

2025 BENCHMARK REPORT

Introduction

Looking back at 2025, charitable organizations operated in a giving environment shaped by economic strain and heightened political pressure, including federal funding uncertainty and policy shifts that disrupted grants, programs and contracts, alongside evolving community needs and changing patterns of supporter engagement.

That's why this benchmark matters.

Each year, we analyze performance across our client portfolio to separate perception from reality. This year's report reflects full-file data from 215 RKD clients across a wide range of causes, representing more than 5.5 million donors and \$1.48 billion in revenue from gifts under \$10,000, and \$4.3 billion including major giving.

Overall giving continues to grow—and outpace inflation—while donor counts are selectively growing. Relational giving continues to carry more of the load, as it should, with continued gains in appreciated asset markets further reinforcing disparities in wealth and giving capacity.

There were significant differences in giving across causes, with food banks leading growth, largely driven by increased demand following the Q4 government shutdown and resulting disruptions to SNAP benefits. Giving follows need, and donors responded in Q4, driving an incredible 76% increase in new and reactivated donors across 79 food banks.

Benchmarks provide clarity. They allow us to understand what is truly unique to an organization versus what is structural across the market. My hope is that this report gives you the context to understand today's environment and the confidence to make strategic decisions grounded in data.

The organizations that will grow in 2026 are not the ones waiting for conditions to improve. They are the ones adapting to what the data is already telling us.

—Lori Collins, EVP, Marketing Science, RKD Group



Top five takeaways:

1

Revenue is growing, but it's driven by donor value, not donor volume

Revenue under \$10,000 increased 6% year over year, and revenue including major gifts rose 11%. Food banks experienced massive revenue growth of 22% under \$10K, with animal welfare up 7% YOY. Active donor counts remain below pandemic levels, reinforcing the ongoing trend of fewer donors giving more. This indicates that organizations, in an effort to maximize short-term efficiency, are focusing budget and strategic attention on donor upgrades, potentially at the risk of long-term program health.

2

Major giving continues its accelerated growth

Gifts of \$10,000+ grew at double that of giving under \$10K, at 13% YOY. Major gifts account for two-thirds of all revenue, underscoring the outsized role relational giving plays in financial performance. Major donor growth is fueled by historic pipeline development and demonstrates the long-term value of donor acquisition and relationship building.

3

Donor value is increasing, even as engagement softens

Revenue per active donor rose 5% percent YOY, outpacing inflation and mostly driven by an increase in average gift, at 6%. Gift frequency declined 1.1% overall, driven by a relative decline in food banks, as those supporters gave larger gifts, less often. Animal welfare, health & hospitals, and rescue missions all increased their gift frequency, a natural result of growing monthly donors.

4

Acquisition and reactivation improve for some causes

New and reactivated donors added meaningful volume back into food banks (+76%!), while animal welfare and rescue missions also saw moderate improvements year over year of 4-5%. While much of the growth was fueled by external factors, like reductions and cuts from federal funding and the government shutdown, it does demonstrate a clear understanding and presentation that resulted in donor response.

5

Retention rates increase for most causes

Retention rates across all causes is up a notch, 0.8%. Only the humanitarian cause had a year-over-year drop, though humanitarian retention has improved three percentage points since 2021. Growth of monthly donors is providing a boost to retention. Most organizations in the benchmark have grown the proportion of revenues under \$10K coming from sustaining donors. A notable exception would be food banks, as the explosion of support in Q425 dwarfed the level of their monthly giving. That said, food banks did grow their monthly donors during the government shutdown, doubling the rate of new donors that are choosing to give monthly.



Based on this benchmark data, RKD's strategy and data science experts developed **three recommendations** for organizations going forward:

Grow monthly giving

One of the best ways to increase retention is to continue stewarding donors into monthly support. Most organizations in the benchmark have grown the proportion of revenues under \$10K coming from sustaining donors.

Acquiring and converting donors into monthly givers increases not only retention but also the long-term value of each acquired donor. With donor acquisition becoming more costly, growing monthly giving is a strategy that pays off.

Acquire, retain, reactivate

This ongoing high-level strategy is re-energized with modern fundraising solutions including digital tactics, predictive analytics and a creative plan that speaks to donor affinities—including what's important to them and their giving.

Continue to invest in acquiring and reactivating mission-aligned donors with strong LTV potential to help position your organization for long-term growth, with the support of a holistic view of pipeline value.

Emphasize communications and PR

Giving follows need, as demonstrated in the extraordinary growth of food banks in Q425. The increase in need due to the government shutdown in Q425 and subsequent impact on SNAP benefits was communicated through the news outlets, with widespread distribution. The needs of local organizations aren't always so publicized, so communications and PR need to be on point to ensure our message of authentic need gets out.

