

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

**Development of a Fundraising Resource Library for a Community-based Non-Profit**

**Organization**

By

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## Abstract

Nonprofit organizations (NPOs) serve public interests through education, health, environment, and community services. Community-based NPOs like Out Our Front Door (OOFD) promote sustainability and local engagement through biking adventures while encouraging environmental awareness and cultural appreciation. To enhance its long-term impact, OOFD is revising its fundraising strategy by collaborating with the University of Chicago Alumni Relations and Development (ARD), considering the health and environmental advantages of biking. The goal of the project is to support OOFD in exploring fundraising strategies by creating a comprehensive resource library. As effective fundraising is vital to nonprofits' survival, this project also addresses the growing need for donor-centered strategies, staff training and leadership engagement. A thematic analysis was conducted to identify patterns from both academic sources and survey responses from comparable NPOs, which serve as supplement insights from the current industry. Responses from 12 organizations reveal social media (91.7%) and email campaigns (83.3%) as the top fundraising tools, with Facebook being the most popular social media platform. The identified fundraising strategies include donor segmentation and diversified fundraising, and while online platforms provide visibility, they need to be used strategically. Additionally, personalized donor engagement and regular contact help improve retention. Emerging trends include peer-to-peer fundraising, a focus on recurring donors, and integrating volunteer engagement into donor pipelines. The shift of engagement towards mid-level donors highlights the need for relationship-based fundraising and long-term donor stewardship for sustainability. The final resource library included curated materials such as articles, webinars, platforms, and toolkits, targeting both beginner and advanced levels to help OOFD board members and volunteers improve fundraising effectiveness. Overall, the project

serves as a resource center for members to access information on different fundraising strategies to improve the organization's sustainability.

## **Introduction/Literature Review**

Non-profit organizations (NPOs) are entities that prioritize fulfilling public needs and addressing social, cultural, educational, environmental, or health issues in a community or society, rather than generating profit. They are usually not commercial and do not distribute profits to owners, members, or stockholders (Ciucescu, 2009). Instead, any extra revenue is reinvested into the organization's mission and initiatives to achieve its goals. This sets them apart from for-profit companies, where earnings are distributed to stakeholders (Moura et al., 2019; Treinta et al., 2020). NPOs often operate with limited funding and personnel, which can be influenced by community needs and stakeholder expectations. Consequently, it is common for NPOs to rely on volunteers, who may serve at the executive or operational level, and assist in committees and task forces to support the organization's functions (Sneath, 2021).

NPOs represent a diverse range of organizations, including universities, schools, hospitals, religious institutions, government agencies, charitable institutions, trade unions, foundations, civil rights organizations, political organizations, and third-sector entities (Frumkin, 2002; Treinta et al., 2020). Each NPO has a distinct purpose and provides a different scope of benefits and services (Sneath, 2021). They can be broadly categorized into two types: public-serving organizations, which are typically people-focused (e.g., social service agencies, community clinics, environmental organizations), and member-serving organizations, which deal with a broader range of issues, from complex policies to everyday events (Frumkin, 2002). Some NPOs operate without government funding (e.g., religious organizations), while others, particularly those assisting vulnerable populations (e.g., the elderly and low-income communities), depend heavily on government support (Frumkin, 2002). In this case, financial

constraints may affect the availability of resources and increase dependence on donations, investments, or subsidies from external stakeholders (Moura et al., 2019).

The success of NPOs is not solely measured by financial results, but by how well they achieve their mission and serve the people they aim to support (Treinta, 2020). The management of NPOs plays a critical role in their success. Essentially, the more resourceful the community is, the better-positioned NGOs are to assist. Financial results do not necessarily measure the success of an NPO (Treinta, 2020). It is the extent to which NPOs achieve their mission and serve the intended population that is essential for evaluating their performance (Moura et al., 2019). Given the competitive and resource-constrained environment in which NPOs operate, effective strategic planning and fundraising are crucial for sustainability, as the lack of competency or funding can be the key to failure, which is why some NPOs are stable while others only last momentarily. Strategic planning is crucial to the long-term viability and effectiveness of NPOs (Akingbola, 2006; Bryson, 1988). Without a clear plan, NPOs are unlikely to overcome today's challenges. Fundraising strategies are particularly important for attracting and keeping donors.

### **The Role of Community Organizations**

Community organizations are typically non-profit and focus on the needs, interests, and concerns of a local population. As public-serving entities, they are often the first place where people seek help, express concerns, or come together to address common issues (Hughey et al., 1999; Frumkin, 2002). These organizations create settings where individuals can convene, express themselves, and organize for social change, fostering a sense of collective identity and solidarity (Hughey et al., 2006). The sense of community allows individuals to connect over shared causes and take collective action through the organization, which can benefit the community. Despite the potential significance, these organizations often rely on various forms of

funding, such as grants and donations, to operate effectively. Therefore, sufficient knowledge in fundraising, as previously stated, has a huge role in maintaining the functioning of the organizations.

### **Biking and Its Economic and Environmental Benefits**

Some NPOs are specific to individuals who share similar interests in physical activities, such as biking, as a form of camaraderie and to promote an active lifestyle, especially when sedentary behavior has become common in this digital era. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has reported a rise in obesity and diabetes. This is partly due to people becoming absorbed in work, social media, and daily life, neglecting their health and the natural environment. However, cycling is gaining popularity as one of the most popular outdoor activities in the United States and is significantly boosting the economy by supporting several outdoor recreation sectors (Chakraborty, 2019). With rising gas prices and concerns about the environmental impact of vehicles, cycling has emerged as an eco-friendly choice of transportation, especially among young people, such as students. Both rural and urban communities rich in natural resources are turning into major destinations for mountain biking, which may bring positive economic impacts (Chakraborty, 2019). Furthermore, there are reports associating biking with health benefits, where it helps people stay active (see Oja et al., 2011). Cities such as Chicago and San Francisco are promoting biking and are building appropriate infrastructure that allows this mode of transportation, which is part of their strategy to develop green economies (Gilderbloom et al., 2015). Investment in bikes and bike-friendly infrastructure can also reduce traffic congestion, create jobs, and potentially save money in the long run (Gilderbloom et al., 2015). This growing demand for a bike-friendly environment often comes

from people who want to live car-free, reduce their carbon footprint, and improve personal health and finances (Gilderbloom et al., 2015).

In recent years, climate change has garnered significant attention, with increasing wildfires, droughts, and odd weather patterns attributed to global warming. Due to the burning of fossil fuels (coal, oil, and natural gas), pollutant gases are generated and lead to environmental pollution (Bose, 2010). Most of the exhaustion is due to automobile transportation, which requires oil to operate. By reducing the use of conventional cars for transportation, cycling can reduce GHG emissions. Cycling also offers opportunities for individuals to engage with nature and lead more active lifestyles. Zafeiroudi (2020) stated that outdoor activities like cycling can help promote environmental responsibility, especially among adolescents who have participated in outdoor intervention programs. Personal beliefs, values, and attitudes about the environment influence one's behavior, and fostering a deeper connection to nature encourages more sustainable actions across society (Zafeiroudi, 2020).

Creating biking trails and greenways within communities can contribute to local economies by providing an active transportation route for residents and visitors (Chakraborty, 2019). The trails also provide a space and opportunities for recreational activities and the improvement of people's health. Furthermore, the natural and cultural attractions along these trails can attract businesses and corporations that recognize the potential benefits of greenways. (Chakraborty, 2019). In the process, people may learn to appreciate and protect the natural resources. As a result, biking trails can revitalize local economies, social structures, and the environmental well-being of communities (Chakraborty, 2019; Gilderbloom et al., 2015). Various NPOs, such as Ride Illinois and Active Transportation Alliance, advocate for better biking conditions and educate the public about cycling laws and benefits. These organizations

often rely on diverse funding avenues to operate and utilize different fundraising tactics to secure financial support.

### **Nonprofit Organization: Out Our Front Door (OOFD)**

Out Our Front Door (OOFD) is a community organization in Chicago that aims to immerse, educate, and preserve the history, culture, trails, and native habitats of the Lower Lake Michigan Basin Area through exploratory bike adventures. Established in 2015, OOFD promotes biking as a sustainable transportation option and advocates for trail maintenance (OOFD, 2015). They believe that appreciation for the environment grows when individuals understand the significance of nature, which leads to support for natural habitats, restoration, and conservation efforts. In general, they provide a place for local historical societies, nature organizations, architectural groups, biking organizations, artists, writers, photographers, and businesses to create an informed public through active adventures, to promote better care, knowledge, and appreciation of outdoor spaces and an active lifestyle (OOFD, 2015). They focus on enhancing personal growth and physical health and developing a cultural and natural connection between participants and the environment, particularly through bike camping adventures (OOFD, 2015). These are outdoor activities that combine biking with camping, where the riders travel towards a destination by bike while exploring the landscapes and enjoying their journey. Their programs are inclusive and welcome people of all age groups and abilities. To sustain and grow the organization, its fundraising strategic plan needs to be revised for future years.

