

Major Gifts Board Involvement

Board members are the leaders of any non-profit organization. They joined the Board because they understand and support your mission. Unless you have clearly defined board roles and expectations, your Board members may not always know exactly how to pitch in. The Major Gifts Program is an opportunity to introduce Board Members to the importance of cultivating lasting relationships with other individuals who understand and believe in the mission.

Ideally, your Board members will take initiative to introduce friends and colleagues to your organization and to build these lasting relationships that move potential donors into the pipeline from donor to major donor. Not all board members are comfortable with this role, but most can be mentored into the process.

Before enlisting Board members in the Major Gifts Program, it is important to prepare all collateral materials: the case statement, a one-sheet of talking points, brochures/marketing materials, budget information, profiles of donors in the program.

Considering your current Board (or how you plan to develop your Board), you can invite them to participate at different points in the process:

1. **100% participation:** Begin with a Give/Get policy for Board members. A Board member who has not made a monetary donation to your organization will have difficulty encouraging others.
2. **Conduct prospect research:** Board members are often connected; they have networks filled with potential donors. They can provide names or research gifts made to other nonprofit organizations in your industry through annual reports.
3. **Thank You Ambassadors:** Who will make the thank you phone calls? Who is available mid-week to make the one-off calls to the high-level donors? Will you provide a list of donors each month for Board members to make a follow up call? Who can invite a donor for coffee to hear more about why they gave?
4. **Impact Messaging:** Which Board members can gather testimonials from program participants, take photos, conduct interviews, or create video – to be used in the thank you/stewardship process? If they don't possess these skills, perhaps they can be the point person to secure someone's services.
 - a. Gather testimonials
 - b. Take photos
 - c. Conduct interviews
 - d. Create Video clip
5. **Cultivation:** Major Donors appreciate being 'in the know', to feel a part of the inner circle of an organization. Board members are great to brag about your organization. Let them!
 - a. Lead an onsite visit for potential/current major donors
 - b. Offer a Happy Hour/gathering in the home or office for potential/current major donors
 - c. Be filmed for a video
6. **Solicitation Portfolio:** Board members with a longer history with your organization, those who turn in professional circles, and those who feel confident about making an ask, can be enlisted as part of the solicitation team. They can partner with the ED, or Development Officer for in-person meetings before branching out on their own. Sometimes finding the right person to make the ask is as important as the person being asked. Who will have the best rapport to make the ask.