



FUNDRAISING

2026 Philanthropy Pulse



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Introduction

Data & Insights to Inform Fundraising Success in a Changing Nonprofit Landscape

Leading a nonprofit in today's environment requires constant judgment calls. Decisions about where to invest, what to sustain, and how to adapt are rarely straightforward and are often made amid shifting conditions for giving and philanthropy.

The CCS *Philanthropy Pulse* serves as a key resource for leaders navigating this reality. Drawing on insights from more than 600 nonprofit organizations across sectors and geographies, the 2026 report provides a snapshot of how leaders are responding to current fundraising and organizational pressures, and where they are finding stability, efficiency, and momentum.

This fifth edition of the *Philanthropy Pulse* enables nonprofit leaders to benchmark their experience and inform strategic conversations. Findings span revenue performance, governance, staffing, operations, technology, and donor engagement, offering both a view of consistent challenges and emerging priorities shaping today's philanthropic landscape.

The data and insights presented in this report are based on an online survey conducted by CCS Fundraising between late October and early December 2025, with responses from 618 nonprofit organizations across 47 U.S. states and 18 countries.

We extend our sincere thanks to Elaine Tomlinson for her instrumental contributions to the development and execution of this year's report.

Executive Summary



Over 60% of nonprofits reported revenue growth last year, led by Public Society Benefit and Education organizations.



Two-thirds of organizations with boards that prioritize personal giving report revenue growth.



Half of respondents place their cost to raise \$1 in the \$0.10–\$0.24 range.



Organizations cite donor acquisition (68%) and donor retention (48%) as top fundraising challenges.



Staff rating their knowledge of AI as mostly or fully knowledgeable doubled to 20%, yet 65% of organizations report no AI training.



Almost half of respondents said recent government policy has negatively impacted their organization.



While 83% of organizations held or grew staff, retention challenges cited include limited salaries (71%) and heavy workloads (67%).



To retain new donors, targeted digital communications are used by 69% of organizations.



Only 18% of organizations report having a formal succession plan, while 42% rely on cross training or shared knowledge to continue momentum during leadership transitions.

Survey Respondents Are Concentrated in Leadership Roles, with 64% Serving as Fundraising or Organization Leaders

While most respondents hold leadership roles, 25% are front-line or operational fundraising staff. Survey submissions reflect organizational input compiled by a designated respondent, often informed by multiple internal contributors, representing 618 distinct organizations across the nonprofit industry.

BY THE NUMBERS

47

U.S. States

18

Countries

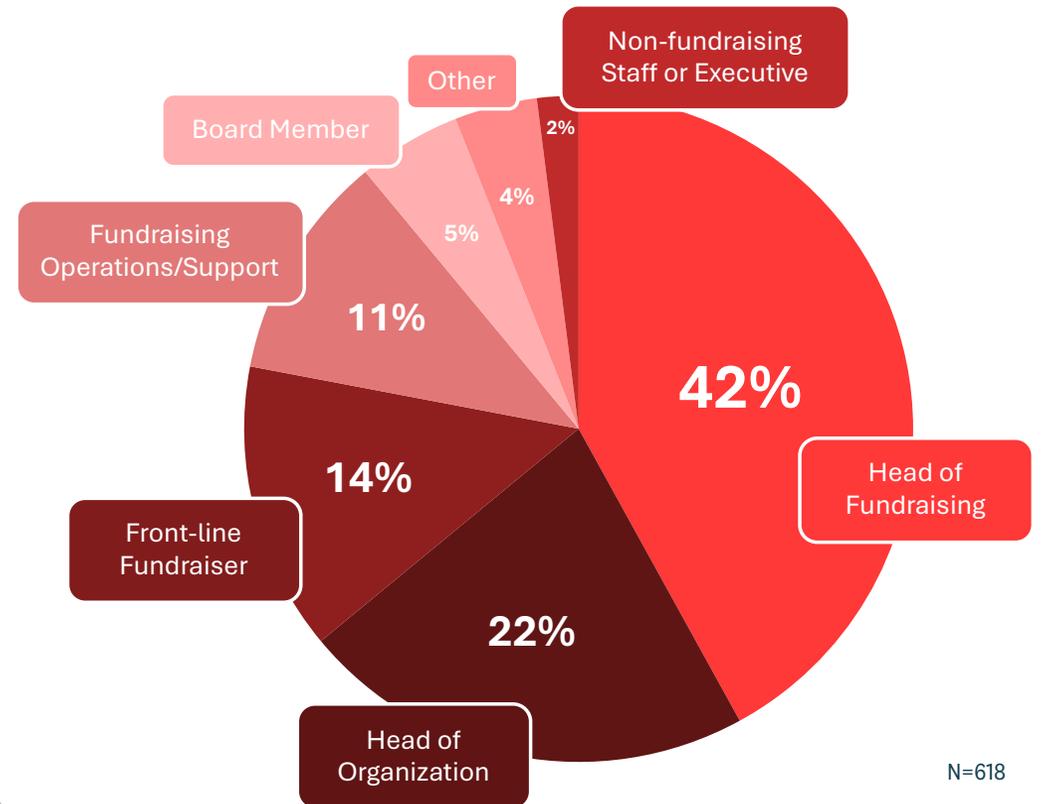
64%

Heads of Fundraising or Organization

25%

Fundraising Staff

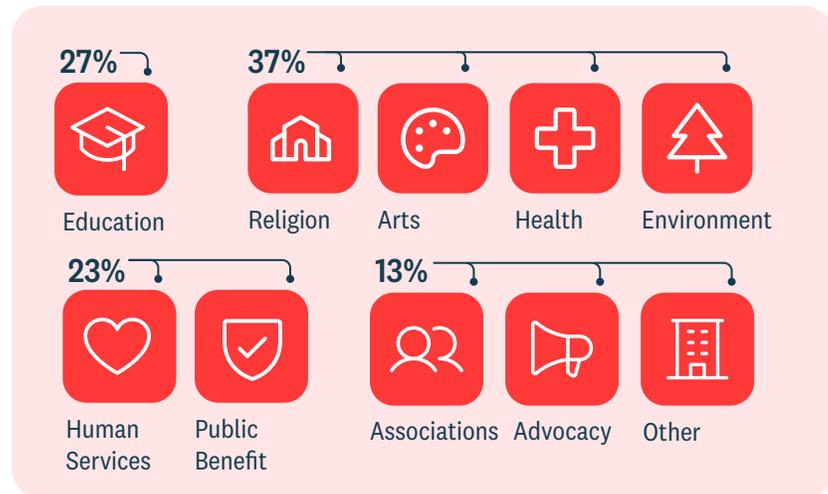
RESPONDENTS BY ROLE



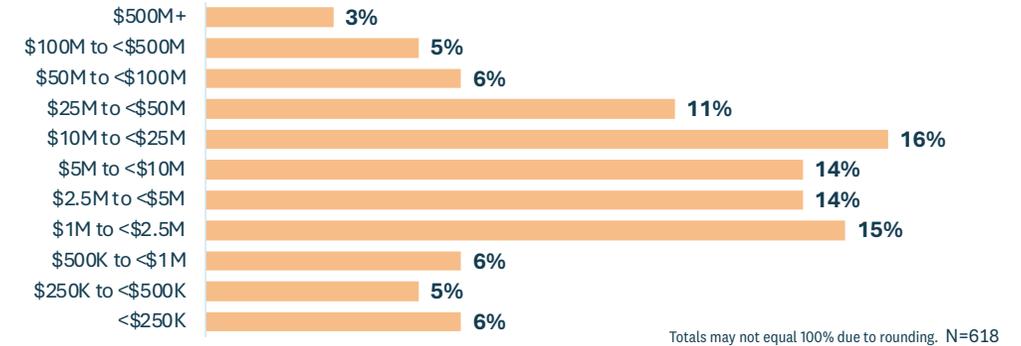
Organizations Span the Nonprofit Landscape Across Both Scale and Sector

The distribution of respondents by organization size showed the largest concentration in nonprofits working with operating budgets between \$1 million and \$10 million (43%).

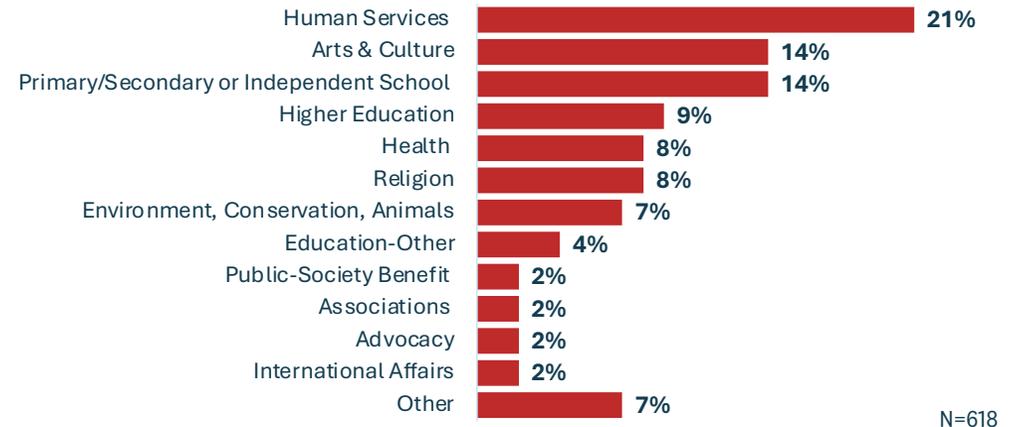
Organizations span the breadth of the nonprofit landscape, with 27% in education, 23% in human services and public benefit, 37% across arts, health, religion, and environment, and 13% in associations, advocacy, international, or other categories.



RESPONDENTS BY ANNUAL OPERATING BUDGET



RESPONDENTS BY SECTOR

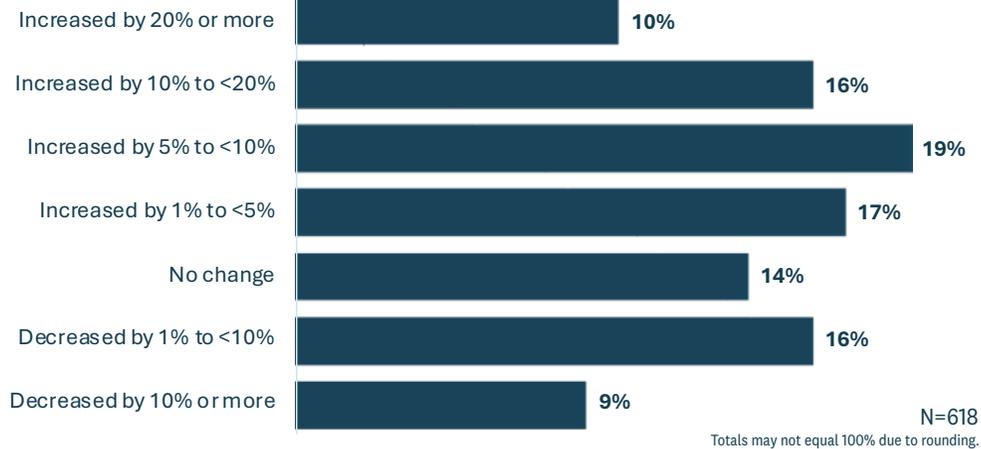




Current Trends in Fundraising

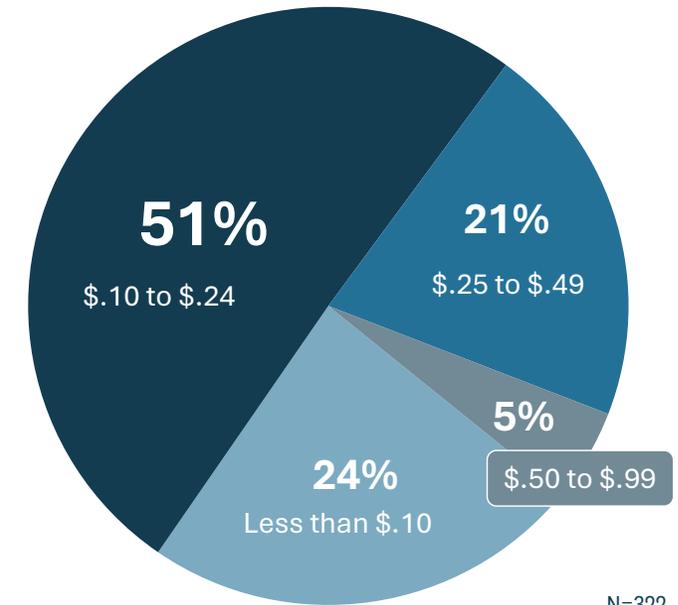
Revenue Performance Remains Steady as Fundraising Costs Vary Across Organizations

CHANGE IN REVENUE FROM PRIOR FISCAL YEAR



A solid majority of organizations (62%) reported increased revenue in FYE2025 with more than half in the 1%-20% range. Only 25% of organizations reported declines and 14% saw no change.

