



# Resource Development Group

*30 Years of Economic  
Development Fundraising*

## **Turning Investors into Champions: Closing the Engagement Gap**

**By RDG Principal Brent Jonas**

The economic development organizations (EDOs) we work with around the country are engines of growth, competitiveness, and opportunity. They develop strategies, recruit talent and investment, and position regions for the future. But none of this work happens in a vacuum. EDOs rely on investors—corporate leaders, foundations, and community champions—whose financial and civic commitments make these initiatives possible.

Yet, when we are hired to do feasibility studies for campaigns and we ask those investors how they feel about their EDOs, we often hear feedback like these actual quotes from past engagements:

- “I’d really like more face-to-face time with staff.”
- “There’s not enough interaction at board meetings.”
- “We don’t really know what they do.”

These are not criticisms of the mission. In fact, investors frequently praise the EDOs we work with, telling us: “They are a high-performing organization” “They’re connected, the brand is strong.” But the gap between activity and impact, and between information and engagement, is where the opportunity lies.

### **Why Engagement Matters**

When investors are engaged, they become champions. They not only renew and grow their financial commitments, but they also open doors to new prospects, advocate for the organization, and lend credibility to bold initiatives.

On the other hand, when engagement falls short, investors feel like outsiders in an organization they fund. As one candidly put it: “I enjoy dealing with them, but I’m unsure of their impact.” Another added: “They’re very active, but the outcomes of this activity can be difficult to point to, and I rarely see new ideas.”

## **Where the Gaps Show Up**

Across multiple conversations and engagements, we’ve heard investors highlight recurring challenges:

### **1. Limited Interaction**

Board meetings and annual updates don’t provide enough meaningful touchpoints. Investors crave dialogue and collaboration, not just presentations.

### **2. Unclear Impact**

Even the most active organizations can struggle to answer the question: “What’s the return on investment for engaging?”

### **3. Information Overload vs. Storytelling**

EDOs often send data-heavy reports. Investors say: “They give us too much information, and not enough storytelling.”

### **4. Strong Brand, Weak Link to Change**

Some EDOs are admired for being visible, connected, and “very active,” yet investors still ask: how is all this activity moving the needle?

## **Five Ways to Strengthen Investor Engagement**

### **1. Prioritize Face-to-Face Time**

Make investor interactions a regular practice, not an annual obligation. Host roundtables, plant tours, or one-on-one coffees. Personal relationships build trust and loyalty.

### **2. Redesign Board Meetings for Dialogue**

Investors don't want to sit through slide decks. Reserve time for open conversation, problem-solving, and brainstorming. Treat meetings as strategy sessions, not updates.

### **3. Communicate Consistently and Clearly**

Regular updates—whether through newsletters, videos, or briefings—can keep investors in the loop. Be honest about wins and challenges. Transparency builds credibility.

### **4. Pair Metrics with Stories**

Data is essential, but investors remember stories. Highlight the company that chose your region because of your work, the entrepreneur who scaled because of your incubator, or the student who found a career path through your workforce program.

### **5. Show ROI and Spark New Ideas**

Tie investment directly to outcomes—jobs created, wages grown, tax revenue expanded. Show how the new payroll impacts the businesses in all sectors in your area. And don't stop there: bring forward bold ideas and lessons from other regions. Innovation signals leadership.

## **The Payoff**

Our work shows us that investors already admire their EDOs. They call them “high-performing” and respect their connections. But admiration is not the same as engagement. To transform investors into champions, EDOs must invite them deeper into the work, show the impact of every dollar, and inspire them with stories and ideas.

The result? Stronger funding, stronger advocacy, and stronger partnerships to tackle the region's most pressing challenges.

At Resource Development Group, we have over 30 years of experience in helping our clients

attract and retain investors, but we don't stop there. Our experience allows us to share investor engagement best practices with our clients, and our technology can help them track that engagement without cumbersome CRM software. We're happy to help you engage.

Remember, engagement isn't a "nice to have." It's the foundation for sustainable economic development.



*Resource Development Group (RDG) partners with chambers of commerce and economic development organizations across the country to design and execute fundraising strategies that drive measurable impact.*

*Learn more at [www.rdgfundraising.com](http://www.rdgfundraising.com)*

**To learn more about Brent Jonas or any other member of our team [go here](#). Please [go here](#) to visit the RDG Interactive Blog.**



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Resource Development Group (RDG) is an economic and community development consulting firm. In addition to capital campaign management, we conduct feasibility studies, best practice research, and organizational development and optimization work. Our client base includes chambers of commerce, economic development organizations and public-private partnerships throughout the United States. RDG was founded in Columbus, Ohio. We have three offices in Georgia (Atlanta, Statesboro, and Columbus) as well as in Asheville, NC, and Charleston, SC. Our mission is to help you elevate!

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