

Matching Gifts Explained

Matching gifts are a great way for participants to reach their fundraising goal while raising additional funds for your organization. It is always a good idea to encourage your OTE participants to ask their donors if their company matches. Essentially, matching gifts turns one donation into two!

Often in the donation process, there is an option for the donor to check a box if their company will match their gift. Checking this box does not automatically mean that the gift will be matched. It is still up to the donor to follow through and apply to have the gift matched through their company. However, if they have checked that their gift is potentially being matched, you as an event manager can track that donation. If you have not received paperwork to verify the matching donation, send a reminder email to the donor. Donors may have the best intention to apply to have their gift matched but can forget or become otherwise occupied. Because of the length of time that it takes for most corporations to process matching gifts, reminding donors to submit for a match helps ensure that the process has started.

In most cases these funds will not be received by your organization before the event day. Understanding how matching gifts work will help you devise a policy when it comes to matching gifts and how to count these pending donations towards your OTE participants fundraising goal. The most common practice is to count the matching gift towards the participants goal once the company sends the verification email or letter.

WHAT IS A MATCHING GIFT?

Matching gifts are donations made by a company that will match employee charitable contributions. Matching gifts can double or triple the amount of the original contribution. Many companies have matching gift programs. If a donor is unsure if their company has a matching gift program, or if they need information on how to apply for a matching gift from their employer, they should contact the company's Human Resources department.

HOW DO MATCHING GIFTS WORK?

Every company handles their matching gift program differently. It is up to the donor to inquire as to what their company requires to match their donation. Often the process is as follows:

- As an employee makes a charitable contribution, they submit a matching gift form to their company. This may be through a website or through paperwork submitted to their HR or payroll department.
- The company then sends a request to the nonprofit to confirm receipt of the donation to be matched. This confirmation request is sent by mail or email.
- The nonprofit must confirm that they received the donation and confirm how much of the donation is tax-deductible.
- Once the nonprofit has verified the gift, the form is resubmitted by the nonprofit to the matching gift company.
- When the company receives the verified form, the matching donation is processed as a payable item.

HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE FOR A MATCHING GIFT TO BE PAID BY THE COMPANY?

Most companies do not process matching gifts on a rolling basis; they are often done on a quarterly, biannual, or annual basis, meaning they only issue payment checks at specific points in the year. Additionally, many matching gift programs have cut-off dates for verified submission forms. Checks are often sent out 4-6 weeks after the cut-off date. It is important to find out if the company has cut-off dates for their payment schedules, as missing cut-off dates can delay a payment.

To better explain this, consider the following example:

Mary works for Microsoft, and her sister Jane is participating in Over The Edge. Mary makes a \$100 donation to Jane’s website. She then submits a matching gift form to the Microsoft Employee Matching Gift Program. Microsoft notifies the nonprofit that a match has been requested, and the Foundation verifies the gift. However, during the submission and verification process, the company’s cut-off date for the payment has passed, and Mary will now have to wait another full quarter until her matching gift is paid out.

HOW CAN YOU HELP IN THE MATCHING GIFT PROCESS?

There are several steps that you can take to ensure that matching gifts are requested, submitted and that the process moves as smoothly and as quickly as possible.

1. Encourage participants to ask their donors if their company matches.
2. Provide your participants with a list of employers in your area that match donations made to your nonprofit.
3. Ensure that all matching gift notifications are submitted to you by tracking the donations with potential matching status.
4. If a donor submits a matching gift form to their company using an online system, they will receive a confirmation email. Ask that they forward the email, so you are aware that confirmation is required.
5. There is an area on most matching gift forms where the donor can choose what program they want the gift designated to. In this case, the donor designation should be completed as “Over The Edge & Participant Name.” For example: Over The Edge—Jane Smith
The designation is the ONLY way you know that the gift should be credited to an Over The Edge participant. If a matching gift is received with no designation, you will have to track the original donor and confirm what OTE participant their donation was credited to.
6. Be sure that you communicate these directions to your participants so that they can properly instruct their donors.
7. Have patience. As you can see from the description of the process, matching gifts can long time to materialize. It is because of this lengthy process that we caution you: do not count un-paid matching gifts as part of your fundraising minimum but aim to get matches in early.