

US NONPROFIT / SOCIAL SERVICES / 12-MONTH INFRASTRUCTURE BUILD

From zero digital infrastructure to **+210%** online donations in **12 months**.

A US-based nonprofit serving vulnerable communities had grown its on-the-ground programmes significantly but had built no digital infrastructure beneath them. No CRM, no measurement layer, no paid media, no email automation, no podcast integration. SKOMA was engaged as the organisation's strategic digital partner to design and implement the entire growth stack across a single fiscal year.

+210%

ONLINE DONATIONS
YEAR OVER YEAR

+340%

WEBSITE ORGANIC
TRAFFIC IN 10
MONTHS

4x

VOLUNTEER
APPLICATIONS
VIA DIGITAL
CHANNELS

+18pp

DONOR RETENTION
YEAR OVER YEAR

01 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

 ENGAGEMENT PROFILE

SECTOR

Nonprofit / Social Services

REGION

United States

ENGAGEMENT MODEL

**Ongoing retainer
12+ months and continuing**

STATUS AT START

**Established programmes, zero digital
marketing infrastructure**

TIME FRAME

12 months, single fiscal year

DISCIPLINES

**HubSpot CRM/CMS, SEO, Paid Media,
Email Automation, Podcast Growth,
CRO**

SERVICE PATTERN

**Senior digital leadership at a fraction of
full-time cost**

The programmes were strong. The infrastructure beneath them was not yet built.

Word-of-mouth referrals and grant funding had carried the organisation to a stage of operational maturity. The digital infrastructure that should have been compounding alongside that growth had never been built. Donor and volunteer records lived in spreadsheets. The website ran on a legacy CMS with no conversion tracking and limited publishing capability. No paid media had ever been run, including the Google Ad Grants programme worth \$120,000 a year that the organisation was eligible for but had never applied to. A podcast had been launched but lived in isolation from the rest of the strategy.

SKOMA was engaged as the organisation's strategic digital partner for a single fiscal year. The brief was deliberately broad. Design and implement the entire growth stack across CRM, measurement, paid media (both grants and Meta), email automation, podcast integration, and the reporting cadence that would let the board read performance on the same rhythm as it read programme outcomes.

The engagement was sequenced in three phases aligned to the fiscal year. Each phase built infrastructure that the next phase could operate on. Foundation came first, then activation, then compounding. By month twelve, every channel that had been built in phase one was producing measurable return in phase three.

The result was a 210% year-over-year lift in online donations, a 340% increase in organic traffic over ten months, volunteer applications via digital channels multiplied fourfold, donor retention up 18 percentage points, the Google Ad Grants programme deploying 92% of its monthly \$10,000 allocation, and the entire team operating from HubSpot rather than spreadsheets. The organisation now had a digital infrastructure that compounded alongside its programmes rather than running parallel to them.

02 THE CLIENT CHALLENGE

The presenting problem was a digital programme that did not yet exist. The actual problem was that the organisation had no system for converting its on-the-ground impact into compounding online growth.

Five operational gaps, all related, were preventing the organisation from translating its programme strength into digital scale. None of them were unusual for a nonprofit at this stage of its lifecycle. All of them were leaving measurable acquisition and retention capacity on the table.

01 / No CRM**Spreadsheets held the entire institutional memory**

Donor records, volunteer records, community partner records, and event attendance history were maintained across multiple spreadsheets with no segmentation, no lifecycle tracking, and no shared field structure. Any analysis that depended on cross-referencing these records was effectively impossible.

02 / Legacy Website**The site was indexed, but it was not competing**

A legacy CMS with no conversion tracking, limited publishing capability, and no SEO discipline meant the organisation had a website but not a publishing platform. For a service organisation with clear search demand on its programme areas, this was acquisition capacity left entirely untapped.

