

The fundraising trends to watch in 2024.



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Aaron supports organisations to secure grant funding, and shapes Oaks' service offer based on trends and insight from the grants landscape. He loves to challenge clients to grow and improve, and the feeling of helping to make their work possible.

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Fundraising approaches are constantly evolving. Three years ago, pandemic-related disruption meant in-person events were out, and online events were the 'new normal'. 12 months later, in-person events were back with a bang and the world was experiencing digital fatigue! In this rapidly changing environment, it can feel impossible for charities to implement any sort of long-term fundraising strategy as they rush to move with the times.

It is, however, possible to set a steady course amongst this turbulence. Whether you're working for a large household name or just starting out on your charity's fundraising journey, we've compiled a list of the key trends that will be impacting fundraisers in 2024 and beyond.

It's time to target younger donors

With the cost-of-living crisis impacting traditional income streams, charities need to be bold and engage more proactively with younger audiences, particularly millennials and Gen Z. While traditionally, charities have focused their messaging on older age groups, emerging evidence points to younger demographics giving in increasing numbers. According to [Enthuse's Winter Donor Pulse report](#), 18 to 44 year olds have become the most generous age group, with 49% of them having given to multiple causes over the last three months.

But how can charities engage with this audience? To start with, it's important that you are set up to receive donations online, as 50% of under 45s support charities through online donations and given how accustomed this audience is to seamless shopping online, the payment process must be smooth and simple to ensure this audience does not go elsewhere. Making sure your website is optimised for viewing on mobile devices is also vital.

Gaming and streaming have grown massively in popularity with younger people over the last decade or so, and some charities have begun to successfully utilise this hobby for fundraising. Just look at the success of [2023's Jingle Jam](#), which raised £2.7 million for 12 charity partners. Organisations currently leading the way with strong Gaming for Good offerings include [British Red Cross](#) and [Cats Protection](#).

Research shows that the younger generations are particularly motivated by impact and want to give to causes that are making a tangible, positive impact on the world. By demonstrating your cause's impact in a clear, concise way, you will make your charity more appealing to young people. There are lots of ways in which to do this – for example, make sure you are monitoring your key performance indicators and share the outcomes in engaging, visual ways. Keep the language accessible and concise, without any jargon. Focus on the human element by using case studies to bring your work to life, placing your service users at the centre of what you do and showing the difference in their situation before and after they engaged with your charity.

One interesting trend to keep an eye on is inverse giving. This is when people give to charity as a result of seeing negative headlines about a cause they care about. In the Winter Donor Pulse Report, it was noted that 27% of 18- to 24-year-olds have donated to show solidarity with a cause or when a charity's actions were criticized in traditional or social media, compared to only 5% of those 45 or over. A well-known example of this was the [RNLI having a record fundraising year](#) after being criticized by the press for their work rescuing people in the Channel. While we wouldn't recommend actively seeking out negative press to solicit inverse giving(!), this is a sign that charities can afford to be braver and bolder in standing up for their values and beliefs as those that resonate with your position will stand by you.

Artificial Intelligence is here to stay

The rise of AI was the talk of 2023, and it looks like in 2024 it will only become more prominent. AI comes in several different forms, including predictive (past data being used to predict future outcomes) to generative (information being gathered from various sources to create something new).

While it may seem intimidating, many charities have already been using AI in various ways for years without realising it – using digital tools linked to your database to segment and personalise donor experiences is an example of predictive AI. Generative AI is also on the rise, being used by fundraisers to come up with events that may appeal to their donors, create first drafts of fundraising copy, and tailor messaging to different audiences. AI can even be integrated into your website's donation forms and use behavioural learning to adapt the 'ask' in real time to each potential donor.

That said, it is worth bearing in mind that AI is still in its very early stages, and the speed at which it is growing and changing could cause issues for charities further down the line. Make sure your charity has an ethical policy related to AI, in particular in relation to data. Copy generated by AI should always be checked for errors or plagiarism, and should still conform to your charity's authentic tone of voice.

Supporter engagement is more important than ever

At its core, good fundraising is about building relationships. While the economic outlook is looking a little brighter for 2024, the cost-of-living crisis is not over yet, and charities are expecting another challenging year for fundraising. That's why it's so important to get the basics right, which means taking time to get to know your supporters, taking them on a journey, and thanking, thanking, thanking.

Take some time to review and update your template messages to make sure these are still fit for purpose. Do they reflect your charity as it is now and where it wants to go? Do they include outdated references or statistics? Could they be more impactful? What messages are you sharing throughout the year and how are you showing supporters the difference they are making?

Take a look at your current donor database – who are your most loyal donors, in terms of the amount given and the length of time they have been donating? What do you do to acknowledge them? This doesn't have to be expensive or time intensive: the occasional handwritten note, thank you call, pin badge or letter from a senior member of staff or beneficiary can go a long way. Given that it costs significantly more to acquire a new donor than retain the ones you already have, it is worth investing the time and energy into ensuring relationships with your current donors are as strong as they can be.

Closure of longstanding Trusts and Foundations

Last year saw a significant development in the grant-making world, one that already shows signs of continuing in 2024. The Lankelly Chase Foundation announced that after 60 years of operation it had made the decision to redistribute all its assets and close within a five-year timeframe. Shortly after, the Albert Hunt Trust announced it would mark its 50th anniversary of existence in 2029 by closing, spending its remaining resources in the preceding years. Whilst the reasons given differed between the two organisations – the former expressed a desire not to continue a philanthropy model built on historic oppression and equality, the latter reflected it did not need to last forever when the charity sector was facing unprecedented pressure today – the endpoint is the same. And just this month, the Foyle Foundation announced it was following a similar path, with 2024 and 2025 being the final years of its grant-making after 25 years.

Trusts and Foundations are independent organisations, but they often look to their peers for insight, collaboration and direction. Many of these organisations still operate based on a mission or way of working that has barely changed since being established decades ago. It is therefore likely that more Trusts and Foundations will see the actions of Lankelly Chase, Albert Hunt and Foyle and reflect on their own approach. Why sit on a vast endowment and drip-feed it to society each year, when there is a clear need to address unforeseen challenges right now?

There will always be new funders beginning their philanthropy lifecycle, but the next few years could see more of the longstanding ones radically change their thinking.



Environmental sustainability remains front and centre

One of the UK's leading grant-making organisations, The National Lottery Community Fund (TNL Community Fund), launched its new 2023-2030 strategy last year. Within it, environmental sustainability sits as one of its key pillars. The awareness and understanding of this subject have steadily grown in recent years, but it is still more commonly seen in international grant-making, where conservation is a critical issue. In the near future, more funders in the UK may explore how they can boost environmental efforts through their grant-making, either overtly like TNL Community Fund or more discreetly such as making an environmental policy a requirement for an organisation to receive a grant.

Not every organisation will – or should – suddenly develop eco-friendly projects or services, but at the very least organisations should review their own “green” practices and procedures and have clear plans on how they can improve in this area. This will stand them in good stead for the years to come.

So, what do these trends actually mean? To reiterate our first point, the only constant in fundraising is change! Therefore, going all in on AI or exclusively targeting Gen Z might not be the right approach for you. However, it is worth reflecting on how these trends could complement your current approach or inform future decisions. Having a robust fundraising strategy which sets out your direction but allows room for flexibility and change is the best way to ensure long-term financial sustainability.

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