COST TO RAISE \$1



Half of responding organizations report spending between \$0.10 and \$0.24 to raise a dollar, while nearly a quarter (24%) operate at a highly efficient level, spending less than \$0.10 per dollar raised.

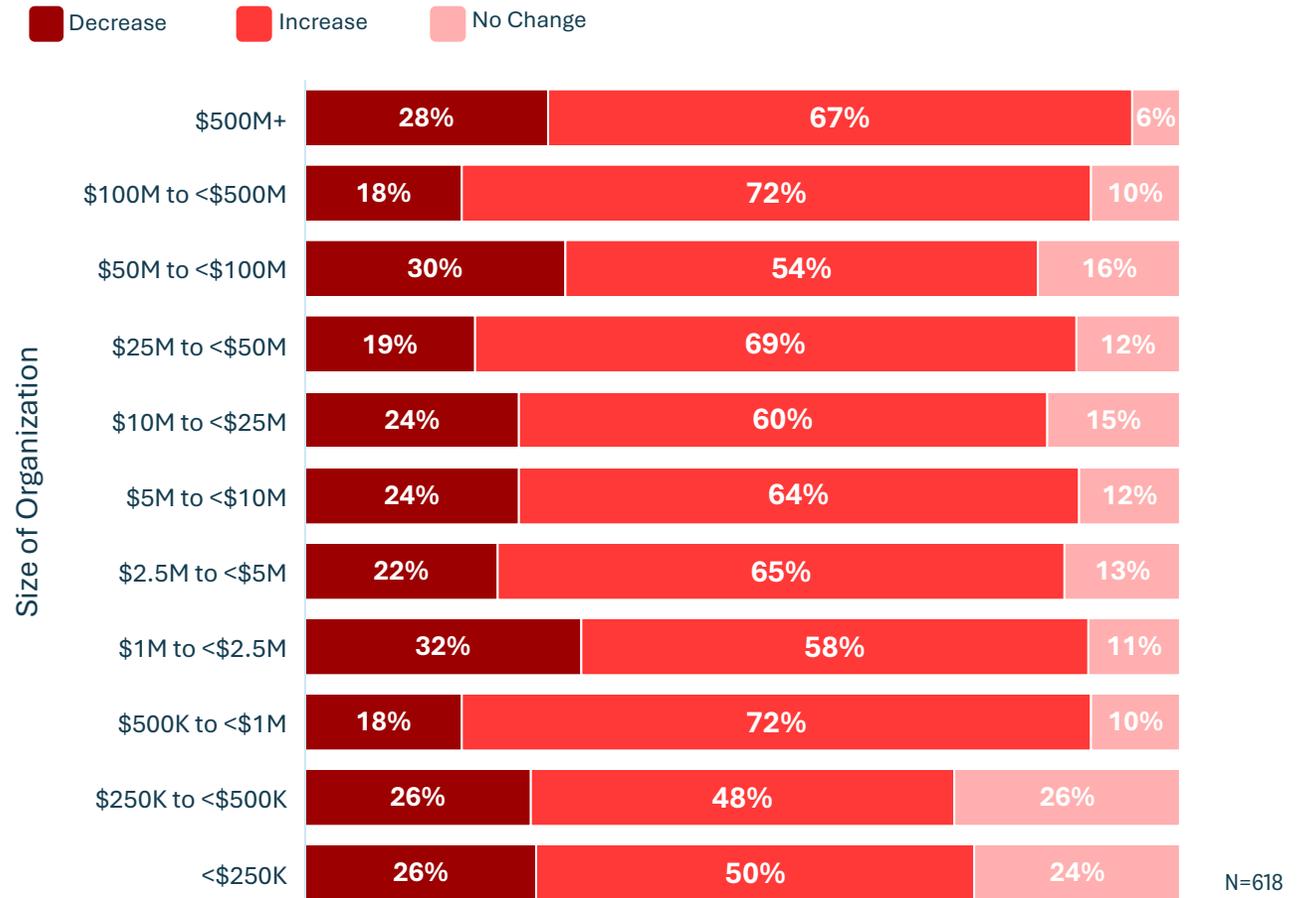


Although cost to raise a dollar remains a standard metric of fundraising efficiency, it is rarely measured at scale in today's environment. Analysis of staff allocation across 271 organizations shows no fundraising role is linked to consistently higher efficiency. Overall, workforce composition has only a minimal relationship to cost to raise a dollar, with no single function proving more cost-effective than others.

61% of Organizations Saw an Uptick in Revenue, with Increases Favoring Larger Organizations

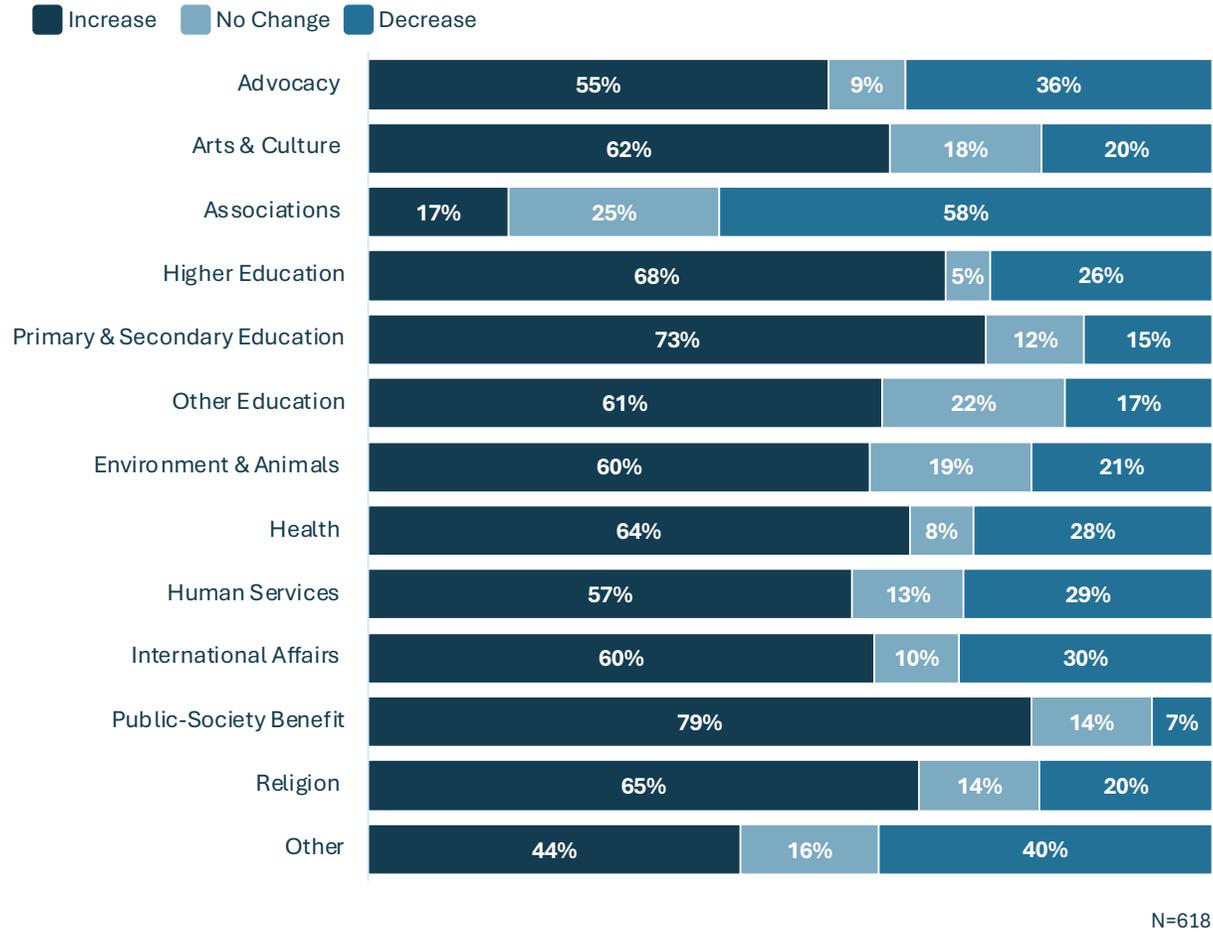
Among organizations with annual operating budgets greater than \$500K, majorities in all categories reported increased revenue compared to the prior fiscal year. And for those with annual operating budgets of \$500K or less, while they did not have a majority reporting increases, nearly three-quarters (74%) of these organizations reported either no change or an increase of revenue, demonstrating stability. Most (69%) of organizations who reported increased donor acquisition also reported increased revenue, signaling the importance of new donor pathways.

REVENUE CHANGE BY ORGANIZATION SIZE



HOW DID REVENUE PERFORMANCE VARY BY SECTOR IN THE PAST FISCAL YEAR?

REVENUE CHANGE BY SECTOR



Public-Society Benefit Organizations, Followed by the Education Sector, Were the Most Likely to Report Revenue Growth

Revenue gains varied significantly by sector. Public-Society Benefit and Primary & Secondary Education organizations performed strongest, with roughly three-quarters reporting increased revenue. Associations faced the greatest challenge, as only 17% reported any increase. Advocacy organizations showed the widest spread in outcomes; over 25% reported revenue declines greater than 10%, while more than one-third achieved growth exceeding 20%.

REVENUE CHANGE SINCE PRIOR FISCAL YEAR

- 10%: ↑ by 20% or more
- 16%: ↑ by 10% to <20%
- 19%: ↑ by 5% to <10%
- 17%: ↑ by 1% to <5%
- 14%: No change
- 16%: ↓ by 1% to <10%
- 9%: ↓ by 10% or more

Donor Contributions Are Most Likely to Come Annually or as a One-Time Gift

Nonprofits report receiving gifts most frequently from annual donors (42%) and one-time givers (40%), while monthly donors representing only 11%. This suggests a relative balance between fundraising practices that engage both new and retained donors alike.

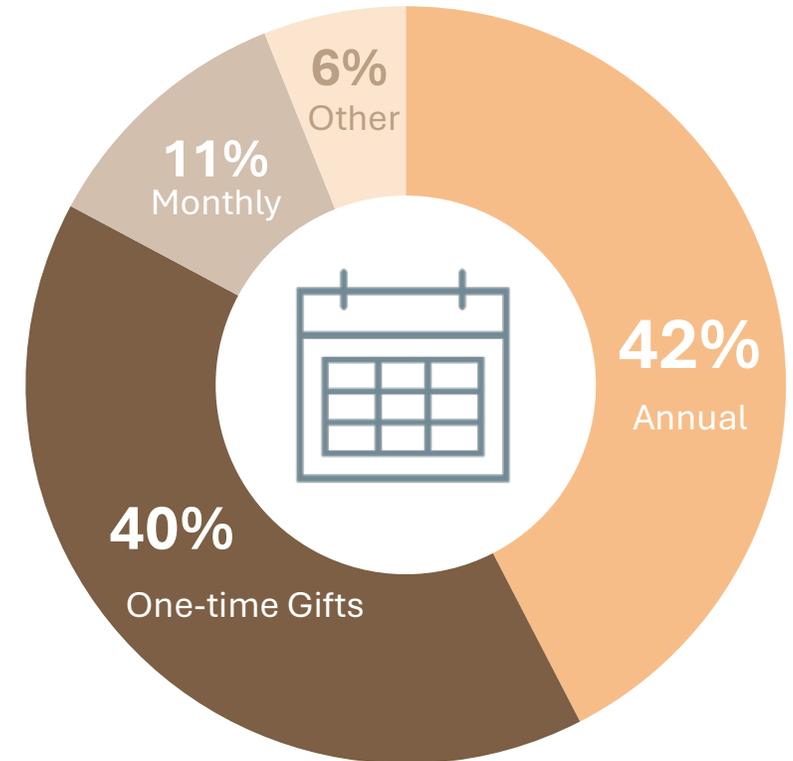
DILEMMA

With most donor support coming from annual and one-time gifts, organizations remain heavily reliant on periodic giving concentrated in a small number of fundraising moments. This structure can heighten revenue volatility at a time when funding uncertainty is increasing across multiple sources.

OPPORTUNITY

Rather than relying solely on annual or single donation models, organizations could introduce alternative recurring options, such as memberships or seasonal giving, that extend continuity in donor support while remaining aligned with donor preferences and capacity.

