Southpaw
Insights

Research That Powers Social Good

Summer 2025

Too many social good organizations don't realize their incredible potential — the hidden superpower of human-centered research. We're here to help them unlock it, ensuring that people working to create change have the insights they need to do it most effectively.

"The most underused superpower in social impact? Human-centered research."

Introduction

Mission-driven organizations—both not-for-profit and for-profit—have never been more essential. They're leading culture, shaping policy, and driving innovation. But they're also navigating:

- Evolving definitions of equity, inclusion, and impact
- Shifting political and societal pressures
- Ever-changing consumer and stakeholder expectations
- Rising community needs
- Heightened competition for funding
- Increased demand for transparency
- Pressure to communicate clearly and credibly

Research helps organizations chart a path forward in this complex landscape. It ensures programs are rooted in real needs, messaging resonates across communities, and strategies are grounded in evidence—not assumptions. It helps ensure that initiatives truly work for the people they aim to serve.

At Southpaw Insights, we believe research isn't just about collecting data—it's a catalyst for meaningful change. Our goal is to empower organizations committed to social good with the insights they need to meet challenges, build resilience, strengthen decisions, and amplify impact.

In This Thought Piece (Contents)

We highlight the key ways research powers mission-driven organizations and how our distinct approach can drive success:

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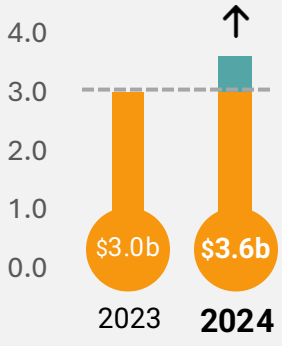
The State of Social Good: Shifting Headwinds

ACROSS SECTORS, MISSION-DRIVEN ORGANIZATIONS ARE FACING A PIVOTAL MOMENT— AND THE STAKES ARE HIGH. THERE ARE INCREASED PRESSURES AND MOUNTING OBSTACLES TO DELIVER AND PROVE IMPACT.

But the opportunity is just as clear. People—whether as donors, funders, consumers, or employees— continue to support organizations that align with their values. New volunteer audiences are eager to engage. Strategic collaboration, data transparency, evidence-based decisions, and inclusive practices can all be leveraged for success.

Here's what the data tells us:



Giving Tuesday 2024 sparked **$3.6 billion** in donations (+16% from 2023), with active on-site participation and volunteering rising 7%.

NonProfitPRO 2024

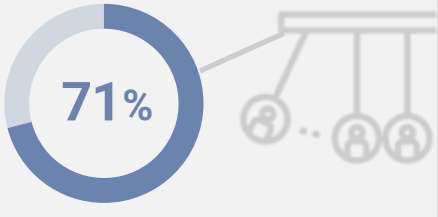
Stay?

82% of shoppers **want brand** values to **align** with their own

75% **have left a brand** over **differing values**

Go?

Harris Poll commissioned by Google Cloud



of employees say a **company's societal impact** is a **key factor** when considering a job

Edelman Trust Barometer, 2023

84% of Gen Z report supporting nonprofits

but ~70% say that transparency and data on results would likely increase giving

NonProfitPRO 2024

Together, these insights **highlight opportunities** but also the growing **expectation that organizations back up their missions** with credible strategy, operational clarity, and measurable results.

Success demands informed action. **today requires more than good intentions.**

That's where research becomes essential.

The Power of Research in Mission-Driven Organizations

FOR SOCIAL IMPACT ORGANIZATIONS, RESEARCH ISN'T A LUXURY — IT'S A STRATEGIC NECESSITY. IT INFORMS HOW TO USE LIMITED RESOURCES IN A WAY THAT DRIVES MEANINGFUL CHANGE AND OPTIMIZES OUTCOMES.

