


# The first year test:

Lessons from Wikimedia UK's leap into Corporate Fundraising

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A practical first-year story for charities starting out, or deciding where to begin.

WHY WE STARTED

# Stable is not the same as future-proof

*Income is relatively stable, but concentrated. A significant proportion comes from an annual Wikimedia Foundation grant, followed by regular donations. The model works/is working, but also underlines the case for diversification.*



Trusts and foundations are under real pressure.



WMF grant levels may reduce in future.



**A new income lane needed to be built before it was urgent.**

THE FIRST-YEAR TEST

# Year 1 was about readiness before revenue

*“The first year isn’t really a test of whether companies will say yes. It’s about whether your organisation is ready to ask well.”*



## Internal alignment

Shared rationale, support and confidence



## Clear guardrails

Policy, ethics and decision-making in place



## Focused engagement

A warm proposition and warm routes in



## LESSON 1

# Start internally before you start externally

Corporate fundraising is not a one-person sport.

Without the necessary internal work, you don't have a strategy, **you have one fundraiser with a hopeful spreadsheet!**



WMUK's strategy needed support and participation across the organisation, not just within fundraising



Early conversations at SMT level surfaced real questions before they became blockers







The aim wasn't instant enthusiasm, it was shared understanding of the why, the risks, and the safeguards

LESSON 2

# Put guardrails in place early

## Policy wasn't bureaucracy, it was structure. It helped us to:

-  Establish clear guidelines for corporate fundraising and partnerships
-  Promote transparency and accountability in fundraising activity
-  Provide clarity to staff, trustees, partners, stakeholders and the public
-  Protect the integrity and reputation of our organisation
-  Ensure alignment with Wikimedia UK's missions values

## LESSON 3

# Build organisational confidence, not heroic dependency

## Training was the turning point



### Strengthen internal expertise

Completed Chartered Institute of Fundraising's Corporate Fundraising Management Level course.



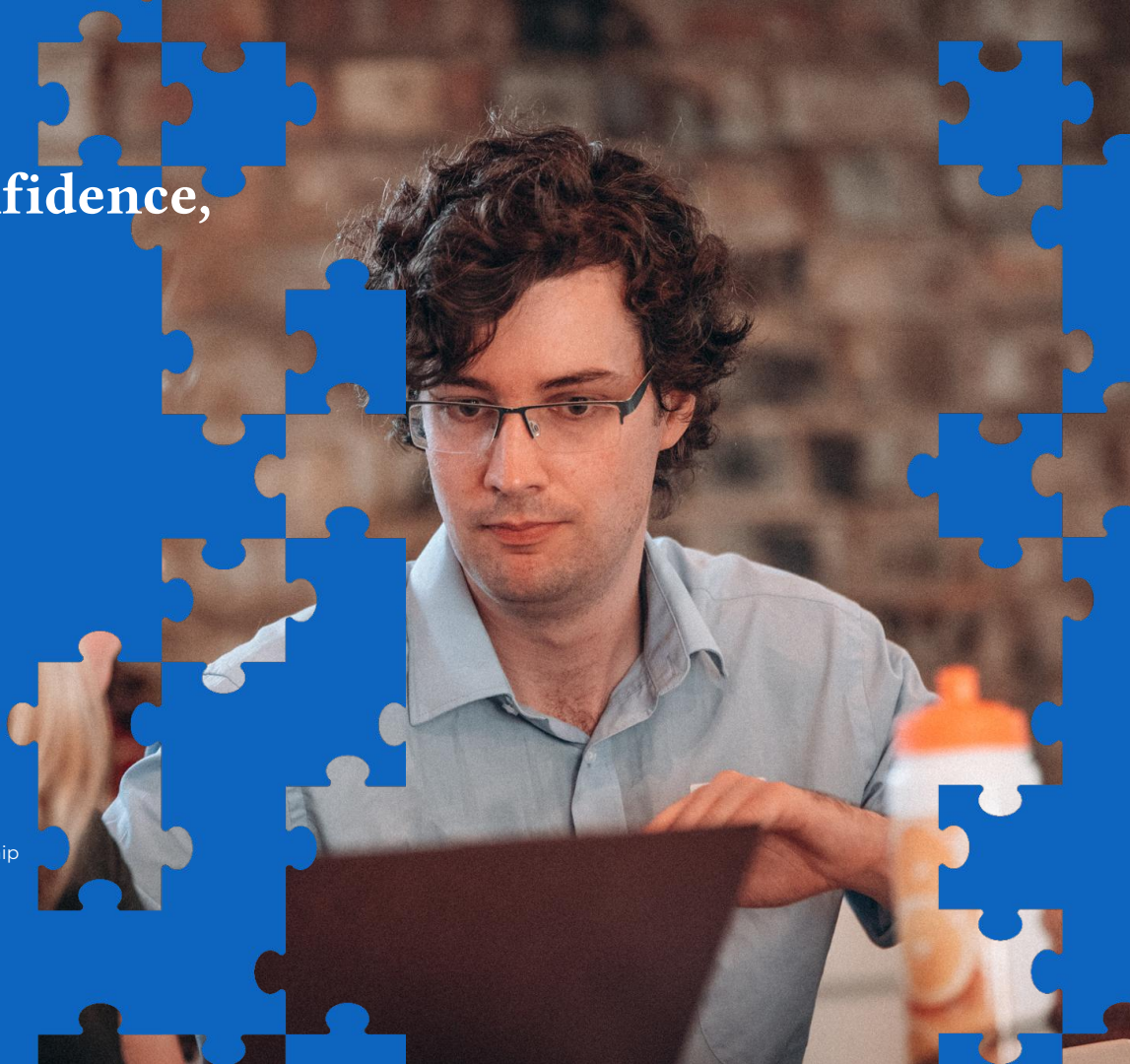
### Bring in outside support (if necessary)

Engaged Fireside Fundraising for tailored workshops involving trustees, SMT and the fundraising team



### Create shared confidence

Built common language, practical tools and collective ownership across the organisation



LESSON 4

# Research deeply, then narrow ruthlessly



## THE PROPOSITION

# A case for support that could guide real conversations

*“This was the bridge between broad ambition and a credible corporate ask”*



Gave the team a clear narrative



Made our offer specific and adaptable



Set out principles as well as opportunities



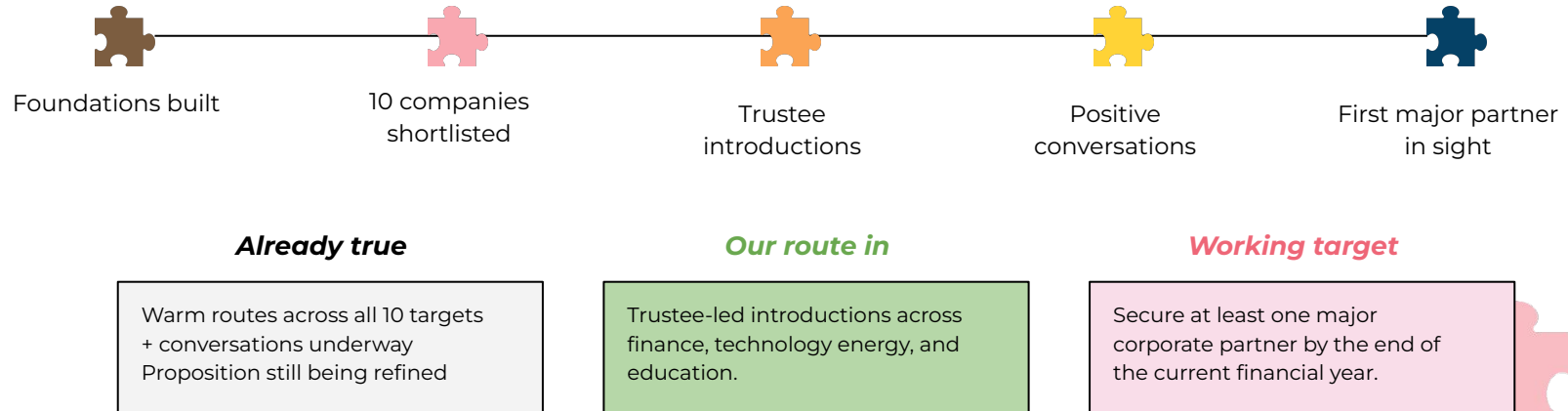
Supported more confident Board and Trustee conversations



WHERE WE ARE NOW

# Year 1 traction

*The first-year story isn't "done", it's "moving".*



WHAT I'D LEAVE YOU WITH

# 5 practical takeaways



***Start with strategy, not urgency***



***Build internal buy-in before external outreach***



***Create policy and due diligence before pressure arrives***



***Invest in learning and shared confidence***



***Judge year-one by quality of momentum, not only cash in the bank***



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Thank you!

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