

# ESOPATHON

EMPLOYEE OWNERSHIP FOUNDATION

## 2024 PARTICIPATION GUIDE



EMPLOYEE  
OWNERSHIP  
FOUNDATION



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## We are thrilled to have your support!

Welcome to the Employee Ownership Foundation's (EOF) Fourth Annual ESOPATHON and thank you for supporting the Foundation's mission of growing employee ownership throughout America. Nationwide, amazing ESOP companies, professionals, and employee owners like you are celebrating and raising awareness of employee ownership and its benefits for workers, their families, their local communities, and our economy. We truly believe in an ownership economy, where everyone can participate in a company's success through hard work, commitment, and engagement.

The funds raised during ESOPATHON will advance that vital mission by both protecting the ESOPs that already exist and growing our numbers so more Americans and communities can benefit from employee ownership.

This Fall, during Employee Ownership Month, you can join thousands of individuals and company teams all across the nation who will proudly display the pride, responsibility, and financial benefit that come with being an owner and help raise the necessary resources for the future of employee ownership. By participating you will make a meaningful and impactful contribution towards the Employee Ownership Foundation, raising awareness for ESOPs and expanding the knowledge and opportunity for future employee-owned companies.

This Participation Guide contains helpful information you need to know about the Employee Ownership Foundation's ESOPATHON and how to make your efforts a success.

Thank you for joining the effort—and thank you for supporting the Employee Ownership Foundation!

Sincerely,



David Fitz-Gerald  
Chair, Board of Trustees  
Employee Ownership Foundation



James J. Bonham  
President  
Employee Ownership Foundation



# ESOPATHON

**ESOPATHON** is an employee ownership engagement and fundraising program for the Employee Ownership Foundation, held annually each fall through the end of October's Employee Ownership Month. It works in a few simple steps:

1

Pick an activity.

2

Set up and personalize a participation page of your own at [esopathon.org](https://esopathon.org).

3

Inform colleagues, friends, and family about the importance of Employee Ownership and ask them to join your team.

4

Kick off your campaign and ask for support!

Every ESOP is unique and so is **ESOPATHON**! You can participate in **ESOPATHON** any time from when registration opens to the last day of Employee Ownership Month in October! You can pick whatever activity you wish, so long as it can be measured by time, distance, or units—you set a goal and raise funds toward that goal. For a list of ideas see the [“ABC’s of Ideas”](#) section of this document.

## Why should anyone contribute?

The reason any one person will support your campaign will be different. For your colleagues at work, try asking for their support because your efforts help support the ESOP to which you all belong. For your friends who don't work at an ESOP company, the Employee Ownership Foundation provides much-needed research and public awareness so that more companies can

form them, and more communities can benefit from job stability, wage gains, and the workplace culture that flows from ESOPs. And for your family members, you can help them understand the benefits that employee ownership brings to your own family and maybe theirs, too. ***Plus, as a recognized 501(c)(3), donations to the Employee Ownership Foundation are tax deductible!***



## Where does the money go?

Your fundraising will benefit the Employee Ownership Foundation's programs that provide resources for every prospective and current employee owner. Monies raised last year went toward funding major public awareness campaigns that are working! Those campaigns help make your company more valuable, cause more companies to consider forming ESOPs, and create more customers for employee-owned businesses. They also support critical research, scholarships, and other efforts by the Foundation. For more information about where your money goes, see the section **"Where Does the Money Go?"** in this document.

## How much do I have to raise?

There is no required minimum, so we recommend setting your goal to what you feel is achievable yet ambitious. Remember you can always create a team to and work together to maximize your success and make it more fun!

## Why participate in ESOPATHON?

For over 30 years, the Employee Ownership Foundation has been the principal financial supporter for essential research about employee ownership at academic institutions. Some of this research has required the collection of data over years and even decades in order to prove what we all know—employee ownership works. This critically important research has laid the foundation to ensure employee ownership is understood by key decision-makers and can continue to be an option for more Americans. Additionally, the EOF supports employee owners and their companies through scholarships, fellowships, and special programming such as the ESOP Employee Accelerator and the CEO leadership program at the University of Pennsylvania.