The best fundraising campaigns and efforts are supported by pre-existing brand awareness and a broad understanding of the need. When a prospective donor knows who you are, trusts you and already believes that a need exists, the response to the "ask" skyrockets.

About the report:

The 2025 Benchmark Report contains full-file data from 215 RKD clients across animal welfare, food banks, health, hospitals, humanitarian and rescue mission causes throughout the U.S., with data through Dec. 31, 2025. Contributions of \$10,000 or more are analyzed separately as noted, to better inform growth from this critical relational segment of supporters.

Key Performance Indicators

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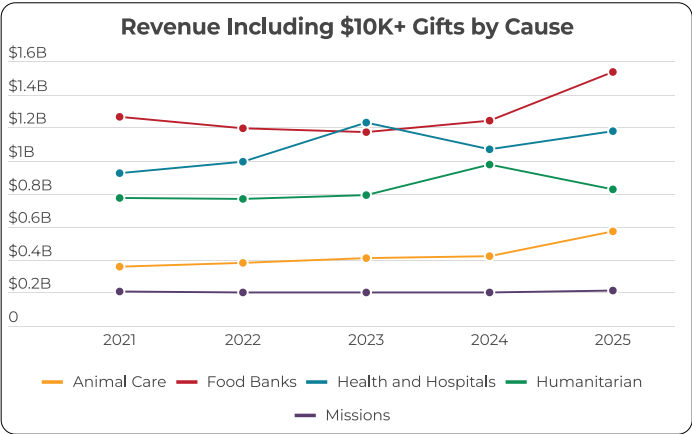
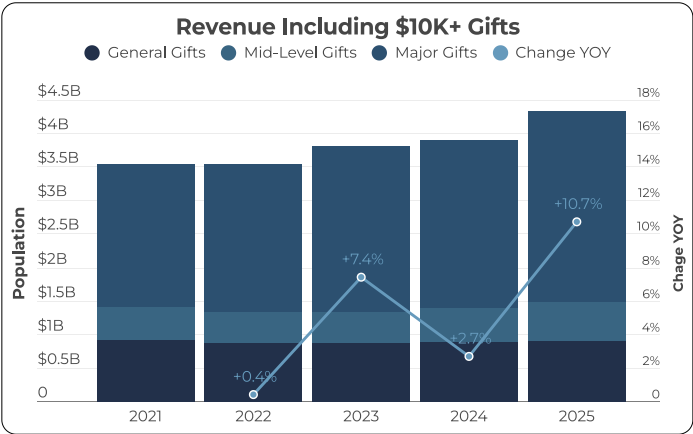
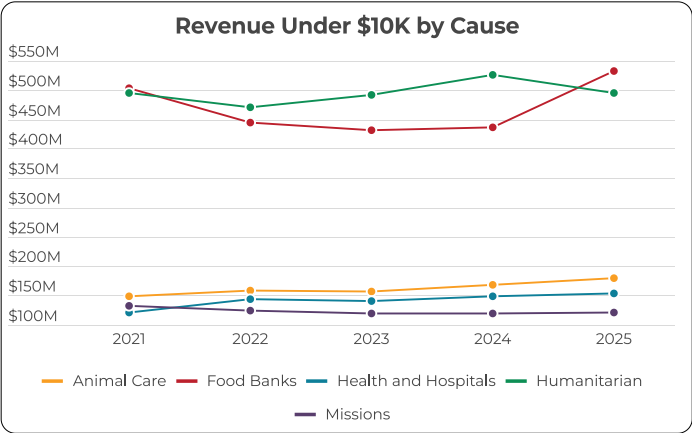
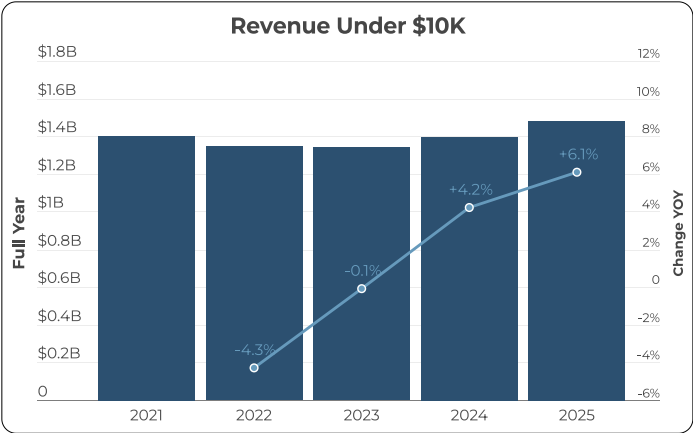
Revenue up

Revenue under \$10K increased 6% year over year across all benchmark clients, a positive end to the year and start to 2026. Food bank donors were a big contributing factor, donating 22% more in 2025.

