



THE STATE OF **SOCIAL IMPACT**

— 2025



SOWEN: THE SHORTEST DISTANCE BETWEEN DATA AND IMPACT

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This study is the first-of-its-kind examination of the social impact sector and its current state. It takes a data-driven approach to understand the current challenges and opportunities faced by individuals and organizations dedicated to improving the health, well-being, and environments around them, regardless of industry, discipline, or area of expertise. It provides a pragmatic view of where we are and stirs further debate about where we should be heading and how to best get there.

The idea took shape in early 2024, driven by a need to identify the most pressing data and technology barriers in the social impact sector. We quickly realized that no comprehensive research explored these challenges across the sector as a whole or examined the intersections between its key players—nonprofits, foundations, academia, government, and private companies.

Our collective goal is to understand whether smarter, more efficient data practices, tools, and culture drive more, better social impact.

Over eight months, we conducted 500+ hours of interviews with 120 experts, leaders, and researchers across the social impact sector. We reviewed 75 peer-reviewed studies from the past five years and distributed research to a network of 30,000 individuals in foundations, nonprofits, universities, companies, and government agencies. Throughout, we prioritized fairness, equity, and confidentiality in audience selection, data normalization, and outputs. To our knowledge, this is the most comprehensive and representative study of the social impact space to date.

Key Findings

Our results reveal a mix of opportunities, barriers, and untapped potential. While many organizations lack the tools, processes, and intentionality for peak efficiency, we also found widespread dedication to meaningful change. Key trends highlight persistent challenges like resource constraints and poor data-sharing, along with gaps such as the disconnect between leadership and frontline innovation. They also point to tailwinds like advances in AI, data maturity, and storytelling, while acknowledging headwinds like economic uncertainties and talent retention issues. Together, they present a sobering reality of both promise and frustration, or resolve and fatigue, and of significant opportunities alongside critical risks.

SPOTLIGHT

Ultimately, we must recognize that our best and brightest are not working effectively on our biggest challenges. They still lack critical data and technology tools, knowledge, processes, and best practices. To do better, we must face this reality head on, and improve.

We've distilled our findings into 10 trends critical to the sector's growth. Each trend, which probably merits its own dedicated study, is further explained and analyzed in the first part of this work. They include:

**Data Maturity
Drives Impact**

As organizations develop in their data maturity and transformation, the link between the tools, knowledge, processes and best practices and tangible, sustainable impact metrics is clear and empirically measurable.

**Resource
Constraints**

Across all sectors, and with only a few exceptions, the shortage of resources is constant, and real. It starts and ends with money, but in between, there's talent, time, partnerships, attention, and other factors that come into play.

**Time is
a Currency**

Respondents, especially executives, consistently report a lack of time for strategic planning and execution and spending their time on reactive, tactical tasks rather than mission-focused work.

**Executive
Disconnect**

Notable gaps exist between executive views of organizational capabilities and the on-the-ground realities seen by managers and staff, especially in nonprofit and foundation organizations.

**Measuring
Impact**

Most organizations still track inputs and activities rather than outputs, outcomes, and impact. The inability to demonstrate real results puts social impact leaders on the constant defense to justify investment and funds.

**The Storytelling
Imperative**

Demand for transparent impact reporting is growing across sectors. Organizations that excel in storytelling—through reports, case studies, or dashboards—often see significant funding benefits.

**Audience
Centricity**

Organizations that prioritize stakeholders in their design and delivery achieve stronger results. This audience-centric approach improves operational efficiency and aligns between activities and organizational mission and vision.

**Fostering
Innovation**

While innovation happens across all sectors, the public and nonprofit spheres often struggle with scaling innovative ideas. The challenge isn't generating ideas; it's implementing and sustaining them to drive lasting impact.

**Data Silos
Persist**

Lack of standardized definitions, collection and aggregation methods, and data sharing practices still restrict the potential for meaningful collaborations. Addressing these long standing issues can unlock significant value and impact.

**Artificial
Intelligence**

AI is transforming the social impact possibilities, yet most organizations, especially outside the private sector, are only starting to explore this potential. The need to quickly adapt is not a choice, but an imperative.

What's Next?

The sector's greatest strength lies in its people—their ingenuity, resolve, and commitment to positive change. If we can match this human capital with the right systems, tools, and cultures, we can make iterative, meaningful progress, at scale.

The next section will dive deeper into these thematic areas, and detail qualitative and quantitative findings uncovered in our work, and gathered with the help of multiple subject matter experts involved in this project. In each section we will answer three questions:

- **The What-** what is the key finding?
- **The So What-** why does this matter to us?
- **The Now What-** what can or should we do about it?

To our mind, none of the trends, themes, challenges, and opportunities identified in this work indicate a lack of tools, data, or knowledge. Rather, they are challenges of systematic solutions, economic structures of incentives, and a focus on the development and adoption of data-driven design across organizations. They are solvable at both the organizational and collective levels and in our work we offer suggested frameworks and activities that can be undertaken as a starting point for change.

But, sustainable change requires true leadership buy-in, investment, and resolve. This study is both a call to action and a blueprint for transformation.

The data support this vision. We hope, when you've finished reading, you'll share our belief that change is not only possible but already underway.



Ori Carmel, CEO
Sowen

PART 1:

10 MAJOR TRENDS



TREND 1: DATA MATURITY DRIVES IMPACT

THE WHAT

By data maturity, we are not referring to the recency of your data. Rather, we are defining it as follows:

SPOTLIGHT

DATA MATURITY
is an organization's capacity to identify, integrate, adopt, measure, and continuously improve data tools, knowledge, processes, culture, and talent into its strategic and tactical work.

The strong correlation between investment in data and stronger outputs, outcomes, and impact is evident throughout our research, and is one of the most significant takeaways from this project. Across sectors and metrics, the strong relationship between strong data culture, tools, processes, knowledge, and personnel seems to be a main (albeit not the only) driver of higher levels of awareness, adoption, performance and representation of impact. In our research, we identified a critical link between strong data practices across all types of organizations and strong performance in critical areas:

The Link Between Strong Data Practices and Strong Performance

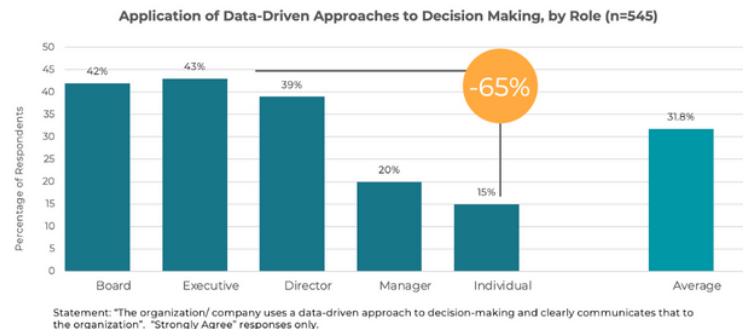


THE SO WHAT

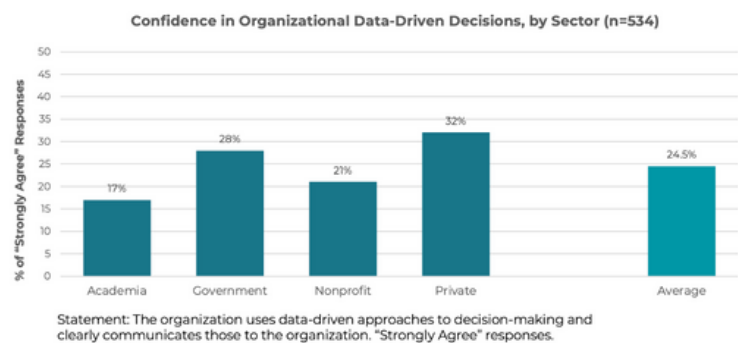
Applying Data in Critical Decision-Making

However, this is not the whole story. While investment in data is a significant driver of success, its adoption and application vary widely across sectors and organizations. When asked if their organization leverages a clearly communicated, data-driven approach to decision-making, only 29.5% of respondents strongly agreed.

More alarmingly, responses revealed stark gaps between perceptions of executives, directors, and board members compared to the realities experienced by managers and individual contributors on the ground.

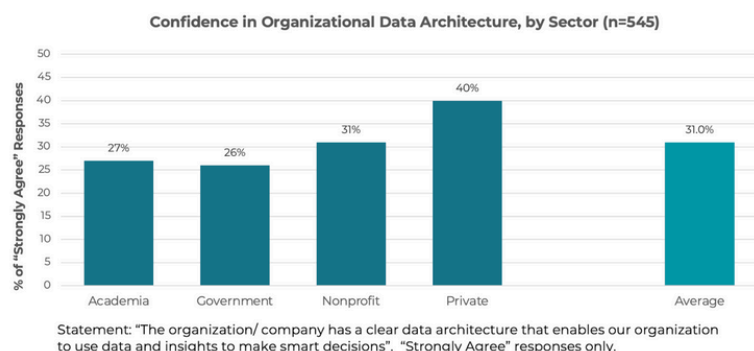


At the sectoral level- Academia and nonprofits reported significantly lower confidence levels in data-driven decision-making compared to the private sector—43% and 34% lower, respectively.



Getting The Data Structures Right

Think of data architecture as the foundation of a well-organized library—ensuring information is accurate, accessible, and usable. For organizations, this means structuring data to inform strategic and tactical decisions and linking activities to impact. Yet, only 34.7% of respondents expressed confidence in their organization's data architecture, revealing a significant gap in leveraging data effectively.



Confidence varied notably across sectors. Respondents from academia (27%), government (26%), and nonprofits (31%) were nearly 30% less confident in their data architecture than those in the private sector. This suggests that while private companies may lead in data strategy, public-serving sectors could benefit from additional support.

SPOTLIGHT



The challenge is clear: for nonprofits and social impact organizations, data can't just be a boardroom buzzword. It needs to be a practical tool for everyone, from frontline staff to senior leaders.

- Barbara Handelin, CEO. The 90-10 Institute

THE NOW WHAT

From Vision to Impact: Building a Clear Through-line

Organizations face a dizzying array of choices when connecting day-to-day activities to meaningful impact. While operational, cultural, and technological changes matter, one investment stands out: building knowledge and applying insight-driven frameworks to design, implement, and measure activities. The key is crafting a seamless “golden thread” that ties an organization’s purpose, vision, and mission directly to the impact it seeks. This goes beyond lofty goals—ensuring every action, project, and decision aligns with measurable outcomes and continuous improvement.

The Anatomy of an Effective Through-line

DEFINING A TRUE NORTH	GOALS AND OBJECTIVES	PROJECTS AND INITIATIVES	METRICS AND BENCHMARKS	CONTINUOUS LEARNING
An organization’s purpose should articulate why it exists, its vision should paint the future it aims to create, and its mission should define how it will get there.	Lofty aspirations must translate into specific, measurable goals . Think of these as the signposts that guide every initiative and decision.	Every project and initiative should serve as a direct step toward achieving these goals. If a program doesn’t align with the mission, it risks becoming a distraction.	Success demands data. Establishing meaningful metrics and benchmarks , organizations enables the tracking of progress, and course-correcting when needed.	Insights gained from tracking outcomes should feed directly into refining strategies, optimizing operations, and enhancing impact over time.

TREND 2: RESOURCE CONSTRAINTS

THE WHAT?

“Lack of resources” is a common refrain in the social impact sector, but it oversimplifies a nuanced reality. Picture a roundtable of social impact leaders: ask about their biggest challenge, and the universal “we need more _____” emerges. Yet, what fills that blank—funding, talent, data, or time—varies widely across sectors. Understanding this variability is essential to addressing resource scarcity effectively.

Top Resource Constraint, by Sector

	Government	Private	Academia	Nonprofits	foundations
What Drives Them?	Funding	Revenue	Knowledge	Mission	Legacy
What They Need?	Talent Attraction and Retention	Purpose, Vision, and Buy-In	Systems and Tools to Test Theories	Funding, Funding, and More Funding	Using Data To Measure Impact

THE SO WHAT?

Different Forms of Resource Scarcity

Different sectors interpret “resource scarcity” in distinct ways, reflecting their unique challenges. Academics often struggle with outdated tools and limited funding, making it difficult to test theories in real-world contexts. In contrast, the private sector enjoys better access to technology but faces pressure to justify social impact efforts—framed as CSR, ESG, or DEI—as drivers of business value rather than cost centers. Local governments primarily face a talent shortage, exacerbated by low wages and bureaucratic barriers that stifle innovation and retention. Nonprofits grapple with chronic funding gaps, dedicating much of their energy to short-term fundraising at the expense of strategic growth. Meanwhile, foundations and trusts, despite financial stability, contend with risk aversion, stakeholder complexities, and gaps in tools for measuring and communicating impact.



A November 2024 review of the top 20 U.S. foundations underscored the widespread need to prioritize impact measurement and reporting.

Impact Representation, Top 20 U.S. Based Foundations and Trusts

20%

Have a dedicated impact page on their website

50%

Release organizational or program level impact reports

35%

Missing basic vision statements and SMART goals and objectives

10%

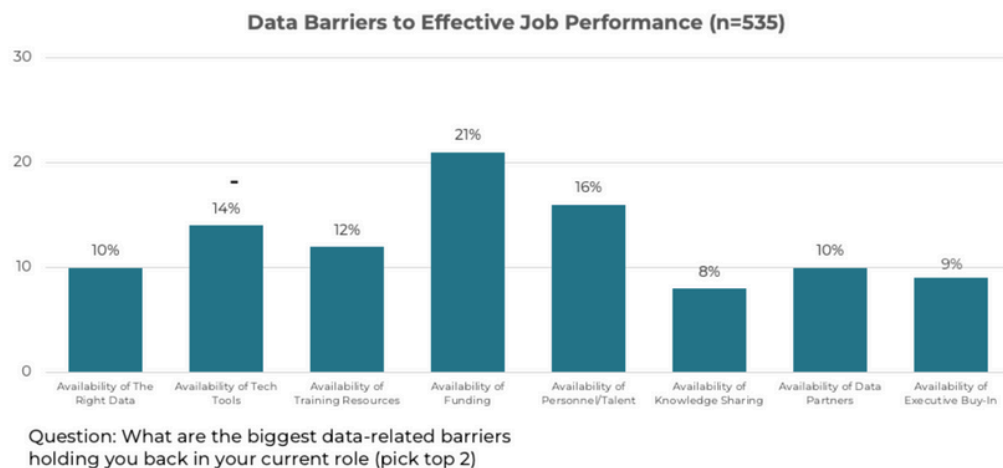
Are using trackers, dashboards, and data visualizations

40%

Do not use audience stories and testimonials in their impact reporting

Beyond the Obvious

For the vast majority, funding shortfalls—whether due to inefficiencies or genuine lack of resources—create a cascade of challenges. Talent retention suffers, strategic planning is limited, and innovation is stifled. This constant resource-balancing act leaves leaders more focused on survival than maximizing impact, turning the pursuit of social good into an uphill battle.



The Nonprofit Hamster Wheel

38%

Of respondents in nonprofits, philanthropies and foundations have high confidence in their organization's ability to use data to drive funding and resources. This is the lowest of all sectors we examined.

Nonprofits and philanthropic organizations report the highest portions of time spent on identifying and securing revenue sources. Yet, they also report on the lowest abilities to leverage data to drive funding and revenue. How does this make sense? Nonprofits, philanthropies, and foundations struggle to convert data into sustainable funding streams—despite being the most reliant on them. Closing this gap could unlock their full potential and drive lasting impact.

THE NOW WHAT?

Addressing resource gaps and transitioning from scarcity to sufficiency requires targeted strategies tailored to the specific constraints of each sector in the social impact space. These strategies often demand significant effort, involving organizational change, operational flexibility, and strategic foresight. The first step, however, is confronting a critical truth: traditional approaches to resource challenges—especially funding—are increasingly ineffective.

Based on our research, the following activities have been most effective for these sectors:

Academia

- Invest in **collaborative platforms** that translate data into insights.
- Identify opportunities to **apply theoretical research** to real-world opportunities.
- Leverage **private sector partnerships** entities to test new tools and platforms.

Government

- Forge **tech-sector partnerships** to create talent exchange pathways.
- Tap into **innovation happening outside** of traditional government channels.
- Integrate mechanisms to **reward good talent** and excellent performance into employment practices

Nonprofits

- Experiment with **different funding models** that will mitigate risk.
- **Diversify, diversify, diversify**- the reliance on a single source of funding is always risky.
- Leverage your own and other available datas to **improve operational efficiency** and strategic decisions.

Private

- Identify and implement impact measurement metrics that **align social impact to business results.**
- Move beyond “feel-good” stories to **develop measures** that resonate with audiences beyond shareholders.
- Integrate social impact into the **organizational DNA** by taking them outside of the CSR, HR and ESG silos.

Foundations

- Provide **meaningful training and resources** of data maturity to grantees, not just money.
- Develop and enforce **standardized frameworks to measure impact**, internally and for grantees.
- Improve **data tools and infrastructure** that enable data sharing and integration into decision making.

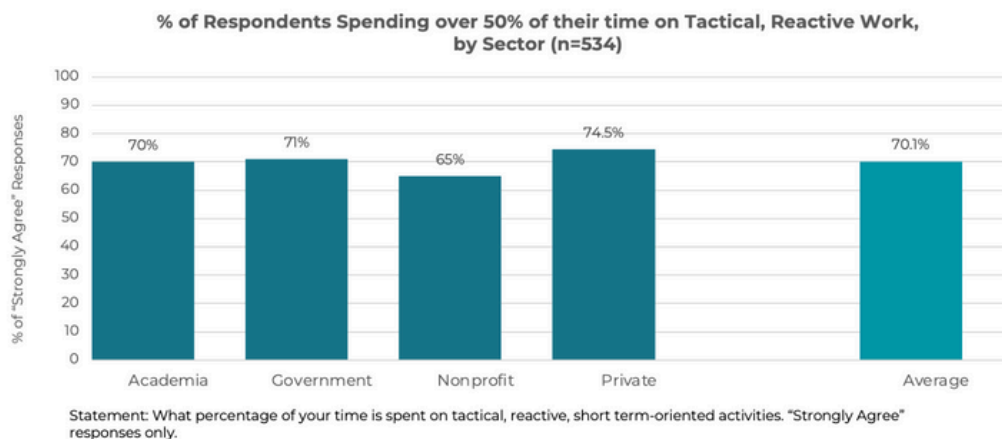
TREND 3: TIME AS A CURRENCY

THE WHAT?

When we consider organizational resources, funding typically comes to mind. Yet there's another, arguably more valuable asset: time. Across sectors and roles, time consistently emerges as a critical concern in social impact work. Leaders aren't just seeking resources—they're struggling to balance time between urgent demands and meaningful, strategic work.

Strategic vs. Tactical Time

In our research, we asked respondents to categorize their workday against two axes: Tactical Time and Strategic Time. Tactical Time reflects reactive tasks—putting out fires and handling immediate needs. Strategic Time, by contrast, involves proactive efforts like planning, critical thinking, and innovation. While strategic time is vital for setting vision, driving sustainable practices, and fostering a culture of insight, most leaders report being mired in tactical tasks, with limited ability to delegate effectively—a barrier to transformative progress.



This matters because reactive work drains time from initiatives that drive lasting change. The result? Organizations struggle to lift their gaze from immediate tasks to a broader, long-term vision.

SPOTLIGHT

A striking **70%** of respondents report spending **less than half of their workday on strategic tasks**. The trend is especially pronounced among nonprofit executives, with **75%** spending over 75% of their time on tactical work.

THE SO WHAT?

Linking Time to Impact

Our research reveals a strong connection between how time is allocated and an organization's ability to leverage data and technology for impact, which we refer to as "Data Maturity".



Simply put- organizations that dedicate more time to strategic activities achieve higher Data Maturity rates and greater impact. Those stuck in tactical work often struggle to harness data effectively, limiting their success. Prioritizing strategic planning, execution, and measurement is essential for organizations aiming to maximize their impact and secure their future.

Misaligned Timeframes

Beyond tactical vs. strategic time spent, another component of time plays a critical role in the social impact space- that of time horizons. Different types of organizations in the space operate on different timeframes. Corporate philanthropy and many foundations, shaped by private-sector roots, adhere to a quarterly rhythm driven by shareholder expectations. This cadence extends to their philanthropy, making short-term progress reporting a key funding condition for grantees.

Here's the rub: nonprofits and governments work on a different clock. Tackling issues like poverty or climate resilience requires years, even decades, to show impact. Yet, the demand for short-term deliverables forces grantees into a balancing act, prioritizing polished reports over meaningful, systemic progress. Governments march to the rhythm of election cycles. New administrations launch ambitious social impact initiatives, only for momentum to stall as elections approach. Addressing these issues begins with acknowledging the mismatch. Flexible reporting, adaptive timelines, and decoupling government programs from election cycles can foster alignment. True social and environmental change isn't about meeting the next deadline—it's about creating a shared tempo that drives lasting impact.

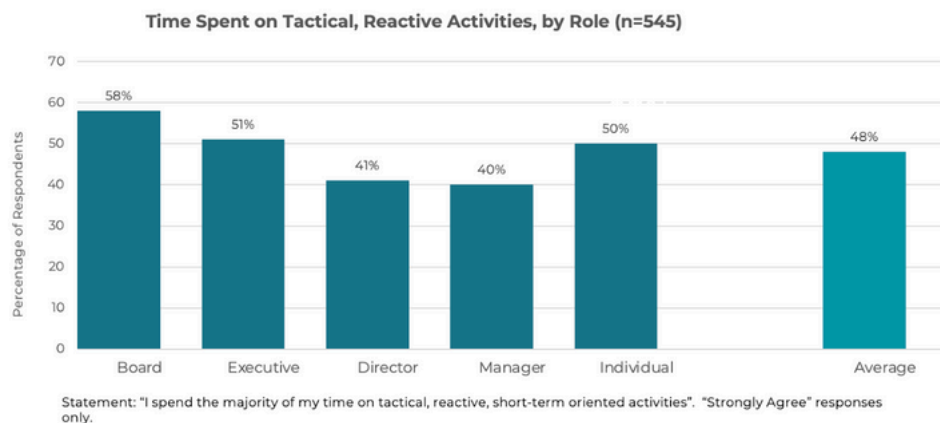
SPOTLIGHT

"Time Horizons and Economic Systems Matter. The business best practices demand monthly or quarterly results. But social impact doesn't happen that way"

Ami Dar, DEO, Idealist.org

Reclaiming Strategic Time = Greater Impact

The data is clear: effective use of time, like funding, drives impact. To sustain the social impact sector, leaders must reclaim time for strategy, creativity, and vision. This requires intentionality—resisting the pull of the urgent to focus on what truly matters—and using data to identify which activities and time investments drive meaningful outcomes. However, what we see on the ground is the exact opposite, with executives spending more time on tactical and reactive activities than most of their subordinates. This inversion underscores a critical issue: even top leaders are often drawn into daily operations, diverting them from the strategic focus their roles require.



THE NOW WHAT?

While these are far from comprehensive and may change depending on the type of organization, our panel of subject matter experts highlighted the following as highly effective activities every organization should consider as a starting point for improving their use and investment of time to drive impactful results:

1. **Streamline grant proposals and reporting:** Advocate for simple internal and external processes that focus on impact rather than activity, and reward results with future opportunities.
2. **Implement Robust Impact Measurement Systems:** Use tools like Theory of Change, Logic Models, or IRIS+ to align activities with measurable outcomes and the Sustainable Development Goals. (SDGs).
3. **Diversify Funding Portfolios:** Explore alternative revenue streams like earned income, corporate sponsorships, or digital fundraising campaigns to reduce reliance on traditional grants.
4. **Invest in Staff Development:** Provide regular training in data analysis, impact reporting, and leadership to ensure long-term organizational sustainability.
5. **Incorporate Predictive Analytics:** Use predictive models to target resources to high-need populations and anticipate emerging social challenges.
6. **Engage Stakeholders Through Digital Feedback Loops:** Use mobile and online platforms to collect real-time feedback from stakeholders and communities, improving program design and accountability.
7. **Adopt Meaningful Metrics:** Move beyond fluffy ESG principles into meaningful impact frameworks focused on impact metrics that align with company values and global frameworks like the SDGs.

