Major Gifts
If you build a relationship, money will follow!

Barbara Milligan, CFRE
Executive Director

What is a major gift?
- Gift for a special purpose, campaign or initiative
- The amount varies among organizations
- Depends on the age of your development program and your operating budget

How do you get a major gift?
- Identify potential donors
- Build a relationship
- Ask!
- Thank and recognize
- Continue to build the relationship
- Ask again!

Where do you find major gift prospects?
- In your database!
- Start with trustees, donors, volunteers and members.
- Move outward to neighbors, peers, and business associates.
- Create a cultivation list.

What are you looking for?
- The 3Cs: Commitment, Connection & Capacity
- Commitment – current donations
- Connection - participation
- Capacity – how much can they give
The Highfield Process
- Work from Donors & Members List
- Development Committee identifies people with $1k capacity
- Add to cultivation list for Highfield Circle
- Build a relationship
- HC first goal
- Research, continue relationship
- Ask for major gift – looking for “Top 15”

Why will donors give?
- Because they have a personal relationship with you: people give to people.
- They trust you and your organization.
- They value the work that you do.

How do you cultivate relationships?
- Special Events
- Any excuse for a phone call/thank you
- Breakfast, lunch or coffee – include board members
- Offer a tour of your facility
- Invite them to a special program
- Host small group events
- Send them communications
- Ask them for advice!

What do you talk to major donors about?
- Family, health, community, travel, things they care about, their personal histories.
- Gather info.
- Most importantly, ask questions, listen.
- Make notes afterward.

Keep track of your interactions
- Also called “moves”
- This should be within your database.
- Write down info as you gather it.
- Birthdates, spouse name, children’s names, interests, travel, other organizations they care about, references to businesses and/or boards.

How do you lay the foundation of trust for your organization?
- Show impact and ROI
- Display a passion for mission!
- Have a strong case for support.
- Provide evidence of vision, leadership, strategic planning, and fiscal stability.
- Respect them and thank them.
Now ask!

- Review all that you know.
- Package your request in a way that matches a gift to their interest and ability
- Be specific.
- Take someone with you if necessary.
- Ask! (You won’t get a gift unless you do)

And remember …

- People want to give, they want to make a difference, they want to change lives.

You will feel confident because …

- YOU have a relationship with the donor.
- YOU believe in your mission.
- YOU have given.
- ALL board and staff members have given.

Be ready for transformation

- Major gifts can transform your organization.
- Major gift fundraising can transform YOU.

Contact Information

Barbara Milligan, CFRE
Executive Director

HIGHFIELD HALL 
& Gardens

P.O. Box 494 | 56 Highfield Drive
Falmouth, MA 02540
highfieldhall.org
508-495-1878
director@highfieldhall.org