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COMMUNITY FOUNDATION CONFERENCE  
APRIL 24 • 26, 2026



# The Donor Journey: Donor Stewardship 101

## Fund Development

Saturday, April 25, 2026, 2:30 pm, Stevenson A



# Your Facilitators

## **Lisa Thomson Stifora**

Vice President of Community Generosity  
The Winnipeg Foundation

## **Carol Light**

Executive Director  
Boissevain & Morton Foundation Inc.

# Today's Session

- Donor Stewardship Defined
- The Donor Cycle
- Donor Engagement
- Group Discussions



# Discussion question

How do you build relationships or nurture connections with current (or future) donors?

Instructions:

Individually reflect and write a response, 1 min

Share with the person next to you, 2 mins

**Carol Light  
Executive Director  
Boissevain & Morton Foundation Inc.**





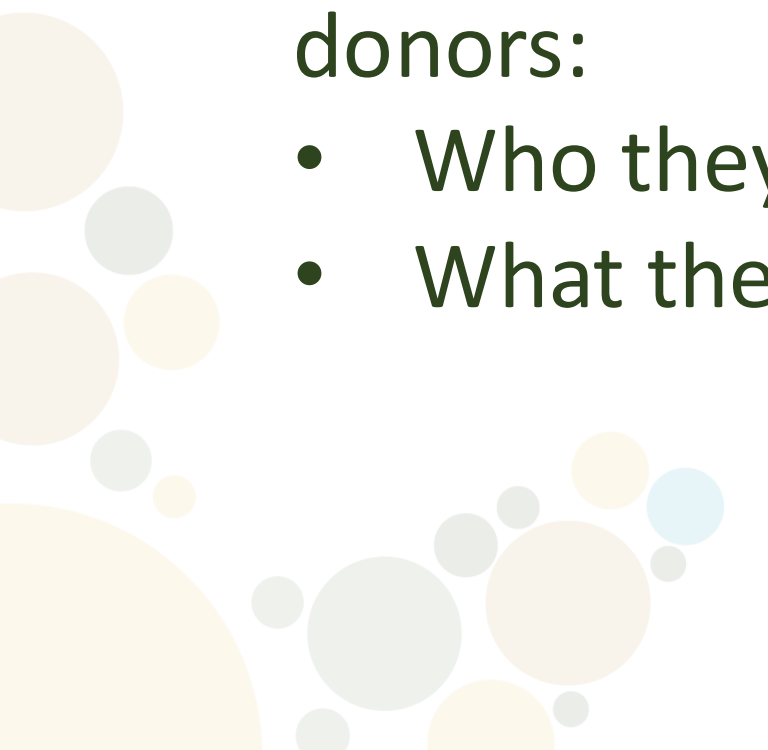
# Donor Stewardship Defined





# Definition: Donor stewardship

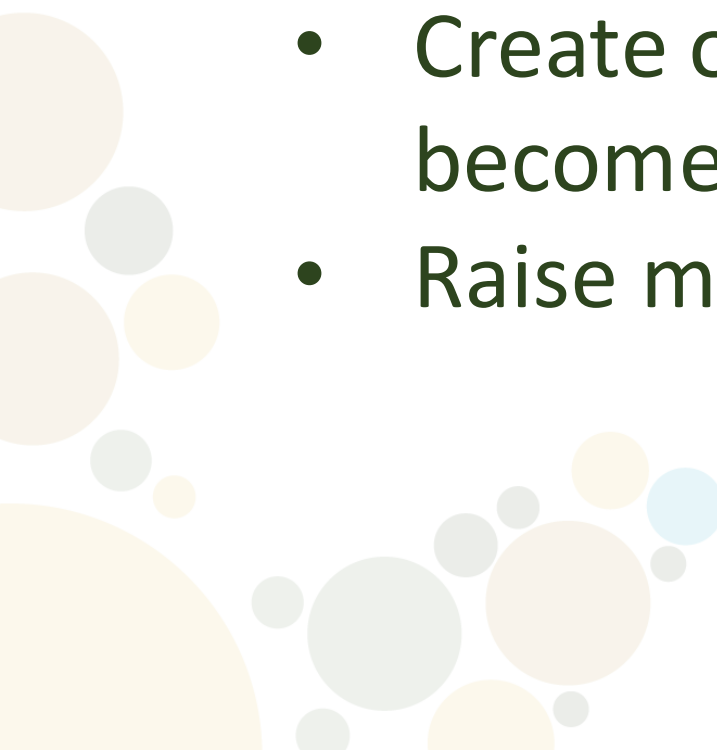
All the activities your community foundation undertakes to **understand** and **build relationships** with current or prospective donors:

- Who they are;
  - What they care about.
- 



# Definition: Donor stewardship


AND all the activities your community foundation undertakes to **leverage** that understanding to:

- Create opportunities for them or others to become involved;
  - Raise money for your community.
- 



# Definition: Donor stewardship

Measurement – The extent to which your donors **interact** with your foundation:

- Reading emails, attending events, volunteering, giving a gift.
- 

# Why is donor stewardship important?

## Growth

- Investment returns are only one part of growth for your foundation.
- Building a donor base for new and future gifts.

