









2015



# Individual Donor Benchmark Report

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**Third Space Studio**

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# Introduction

Heather Yandow | Third Space Studio



**Every year, when I sit down to dig through our fundraising data, I get excited. It's exciting to explore what might emerge from the data, whether it is the new discoveries or confirmations of past results.**

This year's data from 119 small and mighty nonprofits did not disappoint. We were able to confirm many of the benchmarks established from our 2014 Report and dig deeper into a critical tool: the fundraising plan.

When I started this work, it was with a simple goal: to create data that would help grassroots organizations strengthen their fundraising. I believe that successful fundraisers set ambitious yet realistic goals, experiment with new strategies, and invest in the strategies that work. All of this work centers on having good data about your own organization and about other organizations like yours.

I hope you enjoy this year's report – and that it proves useful for you and your fundraising work. If you have questions about the data presented in this report, or would like to find out how to be included in next year's survey, please be in touch at [heather@thirdspacestudio.com](mailto:heather@thirdspacestudio.com).

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## Acknowledgements

I'd like to say a big thank you to the 119 organizations willing to compile and share their data with us – and you – in this report. Thanks also to BC/DC Ideas for their fantastic marketing and communication support for the project. Thanks to our first intern, Hannah Love, for her help with social media outreach and recruiting survey participants.

Many thanks to the organizations that sponsored and supported this project: Ravela Insights, DonorPerfect, Little Green Light, AGH Strategies, Network for Good, NationBuilder, Idealware, and the Grassroots Institute for Fundraising Training.

Special thanks to Mike Glover for his expert help with data analysis.

Thanks also to Kristin Bradley-Bull, Jenny Carillo, Meg Coward, Mary Hackett, Russell Herman, Joanna Joslyn, Angela Kemper, Kim Klein, Ian Palmquist, Andy Robinson, and Stephanie Roth for their support and advice.

Finally, a huge thank you to Meredith Emmett, the founder of Third Space Studio and a steadfast supporter of this project.

Communications partner:  
BC/DC Ideas  
[bcdciideas.com](http://bcdciideas.com)



IDEAS

Other partners:



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# **Busy Person's Guide to the Individual Donor Benchmark Report**





# Busy Person's Guide

Here's what you need to know from this year's Individual Donor Benchmark Report.

Organizations retain about

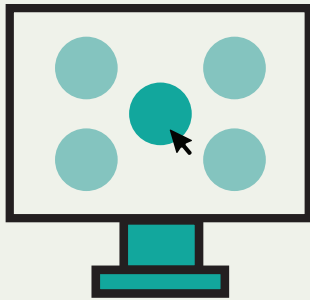
# 60%

of their donors from year to year

# $\frac{4}{10}$



board members are active in fundraising in any significant way



1 out of every 5 individual donor dollars is raised online

Organizations raise

# 34%

of their revenue from individuals



# $\frac{1}{2}$

About half of individual donor revenue comes from donors giving less than \$1,000



The best way to ensure fundraising success is to have a plan

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# How to Use This Report

**Moving From Data to Action**





This report is designed to give you a snapshot of results from organizations like yours, nonprofits with budgets under \$2 million. This is a great way for you to see how you measure up against your peers.

*You can use this document to:*

### **Celebrate your strengths**

Find areas where you are doing well and build on that success. Be sure to share your success with your colleagues and board!

### **Identify your challenges**

This report is your annual opportunity to check-in on how you are faring against the average and where you might want to grow your fundraising program.

### **Find markers that motivate your team**

If your staff and board are obsessed with increasing online donations, focus there and use the averages in this report as a guide. We recommend picking two to three markers of success for your organization and work on those smaller goals.

### **A few key terms**

#### *Could vs should:*

We've purposely chosen to use "could" versus "should" when talking about fundraising goals. These numbers should be used as a benchmark of where your nonprofit compares to other organizations.

#### *Sizes:*

We've reported the average of our sample, but we've also broken many of the numbers down to smaller brackets. Find the specific slice that fits your organization:

- ◆ **OVERALL**
- **SMALL | revenue under \$200,000**
- ◉ **MEDIUM | revenue between \$200,000 and \$499,999**
- ◉◉ **LARGE | revenue between \$500,000 and \$999,999**
- ◉◉◉ **SUPER | revenue between \$1,000,000 and \$1,999,999**



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# Individual Donor Giving

How much could we be raising  
from individual donors?



# Individual Donor Giving

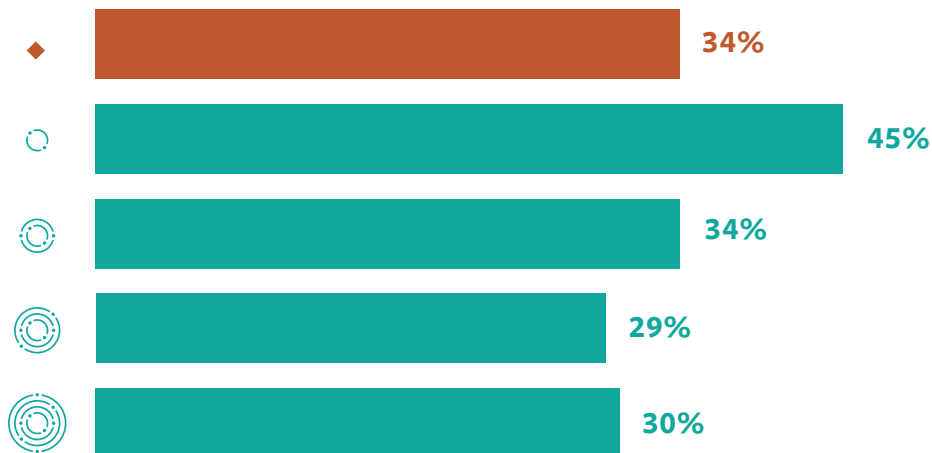
How much could we be raising from individual donors?



Let's start with the question that most people reading this report have: how much can we raise from individuals? There are a number of ways to answer that question.

## Individual Donors as a Percentage of Overall Revenue

Overall, organizations are raising about 34% of their budget from individuals, down slightly from the 36% we reported in the 2014 and 2013 versions of this study. This varies somewhat by budget size, with smaller organizations raising relatively more from individuals.



## Total Dollars Raised

You can also look at the overall dollars raised from individuals, which averages at \$184,225. As you might suspect, the amount raised increases with budget growth.

◆ <b>OVERALL</b>	<b>\$184,225</b>
○ <b>SMALL   revenue under \$200,000</b>	<b>\$41,013</b>
⊙ <b>MEDIUM   revenue between \$200,000 and \$499,999</b>	<b>\$104,600</b>
⊚ <b>LARGE   revenue between \$500,000 and \$999,999</b>	<b>\$211,883</b>
⊛ <b>SUPER   revenue between \$1,000,000 and \$1,999,999</b>	<b>\$399,969</b>

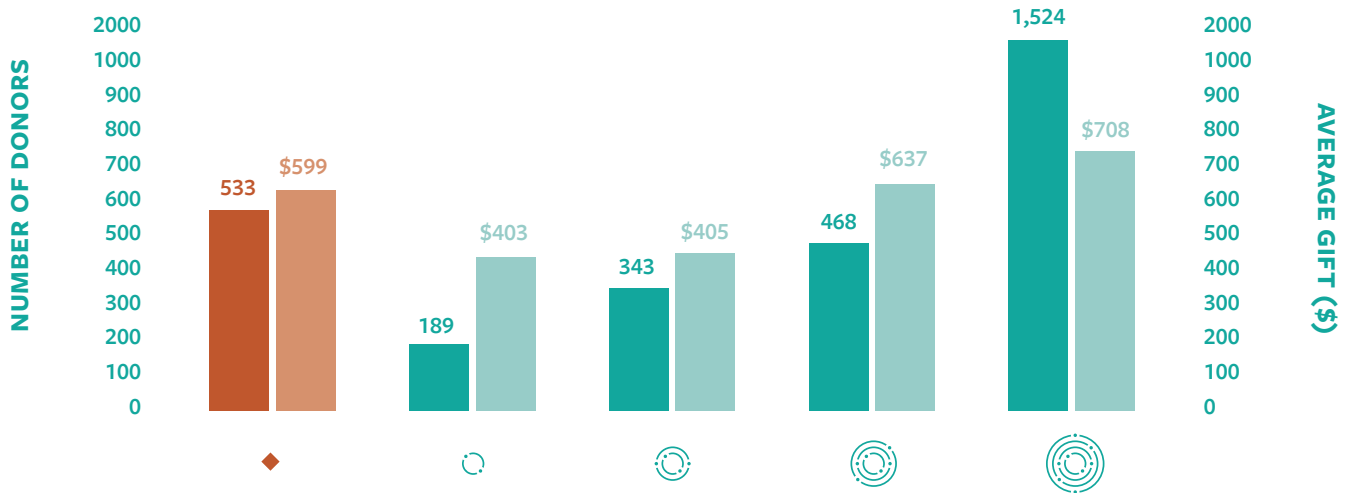
# Individual Donor Giving

How much could we be raising from individual donors?



## Number of Gifts

Another way to answer the question of how much you can raise from individuals is to look at the number of donors and average gift, both of which increase with budget size, as they did in 2014.



## Average vs. Median

In a perfectly distributed data set, the average of our data would be the same as the median. Our data, unsurprisingly, is not perfect. All nonprofits, especially small nonprofits, are unique and their fundraising data reflects that. For the key data points in this section, we wanted to share the average and median:

Data Point	Average	Median
Percentage of Individual Donor Revenue	34%	25%
Total Dollars Raised	\$184,225	\$97,391
Number of Donors	599	287
Average Gift	\$533	\$303

For all of our data, the median is less than the average. The most likely explanation is that there are data points that are significantly higher than the median, and they pull the average up.

# Individual Donor Giving

How much could we be raising from individual donors?

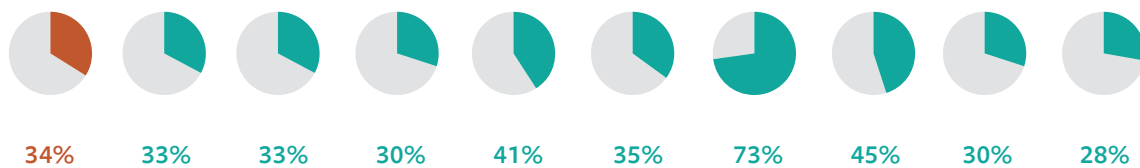


## Results By Issue & Strategy

This report primarily uses overall budget size to break down the data, but we also wanted to share how the individual donor data differed by issue focus and organizational strategy.



## PERCENT REVENUE FROM INDIVIDUAL DONORS



Animal welfare groups depend more heavily on individuals than other types of nonprofits – for the second year in a row, they’ve been at the top of the list. Health, and arts, culture, and humanities organizations tend to be less dependent on individuals than average.

Environmental organizations, as well as animal welfare groups, have a high number of donors and a low average gift. International organizations have the highest average donation and among the lowest donor count. Health organizations have the lowest average gift and a low donor count.

