

# Nonprofit Fundraising Study

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Covering Charitable Receipts at U.S. and Canadian Nonprofit Organizations in 2012

*April 2013*



## *Acknowledgements*

The Nonprofit Research Collaborative (NRC) thanks all respondents who took the survey in January and February 2013. Your willingness to share information about your organization makes this report possible.

We welcome two new members for 2013: CFRE International and Partnership for Philanthropic Planning.

Most importantly, we thank every individual who made this report possible, from concept and survey design through data analysis and proofreading. The partner organizations have a true collaborative that makes the NRC and each report a reality.

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## INTRODUCTION

The economy is trending up, slightly and slowly, but upward. Unemployment is trending down, slightly and slowly, but downward. The historical record shows that these broad changes impact giving as donors gain more confidence in their own economic futures. This study reveals to what extent charitable organizations in the United States and Canada began to see changes in charitable receipts in 2012.

This work is important because, as other studies show, nonprofit charitable organizations continue to face rising demands for services and lower revenues from government grants and fees paid, user fees, and other resources.<sup>1</sup> Using effective fundraising to generate sustained philanthropic giving can be part of the solution to the growing pressures many nonprofit organization managers perceive.

Nearly 1,200 organizations answered NRC survey questions in early 2013 about charitable receipts from January through December 2012. Responding charitable groups included large and small organizations (by budget size) and organizations from every sub-sector, from Arts, Culture & Humanities to Religion. The survey reached organizations in the United States and Canada.

Questions ranged from changes in charitable receipt amounts in 2012 compared with 2011 to expectations for 2013. Sections of this report share findings from the major sections of the survey.

The first section of this report shares results about charitable receipts in 2012 and compares them with results from similar surveys from 2002 through 2011. This first section also compares what charities expected would happen in 2012 with what actually did. One of the unique features of the Nonprofit Research Collaborative is the trend data we have going back to 2002, which covers findings about charitable receipts received from roughly a dozen different fundraising methods.

Toward the middle of the report, we share findings from questions related to planned giving and whether nonprofit organizations in this study have a formal planned giving program.

As part of a series of rotating questions, we also asked about specific methods that charitable organizations might use to keep donors informed and engaged. This report includes some key findings, such as the percentage of responding charities that send a thank you acknowledgement, how many in this study are using e-newsletters, and other aspects of donor engagement. A further study using the engagement data will be released in June.

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<sup>1</sup> Nonprofit Finance Fund. 2013. State of the Nonprofit Sector Survey.  
<http://nonprofitfinancefund.org/announcements/2013/state-of-the-nonprofit-sector-survey>

The survey also asked about expectations for charitable receipts in 2013 and gave respondents a chance to comment on specific challenges or trends they expect to play an important role in fundraising this year. This information is presented in the final few pages of the report, before a presentation of the study's methodology.

## Summary of findings

Fifty-eight (58) percent of respondents—the largest share since 2006—saw fundraising receipts increase in 2012. This is up from 53 percent in 2011 and 43 percent in 2010.

Further, 63 percent, the highest share since the NRC started surveys, met their fundraising goal in 2012. This is up from 59 percent in 2011 and 52 percent in 2010.

The percentage seeing an increase in funds raised was nearly identical in the United States and Canada, across all four regions of the United States, and in most subsectors. Note that two subsectors with a lower share of respondents – Religion and International – saw increases, although each had too few respondents to use to draw firm conclusions.

Major gifts, online gift receipts, and special event proceeds increased at half or more of the responding charities. Among responding organizations, major gift amounts received rose at 50 percent, online receipts rose at 60 percent, and special event proceeds increased at 54 percent.

Other fundraising methods tracked since 2002 saw receipts rise at more organizations in 2012 than had been the case in 2011 or 2010. Figures 13-20 in this report show year-to-year comparisons. Of note:

- Direct mail rose at 48 percent of responding charities in 2012, compared with 45 percent in 2011 and 43 percent in 2010;
- Planned gifts received increased at 36 percent of responding organizations in 2012, compared with 29 percent in 2011 and 27 percent in 2010.

Receipts from institutional donors showed patterns similar to available data (from 2010 on).

- Foundation receipts increased at 41 percent of organizations in this survey, compared with 42 percent in 2011 and 40 percent in 2010. These are virtually identical results.
- Corporate gifts and corporate foundation grants rose at 38 percent of responding organizations, compared with 34 percent in 2010 (data for 2011 could not be analyzed).

Board member contributions rose at 39 percent of participating organizations in 2012, compared with 42 percent in 2011 and 39 percent in 2010.



This study included a special section about planned giving and an investigation of donor engagement methods that organizations use.

Just over one-third (34 percent) of surveyed charities had formal planned giving programs. A formal program could include doing research, cultivating prospective planned gift donors, printing information in materials about planned giving options, or including staff time or budgeting expenses for planned giving.

Organizations with formal planned giving programs were more likely than those without to see an increase in planned gift receipts in 2012. This could be because those organizations tend to be larger, or they devote more staff time to planned giving, or some other factor, such as age or subsector. More analysis is needed.

Donor engagement strategies most frequently used with all donors include sending a thank you letter (at 71 percent of responding organizations) and providing either written or electronic information (newsletters or annual reports). Nearly three-quarters of organizations also recruit volunteers from their donor lists, at least donors above a certain level.

Some strategies are most often reserved for donors above a certain gift level, including sending handwritten thank you notes or personally calling to thank a donor; inviting donors to receptions or other events at no cost to them; and recruiting leadership-level volunteers.

Use of the Internet is widespread, with 8 in 10 respondents reporting that they post new content online about their organization's work regularly. When analyzed against success at meeting fundraising goal, two online techniques particularly stand out: sharing free information (white papers, reports) and posting infographics. Each of these is associated with a greater probability of meeting fundraising goals at organizations that use them.

## Recommendations

### **Develop comprehensive plans for engaging donors and potential donors**

1. Set organizational goals for fundraising, and monitor progress toward the goals.
2. Plans should include recognition of gifts and volunteer service, and events and activities to inform, educate and involve donors in the organization's mission.
3. What gets counted gets done. Set a specific goal for the number of new planned gifts received, even if no monetary value is known. Include planned gifts that are revocable. Goals based on number of commitments are more achievable and motivating for fundraisers. The resulting commitments can be cultivated to strengthen donors' relationship with the organization.

### **Focus on engagement strategies that support greater donor retention**

4. If resources are limited, focus on the engagement strategies that have proven most effective, including thanking donors, and sending communications that inform them about the organization's mission and accomplishments.
5. Think of donors as the future of your organization, not just those who helped you achieve what is past. Two of the most effective ways to encourage donors above a certain level to look to the future are to 1) engage them in helping plan the organization's future, and 2) look at the donor pool as a source of leadership candidates.

### **Provide fundraising budget, staff, and responsibilities**

6. Earlier reports from the NRC found that organizations with fundraising staff and fundraising budgets were more likely to meet their goals. Be sure to commit organizational resources sufficient to implement the plans your group makes.
7. Assign responsibility and goals for planned gift fundraising to specific staff. Bequests are the most basic type of planned gift, and in any organization they count for the largest part of total planned gift income. So at a minimum, a staff person should be in charge of stewarding loyal donors toward bequest commitments and promoting bequests in regular communications with all constituents.

### **Adapt to changing communication methods**

8. Consider the demographics of your organization's constituency, and plan methods of communication appropriate to different constituency groups, e.g., younger donors may prefer electronic communications to printed materials.
9. Recognize that you may need to use — and budget for — all forms of communication to reach people. Be very visual in communications. Printed annual reports are important for some donors; email is important for other

donors. Others like quick looks through infographics, charts and tables, and photos. Be deliberate about your use of each; know why you are using it and for whom. Do not just follow fads.

10. Where appropriate, offer free content downloads through your website. This engages people so that they can support the mission in other ways by learning more, taking specific recommended actions, and sharing what they know about your organization and its work.

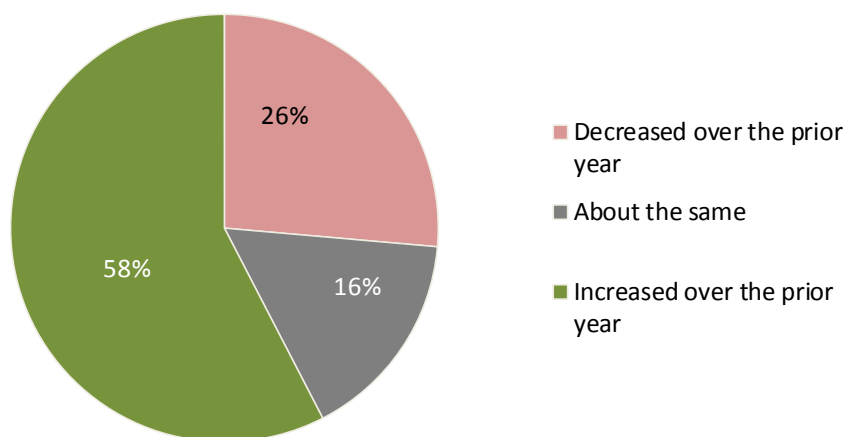
## SECTION I: 2012 results

This section presents overall results, including a summary of answers about factors that helped the organization during the year. The section then details sub-sets where there are statistically significant differences in the results. These include results by organizational size (based on total expenditures) and for one subsector (International).

### Nearly 6 in 10 responding charities reporting growth in charitable receipts

By year end, 58 percent of responding charitable organizations reported an increase in charitable receipts in 2012 compared with 2011. This is the highest percentage seeing an increase since 2007. It is, however, below the result for a similar survey about giving in 2006, when 63 percent of responding charities reported growth in charitable receipts.

Figure 1: Percentage of responding organizations reporting change in charitable receipts, 2012 compared with 2011



There were no significant differences in the direction of change when results were analyzed by Census region or between Canadian and U.S. respondents. However, smaller organizations were less likely to see growth than larger organizations ( $p < .001$ )<sup>2</sup> (see Figure 4 on page 11).

Research shows that well-planned fundraising generates more support for an organization's mission. Whatever your organization does now to generate contributions, you are likely to find at least a few results from this study that will help you raise more for your work.

*Janice Gow Pettey, CFRE  
Chair, AFP Research Committee*

<sup>2</sup> p-values are reported for statistically significant results. The lower the p-value the more likely that the same result will occur with a different set of respondents.

## Organizations attribute success to leadership, fundraising techniques

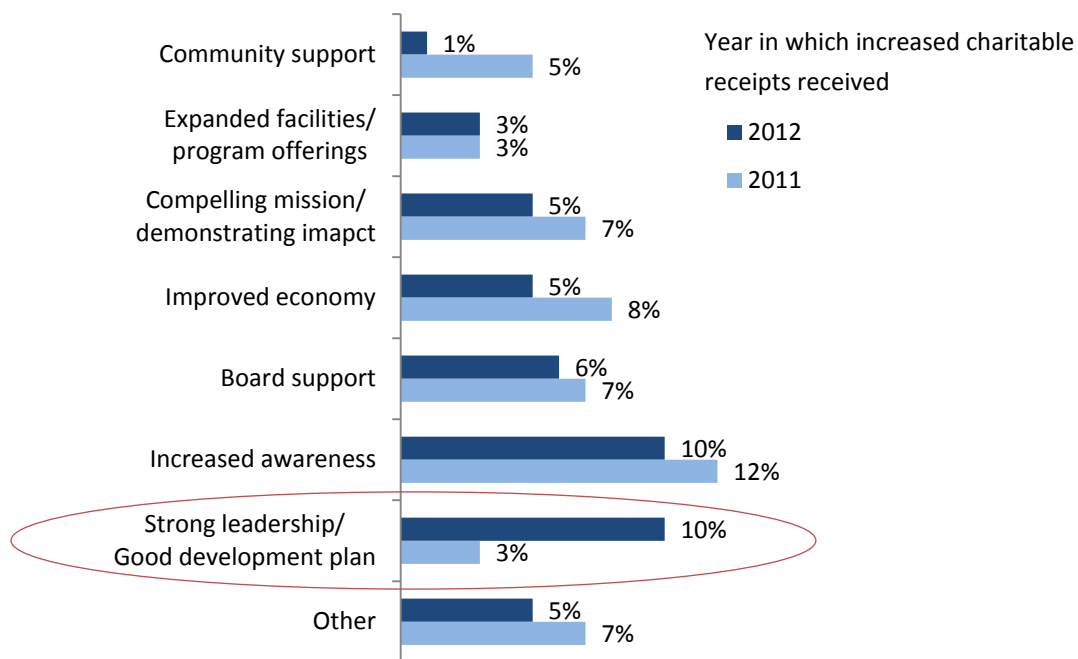
When asked what single issue most positively affected fundraising, respondents indicated a wide range of elements, from the broadest, such as overall improvement in the local or national economy, to very focused statements such as “higher event participation.” Results for 2012 show:

- Just under half, 45 percent, named something either outside of the organization, such as community support (1 percent) or something that applied organization-wide, such as having a good leadership team or development plan (10 percent). See Figure 2.
- About 55 percent of responses related to something specific to the fundraising practices at their organization, including new staff (10 percent), increased receipts from bequests (6 percent), or a successful event (3 percent). See Figure 3.

