MissionWired | **tatango**

Nonprofit Text Messaging Insights Report 2024

Foundational Metrics in Fundraising and Engagement Text Messaging Across Shortcode Broadcast Programs

1. Welcome & Industry Overview

As a core fundraising channel, texting is still considered new or emerging by many nonprofit organizations – but how far back does text message giving go? Remember when the Text to Haiti campaign raised $43 million after a devastating earthquake struck Haiti in January, 2010?

How we fundraise over text has changed a great deal since 2010 – today, texting offers nonprofits another avenue for proactive outreach to supporters, and rather than accepting donations through a phone carrier, we're now driving supporters straight to engagement experiences and donation pages.

And through these innovations in the channel, its potential has grown exponentially.

In recent years, texting has become one of the fastest-growing channels for nonprofit direct response. Of course, rapid rates of growth are expected when a channel is built from the ground up – but the growth we're seeing extends beyond year one of a texting program. **At MissionWired and Tatango, we work with nonprofit partners who've developed multi-million dollar texting programs that continue to achieve incredible growth and returns long after launching. It's programs like these that prove the potential for nonprofit texting programs to scale up year after year.**

What's more, the nonprofit fundraising landscape has seen a number of challenges over recent years, with a decrease in the number of donors in 2022 and 2023, as well as declining donor retention rates driving nonprofits to seek out new avenues for acquiring, engaging, and retaining donors beyond traditional digital channels.

In our increasingly crowded digital world, text messaging is an important resource for reaching your supporters with unmatched immediacy. Not only are 99% of text messages opened, but 90% are opened within three minutes after they're received.

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This opportunity to connect directly and immediately with supporters has made it a key channel year round – and especially during critical fundraising campaigns like Giving Tuesday, Year-End, and rapid-response moments. In fact, some nonprofit organizations with robust texting programs are beginning to see the channel outpace email as their largest revenue driver during those critical moments. We've run tests to ensure this shift doesn't mean texting is detracting from email revenue: rather, organizations running multi-channel campaigns raise more money for their programs overall – and they're building up a highly valuable audience of multi-channel donors while they're at it.

As of 2023, four out of five nonprofits reported that they either already had texting programs in place or were planning to start one – and still, reliable data around nonprofit text messaging results have been limited. This is, in part, due to many nonprofits using it sparingly rather than as a consistent channel for communication as they would email, and therefore tracking performance with less precision. **As long as basic metrics like fundraising conversion rate and average gift amount aren't readily available, nonprofit decision-makers will be left in the dark about what to expect from their investments and how to measure impact when launching or growing their texting program.**

That's where this report comes in: Consider this your starting point for metrics on fundraising and engagement text messaging across the nonprofit industry, here to help guide your strategy. It includes data on over 200 million nonprofit text messages sent, 162,000 donations received, and $5.4 million raised from text messaging by 15 nonprofits in 2023.

In 2023, 15 nonprofits...

sent **200 million** text messages

received **162,000** donations

and raised **$5.4 million.**

In this report, we'll dig into base metrics like conversion rate and average gift – but we'll also share a glimpse into how successful nonprofit texting programs are constructed. How many texts do these programs send annually? Are they sending SMS, MMS, or a mix of both? We'll share the data on these trends, as well as send times, shifts in performance at year-end, and how programs are balancing fundraising vs. non-fundraising messages.

Before we get started, there's one more important note about the scope of our report: All of the text messages analyzed in this report were sent as shortcode texts (sent from 5-6 digit numbers, and also referred to as broadcast texts) rather than longcode texts (sent from 10-digit numbers, and sometimes called peer-to-peer texts). We'll share a little more about short codes, and why they're so important to a texting program, below.

With the incredible growth we're seeing nonprofits achieve using text in mind, we're excited to share our findings in this report as a reflection of the tremendous amount of potential that this channel holds for nonprofit direct response fundraisers. Whether you're just breaking into the channel or you've been texting for years, these key metrics and takeaways from the nonprofit organizations that are leading the way in the industry are here to offer insight into the strategies to achieve growth within your own program.

2. About Broadcast Texting and Shortcodes

Broadcast and Peer-to-Peer Texting

Before we get too deep into results and analysis, let's take a moment to talk about broadcast and peer-to-peer texting – two methods nonprofits use in their text messaging programs. These are helpful terms to understand as broadcast and peer-to-peer texting can often each be a good fit for different types of nonprofits. For the purpose of this report, we are focusing on broadcast texting.

With peer-to-peer texting, messages are sent one at a time to supporters. This is also known as one-to-one texting. Each text to each supporter requires a separate click to send, which allows for extended back-and-forth conversations with supporters. Since you are texting one at a time, you don't need permission or an opt-in from any supporter in your file to send them a text.

Because of the reduced efficiency to scale this method to larger lists, **peer-to-peer texting is often a good fit for smaller nonprofits or smaller lists.** For example, texting 500 people one-at-a-time is likely manageable for a nonprofit. For nonprofits with larger text subscriber lists, sending broadcast texts is typically a more efficient approach.

Broadcast texting is one-to-many texting. Like email, text messages are sent to large audiences with one click. In recent years, broadcast texting has become an essential ingredient in nonprofit fundraising and campaign development, and for good reason – the channel offers fundraisers a number of important benefits:

1. **An additional platform to reach and connect with your donors.** By finding your donors in whichever channels they're most active, you can grow your coveted multi-channel donor file and maximize opportunities for donor engagement.
2. **An opportunity to cut through the noise.** SMS boasts a 99% open rate and allows you to jump right into someone's phone, which is especially key during major fundraising moments like Giving Tuesday or Dec. 31 when email inboxes are crowded.
3. **Reliable deliverability.** In critical moments like rapid response and in efforts to re-engage lapsed donors, SMS allows you to reach supporters without deliverability concerns.

Sending from a Short Code or Long Code

Broadcast texts can be sent from a 5-6 digit short code (e.g. 50545) or long code (e.g. 843-372-9076). The differences include:

APPROVAL TIME
Short code applications usually take 4-6 weeks for phone carriers to approve, while 10-digit numbers take 1-2 weeks.