TREND 4: EXECUTIVE DISCONNECT

THE WHAT?

The “ivory tower” effect—where leadership’s perceptions diverge from on-the-ground realities—is a well-documented challenge across industries. Our research in the social impact space revealed a persistent disconnect between senior leaders, middle management, and employees in how they perceive a shared reality.

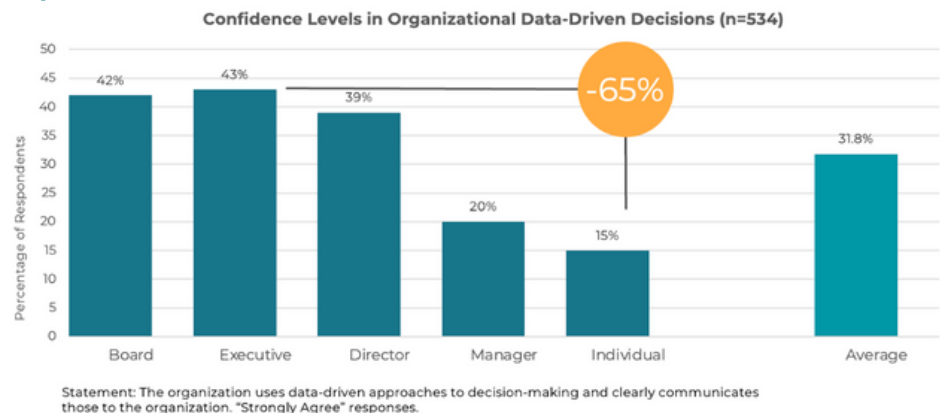
SPOTLIGHT

Individual contributors are **300% LESS CONFIDENT** in their organization’s ability to make data driven decisions than their executives are.

THE SO WHAT?

Same Picture, Different Perspectives.

This gap appears across areas like resource allocation, technological capacity, and organizational commitment. Role-based analysis highlights the divide: while overall confidence in data capabilities is low, the disparity between executives and employees is stark.



Reasons for the Ivory-Tower Gap

Our research identifies multiple reasons leading to this gap. We have been able to tie organizations with significant “leadership vs. reality” gaps to specific findings and behaviors that include:

- **Isolated Leadership:** The presence of leaders who have been in their role for over 15 years without meaningful exposure to an environment different from their own.
- **Lack of Leadership Training and Expertise:** Leaders without management training or experience, that have usually grown within the organization based on tenure rather than measurable performance.
- **Low Data Maturity:** Organizations with low data maturity- where decisions are not data driven, and where adoption of data tools, processes, and knowledge is low, see higher rates of disconnect.
- **Funding Over Purpose:** Organizations that design activities based on funds, not on purpose, and where leaders commit to activities that are not aligned with organizational skills see high disconnect levels.
- **Challenging Boards:** Boards that are seen as “policing” rather than “aiding”, and the optimal use of their networks and capabilities is not effectively helping the organization in a meaningful way.

A Persistence Confidence Gap

This confidence gap extends beyond data-related decisions. Our research identified four additional areas where senior leadership and employees diverge significantly. Across these domains, higher-ranking individuals are consistently more likely to “strongly agree” about their confidence in organizational operations than those in non-leadership roles.

SPOTLIGHT

Only 29% of employees believe that their organizational data strategy provides real value, compared to 52% of executives- a 44% drop

Response Gaps Between Executives and Employees

Area of Work	Statement	Executives "Strongly Agree" %	Ind. Contributors "Strongly Agree" %	Gap
Data Team Enablement	The data and technology team is equipped, informed, and resourced to support the organization, today and tomorrow.	47%	29%	-38%
Employee Empowerment	The organization empowers our employees to make data-driven decisions by providing them with the tools, data, and training..	50%	23%	-54%
Clear Data Strategy	The organization's data and technology leaders provide clear strategy and value to our entire organization.	52%	29%	-44%
Impact Storytelling	The organization uses data and insights to create stories, dashboards, and reports aimed at our key stakeholders.	45%	18%	-60%

Trust in Leadership Buy-In Is Particularly Weak in Government

Effective leadership buy-in and communication are essential for fostering a data-driven culture. Our findings indicate a confidence gap in leadership's ability to communicate the value of data, with the government sector lagging behind other sectors.



THE NOW WHAT?

Bridging the gap between leadership perceptions and on-the-ground realities requires strategic, cultural, and operational interventions. Organizations can take actionable steps, grounded in leading research and practices, to foster alignment, transparency, and trust across all levels. Our research has identified the following as the most effective for most organizations to consider:

- 1. Feedback Loops:** Build structured feedback loops across hierarchies by implementing regular and facilitated feedback practices that include representatives from all organizational levels.
- 2. Enhance Transparency:** Develop and disseminate easy-to-understand dashboards and reports that showcase key metrics, progress, and decision-making criteria internally and externally.
- 3. Rotational Leadership:** Design leadership rotation programs where senior leaders spend time working alongside teams in operational and programmatic roles, and take on leadership shadowing assignments.
- 4. Redefine Board Roles:** Develop clear board member expectations that go beyond oversight to include networking, mentoring, and resource mobilization to shift boards from "policing" to "supporting".
- 5. Develop Leaders:** Introduce professional development programs, especially for long-tenured leaders, focusing on emerging trends, technology, and innovation, through external partners and consultants.
- 6. Strengthen Middle Management:** Provide middle managers with tailored training in both leadership and communications, emphasizing their role as a bridge between leadership and employees.
- 7. External Assessments:** Engage third-party evaluators and consultants to conduct regular organizational health assessments that include employee engagement, leadership alignment, and data maturity.

TREND 5: **IMPACT-MEASUREMENT IS HARD!**

THE WHAT?

The idea that data can seamlessly link activities to impact is an oversimplification. Limited data access, unclear attribution models, and incomplete measurement practices make demonstrating the full impact a persistent challenge—despite growing pressure to do so. Over the past decade, private-sector influence, shorter attention spans, and rising competition have intensified demands for impact measurement. Funders and stakeholders alike now expect clear, measurable connections between funding, activities, and sustainable outcomes. For most organizations, creating this through-line remains a complex and daunting task.

SPOTLIGHT



Only 4 in 10 social impact sector workers are confident in their organizations' ability to effectively measure impact.



THE SO WHAT?

Without a clear demonstration of impact, organizations often struggle to raise funding, build strong sustainable brands, and secure the support of internal and external stakeholders. While the reasons for ineffective impact measurement are varied, we have identified the following as the three most common across organizational types and sectors:

DEFINING IMPACT

Organizations often lack a consistent definition of "impact," even within the same sector. This subjective interpretation leaves too much room for individual biases or manipulation. Without a shared framework, assessing or comparing results becomes difficult.

FRAGMENTED DATA

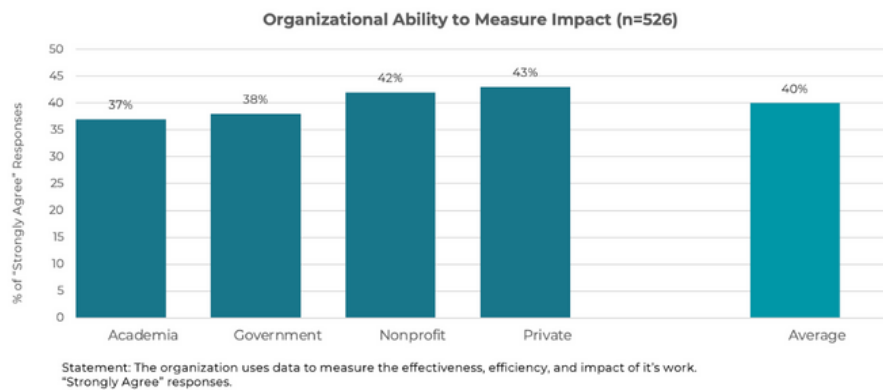
The social impact sector lacks a centralized repository for tracking activities, funding flows, and results. Despite widespread recognition of this need, the vision of a unified data system remains elusive. Without this infrastructure, tracking and attributing impact is a challenging, fragmented process.

TIME HORIZONS

Stakeholders frequently expect monthly, quarterly, or annual updates, but meaningful change—particularly in areas like public health—often requires years or even decades. This misalignment leads to a demand for short-term metrics that don't accurately capture the gradual nature of social change.

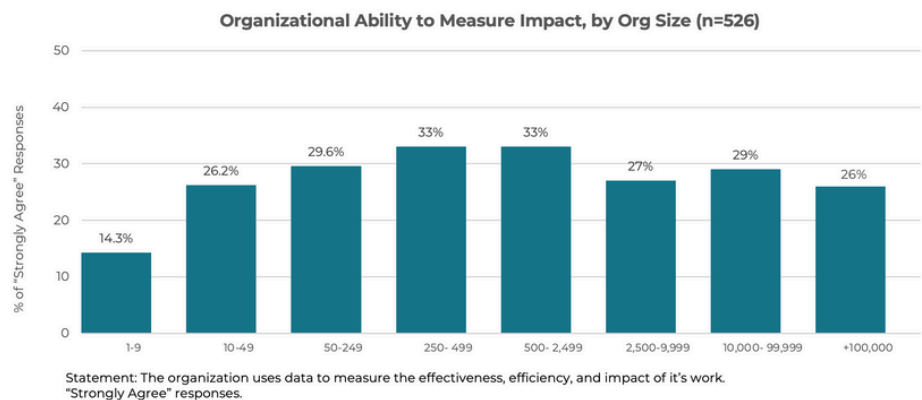
Sector- Specific Variations

Impact measurement challenges vary across sectors. For example, private sector organizations engaged in social impact work often have better practices and resources to measure and report results.



The Influence of Organizational Size on Impact Measurement

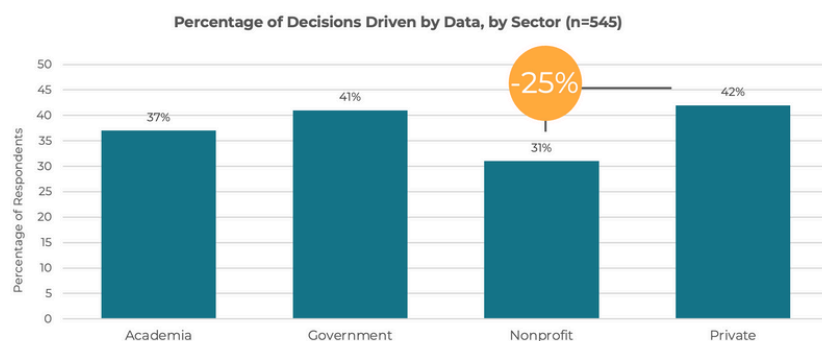
Our analysis also reveals that impact measurement effectiveness differs by organizational size. It appears that small organizations face the most significant challenges, lacking the resources to invest in advanced data systems.



Large organizations, despite their extensive resources, struggle with the complexity of managing multiple initiatives across a variety of programmatic areas, which dilutes their ability to track and impact report. The sweet spot seems to be with mid-sized organizations which are reporting the most effective levels of impact measurement by focusing on a single vision, cohesive teams, internal collaboration, and clear measurable outcomes.

The Nonprofit Sector Is Even Further Behind

The gap in data-driven decision-making is stark in the social impact sector. Only 31% of respondents from nonprofits, philanthropies, and foundations cite data as their primary decision-making tool—25% lower than other sectors. This aligns with a Center for Effective Philanthropy report, where just 28% of nonprofits felt adequately equipped to measure outcomes with data.



THE NOW WHAT?

Improving impact measurement requires a strategic mix of tools, processes, and cultural shifts—spanning resources, personnel, and organizational knowledge. It's not a quick fix but a deliberate, iterative process. One effective approach applies design thinking and measurable insights to create a continuous cycle of delivery. This method establishes a clear link between an organization's "true north," its operating realities, activities, and an agreed framework for measuring impact. The result: data becomes a decision-making compass, not just a collection exercise.

