

# The Essential Guide to **Nonprofit** **Fundraising**





# Contents

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>1. Evaluate Your Fundraising Strategy</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>2. Build a Fundraising Toolkit</b>	<b>6</b>
Email Marketing	7
Direct Mail	9
Peer-to-Peer Fundraising	11
Auctions and Events	13
Text-to-Give/Mass Text	15
<b>3. Expand Your Fundraising Efforts</b>	<b>16</b>
Online Fundraising	16
Virtual Fundraising	18
Multichannel Fundraising	19
<b>4. Incorporate the Corporations</b>	<b>21</b>
Matching Gifts	21
Grants	22
In-Kind Donations	22
<b>5. Maximize Focused Giving</b>	<b>23</b>
Year-End Giving	23
Capital Campaigns	25
Fundraising Ideas for Different Verticals	26
<b>6. Measure Your Success and Plan Your Next Campaign</b>	<b>27</b>

# Introduction

At one point or another, most nonprofits wonder if they could be doing more to raise the money they need to effect the change they're trying to make.

And there's certainly no shortage of advice. There are guides that discuss everything from learning about why donors give to a how-to on running a virtual auction. You can dive deeply into fundraising ideas, setting and measuring goals, building a fundraising strategy, or finding low-cost payment processing. The topics are endless and the opinions numerous.

Our guide doesn't pretend to cover every single aspect of nonprofit fundraising, but it will give you some tips and tricks the team here at Charity Engine has learned over the past decade (plus) helping nonprofits succeed. Whether we are helping **Wounded Warrior Project** manage their impressive number of monthly donors and transactions, or we're helping **Rescue Village** pull off a Tails at Twilight event to raise money for the animals in their humane society, we've spent

a lot of time thinking about how nonprofits can be successful. And we've spent a lot of time building the technology that will help them raise more money.

We decided to think about the advice we give our clients and put together a guide that answers the questions we're most often asked. In this guide, we will look at different aspects of nonprofit fundraising.

You'll learn:

- ➔ How to evaluate your fundraising strategy;
- ➔ How to build a fundraising toolkit;
- ➔ How to expand your efforts and grow your supporter base;
- ➔ How to leverage corporate giving;
- ➔ How to maximize focused giving;
- ➔ And how to measure your success and plan your next campaign.

This comprehensive guide promises to teach you a thing or two that we know will help you engage with your donors and raise more money. So let's get started!



# 1 Evaluate Your Fundraising Strategy

Your nonprofit is unique, even if sometimes your mission isn't. Your donor database is also unique, and the best way to engage those donors is a secret recipe only you can discover and use.

Being a tech company, we are fond of data-driven everything. We start by asking our clients to list every fundraising effort they've launched in the past three years. Start there: Have you sent direct mail? Email? Run an auction or held a fun run? List what you've tried, the duration of the effort, and how much money you raised.

Then review the list and decide how you want to rank the activities. Here are some points to ponder:

- ➔ Which effort raised the most money?
- ➔ Which effort cost the most money?
- ➔ Which took the longest to execute, and which was the quickest?
- ➔ Which was difficult, arduous, or unsuccessful?
- ➔ Which was the most fun?

And take a look at your donors. Use your CRM's reporting and analytics tools to find out as much as possible about them. Did you know that:

- ➔ Women are responsible for 64% of all donations.
- ➔ Baby boomers are most inspired to give via email, but social media inspires millennials.
- ➔ Individuals who volunteer for your organization are twice as likely to donate to you than someone who doesn't volunteer.
- ➔ Email results in a third of all online giving.
- ➔ Married individuals give 1.6 times more than unmarried individuals.
- ➔ Are you thinking of a text-to-give campaign? It will help if your donors are female, married, and middle-aged college graduates because they respond to text campaigns more than any other age group.



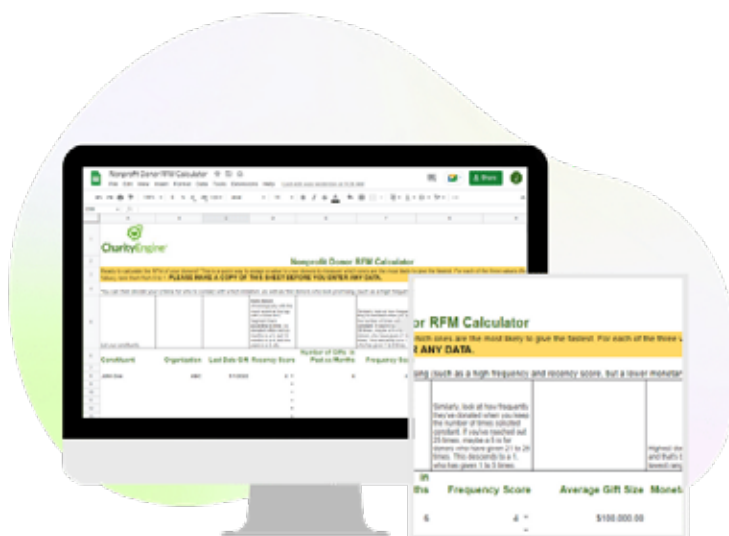


Why does all this matter? These details will help you craft [fundraising campaigns](#) that resonate with your donors. Who are, remember, a unique group with unique qualities. Zeroing in on those can give your next fundraising the electricity it needs.

