



Endowment Accelerator Tips for Endowment Donor Conversations

Getting the Meeting:

- Communicate in a way that is authentic to your relationship with the donor and/or that you know they prefer. Often, a combination of an email and follow-up phone call works well.
- Your only goal is to schedule a meeting - don't get pulled into the conversation prematurely. However, if a donor explicitly tells you they don't want to meet and would prefer to speak by phone or video call, you should be responsive to their wishes.
- Share your role as a volunteer/staff member, explain you would like to meet to thank them for their commitment to camp and to share about a new opportunity to secure camp's future that you are excited to share with them.
- Ask if a spouse/partner will be joining.
- Be prepared with multiple days/times to offer for convenience.
- Set up a time and place to meet. Select a location that will be convenient for the donor and provide privacy for your conversation, and where you are unlikely to be interrupted.
- Send a confirmation message 24-hours before the meeting date/time.

The Meeting:

- Think conversation not sales pitch.
- Be Yourself! The conversation should feel and sound like a conversation you'd have with a friend or family member, not a scripted sales call. Approach the donor as a partner in your shared cause of supporting camp.
- Start by thanking the donor for meeting with you and offering space for them to "download" anything that's on their mind – creating space for this up front will help them focus on your conversation afterwards.
- Ask the donor a question that gets them thinking about their values and their connection to camp:
 - Share your camp story and ask about theirs – why does camp matter to you?
 - Why did you choose to give to camp the first time?
 - Why have you continued to be a loyal supporter of camp?
 - How do you feel about the future of camp? Why do you want to see it thrive?
- Try to stick to the 80/20 rule – the donor should be speaking for 80% of the meeting and you should be speaking for 20% of the meeting.
- Show you are actively listening to them – ask follow-up questions or for more detail. Probe to understand the values that underlie their commitment to camp.



Making Your Ask:

- Try to move the conversation towards your ask by the time you are three quarters of the way through your meeting time. For example, if you have 60 minutes scheduled, try to steer the conversation in this direction after 45 minutes at the latest.
- Move the conversation forward by making a connection between their expressed values/interests and camp's endowment-building initiative.
- Make your case - explain why endowment-building is essential to camp's future and why now is the right time to make this a priority.
- Keep it personal - share why you have made your own commitment to help build camp's permanent endowment fund.
- Be specific in what you are asking for - invite them to join you by making a special gift commitment to the endowment-building initiative of \$X over X period of time. Mention any matching grant incentives.
- Be quiet to let them consider what you've asked. This is hard to do! Consider taking a sip of water to stop yourself from rushing to fill silence.

Handling Questions & Responses:

- Don't think of initial responses as "objections." Think of it as a natural extension of your conversation. The donor is likely going to process aloud as they consider your request, and everything they share is helpful information.
- Questions are often a great sign of interest. Donor questions often indicate that they want to find a way to get to "yes."
- What may initially sound like "no" often means "not now" or "not that amount" or "not for this project."
- It's ok not to know the answer to every question. Offer to find out the answer and call them with it by a certain day.
- Often a donor won't make a firm decision right away and will need to think it over, confer with a spouse, or check in with a lawyer or tax advisor.

Following Up:

- If you get a commitment on the spot, share the pledge/gift form for them to complete.
- If they need time, give them materials to take with them.
- Set a firm day and time that you will reach out to follow up, and make sure you stick to that agreed timeframe on your end.
- Remind them of the matching grant opportunity and any urgency around timing.
- Thank them enthusiastically for their time and consideration and for their continued support of camp.
- After you leave, record your notes of key takeaways from the conversation that are important for camp to have on record in your donor database.
- Send a personal thank you note and reminder of your follow up agreement.