



innovative nonprofit solutions

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OUR MISSION

The INS Group helps nonprofits, government agencies, and faith-based institutions create innovative solutions to build their capacity and sustain their programs and services.

We accomplish this by assessing, designing, and implementing organizational development strategies that focus on improving effectiveness and enhancing the organization's sustainability. The INS Group was established in 1999 and provides organizational development and capacity building services nationally.

Message from the President

Whether or not you believe in making resolutions, the New Year brings many opportunities for individual and organizational growth. Each January gives us the chance to reflect on the past year's successes and challenges, while taking a moment to plan strategically for the future.

This month's newsletter from The INS Group offers a number of resources to help your organization thrive in 2017. We offer guidance on creating a robust social media policy that protects your organization and its clients, staff, and volunteers. You'll also find our reviews of four low-cost web programs for amplifying your organization's marketing presence and brand. Next, we reflect on Giving Tuesday 2016 and whether this fundraising phenomenon is truly worth the effort for nonprofits. Finally, I'm delighted to introduce a new feature in The INS Group newsletter: Client Spotlight. This month you'll learn how The INS Group helped one organization grow its fundraising capacity and bring grant revenue from zero to 14 percent.



What changes is your organization planning for 2017? Tweet us at [@TheINSGrp](https://twitter.com/TheINSGrp) or reply to this message -we'd love to hear from you! Whether you are looking to build capacity or sustain existing programs and services, The INS Group offers a [wide range of customized solutions](#) to meet your organization's needs. Happy New Year from all of us!

Ruth A. Peebles, President
The INS Group



Protecting Your Nonprofit with a Robust Social Media Policy

Last year offered no shortage of high-profile political events. From the presidential election to Black Lives Matter, millions of people took to social media to share their viewpoints.

Due to their tax status, however, nonprofits play by a different set of rules when it comes to the online sphere. Nonprofits must comply with well-known federal restrictions against certain activities like [electioneering](#) and [some lobbying](#). But there are a variety of risk management issues that organizations must consider when using social media—including privacy, client protection, and copyright/fair use.

Here are some tips to keep in mind when creating or revising a social media policy for your nonprofit:

1. Who conducts social media for your organization? Some nonprofits have dedicated communications staff, while others rely on volunteers and consultants to help them run social media. It's important to clearly identify organization-wide who is allowed to create and post content on behalf of your organization. Then, conduct separate trainings for both the individuals running your social media channels AND the staff members who do not. For instance, let regular staff members know that they are not authorized to represent your organization on social media in any capacity—whether that includes commenting on a news article and tagging your nonprofit (“ABC would never stand for this!”) or logging into Facebook as your nonprofit and “liking” a political candidate.

- 2. Protect the safety and privacy of clients, staff, and volunteers.** The ubiquitousness of cell phones means that staff members, volunteers, and even clients themselves may be taking unauthorized photos and videos at events and sharing them on social media—which puts the privacy and safety of these same stakeholders at risk. Before events, gently remind staff and volunteers that they should not take photos or videos. If you see someone doing this, share your organization's media policy and politely ask them to delete the content. Finally, make sure all individuals at events have signed a [photo release form](#) giving your organization permission to use their image in any marketing materials or social media posts. (Here are some [great photography and social media tips](#) if your organization serves children.)
- 3. Ensure that your nonprofit is not violating copyright or fair-use laws.** Train the individuals responsible for social media at your organization in [best practices around copyright and fair use](#). Remind them to use royalty-free resources for photos and videos, such as those with a [Creative Commons license](#). It's also important to attribute sources for borrowed content and ideas—so if you get inspiration for a social media post from another organization or individual, make sure to give them credit. (However, keep in mind that giving someone credit for their work is not the same as receiving permission to use it.)

There are many considerations to make as you shape your organization's social media policy, so don't be afraid to [ask questions](#), discuss it with your staff, and take your time! Need additional guidance? Check out [this database](#) of more than 300 social media policies adopted by nonprofits and corporations, or [contact a local nonprofit attorney](#) near you.



Branding on a Budget

The Internet has made it easier than ever to create your own logos, graphics, and branding--all on a shoestring marketing budget.

Below are several free or low-cost web programs to help you bring your creative ideas to reality. Best of all? These resources are so easy to use, you don't need any formal design experience.

1. [Canva](#)

For design newbies, Canva feels like a miracle. Its basic plan is free and offers dozens of templates for social media graphics, presentations, email headers, and more. Users can build upon existing designs within each template or create their own using Canva's intuitive navigation system. With its free option, Canva allows you to save up to 1GB of uploads and invite 10 team members to share the account. Canva's Work option is reasonably priced at \$12.95 per month, allowing you to save your organization's logos and colors and resize designs for different mediums with just one click.

Pros: easy to use, helpful blog, resize tool

Cons: not all photos or graphics in Canva library are free

2. [Piktochart](#)

Piktochart specializes in making information beautiful. From infographics to impact summaries to reports, Piktochart helps users visualize their data in a compelling format. It offers high-resolution options for printing and has a very affordable nonprofit package at \$39.99 per year.

Pros: easy to use, excellent tutorials

Cons: limited templates for free accounts

3. [Pixabay](#)

Need stock images and videos? Check out Pixabay. All content on the site falls under a Creative Commons CC0 license, meaning it can be downloaded, modified, and used for free in perpetuity--even for commercial purposes. Pixabay also links to sponsored content in case you can't find exactly what you're looking for.

Pros: free, includes vectors and illustrations, different size options for downloads

Cons: limited variety

4. [YouTube Editor](#)

Let's face it: these days, video is an essential part of marketing. Fifty percent of executives are compelled to look for more information about a product or service after viewing a video about it, and videos in emails can lead to a 200-300% increase in click-through rates.

Can't afford a professional videographer? No problem. YouTube, the current king of the videosphere, has a fantastic free editing program. You can easily insert transitions and music, add photos and subtitles, and even search for royalty-free videos and music to integrate into your own clips. It takes a bit of practice to master, but the learning curve is short and worth the effort.

Pros: free, decent Help page

Cons: must be connected to a YouTube account, limited video quality resolution, may need to convert video to appropriate size

Still think you need help from an expert? [Taproot](#) and [Creatives Without Borders](#) are two organizations dedicated to connecting nonprofits to pro bono professional services.

#GIVING TUESDAY

Is #GivingTuesday Dead?

Launched in 2012 to kickstart the holiday giving season, [Giving Tuesday](#) has become a fundraising phenomenon in the U.S. and beyond. In 2016, donors from 98 countries and territories participated, bringing in \$168 million dollars online.

But is Giving Tuesday becoming too popular as a fundraising strategy among nonprofits? Jason Parker, a communications and development consultant, has mixed feelings about the day. “The market is flooded on Giving Tuesday,” he says. “One of the most common mistakes that small organizations in particular make is assuming there will magically be people out there who, if they just see a Facebook post or email, will donate because it’s Giving Tuesday,” he says. In [a 2015 study](#) conducted by the John Templeton Foundation, a mere 18% of Americans said they were familiar with Giving Tuesday, compared to 93% who knew about Black Friday.

However, many nonprofits had success last Giving Tuesday--particularly those that combined their ask with matching grants or used the day to engage new audiences. Rebecca DeLuca, Assistant Director of Communications at [Lasell College](#) in Newton, Massachusetts, targeted her organization’s Giving Tuesday appeal at young, first-time donors. “Giving Tuesday is a day for many young donors to get behind, to feel a part of something bigger,” she says. “We had 68 new donors on Giving Tuesday this year and increased our total number of donors by 68%. So while we aren’t making lots more money necessarily, we are pulling younger donors into the fold,” DeLuca reports.