Mid-level gifts, those between \$1,000 and \$9,999, grew 11.4% in 2025.

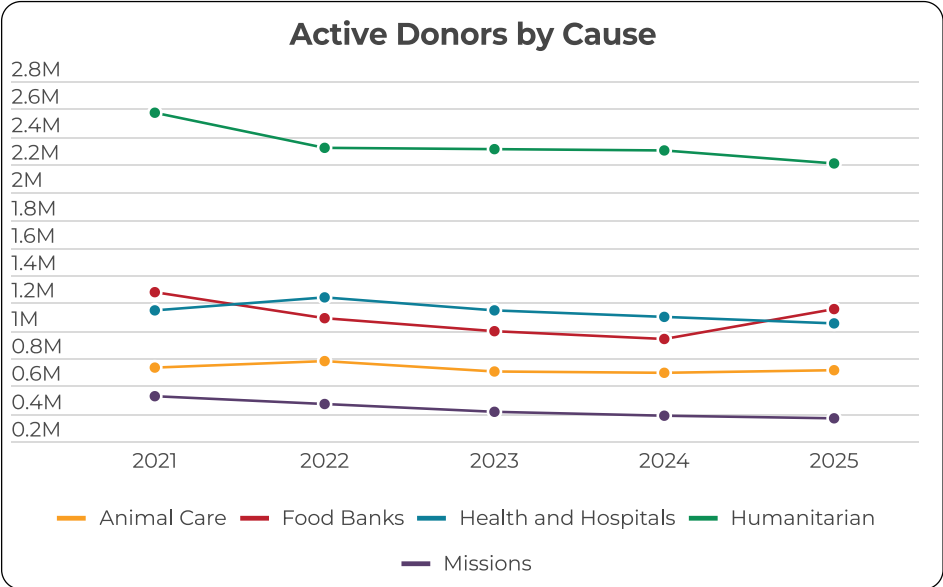
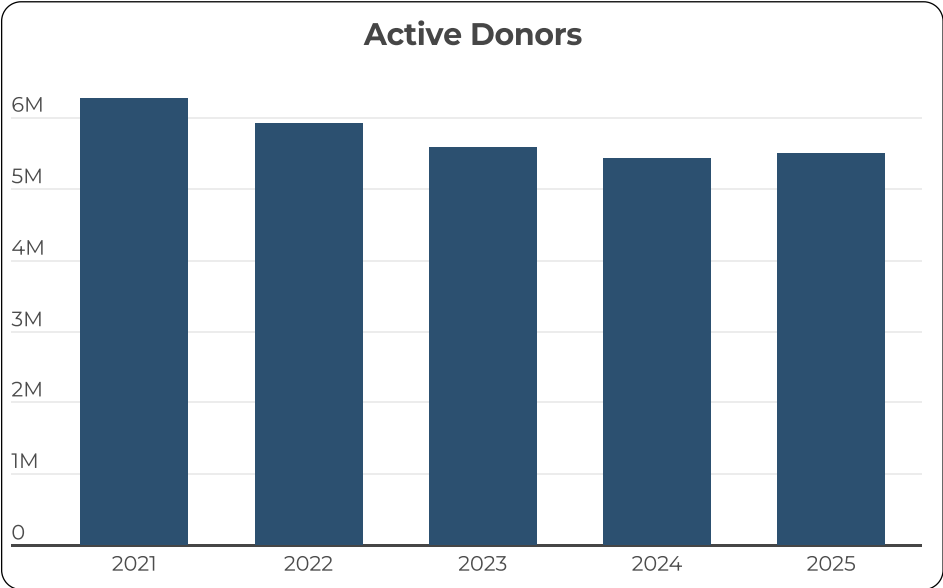
Gifts over \$10,000 grew 13% year over year, and 34% since 2021.

While revenue dipped across the board in the years after 2021, in 2025, all revenue including major giving was 23% higher than in 2021 (+6% excluding gifts \$10K), a sign that relational giving is growing, right alongside the financial markets.



