State of Nonprofit Digital Engagement Report 2022

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Cover images (left to right): Made to Save, Atma Connect, International Rescue Committee, NPower, UNICEF

Introduction

Nonprofits are making digital engagement a critical part of their strategy

From text messages to video chat to email, digital communications have become central to the ways we live and work. At Twilio.org, the social impact arm of Twilio, we've seen the incredible ways nonprofits use modern communications to change people's lives. They use text messaging so people can schedule appointments at their local food bank. They provide remote education using video. They deliver information on how to seek asylum to refugees over WhatsApp.

These are just a few of the many ways digital communications are reshaping the ways nonprofits deliver services and support to people around the world. To get a clear picture of the state of nonprofit digital engagement, we sought to expand our understanding of how nonprofits have evolved their communications strategies over the last couple of years – and learn more about their plans for the future.

How are nonprofits expanding the ways they use communications to serve people in their programs? What do program participants, the people nonprofits serve, want and need in order to more easily access nonprofit services? How did a global pandemic accelerate communications trends already in motion – and what comes next?

To find answers, we used data from three sources to understand the state of nonprofit digital engagement:

- The responses of 800 nonprofit employees surveyed across the US and UK

- The opinions of 1,500 nonprofit program participants surveyed across the US and UK

- Data from our own customer engagement platform

The data made it abundantly clear that nonprofits need digital communications to achieve their missions in 2022 and beyond. This report provides a detailed view of what we found, with insights into industry trends, priorities, and the voices of program participants. We'll share how nonprofits are leading in the digital space, the resources they need for continued innovation, and insights from program participants on what else they would like to see from nonprofits.

89%
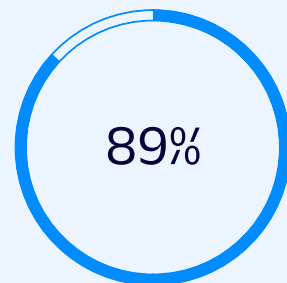
89% of nonprofits consider digital communications **critical to achieving their organization's mission**

Methodology & data sources

To create the State of Nonprofit Digital Engagement Report 2022, Twilio.org drew on three primary sources

1. Nonprofits

We worked with Lawless Research to conduct a 10-minute blind survey of 800 full-time nonprofit employees throughout the US and UK between January 24, 2022 and February 22, 2022. Respondents of the survey were responsible for managing or selecting digital communications technologies, developing communications strategies for program participants, and/or managing communications with program participants at a nonprofit, charity, or NGO with 1 or more employees.

2. Program participants

We also worked with Lawless Research to conduct a 10-minute blind survey of 1,500 nonprofit program participants throughout the US and UK between January 24, 2022 and February 22, 2022. Respondents were 18 or older, accessed benefits or services from one or more nonprofits or charities in the past 12 months, and used one or more digital communications channels to communicate with a nonprofit or charity.

3. Twilio platform data

We have included aggregated, anonymized data from trillions of interactions on our own platform, revealing the way nonprofits and social impact organizations are using digital channels to connect with millions of people around the world.

Legal disclaimer

This report contains statistical data, estimates and expectations that are based on publicly available information, as well as other information based on our internal sources or collected through our commercial relationships. These do not represent, and should not be construed as indicators of Twilio's historical or future financial performance or the actual or potential demand for Twilio's products and solutions, and such information is solely presented as context for broader market trends.

About Twilio and Twilio.org

Effective communication and engagement play a critical role in helping social impact organizations meet the increased demand for their services. Twilio started Twilio.org to be the engine behind these organizations, helping them use our technology, people, and grant funding to supercharge their reach and scale their impact. Twilio.org partners with nonprofits, social enterprises, international NGOs, and local governments to deliver support in a crisis, connect people with life-changing resources, and inspire action for the greater good.

Nonprofits outpace the private sector in digital engagement

UNICEF

Nonprofits are using digital channels to address some of the world's largest social, economic, and environmental problems

Nonprofits are working to address some of the world's largest problems such as humanitarian crises, education inequality, and access to healthcare. The stakes are high when they make adjustments to their program strategies as they work to help as many people as possible. When something clearly accelerates their impact, it feels all the more imperative to dive in.

Nonprofit program delivery looks very different today than it did even a few years ago. While organizations previously relied solely on in-person services, direct mail programs, or word of mouth, more have turned to digital program delivery to scale and improve their services. This wave of digital acceleration has impacted every part of the social impact sector, and the changes are here to stay.

According to private sector data from Twilio's State of Customer Engagement Report 2022, nonprofits are not only leading their B2C peers in digital engagement – they're also betting on personalization and two-way engagement to shape the future of program delivery. Nonprofits are using web chat to provide real-time support. They're using messaging apps to stay connected with program participants. In these and countless other ways, nonprofits are innovating, experimenting, and building on what works.

