

FREEWILL PARTNER TRAINING

Smart Giving Stewardship (105)



Smart Giving Certificate

Our optional certificate program is offered to FreeWill partners at no cost

Complete these requirements to receive a Certificate of Completion and an invitation to add the accomplishment to your LinkedIn profile

- Smart Giving Basics (101)
- Smart Giving Marketing (102)
- Smart Giving Conversations (103)
- Smart Giving Solutions (104)
- Smart Giving Stewardship (105)
- Final online quiz

Eligible for 5.0 CFRE continuing education credits



Agenda

- 01 What is stewardship?
- 02 Why a stewardship plan?
- 03 Stewardship best practices
- 04 How to create your plan
- 05 Stewarding smart giving donors
- 06 Smart gift support in Portal
- 07 Resources & next steps



01

What is stewardship?



What is stewardship?

Nonprofits are largely funded by charitable gifts

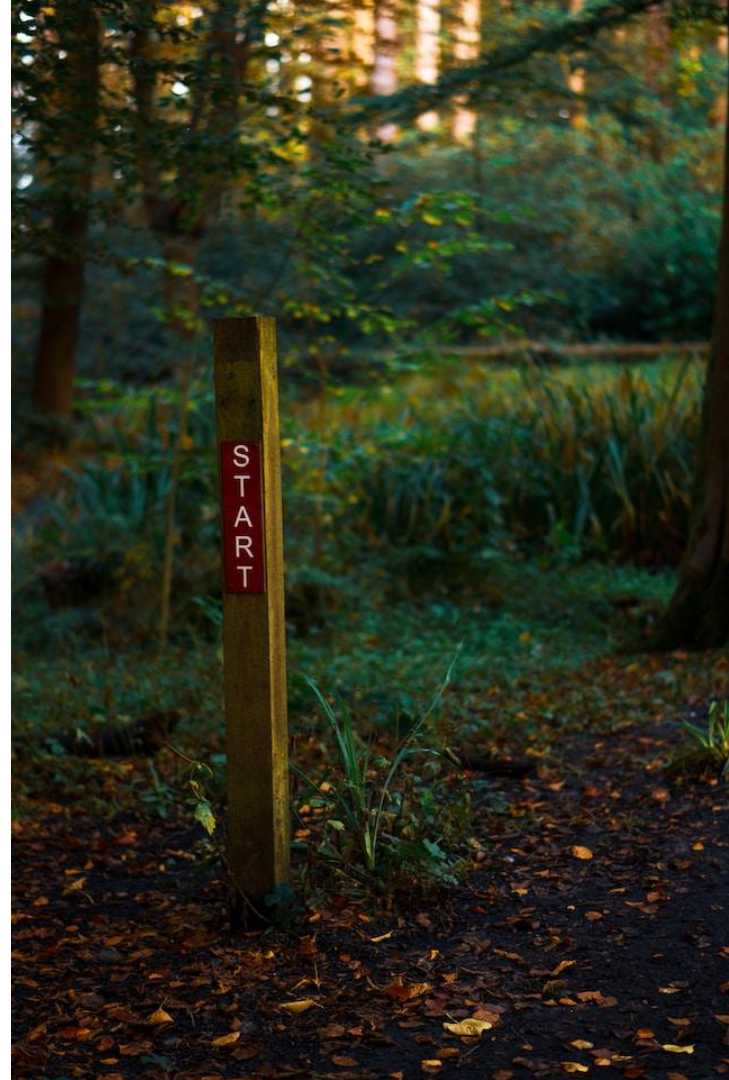
Nonprofits should thank all donors for their contributions, regardless of gift amount or their method of giving

It's the right thing to do – and it's *required* by the IRS for gifts over \$250

Thank yous/tax receipts are just the first step

The relationship doesn't stop after you get a gift – that's where stewardship begins

While planned gift stewardship can last for years, smart gift stewardship is sometimes short, and often morphs into cultivation for the next gift



What is stewardship?

Stewardship is the relationship-building process that begins after a donor makes a gift

It includes:

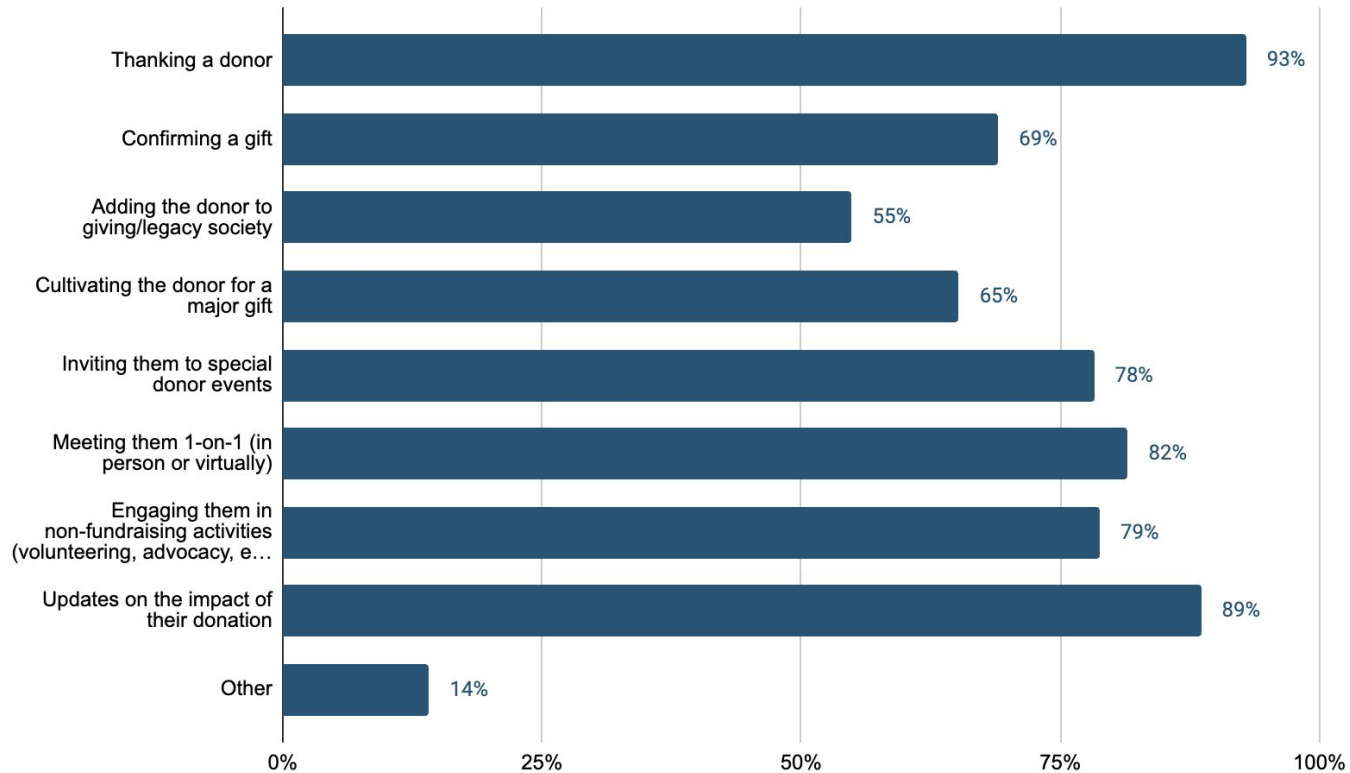
- **Acknowledging and stewarding** the gift to express gratitude and show impact
- **Recognizing and engaging** the donor to provide access, information, and experiences

Stewardship is typically tiered and personalized depending on gift amount, including:

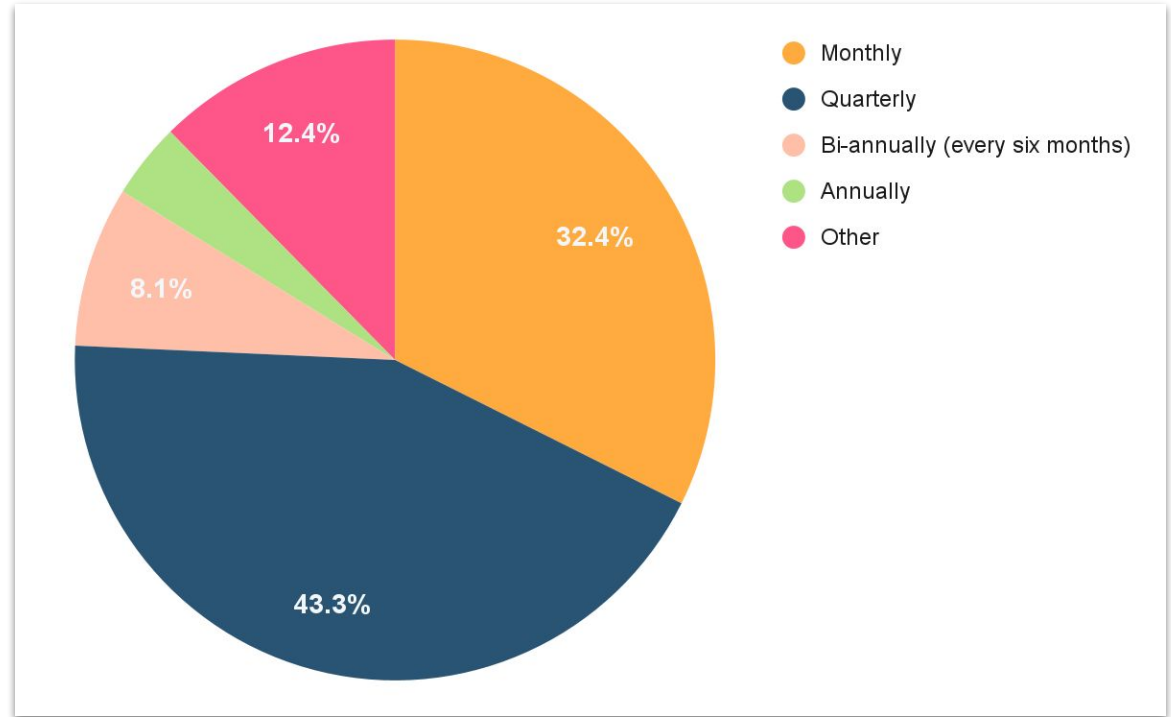
- **General stewardship** efforts directed to all donors
- **More high-touch, customized stewardship** for larger gifts



