



FUTURE- PROOFING FUNDRAISING:

**Unlocking
Growth
Through
the GIVE
Framework**

Dedication

To the nonprofit leaders everywhere—
For your courage, compassion, and tireless dedication to the work you do every day.
You create ripples of good that extend far beyond what you may ever see.
You are the heart of transformation in our world.

“

Never underestimate the power of a small group of committed people to change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.”

— MARGARET MEAD

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A Note from the Author

As someone who has spent more than 25 years walking alongside nonprofit leaders—as a peer, a partner, and a practitioner—I know the weight you carry. The hope you hold. The hard choices you make every day. I wrote this book because I believe deeply in your calling and your capacity to lead lasting change.

The GIVE Framework is not just a set of tactics. It's a mindset shift. It's a way to realign our fundraising strategies with what's most important: relationships, purpose, and community. You don't have to chase trends or carry the pressure alone. There's a better way—rooted in clarity, simplicity, and connection.

I hope this book gives you language for what you already feel, inspiration to take a bold next step, and practical tools to help you lead with confidence.

If you'd like to continue the conversation, explore coaching or workshops, or just need a sounding board—you can reach me anytime at www.gcspartners.co. I'd love to walk with you.

With respect and gratitude,

Rebecca Gregory Segovia

About the Author

Rebecca Gregory Segovia is a fundraising strategist, speaker, and advisor who has spent more than two decades helping mission-driven organizations maximize their impact. Known for her bold vision and heart for people, she works with nonprofit leaders to unlock breakthrough strategies rooted in connection, courage, and meaningful action.

She is the founder of GCS Partners, a consultancy dedicated to equipping nonprofit teams with the clarity and tools they need to grow. Rebecca believes fundraising should never feel transactional—and that the best campaigns start with a deep understanding of what moves people to give.

Learn more at www.gcspartners.co



Introduction

The future of fundraising is community-centered, data-informed, and digitally driven. We are not just navigating change—we are being called to lead through it. As organizations adapt to a digital-first, mobile-first world, it's not enough to simply modernize tactics; we must fundamentally reimagine how we build trust, engage donors, and cultivate relationships at scale.

The nonprofit sector stands at a pivotal moment. With declining individual giving, generational shifts in donor behavior, and increasing pressure for transparency and accountability, it is clear that yesterday's fundraising models are no longer sufficient for today's challenges. To ensure financial sustainability and mission impact, organizations must embrace a strategic transformation.

This eBook presents a comprehensive exploration of the GIVE Framework—a model developed to guide nonprofit leaders in building resilient, diversified, and community-powered fundraising strategies. By unpacking the evolving donor landscape and providing actionable guidance, the GIVE Framework equips nonprofit organizations to go beyond survival and truly thrive.



CHAPTER 1:

The Fundraising Landscape is Shifting

DONOR PARTICIPATION IS DECLINING

Across the sector, fewer households are giving. Traditional loyalty-based fundraising models struggle to maintain relevance with donors who have endless options and expect more meaningful connection.

INSTITUTIONAL FUNDING IS UNRELIABLE

Crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic and recent policy changes have exposed the fragility of grant and government funding streams. Organizations that rely heavily on these sources face existential threats when policy or budget decisions change unexpectedly.

DONOR EXPECTATIONS HAVE EVOLVED

Today's donors—especially Millennials and Gen Z—crave authenticity, transparency, and agency. They're not just writing checks—they want to know their voice matters. They expect organizations to show results, invite participation, and communicate impact.

THE PYRAMID MODEL IS OUTDATED

The traditional donor pyramid, with its rigid progression from first-time donor to major gift to legacy, no longer reflects the realities of supporter engagement. It fails to recognize the multiple and varied ways supporters can and do engage with causes they care about.

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“The donor pyramid is not wrong, but it is incomplete.”

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CHAPTER 2:

From Donor Pyramid to Engagement Vortex

To understand today's donor journey, we must move away from the idea of a single, linear path toward giving. Claire Axelrod's 2011 article, "*R.I.P. Donor Pyramid—Welcome Vortex Fundraising*" (available at clairification.com), proposed the idea of a donor vortex—a dynamic, multidirectional engagement model where individuals interact with a nonprofit through various points of entry.

A vortex acknowledges that donors may enter as:



Visitors, discovering your organization through an event or community outreach



Volunteers, offering their time and energy to support programming



Donors, giving financially—either one-time or recurring



Subscribers, engaging with digital content like newsletters or podcasts



Advocates, taking up your cause and speaking out



Influencers or Impact Creators, leveraging their networks to amplify your mission

This model recognizes the full humanity of your supporters. People are not simply wallets—they're multidimensional allies who want to participate in change. Donors today want to feel connected, known, and invited to take action in ways that align with their values and skills.

