

MILESTONES

Digital Fundraising Benchmarks

Explore data from more than 20 organizations to give you the insights your digital fundraising and marketing teams need to elevate their game, secure investment, and prove impact.



Compiled, Analyzed, and Presented by

DonorDrive[®]

&



Streetlight
DIGITAL

Introduction

Shine a light on digital fundraising milestones to help you drive growth.

Welcome to Milestones Digital Fundraising Benchmarks. We've partnered with more than 20 amazing fundraising organizations to bring you actionable data. These metrics will help you measure your program against others, build projections, and formulate strategies explicitly designed to address the challenges fundraisers like you are facing.

There are many data studies out there, and we truly believe in the power of the data provided by our colleagues in the industry. But we saw something was missing. As silos exist within your organizations, fundraising data alone is just one piece of the puzzle that doesn't represent the entire picture. Fundraising and marketing must be strategically aligned toward shared goals for a peer-to-peer (P2P) program to be truly successful, especially in our digitally-driven world.

By combining DonorDrive's digital fundraising experience with Streetlight Digital's marketing prowess, we hope to align these two worlds and shine a new spotlight on the benchmarks you seek. In the following pages, we'll examine the intersection between fundraising and marketing with metrics that help you better benchmark your own activities and results. Additionally, we'll share tips and tricks from our experience to help you explore how programs can share learnings from tools and channels across departments to effect change throughout the organization.

We hope these milestones help you chart your path forward as you continue on this crazy journey we call fundraising. But remember, the final destination is up to you.

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Key Insights



59%

of participants actively fundraise

The number of participants actively fundraising *increased 4%* from 2022-2023. Reducing your number of zero-dollar fundraisers should continue to be a key focus of your development teams.

19%

increase in average raised per participant (adjusted for inflation)

Participants are raising more on average each year, and continuing to activate and engage your participants throughout their fundraising journey has an exponential impact on your event revenue.

21%

21% of total event revenue was raised by participants connected to Facebook Fundraisers

While revenue from Facebook Fundraisers is decreasing due to many factors, participants utilizing this platform still make up a significant portion of event revenue.



11.4%

participants adopted a mobile app

Mobile app strategy continues to be a huge opportunity for growth, especially as other activations, like Facebook Fundraisers, show less impact on dollars raised.

\$585.96

raised on average by returning participants

While acquisition is a top concern, it's important to recognize that *returning participants raise nearly 5x more than new participants* on average. New participants raise \$120.97 on average.



Key Insights



\$3.93

raised per \$1 spent on paid advertising

Organizations reported a \$3.93 return on ad spend (ROAS). For every \$1 spent on advertising, \$3.93 was raised by participants and/or donors directly associated with that ad spend. The range of ROAS across the organizations was wide—from \$0.35 to \$11.86— and is highly dependent on the strategy and goals outlined for the program.

19%

of event revenue comes from sponsors

The average sponsor *gave \$3,670*, and while this gift amount is increasing year-over-year, the percentage of revenue coming from sponsors is down from 2019. That's not necessarily a bad thing, as fundraisers and individual donors continue to grow and bring in more revenue.

Methodology

To bring you this data set, we looked at programs with events running from 2019, 2022, and 2023 to get a clear picture of the P2P industry. For much of this data, 2019 is our baseline year, providing context about how fundraising has rebounded post-pandemic. We compared this data to 2022 and 2023 to understand current year-over-year growth. All reporting organizations are based in the United States but differ greatly in cause, program structure, number of events, and support staff size. Some organizations host 100+ walk events, while others host a single cycling event. Others focus on a special event series, endurance, livestream fundraising, DIY, and even collegiate and K-12 fundraising. Rather than breaking this data down by event type, our intention is to provide post-pandemic and year-over-year trends in both revenue and participation. The span is great, but what they all have in common is activating individuals to fundraise and donate to support missions they are passionate about. All data provided for this report remains confidential and anonymous.

