

HYPOTHETICALS

I am pleased to offer you hypothetical situations that are loosely based on my real-life experience as a philanthropist. These are meant to offer you food for thought as to how you may want to approach and support the nonprofits when they come to you and it will help you think through how proactive you may want to be in your personal donor strategy.

Hypothetical #1

You care but you are super busy

You are passionate about a local park that you go to almost every day to walk your dog early in the morning before taking your kids to school and a full work day. It is your special time to center yourself before your busy day begins. You learn that the state agency in charge of running the park is having budget shortfalls and so it is closing the park to the public until further notice. You want to do something about this but have very little time to devote to the issue because your days are full of work and family.

Thought prompts – actions you can consider

- **One donation** – and you notice on the web that there is a new group forming to fundraise for the gap in funding that the state agency is articulating. After reviewing the organization's website, annual report, and tax status, you decide to offer it a one-time donation.
- **Fund a campaign or launch a new project** – you may be busy but you are super worried about this park because it is your solace and where you go to rejuvenate every morning before a busy day. You are a social person and happen to know a bunch of other friends and neighbors who also care about the park. You see that there is an organization involved in fundraising to backfill the agency budgets but you feel like more needs to be done. First of all the organization itself has no staff and is all volunteer, which means it has little influence with decision-makers. You are also concerned that the nonprofit won't be able to raise the requisite funds and worry that it is really the responsibility of the public to fund a public agency to maintain the park anyway. You then notice that there is a big and influential statewide nonprofit that also cares about parks and open-space. You give them a call and find out that this issue of underfunding public parks is not just in your neighborhood but a state-wide issue and problem. You decide to offer a project grant to that statewide group to help kick start a collaboration and coalition of nonprofit organizations that care about fully funding state parks. You are too busy to track the day-to-day development of this work but you notice that nonprofit you are funding is also supported by a local family foundation and you give that foundation a call. You find out that the program officer of that foundation is also tracking the issue and is happy to share with you the information that they discover about this issue along with recommendation of which nonprofits need donations. You may be busy but you are now funding a campaign to save the park you care about so deeply and you are partnering with a funder who has the time to track it all in detail and offer you updates.

Now jot down your own thoughts about how you would approach solutions in this hypothetical:

Hypothetical #2

You are retired and want to make a difference

You are retired and have always cared about helping children thrive in those years before kindergarten when the child's development is in such a formative stage in life. You have some money saved up that you intend to donate to a worthy cause, and you are starting to feel like this early childhood focus is for you. You then start talking with friends and colleagues and discover that there is a campaign being developed by really good nonprofits that you like a lot that are working to offer high quality childcare to young children while their parents work. You start talking with leading nonprofits on this issue and learn that they want to do a major study that will prove early childcare is very important for every resident because it improves quality of life overall. You are super excited about this and decide to work with the nonprofits to develop proposals. You also find a bunch of other funders interested in the work and start a funder group geared towards funding the campaign.

Thought prompts – actions you can consider:

- **One donation** – you can give one larger donation to the nonprofit you trust and support their work on the campaign.
- **Investigate** – you can start working with the group of nonprofits to create a strong coalition of organizations all focused on early childhood education. This ends up requiring a public education campaign to ensure that decision-makers and public hear about the groundswell of support for the cause. The solution does require some legislation to change some laws and so you make sure that your specific project grant is not directly supporting lobbying activities, since you want your donation to be tax deductible. You also successfully partner with other funders to make it all happen. Since you did not work in this field prior to retirement you have contracted with and are depending on a consultant to help guide you in your specific funding and donations strategies.

Now jot down your own thoughts about how you would approach solutions in this hypothetical: