



San Diego Nonprofit Giving Season Report 2025

Maximizing Impact During the Fall & Winter
Philanthropy Cycle

Why San Diego Giving Season Matters

The fall and winter giving season is a critical revenue window for nonprofits nationally — and San Diego's nonprofit ecosystem is uniquely positioned to benefit.

San Diego's philanthropic landscape includes major corporate donors and locally focused foundations, plus highly visible nonprofit leaders in hunger relief, homelessness services, health, and environmental work. Local institutions and foundations actively promote year-end giving logistics and deadlines for donors.



When to Start Planning for Giving Season in San Diego

Start early. Organizations that begin planning in **August–September** and move into active engagement in **October** have more time to secure matching gifts, corporate commitments, and storytelling assets before the November–December execution window. The San Diego Foundation explicitly highlights year-end timing and processing details for donors — your campaign calendar should align with those deadlines and with Giving Tuesday.

August – September

Strategy, segmentation, match commitments, story & asset creation.

October

Pre-season engagement — volunteer outreach, community partnerships, soft launches.

November – December

Peak execution (Giving Tuesday, corporate matches, holiday appeals, community events).

Case Example:

Feeding/food-focused nonprofits in San Diego routinely run expanded holiday distributions and Giving Tuesday pushes in November–December to meet increased need. Starting planning earlier lets them lock matching funds and logistics.

Resourcing for Giving Season

San Diego nonprofits succeed when they pair clear roles with accessible community resources.



Staffing

Assign campaign, marketing, donor, and volunteer leads. Use UCSD, SDSU, or USD students to expand events and peer-to-peer pushes.



Technology

Donor management + email automation, mobile-optimized giving pages, and peer-to-peer fundraising platforms.



Budget

Industry benchmark: allocate 10–15% of your annual fundraising budget (or seasonal target) toward campaign marketing, matching gift admin, and tech.



Partnerships

In San Diego, target Qualcomm, Sempra, Petco, and foundations for matching funds, sponsorships, and volunteer programs. Start outreach early.

Key Fundraising Initiatives that Work in San Diego

These campaign types resonate with San Diegans and reflect local need and giving culture:



Food security & holiday meal drives - high visibility and urgent community impact.



Homelessness & shelter support — high local demand; partner opportunities with established providers.



Veterans & military family programs — San Diego's large military population makes these initiatives especially relevant.



Environmental & coastal conservation — leverages San Diego's outdoor identity and donor interest in preservation.



Arts & culture holiday performances — seasonal concerts and local arts fundraisers capture donor interest.



Healthcare & elder support — strong hospital/philanthropy networks in the region.

Examples of Successful Fall/Winter Campaigns in San Diego (Top 10 Causes)

Below are representative examples (short summaries you can expand into case studies on a PDF or landing page):

1

Food Security: Jacobs & Cushman San Diego Food Bank — large-scale holiday and Giving Tuesday campaigns, often using matching funds to amplify impact.

2

Homelessness & Housing: Father Joe's Villages — combines seasonal giving with signature programs (meals, shelter, job training).

3

Youth & Education: SDSU/UCSD community programs partnering on school supply & holiday gift drives.

4

Healthcare: Local hospital foundations running year-end appeals tied to patient stories and impact reports.

5

Faith-Based Giving: Local churches and congregations running angel tree and toy drives.

6

Arts & Culture: Local performing arts centers and community theaters with holiday concert appeals.

7

Animal Welfare: Regional humane societies with “Home for the Holidays” adoption and giving campaigns.

8

Environment: Beach/park clean-up + winter conservation appeals tied to volunteer events.

9

Veterans & Military Families: Holiday support drives that partner with military bases and veteran service orgs

10

Global Relief / Specialized Causes: Local HQ'd organizations and networks leveraging Giving Tuesday for global efforts.

What's Different in 2025



Stronger corporate engagement and local foundation activity — San Diego's corporate base continues to be a reliable partner for matching and sponsorships, but outreach needs to start earlier as companies lock budgets.



Digital-first donors — Instagram, short-form video, livestream events, and text-to-give channels are growing locally as younger donors engage online.



Rising community need — food insecurity and housing pressures remain high in San Diego County; donors respond to clear impact and emergency-focused asks.



Donor expectations for impact transparency — provide clear metrics and stories showing how gifts are used.

San Diego - Specific Campaign Ideas



Neighborhood giving

Mobilize donor pools by neighborhood (La Jolla, North County, Downtown) and pair with volunteer clean-ups or service days.



Peer-to-peer campaign

Activate UCSD, SDSU, and USD students/alumni networks for social-driven fundraisers.



Theme nights with attractions:

Partner with local seasonal events or attractions for charity nights or ticket splits.



Food security spotlight

Coordinate a Giving Tuesday match with the San Diego Food Bank or Feeding San Diego and use matched appeals to drive urgency.

What a Successful Giving Season Looks Like

Benchmarks

Revenue growth

15–20% increase over Q3 fundraising (adjust to organizational size)

Donor retention

Aim for $\geq 60\%$ retention from seasonal donors.

New donor acquisition

20–30% of season donors should be new to your organization.

Investment & resourcing

Staff time

Start planning 2–3 months ahead; allocate specific roles.

Budget

Dedicate 10–15% of seasonal fundraising targets to marketing, matching funds administration, and technology.

Follow-up

Robust stewardship in January (impact reports, personalized thanks) to convert seasonal givers into year-round supporters.

Preparing to Win San Diego's Giving Season

San Diego nonprofits have strong local assets — engaged corporations, active foundations, a networked volunteer base, and community-oriented donors. The keys to success are early planning, strong partnerships (corporate + university + foundation), compelling local storytelling, and the right technology to make giving frictionless.

For organizations stretched on staff or expertise, **outsourcing campaign strategy and execution is an efficient, cost-effective way to ensure you have the strategy, technology, and people in place to maximize this giving season.** A focused partner can lock matching gifts, run the digital operations, and manage rapid execution — often at a fraction of the cost of hiring new part-time staff.



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