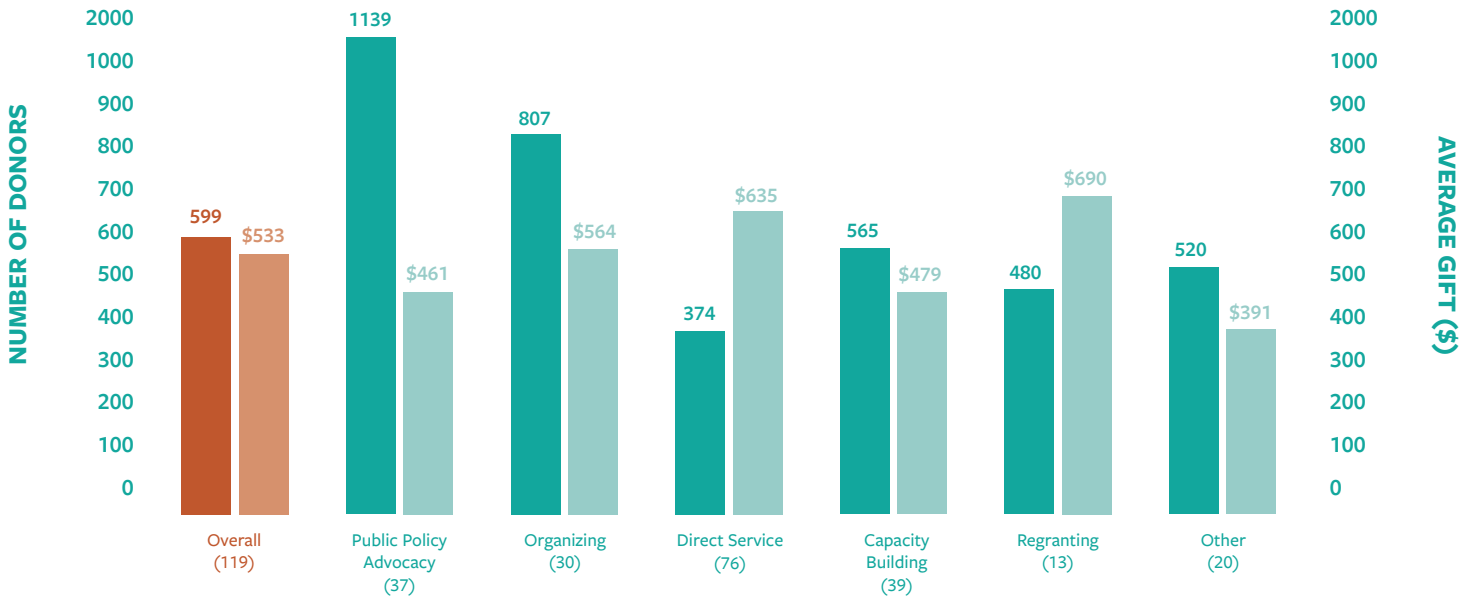
# Individual Donor Giving

How much could we be raising from individual donors?

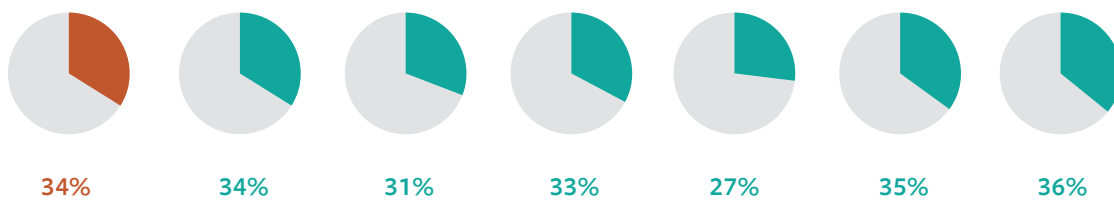


## Gifts by Organizational Strategy

The data also shows some interesting differences when groups are segmented by strategy.



## PERCENT REVENUE FROM INDIVIDUAL DONORS



Capacity building nonprofits are less reliant on individuals than the average organization. Public policy advocacy organizations tend to have the most donors, followed by organizing nonprofits.

# Individual Donor Giving

How much could we be raising from individual donors?



## Size of Gifts

To drill down a little bit into organization's donor base, we looked at information about donors giving \$1,000 or more (major donors) and those giving less than \$1,000 (everyday donors). For the second year in a row, the revenue from these two groups of donors is evenly split!

The average organization has 30 major donors (about 9% of their donor base) giving an average gift of almost \$4,000. They have 581 everyday donors giving an average gift of \$208. These statistics change as organizations grow in budget size.



# Individual Donor Giving

How much could we be raising from individual donors?



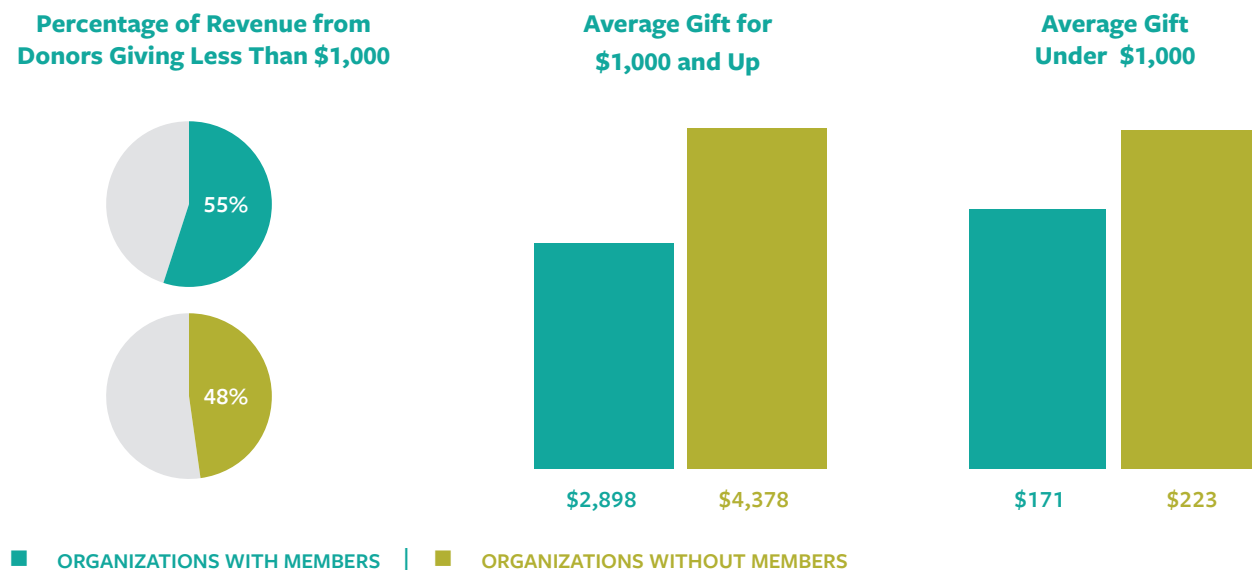
## Membership Impact

One very powerful tool for generating individual donor giving is a membership program. About 30% of our survey respondents had a membership program, and it had an impact on their individual donor giving.

In particular, those organizations with memberships raised slightly less from individual donor revenue as a percentage of overall revenue. But, they tended to have more donors giving a slightly smaller average gift.



Organizations with memberships tended to raise more of their individual donor revenue from donors giving less than \$1,000. They also had smaller average gifts from major donors and everyday donors.



# Individual Donor Giving

How much could we be raising from individual donors?



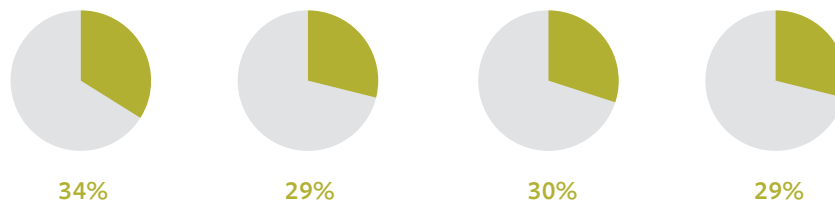
## Membership & Organizing

Membership programs can look significantly different from organization to organization. Some nonprofits use membership primarily as a fundraising tool, while others use their members as part of their organizational power through the strategy of organizing. We were curious how groups that have memberships and engage in organizing compare to other membership groups.

It makes a big difference! Nonprofits that engage in organizing and have membership programs tend to have more than 2.5 times the number of donors as those who do not conduct organizing, and an average gift more than 1.5 times more.



## PERCENTAGE OF INDIVIDUAL DONOR REVENUE



## Membership Levels

Membership levels vary greatly, with some starting as low as \$10 or as high as \$1,000, with an average of \$75. The most popular starting membership is \$25, not including student or senior memberships. The top end of membership levels ranged between \$25 and \$10,000, with an average level of \$1,346. The most popular top membership level is \$1,000.



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# Overall Results

How is everyone doing?





# Overall Results How is everyone doing?

## Revenue & Expenses

In a word, most groups are doing well. The large majority of organizations (65%) ended 2015 with a surplus or even revenue and expenses. Unfortunately, 32% groups were in the red by an average of 16%.



On average, groups ended 2015 with a surplus of about \$35,000 or 7% of their revenues.

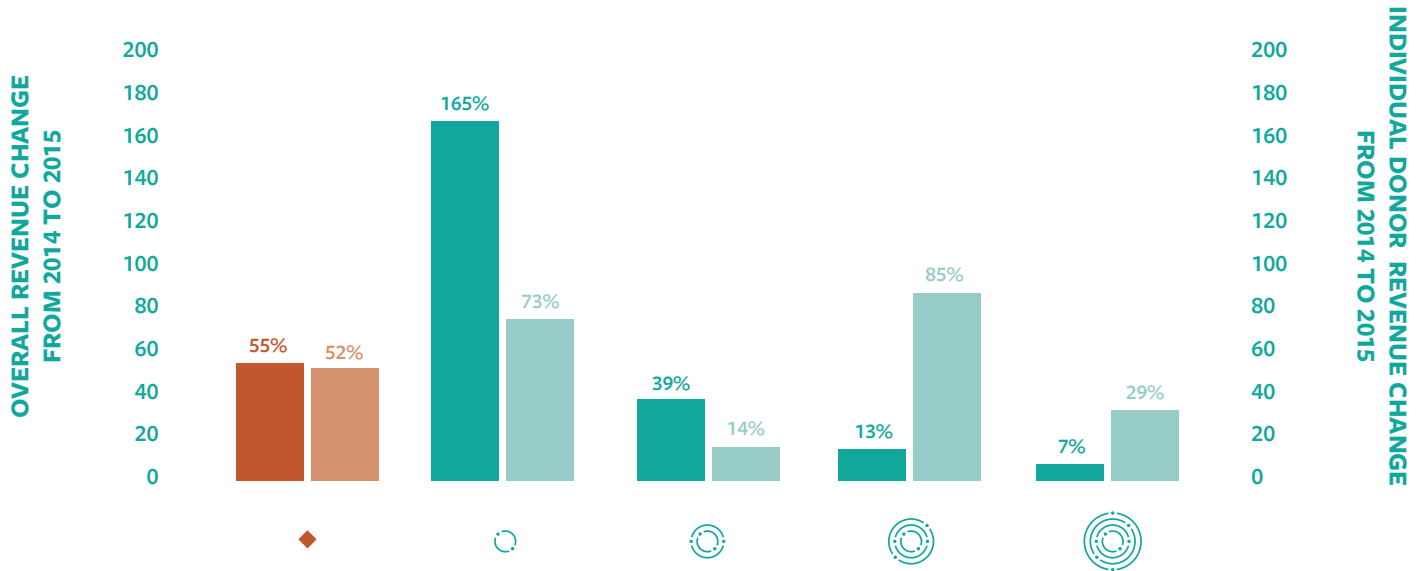
Size	Average Revenue	Average Expenses	Average Surplus	Surplus as a % of Revenue
◆ OVERALL	\$618,863	\$583,591	\$35,273	7.1%
○ SMALL	\$101,854	\$90,942	\$10,912	11.4%
◎ MEDIUM	\$309,769	\$283,261	\$26,509	7.9%
◎◎ LARGE	\$753,832	\$746,462	\$7,370	2.0%
◎◎◎ SUPER	\$1,401,839	\$1,294,868	\$106,972	7.8%

# Overall Results How is everyone doing?



## Revenue Growth

Organizations are still seeing significant growth in both individual donor revenue and overall revenue.



When we dig deeper, we can see that 69% of organizations saw an increase in overall revenue, and the average increase was almost 90%. For the 31% who saw a decrease in revenue, the average decrease was 14%.

For individual donor revenue, a similar pattern emerges: 62% of organizations saw an increase in revenue with an average increase of 96%. For the 38% who saw individual revenue decrease, the average decrease was 19%.

	Percentage of Organizations	Average Change
Increase in Overall Revenue	69%	89%
Decrease in Overall Revenue	31%	-14%
Increase in Individual Donor Revenue	62%	96%
Decrease in Individual Donor Revenue	38%	-19%

Some organizations had explosive growth between 2014 and 2015: 9% of organizations saw an increase in overall revenue of more than 100% and 9% saw an increase in individual donor giving of more than 100%.

