



It's a whirlwind: Sorting through year-end charitable giving tips

If your email inbox—and even your actual mailbox—is any indication, year-end must be right around the corner! You've likely already started to get reminders, charitable giving strategies, and appeals from organizations you care about. It can be a lot! The good news is that thoughtful year-end giving does not have to be complicated. Your community foundation can help you sort through the noise, coordinate with your tax and financial advisors, and focus on the decisions that really matter.

In that spirit, here are five action steps to help you make sense of the communications you're receiving:

Think about what you want your giving to accomplish.

Before you talk with your advisors about tax deductions and which assets to give to the community foundation or other charity, start with the most important question: What do you want your charitable dollars to **do**? Perhaps you want to continue supporting the organizations you give to every year. Maybe you'd like to respond to an emerging community need, involve your children or grandchildren in giving, or set aside resources now for charitable decisions you'll make later.

The Community Foundation of West Georgia can help you begin your giving with the end in mind. We can pull together information on the organizations and causes you care about, help you identify organizations you might not yet know about, and share what we're seeing and learning about our community's needs.

Pay attention to *what* you give, not just how much.

Writing a check or using a credit card may be convenient, but cash is not necessarily the most tax-efficient asset to give. If you own publicly traded stock or other assets that have appreciated significantly, donating those assets directly to your fund at the community foundation or other charity may allow you to avoid capital gains tax that could apply if you sold the asset first, while potentially qualifying for a charitable deduction based on fair market value, subject to applicable rules and limitations.

This is an area where we can be especially helpful. The Community Foundation of West Georgia can accept not only publicly traded securities but also more complex assets, such as closely held business interests or real estate. Before selling a highly appreciated asset, talk with your advisors and the community foundation. A conversation before the sale can open up options that may disappear once the transaction is complete.

Take another look at the 2026 tax rules.

This year brought important changes to the federal tax rules for charitable giving. Among them, taxpayers who itemize generally can deduct charitable contributions only to the extent the contributions exceed 0.5% of adjusted gross income. For taxpayers in the highest federal income tax bracket, a new limitation also generally reduces the maximum federal income tax benefit of itemized deductions from 37% to 35%.

At the same time, taxpayers who do not itemize may now claim a deduction of up to \$1,000 for individuals and \$2,000 for married couples filing jointly for qualifying cash gifts to certain public charities. (Note that gifts to donor-advised funds, private foundations, and certain other organizations do not qualify for this new deduction.)

What does all of that mean for you? Potentially, that the timing and structure of your giving deserve another look. For example, some donors may benefit from "bunching" several years of charitable contributions into a single year rather than giving the same amount every year. We can work alongside your tax advisor to help you explore approaches that fit both your charitable plans and your tax situation.

If you are 70½ or older, don't overlook your IRA.

A qualified charitable distribution, or QCD, can be one of the most useful charitable planning tools available to eligible IRA owners. In 2026, eligible IRA owners age 70½ and older may direct up to \$111,000 from an IRA. A QCD is excluded from taxable income and, for donors who are subject to required minimum distributions, can count toward satisfying the RMD.

There are important rules about where QCDs can go. For example, they cannot be made to donor-advised funds. But the community foundation offers other types of funds that can receive QCDs, including, in many cases, designated funds that support particular charities, field-of-interest funds focused on particular causes, and unrestricted funds that allow the community foundation to respond to changing community needs.

If you are eligible for a QCD, ask your advisors whether it makes sense to incorporate one into your year-end giving.

Don't wait until the last week of December—please!

Perhaps the simplest year-end tip is also one of the most important: Start now.

Stock gifts take time to transfer. Gifts of real estate, closely held business interests, and other complex assets may require appraisals, due diligence, and coordination among multiple advisors. Even a relatively straightforward charitable plan can become more difficult when everyone is racing against a December 31 deadline.

Now is the time to take stock of what you've already given this year, what you still hope to accomplish, and which assets might make the most sense to use.

And you don't need to figure it all out yourself. Bring our team into the conversation with your CPA, financial advisor, or estate planning attorney. We can help you explore your options, coordinate the charitable pieces of the plan, and keep the focus where it belongs: using your generosity to accomplish what matters most to you.



Mitchell Rogers, MBA, CAP®
President
mitchell@cfwg.net
(770) 832-1462

Jennifer Patrick
Manager, Donor Services &
Development
jennifer@cfwg.net
(770) 832-1462