

A Guide to De-risking Your Next **Capital Campaign**

A Practical Resource for Multisite Church Leaders



Capital campaigns can be a powerful engine for ministry growth. They provide the fuel to expand your reach, build new facilities, and deepen your impact. However, these initiatives also come with significant risks. For large, fast-growing, Multisite churches, complexity increases, and the stakes are even higher. A misstep can not only fall short of financial goals, but also erode trust, stall momentum, and jeopardize future ministry opportunities.

This guide will help you navigate the complexity of designing a capital campaign with confidence. You will discover practical steps and proven frameworks for effective planning, avoiding common pitfalls, and positioning your church for a successful campaign. Together, we will explore how to cultivate a scalable vision, align your leadership, and build the systems necessary to translate God-inspired dreams into measurable ministry impact.

1. Start with a Clear, Scalable Vision

A compelling vision, not a budget spreadsheet or blueprints, is what truly inspires people. It answers the “why” behind your campaign and unites each of your campuses around a shared purpose.

In a Multisite church, the main challenge is to create a vision that feels both unified across all locations and deeply relevant to each local community. Your vision must be big enough to inspire everyone, yet personal enough to resonate with each individual.

A scalable vision is more than a bold declaration; it’s a compelling narrative that bridges financial goals with life-changing ministry. It illustrates how generosity directly impacts lives, reaches families, and transforms communities. This story becomes the centerpiece of your campaign, offering clarity, inspiration, and purpose every step of the way.

Steps to Take

- 1. Define the vision with Measurable Objectives and Outcomes:** Your vision must be more than vague aspirations. Collaborate with your leadership team to articulate exactly how this campaign will advance your church’s core mission. Move beyond ambiguous goals like growth and outline specific, measurable, and time-bound objectives that will be achieved. For instance, you might plan to launch a new campus in each of the next three years, with the goal of engaging 500 new families into community groups.

However, tangible objectives like debt reduction, AV upgrades, or a new campus are rarely the most compelling motivators. The true heart of your vision should focus on the measurable human impact: transformed lives.

For example, you could set a measurable, time-bound objective to retire \$1 million in debt. Achieving this would free up \$216,000 annually for your community outreach center. But don’t stop there. Explain how these savings will allow your after-school program to serve 80 latchkey kids instead of 40. This means sharing God’s love with 40 more children by providing a safe environment, a reliable meal, homework help, life skills, and the guidance of positive Christian role models among staff and volunteers.

By setting clear and measurable objectives and outcomes, you empower people to see the tangible

impact of their generosity. This vision inspires them to contribute towards a future they can clearly envision and believe in.

2. **Creating a Compelling Vision Case for Support:** Also known as a Vision Case Statement (VCS), it is a foundational document for pre-campaign planning, serving as a vital tool to align ministry and financial leaders. It helps educate your congregation, prepare for feasibility testing, and shape the communication strategy for your capital campaign. The VCS is typically refined through multiple revisions, ensuring input and collaboration from key stakeholders to create a clear and compelling vision.

In a Multisite church, the challenge lies in ensuring your vision communication strategy bridges a unified mission with the distinct narratives of each campus. The vision communication strategy is often tailored for each individual campus to highlight central goals alongside campus-specific objectives. This approach enables centralized timeline management and shared resources, while fostering deeper, more meaningful engagement within each local community.

Weave together high-quality photography, compelling graphics, and personal stories to shed light on the unique needs and opportunities at each location. This approach demonstrates that leadership understands and values the distinct identity of every campus, as well as the shared mission and values, fostering a stronger sense of shared ownership and unity throughout the community.