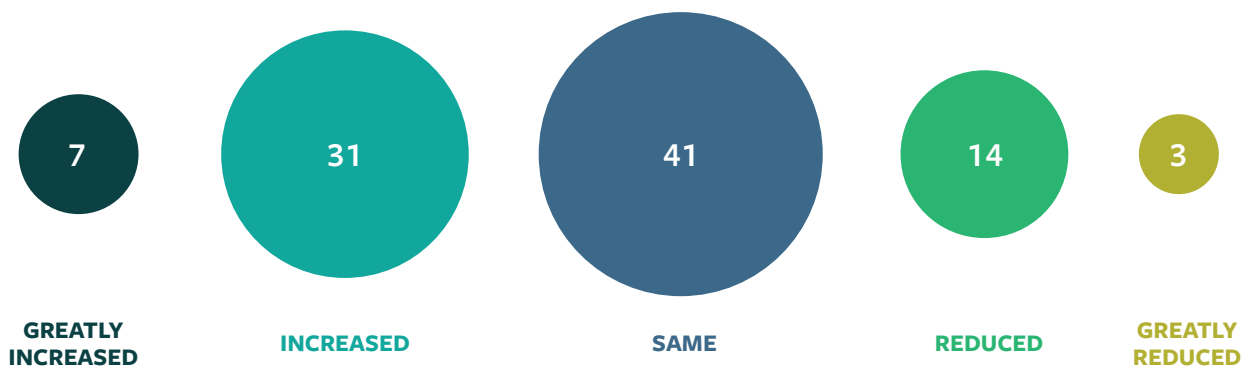
# Overall Results

How is everyone doing?



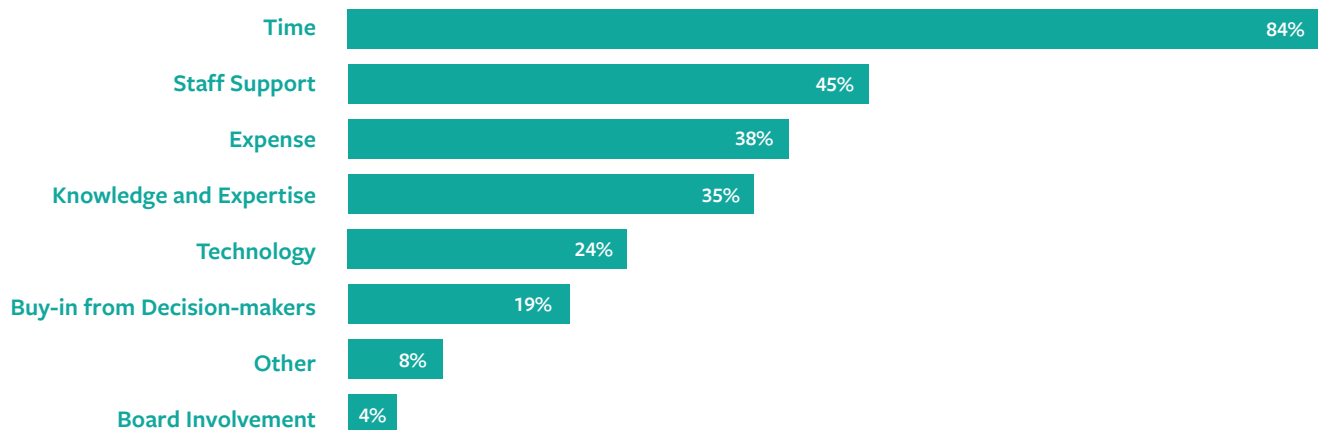
## Foundation Dependence

Over the past five years, four in ten organizations have increased their dependence on foundations, while only two of ten have decreased their dependence. Many organizations build an individual donor base to stabilize their income by becoming less dependent on foundations, so this finding may mean that there's still significant work to do in order to realize that goal.



## Biggest Challenges

Unsurprising, the biggest challenges in implementing individual donor strategies continues to be time, followed by staff support, expense, and knowledge and expertise.



# Overall Results

How is everyone doing?



## Growth Priorities

If organizations had more resources to invest in individual donor work, they'd start by hiring help or improving their databases. They would also spend more time with donors and improve their prospect research and acquisition tools.

## If you had more time, money, support, etc.: What's the first thing you would do or invest in to further your individual donor work?

- 34** Hire more help for fundraising activities
- 20** Improve my database or other fundraising technology
- 17** Spend more time meeting and engaging donors face-to-face
- 16** Invest in prospect research and acquisition tools
- 7** Improve my marketing and communications
- 7** Coaching/training for staff
- 5** Create a fundraising plan and clarify my strategies
- 5** Get training for my board
- 4** Start or strengthen major donor work
- 4** Start or strengthen recurring donations campaign
- 3** More donor engagement or cultivation events
- 2** Social media fundraising
- 1** Improve direct mail campaigns
- 1** Conduct a door hanger campaign
- 1** Improve planned giving

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# Fundraising Plan

How should we think about  
our fundraising plan?



# Fundraising Plan

How should we think about our fundraising plan?



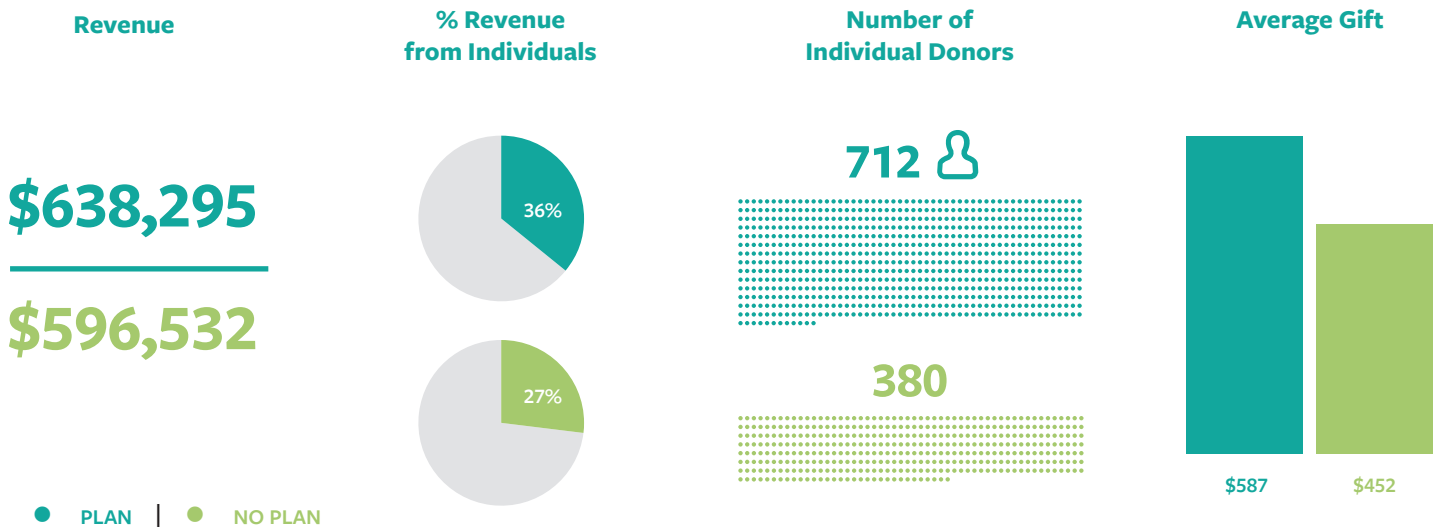
For the past two years, we've found that having a fundraising plan is the key indicator for successful fundraising. This year, we wanted to dig deeper into the fundraising plan.

The good news is that 71% of organizations reported having a fundraising plan.



## Positive Impacts of a Fundraising Plan

Overall, organizations with a plan have similar overall revenues, but generate more of their revenue from individuals, have more donors, and a higher average gift.



# Fundraising Plan

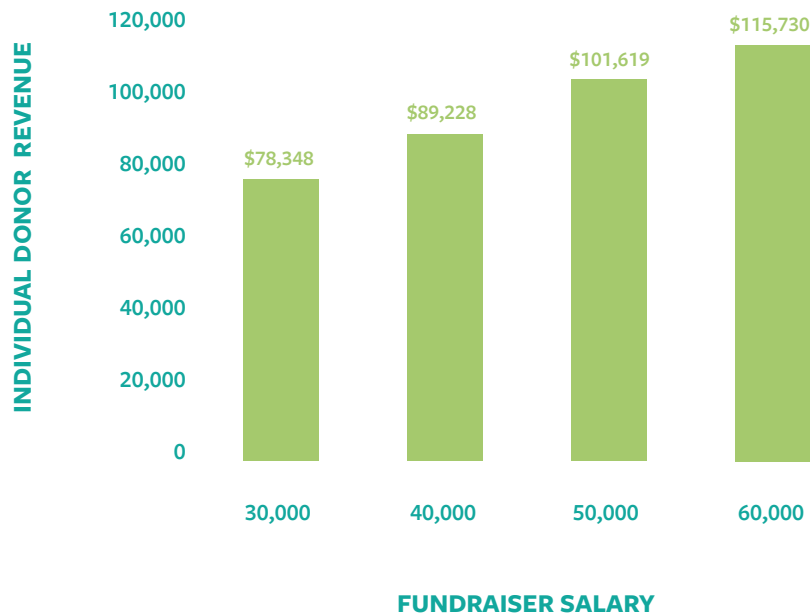
How should we think about our fundraising plan?



As we found last year, having a fundraising plan is the best predictor for fundraising success. In particular, having a plan means that the resources you put into your fundraising program lead to more revenue.

*Let's look at a couple of examples:*

If you have a plan, you invest more in your individual donor program. As measured by a fundraiser's salary, this means that you'll raise more revenue. In fact, there's an exponential relationship! Here's how salary can impact your revenues:



If you don't have a plan, a higher fundraiser's salary does not lead to more individual donor revenue.



# Fundraising Plan

How should we think about our fundraising plan?



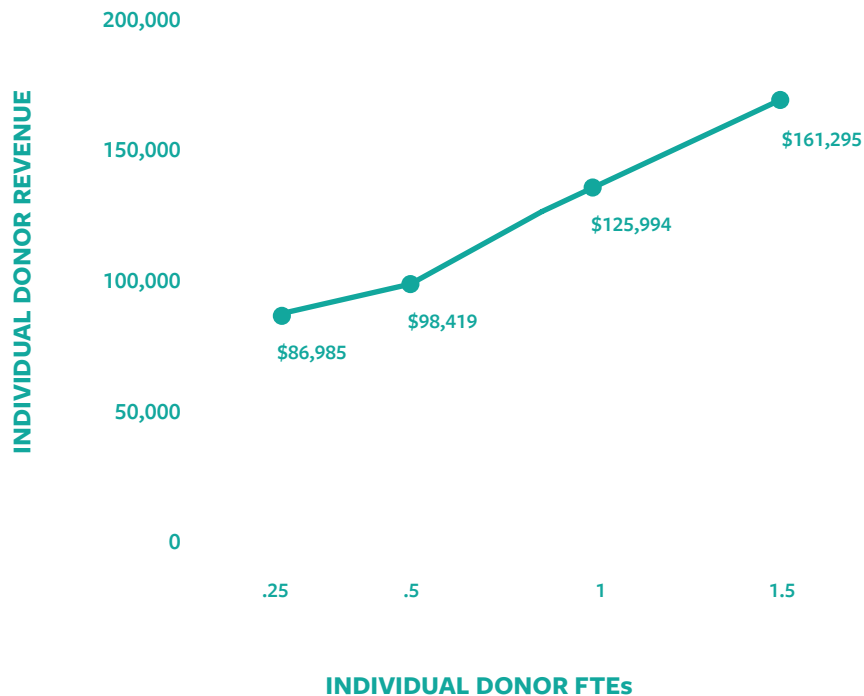
## \$11,686

INCREASE IN INDIVIDUAL DONOR REVENUE

If you have a plan, and you spend time activating your board, you'll generate more revenue. For every additional board member active in fundraising, you can see an \$11,686 increase in individual donor revenue.

If you don't have a plan, there is no correlation between getting your board active and raising more money.

If you have a plan, and invest in additional staff to do individual donor work, you'll generate more revenue. The revenue growth is actually exponential (and can be shown with a fancy formula), but here's the breakdown.



If you don't have a plan, more staff will lead to greater individual donor revenue, but it's a riskier proposition. There's much more variability in our data, and revenues are predicted to be significantly lower.

# Fundraising Plan

How should we think about our fundraising plan?



## Fundraising Plan Use

Organizations with a plan were almost evenly split between those using their fundraising plan on a regular basis or all the time, and those who checked in on the plan a couple of times a year or less.

**Once again: it's the planning, not the plan, that strengthens fundraising!**



- All the time – I often consulted and adjusted our plan.
- I looked at it on a regular basis.
- I checked in on it a couple of times last year.
- It mostly sat on the shelf.
- Oh yeah...I forgot we had a plan...

We wanted to get a better sense of what people meant when they said ‘fundraising plan’, so we collected more details on what these documents include. Almost everyone has some kind of calendar of activities and list of overall fundraising strategies and goals.

Fundraising Plan Parts	Percentage
Calendar of activities	83%
List of overall fundraising strategies & goals	81%
Detailed breakdown of fundraising activities	56%
Assessment of 2014 fundraising results	56%

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# Retention Rates

How many donors can I expect  
to come back from year to year?

# Retention Rates

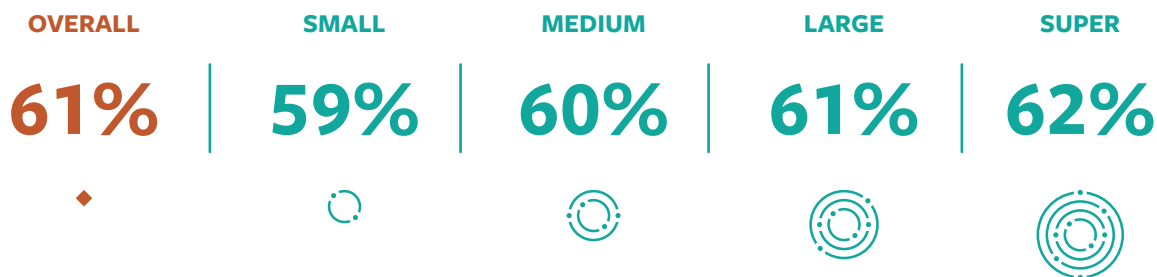
How many donors can I expect to come back from year to year?



Retention rate – or the rate at which last year’s donors give again this year – is one of the most critical pieces of data to help organizations understand and predict their fundraising. Yet, it’s often hard for small and mighty organizations to calculate and track.

This year, we added a survey question about retention rate. We were thrilled that 83% of organizations were able to provide an answer.

What we found was very interesting: the average retention rate was about 60%, no matter how we divided up organizations. Size of organization had little impact.



So we thought: maybe as the number of donors increased, the retention rate would go down? Nope. The number of donors an organization had seemed to make no difference.

Number of Donors	Retention Rate
Overall	61%
Under 100	60%
101 to 250	60%
251 to 500	61%
501 to 1000	62%
1001 and up	60%

# Retention Rates

How many donors can I expect to come back from year to year?



How about the presence of a membership program, a seemingly powerful tool to keep donors giving year after year? No impact!

Membership Program	Retention Rate
Overall	61%
Yes	60%
No	61%

Okay, so what about recurring giving programs? That's got to be the key, right? Wrong.

% of Donors Giving Recurring Gifts	Retention Rate
Overall	61%
Less than 5%	59%
Between 5% and 10%	60%
10% or more	62%

**So the moral of the story is: the average retention rate for small and mighty organizations is about 60%.**

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# Online Giving

How much could we be  
raising online?

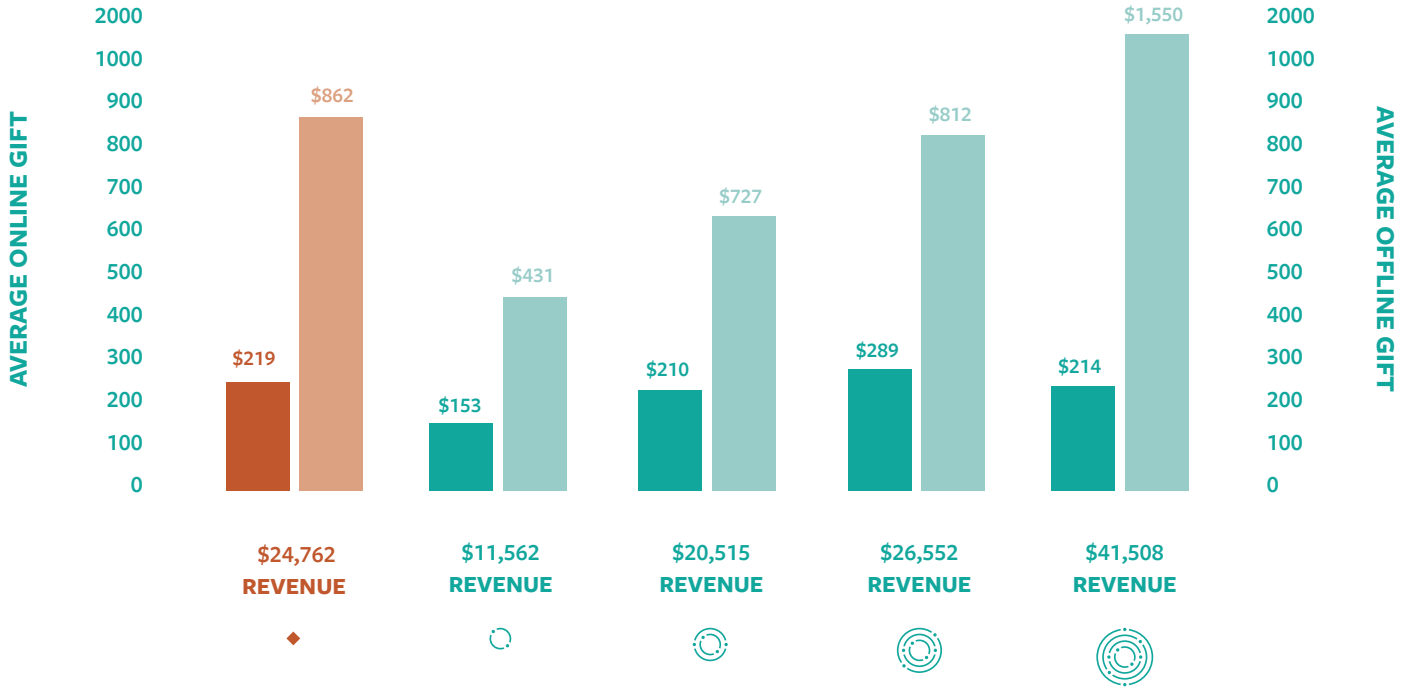


# Online Giving

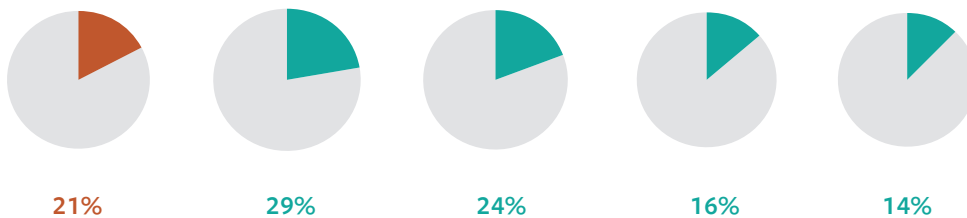
How much could we be raising online?



Online giving is up this year, with organizations raising one out of every five dollars online. This can be seen as great news for nonprofits looking to expand their fundraising, but there is a cautionary tale: the average online gift is just \$219 – less than half of the overall average gift for organizations and almost a quarter of the average offline gift. Organizations need to be smart about how they can maintain their individual donor giving levels as more donations come in online.



PERCENTAGE OF INDIVIDUAL DONOR REVENUE



# Online Giving

How much could we be raising online?



The average organization had 144 online donors, or about three in eight donors giving online.

	Size	Number of Donors	Percentage of Donor Base
◆	<b>AVERAGE</b>	<b>144</b>	<b>37%</b>
○	SMALL	85	45%
⊙	MEDIUM	106	38%
⊘	LARGE	142	33%
⊚	SUPER	262	31%



When we are trying to understand online fundraising data, it's not just the size of the organization that matters. We can also look at the data through the lens of email list size.

Email List Size	Online Revenue	% of Individual Donor Revenue	Number of Donors	% of Donor Base	Average Gift
Overall	\$24,762	21%	144	37%	\$219
Under 1,000	\$21,393	16%	97	27%	\$257
1,000 to 2,499	\$20,264	17%	96	34%	\$193
2,500 to 4,999	\$17,918	30%	100	42%	\$199
5,000 to 9,999	\$37,893	23%	312	45%	\$126
10,000 and up	\$46,179	22%	290	56%	\$290





We can also use email lists to estimate the amount of online revenue generation possible. For the average organization, they are able to generate about \$24 per email subscriber. This number changes significantly as the size of your email list grows.

Size of Email List	Online Revenue per Email Address
Overall	\$24.31
Under 1000	\$58.57
1,000 to 2,499	\$14.10
2,500 to 4,999	\$6.17
5,000 to 9,999	\$5.21
10,000 and up	\$2.84



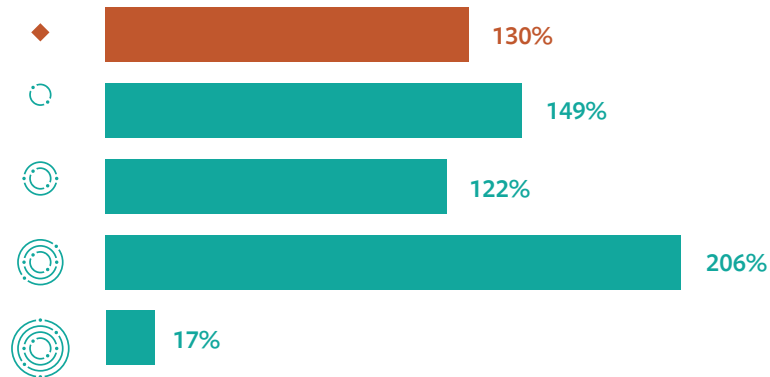
**\$ GENERATED PER EMAIL SUBSCRIBER**

Another way to look at online fundraising is by examining the percentage of online organizations contacts, or the number of email addresses and Facebook fans divided by the number of total contacts (email, Facebook, and postal mail).

The data shows that percentage of online revenue is less than or equal to the percentage of online contacts in most cases. Or, the amount of revenue you can hope to raise online is bounded by the proportion of contacts you have online. For example, if your organization has 500 postal mail address, 200 email address, and 100 Facebook fans, then you have 37.5% of your contacts online, and could plan to raise at most 37.5% of your individual donor revenue online.



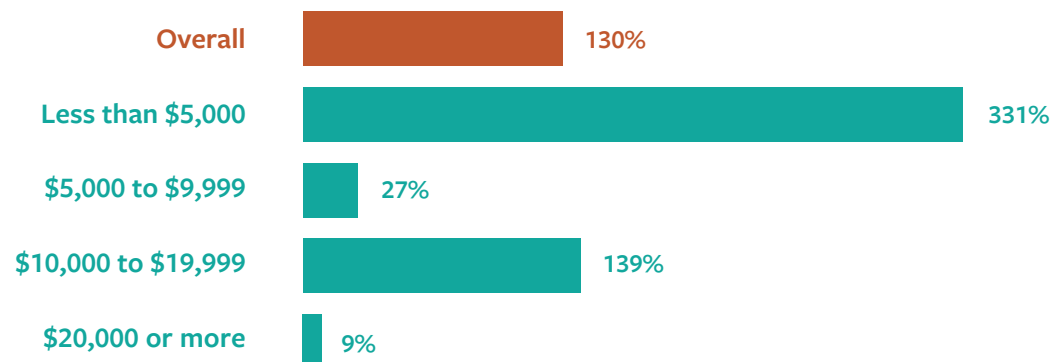
### GROWTH OF ONLINE REVENUE FROM 2014 TO 2015



Much of this growth is likely due to the fact that these online programs are new and still growing rapidly. When we break down the data by online revenue in 2014, we can see that the most established programs tend to have a more sustainable growth rate.