20+
organizations

6,000+
events

2M+ participants

\$540M
dollars raised

Additional sources:

2019 Real Dollars M+R Benchmarks P2P Top 30

Digital Fundraising

BENCHMARKS

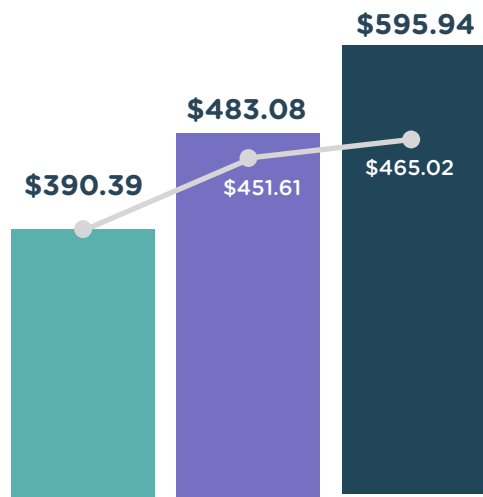




P2P Activation

The power of P2P fundraising comes from your participants' ownership of your cause and how they inspire their personal networks to join your mission. But activating your audience, getting them to register for your events and campaigns, and then turning around and doing the work to actually fundraise isn't easy. In this section, we take a closer look at the impact of individual participants, how many fundraise, how much, and what other actions they take that indicate their road to success.

Fundraiser Average Raised

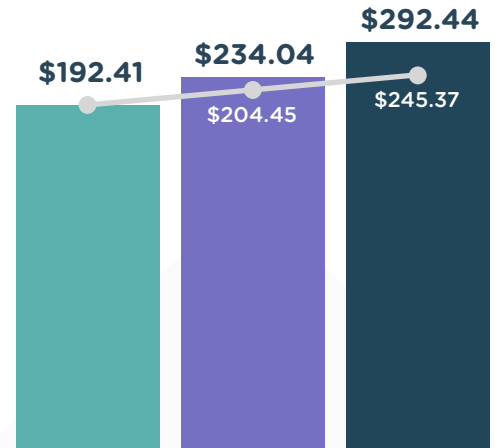


2019 2022 2023

● 2019 Dollars Adjusted for Inflation

So how do we get our participants to fundraise? Let's start by looking at those \$0 participants who will never raise \$1, no matter how hard we try. The data shows that roughly 40% of participants don't fundraise. That's a hard pill to swallow, and we've toiled over strategies to convert those participants into active fundraisers. There is no doubt that targeting these participants in segmented coaching campaigns is a great way to make a dent in this pool. But for how much return?

Participant Average Raised



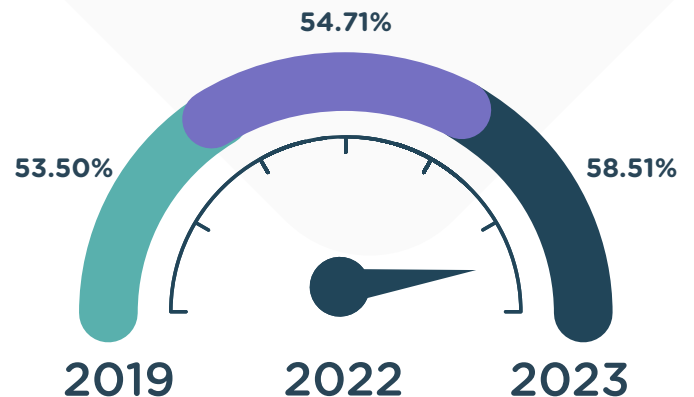
2019 2022 2023

● 2019 Dollars Adjusted for Inflation

P2P strategy doesn't stop at acquiring a participant. The number of participants increased 9.6% from 2022 to 2023, and that larger participant pool resulted in an increase in overall fundraising and revenue. If we look at just those who actually fundraised, we see a 28% increase in the average raised since 2019, when adjusted for inflation.

