

## Introduction

In *Understanding Giving: Beliefs & Behaviors of Colorado's Donors*, we explored what, how, and why Coloradans give. The report was based on a wealth of research, most of which was conducted by Colorado Nonprofit Association in 2011 through a phone survey and focus groups around the state.

Our phone survey included the question: "During the past twelve months, which of the following did you or anyone in your household make a donation to?" The list of 14 options that followed included types of organizations such as religion-related, arts and culture, health or medical, animal-related, disaster or emergency relief, and "a school, university, or other educational organization." In this article, we'll take an in-depth look at the *people who support education-related causes*: how they view nonprofits, how they connect with organizations, and what inspires them to give.

*\*Note: throughout this article, the term "non-donors" is used to refer to those who did not report donating to education-related causes in the past 12 months. The majority of these respondents are, in fact, donors; 84% report making donations in the past 12 months.*

## Report Sponsor



## Colorado Generosity Project Sponsors



## For More Information

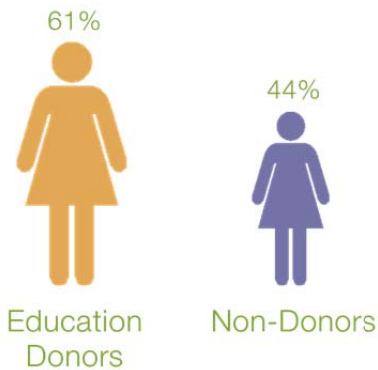
Visit [www.ColoradoNonprofits.org/Understanding-Giving](http://www.ColoradoNonprofits.org/Understanding-Giving) for the full report, *Understanding Giving: Beliefs & Behaviors of Colorado's Donors*. You'll also find supplemental data, regional reports, and a schedule of our upcoming trainings.



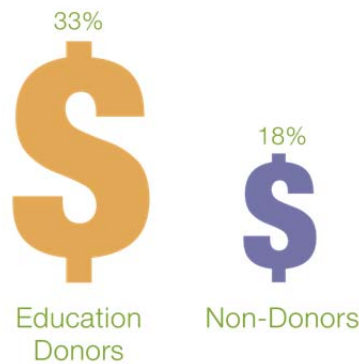
## About the Donors

Overall, 51% of Coloradans surveyed reported donating to education-related causes in the past year. Compared with other survey respondents, education donors tend to:

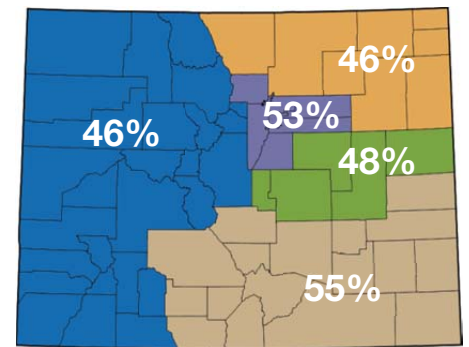
...be female



...have household income of \$100,000 or more



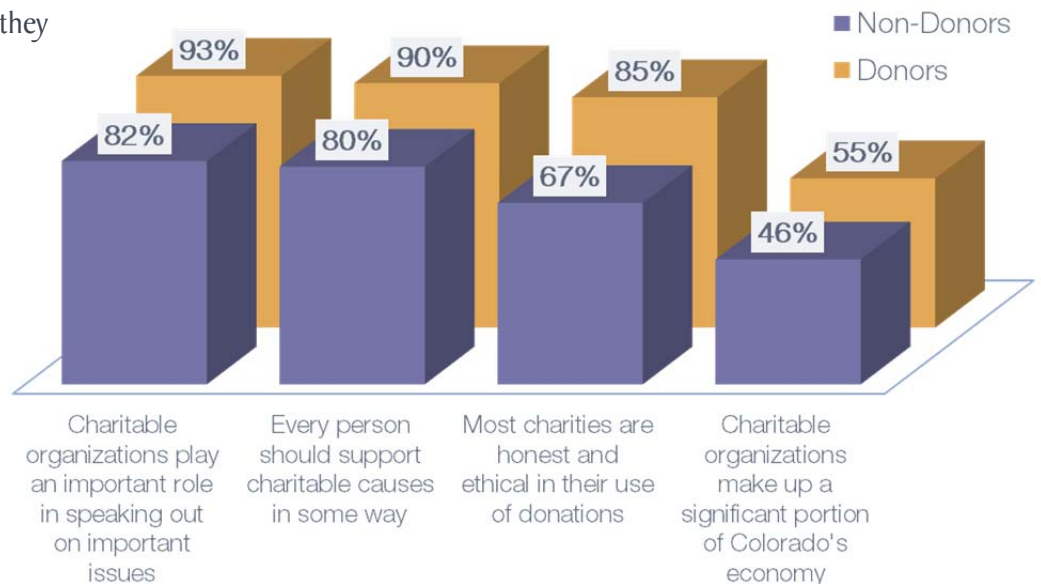
...live in southern Colorado and the Denver area



We found, through their responses to open-ended survey questions, that most of these donors fit into one of three categories: *alumni*, who primarily donate to colleges and universities; *parents and family members* who give to school-related organizations; and those who *support education in general*, donating to anything from neighborhood school programs to international literacy initiatives. Despite this diversity, we do see some interesting patterns when we compare those who don't donate to education-related causes with those who do.

