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# BUREAU NEWS BRIEFS



*American City Bureau, Inc.*

## Finding the Promise of Philanthropic Growth—Taking Stock

Looking at historic data on philanthropic support during a recession bestows a certain amount of comfort to fundraising professionals and organizations. With our earliest education we are taught that “history repeats itself,” suggesting that careful scrutiny of the past will offer concrete answers for dealing with today’s uncertain economic situation. However, what we face today is global and unlike any other economic crisis we as a nation have experienced. The past may not provide the answers we seek, but positive action is still essential. Long-term commitment to your philanthropic efforts will bolster your organization and help you weather the storm. So, batten down the hatches and consider the following:

**Take stock**—examine what is working well within your organization and market those stories to your donors as a means of illustrating need. What does your organization offer that differentiates you from others in the community? How are you enriching lives and providing critical services in uncertain times? And, stress why the needs are greater now more than ever. These are the messages that will resonate with your donors and prospects.

**Collaborate**—If, after taking stock, you find that duplication exists, examine ways to collaborate with other charities. Major donors appreciate knowing that their funds are being used wisely and to maximum benefit.

**Talk to your board**—hopefully your board members are your most committed and loyal donors. Make sure that you are communicating with them so that you know not only what is happening in their individual lives, but what is happening financially with their peers and the community as a whole.

**Get out from behind your desk**—It is easy to assume the worst based on the daily “doom and gloom” media broadcasts. However, perception and reality are not always the same. Constant and meaningful communication with your donors, prospects and friends will give you information you need to make accurate short- and long-term financial decisions.

**Brace for the short-term but look long-term**—If you read the Chronicle of Philanthropy, you will find weekly messages about how, for varying reasons, our present economic difficulties will actually strengthen the non-profit world. Of all the reasons this one seems clearest—the current economic climate offers the greatest opportunity for acquiring assets in a generation. With the right planning the wealthy will not only become wealthier, but they will be positioned to make significant philanthropic investments.

In short, our message continues to be the same. . .while every organization must assess its financial position in these uncertain times and make difficult decisions, investing in your development efforts is imperative. Cultivating your relationships and bravely “making the ask” will help you weather this crisis while positioning your organization for long-term philanthropic success.



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