

YAMM DONOR STORY BUILDER



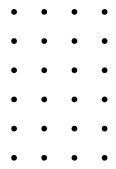
This toolkit provides non-profit professionals with the essential guide, matrix, and checklist to capture and craft powerful donor stories that position supporters as trusted Witnesses and crucial Helpers, shifting the focus from individual heroism to collective community transformation.

Donor Interview

The donor interview serves as a critical data gathering tool, carefully structured to elicit the donor's personal values, observations, and the specific ways their support enabled community change, positioning them as a trustworthy witness rather than the story's hero.

Utilize these four focus areas to gain insight into donor motivations and narratives, allowing you to tailor your questions effectively.

I. The Spark (Values & Recognition)	Uncover the donor’s personal motivation and the specific moment they connected with your mission.
II. The Witness (Observation & Trust)	Capture the donor’s testimony. They must validate the community's success and your organization's effectiveness.
III. The Helper (The Gift’s Role)	Define the gift’s action as enabling the community's success, keeping the focus on the protagonists (beneficiaries/staff).
IV. The Invitation (The Call to Peers)	Establish the donor’s voice as an invitation, making the closing statement actionable for other potential supporters.



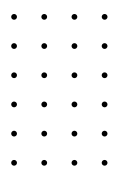
I. THE SPARK (VALUES & RECOGNITION)

Uncover the donor's personal motivation and the specific moment they connected with your mission.

1. Why did you initially feel compelled to support this cause?
(What value of yours does it reflect?)

2. Where did you first learn about the work we do? What piece of our mission or impact first caught your attention?

3. Before your gift, what was the biggest problem/tension you saw in the community we serve?



II. THE WITNESS (OBSERVATION & TRUST)

Capture the donor's testimony. They must validate the community's success and your organization's effectiveness.

4. What tangible moment did you see or hear about that truly showed you the impact of the work? (e.g., "I saw the look on the child's face..." or "I read the quote from the staff member...")

5. If you were talking to a friend, how would you describe the difference this organization is making right now?

6. What part of our program or staff makes you feel most confident that your support is well-spent?

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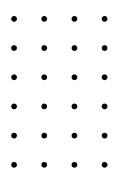
III. THE HELPER (THE GIFT'S ROLE)

Define the gift's action as enabling the community's success, keeping the focus on the protagonists (beneficiaries/staff).

7. How did your contribution enable or unlock a specific piece of the solution? (e.g., funding a specific tool, training, or resource).

8. What are you most proud of seeing the community or our partners accomplish with the resources you helped provide?

9. Who (e.g., the staff, the beneficiaries) do you think is the real driver of this change?



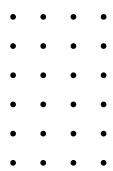
IV. THE INVITATION (THE CALL TO PEERS)

Establish the donor's voice as an invitation, making the closing statement actionable for other potential supporters.

10. Why is it important for others who share your values to join this effort now?

11. What is the single most important thing you want your peers to know about supporting this work?

12. What would you tell someone who wants to make a meaningful difference but doesn't know where to start?



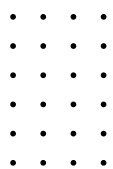
WRITE YOUR OWN QUESTIONS

What is the focus of these questions

Question:

Question:

Question:



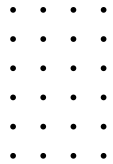
THE STORY ARRANGEMENT MATRIX

The Story Arrangement Matrix translates raw interview data into a compelling narrative by using classic story arc elements—from the initial Tension to the final Invitation—to ensure the community's journey remains the driving plot.