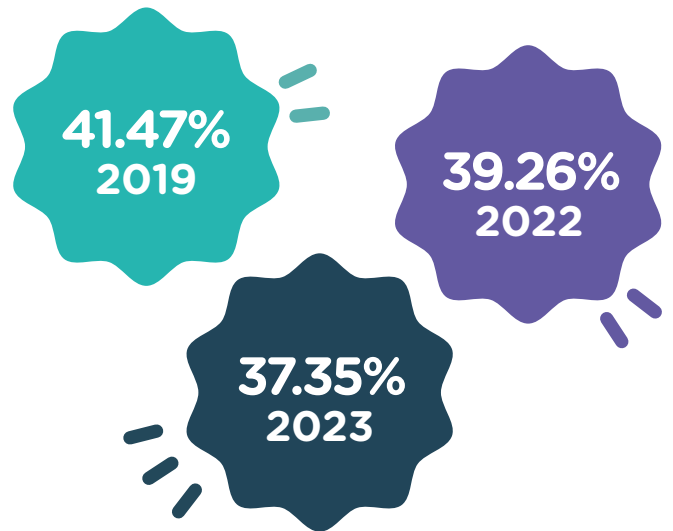
Participants Actively Fundraising

(Fundraised more than \$0)



Participants Making Self Donations

We challenge you to think of other segments with higher fundraising potential and suggest reframing your activation strategy to focus on key engagements and activations as a map for who has the greatest capacity for fundraising. Across the years we surveyed, the number of fundraisers self-donating has hovered around 40%. That's an amazing sign and a crucial marker of their commitment to your cause.



Other activations that show a propensity to fundraise include sharing a connection to your cause (collected during registration), customizing the fundraising page, setting a higher-than-average fundraising goal, sending donor appeals, and taking additional actions we'll highlight later on, like downloading a mobile app or connecting a Facebook Fundraiser.

By looking at participants who show they are ready to fundraise—instead of focusing time and resources on those who may never take action—you can provide them with resources, coaching, and support that will actually help them raise more. Focus on sharing the benefits of these actions with your supporters and creating a plan to steward those who are most engaged.

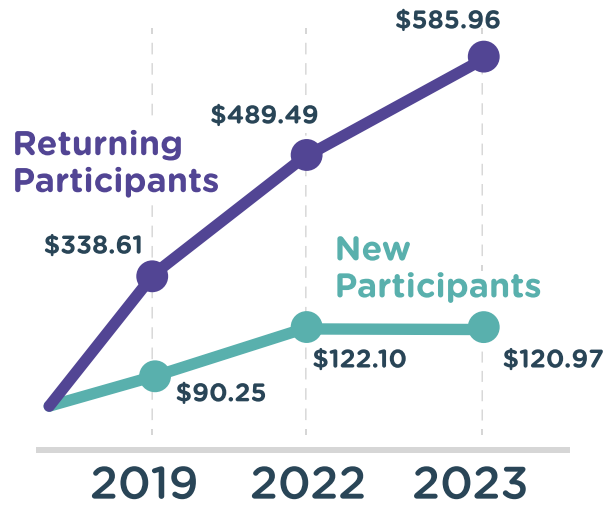




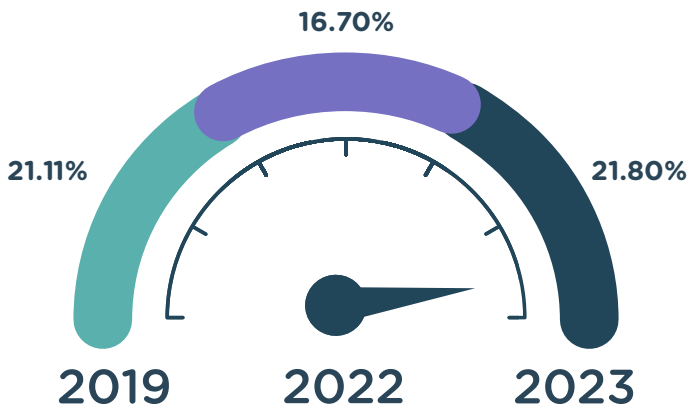
Participant Retention

Wait, why are we talking about retention when the top concern among fundraising staff is acquisition? Stick with us; there's a good reason. Returning participants raised an average of 384% more than new participants, which means their impact is nearly 5x that of new participants.

