

Dreams For the Dream Center

Optimizing Donations and Branding for a Nonprofit



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Executive Summary

This is a comprehensive communication strategy designed to support the Denver Dream Center's goals of maximizing donations and brand awareness. The DDC is a nonprofit organization that serves anyone who needs help in the Denver area with homelessness, re-entry after incarceration, youth empowerment, and family support for the low-income.

While the organization maintains a strong relationship with the people it serves, donor communication strategies require greater consistency and emotional resonance in order to build broader support.

The proposed communication plan focuses on three main objectives: (1) maximizing donations through targeted social media, google campaigns, and email campaigns (2) improving brand recognition by increasing engagement on social media as well as user generated content through storytelling and feedback-based strategies, and (3) expanding wealthy donor acquisition through targeted outreach and community-driven content. When all of these strategies are implemented, the DDC should see a significant return on investment.

This plan also emphasizes the use of integrated AI in order to maximize the amount of content that the DDC can make without paying hefty fees and salaries.

Ultimately, this communication strategy is built to reflect the heart of the Dream Center while reaching new audiences, deepening donor trust, and reinforcing the transformative power of dreams. It positions DDC not only as a lifeline for those in need, but also as a mission that others will want to support, share, and sustain.



Background

There are many factors to homelessness, and the DDC's programs work in tandem to address the problem. Unfortunately, the Colorado Coalition for the Homeless has reported that there has been a 150% increase in the number of people in Colorado experiencing chronic homelessness over the last ten years—that's nearly 14,500 people currently. In Denver alone, more than 30,400 people accessed homeless services between July 1, 2022 and June 30, 2023. The reasons for this increase include family breakups, loss of employment, inability to pay rent, and substance abuse problems.

The Denver Dream Center was started years ago in order to transform Denver by restoring lives and providing hope to those in need. It distributes food to the homeless and low-income, organizes fun events for low-income communities, provides sports for youth in order to discourage gang affiliation, and it also works with reforming current and former criminals. One of the DDC's most popular activities is called Adopt-a-Block where the organization knocks on doors of low-income families and invites them outside for food and games. These programs are paramount for renewing peoples' lives and restoring dreams.

The DDC considers its stakeholders to be the city of Denver, grants, foundations, community churches, and local property owners. As for audience segmentation, religious folks, older Coloradans, wealthy donors, and volunteers are the DDC's key publics.



Situation Analysis

The DDC's current budget is \$3.2 million dollars, and they plan on using \$100,000 for advertising this year. They have never spent money on advertising before. They get a third of their funds from grants, a third from contracts, and a third from donors. In 2024, the DDC was able to get 120 people off of the street and into shelters. That's not nothing, but there's a big need that keeps growing. The DDC also has around 1,000 volunteers, although not everyone consistently volunteers. The plan is to launch a strategic digital marketing campaign that also integrates AI in order to acquire more donations.

The potential difficulty that could impede success on acquiring more donations is that there is a finite number of donors. As the years have gone on, there has been an increase in non-profits but not an increase of donors. ProPublica reports that Colorado has 37,168 tax exempt organizations, so there is a lot of competition for raising money. Furthermore, the DDC is not the most recognizable brand, so potential donors don't necessarily know about it in order to contribute to them. Additionally, the economy in 2025 isn't great, and this could compound the difficulty with asking for donations. And since the DDC hasn't done advertising before, there isn't any past data, so there will be a lot of testing when it comes to their digital marketing campaign.



Core Problem

Chronic homelessness has increased in Denver, and if the DDC can't get more resources, it will continue to worsen.

Goal

To increase donor engagement and financial support by building a more emotionally resonant, community-driven brand presence for the Denver Dream Center.

Objectives

Objective 1: Increase online donations to the Denver Dream Center by \$250,000 within one year through a targeted email and digital media campaign on Facebook and Google.

Key Details:

- Audience: Faith-based Coloradans aged 30–65 with above-average income
- Strategy:
 - Apply the *Journal of Business and Psychology* finding that donations increase when donors are first asked if they want to know more about the charity
 - Integrate AI tools like ChatGPT to generate content and assist with copywriting
- Measurement: Track donation growth through web analytics and CRM systems

Objective 2: Revitalize the DDC's brand recognition by increasing Instagram engagement by 30% and Facebook engagement by 10% within six months.