## Beliefs & Values

We asked survey participants whether they agreed or disagreed (strongly or somewhat) with several different statements about nonprofits and giving. Coloradans who support education-related causes are more likely to agree that nonprofits speak out on important issues, are honest and ethical, and make up a significant portion of the state's economy. Combined, *these three statements indicate a broader – and more accurate – view of nonprofits.*



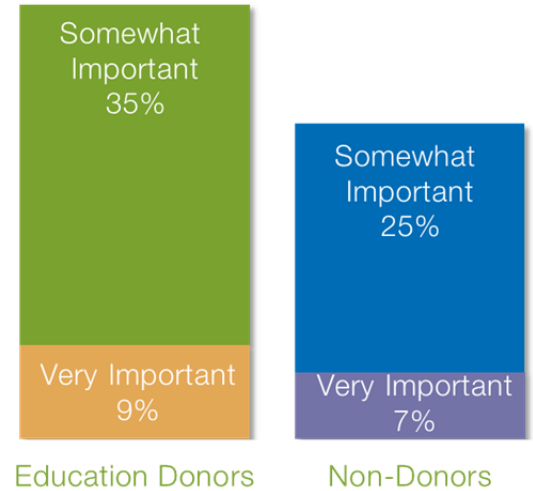
## Reasons for Giving

When choosing an organization to support, education donors prioritize much of the same criteria as non-donors, and at similar levels. They want to support organizations they trust, that are well-managed, that clearly communicate how donations will be used, and that show them how their donation is helping to solve a problem.

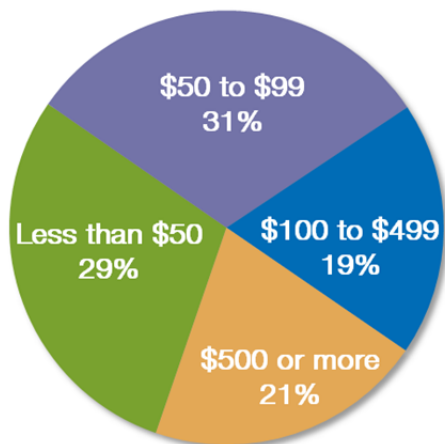
One key disagreement between education donors and non-donors is about the importance of tax benefits as a reason for donating. 44% of education donors, and just 32% of non-donors, say it's an important factor.

When we look at the value of their most recent donations, education donors' interest in tax deductions seems well-justified. While half of non-donors gave a gift of less than \$50, just 29% of education donors reporting giving the same amount – and another 21% reported the donation was \$500 or more. We see the same trend in the total amount they donate during a year: **42% of education donors give \$1,000 or more annually.** Among non-donors, only 23% give the same amount per year.

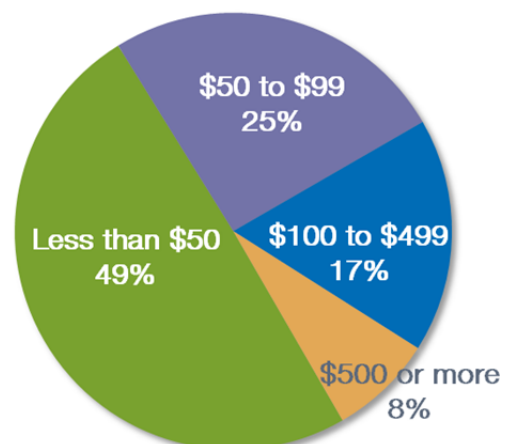
Reasons to Give:  
Tax Benefits



Value of Most Recent Donation  
*Education Donors*



Value of Most Recent Donation  
*Non-Donors*



## Connections

Some striking differences between education donors and non-donors emerge in their histories and relationships with the organizations they support. Education donors are significantly more likely to say they or someone they know “could benefit from the organization’s services” (81%) or “had a good experience with the organization” (79%). These results come as no surprise; both statements are particularly accurate descriptions of school and education programs’ relationships with alumni, parents, and family members.