Figure 2: What most positively affected your organization’s fundraising in 2012 – Compared with responses for the same question for 2011

Overall responses, not specific to fundraising method or vehicle

Written responses were coded by analysts. People could offer more than one idea.



Among possibilities that were either outside of the organization or related to the entire organization, several appeared similar to results from the same question asked about 2011, as shown in Figure 2. The most noticeable difference in 2012 is the high percentage (10 percent) that noted the impact of strong leadership for fundraising,

including having a specific fundraising plan,<sup>3</sup> which compares with 3 percent who offered answers related to that subject to explain improved fundraising receipts in 2011.

**Question: What most positively affected your results for 2012?**

“Successfully reaching several targeted goals directly linked to the organization’s mission, which are partially a result of the organization’s active role in changing the education leadership landscape in our city.”

*Education organization  
2011 budget range \$250,000 to \$999,999;  
raised \$1 million to \$2.99 million in 2012*

“We were in the third year of implementing a comprehensive and consistent fundraising strategy that is finally really gaining traction. There wasn’t just one thing that made the positive difference – it’s that we are doing many things regularly.”

*Human services organization  
2011 budget range \$1 million to \$2.99 million;  
raised \$1 million to \$2.99 million*

“Volunteer leadership that has the willingness and capability to ask, advocate, and arrange. This coupled with a dynamic CEO who set Philanthropy as a priority.”

*Health organization  
2011 budget range \$3 million to \$9.99 million;  
raised \$1 million to \$2.99 million in 2012).*

Other respondents listed successful fundraising activities, such as an event or a focused effort on donor cultivation and engagement. Comments range from simple statements such as “small donors” to wonderful stories about unexpected bequests<sup>4</sup> received or implementation of new communications media to reach donors, such as online or a cause-related marketing campaign.

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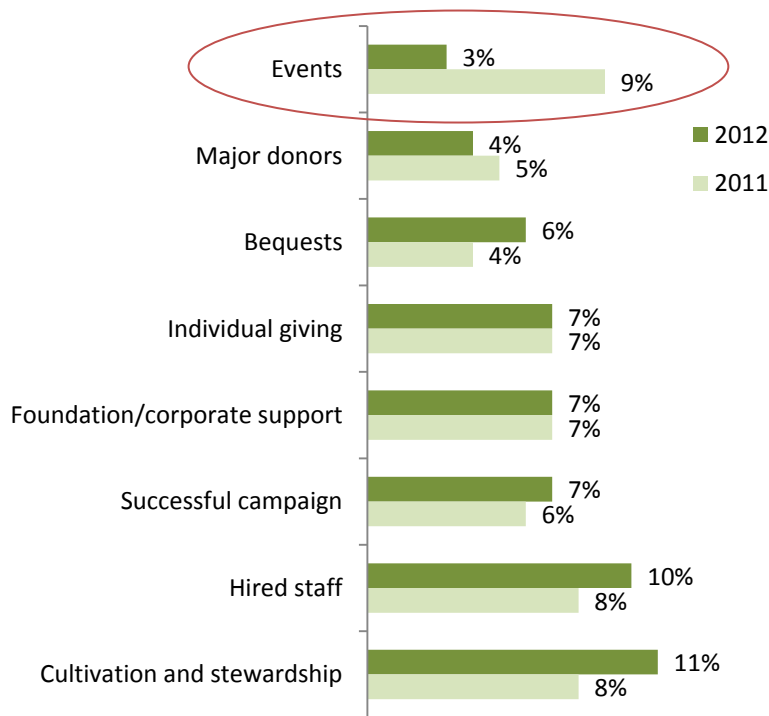
<sup>3</sup> Respondents that reported success in fundraising receipts in 2012 and offered answers to this question include 122 Certified Fundraising Executives (CFRE) and 52 members of the Partnership for Philanthropic Planning. Among these professional societies, 13% indicated “strong leadership/good development plan” as a reason for success, compared with 8% of respondents from other lists used to recruit participants, which were also used for the survey one year earlier where 3% reported strong leadership/good development plan as a reason for increased charitable receipts.

<sup>4</sup> The share of respondents reporting improved results due to received bequests is the same for CFRE and PPP respondents and for other respondents (5% in each group).

Figure 3 compares coded answers for 2012 fundraising success with those for 2011. Here, the biggest shift is seen in the decreased share of respondents that attribute fundraising success in 2012 to events, 3 percent compared with 9 percent in 2011.<sup>5</sup>

Figure 3: What most positively affected your organization's fundraising in 2012- Compared with responses to the same question for 2011  
Responses specific to fundraising techniques

Written responses were coded by analysts. People could offer more than one idea.



In 2012, organizations we saw did excellent work to re-engage lapsed donors. With a better economy, charities generated results by looking again to the future, not just for meeting day-to-day needs. The looming threats to the charitable deduction toward the end of the year spurred some donors to make larger donations in 2012 than they might otherwise have done, in order to claim tax deductions.

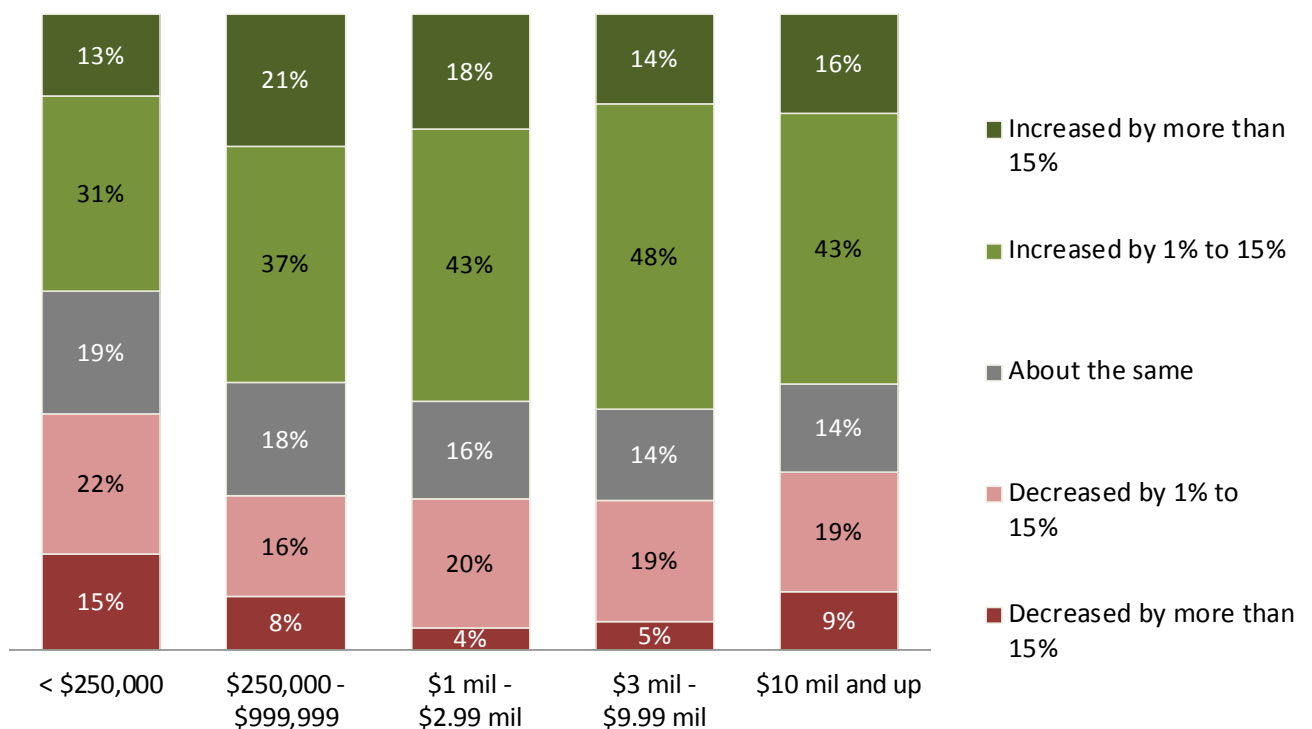
*Nancy Raybin  
Giving USA Foundation*

<sup>5</sup> In this shift, there is no statistically difference in the share of CFRE and PPP respondents reporting success due to events (1%) and respondents from other lists (4%).

## Larger organizations more likely than smaller to see increased charitable receipts

As has been the case in prior waves of the Nonprofit Fundraising Survey, larger organizations (based on expenditures) were more likely to see growth in charitable receipts than were smaller organizations. Figure 4 shows that a smaller share of participating organizations (expenditures under \$250,000) reported growth in charitable receipts for all for 2012 compared with the largest organizations, those with \$10 million or more in expenditures.

Figure 4: Percentage of responding organizations reporting change in charitable receipts by size, 2012 compared with 2011



Note: Size is based on expenditures in 2011 per the IRS Form 990 if available. Where the 990 is not available, size is based on survey respondent answer to a question about 2012 operating budget. This finding is based on a chi-square analysis and is statistically significant ( $p < .01$ )

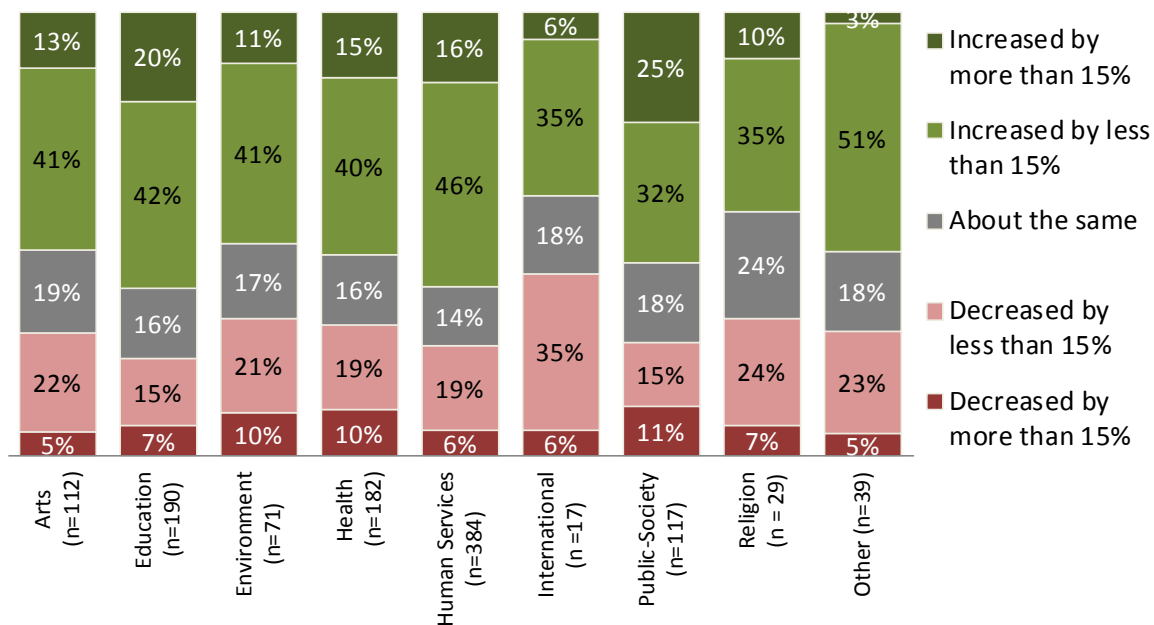


## Organizations in the International subsector more likely to see growth than general trend, but low numbers make it hard to generalize

Most subsectors followed the general trend. However, organizations in the International subsector and the Religion subsector were less likely to report an increase in charitable receipts for all of 2012, with 41 percent and 45 percent of those respondents (respectively) saying giving rose. These percentages below half compared with around 58 percent in other subsectors.

The International subsector had 17 respondents in this wave and there were 29 religious organizations. At these sample sizes for International and Religion, we cannot say whether or not the results are statistically significantly different.

