



Best Practice in Vetting Prospects

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Category: Prospect Development

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Description of Practice:

This Best Practice in Vetting Prospects helps users think through when and how to vet potential contributions from international prospects. This practice can also be applied to domestic prospects considering principal gifts that may garner significant public recognition from the media; however, vetting is most commonly completed for international prospects and/or naming gifts.

Prospective Users of Practice:

- Prospect Research staff
- Gift Officers

- Advancement Services and Development leadership
- General Counsel
- Gift Compliance and Administration staff
- Donor Relations

Issue Addressed:

Accepting gifts from international prospects (or larger gifts from domestic prospects) can expose your organization to increased risk of undesirable associations with legal or criminal activities. Vetting research can ensure that Prospect Development has the opportunity to inform your organization of any publicly known risks or conflicts.

Desired Outcome:

Users will be able to establish a policy that specifies when and how they conduct vetting research to recommend whether or not their organization pursue a solicitation.

Process:

- Locate your organization's gift acceptance policy and associated "trigger list" – if there is no trigger list, ask for one to be created as a guideline for when you should consider conducting vetting research
- Determine what volume of vetting research can be accommodated by your Prospect Development team
- Determine what information you will compile in your international vetting research and the timeframe you can accomplish this within
- Create a standard list of federal and international resources that must be consulted when vetting a prospect
- Determine your recommendation rubric
- Draft your policy, get approval, and communicate it to key stakeholders

AASP Recommendation:

Before your organization solicits or accepts a gift from a prospect, particularly an international prospect, Prospect Development staff may complete due diligence research to vet the prospect and make a recommendation whether or not to further cultivate or solicit the prospect. The purpose of vetting research is to ensure that the potential donor does not have former, current, or future legal, criminal, or moral/ethical concerns or connections that would result in an undesirable association, thereby damaging your organization's reputation and/or credibility.

Where to begin?

- i. Your institution's need for vetting research may depend on your existing gift acceptance policy, so the first step is to locate it, if it exists. If there isn't one, ask your organization's gift processing and fundraising leadership if one can

be drafted. Typically, a gift acceptance policy will outline circumstances where your organization will not accept a gift. These parameters will likely follow set guidelines (e.g., IRS, CASE). They may also be based on your organization's mission (e.g., no corporate gifts, government gifts, or gifts from opposing political ideologists, etc.).

Set criteria for when you do the research

- ii. Determine if your organization has an existing “trigger list” - a list of criteria, which if any are met by a prospect, proposal, or a gift agreement, would require further review (by Prospect Development, but also executive or administration officials as well). Prospect Development's course is typically in-depth research to determine if the institution should pursue the solicitation or accept the gift. Donor Relations leadership may already have a working trigger list. See examples of a trigger list at the end of this Best Practice. If your organization does not, ask if Donor Relations (for gift agreements) will create one in partnership with Prospect Development (for proposals).
 - a. From a Prospect Development standpoint, common trigger list items include prospects who meet one or more of the following criteria:
 - i. Live abroad
 - ii. Tied to royal families
 - iii. Source of wealth is unclear
 - iv. Considering their first gift to your organization
 - v. Considering proposals at or above a certain dollar level (e.g., 7-figure+)
 - vi. Have known political, criminal, legal, moral, or ethical concerns
 - vii. Known family disputes, controversy, scandals, criminal undesired connections
 - viii. They are the head of a private company or are affiliated with companies with legal concerns
 - ix. Have a history of not fulfilling pledges
 - x. Considering a naming gift, both for physical and non-physical entities
- iii. Assess who within your organization has the final approval of whether to accept a gift. Is this the general counsel and president/CEO? Is the board involved? Is it the head of fundraising? This will help you better understand who your vetting audience may be and the gift approval process. Additionally, inquire who else in your organization may conduct due diligence. General Counsel offices will often conduct their own due diligence, so it is important to understand what research they complete to avoid redundancies.
- iv. Given the amount of time and resources it requires to complete thorough vetting of a prospect, consider also what Prospect Development will (or, can, given your political climate) require prior to conducting vetting research. Some requirements could be:

- a. Existing person/individual/organization/entity record in your database
- b. If your CRM has the capability, a prospect record/coding
- c. Prospect manager assigned
- d. Prospect has a proposal in your database and a proposal manager is assigned
- e. Proposal ask date within a certain timeframe (e.g., the next 1-2 months)
- f. Fundraising leadership notification and approval (to ensure that all parties are aware of the resources being invested in vetting research)

When is Prospect Development notified of proposals or prospects that may need vetting?

