



GUIDE TO MAJOR GIFTS

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What if everything started with a relationship?

When we talk about fundraising, we often think first about campaigns, targets to reach, and amounts to raise. Yet behind every donation, there is, first and foremost, a person.

And that is where everything begins. **Major gifts are not built on numbers first — they are built on relationships of trust.**

Contrary to what many people believe, major gifts are not reserved only for large organizations. They represent a real opportunity for any cause that wants to expand its impact, bring important projects to life, stabilize revenue, and deepen relationships with its donors.

In reality, daily operations are often already full. Teams are small, sometimes supported by only one person. Priorities accumulate, time is limited, and structuring a fundraising strategy can seem difficult to integrate. In this context, one idea often comes up: **“Major gifts are not for us».**

And yet.

Major gifts do not depend on exceptional resources. They take root in elements that already exist within your organization: human relationships, a meaningful cause, and a process that develops gradually.

In other words, you already have what it takes to begin!

What is a major gift?

A major gift is not defined by a specific number. It is a donation that is important for your organization and meaningful for the person giving it.

For many organizations, this could be:

- \$1,000
- \$5,000
- \$10,000
- Or more

And that is perfectly valid. Sometimes this type of gift helps bring an important project to life. Sometimes it can even transform an organization in a lasting way.

The mistake almost every organization makes

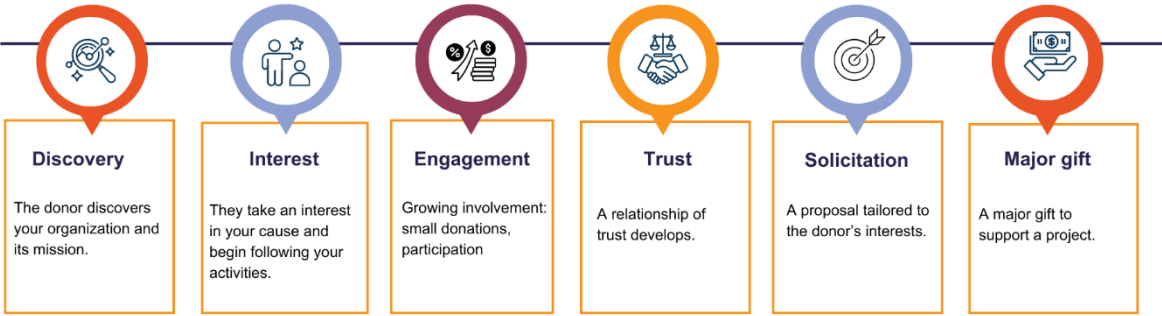
Major gifts do not replace your other fundraising activities. **Instead, they complement them by following a different logic — one that is more relational and evolving.**

They are based on a simple idea: not all relationships develop at the same pace or in the same way.

Some people discover your cause for the first time. Others begin to take interest in it, follow your work, or make occasional contributions. Over time, relationships develop. Trust grows. And for some of them, the desire to go further emerges naturally.

That is when a major gift begins to take shape.

In most cases, it is part of a progressive journey:



Over time, the relationship strengthens and trust grows... until the moment when a more significant contribution becomes possible. This journey takes time, and that is perfectly normal. It cannot be rushed. **It must be built.**

Major Gifts vs. Major Campaigns

It is also important to distinguish major gifts from major fundraising campaigns. These two approaches are often confused, but they follow different logics and objectives.

Major Campaign	Major Gifts Program
Associated with a specific objective, often linked to a large-scale project (e.g., infrastructure, a new building, or a major program).	Part of a long-term philanthropic development strategy.
Intensive mobilization over a defined period of time.	An ongoing and sustainable approach over time.
Aims to build collective momentum around a compelling project.	It is based on building personalized relationships with key donors.
Communication and solicitation are highly concentrated during the campaign.	A structured and relational approach based on trust and follow-up.
May generate major gifts to help achieve a specific objective.	Allows organizations to gradually develop major gifts through long-term relationships.

These two approaches are not opposed, they complement each other. One help mobilize quickly around a specific project, while the other contributes to building lasting relationships with the people who support your mission.

In the long term, it is often these relationships that ensure more stable and predictable growth.

Practical indicators to get started!