### **Fundraising**

Fundraising for NPOs is a complicated, multi-faceted effort. Successful fundraising is driven by a donor-centric approach, where organizations focus on building long-term relationships with donors (Sargeant & Shang, 2016). As competition for funds intensifies, NPOs

must find multiple ways to secure their funding and reduce reliance on any single source of income (Sargeant & Shang, 2016). Fundraising leaders need to identify the broader context of the environment that might be relevant for improvement in raising money. Executive leadership and board members' involvement in fundraising are key factors in ensuring success (Bray, 2022; Sargeant & Shang, 2016; Hager et al., 2002). NPOs should also invest in staff training and create a culture that values fundraising efforts. The growth that fundraising can bring to an organization could be transformational, either in scale or in content, to increase its societal impact (Sargeant & Shang, 2016). A dedicated staff or external consultant can act as a catalyst for advancing fundraising goals and expanding an organization's societal impact (Hager et al., 2002). Planning strategically, including setting clear goals, is crucial for ensuring that efforts are not only effective in the short term but also sustainable and impactful over the long term (Bray, 2022).

To sustain and grow the organization, OOFD is revising its fundraising strategy and has reached out to the University of Chicago Alumni Relations and Development (ARD) for guidance. I have collaborated with the department to create a resource library that would be valuable in helping the organization's executive board or staff enhance their fundraising skills and improve their planning.

## **Methodology**

### **Project Scope**

This project examines fundraising techniques and strategies used by NPOs. Out Our Front Door (OOFD) is currently seeking to update its fundraising plan and recognizes the value of developing a comprehensive fundraising resource library for its staff and volunteers. The fundraising resource library was developed through two stages: (1) a literature review to identify

the common fundraising methods among nonprofits, and (2) a survey of related NPOs to identify current fundraising strategies, trends, and methods that are deemed as effective. By creating this resource, OOFD hopes to empower its team with the knowledge and tools necessary to enhance fundraising efforts and improve its long-term sustainability.

The project deliverable is a single, well-organized document that offers a wide range of recommended fundraising resources, such as eBooks, articles or blogs, webinars, online or in-person courses, and digital toolkits. Since OOFD's board members are mostly volunteers with diverse experience across various sectors, but not necessarily expertise in fundraising, the resources cater to both beginner and advanced levels of experience. This ensures that the library supports strategic planning efforts and helps board members, staff, and volunteers build and execute an effective fundraising plan tailored to the organization's goals and needs.

### **Literature Review**

The first step was to conduct a literature search to identify published studies and articles on fundraising strategies to capture a broad spectrum of strategies, tools, and techniques that can help nonprofits improve their skills. This search was conducted through resources such as the UChicago Library, Google Scholar, and Google with queries including the keywords "fundraising," "strategies," "trends," "nonprofit leadership", etc. Google Scholar is a web search engine that features a variety of scholarly literature in different fields, including nonprofits and fundraising.

Information about online or in-person learning opportunities that are tailored to various levels of expertise in nonprofit fundraising helps keep OOFD's team updated with current trends and proven methods in fundraising. Given the prevalence of misinformation and scams online, it is essential to evaluate the reliability of websites when accessing resources. One key factor in

determining trustworthiness is the domain of the site. Websites with domains ending in .org, .edu, or .gov are generally considered more reliable, as these are often associated with nonprofit organizations, educational institutions, or government entities, all of which are more likely to provide accurate, well-researched content (Purdue, n.d.). On the other hand, commercial (.com) websites may be more promotional and potentially biased, and they should be assessed carefully based on the credibility of the content they offer. For instance, the “about us” or “contact” sections are useful for understanding the site’s background information. The quality and accuracy of the contents are evaluated based on references or links to primary resources. Overall, the credentials of the author, team, or editor of the contents are identified to ensure reliability, and these contents should also be current and up to date.

### **Survey**

Information from the literature review was supplemented by an online survey distributed to NPOs with similar goals and objectives to OOFD to understand their current fundraising practices, successes and challenges, and perspectives on key fundraising trends.

### ***Measure***

Using a free survey tool, Google Forms, a 6-item survey was designed to gather information about effective fundraising strategies, current trends or challenges, and fundraising platforms used by various organizations. The survey included both closed-ended and open-ended questions to capture both quantitative and qualitative data. The study was conducted on behalf of an organization and does not meet the regulatory definition of ‘research’ per 45 *CFR 46.102(l)*, and thus did not require IRB approval.

### ***Targeted Respondents***

To ensure a diverse range of responses, the survey was distributed to NPOs with similar goals and objectives to OOFD. Nine organizations that have objectives, such as biking, outdoor recreation, nature preservation, trail maintenance, and education, were identified. These local or national organizations included: Openlands, Leave No Trace, Chicago Voyagers, Active Transportation Alliance, Ride Illinois, Chicago Adventure Therapy (CAT), Kids Enjoy Exercise Now (KEEN), People For Bikes, and Climate Ride. First, Openlands is a Chicago-based NPO that focuses on environmental conservation, advocating policy solutions, and promoting environmental sustainability. Similarly, Leave No Trace utilized science-based education to advocate environmental protection and promote responsible outdoor ethics. CAT and Chicago Voyagers offer outdoor recreational activities like paddling, camping, cycling, and hiking to Chicago's youth (children, adolescents, and young adults) to promote their social and leadership skills. Active Transportation Alliance and Ride Illinois advocate to improve conditions for bicycling, walking, and transit, and engage people in healthy and active ways to get around. People For Bikes and Climate Ride are national NPOs that promote bicycling as a tool for positive change, whether for transportation or the environment, with the former more infrastructure and policy-focused and the latter focusing on promoting climate action, sustainability, and active transportation. Finally, KEEN targets individuals, especially youth with physical and developmental disabilities, and provides free, one-to-one recreational activities to support their overall well-being.

Additionally, outreach was made through a LinkedIn group known as "Outdoor Adventure" and a Facebook group named "Nonprofit Development/Fundraising Community" for fundraising information. These groups were chosen for their potential to offer valuable insights

from nonprofit board members and fundraising professionals with extensive experience in the sector.

## **Categorization**

### ***Thematic Analysis***

An inductive thematic analysis approach was employed to evaluate both primary and secondary data sources of fundraising strategies utilized in NPOs. Due to its flexibility and capacity to be applied across various research questions and data types, this qualitative research approach involves identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns or themes within the data, allowing for a thorough understanding of fundraising strategies (Squires, 2023). An inductive approach indicates that a specific theme or research question can evolve during coding (Squires, 2023). The process began with gathering similar responses and feedback and then finding common themes and patterns across a wide range of data. The primary data included responses from the survey distributed to several NPOs or fundraising professionals, while secondary research drew from sector-wide reports, industry benchmarks, and trends. By examining the data through comparative analysis, recurring themes, successful strategies, and common challenges within nonprofit fundraising were identified. Ultimately, the information from both the literature and survey data was categorized by theme.

Once information was gathered, they were arranged based on their relevance and objectives. Using Excel for basic data organization and analysis, similar responses were grouped together, and common themes were evaluated. The final deliverable is divided into distinct sections, each focusing on a key area of nonprofit fundraising, such as fundraising strategies, tools, tutorials, and platforms. Each section includes a variety of resources (e.g., website links,

book recommendations) and a summary with key takeaways to make the content easily digestible and actionable for board members and volunteers.

## **Results**

For this thesis, preliminary information was gathered from existing literature. It was supplemented by insights from organizations with similar missions to OOFD, which was also supported by published information, to gain deeper awareness of current fundraising trends.

There are multiple methods for fundraising, each with its own set of strategies, tools, and best practices. In this case, grant writing resources, donor retention techniques, event planning, and marketing guides are commonly used to support fundraising initiatives (Bray, 2025). These resources are essential for nonprofits seeking to secure funding, maintain good donor relationships, and successfully organize fundraising events. In particular, online fundraising has become an increasingly popular method and involves using social media campaigns, peer-to-peer fundraising, and crowdfunding platforms. These strategies are crucial for improving the organization's digital fundraising efforts and expanding its outreach.