03 / No Paid Media**\$120,000 of free annual ad spend was sitting unactivated**

No paid media had ever been run. The most consequential gap was the Google Ad Grants programme, \$10,000 a month in free Google Ads spend the organisation was eligible for but had never applied to. Twelve months of dormant Grants is \$120,000 of acquisition capacity untouched.

04 / Disconnected Podcast**The most expensive content asset was being used once**

A podcast had been launched and was producing episodes, but it sat outside the digital strategy. No SEO on episode metadata, no repurposing into blog or social, no integration into email or donor nurture. The most expensive content the organisation produced was being used once and then archived.

05 / Internal Capability**No one inside the organisation had ever managed a digital campaign**

The internal team was strong on programme delivery but had no experience managing paid media accounts, building email workflows, or interpreting digital analytics. Without that capability, even the right infrastructure would have struggled to find an operator on the day after handover. Training and workflow design were always going to be as important as the data migration itself.

03 STRATEGIC APPROACH

A 12-month plan structured in three four-month phases, deliberately aligned to the organisation's fiscal year so each phase had a natural budget and reporting boundary.

A digital infrastructure rebuild done across a single fiscal year is a sequencing exercise more than a delivery exercise. The CRM had to exist before email automation could be designed for it. The measurement layer had to exist before paid media could be evaluated against it. Schema markup had to be in place before content publishing would compound. Sequenced this way, twelve months is enough. Skipped over, twelve months produces a collection of campaigns that do not yet talk to each other.

<p>01</p>	<p>02</p>	<p>03</p>
<p>MONTHS 1 - 4</p>	<p>MONTHS 5 - 8</p>	<p>MONTHS 9 - 12</p>
<h2>Foundation</h2>	<h2>Activation</h2>	<h2>Compounding</h2>
<p>The infrastructure layer the organisation had never built. CRM migration, measurement framework, SEO foundation, and a content strategy that would feed every channel for the rest of the year.</p>	<p>Acquisition and retention channels turned on, on top of the foundation. Ad Grants secured and deployed, Meta Ads launched, email automation built, and the podcast wired into the strategy.</p>	<p>The integration and optimisation phase. Donor segmentation deepened, CRO programme on key landing pages, podcast integrated into nurture, and a reporting framework built for the board.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — HubSpot CRM migration with custom properties — HubSpot CMS rebuild of key website pages — GA4, GTM, and Google Search Console deployment — SEO technical audit and remediation — Schema markup for organisation, event, and FAQ — Twelve-month content calendar 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Google Ad Grants application and approval — Ad Grants campaigns live across service queries — Meta Ads for awareness and volunteer recruitment — HubSpot email workflows across the donor journey — Podcast metadata and distribution optimisation — Content repurposing into blog and social 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Advanced donor segmentation by tier and geography — Lifecycle email campaigns by segment — CRO programme on key landing pages — Podcast integrated into donor nurture workflow — Board-level performance reporting framework — Year-end reconciliation and next-year plan

04 EXECUTION BREAKDOWN

The operational work delivered across the engagement, with a note on why each piece of it mattered to the 12-month outcome.

04 / 01

HubSpot CRM & CMS

HUBSPOT CRM

CMS REBUILD

CUSTOM PROPERTIES

TEAM TRAINING

Every donor, volunteer, and community partner record was migrated from spreadsheets into HubSpot CRM. Custom properties were built for donation history, engagement level, event attendance, and communication preferences. Key website pages were rebuilt on HubSpot CMS using SEO-optimised templates and conversion-focused landing page patterns. The migration was done with team training scheduled in parallel, so the moment the data landed in HubSpot, the operators using it were already trained on the workflows.

WHY IT MATTERED Adoption is the actual deliverable. A migrated database with no operators is data without leverage. By month four, 100% of staff had moved off spreadsheets onto HubSpot, which was the precondition for everything in months five through twelve.