In our experience, this process works best with guidance from an external, unbiased partner to navigate the tough questions—and answers—that arise. The key takeaway? Without intentionally mapping these elements, impact measurement risks falling short of its potential to drive meaningful change.



TREND 6: THE STORYTELLING IMPERATIVE

THE WHAT?

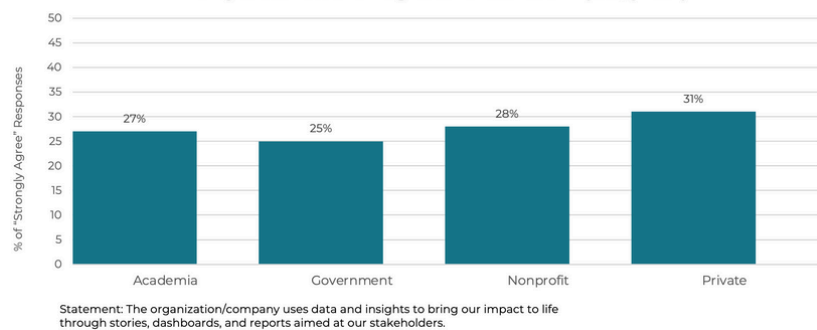
Data-driven storytelling transforms abstract numbers into compelling narratives that inspire action. It builds trust, demonstrates transparency, and makes outcomes tangible for funders, partners, and communities. By blending facts with emotion, organizations can elevate their messaging, deepen connections, and amplify impact.

THE SO WHAT?

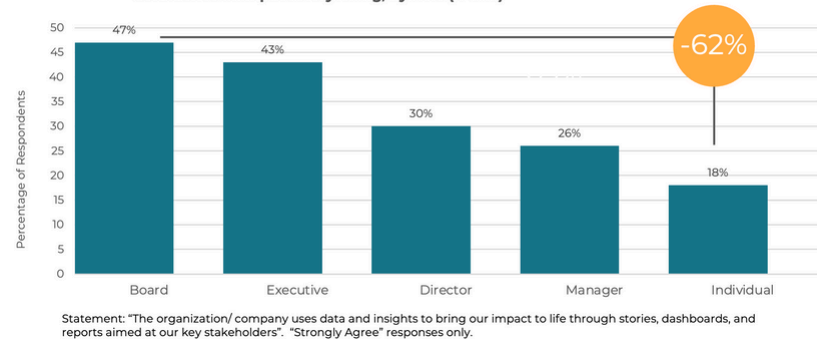
Despite this understanding, organizational confidence in data-driven storytelling severely lacks across sectors. This is particularly acute in government organizations, which, as representatives of their people and communities, should be closest to the individual and collective impact they create in the lives of their constituents.

Additionally, as we have seen in other areas, the confidence of leadership and executives does not necessarily reflect that of employees, or what's happening on the ground.

Ability to Use Data and Insights to Tell Stories of Impact, (n=534)

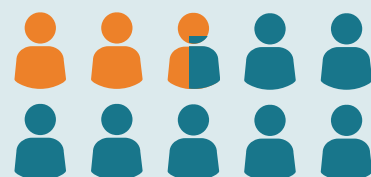


Confidence in Impact storytelling, by Role (n=545)



SPOTLIGHT

Only 28% of all social impact leaders feel confident in their organization's ability to communicate impact.



THE NOW WHAT?

What Does Good Impact-Storytelling Look Like?

Our research suggests two main storytelling approaches in the sector. Some organizations emphasize the human side, using testimonials and case studies, while others rely heavily on data and metrics. However, the most effective stories—the ones that resonate and inspire action—combine three critical elements:

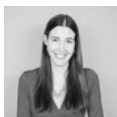
1. **Narrative:** A story that explains what happened, why it matters, and what could come next.
2. **Data:** Tangible evidence that grounds the narrative in valid, representative insights.
3. **Visuals:** Clear, engaging visuals to help audiences process and retain the information.



Source: Brent Dykes, Forbes Magazine 2016

Telling Stories that Drive Change: Expert Views

To improve storytelling and create awareness, engagement, and action, here are expert insights from a few individuals who dedicate significant parts of their work to impact storytelling



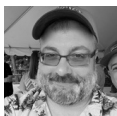
"Stories that only describe challenges fall short. Present a path forward, even if it's imperfect; solutions foster hope and progress."

Aria Finger, Chief of Staff, Reid Hoffman, Co-Host of the Possible Podcast



"Provide context to the broader system behind the problem. Highlighting systemic issues helps audiences understand the impact on individuals or communities."

Dani Ayres, CEO, MeToo.org



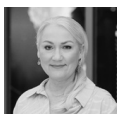
"Avoid stories that place the burden of change on individuals' resilience. Instead, advance a narrative that underscores the need for systemic solutions."

Tim Sarrantonio, Director of Corporate Brand, Neon One



"Emotions drive engagement, but data provides credibility. In a 'post-truth' world, evidence is essential to ensure your story holds up under scrutiny."

Jesse Bournes, Chief Impact Officer, DARO



"Effective stories contribute to broader systemic change. Let your characters drive collective action, inviting audiences to see themselves in the narrative."

Emma Thwaites, Director of Global Policy and Corporate Affairs at the ODI

TREND 7: AUDIENCE CENTRICITY

THE WHAT?

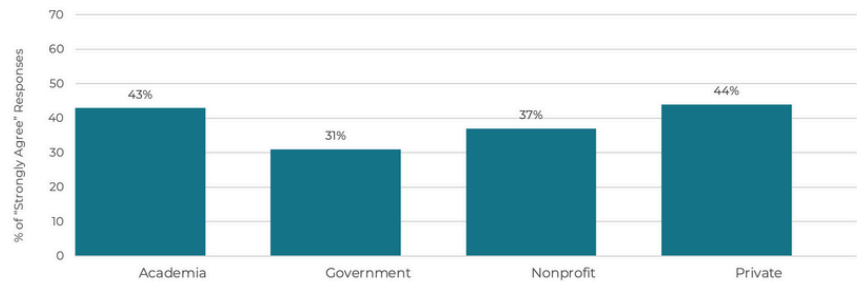
Audience centrality means putting the people an organization serves at the center of every decision and investment. It requires clearly defining the desired change and understanding the needs and aspirations of the individuals and communities impacted.

Our research into audience centrality within social impact organizations uncovered some interesting findings. Confidence in audience-centric practices is relatively high, with nearly 39% of respondents believing their organization effectively centers audiences and stakeholders in design, execution, and measurement. Ironically, government organizations—created to serve the public—had the lowest confidence levels in their audience-centric practices.

A Familiar Leadership Gap

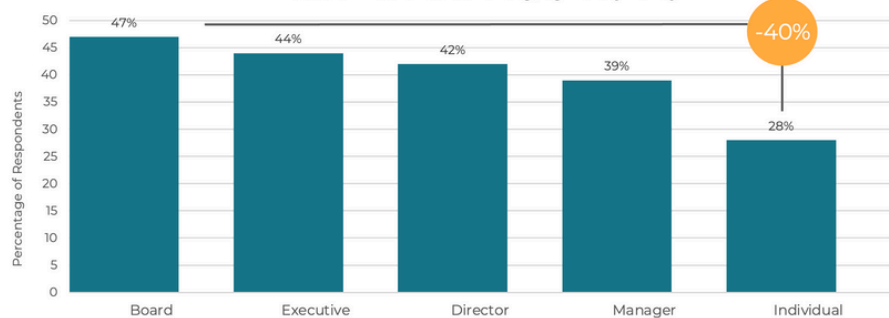
A familiar trend emerged when we analyzed the data by role: the higher a respondent's seniority, the more confident they were in their organization's audience-centric approach. This "leadership gap" in confidence reflects similar patterns we observed in other trends.

A Focus on Audience Centrality, by Sector (n=545)



Statement: The organization/ company regularly engages with our customers and stakeholder to understand what their current and emergent needs. "Strongly Agree" responses only.

A Focus on Audience Centrality, by Role (n=545)



Statement: The organization/ company regularly engages with our customers and stakeholder to understand what their current and emergent needs. "Strongly Agree" responses only.

THE SO WHAT

Can We Learn From Brands, Please??

The link between strong audience centrality and improved performance is clear. In the private sector, customer-centric brands outperform peers by nearly 80%, generating 5.7 times more revenue and 60% higher profitability, according to Forbes. For organizations focused on well-being over profits, prioritizing audience-centricity can dramatically enhance both impact and effectiveness.

SPOTLIGHT

“Some leaders turn impact reports into an exercise in hubris. They’ve created so executives can satiate the needs of the board, and feel good about themselves, rather than to show impact”.

- Dan Lammot, CEO, Threshold

The Benefits of Audience Centrality in the Social Impact Space

Research shows that organizations with a strong focus on audience centrality and stakeholder engagement achieve better outcomes across key metrics:

Expanded Community Impact

Nonprofits that track and engage stakeholders effectively can demonstrate clear achievements, build support, and attract new partners.

Stronger Performance Metrics

Social enterprises with a market orientation—prioritizing beneficiaries' needs—show improved long-term success.

Greater Financial Stability

Transparent impact measurement builds donor trust, increasing funding opportunities by proving contributions are well-utilized.

Strategic and Operational Gains

Stakeholder involvement in decision-making fosters internal trust and effectiveness, particularly in nonprofits, where measurement systems are inherently more complex

The Overlooked Audience of Impact Reports

Our qualitative research highlighted another dimension of audience centrality: identifying the true audience for impact reports. Strikingly, 75% of leaders indicated that when creating impact reports, their primary audience is boards or sector executives, not the communities they serve. Organizations focus more on impressing boards and funders than engaging the people they claim to serve, or demonstrating the impact their funders want to see.

75% of social impact leaders indicate that they create reports solely for boards and executives, rather than for the people and communities they serve or funders.

CASE STUDY: Prostate Cancer Research's

In April 2023, Prostate Cancer Research (PCR) launched the infopool, a user-friendly website for people affected by prostate cancer. It was developed to bridge the gaps in knowledge, treatment options, and access to clinical trials absent from other mainstream cancer resources.

The prostate cancer pathway is complex, leaving many patients uncertain about treatment choices and future regret. To address this, the infoPool was co-designed with caregivers, clinicians, researchers, and patients, creating a comprehensive tool to bridge gaps in knowledge, treatment options, and clinical trial access. With a focus on Black men and individuals with low health literacy—disproportionately affected by prostate cancer—the InfoPool tackles gaps often overlooked by mainstream resources.

Since its launch in late 2023, the infoPool has significantly improved patient experiences, knowledge, and outcomes, with measurable progress across key patient journey metrics.

In December 2024 the Soven's Impact Report for PCR infopool helped secure a funding grant of £496,000 for ongoing development of the infopool tool.



INFORMED AND EMPOWERED

- **3X** more informed vs. non-users.
- **7X** less anxious about diagnosis and treatment.

LOWER TREATMENT REGRET

- **7X** more confident in discussing treatment options.
- **5X** more confident in treatment decisions.

LIVE BETTER LIVES

- **10X** more able to manage emotional and physical challenges.
- **11X** reduction in feeling alone in coping with the diagnosis.



THE NOW WHAT

To enhance their understanding of the communities and individuals they serve and improve audience centricity, nonprofits and foundations can implement the following strategies which are listed in order of complexity and required investment:

Low



Invest in community-led research through participatory action, surveys, and focus groups research to ensure that their voices design and shape evaluation programs.

Foster ongoing community engagement through town halls and open forums that create feedback loops for how community input influences decisions and fosters transparency and trust.

Build long-term relationships rather than transactional engagements and ensure that leaders are empowered, informed, and supported to lead initiatives that align with their community.

Identify and collaborate with local organizations including grassroots groups, nonprofits, faith-based organizations, and others that can leverage your research, insight, and resources.

Co-design programs with stakeholders and involve community members, beneficiaries, advisory councils, and working groups in the design, implementation, and evaluation of your work.

Develop and use data-driven insights to understand demographic and behavioral trends, uncover opportunities, define impact, and incorporate data into your assessment and analysis.

Adopt human-centered design principles to prototype and test programmatic solutions that emphasize the needs and experiences of those who are being served.

