

Leadership in Action Final Report

The Platohedro Fundraising Campaign

Host organisation: Corporación Platohedro

Location: Medellín, Colombia

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Programme: Laidlaw Leadership in Action, Reaction for Impact 2026

Project Overview

My Leadership in Action project supported Corporación Platohedro, a creative and collaborative non-profit organisation based in Medellín. Platohedro integrates art, technology and education to promote personal, social and environmental transformation, particularly among children, young people and women who face inequality, violence and limited access to educational and cultural opportunities.

The project focused on strengthening Platohedro's communications and fundraising capacity. Its purpose was to improve the organisation's international visibility, communicate its impact more clearly, and develop sustainable ways of attracting donors to support its programmes.

Platohedro operates from a repurposed community space in Medellín and has built a reputation, over more than a decade of work, as a hub where technology, art and education intersect with grassroots social transformation. Its programmes reach participants who are often excluded from formal educational and cultural infrastructure, and the organisation relies heavily on a mix of grants, partnerships and community support to sustain its activities. Entering this environment as an external contributor meant that the first task was not fundraising itself, but understanding an organisation whose values, working rhythms and relationships with its community had been built over many years, and ensuring that any communications or fundraising work I supported was additive to that identity rather than a reinterpretation of it.

Approach and Methodology

Given the six-week duration of the placement, I approached the project in three broad phases: listening and diagnosis, development of materials and systems, and handover.

- **Listening and diagnosis:** the first stage involved understanding Platohedro's programmes, beneficiaries, existing communications and prior fundraising attempts through conversations with staff, review of existing materials, and observation of programme activities. This stage was essential to avoid proposing generic fundraising solutions that did not fit Platohedro's context or values.
- **Development:** the middle stage focused on producing concrete, usable outputs — descriptions, donor research, campaign structures and platform recommendations — in close consultation with staff, so that materials could be tested and refined rather than delivered as a finished product with no local input.

- Handover: the final stage consolidated all outputs into a format that staff and volunteers could maintain independently, including a written explanation of how each resource should be updated and used going forward.

Throughout the project, I worked as part of a small team of scholars, which required dividing responsibilities clearly, sharing drafts for feedback, and coordinating with Platohedro staff whose time and availability were limited. Regular check-ins with the organisation's team helped ensure that our proposed direction remained grounded in their priorities rather than in assumptions we had made from outside.

Stakeholder Engagement

The project involved several distinct stakeholder groups, each with different needs and expectations.

- Platohedro staff, who needed materials and systems that were practical to maintain with limited time and resources, and that reflected the organisation's tone and values rather than a generic non-profit voice.
- Programme participants and beneficiaries, whose stories and experiences informed the content we developed, and who needed to be represented with dignity rather than as passive recipients of aid.
- Prospective international donors and partners, who needed clear, credible information about Platohedro's mission and impact in order to make informed decisions about support.
- Former artists-in-residence and volunteers, an existing network with first-hand experience of Platohedro's work, who represented a distinct and underused channel for referrals, testimonials and donations.

Balancing these groups required frequent judgement calls about tone, emphasis and framing — for example, deciding how much detail to include about the social challenges Platohedro's participants face, so that donor communications were honest and compelling without being exploitative of participants' circumstances.

Initial Goals

At the outset of the project, our main goals were to:

- Design and support a fundraising campaign that communicated Platohedro's impact and programmes.
- Research and develop fundraising opportunities through platforms such as Vaki and Patreon.
- Create clear English-language communications for international donors and supporters.
- Improve Platohedro's online presence and institutional positioning.
- Develop promotional materials for its educational, artistic and technology programmes.
- Build a structured donor-outreach system, including a database of potential supporters.
- Leave the organisation with reusable resources and systems that could continue to support fundraising after the project ended.

The initial impact plan aimed to improve the website and digital platforms; establish or strengthen channels such as LinkedIn, Vaki, TikTok, Patreon and Linktree; develop a list of 100 potential donors; contact prospective supporters; and produce promotional materials that clearly explained Platohedro's work.

Sustainable Development Goals

Primary SDG: SDG 4 — Quality Education

The project primarily contributed to SDG 4: Quality Education. Platohedro provides educational and creative programmes for children, teenagers, young adults and mothers, including workshops in art, technology, entrepreneurship and digital education. By improving the organisation's fundraising and communications capacity, the project helped strengthen its ability to secure resources for these learning opportunities.