The nonprofit sector is leading the industry – not lagging behind

Percentage of engagement with program participants/customers that is digital

Nonprofits	65%
B2C companies	55%

Percentage of program participants/customers that report a good or excellent experience from nonprofits/B2C companies

Nonprofit program participants	71%
Customers of B2C companies	48%

More people are getting help from nonprofits through digital communications

511M 👤

People helped by nonprofits through Twilio digital communications in 2021

373% ↑

Increase in people helped using Twilio since 2019

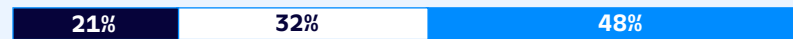108 M (2019), 266 M (2020), 511 M (2021)
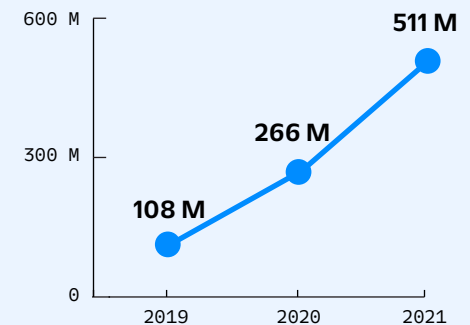
Digital leaders rank personalized communications as the top priority for 2022

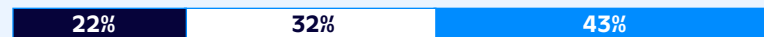How nonprofit organizations rank priority digital communications initiatives for 2022

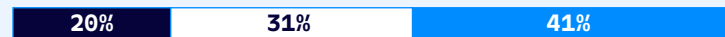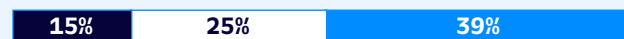**Personalization of communications**

| 24% | 30% | 53% |

On-demand services

| 21% | 32% | 48% |

Two-way digital engagement

| 22% | 32% | 43% |

Launching more digital communication channels

| 20% | 31% | 41% |

Use of machine learning/AI to improve or personalize offers

| 15% | 25% | 39% |

■ Beginning/developing   □ Well-developed   ■ Leader

Percentage of nonprofits that say digital communications is critical to their mission
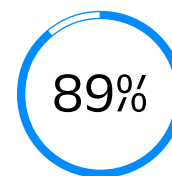
| Leader | 96% |
| Beginning/developing | 80% |

Digital leaders are emerging

Within the nonprofit sector, some organizations stand out for using digital communications in increasingly innovative ways. These "digital leaders" are more likely to adopt multiple digital channels, resource their technical teams, and personalize their engagement with the people they serve. (See page 10 for how nonprofits are self-defining their stage of digital maturity)

Digital leaders are also more likely to take advantage of more advanced digital experiences such as in-app calling, contact centers, and interactive voice response. These organizations are quickly seeing the benefits of digitizing their communications, as it improves the quality of engagement with program participants. As a result, they are prioritizing continued investment in digital communications and technical capacity in the coming years. In fact, 89% of digital leaders plan to hire technical talent in 2022.

Digital leaders are more likely to:

• Rate digital communication intiatives a critical organization priority

• Resource their technical teams accordingly

• Place an emphasis on evolving the program participant experience

89%

89% of digital leaders plan to **hire technical talent** in 2022

Digital communications maturity

Nonprofits are defining their digital communications maturity using these standards:

	Beginning	Developing	Well-developed	Leader
Channels	**Limited** Connect with program participants on 1 or 2 digital channels	**Multi-channel** Connect with program participants on 3 or more digital channels	**Omnichannel** Connect with program participants on all predominant digital channels – text , chat, video, voice, email, social media, in-app messaging	**Seamless omnichannel** Communications can move across multiple channels with a single participant without losing context
Communication Style	**One-way** Outbound-only with no ability for a participant to reply	**Two-way** Recipient can respond – organization has an automated response only	**Two-way** Program participants can respond and organization can reply in-context	**Conversational** Authentic, dynamic, with real-time engagement when needed
Personalization	**No personalization** Communications are generalized for all audience members	**Minimal** Personalization uses only basic, static information such as a person's name	**Well-developed** Personalization (uses name, location, engagement history, and other context that may be static or dynamic)	**Predictive** Personalized, dynamic communications based on individual interactions, services, and needs
Use of Program Participant Data in Communications	**Ad hoc** Data stored in disconnected systems and referenced manually	**Some data used** Limited data integration to track essential program details	**Data-driven** Communications integrated with system of record, but may require manual review	**Automated** Fully integrated to enable data-driven decision-making in real time

Digital leader highlight

National Alliance on Mental Illness

The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) is the largest grassroots mental health organization in the US. The NAMI HelpLine provides free emotional support, resources, and direction to individuals before a crisis situation escalates.

Uncertainty brought on by COVID-19 led to record-breaking call volume to the NAMI HelpLine in 2020, prompting NAMI to move from a brick-and-mortar call center environment to Twilio Flex, a cloud-based contact center. This made it possible to recruit HelpLine volunteers nationally, and to keep pace with growing demand while working remotely.

NAMI increased the number of help seekers it reached by over 75%, without sacrificing quality of care by scaling offerings to include web chat, voice and email, and a quality assurance program. With the help of digital technology, NAMI is bringing resources and support closer to individuals across the US who are experiencing or living with a mental health condition.

"When we went remote using the contact center platform, we were able to extend our hours, quadruple our volunteers, and consistently help 75% more help seekers annually – which is huge. Working with Twilio to build digital communications has made all the difference in the world. We'll continue to expand and are adding text messaging this summer."

Dawn Brown
National Director, NAMI Helpline Services

What's next:
Increased investment

Digital leaders are seeing benefits of digitizing their program offerings, and will continue to invest in building out their technical teams and advanced, data-driven capabilities. As they do so, they will continue to improve services for participants and make progress towards fulfilling their mission.

While an overwhelming majority of nonprofits believe that digital communications are critical to achieving their mission, only half report that their current digital communications strategy is effective. Ongoing investment will enable organizations to innovate further to meet more participant needs, making communications more personalized, more easily adapting to location languages, and offering more channels to meet diverse preferences.

Digital leaders in the social impact sector are paving the way for organizations earlier in their digital maturity and showcasing the outsized benefits of giving digital channels a central role in program delivery.

Year Up

Digital communications are key to improving program outcomes

World Central Kitchen

Nonprofit digital innovation shows no signs of slowing

COVID-19 accelerated a shift that was already picking up speed in the social impact sector. The ways people communicate have steadily evolved over the past decade. An increasing number of people use digital channels and tools to assist with everything from meetings at work to conversations with family to engaging with causes they care about. In turn, nonprofits have found that they need to communicate on the channels their program participants prefer if they want to grow their impact.

Organizations are adopting digital channels to create new lines of communication with the people they serve, and continuing to find new ways to increase their impact. Nonprofits are also innovating using digital solutions like cloud contact centers and automated messaging bots to serve people better, analyze their programs, and prioritize needs.

428% ↑

Increase in **digital interactions on Twilio** by nonprofits from 2020 to 2021

Nonprofits are using channels like SMS, Voice, and Email to:

1. Send automated program or appointment reminders
2. Engage with donors
3. Increase visibility of their programs
4. Provide multiple options for engagement
5. Connect with program participants 1:1

Nonprofits are using digital solutions like contact centers, interactive voice response, and bots to:

1. Route people to support
2. Answer frequently asked questions quickly
3. Provide personalized experiences
4. Allow staff to prioritize the most urgent needs
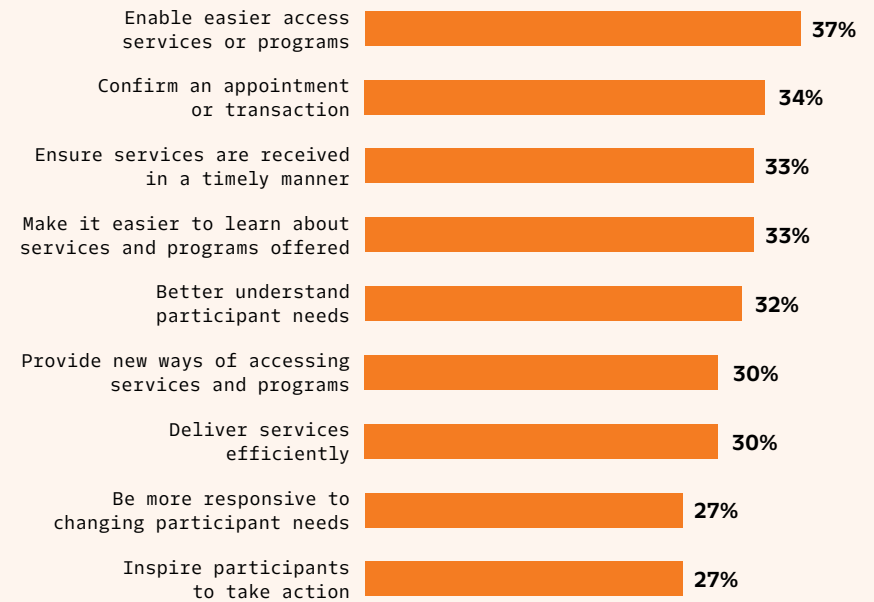5. Report program outcomes and adapt in real-time

Benefits of digital are understood loud and clear – but an opportunity gap remains

Nonprofits now see digital communications as a critical long-term platform for helping people better and faster – and their constituents concur. Nonprofits and program participants alike agree that digital communications are essential for helping people access services and discover programs.

Program participants report multiple benefits of digital communications, from the ability to confirm appointments to obtaining services in a timely manner. Yet nonprofits and program participants also agree that many nonprofits are not yet utilizing digital communications to their fullest capacity. There remains a large margin of opportunity for many nonprofits to move from merely understanding these digital benefits to adopting the solutions to realize them.

Program participants clearly feel the benefits of digital communications

Percentage of program participants that experience benefits from nonprofits using digital communications

Benefit	Percentage
Enable easier access services or programs	37%
Confirm an appointment or transaction	34%
Ensure services are received in a timely manner	33%
Make it easier to learn about services and programs offered	33%
Better understand participant needs	32%
Provide new ways of accessing services and programs	30%
Deliver services efficiently	30%
Be more responsive to changing participant needs	27%
Inspire participants to take action	27%

98%

98% of participants identified ways nonprofits are using digital communications to **better serve** them

# While many nonprofits understand the benefits of digital engagement, a gap remains in adoption

72% ── 72%

── 37%
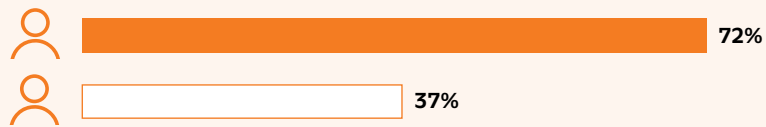
72% of **program participants** say digital communications are important in helping them **access services**