Improve cultural competency by providing staff training and inclusion programs, and tailoring messaging and outreach initiatives to resonate with the cultural and social contexts in your area.

Scale reach with technology by exploring social media, mobile apps, and online surveys, and analyze digital engagement metrics to refine strategies and improve accessibility.

Continuously evaluate and adapt your strategies by implementing a robust monitoring and evaluation framework that can be measured over time.

Complexity Level



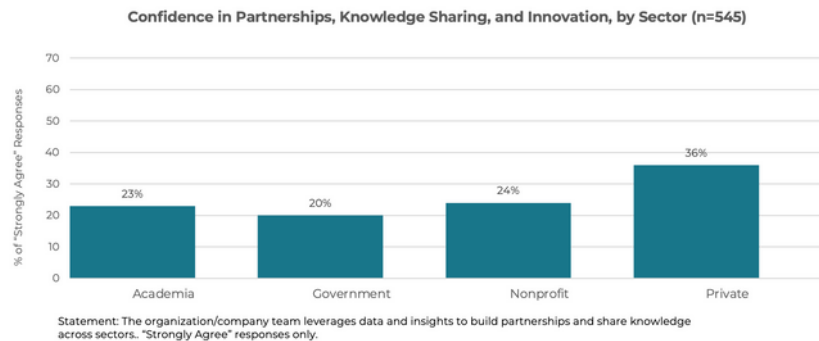
High

TREND 8: INNOVATION EXISTS, BUT...

THE WHAT

We often think of innovation as something that happens in private companies, and then, if we are lucky, gets recognized, adopted, and integrated into the world of social impact organizations. This is certainly reflected in the very low levels of confidence we are seeing across all sectors regarding people's confidence

in their organization's ability to drive partnerships, knowledge-sharing, and innovation through data.



THE SO WHAT

Our research found that this does not represent the reality experienced in social impact organizations. In fact, innovation across the space happens consistently, every single day. What we are actually lacking as an industry is the ability, and perhaps the operational muscle memory to identify, scale, and share the innovation that happens. The focus should not be on creating the conditions for more innovation. Rather, our research suggests that focusing on making better use of the innovation that is already happening presents a far more effective approach.

SPOTLIGHT

"The social impact industry struggles with data innovation not due to a lack of breakthroughs, but because it lacks the mechanisms to recognize and scale them effectively. While innovation occurs, the sector often operates without the processes or "muscle memory" to identify and amplify these advancements."

- Andrew Means, CEO- Good Tech Fest

Different Ecosystems, Different Dynamics

Innovation may differ depending on the type of organization one is in. Foundations, for example, often struggle with outdated systems and processes to work with a wide variety of grantees and provide them with not just funding, but the support their need to execute against their goals. Nonprofits, on their part, innovate continuously through program experimentation and iterative improvements, but struggle to scale these innovations to organizational levels. Academia is great at generating ideas, but often falls short in real-world implementation. The first step to driving scalable innovation is to recognize that it may take on different forms, or be found in different places, depending on the organization and its work.

Regardless of the sector and form of innovation, the scalability of new tools, processes, and knowledge heavily depends on incentives. In the private sector, innovation is often driven by clear, immediate incentives like higher pay, bonuses, and promotions. It also prioritizes short-term gains and often takes on a “zero-sum game” approach that encourages continuous one-upmanship and competition that is often absent in other sectors. In addition, resource constraints in the nonprofit and government sectors often mean risk tolerance is very low.

What Drives Innovation?

In interviewing organizational leaders and studying examples of successful innovation, Darrell M. West and Jenny Lu from The Booking Institute identified the following five reasons why innovation in the private sector has outpaced the public and government ones:

Data/Tech Spending	Customer Centricity	Create Incentives	Define Unique Value	Tie Investment To Impact
Successful innovators spend a significant amount of their overall budget, often over 15%, on information technology, data infrastructure, partnerships, and integration tools and knowledge in their organizations.	Successful innovators place their key audiences at the center of activities. They invest in understanding, connecting with, and continually improving their understanding and engagement with end users.	Successful innovators create and deploy a wide array of sustainable incentives that drive knowledge sharing and collaboration, reward excellence, and aligns all parts of the organization around a shared and collaborative set of goals.	Successful innovators spend significant time and effort researching their competitors and identifying the unique value proposition that aligns their vision, skills, and the unique needs of their key audiences and stakeholders.	Successful innovators create and integrate impact measurement schemes that tie activities and resource allocation to impact metrics that matter to their key audiences, as well as to business metrics.



THE NOW WHAT

Truly innovative organizations have entrepreneurship, experimentation, and a high tolerance for failure embedded into their cultural and operational DNA. If your organization does not exhibit these traits, the change can be challenging and lengthy, but nevertheless imperative. Based on our research, the five most critical elements social impact organizations should focus on include:

1. CREATE A CULTURE OF EXPERIMENTATION

- Encourage risk-taking and normalize learning from failures.
- Create entrepreneurship programs and offer training to build employee capacities and test new ideas.

2. INVEST IN CROSS-SECTORAL COLLABORATIONS

- Partner with organizations from different sectors to bring diverse perspectives and resources.
- Facilitate knowledge-sharing platforms to connect social innovators across industries.

3. (CAREFULLY) LEVERAGE NEW TECHNOLOGY AND DATA

- Use emerging technologies like AI, blockchain, or IoT to address complex challenges.
- Invest in robust data analytics to gain actionable insights and measure impact.

4. ESTABLISH DEDICATED INNOVATION TEAMS

- Set up internal innovation hubs to focus on testing and scaling new ideas.
- Ensure these teams have autonomy and access to decision-makers.

5. SHARE WHENEVER POSSIBLE (AND SAFE)

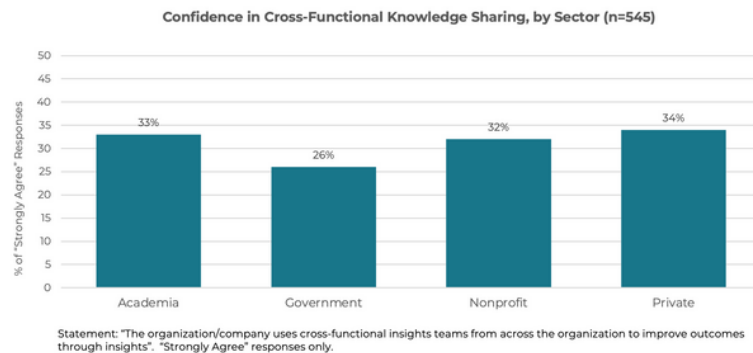
- Where and when possible, identify data-sharing platforms and collaboratives you can contribute to.
- Partake and initiate new best-practice and data-sharing partnerships in safe and secure ways.

TREND 9: DATA SILOS AND COLLABORATION

THE WHAT

In today's data-driven world, managing, sharing, and aligning data is essential for the social impact sector. Nonprofits, foundations, CSR initiatives, and government bodies tackle society's most pressing challenges, yet fragmented data often hampers their ability to drive meaningful, systemic change.

Our research revealed some of the lowest confidence levels in organizational capacity for data sharing and partnerships, with an average of only 31% of respondents expressing strong confidence.



THE SO WHAT

The Biggest Barriers to Effective Data Usage

Addressing issues like data silos, ownership disputes, and ethical use is crucial for unlocking the full potential of data-driven decision-making. Despite efforts to create data collectives and aggregate insights through data lakes, ecosystems, and collaborative initiatives, these efforts have faced various challenges. As a result, social impact data remains fragmented across ecosystems, lacking clear structure and shared processes. The reasons are varied., and our research has identified the following as most consistent and prohibitive:

CHALLENGE #1:

DATA FRAGMENTATION

Many organizations operate in isolation, using siloed data systems that create fragmented insights and duplicate efforts. Hesitation to share data—driven by fears of competition, loss of control, or misinterpretation—persists, making it challenging to align incentives for open data sharing without compromising organizational goals.

CHALLENGE #2:

DATA GOVERNANCE

The field lacks a unified approach to addressing data privacy and governance, let alone establishing agreed-upon protocols. Issues of data ownership, especially when engaging marginalized communities, often create tension as organizations grapple with balancing the need for insights and respecting individual privacy.

CHALLENGE #3:

CAPACITY AND SKILLS

Many nonprofits and social impact organizations lack the resources, skills, and funding to manage and analyze large datasets or integrate data tools effectively. This leads to underutilized data, missed opportunities, and reliance on external partners, further compounded by challenges in attracting and retaining talent.

THE NOW WHAT

Data sharing is one of the most complex challenges facing the social impact space. Pretending there's a simple, one-size-fits-all solution is both reductive and counterproductive. Without streamlined data practices, the sector risks missing opportunities to collaborate and innovate. This isn't a technology problem—the tools for secure and efficient data sharing already exist. Nor is it solely a safety issue—mechanisms for protecting confidentiality are well-established.

SPOTLIGHT

"At its core, this is a people problem: A Matter of incentives, trust, economics, and change management".

- Kristy Gannon, CEO- Fluxx

While there's no silver bullet, our research points to several critical components for building a more effective ecosystem:

1. Create positive outcomes for all

Treat data sharing as a systems challenge, designing an ecosystem where each actor benefits from contributing to the collective good. Create an economic engine that provides incentives for all participants. The goal isn't perfect satisfaction but balanced incentives—if all parties are 80% satisfied, that's a win.

2. Establish Clear Data Governance

Create robust frameworks for ethical, responsible data sharing. Governance protocols should include clear rules, transparent consequences for noncompliance, and swift enforcement. Accountability ensures trust and collaboration.

3. Foster Collaboration and Trust

Trust is the foundation of effective data sharing. Open dialogues, shared goals, and well-defined agreements can ease concerns about privacy and security. Public-private data collaboratives showcase how shared efforts drive collective impact.

4. Invest in Infrastructure and Capacity

Empower organizations with the tools and skills needed for effective data use. Standardized formats, high-quality data, and staff training in data literacy are essential steps toward building a mature data ecosystem. Identification of secure technologies and processes for safe and secure data sharing are imperative.

5. Address Legal and Ethical Considerations

Ensure compliance with privacy laws like GDPR while prioritizing ethical data use. Strong protocols protect individual rights and reduce legal risks, creating a foundation of accountability and respect.

TREND 10: ADOPTING AI

THE WHAT

The use of AI and machine learning in the social impact space is growing rapidly, opening new pathways to address complex societal challenges. These technologies optimize resource allocation, improve impact measurement, and predict social outcomes. AI-driven tools can analyze vast data quickly, uncovering insights that might be overlooked and enabling more efficient decision-making.

AI ADOPTION RATES FOR SOCIAL INNOVATORS

70%

have deployed some form of Machine Learning (ML)

15%

have deployed some form of Natural Language Processing (NLP)

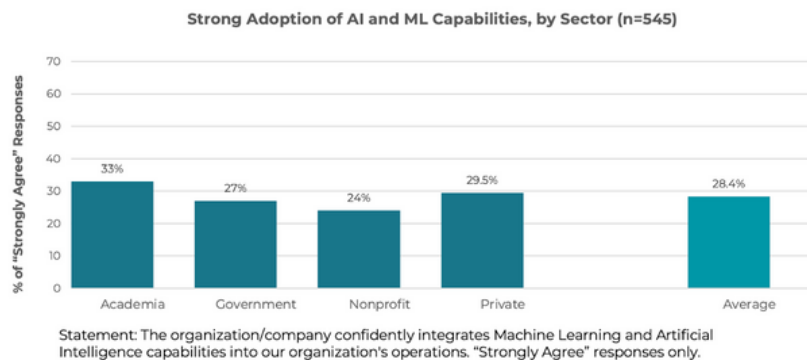
10%

have deployed some form of Predictive Analytics (PA)

Source: World Economic Forum, April 2024

Recent studies show a notable increase in AI use within the sector. A 2024 Twilio survey found that 58% of nonprofits are now using AI in their digital communications, surpassing the 47% adoption rate in B2C businesses. Additionally, McKinsey's 2024 report reveals a global surge in AI adoption across industries, with rates rising from around 50% to 72% in recent years.