Key Details:

- Strategy:
 - Leverage user-generated content (UGC), following the *Journal of Marketing* study showing that UGC can transform donors into brand evangelists
 - Encourage volunteers to take and post photos/videos at DDC events using branded hashtags (e.g., #DreamStories, #DDCDenver)
 - Motivate volunteers to ask friends and family to share their posts
 - Ensure every comment is acknowledged to foster connection and community
- Measurement: Engagement metrics via platform insights (likes, shares, comments, saves)



SWOT

Strengths

- **Strong Mission and Purpose:** The Denver Dream Center has a clear, impactful mission—*rescuing people, rebuilding lives, and restoring dreams*—that resonates emotionally with donors and volunteers, motivating involvement.
- **Holistic Programs:** Initiatives like Positive Pathways, Street Team, and THRIVE address both immediate crises and long-term needs, fostering comprehensive community support.
- **Established Community Relationships:** Partnerships with local organizations and faith groups increase reach, credibility, and the ability to mobilize resources quickly.
- **Volunteer Engagement:** A robust volunteer base expands impact and builds a strong network of local advocates.
- **Diverse Funding Streams:** Multiple income sources—donations, events (Annual Gala), Amazon wish lists, and program-specific campaigns—help ensure operational sustainability.

Weaknesses

- **Limited Marketing Resources:** Budget constraints restrict paid advertising, content creation, and tech adoption, making it difficult to compete with larger nonprofits for attention.
- **Volunteer Dependency:** Heavy reliance on volunteers may lead to inconsistent service or burnout, especially for critical roles.

- **Limited Brand Awareness Beyond Core Community:** Recognition may be high among beneficiaries and local partners, but broader donor visibility (especially outside Denver) is low.
- **Funding Instability:** Annual fundraising can fluctuate; reliance on specific donors or events adds unpredictability.

Opportunities

- **Digital Marketing Growth:** Online campaigns and social platforms provide cost-effective ways to expand reach and engage new audiences.
- **Acquisition of Major Donors:** Targeted outreach to high-capacity donors or corporate sponsors could yield significant new funding streams.
- **User-Generated Content for Branding:** Authentic testimonials, photos, and videos from clients and volunteers can humanize the brand, build trust, and amplify reach—especially if incentivized or part of a campaign.
- **AI and Automation Tools:** Adoption of AI-driven content, fundraising platforms, and CRM could streamline processes and increase engagement.
- **Partnership Expansion:** New collaborations with local businesses, schools, and faith communities could drive both awareness and resources.

Threats

- **Economic Instability:** Economic downturns, inflation, or changes in charitable tax incentives could reduce giving.
- **Donor Fatigue/Attrition:** Major donors may shift priorities or lose interest, especially if not meaningfully engaged.
- **Competition:** Similar nonprofits may target overlapping donors, volunteers, or grant sources, increasing competition for resources.
- **Volunteer Fatigue:** Shifts in workforce dynamics (post-pandemic, remote work, etc.) may reduce volunteer availability.
- **Regulatory and Policy Changes:** Shifts in nonprofit regulations, fundraising laws, or donor privacy rules could add compliance challenges.
- **Negative Publicity:** Any mishap or miscommunication could spread quickly online, harming reputation.





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Xavier University

Interview with Dr. Ron Rex, Managing Partner of Synchrony, Consulting Firm

As part of my research, I spoke with Dr. Ron Rex, a business consultant who specializes in modern branding and marketing. His insights revealed key challenges and opportunities facing the Denver Dream Center’s communication strategy.

1. Branding & Donor Attention

When it came to branding, Dr. Rex stated that “99 out of 100 nonprofits are in the same boat.” They’re in competition for share of mind on the donor.” In his view, the Denver Dream Center likely faces the same challenge, which is standing out in a crowded nonprofit landscape. He emphasized the importance of building memorable and consistent messaging to maintain donor engagement.

