Late November through December -- aka, “The Season of Giving.” Many opportunities for giving seem to pop up around the holidays—red kettles and Angel trees; good Samaritans paying off someone’s Christmas lay-a-way; groups buying toys for children. And certainly, many nonprofits benefit from the point-of-sale spontaneous giving and the year-end financial (and tax) reassessments that generate donations. But holiday magic aside, why do we give? There has been a mountain of research on this topic. We give more readily to a single, suffering individual than to large populations of sufferers. We are more inspired by powerful images (a picture of one child) than by reams of statistics. We are more generous close to home, we have an innate sense of fairness, and sometimes we are responding to a higher power. There also are many so-called “selfish” reasons we give. It makes us feel good about ourselves (is that really a bad thing?), or charitable donations reduce our tax assessments (we would rather give to causes we can see than send money to governments.) Some of us (especially us older givers) may be thinking of our legacy. There is even research that asserts we sometimes give so we won’t tempt fate. For example, we will pledge a small amount to a caller from a cancer organization, subconsciously hoping to ward off cancer. And we give differently based on demographics. For example, millennials want to see direct impact, and they love event-giving (like marathons), while senior citizens are more trusting of established charitable organizations and like to give in honor of someone. However, while the Holiday Season covers us in a warm blanket of generosity, the needs do not disappear on January 1st. Maintaining that level of giving is a task that falls (heavily at times) to the nonprofit leaders. And as harsh as this sounds, motivating people to give is more science than art. The research on who gives, to what, and why is out there. Using it just makes sense. It's simply connecting your cause with the best-fit groups of people in ways that will be most meaningful for them, most efficient for you, and most beneficial to those you serve. Happy Holidays and Beyond!!!