



*The State of*  
**Nonprofit  
Marketing**

**2025 Edition**

# The State of Nonprofit Marketing: *2025 Edition*

A bird's eye view	3
Getting in the weeds	4
<b>1. Digital is the direction, so why do we feel adrift?</b>	6
Let's be direct about it	7
Don't forget to click send	9
<b>2. Where's the money: the big question mark around funding</b>	10
From FaceTime to face-to-face	12
<b>3. Are your donors ghosting you?</b>	13
That third email's a charm	15
<b>4. "Hey kids, what's for dinner?"</b>	16
<b>5. "Science rules!"</b>	18
The empirical email	20
<b>6. Ad granted</b>	21
What did we miss here?	22
Is this where the call to action goes?	23
Notes on methodology	24
More about our community	24

# A bird's eye view

2025 is shaking out to be a year of uncertainty. From the Trump administration's federal funding freeze to revolutionary technologies, we are in the midst of strange times. And nonprofits often feel the reverberations first in these moments of transition.

But because nonprofits fit into the no-man's-land between traditional corporate structures and individual altruism, they're often limited in scope by budgets and the incoming and outgoing tides of major donors and grant issuers.

This isn't ideal, especially when nonprofits are tasked with feeding those experiencing food insecurity, housing people experiencing homelessness, and defending our fragile and beautiful planet.

## *What does the path forward look like?*

Simple answers only provide momentary relief. But there are a few principles.

First, though the future is unknown, we have reason to be optimistic. Your organization is at work today, bringing hope and relief and beauty into this world. Feathr has the unique opportunity of working with so many nonprofits who are doing so much good, which means we have little reason for pessimism.

Second, nonprofits must continue to operate effectively in complex business and regulatory environments. There are no gains from moral grandstanding or naivety. You are fighting the good fight, and it's just that — a fight. It's going to be uphill from here, but you knew that when you signed up.

Third, do what you can today. We already mentioned it's a fight. And if you stay in the ring for some time, there'll be rounds that don't go your way. But don't hang back on the ropes. Get back to swinging. We don't have the heart in this guide to pretend it's always easy.

And there's zero blame for why you feel stretched thin — we aren't in round one anymore.

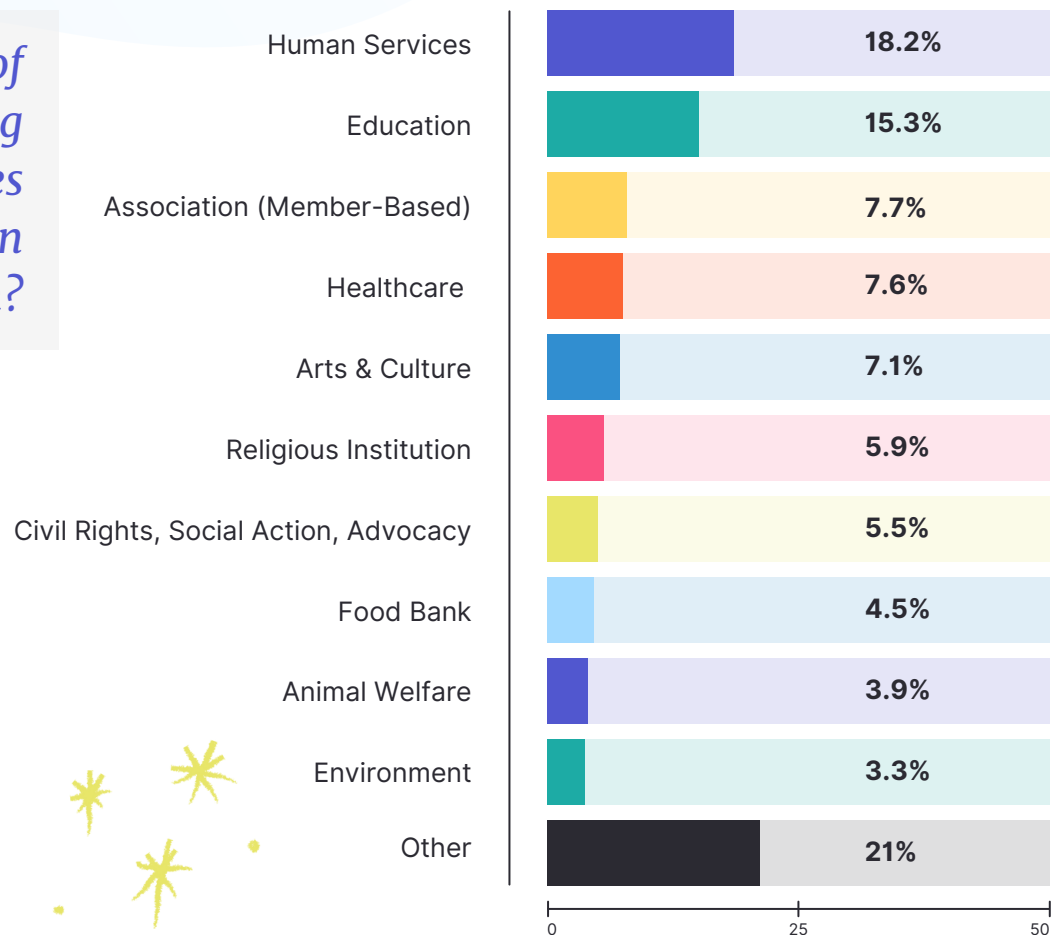
But please don't feel like you have to do everything we're about to suggest. Life happens one day at a time. And, don't forget, you have a lot of people rooting for you.



# Getting in the weeds

This year, we heard back from 490 people who work in organizations in the nonprofit world. They answered questions around what's working in marketing, what isn't, and what their plan forward is.

*Which of the following verticals does your organization align with?*



**34.7%**

Marketing/  
Communications

**25.7%**

Development/  
Fundraising

**24.3%**

Executive  
Leadership

**5.3%**

Programs

**1.6%**

Membership

**8.4%**

Other

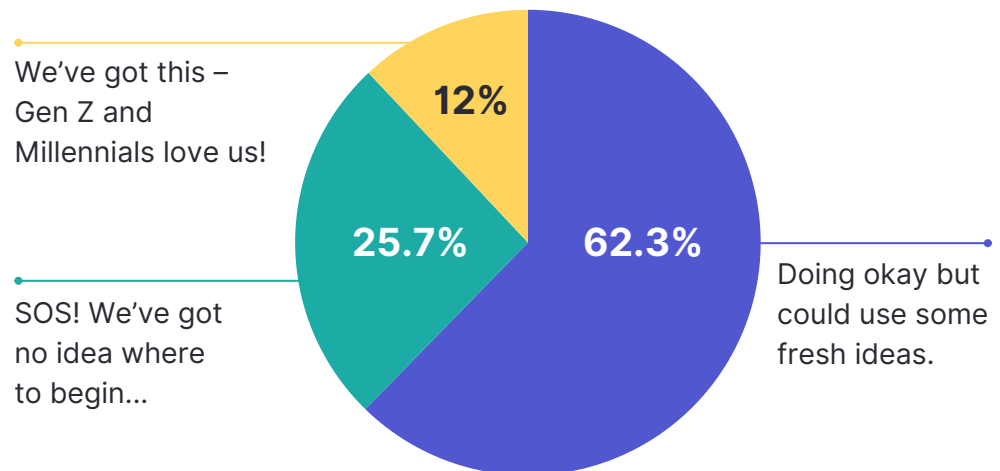
*What is your role within the organization?*

Again, there aren't simple answers to how to move forward. What would work for one nonprofit would be off pitch for another. But it never hurts to gain a fresh perspective. And we hope that's what this offers.

Here are the top takeaways we gleaned from all the insights these generous respondents shared with us:

- **Acquisition is a top priority, retention isn't.** Bain & Company found that within financial services, [“A 5% increase in customer retention produces more than a 25% increase in profit.”](#) You may not be in the same industry, but the idea holds true. When someone sticks with your organization, the benefits snowball.
- **How do we talk to the kids?** Nonprofits understand the strategic value of engaging with wider demographic bases, expanding their funding sources, and as a result, creating greater resiliency. However, only 12% of our respondents felt they had a healthy relationship with Gen Z and millennial cohorts — nearly 26% admitted to being entirely lost while 62.3% said they needed fresh ideas. Well, here they come!

*How concerned  
are you with your  
organization's  
ability to reach  
younger  
generations?*



- **Google Ad Grants is the single largest opportunity nonprofits are walking by.** Over half of our respondents aren't leveraging the Google Ad Grant, and of the 32% who are, more than half of them find it challenging. But this is [free money to spend](#). And with uncertainty around other funding sources, we all need some easy wins.

*Maybe 2025 is the year of making life a little less difficult. We call it generosity when we make other people's lives easier, but we call it laziness when we do the same for ourselves.*

Small, effective changes can yield oversized results. When the simplest actions drive the greatest impact (like using free Google Ad Grant money or doubling down on retention), it's not about convenience — it's about making the right decision for your organization. Tell *that* to the board!

# 1. Digital is the direction, so why do we feel adrift?

When asked how nonprofits were approaching 2025 in terms of their channel mix, 50.8% of respondents plan to increase investment in digital advertising. The second and third places go to events with 43.4% and email coming in at 40.0%.

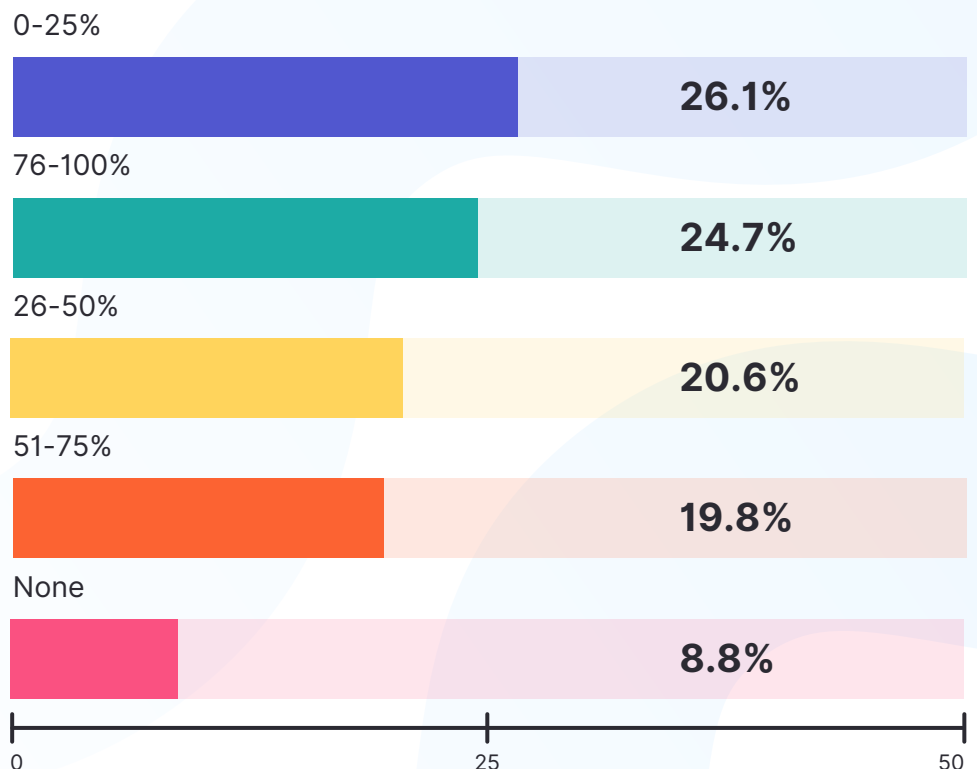
But looking backward, email marketing, Facebook, Instagram, and events were the four most effective channels in 2024. Even these two stats are sending mixed messages.

It's clear that hybrid models are winning. People are social creatures. We get tired of staring at a screen all day or talking into a phone.

So how hybrid are we today?

When asked what percentage of fundraising campaigns were currently in digital marketing, only 8.6% had no current budget. Here's what the rest budgeted on digital:

*What percentage of your fundraising campaigns leverage digital marketing?*



In many ways these are healthy responses. Every nonprofit is going to have a different ideal mix for their channels; they're serving unique groups of people. Where we will weigh in and say that something feels a little off is with the 8.6% that aren't online.

This isn't the first time we're going to use a financial analogy, but diversification matters in marketing too. It isn't a good idea to put all your eggs in one basket.