Figure 5: Percentage of responding organizations reporting change in charitable receipts by NTEE code, 2012 compared with 2011

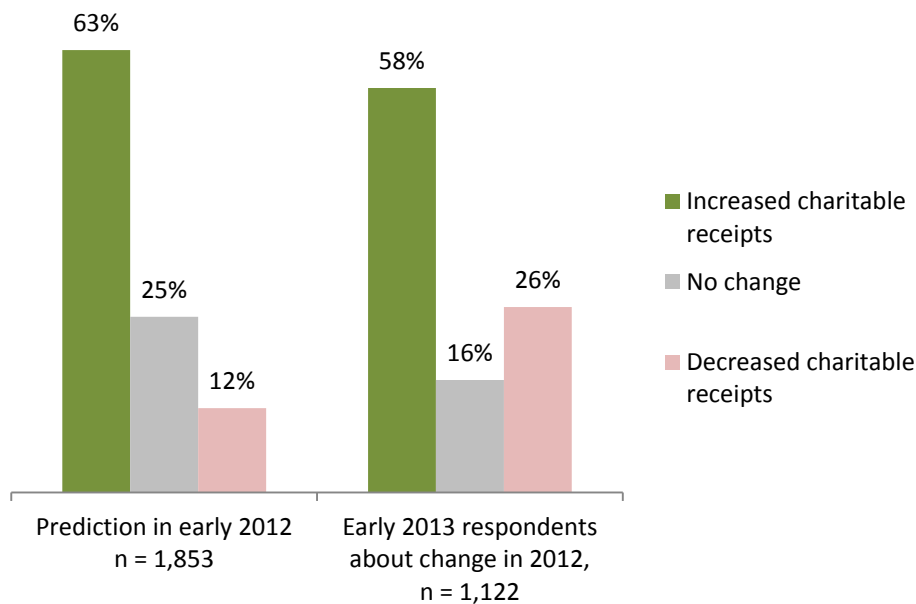


Note: Chi-square results across all subsectors show no statistically significant differences at these sample sizes.

### Predicted change in charitable receipts compared with actual results

A year ago, in early 2012, 63 percent of responding charities projected growth in funds raised in 2012. This is just 5 percentage points above the 58 percent of respondents in early 2013 who actually saw growth in charitable receipts by the end of 2012.

Figure 6: Predicted results for 2012 compared with actual results, 2012 and 2013 winter survey respondents

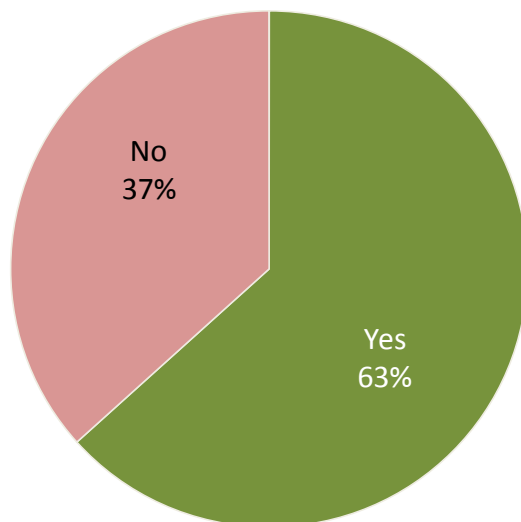


Fundraising actual results came closer to predicted results in 2012 than has been the case in prior editions of the Nonprofit Fundraising Survey. Since 2010, there has been at least a 10 percentage point gap between the predicted share of organizations that will see growth in fundraising receipts and the final results by year end. For 2012, that gap decreased to 5 percent.

## Nearly two-thirds met fundraising goal for 2012

In 2011, 59 percent of responding organizations met their fundraising goal. In 2012, that rose to 63 percent. This finding continues the trend of seeing more positive results for 2012 than for 2011 and 2010.

Figure 7: Did your organization meet its Fiscal Year 2012 fundraising goal?



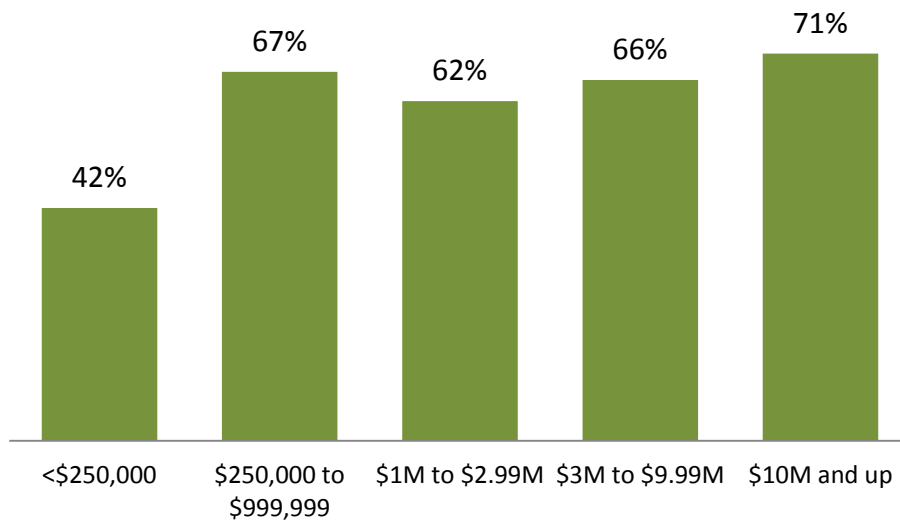
Among respondents, 59 percent increased their goal over the 2011 goal; 29 percent had the same goal in the two years, and 12 percent lowered their goal for 2012 compared with 2011.

Of those that increased their goal, 77 percent succeeded and met the new, higher fundraising goal for 2012. Just one-third (33 percent) of the organizations that lowered their goal for 2012 compared to 2011 met the new, lower goal. Sixty percent of those with the same goal in 2012 as in 2011 met the 2012 fundraising target.

### Smaller organizations remain less likely than larger to meet goals

Despite the overall positive results, smaller organizations, especially those with less than \$250,000 in expenditures, were less likely to meet their goals ( $p < .001$ ) than were larger organizations. This is consistent with findings from earlier waves of the Nonprofit Fundraising Survey. This is likely to reflect a variety of factors, not simply budget. For example, smaller organizations are often grassroots organizations with strong volunteer commitments. Smaller organizations often recruit staff members who have less experience in fundraising. Smaller organizations might also be newer organizations that have not yet developed a steady funding base among their constituents.

Figure 8: Percentage of responding organizations that met fundraising goal, 2012, by organizational size



Size is based on expenditures in 2011 per the IRS Form 990 if available. Where the 990 is not available, size is based on survey respondent answer to a question about 2012 operating budget. Conclusion is reached using a chi-2 test for size and the binary variable for whether organization met its goal. Analysis includes U.S. and Canadian organizations, where Canadian respondents included value for budget size.

Continuing education and certification are vital components of excellence in fundraising. These opportunities for growth allow fundraising professionals from organizations of all size to learn more about how to plan for and implement successful fundraising programs.

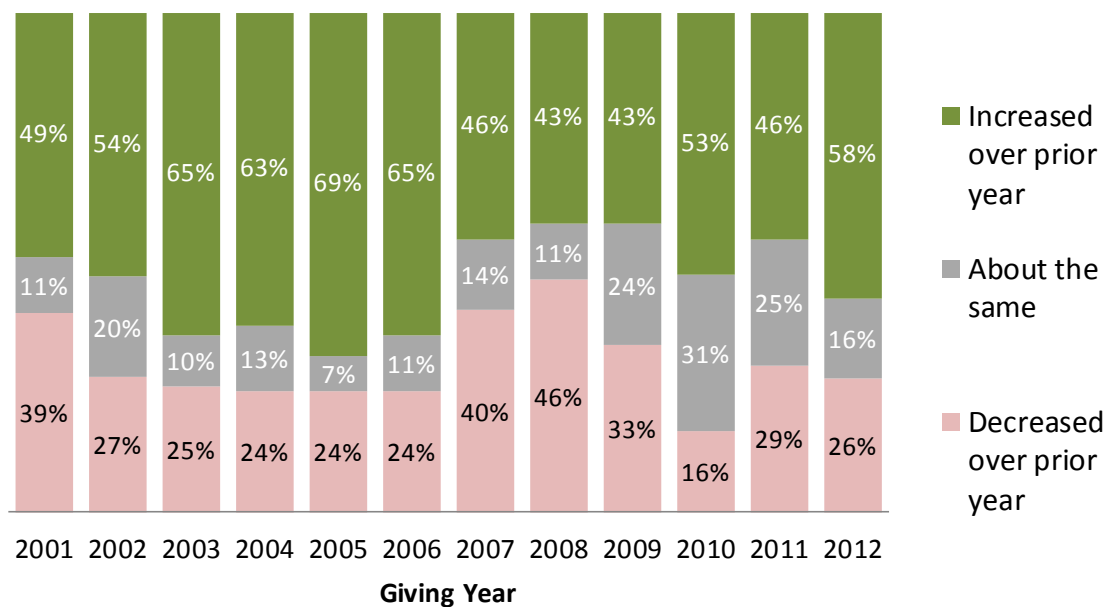
*Eva Aldrich, CFRE*  
*President and CEO, CFRE International*

## SECTION II: Trends since 2002

The Association of Fundraising Professionals (AFP) began conducting surveys in 2002 to track the impact of economic changes on charitable receipts. The Nonprofit Research Collaborative started asking questions similar to AFP's in 2010. Figure 9 shows responses to AFP's survey through 2009 and the NRC's results for 2010 through 2012.

First we review this year's results overall for all methods, then we look more closely at trends by the fundraising methods used.

Figure 9: Percentage of responding organizations reporting change in charitable receipts by year, 2001 through 2012



Data: 2001-2009: AFP; 2010 – 2012: Nonprofit Research Collaborative. Different recruitment methods for respondents since 2010 mean direct comparison of those years with earlier years will not be meaningful.

A higher share of organizations reported lower charitable receipts in recession years of 2001 and 2007-2009 than in non-recession years. Most years since 2009 have seen a comparatively high share of respondents with charitable receipts “about the same” as in the prior year, although for 2012, 16 percent is more consistent with the early 2000s than with 2009-2011, when a quarter or more of those surveyed saw flat giving. The strongest year on record, based on surveys received, was 2005, when 69 percent of organizations had an increase in charitable receipts.

## Types of fundraising methods used

Roughly 80 to 90 percent of organizations in this survey use online giving, foundation proposals, special events, major gifts, direct response via the mail, and board giving to raise funds. Some less-often used methods include telephone, gifts from congregations, and distributions from federated campaigns. A very small number of responding organizations mentioned using door-to-door fundraising in their responses.

Figure 10: Percentage of responding organizations that use each of twelve fundraising methods

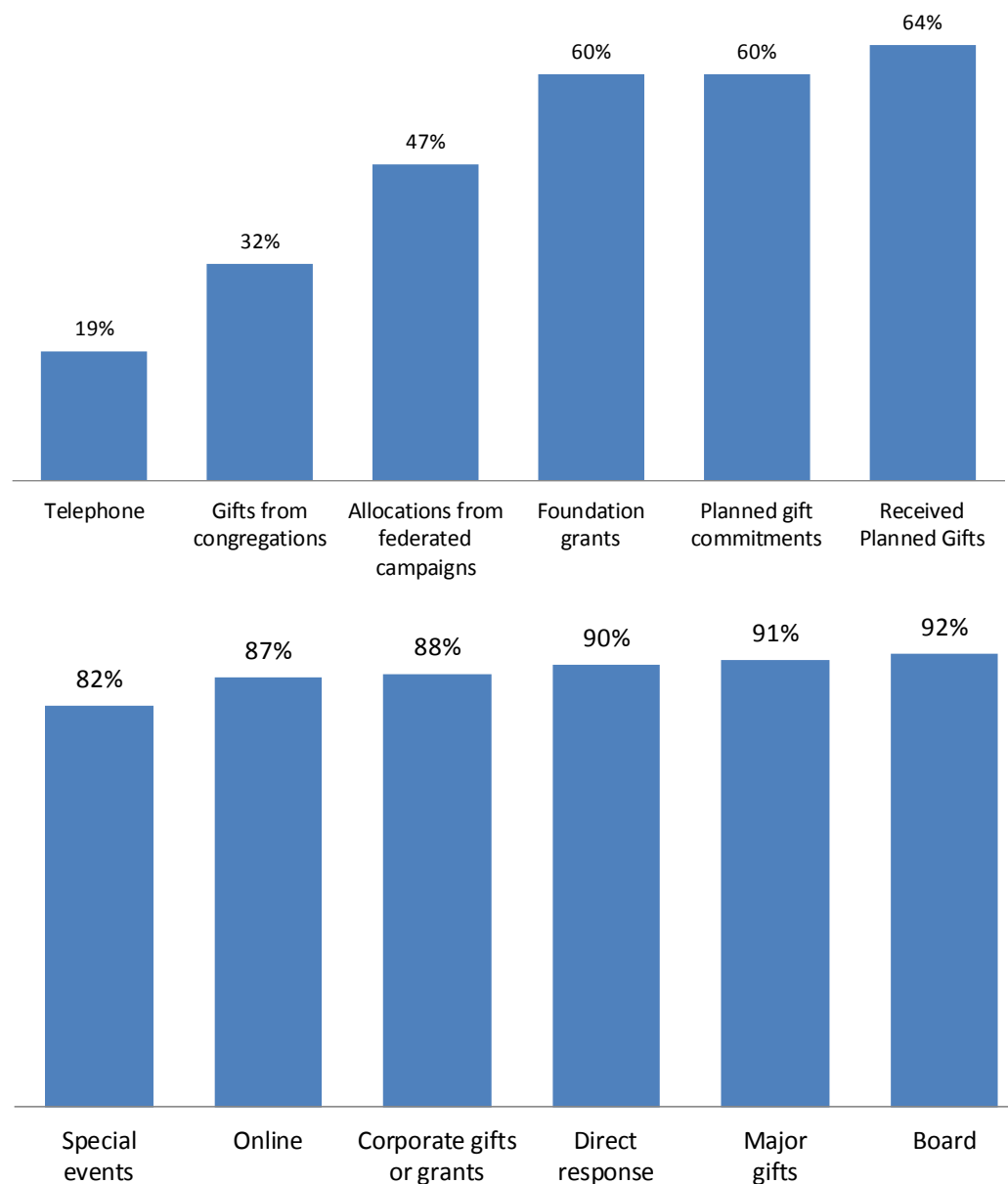
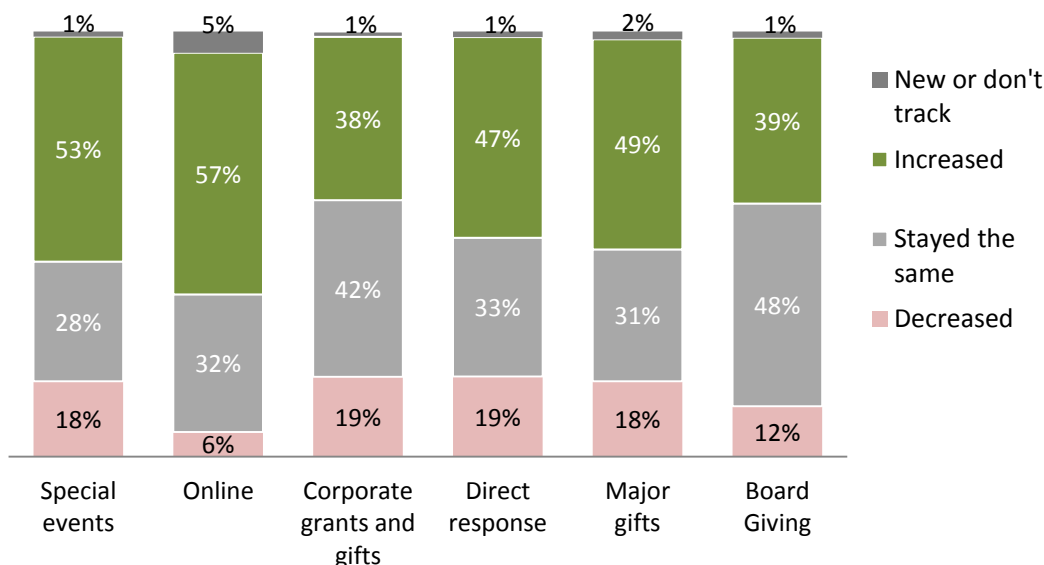


