



# Philanthropy Pulse Survey Webinar Presentation

Insights and Implications for Fundraisers

2026

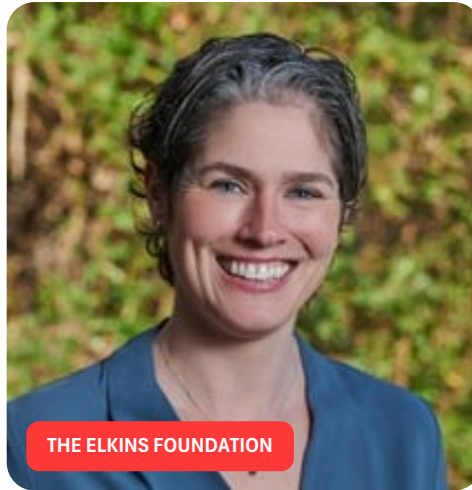
# Today's Conversation



CCS FUNDRAISING

**Lindsay Marciniak**

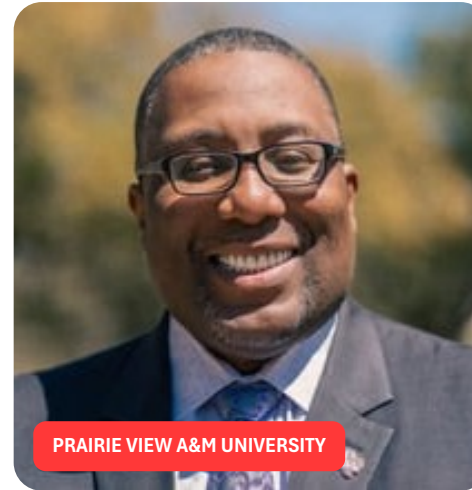
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**Jeff Shaw**

Vice President for  
University Advancement



MAKE-A-WISH AMERICA

**Melissa Arias**

Chief Chapter  
Advancement Officer

# Our Lens: From Trends to Takeaways

01

What fundraisers are  
experiencing right now



02

Why these trends  
matter for strategy  
and sustainability



03

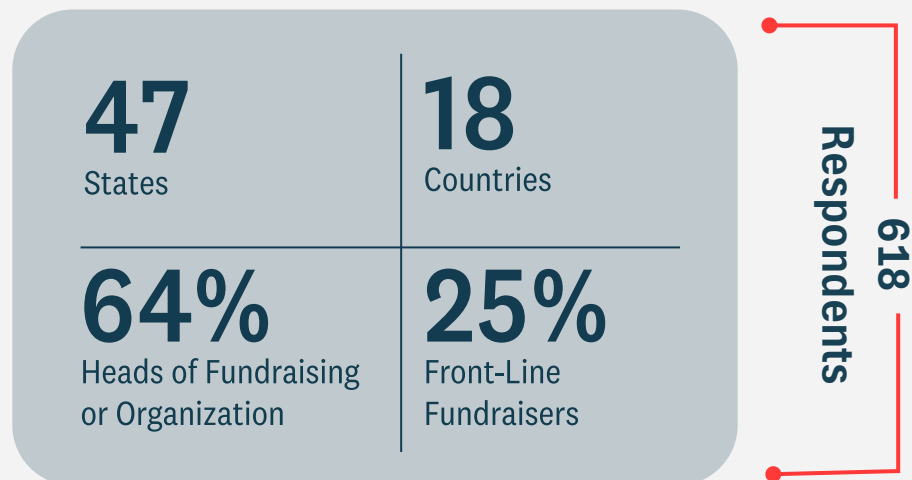
Insights and actions  
you can take back to  
your team

# About The Survey Results

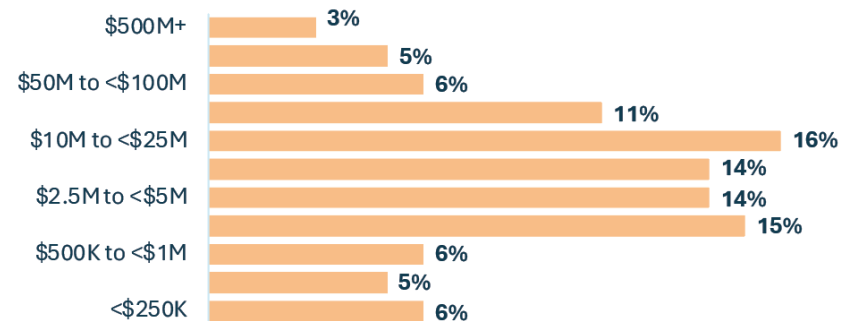
Responses skew toward senior fundraising leadership, shaping a strategic lens.

Representation across budgets and sectors means trends are directional, not one-size-fits-all.

The value is in asking: “What does this mean for us?”

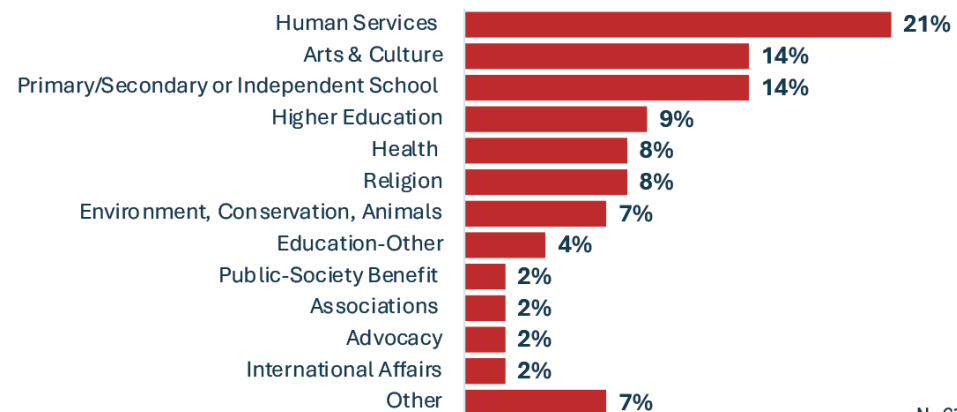


## RESPONDENTS BY ANNUAL OPERATING BUDGET



N=618

## RESPONDENTS BY SECTOR



N=618

# The State of Fundraising in 2026

# Most Organizations Are Seeing Modest Year-Over-Year Change

Half of organizations report no or modest increases from the prior year.

