

Major Donor Cultivation Roadmap

Tips and Tools in Building Relationships with Key Donor Prospects

Back to the Basics

The process of engaging a prospective donor toward a specific gift that deepens a long-term philanthropic relationship.

Realistic Timelines

10–24 months	period from initial contact with a prospect to a gift
3 : 1	ratio of initial contacts to realized donors
3–5 years	common length of major gift pledges
6–10	# of visits / contacts before soliciting a gift

Tools in Cultivation

Information

Share additional detail or collateral on a project, an initiative, or an accomplishment.

Ideas

The conversation has led to a strategic discussion that invites following up with additional people or information involved.

Invitations

Strategic invitations to scheduled events or programs, or creating a special micro event to advance the relationship.

Moving the Conversation Along

Have you ever...

- Wondered about the impact of this project on the region?
- Thought about giving back?

Did you know...

- This building is here because of private support?
- Our x program does y?
- This project began because of a personal donation?

Have you met...

- Our program director / professor of ... ?
- NAME, our director of development?
- One of our scholarship students?
- NAME, one of our board members / volunteers?
- NAME, whose gift changed this program?

I'd like to...

- Expand the scope / impact of this program in the next X years.
- See more students involved in / diversity across / awareness of my program.
- See more people as enthusiastic as you about this project.

Indicators of Successful Cultivation

Look for the Right Cues

Questions donors ask when deeply engaged and interested

- “How do we get more students / faculty / programs like this?”
- “What are your goals?”
- “More people should know about this.”
- “How do I get involved?”
- “I’d love to bring my spouse into the conversation?”
- “How do we get more involved?”
- “I’ve always wanted to give back.”
- “What would it take to ...?”

Moving the Conversation Along

Motivation	Do we know what inspires this person to give?
Amount	Do we have an idea of the right size of gift to ask for?
Impact	Are we able to articulate a clear impact of the gift?
Decisions	Are we confident in our knowledge of the people and timing factors that will influence this decision?