And the biggest problem with doing that in marketing is that your audience members are going to start looking very similar to one another. You want all your supporters to be similarly passionate about your mission, but you're limiting your growth if they all look the same too.

Different audience demographics prefer different channels and content formats. It will be to your advantage to diversify fundraising campaigns to better reach these distinct supporters, giving each person the opportunity to engage you on their own terms.

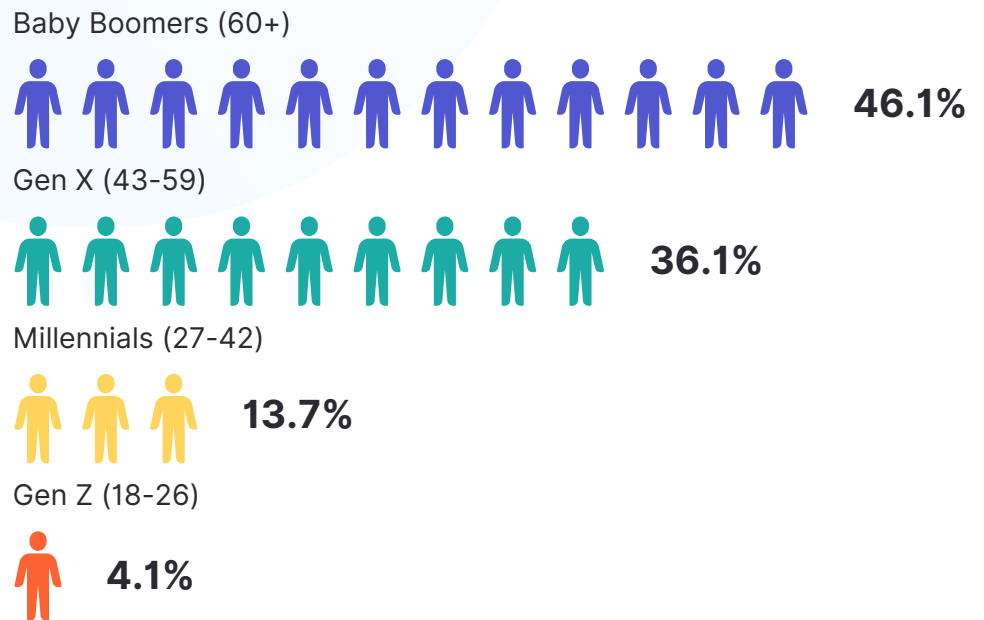


## Let's be direct about it



Aleksander Levental, Feathr's CEO, is such a believer in needing a shift in thinking that he says, "Organizations have to start using digital to engage younger generations. What happens when all these boomers stop opening their direct mail pieces?"

*Which generation represents the largest segment of your supporter base?*



And though his statement is bold, Aleks has a point. Boomers dominate as a funding source, bringing in 46% of donations. Gen X is behind at 36%, but Gen Z and millennials only scrape together 17.6% — and that's when they're combined. This is entirely unsustainable.

As far as your peers are concerned, however, 79.6% plan on maintaining or increasing their investment in direct mail. And only 3.6% will set aside a total of zero dollars for the channel.

*Do you plan on using direct mail in 2025?*

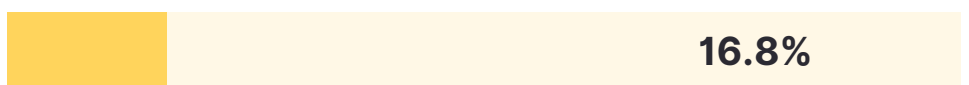
Yes, but we will maintain our current level of usage.



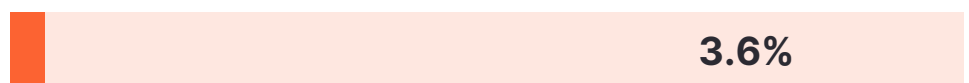
Yes, we plan to increase our direct mail usage.



Yes, but we plan to reduce our current level of usage.



No, we plan to eliminate direct mail.



We do think that direct mail has its time and place. Marketing is very much about identifying what's working and making it work better (isn't that why email investment is going up?). So if direct mail is working, keep at it. But this shouldn't be used as a license to put all your eggs in that basket.



For one, it's an expensive channel. Since 2023, [mailing rates have shot up the most in USPS's history](#), making it less accessible to direct mail marketers. As if that's not enough to be worried about, the Trump administration is threatening to lay off upwards of 10,000 postal workers or even privatize the service. This would drive up costs further and create other disruptions that make direct mail a less predictable channel for driving donations.

But even if you push through those challenges, the questions remain: What are you doing to build younger donor bases? Do you know how direct mail is performing? Are you getting better results for the higher costs? Have you [connected it with tracked link campaigns](#), so you actually know what's happening? Or is continuing direct mail more about not rocking the boat?

## Don't forget to click send

All this talk of direct mail reminds us of the most important kind of mail: email.

You likely already know how important email is to your marketing efforts. M+R Benchmarks found that [email alone brought in 16% of all digital fundraising revenue](#). But how tied in with your overall digital strategy is email?

Do you know which [segments are most engaged](#) with your email content? Are you comparing your results with email to your social or digital ad campaigns? So how does it stack up?

Our bet is that email is significantly outpacing other channels at your organization. And if so,

one of the easiest and most impactful strategies is to squeeze every last bit of goodness out of it.

And while you might be worried about flooding your donors' inboxes, the reality is that most organizations are sending fewer emails than they should. More frequent, well-targeted emails lead to higher engagement rates and donations — not unsubscribes.

Donors who care about your mission want to hear from you, and a steady cadence of updates, impact stories, and timely asks will keep you top of mind.