- v. With a gift acceptance policy, a trigger list, and a working knowledge of the key decision makers, Prospect Development can create a framework for when to conduct vetting research. Prospect Development should consider the following:
 - a. Establish a process that allows Prospect Development to review proposals entered in your CRM. If your development staff or their proxies are able to enter proposals themselves, ensure Prospect Development conducts a weekly or bi-weekly audit of proposals to ensure the appropriate new (or updated) proposals are flagged for review if they meet trigger list criteria. At some organizations this process may be called “Clearance to Solicit.” If establishing that process is not possible at your organization, an automatic, scheduled report of new proposals entered delivered to your inbox to review is a great first step to increase awareness.
 - i. There are commonly two pathways that lead to vetting research:
 1. Ideally, a gift officer will request that a planned solicitation be added to your CRM in the form of a proposal. At this point, your organization may have an internal review process which allows Advancement Services partners and fundraising leadership to flag any concerning proposals, where the prospect should be further vetted.
 2. A gift agreement is being written and Donor Relations or your gift agreement administrator flags concerns about the prospect. In this scenario, the solicitation is likely not already in your organization’s CRM/proposal pipeline. It could be that a gift officer solicited the gift without documenting it in your CRM (that’s a process enhancement and training opportunity) or that the prospect approached your organization with interest in making a gift and the conversation proceeded very quickly (in which case you’ll want to document all of the engagement, including the proposal).

- ii. However the solicitation arrives on Prospect Development's radar, ensure you have key partners in your organization who know to flag these kinds of proposals for your team. Prospect Development can't help an organization mitigate risk if they aren't aware of a pending proposal.

Determine research scope and timeframe

- v. Determine what information you will include in your international vetting research.
 - a. Format: this can be as in-depth or high-level as Prospect Development and/or Advancement Services or fundraising leadership desire. Some organizations use an in-depth narrative format, while others use a check list of resources consulted and a brief executive summary of findings. The format should be outlined in your written policy and can be tailored to the length of turnaround or the amount of the solicitation (i.e., more lead time, the more in depth).
 - b. Research content – consider including the following information:
 - i. Analysis
 - 1. Who is this prospect to your organization? If the prospect approached your organization, include that background.
 - 2. Background on the potential gift or solicitation amount and purpose.
 - 3. Executive summary of the prospect's reputational risk (see sections below) and any mitigating factors (e.g., is the prospect an established philanthropist? Have other well-known nonprofits accepted gifts from this prospect or have public partnerships? That will mitigate your organization's risk, but not eliminate it.)
 - 4. Research recommendation on whether to pursue or halt the solicitation or accept the gift.
 - ii. Basic overview
 - 1. Biographic: family, employment, boards, education, etc.
 - 2. Charitable background
 - iii. Prospect-specific considerations
 - 1. Criminal, legal, moral, ethical, or reputational issues
 - 2. Connections to undesirable individuals or entities, through family or business
 - 3. Has this donor not fulfilled pledges to your organization in the past?
 - 4. Does the prospect have the capacity to support a gift of this level?
 - iv. Gift-specific considerations
 - 1. Were similar gifts controversial elsewhere?
 - 2. Were similar gifts returned to the donor by the nonprofit?

3. Were similar gifts revoked by any donor? If so, why? Would your organization encounter similar issues?
 4. Is the purpose of the gift within your organization's mission?
 5. Does your organization's brand want to be visible in this area?
- v. Country-specific considerations
1. Does the U.S. government permit citizens to conduct business and trade with this country?
 2. If the prospect is closely tied to a foreign country, does your organization want to be associated with that country's domestic and political policies? (e.g., politician, member of, or advisor to royal families, or successful business owners who may have ties to foreign governments)
 3. Are there specific risks of potential human rights issues?
- c. Resources: create a standard list of federal and international resources that must be consulted when vetting a prospect. In general, read as much primary source documentation as one can. First. You may not be able to find much in the way of primary documentation. If there are court cases, even if resolved, read the docket and the filings, in full. If the prospect of interest is affiliated with a company, especially former affiliations, go to the Internet Archive's Wayback Machine and see if you can find the publicly-available bio from that time period for that company. Practice forensic research.
- i. Recommended resources:
 1. U.S. Department of the Treasury, Sanctions List:
<https://sanctionssearch.ofac.treas.gov/>
 2. U.S. Department of State, List of Statutorily Debarred Parties:
<https://www.pmdtc.state.gov/compliance/debar.html>
 - ii. Google:
 1. What could/would a layperson read about this person? The family? The business(es)? What are the suggested searches that come up when one starts typing the name or the company in the search box?
 2. Public relations. What interviews were established as PR moves by the prospect of interest? Their business(es)? Their country/government? Their family?
 - iii. Additional resources:
 1. For country-specific concerns, determine if your shop is comfortable with using reports from subject matter expert organizations like the State Department, the CIA, or the United Nations Human Rights Commission, etc. to

