Know Your Donors
RAISE MORE.

Insights from the 2026 Giving Signals Report

October 28, 2026

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Rachel MUIR

Meet your speakers



Melaina Chromy
Sr. Manager, Brand Marketing
Bloomerang



Rachel Muir, CFRE
Fundraising Consultant,

League of Extraordinary Fundraisers

Preview of today's discussion

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The Giving Signals Report

- Wanted to understand what inspires giving and how generosity is evolving
- 1,000+ donors, 400+ nonprofit decision makers
- Survey conducted by Harris Poll in March on behalf of Bloomerang



Agenda

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1 WHAT DRIVES GENEROSITY

2 TAPPING INTO MILLENNIAL POTENTIAL

3 MOVING DONORS FROM INTENTION TO ACTION

4 WHAT TO PRIORITIZE NEXT

5 Q&A

What drives generosity

Identity & Giving

What motivates you to give? Percentage who agreed or strongly agreed.

97%

Caring about their community

96%

Want to make a difference

95%

Care about their country

92%

Giving is part of who I am

Least selected answer? I have money to give.

Identity & Giving

Belonging has generational implications

Millennials (94%) and Gen Z (92%) were also more likely than Gen X (82%) and Baby Boomers+ (83%) to agree with the statement *“I'm motivated to donate to a charity or nonprofit when that organization makes me feel like I'm part of something.”*



Identity & Giving

Other factors at play impacting motivation to give…

91%

Of donors think nonprofits play an important role in addressing gaps left by reduced public funding

91%

Of donors believe “people need more help than ever right now”

Donors are motivated less by transaction and more by **meaning, identity, and the desire to make a difference**. They care about the future. They care about helping others in a moment when many feel that needs are rising.



Jen Shang, PhD — Co-founder Institute for Sustainable Philanthropy

Institute *for* Sustainable Philanthropy

World's First Philanthropic Psychologist, Jen Shang, PhD:

"Rather than asking why people give, philanthropic psychology asks ***who they become when they give.***"



Institute *for* Sustainable Philanthropy

Philanthropic psychology distinguishes the good feelings we, as donors, get from what we do from the feelings we get from who we are.

Source: Institute for Sustainable Philanthropy framework; example copy by Rachel Muir

Philanthropic psychology

Raises more because it strengthens identity and enhances wellbeing

Humans have three key psychological needs:

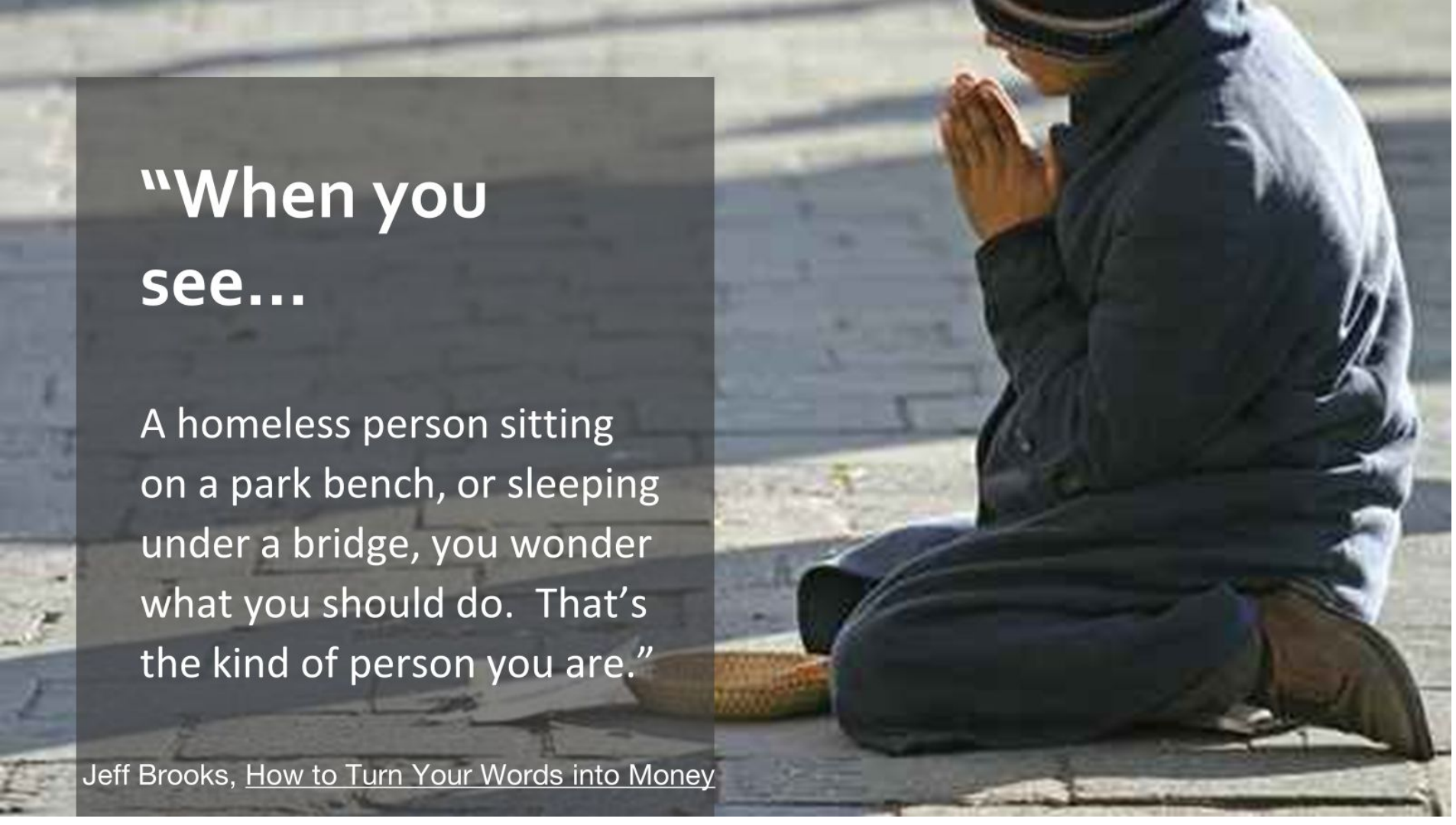
1. **CONNECTEDNESS**
   Feel connected to something bigger than yourself; linking kindness inside donor with the good they do

2. **AUTONOMY**
   Feel like you are making the world a better place; giving is an expression of who you are

3. **COMPETENCE**
   Feel "seen" for the very best person you are (and are going to be) through your giving; will the donor read the appeal and feel CAPABLE of making a real difference?

Institute *for* Sustainable Philanthropy

Source: Institute for Sustainable Philanthropy



"When you see…

A homeless person sitting on a park bench, or sleeping under a bridge, you wonder what you should do. That's the kind of person you are."

Jeff Brooks, How to Turn Your Words into Money

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Rachel MUIR

How can we influence a donor's **IDENTITY and improve their wellbeing?**



- **Moral identity**
- **Personal identify**
- **Relational identity**
- **Group identity**
- **Organizational identity**
- **Religious identity**
- **Social identity**
- **Regional, national, international identity**

Institute for Sustainable Philanthropy

Source: Institute for Sustainable Philanthropy

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People have **TWO IDENTITIES**

1. How we perceive ourselves
2. How we **ASPIRE TO BE**



We want to reflect THIS back to them.

Institute for Sustainable Philanthropy

LEAGUE OF EXTRAORDINARY FUNDRAISERS

Sources: Institute for Sustainable Philanthropy; Rachel Muir, CFRE



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Rachel MUIR

Use language to reinforce **what is needed is them as a person**, not just their money

Instead of:

The next orphaned pup needs you.

Please become a monthly sustainer today.

The next orphaned pup needs you.

