



Responding to a “No”

After many meetings and much homework it can be very defeating to hear “no” to a request for a contribution. The fear of rejection is normal.

Overcoming this fear and understanding what “no” really means can be motivating as you work hard to fund your mission. Ask yourself:

- “Was the organization prepared for this request?”
- Was the right care taken to cultivate the prospect and gain an understanding of his/her concerns, interests and needs?
- Will this request be conducted by the right person, for the correct amount, at the best time, in the best way possible?

If you can say yes to this then it is likely you will not hear “no” at all! But if you hear “no”, what can be done?

Possible responses:

- “Did you say no to the amount, or the project?”
- “Would this amount be easier for you to commit to if we spread the gift over time?”
- “Since you are committed to this program, is there an amount that you could commit?”
- “Would deferring payments until {DATE} help you commit to this amount?”
- “Would you be open to revisiting a gift of this amount in 6 months?”



Take stock of what you learned.

How did you ask? We suggest the following:

- “I know this program is important to you. If I can show you a way how you can fund it, would you be open to that?”

This approach invites a discussion about a monetary donation.

Did the circumstances change? If so, acknowledge this and offer your prospect more time to consider their desire to give now. Make time to visit again and determine then if an ask is more appropriate.

Did a funder decline your request? If so, talk with a program officer and determine what the weaknesses were with your request. This will serve to build a relationship with the funder and help you understand how to strengthen future requests.

Remember these long held concepts in mind as you prepare your next solicitation:

- “No” often means “not at this time”
- Don’t take it personally...this is about your case for support, not you
- Be flexible. This is not your money.
- Often a smaller gift leads to future larger gifts.
- Asking for contributions is built on having strong relationships