“

*Integrating your CRM with your email platform is a game changer. Any time one of my fundraisers updates something in Raiser's Edge, all of that is synced directly into Feathr. I don't have to worry about it.*

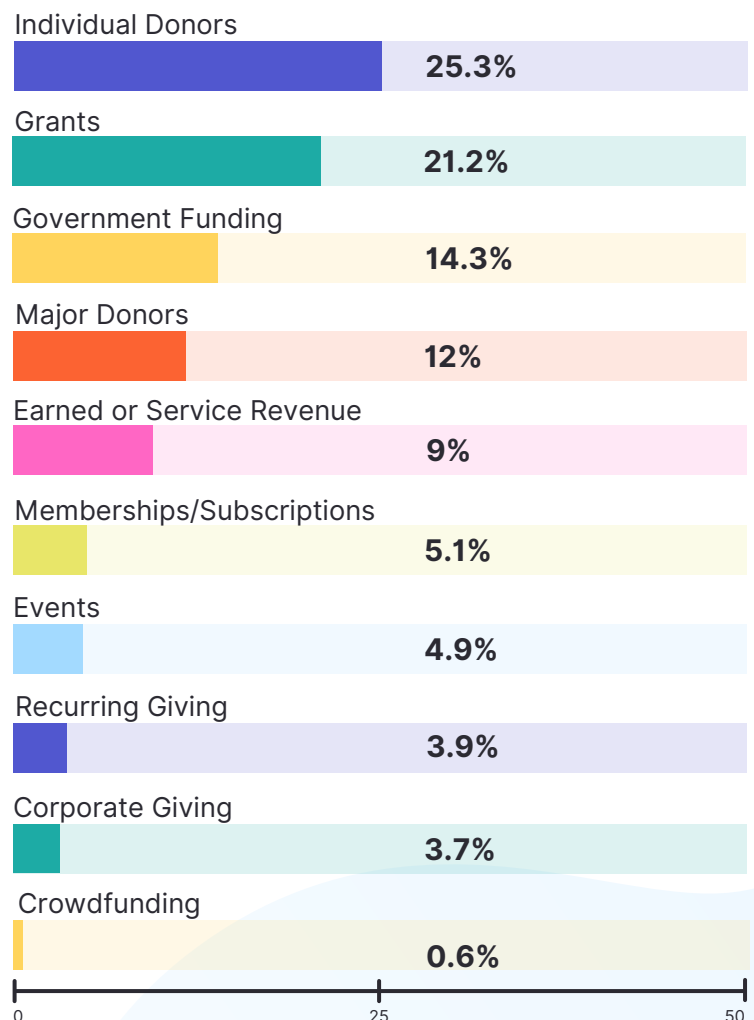
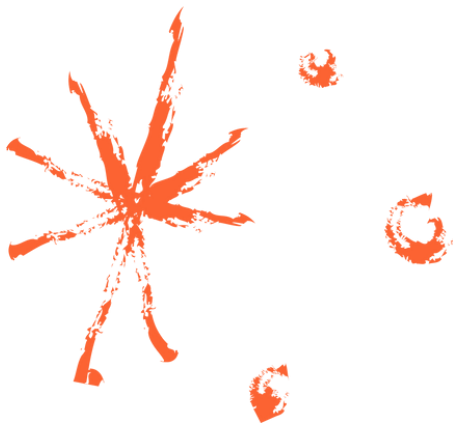
– Emily Weddle  
Chief Digital Content &  
Communications Officer, AFIPO

# 2. Where's the money: the question mark around funding

These are strange times we live in. If you're an organization that has historically been funded with grants or through other government sources, we're guessing you may have landed here for that single reason.

But know that you aren't alone in considering what fundraising will look like beyond 2025. Things are shifting rapidly today, in every sector, and every nonprofit needs to create greater resilience by building additional funding streams.

*What is the primary  
source of funding for  
your organization?*



Of those surveyed, 35.5% said their primary funding source was either government funding or grants, 25.3% named individual donors as their main source, and 12% called out major donors specifically.

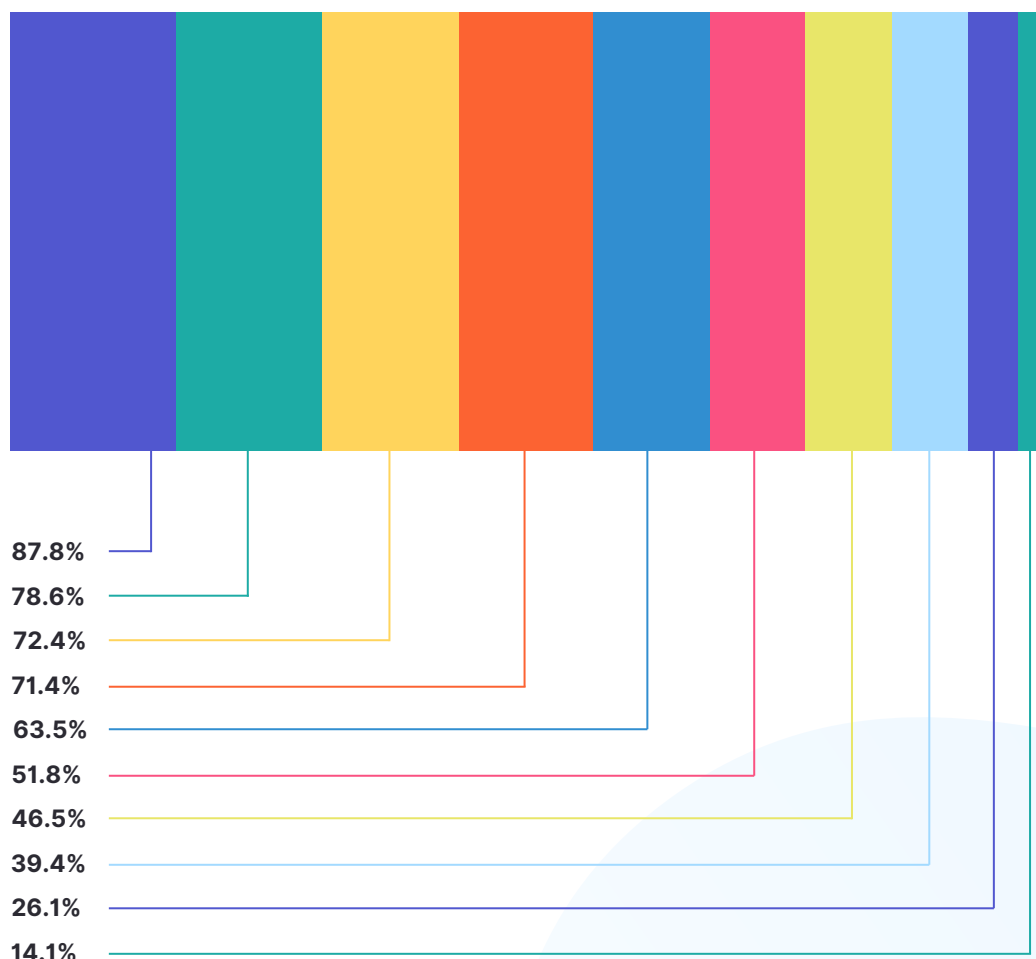
Three that ended up closer to the bottom were earned revenue at 8.8%, recurring gifts at 4%, and memberships or subscriptions at 5%.

