

Steal This Playbook:

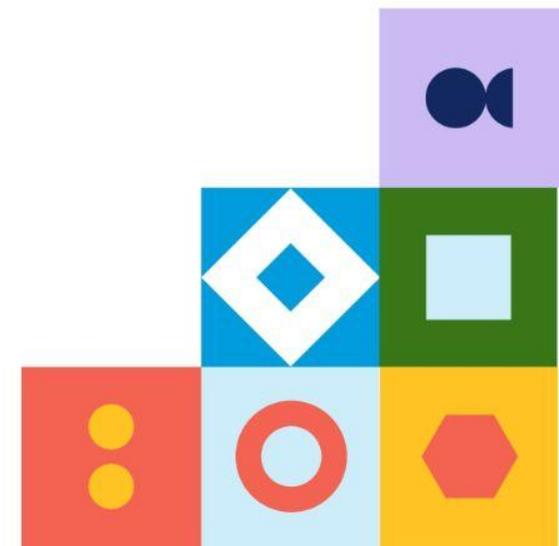
UX Lessons From Nonprofit Websites

Presented by:

Joanna Jackson & Janna Fiester of Sandstorm®



DrupalCon
Chicago 2026



sandstorm®



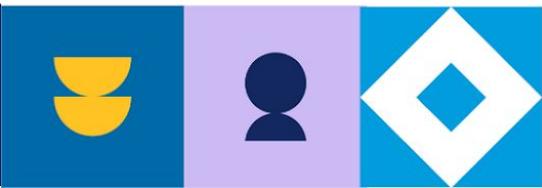
Hi, we're Sandstorm®



Janna Fiester
(she/her)
Vice president of UX
and Creative
Drupal.org: [jannafiester](#)



Joanna Jackson
(she/her)
UX Researcher & Designer
Drupal.org: [joannajackson](#)



Fun facts about Sandstorm®



Accessibility-certified,
creative technology
agency for 25+ years for
purpose-driven brands

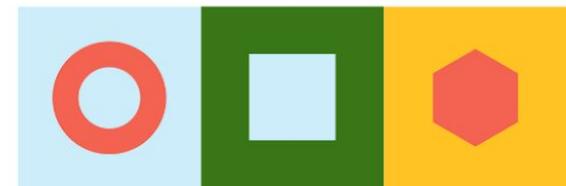
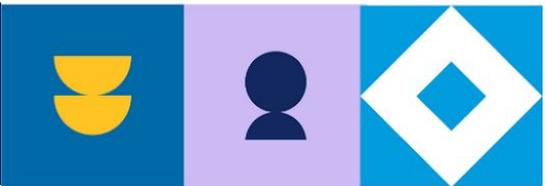
Deep expertise with **Global
Non-Profits, Healthcare,
Professional Associations, &
Higher Ed**



Certifications:
CPACC (accessibility), AWS
Cloud, Pantheon, Acquia, Drupal,
DEIB, and WBENC
(women-owned)

Interdisciplinary team: UX, UI,
AI, strategy, technology,
analytics

UX practice started by **Ph.D
in human factors**
in 2006



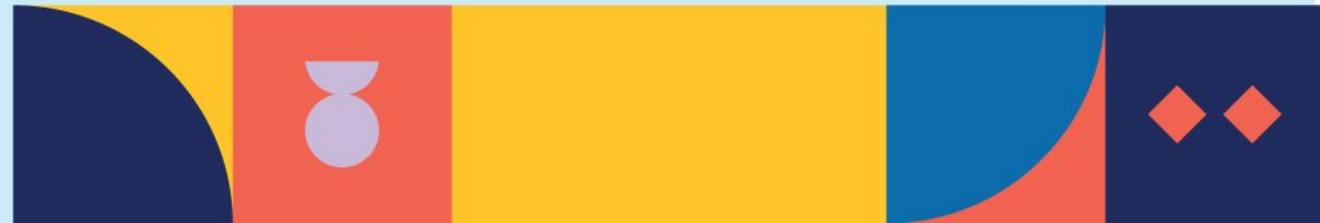


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THE CHALLENGE

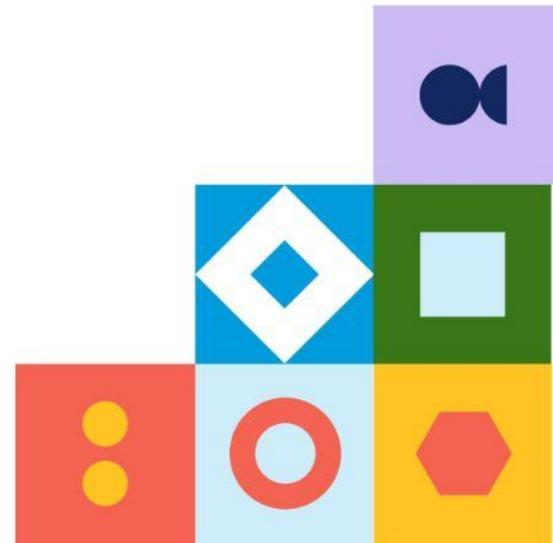
Since March 2025, **trust in nonprofits**
has fallen to 35%

Source: [Johnson Center](#)



Most nonprofit websites fail in the same ways

- Users don't understand what the organization does
- Navigation is vague or confusing
- Impact is buried or abstract
- Trust requires too much effort
- It's unclear what to do next



OPPORTUNITY

In a low-trust internet, the job of UX
isn't persuasion. It's proof.



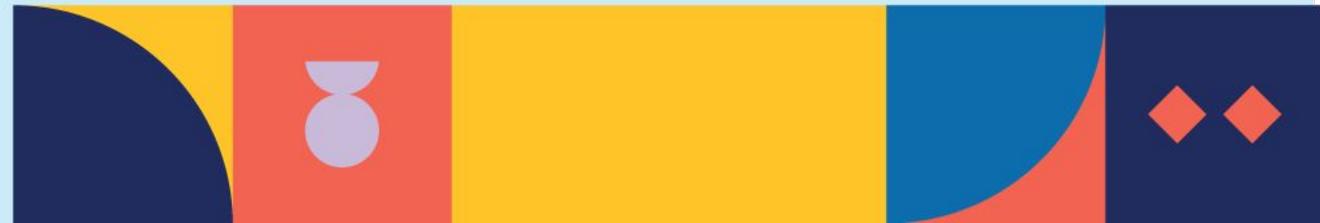


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Actionable UX Plays:

What you can do today



1

You navigation builds trust





Help us provide quality health care for at-risk New Yorkers.

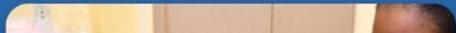
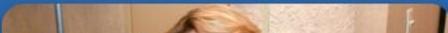
[Menorah and Isabella Centers](#)

[Dementia Care](#)

[Pediatric Hospice Care](#)

[Caregiver Support](#)

[End of Life Care](#)



Bring clean and safe water to every person on the planet

MONTHLY

GIVE ONCE

SELECT AN AMOUNT TO GIVE PER MONTH

\$10 USD/mo

\$20 USD/mo

\$40 USD/mo

\$100 USD/mo

Other amount

♥ Gives 12 people clean water every year.