Figure 11: Percentage of organizations reporting change in charitable receipts, 2012 compared with 2011, by fundraising method— most frequently used methods

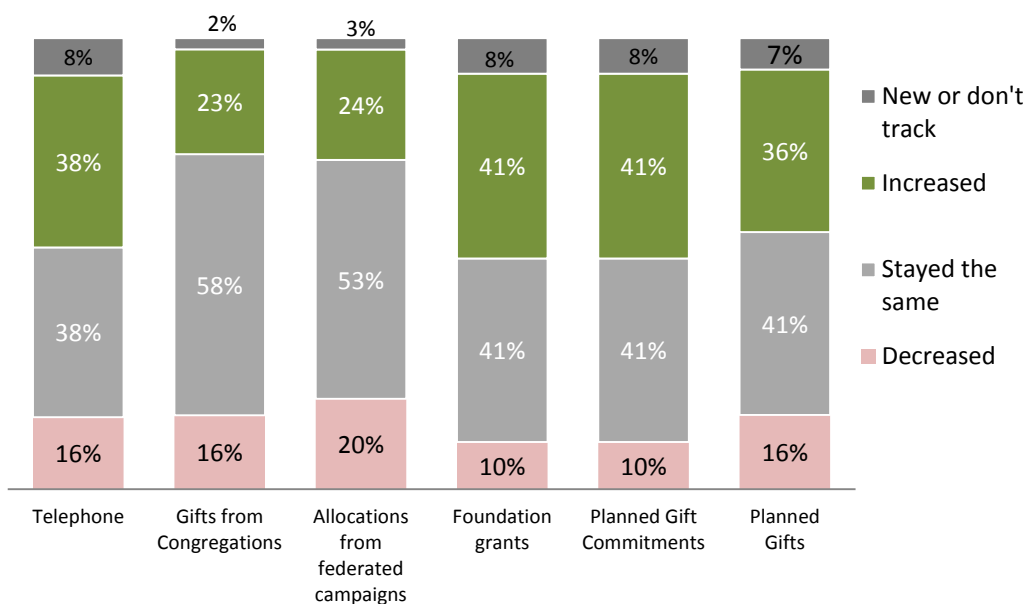
Includes respondents for whom comparative year-on-year change data are not available (New or don't track)



Percentages based on organizations that used the method in 2011 and in 2012.

Figure 12: Percentage of organizations reporting change in charitable receipts in 2012, compared with 2011, by fundraising method — Less frequently used methods

Includes respondents for whom comparative year-on-year change data are not available (New or don't track)

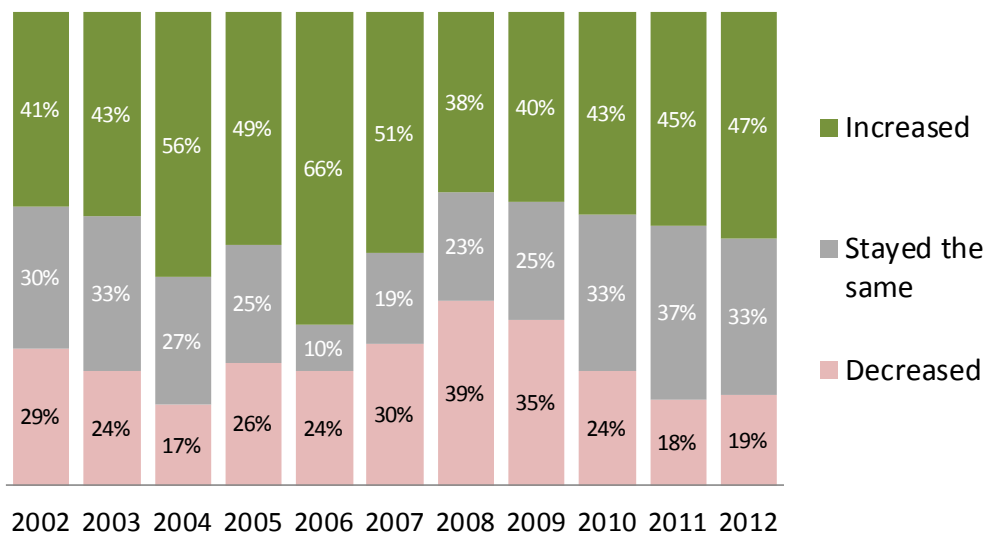


Percentages based on organizations that used the method in 2011 and in 2012.

## Trends in changes in charitable receipts by method, 2002-2012

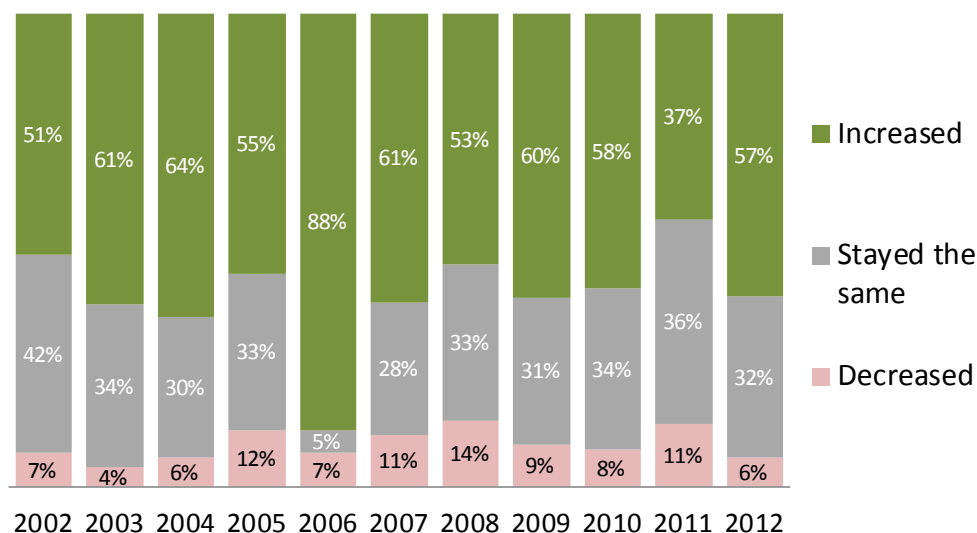
The Association of Fundraising Professionals (AFP) began surveys about charitable receipts in late 2001, following the tragedies of that September. Here we show three years of NRC data in comparison to the trend lines established by AFP, by method used to raise funds. Figures 13 through 20 reflect only respondents that track year-on-year changes, unlike Figures 11 and 12.

Figure 13: Percentage of responding organizations reporting change in contributions received by direct mail, 2002-2012



Data: 2002-2009: AFP Member Survey; 2010-2012: Nonprofit Research Collaborative

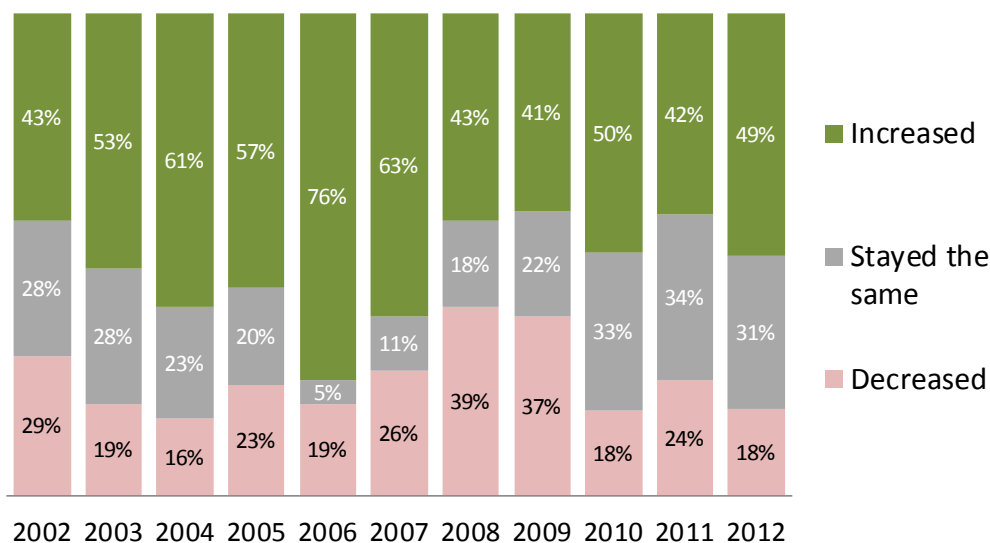
Figure 14: Percentage of responding organizations reporting change in contributions received online, 2002-2012



Data: 2002-2009: AFP Member Survey; 2010-2012: Nonprofit Research Collaborative

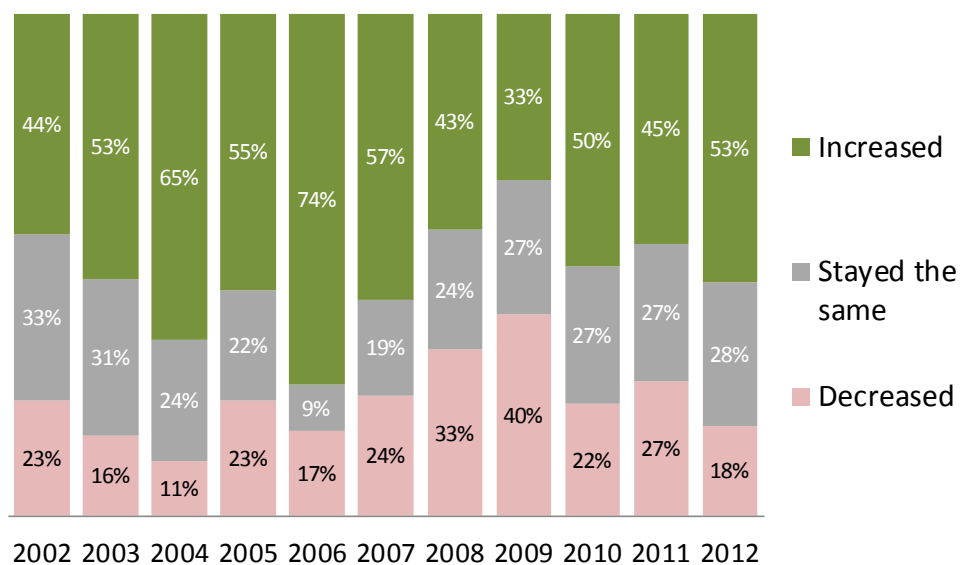


Figure 15: Percentage of responding organizations reporting change in contributions received from major gifts, 2002-2012