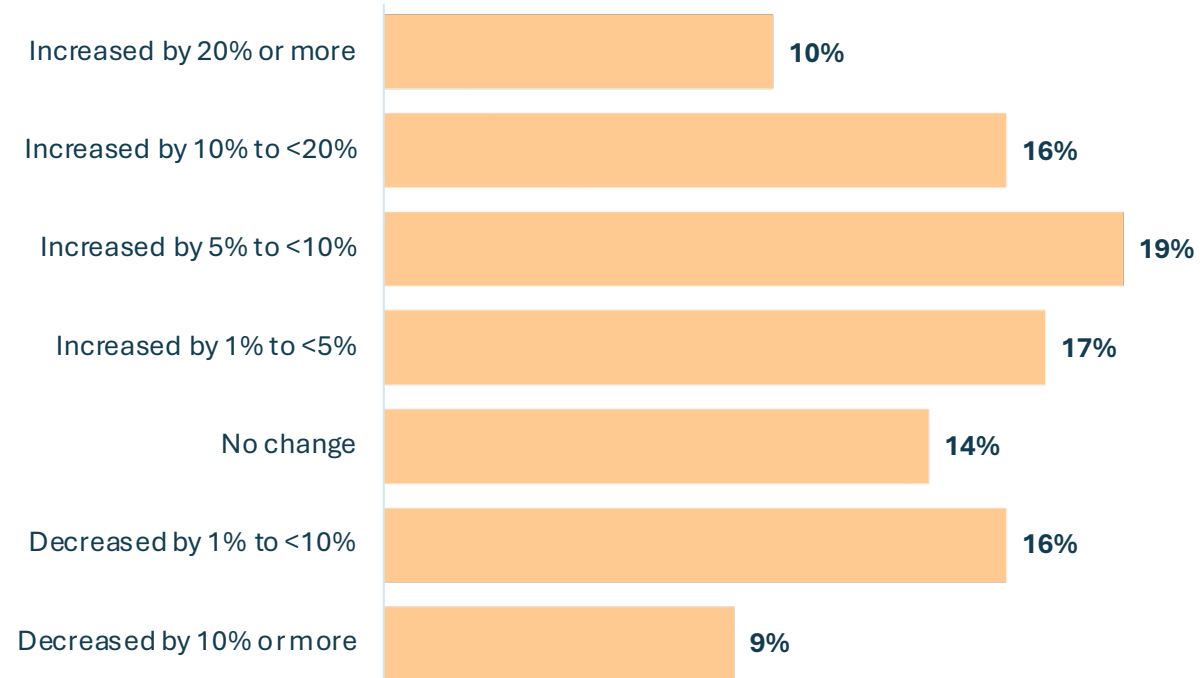
Fundraising performance is changing incrementally for most organizations.



## INSIGHT

Plan for steady growth and protect existing gains rather than relying on big swings.

### CHANGE IN REVENUE FROM PRIOR FISCAL YEAR



N=618

# Most Sectors Report Revenue Growth, Led by Public-Society Benefit and Education

Roughly six in ten organizations reported higher revenue, led by 1) public society benefit, 2) primary/secondary education, and 3) higher education sectors.

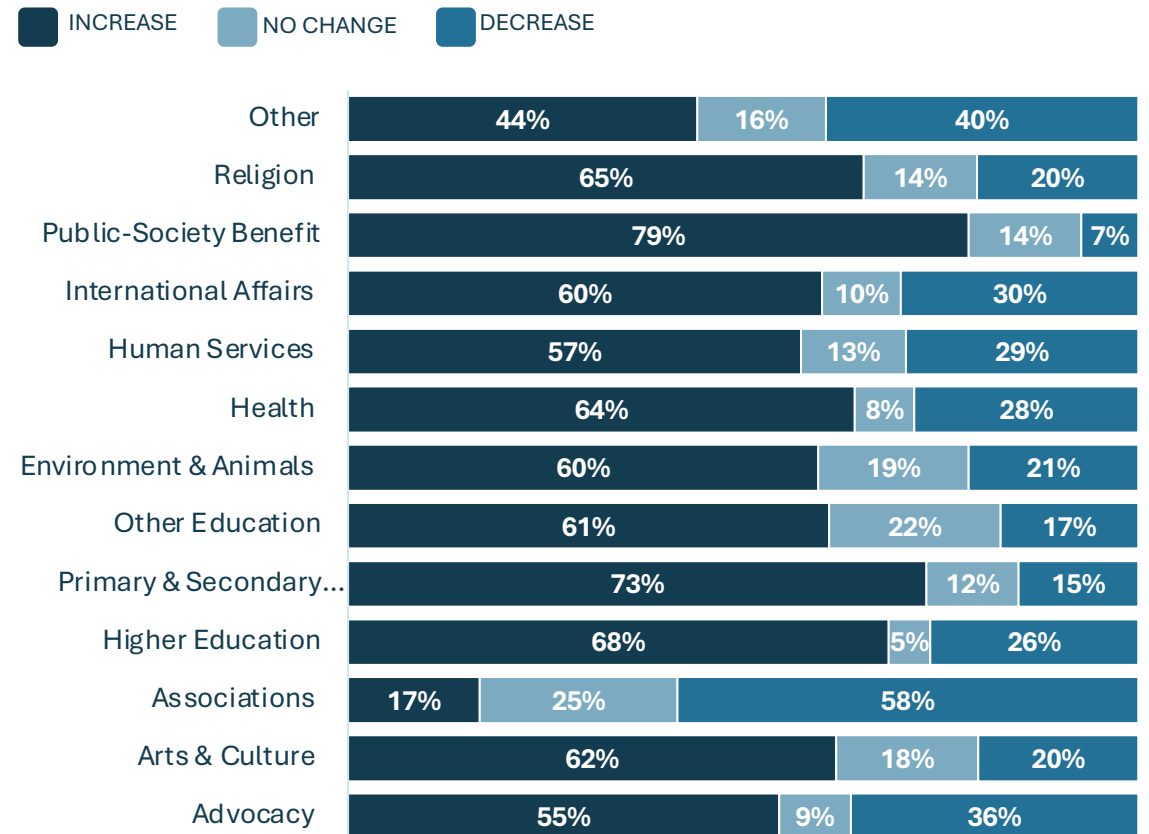
While many organizations saw a revenue increase, results are not consistent.



## INSIGHT

Benchmark ideas within your sector for the most nuanced trends.

### REVENUE CHANGE BY SECTOR



N=618

# New-Donor Retention Looks Largely Unchanged Year Over Year

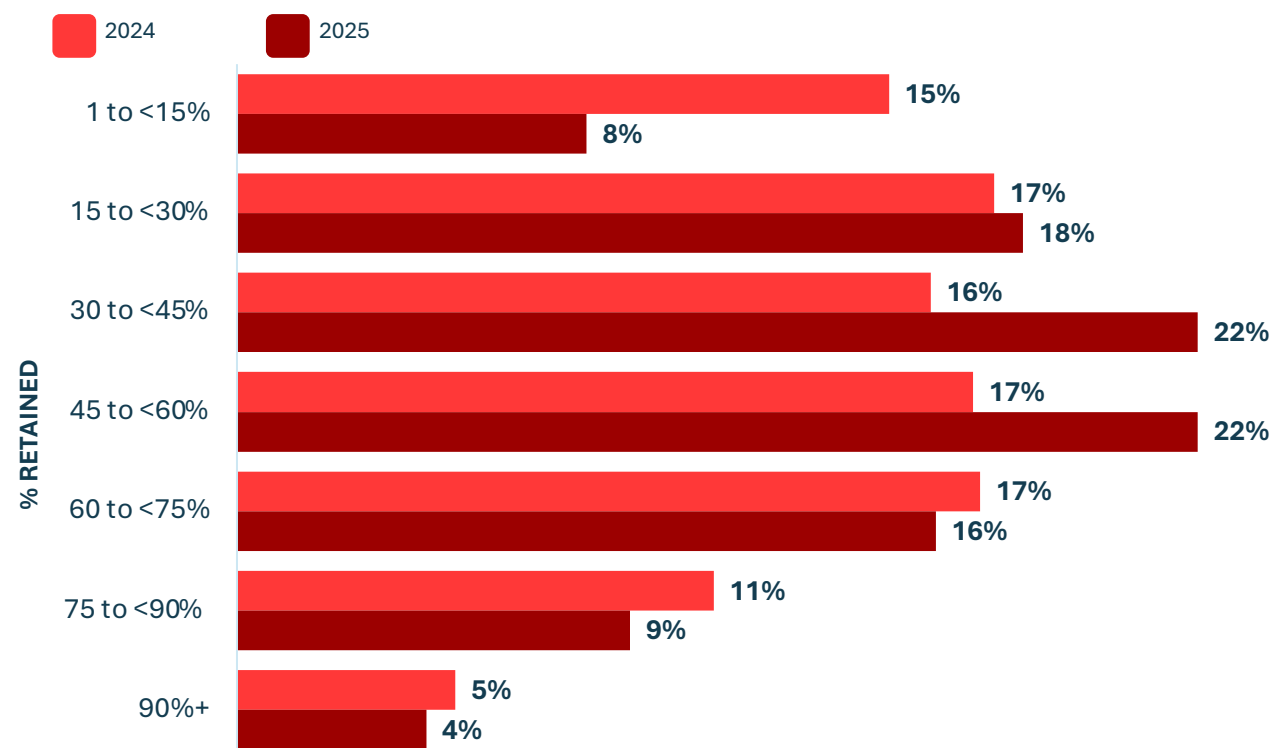
Retention rates for new donors held relatively steady from 2024 to 2025.



## INSIGHT

Strengthen retention early in the donor lifecycle. Sustained annual and mid-level giving fuels long-term and legacy support.

### ESTIMATED RETENTION OF NEW DONORS WITHIN THREE YEARS



N2024=623  
N2025=492

# Donor Acquisition Has Improved

New donor acquisition shows slight improvement in the past year.

Donor acquisition efforts are best coupled with donor retention and upgrades.

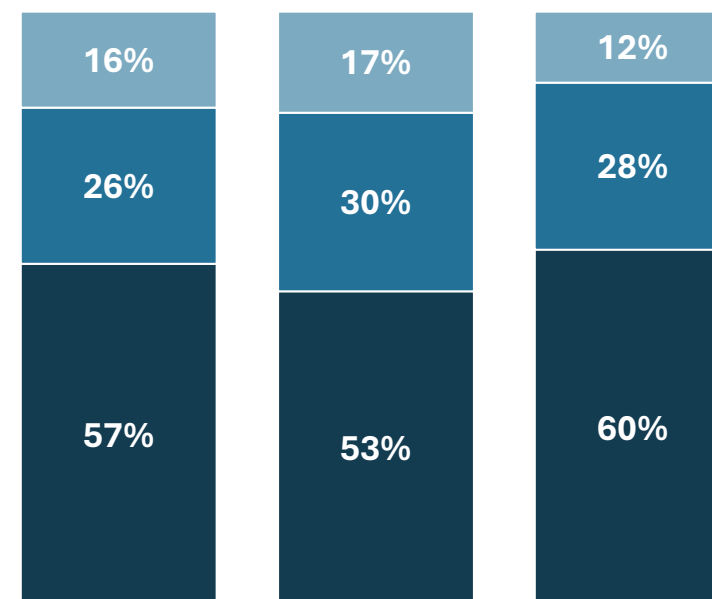


## INSIGHT

Design acquisition strategies to support long-term retention.

### NEW DONORS IN PAST YEAR

■ INCREASE ■ NO CHANGE ■ DECREASE



2023

2024

2025

N=530

# Government Policy Is Disruptive, Even Without Funding Loss

Nearly half of organizations report negative impacts from policy changes.

The most commonly-cited impact (among 61% of organizations) is reduced government funding.

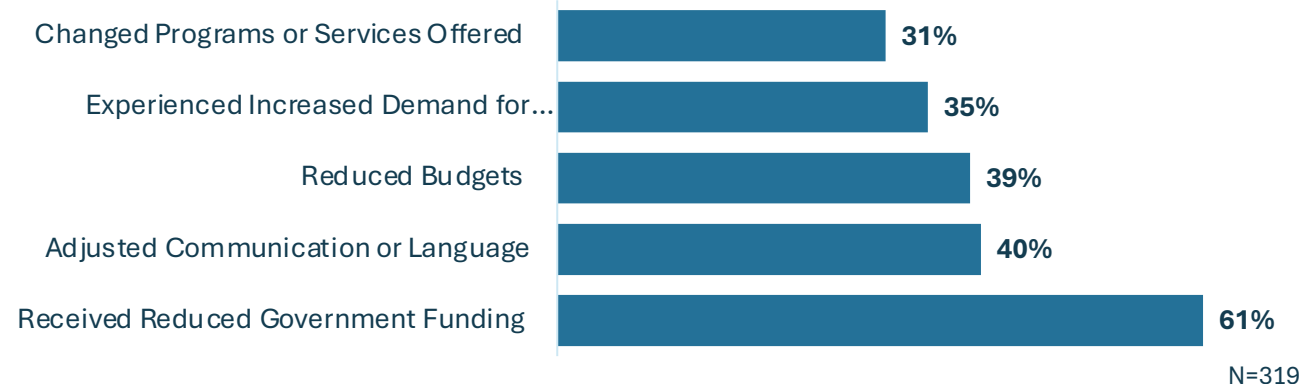
FUNDING MIX & EXTERNAL PRESSURES



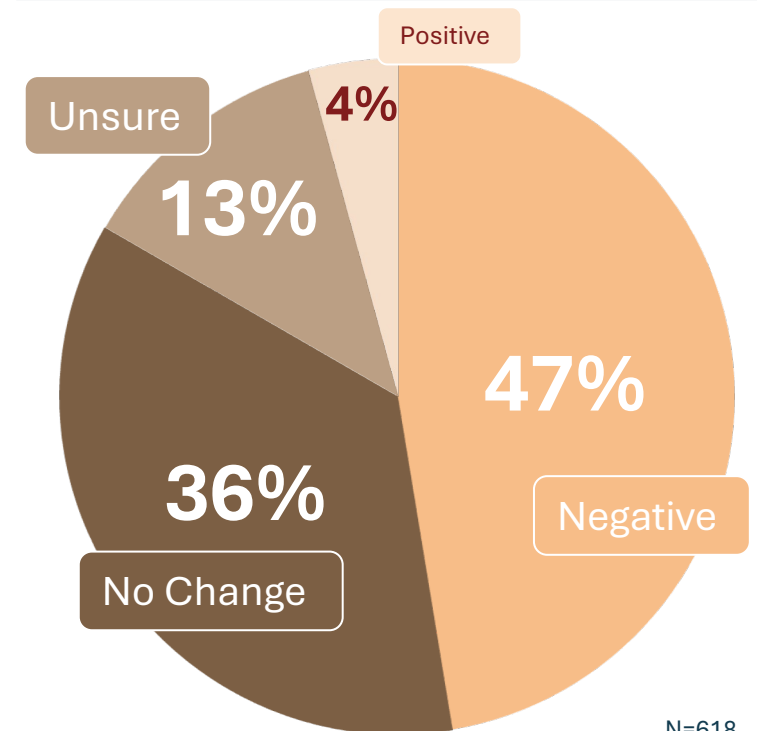
INSIGHT

Plan for volatility and reduce reliance on government funding where possible.

## TOP 5 IMPACTS OF GOVERNMENT POLICIES/REGULATIONS



## GOVERNMENT POLICY IMPACT ON ORGANIZATIONS



# Individual Giving Anticipated to Lead Fundraising Growth

Most organizations expect individual giving to increase, particularly mid-level and major gifts.

Organizations are planning for continued decreases in government funding.



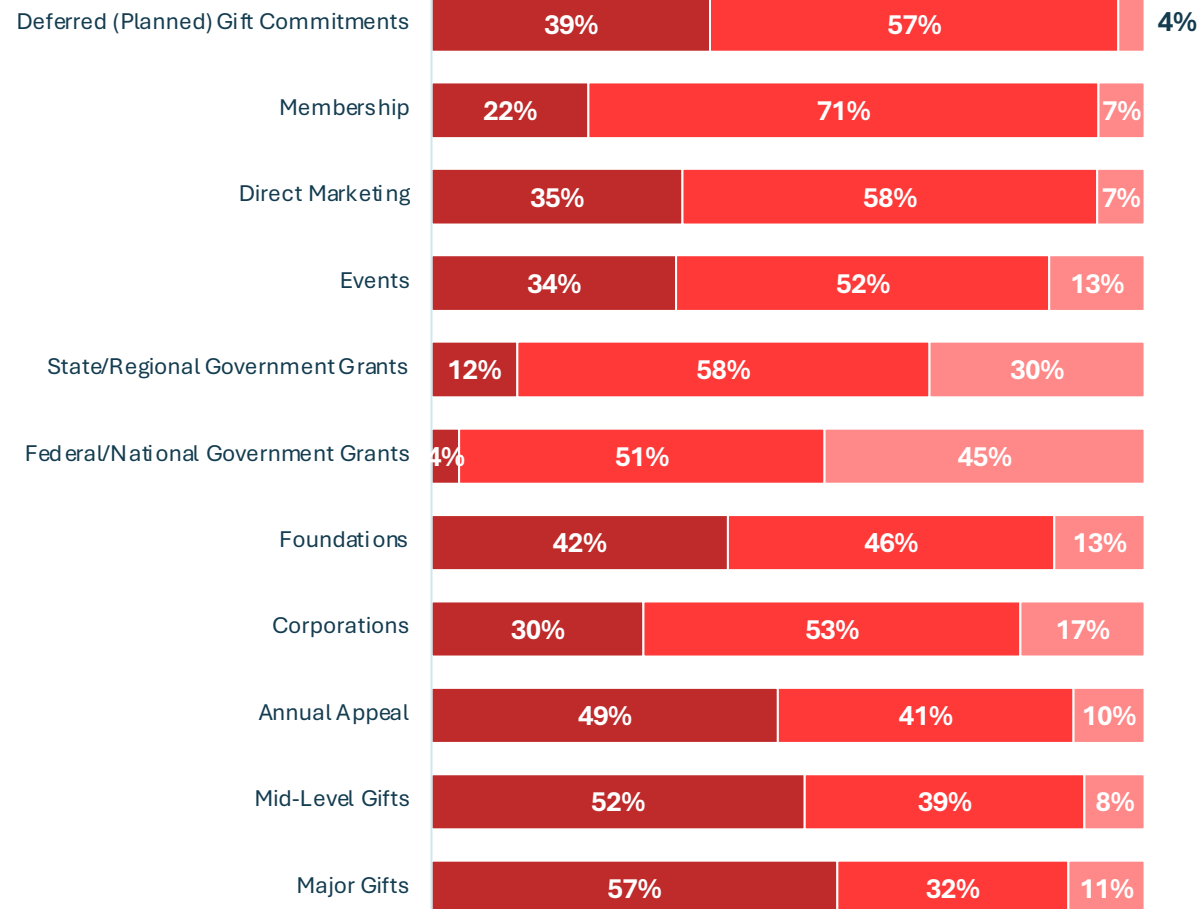
## INSIGHT

Focus on individual donor pipelines, especially consistent and mid-level giving.

## FUNDING MIX & EXTERNAL PRESSURES

### EXPECTED CHANGES IN REVENUE SOURCES FOR 2026

■ Increase ■ Stay the Same ■ Decrease



N=567

# More Organizations Are Accepting Noncash Donations

Modest growth in noncash giving reflects increased investment in gift planning.

Donor awareness remains the biggest barrier to noncash gifts.

## TOP 3 OBSTACLES TO RECEIVING NON-CASH GIVING

**52%**

Donor awareness and/or understanding

**48%**

Communication and marketing

**31%**

Staff knowledge and/or training

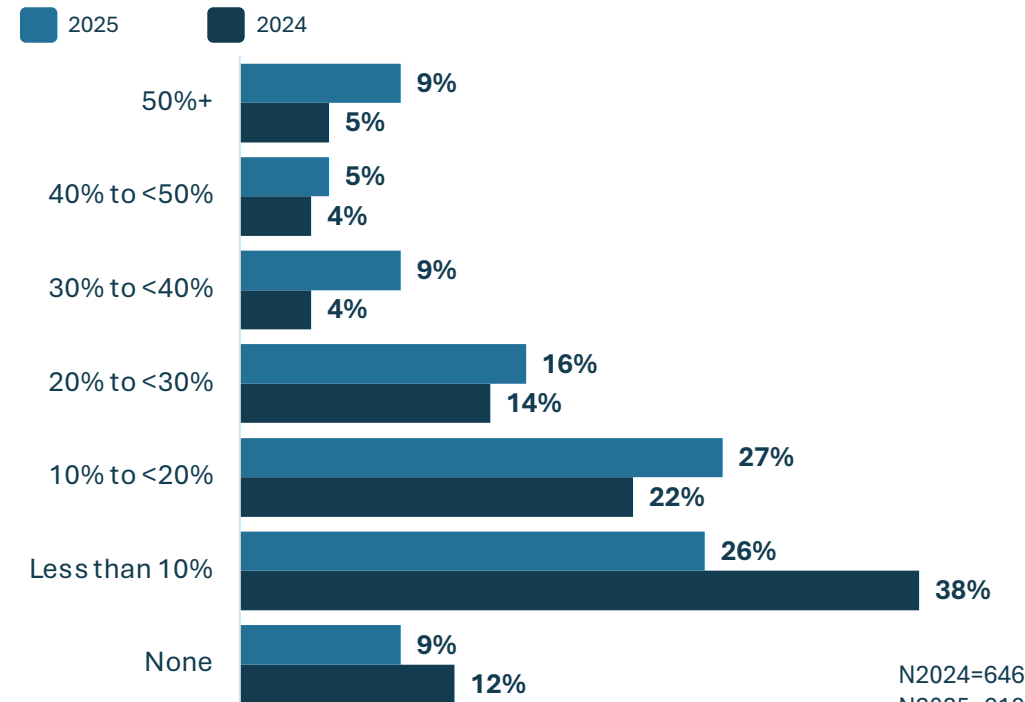
FUNDING MIX & EXTERNAL PRESSURES



**INSIGHT**

Build fluency and educate donors to unlock more noncash giving.

## PERCENTAGE GIVING FROM NONCASH ASSETS



# DAFs Reward Prepared Organizations

Organizations with strong familiarity with DAFs experience larger revenue share.

Organizational preparedness, rather than donor intent, drives DAF results.

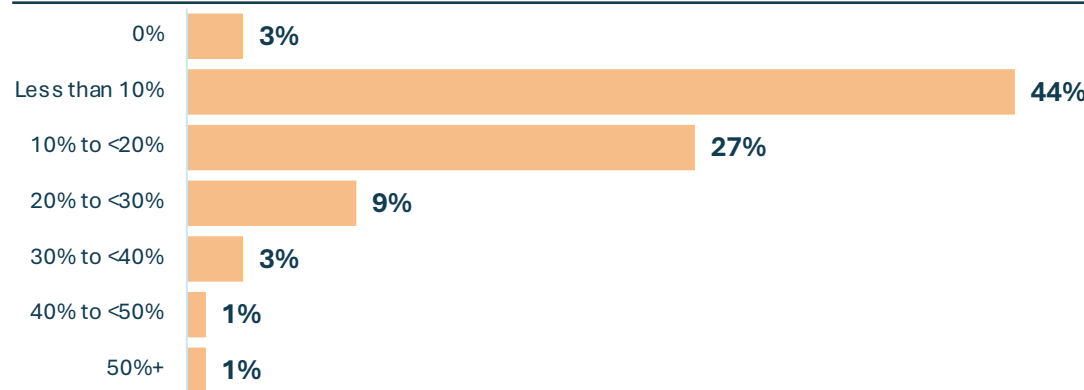
FUNDING MIX & EXTERNAL PRESSURES



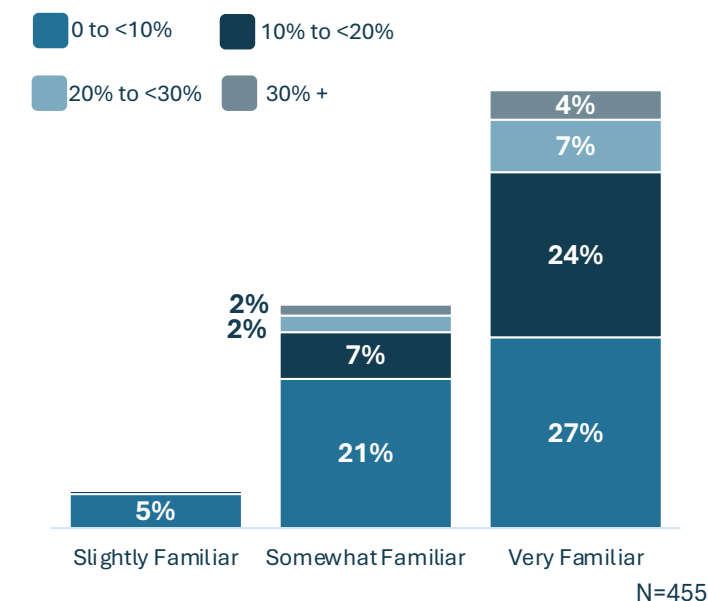
INSIGHT

Equip fundraisers to support DAF conversations.

## PERCENTAGE OF REVENUE FROM DAFs



## DAF REVENUE SHARE BY STAFF FAMILIARITY WITH DAFs



# Board Clarity Drives Better Outcomes

Clear board giving expectations are linked to stronger revenue outcomes.

Structure and clarity matter more than frequent fundraising asks.

