



The First 30 Days Toolkit:

**A Practical Guide To
New Donor Activation**

The First 30 Days



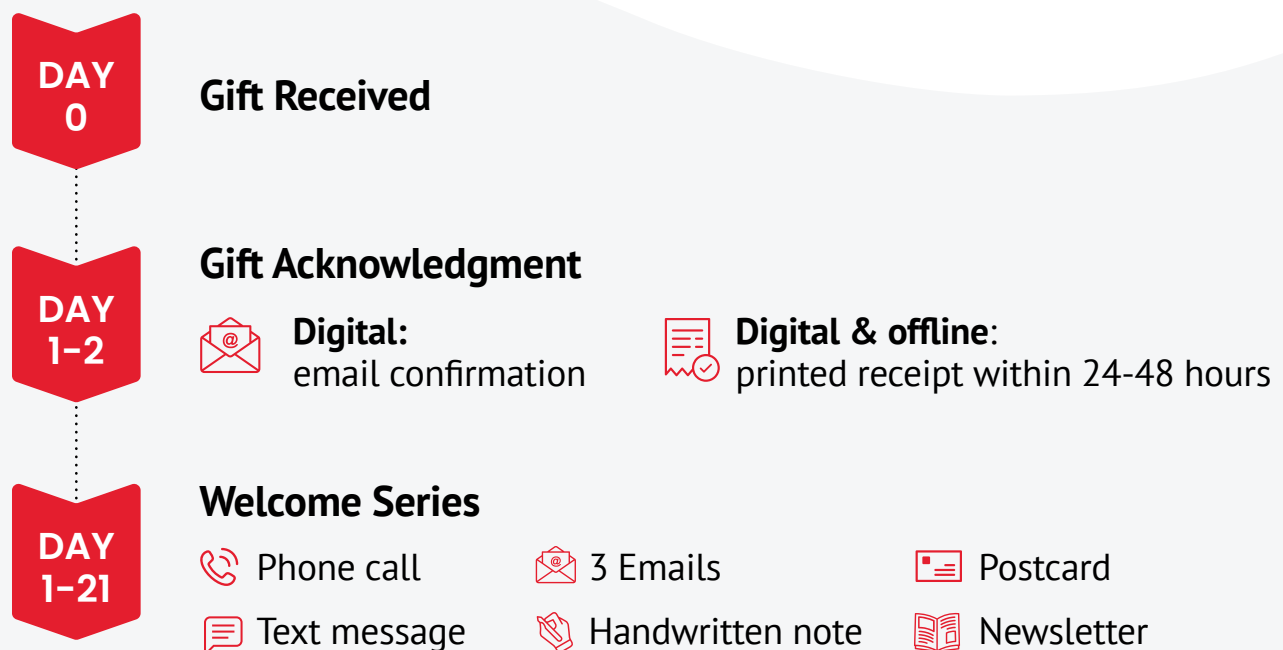
You've just received a gift from a brand-new donor—congratulations! What an exciting moment. Someone has decided to help meet a need, and they've chosen to give through your organization to do it.

A new relationship is just beginning. And what you do in the first 30 days of this new relationship is critical—this is the time when a new donor's enthusiasm is highest, and they are open to learning more about how to make a difference alongside you. In fact, new donors are most likely to give a second gift within that initial 30-day window; their likelihood of giving again declines significantly afterward.

The first 30 days are the time to warmly build a foundation for this new giving relationship through a timely receipt, immediate thank-yous across multiple communication channels, and demonstration of how they are making a difference—and, in addition, an ask for a second gift!

New Donor Journey Map

Create a donor-focused, multichannel acknowledgment and welcome series that quickly thanks every donor and warmly invites them to connect more deeply with your organization. Utilize the contact information you have available to deliver personalized, high-impact communications.



Using consistent messaging across different channels creates a more engaging, cohesive experience for new donors. Our experience shows that a coordinated, multichannel engagement strategy is most effective. Donors may choose to give online, but additional touchpoints—in digital and traditional channels—reinforce connection, strengthen trust, and encourage future giving.

10 Activation Strategies Checklist

Set up systems that ensure donors are receipted, thanked, and invited to give again quickly using the following steps.

1 Email gift acknowledgment

For online gifts, send an immediate email gift acknowledgment. The email should contain a brief thank-you message and reiterate the amount of the donation.

2 Printed receipts within 24-48 hours

For both online and offline gifts, send a printed receipt within 24-48 hours. This is crucial, and too many organizations don't do it; it is a matter of getting organized and giving your donor services team the bandwidth and clarity to accomplish it. If this is something you don't know how to initiate or have never been able to achieve, ask for help. Invite your agency partner or a trusted friend from another organization's development team to audit your process and help you identify areas you are getting stuck.