The adoption of AI/ML in social impact organizations presents challenges, including ethical concerns around bias, data privacy, and transparency. Our research shows that only 28% of individuals in the social impact sector are strongly confident in their organization's ability to integrate AI and ML into strategy and operations.



SPOTLIGHT

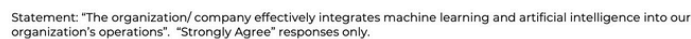
"The age of AI challenges philanthropy to redefine leadership in the social sector- to actively engage with technology and align its usage with our sector's highest values and aspirations".

- Chantal Forster, Social Sector Executive

As social impact organizations explore artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML), they face both groundbreaking opportunities and significant challenges. While AI offers new ways to maximize impact, obstacles like technical skill gaps and ethical dilemmas remain. This analysis examines the key challenges and opportunities in leveraging AI for societal good, providing a balanced perspective for leaders navigating this evolving landscape.



The ones most impacted by the reluctance to understand, create and adopt AI strategies and tools are the individuals on the ground. It is thus perhaps unsurprising to see that they are also the ones with the lowest levels of confidence in their current organization's ability to integrate AI and other advance technology opportunities into their work.



THE NOW WHAT

The promise and opportunity of AI, as well as the risks, are taking shape before our eyes. There is no shortage of case studies that have been published to demonstrate the potential impact of AI on social impact organizations and their most critical strategic and operational objectives. **The American Cancer Society** uses machine learning to optimize communications to donors, increasing donation conversions by 400%. **The Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society** using AI to optimize refugee resettlement increasing refugee employment by 40%. **One Acre Fund** leveraging AI to personalize communications, creating an 18% increase in loan repayment rates with reduced budget expenses.

Where should you start?

The following have been identified as great starting points for any social impact organization to explore as they consider the use of AI to identify opportunities, mitigate risk, or improve results:

- **Optimizing Resource Allocation** – Leverage AI to streamline operations by analyzing data to prioritize needs, improving resource deployment in areas like disaster response for maximum impact.
- **Personalized Solutions** – Use AI to tailor interventions, such as custom education plans or healthcare recommendations, enhancing program effectiveness in underserved communities.
- **Predictive Analytics** – Use AI to forecast trends and anticipate challenges, allowing organizations to allocate resources proactively, reduce costs, and improve outcomes.
- **Enhanced Fundraising** – Ask AI to analyze donor behavior to create targeted campaigns and personalized engagement strategies, strengthening donor relationships and increasing support.
- **Improved Monitoring and Evaluation** – Test the automation of data collection and analysis, providing real-time performance insights, and analyzing qualitative feedback to optimize programs.
- **Collaboration and Knowledge Sharing** – Leverage AI to facilitate cross-sector collaboration through data-sharing platforms and real-time translation, breaking down barriers and accelerating learning.
- **Inclusion and Accessibility** – AI-powered tools like speech recognition and translation can expand access for people with disabilities or language barriers, promoting equitable service delivery.

Artificial Intelligence has and will inevitably continue to change and shape our world. It is important to remember that we are very much in the infancy of this massive change and that the outcomes of these dynamic shifts are happening in real-time. Organizations that carefully monitor and safely test new capabilities, ideas, and tools in this space will set themselves well to harness the opportunities and mitigate the inherent risk involved in any innovation.



PART 2: **EXPERT VIEWS**

The Future of the Nonprofit Sector

By Trista Harris, President of FutureGood

The nonprofit sector has always been about solving society's toughest challenges, but the stakes over the next decade are higher than ever. Economic uncertainty, political instability, climate change, rapid AI advancements, and eroding trust in institutions are creating an unprecedented landscape. In this time of exponential change, nonprofits can no longer afford to simply react to crises. To thrive—and lead—the sector must embrace future thinking as an essential skill. Here's what's ahead and why a future-focused mindset is the key to navigating it.

The Sector Under Fire

Nonprofits will face escalating threats in the coming years. Legislative efforts to undermine charitable giving and nonprofit operations will continue to gain momentum. Cybersecurity risks will rise as AI tools are weaponized for hacking and disinformation campaigns. Organizations tackling critical issues like climate justice, reproductive rights, and LGBTQ+ advocacy will encounter unprecedented challenges to their staff and physical spaces. Reacting to these threats won't be enough. The sector must anticipate disruptions, prepare for them, and build resilience into every aspect of its work. Future thinking isn't just about surviving—it's about ensuring nonprofits remain a vital force in society.

The End of Linear Change

We're living in an era where change accelerates exponentially. The traditional 5-year strategic plan is no longer relevant. Incremental, linear approaches won't address the speed and complexity of today's challenges. Instead, nonprofits must adopt an adaptive planning mindset. Think big—30 years into the future—but stay flexible enough to adjust plans quarterly. This approach allows organizations to craft bold visions without being stuck in outdated strategies. Those already embracing future thinking are thriving in this fast-paced environment. The good news? This skill set can be learned, starting with how we approach our influence on the future.

The Digital (R)evolution

AI, automation, and digital tools are reshaping every corner of society, and nonprofits won't be spared. While these technologies are often viewed as threats, they present unprecedented opportunities for the social sector. Over the next decade, AI can help streamline operations, predict donor trends, and make data-driven decisions at an unimaginable scale. But there's a catch: the ethical challenges of AI—bias, surveillance, and misinformation—demand vigilance. Nonprofits must step up as advocates for fairness and accountability while leveraging technology's potential. Future thinking equips organizations to navigate these opportunities and risks with confidence.

Quality Data is King

In the future, nonprofits will shift from tracking everything to focusing on data that truly matters. By prioritizing metrics directly tied to mission and strategy, organizations can cut busywork, reduce staff burdens, and focus on meaningful progress. Data sources will also become more intentional. Instead of pulling from every available dataset, nonprofits will rely on trusted research hubs, public datasets, and sector experts. Sustaining these resources will require investment—multi-year funding and pay-for-access models will ensure critical data remains available. It's a win-win: better data, smarter decisions, and a stronger sector ready for what's next.

A Decade of Disruption Demands DEI

The Supreme Court's recent rulings have created a chilling effect on diversity, equity, and inclusion work, with many nonprofits stepping back from bold action out of fear. But over the next 10 years, retreating will mean you can't meet your organization's mission. Demographic shifts, economic inequality, and racial justice movements will demand that organizations double down on equity. Future-focused organizations will view DEI not as a "nice-to-have" but as the foundation of their work. Equity isn't just an ethical imperative—it's the engine of innovation, resilience, and relevance in a rapidly changing world.

Why Future Thinking is Non-Negotiable

Future thinking isn't just a buzzword—it's the most practical, pragmatic skillset nonprofits can develop. It's about learning to identify trends before they become crises, adapting to change without losing sight of long-term goals, and designing systems that are as flexible as they are visionary.

Here's how you can start building your future muscle:

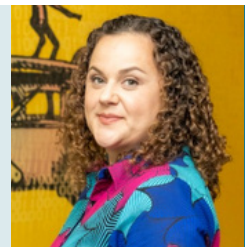
- **Invest in Scenario Planning:** Identify multiple possible futures and develop strategies for each. This helps your team prepare for a range of outcomes rather than being blindsided by unexpected events.
- **Build Internal Capacity for Strategic Thinking:** Stop outsourcing strategy to consultants. Future thinking needs to be a core competency within your organization, woven into every level of decision-making.
- **Anchor in a 30-Year Vision:** Set bold goals for the future and use them to inspire your team, engage donors, and align stakeholders. Quarterly adjustments will keep you on track through the inevitable turbulence.
- **Embed Equity at Every Level:** Make DEI the lens through which you view all strategic decisions. The future demands nothing less.

Changing the Curve

The nonprofit sector doesn't exist to maintain the status quo. It exists to rewrite the trajectory of the future—to challenge injustice, build equity, and create a world that doesn't yet exist. Future thinking gives us the tools to do exactly that. The next decade will test nonprofits in ways we can't yet imagine. But it will also offer extraordinary opportunities to lead. The organizations that embrace the messy, uncertain process of thinking beyond today will be the ones that shape tomorrow.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Trista Harris is a philanthropic futurist and is nationally known as a passionate advocate for leaders in the philanthropic and nonprofit sectors. She is the author of "How to Become a Nonprofit Rockstar" and "FutureGood: How to Use Futurism to Save the World". She is the President of FutureGood, a consultancy focused on helping visionary leaders build a better future.



Rethinking Philanthropy's Role in the Age of AI

By Chantal Forster, AI Strategy Advisor, and former Executive Director of the Technology Association of Grantmakers.

As philanthropy navigates AI's emergence, it's worth exploring: how can we balance caution with curiosity to ensure our actions support the communities we aim to serve? How is philanthropy's caution shielding us from risk but also potentially slowing our ability to innovate and deliver on our missions?

While artificial intelligence (AI) can reduce administrative burden and unearth new insight for both funders and nonprofits, its responsible use requires intention planning, governance, and investment. Many nonprofits are already exploring AI, but philanthropy's support has been measured, with just 5% of foundations funding AI usage for nonprofits, according to a 2024 study by the Technology Association of Grantmakers (TAG). This hesitancy, I believe, reflects philanthropy's deep care for ethical considerations and a commitment to avoiding unintended harm. Yet, as we pause to ensure we act responsibly, we might also ask: how do we balance this care with responsiveness and engagement? What is our responsibility to lead?

Our cautious approach to AI isn't just about funding for nonprofits; it's also evident within foundations themselves. While many grantmakers are experimenting with AI, few have established the governance structures or funding mechanisms needed for responsible adoption. According to the TAG study, only 30% of foundations have an AI policy, and just 9% have both a policy and an advisory group. I worry that this absence of a structured and strategic approach to AI, leaves both foundation staff as well as grantees to navigate AI with minimal guidance or support.

Philanthropy's hesitation is understandable—AI is complex, requiring inclusive governance and the navigation of numerous ethical issues. However, I fear that philanthropy's passivity will create an uneven playing field in social sector innovation. Who benefits from this reluctance? Not the small, community-based nonprofits working within dynamic contexts to fundraise and address complex challenges. Instead, as we hesitate, large well-resourced nonprofits are innovating, and large tech companies are continuing to design AI tools without real-world input from the social sector.

Emerging data highlights another critical dimension: Recent studies, including one funded by the Walton Family Foundation, reveal that Black urban Americans—teachers, parents, and students—are adopting AI at higher rates than White Americans. This raises important questions: Is philanthropy's reticence inadvertently overlooking the preferences of communities already engaging with AI? Could our avoidance of AI reflect unconscious biases in how tech investments are prioritized? More research is needed to answer these important questions accurately.

Such decisions are no longer just about technology; they are about how we deliver on our missions and advance social equity. To deliver on our missions in 2025 and beyond, we are summoned to actively engage with the tools of our time. If we step back from this conversation, we risk missing opportunities to shape AI's development in ways that align with our sector's values. And we risk leaving our staff and nonprofit partners to navigate this new terrain alone, at the expense of those we aim to support.

Philanthropy has the opportunity to lead in the Age of AI with intentional ethical engagement. By taking deliberate steps in 2025, funders can begin to build expertise and confidence while aligning AI exploration with their mission.

1. Establish Clear Governance Frameworks

Creating guardrails for safe exploration with AI is a vital first step, as I wrote in a recent post at the [Center for Effective Philanthropy](#). Start by developing an AI policy and building a cross-functional working group to ensure ethical and thoughtful AI use. For those interested, I've shared a [policy outline](#) to serve as a starting point.

2. Foster Internal Expertise and Cross-Functional Experimentation

Many team members may feel uncertain about where to begin with AI. Address digital literacy gaps internally by ensuring that all staff have access to AI tools and the training they need to develop a shared understanding of the technology's opportunities and risks. Importantly, many team members will wait for permission, so we can help staff build confidence and capacity by fostering a culture where staff feel empowered to test and iterate responsibly. Cross-departmental pilots with AI are equally vital. Bringing program teams, IT, and operations together allows organizations to identify use cases that balance mission alignment with feasibility.

3. Support Nonprofits Holistically

It appears that many nonprofits prefer a combination of AI tools funding, skill-building, and strategy development. Instead of assuming what nonprofits need, consider asking first, then co-designing AI solutions that align with both organizational goals and on-the-ground realities. This approach builds trust and ensures that your resources are targeted effectively.