JOIN TODAY





Help us provide quality health care for at-risk New Yorkers.

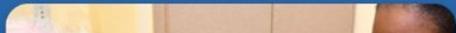
[Menorah and Isabella Centers](#)

[Dementia Care](#)

[Pediatric Hospice Care](#)

[Caregiver Support](#)

[End of Life Care](#)



COMPASSIONATE CARE

Together, we ensure
at-risk New Yorkers
receive the care and
compassion they deserve.

OUR MISSION

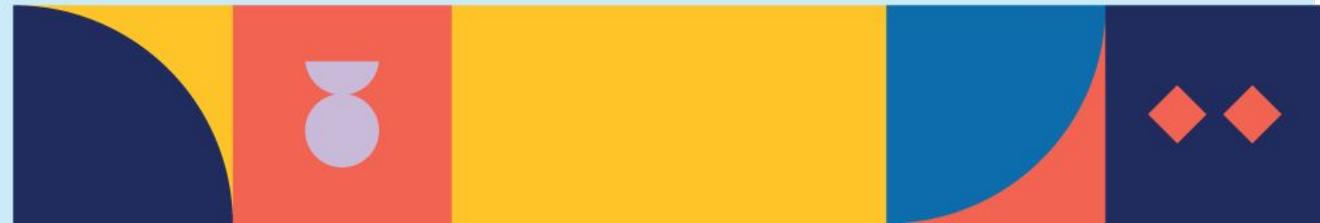




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NON-PROFIT PLAY 1

Your navigation needs to answer questions like what you do, how you help, and where the money goes.





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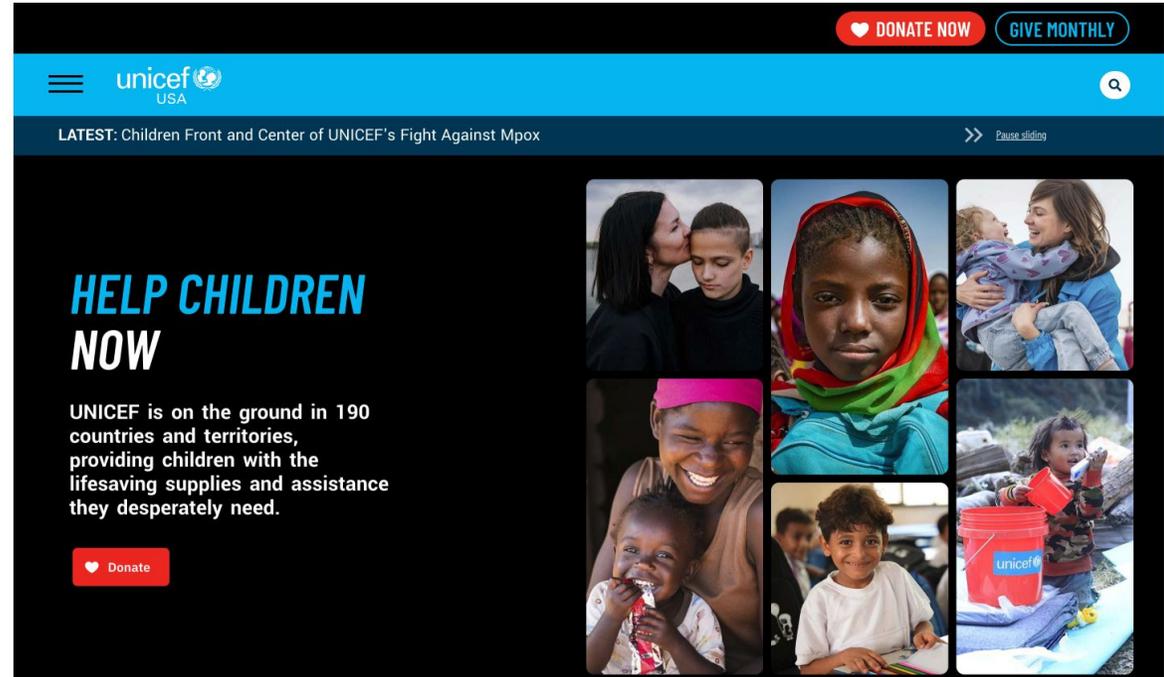
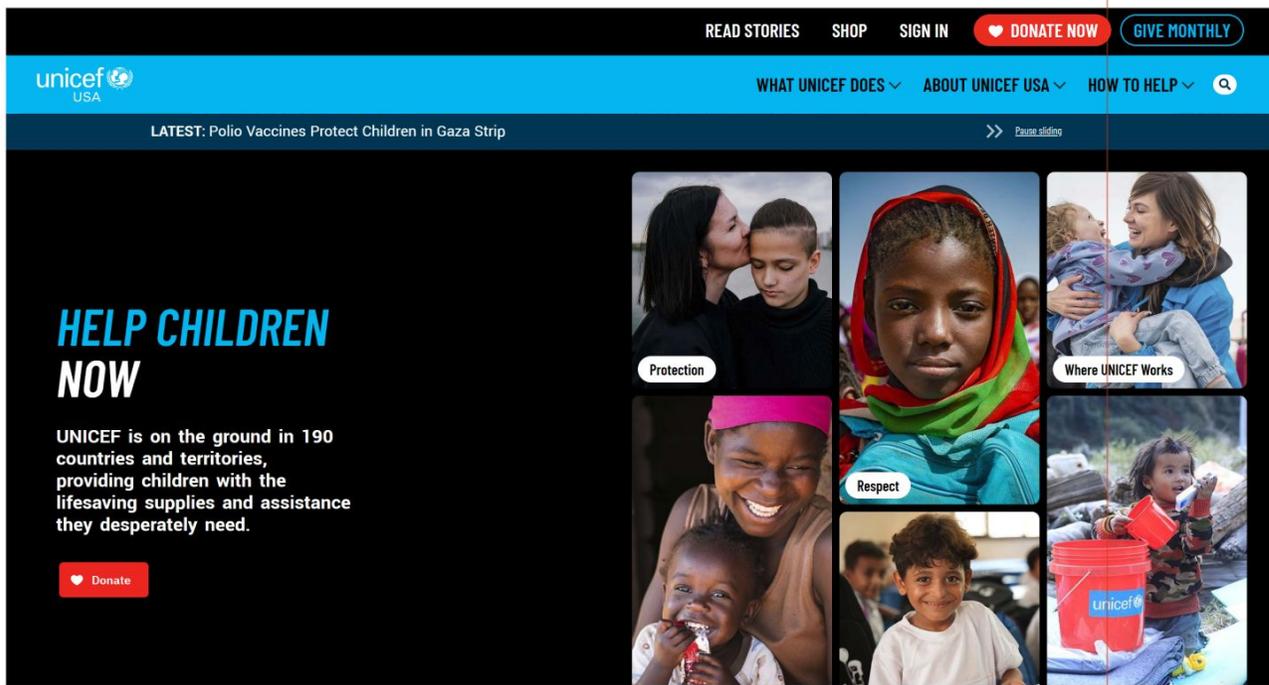
Earn the right to simplify navigation



