



PLEASE NOTE: This Feasibility Study is not indicative of Board of Trustee decisions regarding a proposed Capital Campaign, nor its priority projects. This is an estimation of fundraising capacity; an analysis of people interested in our proposed projects, and a suggested strategy from the consultants at Campbell & Company based on their 2023-24 study. This research report will help inform the Board's deliberations and decisions in regards to a Capital Campaign. This study precedes the creation of a Campaign Plan, which would come after the Board has consensus on projects and goals and votes to proceed with a campaign.

CAMPAIGN PLANNING STUDY: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

February 2024

Context:

In October 2023, The Wild Center (TWC) engaged Campbell & Company to test the feasibility of a \$40 million campaign to sustain and grow their campus and programming. The proposed campaign was built around two priorities: **capital priorities** including a new Convening Center (primary focus) as well as other campus investments, and **The Wild Center Fund** to provide annual support for the “here and now” and a permanent endowment for TWC’s financial sustainability and programming in the future.

During the study, Campbell & Company conducted conversations with TWC’s staff and leadership; convened a Pre-Campaign Planning Committee to guide the study process; developed two versions of a campaign preview document clarifying the campaign’s vision and priorities; engaged campaign prospects in conversations to gather feedback on the campaign preview and the proposed goal; conducted a capacity, portfolio, and pipeline analysis to evaluate TWC’s overall philanthropic capacity; and analyzed findings from all activities to create a final report, the headline recommendations of which are outlined in this document.

Campaign Strategy Overview & Rationale:

Campbell & Company recommends launching a campaign with an initial focus on the Convening Center capital and programs, with a working goal of \$35M to be secured within five years.

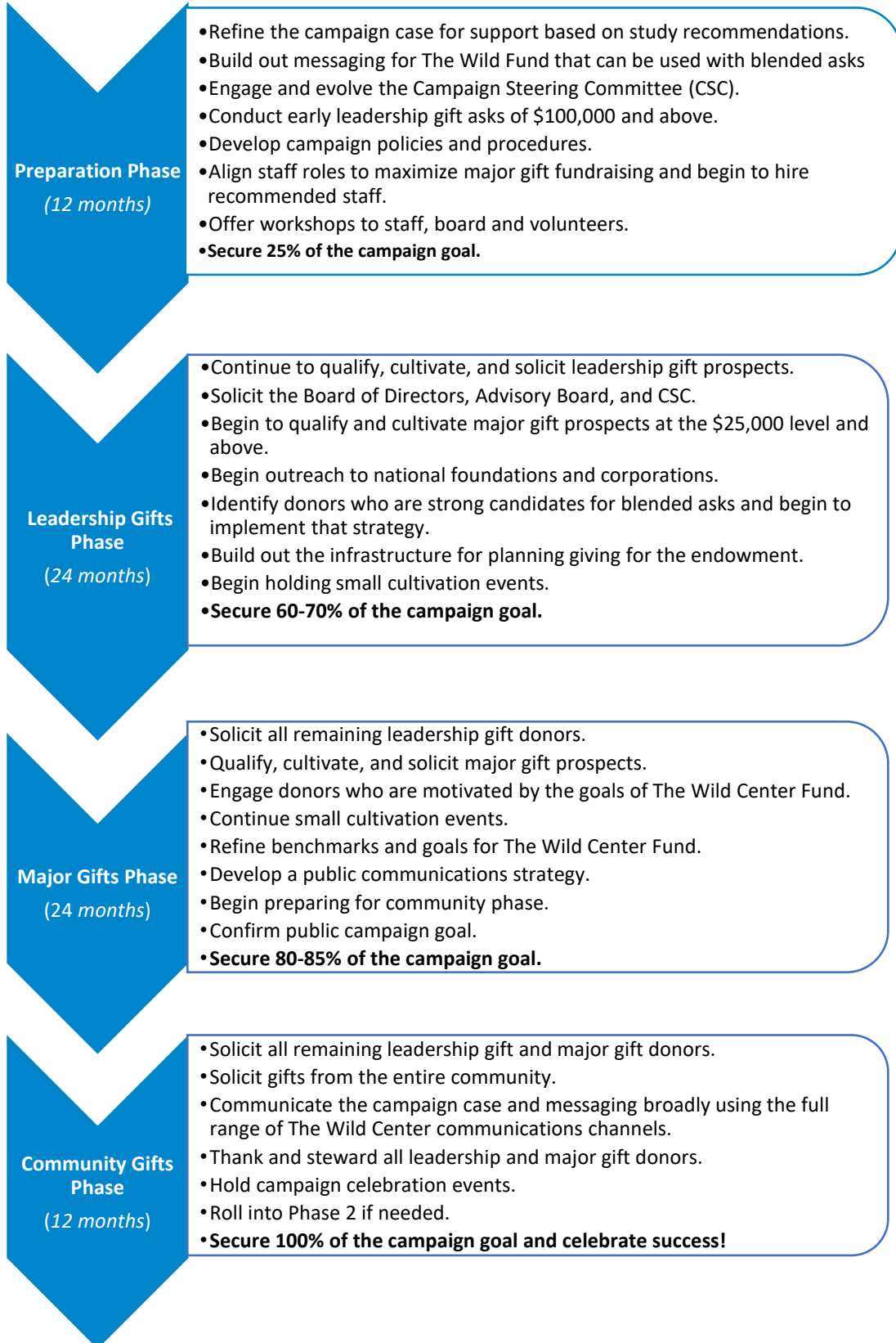
As this campaign achieves predetermined benchmarked momentum, C&C recommends expanding the campaign to more explicitly include "The Wild Fund" for facility, program and endowment goals, and to highlight planned giving. The working goal for The Wild Center Fund is anticipated to be \$20M.