2. The Case for AI-Supported Marketing

Dr. Rex strongly advocated for nonprofits to adopt AI-supported tools to streamline messaging and content production. He mentioned that platforms like ChatOn can generate high-quality content in minutes, allowing staff to make edits rather than start from scratch. He argued this hybrid human-machine model improves efficiency and quality. He said, “If it’s powered by humans, it’s out of date. It needs to be powered by humans and machines.” He also explained that many nonprofits lack real-time, ongoing communication with donors, leading to lapses in giving.

3. Fragmented Marketing Ecosystems

Dr. Rex critiqued the common practice of siloing marketing tasks across multiple people or vendors. This can create internal conflict and inconsistency in message delivery. Instead, he emphasized the need for an integrated, ecosystem-based approach. He said, “Marketing should be managed as one ecosystem. Otherwise, it’s a waste of time.”

4. Lessons from Business History

Dr. Rex cited *The Innovator's Dilemma*, highlighting that machine-led revolutions in business are often resisted at first, but they are always eventually adopted across industries. He positioned AI not as a threat, but as the natural evolution of communication and storytelling in the nonprofit sector.

5. Donor and Influencer Strategy

When asked about acquiring a wealthy donor base, Dr. Rex pointed out the importance of combining traditional outreach with modern data tools and influencer marketing. While cultivating major donors remains important, he advised not to rely on a single source of funding. He said, “Spend time introducing big donors. But what happens when that big donor goes away?”

He also explained that a relationship with high-net-worth donors does not necessarily need to exist prior to outreach. With AI tools, nonprofits can now research and generate prospect lists that align with their mission. He said, “Ask AI to identify the top donors in the Denver area.”



Key Publics

1. Faith-Based Coloradans

- **Demographics:** Adults aged 30–65 in Colorado with an interest in charitable giving and faith-based causes.

- **Psychographics:** These individuals are motivated by a sense of religious duty and desire to help.
- **Targeting Strategy:** While platforms like Facebook don't allow direct targeting by religion, interests such as Christian media, volunteering, philanthropy, and charity can serve as effective proxies. Use exclusion filters (e.g., Richard Dawkins Institute) to refine outreach.
- **Self-Interest Framing:** Emphasize how giving helps fulfill faith-based values, such as serving the community. The DDC can show a tangible impact of donations through storytelling.

2. High-Income Donors and Foundations

- **Demographics:** Private foundations and philanthropic organizations in Colorado.
- **Target Institutions:** Sturm Family Foundation, Denver Children's Foundation, Community First Foundation, Recovery First Foundation, All In Mile High Fund, Caring For Denver Foundation, Colorado Health Foundation.
- **Motivations:** Community impact and brand reputation.
- **Self-Interest Framing:** Position DDC partnerships as *investments in community transformation* and opportunities for public recognition and positive PR.

3. Affluent Older Adults (Ages 30–64)

- **Demographics:** College-educated, household income of \$50,000 and above, aged 35–64.
- **Psychographics:** Value purpose, legacy, and creating social good through their resources.
- **Targeting Strategy:** While the ideal donor may have an income of more than \$100,000, and could be 35 and older, platforms like Facebook may do perform better with a wider filter to avoid overly narrowing audience sizes.
- **Self-Interest Framing:** Emphasize how giving supports meaningful causes, strengthens the community, and aligns with their values.

Note: Targeting users with \$50k or more in income and 30 and older provides a larger pool while still aligning with the profile of potential donors who have discretionary income. Retargeting campaigns can further refine outreach over time.

4. DDC's Volunteers

- **Demographics:** Over 1,000 active volunteers from diverse backgrounds and age ranges.
- **Psychographics:** Altruistic, community-driven, loyal to DDC's mission.
- **Strategic Role:** Volunteers are prime candidates for **user-generated content (UGC)** campaigns. Their social media reach can enhance DDC's visibility and donor trust.
- **Engagement Strategy:** Encourage volunteers to share photos and stories from DDC events using branded hashtags. Recognize top ambassadors publicly to motivate participation.



Primary Message

Public 1 Message: “Together, we can meet people where they are—and help them rise again.”

Hashtags: #DenverDreamCenter #RestorationStartsHere

Public 2 Message: “Your generosity has the power to move mountains for the people of Denver.