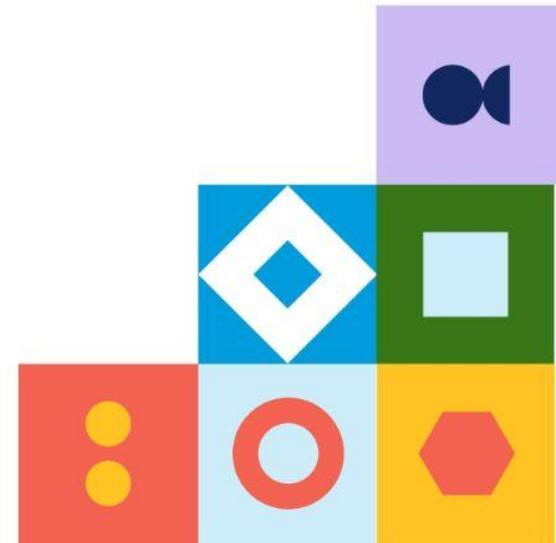


UNICEF wanted
to see if their
navigation
helped or
hindered
engagement





Experiment through A/B studies





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THE RESULT

**Donations increased by
almost 7%**
when the navigation was
moved into a hamburger menu

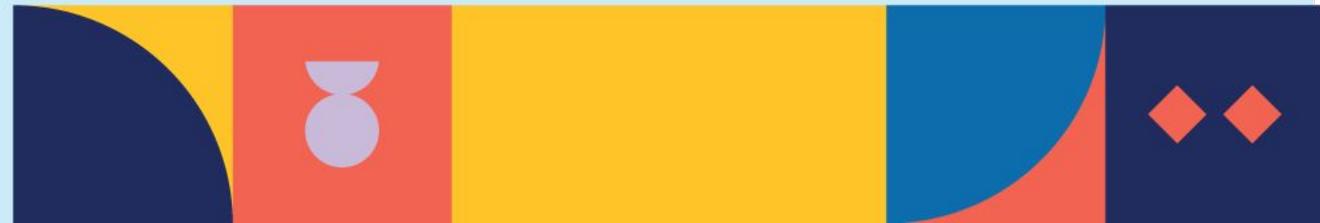




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NON-PROFIT PLAY 2

Simplify navigation only when users already trust and recognize your brand



3

People give to outcomes,
not ideas





[Home](#)

[Services](#) ▾

[About Us](#) ▾

[Newsroom](#)

[Ways to Give](#) ▾

[Contact Us](#)



Salvation Army National
[Find Service Centers](#)

[Find Help](#) ▾

[Donate](#) ▾

Large numbers are impressive but **are hard to relate to and quickly understand.**



183,111,494 Total Meals Served

For over 150 years, The Salvation Army has shown love beyond hunger. Last year, nearly 167 million meals were served to those who needed them most.



1,575,098 Households Provided With Financial Assistance

From rent and utility support to transportation, clothing, and medical needs, The Salvation Army provided critical financial assistance to help individuals and families stay housed, stay hopeful, and move forward with dignity.



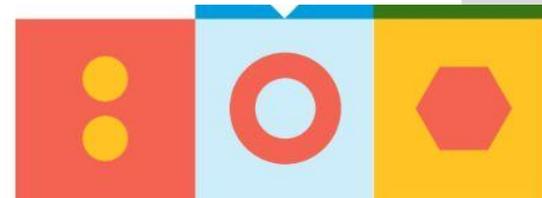
10,075,059 Nights of Shelter

We offered safe shelter to individuals and families experiencing homelessness or escaping unsafe situations — meeting them with compassion, a warm bed, and resources for stability.



1,552,488 Volunteers

The human spirit is remarkable. Over 1.5 million people dedicated their time and energy to volunteering for The Salvation Army last year.



Numbers based on real results from donations are easier to understand and more inspiring.



\$100 can provide nutritious snacks for 20 women attending a financial empowerment session.

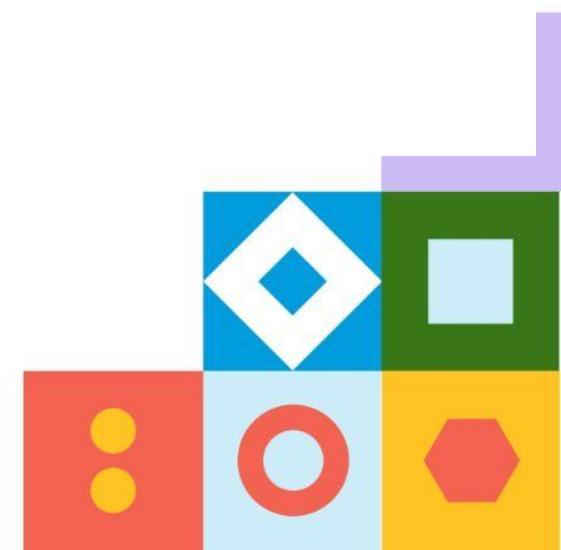
Giving Examples:



\$50 can provide childcare support for a parent to attend a financial literacy class or access a one-on-one financial coaching session.



\$365 can provide a Chromebook plus food for one student so they can be successful in school.



[OUR SUPPORTERS](#)

[OUR COMMITMENTS](#)

[GIVING FAQs](#)

Interactive tools make the donation experience more personal

Impact Report

See exactly how your support impacts people's lives worldwide through lasting water access, dignified bathrooms, and the tools to ensure these services will last for generations to come.

[VIEW IMPACT REPORT](#)

THIS IS HOW WE MULTIPLY YOUR IMPACT

Every dollar you give to Water For People multiplies. Our strategic partners such as communities, local governments, and local businesses also invest. In addition, the health and economic benefits of investing in clean water provide a seven-fold return, helping your \$50 investment multiply to over \$500!

Enter an amount to see what your investment can do.

\$
= \$0.00

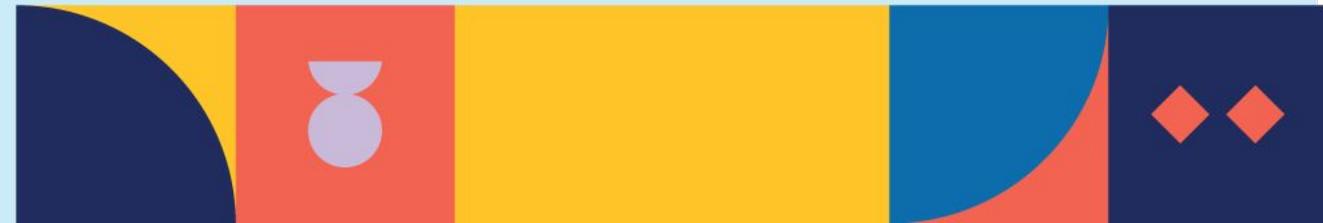




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NON-PROFIT PLAY 4

Don't say "we helped thousands."
Show exactly what someone's
\$5 can do.



4

Financial docs
increase perceived
credibility, even when
not opened



Transparency
builds trust
even when
people don't
read the
details.