The vision case for support should address three fundamental questions:

- Why this? What specific ministry opportunities or challenges are we addressing?
 - Why now? What is the urgency? Why is this the moment God is calling us to act?
 - What will change? How will individual lives, our church, and our community be different because of this campaign?
3. **Communicate the vision early and often:** A powerful vision should never come as a surprise. Start by socializing the concept within your inner leadership circles (e.g., senior staff and elders) to refine the core message and secure essential buy-in. Gradually expand the dialogue to include campus pastors and key ministry and financial leaders.
 4. **Present it as a work in progress:** This ensures ample space for feedback, questions, and concerns before widening the circle further. This helps foster a genuine connection to the vision. Discerning leaders can quickly distinguish between an authentic invitation to offer wisdom and a mere request to rubber-stamp a predetermined plan. Ultimately, if a vision is divinely inspired, it will be clarified and strengthened through active listening and prayerful consideration of your staff, elders or governing board.

With your leadership fully aligned, equipped, and their financial support tested, you can confidently unveil the vision churchwide through a multi-channel communication strategy—leveraging sermon series, town hall meetings, immersive videos, detailed newsletters, and targeted social media. Remember, consistent repetition is essential for the vision to truly resonate and inspire collective action.



Quick Check

- Does the campaign's vision align with your church's mission and long-term strategic ministry plan?
- Have you defined clear, measurable ministry goals that inspire excitement and engagement?
- Does your vision document feature campus-specific stories and benefits to ensure local relevance?
- Does the vision inspire people to give sacrificially?
- Have we invited feedback from staff, elders/board and key ministry and financial leaders?

Instead of setting a generic goal like, "We need \$10 million to bring this vision to life," try something more engaging: "Imagine the profound impact of 1,000 families finding hope and connection at our new East Nashville campus, a place where worship, community, service, and sharing God's love transform lives. Picture hundreds of children and students growing in their faith, learning about Jesus in a safe and inviting space they're excited to share with friends. Together, we can make this vision a reality and create a lasting legacy of faith and community."

2. Get Leadership on the Same Page

In a large church, the greatest predictor of campaign failure is leadership misalignment between staff, elders/board, ministry, and financial leaders. Even a hint of disunity among key leaders can sow confusion and doubt, which can quickly spread throughout the congregation. For a multisite church, this challenge is twofold. First, you need vertical alignment to ensure the vision flows seamlessly from senior leadership down to campus staff and volunteers. Second, you need horizontal alignment to foster unity and collaboration across all campuses.

Lacking this fundamental alignment, your campaign will struggle to find the internal champions necessary for success. When leadership is fully committed, they do more than just endorse the vision; they embody a spirit of generosity, leverage their influence to advocate for the cause, and provide the steadfast encouragement required to maintain momentum until the goal is achieved.

Steps to Take

1. **Engage three critical leadership groups:** Alignment requires intentionally engaging three distinct tiers of leadership:
 - o **Senior Staff and Elders/Board: Success begins here.** This core team must maintain absolute clarity regarding the vision, financial objectives, and strategic priorities. They must be equipped to address tough questions and lead with unified confidence.
 - o **Ministry Leaders:** Identify the influential volunteers at each campus—the small-group leaders, ministry heads, and trusted veterans. By equipping these respected figures with the right information and resources, you empower them to become passionate advocates for the campaign within their local communities.

- **Financial Leaders:** Engage your key financial supporters early in the process. These households typically represent 7–15% of givers but provide about two-thirds of each campus's total giving. Treat them as partners in your ministry, not merely sources of funding. Their early commitment and leadership will build significant momentum and can account for over 70% of your campaign goal before it even launches publicly.

- 2. Create Intentional Feedback Loops:** Alignment is an ongoing process, not a single event. After gathering input from your leaders, share the findings openly and transparently. Address their concerns and show how their feedback is actively shaping the final plan. This not only validates their contributions but also strengthens their sense of ownership. As you progress, celebrate key milestones in alignment. Highlight moments like unanimous approval from senior leaders or commitments from campus leaders to champion the initiative. These small victories foster momentum and reinforce a sense of unity.
- 3. De-risk decision-making through a Leadership Feasibility-Readiness Study:** Before embarking on a churchwide education and testing phase, it's crucial to reduce the risk of rallying the congregation around a vision that lacks the necessary leadership support for success. Start by ensuring that your ministry and financial leaders are fully aligned, supportive, and prepared to invest at the level required to achieve that vision. This approach lays a solid foundation for the journey ahead. It also reflects the biblical example of King David in 1 Chronicles 29; before involving the broader community, David first called on his leaders to demonstrate their commitment by financially supporting the temple, ensuring the vision was grounded in leadership and viability from the outset.