summarize any country-specific concerns to lessen Prospect Development's work.

2. Compile a list for your shop that includes international resources that are region specific. You can start from lists like these (you can find more by searching online):
 - a. <http://www.thephilanthropologist.com/resources-outside-u-s-a-focused/>
 - b. <https://www.internationalprospectresearch.net/links-resources/>
 - c. <http://www.nudevelopment.com/research/bookmark.html>
 - d. Corporate research: <https://www.corp-research.org/>
- iv. Assessing sources: How many reputable sources report the same situation? Is it almost verbatim? (If so, it's not a new report.) A great example of the variations of reporting regarding the same story is taking place now, with the admissions scandal.
- v. Vendors or freelancers can provide research on prospects perhaps more quickly than you can in house if you haven't done a lot of vetting, if your format is very lengthy, or if you're looking for a solid starting point. If you have the budget to purchase these services, it can be a strategic use of your resources.
- vi. Determine the timeframe Prospect Development can complete vetting research within.
 - a. Consider the following when establishing a baseline:
 - i. How many vetting requests do you receive annually? Or, how many solicitations of international prospects or principal/significant naming gifts occur annually?
 - ii. Do you often have more than one request at a time?
 - iii. Do you have budget to outsource most of the leg work?
 - iv. How detailed is the information are you providing in your vetting research?
 - v. What level of review will it require before it is submitted?
 - b. For international, comprehensive vetting where the solicitation timeline allows for it, it is recommended that Prospect Development negotiate four or more weeks to complete the request.
 - c. The timeframe will depend on the prospect's sense of urgency and the level of information Prospect Development provides. In-depth vetting research can be completed within 2-6 weeks depending on the circumstances.
- vii. Determine your risk rubric to provide consistent and clear recommendations from one prospect to the next, instead of using varied language over time. It is up to each Prospect Development team to determine what their recommendation rubric should be. Two sample risk rubrics are below:

- a. *Option 1:*
 - i. *Looks good from what Research can tell:* Based on publicly available information, Research did not identify any specific legal, criminal, or reputational risks for this specific prospect, but there may be unknown risks.
 - ii. *Some concerns:* Research identified the below outlined legal/criminal/reputational risk(s) for this specific prospect, and cautions that accepting a gift from this prospect may be damaging to the organization.
 - iii. *This could be bad:* Research identified the below outlined legal/criminal/reputational risk(s) for this specific prospect, and strongly cautions against pursuing the solicitation/accepting a gift from this prospect as doing so may damage the organization.
- b. *Option 2:*
 - i. Low concern: "Research recommends pursuing a solicitation of [prospect] but notes the following issues of minimal concern."
 - ii. Medium concern: "Research recommends proceeding with caution in a solicitation of [prospect] despite the following specific concerns:"
 - iii. High concern: "Research recommends [organization] halt all engagement with [prospect] given the following specific concerns:"
- viii. Draft any boiler plate language you would like to include in your standard memo as disclaimers. An example is: "Because of the international nature of this prospect, Research is unable to confirm their financial assets, as foreign countries have few requirements to disclose assets publicly." See the sample policies and resources section at the end of this Best Practice for more.