DELIVERABILITY AND TRUSTWORTHINESS
Short codes typically have higher deliverability and trustworthiness than 10-digit numbers since phone carriers have spent a longer time vetting the organization.

SPEED
Short codes can send 120,000 MMS texts per minute while 10-digit numbers can send 60 MMS texts per minute.

VIDEO LENGTH
Short codes can play up to 30-second videos directly within a text, while 10 digit numbers can play about a 5-7 second video.

The speed and deliverability of short codes typically make them a better fit for medium to larger nonprofits or lists, while 10-digit numbers are often a good fit for smaller nonprofits or lists.

As we dig into the results in this report, we'll be looking at the broadcast programs of 15 leading nonprofit organizations using short codes who mostly have large scale and sophisticated programs, to see how they are leveraging this specific channel to drive the strongest results. And as we look at these results, it's also important to note: Texting is a paid channel, like social and digital ads. Platform and mobile carrier fees per message will impact the ROI of each text in different ways than email, so a close look at results and returns is an important part of managing a nonprofit text messaging program.

3. Key Findings

Across the nonprofit texting programs analyzed in this report...

4.5% of online revenue was raised from text messaging.

Nonprofits sent 46 texts in 2023, averaging **3.8 texts per month.**

Click-through rates for **engagement texts** were **6X higher** than fundraising texts. For **cultivation texts,** click-through rates were **4X higher.**

Annually, nonprofits sent **52% fundraising** texts and **48% engagement and cultivation texts**

Non-advocacy organizations sending a cultivation text before a fundraising text saw a **54% increase in average gift.**

Text messages were **58% MMS** and **42% SMS** (see page X for how these differ!)

Fundraising texts sent **after 6:00 p.m.** had a **37% higher conversion rate** than texts sent before 6:00 p.m.

Fundraising texts had a **25% higher conversion rate** from **January to October** than they did from November to December.

Texts sent on **Giving Tuesday** had an **84% higher conversion rate.**

Texting increased to **5.5 texts per month** in December 2023.

4. Report Metrics and Takeaways

Texting Cadence: Sends Per Year

Across the nonprofits analyzed in this report, the median number of text messages sent in 2023 was 46. (Why medians instead of averages? See pg. X for our thinking on this.) This breaks down to an average of 3.8 texts per month – but when we take a closer look at a month-by-month breakdown, we see some shifts throughout the year.

Average Number of Texts Sent Per Month

Jan - Oct	3.5
November	5
December	5.5

So what do these numbers tell us? Nonprofits with established texting programs are using the channel for proactive, ongoing communications similar to how we traditionally use email. By establishing a regular messaging cadence, you can set an expectation among supporters that they'll receive a few texts per month – and then increase that frequency during your biggest year-end campaigns, just like you would in other channels.

Holt International

[Holt International](#), an organization working to support families through adoption and care for orphaned children, launched their text messaging program initially as a channel for donor cultivation and fundraising texts. As their texting program grew, they expanded their messaging to add volunteer recruitment, monthly donor recapture, and major gift officer messages over text.

"We've really been able to get our creative fundraising thinking caps on and start to play with this channel, so that we're turning to text in moments when we really need somebody to see a message and take an action," said Rick Ericson, Senior Director of Donor Pipeline, Engagement and Growth at Holt International.
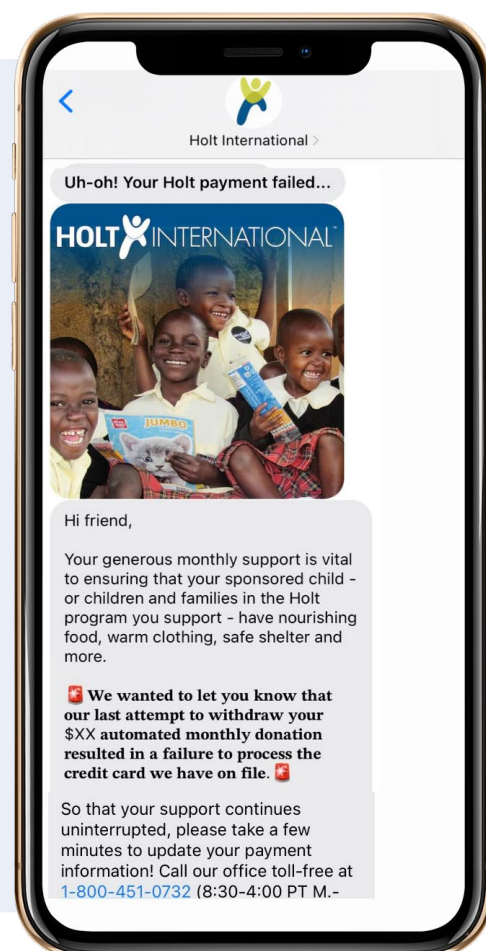
Message Types: Fundraising, Engagement, and Cultivation

To dig deeper into the ways nonprofits are leveraging text to connect with their supporters, we broke messaging types into three categories: fundraising, engagement, and cultivation texts.

Fundraising texts, which ask recipients to make a donation, are likely the most familiar and clear-cut. To differentiate between engagement and cultivation texts, we're looking primarily at audience and intent. **Engagement texts** feature a call-to-action with non-financial ways to get involved with a nonprofit, such as signing a petition, volunteering, or taking a survey. **Cultivation texts** also do not ask for a donation and are sent to strengthen donor relationships by thanking or educating donors, reporting back on the impact of their gifts, or sharing a story made possible by donors.

With these distinctions in mind, let's take a look at the types of messages these nonprofits sent in 2023. Throughout the year, 52% of texts were fundraising, while the remaining 48% were split between cultivation and engagement texts. At year-end, fundraising texts increased to 70% and 71% of total texts sent in November and December, respectively.

	Percentage of Texts Sent Annually	Percentage of Texts Sent in November	Percentage of Texts Sent in December
Fundraising texts	52%	70%	71%
Cultivation texts	21%	21%	22%
Engagement texts	27%	9%	8%

It's important to note that **the split between fundraising and non-fundraising texts is nearly even from January to October.** Successful programs are using this channel to share impact and tell stories, deepen engagement, and thank donors, rather than relying on it only as a means for repeated fundraising appeals. For nonprofits who aren't sending a mix of fundraising, cultivation and engagement texts, consider the channel an important opportunity to drive additional, surround-sound touch points with your audience throughout the year.

International Medical Corps

International Medical Corps, who deliver vital healthcare services and training to communities affected by conflict, disaster, and disease, sends regular cultivation texts to their donors to report back on the impact of their gifts. "We always want to steward our donor base. Our goal is to add value, not just ask for donations," said Jessica Smit, Senior Manager, Direct Marketing at International Medical Corps. "By sending cultivation text messages, we've also re-engaged lapsed donors and doubled our subscriber base."
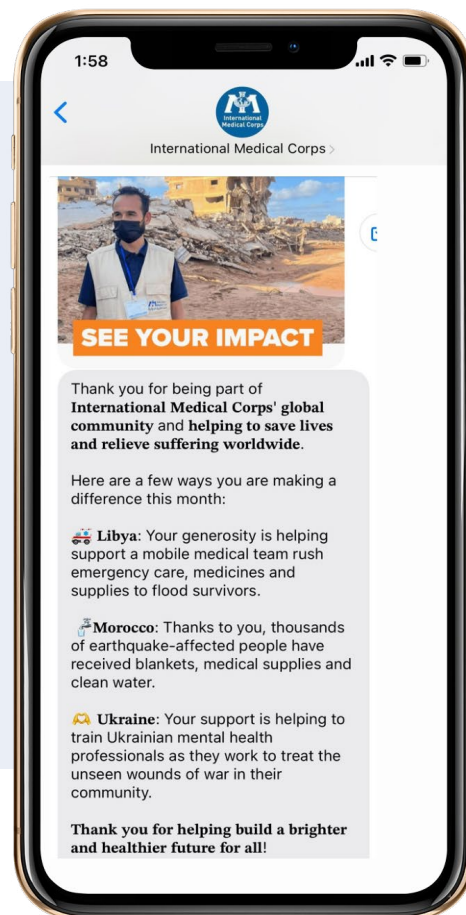
We'll talk more about click-through rates below, but here's a quick spoiler: **We've seen cultivation and engagement texts drive 4X and 6X higher click-through rates than fundraising texts.** So the value they offer your messaging cadence in terms of effective donor engagement is high.

With a steady balance of engagement and cultivation texts included in your messaging calendar, you're also strengthening the impact of your fundraising campaigns. Not only do these messages deepen your relationship with supporters, warming them up for your next fundraising appeal, they can also lead to direct conversions and donation revenue for some nonprofits. One advocacy nonprofit included in this report drove higher conversion rates from their engagement texts than their fundraising tests. Another non-advocacy nonprofit saw their highest conversion rates come from cultivation texts. When the primary focus of your message is on impact sharing or storytelling, a soft ask at the end of a survey flow or photo journey can inspire incredible response. In fact, across the non-advocacy organizations analyzed in this study, **when a nonprofit sent a cultivation text before a fundraising text, they saw a 54% increase in average gift.**

SMS vs. MMS Texts

While you'll often hear "SMS" used synonymously with "texting," text messages can be sent either as SMS or as MMS texts, and nonprofits will leverage each text message type for different purposes. **SMS**, which stands for Short Message Service, refers to text-only messages, with parts that are 160 characters long, which makes them resemble a tweet. **MMS**, which stands for Multi-Media Messaging Service, is a text message with a 1,600 character limit that can include an attachment – a picture, video, emoji, or audio file – which can make them look more similar to an email.

In 2023, nonprofits within this report sent 58% MMS and 42% SMS texts. Fundraising texts were split evenly, 50% each MMS and SMS texts, while engagement and cultivation texts leaned toward MMS texts.

Message Type	Percent of overall texts sent	Percent of fundraising texts sent	Percent of cultivation or engagement texts sent
SMS	42%	50%	33%
MMS	58%	50%	67%

For nonprofit texting programs, the choice between SMS and MMS is a strategic one that will vary from one campaign to the next. While MMS can incur highers costs than SMS, the difference in creative opportunities to engage your audience can make MMS more effective in certain moments, especially when leveraging a visual-forward campaign across channels, or breaking up high volume during a key fundraising campaign.

For the nonprofits in this report, median click-through rates were 61% higher, and median opt-out rates were 41% lower with SMS – but the donation conversion rates were 41% higher with MMS.

Fundraising text metric	MMS	SMS
Conversion rate	0.103%	0.073%
Click-through rate	0.97%	1.56%
Average gift	$38.43	$36.47
Opt out rate	0.63%	0.37%

Time of Day*

We talk a lot about how valuable texting is to connect you with supporters with immediacy. If, as we mentioned earlier, 90% of texts are opened within three minutes after they're received, then timing really matters over text. For the messages analyzed in this report, conversion rates increased later in the day. **Fundraising texts sent after 6:00 p.m. had 37% higher median conversion rates than texts sent before 6:00 p.m..**

Fundraising texts sent after 6 p.m. had 37% higher median conversion rates than texts sent before 6 p.m.

Looking more closely at the result from these two time windows offers some interesting insights: For fundraising texts sent after 6:00 p.m., the median click-through rate was 36% higher and opt-out rate was 19% lower. However, fundraising texts sent before 6:00 p.m. had a 24% higher average gift amount.

Fundraising text metric	Before 6 p.m.	After 6 p.m.
Conversion rate	0.068%	0.093%
Click-through rate	0.53%	0.72%
Average gift	$46.06	$37.10
Opt out rate	0.58%	0.47%

To account for this trend, it's fair to theorize that during the week people tend to be more engaged with text messaging after work when they have free time. Whether they're watching TV, reading a book, or scrolling through social media, it's likely that smartphones are close by. This could easily contribute to nonprofits seeing higher conversion rates over text in the evenings.