Someone who loves them.

Institute *for* Sustainable Philanthropy

Sources: Institute for Sustainable Philanthropy; adapted from material by Rachel Muir, CFRE

The more fundraising copy speaks to a person's identity, the more likely they are to increase their giving.

In one Institute case study, researchers first identified the donor identities that mattered most to supporters. They then tested fundraising materials that reinforced those identities before the ask.

The response doubled, compared with the control.

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+102%

RESPONSE RATE

2X

THE RESPONSE

Institute for Sustainable Philanthropy

Source: Institute for Sustainable Philanthropy, "Case Study 1: A Christian Aid Charity"

So what does that change about the way we communicate?

Everything.



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Speak to the human behind the gift

Transaction first

"Thank you for your $50 donation to Furry Friends Rescue Shelter."



Identity aware

"Thank you for being an animal lover and compassionate friend. Your loving gift is now hard at work fighting cruelty and saving animals.

Mr. Pickles might not know who made HIS rescue possible...but we do."

Institute for Sustainable Philanthropy

Source: Institute for Sustainable Philanthropy framework; example copy by Rachel Muir

Show that you need the person, not just the gift

ASKS FOR MONEY

The next orphaned pup needs you.
Please become a monthly sustainer today.

A standard ask. Treats the donor as a source of funds.

CONNECTS TO PERSON BEHIND THE GIFT

The next orphaned pup needs you.
Someone who loves them.

Feelings of bonding are higher when **what's needed is me as a person**, not just my money.

It makes donors feel good about **who they are**.

Institute for Sustainable Philanthropy

League of Extraordinary Fundraisers

Instead of this:

Speaking only to what their donation can **DO**



Do this instead:

Speak to who the donor **IS.**



Institute for Sustainable Philanthropy

Source: Institute for Sustainable Philanthropy

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Rachel MUIR

Speak to the human behind the gift

I know you care deeply about babies like Kham.

All Max and his littermates lack is the compassion of one person who can change everything: you.

Only someone like you – who believes in Gabe's potential to hear and talk

Institute for Sustainable Philanthropy

Source: Institute for Sustainable Philanthropy, Sarah Masterson Consulting

Tapping into Millennial potential

Tapping into Millennial potential

What makes this generation stand out? The data shows that this group is ready and willing to give…

75%

Of Millennials plan to give more this year compared to 49% of Gen X, 36% of Baby Boomers

80%

Of Millennials plan to give to a new nonprofit this year compared to 52% of Gen X, 30% of Baby Boomers

42%

Of Millennials have already given through a DAF compared to 13% of Gen X, 10% of Baby Boomers

Tapping into Millennial potential

The great wealth transfer has started.

Over the next 30 years $124 trillion is estimated to pass from Baby Boomers to their younger counterparts.

Giving USA 2025 data shows that last year bequests jumped almost 17% after inflation, the second-highest year for legacy giving on record.

Source: Cerulli Associates, 2024



Tapping into Millennial potential

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Millennials are more likely than older generations to be influenced by…

- Third-party reviews
- Matching campaigns
- Personalization
- Mobile-first experiences
- Peer recommendations (social or professional network)

None of these factors outrank issue alignment, fund-use clarity, or impact, but they do appear to play a stronger supporting role for younger donors.

Tapping into Millennial potential

Younger donors prefer easy ways to give (and so does everyone else)!

01 Frictionless giving is non-negotiable: if they can't support your cause in seconds, you've lost them

Convenience drives conversion

1. How easy is it to find your donation page?
2. Are donors prompted to create an account?
3. Is your donation form mobile-friendly?
4. How many steps does it take to complete a donation?
5. Are digital wallets like Venmo, Apple Pay, or Google Pay offered?
6. Is the form intuitive for donors of different ages and levels of digital comfort?
7. Are there unnecessary fields, pop-ups, or other distractions?