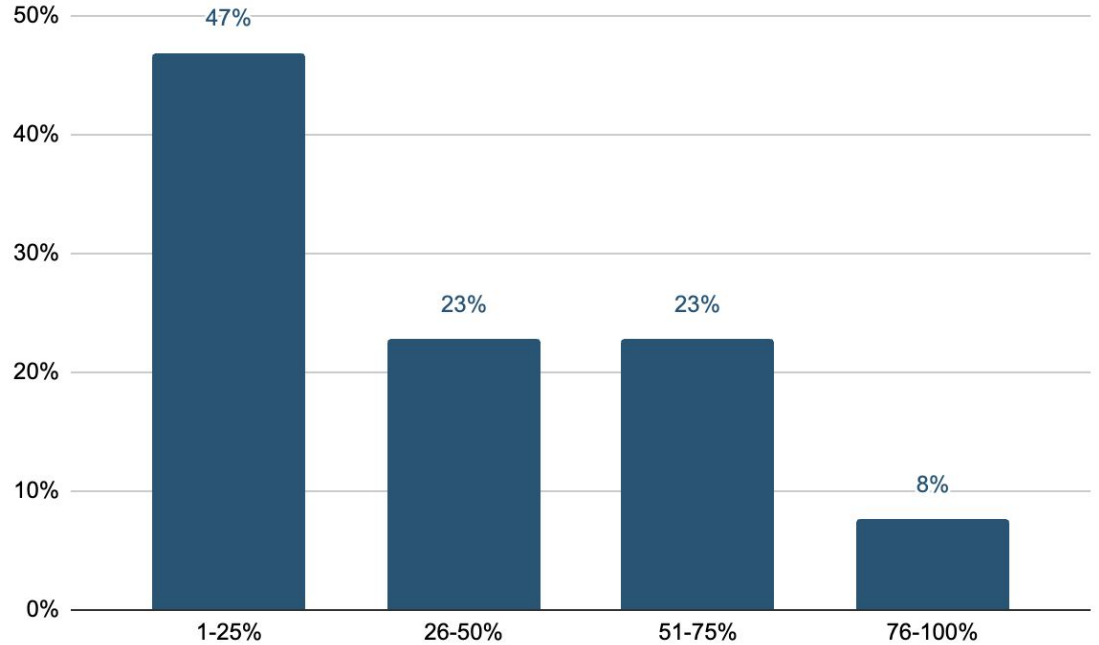
How do you define stewardship?



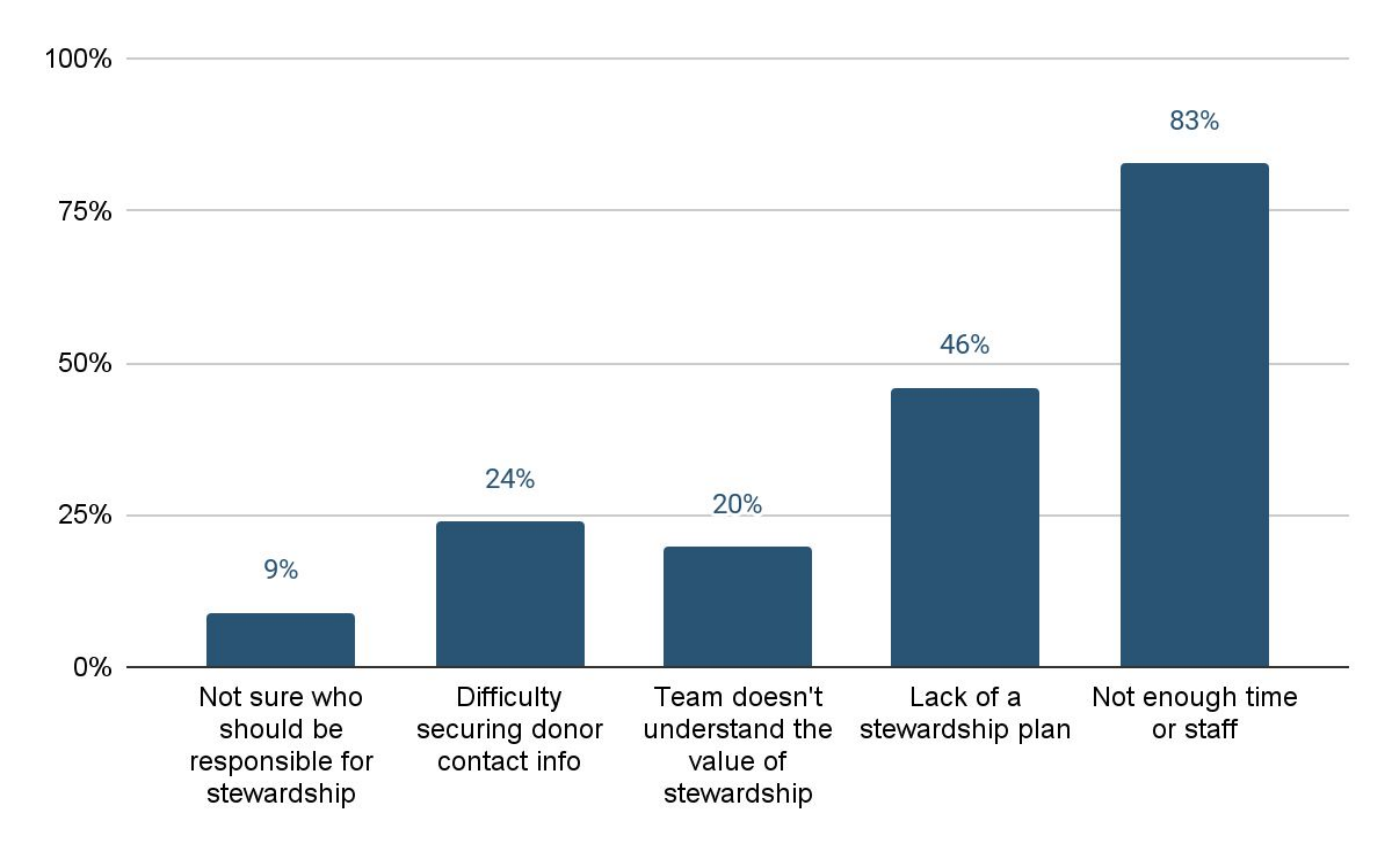
What frequency of communication do you find most effective for stewardship?