### 2014 ONLINE INCOME

### GROWTH OF ONLINE REVENUE FROM 2014 TO 2015



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# Recurring Donations

What could my recurring donor  
program look like?

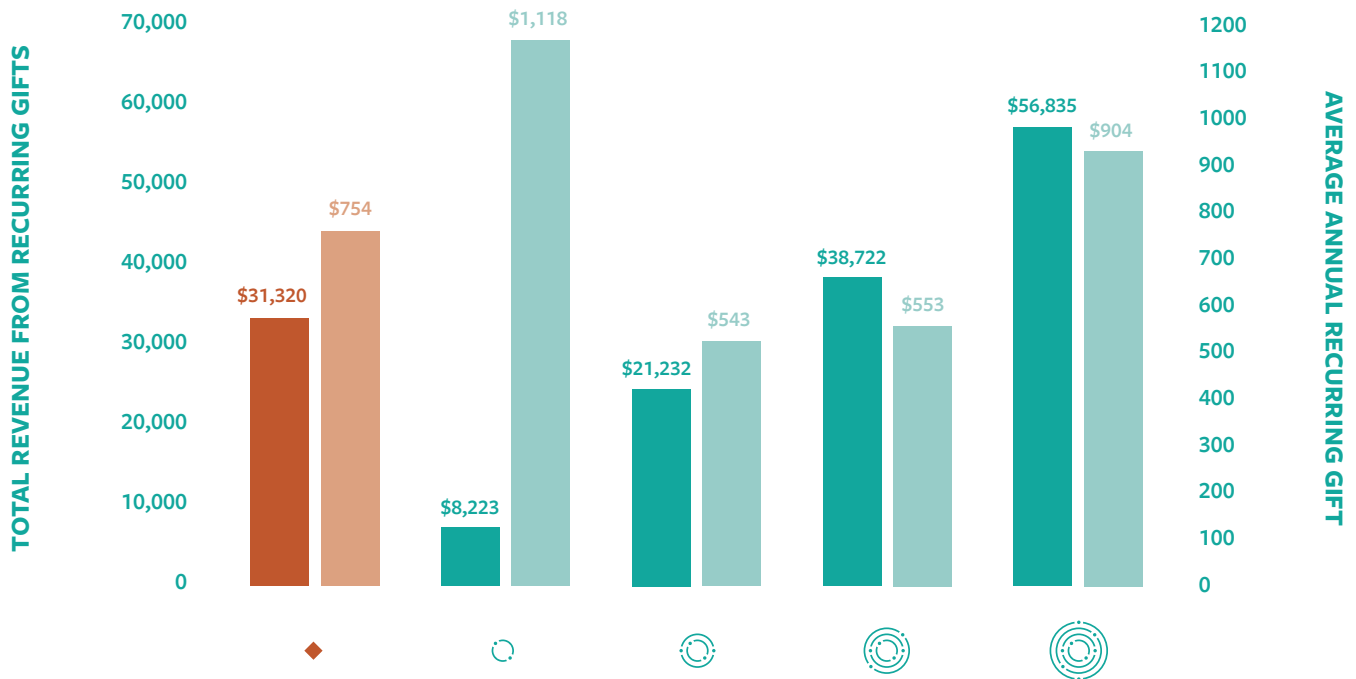


# Recurring Donations

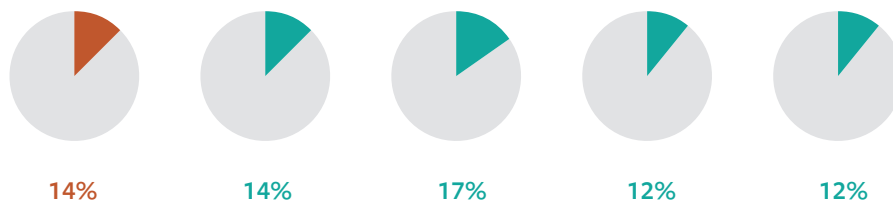
What could my recurring donor program look like?



Recurring donor programs continue to be a smart strategy for growing individual donor revenue. On average, organizations are raising \$31,320, or 14% of their individual donor income, from recurring gifts. These gifts average \$754 – significantly more than the overall average gift of \$533 – and up from last year’s average of \$520.



PERCENTAGE OF INDIVIDUAL DONOR REVENUE



# Recurring Donations

What could my recurring donor program look like?



The average recurring donor program includes 53 donors, up slightly from last year's 50 donors, representing about one out of every 10 donors.

	Size	Numbers of Donors	% of Donor Base
◆	Overall	53	9%
○	Small	16	11%
⊙	Medium	28	9%
⊚	Large	61	12%
⊛	Super	111	5%

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# Communications

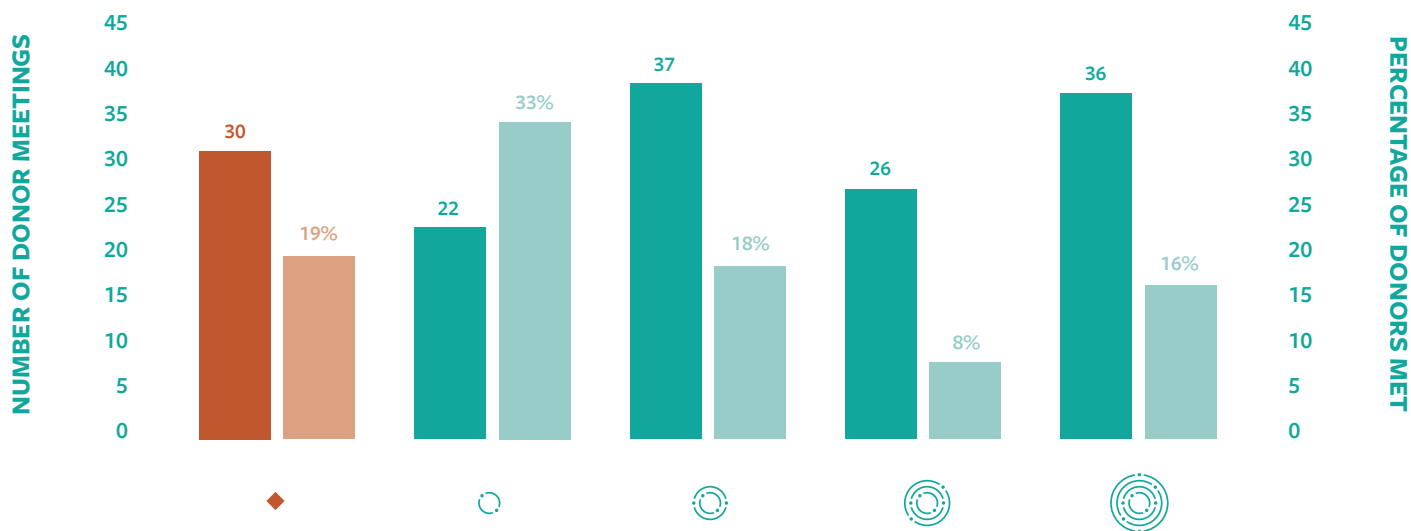
How could I be talking to  
my supporters?





### Donor Meetings

The most effective way to build relationships and ask for support is face-to-face. Yet, with limited resources, many small and mighty nonprofits are able to meet with only a limited number of donors, 30 on average, representing about 20% of their donor base.



However, on average, organizations are holding 3.5 as many meetings as they have major donors (\$1,000 and up). This means that many organizations are meeting with a significant portion of their high level donors, and likely some prospects, too. Great news!



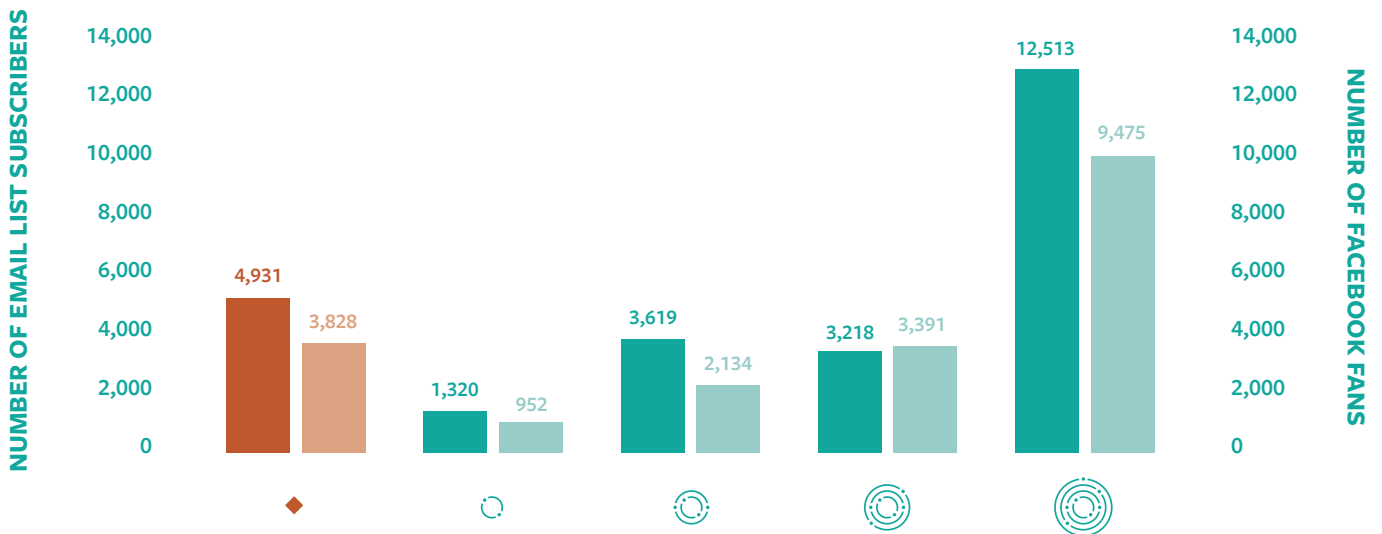
### Mass Communication

In addition to in-person meetings, organizations often use postal mail communications. The average organization has almost 2,000 people on their postal mail list, and a donor base that's about half the size of their postal mail list.

	Size	Number of Addresses on Postal Mail List	Donors per Postal Mail Address
◆	Overall	1,969	0.47
○	Small	1,262	0.35
⊙	Medium	1,055	0.46
⊚	Large	2,365	0.44
⊛	Super	3,108	0.63

On average, organizations have about seven times as many email addresses as postal mail addresses, a sign that online communications (and fundraising) is continuing to grow.

When we look more closely at online communications, we see that on average, organizations have almost 5,000 email subscribers (up from 4,000 last year), and almost 4,000 Facebook fans (up from 3,000 last year).





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# Human Resources

Who makes all of this happen?



# Human Resources

Who makes all of this happen?



Behind all these numbers are people – the staff, board members, and volunteers who cultivate, thank, engage, and solicit donations.

## Organizational Staffing

The average organization has 7.4 full-time equivalents (FTEs) at a cost of \$104,243 per FTE (simply the expenses divided by the number of staff).