Fundraising platforms facilitate the process of raising funds by providing tools and resources for creating and managing campaigns (Bray, 2022). These platforms come in several forms, including crowdfunding websites, peer-to-peer fundraising platforms, and donation management systems (Karellas, 2025). For instance, Donorbox is a digital fundraising platform that supports nonprofits of all sizes. It offers robust tools for donor management and event registration, such as customizable campaign pages for nonprofits to design campaigns that match their objectives. These platforms often provide free guides or training webinars to subscribers, which could provide information about the current fundraising trends. Some platforms also

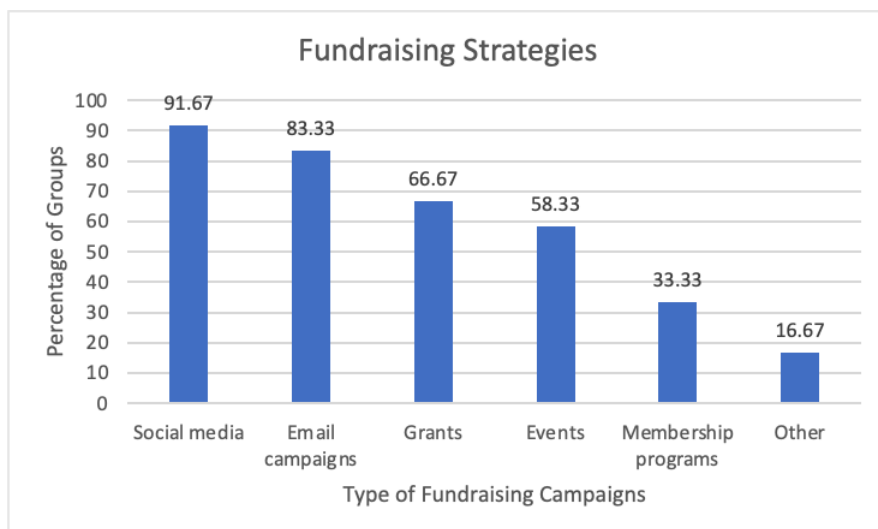
integrate customer relationship management (CRM) systems into donor management. Although developed for businesses originally, CRM systems are being adopted by nonprofits to manage relationships with donors, volunteers, board members, and other stakeholders (Kalra et al., 2024). A CRM can improve communication, manage donor engagement, and track donations, all of which can contribute to more effective fundraising efforts.

Additionally, a guide written by Walker (2012) emphasizes that effective fundraising requires a well-organized team and strong leadership. Leadership is essential in setting the overall pace of fundraising, and all board members should take an active leading role to ensure a productive process. Acknowledging the importance of leadership can be useful for the organization's executives in understanding their role. General knowledge about the process of fundraising and what is involved can help determine whether the members are ready to commit.

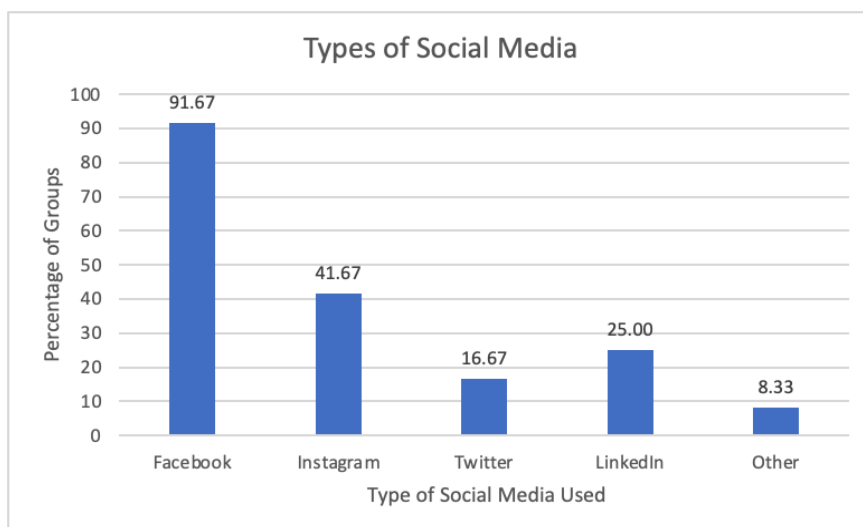
### ***Nonprofit Fundraising Survey***

Based on the 12 organizations that responded (for survey questions, see Appendix A):

Most organizations (11 groups; 91.7%) have utilized social media as a fundraising strategy, followed by email campaigns (10 groups; 83.3%) (**Figure 1**). Eight groups (66.7%) have applied for grants. Only two groups (16.7%) reported using alternative strategies, including “corporate volunteer engagement day” and crowdsourcing. Similarly, most organizations (11 groups) reported using at least one type of social media for fundraising purposes (**Figure 2**). The most popular platform is Facebook (11 groups; 91.7%), followed by Instagram (five groups; 41.7%), LinkedIn (four groups; 33.3%), and Twitter (two groups; 16.7%). One group (8.3%) mentioned using less-known platforms such as Bluesky and Strava. Additionally, approximately 60% of organizations (7 groups) reported using specific fundraising platforms like Classy, Neon CRM, and GoFundMe.



**Figure 1.** Fundraising strategies or campaigns that the surveyed organizations utilized.



**Figure 2.** Social media platforms used for fundraising by the surveyed organizations.

Several effective strategies and practices are identified below based on both the literature and survey findings, with the common themes reflected in the subheadings (Appendix B for details):

### ***Clear Mission and Cause***

A clear and compelling mission is essential for an organization to build trust and emotional connections with donors. Research indicates that nonprofits with well-articulated

missions foster greater donor loyalty and engagement (Mirville, 2021). Clear and consistent messaging about the cause is crucial in ensuring that donors understand how their contributions make an impact. This is a key element in fostering effective donor relations, as aligning the cause's impact with donors' self-concept can help them feel personally connected to the mission (Hou et al., 2009). Therefore, nonprofits should ensure their mission is reflected in all communications, including on platforms such as websites, social media, email, and donor interactions (Philips, 2022). The consistency reflects a strong value the organization possesses.

### ***Donor Segmentation and Targeted Communication***

One response suggested segmenting donors into specific categories such as new, established, lapsed, and prospective donors based on giving history, and tailoring a communication plan for each for maximum engagement. Separating donors and then using value-based communication enhances long-term relationships, making it easier to cultivate loyalty. This is supported by studies that personalized, targeted communication significantly increases donor engagement and loyalty (Bray, 2025; Cerini, 2025a). Nonprofits should leverage segmentation not only for appeals but also to deliver messages that resonate with donors' interests, previous giving behavior, and preferences, as it will be more efficient in engaging them (Wohlgemuth, 2024). Nevertheless, perceptions of priority benefits positively affect donor satisfaction, regardless of being assigned to high or low priority levels (Boenigk & Scherhag, 2013).

### ***Diversification of Fundraising Efforts***

Relying on multiple funding sources, including grants, corporate sponsorships, events, and individual donations, is prominent for nonprofit sustainability, as one organization noted in the survey:

*“Diversifying your fundraising efforts and not putting all your eggs in one basket.”*

Diversification mitigates the risks associated with dependence on a single revenue stream and ensures stable funding (Rees, 2024). By diversifying their fundraising efforts, nonprofits can enhance financial stability and adapt to changing donor behaviors (Cerini, 2025b).

As technologies redefine personalized engagement and deepen customer relationships (Huang & Wu, 2024), integrating both digital and traditional platforms can help nonprofits cultivate enduring donor relationships. Effective nonprofits conducted both online and offline strategies, leveraging digital platforms while maintaining traditional in-person fundraising activities to cater to a broad range of donor preferences.

- **In-person events**

In-person events are essential for cultivating meaningful relationships with major donors, as one survey respondent described:

*“In-person events are one of the best tools to reach folks, as everyone's attention span seems to be short, and provide a good way to connect.”*

Face-to-face interactions may foster deeper emotional connections and a stronger sense of belonging between donors. It also provides opportunities to demonstrate the impact of donations, which helps increase donor loyalty and retention (Johnson et al., 2024). Nonprofits should ensure these events are part of a broader, integrated fundraising strategy that aligns with their mission to build meaningful and memorable donor interactions.