What percentage of your major donors make a second major gift?



What is a barrier to successful stewardship at your organization?



Why is stewardship so important?

It improves donor retention – and retaining existing donors is far less expensive than acquiring new ones

The recapture rate for lapsed donors is only 4%, so if donors stop giving to your org, it's unlikely they'll give again

[Thompson & Associates](#)

Getting a second gift is the hardest part: in 2022, retention of first-time donors dropped precipitously (-26.4%)

[FEP Q4 2022 Report, CCS Fundraising](#)

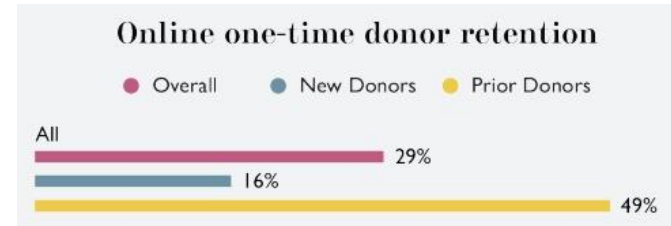
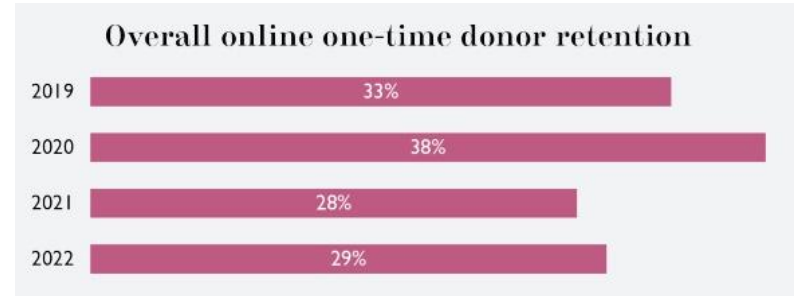
Ongoing stewardship can help grow your fundraising with less investment in donor acquisition

A top reason donors don't give again is they were never thanked and thought the charity didn't need them

Other reasons:

- They weren't asked
- They weren't told what impact their donation made
- They forgot they donated
- They gave to another organization

[npEngage](#)



[M+R Benchmarks 2023](#)

What are the goals of stewardship?

- **Acknowledge the donor's support**, and thank them for giving
- **Create a connection** that makes the donor feel good about giving and loyal to your nonprofit
- **Improve your donor retention rate** – making donors feel appreciated and connected inspires them to give again
- **Inspire them to give more** – on average, repeat donors give 42% more than one-time donors
- **Build a community** – involve donors in meaningful ways and encourage them to share your work with others
- **Amplify your donor acquisition** – friends and family won't want to miss out!



02

Why a stewardship plan?



What is a stewardship plan?

There are many potential touchpoints to engage donors and keep your mission on their minds

It helps to have a roadmap – especially as you grow beyond the ability to personally reach out to every donor

Your plan is a playbook created to systemize the stewardship process

It should leverage all available resources and break down the donor journey into easy-to-follow steps that your team can execute