### Previous Interactions *Before Most Recent Donation*



Education donors are slightly less likely to make repeat donations. Non-donors more often reported giving to organizations they’d previously supported, both when we asked about previous donations in the past two years, or donations made more than two years ago. This data doesn’t seem to fit with the idea of alumni who donate to colleges or universities, and there is no obvious reason why people who support education-related causes in general would make fewer repeat gifts than others do. This difference *does*, however, fit with the idea of parents and family members who contribute to children’s school-related programs. The specific nonprofits they support are more likely to change over time than, for instance, one’s alma mater.

We also asked survey participants about their use of technology and giving. Although the differences are minor, people who support education-related causes more often reported having donated through a website or via text message.



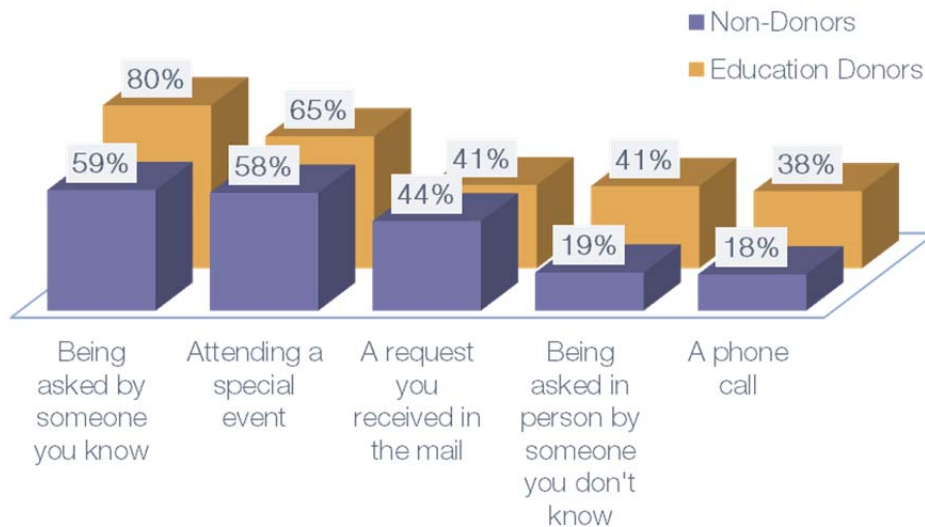
## Deciding to Give

When we asked people about their previous interactions with the nonprofit they'd most recently donated to, we found that education donors more often reported that they'd been asked to donate by someone they know. (See the *Previous Interactions* graph on page 4.)

To get a broader sense of all the ways in which people interact with nonprofits, we also asked them about all the ways in which they'd donated over the past 12 months. "Being asked by someone you know" was the most common response among both education donors and non-donors, with the donors more likely to have made such a donation by a 21% margin.

Education donors are also much more likely than others to donate upon "being asked in person by someone you don't know" or in response to a phone call. Interestingly, there is no significant difference in donors' and non-donors' response rates to solicitations via mail. (The 3% margin is within this study's margin of error.)

In the past 12 months, have you made a donation as a result of..?



In addition to asking donors where their most recent gift went, we asked why they chose that organization. Here's what they said about their gifts to...

### Colleges & Universities

"Because we graduated from and support that institution."

"It's my alma mater, and I like to support it because they need the extra money."

"I got a phone call from the college."

"I got a call from the university to thank me for the past donations."

### Local School Programs

"My kids are all in public school and I am a big supporter of public schools both financially and with my time."

"My kids go to school there, and we wanted to try and keep the band going."

"I have a good friend who works there."

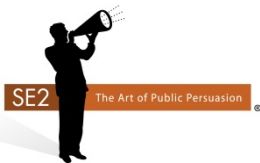
"It helps underprivileged kids."

"They were persistent in asking for it."

## About the Colorado Generosity Project

In 2007, the Colorado Nonprofit Association launched the Colorado Generosity Project, an initiative aimed at building expertise within and awareness of the state's charitable sector, with the ultimate goal of increasing Coloradans' generosity. The Generosity Project seeks to increase the rate and total amount of giving to Colorado's nonprofits by: conducting research about giving trends in Colorado; helping nonprofits fundraise more effectively through technical assistance and training; and teaching the public about the value of giving to charitable organizations.

## Acknowledgements



SE2 is a Colorado-based mass communications firm focused on public issues, policy and social marketing. They offer a full range of advertising and public relations services to nonprofits and issue-driven organizations, helping them tell their story and identify key messages that move their audiences to action.



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## About Us

Colorado Nonprofit Association leads, serves and strengthens Colorado nonprofit organizations. We are a statewide nonprofit membership coalition connecting nonprofits of all sizes, missions and geographic locations.

We lead the nonprofit sector in influencing public policy and public opinion.

We serve our members by providing tools for communication, networking and administration.

We strengthen the nonprofit community through trainings, issue discussions, and public advocacy about the importance of the nonprofit sector.