04 / 02

SEO

TECHNICAL AUDIT

SCHEMA

CORE WEB VITALS

CONTENT CALENDAR

INTERNAL LINKING

A full technical audit covered site architecture, Core Web Vitals, crawl budget, and indexation hygiene. Schema markup was implemented for Nonprofit Organisation, Event, and FAQ entities, the highest-signal schema types for this sector. A twelve-month content calendar was built around high-intent local and service-specific keywords, with an internal linking architecture that supported topical clusters across the organisation's core service areas.

WHY IT MATTERED Organic traffic grew 340% over ten months. That figure is not a ranking story. It is a content publishing story underpinned by technical hygiene, schema discipline, and topical authority that the previous site had never carried.

04 / 03

Paid Media

GOOGLE AD GRANTS

\$10K / MO

META ADS

RETARGETING

COMPLIANCE

The Google Ad Grants application was prepared, submitted, and approved, unlocking \$10,000 a month of free Google Ads spend. Campaigns were built around service-related queries, volunteer recruitment, and event promotion, with compliance management in place to keep the account in good standing under the Grants programme's account-quality rules. Meta Ads campaigns ran in parallel for community awareness and for retargeting website visitors. The account reached 92% of monthly Grants budget deployed effectively.

WHY IT MATTERED Most eligible organisations leave the Grants programme entirely on the table. The compliance overhead is real, but it is one-time work. The annual return on doing it properly is six figures of media spend the organisation does not have to fundraise for.

04 EXECUTION BREAKDOWN — CONTINUED

04 / 04

Email Automation

HUBSPOT WORKFLOWS

DONOR JOURNEY

SEGMENTATION

LIFECYCLE

Five primary HubSpot workflows were built: donor welcome series, recurring donation reminders, event registration follow-ups, volunteer onboarding, and the annual giving campaign. Contacts were segmented across three behavioural axes: donation tier, engagement recency, and geographic proximity. Each workflow carried conditional splits aligned to the donor journey rather than to calendar-based send rhythms.

WHY IT MATTERED Email open rates across donor segments averaged 38%, against an industry benchmark of around 25%. That gap is not a copywriting result. It is a segmentation result. The list is the same. The discipline applied to it is what changed the open rate.

04 / 05

Podcast Growth

METADATA SEO

REPURPOSING

DISTRIBUTION

NURTURE INTEGRATION

The podcast had been the organisation's most underutilised content asset. Episode metadata, titles, and show notes were rewritten for search discoverability. Episodes were repurposed into blog posts, social media clips, and email newsletter features. Podcast CTAs were integrated directly into the donor nurture workflow, so listeners moved from audio into the email programme without leaving the brand.

WHY IT MATTERED Podcast downloads grew 165% after the SEO and distribution work, but the more important figure is the four-way leverage. The same podcast episode now powers organic search, social, email, and donor nurture. The same content is monetised four times.

A note on infrastructure-first engagements.

Building an entire digital growth stack inside a single fiscal year is a sequencing exercise more than a delivery exercise. The CRM had to exist before email automation could be designed for it. The measurement layer had to exist before paid media could be evaluated. Schema markup had to be in place before content publishing would compound. Each layer of work was deliberately staged so the layer above could operate on it from day one rather than wait for it.

Engagements that take eighteen or twenty-four months to do this work usually take that long because the layers were built in parallel rather than in sequence. Sequencing is the unlock that lets a fiscal year produce a complete infrastructure rather than a partial one.