Communicating your findings

- ix. Some organizations have a set distribution list of fundraising leadership and key stakeholders notified of your research recommendation. Communicating your findings to a set list of parties keeps everyone involved in the loop on Prospect Development's findings. These parties could include:
 - a. Your manager and/or head of Prospect Development
 - b. Your Vice President or head of fundraising and their staff
 - c. Members of your development team's executive team or committee
 - d. The Prospect Manager and their management chain
 - e. All prospect team members or secondary gift officers assigned
 - f. Principal Gifts
 - g. International Development team
 - h. Donor Relations
 - i. Communications team (i.e., staff who may help draft the written proposal)
 - j. Gift agreement administration staff
 - k. Members of a Clearance to Solicit committee

Sample policies and resources on subsequent pages:

- 1) Sample international vetting policy
- 2) Sample trigger list
- 3) Sample clearance to solicit policy
- 4) Sample disclaimer and boilerplate language for vetting memos
- 5) Sample stage-based international research guidelines

Sample Prospect Development Vetting Research Policy

As part of potential gift cultivation and solicitation, Prospect Development is often asked to complete due diligence research on individuals and organizations, usually focusing efforts on those that hit one or more of the triggers on the Gift Agreement trigger list.

Criteria for Requesting Due Diligence Memos

Due to the significant time and cost associated with thoroughly vetting prospects, Prospect Development will prepare a due diligence memo on prospects when:

- Entity and prospect records are in the CRM; a Prospect Manager is assigned
- There is a 7-figure+ proposal with an assigned proposal manager in the CRM with an Anticipated Ask Date within the next six months
- Reputational vetting is deemed necessary because there are trigger list concerns or known reputational risks (e.g., political, criminal, or scandals)
- The proposal has been reviewed within the Clearance to Solicit process, all committee members and the VP of Development and Alumni Relations believe we should pursue this gift and that vetting research required.

Due diligence requests may be negotiated within basic Prospect Development protocols and deliverables. For 8-figure+ proposals, Prospect Development provides a level of research that exceeds industry standards, as concerns typically increase commensurate with the ask amount. Requestors of 8-figure due-diligence memos will work with the Prospect Development Director to determine scope.

The Wider Gift Agreement Approval Process

The due diligence memo is a stand-alone document that can be paired with a cover memo or additional materials from the division (i.e., non-Prospect Development offices); that cover memo or additional material should provide context describing proposed activity with the prospect and why the prospect is being vetted. Full details on the gift agreement approval process are available via Gift Administration team members, who is the division's liaison to the university's Office of General Counsel (OGC). The information herein only describes Prospect Development's protocol and delivered product; it does not outline the broader process of gift approval.

Non-Attainment Gifts

Although a gift may not be part of attainment, such as gifts from a foreign government, it may be appropriate to complete due diligence research. Office of the Vice President for Research (OVPR) relies on OGC to vet non-attainment gifts and does not have a process of its own. Outside of OGC, Prospect Development is the most skilled office within the university to vet prospective donors.

Timeline

- For one prospect or for a limited scope, four weeks is needed to complete one due diligence memo and this turnaround time will be communicated to the requestor; depending on the complexity of the request, Prospect Development may be able to complete the process in three weeks.
 - Freelance researcher: 2 weeks to research and compose

- Prospect Development internal revisions: 2 weeks to edit, complete additional research (if necessary) and finalize
- Prospect Development will not complete multiple due diligence memos at the same time, as each is time consuming and Prospect Development cannot achieve the required level of focus if writing and reviewing multiple documents simultaneously. In the event Prospect Development receives multiple requests at once, Prospect Development will consult the Executive Team to prioritize the requests, and Prospect Development will share the resulting timelines with requestors.
- For “quick response” and engagement prior to the Solicit stage, Prospect Development can provide a brief initial effort to check for obvious deal breakers and previous research to recommend whether to engage with a prospect, without a full due diligence memo.
 - Includes the “Pre-Screening” detailed below, of U.S. government lists to determine whether the university can accept a gift from the prospect and a quick negative news search for the prospect and related entities; answered by phone conversation or email.
 - After the “pre-screening,” a gift officer may cultivate the prospect toward solicitation for the next 4-12 months as a planned solicitation approaches; Prospect Development will then work with the gift officer to review the need for due diligence research.

Authorship and Proofing

- Prospect Development will use a freelance researcher to begin all due diligence requests.
- Initial proofing will be completed by the liaison to the requesting area if possible; otherwise, it will be completed by the liaison for international development, as appropriate.
- The Prospect Development Director provides secondary review and final approval.
- While the authorship is not within Prospect Development staff, Prospect Development is fully responsible for the content of deliverables from its office. The liaison to the requesting area is the first line of defense and should have the document as delivery-ready as possible for secondary review.