The minor additional cost of a printed receipt letter can yield significant returns in long-term donor value and retention. On average, our clients see just over 7% of their annual revenue from gifts to printed receipt letters!

Including a handwritten P.S. or Post-it note will make your receipt feel even more personal and high touch!

3 Reply envelope and reply slip included with printed receipt

Include an envelope and a “My Next Gift” reply slip with the receipt to make it easy for the donor to send you another gift.

4 Thank-you note

A handwritten thank-you note for first-time donors is the gold standard. You definitely want this in place for larger gifts (\$500+), but ideally you'd also send a note to donors with a smaller first-time gift. Often, donors who give a small first-time gift are just testing the organization out before giving more substantial gifts, and a thank-you note will let these donors know you pay attention to them and will truly value their giving.

If your team doesn't have the bandwidth to do handwritten notes during the giving season, there are trusted partners you can work with for help.

5 Welcome package

Create a simple welcome package that includes an evergreen newsletter, information about how to get more involved with the organization's mission, and a strong ask for a second gift. Send this out 1-2 weeks after the donation is received.

6 Email welcome series

Create a 3-part email series that thanks new donors and tells an impact story, gives them more information about how to become involved, and asks them to make a second donation, ideally with a fundraising ask similar to the one they first responded to. Note: For local or regional organizations, invite new donors to take a tour. For national or international organizations, consider a video.

7 Phone call

Call new donors to thank them. Hearing something like “I’m simply calling to thank you for caring for children suffering around the world. Your generosity will provide nourishing meals, education, and the hope of the Gospel,” will go far for a new donor. Bloomerang reports that phone calls increase donor retention by as much as 30%!

8 Text message

Send a thank-you text with a link to a video showing a beneficiary of your services expressing appreciation.

Text messages get high open and response rates—up to 98% and 45%, respectively!—and reach donors right where they are, delivering concise communication that cuts through the digital noise.

9 Monthly donor invitation

Make sure that somewhere in your welcome kit and email welcome series you include an invitation to sign up as a monthly donor. As new donors’ giving patterns have not yet been established with your organization, this is the time to ask them to make a recurring commitment.

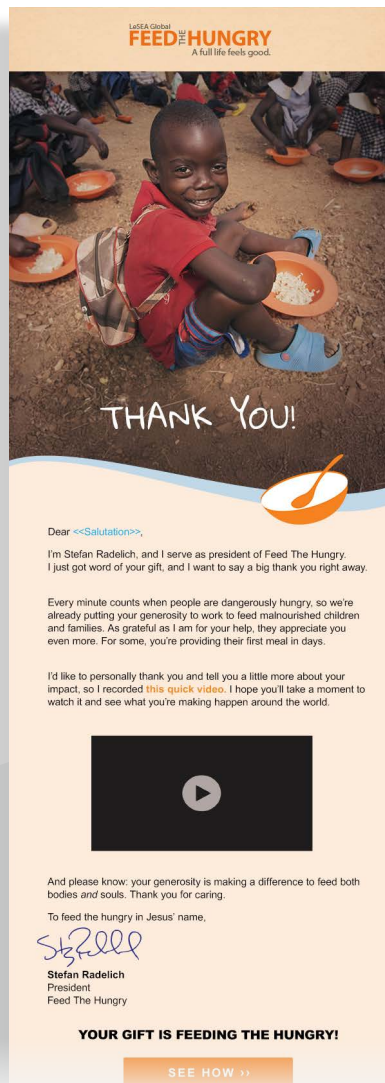
Sustainers can have retention rates of 85%+ and higher lifetime value. The best time to convert a new donor to a sustainer is in the first 30–90 days.

10 Cultivation mailings

Add them to your regular cultivation mail stream right away so they begin receiving newsletters and appeals from you along with the rest of the active donor file.

