

**Board Giving Exercise - Starter Ask**

Designed by Great River Strategies

**Introduction**

Prepared for board member. The purpose of this exercise is to introduce giving to your board of directors. This is especially useful for boards that do not have a strong culture of giving, have a change in board membership, or the organization has started to focus more on philanthropy. This can be conducted by development director if needed, but we strongly suggest a board member conduct this exercise with the support of the development director.

**Materials needed**

- 1 envelope for each board member
- 1 pen for each board member
- 1 blank note card for each board member

**Exercise**

The board chair or a designated board member should conduct the following steps in order and verbally read the questions under #4, allowing time for board members to answer the questions. Do not feel a need to speak beyond these questions. If board members start to ask questions regarding these questions, just encourage them to answer the question for themselves personally, there is no "right" or "wrong" answer.

1. Hand out unsealed envelopes with a blank note card inside along with pen to each board member.
2. Have each board member write down the name of the board member to their right on the outside of the envelope.
3. Each board member should pass their envelope to the board member on the right.
4. Board members should take out the notecard from their envelope and write down the answer to the following questions (asked by the designated board member):
  - a. In dollars, how much do you feel the entire board of directors should personally contribute to the organization this fiscal year (or) [each year]?
  - b. What dollar amount do you feel represents a meaningful gift to the organization?
  - c. \*Turn the card over\*, what amount will you commit to give to the organization this year?
5. Put your notecard into your envelope, seal it, and pass it in to the board chair.

**What was accomplished**

The designated board member should thank each board member and explain to the board what was accomplished in this exercise.

- Each board member made an “ask”. (Look at how easy asking can be!) By writing the name of a fellow board member on the envelope and passing it to the right, you asked that board member to make a commitment. Congratulations!
- Now the organization can understand the average amount the full board feels is an important contribution level for the year. The executive director/development director will total the numbers provided by each board member for “in dollars, how much do you feel the entire board of directors should personally contribute to the organization this fiscal year?” and divide by the number of board members to arrive at an average agreed upon giving level. This fairly shows what the board feels should be given by our group in a year.
- The organization can gain an understanding of what the board feels is a meaningful gift. This is personal to each of us, but by having all these numbers shared by each board member, we can together better understand how to define this as an organization.
- The development staff can gain an understanding of how much each board member plans to contribute in the fiscal year. This is your commitment, and we are grateful to have your dedication of time, talents, and financial resources to support our important work.

Thank you for your commitment to our organization!

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**For executive director / development director following the board meeting**

1. Document the answers to questions a, b, and c. Average the answers to a and b, then arrive at an average gift amount for each. Share the full report with the board chair and designated board member, and development committee if your board has one.
2. The board chair should share the results (average of a and b only) with the entire board.
3. The executive director/development director should then use this information as a plan for:
  - a. Budgeting
  - b. Starting point for board giving
  - c. Identifying opportunities for future gifts and increased giving