As the EOF enters its fourth decade, our nation and our economy are facing major transitions. The Foundation needs resources to continue its very successful legacy programs while working to dramatically increase awareness of the benefits employee ownership provides our nation while helping more business owners, and the public overall, understand its value.

The real strength of the employee ownership movement comes from the more than 10 million individual employee owners throughout our community. ESOPATHON is your opportunity to stand with your peers and support employee ownership and your ESOP. When you participate in ESOPATHON, the funds you raise fuel the mission of the Employee Ownership Foundation and help expand access while protecting those who already have an ESOP.

**We're sure you would all agree, every American deserves the opportunity to be an employee owner.**



# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

## What is ESOPATHON?

ESOPATHON is an activity-based fundraising event that allows employee owners to set up their own individual charitable fundraising webpage, as well as participate in teams together (like their own ESOP company team), all while celebrating Employee Ownership Month.

## Where is ESOPATHON?

Wherever you are! ESOPATHON is a virtual fundraising event that lets you share your story and support employee ownership no matter where you are located. Companies can form teams that allow in person, virtual and remote employees to participate as well.

## I'm not much of a runner, can I still participate?

Of course! ESOPATHON was built for everyone to participate by doing whatever they choose! You can pick the activity that best suits you. Do you swim laps? Read books? Want to drink more water during the day? If you can track it in distance, time, or units (think books per week) then you can participate through an activity. As you reach out to your friends, coworkers, or even family members, you will ask them to donate towards your activity. Want to swim a mile every day? Read a book every week? Run 100 miles during the month? Go for it!

## When is ESOPATHON?

Registration opens early September and runs through the end of Employee Ownership Month, October 31st. You can begin your efforts as soon as you register at [esopathon.org](https://esopathon.org).

## When can I register?

Registration will begin on Sunday, September 8th and remain open until midnight of October 31st.

## Where can I mail a donation?

If you cannot donate online, please mail checks to the Employee Ownership Foundation, 200 Massachusetts Avenue NW, Suite 410. Washington, DC 20001.

## Who do I contact if I have more questions?

If you have questions about participating in ESOPATHON please email us at

[ESOPATHON@EmployeeOwnershipFoundation.org](mailto:ESOPATHON@EmployeeOwnershipFoundation.org).

To register for  
ESOPATHON  
please visit  
[esopathon.org](https://esopathon.org)





# FUNDRAISING TIPS: EASY STEPS TO MAKE THE ASK

Here's an example of a great "ask" following the steps below:

*"I'm fundraising for the Employee Ownership Foundation by participating in ESOPATHON. The money I raise will fuel the mission of the Employee Ownership Foundation (a federally registered nonprofit) and help expand access to employee ownership. It's important for me to raise awareness so others can benefit from employee ownership like I have. My company has (number) employee owners in (city) alone and supports local jobs, economic stability, and is a strong supporter of our community through volunteer and charitable contributions. During the month of October, I will be (activity – such as running a mile per day) with my colleagues to support ESOPATHON and bring more employee-owned businesses into existence. Will you support me by donating \$25?"*

## STEP 1

### **Explain what you're doing.**

"I'm fundraising for the Employee Ownership Foundation by participating in ESOPATHON. The money I raise will fuel the mission of the Employee Ownership Foundation (a federally registered nonprofit) and help expand access to employee ownership."

## STEP 2

### **Make it personal.**

"It's important for me to raise awareness so others can benefit from employee ownership like I have. My company has (number) employee owners in (city) alone and supports local jobs, economic stability, and is a strong supporter of our community through volunteer and charitable contributions."

## STEP 3

### **Share how you are supporting ESOPATHON.**

"During the month of October, I will be (activity—like running a mile a day) with my colleagues to support ESOPATHON and bring more employee-owned businesses into existence."

## STEP 4

### **Make a specific request.**

"Will you support me by donating \$25?"