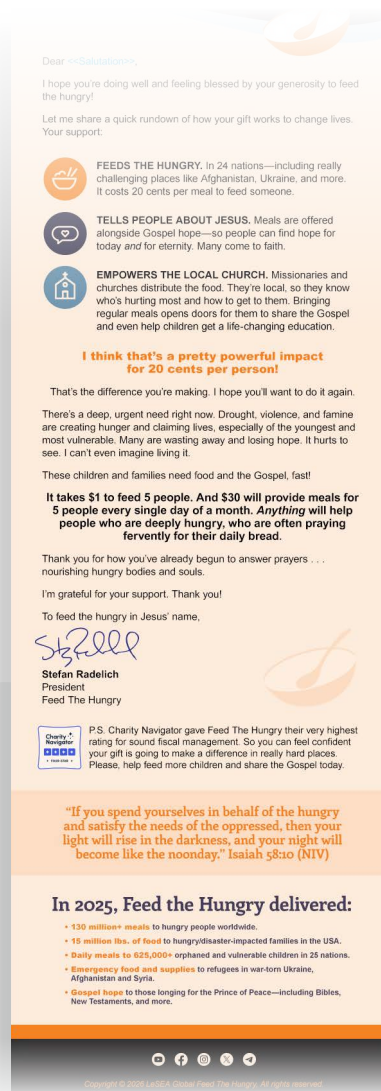
Sample Welcome Email Series

SERIES FORMAT



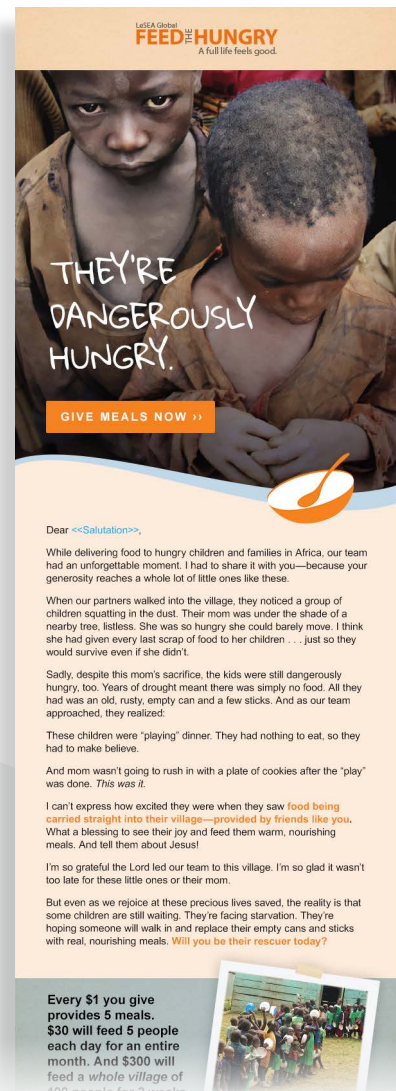
Email 1

Thank-you with video of how donor is making a difference around the world



Email 2

How donor's gift changes lives; impact stats



Email 3

Testimony and an ask for a second gift

Sample Thank-You Letter Framework

Dear <Salutation>,

I am so grateful to receive your generous donation, helping provide care to men, women, and children in our community.

Every day we are seeing more people come to us for help, so your gift really has come at the perfect time. As my letter to you indicated, neighbors like John have found themselves in dire straits with nowhere to turn for help—or for hope. After losing his job, his home, his car, and his family, John was desperate to get his footing again. And you helped him do it when he walked through the doors of our Rescue Mission.

Friends like you are the reason we are able to do what we do—and the reason our neighbors receive the help they need. I'm so thankful for you!

With gratitude,

<Name>

<Optional P.S. Scan this QR code to see a video that shows the impact of your support!>

Text Message & Phone Follow-Up Templates

Text message template:

<Salutation>, this is <Name> from <Organization>. I'm so grateful for your recent donation! You are helping provide meals to hungry men, women, and children in our community, as well as compassionate care and a fresh start for the future. Please take a moment to watch this video showing how you're making a difference: [link to 1-2 minute testimonial video]



Phone message template:

Hello, this is <Name> from <Organization>, and I'm simply calling to thank you for your donation. You are helping provide meals to hungry men, women, and children in our community, and you're offering compassionate care and a fresh start for the future to families that desperately need it. Not everyone has the heart that you do for your neighbors, and I wanted to get in touch to express our sincere gratitude for your generosity. May God bless you for getting involved and making a difference!



Activation Metrics

As you build out your systems to thank new donors and ask them to give again, watch to see if these metrics are improving:

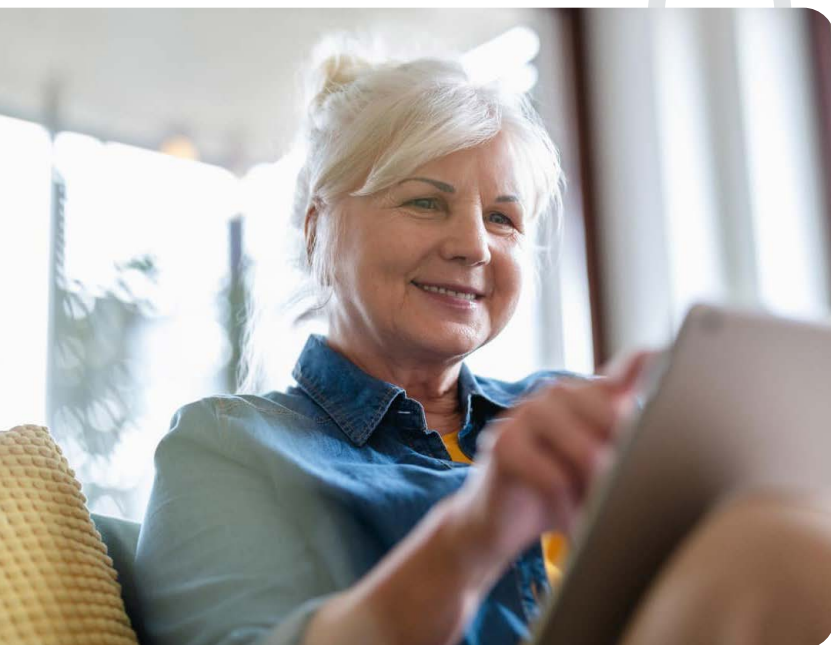


New donor activation rate: The percentage of donors who give a second gift. You can track this year-over-year by looking at how many donors acquired in one year gave a second gift within the next 12 months, compared to how many donors acquired in the next year gave a second gift within the following 12 months. (It's best to compare on a full 12-month cycle to control for seasonal factors like year-end giving.)

Timeframe between first and second gifts: The sooner a second gift is received from a donor, the higher lifetime value they bring to your organization—and the work you're doing. Make sure the opportunity to give again is accessible and compelling.

Breakeven timeframe: How long does it take to break even on the cost to acquire a donor? You will need to know your net cost to acquire (cost of the acquisition campaign minus the gross revenue from initial gifts to that campaign, divided by the number of new donors acquired) and track the subsequent giving from those newly acquired donors.

You may also track **activation and subsequent giving by offer** if you have multiple fundraising asks being used for acquisition. Certain offers may attract donors more likely to give a second gift (i.e., a premium-based acquisition offer will often have a higher initial response but a lower activation rate than a non-premium-based acquisition offer). Track activation rates and subsequent giving for your different acquisition offers so you know if a particular one results in more repeat donors.

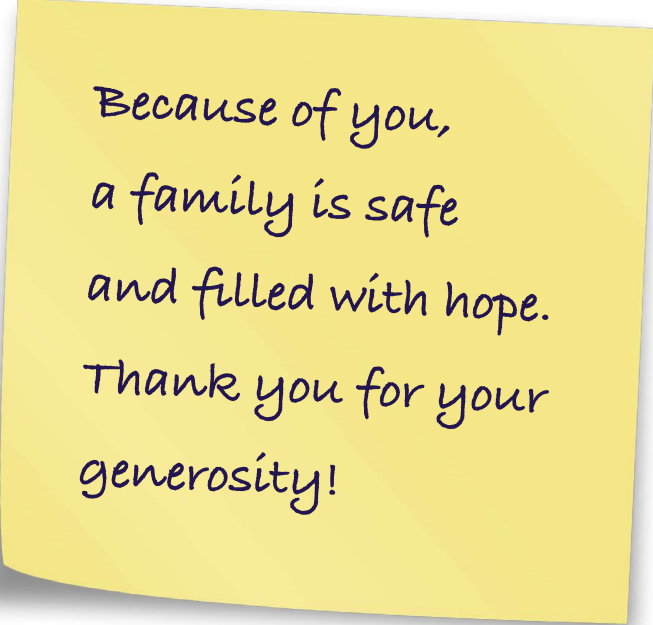


While you should track gifts in response to your welcome kit and email welcome series, remember that the primary goal of these pieces is to welcome new donors and make them feel appreciated. So these communications don't need to generate positive net revenue—though ideally they will approach breaking even.

Third-Party Help

Outside firms offer helpful services to welcome new donors if it's difficult or near-impossible for organizations to manage it in-house.

One can provide peer-to-peer text messaging services and phone number appending, so that thank-you texts can go out to new donors even if you don't have their phone number.



*Because of you,
a family is safe
and filled with hope.
Thank you for your
generosity!*

Another may offer handwritten thank-you notes (using machine handwriting) with custom notecards designed for your organization and thank-you phone calling with phone number appending. Third-party services can provide the additional manpower you need to make sure every donor is thanked personally, no matter what size your staff is.

Adding the Human Touch

Throughout your welcome materials, make sure to use beautiful photos and videos of the real people your organization is serving. In addition, ask the recipients of your services to write quick thank-you notes or have children draw pictures to include in the receipt or thank-you note mailing.

Connecting new donors directly to the person whose lives they're changing keeps them focused on how critical and impactful their giving really is!



Second Gift... Now What?

A donor's second gift is an important signal, but it should not be treated as proof that the relationship is secure. The donor has moved from first-time giver to repeat donor, yet giving may not be part of an established habit or ongoing relationship.

At this stage, your organization should acknowledge the second gift meaningfully, continue demonstrating impact, learn more about what motivates the donor, and offer a relevant next step. Solicitations should not stop. Instead, stewardship and solicitation should work together so that each future invitation feels like a natural continuation of the donor's involvement with the mission and community.

Contact us to start a conversation about how to turn new donors into faithful, long-term donors. douglasshaw.com/contact | info@douglasshaw.com | 630.562.1321