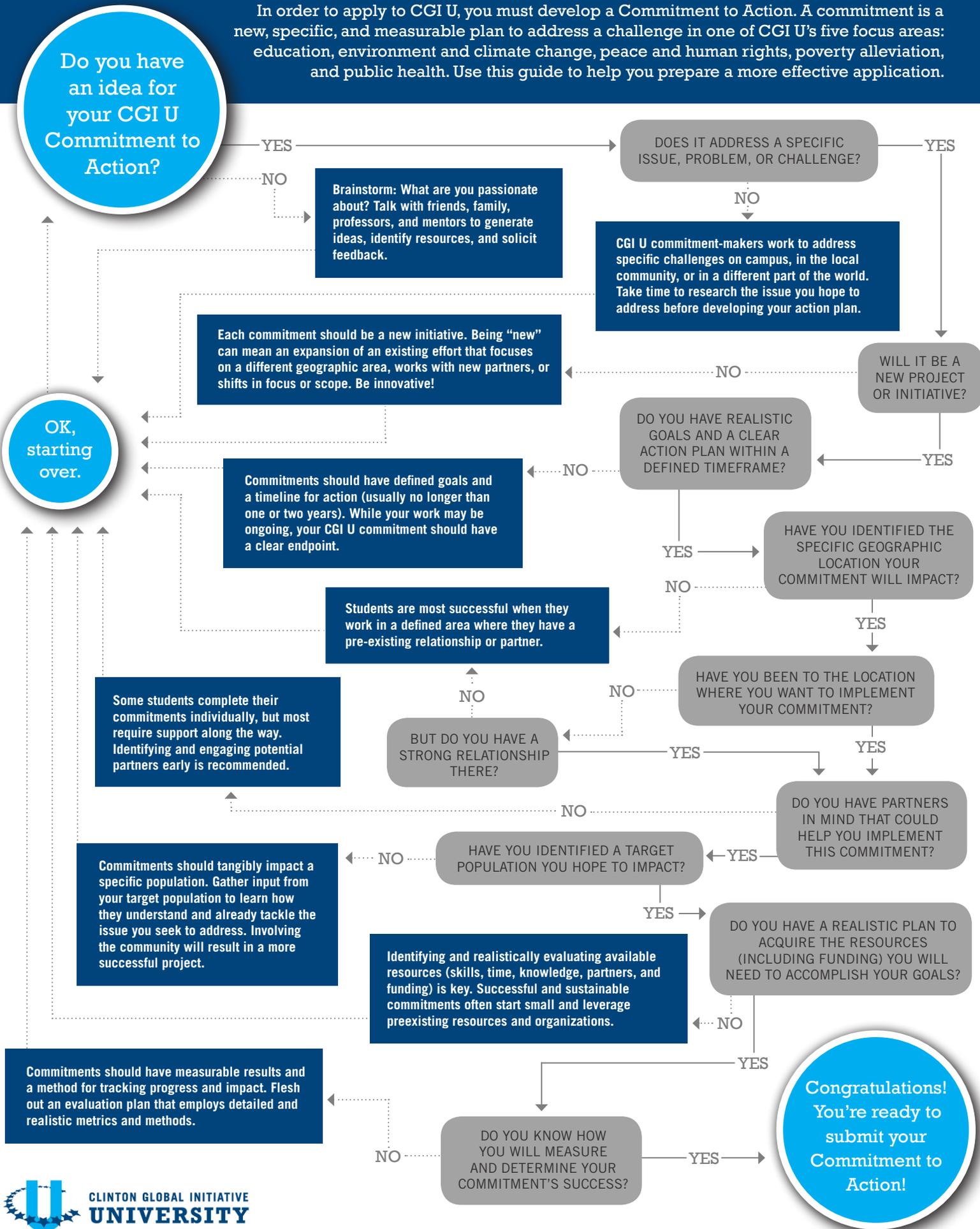


MAKING A COMMITMENT TO ACTION

In order to apply to CGI U, you must develop a Commitment to Action. A commitment is a new, specific, and measurable plan to address a challenge in one of CGI U's five focus areas: education, environment and climate change, peace and human rights, poverty alleviation, and public health. Use this guide to help you prepare a more effective application.

Do you have an idea for your CGI U Commitment to Action?

OK, starting over.





CGI U Commitment to Action Envisioning Framework

This table provides more detail about the three criteria that all CGI U commitments must meet. Considering these questions will help you develop a commitment that is new, specific, and measurable.

