

## GIFT ACCEPTANCE POLICY

This policy was officially approved by the Board of Directors of SERES Global on October 30, 2016. Reviewed January 23, 2021.

### SECTION I. GENERAL PURPOSE AND PRINCIPLES

1. **Purpose:** this policy will guide the staff, volunteers and Board of Directors of SERES Global when discussing possible gifts with donors and/or their adviser(s). It is intended to establish the process for the acceptance and management of all gifts.
2. **Status:** SERES Global is a 501(c)(3) public charity and non-profit corporation whose primary purpose is to foster the emergence of sustainable communities around the world and to enhance the development of organizations committed to this goal, or similar goals. All contributions, gifts and bequests made to SERES Global are tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law.
3. **Assisting Donors:** the task of all SERES Global volunteers and staff is to inform, guide, or otherwise assist the donor in fulfilling his/her philanthropic wishes, but never to pressure or unduly influence such a decision. All donors are advised to consult their own attorneys and/or tax adviser(s) regarding the various aspects and tax ramifications of their proposed gifts. SERES Global staff, board or other volunteers should not act as adviser(s) to a donor regarding gift and financial planning, gift restrictions, or other aspects of gift management because of a potential conflict of interest.
4. **Receipt of Gifts:** all gifts to SERES Global shall be recorded and receipted according to the standards recommended by the Better Business Bureau Wise Giving Alliance and Internal Revenue Service regulations.
5. **Protection of the Interests of SERES Global:** no agreement shall be made between SERES Global and any individual, agency, company or organization on any matter that would knowingly jeopardize SERES Global's interests. No volunteer or staff member will execute any agreement, contract or other legal document with any donor that differs from stated SERES Global policies and procedures without prior and formal approval of the SERES Global Board of Directors.
6. **General Principles:** all gifts to SERES Global shall be evaluated and administered within the following guiding principles:
  - 6.1 SERES Global does not provide legal, accounting, tax or other such advice to donors. Each donor is responsible for ensuring his or her proposed gift meets and furthers his or her charitable and financial planning goals. As such, each donor is encouraged to meet with a professional advisor before making any major gift to SERES Global.
  - 6.2 SERES Global reserves the right not to accept certain gifts, including:

- Those which would not be in the best interest of the donor (i.e., ones that might be inappropriate in light of the donor's personal or financial situation)
- Those that might benefit the donor in certain ways that are not available to others of similar status and interest
- Those from which SERES Global will realize little or no financial gain
- Those that are offered for purposes inconsistent with SERES Global's mission
- Those which have restrictions that might violate SERES Global's ethical standards, operating policies, or require any form of discrimination

**6.3** Donations of gifts for unrestricted, general purposes are encouraged because of the flexibility they provide to SERES Global. Restricted gifts may be accepted as long as they fit within the general program objectives of SERES Global.

**6.4** SERES Global shall acknowledge all gifts and donations in a manner that respects and honors the donor.

**6.5** In accepting a gift, SERES Global also accepts the responsibility to the donor to steward that gift properly. This includes administering the gift properly, and providing donors with accurate, timely financial information about how donations have been utilized, usually through the publication of annual reports.

## SECTION II. GIFT ADMINISTRATION

### 1. Gifts of Cash (or cash equivalents)

**1.1 Processing Contributions:** SERES Global recognizes that the accurate, timely processing of gifts is important to both the donor and to SERES Global. All efforts are made to coordinate the communication process between SERES Global volunteers, executive staff, and board. The SERES Global Treasurer and Executive Director jointly assume primary responsibility to ensure that all cash gifts are recorded and acknowledged in a timely and accurate manner.

**1.2 Gift Acknowledgement:** SERES Global provides gift acknowledgements in accordance with IRS guidelines and the Better Business Bureau Standards for Charitable Accountability, which include:

- a. Timely acknowledgement of receipt of the gift (ideally within 24-48 hours after receipt of the gift.)
- b. Information on how much of a charitable contribution or cash receipt is tax-deductible.
- c. Providing each donor with an annual contribution statement to be used for tax-reporting purposes.

**1.3 Gift Intake:** Any representative of SERES Global who receives cash, check, credit card information or any other property that is, or may be, a contribution shall immediately notify the SERES Global Treasurer of this matter by e-mail, telephone or facsimile and shall then forward such

cash, check, other relevant documentation to the SERES Global Treasurer.

## 2. Deferred and/or Non-Cash Gifts:

**2.1 Deferred Gifts:** Because of its small size and limited staff resources, SERES Global does not generally accept non-cash or deferred gifts that are legally complex, require the services of an outside professional, or require long-term administration or management. Types of non-cash or deferred gifts that SERES Global would not be likely to accept include, but are not necessarily limited to: Real estate, artwork, oil and gas interests, partnership interests, bargain sales, charitable remainder trusts, charitable lead trusts and/or charitable gift annuities.