37% of **participants** say that the nonprofits they engage with are using them in this way
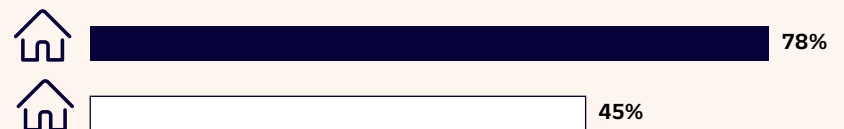
70% ── 70%

── 33%

70% of **participants** say digital communications are important in helping them **become aware of nonprofit services and programs**

33% of **participants** report that nonprofits are using them in this way

79% ── 79%

── 44%
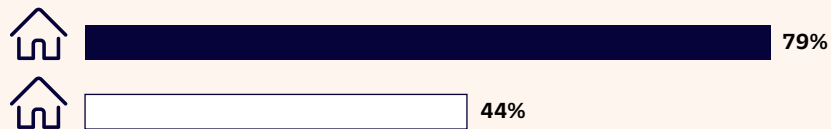
79% of **nonprofits** say digital communications are important in **providing services** and programs

44% of **nonprofits** report using them in this way
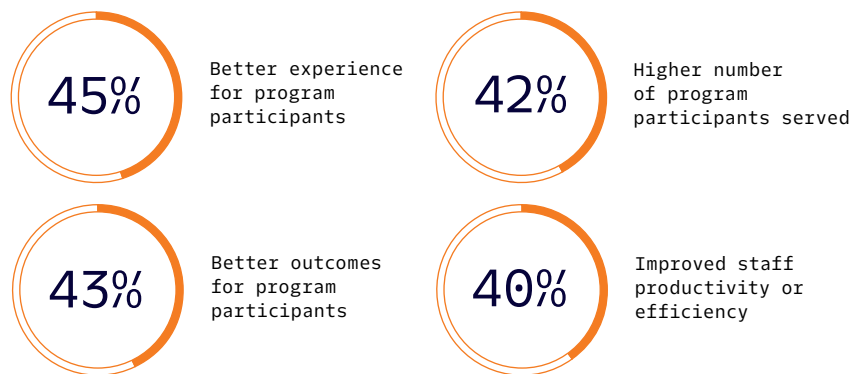
78% ── 78%

── 45%

78% of **nonprofits** say digital communications are important in **reaching new program participants**

45% of **nonprofits** report using them in this way

Nonprofits that do incorporate digital engagement achieve immediate returns

While the pandemic accelerated the shift from in-person services to digital services, nonprofits are not modernizing their communications to merely keep up with current trends. A record number of organizations are adopting new channels due to the clear acceleration of impact and improvements to their program outcomes. Organizations are seeing an increased awareness of their programs, more efficient and scalable program delivery, and increased engagement with the people they serve. Nonprofits experience an average of **3.6 benefits to their core programs** when they digitize program participant engagement.

Percentage of nonprofits that report experiencing the following benefits:

45% Better experience for program participants

42% Higher number of program participants served

43% Better outcomes for program participants

40% Improved staff productivity or efficiency

"Today, we're seeing mass adoption of digital technologies in the regions we work. The amazing developmental potential offered by such technology was especially evident as the COVID-19 pandemic required us to adjust traditional in-person programming to digitally-assisted programs that augmented those we already had in use."

Mark Summer
Sr. Advisor Technology and Data for Development, Save the Children

Digital leader highlight

Benefits Data Trust

Nearly 40 million people in the United States live in poverty, face hunger, and feel the impact of rising healthcare costs. Though there are government social programs available to provide people in need with securing food, affordable housing, and medical coverage, millions of those eligible never receive the help they need because of a lack of awareness or accessibility.

Benefits Data Trust uses data science and behavioral economics to identify and reach out to people likely eligible for these national benefits in the US, like SNAP (Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program). They utilize Twilio to send Voice and SMS-based messages to let them know of their eligibility and provide application assistance over the phone. By using preferred digital channels to both increase awareness and accessibility of their programs, Benefits Data Trust has supported the delivery of **over $7 billion in benefits and services to those that need it most**.

What's next: Closing the gap

Nonprofits are continuing to close the gap between their digital communications capabilities and what their constituents want and need. Nonprofits earlier in their digital journey are working with technical partners like system integrators to build solutions right for them when in-house technical support is lacking. Teams are also utilizing quick-deploy apps to build and test messaging workflows within minutes and taking advantage of this decreased barrier to entry.

Nonprofits who are digital leaders are also continuing to refine and improve their use of digital communications. They're adopting new channels to match their audience's needs, creating automated messaging bots to help more people, and using cloud contact centers to centralize their communications.

American Red Cross

Action Against Hunger

DonorsChoose
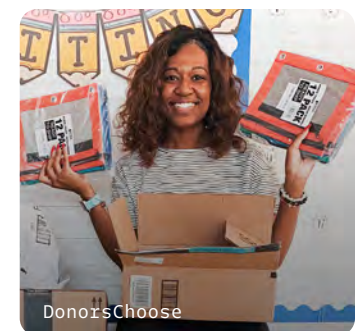
Developers are the secret sauce for digital leaders

Kinvolved

The nonprofit sector needs more software engineers to build digital engagement programs and fuel future impact

Digital innovation doesn't happen on its own. Developers play a key role in building new channels and capabilities. Currently, a divide exists between digital leaders and digital beginners around access to developer talent. Only 1 in 4 nonprofits at the beginning stages of digital maturity report having the developer talent they need. However, digital leaders report having more than twice the number of developers on staff as beginners.
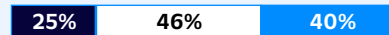
Simply put, nonprofits need more developers – either on staff or through partnerships with system integrators (SIs) – in order to build high impact digital programs. Encouragingly, 65% of organizations plan to hire developers in 2022. Yet here again, there is a divide. Among digital leaders, 89% of organizations plan to hire developers this year, while only 64% of beginners mirror these plans. A significant gap exists across all types of technical capacity, including staff members, contractors, and pro-bono support.

10M
Developers using **Twilio** to build the future of digital engagement
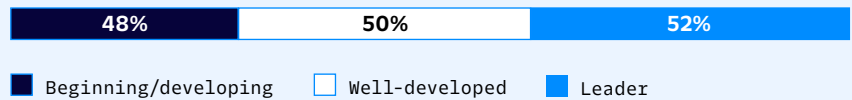
Nonprofits want to hire more developers to match the digital maturity of industry leaders

How organizations assess their current technology staffing status
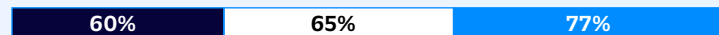
Have the developer talent they need

25%	46%	40%

Plan to hire software developers in 2022

48%	50%	52%

■ Beginning/developing □ Well-developed ■ Leader

41%

41% of nonprofits say **lack of technical support** is #1 barrier to adopting digital communications

How nonprofits currently access developer talent

Technical staff (on-site engineers/developers)

60%	65%	77%

Contractors, vendors, or consultants

48%	50%	52%
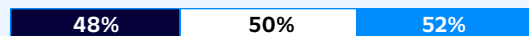
Pro bono or volunteer technical support (e.g., volunteer developers)

20%	27%	36%

■ Beginning/developing □ Well-developed ■ Leader
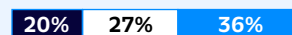
Norwegian Refugee Council

When the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) needed a contact center solution to support Syrian refugees in 2021, they quickly identified a technical capacity gap.

While NRC did not have any developers on staff, they connected with Zing, a Twilio integration partner with experience building solutions for nonprofits.

In short order, they collaborated on a solution and launched a multilingual, multichannel cloud contact center staffed by NRC agents.

Digital leader highlight:

THE TREVOR PROJECT

The Trevor Project

In the US, suicide is the second leading cause of death among young people ages 10 to 24, and LGBTQ youth are four times more likely to attempt suicide than their peers. For more than 20 years, the Trevor Project has provided free and confidential crisis intervention and suicide prevention services to LGBTQ youth via phone, text, and chat to let them know they are not alone.

To scale their programs, the organization moved TrevorText – its SMS program – onto Twilio Programmable SMS, which eliminated a 10-second delay for each message sent via their old platform. This switch, along with other actions taken by Trevor, contributed to a 22% increase in crisis contacts served in the first six months of the platform re-launch. In addition to its tech playing a crucial role in Trevor Project's ability to serve more youth, Twilio has funded development of Trevor's hotline to ensure they have the resources required to hire talent, build software, and run essential services.
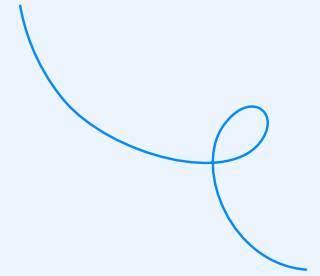
"Partners like Twilio have enabled The Trevor Project's counselors to send and receive messages from LGBTQ youth in crisis at a faster rate, improving our ability to serve higher volumes more effectively. When it comes to suicide prevention, every second counts, so this technology helps us save young lives."

Amit Paley
CEO & Director, The Trevor Project

What's next:
Tech-inclusive funding

Software developers will play an increasingly important role in nonprofit program delivery, from digital engagement to data security. As organizations expand their technical expertise, product managers, on-staff engineers, and contract engineers, like SIs, will contribute to organizational capacity.

Funders should take note: nonprofits need support from donors and institutional funders to build this essential technical capacity. Flexible donations and technical development grants rooted in trust-based philanthropy principles are essential in building digital programming. Yet too often, funders rely on project-specific or highly restrictive funding models. These grants or funds often don't include technical staff or software in "program" related costs, instead putting technical talent and software in overhead costs. This short term bias prevents organizations from building the technical skills and software solutions that will enable greater scale and program effectiveness over the long term.

With program funding that supports technology access and resources, such as grants awarded through the Twilio.org Impact Fund, nonprofits can invest in growing their digital capacity. This provides the flexibility and funding stability they need to test and develop new strategies. It also enables comprehensive impact reporting instead of narrow, program-specific metrics.

The Trevor Project

Netherlands Red Cross

Together App
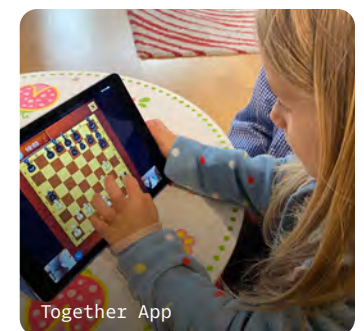
Program participants feel the personalization gap

OPUS

Nonprofits can improve program experiences by tailoring communications to participant preferences

The largest opportunity nonprofits have in meeting participants' needs is personalization. People want more personalization in the ways they interact with nonprofits, ranking it the #1 area they would like organizations to prioritize to improve program experience. Nonprofits agree, with 77% of organizations stating that personalization is a high or critical priority for 2022.

Personalized digital engagement builds trust and credibility with program participants by demonstrating consideration for a person's preferences and speaking directly to their experience. There are many ways to personalize communications, from simple tactics like communicating on their preferred channel, to more deeply synchronizing communications with program experiences. Leading organizations integrate communications directly into data systems like a CRM or customer data platform (CDP) in order to use data from past participant experiences to personalize future interactions. For example, an agent in a call center might use data from a participant's historical experience with an organization to better understand their challenges and respond accordingly.

Program participants want more personalized communications and services on-demand

Percentage of participants who report wanting the following experiences from nonprofits:

45% Personalized communications

44% On-demand services

41% More digital communication options

37% Two-way digital interactions

Nonprofits and program participants diverge in how they perceive digital experiences

While there is agreement about the need for personalization, nonprofits and program participants have different perceptions of the digital experience provided today. An overwhelming 77% of nonprofits perceive the digital experience they provide as good or excellent, while only 64% of participants agree.

Better personalization can help close this gap, starting with aligning communication channels to people's preferences. However, many organizations are not prioritizing the right channels today. In the coming year, organizations plan to overinvest in social media, while underinvesting in channels participants increasingly prefer, like text messaging.

Percentage of nonprofits and program participants who believe nonprofits provide a good or excellent experience

77% Nonprofits

64% Program participants

Planned investments don't meet participant preferences

53%

39%

53% of **nonprofits** plan to focus on **social media**
39% of **participants** want this

36%

49%

36% of **nonprofits** plan to focus on **text messaging**
49% of **participants** want this

Email continues to be a shared preference

52%

54%

52% of **nonprofits** plan to prioritize **email**
54% of **participants** want this

Generations show differing communications preferences

While older generations prefer well established channels like email, text, and phone calls, younger generations are more likely to prefer emerging channels like messaging apps, video conferencing, and webchat.

Likewise, there are some notable differences between generations in how they feel about the benefits of nonprofits using digital communications according to our survey.

People in the Baby Boomer generation are more likely to value benefits such as the ability to easily access services, make appointments, and become aware of services. This could be because Baby Boomers experienced a more distinct shift in how they engaged with nonprofits prior to the adoption of many of these digital tools. Members of Gen Z are more likely to be inspired to take action as a benefit of digital communications. Understanding these differences will allow nonprofits to better craft their engagement strategies to match their unique audience.

✉ **Baby Boomers** and **Gen X** prefer **email**

💬 **Millennials** prefer **social media** and **messaging apps**

📱 **Text messaging** is preferred across the board

Baby Boomers experience greater program accessibility, Gen Z finds inspiration

Percentage of **Baby Boomers** who report the following benefits of digital communications:
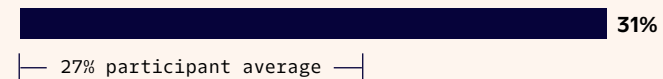
Ability to access services or programs

47%

├──── 37% participant average ────┤

Ability to confirm an appointment or transaction

43%

├──── 34% participant average ────┤

Percentage of **Gen Z** who report the following benefits of digital communications:

Being inspired to take action

31%

├── 27% participant average ──┤
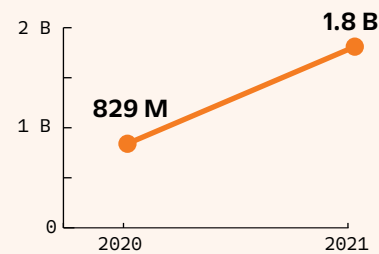
Nonprofits expanded use of digital channels to reach their program participants in 2021

117% ↑

Increase in **Voice minutes** from nonprofits using Twilio in 2021
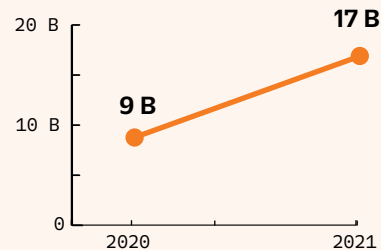

127M

Nonprofits used Twilio to **email 127 million unique recipients** in 2021

89% ↑

Increase in **messages** from nonprofits using Twilio in 2021

32M

Nonprofits used Twilio for **32 million unique video chat rooms** in 2021

Nearly 1.2 million older people in the UK say they're chronically lonely. London-based charity Age UK set out to reduce chronic loneliness with its Call in Time service, connecting older people with volunteers over the channel their participants prefer – phone calls.

Using Twilio, they automated and scaled the phone service increasing their capacity from 3,500 calls a month to 10,000 a week. All that's required from participants is a landline or cell phone, and this regular interaction fuels engagements that often become lasting friendships.

Barbara, a Call in Time member, explains, "That regular, reliable call was a godsend to me. Mel is a very special friend."
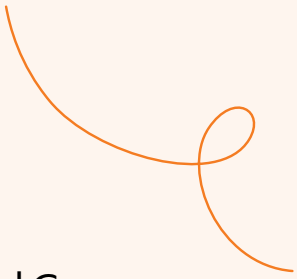
Digital leader highlight

Rode Kruis

Netherlands Red Cross

Following the pandemic, the communities of the Carribean islands of Aruba, Curacao, and Saint Maarten were significantly impacted due to the collapse of international tourism. 510.global, an initiative of the Netherlands Red Cross, needed a scalable solution that would allow them to reach thousands of people across the islands. They first looked to set up a COVID-19 helpline and share up-to-date information. Twilio proved to be the partner needed to accelerate the timeline to support communities in need on their preferred channel and in their native languages.