	Commitment Criteria	Before applying to CGI U, ask yourself...
New	Each commitment must be a new initiative for the individual or group making the commitment. If your commitment is an expansion of an existing effort, consider focusing on a different geographical area, working with new partners, or shifting the focus or scope of the initiative.	<p>Is your initiative, project, or program innovative?</p> <p>Does it augment or build upon current efforts in a meaningful way?</p> <p>If your project is modeled after a current or past program, how can you differentiate yourself or improve upon these efforts?</p> <p>What unique dimensions does your commitment contain?</p>
Specific	Each commitment must address a specific challenge with a defined course of action and detailed objectives. Define your commitment's goal, outline your planned activities, and identify how long it will realistically take you to complete your project.	<p>What specific global challenge is your commitment addressing?</p> <p>Do you have precise and realistic goals and a clear plan of action for accomplishing these goals?</p> <p>What are the demographics of your target population? How many people do you want your commitment to impact?</p> <p>What resources (funds, time, or people) are needed to achieve these goals? What is your plan to secure these resources? Have you identified potential partners to help move your commitment forward?</p> <p>What is your timeframe for implementing the commitment? Is your projected personal time commitment reasonable?</p> <p>Can you imagine the continuation and potential expansion of your project after your specific CGI U commitment is completed?</p>
Measurable	Each commitment should achieve results that are measurable and can be reported back to CGI U. The impact of your commitment can be determined in many ways, whether you're measuring volunteers trained, houses built, children tutored, or hours of direct service provided.	<p>What are the qualitative and quantitative indicators that can help you measure your progress?</p> <p>How will you know that your actions have met an urgent need and have meaningfully impacted your target population?</p> <p>How will you report your progress in a concise, informative, and meaningful way?</p>



CGI U Commitment to Action Implementation Framework

To build a thoughtful, effective Commitment to Action, you need to consider the challenges and opportunities that will occur throughout the lifecycle of your project. While every commitment is different, we have identified some common approaches for implementing any commitment. This table highlights some key issues to keep in mind as you reach major benchmarks during the course of your commitment cycle.

	Conceptualize	Implement	Evolve
Building Partnerships	List existing and potential partnerships with your university, community, or outside groups to facilitate your commitment.	List the steps you plan on taking within the next six months to cultivate existing partnerships and foster new partnerships.	List the ways in which your future partnerships can contribute towards your commitment goal.
Financing Your Commitment	How much money have you raised so far? How much money do you need for your commitment to become a reality?	Brainstorm ways that you can fundraise for your commitment, and implement the fundraising strategy that you believe will be the most effective.	How will your commitment continue to be funded in the future?
Building a Community	How much personal time do you expect to contribute to this commitment (hours/week)? How much help will you need from other people?	List the ways that you can recruit other students and people to help you. How can they contribute to your commitment?	As your commitment progresses, will the type or amount of assistance you need change? How can you prepare for these changes?
Revisiting Your Goals	What are the outcomes you are anticipating? What are the specific results on which you want to report back?	After six months of working on your commitment, reassess your goals. Would you like to modify them in any way?	If you want to modify your goals, how do you need to change your plan of action to achieve the new goals?
Reaching Your Target Population(s)	Describe your target population and your plan to engage them in a meaningful way.	How many people have you reached and to what extent are they being impacted by your commitment?	How can your work be expanded, geographically or in scope, in relation to your target population?
Developing Your Model	How can you create an innovative model to tackle the problem your commitment is addressing?	Is your model flexible enough to adjust for challenges and to incorporate new strategies?	How can your plans be modified to address other problems concerning your target population?



The 30-Second Elevator Pitch for Your Commitment to Action

Whether you're networking at CGI U, meeting with funders, writing a grant application, or riding an elevator with someone you want to impress, you should have a pitch prepared. A pitch is a 30-second monologue of what you do, why you do it, and how your work is innovative or unique. People have short attention spans and busy calendars, so you want to have a clear, brief, and enticing pitch prepared. Your pitch will ensure that you make the most of every opportunity, and present your commitment—and yourself—in the best light possible.