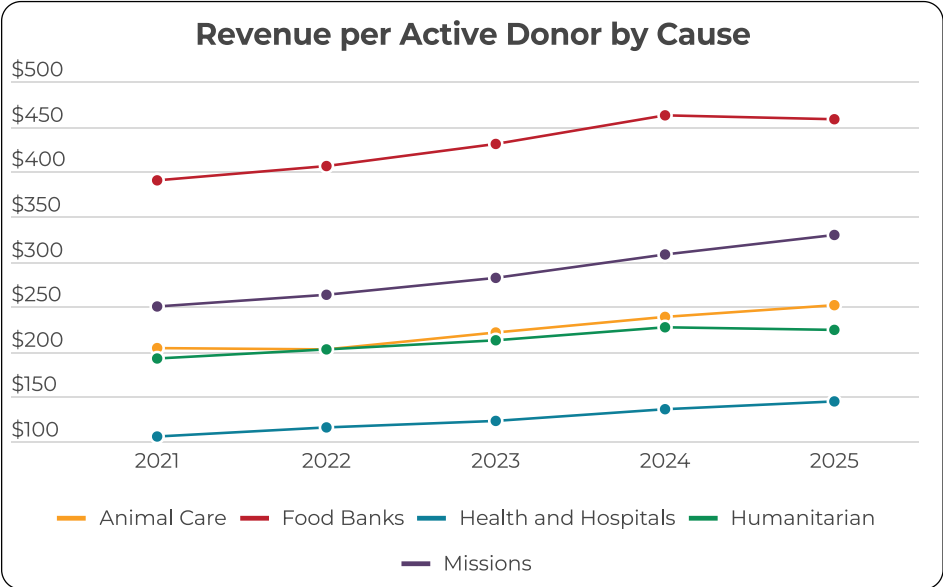
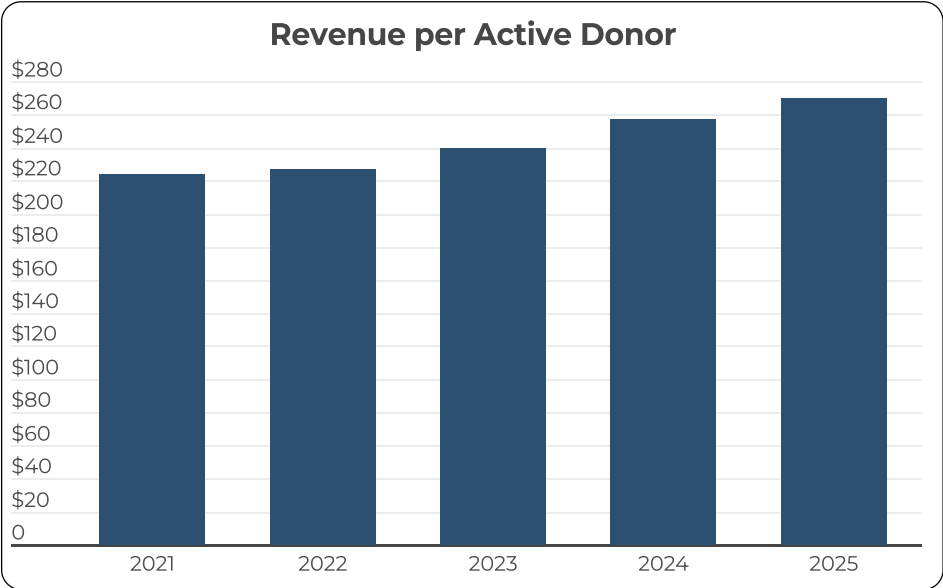
Active donors up 1.2%

Active donors are still about 12% below 2021 levels, but, there was 1.2% growth in 2025, driven by increases in food banks and animal welfare.