We can’t change things without your help.” Hashtags: #DenverDreamCenter

#MakeDreamsComeTrue

Public 3 Message: “Without you, our programs couldn’t function. Thank you for your continued support. Because of you, Denver is a better place.” Hashtags: #DenverDreamCenter

#StrongerTogether #MakeDreamsComeTrue

Public 4 Message: “Your story inspires others—share it to help us restore even more dreams.”

Hashtags: #StoriesThatRestore #DenverDreamCenter #MakeDreamsComeTrue



Big Idea

Make dreams come true in Denver—through community-powered strategies that invite voices, build trust, and transform support into lasting change.

- Theme Strategy Name: *Community-Powered Change*
- Core Insight: People are more likely to give when they feel seen, heard, and personally invested.
- Visual Campaign:
“My Dream for Denver” – a user-generated content series of volunteers, donors, and community members sharing their hopes for the city and how the DDC fits into those dreams.
- Slogan/Hashtags:
#DreamsInDenver | #MakeDreamsComeTrue | #MyDreamForDenver



Strategies

Strategy 1: Invite Opinions Before Asking for Donations

- **Insight:** Research from *Journal of Business and Psychology* supports the *foot-in-the-door* technique—donors give more when first asked for their input.
- **Tactics:**
 - Launch Facebook and Google ads that ask “What’s your dream for Denver?” or “Which of these causes matters most to you?”
 - Follow with a personalized donation ask after engagement.
 - Use email marketing software (e.g., Mailchimp, ConvertKit) to ask for opinions, then follow up with donation links.
 - Use AI tools like ChatGPT to write engaging, empathetic copy and subject lines.

Strategy 2: Build Relationships with Wealthy Foundations

- **Insight:** High-capacity donors want personal connection and a clear mission fit.
- **Tactics:**
 - Email a curated list of Colorado-aligned foundations with a brief, values-based introduction and link to your mission page.
 - Follow up via phone 5–7 days later to request a meeting or introduction call.
 - Offer to send a PDF summary of the impact report or success stories.

Strategy 3: Encourage Brand Evangelism Through User Generated Content

- **Insight:** Based on Glossier’s brand model. User-generated content is more trusted and shareable than traditional promotions.
- **Tactics:**
 - Launch a social media challenge with a snappy hashtag, such as #MyDreamForDenver and invite volunteers, supporters, and even staff to share why they support the DDC, using a short reel or photo post.
 - Feature top user generated content posts on DDC’s account as “Community Spotlights.”
 - Provide photo prompts, hashtag kits, and content guides to make participation easy. Photo prompts are prompts to help people know what to post about. It’s up to the DDC what they want, but ideas include taking pictures of themselves at DDC events or taking a picture of something that symbolizes hope. Hashtag kits are a group of hashtags that the DDC favors and wants used on their platforms. Content guides are items that help people know what to say about the DDC on posts, which tones they should stick to (hopeful and uplifting), and how to post their photos (without filters in order to be authentic).

Strategy 4: Cultivate a Warm and Interactive Social Media Presence

- **Insight:** People are more likely to donate and follow when they feel seen and responded to.
- **Tactics**
 - Assign someone (or a team) to respond to every comment and thank users for likes and shares.
 - Use Instagram Stories for polls, Q&As, and behind-the-scenes glimpses into DDC programs.
 - Celebrate milestones with short “thank you” videos from DDC staff or volunteers.

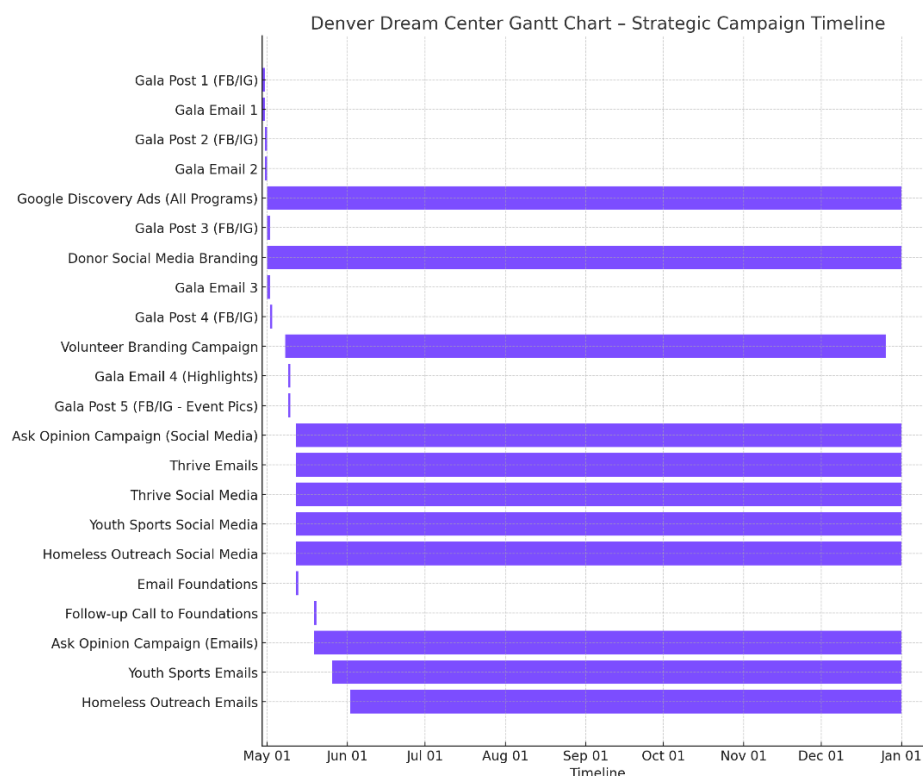


Implementation Plan: Strategy 1 – Targeted Digital Giving Campaign

Objective:

Launch a data-driven, opinion-first digital ad campaign on Facebook and Google to engage faith-motivated Coloradans, collect their input, and increase donations to DDC.

Calendar:



Step-by-Step Implementation:

1. Set Up & Tracking

- Create and configure Facebook and Google Ads accounts.
- Install Facebook Pixel and Google Tag Manager on the DDC website to track conversions (donation completions, button clicks, etc.).

2. Audience Building

- Build custom audiences for website visitors (e.g., those who clicked “donate” but didn’t finish).
- For Facebook, create core audiences for adults 30+ in Colorado, \$50k+ income, with interests in Christian media and philanthropy (Click to Donate, Charitable Organizations, Donation, Philanthropy, Charity and Causes, Volunteering, Passion of the Christ, Keeping the Faith, Nativity Story, and Prince of Egypt)., Also exclude non-religious segments (e.g., Richard Dawkins).
- Use lists of Christian apps and websites in Google Discovery Ad targeting.
- Here’s a full list of apps and websites:

Christian Apps (for Google Discovery Ad Targeting)

YouVersion Bible App (Bible by Life)

Church Bible Gateway

Blue Letter Bible

Logos Bible Study Tools

Echo Prayer

Pray.com

Glorify

Abide

Dwell

Church Center

RightNow Media

BibleGateway.com

YouVersion.com

BlueLetterBible.org

BibleStudyTools.com

Logos.com

ChristianityToday.com

TheChristianPost.com

CBN.com (Christian Broadcasting Network)

RelevantMagazine.com

Crosswalk.com

DesiringGod.org

OurDailyBread.org

GotQuestions.org

Bible.org

iBelieve.com

RightNowMedia.org

Saddleback.com

FocusOnTheFamily.com

Ligonier.org

TheGospelCoalition.org

3. Campaign Structure

- **Awareness Campaign:** Launch a Facebook campaign with short explainer videos showing DDC's impact, casting a wide net for initial interest.
- **Traffic Campaign:** Create a "Request Opinion" ad set inviting input on community needs (foot-in-the-door technique).
- **Sales Campaign:** Develop ad sets for each DDC program, directly asking for donations and optimizing budget allocation to the best-performing ads.

4. Creative Development

- Work with a graphic designer to produce engaging images and videos tailored for each platform and campaign objective.
- AI-generated visuals may be used as supplements, but custom content is preferred for authenticity.

5. Budget Allocation

- Allocate \$100,000 annual ad budget (\$8,333/month), evenly split between Facebook and Google (\$4,166 each) for A/B testing and optimal channel performance.

