

Development Audit: Taking Stock of Institutional Performance

Valuable insights can be found in examining and benchmarking performance | It's difficult to get where you're going if you don't know where you started. That's why an assessment is such a critical part of goal setting and developing a path to future improvement.

Development audits can be an opportunity to validate what you have achieved, identify areas where additional resources should be deployed, and establish benchmarks for future performance. Particularly as organizations prepare to undertake a new campaign or begin a strategic planning process an assessment of internal readiness becomes even more crucial.

A development audit can help determine:

- ▶ What is an appropriate level of expectation for the development office?
- ▶ Are we performing to your own full potential or are there ways to improve performance?
- ▶ Are we performing to the level of other peer institutions?
- ▶ What is our level of investment in raising funds?
- ▶ How does our development performance align with our financial needs?
- ▶ Do we have the appropriate staffing and structure to work with leadership in a cohesive and effective way?
- ▶ How can we position the development office for further success in fundraising?

A development audit is a wellness check-up for the development program, providing an objective, external assessment. The final report of findings and recommendations contains both qualitative and quantitative components.

Through staff and volunteer interviews and a review of key documents, the audit provides insight into the current fundraising culture, degree of understanding and consensus about organizational goals, and observations regarding development efforts. An analysis of fundraising data over the past 3 - 5 years provides a quantitative assessment of current performance in relation to peers and aspirant organizations.

JGA's final written development audit report typically includes:

Qualitative findings from confidential, high level, structured interviews

- ▶ Perceptions regarding the institution's strengths and opportunities in development
- ▶ Points of consensus or dissonance regarding key constituents' overall understanding of the role of philanthropy at the institution
- ▶ An assessment of the development function in relation to industry best practices

Quantitative results from the analysis of development data.

- ▶ Objective data for assessing current performance in development
- ▶ Realistic yet ambitious goals for future achievement
- ▶ External benchmarking against institutional peers

Recommendations for increasing advancement capacity

- ▶ Advice for the appropriate staffing, structures, and systems necessary to increase philanthropic support

The external, objective evaluation inherent in a development audit is an important first step in setting your organization on a path to success. It is a process that will pay dividends for years to come, leaving a successful development program as a legacy for the future