AVERAGE FREQUENCY OF DONATIONS

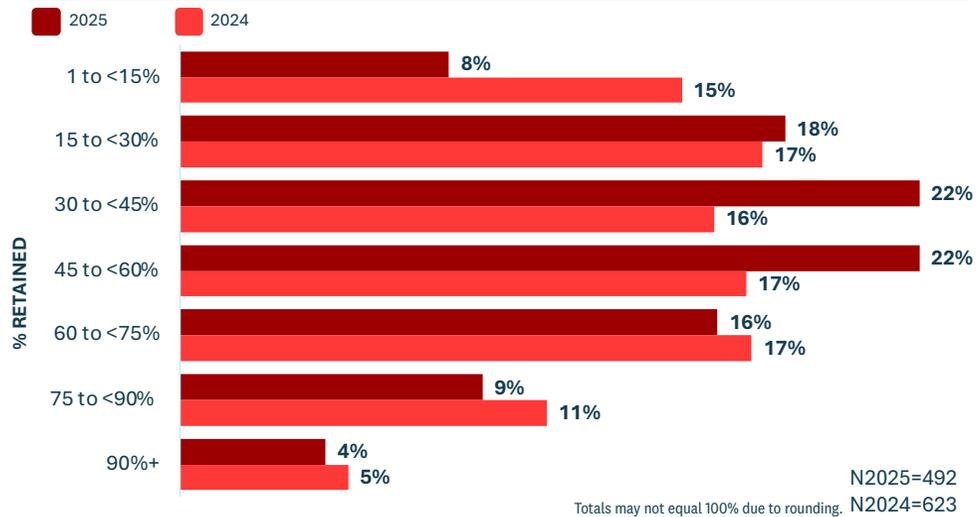


Donor Acquisition and Retention Have Improved Slightly in Recent Years

In FYE2025, donor acquisition was cited again as a top challenge, but one that was met with improvement; a record 60% of respondents noted increases in new donors, up from 53% in 2024.

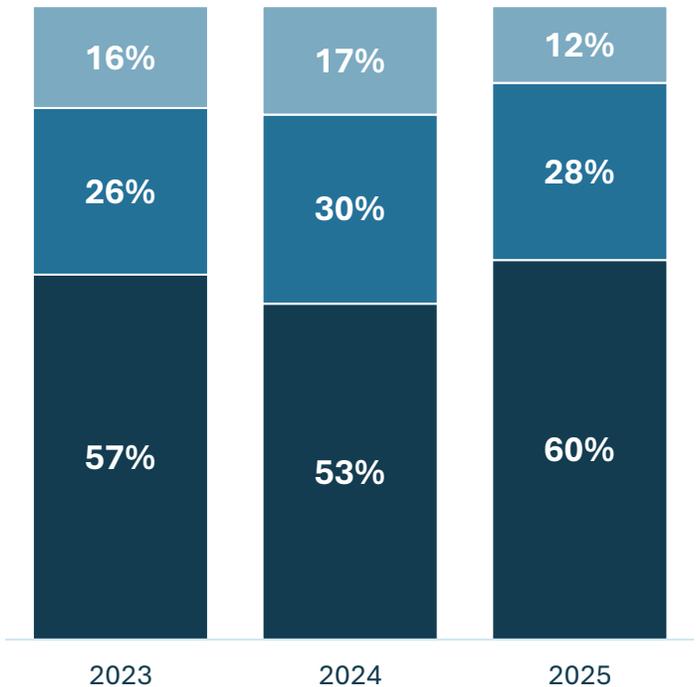
Donor retention also saw modest improvement, driven by fewer organizations reporting very low new-donor retention and more citing greater middle-range retention.

ESTIMATED RETENTION OF NEW DONORS WITHIN THREE YEARS



NEW DONORS ACQUIRED IN PAST YEAR

■ Increase ■ No Change ■ Decrease

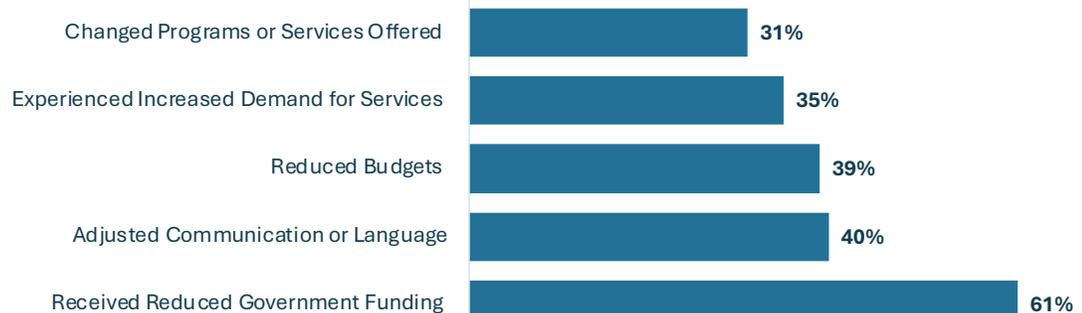


Totals may not equal 100% due to rounding. N=530

Government Policy Has Negatively Impacted Nearly Half of All Organizations, but Quick Adjustments Have Been Made

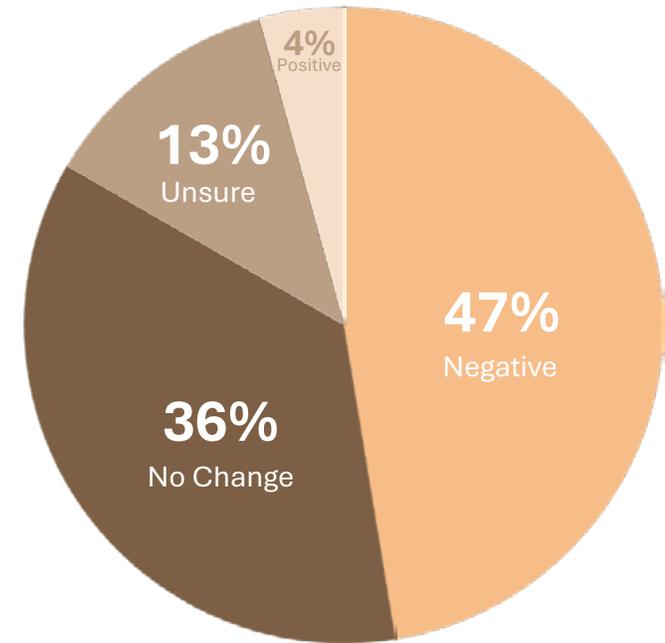
Recent government policies and regulations are exerting growing pressure on nonprofit organizations, with nearly half reporting a negative impact on their operations in the past year. Many organizations are grappling with how to adapt to new or changing policies, and have been quick to respond, often by revising programs, communications, and service delivery models.

TOP FIVE IMPACTS OF GOVERNMENT POLICIES/REGULATIONS



N=319

GOVERNMENT POLICY IMPACT ON ORGANIZATIONS



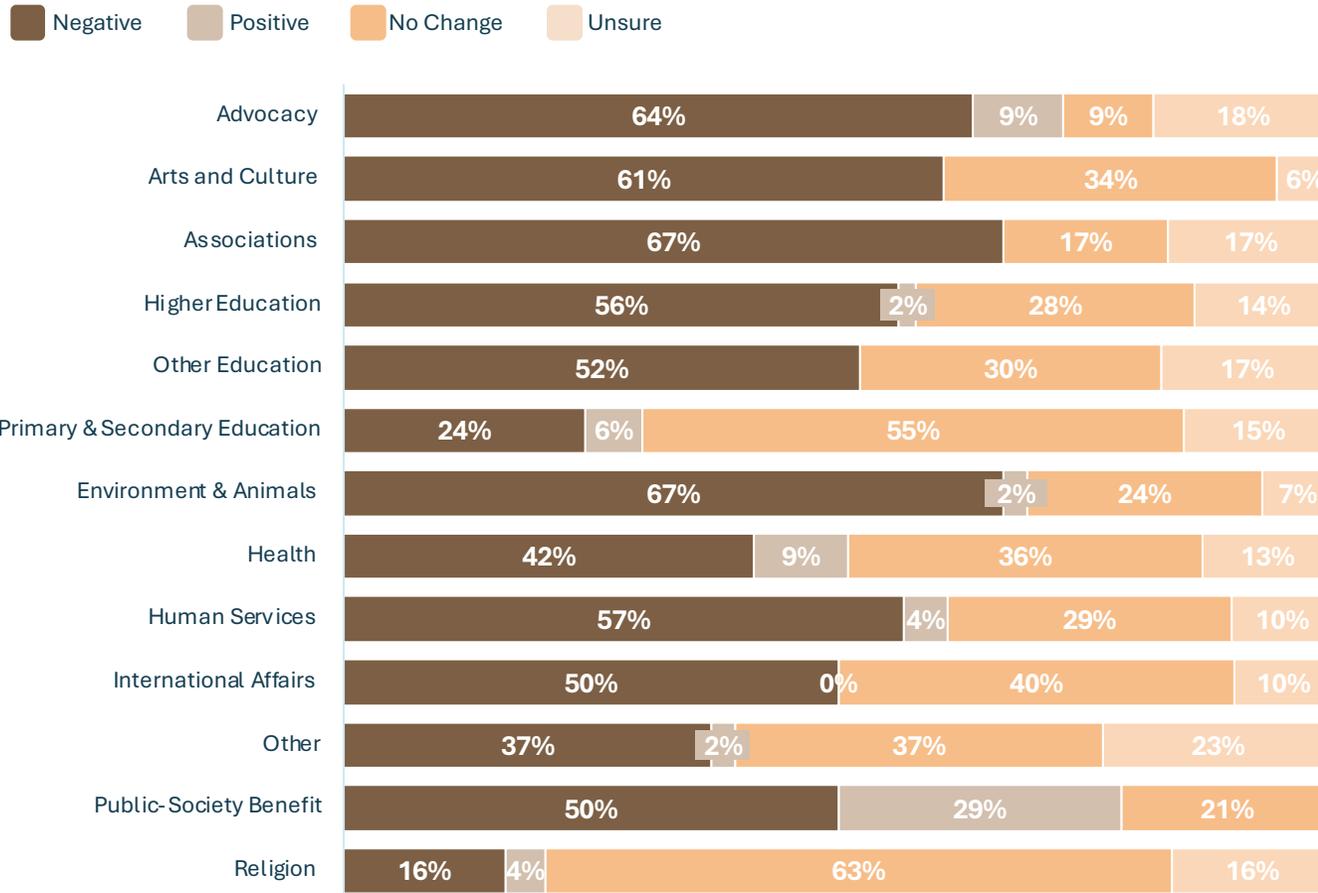
N=618



Expectations for government grants in 2026 have weakened significantly. The share of organizations anticipating a decrease rose sharply from 17% in 2025 to 45% expected in 2026, while just 3% report expecting an increase. Nearly 60% of respondents anticipate that state and regional grants will remain flat, though 30% expect a decline.

WHICH NONPROFIT SECTORS ARE MOST IMPACTED BY GOVERNMENT POLICY CHANGES?

IMPACT OF GOVERNMENT POLICY BY SECTOR



N=618

Government Policy Headwinds Hit Some Sectors Harder Than Others

Negative impacts from government policies are most pronounced among Associations and Environment & Animals organizations (both at 67%), followed closely by Advocacy (64%) and Arts & Culture (61%). Higher Education (56%) and Human Services (57%) also report majority negative impacts, underscoring the broad pressure facing sectors that rely heavily on public funding or regulation-sensitive programs. In contrast, Public-Society Benefit organizations stand out as the most likely to report positive impacts (29%), while Religion is the most likely to report no change (63%). Across most other sectors, reported improvements remain limited, with positive responses generally below 10%. For a deeper investigation of sector-based fundraising differences, see the [2025 CCS Philanthropic Landscape](#).

More Organizations Are Accepting Noncash Donations

Overall, the year-over-year comparison suggests modest improvement in the role of noncash assets within overall giving. Fewer organizations report little or no noncash support, while more indicate that noncash assets make up a meaningful share of total giving. The shift is gradual rather than dramatic, but it points to increasing comfort with and integration of noncash assets into organizations' broader fundraising mix.

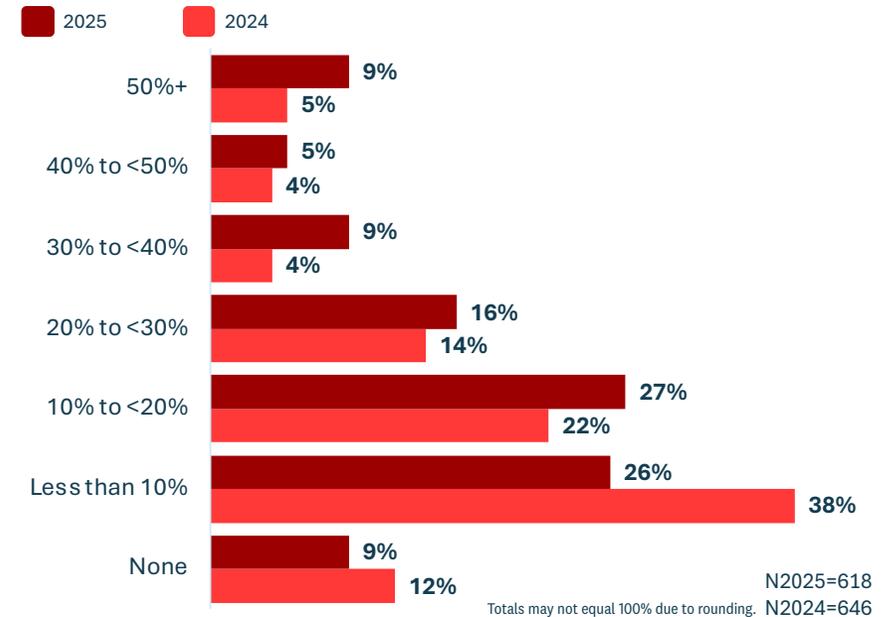
DILEMMA

More than half of organizations (53%) identified revenue diversification as a strategic priority for future success. Among organizations who prioritized expanding fundraising sources, approximately 12% cited limited capacity to accept noncash gifts as a major obstacle. This rate is only slightly higher than the ~10% reported by organizations that did not prioritize diversification, revealing that organizations may have aspirations of revenue diversification, but have not put these goals into action.