Returning vs. New Participants Average Raised

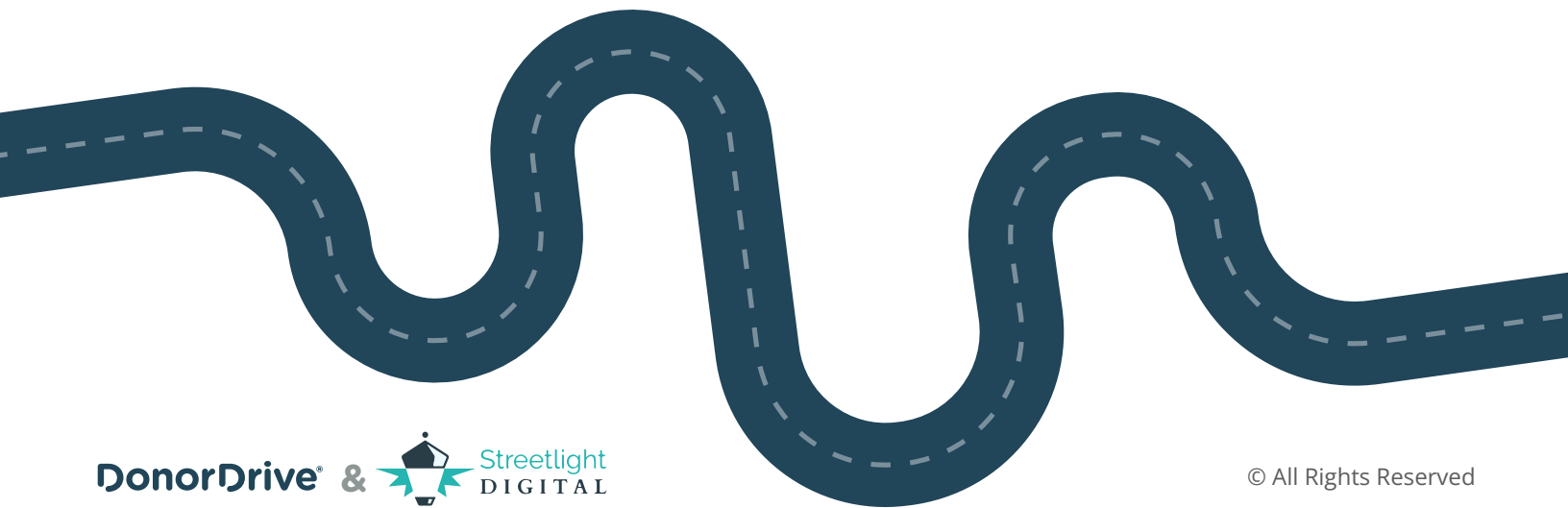


Returning Participants



This isn't to say that acquiring new participants isn't important. Of course, you need to continue growing your program, and gaining new names in your database is one of the key advantages of P2P fundraising. But if we overlook our past participants, we're missing out on a huge revenue opportunity. According to the data collected, the number of returning participants hovered around 21%.

Returning participants are easier (and cheaper) to segment and reach, so why are the numbers so low? Part of the problem comes from our ability to track participants year-over-year. Key identifiers like email could change year to year, and the criteria for how returning participants are calculated likely varies from program to program. But if we take the data on its face, we see a clear opportunity to improve the way we steward our participants and invest in creating an experience that encourages supporters to come back year after year.



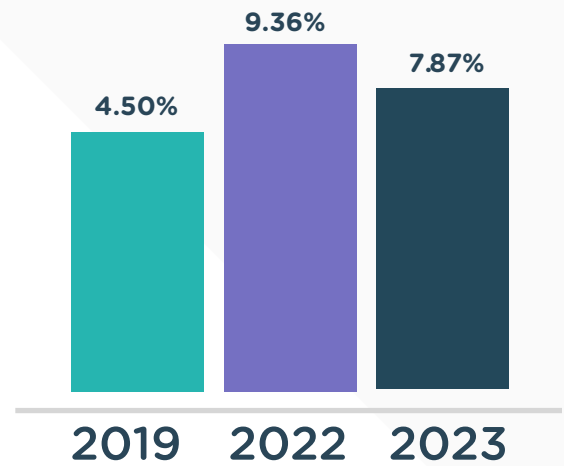


Facebook Fundraisers

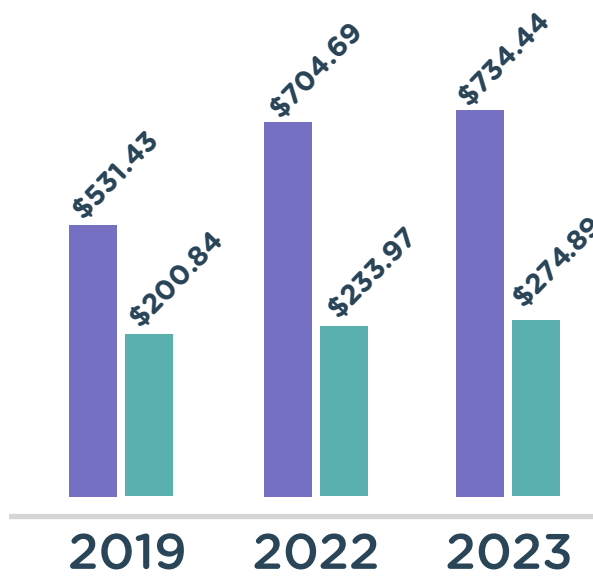
Are Facebook Fundraisers dead? The industry is abuzz with the mad scramble to replace the revenue lost from this channel. There is no question about its impending death, but let's not prematurely call it road kill. While the adoption of Facebook Fundraisers is decreasing among participants, nearly 8% are still taking the time to connect to Facebook.

So how did we go from one of the most promising fundraiser activations to an unreliable revenue stream? META has been slowly decreasing its support for the nonprofit industry—first removing the incentive to begin a fundraiser, then eliminating its Social Impact Team, discontinuing the magical processing fee coverage, and most recently, discontinuing fundraising tools in the European Economic Area in July this year. It's fair to assume that the same move will be made in the U.S.

Participants Creating Facebook Fundraisers



Facebook Fundraiser Participants Average Raised



- Connected Facebook Fundraisers
- Participant Average Raised

(Just events reporting Facebook Fundraiser dollars)

Despite these changes, participants who created a Facebook Fundraiser raised 167% more than the average raised per participant. Participants utilizing Facebook Fundraisers also raised 21.02% of total event revenue, which tells us that this channel is still impacting both our individual supporter experience and total event revenue.

P2P fundraising existed long before Facebook Fundraisers, and it will exist long after. As long as META supports Facebook Fundraising in the U.S., your organization should continue to take advantage of this tool. But this entire Facebook Fundraising experience is a good reminder to never deviate from your core strategies: building relationships with your fundraisers, creating community at your events, supporting your team captains as your brand ambassadors on the ground, and investing in your owned platforms to ensure stability and growth.

Participants Adopting a Mobile App



Mobile Apps

Meeting your fundraisers where they are is essential to keeping them engaged. That's why having a mobile app is quickly becoming the standard in P2P fundraising. Just like self-donations and Facebook Fundraisers, the more actions your participants take, the more likely they are to reach their fundraising goals. With a mobile app, your supporters have quicker access to key activations like customizing their fundraising page, asking for donations in email, text, or on social media, showing their donation QR code to friends and family in person, and even depositing checks.

Not all reporting programs utilize a mobile app. However, among those with mobile app stats to share, we saw an 11.05% adoption rate, similar to the rate reported by P2P Professional Forum, DonorDrive, and others.

Adoption varies greatly by the size of an organization, participant demographics, marketing strategy, and how long they've utilized a mobile app. Our industry has been skeptical about the impact of mobile app fundraising and whether or not those fundraisers would continue to raise more if they didn't have a dedicated smartphone app. We won't solve the correlation vs. causation debate in this report. Still, when we spoke to respondents about their mobile app strategy, they reiterated the importance of the channel in the overall supporter experience, the ability to increase the average raised, and engage with participants in real time through dedicated app feeds and push notifications.

Increasing mobile app engagement takes constant promotion at every stage of the participant journey with dedicated calls to action and additional content on your website, emails, and social media.

Here are just a few places to start promoting your mobile app:

- Registration thank you page
- Registration confirmation and coaching emails
- Participant dashboard
- Fundraiser toolkit and other resources
- 1:1 stewardship with field staff, volunteers, and team captains



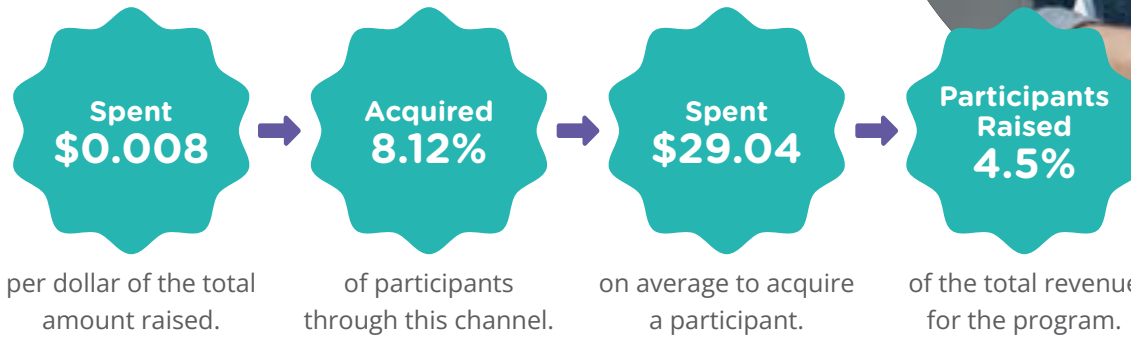


Paid Advertising

Our friends in direct response have been spending money on paid advertising for decades. From display advertising, video, native, paid search (including the free ad spend from the Google Ad Grant), and paid social, M+R reported that organizations spend \$0.12 on advertising for every dollar raised. They've been capitalizing on this channel from the top to the bottom of the funnel and justifying their spend through long-term value calculations.



Google Paid Search



P2P programs have been slower in adopting paid advertising for various reasons. Anecdotally, this is what respondents shared:

- We don't know how much to spend on paid advertising, nor where to invest.
- We tried it but couldn't track the results, so we couldn't continue getting investment.
- There are no benchmarks related to P2P advertising, so we couldn't convince our leadership to include it in our budget.
- Our marketing team controls the budget and the platforms, and we can't influence the strategy.
- We can't calculate the long-term value of our participants and donors.

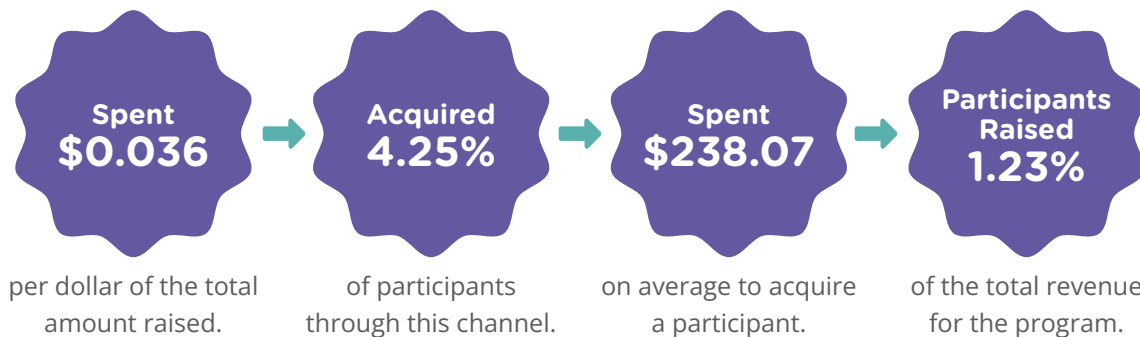




You're in luck! Several organizations in this report are ahead of the curve—they've convinced their leaders of the value of paid advertising and have found it successful—and they were generous enough to pave the way by sharing their results!

The range of advertising investment is wide—from as little as \$1,500 to as much as \$2,000,000—and organizations have ranged from dipping their toes in the water to fully diving into the deep end.

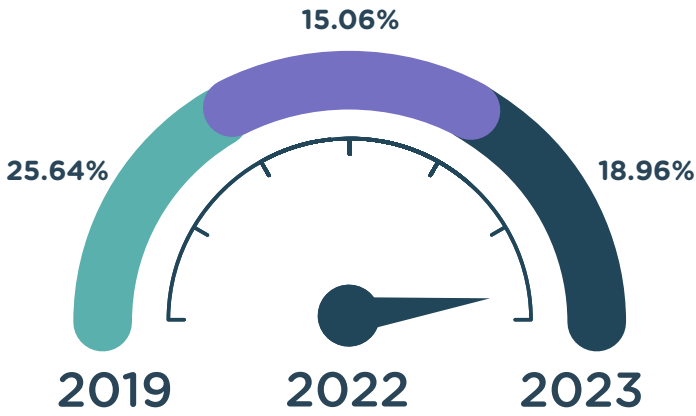
META



Is it worth investing in advertising? Based on the data above, it would appear to be a beneficial channel to adopt. That said, the best way to determine whether it's a good option for your organization is to start with a small test, measure the results, and evaluate whether it's a valuable investment for your program. Ads can be used for acquisition, retention and even coaching towards fundraising goals. Think of it as another communication channel and your numbers will follow.



Sponsor Impact



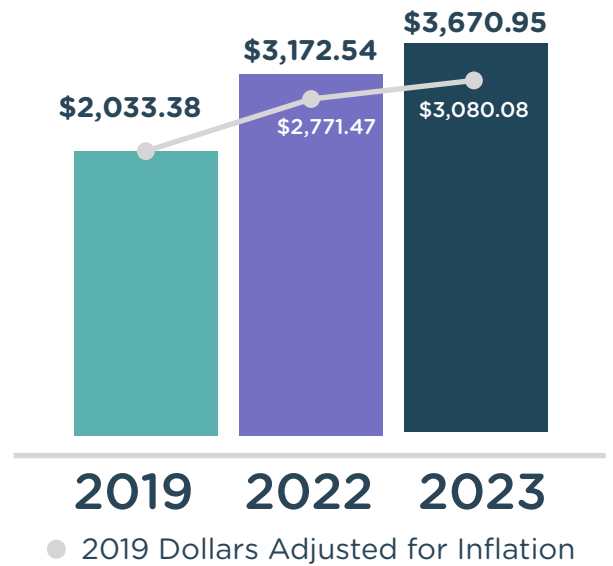
Sponsor Revenue Compared to Total Revenue

While the impact of participants is incredibly important in your P2P strategy, we also know that sponsors play a key role in growing event revenue and bringing in additional participants and donors to your campaigns. The shift to virtual events especially hit sponsors' engagement, with many organizations tightening their purse strings and seeing less value in a digital-focused sponsorship. Those numbers have rebounded, with 19% of event revenue coming from sponsors.

The impact of those sponsors has also increased by 19% when adjusted for inflation. That's an amazing sign for organizations that rely heavily on sponsorships to fuel their event strategy.

