



[WRITING SAMPLE NOTE: The following letter is the first in a series of 10 letters targeted at foundations and wealthy donors. This letter was written as a 2-page letter. The subsequent nine follow-up letters were limited to one page. Each letter is personalized as a merge document (as indicated by the <Merge_Data> entries). This and other letters were formatted for A4 page size. The full series is available on request.]

Dear <Form_Address> <Last_Name> [OR: Friend],

Is your foundation unwittingly wasting money? Donations to traditional models of development may have immediate impact, but long term effects are often limited. Any good that is accomplished must be supplemented by more money... or the positive changes cannot be sustained.

I am certain that <Organization_Name> thoroughly investigates its donations. However, today I want to tell you about a revolutionary philanthropic approach known as microcredit that allows you to maximize the effectiveness of your donations while breaking this cycle of dependency

Very briefly, microcredit is the extension of tiny loans to “micro-entrepreneurs” — recipients too poor to qualify for traditional bank loans. When the original microcredit loans are repaid the money is lent again, over and over, virtually *recycling your donation money perpetually*.

Breaking the cycle of dependency... with pride and self-sufficiency

Microcredit enables those without access to lending institutions to start and maintain small businesses that lift them out of poverty. This proven effective philanthropic strategy is so effective that the 2006 Nobel Peace Prize was awarded to a microcredit organization.

Here is a diagram comparing the traditional model of philanthropy with microcredit’s effectiveness:

Traditional Donation Model



Microcredit Donation Model



Microcredit *does not create the culture of dependency* that so many other philanthropic programs do. It ensures poor recipients will help themselves and not just wait for the next handout.

Hello <First_Name> <Last_Name>, I am Ryan Young, Managing Director of Common Interest— a small but very active philanthropic foundation. Our mission is to use microcredit to bring this type of change to some of the poorest people of Thailand. I will tell you more about Common Interest and why I am contacting you shortly. But first, let me tell a story of how Common Interest has brought *sustainable, measurable changes into real lives and real communities*.

Sanglar is a strawberry and garlic farmer in the small, rural, mountain village of Boh Kaew in Thailand. Every year, she needs to buy fertilizer, starter plants, and water pipes at the start of the growing season.

Until Common Interest lent Sanglar \$200 in 2006, she had to borrow from local moneylenders at exorbitant interest rates of **10% to 30% per month**. After Common Interest lent her money for needed materials, she easily repaid the loan after harvest. After repaying the loan (and making a small interest payment), she realized a significant profit for the first time since she had begun farming.

Sanglar is no longer dependent on the greed of local moneylenders. She feeds her family better, saves money for the next year's farming, and regularly expands her business. Many of her neighbours also benefitted from Common Interest microcredit loans—loans that are continually producing tremendous, positive, sustainable changes in their lives.

Microcredit creates this sustainable impact. Every baht lent to a poor recipient gets repaid on time with reasonable, affordable interest. The loans and interest repaid is lent again... and again... and again, producing perpetual returns for an initial small infusion of capital. Our uncollateralized loans go to individuals who are part of a "Village Bank" system that are "owned" and managed by the recipients of microcredit. Village Banks also provide a place for members to save money locally. And this saved capital further enriches the fund available for additional microcredit loans.

Education and training for a better, healthier life

Microcredit allows Common Interest to provide additional humanitarian services such as micro-insurance and community training — training about crucial issues like HIV, personal and community finance, and effective agricultural practices. We can offer these additional services at **a fraction of the cost other agencies would have to spend**. Since we are already travelling to villages as part of our microcredit program, staff, vehicle, and other **costs of these "added services" are already covered**. In addition, the cost of these extra humanitarian services can be covered by revenue from microcredit programs.

Common Interest has been entirely privately funded until now. But our microcredit successes compel us to expand. I am contacting you and <Organization_Name> today because I would like to discuss funding opportunities with you personally and privately — opportunities to help us continue to break the cycle of poverty and dependency.

I invite you to visit our web site at www.commoninterest.org for a fuller picture of Common Interest's efforts in Thailand. But **I really would love to speak with you personally**. Please call me at your earliest convenience at 403-444-0858 or email me of your interest in further discussion. Common Interest can provide charitable receipts through our US and Canadian affiliates.

Respectfully yours for worldwide economic growth,
[Legible signature]

Ryan Young
Managing Director

PS. I have not been able to give you anything approaching the full story of Common Interest and our work in Thailand. But I will do so over the next few weeks when I tell you about other success stories that replicate Sanglar's or about Common Interest's support of a local hill-tribe children's home or... well, there is a lot more I want to tell you about, but that will have to wait for now.