CREATE YOUR PITCH

Condense: Select 4-8 specific keywords that describe your commitment. *For example, CGI U-related key words include: young leaders, commitments, pressing global challenges, innovative solutions.*

Organize: The simpler the sentence, the better. How can you organize your keywords into an idea in the least number of words? *CGI U is a growing network of young leaders who are developing innovative solutions to address pressing global challenges.*

Inspire: The *what* sentence should remain at the heart of your pitch. However, to effectively engage your audience, start with a brief description of *why*. This can be useful if the issue you are seeking to address is complicated, since the listener will understand *why* as you explain what you do.

Expand (a little): You can add several sentences to your pitch that answer *who, what, when, where, why, and how*, but remember to be concise. For example:

Building on CGI's successful commitments model, CGI U engages the next generation of leaders from around the world. CGI U is a network of more than 5,500 college students who are developing innovative solutions to pressing global challenges. CGI U hosts an annual meeting for students to cultivate their ideas, gain valuable skills, make important connections, and learn from some of the most effective leaders in the public, private, and NGO sectors.

Practice: The only way to ensure that your pitch goes smoothly is to practice (a lot). Record yourself while practicing to make sure you're presenting yourself and your commitment well. Practice with friends; they should be able to echo the key points. Think about the questions people may ask, and prepare your answers.

WHEN DELIVERING YOUR PITCH

Audience/Objective: The first thing you need to do is figure out who you are talking to and what you want them to do for you. Are they potential funders, volunteers, or partners? This will guide your pitch.

Problem Statement: The challenge you are trying to address is important, but you shouldn't dwell on it extensively. Quickly outline the issue, then explain what you are doing about it and why.

Competitive Advantage: Explain the aspects of your commitment that differentiate you from everyone else. Address how your commitment is new, specific, and measurable, and why you are positioned to tackle the challenge your project addresses. In the business sector, this is called your *competitive advantage*.

Story Telling: Humanize your work. Pick an inspiring and engaging story that supports your pitch, steers clear of jargon, and demonstrates why your commitment matters. Always have stories ready when networking.

Next Steps: You didn't spend all this time preparing for nothing. Ask for a business card, a follow-up call, or an opportunity to send along more information. Think of a way to continue your engagement after the conversation ends. Always follow up promptly, within three days at most.



Raising Funds for Your Commitment to Action

Below are a few suggestions on raising the funds you may need to turn your ideas into action.

Budget and Fundraising Plan

Commitment budget: A budget can help you forecast the costs associated with implementing your commitment and determine the amount of funds you will need to secure. Write a budget detailing your projected revenue (e.g., donations, grants, in-kind donations, fundraisers) and projected costs (e.g., personnel, travel, supplies, marketing).

Fundraising plan: It is also helpful to create a fundraising strategy to determine how you will attain the needed funds to cover the costs in your budget. Create promotional materials and brief reports that detail your plan and budget in an accessible, easy-to-read layout to present to potential donors.

University Funding

Faculty and administrators: Discuss your plans with faculty and administrators who might be interested in your commitment and ask them if they know of any funding opportunities that you could pursue. Professors, deans, and department chairs often have discretionary funds available for innovative student projects and research.

Alumni networks: Many alumni are willing to help worthwhile causes initiated by students from their alma mater. Contact your university's alumni affairs office and find out the best way to tap into this network of potential supporters. The office may be able to direct you to specific alumni or alumni networks who are active in the issues your commitment is addressing.

University scholarships and grants: There is a wide range of university organizations that may have small scholarships or grants that can support your commitment. Explore opportunities through the student government, the student activities office, relevant departments, your school's center for community service, or any other like-minded organizations that might have funds for new student initiatives.

CGI University Network: The CGI University Network is a growing consortium of colleges and universities that support, mentor, and provide seed funding to leading student innovators and entrepreneurs on their respective campuses. To join the CGI University Network, a university must provide a minimum of \$10,000 in funding to CGI U student commitment-makers from its campus. Visit the CGI U website to find out if your school is a member of the network.

Community Funding

Write a letter: Write a letter to family, friends, co-workers, and neighbors explaining your commitment and its importance. Keep the letter short, but speak from the heart and personalize it.

Utilize social media: Use social media to make those in your network aware of how they can help you reach your fundraising goals. You can make this an interactive forum, publically thanking those who can offer you monetary or in-kind support.

Hold a community event: Host a public event that will raise both funds and awareness for your commitment. Some ideas include: hosting a benefit concert featuring live bands, selling t-shirts at a central location in town, or holding an information session at the local library.