FINANCES

UNICEF works in over 190 countries and territories, helping to save and meaningfully improve the lives of children globally – focusing on the most vulnerable by providing health care and immunization, clean water and sanitation, nutrition, education, emergency relief and more. UNICEF USA advances the global mission of UNICEF by rallying the American public to support the world's most vulnerable children and uphold their rights.



Donate

Independent Monitors Recognize UNICEF USA

UNICEF USA has been awarded [GuideStar's Platinum Seal of Transparency](#), the highest rating, in recognition of the honesty and visibility we provide to supporters.

We've also earned a [Four-Star rating from Charity Navigator](#), the best possible score for nonprofits, indicating to donors that they can confidently give to UNICEF USA as our passions and values are aligned with our supporters.

UNICEF USA's [reported \(PDF\)](#) program expense ratio of 86 percent means we are a highly efficient charity, as defined by independent monitors. For every dollar spent, 86 cents goes directly toward helping children; we spend about 12 cents on fundraising costs and just under 2 cents on administration.

[View our Annual Report for Fiscal Year 2025 here.](#)



[View Charity Navigator Rating](#)



[View GuideStar/Candid Rating](#)

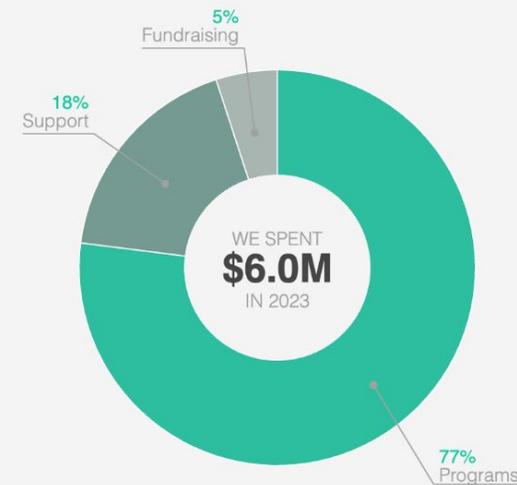
Explain the numbers clearly before linking to the documents.



FINANCIALS

HOW IS MY DONATION SPENT?

All of our expenses support our mission of ending violence and exploitation through dynamic, community-led initiatives. We're more focused than ever, investing in work that directly protects vulnerable communities and the ecosystems in which they live.



DON'T JUST TAKE OUR WORD FOR IT

We're a 501(c) 3 non-profit and we're externally audited. You can download our financial documents below.

2023

[2023 Financial Statement](#)

2022

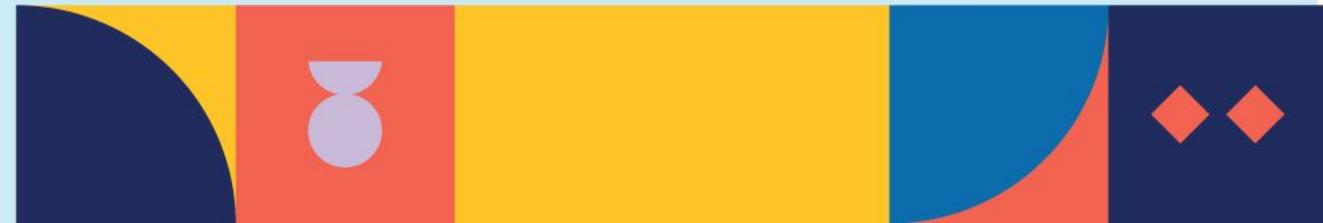
[2022 Financial Statement](#)



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NON-PROFIT PLAY 4

Promote third-party ratings if you have them, but always show a clear spending breakdown and publish your financial reports.





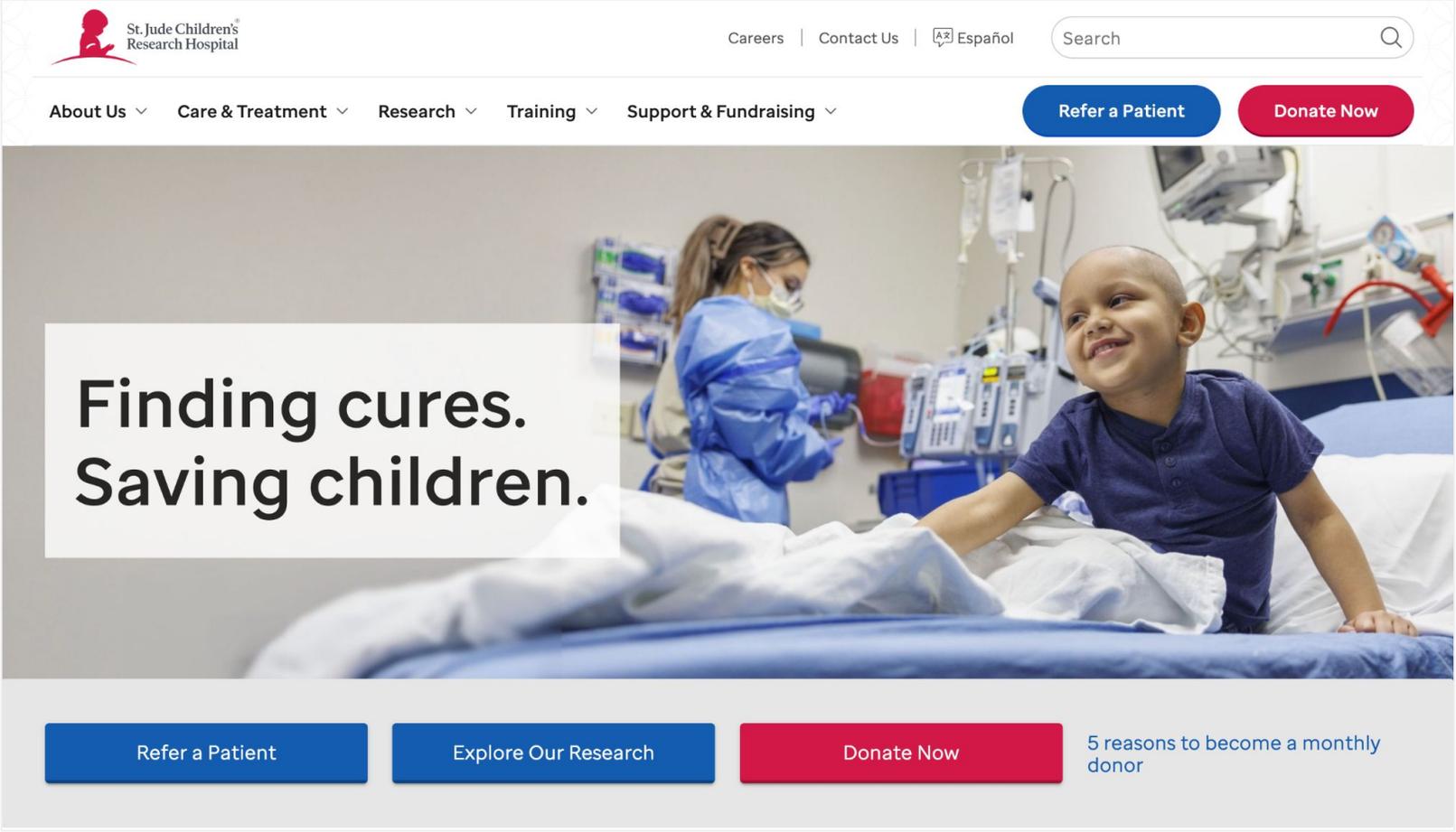
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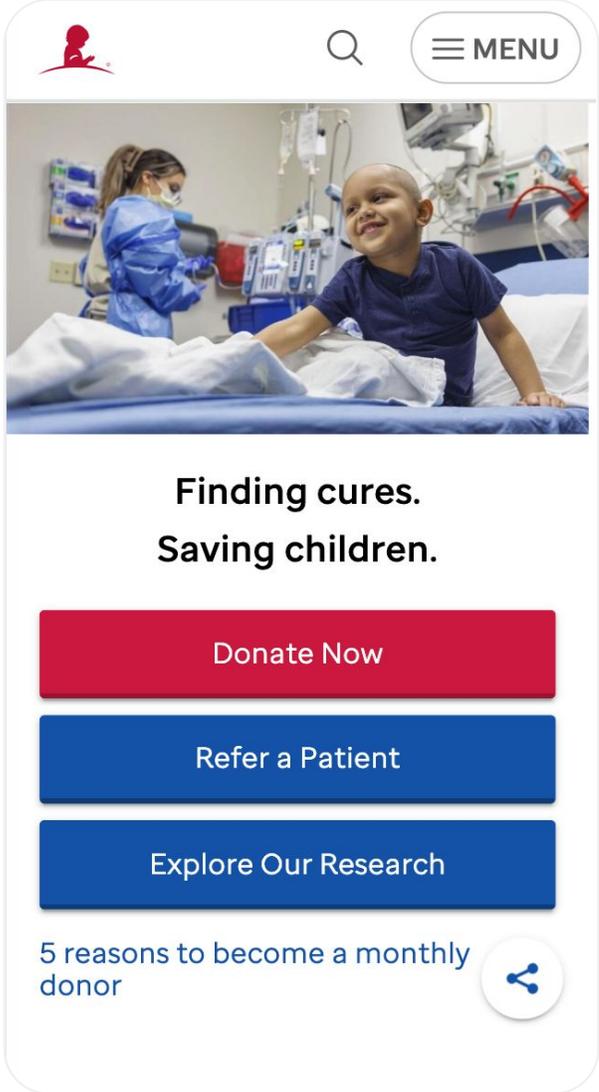
Use your CTAs to create empathy