Pre-Screening

- Prior to sending the request to a freelance researcher, Prospect Development’s first check is to confirm that the university can receive a gift from the prospect. If the prospect appears in the below lists, the research is stopped and communicated to requester, as the gift will not be accepted by the university.
 - U.S. Department of the Treasury, Sanctions List: <https://sanctionssearch.ofac.treas.gov/>
 - U.S. Department of State, List of Statutorily Debarred Parties: <https://www.pmdtc.state.gov/compliance/debar.html>

Framework of a Due Diligence Memo

Analysis

- In a one-to-two-page bulleted analysis, Prospect Development briefly lists any concerns and possible mitigating factors of accepting a gift from the prospect.
- Capacity estimate
- Prospect Development will recommend whether the university should pursue the proposal. Sample recommendation language includes:

- 1 Low concern: “Research recommends pursuing a solicitation of [prospect] but notes the following issues of minimal concern:”
- 2 Medium concern: “Research recommends proceeding with caution in a solicitation of [prospect] despite the following specific concerns:”
- 3 High concern: “Research recommends the university halt all engagement with [prospect] given the following specific concerns:”

Prospect/Gift/or Country-specific concerns

- Targeted sections will include the below; sections are scoped with the requestor and outlined by Prospect Development prior to sending the request to the freelance researcher executing the research.
 - Prospect-specific considerations
 - Reputational, criminal, moral, ethical concerns
 - Examples where a pledge was unfulfilled by this specific prospect
 - Concerns about significant connections that are key to the individual prospect
 - Biographical and family summary
 - Financial capacity
 - Gift-specific considerations
 - Examples of where similar gifts were controversial or were returned or revoked
 - In the topic space in particular, whether the university would want to associate the university brand with the strategy/purpose of the gift
 - Companies/organizations concerns, if appropriate
 - Financial information or evidence to suggest a pledge could go unfulfilled
 - Examples of significant news coverage that paints the organization in a negative light, if any
 - Country concerns, if appropriate
 - A country-specific human rights report is lifted and footnoted with the date accessed; kept to less than a page and within the document or attached as an appendix
 - <https://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/index.htm>
 - <https://www.humanrights.gov/dyn/countries.html>
 - <https://www.humanrights.gov/dyn/reports/>

Appendixes

- Key news articles, biographic pieces, or country-specific reports that would alleviate the leg work on Prospect Development

All findings will be shared with

- Executive team members
- Principal Gift team members
- International team members
- Donor Relations team members
- Gift Agreement and Compliance team members
- Requestor and their management chain
- Prospect Development team members

SAMPLE GIFT TRIGGER CHECKLIST

Purpose: To identify issues that may arise in gift discussions and identify university offices to conduct required early reviews.
 Note: Advancement templates should be used for all gift agreements. Any other form of agreement should be sent to Legal for early review.

ACADEMIC FREEDOM		
• Does gift require donee to conform to specific curriculum requirements?	<input type="checkbox"/>	Steps Required: Provost and appropriate Dean review
• Does gift outline what donee can/can't include in a program?	<input type="checkbox"/>	
• Does gift restrict donee as to "mission"?	<input type="checkbox"/>	
• Does gift require/restrict as to whom donee employs?	<input type="checkbox"/>	
EXCLUSIONS/PREFERENCES		
• Does gift require donee to give preference to designated people or groups?	<input type="checkbox"/>	Steps Required: Early review by Legal and either Financial Aid (scholarships) or Provost and appropriate Dean (professorships; faculty-related)
• Might gift put restrictions in area covered by donee's equal opportunity/non-discrimination policy?	<input type="checkbox"/>	
FINANCIAL OBLIGATIONS		
• Does gift require spending by donee in excess of amount donor contributes?	<input type="checkbox"/>	Steps Required: Finance Director, VP Finance and VP Advancement review; budget required to account for costs
• Does gift obligate donee to hire staff or allocate space (e.g., to run institute, staff advisory committee, administer program)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	
• Does gift require donee to match it in any capacity?	<input type="checkbox"/>	
GOVERNANCE CONCERNS		
• Does gift require donee to establish, manage or govern an institute, center, program, department or activity in a specific way?	<input type="checkbox"/>	Steps Required: Senior Leadership review (includes President, Provost, VP Finance, Legal, VP Advancement, and appropriate Dean)
• Does gift propose an advisory board?	<input type="checkbox"/>	
INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY		
• Does gift permit use of donee logo or other trademark by donor or other third party?	<input type="checkbox"/>	Steps Required: External Relations, Legal and OVPR review
• Does gift require donee to give away or share anything created as result of gift?	<input type="checkbox"/>	
INTERNATIONAL		
• Is gift from an entity outside the United States?	<input type="checkbox"/>	Steps Required: Senior Associate Provost and Legal review, Vetting Research
• Does gift include international requirements?	<input type="checkbox"/>	
ONGOING DONOR ROLE		
• Does donor intend to play active role in the future?	<input type="checkbox"/>	Steps Required: Senior Leadership review (includes President, Provost, VP Finance, Legal, VP Advancement, and appropriate Dean)
• Will donor expect to oversee donee activities related to gift?	<input type="checkbox"/>	
• Does donor want to require donee to obtain donor agreement in event that it's impossible to use funds as designated (i.e., require change to DONEE's "Unforeseeable Circumstances" provision)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	
PARTNER REQUIREMENTS		
• Does gift commit donee to take action not in its control?	<input type="checkbox"/>	Steps Required: Early review with Legal and appropriate Dean
• Does gift require action by MFA, hospital, other donee partner or separate entity?	<input type="checkbox"/>	
PUBLIC RELATIONS/PRESS		
• Does gift include high profile naming or reputational issue?	<input type="checkbox"/>	Steps Required: External relations review; comm. plan
• Does gift commit donee to press release?	<input type="checkbox"/>	
• Does gift require donee to publicize in a specific way?	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Clearance to Solicit Sample Policy