And given the success of texts sent after 6:00 p.m., we broke this time period down further by the hour, looking at send times between 6-9 p.m.. We saw the highest conversion rate from fundraising texts sent between 8-9p.m. at 0.205%, compared to 0.095% and 0.057% at 6-7p.m. and 7-8p.m., respectively. We also saw opt-out rates decrease after 6-7p.m. in the later hours of the evening. Conversely, the average gift was at its highest at $41.88 during that 6-7p.m. window.

Fundraising text metric	6 – 7 p.m.	7 – 8 p.m.	8 – 9 p.m.
Conversion rate	0.095%	0.057%	0.205%
Click-through rate	0.69%	0.74%	0.72%
Average gift	$41.88	$36.36	$33.20
Opt out rate	0.55%	0.26%	0.18%

Because many nonprofit campaigns drive response through deadlines on dedicated giving days, match opportunities, goals, and Giving Tuesday or Dec. 31, it isn't too surprising to see that 8-9 p.m. window drive the highest conversion rates. This aligns with other channels like email, where nonprofits often see donation numbers increase as deadlines approach and donors respond to last-chance appeals. Thanks to the immediacy of texting, nonprofits are now able to reach their audiences closer to deadlines than ever with messages calling for supporters to act now or miss out.

San Diego Humane Society

San Diego Humane Society, an open-admission shelter in California, sent a Giving Text on June 27, 2024 at 6:46p.m. local time to alert supporters of their approaching midnight deadline. This text targeted just over 23,000 donors and managed to achieve an impressive 1.1% conversion rate.
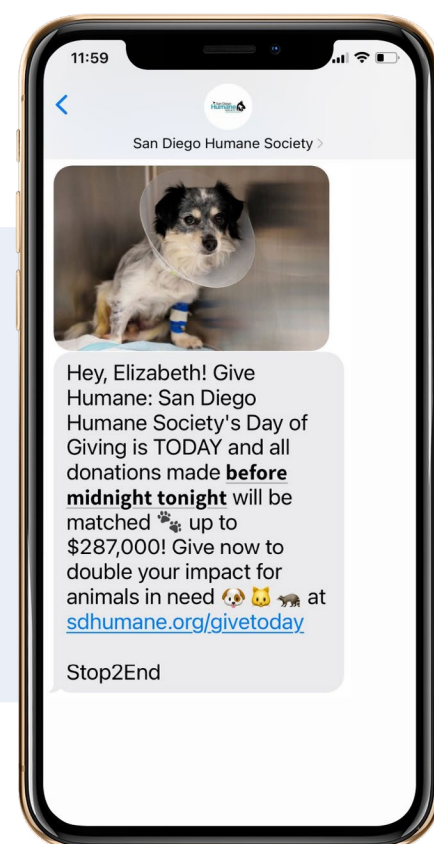
Of course, there's a limit to how late in the evening nonprofits will want to send their texts. If we can count on the likelihood that our supporters will receive and open their text within minutes of delivery, we can also imagine that donors may not appreciate receiving late-night texts. We recommend that your program test into delivery times and gauge response from your audience in an 8-9p.m. window on the last day of a deadline-focused campaign.

*An important note on send times: Some of the nonprofits in this report send texts to all their supporters regardless of time zone (e.g. a text is received at 8p.m. ET and 5p.m. PT), while others send at a set time based on the local time zone (e.g. a text is received at 8p.m. ET and 8p.m. PT). Because we were not able to differentiate between approaches in this report, the send times are measured as a mix of both approaches. Generally, programs who sent evening texts focused their sends based on local time zones.

Fundraising texts had a 25% *higher* conversion rate from January to October than in November and December.

The Year-End Giving Season: Giving Tuesday and Dec. 31

With any good A/B test or results report, the fun begins when some number takes us by surprise. In this report, that surprise was that fundraising texts had a 25% *higher* conversion rate from January to October (0.079%) than in November and December (0.063%).

What does this mean for your texting strategy? For organizations hesitating to use texting as a core channel for a regular cadence of fundraising, engagement, and cultivation messages, this data points to text as a reliable channel for driving conversion throughout the year – **so there's no need to wait until November and December to expand your multi-channel campaigns into text.**

Let's take a closer look at the results by time of year. Important to note is a significant 15% increase in average gift amount in November and December, up to $45.30 during year-end giving compared to $39.42 from January to October

Fundraising text metric	January - October	November - December
Conversion rate	0.079%	0.063%
Click-through rate	0.75%	0.52%
Average gift	$39.43	$45.30
Opt out rate	0.58%	0.51%

It's helpful, too, to dig deeper into the metrics from year-end season by looking at some key giving days around Giving Tuesday and Dec. 31. Within the year-end season for the nonprofits analyzed in this report, we saw the highest conversion

rate of 0.135% take place on Giving Tuesday. The day after Giving Tuesday drove the second highest conversion rate, suggesting that donors are responding to deadline extensions more actively in recent years. In fact, the day after Giving Tuesday had a 6X higher conversion rate than the day before Giving Tuesday.

With this trend, we see another example where the immediate nature of text messages is converting donors closer to, or even just after, midnight deadlines. While we're also seeing nonprofits announcing Giving Tuesday earlier on certain channels like email, these results suggest that text can be a highly valuable channel for "backloading" messages closer to a midnight deadline, or even extending a deadline by one more day.

Fundraising Text Conversion Rate

1 day before GivingTuesday	0.022%
GivingTuesday	0.135%
1 day after GivingTuesday	0.132%
Dec. 29	0.050%
Dec. 30	0.059%
Dec. 31	0.086%

Brady United

For example, Brady United, an organization fighting every day to reduce gun violence in the United States, drove incredible response by extending their match deadline to the day after Giving Tuesday. With urgent, deadline-driven language, the familiarity of a famous signer, and the immediacy of message open rates, text was an ideal channel for this message.

9:04

Brady

It's Coach Kerr. I've got good news and bad news.