## STEP 5

### **Be patient and follow up.**

Don't rush a response, give your donor time to consider your request and plan to follow up soon.





# 10

# TIPS FOR FUNDRAISING SUCCESS

- 1. Donate to your own campaign.** Want to know the best way to start? Lead by example and make a **tax-deductible** donation to your own campaign. Not only will you take the first step toward reaching your goal, but your gift will inspire others to also give.
- 2. Tailor your message to who you're asking.** Consider what type of message would be appropriate. Some might prefer a more formal message, while others respond better to an informal message. Make sure your email explains why you are participating and supporting ESOPATHON and a link to your campaign page and instructions on how to donate.
- 3. Send some emails.** Reach out to co-workers, vendors, family members, friends, neighbors— anyone who might be willing to support and expand employee ownership. Take advantage of the predrafted messages in the ESOPATHON platform and don't forget to check out the platform's other tools like social message sharing!
- 4. Give a timeline.** Donors don't always donate right away, so providing a timeline gives potential donors a sense of urgency and enough time to do a little research if needed.
- 5. Use multiple avenues to share.** Social media is a powerful tool for fundraising. Share your personalized page on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and/or Instagram and continue to share updates on your efforts all month long.
- 6. Don't forget the human connection.** While emails might be easier, picking up the phone or walking over to your coworker's desk is always the preferred method to making the ask!
- 7. Get creative.** Instead of sending out emails, consider hosting a dinner party and asking your guests to contribute to your efforts. If you're looking for more ideas check out our "[ABC's of Ideas](#)" guide.
- 8. Follow up.** It's very common to put things off, a little reminder nudge never hurt anyone.
- 9. Be appreciative.** Make sure you are always sending a timely thank you note! You can even tag them on social media and thank them publicly, so that both they and others know their donation is appreciated.
- 10. Pursue matching gifts.** Many employers sponsor matching gift programs and will provide charitable contributions for donations made by their employees. A matching gift is an easy way to double your tax-deductible donation to the Employee Ownership Foundation! Check to see if your company has a matching gift program or ask if they are willing to match your contribution.



# EMPLOYEE OWNERSHIP MONTH AD PROGRAM



## What is the ad program?

The ad program is an initiative to support the Employee Ownership Foundation during the month of October, celebrated as Employee Ownership Month. Companies can make a donation to the Foundation to have their logo featured in a full-page or half-page advertisement in their local newspaper. The ad will highlight the benefits of employee ownership and recognize participating companies.



## Who can participate?

Members and their companies who are interested in participating in our yearly philanthropy event, ESOPATHON. We specifically focus on employee-owned business owners who want to support the Foundation and gain visibility in their local community.

## Why should I participate?

Participating in the ad program offers several benefits:

- **Community Recognition:** Gain valuable marketing and recognition in your local newspaper.
- **Support a Worthy Cause:** Contribute to the Employee Ownership Foundation, which supports scholarships, educational programs, and leadership training for employee owners.
- **Positive PR:** Enhance your company's public image and demonstrate your community involvement and philanthropic spirit.

## How does it help celebrate Employee Ownership Month?

The ad program celebrates Employee Ownership Month by raising awareness about employee ownership and highlighting the value it brings to businesses and communities. The advertisement will showcase the logos of participating companies, emphasizing their support for employee ownership and the Foundation's initiatives.

## How does it work?

1. **Make a Donation:** Companies interested in participating will make a donation to the Employee Ownership Foundation.
2. **Ad Placement:** In return, your company's logo will be included in a full-page or half-page advertisement in your local newspaper during Employee Ownership Month.



3. **Coordinate with Us:** We will work with you to ensure that your company is properly recognized and celebrated in your local newspaper.
4. **Enjoy the Visibility:** Your company will gain visibility and recognition in the community, celebrating employee ownership and supporting the Foundation's mission.

## What cities will this be available in?

The Foundation has already run two very successful advertisements in The Gazette (Cedar Rapids, Iowa) and Mainebiz (Portland, Maine) in October of last year and we are looking to expand! While we are focused on the following cities, we are happy to explore your city or local newspaper!