Friction


NIGHT of PEACE
Family Shelter, Inc.
ABOUT US
OUR SERVICES
JOIN OUR TEAM
WISH LIST
EVENTS
NIGHT of PEACE
Family Shelter, Inc.
Night of Peace Family Shelter
www.nightofpeace.org
CFC
Combined Federal Campaign Foundation
CFC#68775
Like
Help us support homeless families by becoming a Sustaining Partner!
Donate Now
WHO: You! Our sustaining donors are individuals and businesses who care for the community and understand that many families are only a paycheck away from being homeless.
What: Night of Peace Family Shelter is seeking 100 sustaining partners to meet our annual fundraising goal of $24,000. Sustaining donors commit to giving $20 every month for a year to cover the cost of the shelter's direct services. Every donation goes towards giving our families a Night of Peace.
WHY: $20 covers the cost of one bed a night. For less than .67 cents a day, you can help us keep homeless families with children together.
WHERE: Click here to Donate Now.
HOW: Become one of our sustaining partners by clicking the here to Donate
Sign Up for Email Updates!
SIGN UP

Frictionless

Best Friends
SAVE THEM ALL

Your gift today helps save more lives

Your contribution to Best Friends goes straight to work helping tens of thousands of animals—both at the Sanctuary and through outreach and rescue programs all across the country. With a gift of $25 or more, you'll receive six bimonthly issues of *Best Friends* magazine.

To make your gift in honor of a loved one, please **give a tribute gift here**.



Your donation to Best Friends

All donations are tax deductible.

Most people are giving $50 right now

$25 | $50 | $100 | $500 | $ other

Tapping into Millennial potential

Younger donors prefer personalization, i.e. using their first name, and/or speaking to them as a first-time donor, monthly donor, returning lapsed donor etc (and so does everyone else!)

02 Call out first-time donors and lapsed returning donors in thank-yous; acknowledge monthly donors in every appeal you send



A first gift deserves a first-time welcome

Recognize the milestone.

Make it clear this isn’t just another transaction.

Dear John,

You made our day.

Your generous first gift of $100 tells us something wonderful about you: loving animals is part of who you are.

Mr. Pickles arrived frightened, malnourished and howling from the pain of an infected paw. After surgery and lots of TLC, he's healing, wagging his tail and charming everyone he meets.

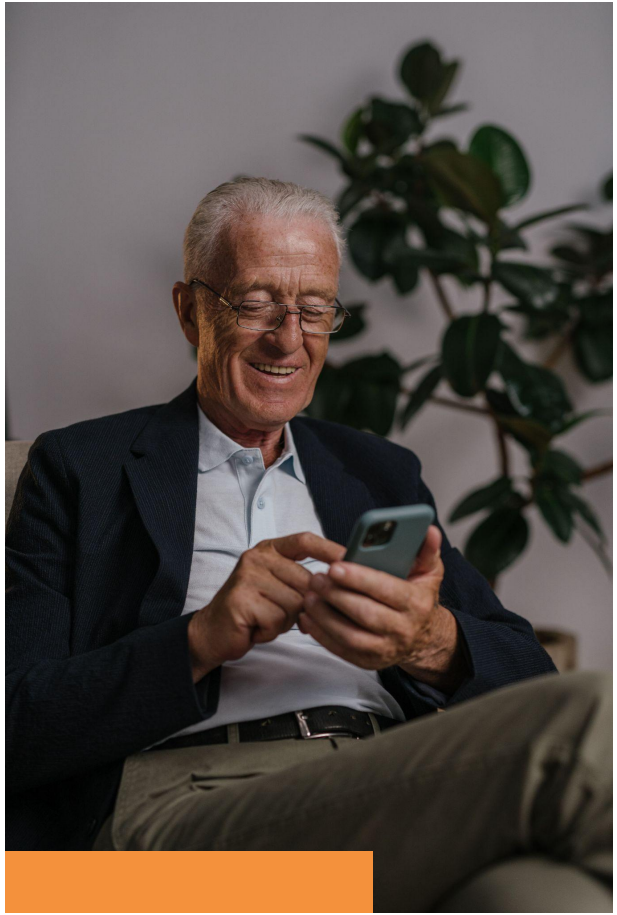
John, your kind heart and compassion rescued a hurting, innocent animal and gave him a second chance.