Data: 2002-2009: AFP Member Survey; 2010-2012: Nonprofit Research Collaborative

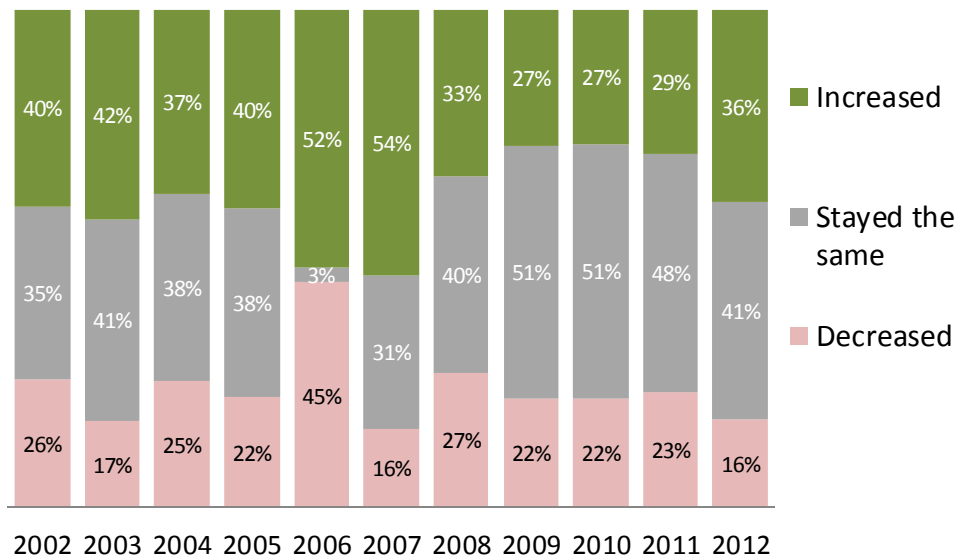
Figure 16: Percentage of responding organizations reporting change in contributions received through special events, 2002-2012



Data: 2002-2009: AFP Member Survey; 2010-2012: Nonprofit Research Collaborative

Receipts from planned gifts are less tied to overall economic change than are receipts from other types of giving. They do not increase at as many organizations in good years, nor decrease at as many in bad years.

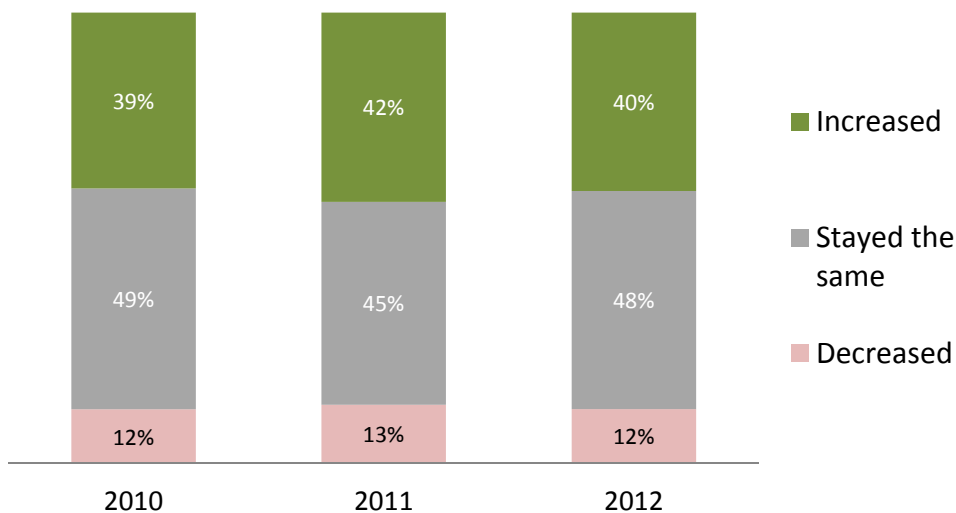
Figure 17: Percentage of responding organizations reporting change in contributions received through planned gifts, 2002-2012



Data: 2002-2009: AFP Member Survey; 2010-2012: Nonprofit Research Collaborative

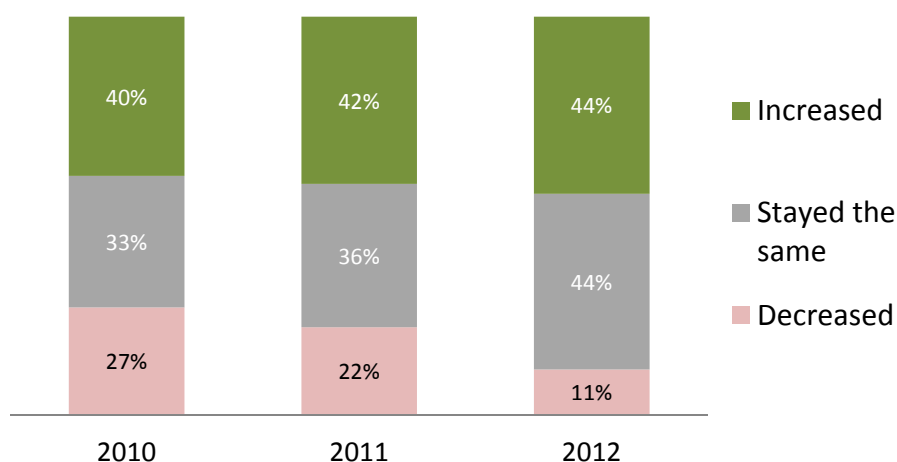
In addition to the long time series of data from the AFP research, the NRC also has three years of responses for methods it studies. These are shown in the figures that follow for board member giving, foundations grants, and corporate gifts and grants.

Figure 18: Percentage of responding organizations reporting change in contributions received through board member giving, 2010-2012



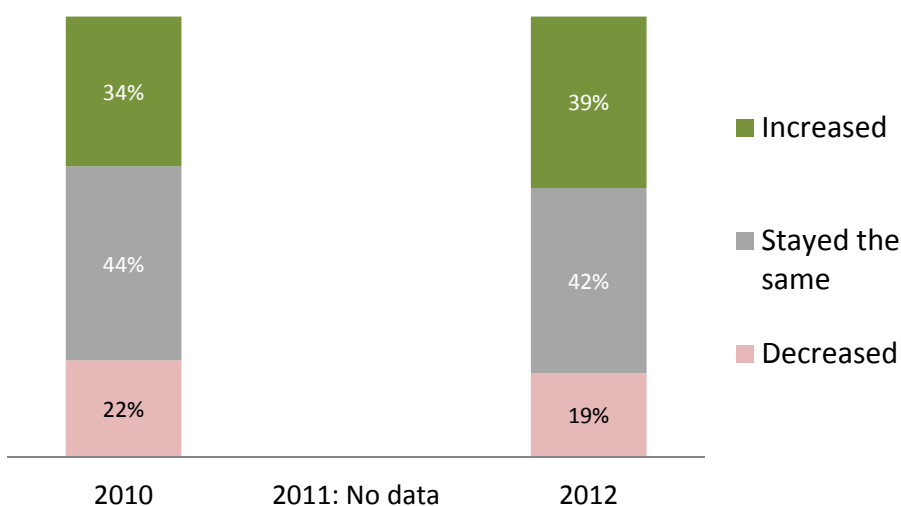
Data: 2010-2012: Nonprofit Research Collaborative (corrected April 30, 2013 – colors now match other graphs)

Figure 19: Percentage of responding organizations reporting change in contributions received through foundation grants, 2010-2012



Data: 2010-2012: Nonprofit Research Collaborative

Figure 20: Percentage of responding organizations reporting change in contributions received through corporate gifts and grants, 2010-2012



Data: 2010, 2012: Nonprofit Research Collaborative. Due to a programming error, no data for corporate giving in 2011 could be analyzed. Corrected April 30, 2013 (colors now match other graphs).

For these the methods of raising funds in Figures 18 through 20, none of the differences across the years are markedly different.

### SECTION III: Special survey about planned giving

Among all respondents one-third (34 percent) reported having a formal planned giving program. Organizations with a PPP or CFRE respondent were more likely to have a formal planned giving program, regardless of organization size.

People holding the CFRE have at least five years of experience in fundraising, which is required to sit for the Certified Fund Raising Executive (CFRE) examination. Note that respondents from CFRE include people on the CFRE mailing list, not just those with certification. The PPP respondents are members of that organization and are likely to have responsibility for or expertise in philanthropic planning. From this analysis, it is impossible to say which came first: the planned giving program that sought someone with experience in that field, or the individual with experience who helped the organization create the program.

Table 1: Percentage with a formal planned giving program, by organization size and respondent source

Organizational budget, 2011	Respondent Source		
	PPP/CFRE	Not PPP/CFRE	All respondents
< \$250,000	36%	12%	16%
\$250,000 - \$999,999	42%	19%	23%
\$1M to \$2.99M	45%	33%	35%
\$3M to \$9.99M	58%	44%	48%
\$10M and greater	82%	49%	65%
No size reported			
Total	50%	28%	34%

CFRE = CFRE International list; PPP = Partnership in Philanthropic Planning list

Those with a formal planned giving program were more likely to have increased planned gift receipts in 2012, compared with 2011 (67 percent saw an increase, compared with 53 percent of respondent without a planned giving program).

At all budget levels, organizations that have a planned giving program were more likely to see an increase in planned gift receipts in 2012 than those in the same size group that did not have a formal planned giving effort.<sup>6</sup>

Those with planned giving programs tended to have staff members devoted to planned giving work, and sometimes those employees specialize in planned giving or have several years of fundraising experience. Thus we cannot say that the mere presence of a formal program “causes” planned giving receipts to go up. Increased planned gift

<sup>6</sup> Using chi-square tests,  $p < .05$  across all cells.

receipts could be driven by other aspects of the organization's total development program, staff expertise, or factors not captured here, including traits of donors associated with a particular type of charitable organization. However, it is generally acknowledged that because people give where they have relationships, having staff members who know donors and their interests will increase fundraising results.

Bequests are the most basic type of planned gift, and in any organization they count for the largest part of total planned gift income. In every organization, a staff person can be in charge of stewarding loyal donors toward bequest commitments and promoting bequests in regular communications with all constituents.

*Michael Kenyon*  
*President and CEO, Partnership for Philanthropic Planning*

Formal planned giving programs can include a number of different activities. There are differences in what they include among respondents from PPP and CFRE when compared with other respondents.

Table 2: Formal planned giving programs by source of respondent

	CFRE/PPP respondents	Other respondents	All respondents
<b>Of those with a planned giving program: percentage that</b>			
Do research on prospects	76%*	67%	71%
Cultivate prospective donors	87%*	70%	67%
Have a program budget	77%*	59%	78%
Print information about planned giving in other materials (e.g., newsletters)	94%	87%	90%
<b>Of those with PG program, median FTE devoted to PG</b>			
Median FTE	1 to 2	< 1	< 1

CFRE = CFRE International list; PPP = Partnership in Philanthropic Planning list

\* Statistically significantly different from other respondents

Other attributes of an active program included these answers in the "Other" category:

- Planned giving committee of the board, or volunteer committee
- Planned giving donor recognition club, legacy society or equivalent formed
- Services from a partner agency (e.g., community foundation), consultant, software provider, or other vendor
- Seminars and training sessions to attract potential donors

## Planned giving goals

About one-third of survey participants reported having a planned giving program. Of those, just over half (53 percent or 18 percent of all respondents) said their organizations have a planned giving goal. The survey asked whether the organization tracks its planned giving progress by counting new planned giving commitments or dollar amounts (estimated) or both. Just over half of the programs with a planned giving goal use the number of new commitments, whereas a third use dollar amounts. Of all programs with a goal, 65 percent reported meeting the planned giving goal (however formulated) for 2012.

Table 3: Planned giving programs, goals, and meeting goals

	Of those with planned giving activity				
	Of all in survey	Of those with goal			
	% with planned giving program	Have a goal	Goal includes number of new commitments	Goal includes dollar amount for new commitments	% that met the goal
Of those with planned giving program	100%	53%	54%	34%	65%
Of all in survey	34%	18%	13%	8%	14%

By its nature, planned giving looks to the future. The Partnership for Philanthropic Planning recommends that organizations with planned giving programs track their success based on the number of new commitments, as dollar values today for funds to be realized in the future cannot be fairly estimated.

## SECTION IV: Benchmarks for donor engagement methods

This wave of the Nonprofit Fundraising Survey asked organizations about various ways they might communicate with and engage donors, whether for stewardship or cultivation purposes or other reasons.

In this survey, nearly 1,000 respondents completed questions about engagement methods. The methods are grouped into “somewhat impersonal approaches,” “more personalized contact,” and “use of the Internet.”

### Somewhat impersonal approaches

The first group of approaches examined includes many that are part of standard fundraising practice, ranging from sending thank you or acknowledgment letters (the recommended time frame is within two business days<sup>7</sup>) to using premiums or small gifts in appeal letters.

