

Personalize your impact reporting

Why every donor needs to see the impact of their individual gift

The two sentences that decide everything

Compare these two messages a food bank could send a donor:

1. *"Our food bank served 12,000 meals to families across the region in 2026. Thank you for being part of that work."*
2. *"Your \$1,000 in November provided 850 meals to 27 families in our community this month. Thank you."*

The first one is a charity report. The second one is a relationship. The first donor learns about your organization. The second donor learns about themselves — specifically, about a choice they made and what came of it.

The difference between a one-time donor and a recurring donor is often that second sentence.

The cash multiplier most food bank donors never hear

Food banks have a superpower most of their donors don't know about: cash doesn't go as far at the grocery store as it does in your hands.

Through your sourcing relationships, your food rescue program, and your buying power, every \$100 in cash donations buys roughly \$350 worth of food at retail. A donor sending \$100 effectively contributes \$350 of groceries to your community.

"Don't give me a basket full of food — give me the money. I can do way more with cash than you can."

Most donors will never figure this out on their own. They imagine a \$100 gift = \$100 of cans on a shelf. They don't know the cash multiplier is your operational achievement, paid for by years of building those supplier relationships.

When you tell each cash donor not just what they did but what they did *compared to what they could have done at retail*, you're handing them a story they can't get anywhere else — a story that maps directly to your charity's structural advantage. That's powerful.

What a personalized impact report actually contains

It's not a more elaborate tax receipt. A personalized impact report has specific elements:

- **The donor's name.** Not *{first_name}*. Their actual name, spelled correctly, used naturally in prose.
- **The exact dollar amount they gave.** Tied to a specific date or campaign, not aggregated.
- **A specific impact metric, in their language.** "850 meals" and "27 families" are concrete. "Significant impact" and "meaningful contribution" are wallpaper.
- **A multiplier where it applies.** For food banks, the cash multiplier. For shelters, the per-night cost. For mental health services, the per-session figure. Show your structural advantage.
- **A cumulative view if relevant.** "Over your three years giving to us, you've funded X."
- **Honourable graphics, not exploitative ones.** If the people you serve saw the impact statement going to your donors, would they feel honoured or dehumanized? "Sob story" graphics drive donations short-term and erode your community trust long-term.

Why does this also matter for grant funders?

The same principle applies upstream. When you write grant applications, you can use your existing impact metrics to forecast outcomes *before* the grant arrives:

"If you fund us with \$50,000, we project X meals to Y families over Z months."

Then close the loop after the grant is spent: *"You funded us with \$50,000. Here's what actually happened."*

Foundations love this because it gives them defensible justification for their decisions. The next year's application is much easier when you can lead with proof of last year's commitment.

The fix

- **Replace org-level metrics with donor-level metrics.** Don't tell each donor what your charity did this year. Tell them the impact of their specific gift.
- **Lead with the cash multiplier.** Most food bank donors don't know \$100 of cash translates to ~\$350 of food. Make it visible in every report.
- **Convert outputs to outcomes.** Pounds of food rescued is an output. "50,000 family-meals" is an outcome. Donors care about outcomes.
- **Honour the people you serve.** When you design impact graphics, ask: would a service user feel honoured seeing this? If not, redesign.
- **Use the same metrics for grants.** Forecast forward in the application; report backward after the spend. Foundations stay loyal to charities they trust to close the loop.

The shorthand is simple: every gift gets its own story. This distinction separates the charities that donors stay with longterm, from the charities that watch their CRM steadily empty out.

Brandon Farr is the founder of Goodfinity (www.goodfinity.ca, www.goodfinity.com), software that helps charities stop losing donors by automating personalized impact reports. After 18 years as a charity donor through his construction company, Brandon built the tool he wished his charities had used with him.