Before getting started, one question often comes up: **is your organization ready to develop major gifts?**

The good news is that it is not about reaching a “perfect” level, but rather about recognizing what is already in place.

Here are 5 key indicators:



Major gifts are not built on a campaign, but on a **culture of relationships**.

The 4 key drivers that make all the difference

1. Identify the right donors

There is no need to look very far to get started. Your future major donors are often already part of your ecosystem:

- People who already give (even small amounts)
- Engaged volunteers
- Members of your board of directors
- Partners who believe in your mission

These existing connections represent a valuable foundation. Over time, they are often the people who may choose to go further.

Start by analyzing your database:

- Donation history
- Engagement with your cause
- Financial capacity
- Network and influence

Priority target: people who are already engaged - not strangers.

2. Qualify and understand

Major donors are not simply looking for an opportunity to give. Above all, they want to engage in something that has meaning for them. They want to understand the real impact of their contribution, feel that they are useful and involved, contribute to something bigger that matters to them, and feel confident in the organization they support.

Most importantly, they appreciate when the approach is thoughtful, personalized, and appropriate. **Being approached “at the right time, in the right way” makes all the difference.**

In this context, before even talking about solicitation, it is essential to take a moment to better understand the people connected to your organization. **A major gift depends on one key element: alignment between your project and the donor’s motivations.**

This does not require complex tools, but rather genuine attention.

- What resonates with them in your mission?
- Why are they engaged?
- How are they already involved in your cause?
- What impact are they hoping to create?

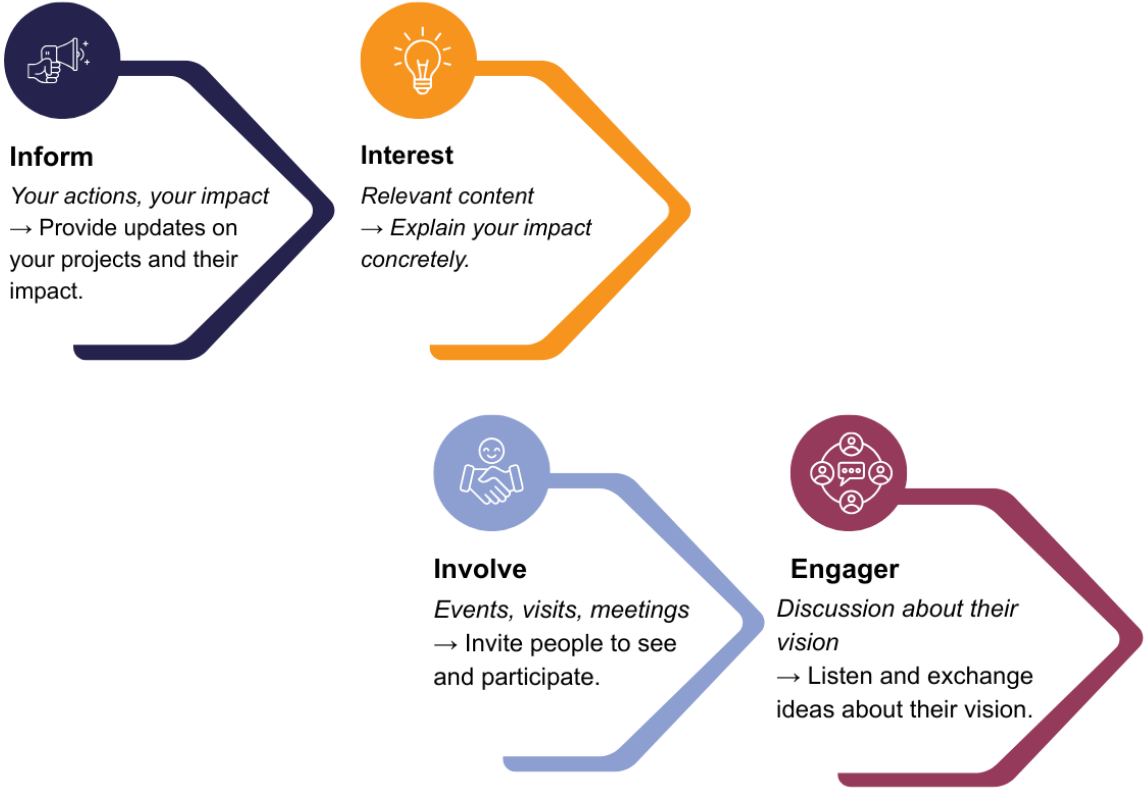
The goal is not to conduct a deep analysis, but to better understand in order to have better conversations. From this understanding, stronger relationships — and eventually major gifts — can be built.