The bad news is that Brady fell $18,209 short of our Giving Tuesday goal. But the good news is that generous donors have agreed to extend our match until midnight.

Don't waste this opportunity. Please, donate now: txt.brady.org/cVEBSy3MGDpkn

Stop2End

Because Dec. 31 landed on a Sunday in 2023, it's possible that the year's calendar might explain why Giving Tuesday's conversion rate outpaced any single year-end day. With Dec. 31 falling on a Tuesday in 2024, it will be interesting to see how these results by day shift this year. Still, Dec. 31 did drive a higher average gift amount of $49.69 than Giving Tuesday's $37.46. And on both Giving Tuesday and Dec. 31, opt-out rates fell below the median opt-out rate of 0.53% for fundraising texts.
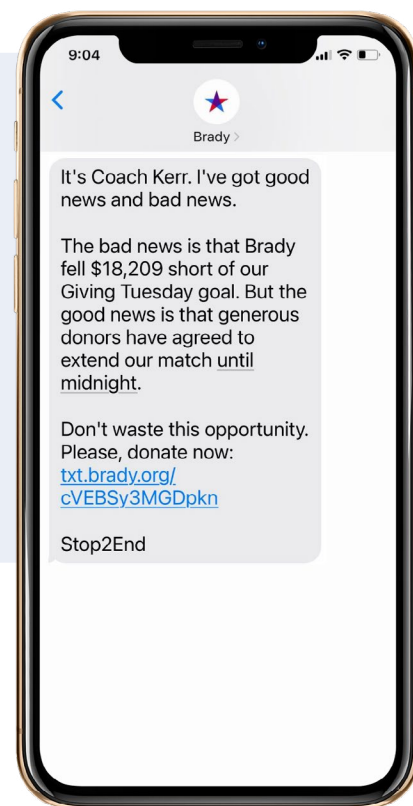
Base Metrics

Now that we've shared some key takeaways around messaging types and cadence, let's dig into some of the core metrics across the 200 million nonprofit text messages that we analyzed in this report.

Click-through rates

A helpful indicator of audience engagement, we measure **click-through rate** by dividing the number of click-throughs by the number of people sent a text message. To get a sense for how audiences engaged with certain types of messages at certain times and from certain nonprofits, we'll take a look at click-through rates (CTR) by messaging type, and then break the numbers down by time of day and organization type.

Click-Through Rate

All texts	1.41%
Fundraising texts	0.61%
Cultivation texts	2.36%
Engagement texts	3.76%

CTR by Messaging Type

Overall, the median click-through rate for the nonprofits we analyzed for this report was 1.41%. Engagement texts had the highest click-through rate at 3.76%, followed closely by cultivation texts at 2.36%. Pure fundraising texts saw a lower median click-through rate at 0.61%

This wide difference in engagement between fundraising and non-fundraising texts highlights the importance of keeping message cadences balanced between cultivation, engagement, and fundraising texts.

Send Time	CTR
Before 5 p.m.	0.83%
5 - 6 p.m.	2.00%
6 - 7 p.m.	1.42%
7 - 8 p.m.	1.63%
8 - 9 p.m.	0.92%

CTR by Time of Day

Across the nonprofits analyzed in this report, we saw click through rates consistently increase later in the day. While texts sent before 5:00 p.m. averaged a 0.83% CTR, texts sent at or after 5:00 p.m. had a 1.74% click-through rate, with engagement peaking in the 5:00-6:00 p.m. window.

CTR by Organization Type

The nonprofits analyzed in this report spanned both advocacy and non-advocacy organizations. Advocacy organizations overall saw higher click-through rates, with a significantly higher CTR

	All Texts CTR	Engagement Texts CTR	Fundraising Texts CTR
Non-advocacy nonprofits	1.09%	1.10%	0.65%
Advocacy nonprofits	1.85%	4.94%	0.60%

for engagement texts of 4.94% compared to 1.10% for non-advocacy organizations. Still, both types of organizations saw similar click-through rates for fundraising texts.

Conversion Rate

To identify the effectiveness of a text campaign in securing donations, we use conversion rate, which is measured by dividing the number of donations by the total number of people sent a text message.

Fundraising Text Conversion Rate

All texts	0.073%
Lists under 50,000	0.114%
Lists over 50,000	0.061%

While the donation conversion rate across all the fundraising texts analyzed in this report was 0.073%, the nonprofits in this study represent a wide range of list sizes, from 1,500 to 800,000 people. For a more detailed look at conversion rates based on an organization's list size, we broke down conversion rate further to look at lists under and over 50,000 people.

Here we saw an increase in conversion rates for fundraising texts sent to smaller list sizes at 0.114%, compared with a 0.061% conversion rate for texts sent to lists over 50,000 people.

This trend highlights a strategy that many nonprofits growing new texting programs have leveraged. By targeting a smaller list of recent, active donors for early texting campaigns, nonprofits can generate initial metrics that will help prove the ROI of the channel to make the case internally to expand their texting program. After this, they can begin to use the channel more widely to target lapsed and non-donors.

When texting programs expand to target a larger list, this will typically and initially lower the fundraising text conversion rate, as texting campaigns incorporate additional goals into their messaging such as retaining donors, reactivating lapsed donors, and acquiring new ones over text.

Feed the Children

When [Feed the Children](), an organization committed to ending childhood hunger, launched their texting program in 2023 they initially targeted their list of recent and active donors. After seeing success with this audience and proving ROI to their internal teams, they have expanded their texting program to include additional audiences and use cases in 2024.

Opt-Out Rate

Just like with email, with text we're also keeping an eye on opt-out rates from one campaign to the next, which is measured by taking the number of opt-outs, or unsubscribes, and dividing by the number of people sent a text message.

Opt-Out Rate

All	0.48%
SMS	0.37%
MMS	0.63%

While the median opt-out rate for the nonprofit texts analyzed in this report was 0.48%, we saw some difference between SMS and MMS texts, with SMS texts showing a lower opt-out rate at 0.37% than MMS texts at 0.63%.