05 RESULTS

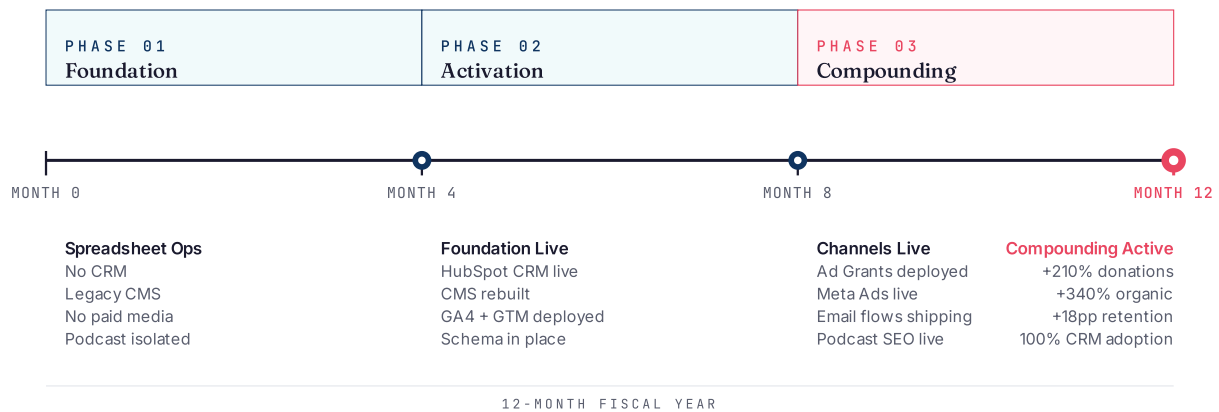
Eight measured outcomes across acquisition, retention, content leverage, and team capability. Each one is the result of infrastructure that compounded across the fiscal year.



05.1 PERFORMANCE VISUALISATIONS

FIGURE 01 — 12-MONTH BUILD PATH

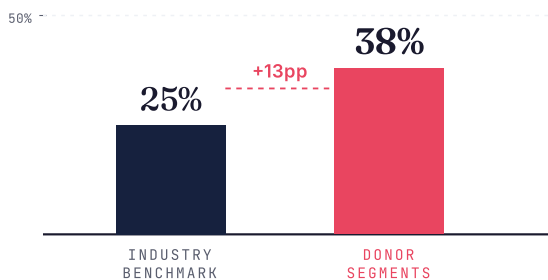
Three sequenced phases, twelve months, eight measured outcomes by year end.



All milestones reflect verified delivery during the engagement. The month-twelve endpoint marks the eight measured outcomes against which the fiscal-year programme was assessed.

FIGURE 02 — EMAIL OPEN RATE

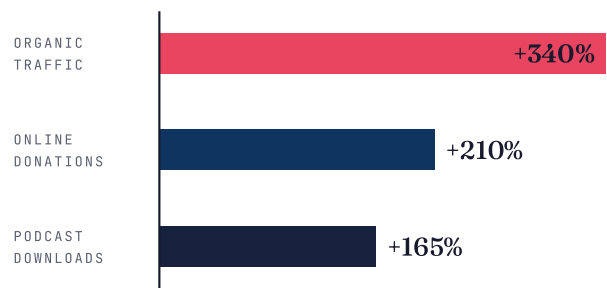
Donor segments performed roughly 50% above the industry benchmark.



Average open rate across donor segments compared to a typical nonprofit email open-rate benchmark. The lift is a segmentation outcome, not a copywriting one.

FIGURE 03 — GROWTH ACROSS CHANNELS

Three channels, three growth multiples, one underlying infrastructure.



The largest bar is organic traffic over ten months. Below it, year-on-year online donations growth, and below that, podcast downloads lift after SEO and distribution work.

06 KEY LEARNINGS

Five observations from twelve months of embedded work with a nonprofit at the moment of its digital build. None of them are sector-specific. All of them are about how infrastructure compounds when it is sequenced rather than rushed.

01**The Virtual CDO model is built for nonprofits.**

Nonprofits need senior digital leadership but rarely have headcount budget for a full-time digital executive. Embedded fractional leadership solves the level-of-seniority problem without solving for headcount the organisation cannot carry, and it produces the same compounding decisions that an in-house director would across a fiscal year.

02**Google Ad Grants is the most underutilised asset in the sector.**

\$10,000 a month in free Google Ads spend is available to eligible organisations who can meet the account-quality and compliance bar. Most do not apply because the compliance work looks heavier than it is. Proper account structure and ongoing compliance management can deliver six-figure annual media value at zero media cost.

03**CRM implementation is finished when the team uses it.**

A migrated database with no operators is data without leverage. Training and workflow design must be planned alongside the migration itself, not added after the data lands. The 100% staff adoption inside the first phase was the precondition for everything else in the engagement working.

04**Long-form content should be repurposed across four channels minimum.**

The podcast became simultaneously an SEO asset, a social asset, an email asset, and a donor nurture asset. The same episode now drives organic search, drives clips, opens email newsletters, and converts listeners into donors through a single CTA path. Standalone content has the worst unit economics in marketing.

05**Scope discipline is the difference between strategic partner and adjacent staff member.**

In nonprofit engagements particularly, the temptation to absorb every adjacent task is real. Social media management, design requests, ad-hoc reporting, event support. A strategic digital partner who absorbs all of those tasks quickly stops being strategic and starts being capacity. Holding a clear scope line is how the work stays at the right altitude, and how the organisation gets the senior decision-making it engaged the partner for in the first place.

07 STRATEGIC COMMENTARY

Five operating principles distilled from this engagement and applicable to most mature organisations approaching a digital infrastructure build from a near-zero starting point.

ON SECTOR MAPPING

The digital growth playbook is the same. The KPIs are different.

The infrastructure required to grow a nonprofit's online donations programme is functionally identical to the infrastructure required to grow a B2B company's pipeline or a DTC brand's revenue. Foundation, activation, compounding. CRM, measurement, paid, email, content. The KPIs shift, but the engineering does not. Sector framing tends to obscure that fact, not illuminate it.

ON FUNDED CHANNELS

Free channels should be activated before any paid channel is considered.

If a grant-funded, sponsor-funded, or platform-subsidised channel exists, the analytical case for activating it before opening a paid budget is overwhelming. Most operators look at grant programmes as a nice-to-have. The math says they are usually the highest-leverage channel available to an eligible organisation, and ignoring them is the single most common acquisition cost an eligible organisation pays.

ON TEAM CAPABILITY

Tools work only if their operators understand what they are doing.

The CRM, the analytics, the paid media accounts, the email automation, the publishing platform. All of them are tools, and all tools require operators. Training and workflow design are part of the build, not an add-on. The most common reason a well-architected stack underperforms a year after rollout is that no one inside the organisation ever became fluent in operating it.

ON CONTENT ECONOMICS

Single-use content has the worst unit economics in marketing.

Long-form content (podcasts, white papers, talks, research) is expensive to produce and cheap to repurpose. Most organisations get the first half of that equation right and the second half wrong. A podcast that lives only as a podcast is the same investment as a podcast that powers search, social, email, and nurture. The repurposing discipline is what separates the two.

ON ENGAGEMENT DISCIPLINE

A strategic partner who absorbs every request stops being strategic.

The scope line in any strategic partnership is held by the partner, not by the client. When the client asks for ad-hoc help on adjacent work, the right answer is rarely no, but it is also rarely yes without acknowledgement of the trade. Holding the scope line is what allows the partner to remain strategic across a multi-month engagement, and it is what the client engaged the partner for in the first place.

SENIOR DIGITAL LEADERSHIP WITHOUT THE FULL-TIME COST

Strong programmes deserve digital infrastructure that compounds. The gap between word-of-mouth growth and digital growth is almost always the systems layer beneath the team, not the team itself.

SKOMA Digital operates as an embedded Virtual CDO for eCommerce, B2B, and nonprofit organisations that need senior digital leadership but do not yet need a full-time digital executive. The work outlined in this case study is illustrative of how that engagement model is structured. The brief, the sequencing, and the operational depth are designed around each organisation individually.

STRATEGIC ENQUIRIES

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SERVICE

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