We're so grateful you chose us and joined our donor family.

For the love of animals,

Your name and role
Anytown Pets Rescue

P.S. We'll keep you updated on how you're making a difference in our donor newsletter. And hit reply if you'd like a tour. I'd love to introduce you to Mr. Pickles!



Source: Rachel Muir—League of Extraordinary Fundraisers

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Stewardship test: 50,000 donors

GROUP A · 25,000 DONORS

Got an extra thank-you at the start of the year: a simple note of gratitude for past gifts, with no ask and no reply device.

GROUP B · 25,000 DONORS

Did not get the extra thank-you.

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12 MONTHS LATER

Both groups gave the same number of gifts.

$450,000 more

given that year by the group that got the extra thank-you

Source: Tom Ahern and Angel Aloma, Food for the Poor

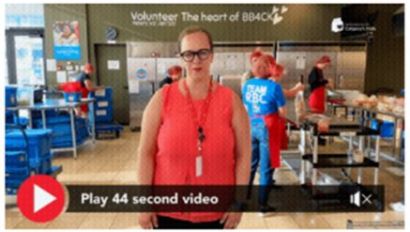
LEAGUE OF EXTRAORDINARY FUNDRAISERS

Subject line: Welcome to the Brown Bagging Hunger Hero Community! ⭐

HUNGER HEROES

Hi Rachel!

You have now joined a league of Hunger Heroes who are a group of dedicated and passionate people determined to see that Calgary's kids receive the food they need to play, learn, and grow! Thank you! We are SO grateful you are here.
Why is your monthly giving so important? Click here to listen to our Executive Director, Bethany, explain why:



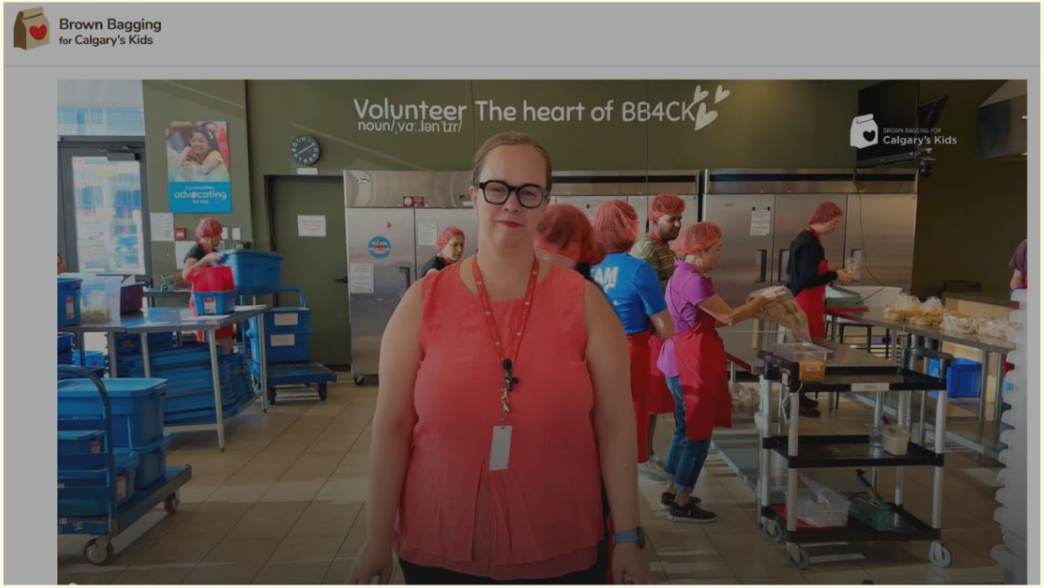
We are **SO** excited to have you on our team. You are doing crucial work that will have a lasting impact in our community.

