



# Big Gifts, Small Charities: Fundraising Success Secrets

By Heather Joslyn, *The Chronicle of Philanthropy*, January 2016

To raise bigger gifts, small charities need to pay more attention to quality, not quantity, when cultivating donors, according to a new study.

Nonprofits should be more selective in deciding which prospective donors to pursue and take better care of the supporters they already have, says Amy Eisenstein, one of the authors.

The researchers surveyed 662 charities with an annual income of under \$10 million. Just over half raise less than \$1 million a year. The groups reported a median major-gift size of \$5,000.



## What helped

### Tenure

- Fundraisers won 6 more major gifts for each additional year at their organizations.

### Training

- Development directors and major-gift officers raised an additional \$37,000 for every kind of specialized training they got. But few charities pay for such training.
- 24% of groups sent their fundraisers to major national conferences.
- 11% of groups paid tuition for formal academic courses on fundraising.
- Asking for repeat gifts
- Charities averaged a \$2,200 gain for each major donor they wooed for repeat gifts.

## What Didn't Help

- Adding more prospective donors
- Charities lost, on average, \$298 for each additional person fundraisers cultivated for a first major gift.

## Benchmarks

None of the following measures correlated with increased giving:

- 83% of charities tracked the dollars raised by their major-gift fundraisers.
- 53% monitored the number of new gifts.
- 32% counted the number of times fundraisers met with prospective donors.

SOURCE: Major Gift Fundraising: Unlocking the Potential for Your Nonprofit, by Adrian Sargeant and Rita Kottasz at the Centre for Sustainable Philanthropy at Britain's Plymouth University, and Amy Eisenstein, author of the *Major Gift Fundraising for Small Shops*.