YMCA Donor Impact Reports

February 2017

**Guide to Developing an Impact Report:**

Once you have acquired a donor, one of the two most important things you can do to enhance that donor’s long-term loyalty and generosity is to provide reports on the impact of his or her gift. Some key points to keep in mind as you develop your impact reports:

* Reports should be specific to the allocation the donor supported. Creating impact reports for each of your most commonly used cases will give you the ability to match the report to a segment of donors and it will allow the donor to feel as if you are speaking to him/her personally.
* Impact reports will have a greater influence if they are personalized to the donor. This does not, however, mean that each report is bespoke. The easiest way to personalize a report is to treat it like an addressable letter and include the donor’s name and address at the top. Additionally, you may have the ability to use variable text/tokens to insert donor-specific information like a gift amount into the report.
* You can communicate the reports to your donors through any medium: mailed directly, emailed directly, handed over personally at an event or during a visit, even bundled with other communications like a newsletter, though this strategy risks having the report missed or ignored by the donor.
* For donors giving larger gifts, you may want to truly personalize the impact report so that if a donor gave, for example, $5,000, the report describes $5,000 worth of program changes and improvements along with the enhanced results that followed those program changes.
* Most fundraising organizations will prepare and send impact reports at a set point in the calendar year, often at a point selected by the organization to fall into a gap in solicitation activity or into a low period in terms of workload. However, the ideal time for an impact report is when the donor’s gift is actually going to work. A report to donors who contributed to summer camp, for example, should go out at the beginning of the summer when the first kids arrive or at the end of summer when the report can relay statistics and testimonials from the summer.
* There is no right or wrong approach to building a successful impact report as long as it speaks specifically to the allocation the donor supported, provides information that confirms the program in question is having its desired impact/result and indicates the explicit connection these impacts and results have to the donor’s gift.
* There are many approaches/formats that can serve as models for excellent impact reports:
	+ An email to the donor that includes a photograph of a new piece of equipment being delivered and the line, “Thank you so much for your gift to the Fitness Equipment Renewal Fund. The new elliptical machines arrived today. Visit us tomorrow and put them to use!”
	+ A hand-written note from a camper to the donor:
		- “Dear Col. Hogan: I’ve been at Camp Wanakita for two days and it’s already one of my top experiences of my life. I wouldn’t be here if it wasn’t for the scholarship I received so I just want to thank you for supporting the camp scholarship program. This summer is going to be awesome. Thank you, Hans Schulz”
	+ Sending donors a copy of a clipping from the local newspaper with a story about an award-winning student who has been part of a YMCA program. The clipping and a brief note can serve as an impact report. The note could say something like: “This is an article about Mackenzie who just graduated as her school valedictorian. Mackenzie has been part of the YMCA’s afterschool program since 2011 when her mother first brought her to us. You and the other 243 people who have donated to that program since 2011 should be incredibly proud today. Mackenzie is just one of our success stories, there are many more, but she’s the only one who made the paper today. I thought you’d like to know. Thank you for your generosity.”
* The following template is an example of a full and formal impact report. Its format is similar to a major-gift style impact report.

**YMCA LITERACY PROGRAM**

**YMCA OF COLUMBUS**

SPRING 2017

PHOTO

**A donor impact report prepared for:**

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**Community Need**

* 20% of high school graduates do not have basic reading proficiency
* Children who struggle with reading skills in third grade are four times more likely than their peers to drop out before graduating high school
* 85% of youth in juvenile court are functionally illiterate

**The YMCA Literacy Program**

Y-Literacy helps struggling readers develop the literacy skills they need to succeed in life. We offer free one-on-one reading tutoring to students in grades K-4 who are reading below grade level. Our curriculum covers the essential components of literacy: phonics, fluency, comprehension and vocabulary.

**The Impact of Philanthropy**

This year, we used donations to help us improve the scale and quality of our Y-Literacy program in a number of ways:

* We added 2 new locations for Y-Literacy, expanding the program from 3 centers to 5.
* Our 3 original sites each added a new literacy tutor, allowing us to admit 24 new students per site.
* We enhanced our evaluation program to include a more thorough intake assessment.
* We distributed 1,800 books in the community, an increase of 80% over the previous year.

**Proof in the Progress**

* 87% of students in the program increased their reading level.
* On average, program completion assessment scores were 12.5% higher than intake scores.
* 74% of program participants reported that they had initiated or increased their at-home reading habits.
* 83% of program participants reported feeling more confident in school.

**Mallory’s Story**

My daughter Jasmine never liked reading. She didn’t even like books. I signed her up for Y-Literacy because I was scared she was getting left behind and would never catch up. It took Jasmine two visits to the program to turn that around. The tutors were wonderful and when I saw Jasmine reading a Thea Stilton book on her own a few weeks after she started the program, I almost cried. As a parent, seeing my daughter happy to have a book in her hand was a wonderful moment.