- |                  |                   |
|------------------|-------------------|
| -Honolulu, HI    | -Indianapolis, ID |
| -Kansas City, MO | -Philadelphia, PA |
| -Chicago, IL     | -Atlanta, GA      |
| -Minneapolis, MN | -Denver, CO       |
| -Washington, DC  | ...and more!      |
| -Columbus, OH    |                   |

## I do not see my city listed - can others be added?

If you have suggestions for a local newspaper, reach out to us! We are always looking to expand the Employee Ownership message and would be glad to work with you to bring awareness to your local community.

## How do I get started?

Reach out to Leandra Wilder, [lwilder@esopassociation.org](mailto:lwilder@esopassociation.org) or (770) 549-1955, to let the team know you would like to participate. We will help guide you through the entire process!

Join us in celebrating Employee Ownership Month and making a meaningful impact through ESOPATHON!



# WHERE DOES YOUR MONEY GO?

## ESOP Educational Programs

### The Oxford Symposium on Employee Ownership

In 2022 the Employee Ownership Foundation stepped onto the international stage as the lead sponsor of the 7th annual **Oxford Symposium on Employee Ownership**, held at Oxford University in the United Kingdom. Together with our key strategic partners, the UK-based Center on Business and Poverty and the European law firm Fieldfisher, the Foundation sponsored a truly groundbreaking effort that brought together representatives from multiple countries across several continents to discuss the barriers to expanding employee ownership.

Central to the Symposium's success was the active participation of high-level government officials from multiple nations. Notably, the United States Senate was represented by six very senior-level staff from the Senate Finance Committee, Health Education Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee, and Senate Budget Committee. These attendees, whose travel and expenses were sponsored by

the Foundation, are some of the most influential officials in Washington with direct roles in U.S. policy impacting ESOPs. The delegation from the UK included Dawn Butler, a Member of Parliament, and Baroness Sharon Bowles of Berkhamsted, both longtime supporters of employee ownership. Several other nations were represented by government officials learning about employee ownership as they are actively forming their own policies, including delegations from Canada, Denmark, and Spain. In the following year, the Oxford Symposium grew to more than 20 countries and is slated for additional growth this year.



### Leading in an Ownership Setting

An educational partnership between the Employee Ownership Foundation and University of Pennsylvania, the program addresses the relationship between ESOP companies and the effectiveness of their leaders. A key focus area is how leaders can foster employee engagement that impacts the company's bottom line.

Limited to just 20 participants each year, this program for CEOs is focused on enhancing each participant's leadership effectiveness, and on building a network of ESOP CEOs who can share resources and best practices to enhance the success of ESOPs across the county.





## ESOP Employee Accelerator

This one-day course is designed primarily for non-managerial employee owners who would benefit from a deeper knowledge and understanding of basic business concepts and ESOP operations. The course is typically offered in concert with The ESOP Association's Chapter meetings, and includes interactive lectures, media-driven case studies, small group discussions, and structured exercises. The program is designed to develop a solid foundation and new perspectives on ownership. The ESOP Employee Accelerator program is one of the most exciting new offerings from the EOF and something that will return both personal and company benefits for employee owners who attend.

## Business Succession Video Series

Our popular Business Succession video series, started in 2021, released several more company and professional videos in 2022. This series has been a tremendous boon to those trying to explain or understand ESOPs, to policy makers trying to understand the ESOP journey, to our ESOP professional community, and to media outlets seeking information on ESOPs. The real-life stories shared in these videos, which clearly communicate the value of ESOPs and their impact on business owners' legacies, the employee owners, and their communities, have been a powerful tool in our education efforts.





## Scholarship Programs



### Charles R. Edmunson Scholarships

The EOF proudly grants 10 scholarships annually in the name of Charles Edmunson. These scholarships are one of the Foundation's core programs, created nearly 25 years ago to help defray the cost of sending non-management employee owners to programs that promote and offer education on employee ownership.