OPPORTUNITY

Strengthening noncash-gift capacity reduces reliance on annual cash giving by expanding who can give and how they give, helping stabilize revenue even in volatile conditions. Consider making blended asks that include noncash and legacy gifts.

PERCENTAGE GIVING FROM NONCASH ASSETS



TOP THREE OBSTACLES TO RECEIVING NONCASH GIVING

52%

Donor awareness and/or understanding

48%

Communication and marketing

31%

Staff knowledge and/or training

Staff Familiarity with Donor-Advised Funds Is Linked to Higher DAF Revenue Share

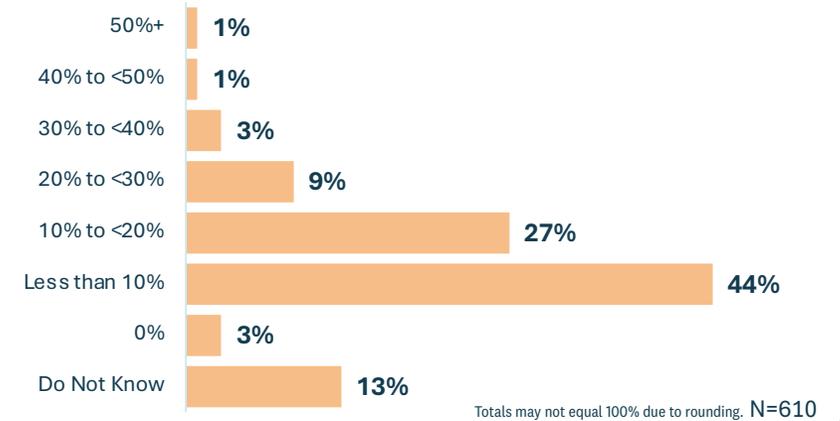
Among the 95% of respondents who report being familiar with donor-advised funds (DAFs), 85% either actively solicit and receive DAF gifts or receive them without specifically targeting DAF donors, indicating that DAF participation is now widespread.

Naturally, greater familiarity is strongly associated with both higher likelihood of receiving DAF gifts and a shift toward higher reliance on DAFs within overall giving portfolios. Of organizations with annual operating budgets over \$1 million, roughly 11%–15% report that donor-advised funds account for 20% or more of total giving. Even so, DAFs remain a minority revenue source for most organizations, with the majority reporting that DAFs account for less than 20% of total giving, underscoring existing adoption but continued room for expansion.

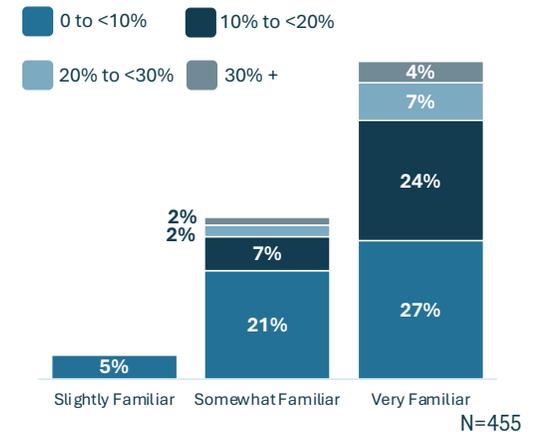


When it comes to DAFs, training may have a high impact on revenue. Learn more about the future of DAFs in this [CCS report](#) about how DAFs respond during times of uncertainty.

PERCENTAGE OF REVENUE FROM DAFS



DAF REVENUE SHARE BY STAFF FAMILIARITY WITH DAFS



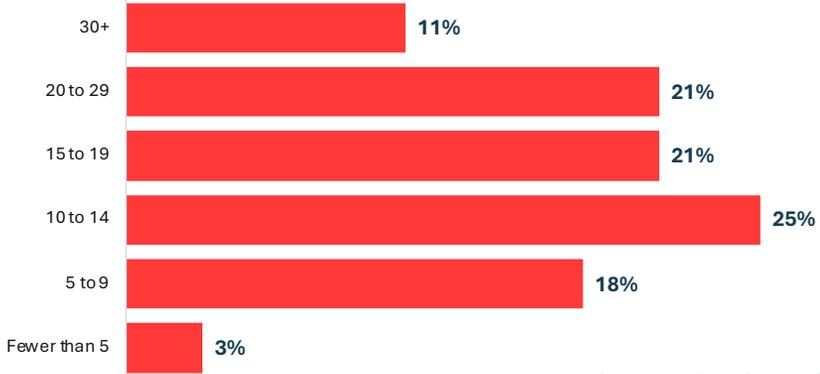


Powering the Work BOARDS & STAFF

Nonprofit Boards Are Typically Mid-Sized, with Fundraising Expectations Focused More on Personal Giving Than Direct Fundraising

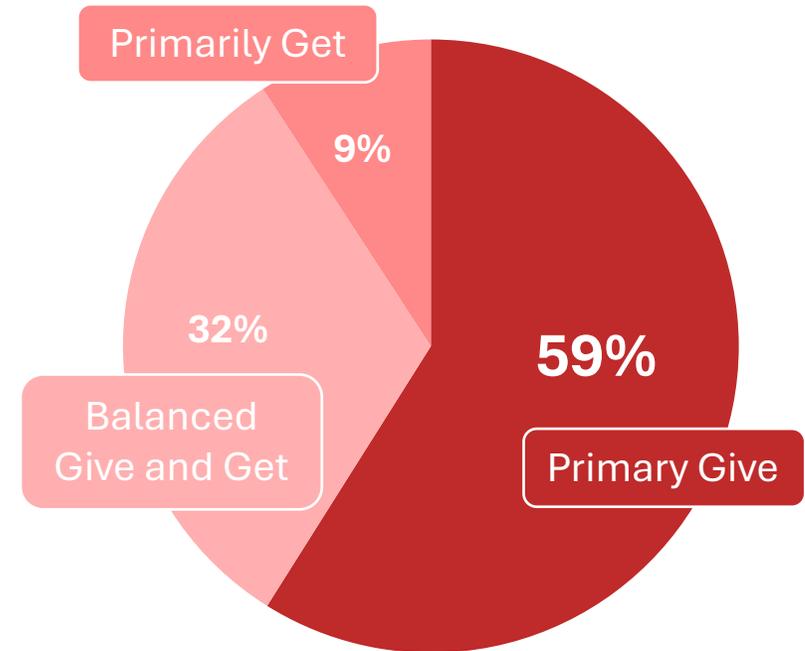
Nearly half (46%) of boards have between 10 and 20 members. In most organizations, expectations emphasize personal contributions, while fewer ask board members to actively raise funds in addition to giving. Together, personal giving on its own or paired with fundraising defines the board role for more than 90% of organizations, while models centered primarily on securing gifts from others remain relatively uncommon.

NUMBER OF BOARD MEMBERS



Totals may not equal 100% due to rounding. N=596

BOARD FUNDRAISING APPROACH

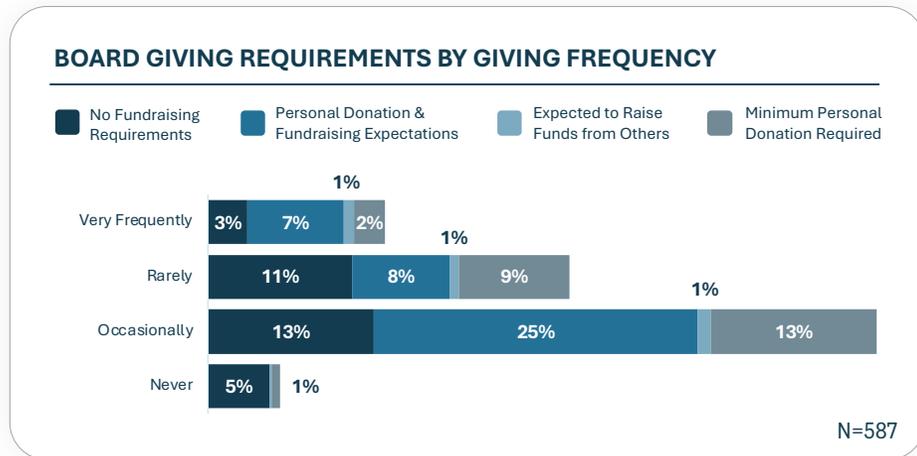


N=542

Board Fundraising Expectations Are Most Often Intermittent

Across organizations, boards most often operate with intermittent fundraising expectations rather than continuous requirements. Just over half of organizations report that boards engage in fundraising occasionally (52%), while 28% indicate participation occurs rarely. Only 14% report very frequent board fundraising activity, and 6% report no participation at all.

When expectations are specified, they most often involve personal financial contribution—either alone or combined with fundraising—accounting for 65% of responses. Expectations that focus primarily on raising funds from others remain uncommon overall, representing just 3% of responses across all levels of application.



DILEMMA

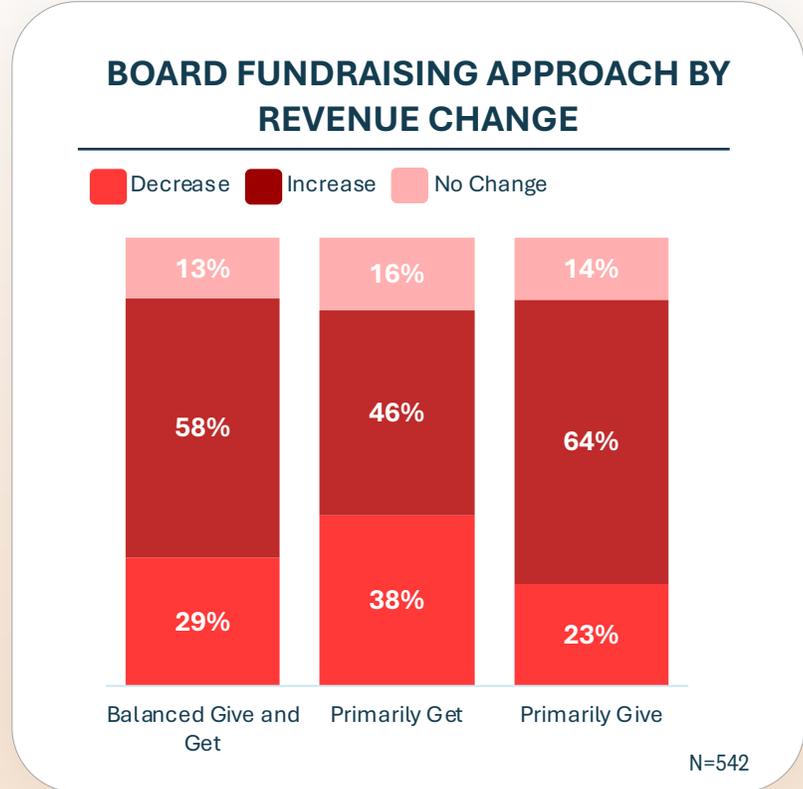
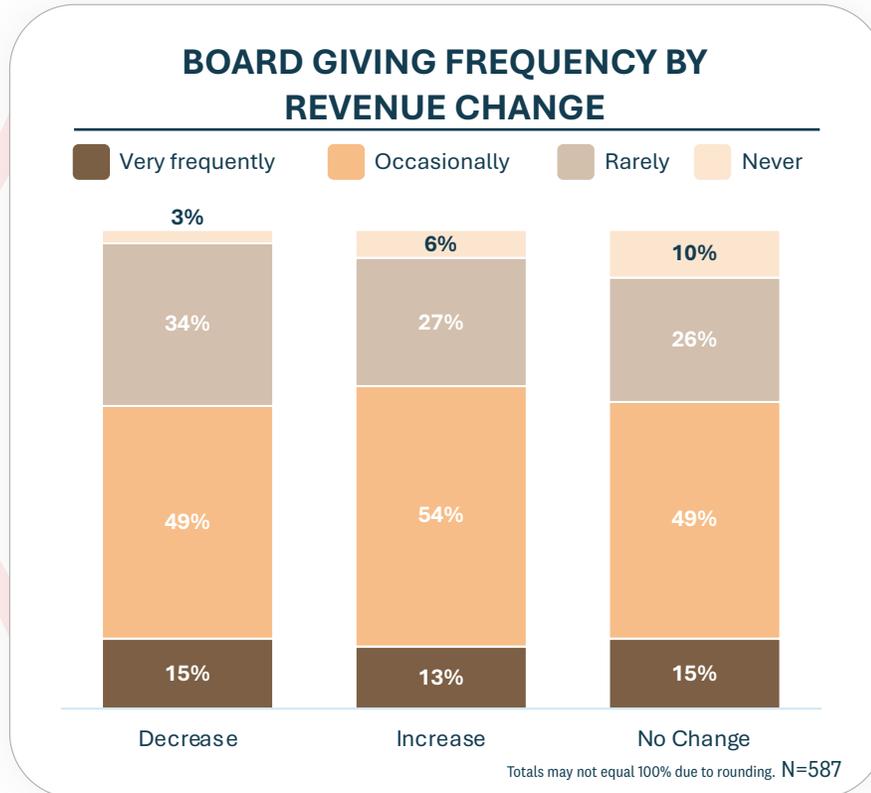
Boards remain a critical (but unevenly activated) resource for fundraising. While most boards participate at least occasionally in fundraising efforts, many operate without clear expectations for giving or fundraising, leaving engagement inconsistent and opportunities under realized. Organizations with undefined expectations risk limiting the full potential of their board members' support, even when participation is frequent.