- **Online Platforms**

Social media allows an organization to share its values on a platform that targets the younger generations, in other words, larger audiences and potentially increased donors (Milde & Yawson, 2017). Although it can improve fundraising efforts, it should not be the primary tool for

generating donations. One respondent noted the limitations of these platforms: “*Social media campaigns are tons of work and yield little result.*”

Nonprofits could use social media or fundraising platforms for brand building, storytelling, and community engagement, as brand personality, image, and awareness of the organization have a positive direct impact on individual giving intention (Hou et al., 2009; Elvira-Lorilla et al., 2023). Facebook appears to be the most utilized social media platform (11/12 groups; 91.7%), according to the survey. Nevertheless, it might not be the most effective fundraising strategy unless nonprofits take the time to develop a comprehensive initiative and ensure the implementation is in line with the mission (Milde & Yawson, 2017). Integrating social media with more direct forms of communication provides a balanced approach that can increase both visibility and fundraising outcomes. Fundraising platforms offer integrated services that benefit both board leaders and members in pursuing their organization's mission. However, the choice of platform often depends on the specific needs of the organization.

### ***Donor Engagement / Retention***

Direct asks, made through personalized communications such as email or phone calls, remain one of the most effective methods for generating donations. In this case, direct appeals based on existing relationships are more likely to yield better results, as they build on the donor's previous engagement and investment in the nonprofit's mission (Minguez & Javier Sese, 2022). Personalization of direct asks, such as referencing past giving behavior or acknowledging specific interests, makes donors feel valued and enhances the likelihood of positive responses (List et al., 2019).

#### **- Frequent and Diverse Touchpoints**

Maintaining engagement with donors through multiple touchpoints throughout the year is a proven strategy for building long-term relationships (Bray, 2025). Nonprofits should regularly reach out to donors with updates, impact stories, and acknowledgment of their support, as one survey respondent highlighted: “...*important to incorporate many touchpoints with donors throughout the year, including informative communication, not just asks.*”

Continuous engagement tends to strengthen the emotional connection and commitment to the cause (Butler, 2022). Nonprofits that use diverse communication channels such as newsletters, social media, and personal thank-you notes increase donor retention and satisfaction.

- **Annual Appeals and Automated Tools**

Annual appeals are critical in planning an annual campaign, as they represent an opportunity to engage new or previous donors with the NPO’s cause and potentially secure their contributions (Sarrantonio, 2024). Conducting two annual appeals appears to be helpful in fundraising as it provides donors multiple opportunities to contribute or choose which forms of giving, they prefer, potentially increasing the total funds raised each year (Kim et al., 2021):

*“Using email tools such as scheduled reminders, selected target audiences, and automated thank you emails have been very helpful in our fundraising efforts.”*

Automated tools like email reminders and targeted campaigns help nonprofits sustain engagement with minimal effort while providing personalized communications. Automated thank-you messages ensure that donors feel appreciated and foster goodwill, encouraging ongoing support (McClain, 2024). These tools allow nonprofits to maintain frequent contact with donors, enhancing retention without incurring extra costs.

***Grant Applications and Corporate Sponsorships***

Grant funding remains competitive, and nonprofits must focus on strategic grant applications that align with their mission and demonstrate measurable impact (Textoris, 2024). Grant proposals are more likely to be successful when they outline clear objectives and provide a measure of success. As one response stated, “*Grant application can be a huge time-sink.*” Meanwhile, corporate sponsorships can significantly enhance visibility while providing essential funding; however, these relationships need to be cultivated over time to ensure long-term benefits (Reis, 2023). Building mutually beneficial partnerships with corporations can enhance both financial support and organizational credibility. However, exposure to sponsorship information may decrease prospective donors’ willingness to contribute, as they may feel their donations are less impactful (Bennett et al., 2012). In this context, clear and thoughtful communication is crucial.

**Key Trends** (see Appendix C for details)

### **Shifting Donor Engagement**

Nonprofits are seeing a shift in the donor landscape, with a trend toward higher donations from fewer donors (AFP, 2024; Meyer, 2024). A report from Giving USA indicated certain sectors, such as educational institutions and foundations, have seen growth in giving; however, giving by individuals has decreased (Meyer, 2024). There is also a growing emphasis on the diversification of funding sources and donor bases, as nonprofits move away from sole reliance on major donors and turn toward mid-level and recurring donors to sustain their fundraising efforts (Cerini, 2025b). In this case, major donors are those who have a significant impact on the organization, and the definition of a major gift depends on the size of the organization (Bray, 2022). For instance, \$500 may be considered a major gift for a smaller nonprofit, but not for larger, national organizations. Mid-level donors contribute at a level lower than major donors but

more consistently (Walker, 2012; Bray, 2022). They are more likely to be loyal donors, and a customized outreach is more likely to retain and increase their donations (Reis, 2022; Cole, 2024). Ultimately, this prompts nonprofits to prioritize a relationship-centric approach, building genuine and long-term connections with their donors accordingly, according to their donation level (CASE, 2024). This is particularly important when engaging younger donors, as they are becoming significant contributors to the nonprofit sector (Cole & VanDewater, 2024).

The shift of donor engagement strategies is unavoidable as donor preferences and the major donor demographics change across the older and younger generations (Browning, 2023; Cerini, 2025b). Tailored and personalized communication, as mentioned previously, is key in maintaining the connection between the organization and each level of donors, especially when peer-to-peer and crowdfunding campaigns start to gain higher response rates.

### ***Peer-to-Peer Fundraising***

Peer-to-peer (P2P) fundraising is growing in popularity as nonprofits find new ways to engage donors (Cole & VanDewater, 2024). It involves individuals fundraising on behalf of the organization by sharing their support for a cause within their networks and relationships, and encouraging them to donate for support. It is strategic and cost-effective, while also maximizing the nonprofit's impact and potentially reaching the fundraising goal (Huntsberger, 2025a). The organization needs to ensure that these campaigns are well-organized and easy to manage, with sufficient support and resources for individual fundraisers to succeed.

### ***Recurring Giving & Donor Retention***

One of the most pressing issues for nonprofits is donor retention, which continues to decline, with some estimates showing a decline of ~4.6% in donor retention rates (AFP, 2024; Paskoski, 2025). One surveyed organization mentioned a decrease in members. As membership

fees are typically a stable income source of an organization, a decline in membership signifies a decrease in funding and threatens the organization's ability to provide services, maintain its influence, and sustainability (Walker, 2012; Huntsberger, 2025b). Thus, monthly giving programs may be an alternative, sustainable funding source for nonprofits. Time-based campaigns, such as Giving Tuesday and subscription-giving, are becoming important with significant year-over-year growth (Cole & VanDewater, 2024; Paskoski, 2025). Another surveyed organization also reported looking to find new ways to integrate volunteer engagement into its donor pipeline, with volunteers often converting into long-term donors (Johnson et al., 2024). For instance, improving meaningful donor stewardship through regular communications and engagement is prominent in enhancing retention (Bonterra Tech, 2025). As volunteer work is growing in significance (Cole & VanDewater, 2024), organizations should create a welcoming environment that values the contributions of volunteers and provides meaningful roles, personal recognition, and opportunity, as engagement is an important motivational pathway for volunteers (Alfes et al., 2015).

## **Discussion**

The most essential fundraising approach for nonprofits is building strong relationships with donors through personalized engagement and clear communication. Donors are more likely to contribute and remain engaged long-term when they feel committed to a cause (Mirville, 2021). Donor retention is crucial, in which having strong stewardship programs and communication that emphasizes the donor's impact on the organization can be effective. As OOFD consists of volunteers, they should continue to invest in volunteers by providing comprehensive onboarding, training, and fostering an inclusive environment (Piatak & Carman,

2023). A productive onboarding helps volunteers feel connected to the organization's mission, while training empowers them with the skills they need. When volunteers feel valued and respected, they will be more engaged and satisfied with their tasks. In turn, volunteers are more likely to continue helping and recommend the organization to others.

Having multiple sources of funding is vital for financial stability, as relying on a single source is risky. In-person events and direct asks for donations are highly effective methods, while tools like automated emails and scheduled reminders can enhance the efforts. As an active online presence becomes important, with social media serving as a platform for engagement and peer-to-peer fundraising, creating compelling stories that resonate emotionally with donors can significantly increase fundraising success (Milde & Yawson, 2017; Philips, 2022). However, relying entirely on social media or grants is risky, as they can be unpredictable and resource-intensive. The limitations of this analysis include a small sample size resulting from time constraints and non-responses, as well as possible selection bias from specifically choosing and individually contacting some of the organizations. Regional differences (local vs. national) may also influence the strategies and resources utilized, as the organizations may modify their approaches based on regional needs. As such, the findings may not fully apply to smaller organizations since the respondents come from a diverse range of organizations. Additionally, the self-report nature of the survey may introduce response biases, where the respondents provide answers based on what they believe is accurate, instead of what truly happened. Nevertheless, the fundamental ideas of diversifying funding, building relationships, and strategic planning are universally applicable. Future studies could explore different metrics of organizational performance, such as the amount of donations, the type of donors, and the organizational size, which could provide a more thorough view of funding dynamics.