### EOF Trustee Scholars

Last December, the Employee Ownership Foundation formally launched our Trustee Scholars Program. We started this scholarship program to better connect our employee owners, their families, and their companies to the work of the Foundation, and to instill within new generations the transformative power of employee ownership.

Each year, the Foundation will award two scholarships of five thousand dollars each, and each scholarship is renewable for up to four years. That means a student working toward a four-year degree can receive up to twenty thousand dollars from the Foundation to help pay for tuition and other expenses.

With the Foundation's mission to grow employee ownership, what better advocates could there be than the children of employee owners, who have had a front-row seat to the life-changing benefits that come with working at an ESOP.

Because of the enthusiasm for the Foundation's mission, and the generosity of our ESOPs and employee owners, especially during ESOPATHON, that we are able to fund the Trustee Scholars. It is your support over the years that allows us to pay it forward and give back to our community.





# ESOP Research

## Employee Ownership Research

Research is central to the Foundation's mission. Over nearly three decades of existence, the EOF has been the nation's leading sponsor of data collection and research programs in employee ownership, funding millions of dollars in survey analysis, fellowships, and academic inquiry.

The Employee Ownership Foundation has funded the National ESOP Employee Survey through Louis O. Kelso Fellowships at the Rutgers Institute for the Study of Employee Ownership and Profit Sharing.

## Groundbreaking Market Research

The EOF and The ESOP Association have just concluded a comprehensive, first-of-its-kind market research study into Americans' attitudes toward ESOPs and employee ownership. TEA and EOF will be releasing findings and guides to help ESOPs and professional service providers gain an edge in marketing, internal and external communications through data-driven insights that resonate with key audiences, including customers, employees and prospective hires, elected officials and the American public, and prospective ESOP founders.

## EOF Executive Series Research

Last year, using the data collected, the Foundation partnered with Rutgers University to begin a yearlong series of academic inquiry that explores different questions that current and prospective ESOP executives and employees face. Below is a selection of questions that the EOF Executive Series Research explored.

- [How Do Pay and Other Benefits Compare Between ESOP and Non-ESOP Firms?](#)
- [ESOP Communications: Does It Even Matter?](#)
- [Do ESOP Employees Have Better Relationships With Their Supervisors?](#)
- [Younger Workers in ESOPs: What To Do?](#)

Additionally, the EOF is pleased to continue supporting the **Louis O. Kelso Fellowships** which support academic research that conveys the value of employee ownership and help other successful businesses become employee owned.

We are proud of the continuing programs sponsored by the EOF and excited about the new offerings launched last year. This year promises to bring growth in these areas, and new exciting additions to the Foundation's efforts promoting employee ownership.

Learn more about employee ownership research at [employeeownershipfoundation.org/foundation-research](https://employeeownershipfoundation.org/foundation-research)

To access these resources and learn more about the Employee Ownership Foundation's work, please visit the Foundation's website at:

[employeeownershipfoundation.org](https://employeeownershipfoundation.org)



# CORPORATE TEAMS

Teamwork is the key to success! Forming a corporate team is a great way to get your company celebrating Employee Ownership Month while supporting the Employee Ownership Foundation. Companies can choose to create one team or as many as they would like!

## Why are teams important?

- Increases company visibility and shows its commitment to its employee owners
- Offers employees opportunities to collaborate and communicate across different departments and/or locations
- Promotes team spirit and increases office morale
- Creates partnerships with other ESOPs and employee owners in their community
- Makes a greater contribution to the Employee Ownership Foundation
- And, ultimately, it's more fun to do it together!

## What does it take to be a team captain?

You'll be an amazing team captain if you..

- Invite others to join your team
- Set up a fundraising goal
- Fundraise and encourage your team members to fundraise
- Coordinate activities and invites
- Celebrate team successes
- Personalize and update your team's fundraising page
- Share stories
- Match donations
- Thank your teammates and donors
- Share resources
- Have fun!

