

Basic Gift Planning for Chapters – Getting Started

Terms like “charitable remainder trust,” gift annuity,” and a dizzying array of acronyms can make gift planning sound daunting. However, starting a gift planning program doesn’t have to be difficult or complicated. Here are some basics of what you need to know:



The majority of planned gifts are left as bequests through wills and living trusts. If you do nothing else, come up with some simple language to make it easy for people to include you in their wills.

1. **Provide suggested language.** It is important to provide people with a specific suggestion of how to word their bequest. For example:

I bequeath ___% of my residuary estate (or \$___) to the _____ Audubon Chapter, a not-for-profit organization located at [mailing address], for its ongoing conservation and education programs. Our tax ID # is XX-XXXXXXX [this information needs to be included].

2. **Publicize.** Make sure your members and community are aware that your Chapter will accept a bequest. This means including language on your website, email communications, printed newsletters and brochures, as well as fundraising appeals for annual operations. Including something on every piece is key. Potential messages may include:
 - Have you remembered us in your will?
 - Make an impact beyond your lifetime – include a gift to ABC Audubon Chapter in your will.
 - Your suggested language itself, on a web page or publication.
 - Check boxes on gift reply cards, indicating “I have also remembered ABC Audubon Chapter in my will/estate plan”; or “Please contact me to discuss how I can include the Chapter in my will”; etc.

Get your Board involved. Find out who on your Board (or other committees) has already made provisions for you in their will. Consider setting a goal to reach for a certain number of Chapter leaders to make planned gifts. You may also have a Chapter member (such as an attorney) with estate planning experience, who can help provide guidance.

Form a recognition society. Recognizing legacy donors for their intentions may help them feel even more invested in your Chapter, while publicizing the opportunity to others. Members of a “legacy society” might get special recognition in a newsletter or wear a special nametag at Chapter events. *It is also important to honor people who wish to remain anonymous.*

You may wish to name your legacy society after someone who has already made a large gift through their will, or other significant contribution; National Audubon's "Grinnell Legacy Society" is named for George Bird Grinnell, one of the founders of the Audubon movement.

Ready for a more advanced step? Consider these possibilities:

Retirement accounts and **life insurance policies** may also name your Chapter as a beneficiary, without the need to revise a will. Donors should work with their plan's administrator to fill out the appropriate form.

The vast majority of U.S. wealth is held in securities (i.e. **stocks and bonds**) – not in cash. Letting donors know how to reduce their capital gains taxes by gifting appreciated stock can be a win-win!

Decide whether your Chapter will accept gifts of **real estate**. Real estate gifts can be tricky, so have your Board draft a policy on criteria for accepting these gifts. Work with a gift planning professional at Audubon or in your own community to make sure you are aware of all the potential pitfalls.

Consider **Charitable Gift Annuities (CGAs)**. The second most-common planned gift, CGAs provide income to the donor for the rest of their life, with the charity receiving the residuum after the donor's lifetime. CGAs are highly regulated at both state and federal levels, so you will want to work with another group in pursuing this. Your local community foundation may be able to administrate CGAs for your Chapter in return for a small administration fee. The National Audubon Society is also willing to partner with Chapters in accepting CGAs from donors who name both organizations as beneficiaries.

There are many other types of **life income gifts and trusts** available, depending on the needs of the donor. These are less common, but just knowing they exist can help you stay ahead of the game if you are asked about them.

Get to know your resources. In addition to the gift planning staff at **Audubon**, your **local community foundation** can provide valuable guidance as questions come up. **Attorneys** who specialize in estate planning and **certified financial planners** can also be very helpful – and you may have one of these among your Board or Chapter membership, just waiting to be asked.

Are you fully fledged and ready to REALLY jump out of the nest? A **Board guidance document** for developing a more comprehensive gift planning program for your Chapter is located at <http://chapterservices.audubon.org/chapter-leader-guide/planned-giving>.

In addition, please don't hesitate to contact Audubon's gift planning office at 212-979-3033 or plannedgifts@audubon.org for guidance.