Before implementing any strategies, nonprofits should first develop a detailed fundraising plan with specific goals and diverse tactics. As technology advances, they are increasingly adopting new tools to connect with younger audiences. Fundraising platforms that integrate with current CRM systems, along with AI tools for communication and analysis, can enhance operations and increase efficiency. These innovations enable nonprofits to better understand donor habits and improve their outreach strategies (Gratten, 2012). In conclusion, the fundraising resource library could be a valuable tool for OOFD, helping them in designing a strategic fundraising plan that aligns with their objectives (see Appendix D for the deliverable).

OOFD seeks to promote healthy lifestyles and raise environmental awareness through biking adventures, which can improve public health and encourage community involvement. By having an effective fundraising plan, they can sustain the operation of the organization and potentially spread their impact to more communities.

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## Appendix A

### Fundraising Strategy Survey

This short 6-question survey is part of a project to help Out Our Front Door (OOFD) build a comprehensive fundraising resource library. This library will serve as a suite of resources to help the organization and its board of directors enhance their skills and confidence in fundraising, as the organization approaches its 10th anniversary. Your honest and thoughtful answers will guide OOFD in strengthening its fundraising efforts and growing its community impact.

1. What fundraising strategies or campaigns does your organization utilize? Please select all that apply:

Social media (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, etc.)

Email campaigns

Grants (Government, Foundation, Corporate, etc.)

Events (gala, auction, walk-a-thon, etc.)

Membership programs

Other

2. If your organization uses social media for fundraising, which platforms do you use?  
Please select all that apply:

Facebook      Instagram      Twitter      LinkedIn      Other

3. What do you think are the most effective strategies or best practices in nonprofit fundraising?
4. What current trends do you see in nonprofit fundraising? (Digital/online campaigns, peer-to-peer, corporate partnerships, etc.)
5. Do you recommend any online fundraising platforms, and why? Please list any you have used or would recommend. (Classy, DonorBox, etc.)
6. What organization do you represent? (Optional if you wish to remain anonymous)

## Appendix B

### Table of Analysis of Strategic Themes

Strategic Themes	Key points / Recommended Approaches	Alignment with Best Practice
Clear Mission and Cause	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Clearly articulate its mission and the specific cause it supports.</li> <li>- Clear message builds trust and emotional connection with potential donors, ensuring them that their contributions are meaningful</li> <li>- Helps both new and existing donors connect with the organization’s purpose.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Mission is central to all communications.</li> <li>- Should be clear on websites, emails, and during donor interactions, as clarity fosters confidence and loyalty (Mirville, 2021).</li> </ul>
Donor Segmentation and Targeted Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Segmenting donors into categories e.g. new donors, established donors, lapsed donors, and prospective donors</li> <li>- By tailoring communication to each group, allows for personalized engagement and nonprofits can maximize their fundraising efforts.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Value-based communication, not just asking</li> <li>- Personalized, targeted communication increases engagement and the likelihood of donations (List et al., 2019).</li> </ul>
Diversification of Fundraising Efforts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Relying on multiple funding sources, such as grants, events, membership drives, and corporate partnerships, is crucial for mitigating risk</li> <li>- Ensure consistent revenue streams</li> <li>- Prevents from becoming overly dependent on one source (Bray, 2025)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Mix online and offline efforts</li> <li>- Using both digital platforms and in-person events to appeal to a wider range of donor preferences</li> </ul>
In-person events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Provide a unique opportunity to connect with donors in a personal, meaningful way.</li> <li>- Grab attention, engage donors more deeply, and provide a memorable experience.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Powerful tool for major donor cultivation and relationship-building (Butler, 2022).</li> <li>- Should be part of a larger, integrated fundraising strategy.</li> <li>- Organizers should ensure they have a clear and concise message to avoid feeling like “just another event”.</li> </ul>

<p>Caution with Social Media Campaigns</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Social media campaigns can amplify fundraising efforts, but effectiveness varies (Elvira-Lorilla et al., 2023)</li> <li>- Require efforts and may not yield immediate results</li> </ul> <p>Most effective when combined with more direct methods of communication (e.g., email, events).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Use social media for brand building, engagement, and awareness (Hou et al., 2009).</li> <li>- Do not rely as primary fundraising strategy.</li> </ul>
<p>Donor engagement - Direct Asks and Personal Engagement</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Direct asks, either through email or phone, are among the most effective strategies for generating donations.</li> <li>- Personal, direct communication often leads to better engagement and larger contributions as it taps into existing relationships</li> <li>- Should be timed strategically and not overdone, as it can lead to donor fatigue.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Personalization is key, tailored to the individual donor's previous engagement with the organization</li> <li>- Ensure the message is about impact, rather than just the need for funds, helps create a sense of urgency and importance (List et al., 2019).</li> </ul>
<p>Frequent and Diverse Touchpoints</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Reaching out to donors multiple times throughout the year, not just during fundraising, helps maintain donor relationships</li> <li>- Informative content, like newsletters or updates, ensures that donors remain engaged and feel connected</li> </ul>	<p>Keeping donors informed, telling success stories, and showing appreciation for their support are all components of a sustainable donor relationship (Bonterra Tech, 2025)</p>
<p>Annual Appeals and Automated Tools</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Conducting two annual appeals has been noted as beneficial.</li> <li>- Gives donors multiple opportunities to contribute throughout the year</li> </ul> <p>Email tools (e.g. automated reminders), targeted campaigns, and personalized thank-you messages improves engagement and donor retention</p>	<p>Automation can save time while still maintaining personal touches. E.g. automated thank-you emails ensure that donors feel appreciated after contribution, fostering goodwill and encouraging future support (McClain, 2024)</p>
<p>Grant Applications and Corporate Sponsorships</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Grant applications can be time-consuming and should be pursued when the likelihood of success is high</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Focus on strategic grant applications that align with the organization's mission and goals (Textoris, 2024).</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Corporate sponsorships or partnerships can be highly beneficial, as they provide both funding and increased visibility</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Corporate partnerships should be cultivated over time and not just for short-term fundraising effort</li><li>- Building a mutually beneficial partnership is key for long-term success.</li><li>- Grant funding remains competitive.</li></ul> <p>Nonprofits need to refine proposals and demonstrate clear, measurable impact to secure funding.</p>
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## Appendix C

Table of Current Trends in the Nonprofit Sector

Trends	Response	Insights & Industry Data / Challenges
Shifting/ Diversifying Donor Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- High-donor donations</li> <li>- Private donations</li> </ul>	<p>More dollars from fewer donors with major donor contributions decreasing by 10%.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Nonprofits are diversifying their donor base, with a shift from major donors to mid-level and recurring donors.</li> <li>- Prioritize relationship-centric approach to build genuine connections and trust with donors</li> <li>- Emphasis on personalized engagement, especially towards younger generations as they are becoming key contributors</li> <li>- Subscription-based giving models are gaining traction, where donors commit to a regular monthly donation schedule; Provides a more predictable and stable funding source.</li> </ul> <p><b>Source: CASE 2024, Donorbox 2024, AFP 2024/2025, Cerini &amp; Associates 2024, Neon One</b></p>
Growth in Digital Fundraising (Data-driven fundraising)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Digital or online campaigns</li> <li>- Challenges in engaging younger donors</li> </ul>	<p>Online giving is growing steadily, with nonprofits shifting to digital platforms.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Virtual and hybrid events are becoming more prevalent</li> <li>- Social media fundraising, especially on platforms like Instagram and Facebook, is growing</li> <li>- The use of AI, machine learning, and data analytics is growing to better segment donors, predict giving behavior, and optimize fundraising campaigns.</li> </ul> <p>Nonprofits are leveraging these platforms to adapt to next-generation's preferences</p> <p><b>Source: Cerini &amp; Associates 2024, NonprofitPro 2024, Giving USA 2024, Donorbox 2024, Classy 2024, CASE 2024, AFP2025</b></p>

Peer-to-Peer Fundraising	Increasing focus on peer-to-peer Fundraising	Peer-to-peer fundraising, where supporters fundraise on behalf of organizations, continues to rise in popularity. This model leverages social networks and personal connections. <b>Source: Donorbox 2024, Classy 2024</b>
Recurring Giving & Donor Retention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Slow decline in members</li> <li>- Volunteer engagement as a donor pipeline</li> <li>- Giving Tuesday &amp; Time-based Campaigns</li> </ul>	<p>Donor retention rates continue to decline (~4.6%).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Monthly giving programs are crucial for nonprofits as they provide reliable, ongoing revenue.</li> <li>- Improve meaningful donor stewardship</li> <li>- Giving Tuesday is increasingly important, with significant year-over-year growth</li> </ul> <p><b>Source: AFP 2024/2025, Cerini &amp; Associates 2024, Giving USA 2024, Donorbox 2024, NonprofitPro 2024, Classy 2024</b></p>

## Appendix D

### Final Deliverables for OOFD

#### Executive Summary

Fundraising is crucial for NPOs' sustainability and growth, especially given the competitive nature of securing funds for nonprofits. Successful fundraising strategies are donor-centric, emphasizing relationship-building, and often require diversifying revenue sources to avoid dependency on one stream. Active involvement from leadership and board members is vital, as well as organizational learning and training to create a culture that values fundraising.

