



Rockland Trust

Endowment Growth

06 October, 2026

Presenter: Mike Goorhouse



Why Endowment, Why Now?

Will your mission be important 25, 50 years from now?

- There is growing interest among nonprofits in building endowments as a tool for long term sustainability.
- Recent **volatility in public funding** has highlighted the value of capital you control
- **Universities, hospitals, and cultural institutions** have long relied on endowments; why shouldn't your organization too?



Benefits of an Endowment

- **Long-term financial stability**
 - Protection during economic downturns
 - Ability to respond to opportunities
- **Flexibility** and the ability to plan for the future.
- It is **permanent financial capital** that you control.
- Increased confidence from donors and partners that your organization is **durable** for the long term.
 - Few organizations will ever be fully endowed, but a goal of 10-20% of your operating budget being covered by endowment can be transformational for your organization.



Most nonprofits say they'd love to have an endowment, but are they willing to give up a little now for the long term?

How to Talk About Endowment

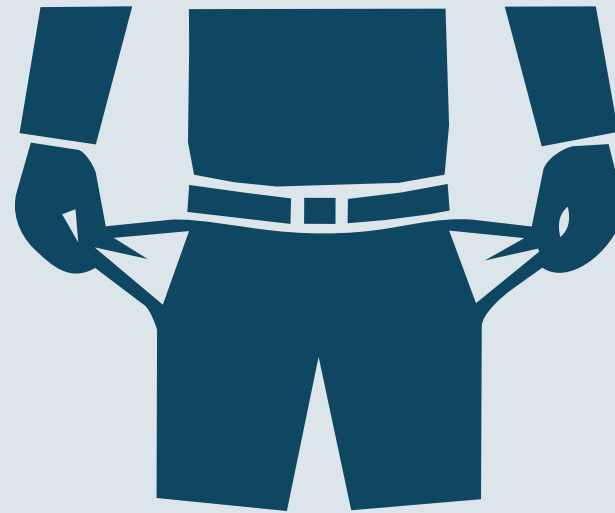


What is an endowment?



The Apple Tree

Why it matters



Living Paycheck to Paycheck

How it grows



Saving for Retirement



How to Talk About Endowment



Apple Tree

What is an endowment?

- The apple tree is your endowment principal, and apples are your annual spending policy.
- Each year, your endowment generates “fruit” by being invested in the financial markets
- As the tree (principal) grows over time, it bears more fruit year after year.



How to Talk About Endowment



Why it Matters

- We know that people don't thrive while living paycheck to paycheck. **Organizations don't thrive either.**

How to Talk About Endowment

How it Grows:

Growing your endowment is like growing your retirement account.

- The benefits build slowly, over years of contributions.
- Starting early and staying disciplined is what makes the difference.
- Your future self will be glad you did it!



Common Ways to Grow Endowments:

- **Major Gifts**

- An individual major donor can singlehandedly grow your endowment.
- A small group of endowment champions can have the same impact.

- **Campaigns**

- Endowment specific campaigns (anniversary campaigns).
- Embedding endowments into capital campaigns

