

# Getting Started



Together, The Erie Community Foundation and The Nonprofit Partnership host **The Giving Pledge** year-round. This initiative encourages nonprofits in the Erie area to ask their donors to consider a pledge in their will or estate plan for the benefit of those nonprofits. The Giving Pledge is a non-binding commitment that donors make to nonprofits. It is our desire that this commitment will begin the discussion between donor and nonprofit about what is perhaps the most meaningful gift in that relationship—a planned gift.

Planned giving is perceived as only being accessible to large organizations, like hospitals and universities, that can afford the fundraising and legal personnel to make it possible. Terms like “gift annuities” and “charitable remainder trusts” can be intimidating to the average nonprofit, and delving into legal and financial issues with donors is often seen as out of our reach or beyond our capabilities. This certainly not true, especially with The Giving Pledge. The Giving Pledge is **WHERE WE START**.

# Create a Plan

The Nonprofit Partnership is available to work with you to produce customized brochures, images, logos, cards, and other materials to communicate with your donors, but your organization will still need a plan.

Possible elements of this plan might include:

- A communications plan. Identify when and how you will communicate to donors. Remember, it is important to reach out through mailings, websites, emails, social media, and other platforms. Your organization needs a solid case for support as to why donors will want to commit to you in their long-term financial plans. You need to communicate that case through multiple channels.
- A review of your donor base. Planned gifts don't necessarily come from our wealthiest donors. They come from donors who have given to us on a consistent basis, numerous times, over a number of years. Identify and target these people.
- An infrastructure. To be successful in this effort, your leadership needs to be committed to the process and you need to be able to respond quickly and appropriately to any questions or needs that arise from your donors. Make sure this is a priority and that you are prepared!



## *Start with an Internal Commitment*

- In order to maximize the potential of The Giving Pledge, you need to have the commitment of the Executive Director/CEO and your fundraising staff. Having everyone who is going to pursue these opportunities on the same page is key.
- Get your Board to commit. The Board must commit both to assisting staff in pursuing commitments to The Giving Pledge and also in providing commitments themselves. Remember, this is a **NON-BINDING** commitment. It doesn't require a Board member or donor to do anything other than sign the card. The legal arrangements can be made at a later date.
- Involve your staff. Many organizations have very committed staff. Don't forget them as a part of this process. They've given more than anyone to your organization. Give them the opportunity to commit to you in this way.

### *The Time is Right!*

- \$4.79 billion will transfer from one generation to another over the next five years in Erie County (The Center for Rural Pennsylvania).
- People over the age of 50 control 70 percent of all privately held financial assets in the United States (U.S. Census Bureau).
- \$41 trillion to be transferred from one generation to next in 50 years – Estimates indicate that \$6 trillion will be given to charities (Boston College study).
- 42% of Americans have wills but only 8% say they have named charities in their wills (National Committee on Planned Giving).
- 89% of planned gifts are bequests and more than 80% of bequest donors do not inform the recipient organization prior to their death (National Committee on Planned Giving).



# Begin the Conversation

You can start the conversation today with your donors. You aren't talking to them about "annuities" or "trusts" but rather a commitment to your organization. You do this every day with your donors and The Giving Pledge now provides the platform to have that conversation about the most basic of planned gifts—the bequest.

Few people are comfortable discussing final arrangements, especially when it is combined with finances. The Giving Pledge, with the commitment and backing of the Erie Community Foundation and The Nonprofit Partnership, provides you with the opportunities to begin that conversation.

Here are some examples of how you might begin that conversation:

- *{Your Nonprofit} has been challenged, along with other nonprofits in the community, to participate in The Giving Pledge. We'd like to talk to you about this challenge and how you might help.*
- *The Erie Community Foundation and The Nonprofit Partnership have committed to developing resources, including cards, tools, videos and recognition, for those participating in The Giving Pledge. The more successful we are, the more we get in return. We would like to encourage you to help us in this effort.*
- *There is a community-wide effort to engage faithful donors like you. It is called The Giving Pledge. We would like to talk to you about joining others in Erie in strengthening nonprofits like {Your Nonprofit}.*

The Giving Pledge IS YOUR REASON to begin having these conversations. And remember, it is a *conversation*. Don't just send out The Pledge Card and forget about it. Use this time, this excuse, to have that conversation.