## How can my company support a team?

- Recruitment: use corporate newsletters or your company's intranet to encourage participation
- Offer a corporate match for funds raised
- Provide incentives to encourage participation
- Host a lunch or event and encourage attendees to participate

## Team motivation

Here are some ways to motivate others!

- Host a team kick off meeting
- Create some friendly competition by asking other departments or locations to participate
- Create weekly themes
- Organize team activities
- Send team messages
- Highlight your teammates successes!

## Team-building timeline

1. Decide who will be your corporate team captain
2. Set up your team page and goal
3. Decide who should be on your team
4. Ask people to join your team
5. Follow up with anyone who hasn't responded
6. Post messages on social media, on your office intranet site, and/or company newsletter. Pass out flyers or post a sign in your break room.



# ABC'S OF IDEAS

There are endless opportunities to participate, pick one or do them all!



Ad Program, Art show, auction

Bake sale, bike, bowl, bingo

Cycle, cook off, costume party, car wash, cartoons

Dollars for days off, donate, dance marathon, dodgeball

Exercise class, eating contest, embarrass the boss

Fashion show, films, fish, funny photo contest, family day

Game night, golf tournament, guess the amount, garage sale

Host an event, happy hour

Ice cream social

Jump rope, jazz night

Karaoke night, kick-a-habit

Learn a new skill

Match giving, movie night

Night walk

Online cooking class, obstacle course, open mic night

Pizza party, pet challenge, potluck event, ping pong tournament

Quiz night

Run, read, relay race

Swim, scavenger hunt, sports day

Theme day, teatime, talent show, trivia night

Used book sales, unplug from tech, Ultimate Frisbee

Virtual event, vacation days, variety show

Walk, wear something, world record attempt

X-factor competition

Yard sale, yoga marathon

Zero waste day!

**Still stumped? Ask your colleagues how they would like to celebrate Employee Ownership Month and make it happen!**



# EMPLOYEE OWNERSHIP FOUNDATION

## About the Employee Ownership Foundation (EOF)

The Employee Ownership Foundation is a recognized 501(c)(3) organization supported by grants and tax deductible donations as well as the volunteer efforts of individuals throughout the nation. Since its founding, the Employee Ownership Foundation has operated in pursuit of a single overarching goal: to help more individuals become employee owners. If you are an employee owner, the Employee Ownership Foundation has almost certainly been a part of making that happen and making it possible to continue.

The EOF is dedicated to the promotion of employee ownership as a model for business, education, and research. Each year, the EOF distributes between \$350,000 and \$500,000 in advancement of its mission.

The Foundation has raised and donated millions of dollars to collect data used by academics, encourage objective research, and to facilitate dialogue about employee ownership between thought leaders. To learn more visit [employeeownershipfoundation.org](https://employeeownershipfoundation.org).

## About Employee Stock Ownership Plans (ESOPs)

In the simplest terms, an Employee Stock Ownership Plan (ESOP) is a retirement plan. But, in reality, it is much more than that: ESOPs motivate employees, increase productivity, improve worker retention, keep jobs local, contribute to business longevity, and so much more.

ESOPs are governed by some of the same laws and regulations as 401(k) plans. ESOPs, though, are fundamentally different from 401(k)s, offering far more advantages to businesses, owners, employees, and communities.

- ESOPs boost employee engagement. When ESOPs are formed, shares of company stock are allocated to all employees, making them employee owners who share in the rewards if the stock rises and the risks if the stock falls. As a result, they are more invested in helping the business succeed and more likely to tackle problems, such as helping co-workers who are underperforming.
- Most ESOPs require no out-of-pocket contribution from employees. For plenty of people, funding a contribution to a 401(k) each paycheck is a struggle. For employees like these, an ESOP might be the only retirement plan in which they can afford to participate.
- ESOPs help narrow the wealth inequality gap. Employees at ESOP companies tend to earn higher wages and have greater savings than their peers in non-ESOP companies. In 2018, ESOPs distributed \$126.7 billion nationally.

Want to learn more about ESOPs and their benefits?  
Visit [esopassociation.org/what-is-an-esop](https://esopassociation.org/what-is-an-esop)



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