- **Planned Giving**

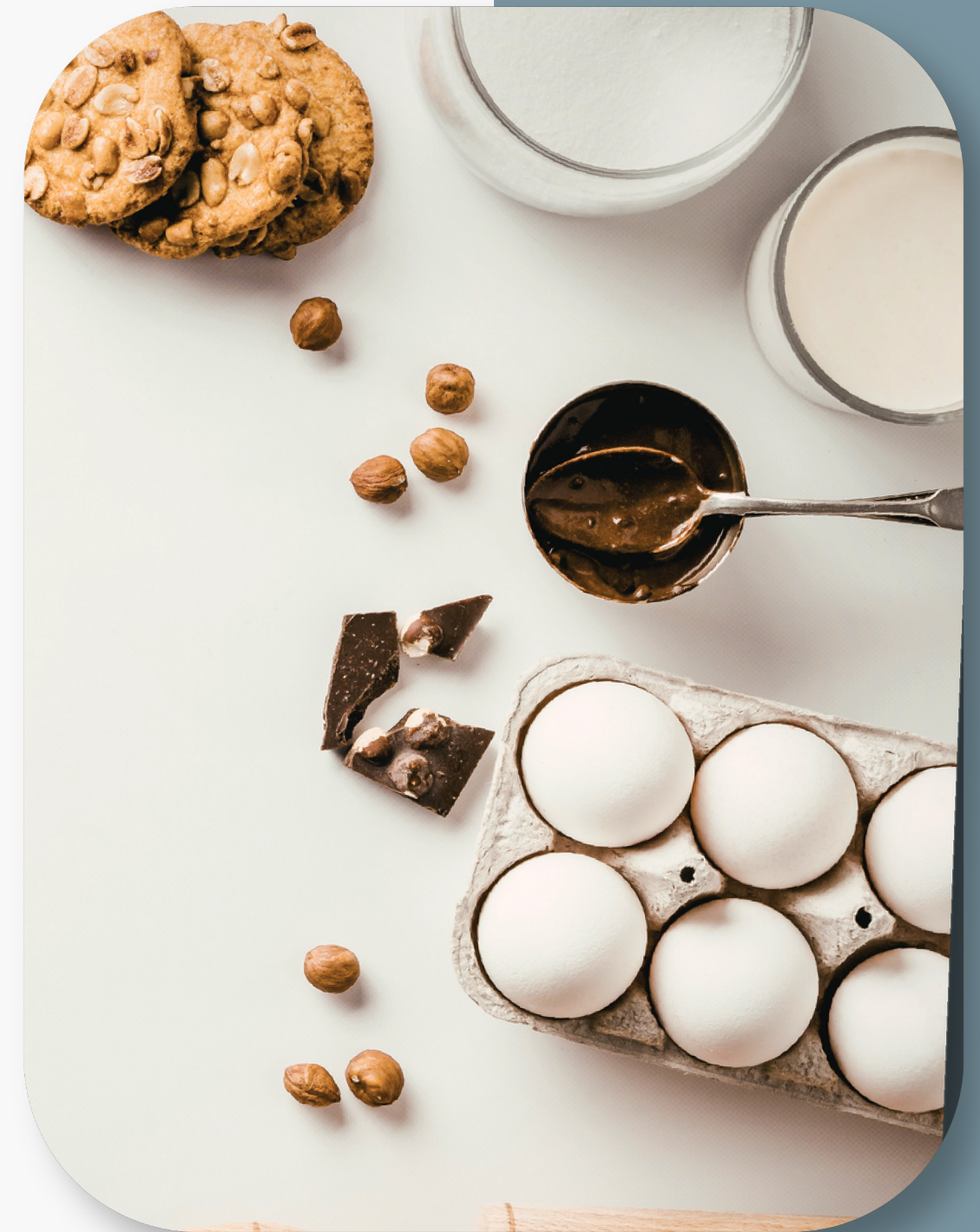
- Commit to placing undesignated estate gifts into endowment.
- Proactively soliciting estate gifts for endowment.



How many estate gifts have you asked for this year?

Ingredients for Successful Endowment Growth

- Any organization can grow endowment, but being around for 15-20+ years is helpful.
- Commitment from the CEO/ED and buy-in from staff
 - Energy is contagious.
- Your individual donor base is key.
 - Some foundations will fund endowment but it is less common.
 - Corporate and public revenue sources are least likely.
- Match components can help generate urgency
- Have a plan and a policy for how you will use your endowment spendable.



Your Endowment Story

What will it be used for? People like knowing what they are giving to.



