



Conclusion

Individual donors are the largest source of philanthropic support for nonprofits, and as giving among small- and medium-gift donors declines, major donors are becoming even more important. To be most helpful to nonprofits, major donors should consider what these organizations and their leaders most need.

The relationships between major donors and nonprofit leaders matter. Nonprofit leaders spend more time building personal relationships with major donors as their gifts become larger, and in the coming years, nonprofit leaders expect that they will place greater focus on building personal relationships with *all* major donors.

Given the importance of relationships and the time it takes to build strong relationships, major donors should consider the following questions:

- 1 What does it mean to you to have a relationship with the nonprofit organization(s) you support?
- 2 What are you doing to build this/these relationship(s)?
 - To what extent do you view relationship building as the responsibility of nonprofit leaders, versus a shared responsibility between yourself and those leaders?
- 3 How aware are you of the challenges those leading the nonprofit(s) you support face in working with major donors?
 - What kind of training would help those leaders strengthen their ability to form and maintain relationships with major donors?
 - How are you able to support those leaders in receiving such training?

A crucial component of relationships is understanding, and nonprofit leaders say that there is an understanding gap. To be most helpful, nonprofit leaders believe major donors need to understand their organizations and the context of their work better than they currently do by focusing on understanding organizations' goals, asking about their greatest needs, and understanding the issue area(s) in which they work.

To address the understanding gap, major donors should consider the following questions:

- 1 What resources are you drawing from to develop an understanding of the goals and the issue area(s) of the nonprofit(s) you support?
- 2 Have you asked those leading the nonprofit(s) you support what they most need
 - For their operations and staffing?
 - For their programmatic work?
 - For their own professional development?
- 3 How could you change the way you or your staff interact with nonprofit leaders to help them feel more comfortable expressing their needs?

In addition to addressing the understanding gap, nonprofit leaders say major donors can be most helpful by providing multiyear commitments, unrestricted gifts, and support beyond money.

These kinds of support help their organizations do their best work and plan for the future. When making decisions about what kind(s) of support to provide to nonprofits, major donors should consider the following questions:

- 1 How do you decide whether to provide single or multiyear commitments to the nonprofit organization(s) you support?
 - What information from or about the nonprofit(s) do you factor into this decision?
 - Do you ask leaders of the nonprofit(s) you support what type of commitment would be most helpful to their organization(s) and why?
- 2 How do you decide whether to provide a restricted or unrestricted gift to the nonprofit organization(s) you support?
 - What information from or about the nonprofit(s) do you factor into this decision?
 - Do you ask leaders of the nonprofit(s) you support what type of gift would be most helpful to their organization(s) and why?
- 3 How do you learn about what support beyond money would be helpful to the organization(s) to which you donate?
- 4 Do you have the ability to personally, or through your network, provide any support beyond money that would be helpful to the organization(s)?
- 5 How do your decisions about providing single versus multiyear commitments, restricted versus unrestricted gifts, and support beyond money relate to your philanthropic goals?

The support that major donors provide to nonprofits is crucial. In a nonprofit leader's own words, in the coming years, "Major donors will continue to be the most important resource for nonprofits." By learning and providing what nonprofits most need—in terms of relationships, understanding, and types of support—major donors can have an even greater impact on the issues they seek to affect.