Opt-out rates also varied between fundraising and non-fundraising texts, with a slight uptick in opt-outs for fundraising texts than both engagement and cultivation texts.

Opt-Out Rate

|	
Fundraising	0.53%
Engagement	0.42%
Cultivation	0.45%

According to the last Luminate Online Benchmark Report, opt-out rates for email are averaging at a lower rate of 0.17% – but there's an important distinction to draw between the two channels here. With a 99% open rate over text, compared to email's historical 20%-25% open rate, 4X to 5X more people are seeing your text messages than your emails. When more people see a message, opt-out rates tend to be higher. Said another way, if an email and a text message were each opened and read by 20,000 people, it's likely you'll see a similar number of opt outs.

To counter opt-out rates and grow a list of engaged, committed supporters, nonprofits are driving opt-ins to their texting lists in a number of effective ways:

- Adding an opt-in field on web forms (for donations, events, email, and advocacy)
- Inviting email lists to subscribe to text
- Running peer-to-peer text campaigns over longcode to drive opt-ins to your shortcode
- Targeting lapsed donors and prospective donors in unique campaigns

USO

When the USO, an organization supporting active-duty service members and military families since 1941, first launched their texting program in 2020, they quickly grew a robust file of supporters over text by adding mobile opt-in fields to advertising and email pages, targeting their existing list of email supporters, and running peer-to-peer text campaigns to donors, inviting them to take action and join their broadcast list.
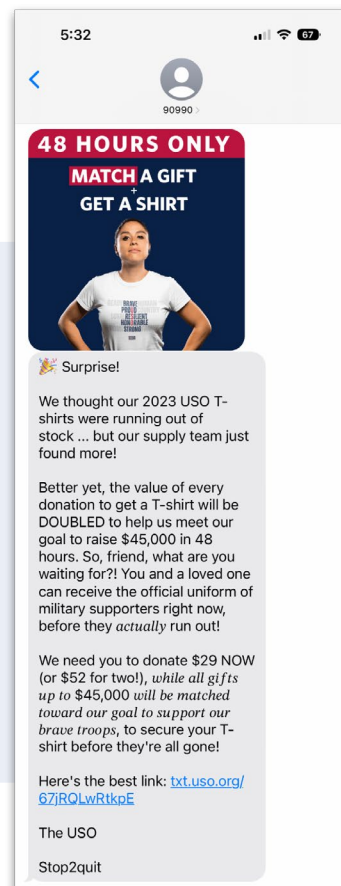
Average Gift Amount

When analyzing the effectiveness of a text campaign, **average gift** offers a helpful insight into the level of donation that the campaign's messaging and tactics are inspiring, and it's measured by taking the total revenue and dividing it by the number of donations.

Across the texts in this report, the median average gift amount for fundraising texts was $42.50 overall, but we saw a higher average gift for non-advocacy nonprofits than advocacy nonprofits, coming in at $58.86 and $34.90, respectively.

Fundraising Text Average Gift

All nonprofits	$42.50
Non-advocacy nonprofits	$58.86
Advocacy nonprofits	$34.90

Of course, the average gift amount went up during the end-of-year season when nonprofits are making some of their biggest fundraising appeals of the year.

For non-advocacy nonprofits, median average gift amount increased by 56% in December. Advocacy nonprofits also saw a lift in average gift amount of 16%.

Remember how we talked above about how engagement and cultivation campaigns are also driving direct conversions to donations? In other words, after clicking through an engagement text and taking an action like completing a survey, or, after clicking through a cultivation text and reading an impact story, a supporter makes a donation. In this report we also tracked average gift amount by messaging type to compare fundraising texts to non-fundraising texts.

December Fundraising Text Average Gift Amount

All nonprofits	$X
Non-advocacy nonprofits	$91.80
Advocacy nonprofits	$40.35

Average Gift Amount

Fundraising texts	$42.50
Engagement texts	$24.44
Cultivation texts	$35.89

While the median average gift remains higher for fundraising texts than non-fundraising texts, engagement and cultivation texts still managed to inspire median average gifts of $24.44 and $35.89, respectively:

Stewardship of your existing donors through cultivation messaging, and deepening of your supporters' affinity with your work through engagement messaging can have an incredibly valuable impact on your long-term relationship with donors – But these results also offer evidence that when you engage your supporters, thank them, and educate them on your mission, there's also an opportunity to inspire a second gift, upgrade, or upsell to a sustainer gift.