This project aims to develop a comprehensive resource library for executive members and volunteers. As OOFD is mainly volunteer-led, the library will offer tools and knowledge to improve fundraising efforts and organizational sustainability, targeting both beginner and advanced levels. The resources will include books/eBooks, articles, webinars, courses, and digital toolkits.

#### Key Findings

Twelve local or national organizations were surveyed to gain insight into current fundraising practices, successes and challenges, and key fundraising trends.

#### 1. Fundraising Campaigns:

- **Social media:** 91.7% of organizations utilize social media as a key fundraising tool, with Facebook being the most commonly used platform. However, social media campaigns often require significant effort but yield modest results, indicating that while it is useful for brand-building and community engagement, they should not be the sole focus for direct fundraising.
- **Email campaigns:** 83.3% of organizations report using email campaigns, emphasizing the importance of personalized communication for effective donor engagement.
- **Grants & Corporate Sponsorships:** 66.7% of organizations pursue grants, and 16.7% engage in alternative methods like corporate volunteer programs. Strategic grant proposals and cultivating corporate partnerships can enhance visibility and financial support, though these approaches must be well-planned to avoid over-reliance.
- **Events & membership program:** 58.3% of organizations arranged events for fundraising, while the remaining 33.3% rely on funding from memberships.
- **Peer-to-Peer fundraising:** Growing in popularity, this method allows individuals to fundraise on behalf of organizations, extending the nonprofit's reach and potentially increasing fundraising success.

#### 2. Effective Fundraising Practices:

- **Clear Mission & Cause:** A compelling telling of a mission that resonates with donors is vital for cultivating trust and loyalty. Nonprofits should consistently communicate their mission across all platforms to maintain donor engagement.
- **Donor Segmentation:** Segmenting donors into categories such as new, lapsed, or prospective allows for targeted and personalized communication, which may improve donor retention and engagement.
- **Diversification of Revenue Streams:** Relying on a mix of funding sources, such as grants, corporate sponsorships, events, and individual donations, helps mitigate financial risks and ensures organizational stability.
- **In-Person Events:** Face-to-face interactions are more likely to deepen connections with major donors as they are informed of the impact of their contributions.

### 3. Emerging Trends:

- **Shifting Donor Engagement:** There is a noticeable shift toward larger donations from fewer donors, indicating a decline in donors or donor retention rate. As a result, NPOs are increasingly focusing on mid-level and recurring donors rather than relying solely on major gifts.
- **Recurring Giving Programs:** Monthly giving and time-based campaigns like Giving Tuesday are becoming increasingly important for sustainable funding. Younger donors appear to prefer monthly donation programs.

### Recommendations

- **Diversify Fundraising Efforts:** OOFD should continue to leverage a mix of online and offline fundraising strategies, including social media, email campaigns, peer-to-peer fundraising, and in-person events. This approach will reach a broader audience and reduce dependence on any single funding source.
- **Focus on Relationship Building:** Prioritize personalized engagement with donors through targeted communication and regular touchpoints. Investing in donor segmentation and ensuring clear, consistent messaging about the organization's impact will help foster long-term donor loyalty. *Volunteering* is increasingly recognized as a powerful way to build long-term relationships with potential donors. Through consistent engagement, they may become long-term donors who contribute to the organization's sustainability.
- **Enhance Corporate Partnerships:** While corporate sponsorships can offer significant support, it is essential to build meaningful, long-term relationships with corporate partners and ensure transparency in communication to mitigate any potential negative perceptions.
- **Capitalize on Technology:** Utilizing fundraising platforms and automated tools to streamline donor communications can improve engagement and enhance donor retention with minimal effort. A CRM system is useful in tracking donor/volunteer engagement and identifying those who are highly committed.

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## Non-profit Fundraising Resource Library (OOFD)

### Introduction to Fundraising

**About:** Fundraising is the process of seeking and gathering voluntary financial contributions or resources from individuals, businesses, foundations, or government to support a specific cause, organization, or event. For nonprofits, fundraising is essential to sustain and expand their operations, ensuring the continued delivery of their services and programs. Developing a strategic fundraising plan is crucial to achieve long-term success and meet financial goals. This section introduces the foundational concepts of fundraising, helping organizations understand the importance of a strategic approach.

- [Introduction to Fundraising](#) - General overview applicable to nonprofits
  - [Funding and Donor Development Strategies for Small Nonprofits](#)
  - [How to Design a Nonprofit Fundraising Plan](#)
  - [Donorly | Free Annual Fundraising Plan Template for Nonprofits + Steps](#)
  - [Fundraising Guide | Society for Nonprofits](#) - Step by step, ensuring readiness for fundraising
- Strategy and Planning
- [Finding Your Nonprofit's Funding Strategy | Bridgespan](#) ☆
  - [Nonprofit Quarterly | Finding the Right Fundraising Structure for Your Board](#)
  - [Nonprofit Quarterly | Five Steps to Developing a Better Fundraising Budget](#)

### Trends and Insights

**About:** Understanding the latest trends in nonprofit fundraising can help your organization stay ahead of the curve. This section provides insights into emerging strategies, new technologies, and evolving donor expectations that can shape the future of fundraising.

- [Nonprofit Trends That Will Dominate 2024](#)
- [5 Fundraising Trends for 2025](#)
- [Why You Need Diversified Fundraising For Your Small Nonprofit](#)
- [Nonprofit Marketing Trends for 2025: Staying Ahead of the Curve](#)
- [Our Top 10 Tips for Fundraising Success](#) - from the organization, Climate Ride
- [5 Nonprofit Trends to Help Your Organization Thrive in 2025](#)
- Full report: [NonProfitPro: 40 Nonprofit Trends for 2025](#) (requires download)

\*☆\_\_ May be more informational for OOFD

## Funding Sources

**About:** With the increasing competition for funds, it is important to ensure your approach is comprehensive, strategic, and well-targeted. This section offers resources for approaching different funding sources, including grants, individual donors, and corporate partnerships.

### 1. Grant writing

**About:** Writing successful grant proposals requires skill and persistence. As it is becoming competitive among nonprofits, ensuring the application fulfill the requirements is important to ensure better probability in being accepted. These guides and templates will help you navigate the competitive world of grants.

- [How to Write a Grant Proposal in 9 Steps | Indeed](#)
- [7 Tips for Writing an Effective Grant Proposal | The National Environmental Education Foundation \(NEEF\)](#)
- [Writing a Successful Grant Proposal](#)
- [How to Find Grants for Nonprofits | Funding for Good](#) (with downloadable template)
- Potential grant resource (for information)
  - [Adventure Grants](#)
  - [Environmental Grants | GrantWatch](#)

### 2. Individual donors

**About:** Individual donors are crucial to the financial sustainability of most organizations, especially nonprofits, as they often represent the largest group of contributors. These donors can vary greatly in terms of their giving capacity, frequency, and the type of support they provide. Building strong, lasting relationships with individual donors is prominent for ensuring long-term support and engagement. This section covers strategies for donor cultivation, stewardship, and retention.

- Donor Stewardship and Retention
  - [Donor Retention: How to Sustain Relationships Year After Year | Association of Fundraising Professionals](#)
  - [How to create a donor stewardship plan: step-by-step guide](#)
  - [8 Donor Stewardship Best Practices](#)
  - [How to Get Donors to Give Again | Classy](#)
  - [10 Top Volunteer Retention Strategies for Nonprofits | Neon One](#) ☆
  - [Volunteer Management Guide: How to Incentivize & Retain Support](#) ☆
- Templates
  - [14 Fundraising Letters & Templates to Inspire More Support](#)
  - [13 Donor Retention Email Templates](#)

### 3. Major Donor Engagement and Corporate Sponsorship

**About:** Major donors are often the largest contributors to a nonprofit's fundraising efforts, while corporate sponsorships offer both financial support and valuable visibility. This section offers resources to strengthen your major donor strategy and secure corporate sponsorships for events and campaigns.