The Age of AI challenges philanthropy to redefine leadership in the social sector—to actively engage with technology and align its usage with our sector's highest values and aspirations. My hope is that we engage with intention and lead with courage, ensuring that AI becomes a tool for empowerment, access, and positive change in the communities we serve.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Chantal Forster is a nonprofit executive with over 20 years of experience at the intersection of technology and society. She is the co-author of the "Responsible AI Adoption Framework for Philanthropy" and the former Executive Director of the Technology Association of Grantmakers (TAG). Starting her career in predictive AI with SPSS, Chantal's career has come full circle as she now advises philanthropic organizations on the ethical and strategic use of AI.



The Social Impact Economy Must Be Powered by Storytelling

By Dr. Dan Lammot, CEO, Threshold.world

Despite social enterprises' \$2 trillion economic footprint and the 200 million jobs they create globally, the sector struggles to gain the recognition it deserves. Why? Because data alone isn't enough. Impact needs a voice, a narrative, and a story to resonate. In the crowded marketplace of ideas and initiatives, storytelling is the differentiator that propels social enterprises from obscurity to influence.

The Storytelling Imperative

The social impact economy is rich with data but poor in narrative. Reports highlight trends, challenges, and achievements, but they often fail to humanize progress. This is where storytelling comes in: it combines data, narrative, and visual elements to engage empathy, emotions, and imagination. It transforms abstract metrics into tangible outcomes, engaging customers, donors, policymakers, and the public in a way raw data cannot. Storytelling isn't just an add-on; it's humanity's most transformative tool. Consider the hurdles faced by social enterprises—gaps in data availability, difficulty quantifying true impact beyond outputs, and the challenge of competing for attention in an information-saturated world that doubles its data every two years. Storytelling bridges these gaps, amplifying impact and fostering deeper, more lasting connections.

Turning Data Into Stories

Leaders in the social impact economy demonstrate how combining narrative with data creates powerful outcomes:

- **Patagonia:** Known for its commitment to environmental sustainability, Patagonia doesn't just present its achievements in carbon reduction. Instead, it tells stories about the ecosystems it protects and the communities it empowers. By pairing visuals of pristine landscapes with metrics about its supply chain's carbon footprint, Patagonia turns sustainability into a story consumers want to champion. See Patagonia's Planet stories [here](#).
- **Microsoft's Social Entrepreneurship Program:** This Microsoft for Startups initiative supports social enterprises globally, but its impact isn't conveyed solely through grant amounts or partnerships. Microsoft highlights stories of innovators using technology to address pressing social issues, showcasing these narratives through immersive videos and compelling graphics. The result? [Data becomes relatable](#), inspiring further collaboration and investment.
- **The Surfrider Foundation:** For the past 40 years, the Surfrider Foundation has protected our ocean, waves, and beaches for all people through a powerful activist network. Surfrider elevates stories of climate activists around the globe through Activist Spotlights, like [this one](#) about Sofia who started the first Surfrider Student Club in the Caribbean to champion youth climate activism.

These changemakers' successes gain traction because their stories combine personal struggles, innovative solutions, and measurable outcomes.

Amplifying Impact with b.world

This is where platforms like b.world come into play. b.world enables social enterprises to leverage AI to craft compelling stories by turning fragmented data into cohesive narratives enriched with visuals and videos based on curated story templates. It empowers organizations to:

- Demonstrate their economic and social contributions with clarity and creativity.
- Share their journey and milestones more often in ways that resonate deeply with stakeholders.
- Amplify their voices in the competitive marketplace of social change.

With b.world, storytelling becomes accessible, actionable, and impactful. It bridges the gap between intent and understanding, ensuring that every piece of data tells a story worth hearing.

Challenging Conventional Norms

The social sector's reliance on raw data-heavy reports is outdated. Facts alone don't inspire—stories do. The most successful social enterprises have embraced this truth, investing in storytelling not as a luxury but as a necessity. It's time for the sector to shift its perspective: tools that enable storytelling are as vital as the metrics they highlight.

The Call to Action

Storytelling isn't just about communicating impact; it's about creating it. As leaders, funders, and changemakers, we must prioritize storytelling as a core capability. By doing so, we can ensure that the stories we tell today shape the change we create tomorrow.

The social impact economy is at a crossroads. Let's choose the path that amplifies voices, bridges divides, and inspires a better world. In the end, the world isn't changed by data alone—it's changed by the stories we tell about it.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Dan serves as CEO and Co-founder of threshold.world, a Microsoft Tech for Social Impact partner that leverages AI to enable nonprofits and social impact organizations to do more good, and creator of b.world, the first AI powered impact storytelling app for social impact teams. Prior to threshold, Dan was CEO and Co-founder of roundCorner, a key Salesforce.com partner in the social impact, nonprofit, and healthcare foundation markets.



Advancing Health Equity within the Social Impact Sector: Are We Truly Making Progress?

By Dr. Angelica Geter, Founder at Impactful Collaboration, Health Advisor at Soven

As we navigate the complexities of health disparities within our communities, it becomes imperative to ask ourselves: are we genuinely witnessing progress in advancing health equity within the social impact sector? This question invites us to delve deeper into the underlying structures, policies, and practices that shape our understanding of health equity. It also shines a bright light on how we are and are not using data to design, implement, and measure our work in the space.

To what extent are we addressing the systemic barriers that perpetuate inequalities? Are the initiatives implemented truly resonating with the communities they aim to serve, or are they merely superficial efforts that fail to tackle root causes? Moreover, how do we measure progress in a landscape where success is often defined by quantitative metrics, potentially overlooking the qualitative experiences of marginalized populations?

Engaging with these questions requires a critical examination of our approaches and a commitment to listening to the voices of those most affected by health inequities. As we strive for genuine change, we must consider whether our strategies are inclusive and equitable, ensuring that every individual has access to the resources and opportunities necessary for optimal health.

In this pursuit, we must challenge ourselves to think beyond traditional frameworks and embrace innovative solutions that prioritize collaboration and community empowerment. Only then can we begin to grasp the true nature of progress in advancing health equity, paving the way for a more just and equitable future for all.

The pursuit of health equity within the social impact industry is an ongoing endeavor, marked by both significant challenges and notable advancements. This section aims to assess whether true progress is being made in achieving health equity and what steps can further propel us towards this goal.

CURRENT STATE OF PROGRESS

Efforts to promote health equity have been multifaceted, involving policy reforms, technological innovations, community engagement, and data-driven strategies. Here's an overview of the current progress:

Advancements:

- **Policy Reforms:** The expansion of healthcare coverage through policies such as Medicaid expansion and sliding scale fees has increased access to healthcare for marginalized populations. These reforms are crucial in reducing economic barriers and ensuring that low-income families receive medical care.
- **Technological Innovations:** The rise of telemedicine has revolutionized access to healthcare, particularly for rural and underserved populations. Digital health platforms and mobile health applications are making healthcare more accessible and convenient, bridging gaps in service delivery.
- **Community Engagement:** Community-based health programs have shown success in addressing local health issues and encouraging preventative care. These programs leverage local knowledge and resources to tailor healthcare solutions to specific community needs.

- **Data-Driven Strategies:** The use of data analytics has enabled organizations to better understand health disparities and allocate resources effectively. By analyzing trends and patterns, interventions can be more precisely targeted to populations in need.

Areas Needing Improvements: Despite these advancements, certain areas still require attention to ensure sustained progress:

- **Persistent Access Issues:** Many communities still face challenges in accessing healthcare services due to geographic, economic, or systemic barriers. Efforts must continue to ensure that healthcare is within reach for all, especially the most vulnerable.
- **Cultural Competency:** Addressing cultural and language barriers remains critical. Healthcare systems must enhance cultural competency training to improve patient-provider interactions and ensure equitable treatment for diverse populations.
- **Systemic Bias:** Reducing systemic biases within healthcare institutions is essential for achieving true health equity. Ongoing education and training are necessary to mitigate biases and promote inclusivity.

Opportunities for Further Action: To continue making strides in health equity, the following opportunities should be capitalized on:

- **Harnessing Insights:** leveraging existing and new data to better understand patients and communities, improve our interactions and engagements, and continually optimize our health equity efforts.
- **Strengthening Partnerships:** Enhanced collaboration between public and private sectors can lead to more comprehensive and effective health equity strategies.
- **Investment in Technology:** Further investment in digital health solutions can continue to expand access and improve healthcare delivery, especially in remote areas.
- **Advocacy and Awareness:** Raising awareness about health equity issues is vital for driving policy changes and mobilizing community support. Advocacy efforts can shape health policies and ensure they are inclusive and equitable.

While significant progress has been made in advancing health equity within the social impact space, the journey is far from over. By addressing persistent challenges and embracing new opportunities, the industry can continue to move closer to ensuring health equity for all individuals. A better use of data tools, processes, and knowledge-sharing must be a part of this path. This requires a concerted effort from all stakeholders to create a healthcare system that is just, accessible, and inclusive for everyone.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Dr. Geter is one of the nation's foremost public health experts. She is a principle health equity consultant at Soven and founder at Impactful Collaborations. In her past, she served as Atlanta's inaugural Chief Health Officer. For 20 years, Dr. Geter has provided guidance to corporations, small enterprises, and governmental agencies, aiding in the progression of health equity research, data analytics, strategic planning, and organizational transformation.



Beyond the Numbers: Turning Data into Action to Create Lasting Social Change

By Annie Rhodes, Chief Strategy Officer, Fluxx

How can we move beyond talking about what needs to be done and start taking action— harnessing data and technology to reshape the social impact sector shifting from reactive responses to proactively driving measurable, sustainable change?

As the global community confronts an unprecedented wave of crises—climate change, systemic inequality, public health emergencies, and potential political headwinds, we cannot afford to rely on outdated models and fragmented efforts. We face a fundamental question: are we content-tracking spending and activities, or do we have the courage to truly understand outcomes and fuel the progress needed to sustain and amplify them?

The future requires collective action and better coordination. Funders—whether private, corporate or government-nonprofits, service partners, and tech innovators must synchronize their efforts and pool their resources to drive meaningful, data-powered change.

The myth of “techno-solutionism”—that simply building technology will solve complex problems— is a fallacy. Technology is always a means, and never the end. In the social sector, we cannot operate in a winner-takes-all mentality. Technology should not be an end in itself: it must serve to elevate human potential, unlock opportunities, and create systems that empower communities to thrive.

Emerging Innovations are showing the way:

- **Insight-Driven Decision Making:** Advanced analytics enable funders to allocate resources more strategically, maximizing the impact of their contributions.
- **Transparency and Risk Mitigation:** Predictive analytics enhance transparency and accountability in nonprofit organizations, enabling proactive planning and real-time risk management. Early warning systems help address potential issues before they escalate.
- **Collaboration:** Organizations leverage communications technology to connect more effectively within and between organizations, stakeholders, and communities.
- **Reaching Underserved Communities:** Insights from “big” data uncover “invisible communities” that are frequently neglected, ensuring aid reaches those who need it most.

But, even with these breakthroughs, we face critical barriers:

- **The Digital Divide:** We cannot let technological advances inadvertently exclude or disadvantage the very communities they aim to serve. The social impact sector has a moral obligation to advocate for ethical, inclusive technology that benefits everyone—especially those most at risk of being left behind.
- **Building Technology Capacity:** It's not enough to throw technology at problems; we must equip nonprofits with the resources and training to leverage these tools for long-term success.

- **Balancing Technology and Human Insight:** Data and AI can guide us, but human judgment and empathy must remain at the heart of every decision we make. The challenge is not whether to adopt technology, but how to use it responsibly and effectively.
- **Data Access, Collaboration & Sharability:** it is no longer enough to collect the data. We also have to: a) share it (ethically and responsibly) across actors and ecosystems to identify opportunities and mitigate risks; b) integrate it into the strategic and operational DNA of purpose-driven organizations; c) create viable systematic solutions that integrate sustainable economic engines with purpose and d) link between the investment we all make, every day, in social impact causes, and direct results in terms of lives improved.

