

What Makes a Gift Effective?



It is critical that philanthropists reflect on their past gifts—both effective and ineffective ones. This reflective process is the first step in transforming your giving from having momentary meaning to becoming monumentally meaningful to both you and the organizations you support. As you prepare for #GivingTuesday, explore what it means for a gift to be effective by answering the questions below.

reflect on your past giving

Each year, do you tend to make one substantial gift, several large- or medium-sized gifts or many small ones? What is the reasoning behind your strategy?

Are your gifts one-off donations or recurring gifts?

Is your giving largely random, funding a wide array of unrelated organizations or causes each year, or focused and specialized?

Do you give to local nonprofits with which you have a direct connection, larger state-based organizations or national or global causes and organizations?



Do you make your giving decisions alone, with your partner or with a circle of friends or colleagues? Is your giving a family decision?

Identify a gift that you think was one of your most effective and meaningful—to both you and the organization or people you aspired to serve. Write down three reasons why it was successful.

Now, recall a gift that was one of your most ineffective. Write down three reasons why this gift did not have its intended impact.

unpack your giving

Review your responses to the questions above. What criteria did you use to determine the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of your philanthropic gift? Did you prioritize your learning, how the dollars were used, feedback from the nonprofit you funded and the people receiving the programs or services, the gift's measurable impact, if the gift provided immediate relief or some other consideration?



How do you define and measure effectiveness?

What aspects of your giving (e.g. researching and sourcing nonprofits, identifying selection criteria, measuring impact, sharing your learning, etc.) do you want to grow?

identify your success criteria for #givingtuesday

Finally, identify the criteria you will use on #GivingTuesday to determine the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of your gift. Will you consider your personal journey, the dollars you allocate to your issue area, the number of people your gift reaches, the feeling you get, the extent to which the organization shares the impact of your gift or some other consideration?