OPPORTUNITY

Organizations can strengthen board impact by clearly defining expectations for both personal giving and fundraising participation. Establishing this framework provides guidance for members, encourages more reliable involvement, and helps translate sporadic participation into sustained contributions that support organizational goals. **Board benchmarking** can offer a useful starting point for organizations looking to define or recalibrate these expectations.

Organizations with More Engaged Boards Are More Likely to See Revenue Growth

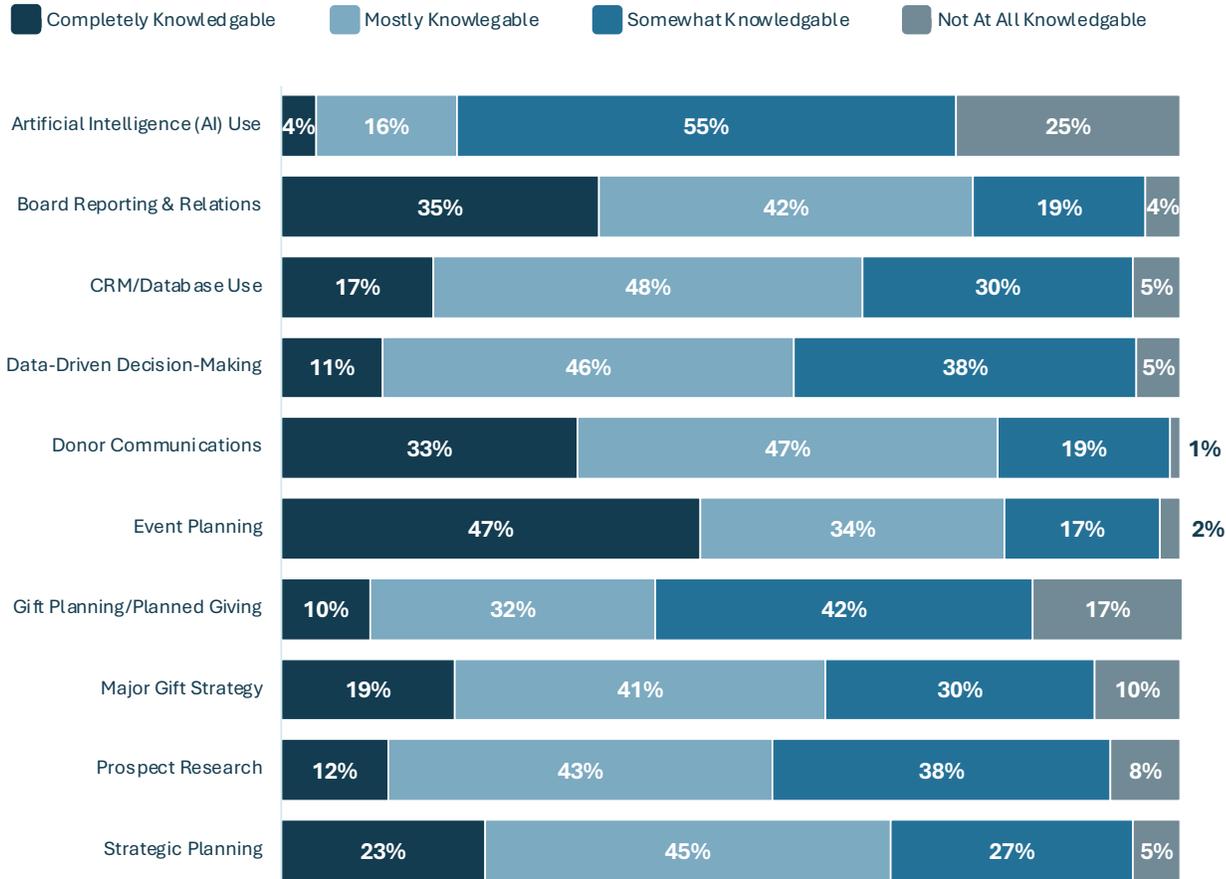
Organizations that reported revenue growth also indicated more consistent board fundraising participation. Among organizations with increased revenue, two-thirds say boards give at least occasionally, including 13% that do so very frequently. Organizations reporting revenue decreases, by contrast, show a heavier concentration of boards that fundraise rarely.



Organizations that emphasize personal giving, either on its own or as part of a balanced give-and-get approach, report stronger revenue outcomes than those relying primarily on a get-focused approach. Nearly two-thirds of give-focused boards and close to 60% of those that balance give and get report revenue increases, compared with fewer than half of primarily get-focused boards.

WHERE DO FUNDRAISING TEAMS FEEL MOST CONFIDENT?

FUNDRAISING STAFF CAPABILITIES



Totals may not equal 100% due to rounding. N=512

Staff Confidence Remains Highest in Events and Donor Communications, and AI Adoption Accelerates

Fundraising teams continue to feel most confident in event planning and donor communications. About 80% of organizations describe their teams as mostly or completely knowledgeable in both areas.

Staff capability in board reporting and relations increased, with 77% of organizations now rating staff as mostly or completely knowledgeable, up from 72% in 2025.

Confidence in prospect research also rose. Less than half of organizations described their teams as mostly or completely knowledgeable last year, compared with 55% this year.

Meanwhile, familiarity with AI is rising. The share of organizations reporting staff as mostly or completely knowledgeable doubled to 20%, marking the largest gain across all capabilities.

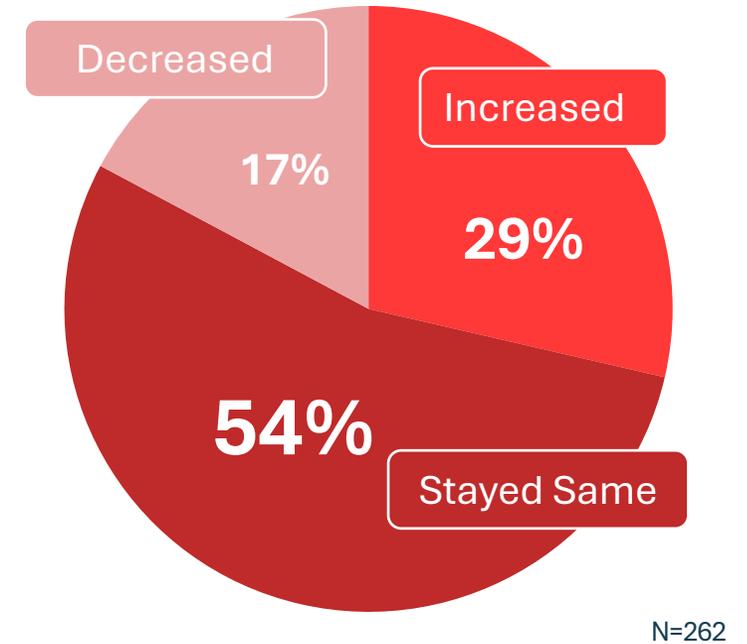
Teams Are Growing, but 7 in 10 Organizations Cite Salary Limitations as Their Top Hiring Challenge

Among organizations with fundraising staff, 83% maintained or grew their teams, with the share that increased staff rising by 6 percentage points from 2024. Hiring decisions continue to reflect the same core pressures seen last year, with limited salary budgets and difficulty finding qualified candidates remaining the most influential factors. At the same time, the data suggests that internal capacity matters. Challenges related to organizational readiness, growth pathways, and role structure also shape whether organizations are positioned to add or sustain fundraising staff.

TOP CHALLENGES IN FUNDRAISING STAFF HIRING



FUNDRAISING STAFF SIZE CHANGES

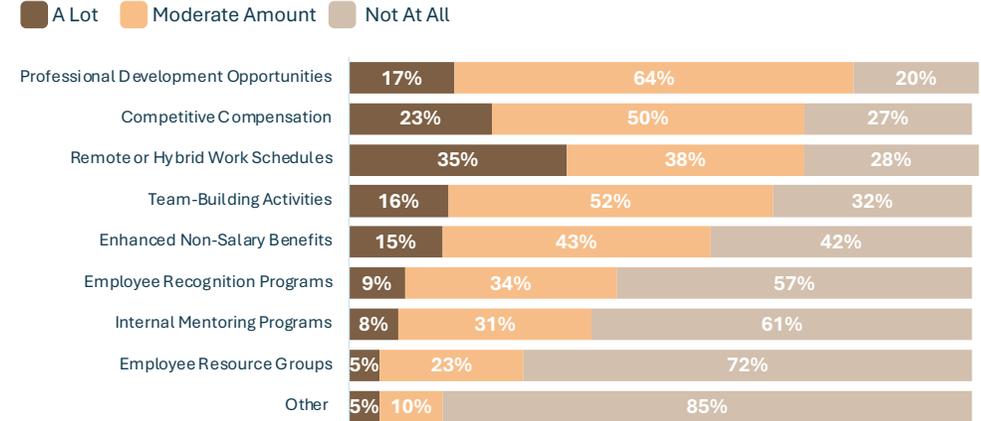


Workloads and Burnout Outpace Pay as a Top Fundraising Staff Retention Challenge

Fundraising staff retention challenges extend beyond compensation. Heavy workload and burnout (62%) and limited career growth (52%) are both cited more frequently as a main challenge than low pay and benefits (44%). Encouragingly, though, nearly one-quarter of organizations report no fundraising staff retention challenges.

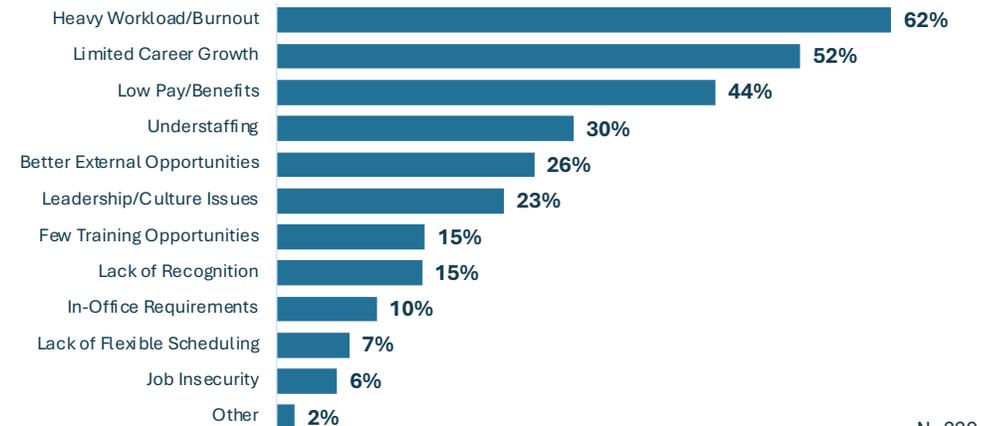
To combat retention challenges, roughly two-thirds of organizations indicate at least moderate investment in professional development, and a similar share report investing in competitive compensation. Flexibility stands out as well, with 35% of organizations reporting a high level of investment in remote or hybrid work schedules. By comparison, formal programs such as mentoring, employee recognition, and employee resource groups remain less commonly emphasized.

