

## Blueprint for success

### *How do your practices stack up against the Donor Bill of Rights?*

If you haven't examined whether your nonprofit is abiding by the 10 tenets of the Donor Bill of Rights, you're missing an opportunity to attract new donors. The Donor Bill of Rights is a blueprint of best practices designed to help organizations boost their donations.

### Bill's history

Originated in 1993, the Donor Bill of Rights is a joint creation of the American Association of Fundraising Counsel (now the Giving Institute), the Association for Healthcare Philanthropy, the Council for Advancement and Support of Education, and the Association of Fundraising Professionals.

Its purpose is to "assure that philanthropy merits the respect and trust of the general public, and that donors and prospective donors can have full confidence in the not-for-profit organizations and causes they are asked to support."

### The 10 rights

Here are the rights and related considerations:

- 1. To be informed of the organization's mission, of the way the nonprofit intends to use donated resources and of its capacity to use donations effectively for their intended purposes.*** This information is the bedrock of your outreach efforts, and it should be clear to your board, staff and anyone reading materials about your organization.
- 2. To be informed of who's serving on the organization's governing board, and to expect the board to exercise prudent judgment in its stewardship responsibilities.*** Your nonprofit must be transparent about who serves on your board, the decisions they're making and what they're responsible for.
- 3. To have access to the organization's most recent financial statements.*** Access isn't just expected, it's required. You must make your nonprofit's financial data easily accessible to your constituents and potential donors.
- 4. To be assured donors' gifts will be used for the purposes for which they were given.*** In what *ways* are you accountable to your donors for the use of their gifts? Donors expect that you'll minimize administrative expenses so their funds are available for programming. You must honor restrictions on donations.

5. ***To receive appropriate acknowledgment and recognition.*** Make certain to publicly and privately thank your donors.
6. ***To be assured that information about their donations is handled with respect and confidentiality to the extent provided by law.*** Privacy cannot be taken for granted. How do you safeguard donor information?
7. ***To expect that all relationships with individuals representing organizations of interest to the donor will be professional in nature.*** Having a nonprofit designation doesn't exempt your organization from acting with professionalism and decorum. That expectation should extend to every staff and board member.
8. ***To be informed whether those seeking donations are volunteers, employees of the organization or hired solicitors.*** Again, transparency about your operations is valued, if not demanded.
9. ***To have the opportunity for donors' names to be deleted from mailing lists that an organization may intend to share.*** Donors, not your nonprofit, get to decide whether their information can be shared.
10. ***To feel free to ask questions when making a donation and to receive prompt, truthful and forthright answers.*** Open dialogue between your not-for-profit and your donors fosters respect and deepens relationships.

### **Meeting expectations**

Understanding and meeting your donors' expectations can help you build solid and lifelong relationships with people who share your mission. Abiding by the 10 tenets of the Donor Bill of Rights is a major step toward achieving that goal.