It's doubtful every one of your donors is the same (it would be a little creepy if that were true). So segment your donors into as many like groups as you can. We sometimes recommend rolling campaigns that might look something like this:

- ➔ January to March: text-to-give campaign targeting Group A
- ➔ February to April: email campaign to Group B
- ➔ March to May: Two events targeting local donors (Group C)
- ➔ June to August: Direct mail to all donors (Group D)
- ➔ September to December: Giving Tuesday and year-end giving push to Group D (multichannel)

Now we've thought about which efforts you might want to try or repeat, and we've done some quick analysis of who your donors are. (If you like to drill down into your donors, check out an [RFM Calculator](#) for some actionable insights). You have an idea of which campaigns might resonate with audiences, and you've started sketching out the next month, quarter, or year. This outline will be the foundational document we will build upon as we look at different aspects of nonprofit fundraising.



# 2 Build a Fundraising Toolkit

Once you've completed the first step of looking at your donors and thinking about your outreach methods, it's time to explore [common fundraising tools](#) nonprofits use. We recommend these:

1. [Email Marketing](#)
2. [Major Gifts](#)
3. [Membership Management](#)
4. [Online Forms](#)
5. [Payment Processing](#)
6. [Reporting and Analytics](#)
7. [Sustainer Management](#)
8. [Advocacy](#)
9. [E-commerce](#)
10. [Events and Auctions](#)
11. [Peer-to-Peer Fundraising](#)
12. [Text-to-Give](#)

Your organization probably won't touch on every one of these. Still, it's helpful to have an exhaustive list to match up your donor analysis, your campaign calendar, and different outreach tools.

When we talk about a fundraising toolkit, we are referring to technology (because that's what we do, and we're pretty good at it!). If you're a brand-new startup nonprofit, your toolkit might not yet include a sophisticated CRM. In fact, it might include spreadsheets on your computer, lightbulbs for the lamp in your office, and the code to the shared restroom.

And that's okay! That's where all nonprofits start, so congratulations on taking the first step. Keep this summary as it will help you envision and, one day, form a mature, integrated campaign.

Think of this as a buffet list of technology features. When you are [evaluating your CRM](#), [comparing CRM vendors](#), or when you're ready to [shop for a new CRM](#), it's helpful to have this list in hand with the fundraising software [features most important to your nonprofit](#) circled or highlighted. A good, [all-in-one nonprofit CRM](#) will offer all these features, but some vendors likely only offer a handful. Make sure it's the right handful!

**Let's start with one we've already mentioned: email.**



# Email Marketing

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If email results in **a third of all online giving**, it's a powerful method for you to engage your donors. But how can you maximize the return on your email investment? There are two critical pieces of this puzzle: the technology behind the campaign and the content of the email.

The technology behind your email campaign can make or break your results.

- ➔ Use your CRM to analyze your audience and segment them. Pick any demographic feature—age, gender, location, favorite color, any information you have access to—and craft a message that will resonate with that group. Is it an offer or just an ask? The Red Cross offers t-shirts or koozies to would-be blood donors to entice them to visit a donation center. Would you offer some branded swag for donations over a certain dollar amount? **Segmenting would come in handy here** because you could offer koozies (great for keeping beer cold at frat parties) to your 21+ donors and a t-shirt or socks to your oldest group.
- ➔ What if you have a perfect email and send it to 10,000 donors....and it's marked as spam? Email deliverability statistics for your CRM are critical. As a goal, find a CRM that **boasts 95% to 99% deliverability rates**. This benchmark holds true for systems such as Mailchimp and Constant contact, so don't settle for lower rates.

- ➔ Look at your domain. Is it a custom domain that costs you a pretty penny? That might be harming your deliverability. Ask your CRM vendor if they offer the option of a **shared email sending pool**. If you're a well-known, established nonprofit sending hundreds of thousands of emails a month, you're probably okay, but if you send a few thousand now and then, there's safety in numbers, and you should check out a shared domain.

Now let's talk about your content. What does a good fundraising email look like?

- ➔ Start at the beginning. What's the **subject line** of your email? Picture your donor opening a crowded email inbox. What would make them click on your name? Our friends at [Classy](#) have gathered some good subject lines for your consideration. They recommend you:
  - Emphasize the cause
  - Intrigue the reader
  - Use time to drive urgency
  - Express gratitude
  - Get personal
  - Offer an incentive



- ➔ Have you heard of a friendly from? It's a label you can add to your email. As the linked article states, an "I'm coming over" email from your friend inspires a different reaction than if it's from your bank! **Be creative but clear.** At CharityEngine, we'll use "CharityEngine News" or "CharityEngine Product Team." Give them a little taste of who you are. We think of friendly froms as an extension of the subject line. So if our friendly from is "CharityEngine Webinars," we won't repeat the word "webinar" in the subject line.
- ➔ Now into the email: make sure your **header is branded.** It's good visibility and inspires trust; you're upfront and honest. As you go back to these donors, your brand will become more established and recognizable to them.
- ➔ Have a **great visual and robust opening sentence.** Your opening sentence should relate to the picture and allude to the impact of a donation or the relevance of the activity.

Good text and captivating images can make a big difference! Also consider:

- ➔ Keep your email short, and don't hesitate to ask your question. It's effective to quantify the value of a donation: "\$25 fills a backpack for a child in need."

- ➔ Make it easy to give. Put a brightly colored button in the email so they can donate with a click.
- ➔ Send a test email to yourself and look at it on your phone. Mobile giving donations have increased 205%. Ensure your email looks readable and engaging on a mobile device and add a bullet so they can unsubscribe if they wish.

Email is a profitable tool, and it doesn't cost you a thing. That said, we all receive lots of emails, and a little thought and strategy can ensure your email hits a home run.





## Direct Mail

Direct mail fell out of favor for a while, but successful nonprofits know it's an effective fundraising technique. The response rates can be as high as **five times** those of email or social media fundraising requests! It's also a tangible representation of your brand.

If you send something branded through the mail, such as a calendar or pen, you know your brand will be around and seen for a while.

To that end, you can have fun with direct mail. You can incorporate an activity, like a crossword or word search, or offer a coupon code. You can use direct mail fundraising to drive traffic to your online donation page, adding another donor "touch." The greater the number of donor touches you have, the better your chances of receiving funds and meeting your fundraising goals.

Because of this, a marriage of direct mail and online fundraising can often be considered a match made in heaven.

What's the best way to bring recipients from direct mail to your online page? You can add a QR code to the direct mail piece. Chances are a smartphone will be close at hand, and with the advent of touchless menus and touchless everything else, **we all know what to do when we see a QR code (hint, hint)**.



You can also create a web page with a short and memorable URL, and that's another way to extend your brand.

There are a few pieces of advice we give to our clients who ask how they can create a great piece of direct mail:

1. **Use color**, but not too much. Showcase a fantastic logo or just use colors that communicate part of your message. For example, green or blue work for environmental nonprofits, green or yellow work for food banks, etc. Purple connotes royalty and prestige, while orange communicates energy.
2. **Personalize** your mail as much as you can. Thank supporters for a recent gift of money or time. The more your audience feels a personal connection to you, the more loyal they become. The more you remember to thank donors and acknowledge their contributions, the more goodwill they feel.
3. Make sure your **call to action is clear**. Make it easy to give!
4. If you can, **send a little something** with the mail that is of value. It can be a magnet or a bookmark, but a gift of some value amps up the overall impression of your direct mail piece. (And let's be honest. No one throws away an envelope without opening it if they can feel something inside.)
5. Make sure your direct mail isn't a random smattering of pieces. It should be a **carefully thought-out campaign** that compels your recipients to action. Take the principle of nurturing emails, in which you give a little advice or expertise while leading your recipient to the ultimate call to action—and translate that into your direct mail pieces. Remember not to send more than one piece a week, or you'll look pushy. The American Marketing Association has long held that a mail send every 21 days is optimal.



## Peer-to-Peer Fundraising

This type of fundraising gets down to a micro-level. In P2P you empower your donors to act as ambassadors for your nonprofit. You give them tools and carefully crafted messaging, and they raise money within their social circles.

With the right peer-to-peer software, campaigns are easy and fun. There are a few different ways our clients use this tool.

- ➔ You can plan a **sporting event**. It can be a run, a walk, a golf tournament, or even an obstacle course. Participants launch donation campaigns with the proceeds benefiting your nonprofit.
- ➔ Get creative! Plan a **treasure hunt** and sell tickets so people can hunt for prizes. Plan a **golf tournament**. Plan a **raffle** if any donors have amenities they can offer, like a beach house for a weekend.
- ➔ **Days of giving**. Think of a day like Giving Tuesday and capitalize on existing hashtags and publicity.
- ➔ Perhaps your nonprofit could run a **virtual event**, and your donors could sell tickets on social media and in their communities. The campaign could run for the week before or after the actual date to maximize the amount of time people can donate.
- ➔ You can also launch a **P2P campaign** to celebrate the birthday or anniversaries of your nonprofit. Your donors could share a message with their friends, asking for a \$10 donation to mark your nonprofit's tenth anniversary.

Our clients often ask us how to get donors involved in a peer-to-peer campaign. That's an easy one: just ask them. Send an email to your donor database explaining why you are launching this effort and how you'll use the money you raise. Offer a toolkit of social media posts they can cut and paste and spell out how the campaign will work.

P2P is a popular way to raise money because of its many benefits:

- ➔ Leveraging online tools means your cost is low.
- ➔ Your donor base will grow as a P2P campaign targets a large and compounded population.
- ➔ The campaign is scalable and effortlessly refined, then repeated.
- ➔ Donors are excited to participate in activities actively and will enthusiastically jump on board.



Another benefit is that your donors aren't asking people for a large sum of money, which can be difficult among friends. Instead, your database is out there asking many people for a small amount of money, which adds up faster than you'd expect.

What happens if your peer-to-peer fundraising strategy is losing steam? We recommend four steps to reinvigorate your campaign:

- ➔ **Rethink your strategy** to ensure you're on track for success, and try making small changes, one at a time, until you find something that works.
- ➔ **Integrate your technology**, so it's all talking to each other. Your P2P software is critical to the execution of the campaign, but your CRM has your donor database! You need both, and you need them to share data in real time.
- ➔ **Use data.** Gather, analyze, and use data from past campaigns or events to uncover trends and find new opportunities. Data will help you hone in on your efforts, find people to participate, and let you track metrics to determine your success.
- ➔ **Party!** Schedule a brunch, coffee date, or happy hour for donors to get together and share ideas and wins.



## Auctions and Events

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While we're on the subject of putting the "fun" in fundraising, let's chat about auctions and events (otherwise known as **partying for a purpose**). Both events and auctions can get out of hand quickly, so it's essential to leverage every bit of software to keep you organized.

Good software will allow one-click form creation, online ticketing and registration, seat assignments, inventory, and even online and mobile bidding if you have an auction in your plans. Software can help you manage (and later thank) your volunteers.

There's a common misconception that only prominent organizations can run charity auctions. Not true at all! We suggest that our smaller clients hold a (budget-friendly) online auction. Create a list of items or experiences you would like to procure and publish a "wish list" so there's no stress or question if something or some experience is acceptable. Poll your database and ask what can be donated or procured. While tickets to events or weekend houses are always big hits, some of your donors probably have talents you could use. Can someone bake a cake, teach a tennis lesson, or help with a college essay?

Breaking the auction down into steps helps keep it manageable. This is not an exhaustive list of actions, but it's enough to get you thinking:

- ➔ Decide if you'll have an in-person, silent, or online auction, and choose your date and time.
- ➔ Set your monetary goals: a budget, how much money you would like to raise, and for what. Communicating the "for what" is necessary to garner support.
- ➔ Assess your technology to know what tasks can easily be automated or managed for you.
- ➔ Along those lines, set up a landing page for registrations and a thank-you acknowledgment page. Send these to everyone in your database.
- ➔ Procure your donations and catalog them.
- ➔ Think about logistics. If the auction is live, who is your auctioneer? If it's virtual, can you accept mobile bids?
- ➔ No matter what kind of auction it is, bring loads of energy and fun through your communications and attitude.
- ➔ Thank your donors, volunteers, and everyone who made the event possible.





You don't want an auction, but you're stuck on what kind of an event you want? Consider some [art-based fundraising ideas](#)! While these often apply to schools or other groups of kids, they will work for anyone. You could involve your community of supporters in events such as:

- ➔ A danceathon
- ➔ An arts and crafts sale
- ➔ A photography contest
- ➔ An art or cooking class
- ➔ A talent or karaoke show
- ➔ A t-shirt design contest (and then you sell the shirts!)
- ➔ An ornament auction during the holidays

Your local supporters can come to a flower-arranging class, a paintball game, or anything else that will raise money and show the participants a good time. If you want to collect donations on-site at these events, look into a [swiper that will add mobile fundraising](#) to your bag of tricks.

Just be sure you consider the people attending your event or auction. How much money are they comfortable spending? How far do they have to travel? It's on repeat: **make it easy to give.**

EMCEE - Dr. Quiana Preston

SPECIAL MUSIC BY

ITPA SPINETS, SARAH ENGLISH, REBECCA SCHROEDER

Reserve your seat or consider sponsoring!

RESERVE YOUR SEAT BY TYPING IN THE NUMBER OF SEATS YOU WANT (INCLUDING YOURSELF)

One Seat \$40.00

0 Qty

Sub Total \$0.00

Two to Four Seats \$35.00

0 Qty

Sub Total \$0.00

Five or more Seats \$25.00

0 Qty



## Text-to-Give/Mass Text

While we can easily go on (and on, and on, and on!) about different fundraising methods, there's just one last big one we need to cover.

Like many of our ideas, this **covers a considerable population, doesn't cost much, and engages your donors.**

With this type of outreach, you upload supporters' mobile phone numbers into the software. It's essential to ensure these supporters have opted in to text messages from you. On whichever form you're collecting mobile numbers, be sure you have language stating that they agree to receive text messages from you. On your text messages, provide the option to unsubscribe.

Remember, this is a personal outreach method, and you don't want to alienate or annoy your donors.

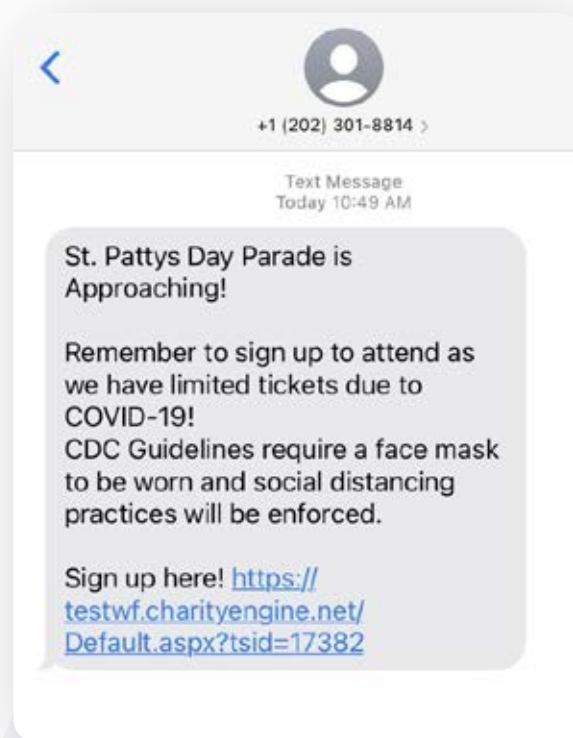
If your CRM supports it, segment your donors so the messages can be personalized and relevant for each group. You can segment people by geographic location, demographic information, or even by the different ways (and the level at which) they've interacted with your organization.

Create your messages. Be conversational but keep it short. And communicate compelling information: why are you launching this campaign? Do you have a fundraising goal? How will the funds raised be used?

Creating a sense of urgency can also result in a spike in donations. "Last hour to give!" or similar sentiments work well.

When you send the messages, you'll include a link that they tap to get to your online donation form. Make sure the form is optimized for mobile and very short. Just a few clicks should get your donors through the giving process.

Texting is a simple method of communicating, but one with which everyone is familiar. Follow a few of those best-practices tips above and you'll be on your way to a successful mass text outreach.



# 3 Expand Your Fundraising Efforts

Now that we've looked at different ways you can fundraise, let's dive into execution and think about how to get the most bang for your buck.

## Online Fundraising

The percentage of donations made online is continuing to grow steadily. The previous growth rate of 15% was eclipsed by a 23% increase most recently, and there's no sign of it going in the opposite direction.

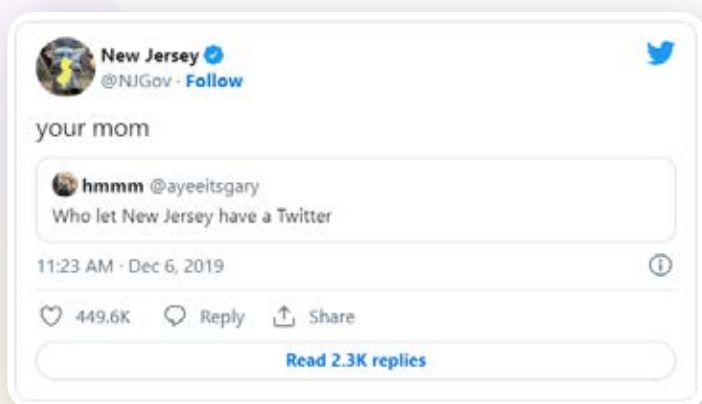
So how can you ensure you are running a perfect online fundraising campaign? As you can imagine, we've got some tips for you.

- ➔ Start with an optimized **donation form**. Make sure it's branded with your logo to reinforce those donations go right to your organization. Customize the questions and only ask for the information you need. Imagine that many people will be looking at the form on a phone, so it should be simple to fill in a few fields and submit the donation. Anecdotally, we like three to five fields, but you can figure out what works best

for your audience. Finally, you do need to keep it brief, but if you can quantify donation amounts, it will lead to higher giving. It can be as simple as "\$20 buys a Thanksgiving dinner for a family of 6." That's a pretty compelling reason to give in multiples of 20.



- ➔ Don't skip on your socials. **Social media** is an easy way to start and maintain a conversation with your supporters and even get new ones. And don't underestimate the power of going viral! The [governor of New Jersey has a Twitter account](#) run by two women who have a great time with their job.



These tweets often go viral and prove that really, no subject is too boring to be a social media darling.

While that example is extreme, it illustrates that you can communicate well outside your expected audience by following a few proven tips:

- ➔ Check out **where your followers are**. Use your CRM to get demographic profiles because every social media platform offers a different vibe. An older woman probably isn't on Snapchat, and teens aren't likely perusing LinkedIn.

- ➔ **Tell a story**. Use humor or be poignant and talk about the difference you make in the community and around the world.
- ➔ Aim for posts that get engagement, then **engage!** Respond to comments or questions. If you're noticing the same people interacting with multiple posts, invite them to an event in the hopes they'll become more involved.
- ➔ Plan campaigns around **events**, like Giving Tuesday, or at least be sure you're posting regularly to gain traction with viewers.
- ➔ Always **say thanks**. This might be the most important part of a relationship with your donors because feeling appreciated will deepen your relationship. Keep your donors updated on your progress and offer ways they can get involved without writing a check. And say thanks quickly! Be specific and make sure they know where their money goes.



## Virtual Fundraising

We've all learned – some would say the hard way – that there's no event that can't be virtual. But what if you've already tried auctions and an online donation form boosted by Twitter, but you're running out of fresh ideas? Here's a list of [virtual fundraising](#) ideas we love. All you have to do is pick one and sell tickets!

- ➔ Use a program like Soundcloud and throw a **virtual concert** from your basement.
- ➔ Have a **cooking show**! You don't need to be best friends with Emeril Lagasse; even your aunt's famous chocolate chip cookie recipe could be the star of the show. Send attendees a shopping list and let them bake alongside you.
- ➔ Invite your supporters to **showcase their talents on video**. Sell tickets to the virtual talent show and let all supporters vote on a winner, then announce the lucky winner on your communications and social media accounts.
- ➔ Have supporters form teams and play in a **board game tournament**.

- ➔ Ask a local yogi to donate a 45-minute online class. You can do anything **wellness-related**, including meditation, stretching, and cardio. You can record yourself on a motivational walk and encourage folks to lace up their shoes and dial in.
- ➔ Try a **trivia contest** or a **movie night**. How about a **bingo night** on Zoom?

As you can see, you can take anything you love to do and turn it into a fundraiser. **Pottery**? Mail supporters some clay or ask them to buy it and then demonstrate some techniques. **Painting**? Same thing. Have a **virtual book club** and just charge a small fee to join. The sky's the limit, and all these ideas will bring your supporters closer to your organization.





# Multichannel Fundraising

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Just to throw a wrench in your plans, even if you're on top of every tip we've offered, you're still not done. It's time to move beyond the boundaries of whatever you're doing and focus on [multichannel fundraising](#).

While this might sound like a giant task, it just means you will use **many different methods to reach your donors**. Everyone likes to get information differently, and you will get in front of the most eyeballs by checking all the boxes.

It's safe to assume that most nonprofits use email for outreach. But with [12% of emails marked as spam](#) and the average open rate for nonprofit email marketing hovering just over 25%, a lot of people just aren't going to engage or donate because you sent them an email. Social media, which we just finished touting? [8% of your Facebook fans](#) will see it.

This isn't all as depressing as it might seem. Think of each fundraising tool, or outreach effort, as a piece of the overall pie. The pie is your campaign, and the pie pieces are the channels through which you communicate. You'll see better results if you have the technology to integrate all your outreach efforts and feed data to each one.

So what are the channels nonprofits should consider? Here's a recommended starting point.

- ➔ **Email** is the little-black-dress or the pair-of-khakis kind of tool. It always works in every situation. You want to focus on getting people to open the emails and click on the links, so remember to tell a story. Use your subject line as your first hook; your opening line can come from that. "One in eight families in America is hungry" is a pretty staggering stat from the [United Way](#). Personalize your outreach, communicate our impact, tug on some heartstrings, and include a call to action that leads to your donation page.
- ➔ **Social media** is still a winner. We alluded to this earlier, but let's consider what each platform does.
  - Facebook is great for longer content, but it's still best to have shorter posts and use pictures. Male users ages 25 to 34 make up the [biggest demographic of Facebook users](#).
  - Instagram is all about pictures. The captions support the pictures, but the message is communicated through images. This is a powerful way to reach people, particularly if you're trying to reach [females under the age of 35](#).



- Twitter is fast-moving and rapid-fire. Character counts are limited, and you must communicate a lot in just a few words and pictures. 59% of users have completed at least some college and 34% report earning more than \$75,000 a year.
- ➔ Your **website** is your most valuable sales tool. Assess yours for relevancy, easy navigation, accessibility, and overall interest. You want minimal text (says the person writing a very long document), eye-catching graphics, and plenty of calls to action that take viewers to your donation page.

- ➔ Advertising will cost you but can be highly effective. You can try Google ads (and check out [Google ad grants](#) for nonprofits or social media ads).
- ➔ Other avenues, like **direct mail**, **text-to-give**, and even a good old-fashioned **phone call** will add channels to your multi-channel campaign.

Just remember that if every pie piece reaches a part of the population you're targeting, they will work together to get your message to many people in many ways.

I'm John Smith from The Puppy Advantage Foundation. We find loving homes for local dogs in need. We're expanding services to save 25 additional dogs each and every year, and your help to make this dream a reality. For just \$100, you can cover all of the medical costs for one puppy that we bring into the country. Would you be interested in pledging a gift to our cause to help us achieve this mission? Thank you!



Jaime Laredo's  
Team page

SHARE THIS PAGE

Hey Everyone! I'm excited to be doing the 5K to Save Puppies for the fifth straight year!

Many of you know that I run the 5K every year, but you may not know why this mission is so important to me.

So, I made a video! Please give it a watch and then I hope you'll be inspired to make a donation to my page.

Jaime Video for 5K



FUNDRAISING  
PROGRESS

\$3,880

FUNDED: 92%

DONATE

DONORS



Eric Church \$3,755.00  
1 day ago



Bruce Leroy \$125.00  
128 days ago



Dear Susan,

I am John Smith and work with Puppy Advantage Foundation. At The Puppy Advantage Foundation, we seek to help animals in need by providing homes, vaccines, food, shelter, and love until they can be adopted out to loving homes.

We need your support to expand our services and help an additional 25 dogs each and every year.

Would you consider donating \$100 to help us achieve this mission?

If you have any questions, I would be happy to provide you with more information about how you can help support our work at The Puppy Advantage Foundation.

We greatly appreciate your donation, and it will be used to feed these animals in need. If you wish to contribute, please fill out the attached form or give us a call at 123-456-7890.

Sincerely,

John Smith

john-smith@email



The Puppy Advantage Foundation  
Address Line One  
Address Line Two  
City,State 12345-6789



# 4 Incorporate the Corporations

This could also be called, “Don’t leave money on the table.”

## Matching Gifts

Almost every large corporation will match the gifts of its employees to nonprofits. At CharityEngine, we partner with [Double the Donation](#). Our clients sign up, and their software immediately searches their database of companies. While your donor is still on your website, they will get matching gift forms so they can quickly submit a request to their organization.

Double the Donation lists these facts that show you how vital matching gifts can be to any-sized organization:

- ➔ More than **26 million** people work for companies with matching gift programs.
- ➔ About **10% of the U.S. workforce** is eligible for corporate matching gifts.
- ➔ The average nonprofit only receives corporate matches for **1.31% of individual contributions**.
- ➔ And organizations working with Double the Donation can **double their matching gift revenue** in the first year. We’ve seen this and can vouch for it.



## Grants

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Do you know that large companies also often offer grants to nonprofits? This list of [corporate grants for nonprofits](#) is full of household names. Suppose your nonprofit is located near Bank of America's headquarters (Charlotte, NC) or the 3M Foundation offices in Maplewood, MN. In that case, it's worth digging around to see if you qualify for a grant that would keep the corporation's money in their own community.

Why might you need one? You could be looking for money to get started or hoping to fund an extensive campaign. You could need equipment, a new office building, or land.

There are other grants available for nonprofits, too. You can look into federal, state, and local government grants. You can apply for grants at a large charitable foundation, like The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. [Use good software](#) to keep track of grant applications and deadlines to stay organized.

## In-Kind Donations

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An in-kind donation is, simply, anything other than money. It can be time. It can be the copier at someone's office. Our foodbank clients love to accept non-perishable food as gifts. Maybe your nonprofit could use donated office space or storage space. Even intellectual assets, like patents, can count as an in-kind donation.

If you are a nonprofit that could benefit from this type of giving, be strategic about it. You don't want to end up with more things than you ever needed. It's smart to have a [gift acceptance policy](#) that clearly spells out what you need.

How can you solicit in-kind gifts? Start with your employees, board members, volunteers, and others close to your cause. Then reach out to local businesses in your community and continue to branch out from there.



# 5 Maximize Focused Giving

For the grand finale of this guide, we're going to cover a smattering of specific types of focused giving.

## Year-End Giving

About a third of nonprofits receive up to 50% of their annual revenue in the last few months of the year. It kicks off on [Giving Tuesday](#) right after Thanksgiving and scales up as organizations and donors either feel the holiday love or hedge their bets against Uncle Sam. This is a prime opportunity to leverage those matching gifts.

[Year-end giving](#) requires planning and strategy. It's a nonprofit-friendly time of the year, but there are some suggestions that might make it run more smoothly.

- ➔ **Start planning early.** We try to publish helpful content, either written or video or both, by September. This gives our clients time to get ready for October planning. You'll need to have everything in order – technology, tools, and capabilities like matching gifts – ready to go when you are.
- ➔ Always, always, **look at what's been done** and what worked (more importantly, what didn't work). If your donors respond well to certain outreach methods, that's where you'll want to focus your efforts.





- ➔ **Set realistic goals.** We love to talk about goals in terms of being S.M.A.R.T. – Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-Bound, which just really means a defined time period. Think big picture in terms of who you want to reach and how much you want to raise, and think small picture too. Do you have the staff? The technology?
- ➔ Use your CRM to **segment your audience** so you can appeal to them in a way that feels personal. Savvy givers won't respond to form letters or non-specific platitudes; they want to feel as though you're right there talking to them.
- ➔ **Decide on your message** and approach. What stories will you share or what successes or needs will you spotlight? Donors want to connect with a face and a story, not statistics or facts.
- ➔ Create a **timeline** with Giving Tuesday toward the front and December 31 at the end. Most giving happens in the last three days of December.
- ➔ Use **multi-channel fundraising** to get your message out there and always make giving easy with a crystal-clear call to action.
- ➔ **Thank** your donors and supporters profusely, genuinely, and in a personal way. Thank your staff. Recognize your superstars, both internally and even on social media.
- ➔ Don't let all the data you've collected go to waste! **Analyze** your results so you have a blueprint for next year. Your CRM is your best friend as it collects and organizes all the information on your campaign and spits out reports you can use.



## Capital Campaigns

Capital campaigns can have an enormous impact on your fundraising. What is a capital campaign?

- ➔ It's focused on a big goal, like a new building or a van for your nonprofit to use.
- ➔ It takes place during a defined time, often over several years.
- ➔ Supporters know that their donation is going right to whatever the project is, and there's usually something tangible (like land to build on or needed big-ticket supplies) as a result.

A by-the-book capital campaign starts with a **quiet phase** during which you appeal to your major donors to see how much money can be raised. This is where the bulk of your funds come from so you'll want to ensure everyone in your nonprofit (from the staff to the board members) is brainstorming ways to maximize those major gifts.

The second phase is called the **public phase**, and this is where you'll want as many \$25 donations as you can get so they add up. Shout your message from the rooftops and check out all the tools at your disposal to find as many donors as you can.

In all the phases, [use data for smarter capital campaign planning](#). We offer four tips:

- ➔ Track relevant performance data on an ongoing basis.
- ➔ Use data for your prospect research.
- ➔ Mine your data to strengthen your support case.
- ➔ Segment your audience to personalize your approach.

Capital campaigns aren't right for every nonprofit, but if you have reason to run one, it will be effective.



## Fundraising Ideas for Different Verticals

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Our clients fall into several verticals (like food banks, healthcare, veteran organizations, environmental groups, etc.) and often ask us for fundraising ideas they can use.

While almost any type of fundraiser will work for almost any vertical, here are some of the ideas we like to share with our clients.

- ➔ **Veteran organizations** looking for fundraising ideas can capitalize on the idea of commemorating fallen servicemen and women by asking donors to contribute to a memorial. It can be a walkway of engraved bricks, a bench, a tree, or a fountain marked by plaques of supporters' names.
- ➔ Our **animal welfare** clients can have a "howl at the moon" fundraising party or offer pet care classes. They can take pictures of pets in their care and use them to create a calendar. You can plan a fun, sunny weekend to offer a massive pet bath, where people pay your team to give their dog a soapy bath in a plastic swimming pool. Think of the great social media campaign you could run around that!

- ➔ **Healthcare organizations** can plan fancy galas or competitive bike rides or runs. You could partner with a local restaurant specializing in healthy fare and ask if one night's dinner proceeds could benefit your organization.
- ➔ **Environmental groups** can sell inexpensive tickets for a guided walk in fields or along river banks. You can plan a field day for kids or sell tickets to the biggest water-balloon fight ever.
- ➔ Our **foodbank** clients can partner with restaurants so they receive leftover food. You can use peer-to-peer fundraising to fill baskets with food or branded milk jugs with money. You can leave a jar at the cash registers of local supermarkets or convenience stores and ask for donations to your cause.

As you can see, there's overlap with ideas (there's no reason a food bank can't sell bricks!) but the key is to align your fundraising idfo. If you use your imagination and get to know your donors well, the opportunities are quite literally endless.



# 6 Measure Your Success and Plan Your Next Campaign

If you've made it this far, you must have gotten some creative ideas and helpful tips. The reason we wrote this is because **we know nonprofits, we know donors, and we know technology.** And **we know how they all work together to change the world.**

In conclusion, remember to follow [fundraising best practices](#) from your strategy to your ask to your execution to your follow-up thanks and appreciation. Use technology to lighten the heavy lifting and use your innovation and imagination to reach out to your donors. **We would love to show you what our CRM can do, [so please drop us a line](#) if you're interested in seeing it in action.**

Your organization exists because there's a need you can meet. You are working there because there's something in you that believes you can make a difference in our lives. While there isn't a shortage of general advice and ideas to help nonprofits raise money, it's also necessary to recognize that your nonprofit is unique and a source of great feedback and support. So try your hand at different things, and then share your success so that others will be compelled to do the same. In this way, both successes and failures make the whole nonprofit community better and more powerful.