In just two days, the team built a crisis communications solution to send messages to people across the islands. They sent information about food vouchers to thousands using SMS. They quickly realized that the communities they were trying to reach were much more frequent users of WhatsApp. 510.global was quickly able to pivot their outreach strategy using the Twilio WhatsApp API and reached 3500% more previously unreachable people in their native language with relevant and timely information about emergency food access.

"Seeing the American Red Cross working with Twilio helped me to start exploring Twilio as a trusted connection. 510.global's mission is to use technology to reach more people, and the Twilio platform is perfect for nerds like us who want to build solutions at scale."

Maarten Van Der Veen
Founder and Strategic Lead of 510.global (a Netherlands Red Cross initiative)

What's next:
Personalized communications

Personalization in digital experiences will play a central role in nonprofit programs, requiring organizations to select the right channels, use data to individualize engagements, and deliver accessible services on demand. It will also enable nonprofits to meet the diverse preferences of the populations they serve.

As Gen Z and Millennials become a larger percentage of program participants, organizations will need to adopt emerging channels alongside established ones as part of this personalized experience. Preferences will continue to evolve over time as new channels emerge and channels that are novel today become commonplace.

AI and natural language processing will also play an increasing role in informing messaging content in the social impact sector. Digital leaders are already utilizing this technology to collect important data from program participants, route callers to relevant staff, and analyze message content to inform program strategy.

By delivering digital experiences that reflect constituent preferences, nonprofits can make programs more accessible and advance their missions.

ATL Family Meal

Several segments of the nonprofit sector pull ahead in digital maturity

UNICEF

Civil rights, advocacy, health, human services, and education organizations showcase digital leadership in 2022

Some nonprofit subsectors are pulling ahead in advancing their digital communications strategies. A closer look reveals how these subsectors are matching the unique needs and preferences of program participants they serve, as well as a variety of ways digital communications are augmenting services and improving program efficacy.
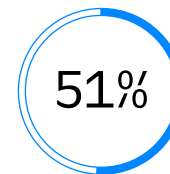

Made to Save

Civil rights and social activism

Civil rights, social action, and advocacy organizations are twice as likely as other organizations to consider themselves digital leaders. These organizations also reported high efficacy of their digital communications. Indeed, nonprofits focused on civic and social action are also twice as likely to report their digital comms strategy is extremely effective.

70%
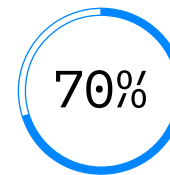
70% of civil rights/social action/advocacy program participant engagement is **digital**

Connected healthcare

In keeping with the rise of virtual health and digital patient engagement, health-related nonprofits, including nonprofit hospitals and health-systems, are most likely to use digital communications to increase their responsiveness to patients and to innovate service delivery.

51%

51% of health organizations use digital communications to **increase responsiveness** to program participants

Human services

Human services organizations report a high propensity to use digital communications to increase the efficiency of program delivery, with 56% citing efficiency as a driver. Interestingly, while human services organizations are less likely to consider themselves digital leaders today, they are just as likely to report plans to increase investments in digital communications as civil rights, social action, and advocacy organizations.

80%
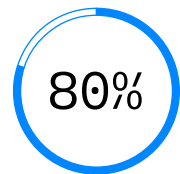
80% of civil rights and human service nonprofits plan to **increase their investment** in digital communications in 2022

Education

Education nonprofits expect that nearly three quarters of their student engagement will be digital by 2025. This high proportion of digital engagement may reflect the fact that education nonprofits commonly serve younger populations of digital natives, who report a preference for digital channels. Utilizing the right channels allows nonprofits to solve significant problems, like ensuring all students have access to education.

74%
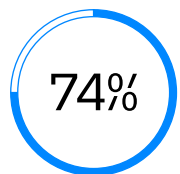
74% of student and family engagement is expected to be **digital by 2025**

"There are plenty of notification systems in the K-12 marketplace, but many fail to account for the situations of students who have a higher likelihood of being chronically absent, such as students without a permanent home. We've found that SMS is one of the most reliable ways to engage families, because even if they don't have internet connection or a smartphone, most adults in the U.S. have some type of cellular device that can receive text messages."

Patrick McLaughlin
Marketing Lead, Kinvolved

Digital leader highlight

World Central Kitchen

Founded by Chef José Andrés, World Central Kitchen is a nonprofit organization dedicated to providing quality meals in the wake of natural disasters and investing in long-term food solutions to create more resilient communities. During the pandemic, lines for their food services began to stretch down the block, with people waiting for hours for fresh food – sparking the need for a way to serve meals more efficiently.

In just a couple of weeks, World Central Kitchen developed an automated food request and delivery service using Twilio SMS and Voice. It allowed program participants to order food when and where they needed it, while fulfilling requests through local food providers and restaurants. This simple and accessible service has allowed hundreds of thousands of people in several states to access healthy food without waiting in line, freeing up time for participants and World Central Kitchen staff alike.

