



Charleston Nonprofit Giving Season Report 2025

Maximizing Impact During the Fall & Winter
Philanthropy Cycle

Why Charleston Giving Season Matters

Charleston has a thriving nonprofit ecosystem serving causes including **food security, housing, historic preservation, arts & culture, healthcare, and youth development**. The city benefits from **strong tourism, wealthy seasonal residents, local foundations (like the Community Foundation of the Lowcountry), and corporate philanthropy from healthcare, logistics, and finance sectors**.

The **fall/winter giving season** is the prime fundraising window, driven by **Giving Tuesday, holiday generosity, and year-end tax incentives**. Well-timed campaigns can maximize both donor engagement and community impact.



When to Start Planning for Giving Season in Charleston

Successful Charleston nonprofits start **campaign planning in August–September**, launch early engagement in **October**, and execute peak campaigns in **November–December**.

August – September

Develop strategy, segment donors, secure corporate/foundation matches, and prepare stories.

October

Begin pre-season engagement — volunteer sign-ups, teaser campaigns, and donor outreach.

November – December

Execute Giving Tuesday, holiday, and year-end campaigns.

Local foundations often finalize year-end commitments in the fall, so aligning campaigns with their schedules is critical.

Resourcing for Giving Season

To maximize success in Charleston:



Volunteers

Utilize seasonal residents, college students (College of Charleston, The Citadel), and community groups for peer-to-peer campaigns and event support.



Technology

Mobile-friendly giving pages, donor CRM, email automation, and social/peer-to-peer platforms.



Staffing

Campaign lead, donor relations manager, and digital communications owner.



Partnerships

Healthcare systems (Roper St. Francis, MUSC Health), tourism and hospitality businesses, and finance companies often offer matching gifts or sponsorship opportunities.

Key Fundraising Initiatives That Work in Charleston

Charleston donors respond well to campaigns tied to local needs and identity:



Food Security: Holiday meals and food drives through organizations like Lowcountry Food Bank.



Housing & Homelessness:

Winter shelters, housing assistance, and rapid rehousing initiatives.



Environmental & Coastal Conservation: Sea turtle protection, wetland preservation, and climate adaptation campaigns.



Youth & Education: After-school programs, mentorship, and scholarships.



Arts, Culture & Preservation: Historic preservation campaigns, theater and museum events, and seasonal arts programs.



Healthcare & Wellness: Hospital foundations and patient support programs.

Examples of Successful Fall/Winter Campaigns

1

Lowcountry Food Bank: Holiday campaigns with corporate matches and volunteer engagement.

2

Jasper County & Charleston shelters: Winter coat and shelter drives.

3

Community Foundation of the Lowcountry: Year-end donor-advised fund campaigns.

4

Roper St. Francis Hospital Foundation: Healthcare-focused giving drives highlighting patient impact.

5

Historic Charleston Foundation: Holiday preservation campaigns tied to donor recognition events.

6

Charleston Symphony & local arts organizations: Seasonal concerts and performances paired with fundraising.

7

Faith-based nonprofits: Toy, coat, and food drives across churches and community centers.

8

Youth-serving nonprofits: Holiday scholarship and enrichment fund campaigns.

What's Different in 2025



Tourism and seasonal residents: Campaigns leveraging seasonal donors and visitors perform particularly well.



Digital engagement: Social media campaigns, peer-to-peer fundraising, and mobile-friendly giving are critical for younger donors.



Community needs: Housing, food security, and healthcare remain top priorities; donors respond to urgent, visible impact.



Corporate & foundation priorities: Corporate matching and sponsorships remain essential but increasingly require measurable impact.

Charleston-Specific Campaign Ideas



Corporate match days:

Partner with MUSC Health, local hospitality, or finance companies for matching campaigns.



Volunteer + giving events:

Meal packing, coastal cleanup, or toy distribution combined with fundraising appeals.



Arts & preservation tie-ins:

Museums, theaters, and historic sites host holiday events with integrated donation appeals.



“Holy City Giving Challenge”

Citywide donor competitions or volunteer drives linked to Giving Tuesday.



Faith-driven initiatives:

Holiday food and toy drives coordinated with local congregations.

Defining a Successful Giving Season

Benchmarks: What a Successful Giving Season Looks Like in Charleston

Revenue growth

Target 15–20% increase over Q3 fundraising.

Donor retention

≥60% seasonal donor retention into the following year.

New donor acquisition:

20–30% of gifts from new supporters.

Corporate match:

Secure at least one match to amplify giving.

Investment & resourcing

Lead time

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

Budget

10–15% of fundraising goal allocated to marketing and donor engagement.

Follow-up

Post-season impact reports, donor appreciation events, and storytelling in January to convert seasonal donors into repeat supporters.

How Charleston Nonprofits Can Win in 2025

Charleston nonprofits can maximize giving season by **leveraging tourism, historic preservation, arts & culture, and corporate partnerships**, while investing in **digital-first campaigns and volunteer-engaged donor experiences**.

For organizations short on staff or expertise, **outsourcing campaign strategy and execution ensures you have the strategy, technology, and people-power in place to succeed — quickly and cost-effectively — during the giving season.**



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