We'll talk further on building new connections with younger generations, but one of the best ways is going to be through recurring gifts or subscriptions. It's easier for millennials and zoomers to [pay a little every month rather than a lump sum](#) at the end of the year. And the nonprofits that end up building long-term relationships across generations are going to meet supporters where they are.

Also, these recurring gifts and subscriptions can give your nonprofit a better ability to anticipate annual revenues. And this is foundational when building marketing budgets and allocating funds.

## What are all of the sources of funding your organization relies on?

Individual Donors  
Grants  
Recurring Giving  
Major Donors  
Events  
Corporate Giving  
Government Funding  
Earned or Service Revenue  
Memberships/Subscriptions  
Crowdfunding



When asked the sources of their revenue, these were the top five responses: individual donors with 87.8%, grants with 78.6%, recurring gifts with 72.4%, major donors with 71.4%, and events with 63.5%.

# From FaceTime to face-to-face



In-person events have seen a resurgence over the past few years. More than three quarters of those surveyed — 77.2% to be exact — brought in revenue through events.

This alone is worth celebrating, since it's been a bumpy ride since 2020. But another, less obvious, perk of events being back is that they often come with some sponsors attached to them. And there's probably a lot more you could be doing to capitalize on that.

Feathr's CEO Aleks believes this group is an untapped source of wealth: "Your sponsors likely

have more money to burn than you do. Rake in some of those dollars for your cause by selling sponsored retargeting packages. They'll go a longer way for your sponsors, and you can sell them year-round."

Companies are sponsoring your events because they want to get in front of your people. So why don't you give them [the opportunity to reach those people online every day?](#) And just like you sell a physical sponsorship, consider offering them a digital one so they can get more exclusive, measurable access to your audience?

*Are events  
a source  
of revenue  
for your  
organization?*

**77.2%**  
Yes

**22.8%**  
No

Maybe we're getting ahead of ourselves, but we think 2025 should be a year of exponential growth for your nonprofit. Engage younger generations, especially through digital channels and the Google Ad grant, organize even more exciting events, and prioritize current relationships (retention) over acquisition.

This is the path to resiliency: diversified revenue streams, larger pools of partners, long-term donor relationships, and agility in positioning. With a forecast of economic uncertainty, organizations that will find stability will navigate to it themselves. They aren't going to find a lot of help from outside.

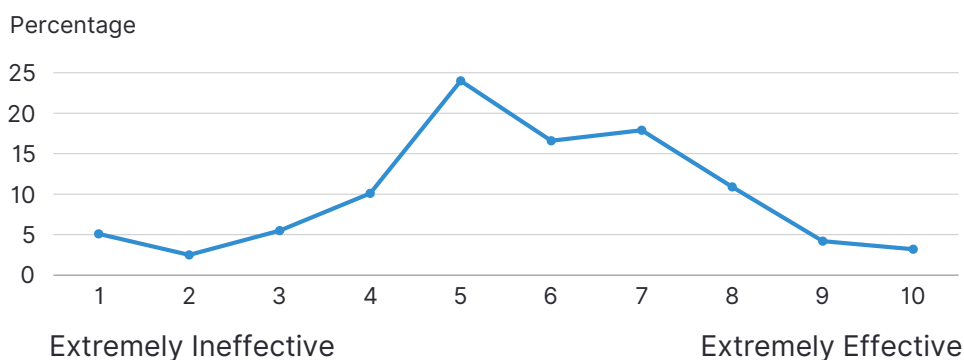
# 3 • Are your donors ghosting you?



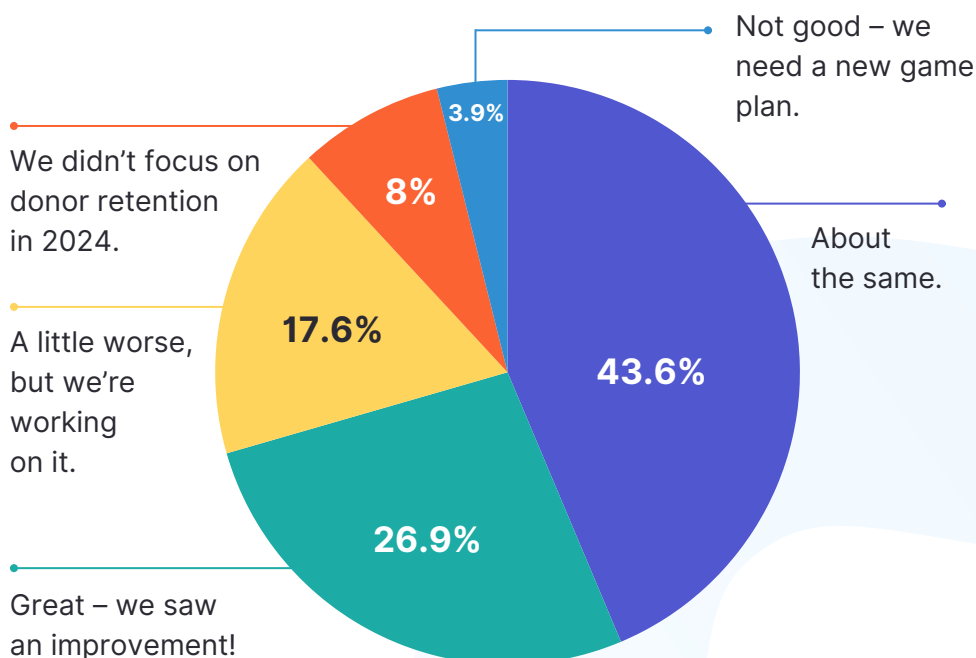
After that first gift, too many donors vanish without a trace. But keeping donors engaged isn't just nice to have — it's one of the easiest ways to boost long-term fundraising success.

*How effective is your first-time donor retention strategy?*

## 5.7 Average Rating



*How did your donor retention efforts in 2024 compare with 2023?*



When asked how effective their first-time donor retention strategy was on a scale from one to ten, only 18.1% put it between eight and ten while 68.6% put it between four and seven. That's solidly "mid" (zoomers don't like things that are "mid" — they're expecting better from life).