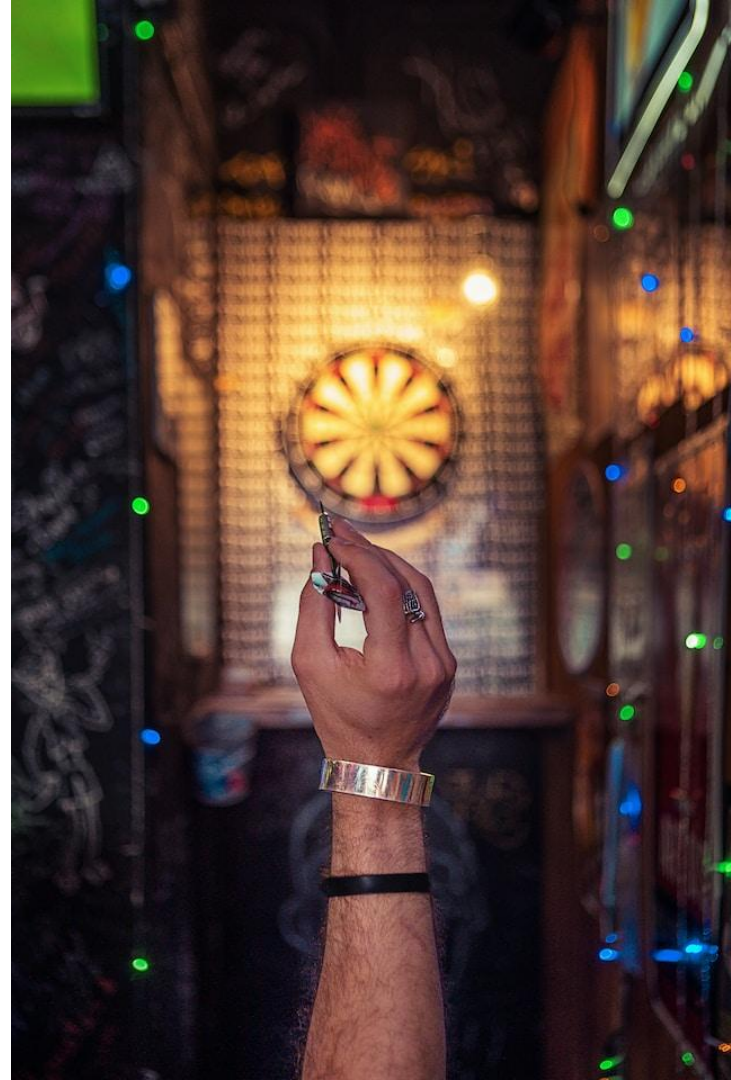
Distinct journeys can be set for different gift amounts or giving behavior, e.g. new, monthly/loyal, mid-level, major, and legacy donors – and smart giving donors!



Objectives of a stewardship plan

A stewardship plan:

- Documents your ideal donor experience: how many communications, what type, what message
- Ensures regular communications are sent and appreciation expressed
- Ensures consistency across the donor experience
- Boosts efficiency – knowing when & where to focus your efforts saves time and energy
- Takes the guesswork out of keeping your donors connected
- Helps to engage and retain donors – and better retention improves fundraising revenue over time



FreeWill partners are varied

FreeWill works with partners of all sizes

Some of you may have a sophisticated stewardship plan in place

Others may be creating a brand new stewardship program



03

Stewardship best practices



Starting a stewardship program

Don't let the perfect be the enemy of the good

Just start somewhere, with small steps that are manageable and deliverable

To be effective, stewardship must be timely and sincere

Collect donor feedback and evaluate your program regularly

Keep iterating on the plan over time, as budget and bandwidth allow, to work towards your larger program goals

Stewardship is a dynamic process – it will change at your nonprofit, and it's often a lifetime journey for your donors



General stewardship best practices

Once a gift is received and documented:

1. Send a prompt, accurate gift acknowledgement
*Refresh this language at least 1x/year, and utilize inserts/links
2. Consider sending a personalized thank you message
3. Evaluate whether the donor should be assigned to a gift officer for qualification
4. Stay in touch through general communications, honoring the donor's communication preferences
5. Consider in-person engagement, like visits or event invites
*Capture important information in a contact report
6. Send impact reports, annual reports, stories from the field
7. Remember the donor's giving anniversary, and invite them to give again



Tips for the unengaged

If a donor knowingly gives for tax reasons only, gives to support a friend's crowdfunding campaign, or gives in honor/memory of a friend or loved one:

- Send a tax receipt promptly
- Send an impact report

That may be all they need

- Consider re-sending the tax receipt digitally in January of the following year for tax purposes

Don't ignore lapsed donors

Unless they unsubscribed, assume supporters want to hear from you and continue sharing occasional updates about your mission and opportunities to support your work



04

How to create your plan



Creating your stewardship plan

1. Form a donor stewardship planning team
Consider surveying existing donors about the stewardship activities that are most meaningful
2. Segment your donors into categories or giving levels (including smart gift donors)
3. Identify and develop stewardship and recognition opportunities that are meaningful and deliverable
4. Outline a communication strategy and donor stewardship matrix



Creating your stewardship plan

1. Form a donor stewardship planning team

Consider surveying existing donors about the stewardship activities that are most meaningful
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4. Outline a communication strategy and donor stewardship matrix
5. Implement your donor stewardship plan
6. Evaluate your plan regularly, and make changes
7. Regularly qualify your donors to keep your stewardship plan accurate

