



METRICS



Measuring Success

Like other fund development strategies, it is important to track key performance indicators for a planned giving program. These metrics can inform annual goals and indicate the amount of actual and potential future income. Establishing and regularly sharing metrics with your organization's staff and Board can be successfully leveraged to build awareness of the program and its impact on the organization. This can lead to an ongoing commitment to planned giving, which is key to the program's development and long-term success of an institution.

Where to Begin

First, dependent on the quality and comprehensiveness of your organization's database, research the number and types of planned gifts your organization has received over the years, the amount of these contributions, and piece together the individual stories behind them. Record key data points in the database or on an Excel spreadsheet, such as the names of donors, type of gift, amount of gift, and any other helpful details that might be evident, for example, the age of the donor, whether or not he or she had been annual fund donor, volunteer or staff member, and so on. These facts can help you later in segmenting your database for prospecting purposes. Stories you are able to discover through your database or discovery conversations with longtime staff and volunteers, will provide specific examples for you to share with your organization's staff, Board and donors to help them realize the importance and potential impact of such gifts.

What to Track

The vast majority of planned gifts an organization has received are likely to be bequests. Calculate the average size of bequest your organization has received, discounting anomalies such as the largest and smallest contributions. Round that amount to the nearest whole number and use the figure, or a range, to track a projected bequest expectancy for your planned giving program. If your organization has not received many planned gifts, consider using a figure based on research readily available online. For example, according to the Nonprofit Research Collaborative's national Winter 2018 study, the average bequest at the median was in the range of \$25,000 to \$100,000. You may wish to use the conservative end of the range you identify.

Research your files for known bequest expectancies and other planned gifts and create a spreadsheet with the names of the donors and other information that might be available, such as their ages, whether they are members or annual fund donors, volunteers, staff, male or female, married or single, have children or are childless. As you get to know these donors – and you certainly should reach out to them to introduce yourself, thank them, and ask to meet with them to learn their stories and connection to your organization – you can fill in any pertinent missing data, which, again, can help you segment your database to prospect for supporters with a similar profile.

In a separate spreadsheet or through your data base, track bequest notifications. Include the donor's name; name and contact information of the attorney, personal representative or executor; date of notification; and expected bequest amount, if known. Some notifications will include a check with the total or a partial distribution. Record that information. Other estates will be subjected to probate or have other issues to settle, such as the payment of debts or sale of real estate. You will want to gain an understanding from the estate's representative of the issues, process and timing of this work. It is important to check in regularly for updates, which can gently help keep the process moving along. And, understanding the expected timing for distributions can help your organization map revenue expectations.

You will also want to track planned giving activities, such as the number of contacts with planned giving





METRIC RESOURCES

- Tracking Metrics: [“Measuring Planned Giving Progress”](#)

donors and prospects, including phone calls, correspondence, visits, and their participation in events. Interactions with professional advisors should also be recorded.

As author Larry Kerstein states in the PG Calc article “Measuring Planned Giving Progress” (see section [Resources](#)): with a sustained investment in planned giving activity, it generally takes around five years to see material increases in known expectancies and life income gifts, and even longer before seeing increases in realized estate gifts.

Build Awareness & Support

While, of course, an organization should not count on planned gift expectancies, the projected figure of total expectancies can illuminate the potential revenue that can be realized from a planned giving strategy. It will very likely be much higher than any other fund development strategy an organization is pursuing, and that helps build enthusiasm and commitment to the planned giving program.

Track the number of the planned giving group and set annual goals to increase membership. As new members are discovered or recruited, share the good news with the Board and staff to keep the planned giving program on their radar. Track the planned giving club membership along with the organization’s other key performance indicators that are regularly shared with your Board.

The details of planned gifts from living donors should be kept in confidence, but every time a bequest notification is received from an attorney, personal representative or executor, let your Board and staff know. Share the donor’s story (Long-time volunteer? Family benefitted from the organizations work?) with the board and staff. Such information helps to bring your planned giving program to life and enriches the storytelling resource available to you, your Board and staff as the program develops.

