

Three-Tiered Giving Strategy Heightens Impact

Make a greater impact with your charitable donations.

Board members for local charities and community groups know where to start for fundraising: credit unions.

Local donations should always be at the heart of credit union charitable giving programs. But donating on a first-come, first-served basis might not be the most effective policy.

A strategic plan using three tiers—local, state/regional, and national—can give your charitable contributions more impact.

1. Local: Let employees help set priorities. Communities typically can count on credit union employees to support their local volunteer activities, such as staffing fundraising events or cleaning up after natural disasters. To help align employees' volunteer interests with your credit union's giving priorities, involve them early in the planning process.

Invite employees to identify key goals for your credit union's charitable donations and volunteer efforts. Emphasize that the goals should align with those in your field of membership.

Don't just ask which charities employees favor, as you may get a long list of organizations. Instead, ask staff for recommendations on broader categories your credit union should support, and choose the top two or three.

Next, identify the most effective organizations to partner with in addressing these needs.

Recruit employees to work with these organizations on high-impact activities your credit union can help organize, fund, and run. Establish measurable goals and follow through by documenting and sharing results.

This approach can make it easier for credit unions to explain why they can't accommodate certain donation requests.

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ANDY ROQUET



While it's important to reserve some funds for spontaneous requests, focus the bulk of your giving and volunteer energy on achieving results for causes employees support personally.

2. State and regional: Extend your influence. By supporting your state or regional credit union league or association, you're investing in the quality of credit unions in your area.

Most leagues run educational programs that allow credit unions to operate more smoothly and compete with larger institutions. Training topics typically include operations, lending, compliance, marketing, and security.

Credit unions may be able to apply to state/regional associations for grants to pur-

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chase technology and equipment. These grants and training scholarships are especially important for smaller credit unions.

Some associations also run charitable foundations to pool credit union donations. Through these foundations, individual credit unions have more collective leverage in supporting disaster relief, financial literacy programs, and other community outreach.

3. National: Promote the credit union brand. Much like contributing at the state/regional level, budgeting funds each year for a national charitable organization helps

our industry pool resources to make a greater impact.

The National Credit Union Foundation, for example, channels disaster relief donations through its CUAid online portal. It focuses on credit unions and their employees who need assistance after a disaster.

When credit unions return to operation quickly, they can contribute more to the recovery process in their communities.

The Foundation also sponsors educational programs credit unions can use to promote financial health for members, students, and their communities.

Disaster relief and financial health education programs are visible, tangible evidence that bolster the overall credit union brand.

Credit unions still fight consumer misperceptions—many consumers still don't believe they can join a credit union, or they assume most credit unions don't offer a full array of financial services.

A three-tiered strategy can aid and educate your local community, your state, and individuals across the nation.

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A CDA Can Increase Giving

Consider establishing a charitable donation account (CDA) as a vehicle to generate income for contributions.

By using professionally managed investment portfolios and corporate-owned life insurance, a CDA may earn more than traditional credit union investments, says Andy Roquet, a senior executive benefits specialist for CUNA Mutual Group. While some credit unions commit CDA proceeds to a specific organization or civic project, others use proceeds as part of a general fund for donations.

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