

How to Create a Culture of Philanthropy

TOOLKIT NAME

Culture of Philanthropy

DEVELOPED BY



Adapted from content presented at the 2023 Relationship-Based Fundraising Summit. Special thanks to Aperio Philanthropy and Eastern Illinois Food Bank for their contributions.

BIG PICTURE: WHY DO PEOPLE SUPPORT YOUR ORGANIZATION?

- Consider why people donate, volunteer, serve on the board, and work at your organization.
- The heart of your culture of philanthropy must be rooted in the *Why*.

WHAT IS PHILANTHROPY?

- Philanthropy = love of humankind.
- Philanthropy's aims are long term:
 - To make a difference.
 - A partnership to achieve a shared goal.
 - Match desire of supporter with mission of organization.
- Philanthropy is not a moment - it is a movement.

This guide reviews what a culture of philanthropy is, how to assess if you are in a fundraising culture or culture of philanthropy, and how to foster a culture of philanthropy across your organization.

A CULTURE OF PHILANTHROPY IS...

- Everyone shares responsibility for development and knows what their role is.
- Donor relationships are strong. All supporters are treated exceptionally, but not the same.
- Fundraising is integrated and aligned with the mission.
- Engaging the people you serve with care and partnership with program staff.
- All program staff play an active role cultivating relationships for the organization; this expectation is integrated into job descriptions and conveyed as a priority in the hiring process.
 - This doesn't mean all staff fundraise necessarily. But all staff should understand their role in philanthropy.
 - Staff must know the story of the work as all staff represent your organization.
- The focus is on fundraising as engagement. There is one database containing everyone who is affiliated with the organization, whether they are donors, volunteers, newsletter subscribers, etc.
 - A true understanding of how people come across and engage meaningfully with your organization is the only way to integrate your whole team in the work.

HOW TO CREATE A CULTURE OF PHILANTHROPY—*continued*

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF EACH TEAM IN CREATING A CULTURE OF PHILANTHROPY?



NEIGHBORS



DEVELOPMENT



PROGRAMS



FINANCE AND HR

Here are a few examples of each team's role:

→ Leadership

- Leads and inspires a culture of philanthropy
- Involved with development by cultivating and engaging donors
- Interviewed or writes the opening letter of newsletters, annual reports and campaign materials for donors
- Provides input and ideas of how they want to show strategic plan objectives and progress in the annual report or campaigns materials

→ Board

- Serve as an ambassador in the community
- Open doors and make connections to potential supporters
- Provide quotes about their service for your annual report or newsletters.

→ Development

- Lead culture of philanthropy efforts
- Thanks those that participate in fundraising efforts at all staff or team meetings
- Creates the vision for annual reports, newsletters, campaign materials, etc. with the donor's interests in mind
- Project manages annual reports, newsletters, campaign materials, etc. Gives ample time for the activities laid out to involve all teams. It is this communication and project management that will contribute to a growing sense of a culture of philanthropy.

HOW TO CREATE A CULTURE OF PHILANTHROPY—*continued*

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF EACH TEAM IN CREATING A CULTURE OF PHILANTHROPY?



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→ Programs

- Partners with Development staff to work with the people you serve
- Provide stories from sites where the work is done, and critically, know what neighbor areas are stable and ready to share their story. This can be used in the annual report or future campaign materials.
- Will surface critical work with volunteers for consideration, and what they see as current needs. This will help in crafting the CEO letter for the annual report or for future campaign material.
- Play an important role in providing inputs for proposals and grant applications as well as building relationships with donors and program officers.

→ Finance & HR

- Finance and Development must agree on how to report financials in the annual report and if they are audited or not. If you choose to put unaudited financials in your annual report, make sure to follow up and update the online version.
- Have HR involved in how you tell the story of your organization. Have them review your annual report or campaign materials to align with your core values.

HOW TO CREATE A CULTURE OF PHILANTHROPY—*continued*

HOW TO ASSESS YOUR CULTURE

How do you know where your organization stands in terms of your culture of philanthropy?

