



Tips for Formalization

You have successfully secured letters of intent for after-lifetime gifts from your most loyal donors. Congratulations!

The next step is to check in with and move your donors from intent to formalization of their commitment. This involves making the necessary revisions to their will or trust and/or life insurance and retirement beneficiary forms.

Why should legacy donors formalize their legacy commitment? To ensure their desire to support your organization is fulfilled!

Steps you can take to document their formalized gift:

1. **Based on the notation as to the time frame in which the donor stated they would formalize their intent**, contact your donors to ask them if they have formalized their commitment and if not encourage them to do so. For example if they wrote 3 months on the intent form, then contacting them at 3 ½ months is appropriate, but don't contact them if only 2 months have passed.
2. **Contact is best made by phone or in person.** It's OK to be direct about why you are calling. In most cases donors realize that they need to take an additional step to follow through on their commitment.

Sample language: *“(Name of donor), Thank you for your legacy commitment to (name of organization). In accordance with best practices we're calling all of our donors to find out if they have formalized their legacy gift either in their will, trust or by making a change to a life insurance or retirement beneficiary form. Your letter of intent stated you intended to formalize your commitment within _____ months. I am following up to see if you have taken this next step and to offer assistance if you have not.*

3. **If the donor has formalized his/her intent**, let him/her know that you will be forwarding a **Legacy Gift Confirmation** form. Ask them to fill out the form and return to you for your organization's records at their earliest convenience. **Make sure to end the call by thanking the donor for their commitment to your organization.**
4. **If the donor hasn't taken the steps necessary to formalize his/her commitment**, find out if you can be of assistance by putting them in touch with someone at the Jewish Community Foundation or Federation.
 - **If they say yes**, give them the contact information or offer to be in touch with the Foundation/Federation and have someone contact them.
 - **If they say no, they just need more time**, then let them know that you will be sending them a Legacy Gift Commitment form to fill out and return to you once the formalization process has been completed. Ask them if you can contact them again in 3 months to check in if the form has not yet been submitted. Make a note in your calendar so you remember to do so. Try not to end the conversation without a date by which it is ok for you to follow-up with them.
 - **If they say no because there are other issues that need to be addressed** before they can formalize their gift, ask them when might be a good time for you to be in touch again.
5. **No matter what the response, always thank the donor for their legacy gift and their commitment to your organization.**