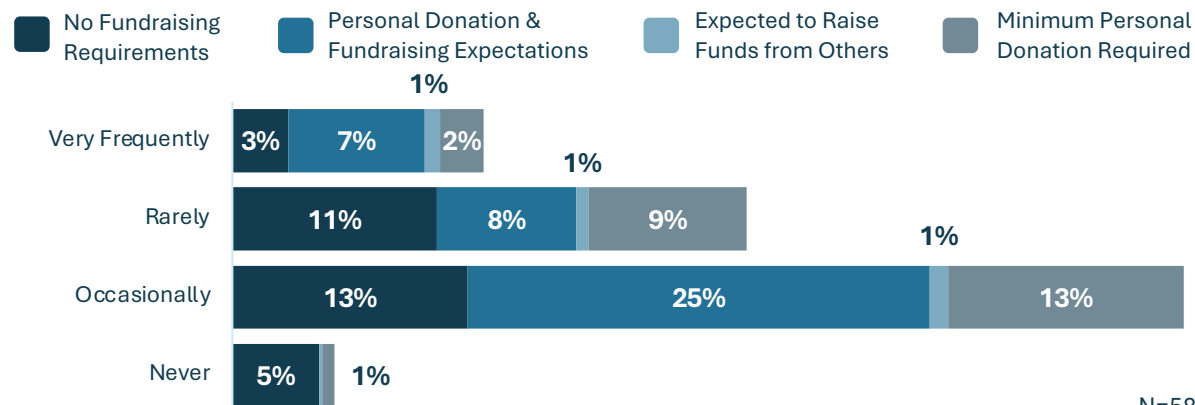
PEOPLE, BOARDS, & CAPACITY



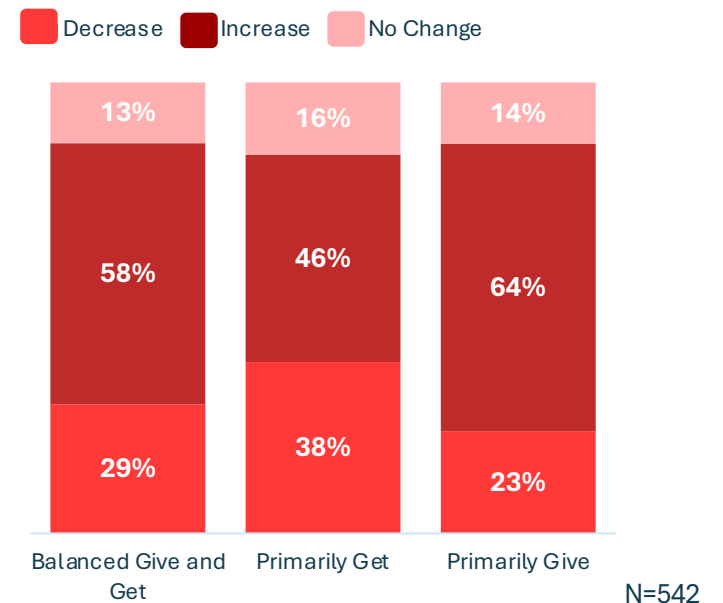
INSIGHT

Revisit, recommit, and/or refresh board expectations to increase clarity and accountability.

## BOARD GIVING REQUIREMENTS BY GIVING FREQUENCY



## BOARD FUNDRAISING APPROACH BY REVENUE CHANGE



# Burnout and Pay Constraints Limit Staff

Burnout and career growth limitations drive staff retention challenges.

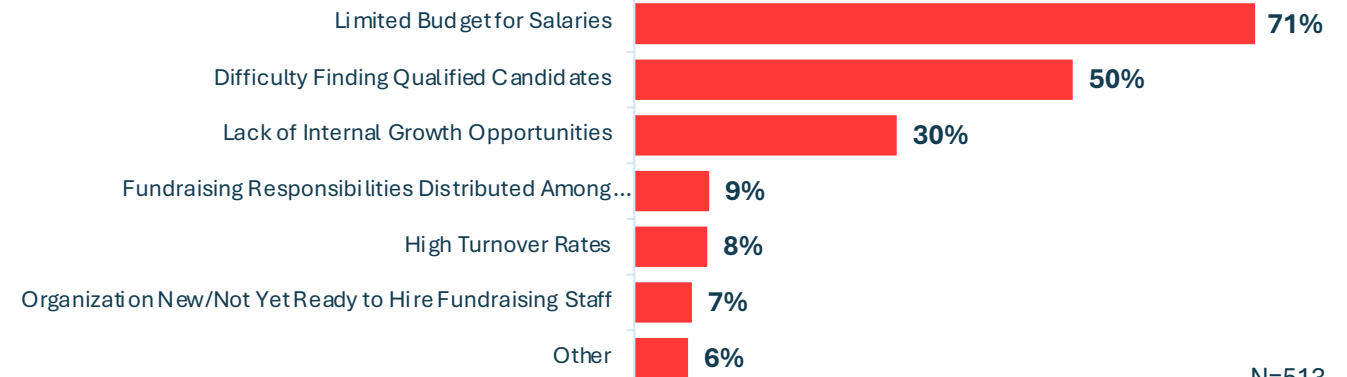
Limited financial and professional growth opportunities hinder hiring opportunities.



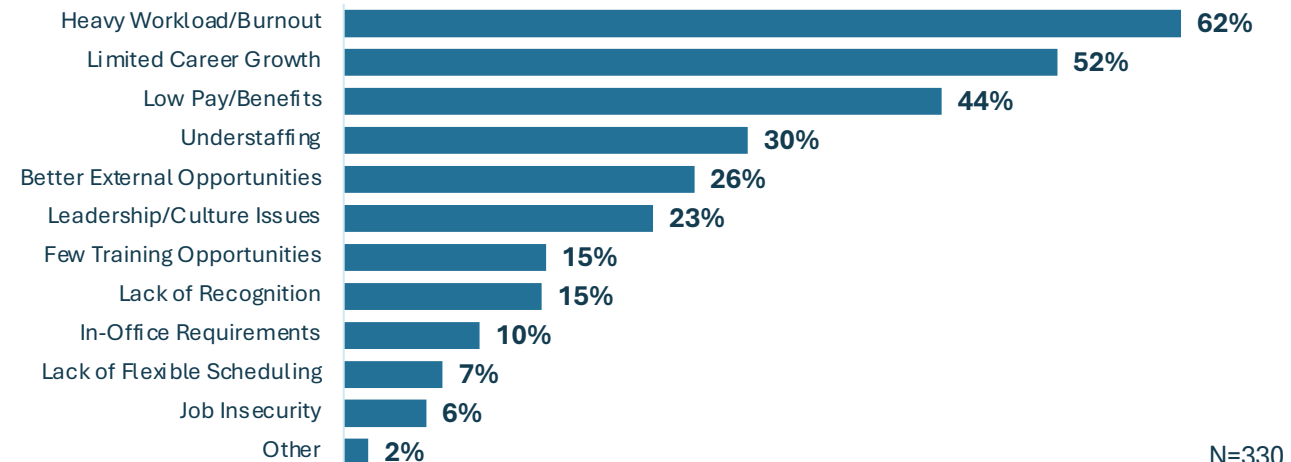
## INSIGHT

Stabilize and address burnout concerns before raising growth expectations.

### TOP CHALLENGES IN FUNDRAISING STAFF HIRING



### FUNDRAISING STAFF RETENTION CHALLENGES

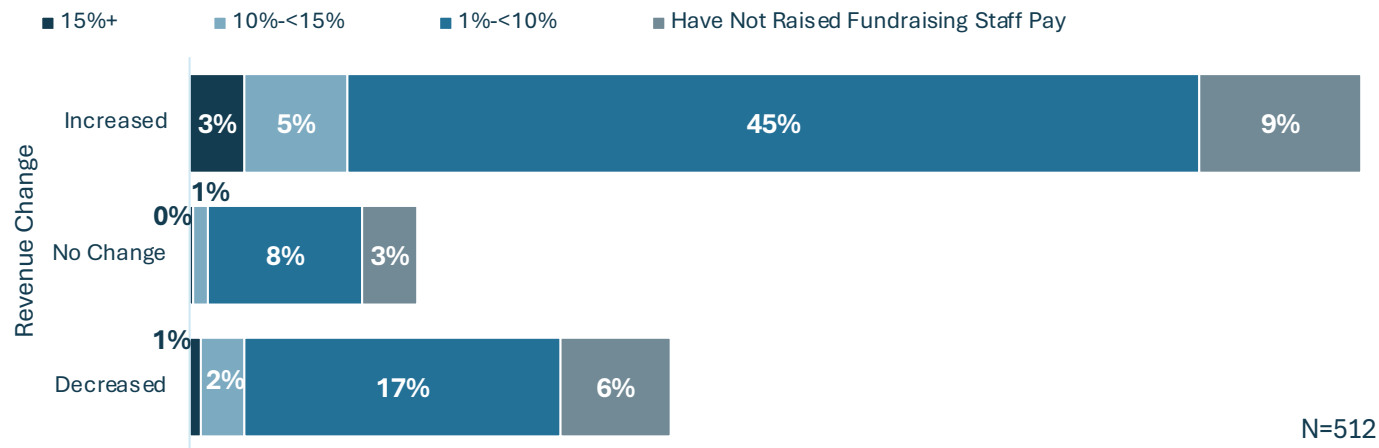


# Compensation Linked to Revenue Outcomes

Nearly half (47%) of respondents increased pay between 1% and 6% over the past three years.