A majority of organizations in this research sent thank you letters to all donors (71 percent) and provided printed information (newsletters or annual reports) by mail to all donors (56 percent). Somewhat fewer, but still a majority when combined with distribution to “some donors not all,” provided information by email (48 percent to all donors, and 26 percent to some donors, for a combined total of 74 percent). Donors also had opportunities to volunteer at a large share of organizations in this study. Very few organizations use premiums in appeals to all donors (6 percent) although about one in eight (17 percent) use them selectively with some donors.

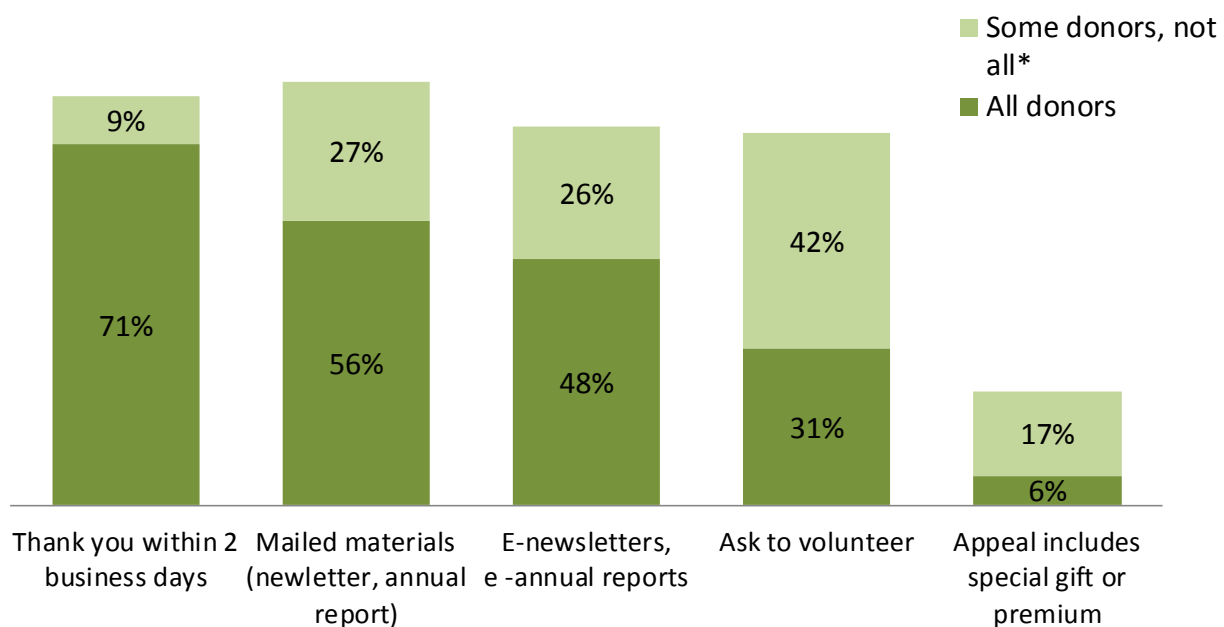
Two things in particular stand out for me in the latest NRC report: the vital nature of donor engagement, whether it be called ‘cultivation’ or ‘stewardship,’ in meeting fundraising goals; and how closely fundraisers have their ‘fingers on the pulse’ of donors as indicated by the predicted levels of success and the reality of those levels. It’s reassuring to note how these findings confirm what we teach in The Fund Raising School.

*Timothy L. Seiler, CFRE  
Director, The Fund Raising School*

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<sup>7</sup> Association of Donor Relations Professionals and Association of Advancement Services Professionals, *Best Practices: Gift Acknowledgement*. <http://www.adrp.net>

Figure 21: Percentage of respondents that responded that their organizations use the engagement method – Somewhat impersonal methods



\* "Some donors, not all" includes donors above a certain gift level (by far the most frequent response), donors by other category (age, gift frequency, etc.), donors below a certain gift level (very uncommon), and donors who ask.

Organizations that used four of these five methods either for all donors or for donors above a certain level were more likely to meet fundraising goals for 2012 than were organizations that did not use the method at all. The exception is including a premium as part of the appeal.

Table 4: Percentage of organizations meeting fundraising goal based on donor engagement methods – Somewhat impersonal methods

Donor engagement method	Percentage of respondents that met organizational fundraising goal for 2012		
	Used method for all donors or donors above a certain level	Didn't use the method at all	
Typed/computer thank you letter	63%	52%	**
Material by mail (newsletter, annual report)	64%	51%	**
E-mailed materials (newsletter, annual report)	63%	54%	*
Recruit volunteers from donor group	67%	55%	**
Appeal includes premium	63%	60%	

\*\* statistically significantly different,  $p < .01$

\* statistically significantly different,  $p < .05$



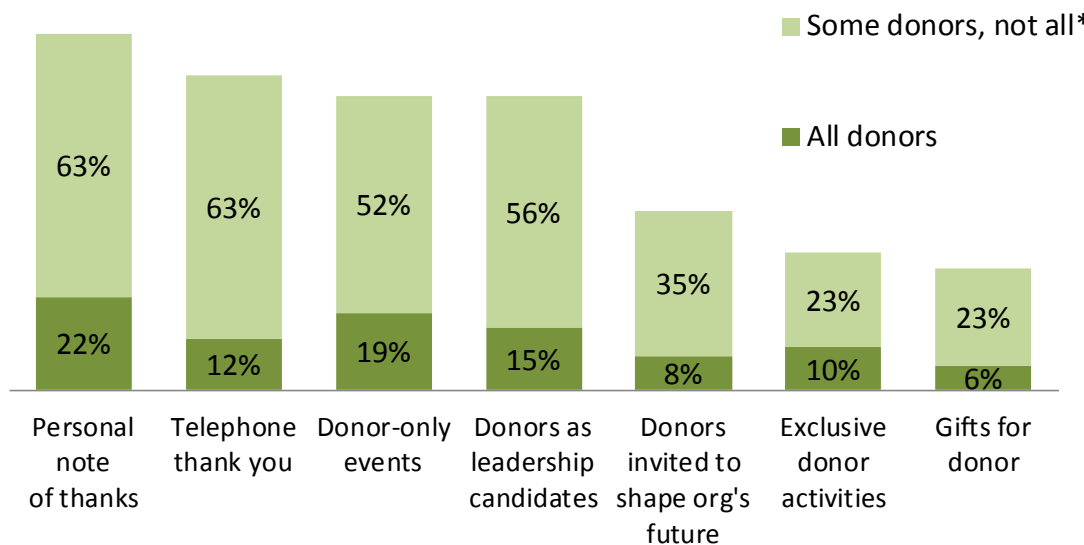
Campbell Rinker finds that while donor confidence is trending upward, high unemployment rates, increased payroll tax deductions, and rising fuel and other costs still might lower household giving. Nonprofits will benefit most from the lift in confidence when they pursue effective strategies to keep the donors they have and carefully develop plans to acquire new donors.

*Dirk Rinker*  
President and CEO, Campbell Rinker

## More personal approaches

Questions in the study asked about use of seven donor engagement methods that have a more personal touch, ranging from sending a handwritten note to a donor to inviting donors to participate in exclusive activities arranged just for them. Each of these more personal methods was used most often for “some donors, not all.” Respondents could indicate if the method was used for donors above a certain level, below a certain level, or based on some other criteria. By a vast majority, these methods, when used, are for donors above a certain level.

Figure 22: Percentage of respondents that responded that their organizations use the engagement method – More personal contact



\* “Some donors not all” includes for donors above a certain gift level (by far the most frequent response), donors by other category (age, geography, etc.), donors below a certain gift level (very uncommon), and donors who ask.

Donor-only events are no-cost activities; exclusive donor activities are tours or opportunities to which donors are invited at their own cost. Activities through which donors may be invited to shape an organization’s future could include focus groups or

other occasions when the donor is asked to express views and priorities about the organization's future.

Five of these seven approaches, when used with all donors or – as is most often the case – with donors above a certain level, are associated with meeting fundraising goal for 2012 for respondents to this survey. The exceptions are sending donors a gift after they have made their contribution and organizing paid events to which only donors are invited. There are other reasons for these types of activities even if in this study, they are not correlated with meeting fundraising goals.

Table 5: Percentage of organizations meeting fundraising goal based on donor engagement methods – More personal approaches

Donor engagement method	Percentage of respondents that met organizational fundraising goal for 2012		
	Used method for all donors or donors above a certain level	Didn't use the method at all	
Personal thank you	63%	52%	**
Telephone thank you	63%	55%	*
Donor only events	64%	51%	**
Donor invited shape organization's future	69%	56%	***
Donors as leadership candidates	66%	54%	***
Exclusive donor activities	64%	60%	
Gifts for donor (not premium, but after the donation is made)	64%	59%	

\*\*\* p< .001

\*\*p<.01

\*p<.05

#### **Restricting comparison to organizations that use method for donors above a certain level**

Because most of the more personal methods are used most often with donors above a certain level, the analysis is repeated and limited to organizations using the method only selectively.

There are two marked shifts when we look only at using these methods above a certain level. The first is a jump in the percentage of organizations that met their fundraising goal when they engaged donors in discussions about the future of their charity. In this survey, nearly three-quarters (74 percent) of organizations that engaged their donors above a certain level in that kind of discussion met their fundraising goal for 2012.

Table 6: Percentage of organizations meeting fundraising goal based on donor engagement methods – More personal approaches – Organizations using method for donors above a certain level

Donor engagement method	Percentage of respondents that met organization's fundraising goal for 2012		
	Used method donors above a certain level	Didn't use the method at all	
Personal thank you	65%	52%	**
Telephone thank you	64%	55%	*
Donor only events	66%	51%	**
Donor invited shape organization's future	74%	56%	***
Donors as leadership candidates	68%	54%	***
Exclusive donor activities	64%	60%	
Gifts for donor (not premium, but after the donation is made)	68%	59%	*

\*\*\* p< .001      \*\* p<.01      \* p<.05

The second shift is that sending gifts to donors above a certain level is associated with meeting goal, when compared with not sending any gifts at all to donors.

Stewardship is a very close relative of friendship. Place yourself in the donor's shoes and ask, "what can I do, with the means we have in place, which has the opportunity to 'delight' the donor and stand out from the crowd?"

*Jay B. Love*  
*Bloomerang.co*

## Use of the Internet for donor engagement

In 2002, Harvard professor James Austin predicted that by 2010, one-third of donations would be online.<sup>8</sup> The most recent estimate is that one-tenth of all dollars given as tracked by *Giving USA* are from online giving. However, Dr. Austin's prediction is closer to the truth if we look at online donor communications.

This survey asked about six different ways to engage donors online, guided by some current practices in the for-profit words. Among these, posting regularly to the organization's website dominated, with 82 percent answering yes.

Almost as frequent is inviting donors and others to connect via some of the dominant social media tools, such as Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn. The question read, "Asking donors to 'like' your organization's Facebook page, 'follow' your Twitter account, or connect through LinkedIn or other social media."

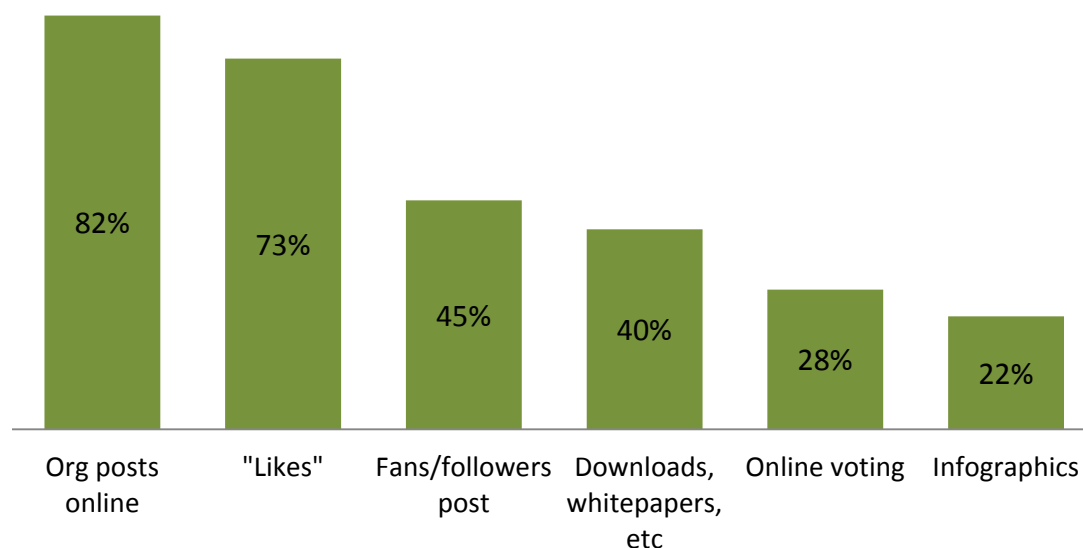
This study finds two-thirds of organizations that used these methods met their 2012 fundraising goals. To me, this says social and online engagement in the overall fundraising strategy will continue to be important. For those organizations that shy away from using these methods, there may continue to be a fear of being able to justify a return on investment (ROI) to boards or the executive team.