Consistently use CTAs to guide the user and reflect their journey.



The desktop view of the St. Jude Children's Research Hospital website features a navigation bar with the logo, links for Careers, Contact Us, and Español, a search bar, and a menu. Below the navigation are dropdown menus for About Us, Care & Treatment, Research, Training, and Support & Fundraising. Two prominent CTAs, 'Refer a Patient' (blue) and 'Donate Now' (red), are positioned above a large hero image of a smiling child in a hospital bed. A white text box on the left of the hero image contains the text 'Finding cures. Saving children.' At the bottom of the hero image, there are three CTAs: 'Refer a Patient' (blue), 'Explore Our Research' (blue), and 'Donate Now' (red). To the right of these CTAs is the text '5 reasons to become a monthly donor'.



The mobile view of the St. Jude Children's Research Hospital website features a navigation bar with the logo, a search bar, and a 'MENU' button. Below the navigation is a hero image of a smiling child in a hospital bed. A white text box on the left of the hero image contains the text 'Finding cures. Saving children.' Below the hero image, there are three CTAs: 'Donate Now' (red), 'Refer a Patient' (blue), and 'Explore Our Research' (blue). To the right of these CTAs is the text '5 reasons to become a monthly donor' and a share icon.

CTAs should reflect the user goals

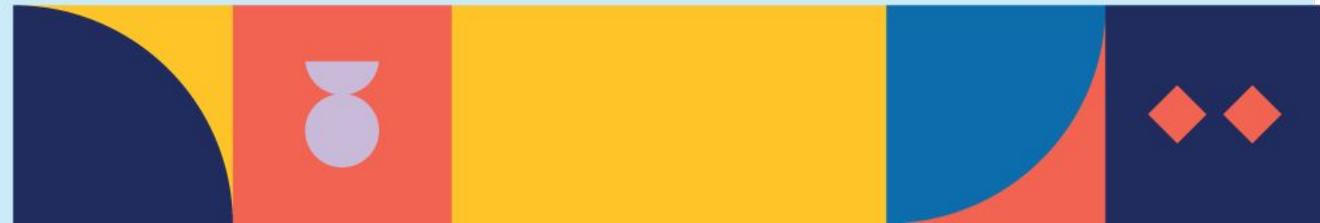
The screenshot displays the St. Jude Children's Research Hospital website. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links for 'About Us', 'Care & Treatment', 'Research', 'Training', 'Support & Fundraising', and 'More From St. Jude'. Below this, the page title 'St. Jude Care & Treatment' is visible, along with a language selector set to 'English' and a search bar. A secondary navigation bar includes 'Patients & Families', 'Treatment', 'Clinical Trials', 'Patient Referrals', and 'Careers', with a prominent red 'Refer a Patient' button on the right. The main content area features a large heading 'Diseases Treated at St. Jude'. Below the heading is a red search bar with the text 'Find a disease or condition' and a 'View full list' button. Underneath the search bar, there are two sections: 'Search by name' with a search input field, and 'Browse by first letter' with a grid of circular buttons for each letter from A to Z, plus a 'Z' button.



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NON-PROFIT PLAY 5

Make the next step clear and reflect the user journey
on every page



6 Visuals carry meaning users don't forget



Imagery and wording
can actively turn users
away.

NEWS & UPDATES

Aunt Martha's stories



January 11, 2022

Aunt Martha's at 50: A Statement from Raul Garza, Aunt Matha's President and CEO

[Read more](#)



January 11, 2022

Aunt Martha's at 50: A Statement from Raul Garza, Aunt Matha's President and CEO

[Read more](#)



November 8, 2021

Rep. Underwood, HHS Secretary Becerra and IDPH Director Ezike Visit Aunt Martha's for Roundtable on Maternal Health Disparities

[Read more](#)

NEWS & UPDATES

SCHEDULE YOUR APPOINTMENT TODAY

[Find a location](#) or call 877-692-8686.