Here's another "mid" statistic for you. When comparing 2024 retention rates with 2023 results, 43.6% of respondents said they looked about the same, 26.9% saw an improvement, and 29.5% either didn't focus on retention or saw a decline.

It's worth mentioning again: ["A 5% increase in customer retention produces more than a 25% increase in profit."](#)

This is low-hanging fruit you're letting drop off the tree.

### *What are your organization's top three marketing priorities for the next 12 months?*



Donor retention placed in the top three priorities for 2025, but it came in well behind brand awareness and donor acquisition.

We believe nonprofits need to grow through building brand awareness and recognition, but we also think retention needs to stop perpetually getting the short end of the stick.

Sustainable growth requires a rebalancing between donor acquisition and retention efforts. Again, are we afraid to rock the boat? What's really bringing in the lion's share of donations for your nonprofit? Do you know?

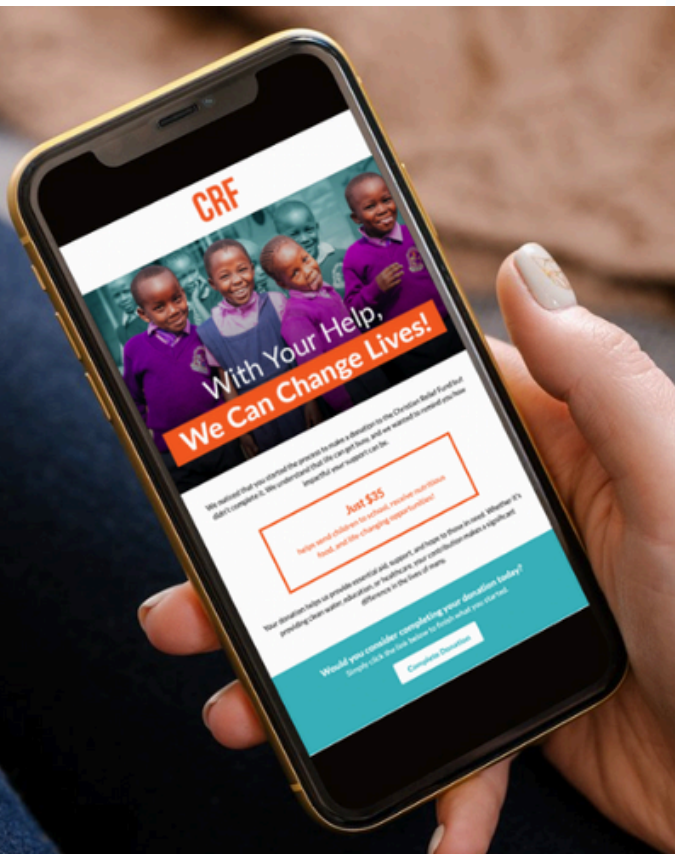
## That third email's a charm

We're at it again, talking about email. When it comes to retention, there isn't some secret you're missing; it's really as [simple as an email](#). You have their contact if they've donated or volunteered, so don't waste a golden opportunity.

One of the keys to retention is building the messaging around the unique group of people you're talking with. You already know your major donors are different from your first-time donors. But do you have different [email drip campaigns](#) for each of these segments?

This may be overused, but it's because Maya Angelou is so good: "At the end of the day people won't remember what you said or did, they will remember how you made them feel."

Your first-time donors are going to come back for more if you take the time to acknowledge their gift, and more importantly, show them the difference it made. So get out there and start typing up that thank-you email, and be sure to follow it up with impact stories.



“

*Unlike our more traditional campaigns, in Feathr we were able to follow the sponsor all the way to the donation, knowing exactly how long they stayed on the page, with all the data that came with it.*

– Caleb Dansby  
Director of Marketing,  
Christian Relief Fund

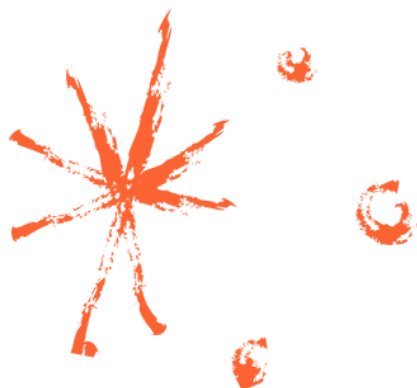


# 4. “Hey kids, what’s for dinner?”

Haven’t we talked enough about those zoomers and millennials? Nope. They may not be in a place to be your primary donors over the next couple of years, but over the next two decades we’ll all go through one of [the greatest wealth transfers in history](#).

Then these age groups are going to be awfully important.

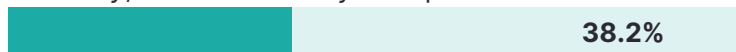
*What are you planning to do in the next 12 months to attract younger donors and supporters?*



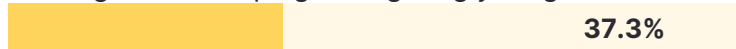
Create/enhance our presence on social media platforms.



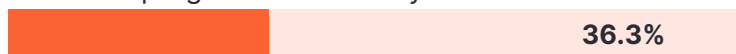
Honestly, we’re not sure yet - open to ideas!



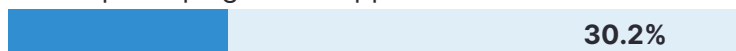
Run digital ad campaigns targeting younger audiences.



Offer different opportunities to get involved, like volunteer programs or advisory boards.



Develop campaigns that appeal to Gen Z and Millennials.



Leverage peer-to-peer fundraising.



Update our positioning to resonate with young people.



Partner with influencer to reach younger audiences.



Use text messaging campaigns.



Other



Much of the reason why we aren’t seeing enough participation from these younger groups is simply a reflection of their current discretionary spending. Younger generations are nearly always going to have less in savings, and earn more later in their career. But this problem is a bit exacerbated at the moment with [cost of living outpacing wage growth by miles](#).



But that's enough woe and dread.

Younger generations do care about your mission, and this is clear from who's volunteering. From our findings, Gen X is the most frolicsome at 27.5% with millennials composing 24.5%, boomers 23.3%, and Gen Z 9.3%. This looks rather healthy.