*Jeff Stanger*  
*www.causegeek.com*

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8 J. Austin. 2002. The E-philanthropy revolution. Harvard Business School Social Enterprises No. 18, Working Paper, page 3. Accessed March 20, 2013, [www.hbs.edu/socialenterprise/pdf/SE18TheEPhilanthropyRevolution.pdf](http://www.hbs.edu/socialenterprise/pdf/SE18TheEPhilanthropyRevolution.pdf).

Figure 23: Percentage of respondents saying “Yes” when asked if their organization uses the engagement method to reach donors via the Internet



Less frequently used engagement tools were asking fans or followers to post their own photos or stories; offering free downloads, such as white papers or reports; offering online polls; and posting infographics associated with the organization’s work and results.

Table 7: Percentage of organizations meeting fundraising goal based on donor engagement methods – Use of the Internet

Donor engagement method	Percentage of respondents that met fundraising goal for 2012		
	Use method	Do not use method	
Organization posts online regularly	63%	50%	***
Invites “likes” or “follows” (Facebook, Twitter, Linked in)	62%	56%	
Fans/followers invited to post to organization’s site	59%	61%	
Free downloads, white papers, etc.	67%	56%	***
Online polls	62%	60%	
Infographics used to tell the organizations’ story	67%	57%	***

\*\*\* p< .001

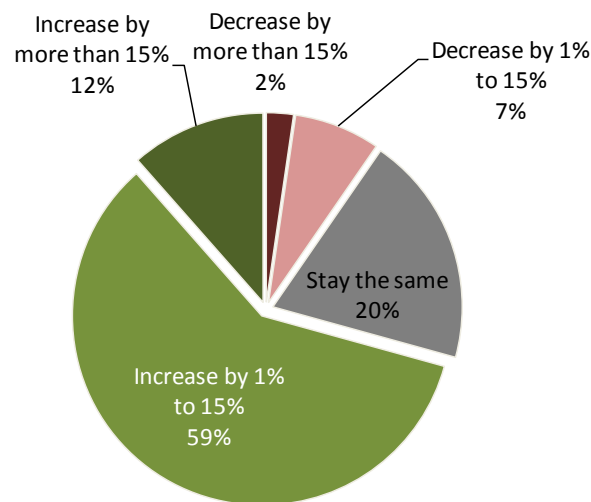
\*\* p<.01

\* p<.05

## SECTION V: Outlook for 2013

As in prior years of similar studies, a majority of respondents anticipate improved fundraising results in 2013, compared with 2012. More than 70 percent expect an increase, with most (59 percent) expecting growth in funds raised to be between 1 percent and 15 percent. The results for 2013 predictions are close to those predicted for 2012. As shown earlier, predicted results for 2012 came very close to the actual reported percentages change in this study.

Figure 24: Anticipated direction of change in charitable receipts, 2013 compared with 2012



### Challenges, issues, or trends that will affect fundraising in 2013

#### ***Those looking forward to increases***

Commitment to a long-range fundraising plan will affect our organization positively.

*Medium-large Canadian arts organization*

For the first time we have a campaign underway to raise \$50,000. We communicated with donors and they signed up to help fundraise through their networks, which increased our donor prospects by 1,300. It's been a slow start but at least we are underway. It's the first time donors have had to fundraise.

*Small Western education organization*

Effectively instituting a donor-development model that sets annual goals relative to dollars raised and planned giving commitments secured. This will require realigning staff, as well as increasing staff, as well as evolving the culture to one of setting and attaining goals.

*Medium-small Southern human services organization*

### ***Those concerned about declines***

The economy of the region and the economy in general.

*Small Canadian health organization*

We are concerned about changes to the tax code and how that may affect gifts from major donors.

*Large Western environmental organization*

Declining direct mail, which is traditionally supported by mature donors combined with not enough mid-level, mid-aged supporters, is an ongoing battle.

*Large Midwestern human services organization*

## **CONCLUSION**

Philanthropic fundraising in 2012 showed signs of improvement, after being relatively unchanged in 2011 and 2010. While this is an encouraging sign, nonprofit charitable organizations continue to face a challenging fundraising climate, with increases reported at fewer than half of the respondents using most direct mail, board giving, foundation grants and most other methods studied.

Nonprofit organizations that set fundraising goals and practice excellent stewardship are more likely to see gifts increase in 2013 and beyond. With fundraising training programs widely available and a growing body of evidence about what is working, staff and volunteers at charitable organizations can plan and implement successful fundraising initiatives.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The survey invitation was sent by email and through social media postings beginning on January 16, 2012. The online-only survey response remained open through February 3, 2012. Invitations were sent to several distinct groups:

- Prior participants in NRC surveys (called here panelists)
- A random sample of members of the Association of Fundraising Professionals (AFP) located in the United States
- All members of AFP in Canada
- All individuals on the email lists maintained by Partnership for Philanthropic Planning and by CFRE International
- More than 13,490 organizations on the mailing list of Campbell Rinker

Reminders were sent at least once, and sometimes twice or three times, to people in each of these groups. In addition, members of the NRC used notices in newsletters and via social media outlets to recruit additional survey participants.

By source of list, response numbers are as shown.

List source	Sample size	Number of Respondents	Percentage of all respondents-column	Response rate within sample – by row
AFP	5,000	190	16.3	4%
AFP Canada	3,000	128	11.0	4%
CFRE International mailing list	20,000	250	21.4	1.3%
Campbell Rinker	13,495	121	10.4	0.9%
Giving USA	Convenience	11	0.9	n/a
Partnership for Philanthropic Planning	4,091	100	8.6	2.4%
Urban/NCCS	Convenience	202	17.3	n/a
Panel	738	102	8.7	13.8%
Other	Convenience	63	5.4	n/a
Total		1,167	100%	n/a

Where we can calculate a response rate based on the sample or membership list number, it is shown at the far right as a percentage of the sample size in the second column.

Note that a correlation analysis for AFP member surveys from 2002 through 2008 and NRC surveys from 2010 and 2011 shows a correlation coefficient of 0.625 for the percentage of respondents reporting increased fundraising receipts in a year and the percentage change in total giving found by Giving USA in its estimates. This finding is statistically significant ( $p < .05$ ). Analysis comparing the results by source of respondent for this survey finds no statistically significant differences between respondents from samples (AFP, PPP and CFRE combined) and all other respondents from the convenience sample.

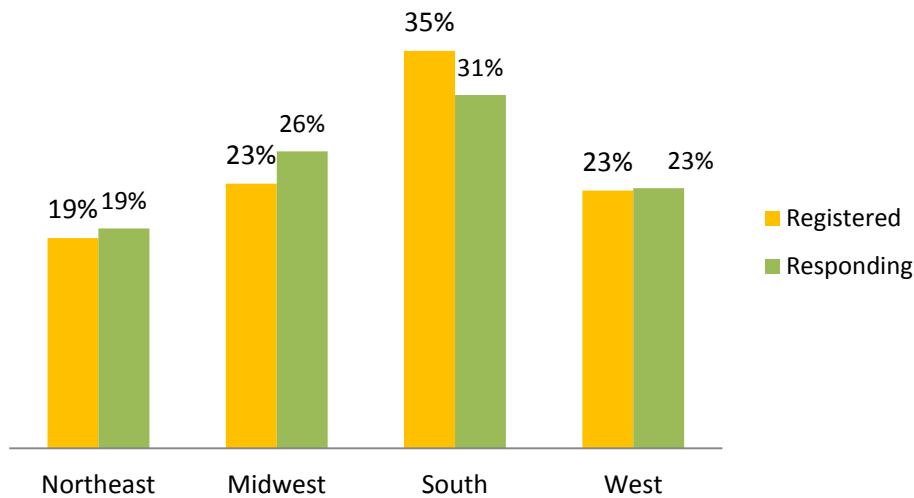
The *Winter 2013 Nonprofit Fundraising Survey* received a total of 1,167 non-duplicated complete responses representing organizations with more than \$33.33 billion in expenditures in 2011 (based on IRS Form 990s, so excluding Canadian respondents).

In this file of responding charities, regions defined by the Census Bureau are roughly equally represented based on the number of registered charities within each.



Figure 25: Percentage of responding charities by U.S. Census region compared with registered charities IRS and Business Master File, July 2011

(The sum is 100 by region—that is, add North, South, Midwest, and West for any of the categories of charity to get 100. All yellow bars together = 100, for example.)

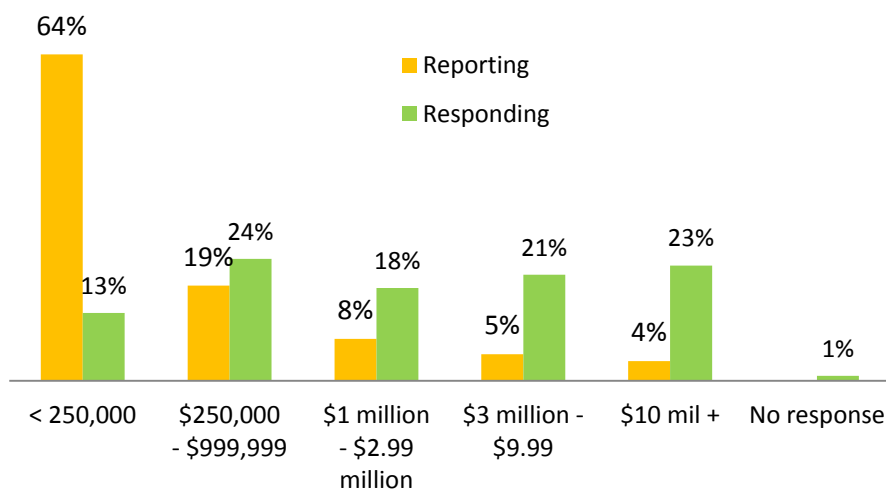


Registered = In the IRS Business Master File as of mid-2011. Regions are as defined by the U.S. Bureau of the Census.  
Responding = Response provided in this survey.

In addition to 982 respondents from the United States, this survey received 164 responses from Canadian charities and 21 responses where the organization's location was not identified. Canadian responses are analyzed as one group, as there are not enough to consider each province separately.

This study used reported expenditure amounts on IRS Forms 990 to categorize U.S. responding charities by size, after matching responding charities by Employer Identification Number (EIN) to the record maintained by the National Center for Charitable Statistics that draws from IRS Forms. Thus only reporting charities, which provide expenditure information to the IRS, could be coded for size using official data. Some organizations were coded for size based on their self-report of total expenditures for 2012. Canadian organizations are not included in the graph below, but in analysis, when they are included the results are virtually identical.

Figure 26: Responding charities by 2011/2012 expenditure total, compared with reporting charities filing IRS forms – US respondents only

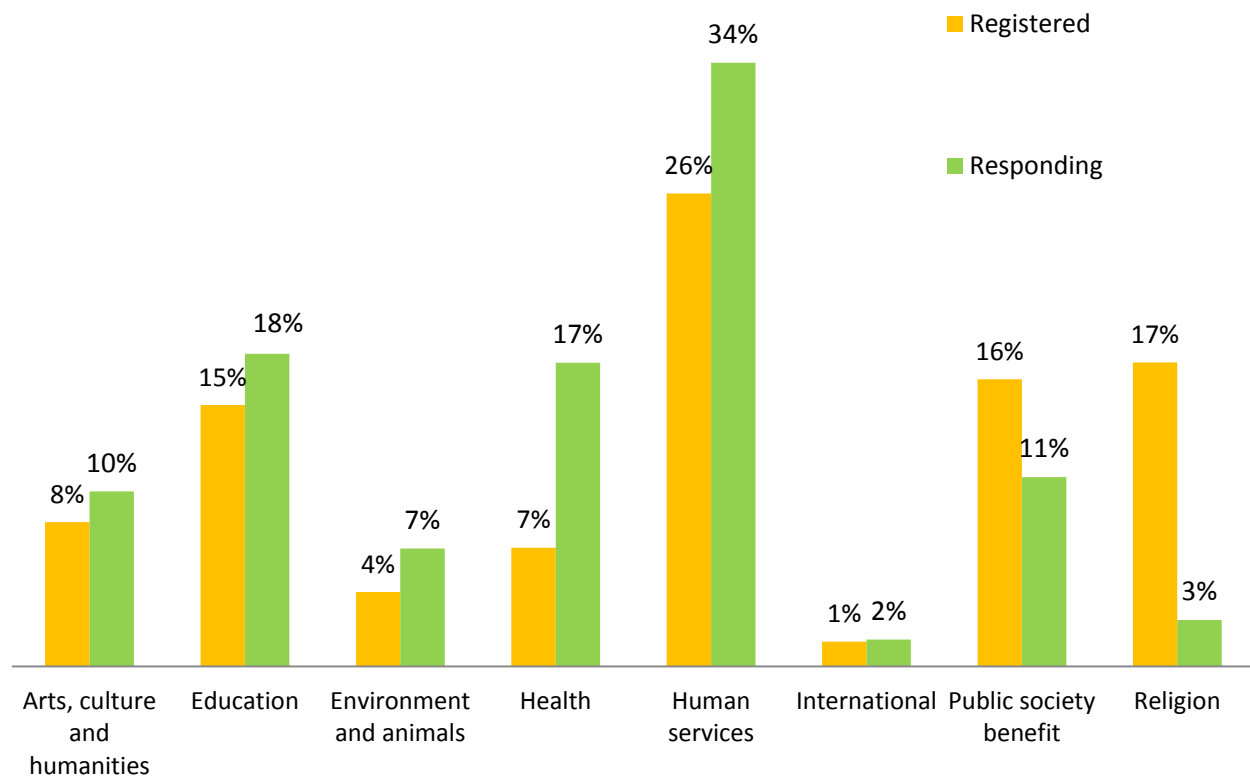


Reporting = filing an IRS Form 990 or Form 990EZ or 990-N ePostcard. Only non-religion registered charities with revenue of \$5,000 or more are required to report. Expenditure information for non-reporting charities is not available at a national level for registered nonprofit 501(c)(3) organizations. Canadian charities are not included. If they were, the results would be almost identical to the figure above.

