



Chicago Nonprofit Giving Season Report 2025

Maximizing Impact During the Fall & Winter
Philanthropy Cycle

Why Chicago Giving Season Matters

Chicago is one of the nation's most philanthropic cities, home to both deep-pocketed corporate donors and neighborhood-based community giving. Nearly one-third of all annual donations come in Q4, with Giving Tuesday and December campaigns providing critical year-end revenue.

Anchored by corporations like Boeing, United Airlines, McDonald's, Walgreens, and Allstate, and supported by robust community foundations, Chicago nonprofits are positioned to thrive if they prepare effectively for the fall and winter season.



When to Start Planning in Chicago

August – September

Secure corporate sponsors and foundation partnerships.

October

Launch neighborhood-level events and donor cultivation.

November – December

Execute Giving Tuesday campaigns, corporate matches, and community holiday events.

Case Example:

Greater Chicago Food Depository began storytelling and donor engagement in September last year. Their early start led to record-breaking December donations.

Resourcing for Giving Season



Staffing

Assign campaign captains; partner with Chicago universities (Northwestern, UChicago, DePaul).



Technology

Optimize mobile giving and social media campaigns.



Budget

10–15% of seasonal fundraising goals allocated to tech + outreach.



Partnerships

Engage local aldermen's offices, block clubs, and neighborhood associations.

Key Fundraising Initiatives in Chicago



Food insecurity & homelessness
(major local priority).



Youth empowerment & education (after-school and mentorship programs).



Faith-based drives (large Catholic, Protestant, and interfaith networks).



Corporate employee-giving campaigns (strong tradition in Chicago's business community).



Arts & culture (Chicago Symphony, museums, community theaters).

Successful Fall/Winter Campaigns in Chicago (Top 10 Causes)

1

Greater Chicago Food Depository – holiday meal campaigns.

2

Chicago Coalition for the Homeless – end-of-year shelter fundraising.

3

Big Shoulders Fund – Catholic school scholarship drives.

4

Lurie Children's Hospital – holiday donation programs.

5

Salvation Army Chicago – Red Kettle campaign.

6

Chicago Symphony Orchestra – year-end giving.

7

PAWS Chicago – holiday adoption/fundraising.

8

Friends of the Parks – environmental giving campaigns.

9

USO Illinois – holiday programs for veterans.

10

Heartland Alliance – refugee and housing assistance drives.

What's Different in 2025

**Equity focus:**

Donors want more impact transparency, especially on local community impact.

**Digital growth:**

Livestream fundraising, text-to-give, and TikTok campaigns are gaining traction.

**Economic pressures**

Some donors are giving smaller gifts, but more consistently.

**Corporate stability:**

Major Chicago corporations remain strong anchors for matching gifts.

Chicago-Specific Campaign Ideas



Neighborhood Giving Challenges:

North Side vs. South Side giving competitions.



Sports Tie-ins:

Chicago Bulls, Bears, Cubs, White Sox charity events.



Cultural Campaigns

Holiday pop-ups at Christkindlmarket or Navy Pier.



University Partnerships:

Student-led peer-to-peer giving campaigns.

Defining a Successful Giving Season

Benchmarks

Revenue growth

20%+ above Q3 (higher competition).

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 Chicago's Giving Season

Chicago nonprofits can maximize year-end giving by leveraging corporate partnerships, community networks, and digital strategies.

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.

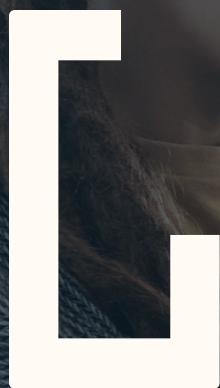



Visit goharness.com

or



Schedule a meeting [here](#)



 Harness