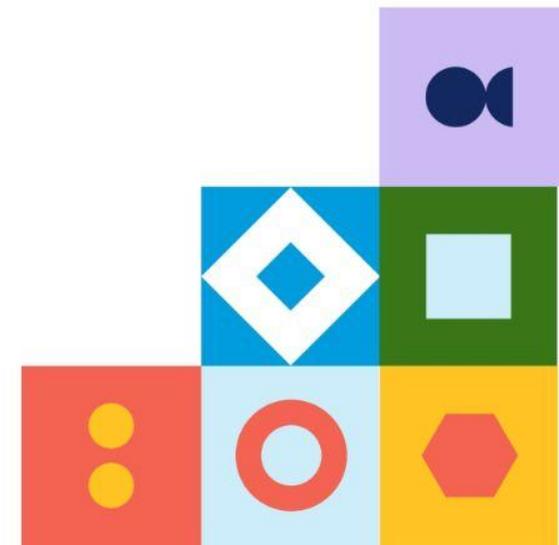
Choose imagery that builds trust, not friction

Avoid images that:

- Feature polarizing individuals without clear, positive context
- Feel manipulative or AI-generated
- Create doubt about the organization's intent or value

Use images that:

- Shows real impact and outcomes
- Feel real and authentic

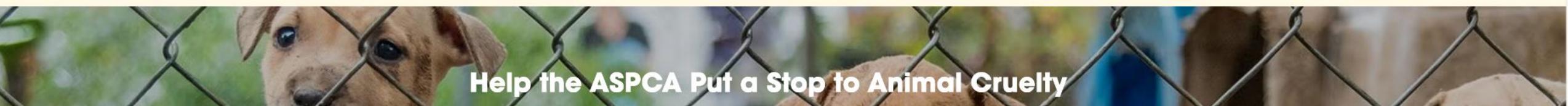
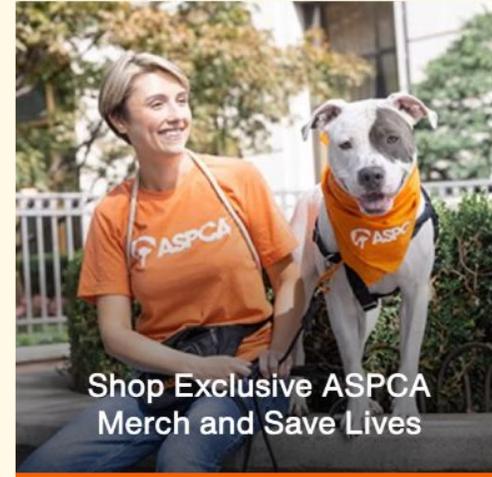
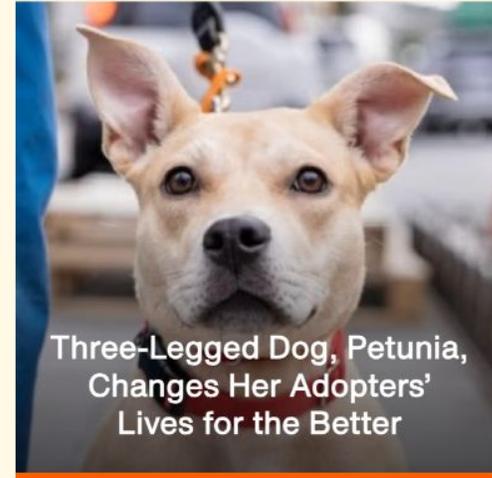
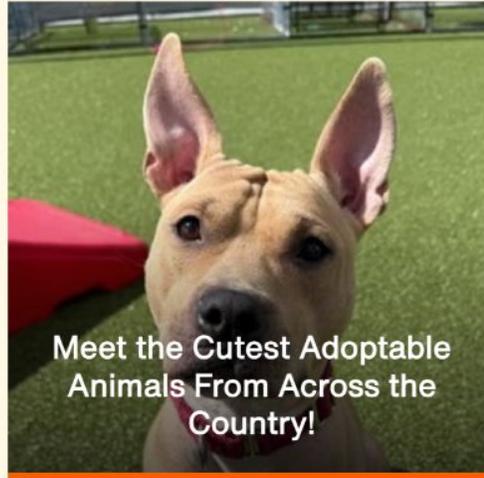


A woman with long, wavy brown hair, identified as Sarah McLachlan, is sitting on a light-colored sofa. She is wearing a dark t-shirt with a gold-colored graphic of a lion rampant. A large, light-colored dog is sitting next to her, looking up and barking with its mouth wide open. The background shows a living room with a wooden side table, a lamp with two lit shades, and a vase with flowers.