Once you've incorporated feedback from ministry and financial leaders and completed your Vision Case for Support, the next step is to evaluate the true level of support within your leadership team. The most effective way to do this is through a formal Feasibility-Readiness Study, using confidential interviews and surveys to gather insights. Engaging external campaign counsel to lead this process often results in more honest and reliable feedback.

The process evaluates and quantifies confidence in your vision, uncovers potential risks, and gauges leaders' willingness to lead by example through their personal giving. It's also essential in projecting a realistic range of financial support for your campaign. Far from being a test of loyalty, this study serves as a critical listening tool designed to build trust, quantify support for your strategic plan, and provide the elders or board with data-driven insights. Ultimately, the goal is to enable a well-informed, prayerful decision about the next steps forward.



Quick Check

- Do your senior leaders, elders, and campus staff fully and enthusiastically support the campaign's vision?
- Have you engaged ministry and financial leaders from every campus?
- Have you carefully documented feedback from your leadership groups and taken meaningful action based on their insights?

- Have you tested to ensure your ministry and financial leaders in all of your campuses feel truly invested as partners in the campaign's success?
- Are the financial projections from your ministry and financial leaders strong enough to confidently share the vision with the entire church?

Example: Convene a “First Impressions Gathering” for ministry and financial leaders from across all campuses. Begin with the Senior Pastor articulating the core vision, punctuated by compelling narratives of transformation from various locations, involving Campus Pastors where appropriate. Clearly outline the discernment process and timeline established by the elders or board, and illustrate the specific commitments required from leaders at each campus to fully fund the identified needs.

Following the presentation, facilitate moderated table discussions to invite candid feedback. Encourage attendees to share what inspires them most about the vision, alongside any questions or reservations they may hold. Ensure all responses are meticulously documented to inform and refine your subsequent strategic steps, the creation of the Vision Case for Support that will be used in the Feasibility-Readiness Study of your ministry and financial leaders.

3. Sharing the Vision Churchwide

Emboldened with the results of your ministry and financial leader Feasibility-Readiness Study, it's time to share the vision churchwide. It can be tempting to move directly into the quiet phase (cultivating and receiving lead gifts from ministry and financial leaders). But de-risk the process further through a churchwide education phase and Feasibility-Readiness Study.

Engaging the church with the vision before launching a capital campaign provides valuable insights and objective data to guide informed decisions. This approach helps set realistic goals, gather critical information for a strong communication strategy, and identify potential challenges early, preventing them from becoming major obstacles. More importantly, it creates an opportunity for the Holy Spirit to work in the hearts of those who interact with the vision and prayerfully participate in an online churchwide Feasibility-Readiness Study. This process isn't about seeking permission—it's about gaining the wisdom and clarity needed to lead with effective purpose and igniting the work of the Holy Spirit churchwide early in the process.

Steps to Take

1. **Use multiple communication channels to share the vision:** With your leadership fully aligned, equipped, and their financial support tested, you can confidently unveil the vision churchwide through a multi-channel communication strategy—leveraging sermon series, a vision web landing page, town hall meetings, small group presentations, immersive videos, detailed newsletters, and targeted social media. Remember, consistent repetition is essential for the vision to truly resonate and inspire collective action.
2. **Promote participation in an online survey:** Not everyone understands the importance of their participation in the online Feasibility-Readiness Study, so it's essential to communicate the value of their feedback. Use compelling language that conveys both urgency and belonging to motivate members to participate in the survey.