Supplement Annual Operating Budget



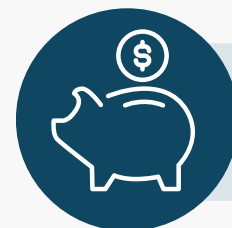
Use it for Building Maintenance and Upkeep



Targeted for a Specific Program



Specific Element of “Extras” for a Program



Save it for a Unique Challenge or Moment



Your Endowment Story

New Endowment

Having a match or catalyzing starting gift will be helpful.
Carefully craft your messaging on why starting an endowment matters to your organization

Growing Existing Endowment

Share how your endowment has been used over the years and what the growth will mean for the organization



Long term plan

Have a strategy for how you are going to grow endowment.

Have a goal for your endowment:

- \$5 million by 2030
 - 5% coverage of operating budget by 2035
-



Case Study:

Children's Foundation of Michigan:

Catalyzing Endowment Growth

- 11 organizations received:
 - \$500,000 seed investment into their endowment
 - Up to \$500,000 in matching funds.
 - Two years to raise matching contributions
- Major donor support
- CEO buy-in



MICHIGAN CENTRAL
STATION CHILDREN'S
ENDOWMENT INITIATIVE

● ● ● ● ● What is your path to growing your endowment?

Endowment Language That Works



We can't predict the future,
but we can prepare for it.



Weather the storm



Having more control of your
financial sustainability
matters



Take advantage of
opportunities



It takes a certain kind of person
to plant a tree fully knowing
that they may never benefit
from its fruit or shade

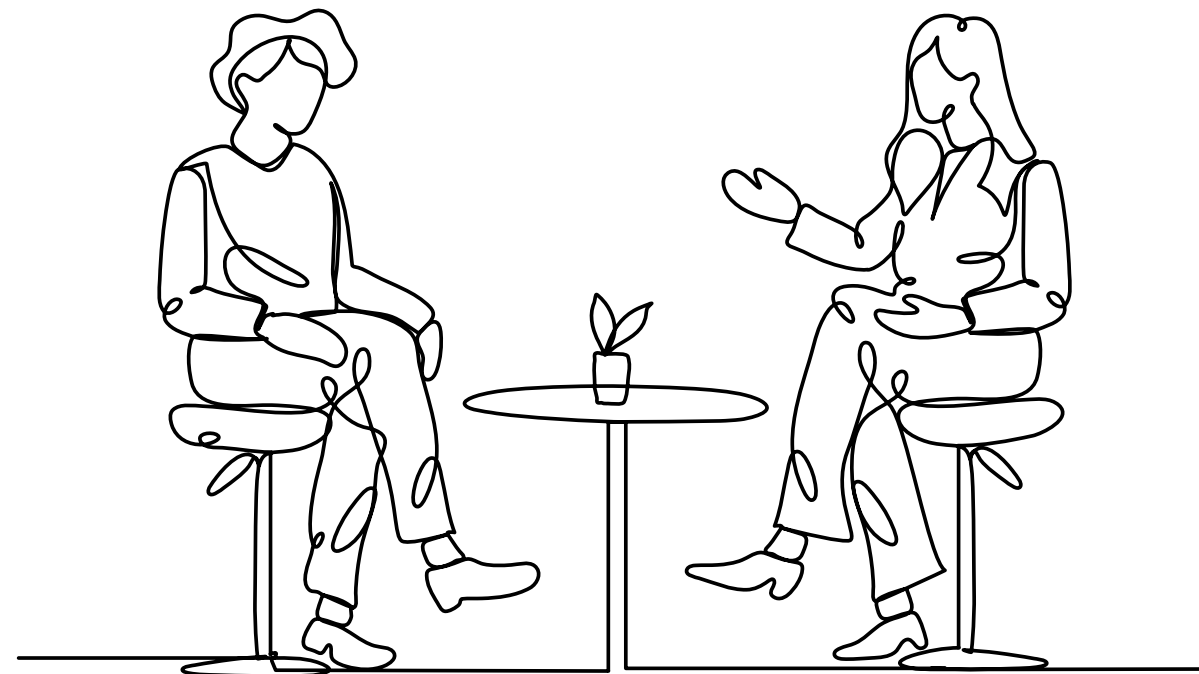


There will always be youth in our community that
need our support. The community is better off
with a consistent, sustainable, youth-serving
organization than needing to start a new one
every 20 years.



