others. You will find helpful information on what other fundraisers are doing, how the downturn has affected organizations similar to yours, and a library of articles and sample documents from consultants and colleagues.

While the "where we are now" picture can be disheartening, the true value of a gathering like the Tri-State Summit is the "we're in this together" camaraderie that was evident over coffee and around the room. While the dollars are not flowing as freely these days, the facts, figures and support to get us through this unsettled period are. So step away from your desk and join your AFP colleagues at the next chapter event to strengthen your resolve and expand your knowledge!

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