Apply for grants: Research various foundations and other grant opportunities that could potentially provide funding for your commitment. Many large corporations will match their employees' contributions one-to-one. Check with your existing donors to see if their companies have matching programs.

Create a website: Even the most basic website or blog can become an invaluable fundraising tool. A secure donation form can enable users to donate to your commitment in a matter of seconds. A web presence with information and photos about your commitment can also generate increased buzz and interest in your work.

Contact the local media: Contact your local newspaper and college media sources (e.g., newspaper, website, alumni magazine, school blog) and ask them to write an article about your commitment.

Work with local community groups: Reach out to local community groups that address similar issues as your commitment. Attend a meeting or speak on the phone with a key representative of the organization to let them know about your commitment. Local non-profits could be potential partners or might know of potential donors.

Developing and Maintaining Donor Relations

Provide Multiple Ways to Donate

- Monetary: make it easy for donors to donate. Set up an online account to make it easy for potential donors to fund your project. Also, provide a mailing address for those preferring to mail donations to you instead.
- Sponsorship: start a campaign for donors to sponsor a product or service for the beneficiary (e.g., pay a teacher's salary, fund training for a local co-op).
- Pro bono: in lieu of donations, ask for pro bono services such as legal services, marketing advice, or consulting.
- Events: host events or ask donors to host events (e.g., birthday parties or other types of parties) and ask attendees to donate to your project rather than bringing gifts.

Collect Data

- Collect all pertinent data about donors (e.g., names, addresses, donation amounts, dates of donations).
- Save the data in a user-friendly database where you can easily create illustrative charts and tables of donor data.

Show Gratitude

- Write thank you notes to donors – the more personalized the note, the better.
- Plan donor appreciation events or provide donors with small gifts of thanks.
- Find ways to publically recognize donors via social media or on your website.
- Keep in touch with your donors and continue to engage them in your work.

Newsletter

- Create a monthly e-newsletter that includes progress on your project.
- Professionalize your letter by having a clear format and including a logo.
- Use multimedia like videos and photos to enhance your newsletter.
- Include an opt-out option in the newsletter for donors who no longer wish to receive updates.
- Include links to your project's website and social media sites.

Seek Advice

- Ask for suggestions on how to develop your work and improve donor relations.
- Encourage your donors to recommend potential partners or relevant resources that can enhance your project.

Utilize Your Donor Network

- Encourage donors to share your project with their network.
- If a donor belongs to a society or members-only organization (e.g., Rotary or Lions Clubs), ask if you can make a presentation at a meeting.



Sample Budget Worksheet

The following budget worksheet provides a template for keeping track of your revenue and expenses. Consider using this example or a similar budgeting tool to stay organized with your commitment funds.

Revenue	Program or project
Grants	
Corporate contributions	
Fundraisers, events, sales	
In-kind donations	
Endowment	
Individuals	
Total	\$
In-kind	\$
Total revenue	\$

Expenses	Program or project
Staff salaries and wages	
Rent and utilities	
Equipment	
Supplies and materials	
Printing and copying	
Marketing and advertising	
Travel	
Subtotal	\$
General operating (indirect) – x%	
Total	\$
In-kind	
Trainers	
Classroom supplies	
Total in-kind*	\$
Total expenses	\$
Revenue over expenses	\$

*In-kind gifts should be mirrored in your budget. You should have a line item for in-kind in both the revenue and expenses sections of your budget.



Using Social Media for Your Commitment

By tapping into social media you can broadcast your project, program, or initiative to a larger audience. Doing so will increase your impact and expand your opportunities for growth. However, remember that having an underdeveloped presence on every platform is not as important as creating a strong content strategy for the platforms that make the most sense for your specific commitment.

GENERAL ADVICE

Think strategically about your social media presence: this will help you reach a wider audience and engage more with followers. Find out which platforms your constituents use so that you don't devote time to the wrong platform.

- **Planning:** Make a plan. Look closely at your social media presence and figure out what's working and what isn't. This may not appear as important as the on-the-ground work you are doing, but remember that your commitment needs a broader network of followers, supporters, partners, and donors in order to grow. Social media is a free way to build these connections, so it's worth investing the time.
- **Posts:** Post powerful statistics that speak to your mission, quotes that inspire social good, and position statements with conviction. Include well-formatted, easy-to-read facts, photos, and videos. Ask questions that encourage followers to respond. People are becoming inundated with social media posts, so be sure to find the balance between overposting and not sharing enough online.
- **Followers:** Interact with those who like and follow you, and be an engaged user that encourages others to follow, like, and interact with you. Make sure to like and follow whoever follows you. Look for like-minded organizations, celebrities, and bloggers. Ideally, you should like and follow people with influence. Identify networking hubs with the potential to connect you to massive audiences.
- **Connect Accounts:** You can sync your social media accounts to make your life easier and to provide your audience multiple ways of access.

