



The State of the Art and Future Research Directions in Face-to-Face Fundraising

Research Note provided by: [Fiona Watson – Bliss](#)

Original publication by: [Tayyeb Hadi, Tine De Bock, Tine Faseur and Siegfried Dewitte – KU Leuven](#)

This review brings together 50 years of academic research on F2F fundraising and highlights future research needs. Focusing on door-to-door and street fundraising, it identifies the outcomes, the actors, and the context of F2F fundraising mentioned in the literature. Moreover, it examines the influence of the actors, namely organisation, recruiters, and donors, and the context, that is campaign design, conversations, and setting, on F2F fundraising outcomes.

This review helps researchers and organisations by synthesising existing knowledge on F2F fundraising, offering a practical framework for future research, and providing evidence-based questions to support more effective fundraising campaigns.

Outcomes vary widely across organisations, recruiters, donors, campaign design, conversations, and setting. The authors therefore developed evidence-based questions to guide F2F campaign design and identify research gaps, including limited knowledge of recruiters' and beneficiaries' perspectives and long-term outcomes.

[#Face-to-facefundraising](#) [#Door-to-doorfundraising](#) [#LiteratureReview](#)

Background

&

Context



- **Face-to-face (F2F) fundraising is a widely used approach for non-profits to build relationships with donors.** It includes activities such as door-to-door fundraising, street fundraising, and event fundraising. The current form of F2F fundraising, recruiting committed donors through public solicitation and recurring donations, emerged in the 1990s and has grown steadily since. Approximately 28% of US nonprofits and 43% of European nonprofits reported using it in recent years.
- **F2F fundraising can help nonprofits reach new audiences, especially younger donors, and create regular income.** Organisations have explored it to address ongoing struggles with traditional fundraising methods. Research suggests it can be an effective and cost-efficient way to build a donor base.
- **However, F2F fundraising also faces challenges around public perception and donor trust.** Some people view approaches like street fundraising as intrusive or pressuring, and negative media coverage has contributed to concerns about the reputation of this fundraising method.
- **Research on F2F fundraising is spread across different fields and has not previously been brought together in one place.** This makes it harder for nonprofits to understand how certain factors can influence the outcomes of campaigns and how to improve their approach.

ERNOP Research Note

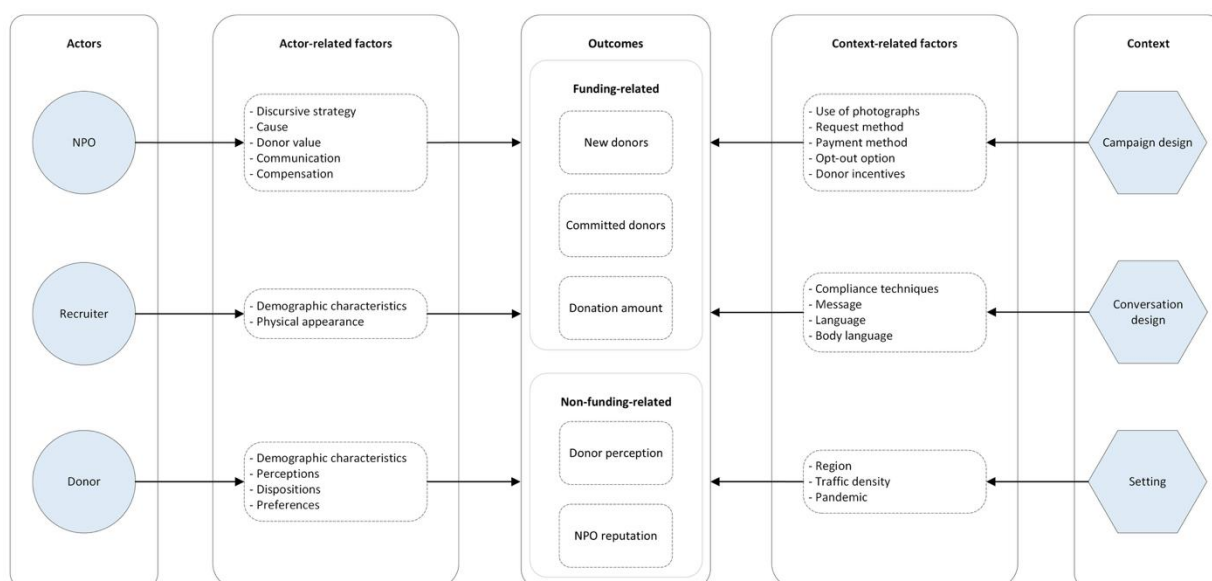
Academic articles on philanthropy through a practitioner lens

Take aways & Learnings



- **F2F fundraising has a range of outcomes beyond donation amounts**, including recruitment, donor retention, and campaign effectiveness. These outcomes vary across different fundraising contexts and should not be assessed solely in financial terms.
- Factors related to **organisations, recruiters, and donors** can influence F2F fundraising outcomes. **Conversational techniques, body language and appearance of the recruiter can affect outcomes**. For example, using social proof, smiling, and making eye contact can influence donor behaviour, while recruiters' age, dress, attractiveness, and shared characteristics with donors (e.g. race or background) may also play a role.
- **Context** can also influence F2F fundraising outcomes. **Campaign design choices can influence donation rates**, such as asking for a specific amount, using a small request before a bigger one ("foot in the door"), or saying "any amount helps". Outcomes may also vary depending on the conversation itself, as well as the wider setting, including location, timing, foot traffic, region and world events, such as the pandemic, which sharply reduced new door-to-door sign-ups, which sharply reduced new door-to-door sign-ups.
- **There's no single best practice**. F2F fundraising results vary so much by cause, context, and audience, suggesting that nonprofits should continue testing and adapting their approach rather than applying the same formula to each campaign.

F2F Fundraising Framework proposed by the authors.



ERNOP Research Notes provide easy-to-read, practice-oriented summaries of academic articles on philanthropy and are written by practitioner experts. This ERNOP Research Note 2026/24 is published in September 2026 and has been written by Fiona Watson from Bliss – The National Charity for the Newborn. More information can be found at www.ernop.eu.