- Create a survey and survey your staff, board, volunteers every year. Ask the questions below on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 being Not at All, 5 being Always). Then create SMART goals to improve your scores.
- On a scale of 1 to 5...
 - Philanthropy is an important part of fulfilling our mission.
 - My organization builds meaningful, lasting relationships with supporters.
 - Everyone at my organization plays a role in philanthropy.
 - I contribute to philanthropy on a regular basis.
 - I can explain why someone should give their skills, talent, or a financial gift to my organization.
 - I feel I could contribute to philanthropy more than I currently do.



Use the **Building a Culture of Philanthropy** chart in the Appendix to identify ways of moving your organization from a Fundraising Culture to a true Culture of Philanthropy.

THE GOAL

- The goal of achieving a culture of philanthropy involves a lot of different groups with different jobs to be a part of an ever-growing response to a real need: your mission.
- Recognize that one year it might require more work to build a culture of philanthropy with the board, and the next year it may require more work with the staff.
- Keep the big goal in mind: A culture of philanthropy is when everyone is working together to inspire supporters to roll up their sleeves and join the cause and fulfill promises to both supporters and the mission they serve.

Thank-a-Thons are a great way to get staff involved in philanthropy!

Check out the [Feeding America Donor Thank-a-Thon Script & FAQs – Example in the Culture of Philanthropy Toolkit](#) to learn more!

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Appendix

BUILDING A CULTURE OF PHILANTHROPY

In a Fundraising Culture	In a Culture of Philanthropy
Philanthropy = grants by institutions or gifts from wealthy individuals.	Philanthropy = love of humankind.
Development staff is responsible for revenue generation.	Everyone in the organization shares some responsibility for revenue generation by serving as ambassadors and building relationships with potential supporters and constituents.
It's all about the money.	It's all about the relationships.
Supporters = money.	Supporters = skills, talents, time and money.
Supporters are contacted only when money is needed.	Supporters are contacted regularly with invitations to participate in activities, progress updates, and information about how their contributions are helping.
Fundraising and engagement are siloed and have different contact lists.	There is one list for every person who's affiliated with the organization in some way (e.g., volunteering, donating, organizing, etc.).
Fundraising is seen as a one-off or add-on.	Fundraising is incorporated into and across every staff position and activity in the organization.
Culture is seen as "touchy feely."	Culture is the most important factor in determining an organization's effectiveness.
The board relegates fundraising to the development committee.	The board development committee directs the participation of the entire board in fundraising.
It's about acquiring supporters.	It's about keeping supporters.
Mission, program goals and operations are separate from revenue generation.	Mission, program goals and operations are aligned with revenue generation.
The focus is on short-term tactics like appeals and events.	The focus is on the longer-term strategy behind the tactics.
The organization functions with a scarcity mindset.	The organization functions with a mindset of abundance.
The organization's leaders make decisions based on what's available.	The organization's leaders make decision based on what the community needs and a shared vision of how to meet that need.
The community isn't engaged.	The community is intentionally engaged and participates as a partner with the organization.
Development staff/directors are relegated to secondary status.	Development staff/directors are part of the leadership team and equal partners with other senior staff; they participate in all planning, strategy, financial and organizational meetings.
Development goals aren't part of everyone's job description.	Development goals are part of everyone's job description.
Board and staff have sporadic contact.	Board and staff have regular opportunities to engage and interact.
The focus is on big gifts.	All gifts are important.
Donations come first.	Donations come after we engage people in our work.
We will win over every supporter for our organization.	We will listen and refer supporters to other organizations that align more closely with their aspirations.
Money is dirty.	Money is what we need to do our work.
There are rigid lines between organizations' departments, including development.	Job responsibilities and departments are more fluid; more collaboration to meet goals.

*Adapted from "*BEYOND FUNDRAISING: What Does It Mean to Build a Culture of Philanthropy?*"