Respondents over-represent the larger charities (\$1 million and up in expenditures) and under-represent the smallest organizations (less than \$250,000 in expenditures).

Responding charities also more or less mirrored the Reporting (filing Form 990) charities by subsector or major category under the National Taxonomy of Exempt Entities (NTEE). However, religious and public-society benefit organizations are under-represented, and human services and health organizations are both disproportionately high in this set of respondents.

Figure 27: Responding charities by subsector compared with charities registered with the IRS



Registered = In the IRS Business Master File as of mid-2011. Charities in the BMF are coded by major category of the National Taxonomy of Exempt Entities (NTEE). Major categories are grouped here into “subsectors” as defined by *Giving USA*.  
Responding = Response provided in this survey

### No change in charitable receipts differed by respondent affiliation

This survey reached people through several possible affiliations, including membership in the Association of Fundraising Professionals (AFP). In the Winter 2013 survey about giving in all of 2012, responses from people accessing the survey varied little based on respondent source. This includes responses from respondents from the lists of two new members of the NRC (CFRE International and Partnership for Philanthropic Planning) compared with all other lists. It also includes comparison of respondents who have answered in the past, who form a small panel, compared with respondents for whom there is no prior response on record.

Figure 28: Percentage of respondents reporting a change in charitable receipts, by source of responses, 2012

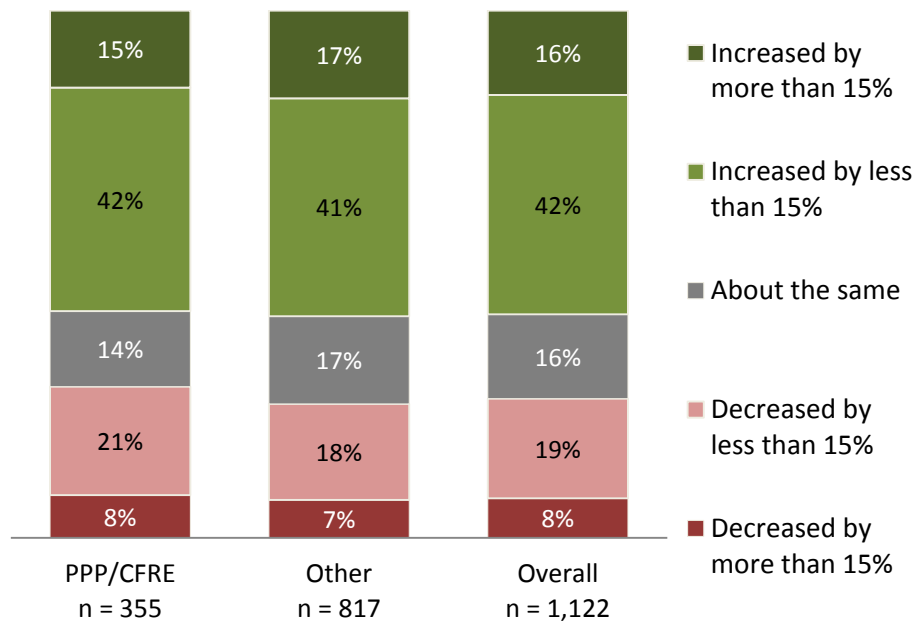
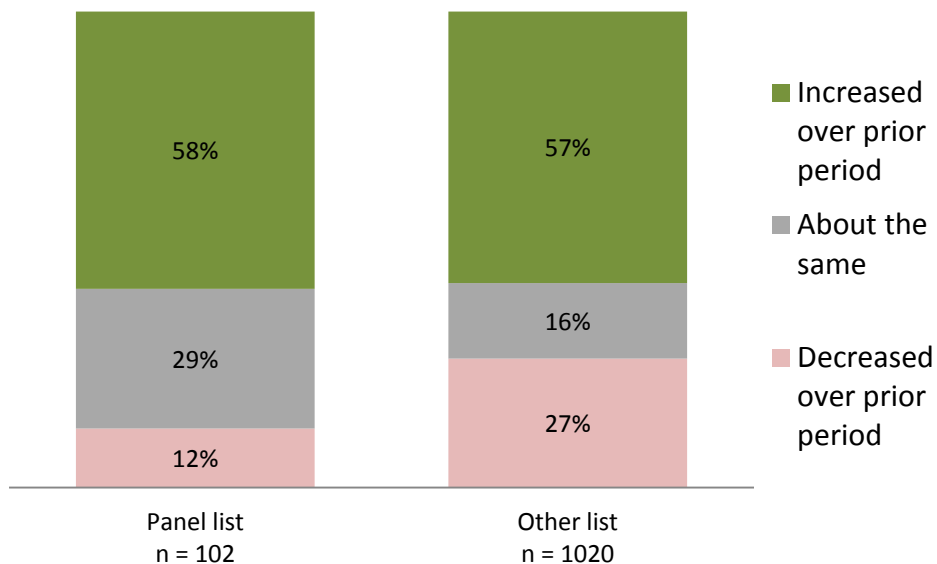


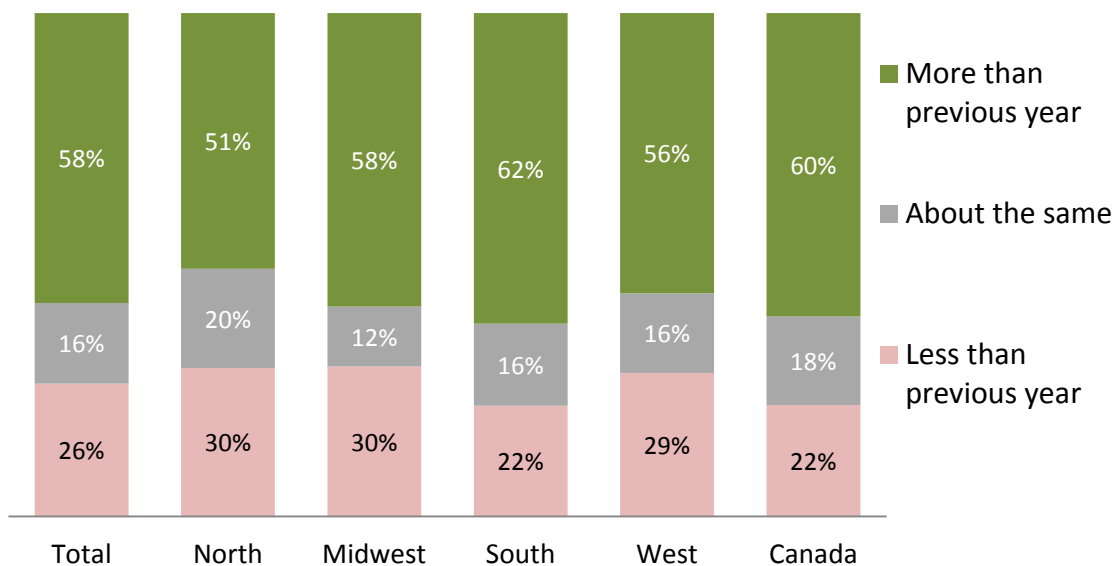
Figure 29: Panel responses compared with other responses



## Comparison by U.S. region and Canada

There were no differences in the percentage of respondents seeing change in any direction based on region of the United States or the United States compared with Canada.

Figure 30: Responses: All, US Regions, Canada



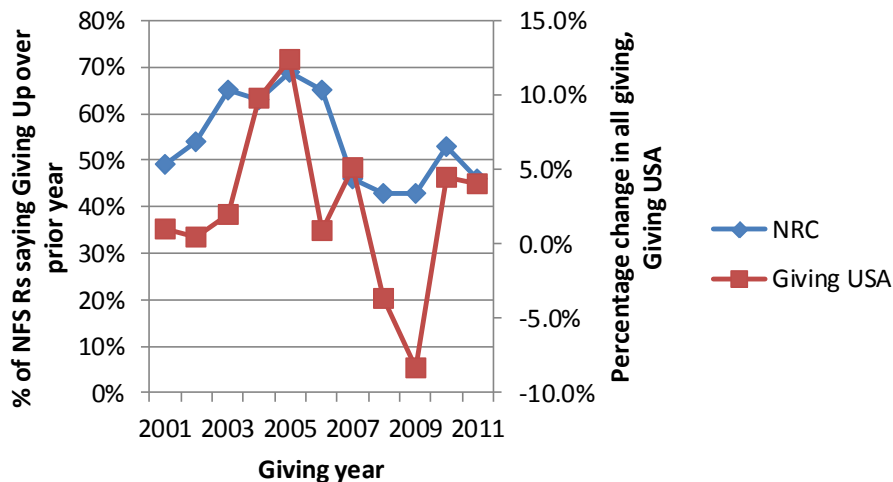
## NRC results compared with *Giving USA* estimates

The NRC survey began in late 2010, so we have three years of year-end data from that source, plus the preceding nine years from the similar study conducted by AFP among its members. Like the NRC, the Association of Fundraising Professionals tracked the percentage of respondents reporting an increase in gift amounts received. The annual yearbook of philanthropy, *Giving USA*, estimates annual percentage changes in the total amount of charitable giving in the United States.

Thus AFP and NRC measure the share of organizations that saw an increase in giving; Giving USA reports a change overall in the amount contributed. Despite these differences in what is measured, there are relationships between the two. When more organizations see giving rise, it is likely that giving rose in total. And the opposite: when comparatively few organizations report an increase in gift amounts received, it is likely that giving overall held steady or even declined.

Analysis finds a statistically significant correlation of 0.62 ( $p < .05$ ) between the percentage of organizations reporting an increase and the percentage change in total giving found by Giving USA. This is based on Giving USA estimates published in *Giving USA 2012*, which include preliminary estimates for 2011.

Figure 31: NRC/AFP results for percentage of organizations reporting increase in funds raised compared with Giving USA rate of change in total giving in the United States, 2001-2011



Data: AFP, 2001-2009; NRC: 2010-2011

Giving USA 2012: 2001-2011

The AFP/NRC results did not completely capture the downturn in giving in 2007 through 2009. Giving USA tracks gifts TO foundations, which can be as much as 10 percent or more of total giving. Other than community foundations, grantmaking foundations are not included in the NRC.

### Statistical significance

The respondents form a convenience sample. The study does not weight responses. There is no margin of error or measure of statistical significance using this sampling technique, as it is not a random sample of the population studied. Chi-square tests were used throughout the analysis to compare differences between larger responding organizations and smaller responding organizations. Results included here are statistically significant using that approach.

## About the Nonprofit Research Collaborative

Several organizations have formed the NRC. Each of these entities has, at a minimum, a decade of direct experience collecting information from nonprofits concerning charitable receipts, fundraising practices, and/or grantmaking activities. The collaborating partners are:

- Association of Fundraising Professionals, which surveyed members for an annual state of fundraising study from 2002 through 2010;
- CFRE International, which encourages research that helps fundraising professional achieve the highest standards of professional competence and ethical practice;
- Campbell Rinker, which publishes the bi-monthly Donor Confidence Report and conducts numerous studies among nonprofit donors and nonprofit professionals.
- Giving USA Foundation, which has published the *Giving USA Annual Report on Philanthropy* for nearly 60 years;
- The Partnership for Philanthropic Planning, which conducts research, education, advocacy, community dialogue and the setting of standards and best practices in philanthropic planning.
- The National Center for Charitable Statistics at the Urban Institute, which tracks the finances and activities of nonprofit organizations and prepares *The Nonprofit Almanac* and other publications and resources.

The collaborative effort reduces the burden on charities, which receive fewer requests for survey participation. Survey respondents will form a panel over time, allowing for trend comparisons among the same organizations. This approach provides more useful benchmarking information than repeated cross-sectional studies.

The Nonprofit Research Collaborative (NRC) conducts surveys twice a year.