

eBook

# Recurring Giving: A Quick-Start Guide for Nonprofits

Maximize Your Fundraising  
Results and Acquire More Loyal  
Donors with Monthly Donations



[WWW.NETWORKFORGOOD.COM/NPO](http://WWW.NETWORKFORGOOD.COM/NPO)



# Thinking About Recurring Giving?

We're happy to hear it! That's because thinking about recurring, or monthly, giving is one of the smartest things you can do as a fundraiser. At Network for Good, we find that 30% to 40% of the online donation volume coming from a nonprofit's website is monthly giving.

Imagine using more of your time to thank people every month instead of asking them for donations every few weeks? Sounds pretty great, right?

We thought so.

Creating a recurring giving program online makes donations convenient for you—and your supporters—so don't miss out!

A monthly giving program can benefit your organization in other ways:

- Recurring donors give more over time.
- They are more loyal and easier to retain.
- They are more engaged, giving additional gifts and actively volunteering.
- Recurring donors can be steered toward higher giving levels.
- Enabling recurring giving online reduces your costs and makes administering your program much easier.

## In this guide, you'll learn:

- Why recurring giving can make a big difference
- How to convert one-time donors into monthly givers
- Tips for retaining your recurring donors

# Why Recurring Giving Matters

Well-positioned recurring giving options allow you to increase the size and volume of your donations. Remember, even smaller monthly gifts can add up over time.

Recurring gifts help donors fit giving into their budgets and allow them to see that being more generous is possible. If donors feel like they can't give enough to make a difference, they may not give at all.



The average monthly recurring gift is \$52.

Over 1 year, that's a \$624 donation!



On average, donations are 43% larger on a branded online giving page that includes suggested donation amounts.

Donors are 31% more likely to initiate a recurring gift on a branded page versus unbranded page.

**Bonus:** A compelling monthly giving campaign gives your nonprofit a new offer to promote and can become a signature program for your organization.

# Get More Monthly Gifts

OK, so we know it's important, but how do you start turning your annual givers into monthly supporters through an online giving program? Consider these key pieces of your strategy:

## 1. Have the right tools in place.

Ready to make the monthly giving magic happen? First, let's make sure the whole experience is as easy as possible for your donors (and your staff).

- Your online donation page must offer a easy and clear monthly giving option. Ideally, you'll have a page dedicated to recurring giving campaigns, as well as a strong monthly giving ask on your standard campaign pages.
- Your online giving experience should look and feel like your nonprofit's website and campaign materials. Having a professional and familiar design will make it easier for donors to say "yes" to your appeal. Plus, it can also help increase your average gift amounts.
- Your system should automatically send receipts and thank yous, and allow donors to easily update their information.
- Your online donation page should allow you to set custom gift strings and add impact labels to donation amounts so you can reinforce what a donation can provide. (We'll talk more about this later!)
- You'll want to track your progress, so your online giving system should also offer real-time reporting of gifts and allow you to track monthly donors over time and produce reports focused on recurring donations. Spreadsheets and graphs never felt so good!
- Use a reputable email marketing service to send email appeals, newsletters, and impact reports. This will allow you to segment your appeals and updates to tailor your message for monthly donors and recurring giving campaigns.
- Feature monthly giving options in a prominent place on your website and make sure visitors can easily find your donation button so they can quickly give.

# Get More Monthly Gifts

## 2. Frame your ask.

When you appeal to your donors for help, think about how you frame your ask. Instead of asking supporters to give in December or during a one-time campaign:

- Get in the habit of asking for a monthly pledge instead of just a one-time gift. When you ask for a one-time gift, that's what you'll get! Refocus your ask to encourage donors to set up recurring donations.
- Don't be afraid to ask for a monthly gift from donors who make a one-time contribution.
- Celebrate why recurring giving is a win-win! For donors, it's convenient and it's not one big hit to their bank accounts at the end of the year when you're likely competing with many other expenses.
- Let donors know that recurring donations give your cause a steady stream of support that can lead to better budgeting, increased efficiency, and more help for other year-round programs. This means their dollars can go even further!



**Bonus:** Since it's easier to spread gifts out over time, most recurring donors end up giving more! On average, recurring donors who give through Network for Good give 42% more per year than one-time donors.

# Get More Monthly Gifts

## 3. Make a compelling case for monthly giving.

Describe the good that you do in a way that relates to a monthly gift and show a tangible tie to the idea of giving every month.



### DONATE TO MATTHEW 25: MINISTRIES

Thank you for making a donation to Matthew 25: Ministries. More than 99% of all cash and in-kind donations go toward programs. Join one of our **Levels of Hope** by making a recurring donation of just **\$20 a month** for the Gold Level or **\$12 a month** for the Bronze Level.

DONATION **REQUIRED**

HOW OFTEN DO YOU WANT TO MAKE YOUR DONATION?

- Matthew 25: Ministries uses “Levels of Hope” to encourage monthly giving by showing that even gifts as small as \$12 a month can make a big impact in their humanitarian aid programs.
- Show how much more recurring gifts can do. Give concrete examples that illustrate how these donations add up and what they could provide versus a one-time gift.

## 4. Make it easy to choose a monthly donation.

Online giving makes it easy for donors to make a monthly gift, and collecting monthly gifts online cuts down on your administrative efforts.

- When your donor chooses recurring giving, your online fundraising software should allow them to automatically give each month without returning to your page.
- Launch a campaign just for monthly giving and center all of your messages on why recurring giving is great for you and your donor. Set up a dedicated online donation page focused on recurring options just for this campaign! Donors will think more seriously about becoming regular contributors.

# Get More Monthly Gifts

## 5. Provide rewards and recognition.

Make monthly gifts even more appealing. Your goal should be to make supporters wonder *why they wouldn't* become monthly sustainers.