3. **Conduct a churchwide online Feasibility-Readiness Study:** To effectively share the vision with your church community, send an email containing a link to the survey. This email should also include links to the vision landing page, where they can find resources such as the Vision Case Statement and a video from the Pastor.

The study should seek to answer key questions, including:

- How strongly does the vision resonate with the responding household?
 - If the vision consists of multiple components, what is the weighted average level of support for each?
 - Are there any lingering questions, unresolved concerns, or sources of resistance?
 - What is the support for launching the capital campaign now?
 - What percentage of households are currently considering a commitment to the campaign?
 - Are there specific concerns or trust issues tied to a particular campus, age group, or level of engagement?
 - Based on insights from the ministry and financial leader survey, combined with the churchwide survey, what is the projected giving outcome for the tested campaign?
 - Is now the time to launch the campaign?
4. **Make any needed adjustments to goals and strategy:** The purpose of a feasibility study is to gather objective insights that inform your decision-making. Resist the urge to set an arbitrary goal based on your needs and then manipulate the data to justify it. If your research reveals the church's readiness or giving capacity is lower than expected, be prepared to pivot. This could involve refining your financial targets, dividing the project into strategic phases, or dedicating more time to vision-casting before the official launch. In a multisite environment, a phased approach is often the most effective path forward.

Quick Check

- Have you tested support for the vision and capital campaign churchwide?
- Are there adjustments needed in goals and strategies churchwide or at a campus?
- Based on the information received in the Feasibility-Readiness Study, is now the right time to launch your campaign at every campus?

Example: If your Feasibility-Readiness Study shows strong enthusiasm at your downtown campus but less readiness at a newer suburban campus, consider adjusting the goals or phases for the suburban location. If

more time is needed to develop the vision at one campus, you might explore launching its campaign on a different timeline. This approach respects each community's unique readiness.

4. Plan for Operational Complexity

Managing a large church multisite capital campaign can be a leadership marathon that requires meticulous attention to detail. Juggling multiple construction timelines, coordinating communication across different communities, and tracking financial data from various locations requires robust systems and transparent processes. Without them, your team can quickly become overwhelmed, leading to costly mistakes, missed deadlines, and a breakdown in communication.

Operational readiness means having the right people, processes, and tools in place before the campaign begins. It's about building the internal infrastructure needed to execute your vision with excellence and integrity. Proactive planning minimizes stress, ensures accountability, and builds trust with your congregation by demonstrating good stewardship.

Steps to Consider

1. **Develop a master multisite project plan:** Establish a single, centralized master plan to serve as the definitive source of truth for the entire campaign. This framework should synchronize critical timelines across all campus-specific projects, including architectural design, permitting, construction, and launch. To ensure seamless execution, the plan must explicitly define the roles and responsibilities of both central services teams (e.g., finance, communications, facilities) and campus-level personnel. Most importantly, it should incorporate robust contingency strategies: establish clear protocols for construction delays or potential cost overruns. Anticipating these scenarios in advance is critical to maintaining momentum and fiscal discipline.
2. **Coordinate early with architects and builders:** One of the biggest mistakes churches make is setting a fundraising goal before validating construction costs. Engage your architectural and construction partners during the feasibility phase, not after. They can provide realistic cost estimates, help you value-engineer the project to align the scope with your budget, and identify potential zoning or permitting issues early on. This integration ensures your campaign target is grounded in reality, protecting you from having to return to the congregation later to request more funds.
3. **Invest in the right tools and staffing:** Managing a multisite campaign through Excel spreadsheets is a recipe for inefficiency. To ensure success, invest in a user-friendly project management platform capable of tracking tasks, deadlines, and dependencies across all teams and locations. This centralizes information and boosts transparency and accountability.

Quick Check

- Is there a master timeline that integrates all campus projects and key campaign milestones?
- Are the roles and responsibilities for central staff and campus staff clearly defined and documented?
- Have you secured and vetted professional partners for architecture, construction, and fundraising?