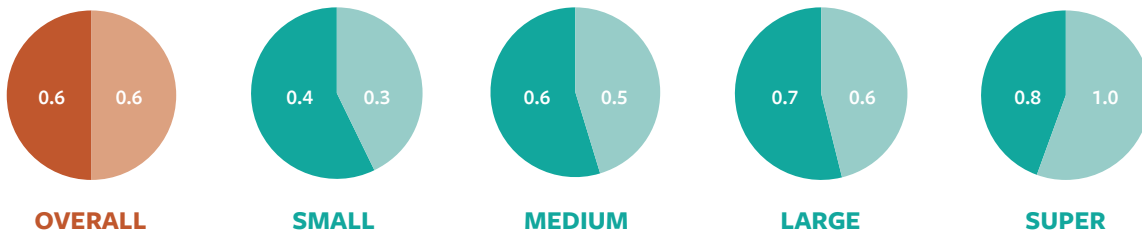
TOTAL FTEs	7.4	1.7	3.2	9.5	14.4
EXPENSES PER FTE	\$104,243	\$77,873	\$103,723	\$113,442	\$115,813

## Fundraising, Marketing, and Communications Positions

Of those staff, organizations typically have 13% of their overall FTEs devoted to individual donor work and an almost equal amount devoted to communications and marketing. The percentages and average FTEs for both positions remained the same as our 2014 findings.

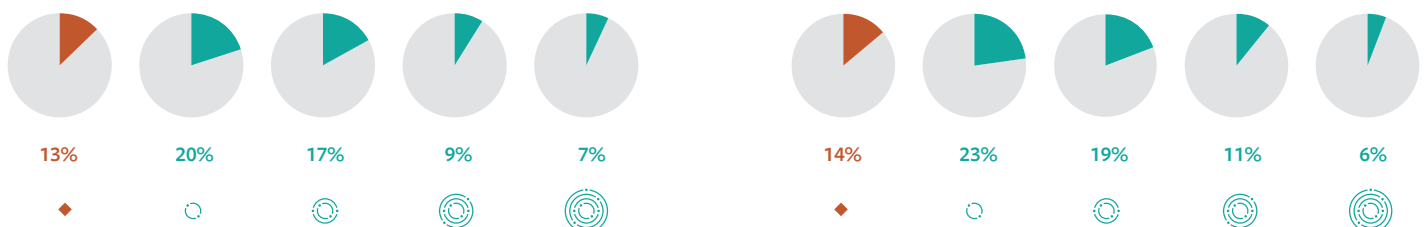
It's interesting that although the FTEs devoted to both positions increase as budget size increases, they decrease as a percentage of overall staff. This is most likely due to the increased staff capacity devoted to program work as organizations grow.

- STAFF FOCUSED ON INDIVIDUAL DONOR WORK (IN FTES)
- STAFF FOCUSED ON COMMUNICATIONS AND MARKETING (IN FTES)



Percentage of Staff Focused on Individual Donor Work

Percentage of Staff Focused on Communications and Marketing

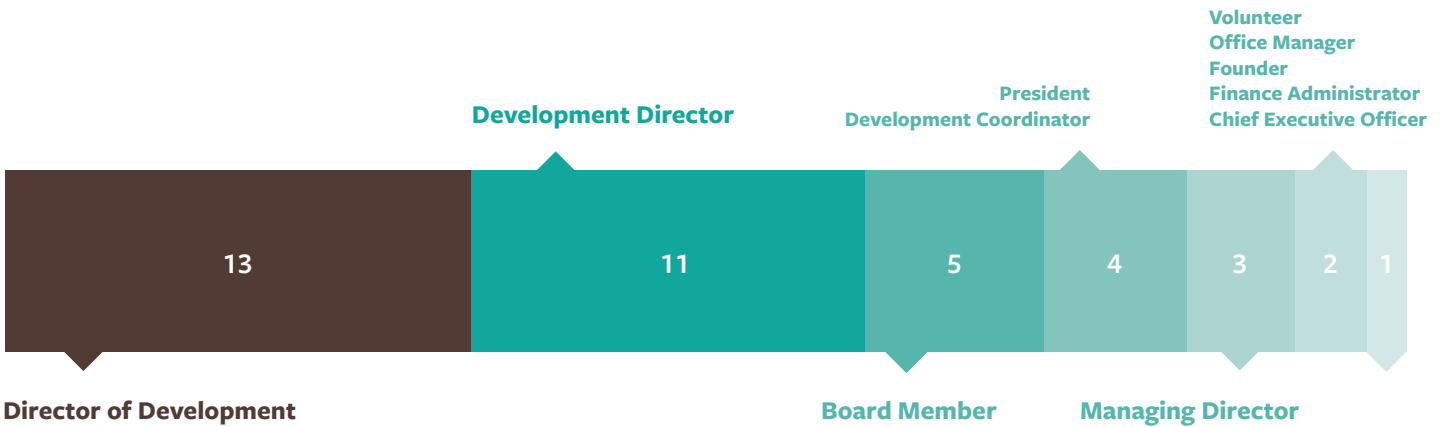




### Chief Fundraiser Details

We asked for the title of the person primarily responsible for individual donor fundraising, and found that in half of organizations (49%) the executive director or chief executive officer play that role. In 40% of organizations, someone with a development-specific title is responsible. For a small number of organizations (6%), board members or other volunteers are in the lead.

The position titles vary, with executive director and director of development being the most popular.



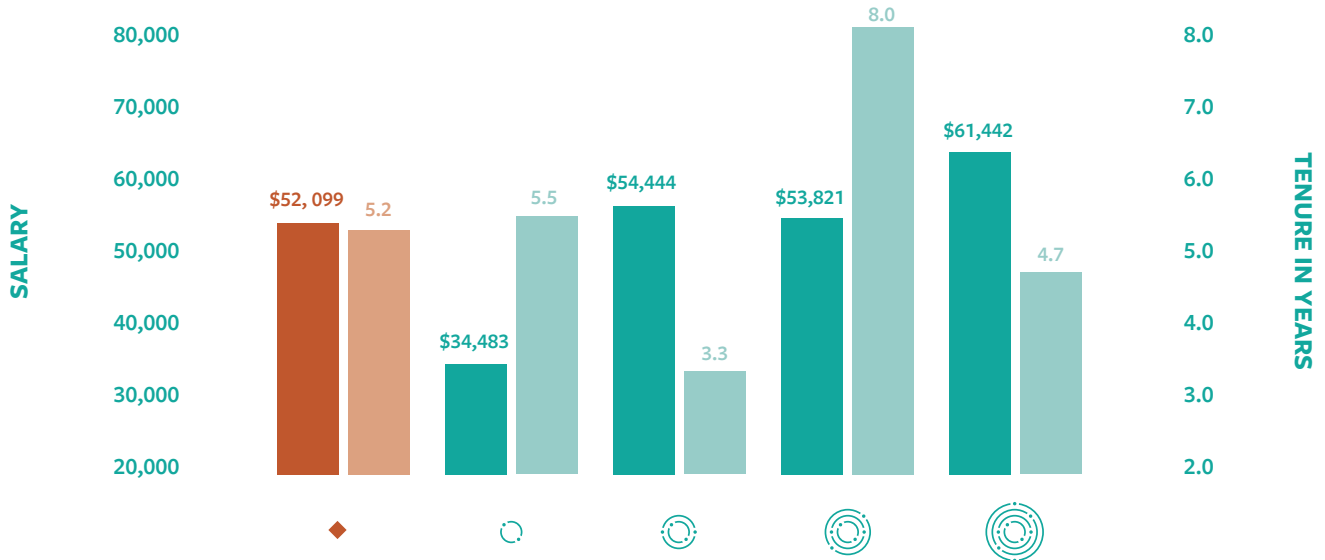
- Resource Development Director, Outreach and Development Coordinator
- Marketing & Fundraising Coordinator, Fundraising Consultant
- Fundraising and Communications Mgr, Fund Development Director
- Director, Development and Outreach, Director of Major & Planned Gifts
- Director, Development Manager, Development Associate
- Development and Public Relations Manager
- Development and Community Relations Manager
- Development and Communications Associate
- Development & Outreach Coordinator
- Communications and Development Director
- Communications & Development Manager, Associate Director

# Human Resources

Who makes all of this happen?

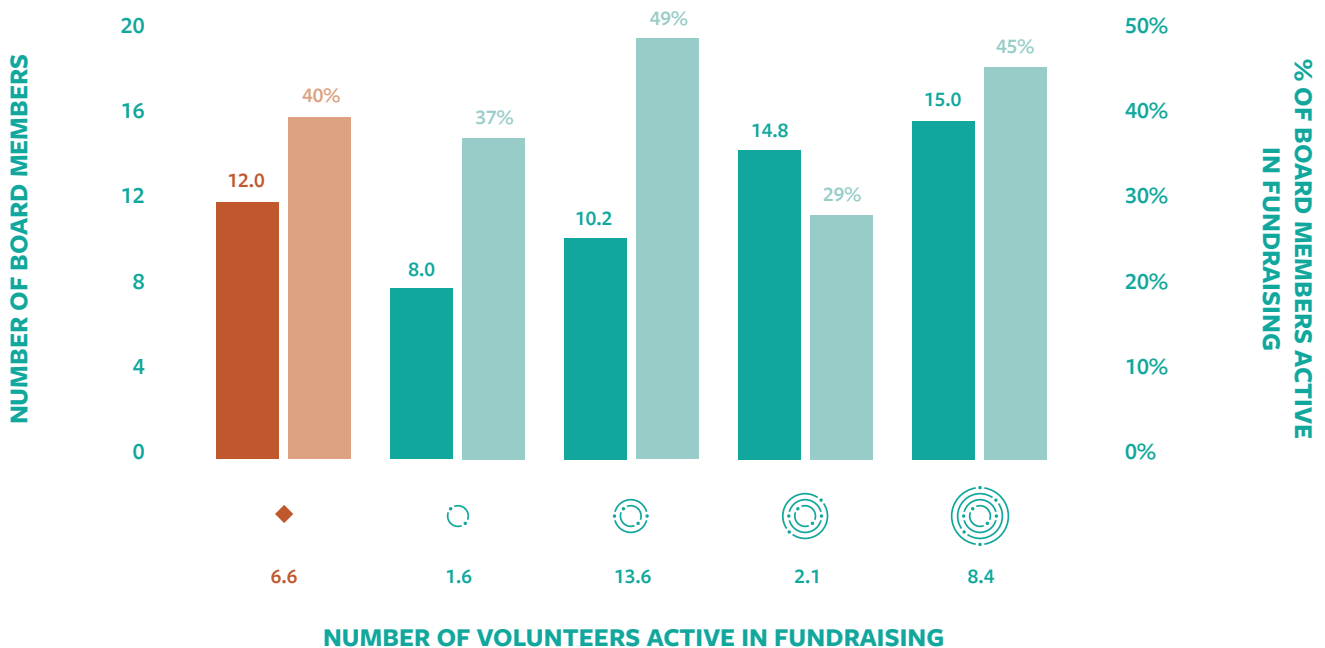


On average, the person responsible for individual donor fundraising work makes \$52,099 and has been with their organization for 5.2 years.



## Board and Volunteers

In addition to their hardworking staff, most organizations engage their board members and volunteers in fundraising. Once again this year, we found that only 40% of board members are truly active in cultivating and soliciting individual donors. In addition, the average organization only has between six and seven volunteers beyond their board involved in donor fundraising.



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# Technology

What technology can I use to support my fundraising?





The survey looked at two technologies to support fundraising: online fundraising platforms and databases.

### Online Fundraising Platform

Most organizations (58%) reported using some kind of online platform. Of these, one quarter reported using more than one platform.



**21 NETWORK FOR GOOD**

**9 RAZOO**

**4 CLICK & PLEDGE**

**4 PAYPAL**

- 3 CrowdRise
- 2 Amazon Smiles
- 2 FirstGiving
- 2 GiveMN
- 2 GoFundMe
- 2 Indiegogo
- 2 Salsa
- 1 Affectly
- 1 Bidding for Good
- 1 BidPal
- 1 Blackbaud
- 1 CauseVox
- 1 ColoradoGives
- 1 DonorSnap
- 1 eTapestry
- 1 FastTransact
- 1 Flipcause
- 1 Fundraise.com
- 1 Give Local
- 1 GiveGab
- 1 GlobalGiving
- 1 GoodWorld
- 1 Greater Giving
- 1 JustGive
- 1 Kimbia
- 1 Ministry Sync
- 1 MobileCause
- 1 NationBuilder
- 1 PledgeCents
- 1 PowerBase
- 1 Raiser's Edge
- 1 Rally
- 1 RallyBound
- 1 WeDidIt



### Database

Almost all (94%) of organizations reported using some kind of database. In addition to database names, we also collected data on how much organizations love their databases (a pre-condition to successful database usage), and how easy it was to get data out of their systems. Both were ranked on a five-point scale, with five being the highest. The table below also includes the total time for participants to complete the survey.