Consider giving your monthly donors a special status, a special name, or a unique recognition on your website. You can reserve special perks for these loyal supporters, such as a sneak peek of your newsletter, first dibs on event tickets, or invitations to an open house. Here are some ways other nonprofits have recognized their most loyal donors:

- **Feature their stories in your newsletter or on your website.** Each month, Sacramento Food Bank & Family Services features a different volunteer. Highlight the people you support, along with the people who support you, to keep your mission front and center.
- **Host a special event.** Give donors an exclusive behind-the-scenes experience or host programs for them to show your gratitude. The Barter Theatre in Abingdon, Virginia hosts donors for a quarterly luncheon and discussion series, as well as special tours.

## 6. Start donors as recurring donors.

A small, monthly recurring gift can be an easy entry point for donors. A gift of \$10 or \$15 a month is easier to work into a budget than a one-time gift of \$100. And with online fundraising software from Network for Good, those donations are processed automatically—no extra effort for you or your donors.

Plus, these donors are likely to make additional one-time gifts throughout the year, attend events, and encourage their networks to support and donate. In short, these recurring donors are the most active and generous supporters over time.

# Retaining Your Monthly Donors

With 70% of donors never returning to make a second gift, it's more important than ever to capture the loyalty of one-time donors and keep them engaged. Monthly donors are usually an organization's most loyal and more engaged donors. Here are four ways to build and retain a large sustaining network of recurring donors:

## 1. Thank them profusely.

That probably feels painfully obvious, but it's so important that we need to bring it up. So important, in fact, that we created a [whole guide dedicated just to thanking donors in meaningful and creative ways](#). Since the retention rate of monthly donors is over 80% (wow!), you need to craft a gratitude plan to make sure they know just how special they are.

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# Retaining Your Monthly Donors

## 3. Have a plan to personally engage donors as soon as they join.

Katie Matney, Director of Development for The Women's Fund of Central Ohio, says to plan for the relationship you want with your recurring donors: How are you going to pick up these donors and take them with you on this ride towards social change? Keep your donors involved with frequent email updates, but pepper in personal touches. Take your recurring donors to coffee, write them a quick email, hold special events for them, and ask them for their feedback. Giving is highly personal, so make sure you understand what inspires your donors to give.

## 4. Make it manageable.

You'll need to dedicate time to nurture and keep your recurring donors feeling great about their impact. It's totally worth the effort, but may feel like a lot to juggle. Follow these tips to make it manageable:

- **Have a plan.**  
Recurring donors are your most loyal supporters and so treat them that way! Map out how your organization will interact with recurring donors. Those with recurring gifts should receive more frequent communications. It's easier to save time if you're following a thoughtful strategy and process, so set aside some time before you begin to plot this out.
- **Make sure your plans allow you to achieve success.**  
Don't promise you'll send hand-written thank you notes to each donor if you don't have the resources. Instead, strive toward a signed letter from your executive director within 24 hours.
- **Make small but regular progress.**  
By making a habit of doing something small every day to improve either the number or loyalty of your recurring donors, you'll create a habit that allows you to be more effective and successful over time.

# Create a Monthly Giving Program

Now that you know how valuable monthly giving can be for your organization, it's time to get going! Set up your recurring giving program with these key steps.

- Customize your online giving page to reflect your monthly giving program. (Remember, your supporters should feel like donors, not shoppers.)
- Make the giving process obvious, easy, and transparent.
- Make sure your donate button is prominently displayed on your website and included in all of your online outreach.
- Always provide donors the option to choose recurring giving. Offering this choice helps donors realize giving more is possible.
- Illustrate the impact of a sustaining gift by adding impact labels to monthly giving levels or create a special membership program that ties back to what a gift can do.
- Celebrate sustainers (and their impact) by including updates on your monthly giving program in your annual report, newsletters, and on your organization's website.
- Create a special thank you and stewardship program for your monthly donors.
- Plan a dedicated recurring giving campaign to target portions of your donor base that may be more likely to give on a monthly basis.
- Have a plan for upgrading monthly donors to new giving levels over time.
- Remember to track your progress and measure which methods result in the most new monthly donors.
- Continue to report on the impact of your recurring donors by regularly sharing results, stories, and updates.

# About Network for Good

Need an online fundraising solution to jump-start your monthly giving program?

Network for Good powers more online giving than any other platform. Since 2001, we've processed over \$1 billion for more than 100,000 nonprofits. We are Level 1 Audited PCI Compliant and our Donor Advised Fund is accredited by the Better Business Bureau Wise Giving Alliance, meeting all 20 of its standards for charity accountability. Plus, we're registered in every state for online fundraising.

We're a mission-minded organization, just like you, so we understand the challenges you face. We're here to help.

Our suite of affordable fundraising software helps nonprofits raise money and engage supporters online—plus we provide the expertise, training, and support that will make you a fundraising superstar.

1. **Online fundraising:** Acquire more donors with smarter online donation pages and social fundraising campaigns that encourage giving and match your campaigns. With built-in best practices and mobile-friendly giving options, you'll raise more than ever before.
2. **Professional email communications:** Send professional email newsletters, appeals, and updates to your supporters. Keep them engaged as you track and learn which messages work best.
3. **Expert coaching:** Exclusive access to Network for Good's expert advice with personalized reviews, step-by-step tutorials, fundraising templates, and more.
4. **Events management:** Make the most of your events with easy online ticketing, registrations, and donations.

Ready to start your own online monthly giving program? We can help. Visit [www.networkforgood.com/NPO](http://www.networkforgood.com/NPO) or call 1-888-284-7978 to speak to an online fundraising consultant and get started today!

Contact Us!