- [Major Donor Fundraising: How to Strengthen Your Strategy](#)
- [Engaging Major Donors in a Capital Campaign: 6 Tactics | Association of Fundraising Professionals](#)
- [A Closer Look at the Major Donor Fundraising Cycle](#)

#### ➤ Corporate Sponsorship

**About:** Refers to a partnership between a nonprofit and a corporation, where the corporation provides financial support, services, or resources in exchange for promotional opportunities, visibility, and other benefits. It is a powerful way for NPOs to raise funds and increase visibility. Securing corporate sponsorships can be challenging for small NPOs, but with the right strategies, it is possible.

- [The Ultimate Guide to Marketing Corporate Sponsorships](#)
- [Candid | How to secure corporate sponsors for your fundraising event](#)
- [Council of Nonprofits | Corporate Sponsorship](#)

## Event & Campaign Planning

**About:** Fundraising events can be a powerful revenue generator for nonprofits, whether in-person, virtual, or hybrid. However, the success of an event depends heavily on careful planning, thoughtful execution, and setting clear goals. This section provides guides, strategies and tools for planning impactful fundraising events and campaigns that engage supporters and maximize donations.

1. Fundraising Events
  - [Fundraising events that generate the most revenue for nonprofits](#)
  - [Donorly | Fundraising Strategy for Beginners: How to Create Your Own + Free Annual Fundraising Plan Template for Nonprofits](#)
  - [The Ultimate Nonprofit Event Planning Checklist for Success - Bloomerang](#)
  - [The Event Planning Toolkit: Your Guide to Organizing Extraordinary Meetings and Events-](#) (eBook \$30.4)

#### a) Peer-to-peer

**About:** Peer-to-peer (P2P) fundraising has gained momentum in recent years. It taps into the personal networks of individual fundraisers, making the cause more relatable and accessible for organizations to expand their reach and leverage the networks and personal connections of their supporters.

- [Peer-to-Peer Fundraising 101 - The Ultimate Nonprofit Guide](#)
- [Peer-to-Peer Fundraising: The Complete Nonprofit Guide \(2025\) - Neon One](#)
- [Funraise | The Best Peer-to-Peer Fundraiser Toolkit](#)

## b) Giving Tuesday

**About:** Giving Tuesday is a global day of giving that occurs annually on the Tuesday after Thanksgiving. It is rapidly growing in impact and is an excellent opportunity for nonprofits to raise funds, expand their reach, and engage with a broader audience.

- [What Is Giving Tuesday? 12 Ways to Participate | Classy](#)
- [GivingTuesday Toolkit for Nonprofits + Community Organizations](#)
- [33+ Giving Tuesday Ideas: Expert Tips and Campaigns to Try](#)

## Online & digital fundraising

**About:** Online giving and hybrid events are rapidly growing as key fundraising strategies, driven by the increasing preference for digital engagement. Online giving offers convenience, making it easier for donors to contribute. Virtual and hybrid events can expand audience reach, reduce costs, and provide flexibility for donors. These formats also offer interactive features and new sponsorship opportunities, while attracting younger generations who prefer digital experiences.

### 1. Crowdfunding

**About:** Crowdfunding allows nonprofits to raise funds from a large group of people, often in a short time frame. It is a powerful method for specific projects, campaigns, or causes. Crowdfunding campaigns can be driven by individuals or organizations, with platforms like GoFundMe making it easier than ever to reach potential donors.

- [What Is Crowdfunding and How Does It Work?](#)
- [Nonprofit Ultimate Guide | What to Know About Crowdfunding](#)
- [CHECKLIST: Crowdfunding Campaign Essentials For Nonprofits Of All Sizes](#) - Guide (needs download)

### 2. Social Media

**About:** Social media has become an essential tool for online fundraising. Leveraging platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter can help nonprofit engage donors, spread awareness, and encourage giving in real-time.

- [Is Social Media Fundraising The Future? | Foundant Technologies](#)
- [Social Media Fundraising Post Examples | CharityAuctionsToday](#)
- [Social Media Fundraising: Tips & Examples for Modern Nonprofits](#)

### 3. Email Marketing

**About:** Email campaigns remain a cornerstone of nonprofit fundraising. With well-crafted messages and calls-to-action, nonprofits can effectively engage their supporters and drive donations.

- [Nonprofit Email Marketing: How to Create Clickable Messages](#) ☆
- [Fundraising Email Templates: A Beginner's Guide](#)

#### 4. Website

**About:** The nonprofit's website is a crucial tool for online fundraising. It is where potential donors learn about your mission, events, and how they can contribute to your cause.

- [How to Write a Nonprofit Newsletter: Examples & Best Practices](#) ☆

#### Fundraising Platforms

**About:** Online fundraising platforms have revolutionized the way nonprofits raise money, offering a wide range of tools that streamline the donation process, manage campaigns, and optimize donor engagement.

Many platforms also integrate with CRMs (Customer Relationship Management systems) to enhance donor relations and simplify administrative tasks.

- [The 5 Best CRMs for Small Nonprofits in 2025 - Neon One](#) ☆
- [15 Best Nonprofit CRMs for 2025: Compare the Top Solutions](#)
- [High Impact CRM on a Budget: Customer Operations for Non-Profits](#) (An article of information on CRM)
- [Top 10 Peer-to-Peer Fundraising Platforms – Choose the Best One](#)

➤ Brief comparison of some online platforms (for reference):

Platforms	Analysis
Donorbox	<p><b>Pros:</b> Affordable, user-friendly, recurring donation support</p> <p><b>Cons:</b> Limited reporting and event features, advance features limit to high-plan users</p>
GiveButter	<p>Make fundraising campaigns fun, social, and interactive</p> <p><b>Pros:</b> Free with optional fees, ticketing and event management functionality</p> <p><b>Cons:</b> Limited customization, donor and event management features and CRM integration</p>
Neon One (CRM)	<p><b>Pros:</b> Donor management, comprehensive P2P features (integration to Neon Fundraising), strong support for recurring donations, customizable donation pages</p> <p><b>Cons:</b> May require training for certain features</p> <p>Starts at \$50/month</p>
Funraise	<p><b>Pros:</b> Free to use, peer-to-peer, customizable pages</p> <p><b>Cons:</b> Basic reporting features, limited large-event support, transaction fees on donation</p>

Classy	<p><b>Pros:</b> Customizable donation pages, comprehensive reporting &amp; analytics, event management tools, integration with CRM</p> <p><b>Cons:</b> expensive for small organization (monthly platform fees), mixed experiences with customer support and new user experience</p> <p>“Great for P2P campaigns and events, easy to use” – from one organization</p> <p>Useful for some organizations but might be lacking for others.</p>
GoFundMe	<p>Crowdfunding (personal causes, small nonprofit campaigns)</p> <p><b>Pros:</b> Easy to set up, free for nonprofits</p> <p><b>Cons:</b> More focus on donations for individuals, limited features, transaction fees</p>
Eventbrite	<p><b>Not</b> exactly a fundraising platform</p> <p><b>Pros:</b> Easy to use for event creation and ticket sales</p> <p>“For smaller events, such as volunteer or other public events and can reach out to wider audiences” – from one organization</p>

### Fundraising Courses/Training

**About:** This section offers a selection of courses and training opportunities, designed to help both beginners and nonprofit board leaders gain knowledge in fundraising. Whether you are new to fundraising or an experienced leader looking to strengthen your skills, these courses, both free and paid, provide valuable insights.

- Some of these offer professional certification (**CFRE**) credits to further your career.

