10 Considerations When Selecting a Database
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1 **Look at your current database.** What works well? What is missing?

2 **Determine your needs.** Are you tracking donations? Members? What do you want the database to do? What do you wish for? Make sure your needs are first priority. You MUST, at this point, consider other software/programs your organization utilizes. Will the database in anyway interact (downloads, etc.) with the other programs? Talk to your staff. Consider having a software professional evaluate your current work systems, flows and staff interactions with the database. A third party may root out tasks that you simply forget to consider and will be able to save time by making recommendations as to which products can best serve you.

3 **Do your research.** Visit websites such as idealware.org or techsoup.org for ideas. Talk to your peers or organizations who do similar work. What database do they use? Do they like it? Be sure to also research the type of technical support that is provided with each database.

4 **Narrow down your list.** Once you've had a professional make recommendations, done your research and/or talked with your peers, choose your favorites. Select no more than five (three is actually best) potential products.

5 **Try it out!** Vendors want your business and as such will offer you free demos. Most demos are done online and you may have several staff members participate.

6 **Do your research (again)!** So you've furthered narrowed down your list. Ask the vendor for references. Ask everyone else about their experience not only with the database, but with the vendor as well. Your relationship with the vendor can make a significant difference as to the success of your database implementation. Make sure you have an understanding of the technical support offered with each product you are considering. Ask the vendors about staff training options. Know who the staff should contact when they have a question or need help.

7 **Back it up!** If you are moving from one database to another, be sure to have a backup of your current system completed immediately before your transition.

8 **Start it up!** Data will need to be migrated into your new system. Your vendor should have a detailed plan on how this is to be accomplished.

9 **Know that hiccups happen.** You may need to do some data cleanup. You may have unexpected issues that can become frustrating and overwhelming for staff. Take each challenge one at a time.

10 **Recover.** Do not under estimate the mental and physical toll a database change may take on staff. Consider offering staff a special indulgence for a job well done – an extra paid day off, lunch, etc.