Sarah McLachlan

ASPCA Supporter

Featured Highlights

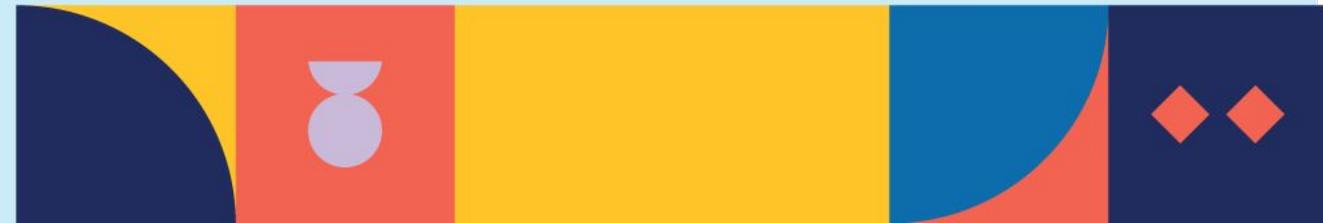




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NON-PROFIT PLAY 6

Use inclusive, outcome-focused imagery that reflects your audience





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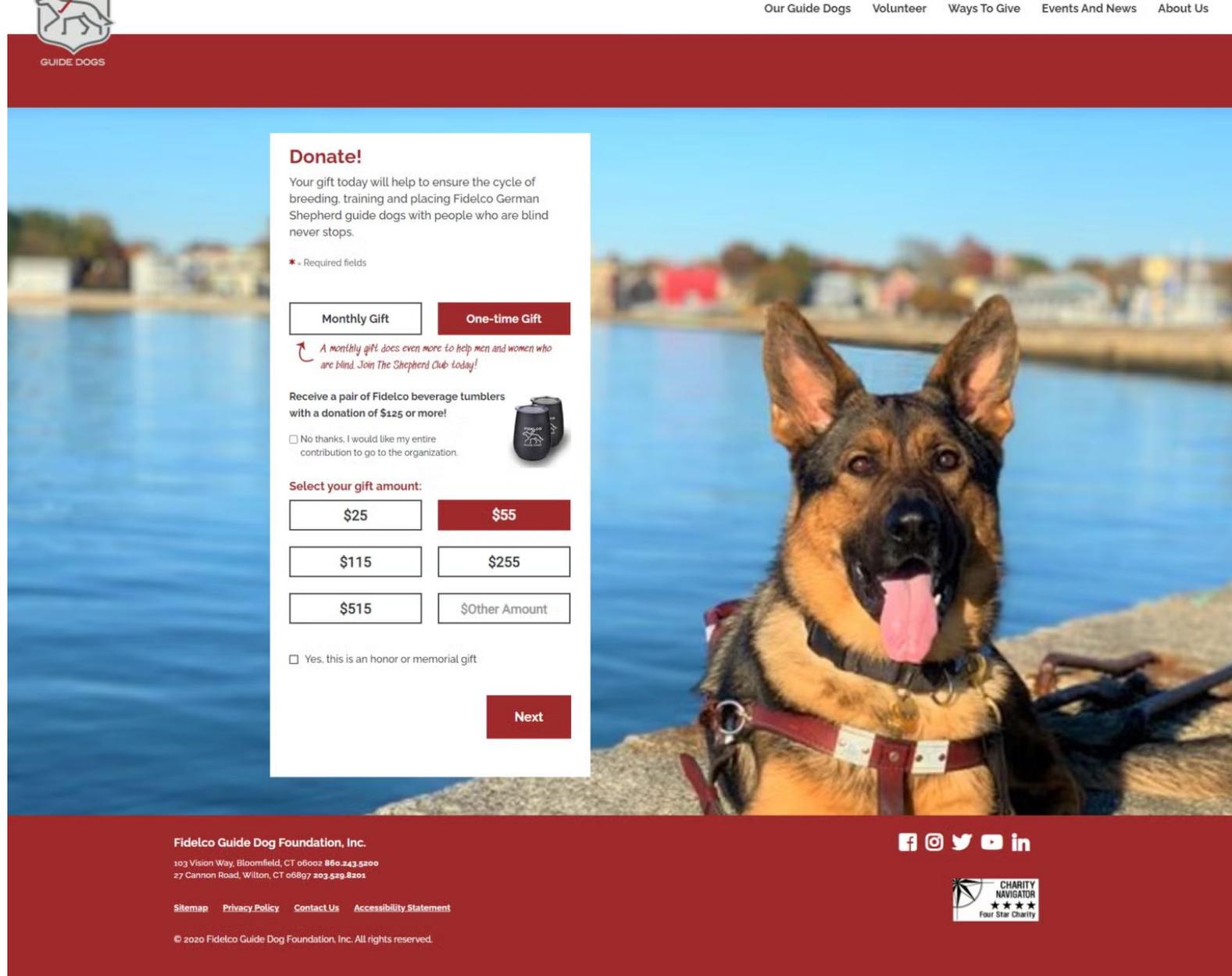
Sometimes fewer
clicks is not the
answer



Normally we want to reduce clicks, but forms are an exception.

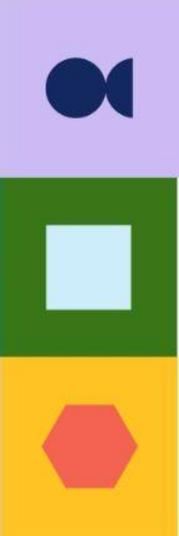
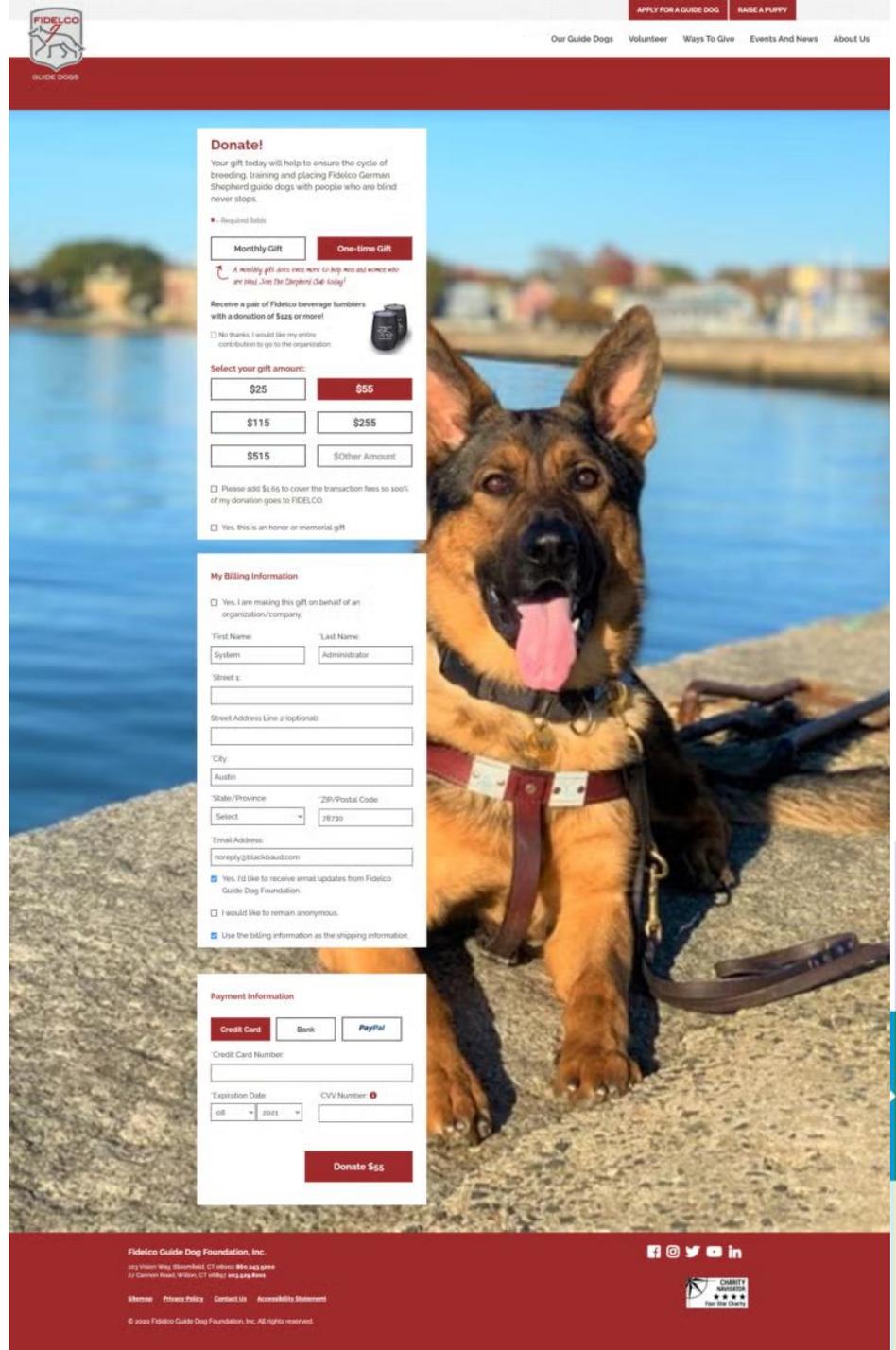
A/B study of two forms:
Multi-page form

Source: [The Engage Blog](#)