So, should your nonprofit should make an ask on Giving Tuesday? Check out what different organizations tried in 2016:

- **A day of thanks.** Embrace an attitude of gratitude and give thanks to your clients, volunteers, and supporters. Ask Board members to make phone calls to donors about the impact of your organization’s programs and services. These kinds of efforts can be a meaningful and memorable way to engage your supporters while celebrating the spirit of Giving Tuesday, says Parker. “Giving Tuesday can be a great opportunity to raise awareness, share information, and generate a low-cost but high-impact touch point,” he notes.
- **Ask donors to support a small, specific project.** Modest requests benefiting distinct projects can be a great way to make your organization stand out in the Giving Tuesday crowd. For example, encourage donors to sponsor a bilingual home library for a low-income family, or ask supporters to help you raise the remaining \$2,500 needed to build a new computer lab for elderly adults. By setting a reasonable fundraising goal that has a clear outcome, your nonprofit can compel supporters to act immediately and feel that even a small gift is worthwhile.
- **Incorporate Giving Tuesday into your End-of-Year Giving plan.** Giving Tuesday doesn’t have to take over your fundraising plans or require a lot of effort. Plan two social media posts for the day or purchase a day-long social media ad. Send out your organization’s monthly newsletter on the morning of Giving Tuesday and include a small ask. Or, ask supporters to give their time or donations in lieu of a financial gift. Most importantly, be strategic in your planning so that you don’t overwhelm your development staff--or make too many end-of-year asks of your supporters. “The most successful organizations don’t treat Giving Tuesday as an isolated event or campaign,” says Parker. “They tend to treat it as a larger component of their development strategy or plan.”

All in all, Giving Tuesday 2016 raised 31% more than Giving Tuesday 2015--so this fundraising phenomenon is far from dead. Be creative and strategic in your Giving Tuesday campaign and your organization can enjoy a multitude of benefits that extend well beyond this one day.

CLIENT SPOTLIGHT: Center for Inquiry-Based Learning



For more than 15 years, the Center for Inquiry-Based Learning (CIBL), a Durham-based nonprofit, has provided STEM kits, STEM program consulting, and professional development to teachers and schools across North Carolina. But in 2014, CIBL's leadership realized they had a problem.

Earlier that year, CIBL had begun to see an ominous shift in its funding streams. As schools cut services and local funds dwindled, the organization realized it needed to find additional sources of revenue. "We figured we could either watch our old model of fee-for-service continue to drop off or we could do something about it and learn about fundraising and grant writing," says Mara Thomas, CIBL's Business Manager. "That's when we called Ruth Peebles at The INS Group."

Over the next year, The INS Group worked closely with CIBL to assess its existing funding sources, conduct grant

research, and develop a core proposal. Since CIBL staff had limited experience engaging funders, The INS Group provided strategies for building relationships with potential donors while simultaneously providing feedback on CIBL's first proposal drafts. The INS Group also guided CIBL in creating individual donor campaigns and new marketing materials.

The results? "Since working with The INS Group, we have seen our fundraising from grants go from \$0 to nearly 14% of our revenue," says Thomas. CIBL has cultivated relationships with multiple funders at local and national levels and learned the importance of communicating with potential funders before submitting proposals. "We have started to develop partnerships and are finding more meaningful and inspiring ways to talk about what we do," Thomas says. "We're finding the relationships and the improved messaging to be key components of our success."

From engaging its Board of Directors in fundraising to learning the basic mechanics of writing a grant proposal, CIBL's partnership with The INS Group has been enormously valuable for the organization. "The grant writing process was intimidating at first, but now we have so much more confidence," reports Thomas. "Ruth was incredibly professional and encouraging. If she could help us begin to turn this ship around, she could help anyone."

Learn more about The INS Group's suite of innovative solutions for nonprofits.

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The INS Group can assist you with:

- Organizational Assessments
- Strategic Planning
- Strategic Fund Development Planning
- Board Development
- Grant Writing and Research
- Board Fundraising Training
- Executive Coaching
- Project Management
- Marketing Communication