Research helps organizations:

Understand Complex Community Needs
- Identify root causes beyond surface-level symptoms
- Uncover lived experiences and hidden barriers

Design Effective, Evidence-Based Programs
- Address funding challenges and partnership opportunities
- Meet people where they are with culturally relevant initiatives

Refine, Measure, and Communicate Impact
- Test solutions before scaling
- Track progress and demonstrate value to funders and stakeholders

Center and Elevate Authentic Voices
- Ensure those most affected are heard
- Build trust through respectful engagement

In short, great research makes good work better and ensures well-intentioned efforts are translated into lasting impact.

Southpaw's Approach to Research for Social Good

EMPATHY, INCLUSION, AND COLLABORATION ARE THE FOUNDATION OF OUR APPROACH — BLENDING RIGOROUS METHODS WITH COMMUNITY-BASED PRACTICES THAT BUILD TRUST AND UNCOVER MORE MEANINGFUL INSIGHTS:

GUIDING PRINCIPLES:

Listen Deeply and With Empathy

- Go beyond the obvious (and assumptions!) to understand people's lived experiences and values, connecting patterns across voices and contexts.

Build More Inclusive Research

- Recognize intersectionality and cultural nuance within communities.
- Use creative recruiting techniques to reach underrepresented audiences.
- Remove participation barriers through flexible scheduling, methods, and design.

Deploy the Right Tools for Every Challenge

- Bring a full-service toolkit across methods—qualitative, quantitative, community-based participatory research (CBPR), work sessions, expert inputs, etc.

Engage Communities Collaboratively

- Partner with community stakeholders to ensure the work reflects on-the-ground realities, creating ongoing relationships and transparencies.
- Utilize subject matter experts—clinicians, educators, activists, and more—to inform culturally and contextually appropriate approaches.

Stay Nimble and Budget-Friendly

- Offer scalable solutions to fit a range of budgets and organizational capacities

Southpaw's Approach to Research for Social Good (cont'd.)

WHAT THIS MIGHT LOOK LIKE IN ACTION

Example projects:

ASSESS COMMUNITY NEEDS

Uncover behaviors, attitudes, and cultural context while evaluating unmet needs.

REFINE PROGRAMS AND OFFERINGS

Deep dive with stakeholders and the community to understand the role and impact of programs, informing funding and resource allocation.

GAUGE PUBLIC AWARENESS

Explore public opinion on trends and issues to inform evidence-based communications, policies, and initiatives that resonate.

EXPLORE REACTIONS AND FEEDBACK

Test messages to ensure clarity, relevance, and cultural sensitivity at any stage of development.

INFORM POTENTIAL STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

Gather insights on capacity, needs, and synergies to help build collaborations with corporations, volunteers, donors, etc.

PERFECT DONOR MESSAGING

Understand donors' landscape and motivations to develop and improve fundraising and outreach strategies.

DEMONSTRATE PROGRAM IMPACT

Produce hard numbers to measure how a campaign, program, or event has moved the needle.

CREATE THOUGHT LEADERSHIP MATERIAL

Uncover insights that are fresh, new, and relevant to use in media outreach, academic publications, or internally

SOUTHPAW DISTINCTIONS

We're not just researchers.

We're **listeners, translators, and partners**.

Experts in Hard-to-Reach Audiences

We specialize in reaching those often left out—LGBTQ+ individuals, low-income communities, youth, people of color, and more.

Inclusive and Equitable Methods

We design for access, comfort, and cultural relevance, resulting in deeper, more authentic insights.

Full Service, Flexible, and Collaborative

We deliver start-to-finish solutions, customizing to your needs, budgets, timelines, and internal capabilities. Think big-agency quality, small-agency partnership.

Actionable Results

Our work sparks smarter decisions, stronger programs, deeper engagement, and greater impact.

Our Experience (Project Examples)

Resonating with Youth on Substance Use
(Developing Communications Materials)

We interviewed youth and parents (in Spanish and English) to uncover their **lived experiences and perceptions** , informing the development of more effective, potentially lifesaving media campaigns. Deep insights and stories shaped authentic, community-informed messaging that went beyond “marketing speak” to be **emotionally resonant and impactful**.