Our findings indicate that The Wild Center has the right "ingredients" to successfully achieve a \$50M campaign – following an investment in campaign “readiness”.

The initial \$35M campaign will attract new donors and the support needed to build the donor pipeline for this elevated effort.

We recognize that there are donors who are eager and ready for "blended" asks that include support for the Convening Center, as well as The Wild Center Fund—and these donors should be asked for gifts early in the campaign.

Campaign Timeline:



Supporting Recommendations:

CASE FOR SUPPORT

- To capitalize on donor enthusiasm for The Wild Center's programs, create a campaign brand and case for support that clearly connects capital priorities to programmatic growth and impact.
- Use donor segments and personas to implement a tailored, personalized approach to donor communications.
- Ensure that the case for support speaks to donors who value The Wild Center's local, place-based value proposition *and* those who are more motivated by broader issues such as climate change.
- Building upon TWC's success with community donors in the previous campaign, plan for a robust Community Phase to engage even more community support.

LEADERSHIP

- Position Stephanie Ratcliffe as the face of the campaign, with support from staff and volunteer leadership.
- Position Hillarie Logan-Dechene as Campaign Director.
- Officially launch a Campaign Steering Committee of volunteers to provide leadership for the campaign.
- Grow the partnerships between staff leadership and Board members to craft and implement solicitations.
Clarify and differentiate the various roles and responsibilities of volunteer leaders related to the campaign to maximize the input of all Board and Committee members.

DONOR ENGAGEMENT

- Structure all leadership and major donor engagement around the relationship management cycle (the foundation for systemic major donor engagement).
- Begin qualification of Top Prospects immediately. Maintain a focus on qualification of Future Prospects throughout the life of the capital campaign.
- Continue to develop place-based cultivation strategies during the summer months that can extend into year-round relationships.
- Leverage The Wild Center's science-based programming to engage new stakeholders at the national level in The Wild Center's vision.
- Engage large national foundations and corporate funders that will be attracted to The Wild Center's broad, impactful programming.
- Consider blended gift solicitation strategies to support campaign priorities.
- Create and execute an elevated and comprehensive donor stewardship strategy for campaign-level giving.
- Create a menu of naming opportunities at all levels to encourage donors to make stretch gift commitments.

- Evaluate The Wild Center’s capabilities, channels, and strategies for donor giving and digital donor engagement, with a focus on providing high-impact engagement opportunities and supporting a higher level of online giving during the Community Phase and beyond.
- Keep donors and study participants informed about and engaged in campaign details and progress.

STAFFING & SYSTEMS

- Hire new Development staff positions to maximize the major gift fundraising activity necessary for a campaign.
- Formally establish major gift portfolios for front-line fundraising staff and establish a system of regularly re-balancing portfolios.
- Establish relationship management meetings and processes, including regular donor reports.
- Standardize The Wild Center’s relationship management and database systems to consistently collect, record, and track data.

IMMEDIATE NEXT STEPS

- Adopt the study recommendations to prepare for the campaign.
- Launch the Preparation Phase in June 2024 (see timeline and specifics above).

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