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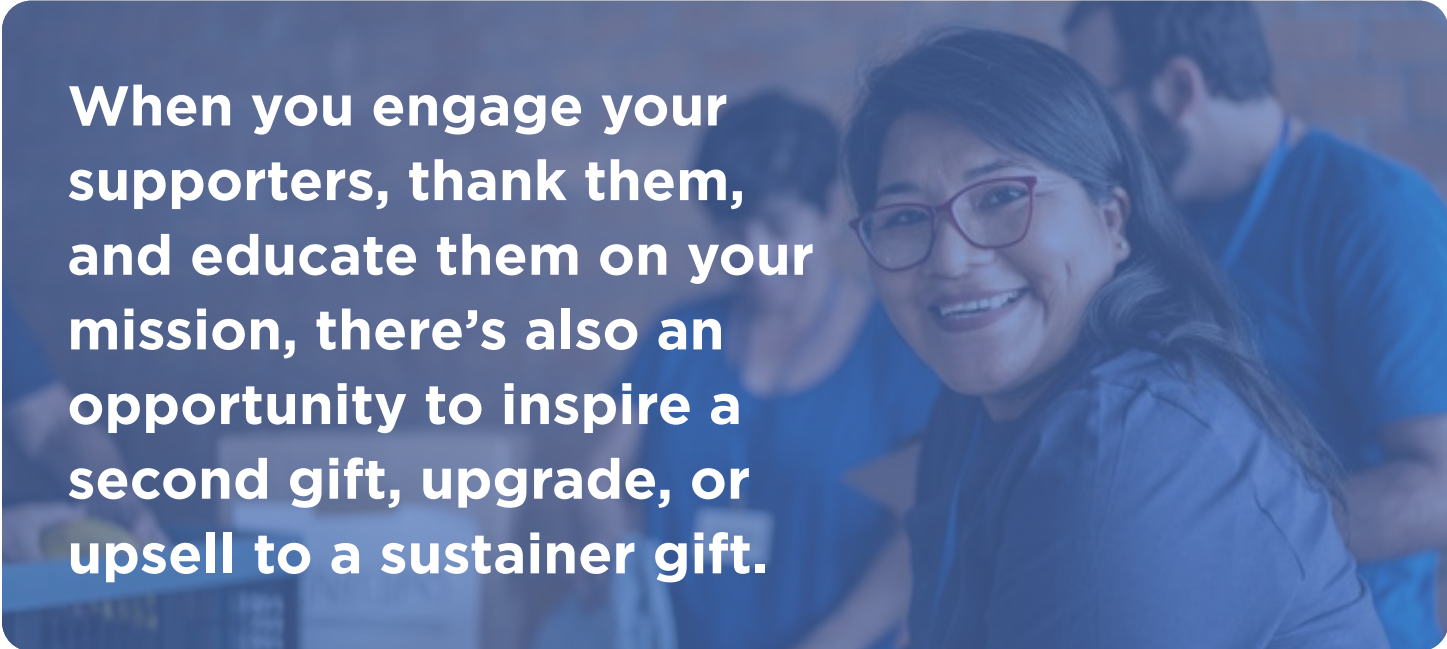
For nonprofits aiming to increase their average gift over text, personalization can play a key role. Just like direct mail and email, nonprofits can personalize ask amounts based on a donor's last gift amount. Consider including a suggested gift amount within your text message or a pre-filled donation form to increase average gift size.

Sandy Hook Promise

This strategy drove incredible results for [Sandy Hook Promise](#), an organization dedicated to protecting children from gun violence. To maximize engagement and a sense of connection between donors and their program, Sandy Hook Promise segmented their text messages to get specific with different audiences. Personalizing by a donor's last gift date, donation size, and their status as a nondonor, recent, lapsed, or recurring donor helped them to meet supporters where they're at when sending fundraising asks over text. One text campaign with a personalized ask amount based on supporters' last donation drove a 142% lift in gifts.
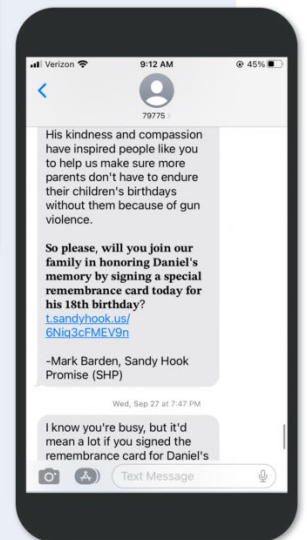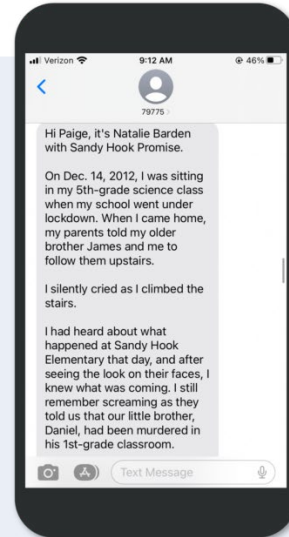
5. Summary

In our inaugural text messaging insights report, the teams at Tatango and MissionWired set out to establish a starting point for the nonprofit industry. By digging into the results across some of the nonprofits leading the way in text message fundraising, analyzing data from over 200 million nonprofit text messages, 162,000 donations received, and $5.4 million raised, we've helped answer questions like:

- How often are nonprofits texting?
- What's the right balance of fundraising vs. engagement or cultivation texts?
- When should I use MMS vs. SMS?
- What are normal metrics for conversion rates? For opt-out rates?
- Should I expect results to vary at different times of year? Different times of day?
- What type of content are nonprofits sending over text?

Among our most meaningful takeaways is the evidence in this report that **nonprofits are using texting as an ongoing communication tool to engage with supporters, connect, and fundraise.** The median number of texts per year among the nonprofits we analyzed was 46 texts, suggesting a regular cadence of a few messages per month is common among nonprofits with established texting programs. These nonprofits split their messages nearly evenly between fundraising texts and non-fundraising texts – and they saw their engagement texts and cultivation texts drive 6X and 4X higher click-through rates than fundraising texts, respectively.

The opportunities MMS offers to build authentic, engaging messages through creative strategy can yield powerful results.

Frequency and cadence aren't the only ways that texting can resemble email. Many nonprofits have found success translating their top-performing content across channels, and extra creative touches can drive strong response over text. More than half of the texts analyzed in this report were MMS texts – which can include bolding, italics, and an image, GIF, or short video. Like with any channel, it's important to test into the strategies that drive response for your unique audience, but the opportunities MMS offers to build authentic, engaging messages through creative strategy can yield powerful results.

While content and cadence over text show similarities to email, **texting has one important differentiator: immediacy and open rates over text far surpass email.** In the data we analyzed throughout this report, timing played an important role in a campaign's effectiveness. We saw nonprofits leveraging text messaging's near-instant engagement to reach their supporters and drive donations in the evenings, when campaign deadlines were in their final hours.

Whether your nonprofit has been texting for years, or you're just getting started building your program, the metrics and takeaways from this report are here to offer the evidence and inspiration to scale up and go big over text.

Fundraising texts sent after 6:00 p.m. had a 37% higher conversion rate, with the highest conversion rates and lowest opt-out rates from texts sent between 8:00 - 9:00 p.m. By using broadcast texting and short codes, rather than longcode texts from 10-digit numbers, nonprofits are reaching larger audiences with precision within these critical windows during key giving moments.

Whether your nonprofit has been texting for years, or you're just getting started building your program, the metrics and takeaways from this report are here to offer the evidence and inspiration to scale up and go big over text.