How to Have the Conversation

Don't overcomplicate things. We learn about our donors by talking to them.



"We've been wrestling with whether an endowment could be an important part of our business model and revenue plan going forward. What do you think?"

"We're not just planning for next year anymore, we're planning for the next 50. Would you join us in helping to grow our endowment to ensure that those in our community struggling with addiction always have a place to go."

"We can't predict the future, but we can prepare for it. In our industry, building an endowment is one of the primary ways we can prepare for an unknown future."

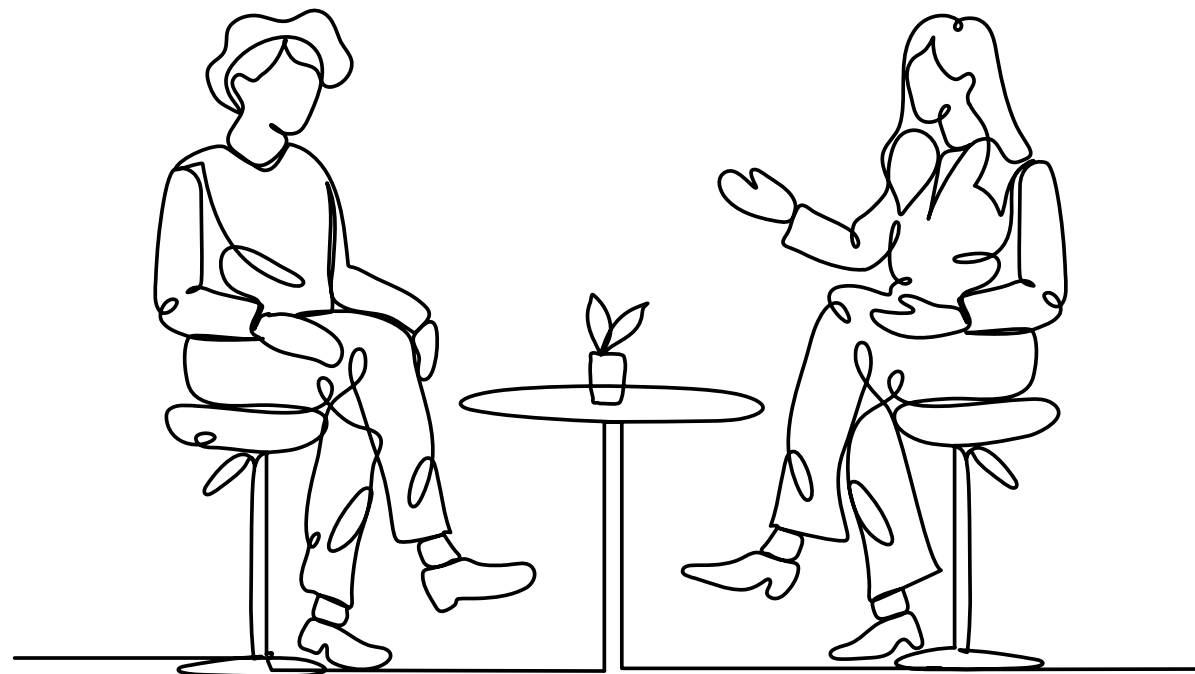
How to Have the Conversation

Don't overcomplicate things. We learn about our donors by talking to them.



“Do you believe our mission will matter 10, 25, or 50 years from now? Do you ever imagine a day where our community wouldn't want our organization to exist?”

“You've always taken the long view with your own planning. We're trying to do the same thing as an organization, and we think endowment will be a big part of that. Would you be willing to talk about how you and your family might be a part of that?”