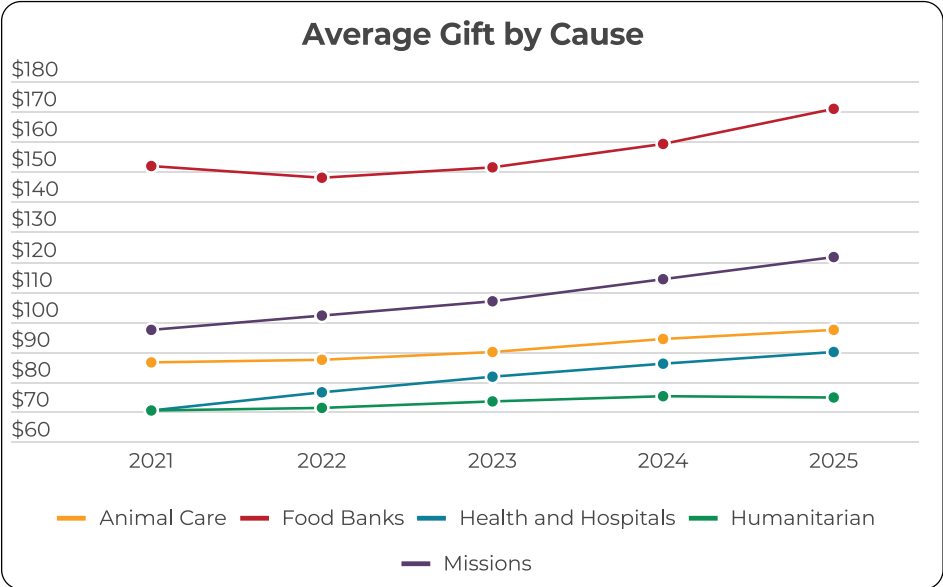
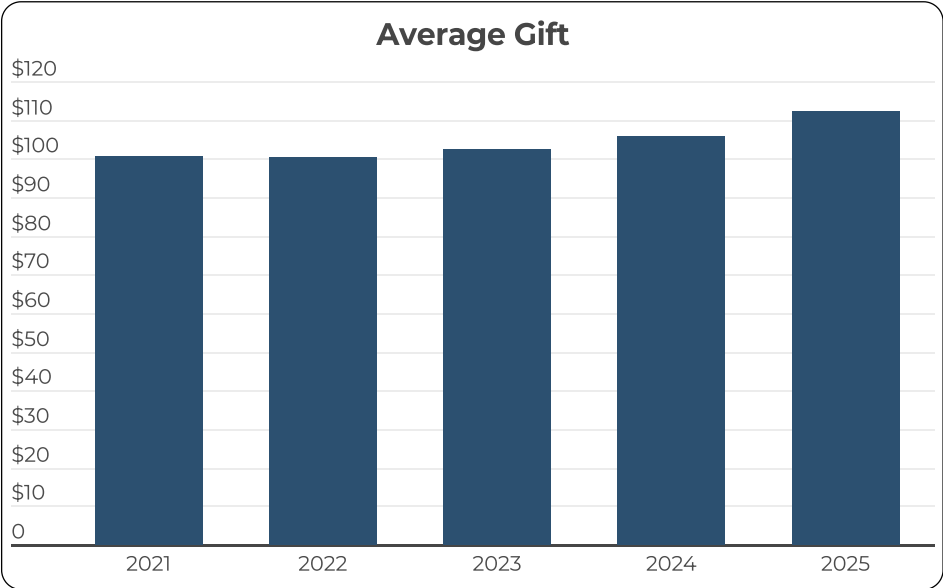
Revenue per active donor up 4.8%

Revenue per active donor rose 4.8%, from \$257 in 2024 to \$270 in 2025. Missions, animal welfare and health organizations were behind that increase.



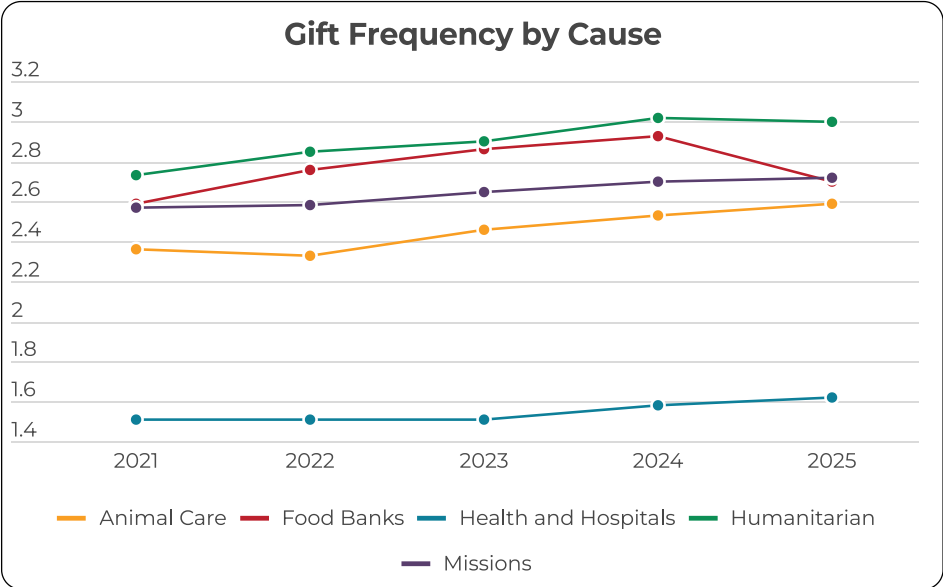
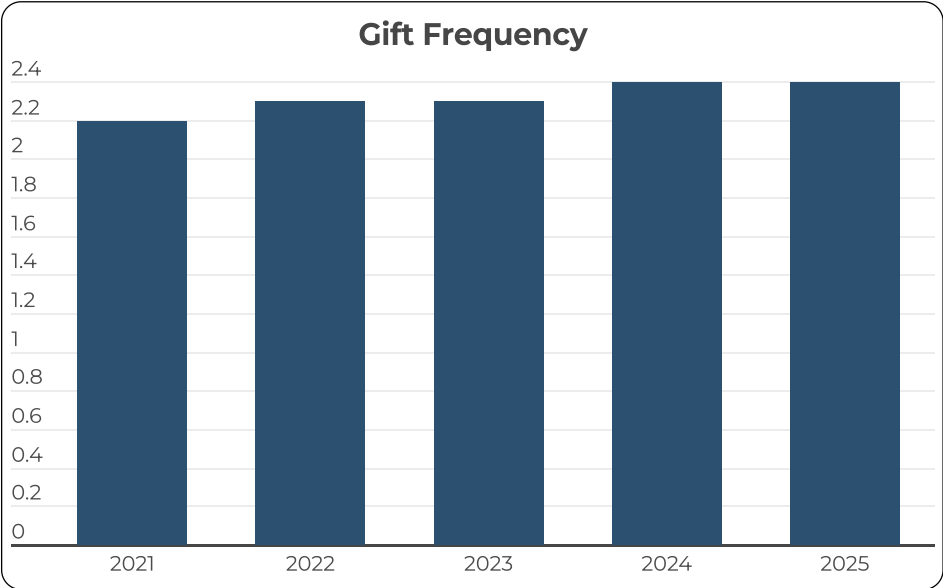
Average gift up 6%