This holistic engagement unlocks new strategies for cultivation. A subscriber today might become a peer-to-peer fundraiser tomorrow. A volunteer might become a board member. The goal is to make it easy for people to take their next meaningful step—whatever that looks like for them.

CHAPTER 3:

The GIVE Framework Overview

A core philosophy behind the GIVE Framework is the belief that fundraising must be community-centered. The organizations that thrive today and tomorrow are those who shift from broadcasting messages to co-creating impact with their supporters. When donors, volunteers, advocates, and partners feel seen, valued, and empowered—they don't just give. They show up again and again as champions for your mission.

And in today's digital-first, mobile-first world, having the right technology stack is essential. From donor management systems and segmentation tools to storytelling platforms and mobile-optimized giving experiences—your infrastructure must support modern expectations. Equally important is the role of data. The ability to capture, analyze, and act on donor behavior and motivation allows organizations to segment more precisely, personalize communications more meaningfully, and activate their communities with relevance and care.

At the heart of this eBook is the GIVE Framework—a practical model designed to help organizations move from reactive fundraising to proactive, relationship-centered growth. Each letter of the acronym represents a core element of modern development strategy:



G: GIVE

Nonprofits must build a strong, sustainable base of financial support that extends beyond emergency appeals or single campaigns. This includes:

- Recurring giving: Monthly donors provide financial stability and higher lifetime value.
- Unrestricted funding: Educate donors about the power of flexible dollars to drive strategic, long-term outcomes.
- Planned giving: Engage Baby Boomers in legacy conversations as part of the \$30 trillion wealth transfer.
- Donor-Advised Funds: Identify attributes of likely DAF holders and initiate personalized outreach.
- Corporate & Foundation Support: Move from transactional sponsorships to trust-based, multi-year partnerships.

I: INSPIRE

People give to people—and they stay connected through stories. Nonprofits must shift from “broadcasting impact” to co-creating meaning with donors. This involves:

- Storytelling with empathy: Center the donor’s role in achieving change, not just your organization’s success.
- Empowering Impact Creators: Equip key supporters with toolkits—approved images, sample language, impact stories—to champion your cause across their networks.
- Omni-channel content: Sync your stories across email, social media, direct mail, video, and live events to create a unified message.

A story shared by a friend is more compelling than an ad from an organization. Leverage your people as messengers.

V: VOLUNTEER

Volunteers are often your most passionate and capable supporters, yet many organizations underutilize them. GIVE encourages a redefinition of volunteerism:

- From helpers to fundraisers: Train volunteers to run micro-campaigns or host peer-to-peer events.
- From in-person to digital: Offer skill-based and virtual volunteer roles in areas like social media, analytics, content, and outreach.
- From occasional to influential: Create ambassador tracks or advisory roles for long-term engagement.

Volunteering builds a sense of ownership—when someone gives time and talent, treasure often follows.

E: ENGAGE

The final component of GIVE focuses on creating community. Donors today want to belong—to feel part of something bigger. This means:

- Building donor communities: Host private Facebook groups, digital town halls, or local meetups.
- Inviting advocacy: Ask supporters to sign petitions, attend rallies, or write to legislators.
- Designing personalized journeys: Use segmentation and automation to tailor experiences based on each person's values and history.

Engagement is not a single moment—it's an ongoing relationship. When donors are engaged deeply, they become lifelong champions.

CHAPTER 4:

Case Study

In early 2025, a national humanitarian organization whose work centered around refugee resettlement faced a crisis that threatened its operations: an executive order halted refugee resettlement funding, creating a sudden and severe financial gap. What followed was a rapid, intentional response rooted in the GIVE Framework:



Give: The organization launched a targeted emergency fundraising campaign focused on both individual and institutional donors. They also began building a case for unrestricted and recurring gifts, reminding donors that flexibility is critical in moments of disruption.



Inspire: Staff shared real-time stories of impacted families and frontline workers. Supporters were not only informed—they were moved. These stories were repurposed across every channel, reinforcing the urgency of the moment.



Volunteer: The organization activated its local and national volunteer network to meet immediate needs. These volunteers became trusted boots-on-the-ground, allowing core services to continue while staff capacity was reduced.



Engage: Through digital advocacy, the organization mobilized its supporters to contact elected officials, helping build public pressure to reinstate funding. Their fundraising and advocacy were integrated—supporters were invited to give, act, and amplify.

This case study is a compelling example of how community-powered strategies can make the difference between survival and shutdown. By embracing the GIVE Framework, the organization not only stabilized but expanded its network of supporters and advocates.

CHAPTER 5:

Building Your GIVE Strategy – A 90-Day Plan

Turning insight into action requires intentional planning. The GIVE Framework offers a powerful lens through which to reimagine fundraising—but its impact hinges on execution. This chapter provides a 90-day roadmap to help you assess your current strengths, activate your community, and measure your progress.