TWITTER

Twitter is one of the most popular ways to interact online, and it is essential to building overall credibility, community, and support. It's definitely worth taking the time to build a Twitter strategy.

- **Content:** Content that contains a link, video, or photo will almost always be retweeted more than other content. Memes have especially high retweet rates. Don't tweet automated updates from other sites ("I posted a new photo on Facebook.") and it is recommended not to use more than two hashtags, since the effectiveness of tweets diminishes after two hashtags
- **Frequency:** Do not tweet more than four times per day, or you risk clogging Twitter feeds and diminishing impact. You also do not want to tweet less than twice per week.
- **Timing:** Tweets posted later in the day and on the weekends have more retweets on average.
- **Length:** They should be between 100-120 characters, and cannot exceed 140 characters. (Note that any link or photo counts for 20 characters, no matter how long or short the URL.) You want to provide others with the opportunity for customization and retweeting.

FACEBOOK

Commitment-makers can use Facebook to educate supporters, inspire advocacy, and put people at the center of the issues they care about. Facebook users love to feel engaged: post photos, videos, and competitions that draw users into the issue that you're addressing. Your posts should be relevant, interesting, concise, responsive, and add value. Be sure to answer all questions in a timely manner. Use Facebook to interact and provide personalized responses, not just to push your project. Even some negative comments can be an opportunity for meaningful engagement. Remember, the ultimate goal of Facebook is to connect: interact with your fans like one of their friends by making your posts personal, and people will be more inclined to engage.

INSTAGRAM

Social media content that contains images is reposted more frequently than content without images, so it is no surprise that Instagram is rapidly becoming one of the most widely used social media platforms among young people. .

- **Hashtag:** Instagrammers find you and your photos by searching for hashtags, so make sure you hashtag each photo. Be creative, but don't overdo it. Three to five hashtags per photo should be sufficient.
- **Show Yourself:** You are the face of your work, so don't be afraid to share more informal photos. Accessible, friendly organizations are more likely to garner support.
- **Behind The Scenes:** Show off the day-to-day life of your project, whether it's your volunteers at work, or a conventions you attended. Reward Instagrammers with unique insight into what you do.

GOOGLE+

Google+ has recently been gaining popularity—there are almost 350 million active users—and is now connected to other Google products such as YouTube. This makes it an increasingly useful platform for your organization.

- **Search:** Google+ users appear sooner and more frequently on Google searches. Since Google is the most powerful search engine in the world, this will expand your network and improve your credibility.
- **Integration:** Google seamlessly integrates Google+ with YouTube, Google Search, Google Maps, Gmail, and other features that most internet users depend on. This allows you to streamline your own internet activity and maximize your visibility.
- **Hangouts:** Google Hangouts are accessible from any device with internet access, and allow you to share video, photos, and messages with up to 10 Google+ members. You can use hangouts for conversing with remote donors, conducting board meetings, or hosting exclusive hangouts as a reward for active volunteers or donors.
- **Hangouts On Air:** These are live stream videos that you can schedule and broadcast to the world. Your stream will be available on Google+ and YouTube afterwards. This is an excellent opportunity to spread the word about your project and cause.
- **Cater to your Circles:** Google+ gives you the advantage of dividing your network based on each person's relationship to you. Are they donors or potential donors? Interested students? Participants? Volunteers? You can ensure that the right people get the right information by placing them into Circles.
- **Google for Nonprofits:** Google+ has special opportunities available to some 501c3-certified nonprofit organizations based in the United States. Though not for everyone, this is worth exploring.

TUMBLR

Primarily a blogging platform, Tumblr users post photos accompanied by lengthier text descriptions ranging from one to three paragraphs. Since most Tumblr users are under 25 years old, it is not likely that Tumblr will be a source of large donations. However, if you are looking to raise awareness among high school and college audiences, Tumblr may be worth considering.

