

STARTING A GIFT PLANNING PROGRAM – A GUIDE FOR CHAPTER BOARDS

This document is intended for Audubon Chapters that already have some experience with promoting and/or accepting planned gifts. In many cases it is strongly advised to consult professionals in your community and within the National Audubon network. Please do not hesitate to contact NAS gift planning specialists at 212-979-3033 or plannedgifts@audubon.org.

1. OBTAIN A COMMITMENT FROM THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Ultimately, your Board (or Executive Director, if you have one) is responsible for policies adopted while implementing a gift planning program. It is recommended that the Board pass a resolution endorsing this decision:

The [NAME] Audubon Society Board of Directors authorizes the development of a Planned Giving Program. The Board of Directors is committed to the success of the Planned Giving Program, and directs the Development Committee [or paid staff, if appropriate] to provide updates regarding progress of the Planned Giving Program at each Board Meeting. The members of the Board further resolve to support the Planned Giving Program by assisting with outreach and marketing.

2. CREATE A PROFESSIONAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The Board (or Development Committee) may wish to create a gift planning advisory committee. This may include current and past Board members, as well as other members of the community who can assist with the effort. Suggested recommendations for the advisory committee include fundraising professionals, attorneys, and financial advisors.

3. ENGAGE A PROFESSIONAL GIFT PLANNING OFFICER, OR IDENTIFY A DEVELOPMENT PROFESSIONAL ON STAFF TO OVERSEE THE PROGRAM

If your chapter has a paid executive director or fundraising professional, this person should oversee the program and work closely with the development or gift planning committee. They should also meet with all potential donors if feasible. If your chapter does not have paid staff in a capacity to oversee the program, the committee should choose a member to take responsibility for providing guidance and reporting to the board in moving the program forward.

4. CREATE A PLANNED GIVING CASE STATEMENT

The committee should develop a one-page case statement that expresses why a donor should give to your chapter. The case statement need not be lengthy or complicated, but should be specific in explaining (1) how planned gifts make a difference for your chapter (i.e. specific programs), (2) the need for planned gifts (ensuring the future), and (3) that a long-term investment in your chapter is worthwhile (it's been here for 100 years and will be here for 100 more).

5. PRODUCE APPROPRIATE POLICIES AND GUIDELINES

The committee should consider potential problems or challenges associated with receiving planned gifts, and address those in written policies and guidelines. The written guidelines should include rules on how to accept and track planned gifts. Other things to consider in your guidelines are:

- Whether certain types of gifts must be voted on by the Board before being accepted (such as gifts of real estate, or gifts with contingencies attached).
- How to receive gifts of stock.
- How donors will be recognized for their gifts.
- Where planned giving documents will be filed, and who is responsible for maintaining these records.

In *Achieving Excellence in Fundraising* (2003), Hank Rosso identifies questions an organization should address when developing these policies and guidelines. They include:

- Will the organization offer charitable gift annuities to its donors?
- Will the organization serve as trustee of charitable remainder trusts and charitable lead trusts? If not, is it the donor's responsibility to secure a trustee?
- Will the organization administer charitable trusts or charitable gift annuities? If not, who will serve as the third-party administrator?
- What minimum amounts and other limitations should be established for each of the different planned giving instruments (i.e. age requirements, maximum payout percentages, etc.)
- Who in the organization has the authority to accept gifts of appreciated property, particularly real estate and closely held stock? Is board approval required before such assets are accepted?
- Who in the organization is authorized to negotiate the terms of a planned giving instrument, such as a charitable gift annuity or charitable remainder trust, with a donor? Is board approval required before the document may be executed?
- Who in the organization has the authority to sign the planned giving document on behalf of the organization?
- When should the organization seek legal counsel before accepting a gift?
- How will personal information (such as donor names, ages, gift amounts, net worth, etc.) be kept confidential?

Many of these points to consider have standard recommendations from gift planning professionals. It is strongly advised to seek answers to these questions in creating your own planned giving program, from professionals in your community and within the National Audubon network.

6. ESTABLISH A SYSTEM FOR CONSISTENT ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES

This overlaps with #5. Your chapter may want to consider scanned electronic copies of important documents, in addition to hard copies filed securely.

7. PRODUCE THE FIRST YEAR'S BUDGET AND OBTAIN APPROVAL FROM THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The committee should develop a budget for the gift planning program, including the amount of time staff should be expected to spend on the program, potential mailing or marketing costs, etc.

8. PREPARE AN ACTION PLAN OR BUSINESS PLAN

The committee should create an action plan for the gift planning program, to include:

- (1) How potential donors will be identified;
- (2) Goals, objectives and tactics of the program;
- (3) A prediction of the number and size of gifts required to reach goals;
- (4) A listing of prospects to be cultivated to reach those goals; and
- (5) A marketing plan.

9. INITIATE A DONOR RECOGNITION AND STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

As part of the policies and guidelines, a procedure for recognizing and stewarding your "legacy donors" should be developed. This includes "thanks yous" to donors when gifts are made or pledged. When approved by the donor, you should publicize the gift in your newsletter or on your website, and if possible request that the donor provide a personal story about why he or she made the gift.

Relationships with the donors should also be maintained. People who leave legacy gifts to organizations usually increase annual giving as well, because they have made the organization "part of the family." When appropriate, legacy donors should receive invitations to special events, regular check-in visits, birthday phone calls, etc.

10. MANAGE THE ONGOING PROGRAM

The development committee should decide what priority to give your gift planning program going forward. It is the area of development where the committee can have the most impact given committee members' limited time to invest in your chapter's development activities.

The committee and staff (or Board) should confer regularly on ongoing donor cultivation, marketing, and evaluation of progress.

The Board of Directors should require reports from the development committee at each Board meeting. If goals are not being met, the gift planning program should be revised or additional resources should be invested in the program (i.e., additional Board members should participate, etc.).

Resources for this outline include

<http://www.plannedlegacy.com/newsletter/developing-a-planned-giving-program.html>.

http://www.nps.gov/partnerships/planned_giving_establish_prgr.htm.

<http://blog.nysarc.org/2012/06/12/the-fundraising-files-how-to-start-a-planned-giving-program/>