But our CEO, Aleks, has some practical ideas on how personnel choices may help: "Hire some millennials! And we know this next one is even more absurd; pay them well and put them on the board. Look, they may not know some of the things you know, but they also know a few things you don't."

It isn't going to work to pay millennials and zoomers just enough to scrape by, second guess their ideas for building connections with their generational peers, and then be surprised your donor base isn't booming (or did we mean zooming?).

We all need to work hard to expand the range of voices we listen to. Younger generations need to work as hard (or even harder) than their elders in this, but we will all pay dearly if we choose to shut each other out.

And for those making the key decisions at nonprofits, this isn't only about building personal relationships. It's about your organization's ability to meet the future. The next generation of major donors likely won't be reached through direct mail. They're going to be found and engaged online.

And they probably won't think in the same ways or say the same things. That's one of the reasons it's so important to have a diverse team at your nonprofit. So that you can better engage with your diverse community of supporters.

And to carry us over to our next section, let's sum things up here with a fitting quote from Bill Nye, the science guy: "Everyone you will ever meet knows something you don't."



# 5. “Science rules!”



Bill Nye also said:

*“Science is the best idea humans have ever had. The more people who embrace that idea, the better.”*

And this completely applies to nonprofit marketing.

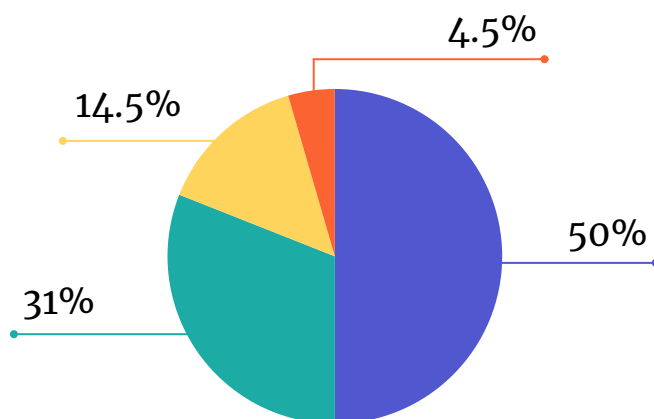
Whenever you’re able to transfer the decisions of marketing from gut feelings to data-inspired hypotheses, the better your campaigns will perform. Ok, that’s not actually a promise (those don’t exist in science), only a hypothesis. But let’s test it!

Only 31.2% of nonprofits surveyed always use past data to inform current marketing strategies while 49.6% do sometimes and 19.2% rarely or never use data when building campaigns.

NextAfter, an organization dedicated to helping nonprofits build better fundraising campaigns, says in their [guide to A/B testing](#): “Relying on your own intuition is no better than flipping a coin to determine which version is better.”

We may be a little more generous since this is your audience. You know them better than a completely unbiased spectator (e.g. a coin). But we’re not arguing against NextAfter’s conclusion. It’s better to have good reasons for your decisions than not.

*Do you use data from past campaigns to inform your marketing strategies?*

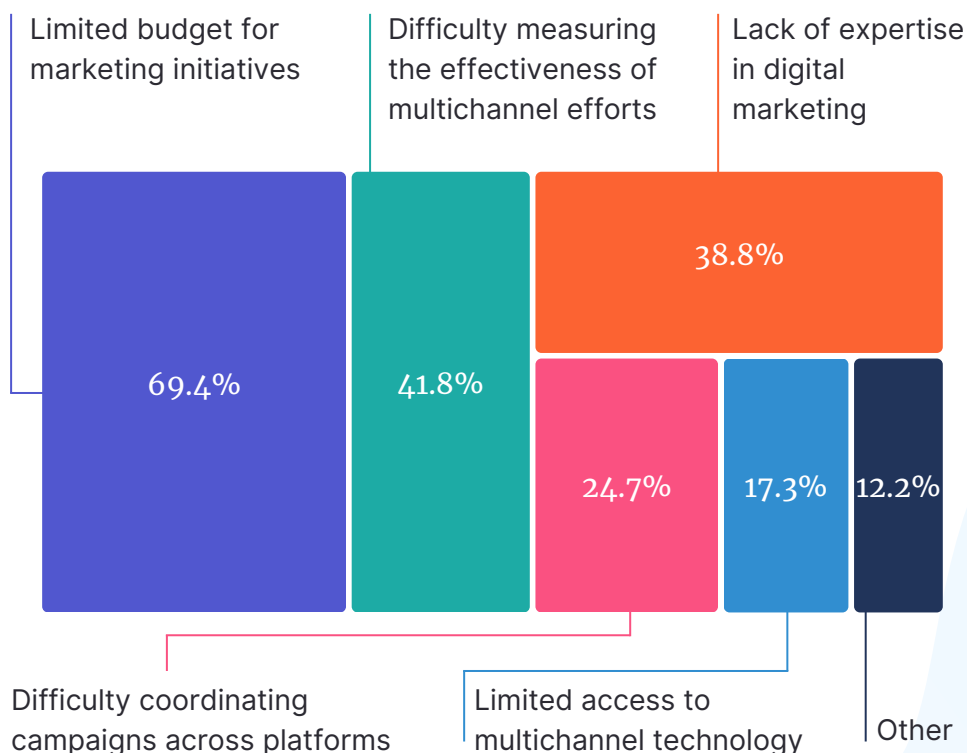


- Sometimes – it depends on the campaign.
- Always – I’m a huge data nerd.
- Rarely – I’m just trying to get things out the door!
- Never – I don’t really know where to begin.

So why aren’t more organizations building more scientific campaigns?

Let’s bring in a few more stats to shed some light on the topic. We asked nonprofits to check off any and every reason they found it difficult to build multichannel marketing campaigns, and these were their answers.

## What challenges have you faced in implementing a multichannel marketing strategy?



We aren't going to sugarcoat these obstacles. They absolutely exist for many nonprofits who are attempting to take their marketing to the next level.

And these things don't work themselves out in organizations overnight. Change isn't easy. So, if you hear one thing from us — it isn't blame, it's an invitation.

We get that it's hard to move toward data-backed campaigns with the obstacles you're facing. But the reality is that you have a much higher probability of finding success through science than you do throwing ideas against the wall.

And we're going to say it again, small wins often build into something much bigger. So even if it's hard to take that first step, please do. We believe the next step will be a little easier.