### This year's database All Stars are:

- DonorPerfect
- Little Green Light
- NeonCRM
- Salesforce

These databases had at least three users, they scored high marks on both love and ease of usage, and participants had a relatively short average time to take the survey.

*DonorPerfect and Little Green Light were also named as All Stars in last year's survey.*

Database	Count	Love Score (out of 5)	Ease Score (out of 5)	Time to Take Survey (in minutes)
DonorPerfect	12	♥♥♥♥♥	★★★★★	73
Salesforce	10	♥♥♥♥♥	★★★★★	54
eTapestry	8	♥♥♥♥♥	★★★★★	49
Excel	8	♥♥	★★★	131
Little Green Light	7	♥♥♥♥♥	★★★★★	67
Custom Database	6	♥♥♥♥♥	★★★★★	150
GiftWorks	5	♥♥♥♥♥	★★★	111
NeonCRM	5	♥♥♥♥♥	★★★★★	54
Salsa	5	♥♥♥	★★★	103
Bloomerang	4	♥♥♥♥♥	★★★★★	56
Donor Tools	3	♥♥♥♥	★★★	35
FileMaker	3	♥♥♥	★★★	90
Raiser's Edge	3	♥♥♥♥	★★★★★	102
Access	2	♥♥♥	★★★	148
Quickbooks	2	♥♥♥	★★★	150

# Technology

What technology can I use to support my fundraising



Database	Count	Love Score (out of 5)	Ease Score (out of 5)	Time to Take Survey (in minutes)
Abila	1	♥♥♥	★★★	15
Access	1	♥	★★★	120
Altru	1	♥♥♥	★★★	120
Aplos	1	♥♥♥	★★★	30
Apricot	1	♥♥♥	★★★	75
Blue State Digital	1	♥♥♥	★★★★	60
Choice Ticketing	1	♥♥♥	★★	60
Church Management Solutions	1	♥♥♥♥	★★★★	60
CiviCRM	1	♥♥♥♥	★★★	180
DonorSnap	1	♥♥♥	★★★	120
Exceed!	1	♥♥♥♥	★★★★	120
Google Spreadsheet	1	♥♥♥	★★★★	150
iMIS	1	♥♥	★★★	120
Membership	1	♥♥♥♥	★★★★	15
NationBuilder	1	♥♥	★★★	60
Outlook	1	♥♥	★★★	120
PowerBase	1	♥♥♥♥♥	★★★★★	10
Total Info	1	♥♥♥	★★★	180
WaterGrass	1	♥♥	★★★	180
WayCool	1	♥♥♥♥♥	★★★	75

*Note: several technology providers – namely DonorPerfect, Little Green Light, and AGH Strategies (a CiviCRM provider), NationBuilder, and Network for Good – are supporters of this year’s report. They, among with many others, assisted with recruiting participants, and may have affected the number of users of those technologies. Although, their participation did not affect the rankings or time reporting.*



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# Comparisons

**How does this data compare  
to other reports?**



# Comparisons

How does this data compare to other reports?



We believe our data is great, but there are lots of other data sources out there. Below are a few studies that look at similar statistics. Keep in mind that none of these studies is focused on the same universe as this report (individual donor fundraising for organizations under \$2 million), but we hope these statics provide more context to our data – and gives you a few more resources to check out.

## Retention Rate and Overall Growth

Source	Retention Rate	Overall Revenue Growth
<p><b>Fundraising Effectiveness Project</b></p> <p>The annual Fundraising Effectiveness Project (FEP) Survey collects fundraising data, including individual donor giving, foundation grants, and corporate donations, from nonprofit organizations. The FEP Survey Report enables participating groups to measure and compare their fundraising gain and loss percentages to those of similar organizations.</p> <p><a href="http://afpfep.org">afpfep.org</a></p>	46%	5.3%
<p><b>Blackbaud Charitable Giving Report</b></p> <p>The 2015 Charitable Giving Report includes overall giving data from 5,379 nonprofit organizations representing \$18.2 billion in total fundraising from 2015. The Report also includes online giving data from 3,983 nonprofits representing \$2.2 billion in online fundraising from 2015.</p> <p><a href="http://blackbaud.com/nonprofit-resources/charitablegiving">blackbaud.com/nonprofit-resources/charitablegiving</a></p>	--	5.5% (fundraising under \$1 million)
<p><b>Individual Donor Benchmark Project</b></p>	61%	55%

# Comparisons

How does this data compare to other reports?



## Online Fundraising

Source	Online Revenue Growth	Average Online Gift	Average Monthly Recurring Gift	% of Revenue from Online Donations
<p><b>M+R Benchmarks</b> The 2016 M+R Benchmarks</p> <p>Study collected data about email messaging, email list size, fundraising, online advocacy, web traffic, Facebook, Twitter, and mobile programs from 105 nonprofits for the calendar year of 2015. They analyzed the results of over 2.8 billion email messages sent to over 69 million list subscribers; more than \$481 million of online donations from over 13 million online gifts; and 8.2 million advocacy actions. <a href="http://mrbenchmarks.com">mrbenchmarks.com</a></p>	19%	<p>\$68 (<i>email</i>)</p> <p>\$102 (<i>other online</i>)</p>	<p>\$18 (<i>email</i>)</p> <p>\$24 (<i>other online</i>)</p>	--
<p><b>Blackbaud Charitable Giving Report</b></p>	8.3% ( <i>fundraising under \$1 million</i> )	--	--	8.1% ( <i>under \$1 million</i> )
<p><b>Network for Good Digital Giving Index</b></p> <p>Network for Good created the Digital Giving Index to provide insights on charitable giving for nonprofits seeking to strengthen relationships with donors and companies seeking to engage with consumers and employees. The Digital Giving Index examines giving behavior across Network for Good's online donation platform. <a href="http://networkforgood.com/digitalgivingindex">networkforgood.com/digitalgivingindex</a></p>	9%	<p>\$142 (<i>Giving Tuesday</i>)</p> <p>\$223 (<i>December 31</i>)</p> <p>\$119 (<i>disaster</i>)</p> <p>\$110 (<i>rest of year</i>)</p>	--	--
<p><b>Individual Donor Benchmark Project</b></p>	130% (9%*)	\$219	\$63	21%

\*For organizations with existing online giving programs of \$20,000 or more.

# Comparisons

How does this data compare to other reports?



## Communications

### Organizational Revenues

Source	\$250,000 or less*	\$250,001 to \$500,000*	\$500,000 to \$1 million*
<p><b>Nonprofit Marketing Guide's 2016 Nonprofit Communication Trends Report</b></p> <p>The Nonprofit Communications Trends Report is an annual survey of nonprofit communications professionals that reveals anticipated communications goals, channels, and frequency for the coming year, as well as information about nonprofit communications teams, their productivity, and their job satisfaction. Nonprofit Marketing Guide opens the survey each November and releases the report in January. <a href="http://NonprofitMarketingGuide.com/trends">NonprofitMarketingGuide.com/trends</a></p>	.5	.75	1.25
<b>Individual Donor Benchmark Project</b>	.36	.58	.7

## Salary

UnderDeveloped by Compasspoint ([compasspoint.org/underdeveloped](http://compasspoint.org/underdeveloped)) looks at many challenges to fundraising from 2,722 organizations of all shapes and sizes. They found the average salary for organizations with budgets under \$1 million to be \$49,141, which matches up with our finding of an average salary of \$49,283.

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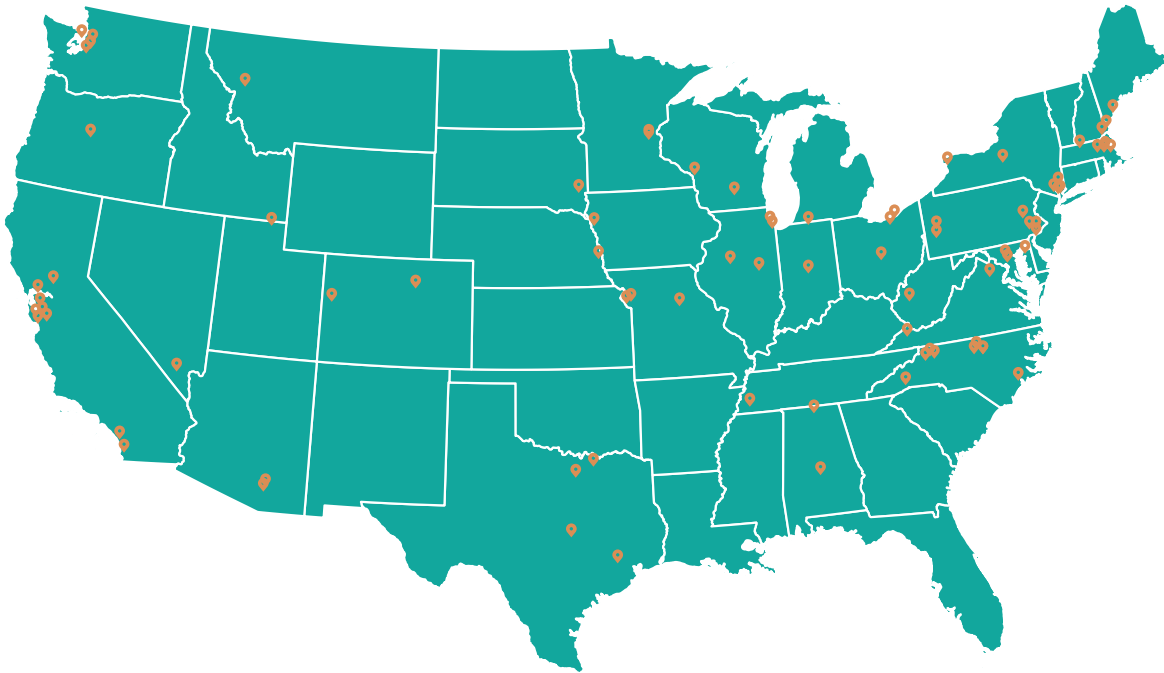
# Demographics



# Demographics



This year's 119 organizations are spread out across the US in 36 different states.



## Sizes

**26**

SUPER



**32**

LARGE



**33**

MEDIUM



**28**

SMALL



# Demographics

How does this data compare to other reports?



## Issue Focus



## Fundraising Focus



On average, organizations are almost 27 years old, and the median age is 20.5 years.

## Organization Age



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# Survey & Recruitment







# Survey & Results

The survey was conducted online from March 3rd through April 13th, 2016. Participants were recruited through a number of means including:

Outreach to past participants and those who downloaded the 2014 report:

- Traditional and social media outreach
- Emails through sponsoring companies and other partners
- Every attempt was made to ensure the survey was available to a wide audience of potential participants.