1. Free courses and webinars
  - [NonprofitReady | Free Nonprofit Board Member Training](#)
  - [Free Fundraising Courses | NonprofitReady.org](#)
  - [Nonprofit Learning Lab | Free Nonprofit Webinars](#)
  - [Free Nonprofit Webinar: 10 Tips and Tricks for a Successful Grant Seeking Strategy](#)
  - [Instilling Confidence in Your Fundraising](#) (Build confidence)
  - [Fundraising Academy | Fundraising Webinars & Training Courses Online](#) (include a series of previous, on-demand nonprofit fundraising webinars but **requires** registration with the Learning Portal)
2. Board Management and Training
  - [Candid Learning | Get your board fundraising](#)
  - [Nonprofit board management guide](#)
  - [Board Basics A to Z - Center for Nonprofit Advancement](#)

- \$125 per participant; Group discount: 3+ board members of the same organization (\$75 each participant)
- [Certificate of Nonprofit Board Education - BoardSource](#) - Require membership for access → Individual members (\$499); Organizational members participating in the Board Support Program, Foundation Board Assessment Program, Charter or Independent School memberships have included access to the full four-part course (\$0); **membership fees varies** (Individual: \$129, NPO: \$500 - \$2000+)
  - Indiana University Indianapolis: [Principles & Techniques of Fundraising: The Fund Raising School Courses](#) (\$1695 - \$1745)
3. Paid Courses/Webinars and Certifications
- [Association of Fundraising Professionals \(AFP\) e-courses in Partnership with MindEdge](#) (\$79-699) - can be taken for CFRE credit.
  - [Professional Fundraising Certificate Program – Noncredit](#) (\$595) - suitable for both leaders and staff
  - [The Nonprofit Board of Directors Bundle](#) (\$74) - CFRE: 1.75 Points
  - [Online Nonprofit Trainings](#) (Nonprofit Learning Lab - Provide fundraising workshops: Members \$30; Non-Members \$50)
  - [How to Create a Newsletter That Motivates Donors to Give and Give Again: The Proven Formula for Success](#) (\$87, March 25) - CFRE: 1.5 Points - Just more information

### Books and eBooks

**About:** A selection of books and eBooks that delve into the intricacies of fundraising, from strategy development to donor relationship management. These resources are great for fundraisers looking to deepen their understanding of the field and sharpen their skills.

- [Effective Fundraising for Nonprofits: Real-World Strategies That Work](#) (2022) (eBook \$30; Free preview) ☆
  - *Whether your nonprofit has just gotten tax-exempt status or has been operating for years, its success depends on its ability to raise donations from individuals, companies, and institutions. The question you're facing is, "How do we make our voices heard and bring in the needed support?" Featuring advice and stories from over 50 experienced fundraisers, foundation staffers, journalists, and more.*
- [The Complete Fundraising Handbook](#) (\$28-\$35) - Professional fundraisers (beginner or experienced) ☆
  - *This is a one-stop shop that encompasses all of the main fundraising sources and techniques, including: Authoritative chapters from the world's best fundraising and charity minds; case studies throughout of fundraising campaigns that have, and haven't worked; the common mistakes new fundraisers make, and how to avoid them; and fully updated to reflect today's tighter regulatory environment and rapid changes in technology.*

- [Nonprofit Fundraising 101: A Practical Guide to Easy to Implement Ideas and Tips from Industry Experts | Wiley](#) (\$30 - \$38)
  - *This easy to digest book provides practical, comprehensive guidance for nonprofit fundraising around the globe. With tips and tools, expert advice, and real-world insights from almost fifty industry leaders, this robust resource addresses the entire spectrum of fundraising for nonprofits, including: Planning, hiring, and tracking progress, individual donors, major gifts, events, and direct mail and more.*
- [A Fundraising Guide for Nonprofit Board Members | Wiley](#) (\$32 - \$53.95)
  - *Everything you need to know as a nonprofit board member to raise more money and help your organization succeed in meeting its goals. Engaging and informative, this practical guide to fundraising contains valuable insights that nonprofit boards need to succeed in raising money in today's dynamic economic environment. While written expressly for board members, this useful handbook also provides advice to executive directors and advancement staff on how to partner with your board to build an unstoppable fundraising team.*
- [2024 Nonprofit Fundraising Study](#) (A study and report)
  - *2023 was a year of economic uncertainty, and nonprofits faced unprecedented challenges. How did they adapt and what can we learn from their experiences? NonProfit PRO is proud to present the inaugural "2024 Nonprofit Fundraising Study," providing key insights into how organizations weathered the storm and what this means for the future of fundraising.*
- [Free Fundraising eBooks when you Join Amy's List](#)
  - *How to Raise Major Gifts in Just 30 Minutes a Day + 3 Essential Keys to Motivate Board Members to Raise Major Gifts - Need subscription; Just more information*

### Additional resources

**About:** Miscellaneous or additional information on donor retention, articles, and more.

- [6 Effective Donor Retention Strategies for Small Nonprofits](#) ☆
- [Become a Confident Fundraiser to Boost Your Nonprofit Value](#)
- [Creating Effective Donor Personas - A Guide for Nonprofits](#)
- [Get Fully Funded | Top Fundraising Articles of 2024](#)
- [How Nonprofit Organizations Use Social Media for Fundraising: A Systematic Literature Review | Di Lauro | International Journal of Business and Management](#)
- [Fundraising Coaching](#) (fees negotiable) - Free quiz: what is missing in your fundraising

# Appendix E

## Presentation



### Non-profit Organization: Fundraising Resource Library Development

Huey Ru Lee  
Graduate Practicum

Prepared for: Out Our Front Door (OOFD)  
With UChicago ARD

## Introduction

### Non-Profit Organizations (NPOs)

- Driven by a mission to address societal issues, not to generate profit
- Rely on limited funding, often depend on volunteers to support their operations
- Fundraising and strategic planning are key to NPO sustainability, particularly in resource-constrained environments



## Out Our Front Door (OOFD)



- **Mission:** To educate, immerse, and preserve the history, culture, trails, and native habitats of the Lower Lake Michigan Basin through bike adventures
- **Focus:**
  - a) Promotes biking as a sustainable transportation option.
  - b) Advocates for trail maintenance and conservation.
  - c) Enhances personal growth, physical health, and natural connections through bike camping adventures.
- Brings together local organizations to foster an informed public and promote environmental appreciation
- Currently revising its fundraising strategy to ensure future growth and sustainability.



## Project Overview



To develop a comprehensive fundraising resource library that may enhance the fundraising capabilities of OOFD.



Empower OOFD's staff, board members, and volunteers with the knowledge and tools necessary to improve fundraising efforts and ensure long-term organizational sustainability.

### Goals:

- Learn about fundraising strategies and techniques
- Create a well-organized document with recommended resources
- Support OOFD's strategic planning efforts in fundraising

## Methodology



Literature search to identify best practices in nonprofit fundraising



A 6-item survey is created to gather quantitative and qualitative insights.

- Capture data on effective fundraising strategies, current trends, and challenges.



### Thematic Analysis:

Identify patterns and themes from the collected data

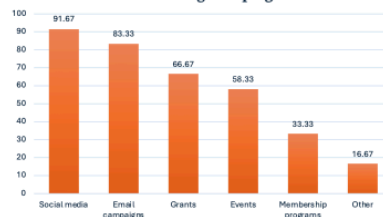
1. **Primary Data:** Survey responses from various NPOs and fundraising professionals.
2. **Secondary Data:** Sector-wide reports, trends, benchmarks, and literature in fundraising.

## Analysis / Results

### Data Organization:

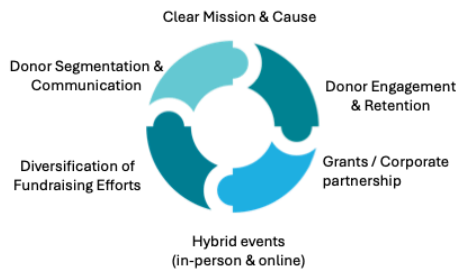
- Collected data is organized in Excel for analysis.
- Similar responses will be grouped to identify recurring themes.
- The final deliverable will be a single document consisting of various resources that will support OOFD's fundraising plan.

Fundraising Campaigns



## Results

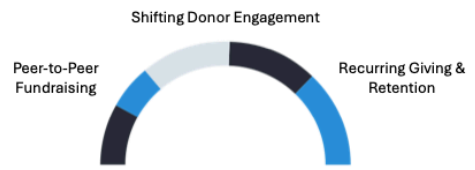
### • Effective Fundraising Strategies



- Organizations with strong, well-articulated missions foster greater donor loyalty and engagement.
- Segmenting donors into categories and tailoring communication for each group increases donor loyalty
- Relying on multiple sources of funding ensures financial stability
- Combining in-person and online approach strengthens both visibility and donor retention

## Results

### • Key Trends in Fundraising



- Increase popularity on peer-to-peer fundraising
- Nonprofits are shifting their focus toward mid-level and monthly donors as monthly giving programs are gaining popularity.
- Donor retention is key to ensuring organization sustainability.

## Conclusion / Recommendations



- Prioritize donor relationships and diversified funding strategies to achieve long-term sustainability.
- Develop a comprehensive, tech-enabled fundraising plan that ensures the organization meets its goals,
- Leverage both traditional and digital methods to maximize impact.

## Discussion



Effective nonprofit fundraising relies on building strong, personalized relationships with donors



- The respondents came from a diverse range of organizations, the suggestions may not apply to smaller organizations
- Due to time constraints, the data is relatively small



Automation tools or AI-driven platforms enhance efficiency and maintain consistent communication.



The resource library will be accessible to all members and help them develop a stronger, more strategic approach to fundraising.



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# Thank you !

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