LWRBA
LAKEWOOD RANCH BUSINESS ALLIANCE

LWRBA COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT - NON-PROFIT RESOURCES

DONOR STEWARDSHIP BEST PRACTICES

Step 1: Thank the Donor for Their Gift

Once a donor gives, the first thing you should do is thank them for their generosity. Think of this thank you as a starting point in a more involved process. Always thank the donor with their preferred name and title, regardless of the size of the donation. Provide your thank you in the same channel that the donor gave. Online donors, for example, may prefer email communications.

Step 2: Confirm the Donor's Intentions and Expectations

This step is a chance to confirm your donor's intentions and expectations with their gift or find out about the motivations of a new donor that you haven't been cultivating. It's important that your donor understands the level of stewardship that they'll receive for their gift. A $100 gift, for example, would likely not warrant a personal meal with your board members, and a major gift would require more than a handwritten thank you card.

Step 4: Recognize the Donor Accordingly

Based upon the donor's gift and their expectations, recognize the donor accordingly. Recognition can be public or private. This step requires a great understanding of who your donor is as a person. Some major donors, for example, may love to be put in the public spotlight, while others would cringe at being thanked in a crowded room. Be sure to ask for permission before recognizing donors publicly. It's also important to understand that recognition should not be reserved for major donors alone. Smaller gestures can be effective for new, low, or mid-level donors. An opportunity to sign a banner at an event, for example, is a simple way to recognize all donors.

Step 5: Report the Gift's Impact to the Donor

Why do donors give to your nonprofit? *To help causes that they care about!* Reporting on the donor's impact is vital to fulfilling your donor's expectations. Reports should also be governed by the gift. It would be appropriate to call a major donor to update them personally on how their donation built a new home for a family in need (you could even take them to the worksite!). Your new and smaller-gift donors deserve to see the impact of their gifts just as much. However, in these cases, you can send emails or post a mass update on social media.

Step 6: Begin the Cultivation Process

Once you've properly stewarded a donor, they should feel appreciated and they should understand how vital their contributions are to helping people in need. Now, you need to begin cultivating them for their next gift. A strong stewardship process should help you retain your donors and grow their giving levels, after all.

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DONOR STEWARDSHIP TECHNIQUES

Process Gifts Quickly

Send donation receipts ASAP so that donors know their gift has been received. Most online giving software can automate this process. The more personal your receipts are, the better your donors will be able to understand the impact of their gift. For example, a receipt that thanks a donors for their contribution to a specific campaign will show that your organization is putting the gift toward its intended purpose.

Create Giving Societies

Donors who give a certain amount or pay an annual membership fee can be invited into your giving society. The giving society should hold special perks for members, such as free parking at events or exclusive promotional items. But ultimately, your giving society should focus on a community of philanthropy.

Tell a Story

Write thank you letters that focus on the donor and the people that they want to help. Use donor-centric language, using “you” at least twice as much as “we.” Structure your letter so that you introduce the recipient(s) of your nonprofit’s aid and then explain how the donor helped them. Allow the recipients of your nonprofit’s aid to speak for themselves.

Stewardship Matrix

A stewardship matrix should be segmented based upon your target donor groups, and it can be as granular or as general as your nonprofit needs it to be.

	>$99	$100-$499	$500-$999	$1,000 - $4,999	>$5,000
Thank you email within 48 hours	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Personal note from board member					✓
Invitation to recognition event			✓	✓	✓
Newsletter		✓	✓	✓	✓