INVESTMENT IN FUNDRAISING STAFF



Totals may not equal 100% due to rounding. N=512

FUNDRAISING STAFF RETENTION CHALLENGES

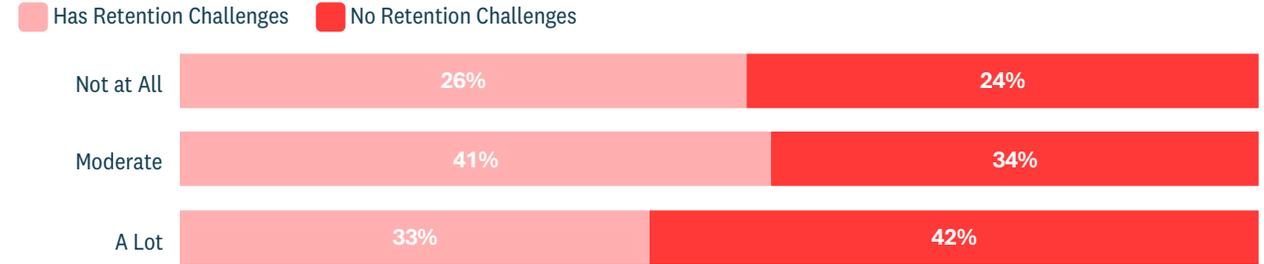


N=330

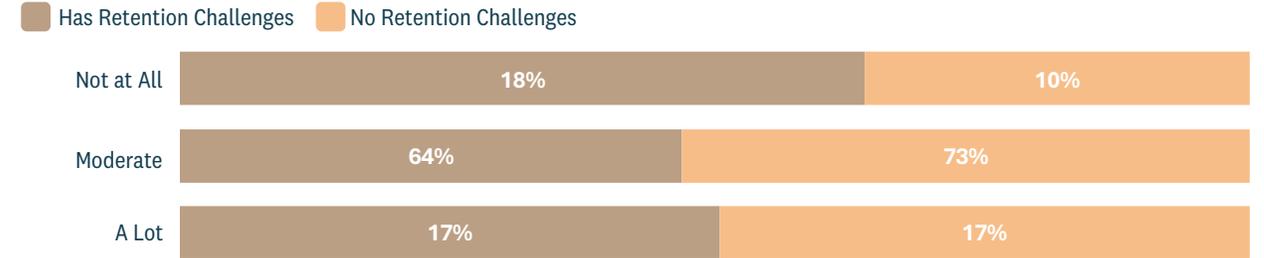
Retention Challenges Are Less Common Among Organizations That Invest in Flexibility, Compensation, and Team-Building

Organizations without fundraising staff retention challenges tend to report higher investment across multiple people-centered practices. Among these organizations, 42% indicate high investment in flexible work arrangements, compared with 33% of those experiencing retention challenges. Similar gaps appear in competitive compensation (30% vs. 22%) and team-building activities (21% vs. 14%), suggesting that sustained investment across several dimensions—not a single intervention—correlates with greater staff stability.

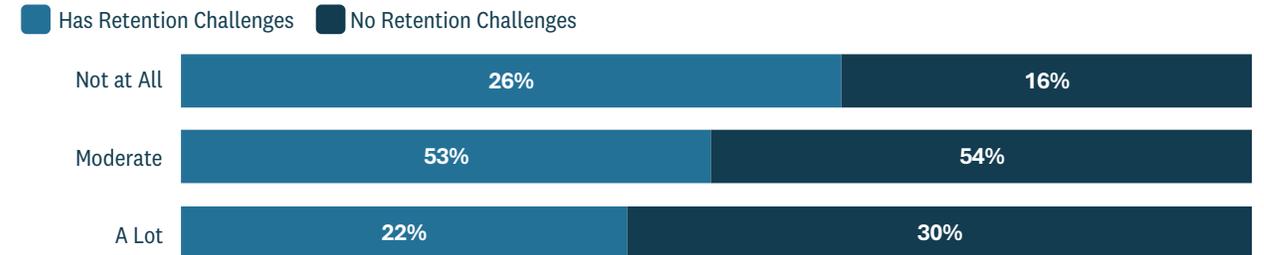
INVESTMENT IN REMOTE OR HYBRID WORK SCHEDULES



INVESTMENT IN DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES



INVESTMENT IN COMPETITIVE COMPENSATION

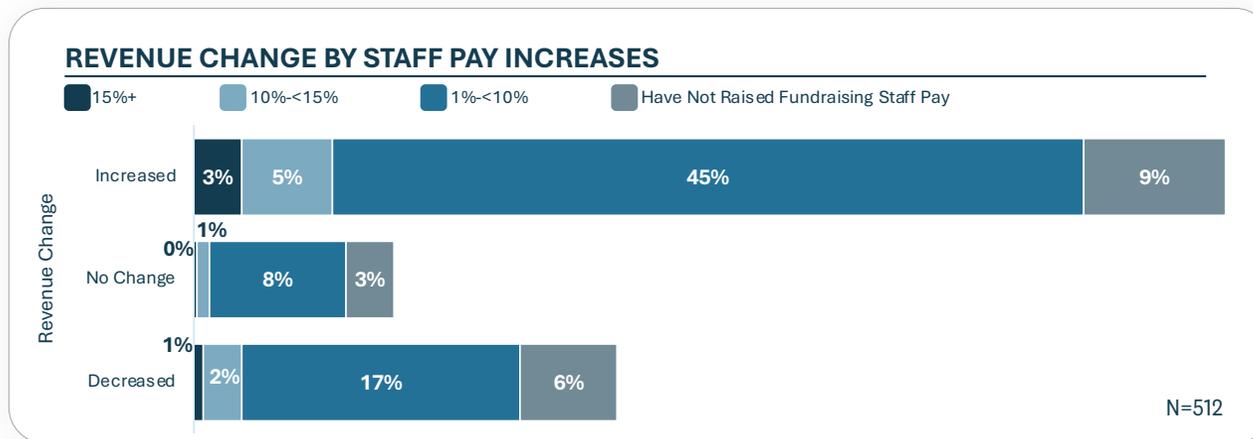


Totals may not equal 100% due to rounding. N=330

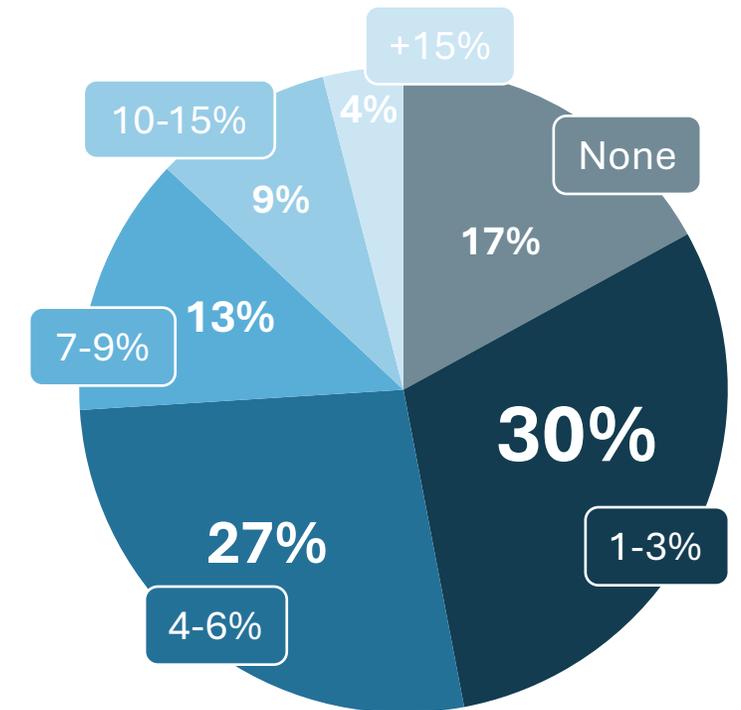
Revenue Growth Appears More Common Among Organizations That Increased Fundraising Staff Pay

Most organizations reported modest increases in fundraising staff pay over the past three years, with increases concentrated at the lower end of the scale. Nearly 60% raised pay by 1% to 6%, while 17% made no increase.

Revenue growth was most common among organizations that implemented modest increases overall, with 45% of organizations raising pay by 1% to less than 10% reporting growth. By contrast, only 9% of organizations that did not raise fundraising staff pay reported increased revenue.



FUNDRAISING STAFF PAY INCREASE OVER PAST 3 YEARS



Most Nonprofits Prioritize Knowledge Continuity During Fundraising Leadership Transitions

When fundraising leadership changes, organizations most often rely on informal practices to maintain continuity rather than formal succession plans. Cross-training and shared institutional knowledge are the most frequently used approaches, cited by 42% of nonprofits. Meanwhile a similar share of organizations report having no defined succession strategy in place (41%). Formal succession structures remain relatively uncommon, with fewer than one in five organizations (18%) reporting a documented plan for leadership transition.

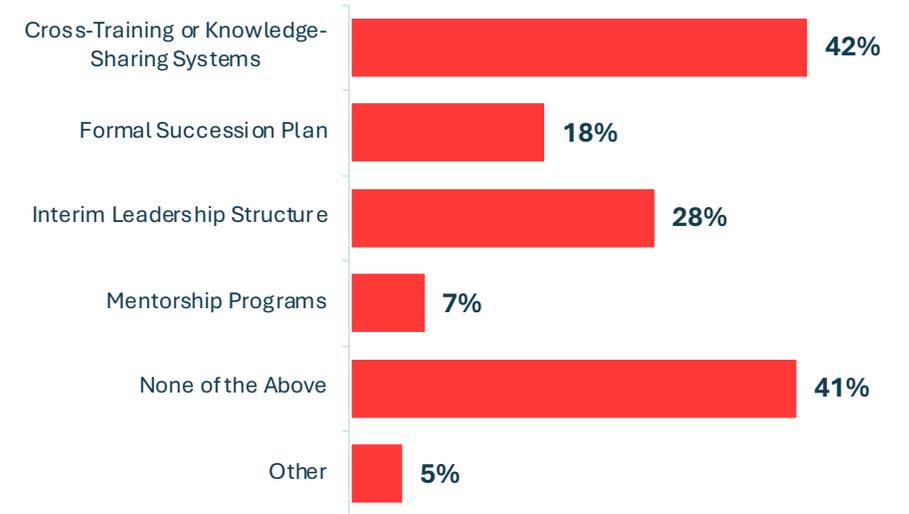
DILEMMA

Fundraising leadership turnover remains common, with 17% of organizations reporting a decrease in fundraising staff this year. When leadership changes occur, organizations often experience operational disruption, slowed decision-making, and inefficiencies that extend beyond the role itself, affecting teams, donors, and fundraising momentum.

OPPORTUNITY

By planning for leadership transitions, organizations may reduce disruption and protect employee performance. Clear transition processes can help maintain operational stability, preserve relationships, and allow fundraising efforts to continue without reduced focus or efficiency. [See how some organizations in Higher Education are handling leadership transitions.](#)

TOP SUCCESSION PLANNING METHODS





FUNDRAISING
**Operations &
Innovation**

Donor Acquisition Remains a Top Challenge Despite Fundraising Landscape Shifts

As fundraising environments grow more complex, organizations are facing both persistent and intensifying challenges across core fundraising functions. Donor acquisition remains the most commonly-cited challenge, reported by 68% of respondents, followed by board and leadership involvement (51%) and donor retention and stewardship (48%).

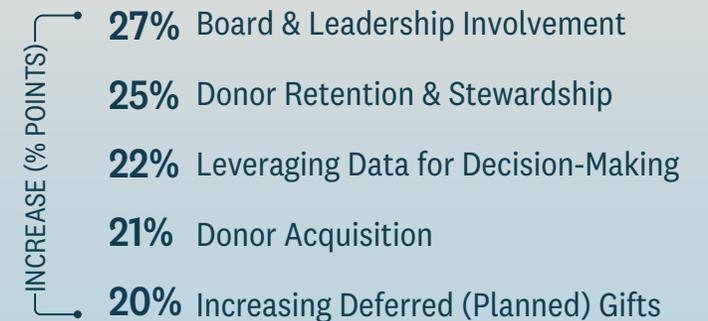
Board and leadership involvement shows the largest increase in challenge intensity (+27 percentage points), followed closely by donor retention and stewardship (+25 percentage points) and the need to better leverage data for decision-making (+22 percentage points).

These patterns suggest an industry navigating mounting pressure while also identifying where focused effort, leadership engagement, and operational investment will be most critical moving forward.