Reminder: Donors want to **make a difference**, not just make a donation.

3. Create and nurture the relationship (before asking)

This is where everything happens. In most cases, major gifts do not happen behind a screen. They are built through meetings, conversations, and involvement. A strong relationship is more powerful than a perfect pitch.

The 4 key drivers:



A major gift is rarely the result of a single meeting. It requires consistency and authenticity.

4. Make the ask strategically

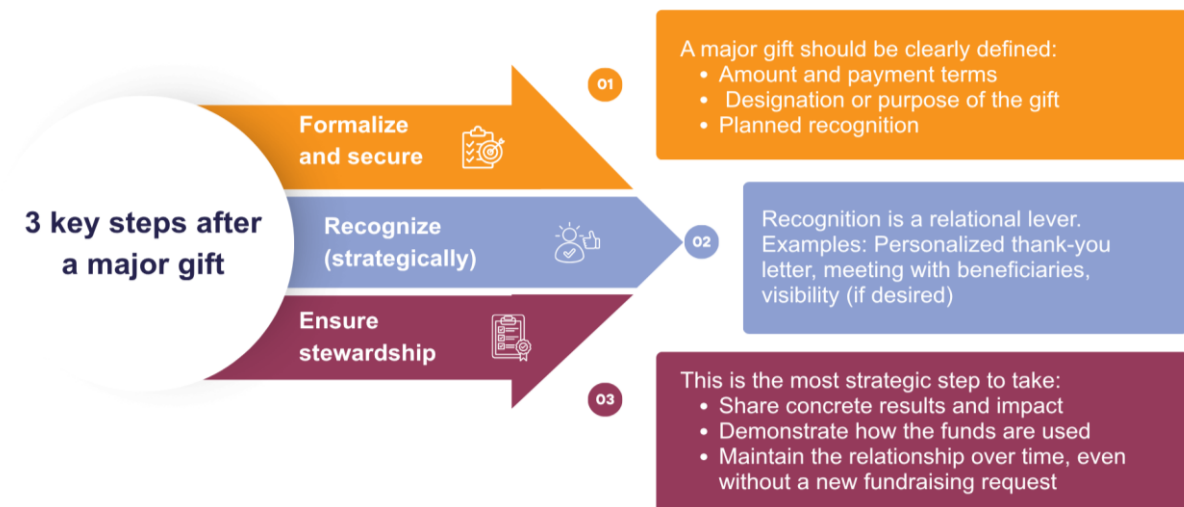
An effective solicitation relies on five key conditions:

- The right person
- The right project
- The right amount
- The right moment
- An in-person meeting

And most importantly: Dare to propose a specific amount.

After the gift: where everything truly begins!

Many organizations celebrate the donation and then move on. **That's a mistake. The real work begins after the gift.** To succeed, organizations must clearly demonstrate the impact, maintain the relationship, and involve donors in order to increase giving and build lasting relationships.



Objective: transform a major gift into a long-term relationship.

Major gifts: a shift in mindset

Major gifts are not a technique. They are a **strategic and human-centered approach** that requires time, consistency, and genuine listening to donors.

What this approach offers in return:

- Ambitious projects brought to life
- Stronger relationships
- A more stable and impactful organization

BONUS — Your next immediate actions

- Identify 10 potential donors in your network or database.
- Ask yourself this question: “Who could make a significant gift if we presented the right project?”
- Clarify one meaningful project to present based on the people you have identified.
- Plan three meetings in the coming weeks.



Would you like to go further?

Major gifts require a structured approach, tailored to your reality.

BNP Inspire supports organizations in:

- Building and structuring their major gifts strategy
- Identifying their full potential by analyzing their database and network
- Turning their ambitions into concrete results
- Building a recognition and stewardship program for donors

Contact us:

info@bnpinspire.com

bnpinspire.com