FREEWILL 				New donors	Loyal donors	Major Donors	Planned Giving Donors
DONOR STEWARDSHIP MATRIX							
	Communication type	Timeline	One-time/ Recurring				
Acknowledgment	Thank you email or call	Within 24 Hours		✓	✓	✓	✓
	Thank you call from director	Within 48Hours				✓	
	Welcome letter	First week		✓			
Recognition	Annual donor lunch invite	Annually			✓	✓	✓
	Annual report listing	Annually				✓	✓
	Legacy society invitation	First month					✓
	Donor highlight in newsletter	Annually				✓	
Reporting	Video update of impact	Quarterly		✓	✓	✓	✓
	Impact report	Quarterly		✓	✓	✓	✓
	Update on gift use	Twice a year				✓	
Ongoing engagement	Volunteer opportunity	Quarterly		✓	✓	✓	✓
	Donor survey	Quarterly		✓	✓	✓	✓
	Holiday cards	November		✓	✓	✓	✓
	Donor summaries for taxes	Annually		✓	✓	✓	✓
	Gala invitation	Annually				✓	✓
	Donor anniversary	Annually		✓	✓	✓	✓
	Donor stories	Quarterly		✓	✓	✓	✓



You'll need the right tools

In addition to your plan, you'll need:

- Clear ownership for the development and execution of stewardship activities
- A process to regularly evaluate your stewardship plan, review your donor lists, and suggest improvements
- Data management to capture donor communication preferences, track individual donor engagement, and report on key metrics over time
- Ability to report out on individual donations by gift type, to make the impact of smart gifts more visible to your donor base, leadership, and Board



05

Stewarding smart gift donors



Where do smart gifts come in?

Smart gifts come in all amounts

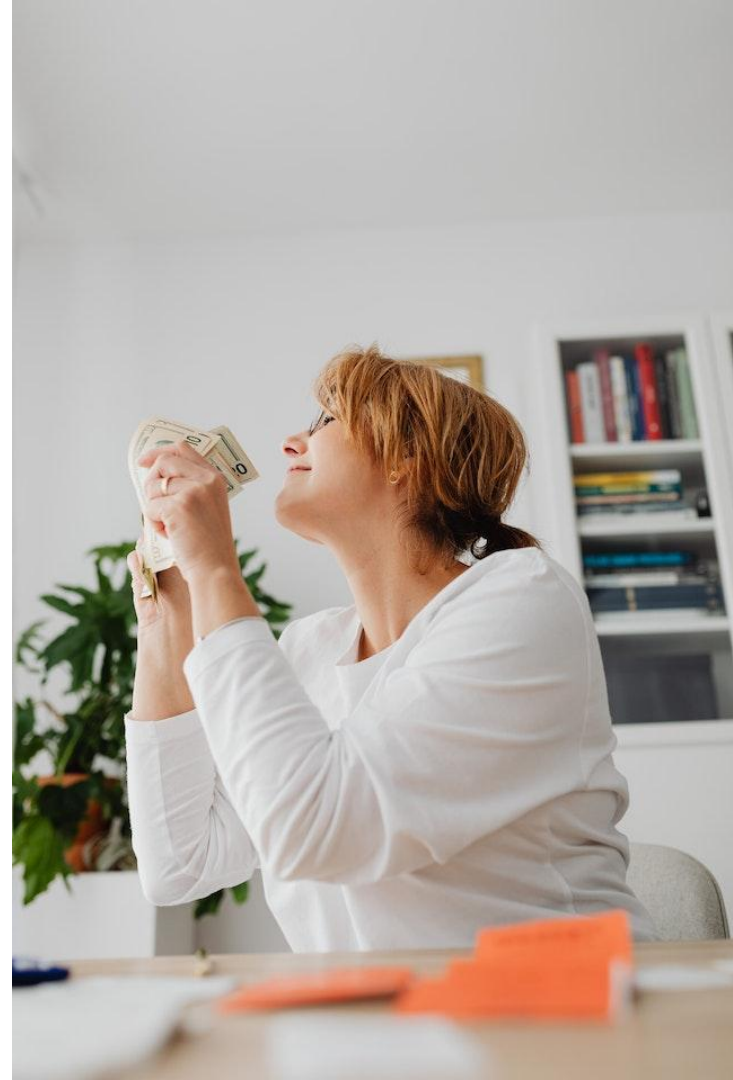
You may assign management of smart gift donors by gift size (membership, mid-level, major, principal gifts)

But some stewardship principles are *particularly* important for smart gift donors, so you'll need the ability to scoop them up as a group, as well

Smart gifts are a strong indicator of wealth, and may warrant more stewardship than a cash gift of the same amount

Consider borrowing from the major gifts playbook in your approach to smart gift stewardship, even for lower-dollar smart gifts

Just be careful not to overvalue the gift – and be thoughtful about who will “own” smart gift donors in terms of stewardship and cultivation of future gifts



Where do smart gifts come in?