PINTEREST

Pinterest, like Instagram, anchors itself in sharing images. However, Pinterest distinguishes itself by letting you "pin" any image from the internet—products, websites, photos—in addition to any of your own original images. Pinterest functions like a personalized magazine, where users can flip through beautiful images, fashion trends, recipes, DIY projects, locations, infographics, and more. While the primary use of Pinterest is retail, the platform is ideal if you have captivating photos to post, a visual story to tell, or a product component to your commitment.



How to Monitor and Evaluate Your Commitment Progress

Commitments to Action should have measurable results along with rigorous methods for tracking progress. Documenting both quantitative and qualitative data provides you with a way to more effectively measure and identify the impact of your commitment.

What are metrics?

Performance metrics measure the social, environmental, or economic impacts of your commitment on the target community or population. A performance metric should be clearly defined and easily measurable, and should answer a specific question about the outcome of your commitment.

Why measure?

Measuring the results of your commitment allows you to determine the effectiveness of your work, and you can use this information to enhance your commitment in the future. It is also a good idea to share your metrics with your supporters, partners, and any potential funders.

STEP 1: ESTABLISH BASELINE MEASUREMENTS

- Survey the community in which your commitment will be implemented, and document the initial conditions.
- These initial conditions will form your baseline measurements, to which you can compare outcome data in order to assess your commitment's impact.

Example: students who commit to increasing adult literacy rates should survey the group of people with which they will work in order to attain the pre-commitment literacy rate. After the implementation of the commitment, the students should compare the post-commitment literacy rate to the initial one, so that they can assess the impact of their commitment.

STEP 2: COMPILE A LIST OF METRICS FOR MEASURING PROGRESS

- What are your commitment's inputs, outputs, and outcomes?
 - An input is a resource needed to implement your commitment. An output is a direct product of your commitment. An outcome is a benefit or change that results from your commitment.
 - Example: an input could be personnel, time, or money spent on a tutoring commitment. An output of a tutoring program could be hours spent tutoring or number of students tutored. An outcome could be a percentage increase in test scores or change in literacy rate within a school.
- What are your commitment's objectives? How well are they being met?
- How is your commitment improving the quality of life of the targeted population?

Ensure that you consider all stakeholders when devising your metrics and strategies for measuring progress. It is important to consider all of the inputs, outputs, and outcomes for your target population, the larger community, your donors, and yourself or your organization.

STEP 3: DOCUMENT AND RECORD DATA

Quantitative Data

- Quantitative data can be counted or expressed numerically, and can be represented visually in graphs or charts.
- Examples of specific metrics: number of lives affected, number of products sold, amount of money spent, amount of energy saved, or number of children with access to textbooks. There is a huge range of options for quantitative data depending on the exact scope and focus of your commitment.
- Use a program like Excel to make record-keeping simple and efficient.

Qualitative Data

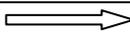
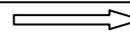
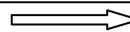
- Qualitative data can be observed, but not quantified. Instead of using numbers, qualitative data is expressed in categories, descriptions, and text.
- Examples: feedback from your target community, success stories, case studies, survey responses, personal interviews, field notes.

STEP 4: ANALYZE DATA

- Determine whether your data indicates positive change in your target community and whether you have met the goals of your commitment.
- If you did not meet your goals, consider making modifications to your commitment plan.
- Consider whether you should revise your list of metrics or use a different data-collecting method in the future.

You can use a chart like the one below to consolidate your information and visually organize your results.

SAMPLE CHART OF MEASURED PROGRESS

Inputs 	Outputs 	Outcome 	Impact
Resources used to implement your commitment.	Direct and tangible products of your commitment.	Change or benefit resulting from these products.	Broader change or benefit that can be attributed to your commitment. Would any of these outcomes happened in the absence of your commitment?
Example: cost of providing a loan.	Example: 25 people received a loan.	Example: number of people whose quality of life improved as a result of the loan.	Example: if three out of the 25 loan recipients would have improved their quality of life without the loan, the impact of the loan should be based only on the other 22 people.

STEP 5: REPORT AND SHARE RESULTS

- Create graphs, tables, and charts to visually display your data.
- Write up success stories, case studies, and detailed reports. Also consider shooting video footage of your commitment's impact and recording personal interviews with beneficiaries.
- Share outputs, outcomes, and impacts with funders, partners, and the beneficiaries of your commitment.
- Publish your data on your website and create resources that show your commitment results.