TOP FUNDRAISING CHALLENGES



TOP INCREASED CHALLENGES

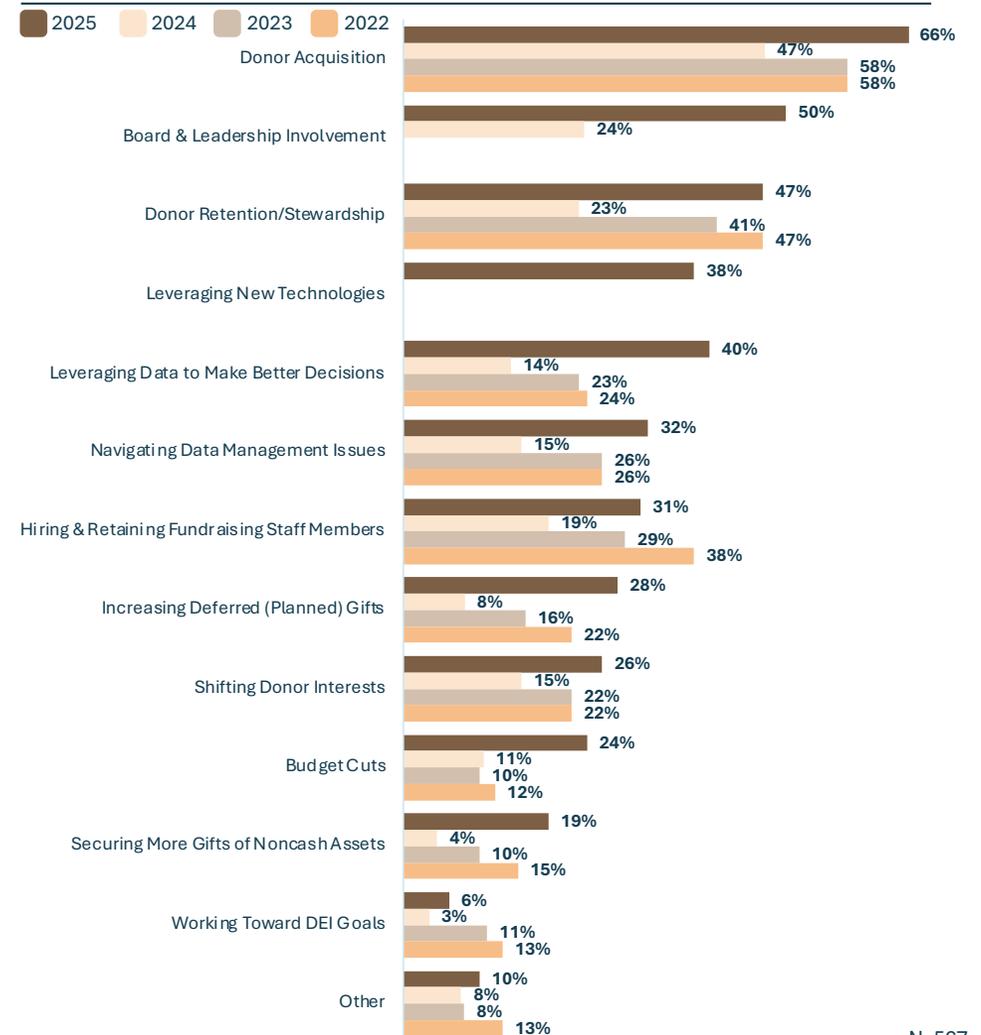


Fundraising Teams Face Growing Challenges Related to Back-Office Operations

Beyond donor acquisition and leadership pressures, challenges related to **leveraging data for decision-making** rose to 36% in FYE2025 (from 14% in FYE2024), and data management and CRM issues increased to 33% (up from 15%). More organizations, it seems, are struggling to effectively **use and manage their fundraising data**. Difficulty increasing deferred (planned) gifts also grew substantially, cited by 28% of respondents in FYE2025 compared to just 8% the prior year. At the same time, the share of organizations identifying budget constraints as a fundraising challenge more than doubled, rising from 11% to 25%, underscoring heightened concern about financial pressures as they relate to fundraising capacity.

Methodology Note: In 2026, respondents selected their top five fundraising challenges, up from two in prior years. As a result, findings are comparable but not directly scalable to earlier results. Board and leadership engagement appears prominently in 2026 but was introduced as a distinct response option only in the 2025 report and is therefore absent from earlier years. Where data was not available is indicated as n.a.

TOP FUNDRAISING CHALLENGES 2022-2025

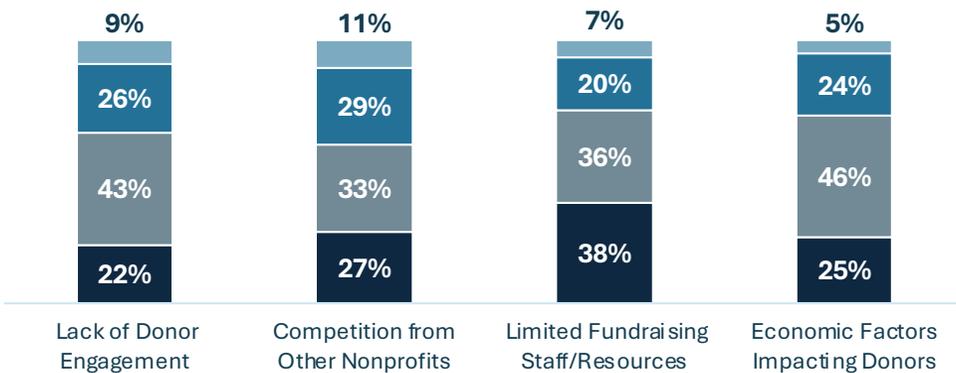


Targeted Digital Outreach Offsets Staffing Constraints for Donor Retention

Nonprofits find donor retention a challenge, driven significantly by limited fundraising staff and resources, with 74% of respondents indicating at least a moderate challenge in this area. With capacity stretched and competition intensifying, organizations are prioritizing retention strategies that are both scalable and effective. Targeted digital communication has emerged as the clear front-runner, offering a cost-efficient way to maintain connection and relevance amid resource constraints.

CHALLENGES TO DONOR RETENTION

■ Significant Challenge ■ Moderate Challenge ■ Minor Challenge ■ Not a Challenge



Totals may not equal 100% due to rounding. N=492

TOP THREE STRATEGIES FOR RETAINING NEW DONORS

- 69%** Send Them Targeted Digital Communications
- 59%** Invite Them to Regular In-Person Events
- 39%** Arrange for Individual or Small Group Meetings

Since 2024, organizations showed the same clear hierarchy of donor retention strategies. Interestingly, the top strategies for retaining new donors aligns perfectly with two of the top staff capabilities: event planning and donor communications.

Targeted digital communications widened its lead, increasing by 29 percentage points among top-two rankings, while print mailings saw a 16-point increase, with 10% more organizations ranking it third. In-person events remained stable in the top two, but 17% more respondents placed them third, reinforcing their role as complementary rather than primary retention drivers.

Methodology Note: The 2025 report captured the top two strategies for retaining new donors, while this year's report captured the top three. The above numbers reflect this change.

Interest Is High, but Adoption Lags for AI Usage in Fundraising

Organizations commonly report that AI is helping streamline fundraising operations (50%) and enhance personalized donor engagement (49%). Leading nonprofits might consider leveraging AI for predictive insights, campaign support, and other techniques detailed in CCS’s AI in Fundraising report.

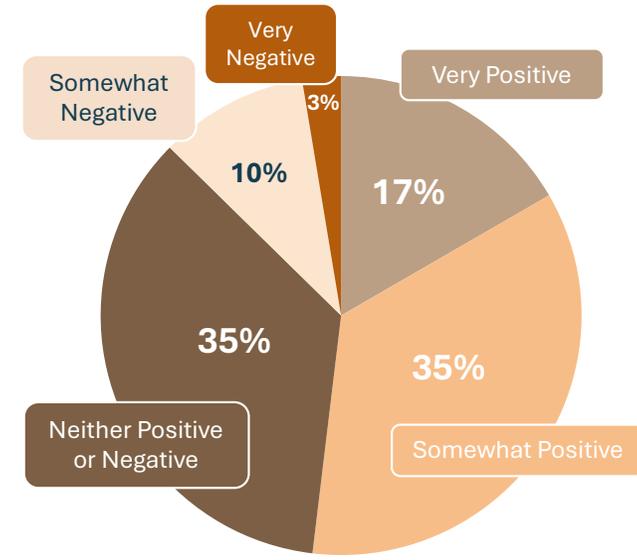
DILEMMA

Nonprofits are largely receptive to AI, with 52% reporting a positive outlook and 35% neutral, suggesting curiosity rather than resistance. However, this openness has not yet translated into meaningful adoption: 65% report no staff training, 71% lack an AI strategy group, and 57% have no formal guidelines. As a result, many organizations remain interested in AI’s potential but lack the structures to use it consistently or confidently.

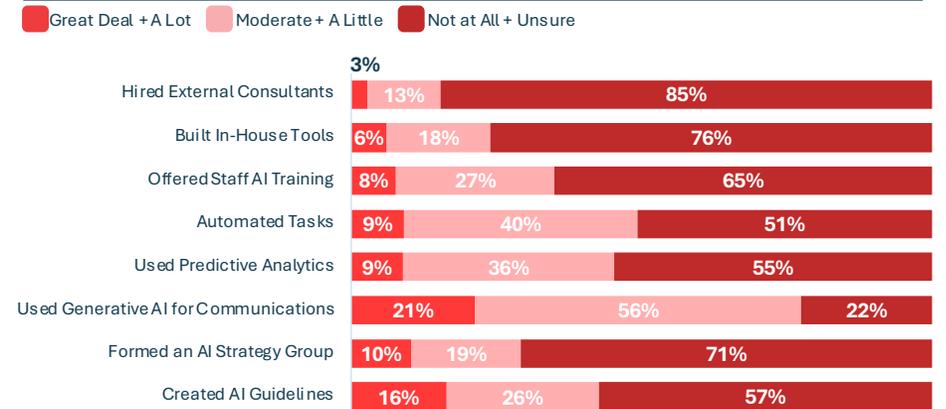
OPPORTUNITY

This gap between interest and adoption presents a clear opportunity. With close to or more than half of organizations not using AI at all, the challenge is not attitude but readiness. Organizations that invest in training, governance, and coordinated leadership can move beyond ad hoc experimentation—positioning AI as a practical tool to improve efficiency, insight, and long-term fundraising performance.

ORGANIZATION’S STANCE ON AI IN FUNDRAISING



ENGAGEMENT WITH AI & RELATED TECHNOLOGY IN LAST 12 MONTHS



Totals may not equal 100% due to rounding. N=499

An Organization's Stance on AI Predicts Its Reported Revenue, Favoring Those Who are Open to New Technology

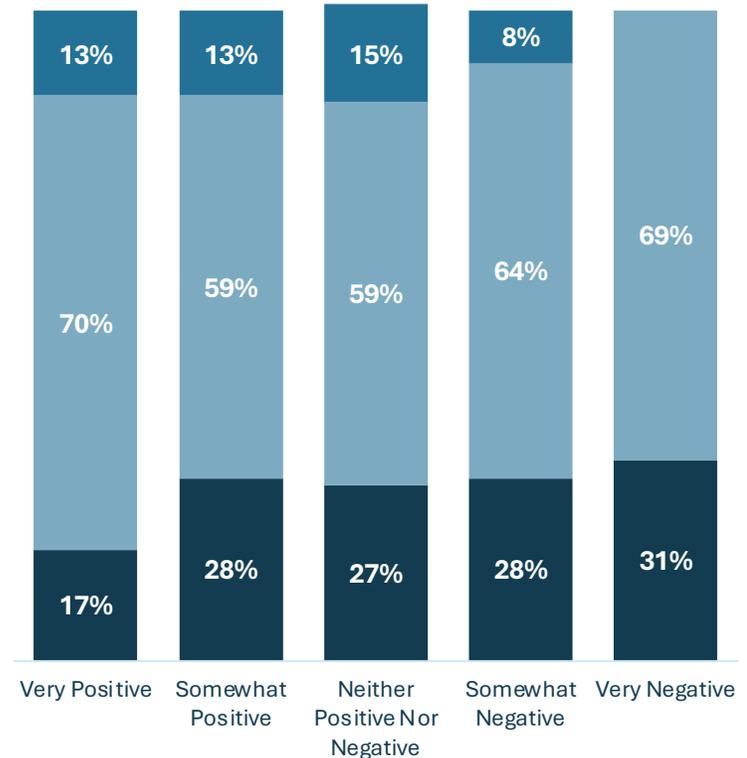
Organizations with more positive stances toward adapting and using AI tend to report stronger revenue outcomes, while those with negative views are approximately 3.5 times more likely to experience revenue declines than their more AI-positive peers. However, the data suggests that AI readiness may currently function less as a driver of growth and more as a form of resilience—helping organizations avoid losses rather than deliver gains. As interest in AI continues to outpace effective implementation, many organizations remain constrained by limited training, governance, and infrastructure, making it difficult to convert openness into measurable financial impact.



Learn about how some organizations are implementing AI across functions in these articles about [custom GPTs](#) and [prospect identification](#).

IMPACT OF AI STANCE IN FUNDRAISING ON REVENUE CHANGES

■ No Change ■ Increase ■ Decrease



N=294

Totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.



Positioning for the Future:

DEI, YOUNG DONORS,
& PLANNING FOR 2026

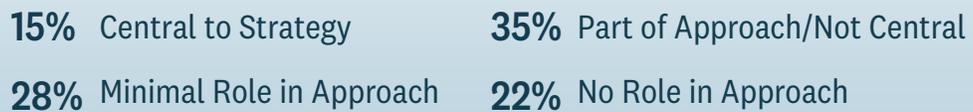
Most Nonprofits Say Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Influences Fundraising, Though Rarely as a Central Driver

Over the past year, two-thirds of responding organizations made no DEI-related changes to their fundraising approaches.

Among the 23% that did make changes, efforts focused mainly on internal practices. This included updating policies or guidelines and forming partnerships aligned with DEI priorities. Far fewer organizations extended DEI efforts into donor-facing fundraising activity.

When organizations did address DEI in fundraising, they most often encountered practical challenges tied to day-to-day work. These challenges centered on reaching and engaging diverse donor groups, aligning DEI goals with broader fundraising strategies, and measuring impact.