Reproductive Health Equity
(Guiding Investment, Services, & Policy)

A BIPOC-led grassroots organization needed to gain **a deep understanding of the communities they serve**. Utilizing an on-the-ground approach to collect data in seven languages, we both quantified the landscape and uncovered deep emotional experiences, equipping our client with a **strategic roadmap** to guide campaigns, invest in services, fundraise, and advocate for policy change.

Mission-Aligned Rebranding
(Reimaging a Brand)

A healthcare organization needed to ensure its new brand reflected its values across a range of audiences. We qualitatively and quantitatively **tested messaging** with patients, physicians, staff, and advocates — informing a **more relevant, effective, and inclusive brand identity**.

What Clients Say

*"I keep **returning to Southpaw** because of their service, flexibility, well-written reports and fair pricing… They will take time to brainstorm ideas and thoughtfully respond to questions…They **deliver an excellent project** on time and on budget."*

— **Marie Manning**, Director of Communications, American Red Cross

*"Southpaw provided us with **incredibly valuable insights**…the team was simply **top notch**…I've worked with seemingly countless research firms in my professional career, and I can honestly say that Southpaw **stands out** as a shining star."*

— **Sean Mayberry**, CEO, StrongMinds

*"The Southpaw team provided **invaluable guidance**…the result was a rebrand that **truly captured input** from all of our audiences and an overwhelmingly positive response to our new name."*

— **Claire Gill**, CEO, Bone Health and Osteoporosis Foundation

*"The Southpaw team has **deep experience** with historically marginalized groups. They design projects that respect participants' privacy and dignity."*

— **Michelle Portlock**, Director of Impact & Evaluation, The Osborne Association

How We Got Here (Our "Why")

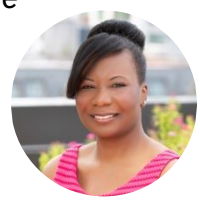
"My path to research for social good hasn't been linear, but every step has deepened my commitment to listening — and to using insights to make a difference in the world.

During two years in Cape Verde with the Peace Corps, I was immersed in a culture completely different from my own. It taught me that the foundation of any work is understanding the people you aim to serve. That experience shaped my belief that real impact starts with empathy and confirmed that I wanted to build a career centered on people and purpose."

Jessica Broome
Founder and Head Southpaw (she/her)

"Growing up as a Black woman in Brooklyn, I quickly learned that the stories behind the headlines are never as simple as they seem. If we really want to understand what's happening with people and in communities, we can't just skim the surface.

This is why I'm drawn to research that digs deeper. I believe in work that's both rigorous and grounded in lived experience – because for me, doing research for social good isn't just about collecting data. It's about giving voice to the full story and producing evidence that can actually drive meaningful change.



Quiana Cooper-Jarrett
Senior Director, Research & Operations (she/her)

"My path into research for social good began at a rural food pantry in Western Massachusetts, where I handed out surveys and helped serve meals. It didn't look like traditional research, but it helped us uncover real experiences and ultimately, drive impact.

At Southpaw, we bring that same spirit to every project. Research for social good means showing up for your community as listeners and facilitators. It means centering the voices of those most impacted. Because when done right, research doesn't just describe the world, it helps change it.

Hannah Kaplan
Senior Research Associate (they/them)

What's Next?

WHAT DOES THIS ALL MEAN FOR YOU AND YOUR ORGANIZATION?

Whether you're refining messaging, exploring new strategies, building donor programs, or seeking to connect more deeply with your community, we're here to help.

Contact us for a consultative call to explore your goals and how research can help you reach them..

Visit our website

or contact us at info@southpawinsights.com to discuss your research needs.

Southpaw*Insights*

Our Contacts

Jessica Broome
Founder & Head Southpaw

Jessica@southpawinsights.com

Quiana Cooper-Jarrett
Senior Director of Research & Operations

Quiana@southpawinsights.com

Hannah Kaplan
Senior Research Associate

Hannah@southpawinsights.com