“

*With our digital ads, we continue to run more test concepts in smaller markets, optimize, and then roll them out in a larger service area. And our data shows what a difference small personalizations make.*

– David Edwards  
Director of Communications,  
Arkansas Hospice Foundation

# The empirical email



There's some book out there (you know which one) that says something close to, "Pride comes before the fall." And this is true for nonprofits that feel like they've fully solved the riddle of email. We hope you have abnormally high open rates and click-through rates. And if so, we also hope you're the type that still isn't satisfied.

There's always something else to learn out there. In our own marketing at Feathr, we were 100% convinced that using title case in our calls to action (example: "Learn More") would bring in more clicks. But after A/B testing it, we found that all caps buttons won 75% of the time.

It might feel like a subtle thing before you test it, but the numbers don't lie!

Listening to the data and A/B testing are going to help you push your nonprofit more toward the things that are truly working and away from the things that aren't.

At the heart of testing is humility. Listening is so much harder than talking, but it truly pays off. So make sure you're listening especially close to the results of your email campaigns since we all know these are near the top of the list for what's really working.





# 6. Ad granted



We kept you hanging for some time now. This is what you've all been waiting for. This is absolutely the single action item on your to-do list over the next week — that is unless it's already checked off.

Of those surveyed, only 31.8% were currently spending their monthly \$10,000 from Google Ad Grants. And only 44% of that group felt that they were getting the results they wanted. That's not a very promising response.

Some felt that the Google Ad Grant wasn't a good fit — 16.6% to be exact. And they were probably right because the [Google Ad Grant isn't available to government entities or organizations in education and healthcare.](#)

But if you don't fall into one of those three groups, and you're officially a 501(c)(3), then we're of the opinion that [free money is a good fit](#) at your organization.

We do understand that it takes time and effort to learn the platform and to make the most of the opportunity. But because this is actually \$10,000 (have we said this too many times? Has it worked? Is it on your to-do list?) of advertising budget that you can have every single month, it's even worth roping in an agency to get the ball rolling.

We believe you can add the capacity internally, but we said it before, we know you're stretched. Which is why, in this instance, it could make perfect sense to pay someone to get it going.

Here's another analogy from finance. Let a professional build your portfolio of stocks (in terms of Google Ads, these are your keywords). Ask them questions over the year or two when they're managing everything. And then have them transfer it in kind back to you.

## *Are you leveraging Google Ad Grants for nonprofits?*



This analogy works really well because your brokerage account or your Google Ads account is yours from the very beginning. The agent is only managing your account, so it's easy to transfer management back to you — and you can see everything they did the whole time.

There's no fee for being clever — it's actually the opposite. If someone's doing rocket science for you, please keep them in that role. But if they're [picking keywords](#) or stocks, ask questions for a couple years and then stop paying them to do your job.

# What did we miss here?

Aren't you so happy this is the first time you're seeing the two letters AI together?

Don't get me wrong, it will have its time and place. But keep doing what you're doing. You're likely as informed as you need to be on the topic. Actually, there's a strong chance all of us are over informed.

Because none of us know what the future holds. The important thing is to take a breath and form a cohesive strategy for moving forward.

Marketing is always a fine balance between doing what's working and identifying where the growth will come from in the future. This is always going to demand a balance between statistics and intuition. But deciding when to follow the numbers and when to follow your gut (or listening closely to both) will help you make easier, better, faster, and stronger decisions at your organization.

Yes, it will require effort — because that's how this world works; the good things require time, money, and effort. And did you forget? This is a fight we're smack dab in the middle of.

We may have mentioned some buzzy subjects, but we tried hard to keep this practical and tactical. It's time to tape up and get in the ring.

Does your organization need to jump into Google

Ad Grants next month? Or would you be better served getting a [new digital advertising platform](#)?

Do you make marketing decisions based on someone's opinions or detailed reports? Do you have a millennial or zoomer on your marketing team, in a full-time, salaried role?

Ok, we've devolved into a list, but here's another one:

Would you trade what you do every day for anything else in the world? Whose life did you make an impact on this week? Who's on your team that you wouldn't trade for anyone else?

How does your community feel about the work your team does? How do people in need think about your organization? How do you think about yourself and your work?

My guess is that you're happy doing what you're doing. Maybe not every day or every minute, but that's simply unreasonable. My guess is that you chose this life instead of following the dollar signs or the easy way out or someone else's opinion.

Getting to do something that matters every day comes with a price. But don't make it harder than it needs to be. Put one thing on the to-do list for this month — not all six things above! And see where it goes from there.

# Is this where the call to action goes?

We're going to take a note from this guide (yes, we're even listening to ourselves here) and offer a few different ideas for you to consider.

If you're a boomer, you're probably ready to talk to a human being about some things. You absolutely don't have to buy anything. We're simply passionate about seeing nonprofits soar. So [tell us when's a good time](#) for us to give you a call. We can't wait to learn more about your mission!

Gen X cohort, let's get to the point. If you want to talk through your questions, sign up for a [demo here](#). You have every right to be skeptical when you see a CTA, but give us a try, we keep it real on occasion.

Millennials, let's not even go there. Stay back there in the shadows if that's your thing. Click through some links if you feel like it! We're not here to tell you what to do. And if it gets there, [double check what we offer](#), and then schedule that demo.

Zoomers, do you even like being called that? Dang, how do those millennials and Xers feel about you calling the shots? Glad your organization has at least one person who's slaying. No cap, we'd be honored to hear more about what you're thinking about with your nonprofit's marketing. [Put something on our calendar](#).

Alphas, we don't want to be rude here, but the fact is, you're still in high school. So more power to you if you want to [schedule a demo](#).



*Trusted by the YMCA, Feeding America, United Way, and thousands of other organizations.*

**Request a Demo**

# Notes on methodology

This year's questionnaire was composed of 39 thought-provoking questions. Many were multiple-choice with a single answer, though others allowed prioritization or multiple responses. A few of the questions revolved around the nature of the organization the respondent worked at, its size and mission. We incentivized responses by offering those who completed the survey the opportunity to win a \$250 Amazon gift card.

## More about our community

A majority of those surveyed came from marketing, development, or leadership roles at a nonprofit. But we did hear back from others in programming, operations, and administrative roles. This wide range of roles and perspectives was valuable for us while building this resource. We believe the best decisions are reached when a point of view can take in a wider vista.