Tool 17: Donor Cultivation

- **Make it easy.** Start with the people who know you. Identify donors (current and lapsed), former board members, and other one-time friends of your organization who have relationships with your group or are otherwise known by current staff and board members. If they gave in the past, that's best: they meet the "ABC" test of having the ability to give, belief in your mission, and a connection to your organization.
- **Make it strategic.** Of all the donors and others connected to your organization, prioritize those who have the capacity or history of significant giving. For each of these donors and prospects, develop an individualized donor cultivation plan (see Tool 18 – Donor Cultivation Plan).
- **Make it personal.** Use personalized email, letters, phone calls, or direct messaging to establish or re-establish relationships with each member of your group of priority donors. As much as possible, have contact for each donor or donor prospect come directly from someone on staff or the board who has a connection to or relationship with that individual. In the donor cultivation plan for each donor, identify the person within your organization who has this "stewardship" responsibility.
- **Make it special.** Arrange individual or small group meetings (e.g., coffee, lunch, house parties) to demonstrate the importance of relationship with members of this prioritized group. These meetings are not always about asking for money: they are about learning more about these donors' lives and goals, and (especially for past board members or lapsed donors) communicating what's new and exciting at your organization. When you are going to solicit, make it clear that it is an "ask" meeting, not an "update" or "learning" meeting.
- **Make it regular.** Your bigger donors should receive a personal phone call three times per year from the board member who is stewarding that relationship: once to ask, once to thank, and once midyear to update the donor on your organization's current work.