The average gift amount increased 6% year over year, which again highlights the notion that the donors who continue to give are giving more, making up for the overall drop in the number of donors.



Gift Frequency down 1.1%

Gift frequency declined 1.1% overall, driven by a relative decline in food banks, as those supporters gave larger gifts, less often. Animal welfare, health & hospitals and rescue missions all increased their gift frequency, a natural result of growing monthly donors.

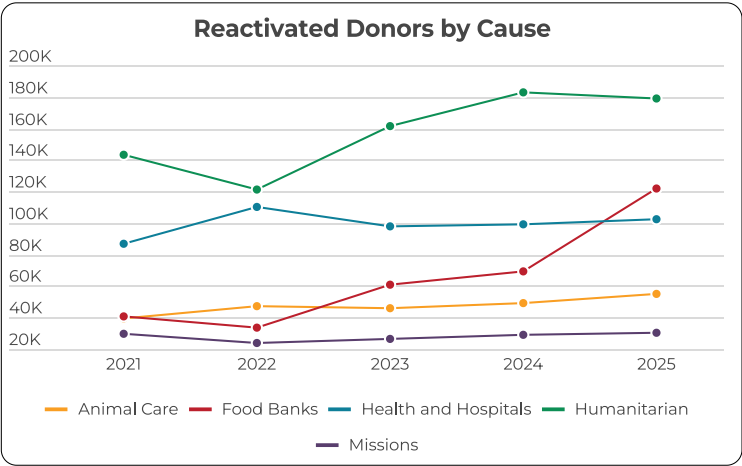
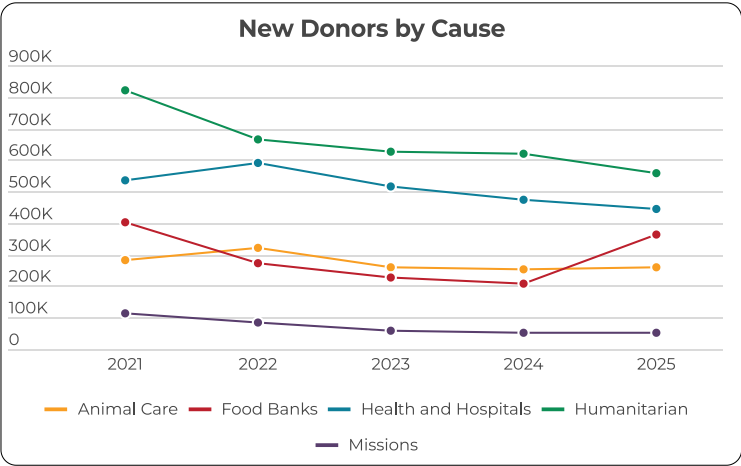
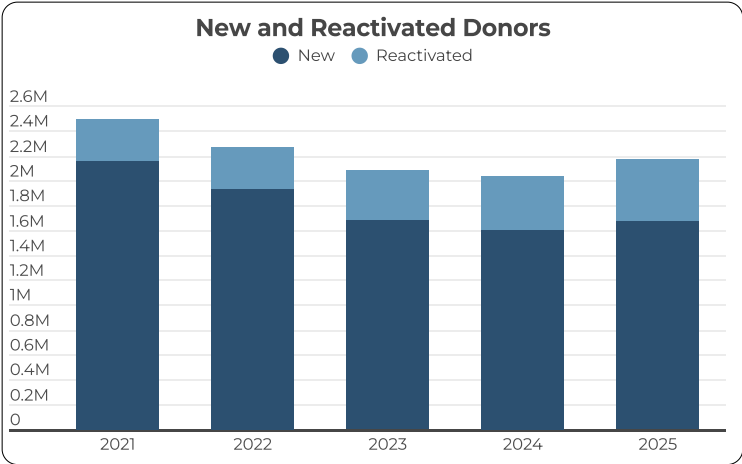