Whether you're a large nonprofit with a national presence or a small community organization with a loyal base, this plan is designed to be adaptable and scalable. Think of it as a structured sprint—a practical way to move from strategy to momentum.

MONTH 1: ASSESS AND MAP

- Evaluate your revenue mix and donor data.
- Identify potential impact creators and advocates.
- Understand donor motivations through surveys or CRM analysis.

MONTH 2: ACTIVATE AND PERSONALIZE

- Launch a storytelling campaign featuring real donor impact.
- Create volunteer and ambassador roles aligned to your mission.
- Design segmentation strategies for email and social outreach.

MONTH 3: MOBILIZE AND MEASURE

- Host a peer-to-peer or advocacy activation event.
- Launch a donor community group (e.g., Facebook, Slack).
- Track performance and optimize your messaging and engagement paths.

NEXT STEPS:

- Schedule a GIVE Framework team debrief to review outcomes and refine the strategy for the next quarter.
- Identify what worked, what can be improved, and where you need additional support or capacity.
- Consider expanding successful pilots (e.g., impact creators, donor communities) into ongoing programs.
- Begin planning a longer-term strategy grounded in the GIVE principles, integrating fundraising, communications, and volunteer engagement into one unified approach.
- Host a peer-to-peer or advocacy activation event.
- Launch a donor community group (e.g., Facebook, Slack).
- Track performance and optimize your messaging and engagement paths.



CHAPTER 6:

Moving From Transactions to Transformation

Today's most successful fundraising organizations are not merely raising dollars—they are building loyal communities of changemakers. But why is this shift from transaction to transformation so critical right now?

The external environment is rapidly evolving. Donors are increasingly skeptical of institutions and crave a deeper connection to the causes they support. They are asking not just “what are you doing?” but “why does it matter—and how can I be part of it?”

Transactional fundraising—focusing on short-term gifts, one-time asks, or impersonal campaigns—can no longer sustain long-term growth. In contrast, transformational fundraising prioritizes relationships, shared values, and mutual investment in impact. It shifts the narrative from “give because we need you” to “give because you belong here.”

This transformation requires intentionality. It means designing donor journeys that reflect empathy and engagement. It means creating space for supporters to contribute more than money—bringing their voice, story, and influence to the table. It means treating every interaction as an opportunity to deepen trust.

The GIVE Framework provides a path forward. But your leadership will make it real.

The challenge? Don't just read this framework—use it. Pick one section—Give, Inspire, Volunteer, or Engage—and take action this week. Schedule a team conversation. Reframe your next campaign. Invite one donor to become an advocate. Start small, but start now.

The future of fundraising belongs to those who lead with purpose, invite community, and create movements. Let your organization be one of them.

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“The future doesn't belong to the loudest organization—it belongs to the one that makes people feel they matter most.”

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Endorsement

A TRUSTED GUIDE

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“Rebecca is the kind of guide every nonprofit leader needs—rooted in deep experience, grounded in reality, and full of hope. The GIVE Framework brings language and clarity to what so many of us have felt but didn’t know how to articulate. This is more than a book. It’s a blueprint for breakthrough.”

— MEGHAN, NONPROFIT LEADER & STRATEGIC PARTNER

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APPENDIX

Worksheets

GIVE Framework Self-Assessment Evaluate your current readiness to activate each area of the GIVE model:

1. Give: How diversified is your revenue? What percentage is unrestricted? Do you have a plan for recurring and planned giving?
2. Inspire: Are your stories being told consistently across channels? Are donors featured as the heroes?
3. Volunteer: How easy is it for someone to find and sign up for a meaningful volunteer experience—especially virtually?
4. Engage: Do you have active donor communities, personalized journeys, and advocacy opportunities?



Assign a 1–5 score for each area, reflect on gaps, and set a goal for improvement over the next quarter.

Impact Creator Activation Plan Identify and mobilize your most passionate advocates:

- List 5–10 donors, volunteers, or followers who already share or promote your work.
- Create a toolkit (social media graphics, talking points, stories) they can easily use.
- Invite them to join a quarterly “insiders” call or group.
- Track their influence: referrals, shares, peer-to-peer dollars raised.

Donor Engagement Journey Map Design pathways to deepen involvement:

- Stage 1: First encounter (event, website, social)
- Stage 2: Opt-in (subscribe, follow, download)
- Stage 3: First action (donate, advocate, volunteer)
- Stage 4: Repeat action or engagement
- Stage 5: Deeper connection (monthly giving, ambassador role, board invitation)

Align communications, content, and relationship-building activities to each stage.

RECOMMENDED READING

- *The Social State of Giving* – Classy + GoFundMe (2024)
- Claire Axelrod – *RIP Donor Pyramid*
- National Philanthropic Trust – *DAF Reports*

For a consultation or custom GIVE Framework workshop, contact [Your Organization] at [email/contact info].