- Do you have the right technology and staffing in place to manage the administrative load?

Example: To improve project coordination, create a single source of truth. Develop individual project plans for each campus initiative and link them to a master campaign timeline or tracker. Assign clear ownership for key activities, such as tasking the campus lead with drafting newsletter updates and the central finance team with processing weekly giving reports. This approach keeps all stakeholders aligned and informed in real-time.

5. Engage People at Every Level

Generosity thrives on connection. People contribute when they feel personally tied to a vision and confident that their support makes a tangible difference. In a large, Multisite church, the primary challenge of an engagement strategy is cultivating this sense of belonging at scale. Communication must be consistent enough to forge a unified identity yet sufficiently nuanced to resonate with the unique context of a member at any specific campus.

A truly effective strategy transcends mere broadcasting; it nurtures a dynamic, two-way conversation. This means celebrating shared stories, actively listening to feedback, and creating meaningful avenues for participation that go far beyond financial support. Ultimately, the goal is to ensure that every individual, regardless of their location, feels like a vital partner in the journey.

Steps to Take

1. **Centralize core messaging, localize delivery:** Establish a collaborative communication framework where your central team crafts the core campaign messaging, primary themes, and branded assets to ensure structural consistency. Simultaneously, empower campus pastors and their teams to adapt this message, ensuring it resonates authentically with their local congregations. For instance, a video update from the senior pastor can serve as a universal foundation, yet it should be paired with a personal appeal from the campus pastor that bridges the broader vision with specific local needs. Similarly, utilize centralized email templates that allow for the integration of campus-specific stories and imagery, blending institutional unity with local relevance.
2. **Build intentional donor relationships:** While it's important to engage the entire church, creating a specific plan to cultivate relationships with financial leaders and high-capacity givers is also crucial. This isn't about giving them preferential treatment, but about stewarding their gifts for maximum impact.

Start by identifying households with major gift capacity at each campus and creating individualized cultivation plans for them. These plans might include personal meetings with the senior or campus pastor, invitations to intimate vision-casting dinners, or exclusive updates on project progress. The ultimate goal is to build a strong relationship based on trust and partnership.

3. **Leverage technology for scalable engagement:** In a Multisite environment, technology is an indispensable ally. Leverage your church management software, online giving platforms and donor development software to develop real-time dashboards that track your progress. Displaying progress reports in your lobbies and on your website fosters transparency and momentum across every campus. Additionally, establish a campaign landing page—"Campaign Hub" on your site to serve as

a comprehensive resource for the vision document, FAQ videos, and project updates. By utilizing targeted email and SMS campaigns, you can ensure that every segment of your congregation receives timely, relevant information that keeps them engaged with the mission.

Quick Check

- Does your campaign messaging maintain consistent core themes while being tailored to resonate with each individual campus?
- Do you have a clear and intentional strategy for cultivating relationships with major gift capacity at each campus?
- Are you leveraging technology to provide real-time updates and streamline the engagement and giving process?

Example: Create a “Campaign Hub” on your website to serve as the central place for your initiative. The main page should feature a video from the senior pastor and an overall progress tracker for the campaign. From there, visitors can select their specific campus to see a welcome video from their campus pastor, read stories of life change within their community, and track progress toward their campus-specific goals.

6. Sustain Momentum After the Launch

Many church leaders feel a sense of relief after their launch event and Commitment Sunday, thinking the hardest work is behind them. However, the reality is that most campaigns falter not during the launch, but in the follow-up. It takes considerable effort to maintain momentum, encourage people to honor their pledges, and keep the vision alive over a 24 to 36-month period, particularly when coordinating across multiple locations.

The fulfillment phase is when the commitments made during the campaign come to life through the church delivering on planned projects and the congregation honoring their financial pledges. A successful fulfillment strategy emphasizes clear communication, ongoing celebration, and seamless integration. This approach not only ensures the campaign's success but also fosters a lasting culture of generosity within the community.