Some activities are especially important for this group:

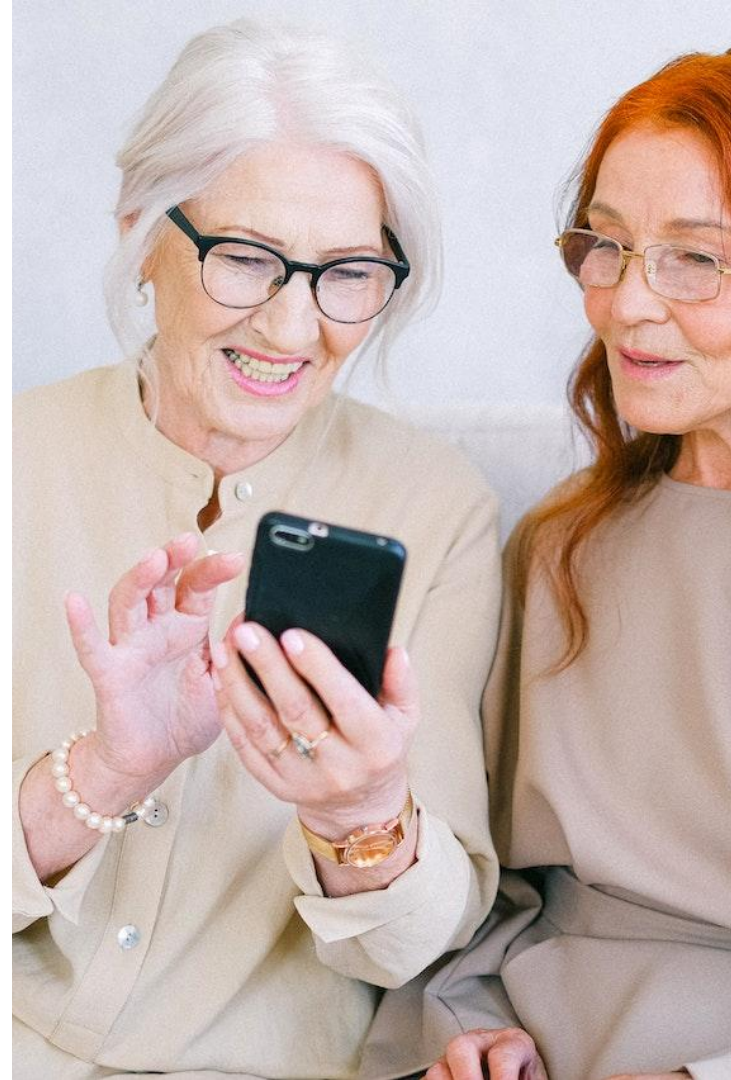
- **Send a personalized gift acknowledgement promptly** and always ensure the receipting is correct – e.g. for stock gifts, acknowledge only the date of transfer, ticker symbol, and number of shares (not a total or estimated gift amount)
- **Assign all smart giving donors to gift officers for qualification** – e.g. DAF donors are sophisticated philanthropists with charitable intent and an established charitable savings account – where do you fall on their list of charitable priorities?
- **Survey smart gift donors** about their communication preferences and what kind of stewardship they value most – e.g. QCD donors may prefer print mail to texts or emails



Where do smart gifts come in?

Some activities are especially important for this group:

- **Help your donors stay up to date** with changes that may affect their ability/interest in giving certain ways (SECURE Act, stock market trends, etc.) – forward articles or resources, and be available to answer basic questions
 - Just remember, you're not a financial advisor, attorney, or tax preparer and should not offer tax or legal advice
- **Send an email, text, or handwritten “thinking of you” note** – the element of surprise creates pleasure and emotional resonance, and you can reference their savvy support through a smart gift
- **Tips for the unengaged may apply to crypto donors**, who are notoriously unresponsive to outreach and may not want a relationship with you



Ideas for additional touches for smart gifts and gifts of \$1K+

Stewardship touches typically reserved for gifts of \$1K+ could be useful for smart gifts as well:

- Write a personal note on their acknowledgement letter, send a handwritten note, or place a personal phone call (leave a short voicemail, if needed)
 - At certain levels, the President/E.D./Dean could do this
- Invite an interaction (visit, call, tour, program visit) in the first 90 days after their gift → the time frame really matters
- Always assign them to a gift officer for qualification
- Ask the donor to provide a written testimonial so others are encouraged to follow their example
- Ask them for advice/input on select projects, like new fundraising campaigns



Ideas for additional touches for smart gifts and gifts of \$1K+

- On a quarterly basis:
 - Share impact reports/stories from the field – helps the donor feel informed, engaged, and appreciated
 - Consider a service like [Thankview](#) to include compelling video content in these communications
 - Share testimonials from those who benefited from their gift, or invite them to the event/program their gift funded
- Be thoughtful about event invitations – invite to special events, consider offering VIP tickets (if available)
- Invite to an exclusive breakfast event with the President/ E.D./Dean or other VIP and other donors on their level
- Ask them to host a porch party/reception to introduce other prospects to your org



Ideas for additional touches for smart gifts and gifts of \$1K+

- Steward your donors through their financial advisors – connect with the advisor to ensure philanthropy is part of the conversation
- Provide curated experiences, e.g. tour a new building, see a new zoo exhibition before it opens, walk-on at the football field before the big game, etc.
 - Nurture generational philanthropy by letting them invite family to these experiences (children, grandchildren)
- Offer a speaking opportunity to present on their field/industry to other org supporters
- Invite them to serve on an advisory board
- Give them an award (Distinguished Supporter)
- Offer naming opportunities for buildings, sports fields, vehicles/vessels, etc.



You have a plan in place – now what?