As you look to engage additional sponsors (or retain your existing corporate partners), consider other ways to engage beyond accepting a check. Many of our respondents have robust corporate team strategies, increasing participant acquisition with established and engaged employee communities and creating a mutually beneficial culture of giving back to the community.

Sponsorship Average



CONCLUSION



Conclusion

Key Takeaways

Fundraising organizations continue to experience constant challenges, and many programs and jobs have not survived. Despite those hard times, there is a lot of hope in these numbers. Participant communities are still showing up to support the missions they care about. If they're engaged in the right ways, they are willing to raise money, recruit others, show up to support other initiatives, and come back year after year.

We hope this report is just the start of what will be a continuing conversation between fundraisers and marketers, working together to break down silos to raise more and create a more holistic experience for your supporters.

Data plays a key role as you work to prove the importance of your P2P programs and continue to justify investment throughout your organization. The benchmarks in this report serve as a guide, but we encourage you to line up these data points against your own data to better understand what drives your unique supporter base. (If you need help, let us know!)

When you do, consider not just the immediate impact your supporters have but how their value to your organization grows as they interact with multiple facets of your organization. Simple cost to acquire metrics often overlook the long-term constituent value, and frankly make it hard to continually justify budgets. If you're able to show not just the immediate impact your actions have on revenue, but the increased value as a supporter not just registers to an event, but donates, fundraises, and recruits team members, the story starts to become more clear.

Our industry is facing unprecedented change. What worked yesterday may not work the same tomorrow. As nonprofit fundraisers and marketers, we need to embrace change, innovate new engagement strategies, and invest in technology that can support our programs not just today but into the next leg of our journey.

What's In Your Toolbox?

To drive long-term results, we're challenged to reach into our toolkits and dust off some past tools while embracing new ones. Start by asking yourself a few questions:

- Can we minimize friction in the registration and donation processes and maximize conversion?
- Do our participants have the tools they need to fundraise successfully?
- What actions result in increased revenue both for our fundraising staff and P2P fundraisers?
- Do our communications strategically highlight distinct calls to action and coaching our participants to fundraise?
- What is our mobile strategy? How can we improve app adoption?
- How can AI help fuel our future fundraising strategy?

About Our Authors



Natalie Stamer

Co-Owner and Managing Partner, Streetlight Digital

Natalie has spent nearly two decades working for nonprofits — overseeing marketing, communications and online fundraising strategy and execution. During her 12-year tenure at St. Baldrick's Foundation, she helped grow the organization from a handful of events raising \$300,000 into a worldwide phenomenon, raising more than \$38 million a year. She then accepted the position of VP of Online Fundraising at MDA, which quickly grew into a role that encompassed the digital marketing team as well as the direct response and donor care teams.

Her unique skill set as a marketing fundraiser (or a fundraising marketer), with a full understanding of the digital landscape allows her to provide today's nonprofit with full-spectrum support — helping nonprofits turn casual donors into life-long supporters and one-time participants into brand advocates.

Kay Todd

Product Marketing Manager, DonorDrive

Kay's passion for working with nonprofit causes shines through in everything she does. Kay brings years of digital fundraising to DonorDrive, where she specializes in nonprofit thought leadership, works directly with clients to understand key trends in digital fundraising, and collaborates with leaders in the nonprofit space to enhance the impact of the industry as a whole. Her goal is to help nonprofits acquire new demographics, retain their supporter base, and ultimately crush their fundraising goals.



DonorDrive®

DonorDrive builds enterprise-level digital fundraising solutions that create meaningful relationships with nonprofit supporters. Over the past 27 years, we've built a reputation for innovation with first-to-the-market social sharing tools, fundraising for livestreamers and gamers, DIY and crowdfunding for nonprofits, and a fully integrated mobile app for fundraisers.



Streetlight Digital provides marketing and fundraising strategies for P2P and Direct Response programs. With more than 25 years of collective marketing and fundraising experience working with small charities as well as large, multi-affiliate nonprofits, Streetlight Digital offers full-spectrum support for your organization.