ROLE OF DEI IN FUNDRAISING



N=491

TOP CHALLENGES OR BARRIERS WHEN TRYING TO INCORPORATE DEI



N=245

TYPES OF DEI-RELATED CHANGES IMPLEMENTED



N=111

More Than Half of Organizations Are Connecting with Younger Donors Online

When organizations engage the next generation of philanthropists, they most often start with scalable tactics. A majority run digital or social media campaigns (59%). About one-third use cause-based approaches (31%) or personalized, targeted outreach (31%). Fewer employ structured participation or development pathways, such as youth or advisory boards and giving circles (14%), school or university partnerships (12%), or philanthropy leadership and mentorship (6%). And 16% report taking no action.

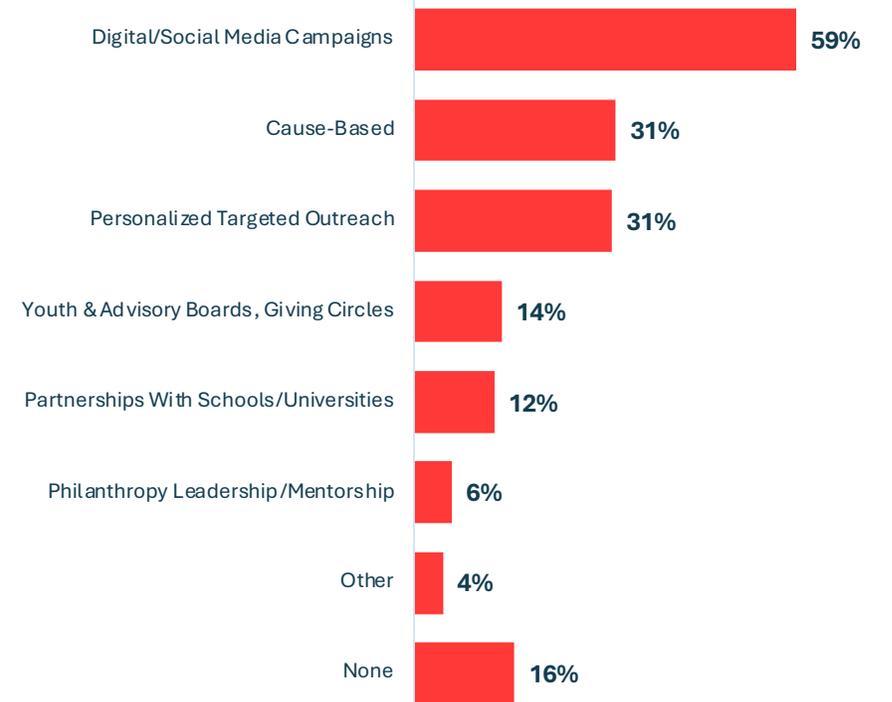
DILEMMA

Earlier in this report, we saw that 69% of organizations use targeted digital communications to retain new donors, and when organizations engage the next generation of philanthropists, 59% rely on digital or social media campaigns. Yet donor acquisition (68%) and retention (48%) remain the most commonly-cited fundraising challenges. Taken together, these findings suggest that while digital tools are widely in use, many organizations are not yet seeing them translate into sustained growth or stronger long-term engagement.

OPPORTUNITY

Having the right channels, tools, and capabilities needed to engage younger donors is only the first step. The next is to move beyond the medium and focus on the message: cause-driven, personalized, and relationship-based approaches are underutilized, yet they have the potential to strengthen engagement early and build long-term loyalty across the donor lifecycle. For more on strengthening generational communications, [CCS's Communications Strategy](#) outlines how donor preferences vary by generation and how organizations can reach each group more effectively.

STRATEGIES TO ENGAGE NEXT GEN PHILANTHROPISTS



N=503

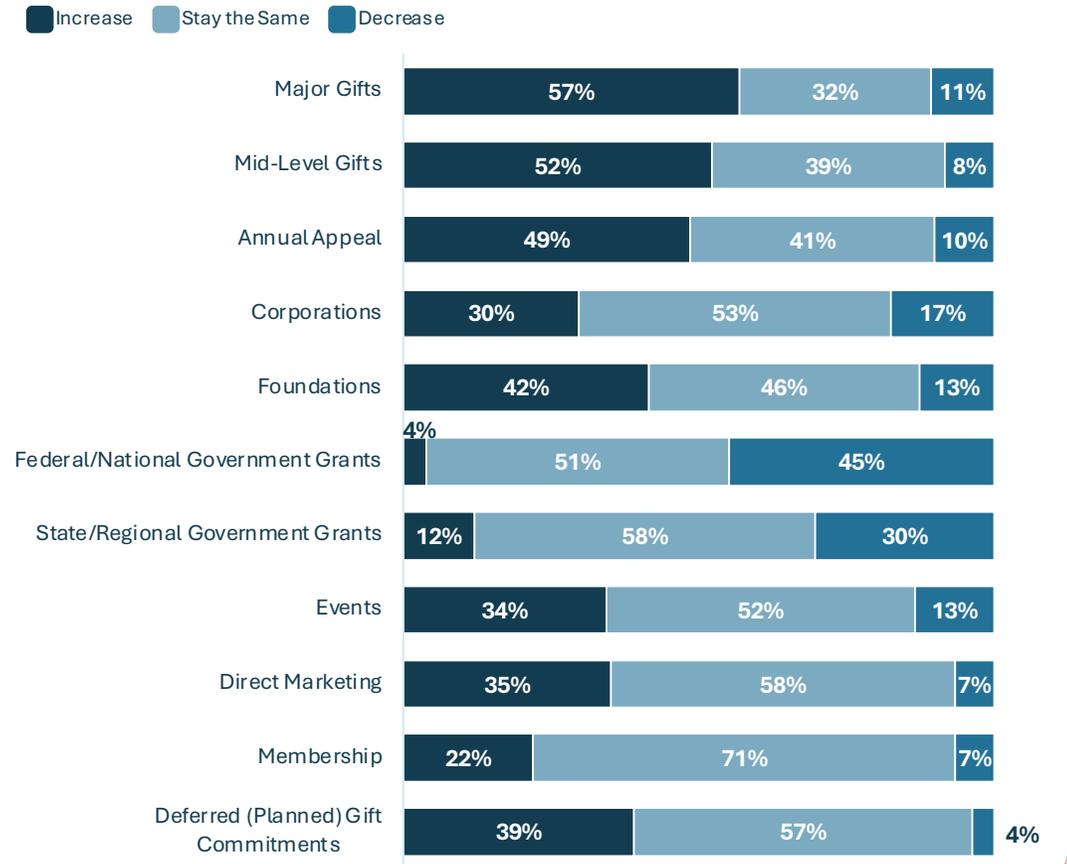
Organizations Expect Individual Giving to Drive Growth in 2026 as Public Funding Faces Anticipated Declines

Expectations for 2026 signal a growing divergence between individual and institutional funding sources. Confidence is strongest in individual giving, with 57% of organizations expecting growth in major gifts and 52% in mid-level gifts, and relatively few anticipating declines. Annual appeals are expected to remain steady, with 49% projecting growth and 41% no change.

Reliance on government grants shifted notably year over year. Last year, 63% of organizations anticipated no change and 17% expected declines. This year, 45% expect declines in federal or national funding and 30% expect declines in state or regional funding, making public funding the most vulnerable revenue source.

Outlooks across other institutional channels have also softened. The share of organizations expecting declines in corporate giving rose from 9% to 17%, while expected declines in foundation funding increased from 7% to 13%. By contrast, confidence in major gifts strengthened modestly, with growth expectations rising from 54% last year to 57%.

EXPECTED CHANGES IN REVENUE SOURCES FOR 2026



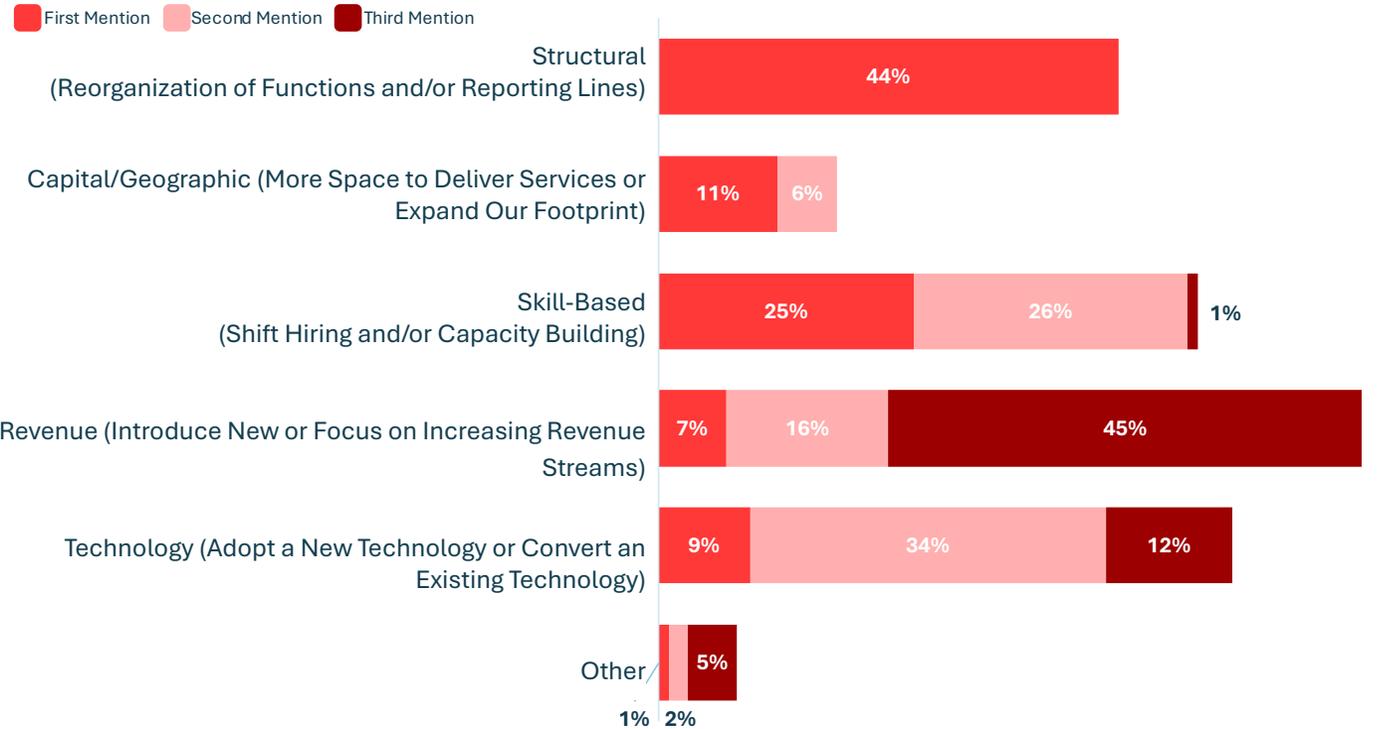
Totals may not equal 100% due to rounding. N=567

Structure and Skills Lead Nonprofit Investment Priorities

To better position themselves for the future, organizations most often pointed to internal changes rather than outward expansion. Structural changes emerged as the clear top priority, with 44% ranking them first. Skill-based changes followed closely, with more than half of organizations ranking hiring shifts or capacity building among their top two priorities.

Focusing on increasing or introducing new revenue streams was cited most frequently overall, included by 67% of organizations, but it was typically a later priority. Nearly half of those naming revenue ranked it third, suggesting that many view growth as a downstream result of earlier investments in structure and skills. Technology played a supporting role, with few organizations ranking it first but many citing it as a second or third priority.

EXPECTED CHANGES IN ORGANIZATION FOCUS FOR 2026



N=489



About CCS

Strategic Consulting for Nonprofits

WE PARTNER WITH NONPROFITS TO CREATE LASTING IMPACT AND MEANINGFUL CHANGE.

For nearly 80 years, our work has been rooted in a simple belief: generosity can effect change for the better. From our earliest efforts to fund schools, churches and hospitals after WWII to our work with organizations across the globe today, CCS Fundraising partners with nonprofits to help them fulfill their missions and expand their impact.

We work alongside organizations of all sizes and across every sector to strengthen fundraising programs, navigate change, and build strategies that support long-term progress. At every stage, our role remains the same: to be a trusted partner in turning vision into sustained, meaningful change.

OUR EXPERTISE

CCS delivers unmatched strategic fundraising consulting that balances strategy, data, and insight to help nonprofits reach their goals. As the leading firm in fundraising strategy, we apply deep expertise, uncommon creativity, and disciplined execution to every engagement. Our work is designed to drive measurable results—equipping organizations with the information, structure, and momentum needed to advance their missions.

OUR SERVICES

- Audits, Assessments & Growth Plans
- Data Analytics
- Fundraising Campaigns
- Interim Development Management
- Strategic Planning & Specialized Development Projects
- Systems & Change Management
- Training & Leadership

OUR SECTORS

- Advocacy
- Arts & Culture
- Associations
- Environment & Animals
- Faith
- Foundations
- Health
- Higher Education
- Human Services
- Primary & Secondary Education



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