**2.2 In-Kind Contributions:** SERES Global does accept in-kind non-cash contributions that would otherwise be direct expenses related to its fund-raising, administration or program costs. These could include: airline miles, office equipment, personal property used within a limited time frame for fund-raising purposes (i.e. auction or raffle items), or other items deemed easily and directly usable by the SERES Global staff or Board of Directors. Unless special circumstances exist, SERES Global will use its best efforts to sell or utilize non-cash gifts as soon as possible at the highest value available.

**A. Determining Value and Cost Basis:** The donor is responsible for determining a non-cash gift's cost basis and value. SERES Global will provide donors with information on valuing non-cash gifts when such information is available. Generally, SERES Global will rely on the donor's representation as to the gift value for recognition purposes.

## 3. Date of Gift:

The date of gift (either cash or non-cash) is the date the asset ceases to be in the donor's control and, instead, is within SERES Global's control. SERES Global adheres to the rules of gift acceptance required by the Internal Revenue Service. Dates that may be used as the date of gift generally include one of the following:

- Mail: the postmark date
- Hand delivery: the date of physical receipt
- Wire transfer: the date received in the accounts of SERES Global, or
- Journal Entry: the date of recorded transfer into SERES Global bank accounts

## SECTION III. SPECIAL GIFT ISSUES

**1. Pledges:** SERES Global welcomes support in the form of pledges for monthly support of its programs. Pledges extending for more than three years shall be evaluated on a periodic basis (no less than once every three years) to ensure that the pledge is still aligned with both the donor and SERES Global's needs and priorities.

**2. Bequests:** SERES Global welcomes bequest intentions. SERES Global encourages donors to ensure that their family members understand the donor's estate plan or bequest intentions. SERES Global reserves the right to disclaim a bequest if its terms are contrary to the needs or wishes of SERES Global. Once it knows of a bequest, SERES Global will make every effort to protect SERES Global's interests throughout the probate and/or administration process.

**3. Gift Agreements (Restrictions):**

**3.1** SERES Global will work with donors and/or their representatives to document donor expectations regarding criteria for the use of restricted gifts. When unusual restrictions are requested, SERES Global will negotiate alternative language in good faith. In the absence of a formal gift agreement, correspondence with the donor will carry the same weight. The SERES Global Board of Directors shall review and approve all unusual requests. Once a gift has been offered and received, its use can be changed only with the express consent of both the donor and SERES Global.

**3.2 Guidelines**

**a. Preference for Unrestricted Gifts:** Unrestricted gifts provide SERES Global the greatest flexibility to direct resources where they are most needed at any particular time. For that reason, unrestricted gifts are always preferred.

**b. Restricted Gifts:** From time to time, a donor will decide to restrict a gift. These guidelines will help SERES Global staff in responding to requests by donors to restrict their gifts.

**Restriction by Program Area:** When a gift <\$10,000 is restricted by program area (not time), it should generally be used within a 12-month period after receipt of the gift unless otherwise noted. If the gift is not used within that time period, SERES Global should contact the donor to possibly redefine the restriction, or to remove the restriction on the unused portion of the gift.

**Restriction by Time:** When a gift is restricted by time: i.e., gifts that must be used within a certain time period, the gift should not reasonably exceed the amount that could be spent within the restricted time. If the amount contributed exceeds what can be spent within the allotted time period, arrangements should be made with the donor, if possible, to have any remaining unused part of the gift shifted to being an unrestricted contribution.

**4. Life Insurance**

SERES Global will accept gifts of new and existing whole life insurance (no term or non- dividend policies) if the donor or insured designates SERES Global as the sole owner and irrevocable beneficiary. SERES Global will not accept gifts of life insurance policies that have a loan against the value without the consent of the SERES Global Board of Directors. All policies will provide for waiver of premiums in case of disability. There will be no automatic loan provisions. If the donor does not respond to a premium bill by the due date, SERES Global retains the right to cash it in for the surrender value. At all times, SERES Global reserves the right to cash in the policy or retain it as an investment. The policy's

fair market value (approximate cash value) is available to the donor as a charitable contribution deduction at the time of contribution.

#### **5. Major Gifts to Named Funds or Programs**

A major gift can be used to establish a Named Fund which can be named after the donor, in recognition of another individual, or for a particular interest of the donor. A gift designed to fund a specific program requires consideration of the full budgetary requirements (e.g. salary, benefits, other costs,) to fund that program. Any new program or fund would require approval by the SERES Global Board of Directors. The minimum donation required to establish a Named Fund or Programs is \$25,000.

#### **6. Gifts Outside These Parameters**

When SERES Global receives an offer of a gift that is less than \$25,000 and that would require the establishment of a new fund or program, the staff or volunteer who receives the gift offer should discuss the following options with the donor:

- 6.1** Increase the amount of the gift through a multi-year pledge.
- 6.2** Eliminate the designation and make an unrestricted gift, or make a restricted gift to an already established program.
- 6.3** Temporarily restrict the funds to be used over a pre-determined period (not to exceed five years).