*Attracting new donors is harder than keeping current ones.*

# Why is donor stewardship important?

## Relevance

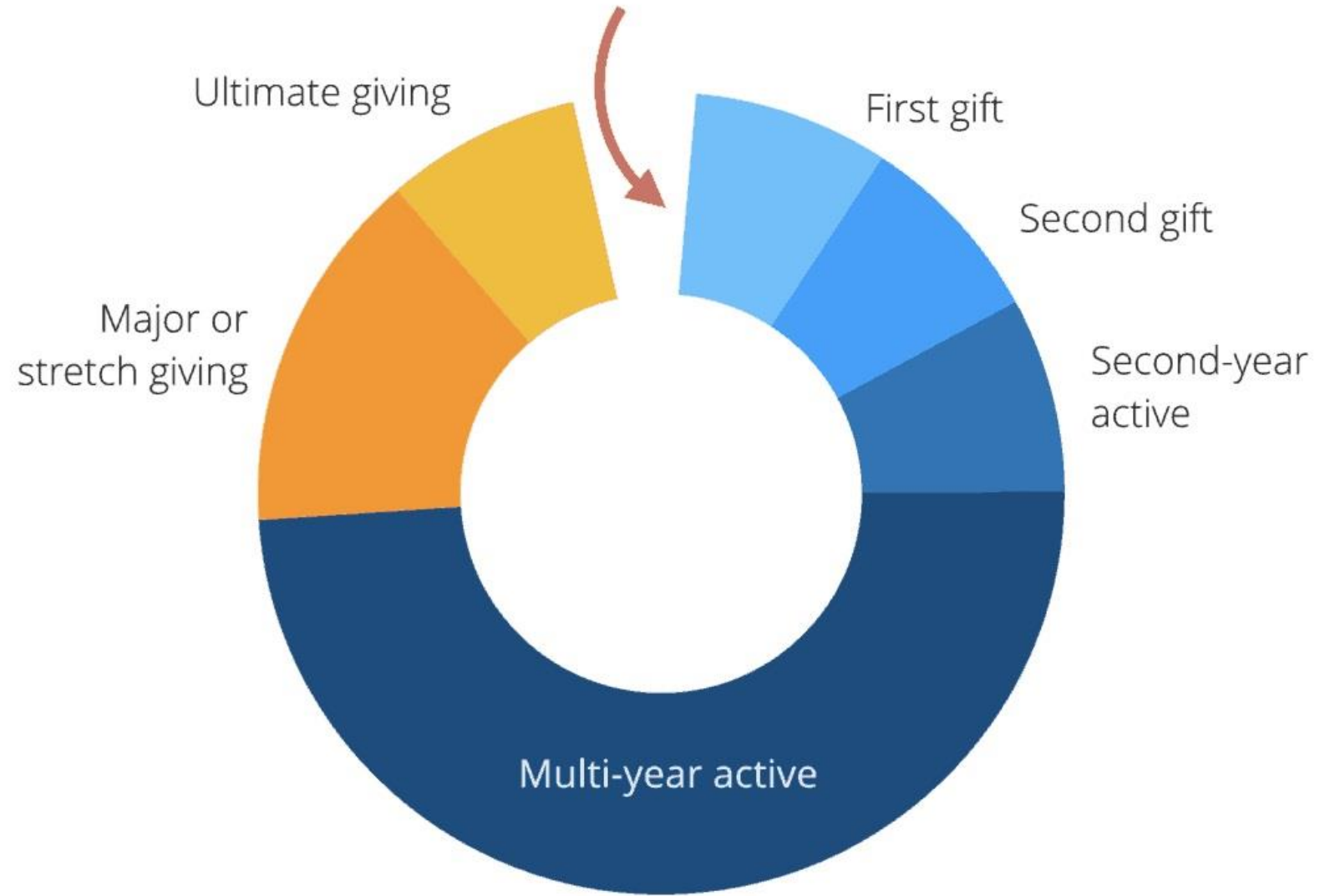
- Connecting a donor's interests with need in your community - improves your foundation's impact.
- Increases gifts now and in the future.



# The Donor Cycle



# The Donor Cycle





# Donor Engagement



# How to engage donors?

Building relationships with donors (or prospective donors).

- Meet the donors where they are.
- Ask questions/Be curious.
- Be interested in them as people, not just as donors.



# How to engage donors?

Intentionally use the information received to create connection.

- Communicate with them about the things they value.
- Reach out to show your value and remember the conversation.
- Draw their attention to something they care about.
- Celebrate their generosity.



# Donor engagement

Key things to remember:

- Balance the "human touch" with the "transaction" touch.
- Focus on those who care about you.  
*Here is a secret – not everyone will.*
- Don't be afraid to make mistakes as you engage with people.

# Outcomes of good donor engagement

- Improved relationships with, and relevancy to, the people who support you.
- Improved donor:
  - Communications
  - Involvement (*long term partnerships*)
  - Retention (*improved donor satisfaction/loyalty*)

# Outcomes of good donor engagement

- Ultimately: Greater capacity to undertake your mission and fulfill your vision.

*More gifts!*



# Group Discussion





# Discussion question

What do you do after a gift is made?

Does the size or type of gift change how you interact with the donor? Why?

Instructions:

Designate someone to report back  
10 minutes of table discussion



# Discussion question

How can your foundation build closer relationships with the people who give to you?

(Let's Blue Sky it)

Instructions:

Designate someone to report back  
10 minutes of table discussion



# Q&A

Exploring YOUR challenges.

What is your greatest challenge with respect to effectively engaging with your donors?

:



# Shared reflections

What's one key takeaway or "AHA" that you want to remember?

What are you curious about now?

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## Individual Reflection

What tools & ideas can you take back to your community foundation board?



**Thank you**



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