With unrivaled immediacy and engagement, text messaging has become an essential nonprofit channel for your core digital fundraising program alongside email, social, and digital ads.

While we'd need more data from across digital channels to investigate the relationship that growing texting programs have with email, direct mail, and other channels, we've found that in initial tests, organizations running multi-channel campaigns not only raised more revenue overall but also built up an audience of valuable multi-channel donors that engage with messages over email, text, and ads.

So, what's next? We hope some of the specific metrics throughout this report will inspire new strategies for your organization's mission and audience, but if you're a nonprofit looking to refine or launch your texting program in the second half of 2024, here are our top recommendations:

- **Balance your messaging types.** Successful nonprofit texting programs are using the channel not just for repeated fundraising asks, but to share impact and tell stories, deepen engagement, and thank donors. Consider texting an opportunity to drive additional, surround-sound touch points with your audience throughout the year.
- **Take advantage of both MMS and SMS texts.** Consider when short, simple messaging over SMS will do the trick, and when you'll want to lean into the additional creative touchpoints that MMS offers, and leverage both types of texting strategically.
- **Texting later in the day can increase response before a deadline.** For time-sensitive fundraising campaigns, remember the value of texting's immediacy and open rates and leverage "last-chance" messaging to drive close-to-deadline revenue.

6. About this Report

Study Participants

This Report includes data on nonprofit text messaging sent to over 200,000,000 people from January 1, 2023, to December 31, 2023. It includes over 3.8 million click-throughs, 162,000+ donations and over $5.4 million raised directly from broadcast text messages sent by 15 nonprofits using short codes. The nonprofits analyzed range from mature nonprofit text programs where texting revenue exceeds email revenue to text programs that were launched by nonprofits in 2023. One-third were advocacy-focused nonprofits, while two-thirds were not. The annual revenue of nonprofits included in this report ranges from $5 million to over $400 million.

Medians

All values in this report are presented as medians rather than averages to provide a more accurate representation of benchmarks. Using medians helps minimize the impact of outliers, reflecting the middle value in a dataset rather than being skewed by extreme high or low results from certain organizations. Nonprofits utilizing text messaging may experience increased engagement, conversion rates, or average donation amounts during emergencies, significant news events, or year-end giving periods. This report encompasses all revenue generated via text messages throughout 2023, including responses to major news events, holidays, significant giving moments, and emergencies like the February 2023 Turkey-Syria earthquake. No adjustments have been made to metrics related to text messaging during these periods. This approach underscores why the report focuses on industry medians rather than averages, which could be distorted by emergency responses or sudden news events.

7. Definitions

Fundraising text - Texts that ask recipients to make a donation.

Engagement text - Texts that do not ask for a donation and instead feature a call to action of non-financial ways to get involved with the nonprofit. Examples include signing a petition, volunteer opportunities, taking a survey/quiz or learning more about the nonprofit's mission.

Cultivation text - Texts that do not ask for a donation but are sent to supporters to thank, update or report back on the impact of their gift. Examples include thanking donors for past gifts on an awareness day, reporting back on the impact of gifts or sharing a story made possible by donors.

Click-through rate - The number of click-throughs divided by the number of people sent a text message.

Conversion rate - The number of donations divided by the number of people sent a text message.

Opt-out rate - The number of opt outs divided by the number of people sent a text message.

Average gift - The total revenue in donations divided by the total number of donations

MMS texts - Stands for Multi-Media Messaging Service (MMS) texts. MMS texts that include up to 5,000 characters and contain an image, short video, audio file, images or animated images called GIFs. MMS texts can include bolded or italicized text, emojis and a subject line.

SMS texts - Stands for Short Message Service (SMS) texts. SMS texts can contain up to 160 characters in a text-only format. Images, video, GIFs, bolding, italics, emojis and subject lines cannot be included in SMS texts.

Short code - A five- or six-digit number (e.g. 30032) that nonprofits use to send and receive text messages. Texts are delivered much faster via short codes than long-codes, especially MMS texts.

Long code - This is simply a ten-digit phone number (e.g. 312-984-5764) that organizations use to send and receive SMS messages.

Broadcast texting - Broadcast texting is one-to-many texting. Like email, text messages are sent to large audiences with one click. Broadcast texting requires your recipients to consent to receive your text messages.

Peer-to-peer (P2P) texting - With peer-to-peer texting, texts are sent one at a time to supporters. This is also known as one-to-one texting. Each text to each supporter requires a separate click to send and allows for extended back-and-forth conversations with supporters. Since you are texting one at a time, you do not need permission to text anyone.

8. Contributors

Tatango

Since 2007, nonprofits have used Tatango's best-in-class software to create meaningful text message conversations with donors, resulting in hundreds of millions of dollars being raised. Made to serve the needs of high-volume senders, Tatango's easy-to-use technology ensures that every nonprofit client can realize the reach and unrivaled visibility of text messaging within their organization to maximize fundraising results. We're honored to help leading nonprofits including March of Dimes, Alzheimer's Association, USO, United Women in Faith, Brady United, Feed the Children and more. No texting provider can deliver messages at scale faster and more reliably than Tatango. We've been through thousands of fundraising deadlines over 15+ years and help nonprofits amplify their message, drive donations and reach goals when it really matters. For more information, visit www.tatango.com.

Contributors from Tatango: Mike Snusz

MissionWired

Since launching in 2007 as Anne Lewis Strategies, the experts at MissionWired have raised more than $3.1 billion across channels – direct mail to email, SMS to telemarketing, canvassing to connected TV, and more. We've done it for organizations like the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, USO, Sandy Hook Promise, Planned Parenthood Federation of America, American Red Cross, Human Rights Watch, Save the Children, Biden-Harris for President, ACLU, Sen. Raphael Warnock, DSCC, and Make-A-Wish America. MissionWired brings together a one-of-a-kind collection of talent and passion with a record of achievement and standard-setting across direct mail and digital channels.

Contributors from MissionWired: Aneesh Gowri, Isidro Camacho, Jane Shepard