Donor Growth

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New and reactivated donors up

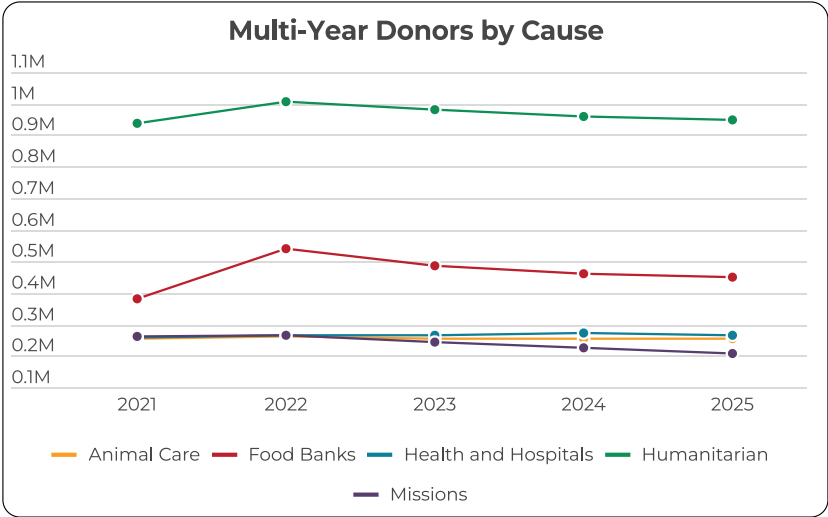
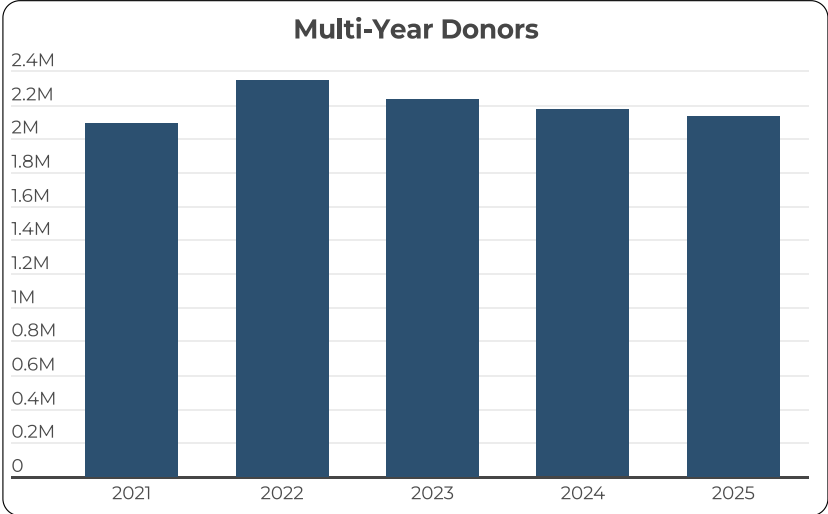
New and reactivated donors added meaningful volume back into food banks (+76%), while animal welfare and rescue missions also saw moderate improvements year over year of 4-5%.



Multi-year donors down

Active multi-year donors, those who regularly donate for longer than two years, have been on the decline since their high in 2022. In 2025, this cohort decreased 2% year over year. On average in 2025, multi-year donors continue to show an upward trend in the amount they give, \$110 on average, and how often they give, 3.9 times on average. In total, revenue from these loyal donors is increasing, with 2025 seeing a 3.8% boost year over year.

When you include gifts over \$10K, revenue from multi-year donors increased 11.8% year over year. This shows that these important donors are a critical part of major donor strategies.