Secondary SDG: SDG 10 — Reduced Inequalities

The project's secondary SDG was SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities. Platohedro works with underserved communities affected by inequality, violence, displacement, precarious economic conditions and limited access to education, art and culture. The fundraising campaign aimed to increase support for inclusive programmes that provide safe spaces, psychosocial support, skills development and opportunities for participants to imagine alternative futures.

Additional SDG Contributions

The project also aligned with the following goals:

SDG 5 — Gender Equality: The campaign promoted Amapolas, Platohedro's programme for women and mothers, which provides technological education, entrepreneurship training, artistic workshops and psychosocial support.

SDG 8 — Decent Work and Economic Growth: Entrepreneurship training, technology education, skills development and artistic residencies can improve participants' future economic opportunities.

SDG 9 — Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure: Platohedro's work includes coding, digital art, blockchain, emerging technologies, open knowledge and technology education.

SDG 11 — Sustainable Cities and Communities: Platohedro creates inclusive cultural and community spaces in Medellín where people can learn, collaborate and participate in artistic and educational activities.

SDG 16 — Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions: Its programmes promote human rights, psychosocial wellbeing, collective participation and alternatives to cycles of violence.

SDG 17 — Partnerships for the Goals: The fundraising strategy aimed to strengthen connections with international donors, foundations, former artists-in-residence, volunteers and partner organisations.

These additional goals should be understood as areas of contribution and alignment, rather than SDGs achieved independently within the six-week project.

Main Responsibilities

- Researching cultural crowdfunding platforms and fundraising approaches.
- Contributing to the development of a Vaki and Patreon strategy.
- Creating English-language descriptions of Platohedro and its programmes.
- Developing key messages for donor communications and promotional content.
- Helping plan a social-media fundraising campaign.

- Supporting the creation of donor-facing copy, including Vaki descriptions, thank-you messages and fundraising emails.
- Researching potential donors, organisations, foundations and former artists-in-residence.
- Contributing to the improvement of Platohedro's online presence, including its website, LinkedIn, Vaki, Patreon and Linktree.
- Helping organise project tasks, responsibilities, deadlines and handover information.
- Working with the wider team to ensure that communications reflected Platohedro's values and avoided paternalistic or overly institutional language.

Achievements and Outputs

During the project, I contributed to a range of practical outputs that Platohedro could continue using after the placement:

- An English key-phrase and descriptions bank covering Platohedro's mission, programmes, beneficiaries and impact.
- Descriptions for programmes including Amapolas, Matinee, Ideatorio, Jaguar Escool, RadioCypher and Art and Thought.
- Fundraising copy for Vaki, Patreon, donor emails and thank-you messages.
- Research and recommendations relating to crowdfunding platforms and donor engagement.
- A potential donor and contact database containing corporate, philanthropic, individual and international prospects.
- A list of former artists-in-residence who could be contacted for donations, referrals or campaign promotion.
- A proposed social-media campaign structure, including launch content, donation-focused posts, programme spotlights and participant testimonials.
- Suggestions for using website improvements, LinkedIn, Vaki, Patreon, TikTok and Linktree to make Platohedro more accessible to potential donors and partners.
- A project planner documenting deliverables, deadlines, responsibilities, resources and progress.
- An impact-measurement framework linking activities to outcomes, long-term impact and possible indicators.

The project also helped make Platohedro's work easier to explain to international audiences. Instead of relying on lengthy or highly technical explanations, the organisation was left with concise, reusable descriptions that could be adapted for websites, social media, fundraising platforms, presentations and donor outreach.

Impact

The most significant contribution of the project was the development of organisational capacity, rather than the immediate generation of a specific amount of funding. The campaign created a stronger foundation for future fundraising by:

- Making Platohedro's programmes and impact easier for donors to understand.

- Providing clearer explanations of where donations could be directed.
- Expanding the organisation's potential donor and partner network.
- Creating reusable communications materials.
- Providing a more structured approach to campaign planning and donor outreach.
- Reducing the time required for staff to explain the organisation's work.
- Supporting Platohedro's ambition to develop a stronger international presence.

The project's intended long-term impact was to help Platohedro attract more donors, participants, residents and partners, thereby strengthening the sustainability of its educational, artistic and technology programmes. The impact plan proposed measuring progress through indicators such as donor numbers, donation amounts, Patreon subscriptions, social-media engagement, platform visibility and feedback from Platohedro staff.