❤️ This is the first of five emails in your Hunger Hero welcome journey where you will see one email for five days that will contain important information, such as some astounding statistics about the work you are supporting, impactful quotes, and what goes into a lunch.

Grateful,

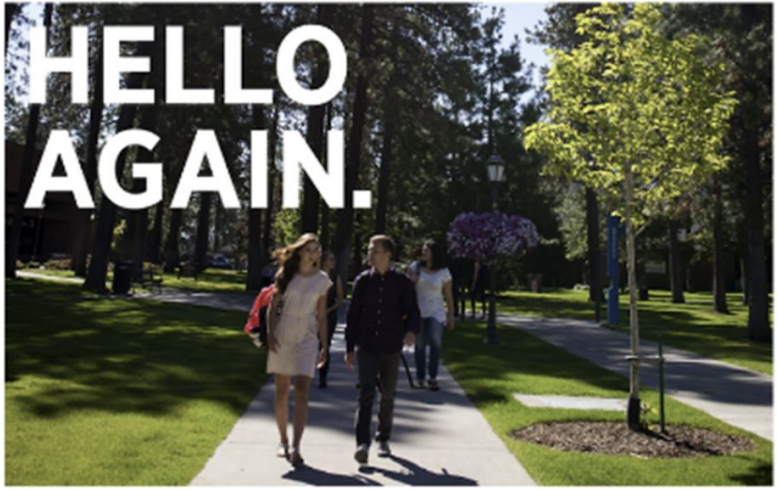
Lyndsey Enyimu
Individual & Monthly Giving Coordinator

✔️ As a monthly donor, you have access to a donor portal where you can update recurring plan information. Click here to access the portal.



Source: Rachel Muir—League of Extraordinary Fundraisers

Lapsed donor thank you





Sources: The Donor Relations Group,
Rachel Muir—League of Extraordinary Fundraisers

LEAGUE OF EXTRAORDINARY FUNDRAISERS

Tapping into Millennial potential

What is responsible for fundraising profit, regardless of the generation? Stewardship.

03 Ask → Thank → Report Back — drives upgrades every time

Rachel MUIR

Fact: A donor's decision to give again, and to give more, is shaped by the stewardship they receive in the down time between appeals.

rachel@rachelmuir.com

www.rachelmuir.com

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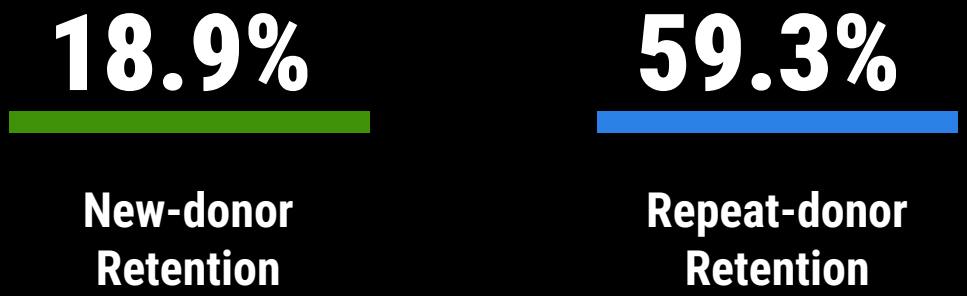
The 2nd gift changes the **RELATIONSHIP**



Source: Fundraising Effectiveness Project, Q4 2025

Moving donors from intent to action

Intent to action

What motivates you to give to the organizations you currently support? Issue alignment is answer #1 but #2 and #3 are…

94%

The nonprofit tells me exactly where my money will go

90%

I know the impact of my donation



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Make the impact easy to picture

Donors should be able to see, quickly and clearly, what their gift makes possible.

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Make the impact **CONCRETE**

$250 Provides a week of summer camp to child in need.

$100 Feeds a hungry senior nourishing hot meals for one month.