Common Questions and Concerns

1 Won't an endowment make us look like we have too much money?

2 How can you focus on endowment when there are such big needs today?

3 Will this donation take the place of program dollars?

4 What if I change my mind down the road? What about after I'm gone?

5 What happens to the endowment if the organization no longer exists?

In practice, donors tend to give more to strong, strategic, and stable institutions.



Endowment on the Menu

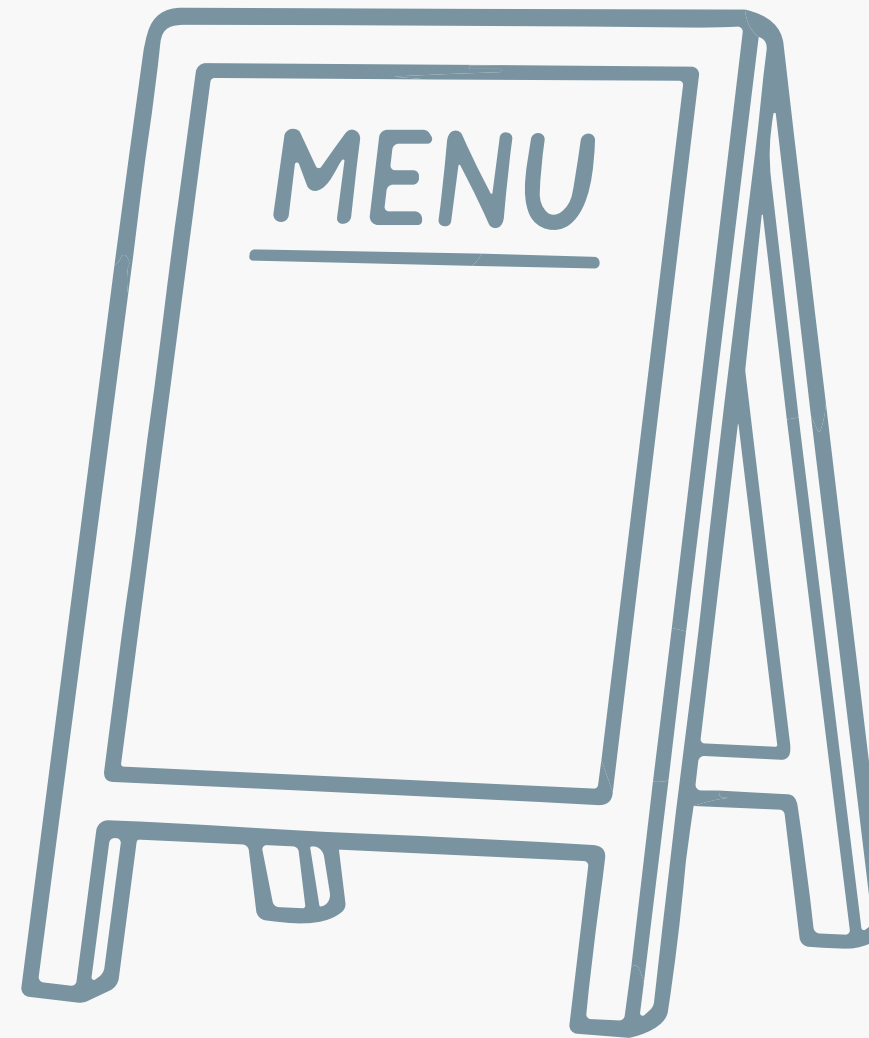


Keep it on the menu.

if endowment isn't on the menu,
no one will choose it. Put it on
the menu consistently.

It's not either/or

Donors can still give to other
areas of the work.



It's your job to plant the seeds!

The endowment won't grow by
itself!

Endowment isn't for everyone

Endowments are not for every
donor, but they are perfect for
some donors. Donors will have a
range of preferences and you
won't know until you ask.



Inspiring Impact

*I hope this helps you to facilitate
endowment conversations with your
partners to better your communities*

Connect with us.



616-566-7257



mgoorhouse@inspiring-impact.com



www.inspiring-impact.com

