



Guidelines for Developing Leadership Annual Fund Impact Statements for the Arts®

We know that people give to our organizations and institutions because they want to make a difference and they believe that we are the right place to effect that societal and/or individual change. They take a leap of faith and trust that their philanthropy will accomplish something important.

Giving small gifts to operating budgets doesn't require a great leap of faith. But as we seek larger, repeatable, unrestricted and budget relieving gifts of \$1,000 to \$25,000 (and for some larger institutions \$50,000 and \$100,000) that leap of faith appeals to far fewer people. They often want to give to specific projects and purposes, often because they want concrete and specific outcomes. So how do we make leadership annual fund gifts as appealing as restricted gifts? We add impact statements to our giving clubs. They serve as the case for support for your leadership annual fund program specifically. In addition, you can use the ideas behind them to bolster your case for the entire annual fund.

Impact statements answer four questions:

1. What difference will this gift make in the lives of the people the organization serves?
2. What are the outcomes a donor can expect from this gift or how will this make someone else's life better (the community better, the state, society better)?
3. Why should I do it now?
4. Why should I increase my gift?

The last question is particularly important. As you develop items to include in your impact statements, tie the gift level to specific services and programs you provide but don't feel these must be a dollar-by-dollar accounting from your balance sheet. You want to give your prospective donors a sense of the kinds of things their gifts will help accomplish or support, not what item their dollars will "buy". (This is philanthropy, not shopping!) You do want to make the examples included in your impact statements tangible and link them to specific impacts and outcomes. As you move up the giving ladder, the impact envisioned should get larger, more significant and more appealing thus giving the donor reasons not only to give, but also to give more.

Getting Started

Meet with your CFO and go over the budget. On what do you spend unrestricted funds? What do they accomplish? Brainstorm with program staff. What are they doing that is exciting AND supported by unrestricted dollars? Survey your larger donors to get a sense of why they invest in your organization. Which of the ideas from the CFO, your team and the program staff would be appealing to donors? What are donors hoping to accomplish? (This is also a great engagement opportunity)

Remember, you are not restricting gifts. You are simply letting donors know these are the types of things accomplished with gifts of this size.

As you develop and refine your impact statements, use this task as another reason to get in the door with your prospective donors: asking for help reviewing your materials is a great way to generate new ideas about how to use these, but also a terrific way to find out what resonates most profoundly with your individual donors!

Examples of Impact Statements:

Recognizing gifts of \$10,000 or more for music, visual arts, theater, and museums

Gifts at this level help provide:

- **Music:** Provide instruments and instruction for underserved schools helping students master skills, gain focus, develop appreciation and literacy, strengthen math and science skills (research supports increased skills in math and science tied to music education)
- **Visual art:** Help the community gain visual literacy and art appreciation, deepening their ability to judge visual content, learn about history and culture, understand and embrace visual art
- **Theater and library:** Stimulate critical thinking, increase reading and comprehension, gain access to thoughts, countries, cultures, experiences beyond the boundaries of neighborhoods and communities resulting in the ability to be and interact with educated global citizens
- **Museum:** Gain an understanding of the past and thus enabling citizens to make good decisions about the present and future

How to use Impact Statements:

Use the information you gather to develop your leadership annual fund impact statements throughout your fundraising efforts in support of your organization or institution. They can be:

- Incorporated into your printed materials and web content, or as a “stand-alone” brochure
- Used in your membership materials, tying membership to more than just quid pro quo benefits; helping members realize they are also contributing to the community
- Used to bolster all types of special events: point of entry, cultivation, solicitation/fund-raising and recognition/stewardship. At a fundraising event, for example, you can offer giving circle level tables at a gala or foursomes at a golf outing, letting participants know what can be accomplished with their collective gifts.
- Included in all speeches given by your CEO, and in face-to-face or phone calls by staff or volunteers
- **The basis for all your in-person engagement visits with prospective donors!**
- **And, of course for Stewardship**

Using Impact Statements for Stewardship

The impact statements “market” your leadership annual giving programs. They offer a promise of change. Stewardship demonstrates the fulfillment of that promise. We said your gift dollar would (insert the promise) and they have. Linking your stewardship and accountability reports, communications, and events to the impact statements reinforces the importance of unrestricted giving.

If you would like to learn more about:

- *Creating mission-based leadership annual giving circles*
- *Making the case for support*
- *Making effective in-person visits*
- *Incorporating leadership annual fund solicitations into major gift and campaign solicitations*
- *Creating or enhancing your stewardship program so that it includes annual giving*
- *Any other aspect of fundraising or campaigns, contact us at 914 428-7777 or contact us at mail@theosbornegroup.com*

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