$50 Vaccinates a litter of newborn shelter puppies.

Intent to action

The trust factor...

97%

Of donors trust the nonprofits they give to

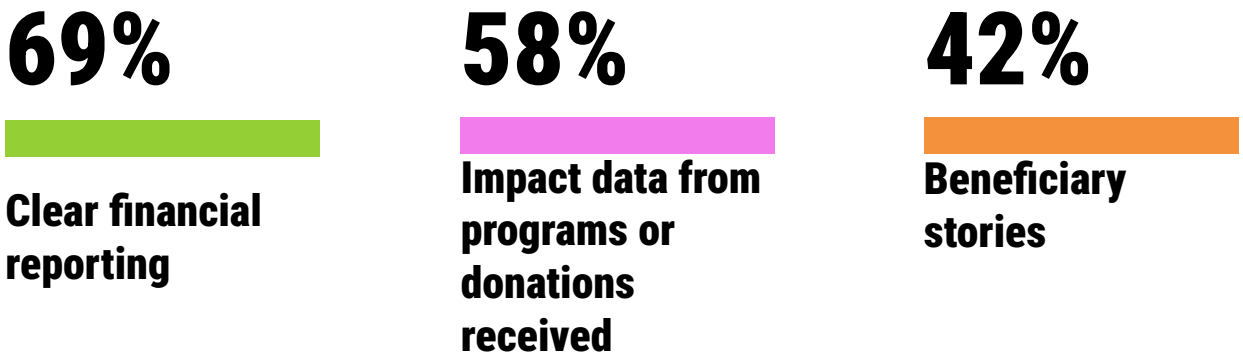
79%

Of donors trust nonprofits broadly to use funds effectively



Intent to action

What indicates to you that a nonprofit is effective?



Wanting transparency doesn't mean donors lack trust. **97% of donors trust the nonprofits they donate to. 79% trust nonprofits broadly to use funds effectively.**

From intent to action

Transparency is a tangible offer and reporting on impact — not a paragraph about your mission

01 Give donors a clear, concrete offer: "Your $100 provides round-the-clock care to neonatal kittens" — not a vague “give to our annual appeal today”