Organizations that increased pay reported stronger revenue trends.

## REVENUE CHANGE BY STAFF PAY INCREASES



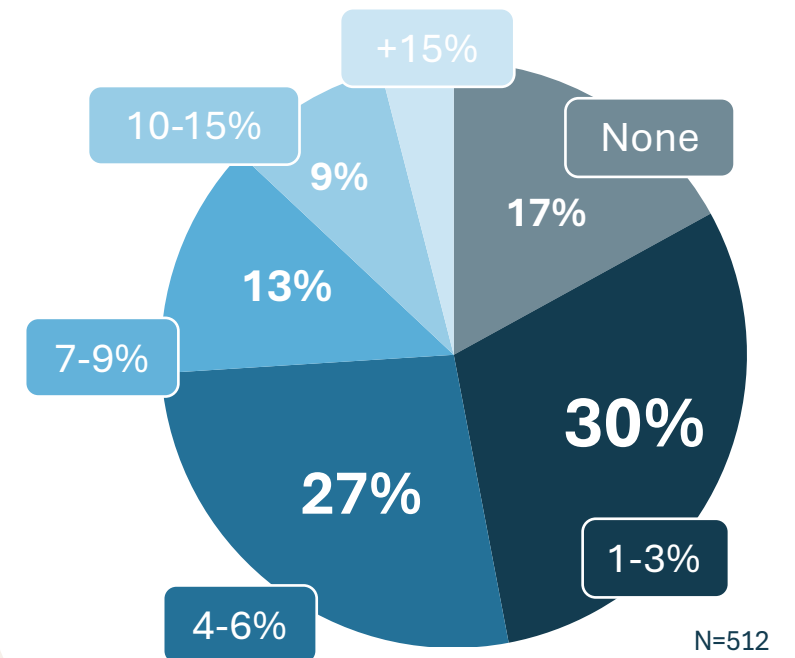
PEOPLE, BOARDS, & CAPACITY



INSIGHT

Examine the rate of pay increases vis a vis fundraising goal increases.

## FUNDRAISING STAFF PAY INCREASE OVER PAST THREE YEARS

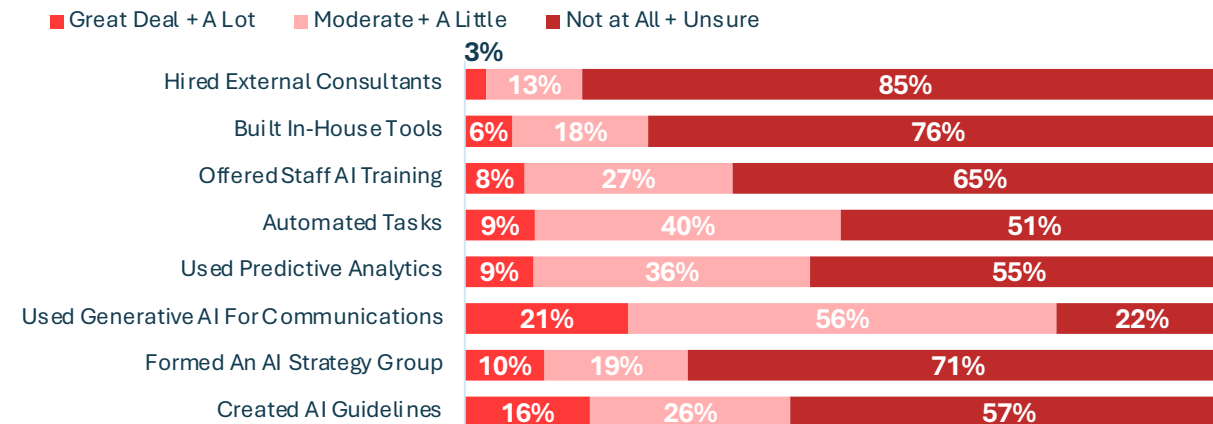


# AI Interest Is High, But Adoption Is Uneven

Most organizations are experimenting, fewer are operationalizing.

Lack of training and governance limits known impact.

## ENGAGEMENT WITH AI & RELATED TECHNOLOGY IN LAST 12 MONTHS



N=499

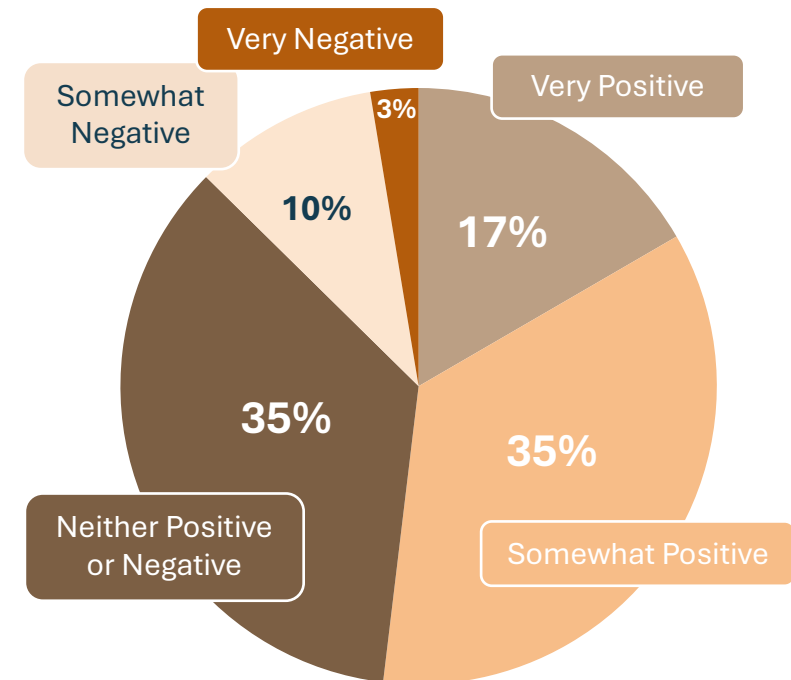
SYSTEMS, AI, & FUTURE POSITIONING



INSIGHT

Start with one to three defined AI use cases, measure and adapt as needed.

