

TIPS FOR BUILDING A MAJOR GIFTS PROGRAM

Major Gifts programs have a common framework but are unique to each organization. Here are some tips to consider:

1. DEFINE YOUR MAJOR GIFTS LEVEL

Run a list of your top 10 donors last year or the year before. Remove any outlier contributions. Average the gifts together and round up. That is your major gift level. But you will want to clarify between the major gifts you ask for annually and those that are larger, more transformational, and that can be designated for specific programs.

2. IF YOU DON'T HAVE A MID-LEVEL DONOR PROGRAM, LIKE A GIVING CIRCLE, CONSIDER LAUNCHING ONE.

Creating a named society for gifts below the major gift level you determined provides an easier way for regular annual donors to think about upgrading, and helps to identify who may be your major gift donors in the future.


3. DETERMINE THE MAJOR GIFTS YOU WILL SOLICIT BOTH ANNUALLY AND FOR SPECIAL INITIATIVES.


With limited bandwidth, you have to focus on where your time can raise the most funds. Once you know who your annual major donors are, commit to a plan for 1:1 engagement to steward and engage them. You may identify a few of those donors for larger gift solicitations. But keep the pipeline you manage realistic to your time.

4. ALWAYS THINK ABOUT BUILDING YOUR MAJOR GIFTS PIPELINE.

Major gifts will only come from people who have been supporting you and who feel engaged. Regularly look at your donor list to watch for trends in upgraded giving, new gifts, etc. Some of those donors who are increasing or making larger new gifts without much effort from you, are worth paying attention to. And, if you can screen your donor file for gift capacity, that will likely uncover large gift potential you didn't know existed.

GOT QUESTIONS?

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