02 The donor's real question: "Why should I care, and what happens because of ME?"

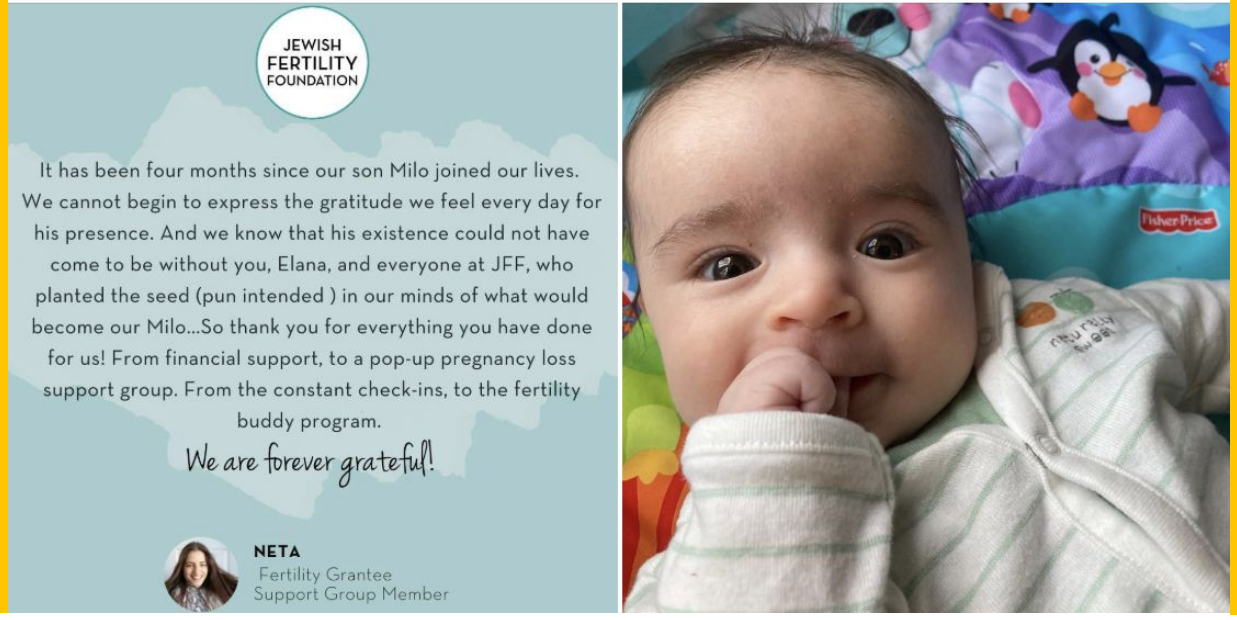


SHOW donors what their support made possible

Jewish Fertility Foundation
March 29, 2022 ·

This testimony is EXACTLY why we work so hard towards our mission of building Jewish Families! We are so happy you feel your family is complete, and we could't be more excited for your family! Baby Milo is beautiful!

#jff #jewishfertilityfoundation #jfftestimony #testimonialtuesday #jffsuccessstory #jffbaby #letsmakebabies #makingmiracles #makingjewishfamilies



From intent to action

Emotion drives giving

03 **Reflect the donor's best self back to them.**
Show them what their generosity says about who they are.

Instead of: *Your gift helped feed a senior.*

Use: *The warmth of your kindness means a hungry senior doesn't have to worry about where their next hot meal is coming from.*

Reporting back: **STEWARDSHIP EXAMPLE**

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Dear [First name],

I wish you could meet Jenna.

You were her lifeline. When Jenna arrived at [organization name], she was seven months pregnant, fleeing an abusive relationship, and had nowhere to turn.

Thanks to you, she found safety and received the care she needed. Today, Jenna is enrolled in community college and studying to become a nurse.

Your love and compassion for women like Jenna says everything about your generous and caring heart.

Today, we celebrate you for giving Jenna a fresh start.

With gratitude,
[Name]

LEAGUE OF EXTRAORDINARY FUNDRAISERS

Adapted from example by Rachel Muir, CFRE—League of Extraordinary Fundraisers

What to prioritize next

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THIS WEEK

Audit your donor experience

Try completing a gift to your org on desktop and mobile.



Then ask yourself:

- **What tangible impact will my gift make?**
- **Am I needed as a person, or just my donation?**
- **Was the thank you immediate, personalized and did it reflect on the kind of thoughtful, caring, compassionate person I am?**

Choose one point of friction to improve this week. **Then test again.**

Source: Bloomerang, 2026 Giving Signals Report

THIS MONTH

Work identity into your donor comms

Audit your communications for donor identity:



- **What does the donor's gift say about who they are?**
- **Which positive aspects of their identity can we reflect back to a donor?**

Don't just tell the donor what their gift will do or what it did.
Tell them what their gift says about ***who they are***.

Source: Bloomerang, 2026 Giving Signals Report

THIS QUARTER

Use the signals your donors are sending

FIRST GIFT

- Give them a first-time welcome—not a standard follow-up.

ISSUE INTEREST

- In your next update, share a story about the work they've shown they care about.

CAMPAIGN RESPONSE

- Shape your follow-up around what prompted the gift—and track whether they give again.

Start with one segment. Learn what works. Build from there.

Source: Bloomerang, 2026 Giving Signals Report

“Look beyond the gift and into the ‘who’—who we are when we give, and who we become through giving.”

Institute for Sustainable Philanthropy



Resources

The Giving Signals Report

Institute for Sustainable Philanthropy: Philanthropic Psychology Quiz

Want an end-of-year appeal checklist?



Rachelmuir.com/checklist

Q&A

Type questions in the Q&A box!

Thank you!



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