Some organizations are already leading by example, providing that innovation and collaboration can catalyze profound change:

- [Whanganui Community Foundation's Quick Response Grants](#) show how responsive technology can meet urgent needs, enabling rapid resource allocation where it's needed most.
- [Transparent Philanthropy](#) is not just a buzzword; it's unlocking billions of dollars for more effective, equitable impact.
- [Transformative Impact of Digitalization](#) Entrepreneurship is a powerful catalyst for economic growth, especially in underserved communities. We need to address digital inequities to unlock opportunities, drive innovation, and strengthen the overall economic landscape.

Looking ahead, we stand on the precipice of a technological revolution that could reshape how we tackle global challenges. Blockchain, AI, and IoT have the potential to revolutionize transparency, accountability, and real-time decision-making. At Fluxx, we're excited to embrace our evolving role in the social impact space—guiding our community toward smarter integration of data tools, processes, and expertise. As both a leader and collaborative partner, we remain dedicated to empowering our partners to unlock their data, transforming it into actionable insights—and ultimately, into meaningful impact.

Yet, this future is not guaranteed. It will take a united effort from all corners of the social impact ecosystem—philanthropy, nonprofits, tech innovators, and funders—to ensure these technologies are used responsibly, inclusively, and to their fullest potential. Success depends on a collective commitment to using these technologies responsibly and inclusively. The question is not “Can we do this?” but “How quickly can we embrace innovation, harness power, and turn it into real, lasting change?”

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Annie is a premier leader and voice in the social impact space. Over her career she has been in multiple leadership positions, and has most recently taken on the Chief Strategy Officer role at Fluxx. Annie is known for her user-driven technology transformation as well as effective management of teams, processes, and businesses. She has served at C-level positions in multiple social impact companies as well as a lecturer in the Columbia University Nonprofit School of Management.



The Power of Community: Resilient Networks in an Age of Disruption

By Andrew Means, Chief Executive Officer- Good Tech Fest

In an era of increasing polarization and mounting challenges to social impact organizations, the traditional models of hierarchical, siloed work are not just inefficient—they're dangerous. As we navigate an increasingly complex landscape of social challenges, from climate change to economic inequality to political instability, the survival of our mission-driven work depends on our ability to build and nurture resilient communities that can withstand and adapt to disruption.

The upcoming funding challenges facing U.S. nonprofits serve as a stark reminder: no single organization can succeed in isolation. As traditional funding streams become more uncertain, we must look to the power of communities to distribute risk, share resources, and accelerate innovation. This isn't just about survival—it's about thriving through collective intelligence and shared purpose.

At Good Tech Fest, we've witnessed firsthand how community-driven innovation can transcend traditional organizational boundaries. Our network of technologists, nonprofit leaders, and social innovators has demonstrated time and again that the most powerful solutions emerge not from top-down directives, but from the organic collaboration of diverse perspectives united by shared values and vision.

Consider the traditional nonprofit model: dependent on a handful of major donors, vulnerable to shifting political winds, and often working in isolation. Now imagine instead a web of interconnected organizations and individuals, each contributing their unique expertise and resources. When one node is disrupted, the network adapts and redistributes the load.

Take StriveTogether, a network of over 70 communities across the United States working to improve educational outcomes. When several member communities faced severe budget cuts during recent economic challenges, the network's distributed structure proved invaluable. Communities shared grant-writing resources, pooled data collection efforts, and adapted successful programs across contexts. In Cincinnati, where the model originated, the network maintained momentum on cradle-to-career initiatives even as individual organizations faced funding constraints. Member organizations stepped in to fill gaps, shared staff expertise, and maintained vital programs through collaborative funding approaches. This resilient structure ensured that no single budget cut could derail the broader mission of improving educational outcomes.

The power of decentralized collaboration becomes particularly evident in today's polarized environment. When social impact organizations face opposition or scrutiny, a strong community provides not just moral support but practical resilience. Knowledge sharing becomes more than a buzzword—it becomes a survival strategy. At Good Tech Fest, we've seen organizations weather significant challenges by drawing on the collective wisdom and resources of their peers.

But building these resilient networks requires us to challenge some deeply ingrained assumptions about leadership and impact. It means embracing vulnerability and interdependence rather than projecting institutional strength. It means investing in relationships even when the ROI isn't immediately apparent. Most importantly, it means recognizing that our greatest asset isn't our individual organizational capacity—it's our ability to connect, collaborate, and create together.

The evidence for this approach is compelling. When communities come together, they can achieve what no single organization could accomplish alone. They can rapidly prototype and test solutions, share failures and learnings without fear, and scale successful innovations across different contexts. This is the kind of adaptive, responsive approach we need in a world where social challenges are increasingly interconnected and complex.

Looking ahead, the organizations that will thrive are those that invest in building and nurturing strong communities. This isn't just about attending conferences or joining networking groups—it's about fundamentally reimagining how we work, learn, and create change together. It's about building the kind of resilient networks that can not only survive disruption but use it as a catalyst for innovation.

At Good Tech Fest, we're committed to modeling this approach. Our community isn't just a group of members—it's a living laboratory for the future of social innovation. We're proving that when we break down silos and embrace genuine collaboration, we can accelerate positive change in ways that were previously unimaginable.

The choice before us is clear: We can cling to outdated models of organizational independence or embrace the power of community to build something more resilient, innovative, and ultimately more impactful. The challenges ahead are significant, but they're no match for the collective intelligence and creativity of a strong, purpose-driven community.

The future of social innovation isn't in any single organization—it's in the spaces between organizations, in the connections we forge, and in the communities we build together. It's time to embrace this reality and invest in building the resilient networks that will drive the next wave of social change.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Andrew Means is a social entrepreneur focused on leveraging data and technology for impact. He co-founded BrightHive, founded Good Tech Fest, and advises foundations and nonprofits on emerging technologies. Previously, he held leadership roles at Salesforce.org, Uptake.org, the University of Chicago, and the YMCA of Metropolitan Chicago. Andrew holds a Master in Public Policy from the University of Chicago and is pursuing an Executive MBA at UC Berkeley. He also serves on the boards of VolunteerMatch and Everfree.



METHODOLOGY

Our goal is to provide an accurate, comprehensive, and inclusive view of the social impact landscape, including key trends, risks, opportunities, and projections for the future. Many attempts at industry studies with similar purpose have relied heavily on surveys limited to organizational leaders or focused narrowly on specific sectors (e.g., health, environment). This approach often misses the broader picture and overlooks the diversity within the social impact space. We provide a more holistic and representative view guided by:

- **Multi-source Integration:** Leveraging diverse information sources and cross-referencing findings wherever possible to triangulate information and validate insights.
- **Mixed Methodology:** Combining qualitative and quantitative methods to capture the nuances of the field and corroborating insights through multiple research approaches.
- **External Validation:** Incorporating a peer-review process and integration of reputable, unbiased research to critically evaluate our findings, reinforcing or challenging our hypotheses.
- **Inclusive Sampling:** Applying a broad, equitable array of respondents across industries, backgrounds, geographies, and demographics to provide a complete and fair view of the social impact space.

Defining Social Impact

In this study, "social impact" encompasses the collective efforts of organizations across public, private, philanthropic, and academic sectors that are committed to positive societal change. Our definition spans all impact areas—whether environmental, community, health, or equity—united by a focus on improving the well-being of people and their lived environments.

Shortcomings of Previous Research

We also discovered several shortcomings in existing research which we believe this project addresses. They include:

- **Methodological Gaps:** Most studies relied solely on surveys, failing to balance perception-based data with on-the-ground realities. Surveys, while useful, often produce biased or incomplete insights.
- **Narrow Perspectives:** Most prior research focused on leadership viewpoints, neglecting the voices of staff and stakeholders. This oversight resulted in findings that didn't capture internal misalignments.
- **Simplistic Narratives:** Social impact organizations were stereotyped as either naive dreamers or inefficient do-gooders, while corporations were cast as either heroic innovators or villains. We suspected the reality was more nuanced—and we were right.

Comprehensive Data Collection

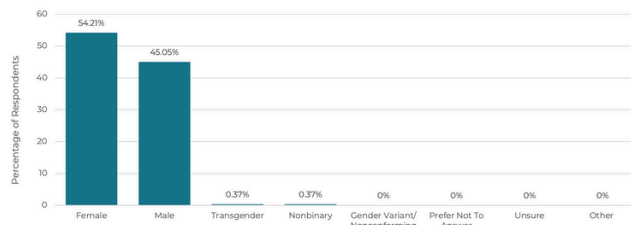
Our study integrates multiple primary and secondary data sources to ensure a balanced, evidence-based view. By drawing from a wide array of inputs, we aim to capture both expert perspectives and lived experiences in the social impact field. Our data sources include:

- **Expert Interviews:** Over 300 hours of interviews with 35 leaders across disciplines and organizations.
- **Secondary Research:** A review of 75 recent studies from unbiased academic and professional sources.
- **Survey Data:** A detailed 38-question survey with 545 responses from a representative audience sample.
- **Analysis Frameworks:** Application of frameworks including SWOT and Competitive Forces Models.
- **Statistical Correlations:** Cross-referencing data sets to uncover relationships and findings.

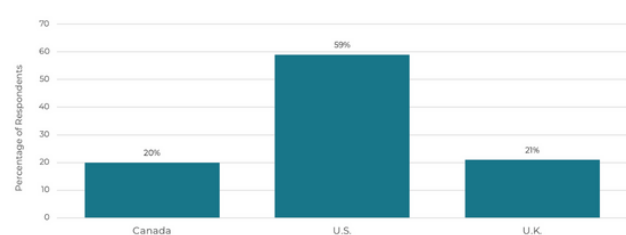
Ensuring Equity and Representation

Our study not only seeks an accurate representation of the social impact sector but also strives to reflect the diversity of those working within it. To achieve this, we ensured our sample of 545 respondents aligns with the demographic landscape of social impact organizations and, where feasible, the broader U.S. population. This inclusive approach enhances the credibility and relevance of our findings. The following represent the demographics of the individuals who were included in our research:

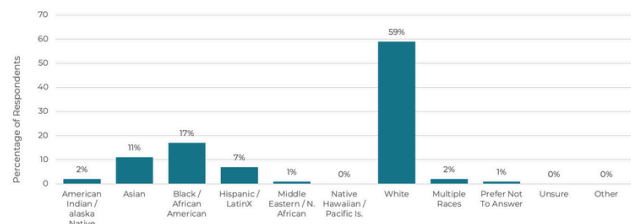
By Gender (n=532)



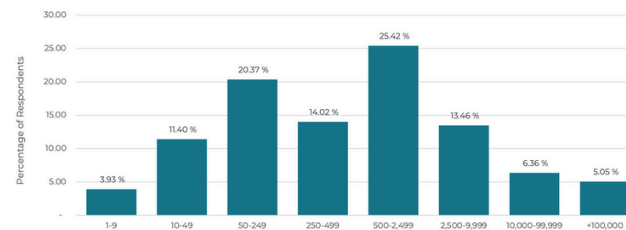
By Location (n=535)



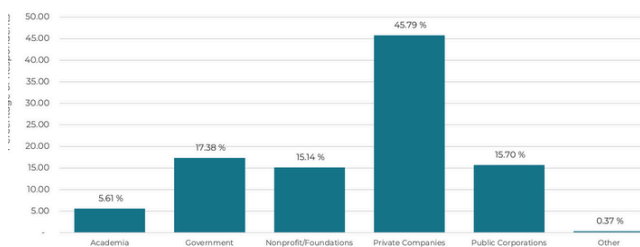
By Race (n=526)



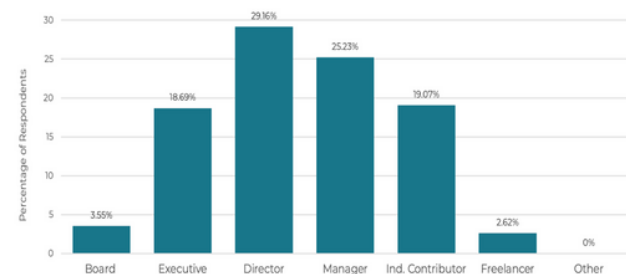
By Organizational Size (n=535)



By Sector (n=535)



By Role (n=535)



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