

*Evolving Donor
Expectations and
Steps to Increase
Giving and
Enhance
Engagement and
Sustainability*

HORSE SENSE PHILANTHROPY



Today's Competitive Philanthropy Landscape

- **Giving USA: The Annual Report on Philanthropy**
A public service initiative of The Giving Institute
- **2025 Giving USA Report (data from 2024)**
 - Gifts from individuals accounted for 2/3 of all giving
 - 19% from foundations; 2.4% increase
 - Corporate giving (in-kind contributions, grants, and corporate foundations) remained the smallest source of giving
 - Dollars for health and human services each increased by 5%



Today's Philanthropic Landscape (cont.)

- **The Fundraising Effectiveness Project (FEP)** is a collaborative project between the Association of Fundraising Professionals (AFP), Giving Tuesday, and various data providers, researchers, and analysts to track and evaluate giving trends.
 - Total charitable dollars raised grew an estimated 5% in 2025 compared to 2024, the strongest growth in five years.
 - The number of donors declined by 3.6%, continuing a downward trend that began in 2021.
 - Continued trend of “Dollars up, donors down.”



Evolving Donor Expectations

- Four areas of note:
 - **Transparency**
 - Finances, policies, leadership, staff, and board
 - Getting ahead of the narrative in an off-year
 - **Accountability**
 - Clear narratives and reporting
 - **Measurable Outcomes**
 - Goals and metrics
 - **Personalized Engagement**
 - Connecting fundraising to a participant, project, or specific outcome vs. broad organizational messaging



Personal Engagement: ***Philanthropy Is About Relationships***

- Does not mean asking the same people to support your mission and programs more often
- Importance of knowing our donors and stewardship at all giving levels
- Focus on retention of current donors and those who may have lapsed
- Relationship-building efforts to move from transactional fundraising efforts to more strategic partnerships



Fundraising as Art and Science

- **Beyond a Compelling Case**

- Authentic engagement
- Strategic and inspirational storytelling
- Data-driven insights
 - Importance of CRM and donor information captured in one place; relationship mapping
 - Metrics do not have to be complicated, but consistent and measurable

- **Importance of Messaging**

- *“We get the donors we deserve.”*

- **Transactional vs. Transformational**

- Giving and relationships



Leveraging Digital Platforms

- **Website**

- Programs, board, staff, volunteers, herd, and financial information
- Link to donation page – on every page
- *Ways to Give page* in addition to the credit card donation form (i.e., check, stock, DAF, corporate matching gift, IRA, nonprofit as beneficiary of bequest or life insurance)
- Credit card donation form can also promote recurring gifts, DAF grants, and corporate matching gifts

- **Social media platforms: Use and Strategy**

- Include a link to the website in every post

- **Google Grants**

- www.google.com/grants



Effective Stewardship

- Combination of timely acknowledgment, personalized engagement, impact reporting, and long-term relationship building
- Continuum from first gift to planned gift
- **Goal**: To increase the number of recurring and transformational gifts and lifetime donors



Practical, Innovative Ideas and Messaging for Long-Term Relationship and Sustainability

- Establish a “Culture of Philanthropy”
- Focus on retention, further engagement, and re-engagement
- Increase personalized and authentic engagement
- Further engage BOD and Development Committee in meaningful activities
- Establish or promote a monthly recurring giving program



Practical, Innovative Ideas and Messaging for Long-Term Relationship and Sustainability (cont.)

- Increase storytelling and methods of sharing, including videos; creates an opportunity for a donor to connect to a real outcome.
- Promote gifts from donor-advised funds (DAF) and IRAs
- Pressure test appeals and proposals
- Look for and create naming opportunities or recognition circles
- Establish or promote planning giving opportunities

Stories of Success and Growth

- Examples of centers embracing a culture of philanthropy
- Donor giving or engagement success stories
- Examples of strategic or inspirational storytelling – stories or opportunities
- Fundraising programs or initiatives you are particularly proud of
- Q&A



THANK YOU!

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