1. The Hook / The Status Quo	
2. The Inciting Incident	3. Rising Action / The Journey
4. The Climax / The Unlocked Moment	
6. Resolution / The Invitation	
	5. Falling Action / The Witness's Testimony

Story Arc Element	Narrative Function	Data Arrangement (Where to place the Donor's Data)
1. The Hook / The Status Quo	Establishes the setting, introduces the protagonist (the community/beneficiary), and captures the central Tension or challenge that needs addressing.	Use data from Interview Q3 (the tension they cared about) to set the scene. Immediately introduce the community member or problem. The Hook is NOT the donor.
2. The Inciting Incident	The moment the action begins. For a donor story, this is the moment the donor Recognized the need or the hope.	Use data from Interview Q1 & Q2 (The Spark/Recognition). This is where the donor's voice enters the narrative, connecting their values to the problem.
3. Rising Action / The Journey	Details the work being done, the program's efforts, and the hurdles faced by the protagonist (the community/beneficiary). The bulk of the story.	Integrate data from Interview Q9 (Who drives the change) to highlight staff and beneficiaries. Show the process—the effort, resilience, and small victories.
4. The Climax / The Unlocked Moment	The single point of success or critical progress where the community's effort pays off. This is the tangible evidence of impact.	Use data from Interview Q7 (The Gift's Role/Unlocked Moment) to clearly connect the donor's support to this high point. The donor is the Helper providing the crucial tool.
5. Falling Action / The Witness's Testimony	The aftermath of the success. This is where the story shifts back to the donor for validation and reflection.	Use data from Interview Q4 & Q5 (The Witness/Observation). This is the donor's most powerful section—their trustworthy, peer-to-peer confirmation of the impact.
6. Resolution / The Invitation	The new status quo, and a look toward the future. The story ends with a clear call for collective action.	Use data from Interview Q10, Q11, & Q12 (The Invitation/Call to Peers). This transforms the story from a reflection into a directive for the reader.

Story Section	Focus	Action & Required Elements	
A. The Hook (50-75 words)	Tension and Introduction.	Start with a vivid scene of the protagonist (community member/beneficiary) struggling or succeeding. State the core problem.	
B. The Donor's Recognition (75-100 words)	The Inciting Incident.	Introduce the donor's values and use an emotional quote (from Q1/Q2) about the reason they felt compelled to act. This is the Spark.	
C. The Journey & The Need (150-200 words)	Rising Action.	Detail the work, the challenge, the program's solution, and the dedicated staff/partners. Use specific, quantifiable need (e.g., "We needed 20 more hours of	
D. The Unlocked Moment (50-75 words)	Climax/Helper's Role.	State clearly what the donor's support unlocked (from Q7). Frame it as the resource that allowed the protagonist to achieve a specific win.	
E. The Witness's Testimony (75-100 words)	Falling Action/Trust.	A strong, direct quote from the donor (from Q4/Q5) validating the transformation they observed. This acts as the peer-to-peer assurance.	
F. The Invitation (50-75 words)	Resolution/Call to Action.	Briefly summarize the impact and transition to the future need. Use a quote from Q11/Q12 as the final invitation to join the movement.	



TIPS

Instead of Saying...	Try Saying...	Why? (The Focus Shift)
"A poor, suffering single mother."	"Ms. Elena, a resourceful mother working to build stability for her family."	Focuses on resilience and action, not deficit.
"Victims of homelessness."	"Individuals experiencing homelessness" or "Our unhoused neighbors."	Focuses on the person, not a permanent label or condition.
"The donation saved them."	"The donation enabled our staff to provide the crucial support they needed."	Focuses on the community's effort and the donor as the enabler, not the savior.
"The struggle of the disadvantaged."	"The challenges faced by our neighbors with limited access to opportunity."	Uses precise, respectful language and avoids broad, dehumanizing terms.

CHECKLIST

Final Review & Editing Checklist	
This checklist ensures the final story adheres to all the	
Philosophical Alignment:	
The Community is the Protagonist.	
The Donor is positioned as the Witness/Helper.	
The story reveals shared values (not personal vanity).	
Content & Structure:	
Story arc follows the Arrangement Matrix	
Includes a specific, powerful quote as the Witness's	
Clearly defines what the gift unlocked (the Helper's role).	
Ethical & Language:	
Dignity-First Language used throughout (no sensationalizing	
Consent and review were obtained from any identified person	
Program partners and staff are visible and credited.	
Call to Action:	
The ending is an invitation to peers (e.g., "Join us") rather than	
Includes a clear link to donate or get involved.	