A best practice among high-functioning fundraising shops to ensure the most significant solicitations are communicated and structured for successful outcomes, Clearance to Solicit helps the division think bigger and inspire our donors, making sure we have thought as broadly as possible and have maximized our solicitations through this holistic approach.

Clearance to Solicit applies to proposals of \$1M+.

How to Request

The Proposal Manager will submit the proposal request to Prospect Development through one of the following:

- A portfolio review
- Other portfolio or pipeline conversations with their liaison
- The Prospect Management Data Request form
- Via email to relationshipmanagment@school.edu
- Review Mechanism

The head of Relationship Management facilitates review of these proposals to the Solicitation

Review Committee [generalized for anonymity]

- Principal Gift team members
- Donor Relations team members
- Gift Agreement and Compliance team members
- Executive fundraising managers
- Prospect Development team members

Review Process

The Clearance to Solicit Review Committee looks at all aspects of the proposal and corresponding information in the CRM (i.e., Rating, Strategy, and Contacts) to determine if the prospect is ready for the ask, taking into account if budget and other implications, such as what academic leadership should be involved, have been considered. After a staff member submits the request, there is a two-week turnaround for approvals; for rush requests, the review team is called together for a two business day turnaround. The Proposal Manager (and/or Prospect Manager) will participate in the review discussion. If the Proposal Manager is not available to attend the meeting, the proposal will not be discussed until the next meeting when the Proposal Manager is able to attend.

Guiding questions to think through while building a solicitation strategy are below.

Decision

Once clearance is granted, Prospect Development will enter the proposal in Advance within two business days and send an email confirmation to the requestor. If the clearance discussion, in conjunction with the proposal manager, determines that the proposal is not viable, the proposal will not be entered in Advance.

Guiding Questions

- Is there an up-to-date Strategy (last three months) filed in Advance? Does it incorporate this solicitation?
- Does the solicitation fall within the range of the Rating on file?
- Is the gift officer requesting clearance to solicit the Prospect Manager, or does the solicitation need to be cleared with that PM?
- Through contact reports, do the steps toward this solicitation appear to be captured?
- If this is a planned giving or organizational solicitation, is a member of the Planned Giving or CFR team, respectively, part of this discussion with the prospect?
- Have the appropriate faculty affiliated with the program(s) who will be impacted by this gift been consulted?
- Does the donor have additional areas of philanthropic interest where a more collaborative or transformative ask would have a larger impact on the university?
- Does the proposal amount cover the associated costs?
- If appropriate, has a Gift Agreement been drafted or requested?
- If appropriate, is there a stewardship plan?

Frequently Asked Questions

Tell me more about Clearance to Solicit!

Some kind of clearance review is a typical business process within any high functioning, complex fundraising shop. Here in our fundraising division, we are utilizing Clearance to Solicit to help us think bigger and inspire our donors and make sure we have thought as broadly as possible and have maximized our solicitations through this holistic approach. This process also accommodates our fundraising projections exercise and the division's interaction with the Office of the President.