Challenges and Learning

One of the main challenges was that fundraising requires sustained implementation beyond the duration of a six-week project. Developing a strategy, database and campaign materials is only the first stage; continued outreach, regular content production, donor follow-up and platform management are needed to generate measurable financial results. This meant recalibrating what “success” looked like for a short placement: rather than aiming for donations received, the more realistic and valuable goal was to leave Platohedro significantly better equipped to raise funds after we left.

I also learned that communications for a social-impact organisation must be carefully designed. Messages should be clear and emotionally engaging while representing participants respectfully. It was important to avoid presenting Platohedro as a “saviour” organisation and instead to emphasise collaboration, dignity, empowerment and community-led change. Early drafts of donor copy sometimes leaned too heavily on describing hardship; through feedback from Platohedro staff, I learned to rebalance this towards agency, creativity and resilience, which better reflected how the organisation understood its own work.

Working in Medellín also strengthened my ability to adapt to a different cultural and organisational context. Collaboration required active listening, flexibility, cross-cultural communication and an appreciation that solutions needed to reflect Platohedro's existing identity rather than impose an external model. Language was a practical challenge throughout: producing English-language materials required close collaboration with Spanish-speaking staff to make sure nuance and meaning were not lost in translation, which slowed some tasks but ultimately produced stronger, more accurate outputs.

A further challenge was scope. It was tempting, given the breadth of channels Platohedro could theoretically use — website, LinkedIn, Vaki, Patreon, TikTok, Linktree — to spread effort thinly across all of them. Over time, I learned to prioritise the platforms and materials most likely to be sustained by Platohedro's own capacity after the project ended, rather than the platforms that looked most impressive in a final report.

Leadership Development

This project gave me concrete opportunities to develop each strand of the Laidlaw Leadership Framework: leading self, leading others, and leading in different contexts.

Leading Self

Working on fundraising for an organisation I had only just met required me to manage uncertainty and to be honest about the limits of my own knowledge — particularly around Colombian cultural norms, donor behaviour in the region, and Platohedro's own history. I had to actively seek feedback rather than assume my instincts about “good” communications, shaped by a UK and university context, would transfer directly. This required a degree of humility and self-awareness that I continued to draw on throughout the placement, and that I now recognise as a recurring feature of any leadership role: knowing when to lead with expertise and when to lead with curiosity.

Leading Others

As part of a small team of scholars, I took on responsibility for coordinating specific workstreams, which meant clarifying priorities, allocating tasks according to strengths, and keeping the wider team aligned on deadlines and handover requirements. I learned that leadership in a short, high-ambiguity project is less about directing others and more about creating enough shared clarity that a small team can work independently and still arrive at a coherent, consistent output.

Leading in Different Contexts

Leading within an unfamiliar organisational and cultural context required a different leadership register than I had previously practised in university societies or internships. Influence had to be earned through demonstrated understanding of Platohedro's mission, not assumed through title or role. This experience sharpened my appreciation that effective leadership in an international, cross-sector setting depends on adaptability, listening, and a willingness to let local expertise — in this case, Platohedro's staff — shape the direction of the work, rather than imposing a pre-existing framework from outside.

Taken together, these experiences have shaped how I now think about leadership: less as a fixed set of skills to apply, and more as a responsiveness to context, paired with the discipline to leave something genuinely useful behind.

Handover

The handover included the English descriptions bank, fundraising research, donor and former-resident contact lists, donor-facing copy, campaign ideas, platform recommendations and the project planner. These resources were intended to be updated and reused by Platohedro's staff and volunteers.

A future scholar undertaking similar work should understand the importance of learning about the organisation before proposing solutions, building relationships with staff and volunteers, allowing time for approvals, and leaving behind systems that are practical to maintain. The project should be approached as a capacity-building exercise, not simply as a short-term marketing campaign.

Conclusion

The Platohedro Fundraising Campaign achieved its main objective of strengthening the organisation's communications and fundraising foundation. It produced practical materials, clearer programme messaging, donor-outreach resources and a structured campaign framework that Platohedro can continue developing.

The project primarily supported SDG 4: Quality Education, with SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities as its secondary SDG. It also contributed to SDGs 5, 8, 9, 11, 16 and 17 through its support for gender-inclusive programmes, skills development, technological innovation, community spaces, human-rights-based work and international partnerships.

Overall, the experience developed my skills in fundraising strategy, communications, project management, cross-cultural collaboration and social-impact measurement, while leaving Platohedro with resources to support its future sustainability.