World Central Kitchen

What's next: Understanding participant behaviors

In the coming years, nonprofit organizations of all types will increasingly rely on digital communications to improve program delivery. Digital leaders in civil rights, social action, healthcare, and advocacy organizations have already showcased the power of using digital communications strategically to better understand their audience and spur them to action, such as making a plan to vote or to visit the doctor.

Democracy Works used SMS to send voter registration forms and maps of the local polling place to eligible voters and encouraged them to vote. After a survey designed to understand the patient's behaviors, UCSD School of Medicine sent personalized, timed nudges to patients to remind them to take their medication or encourage healthy eating behaviors.

Armed with a deep knowledge of their audience's motivations and preferences, sector leaders are selecting the right channels and then creating messages that will best nudge their behaviors. Humanitarian organizations are also making it mission-critical to understand the channels their program participants prefer, and build trust and credibility into their messages, as every message delivered successfully means one more person has access to life-changing resources.

SMASH

Cell-Ed
Cell-Ed

Conclusion

Nonprofits are building the future of program delivery

As audiences increasingly rely on digital communications, nonprofits must have the right tools and platforms in place.

Over the last few years, the social impact sector demonstrated that digital communications can enable organizations to serve more people in record time. With clear benefits, nonprofits are leading the charge in adopting new channels and evolving their engagement strategies.

While much has been accomplished, nonprofits still have many opportunities to better understand the preferences and experiences of program participants in order to better serve them. Amid the growing need for more advanced capabilities and personalization across the sector, developers are continuing to prove they are key to furthering this innovation.
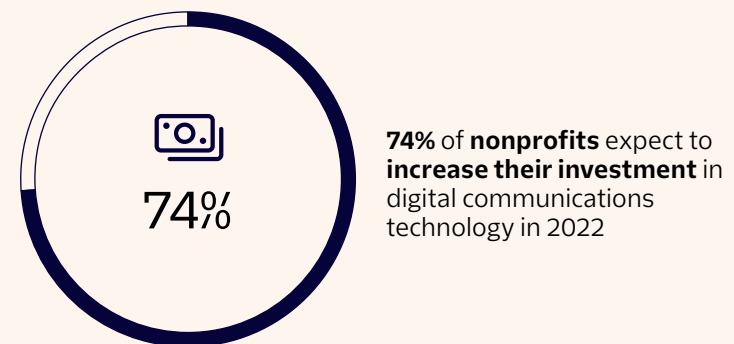
It is no surprise that 3 out of 4 nonprofits are prioritizing increased investments this year, with 92% of digital leaders increasing their investments. Nonprofits see the importance of continued digital growth, and will use these investments to bolster their services and programs in 2022 and beyond. By all indications, future nonprofit programs will largely rely on digital communications – meaning that the time to build is now.

Appetites for digital engagement are growing

75%

74%

75% of **nonprofits** say their program participants would like them to provide more digital communications options
74% of **program participants** agree

The time to build is now

74%

74% of **nonprofits** expect to **increase their investment** in digital communications technology in 2022

Partnership to End Addiction

"Twilio powers everything we do. We were drawn to Twilio because of the omnichannel communication to reach the most disenfranchised populations."

Fred Muench
President, Partnership to End Addiction

Digital leader highlight

Debt Free London

At the onset of the pandemic in 2020, Debt Free London had to close the doors to its physical advice centers overnight. They needed to support their clients remotely while also coordinating the involvement of 21 partner organizations – all without consistent IT infrastructures. Some teams used webchat, while others utilized WhatsApp via personal numbers.

Working with Ciptex, a Twilio solutions integrator and partner, Debt Free London built a custom solution on Twilio without needing a vast in-house technical team. Within days, Debt Free London deployed a modern contact center to distribute messages through multiple channels, supporting native web chat, video, WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger, email, and SMS. Call recordings enabled trainees and advisors to learn more about the needs and preferences of those they served. Thanks to their new digital freedom and accessibility, Debt Free London was able to **hire more staff and dramatically extend their opening times** to be available 24/7, helping more people in the UK with free financial advice when they need it most.

What's next:
Engagement platforms

As nonprofits continue to adopt numerous digital channels, disaggregated services and siloed software platforms make it difficult for nonprofits to provide a cohesive, personalized experience for program participants. There is an emerging need for engagement platforms that are able to manage all participant interactions, messaging workflows, and multiple channels more efficiently.

Organizations are turning to customer engagement platforms like Twilio to streamline workflows for their agents, deliver better personalization for the people they serve, and scale their impact. Our team at Twilio.org can help both nonprofits early in their digital journey and digital leaders alike to build solutions right for their goals with their current resources.

Connect with a nonprofit specialist to start building the future of nonprofit program delivery today.

🏢 **235K**

Number of organizations **building with Twilio** to reach people in more than **180 countries**

UNICEF

Made to Save

Save The Children

twilio.org
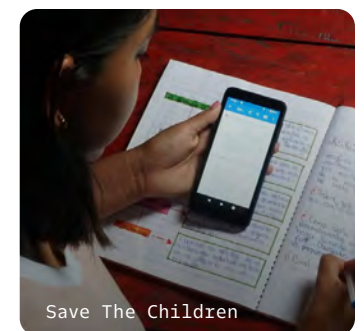
Developers all around the world are using Twilio to innovate their digital engagement strategies and reach more people.

Our team of social impact and communication experts is here to help you succeed. If you would like to learn more about what Twilio can do for your organization, contact a nonprofit specialist.

We can't wait to see what you build.