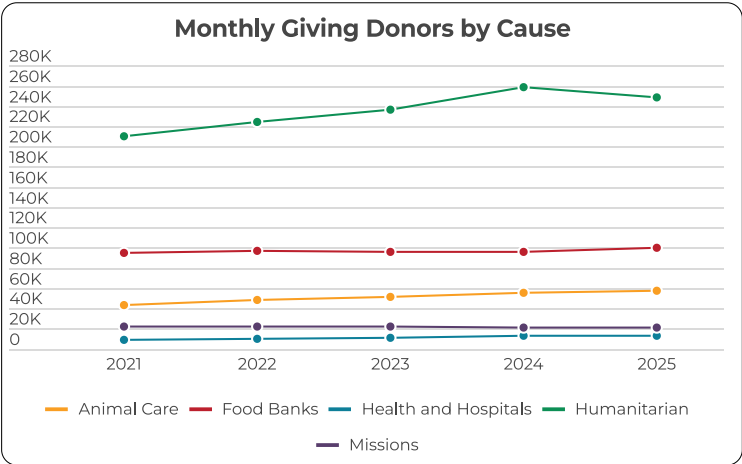
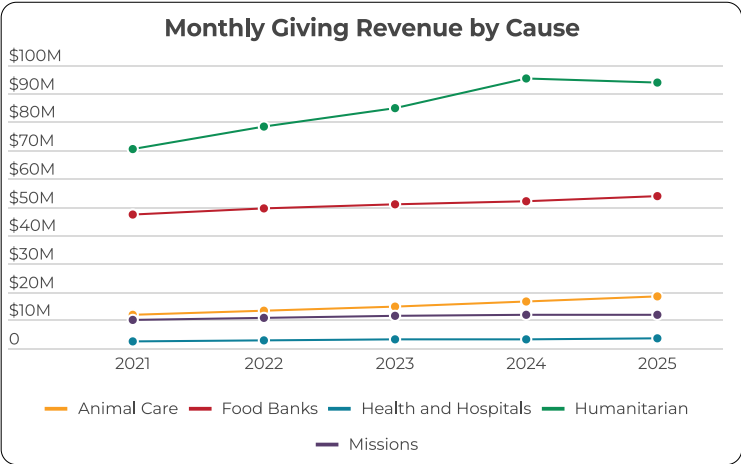
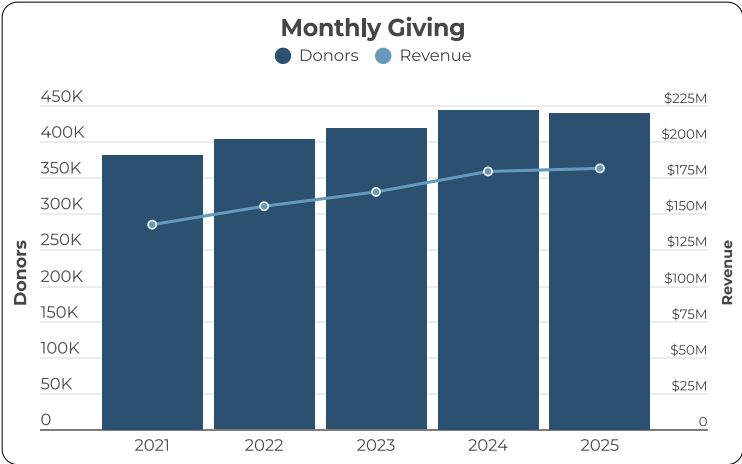


Monthly Giving

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Recurring revenue up slightly

Most organizations in the benchmark have grown the proportion of revenues under \$10K coming from sustaining donors. A notable exception would be food banks, as the explosion of support in Q4'25 dwarfed the level of their monthly giving. That said, food banks did grow their monthly donors during the government shutdown, doubling the rate of new donors who are choosing to give monthly.





About RKD Group

RKD Group is the growth architect for nonprofits. We design fundraising and marketing programs that accelerate donor engagement and net revenue for your organization. We simplify complexity and scale your impact through bold strategy, creative orchestration and audience-led insights.

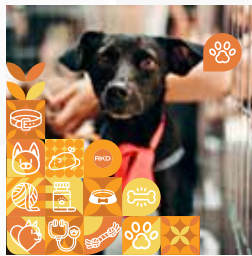
What does that mean exactly? Simply put: We help your fundraising thrive.

[Reach out to us](#) and discover expertly crafted, optimized fundraising.

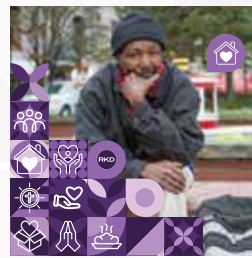
See how each cause performed



Food Bank



Animal Care



Rescue Missions



Health & Hospitals



Humanitarian Action