- **Adapt your plan to your donors as individuals, and let it evolve over time** as you learn what works for your unique community and mission. Stewardship is a dynamic process.
- **Audit your technology.** Does it support your improved stewardship process, workflow, and data collection? Is it slowing your team down or creating unnecessary pain points during the donor journey? Note these opportunities and explore options to address them over time. Even small, iterative improvements can make a difference in the long run.
- **Use the right tools to inform and manage your stewardship efforts.** Intuitive platforms that improve the donor experience and ensure data transparency for your team allow you to continually learn and adapt your approach and maximize impact.
- **Employ software that specifically supports smart giving.** This will help you close the loop and prevent valuable engagement data from falling through the cracks.



06

Smart gift support in Portal



Update gift status

FREEWILL

ACME, Inc.



- Home
- Contacts
- Requests
- Gifts
- Legacy Commit...
- Real-time Gifts
- Dashboards
- Help Center
- Partner Resource Hu
- Print Marketing Libra

Gift Details

Basics

DONOR: Cari Librett GIFT ID: Q7avzG15 ENTRY DATE: Sep 14, 2023

Gift Details

STATUS

Identified

Updated on September 14, 2023

VALUE

\$2,273.00

ASSET TYPE

QCD

INSTITUTION

Charles Schwab

Hide details

Identified

DATE

September 14, 2023

VALUE

\$2,273.00

DONOR DETAILS

DONOR NAME

[Cari Librett](#)

PREFERRED NAME

—

PRONOUNS

—

GENDER

—

DATE OF BIRTH

Jan 1, 1947 (Age 76)

EMAIL

cari9000@gmail.com

PHONE NUMBER

(789) 974-9928

ADDRESS

123 Harrison Ave
Boston, MA 02118

FREEWILL ID

e9rkjRP1



Add date received & gift value

The screenshot shows the 'Gift Details' page for a donor named Cari Librett. A modal window titled 'Mark QCD as received' is open, allowing the user to update the gift's status. The modal contains two input fields: 'Date received' with the value '09/18/2023' and a calendar icon, and 'Amount received' with the value '\$2,273.00'. 'Close' and 'Save' buttons are at the bottom of the modal.

Gift Details

Basics

DONOR	GIFT ID	ENTRY DATE
Cari Librett	Q7avzGl5	Sep 14, 2023

Gift Details

STATUS: Identified (Updated on September 14, 2023)

VALUE: \$2,273.00

ASSET TYPE: QCD

Hide details

Identified

DATE: September 14, 2023

VALUE: \$2,273.00

DONOR DETAILS

DONOR NAME: Cari Librett

PREFERRED NAME: —

PRONOUNS: —

GENDER: —

DATE OF BIRTH: Jan 1, 1947 (Age 76)


EMAIL: cari9000@gmail.com



PHONE NUMBER: (789) 974-9928



ADDRESS: 123 Harrison Ave, Boston, MA 02118

FREEWILL ID: e9rkjRP1


Draft a donor thank you letter

FREEWILL 


ACME, Inc.  

- Home
- Contacts
- Requests
- Gifts 
- Dashboards 
- Customizations
- William**
- Help Center
- Partner Resource Hub
- Marketing Library

< Donor thank you note

Write a donor thank you note. 


You • Just now

 Sure! I will help you write a donor thank you note. But first I'll need to ask you 4 questions. Don't worry, this won't take long.

What is the name of the recipient?

William • Just now

Recipient name (optional)

Skip 



Track stewardship in gift comments

FREEWILL

ACME, Inc.



Home

Contacts

Requests

Gifts
Legacy Commit..

Real-time Gifts

Dashboards

Help Center

Partner Resource Hu

Print Marketing Libra

Gift Restrictions

DESIGNATION

Acme Corporation

ADDITIONAL RESTRICTIONS

Area of Greatest Need

Message from donor

MESSAGE

Thank you!

Source information

ENTRY PATH

/qcd/acme

UTM PARAMETERS

UTM Campaign: —

UTM Medium: —

UTM Source: —

Leave a comment...

9/18/2023 - Spoke to the donor on the phone. She has sent the stock gift paperwork to her broker.
Changing the gift status to "In Transit."

Add



Share your ideas & feedback

Have an idea for how Portal can support your smart gift stewardship?

Let your FreeWill strategist know!

Our Product Team values your input and works hard to make the FreeWill products not just helpful but *essential* to you and your nonprofit!



07

Resources & next steps



TO EXPLORE:
Resources

- [Webinar: How to engage and retain donors in 2023](#)
- [Donor stewardship: How to build relationships & retain donors](#)
- [How to make a nonprofit donor stewardship plan: 7 steps](#)
- [10 donor stewardship best practices for nonprofits](#)
- Remember to try William – your AI-powered writing assistant in Partner Portal – when drafting stewardship outreach (accessible in [Partner Portal](#))



LOOKING AHEAD:

Next steps

1. Complete the [post-training survey](#)
2. Assemble your stewardship planning team and draft your stewardship matrix – design a plan you can deliver on
3. Thoughtfully include smart gift donors in your stewardship plan, borrowing from the major gift playbook wherever possible
4. Execute the plan, gather feedback, and allow yourself to iterate over time



Thank you!

Lauren Winther-Hansen
Nonprofit Training Lead

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