## ORGANIZATION'S STANCE ON AI IN FUNDRAISING



N=499

# Openness to AI Correlates with Revenue Growth

Organizations with positive AI stances report better revenue outcomes.

Technology posture reflects broader adaptability.

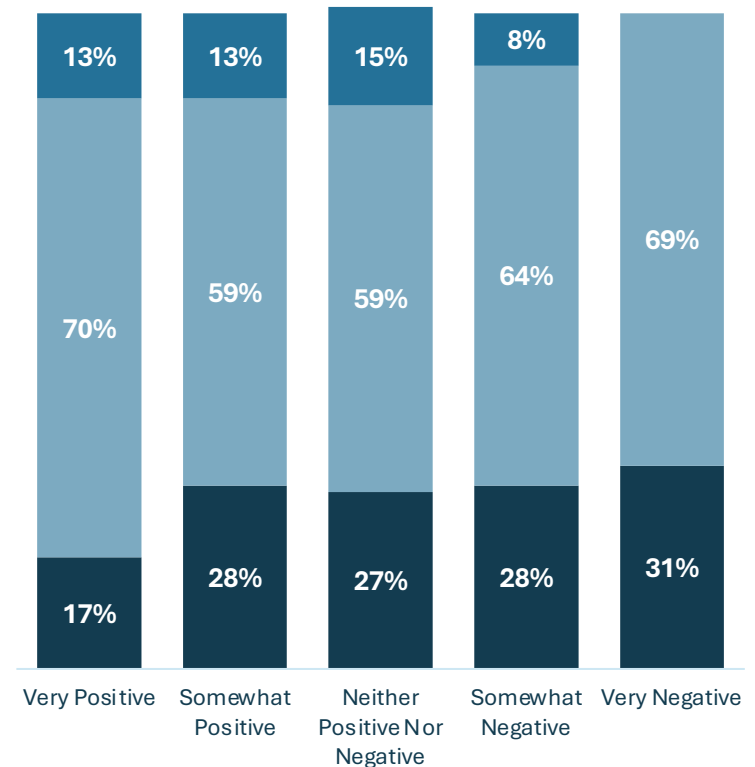


## INSIGHT

Consider AI as an emerging strategy, not a side experiment.

### IMPACT OF AI STANCE IN FUNDRAISING ON REVENUE CHANGES

■ No Change ■ Increase ■ Decrease



N=294

# DEI Is a Component of Fundraising Strategy & Diversifying Donor Groups Remains a Challenge

DEI increasingly shapes fundraising strategy and engagement.

Many organizations lack tools to measure and operationalize impact.

SYSTEMS, AI, & FUTURE POSITIONING



INSIGHT

Embed DEI across systems, data, and talent decisions.

## ROLE OF DEI IN FUNDRAISING

|     |                          |     |                              |
|-----|--------------------------|-----|------------------------------|
| 15% | Central To Strategy      | 35% | Part Of Approach/Not Central |
| 28% | Minimal Role In Approach | 22% | No Role In Approach          |

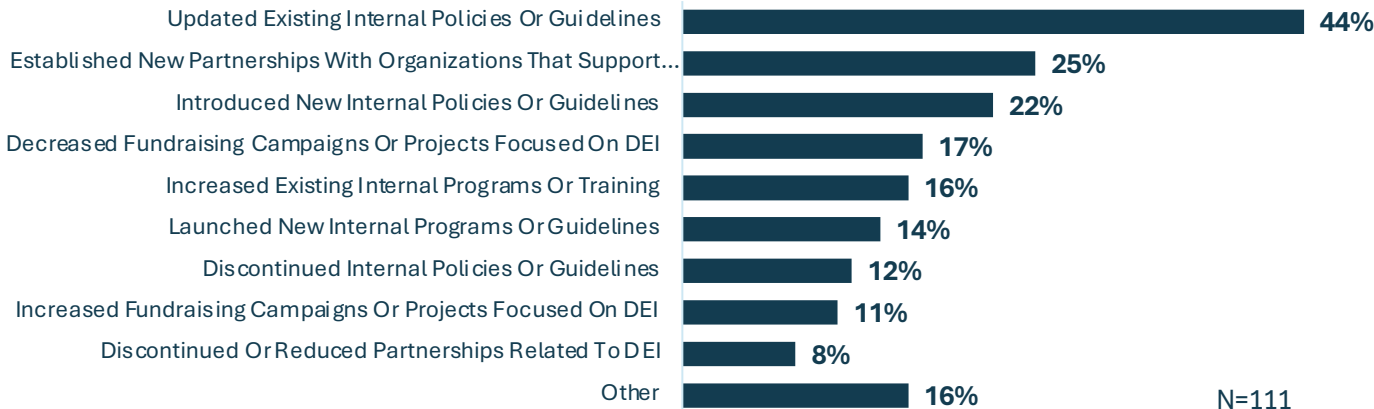
N=491

## TOP CHALLENGES OR BARRIERS WHEN TRYING TO INCORPORATE DIVERSITY

- % OF RESPONDENTS
- 49% Difficulty In Reaching And Engaging Diverse Donor Groups
  - 30% Aligning DEI Goals With Broader Fundraising Strategies
  - 27% Uncertainty In Measuring DEI Impact
  - 17% Addressing Cultural Insensitivities & Inclusive Messaging
  - 16% Insufficient Diverse Voices In Decision Making

N=245

## TYPES OF DEI-RELATED CHANGES IMPLEMENTED



N=111

# Key Takeaways & Action Steps

# Top 5 Takeaways

01

**Stability is uneven:** Many organizations are holding steady, but gaps are widening.

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02

**Retention matters more than volume:** Keeping donors drives durability more than acquiring new ones.

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03

**External forces are accelerating change:** Policy shifts, funding uncertainty, and workforce stressors require organizations to adapt nimbly.

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04

**Investment correlates with results:** People, pay, and systems matter to growing revenue.

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05

**Prepared organizations have an edge:** Readiness around boards, planned and legacy giving, data, and tools differentiates organizations.

# Top 5 Actions to Bring Back to Your Team

01

## Prioritize retention and stewardship

- Develop stewardship plans as intentionally as cultivation plans.
- Invest in mid-level and major giving .

02

## Assess exposure in your funding mix

- Look at the composition of your top 10% of funders to identify opportunity and risk.
- Consider one or two priority areas of revenue focus for the year ahead.

03

## Clarify board and staff roles

- Define clear giving expectations for board members.
- Emphasize board “give” policies over board “get” policies, where appropriate.

04

## Stabilize and support your team

- Align growth expectations with capacity and workload realities.
- Invest in retention through clear roles, development, and manager support.

05

## Explore AI, DEI, and systems strategies

- Focus on a few high-value use cases that support fundraising.
- Establish governance and training so tools become embedded, not ad hoc.