

## A History of the Association of Fundraising Professionals

### The Beginning

While philanthropy and fundraising have grown significantly during the past 20 years, there was no organization of fundraisers until 1960. In the winter of 1959, three noted fundraisers met to share a common vision. Benjamin Sklar of Brandeis University, William R Simms of the National Urban League, and Harry Rosen of the Federation of Jewish Philanthropies, had long considered the need for an association of fundraisers. Their discussions led to the idea of the National Society of Fund Raisers (NSFR).

### Dr. Abel Hanson – NSFR’s First President

To help launch and lead the organization, the three chose Dr. Abel Hanson, a professional fundraiser and instructor who had written a monograph on fundraising. The purpose and mission of the organization was defined in its Article of Incorporation.

### NSFR Chartered in New York

The National Society of Fund Raisers was officially chartered by the state of New York on June 21, 1960. By spring 1962, the Society numbered 197. By the end of 1965, NSFR had almost 500 members from 26 states. NSFR was truly becoming national, and the dream of an international association for fundraisers was slowly coming to fruition.

### President Goldstein’s Leadership

Henry ‘Hank’ Goldstein became volunteer president in 1973. He understood that an effective national organization needed a full-time professional staff. Under his leadership, the NSFR Institute of Continuing Education (now the AFP Foundation for Philanthropy) was created to raise contributions and benefit from 501(c)(3) organizational status. The Institute allowed the Society to renew its commitment to fundraising education.

### Changes in Leadership, Programs

In 1977, NSFR hired its first paid president, Fletcher Hall. With the establishment of the paid presidency, volunteer leaders became chairs. That same year, NSFR moved its national offices from New York to Washington, D.C., and changed its name to the National Society of Fund Raising Executives (NSFRE).

### President Campbell Establishes New Divisions

The tenure of Donald A. Campbell, Jr. (1978 - 1980) marked a turning point in NSFRE’s history, as he divided NSFRE’s activities into four major operating divisions: Professional Education, Membership Services, Public Affairs, and Operations. To alert chapters and members of pending changes in federal and state laws, NSFRE established its legislative network, today called the Government Relations Activist Network.

### Certification Standards

The Certification committee developed minimum certification requirements – eligibility at the five-year level with no prerequisite graduate work. Over 400 members were certified in 1981, the first official year of the program. With its new operational structure and successful certification programs, NSFRE entered the 1980s with the capacity to strengthen the fundraising profession, advance the tradition of philanthropy, and realize its founders’ dreams.

### The 1980s

NSFRE’s third decade was marked by impressive growth and an increasing sense of professionalism. During the 1980s the Society focused on the legislative and public affairs arena. Robert Blum became Chairman of the Board in March 1980. That same month, J. Richard Wilson was named Executive Vice President. Blum and Wilson agreed that their first priority would be to restructure NSFRE from a volunteer-driven to a staff-managed organization with volunteer input on policy and grassroots issues and activities.

## Consortium is Formed

NSFRE began to reach out to related organizations. A consortium comprising the chief staff officers of key philanthropic organizations, including the Council for Advancement and Support of Education, the American Association of Fund Raising Counsel, Independent Sector, and United Way met informally to discuss common issues. This consortium continues to meet today. In 1981, the certification program became reality. The first CFREs were conferred, making a huge difference in how the organization was viewed by both its members and the entire philanthropic community.

## Changes to the Board of Directors

In 1985, NSFRE boasted 5,400 members in 70 chapters across North America. The Society offered over 800 educational programs and established a fund to assist in the formation of new chapters. A Minorities Task Force was formed to address the advancement, and service for minority fundraising professionals and the Professional Advancement Division developed the case statement for Advanced Certification (ACFRE). These activities reflected the association's commitment to the fundraising profession – a maturing profession that would explode in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

## The 1990s

The 1990s was a decade of unprecedented growth for both the fundraising profession and NSFRE. Charitable giving rose dramatically, and major gifts from world-famous personalities put philanthropy in the public spotlight. Fundraising and the non-profit profession became a critical part of the economy.

## A Strong Voice in Legislative Affairs

As the association grew, so did its involvement in national and state legislation. The organization's work in public affairs reached a new zenith with development of the Donor Bill of Rights. In November 1993, the Society developed a new strategic plan focused on strengthening NSFRE's relationships with its chapters, developing chapter and volunteer leadership, and effectively using its resources. The NSFRE Journal was revised and renamed *Advancing Philanthropy* and a new accreditation program using continuing education units (CEUs) was established. In 1997, membership reached 18,000 members in 149 chapters.

## Maehara Named President and CEO

Paulette V. Maehara, CFRE, was named NSFRE's new president and CEO in June 1998. A new Public Affairs Department was created to oversee the association's legislative, regulatory, and public relations efforts. By the end of 1999, membership surpassed 22,000 members in 157 chapters.

## A New Millennium

Just as the fundraising profession was becoming an important part of the economy and society, so was NSFRE becoming a critical element in and advocate for philanthropy and charitable giving. The new millennium created opportunities for the association to realize its full potential. It would all begin in January 2001 with a new name, the Association of Fundraising Professionals.