Steps to Take

1. **Keep the vision front and center:** Out of sight, out of mind. Maintaining momentum requires a disciplined strategy for keeping the campaign's vision at the forefront of the congregation's mind. Provide regular updates that highlight financial milestones, but more importantly, emphasize the tangible impact on your ministry. Did you finally break ground on a new facility? Document the moment with photos and videos. Has a family joined the church, drawn by the energy of a new campus? Share their personal journey. By celebrating every victory—regardless of scale—across all locations, you offer a consistent reminder that every contribution translates into a meaningful difference.
2. **Monitor pledge fulfillment with grace:** Establish a system to track giving commitments effectively. Your finance team should provide regular, confidential updates to the leadership team to ensure

transparency. If you notice a donor's giving has paused, approach the situation with care and compassion, not like a bill collector. Follow-ups should be thoughtful and pastoral—a kind email or a personal call from a campus pastor to check in, offer support, and ask how they're doing. It's often a matter of providing a gentle reminder or understanding any changes in their circumstances.

3. **Welcome and onboard new participants:** Your church is vibrant and ever-growing, with new members joining your community throughout the campaign period. To ensure they feel included, it's vital to have a thoughtful plan to invite them into the journey. Integrate the campaign's vision and story into your new members' class or onboarding process, providing clear and engaging materials that explain the purpose of the campaign and how they can get involved. This approach not only supports your financial goals but also helps new members quickly connect with the mission and heart of your church.
4. **Build on the momentum to grow generosity:** A successful capital campaign should do more than just raise funds; it should cultivate a culture of generosity throughout your church. You can harness the momentum from the campaign and share its positive stories to strengthen your annual giving. The campaign offers a powerful, real-world example of what God can accomplish through a generous congregation. Use this as a teaching moment to transition the conversation from a one-time event to a lifestyle of giving, framing generosity as a vital act of worship and a path to deeper discipleship.



Quick Check

- Do you have a reliable system for tracking pledges and a clear plan for pastoral follow-up?
- Do you have a communications calendar in place to provide regular updates and celebrate team successes?
- Is there a clear onboarding process for new campaign donors?

Example: Send out a quarterly "Impact Report" in both email and print formats to keep everyone engaged and excited about what their giving is accomplishing. This beautifully designed report can feature professional photos of construction progress, a short video about a life changed through the ministry, and clear infographics showing the financial progress for each campus.

Spiritual Before Financial

A capital campaign is more than a financial exercise; it's a spiritual journey with the power to transform your church. It can unify your congregation around a common purpose, deepen your members' faith, and accelerate your ministry's impact, allowing you to expand your reach in ways you may not have thought possible.

Achieving this requires careful planning. A solid strategy will help you navigate the complexities of the campaign with clarity and confidence, ensuring every step aligns with your church's vision. Fostering alignment among leaders and members is just as crucial, as it builds a foundation of trust and shared purpose. When you combine this with an inspiring vision that speaks to the heart of your congregation, a capital campaign can turn potential risks into opportunities for extraordinary growth.

Through this process, you can build a stronger, more generous church, better equipped to serve your community and create a lasting impact. With prayerful consideration and intentional effort, your capital campaign can become a defining moment in your church's life, propelling your ministry toward a vibrant future.

This resource series is a collaboration between The Unstuck Group and GenerosityOS.

About GenerosityOS

GenerosityOS brings decades of combined experience serving fast-growing, staff-led churches across the country—helping align generosity with discipleship, enhance ministry strategies, and build sustainable financial systems. Through our proven process, you'll walk away with a comprehensive, customized plan to cultivate a thriving culture of generosity, along with the structure and systems needed to execute it effectively. Learn more at generosityos.com.

About The Unstuck Group

The Unstuck Group helps pastors grow healthy churches by guiding them through experiences to align vision, strategy, team, and action. Our core services include ministry health assessments, strategic planning, staffing and structure reviews, and multisite consulting. Learn more by visiting theunstuckgroup.com.