What factors will the Solicitation Review Committee consider?

The committee primarily reviews the prospect's Strategy, Rating, and Contacts to determine if the prospect is ready for the ask, whether the solicitation should be broadened for greater impact to the university, if all appropriate staff/faculty/volunteers are involved in the ask, and if the budget is appropriate for the ask.

What if my proposal changes scope after being approved?

For clearance proposals where the purpose, timeline, and/or ask amount have changed, simply update the existing proposal record with new ask amount, scope, or expected dates. The Strategy should be updated in the CRM as well.

What if my proposal changes scope after I have already made the ask?

For proposals in the Ask Made stage, close the existing proposal as Ask Declined if at least one of the following circumstances occurs:

- If both the purpose and the Expected Amount change, even if within the same school or unit; and/or

- If the Expected Date is bumped out more than two fiscal years (e.g., was expected Q2 FY17, now is expected Q4 FY19).

My prospect will be ready for solicitation more quickly than most. What can I do to ensure this won't slow down this solicitation?

The process is designed to take about two and a half weeks. Should you need to add a proposal more quickly, please connect with the head of Relationship Management [insert contact info]. The committee will gather within two business days to review.

Does this process also apply to prospect assignment?

No. However, Prospect Development has been asked to look more critically at the quality of prospects being assigned (e.g., ensuring prospects are of major gift potential or that a spouse or related entity is not already managed).

If I am not the Prospect Manager, may I submit a proposal for Clearance?

It is the division's practice, as part of good citizenship, that the Proposal Manager will proactively notify the Prospect Manager.

More questions? Contact the head of Relationship Management: [contact info]

Sample disclaimer and boilerplate language for vetting memos

- “Because of the international nature of this prospect, Research is unable to confirm their financial assets, as foreign countries have few requirements to disclose assets publicly.”
- “As a member of the [country] royal family with familial net worth of over \$X billion, the prospect may have greater capacity via private assets beyond the capacity rating Research assessed.”
- “However, the prospect does not appear to be publically philanthropic; it is possible they donate anonymously.”
- “It is likely accepting a gift from [country] would also garner some criticism for [your organization]. The polarizing nature of U.S.-[country] relations may become an increasing issue as the amount and visibility of a potential gift increases. An eight- or nine-figure gift would include additional press and attention. Reputational concerns are less significant for lower gift levels due to the anticipated lighter media attention garnered from such a gift. Endowed scholarships and fellowships, in general, are a more benign gift and do not often elicit the same level of controversy that named facilities or program can create in some instances.”
- “A(n) #-figure proposal would seek over a tenth of [Prospect’s] reported estimated net worth, and therefore would far exceed the conventional ratio philanthropists reserve for charitable giving. Compounding this concern is a lack of public profiles on [prospect] as a philanthropist who intends to donate an above-average portion of his/her wealth (e.g., signing the giving pledge).”
- “[Prospect] focuses his/her philanthropy in the following geographic regions, which [your organization name] is not among: city 1, 2, 3.”
- “[Prospect] has demonstrated a clear pattern of giving to organizations where he has served on the board; including a board or volunteer role in the cultivation will likely resonate well with [prospect], based on his philanthropic history.”

Stage	What PD can provide	But what if...
Qualify (Discovery)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Past research or existing vendor reports • Confirm contact information • Confirm employment information • Assess a rating bucket (5-, 6-, or 7-figure) • Create a prospect news alert 	<p>The prospect requested a meeting? <i>Update the stage as appropriate.</i></p> <p>The prospect requested a proposal? <i>Update the stage as appropriate.</i></p>
Engage (Communication established)	<p>Everything above, and:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check government resources • Request vendor profile 	<p>What if the prospect isn't in our CRM? <i>Add them to the CRM and select the appropriate stage.</i></p>
Cultivate (Philanthropic conversation)	<p>Everything above, and:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Answer specific, targeted questions that will move the relationship toward solicitation 	<p>What if there isn't existing research to update? <i>Gift officer or their support staff can use the self-help research resource guide on the intranet.</i></p>
Solicit (Ask is planned and in CRM)	<p>Everything above, and:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update of existing research or vendor/freelancer research request 	
Negotiate (Ask was made)	<p>Everything above, and:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$1M+: full vetting research • \$1M-: See above 	
Stewardship (Gift made)	<p>See Qualify</p>	
Not a Prospect Now/Ever (Disqualified)	<p>See Qualify</p>	