6. Optimization & Reporting

- Monitor results weekly using ad platform analytics and web tracking tools.
- Adjust creative, targeting, and spend based on performance data (e.g., engagement, donation conversions, audience growth).
- Prepare monthly summary reports for DDC leadership.



Tactic Creation and Strategy Brief

Key publics, including motivating self-interests:

Religious Coloradans, especially middle-aged religious people interested in giving, community service, and charity. The self-interests would be fulfilling religious values through giving, helping the homeless, and making a visible positive impact.

Older Americans (ages 30–64) with college degrees and above-average income are also key. They have the financial resources and would like to see a positive change to the community.

DDC Volunteers are vital brand ambassadors who can use their social platforms to increase awareness. Their self-interest lies in feeling part of a greater mission than their scheduled volunteer days.

Secondary publics:

Wealthy foundations (e.g., Colorado Health Foundation, All In Mile High Fund, etc.)

Secondary messages:

Homelessness in Colorado has increased 150% in the last decade. We need your help.

The DDC's programs work in tandem to address the homeless crisis. We serve thousands of people annually in Denver with food, clothing, housing, job training, spiritual care. We reach out to low-income communities, and your donations are what make the difference.

Your donation rescues people from homelessness, addiction, poverty—and it restores their dreams.

Volunteers make the work possible. Share your experience to inspire others.

Action desired from publics:

Donate to the Denver Dream Center

Share about DDC and its programs in order to amplify reach on social media

Attend events or volunteer

News release's tie to campaign big idea:

Promote DDC's impact and show how public support (donations, shares, and volunteering) directly better the community. This is part of the overall campaign to increase donations and visibility in Colorado.

Media contacts and email addresses:

Jen Sanders – jen@denverdc.org

Stephen Crouch – stephen@denverdc.org

News hook:

Homelessness has increased by 150% in Colorado in the last 10 years. The Denver Dream Center's programs work together to address this problem. We're launching a donor awareness to show how you can help!

Proposed headline:

"Denver Dream Center Launches Campaign to Tackle Colorado's Growing Poverty and Homeless Crisis"

Quality control

All ad copy, images, and videos will be reviewed by Stephen Crouch and Jen Sanders before being implemented. This will ensure that there aren't typos or factual errors.

Proposed lead:

The Denver Dream Center has launched a bold new campaign encouraging Coloradans to donate, volunteer, and raise awareness about the growing poverty and homeless crisis in Denver. With more than 50,000 people served annually, the DDC is calling on the public to make a difference—starting today.

SEO terms (key words or phrases):

Denver homelessness

Colorado charity donation

Faith-based nonprofit

Volunteer in Denver

Help the homeless Denver

Denver Dream Center

Opinion leaders and how they will be used (testimonials, quotes, etc.):

Testimonials from volunteers and program recipients shared on DDC's Instagram and Facebook.

Influential volunteers will be encouraged to post using hashtags like #DenverDreamCenter and #MakeDreamsComeTrue.

Pastor leaders and donors quoted in email newsletters or short social media reels.

Photos/charts/graphics:

Branded social media assets and videos made by a graphic designer and videographer

Infographics about the DDC's programs

Testimonial photos with quotes

Volunteer activity images

Where and when distributed:

News release emailed to local media, churches, donor mailing lists, and community blogs

Shared on Facebook, Instagram, and website

Timed to lead into the DDC's May 8 Annual Gala

Additional uses after publication:

Repurposed for donor follow-up emails and Instagram Stories

Included in spring donor newsletter

Condensed for Facebook Ad and Google Display Network text

Timeline/deadline:

Start Campaign by end of April 2025, or when Stephen and Jen deem appropriate.



Evaluation Criteria and Measurement Tools

Objective 1: Increase online donations to the Denver Dream Center by \$250,000 within one year through a targeted email and digital media campaign.

- **Evaluation Criteria:** Total dollar amount in online donations compared to baseline
- **Measurement Tools:** Website analytics, donation CRM system, campaign performance reports

Objective 2: Revitalize the DDC's brand recognition by increasing Instagram engagement by 30% and Facebook engagement by 10% within six months.

- **Evaluation Criteria:** % increase in engagement (likes, comments, shares, saves)
- **Measurement Tools:** Facebook Insights, Instagram Business Analytics, Hootsuite/Sprout reports

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