

# ASK AN EXPERT

## How can I make sure our donors feel appreciated?

Planning an annual fundraiser and applying for grants and sponsorships is hard work. But the work doesn't stop when the donation comes in. Donors make an investment in your project — it's your club's responsibility to thank them and demonstrate that you have been good stewards of their funds. Use these tactics to show them their impact.

- 1 **Send a note.** A heartfelt, handwritten note or card is still one of the best ways to show gratitude. Reinforce how the donor's gift will be used and thank them for their generosity. Nonprofit best practices indicate that thank-you notes should be sent within 48 hours of a gift being made — so make sure to write in a timely manner!
- 2 **Share the experience.** Is there a way to let your donors see their impact firsthand? Coordinate a chance for them to meet a child whose life has been improved, or to volunteer with the program their donation supported. A tangible experience is memorable — and it might inspire a future gift.
- 3 **Share photos and videos.** Donors can't always experience the impact of their gift in person. In that case, use photos or videos instead. Feature the kids, families and people you serve rather than fundraising events or ribbon-cutting ceremonies. Make sure it's all about personal impact.
  - > **HERE'S A PRO TIP:** Consent for use of people's names and faces is mandatory. Go to [kiwanis.org/photorelease](https://kiwanis.org/photorelease) to download an approved form.
- 4 **Tell stories.** Donors want to *feel* that their support makes a difference. Send them stories about the people your project has reached. Share testimonials from parents or children. Include photos or videos whenever you can. Be "donor-centric" when you write — so the donor knows that these stories are possible because of generous gifts like theirs.
- 5 **Celebrate together.** When you hit a milestone in your project or have an exciting update to share, let donors know! As investors in your project, they should be among the first to celebrate success with you.
  - >> **HERE'S A PRO TIP:** Send semi-annual or quarterly updates to all your donors, reporting on your project's progress, goals being met and stories of people impacted by your work.



- 6 **Ask them to participate.** Donors are more likely to stay involved if they're engaged in more than one way — not just writing a check but being a part of the project they fund. Ask them to volunteer, serve on a committee or even join your club! Every new method of involvement deepens the relationship with your donor.
- 7 **Keep in touch.** Build a relationship with donors through regular communication. Call to express your thanks for their gift. Send articles about causes they're passionate about. Let them know when your club is working on a project they'd be interested in. Or simply call to wish them a happy birthday.
- 8 **Ask for their input.** Many donors are willing to invest more than time or money — but they have to be asked. Welcome their suggestions about how to improve your project. Engage them throughout the planning process and ask their opinions on challenges you're facing. They might have a brilliant idea or be able to connect you with more resources!
- 9 **Hold a VIP event.** Treat special donors to a behind-the-scenes look at your project, or introduce them to your community partners. Most of all, *thank them*. Don't use this time to request more money, but remind donors that their investment is the reason your project is possible. Share stories, photos or video of the people they have reached with their gift.

>> **HERE'S A PRO TIP:** VIP events don't have to be huge. In fact, a more intimate gathering will feel more exclusive and allow you to deepen relationships.

- 10 **Recognize donors publicly.** Some donors value being honored in front of their peers. Consider listing the names of donors on your website or sharing them on social media. You could plan to thank significant donors on stage at your next fundraising event or in the program. However you do it, follow the donor's wishes — make sure public recognition is OK first.

Whatever you do, be authentic and personal. Make the donor feel important and share how their gift makes a difference. You aren't just saying thank you — you're reporting to them about their investment!



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