VS: A one-page form

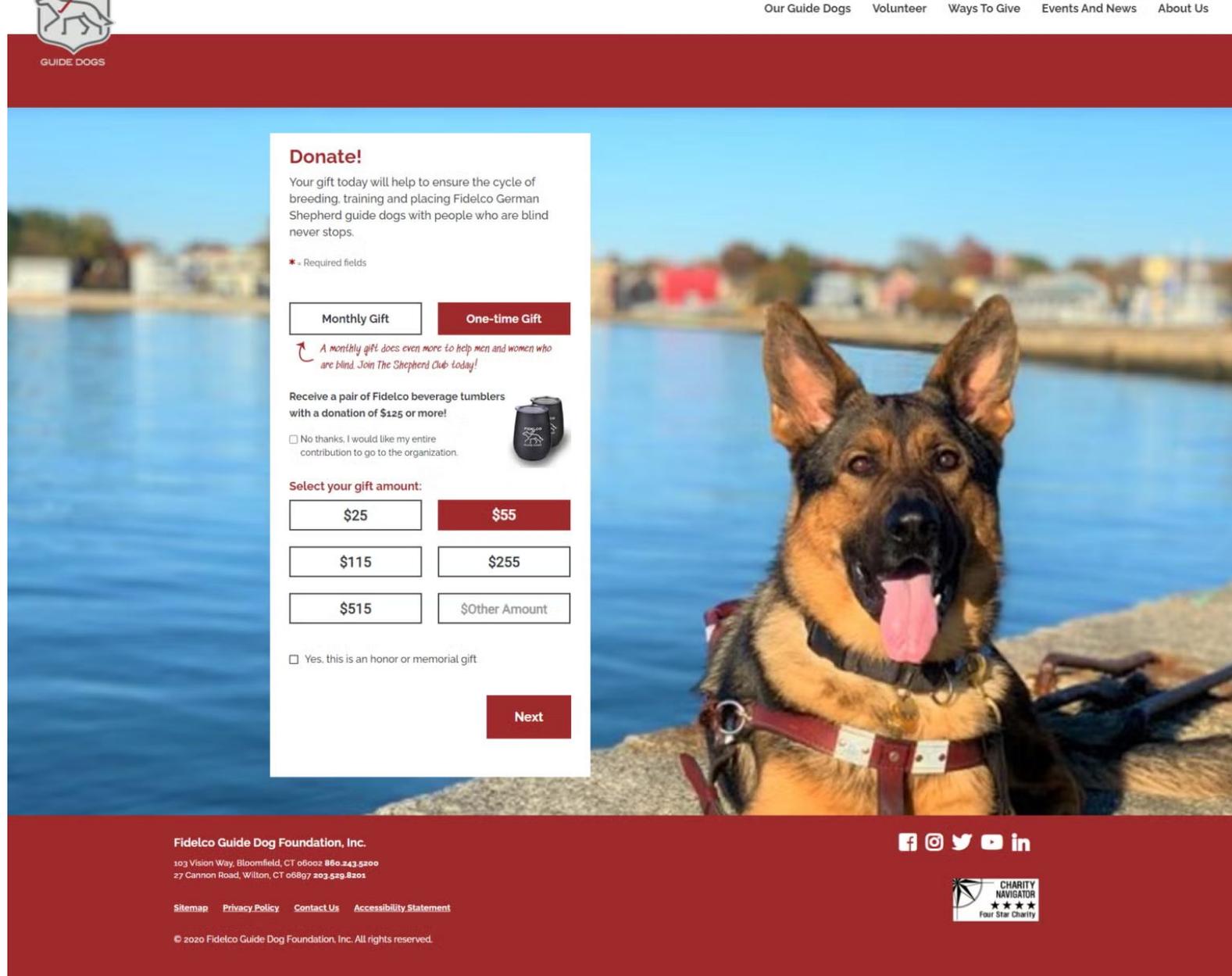
Source: [The Engage Blog](#)



Multi-step donation forms outperform single-page forms:

- +75% higher conversion rate
- +54% higher average donation

Source: [The Engage Blog](#)

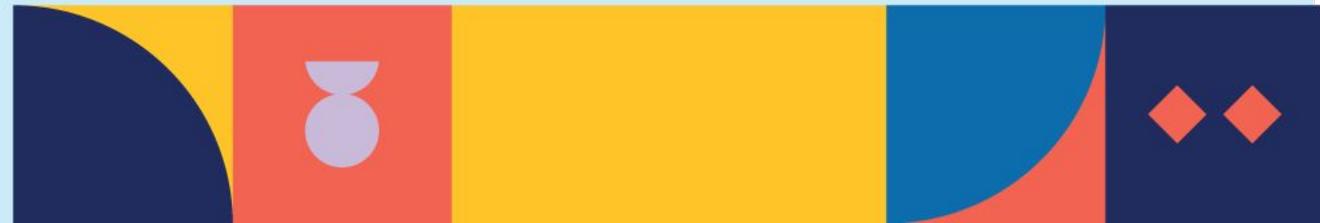




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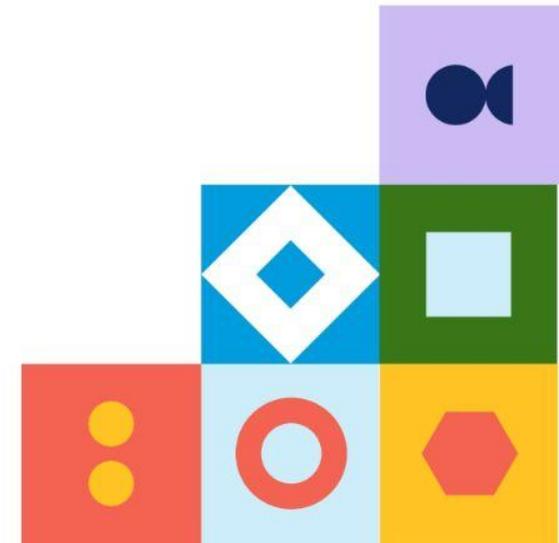
NON-PROFIT PLAY 7

Break long forms up to give users control when donating



UX Playbook

1. Make sure your navigation answers who you are and what you do
2. Test your brand and navigation via A/B test to optimize for donations
3. Show exactly how someone's donations are used
4. Promote third-party ratings and share financial reports
5. Guide the user through your site and have CTAs reflect their journey
6. Use outcome-focused imagery that reflects your audience
7. Break long forms up to give your users control



Say Hello



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janna@sandstormdesign.com

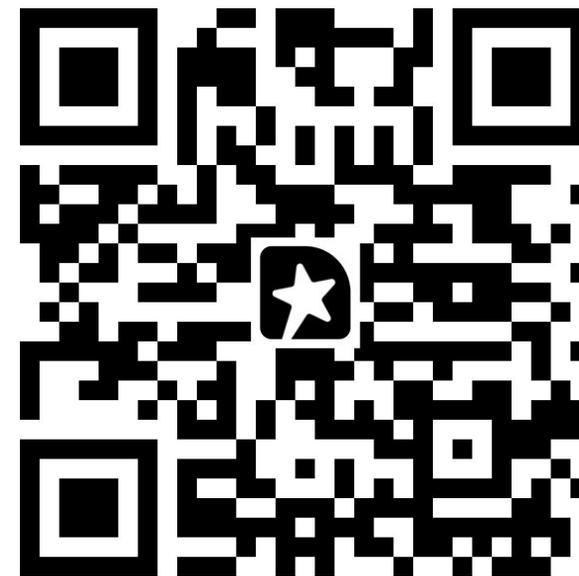


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sandstormdesign.com



We Would Love Your Feedback



Steal This Playbook: UX Lessons From Nonprofit Websites