## 2015 Participating Organizations

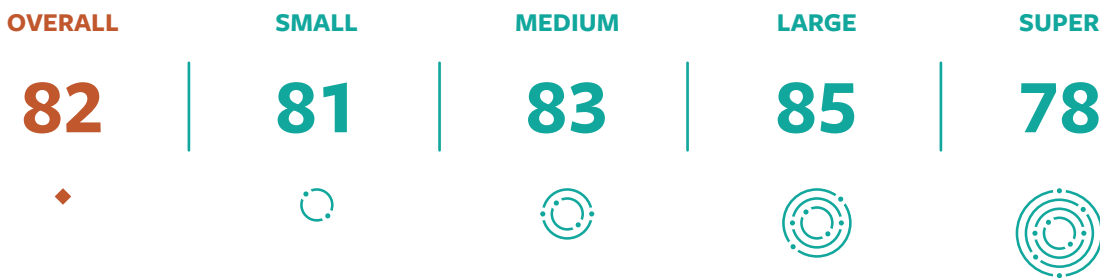
- |                                                 |                                               |                                            |
|-------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|
| A Time to Heal                                  | Friends of African Village Libraries          | PET MO-Columbia                            |
| Alliance for Peacebuilding                      | Friends of North Creek Forest                 | Philadelphia Area Disc Alliance            |
| American Lyric Theater                          | GAMA Foundation for Education and Research    | Pioneer Valley Symphony                    |
| Anabaptist Disabilities Network                 | Gathering Waters                              | Platte Land Trust                          |
| Angles                                          | Gay-Lesbian-Bisexual Transgender Pride        | Project: LEARN of Medina County            |
| Apparo                                          | Twin Cities                                   | Puente a la Salud Comunitaria              |
| Arise Citizens' Policy Project                  | Germantown Performing Arts Center             | QWOCMAP - Queer Women of Color Media       |
| Associated Artists of Winston-Salem             | Grassroots Institute for Fundraising Training | Arts Project                               |
| Association of Nature Center Administrators     | Hawaii Performing Arts Company                | RAD Remedy                                 |
| Bergen Volunteer Medical Initiative             | Heart to Heart International Children's       | Rainforest Foundation                      |
| Bradbury-Sullivan LGBT Community Center         | Medical Alliance                              | Rebuild Africa                             |
| Brattle Film Foundation                         | Her Health Women's Center                     | Resource Center for Women and Ministry     |
| The Bridge Academy                              | High Level Outcomes                           | in the South                               |
| Camp of Champions USA                           | Human Services Center                         | Roice-Hurst Humane Society                 |
| Catawba Riverkeeper Foundation                  | Idealware                                     | Samaritan Ministries of Hot Springs        |
| Center for Prevention Services                  | Independent Living Resources                  | Schoolhouse of Wonder                      |
| Chapel Hill Philharmonia                        | Jeannette Rankin Peace and Resource Center    | Science Club for Girls                     |
| Chester River Association                       | Jumping Mouse Children's Center               | SEEDS                                      |
| Christian Evangelistic Association              | Justice at Work                               | Send Hope                                  |
| Clean Air Coalition of Western New York         | Kheprw Institute                              | Sisters of the Presentation of the Blessed |
| Coalition for Compassionate Care of California  | Land Trust of North Alabama                   | Virgin Mary                                |
| The Colledge Settlement                         | The Latino Community Association              | Skookum Kids                               |
| Community Toolbox                               | Laudholm Trust                                | Spirit in Action                           |
| CUESA (Center for Urban Education about         | The Lighthouse Foundation                     | Store To Door                              |
| Sustainable Agriculture)                        | Literacy Advance of Houston                   | Street Youth Ministry of Austin            |
| Delaware Speech and Hearing Center              | Literacy Connects                             | Student Action with Farmworkers            |
| The Delores Project                             | LiveConnections                               | SunServe                                   |
| Democracy North Carolina                        | The LOFT: LGBT Community Services Center      | Triangle Flying Disc Association           |
| DRC, formerly Day Resource Center for           | Luka The Lion Foundation                      | Triangle Land Conservancy                  |
| the Homeless                                    | Mangrove Action Project                       | Tuolumne River Trust                       |
| Dress for Success Triangle                      | Master Gardeners                              | Twin City Stage                            |
| Durham Nativity School                          | Minnesota Prison Writing Workshop             | University YMCA                            |
| East Coast Greenway Alliance                    | Mondoweiss                                    | Wade Edwards Foundation (WELL)             |
| EESI (Environmental and Energy Study Institute) | Natural Heritage Land Trust                   | WakeUP Wake County                         |
| El Pueblo                                       | NC Conservation Network                       | White Oak-New Riverkeeper Alliance         |
| Ellerbe Creek Watershed Association             | NC Center for Public Policy Research          | The Women of Global Change                 |
| Family Matters                                  | NC Interfaith Power & Light                   | Worcester County Food Bank                 |
| Family Reading Partnership                      | Neurofit Networks/Parkinson Wellness          | WV Citizen Action Group                    |
| Farrington Nature Linc                          | Recover (PWR!)                                | Yankee Golden Retriever Rescue             |
| First Congregational Church-UCC                 | NYCMedics                                     | Youth Volunteer Corps                      |
| FLBM (Finger Lakes Boating Museum)              | Ohio Citizen Action/Ohio Citizen Action       |                                            |
| Foster Kinship                                  | Education Fund                                |                                            |
| The Foundation for Excellence in Faith and Work | Ossining Food Pantry                          |                                            |
| Fred T. Korematsu Institute                     | Partners for Youth Opportunity                |                                            |

# Survey & Results



It took organizations an average of 82 minutes to complete the survey, with larger organizations having slightly quicker response time.

## Time in Minutes



A stronger influencer of the amount of time it takes to complete the survey is how much organizations reported liking their database. Organizations who ranked their databases as a 5 took significantly less time on average to complete the survey.

*On a scale of one to five, how much do you like your database?*



Scale	Time in Minutes
5	60
4	78
3	98
2	88
1	86

The median time it took to complete the survey was one hour, meaning half of respondents were able to complete the survey in an hour or less.

# Survey & Results

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## Your Results

Please answer the first set of questions for the calendar year 2015, or your most recently completed fiscal year. Please do not include non-numeric characters such as dollar signs (\$) or commas (,).

## Survey Questions

**1. What was your organization's total income/revenue in 2015?**

**2. What were your organization's total expenses in 2015?**

**3. What was the total amount raised from individuals in 2015?**

*Please include online and offline donations from direct mail, email, major donors, and other individual donor strategies.*

**4. How many individuals donated in 2015?**

**5. What is your retention rate?**

*Retention rate is the percentage of individuals who gave in 2014 that also gave in 2015.*

**6. How much did you raise online from individuals in 2015?**

*Please do not include recurring (monthly, quarterly, etc.) in this total.*

**7. How many individuals gave online in 2015?**

**8. How much was given in total through recurring (monthly, quarterly, etc.) donations in 2015?**

**9. How many individuals made recurring donations in 2015?**

**10. How much did you raise from individuals giving \$1,000 or more (in total) in 2015?**

**11. How many individuals made gifts of \$1,000 or more (in total) in 2015?**

**12. Does your organization offer memberships?**

**13. Yes, No, Not applicable. If yes, what are the levels of membership:**

**14. Did you use the 2015 calendar year to answer the above questions?**

*Yes, No, Not applicable. If no, what time period did you use?*



# Survey & Results

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## Past Results

This next set of questions focuses on your past results.

**15. What was your organization's total income/revenue in 2014?**

**16. What was your organization's total income from individual donors in 2014?**

**17. What was your organization's total income from online donations in 2014?**

**18. Over the past five years, how has your organization's dependence on foundations changed?**

- Greatly reduced
- Reduced
- Same
- Increased
- Greatly increased
- Do not know
- Not applicable
- Comments:

## Your People

**1. How many people are on your email list?**

*Choose the list most commonly used for e-newsletters, action alerts, etc. Feel free to estimate.*

**2. How many people like your organization on Facebook?**

**3. How many people are on your postal mail list?**

*Choose the list most commonly used for newsletters, direct mail appeals, etc. Please feel free to estimate.*

**4. How many total Full-Time Equivalents did you have on staff in 2015?**

*A Full-Time Equivalent is equal to one person working a full week. For example, if you have a full-time Executive Director, a three quarters time program staffer, and a half-time administrator, then you have 2.25 Full-Time Equivalents on staff. Please use this definition in the below questions.*



# Survey & Results

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**5. How many total Full-Time Equivalents were devoted to individual donor fundraising in 2015?**

*Please do not include marketing, communications, grant writing, volunteer management, event planning or other activities not directly focused on individual donor fundraising. If individual donor fundraising work is 50% of someone's full-time job, that is 0.5 FTE.*

**6. How many total Full-Time Equivalents worked on communications and marketing in 2015?**

**7. What is the title of the person primarily responsible for individual donor fundraising?**

**8. What is the approximate annual salary of your lead individual donor fundraiser? Please feel free to estimate.**

**9. How long has your lead individual donor fundraiser been on staff in this position?**

**10. How many board members did you have in 2015?**

**11. How many of your board members actively participated in individual donor fundraising during 2015?**

*Active participation includes activities like providing introductions to donors, attending major donor meetings, soliciting donors by phone, writing personal letters to friends, among other significant activities. It does not include writing notes on annual appeals or making thank you phone calls (although those are good things).*

**12. How many volunteers (other than board members) are actively involved in individual donor fundraising?**

*Please use the description of 'active' above.*

**13. How many face-to-face meetings with donors or potential donors did you have in 2015?**

*These meetings could have been to develop relationships, cultivate prospects, ask for donations, or thank for support. Feel free to estimate.*

## Organizational Background

Please tell us a little more about your organization. This information will help us interpret the data and give you more personalized results.

**1. Did your organization have a fundraising plan in 2015? Yes, No, Not applicable.**

# Survey & Results



**2. If you did have a fundraising plan in 2015, what did your plan include? Please choose all that apply.**

- **Calendar of activities**
- **List of overall fundraising strategies and goals**
- **Detailed breakdown of fundraising activities**
- **Assessment of 2014 fundraising results**
- **Other**
- *If you chose 'other', please specify:*

**3. If you did have a fundraising plan in 2015, how much did you actually use it?**

*Be honest! This is a no-judgment zone.*

- 5: All the time - I often consulted and adjusted our plan.**
- 4: I looked at it on a regular basis.**
- 3: I checked in on it a couple of times last year.**
- 2: It mostly sat on the shelf.**
- 1: Oh yeah...I forgot we had a plan...**
- Not applicable.**

**4. What is your biggest challenge in developing and executing individual donor fundraising strategies (like a new direct mail campaign or a recurring giving program)? Please choose all that apply.**

- **Time**
- **Expense**
- **Technology**
- **Buy-in from decision-makers**
- **Knowledge and expertise**
- **Staff support**
- **Other**
- *If you chose 'other', please specify:*

**5. If you had more time, money, support, etc.: What's the first thing you would do or invest in to further your individual donor work?**

**6. In 2015, did you actively use any online fundraising platforms (Network for Good, Razoo, Crowdrise, FirstGiving, etc.)? If so, which ones?**

**7. What is the name of your primary individual donor fundraising database?**



8. On a scale of one to five, how much do you like your database?

- 5: I love it!
- 4: I like it.
- 3: It's okay.
- 2: I don't really like it.
- 1: I hate it!
- Not applicable.

9. Why did you rank your database in this way?

10. On a scale of one to five, how easy was it to get the data for this survey from your database, and other data sources?

- 5: Super easy.
- 4: Easy.
- 3: Easy for some things, harder for others.
- 2: Hard.
- 1: Very hard.
- Not applicable.

11. Why did you rank your database in this way?

12. How long did it take you and/or your staff to gather this data and complete the survey?

13. What year was your organization founded?

14. What is your organization's zip code? If you have several locations, use the zip code for the main office.

15. At what level is your individual donor fundraising primarily focused?

- City or county
- Multi-county region of the state
- Statewide
- Multi-state
- National
- International
- Other
- Not applicable
- *If you chose 'other', please specify:*



**16. On what issues does your organization focus its work?**

*Please choose all that apply. Categories are from Giving USA.*

- Environmental/Conservation
- Public-society Benefit
- Health
- Human Services
- Education
- Animal Welfare
- International
- Arts, Culture, and Humanities
- Other
- *If you chose 'other', please specify:*

**17. What strategies does your organization use to pursue its mission? Please choose all that apply.**

- Public policy advocacy
- Organizing
- Direct service
- Capacity building
- Regranting
- Other
- *If you chose 'other', please specify:*

**18. How did you hear about the Individual Donor Benchmark survey? Please choose all that apply.**

- Ravela
- DonorPerfect
- NeonCRM
- CiviCRM
- Little Green Light
- AGH Strategies
- Grassroots Institute for Fundraising Training (GIFT)
- Third Space Studio
- BC/DC Ideas
- Network for Good
- Other
- *If you chose 'other', please specify:*

**19. Last question! Got any feedback on the survey? *We'd love to hear it!***





[thirdspacestudio.com](http://thirdspacestudio.com)