

America's Top Charities

How to Read Consumers Digest's Chart: For our chart, Consumers Digest focused on 800 or so of the top charities as defined by size and reputation among independent analysts. We whittled the list and asked each of the charities listed below to provide an IRS Form 990 for the latest tax year. We scrutinized the numbers received and created the corresponding chart, which is divided by general goals (health, human services, religious, etc.) and then sorted by direct public support, or the amount that was received directly from individuals or private foundations.

We looked at the percentage of how much a charity spends on its mission compared with its total expenses. (On Part IX of the 2008 Form 990, divide Line 25B by Line 25A and multiply by 100.) A charity should spend at least 65 percent of its total expenses on its programs. We also compared a charity's spending on fund raising with the amount that its fundraising efforts bring in. (Divide Line 25D on Part IX of the 990 by Part II, Line 4e and multiply by 100.) A charity should spend no more than 35 percent, or \$35 per \$100 raised, of its contributions on fundraising.

We also noted whether an organization reports joint costs, which are typically

fundraising solicitations that also provide an educational component. Organizations can include some of these costs as program services. It's legitimate, but potential donors might want to consider this when assessing a charity's value.

A number of organizations, most prominently Salvation Army, were dropped from consideration because they are not required to file 990s, rendering apples-to-apples comparisons impossible. Non 501(c)(3) organizations also were scratched. Donor-advised funds, which distribute money to charities, were not considered for this chart.

Other organizations were not included because they have local affiliates that file separate tax documents, and the national group could not produce complete information—again eliminating the possibility of accurate comparisons. This group included: Camp Fire USA, Catholic Charities, Children's Miracle Network, Girls and Boys Town, Girl Scouts of USA, Hadassah, Junior Achievement, Lupus Foundation of America, Mental Health America, National Federation for the Blind, National 4-H Council, National Kidney Foundation, PKD Foundation, St. Jude Children's Research Hospital and YWCA USA.

Organization	Phone Number	Direct Public Support	Spending Efficiency	Cost to Raise \$100	Joint Costs	Recent Accomplishments/Organizational Goals
Development/Distribution						
United Way of America	703/836-7100	\$4,052,704,828	85.80%	\$8.63	N	National program offers free tax preparation for low-income workers.
AmeriCares Foundation	203/658-9557	\$1,010,493,364	98.72%	\$0.87	N	Donated more than \$1 billion in aid to 87 countries.
United States Fund for UNICEF	800/486-4233	\$440,160,557	90.51%	\$6.66	N	Distributed clean water to 982,000 people in Darfur.
Gifts in Kind	703/836-2161	\$385,039,239	99.63%	\$0.06	N	Works with corporations to donate unused products.
Brother's Brother Foundation	412/321-3160	\$329,701,348	99.81%	\$0.05	N	Shipped 6,500 tons of relief items, valued at over \$1.1 billion, overseas.
Pew Charitable Trusts	215/575-9050	\$308,683,300	93.47%	\$0.61	N	Conducts research to develop practical solutions for public policy problems.
Habitat for Humanity International	800/422-4828	\$198,780,065	82.89%	\$19.00	N	55,000 homes built, rebuilt or repaired in 2008.
Direct Relief International	805/964-4767	\$198,338,082	98.93%	\$0.42	Y	Provided more than \$70 million to global partner organizations.
UJA/Federation of New York	212/980-1000	\$177,534,000	76.91%	\$19.17	N	Groceries provided to 120,000 New York families in need.
Robin Hood Foundation	212/227-6601	\$153,760,584	94.24%	\$4.20	N	Helped create \$200 million fund to maintain low-cost housing.
PATH	206/285-3500	\$139,129,867	85.62%	\$0.49	N	Developed formulation to prevent vaccines from freeze damage.
American Nicaraguan Foundation	305/374-3391	\$136,276,768	98.94%	\$0.69	N	Built 1,842 homes for low-income families in 2007.
Nat'l Assn. for the Exch. of Industrial Res.	800/562-0955	\$134,381,940	98.05%	\$1.24	N	Receives donations from more than 7,500 companies for redistribution.
Children's Hunger Fund	818/899-5122	\$127,231,838	99.15%	\$0.33	N	Distributes 20-pound boxes of nutritional food to poor neighborhoods.
William J. Clinton Foundation	646/775-9175	\$124,136,983	94.76%	\$2.97	N	Made agreement with drug companies to reduce prices to \$1 per dose.
Jewish United Fund/Jewish Fed. of Chicago	312/346-6700	\$118,111,122	84.99%	\$10.64	Y	Embarked on new fundraising campaign for disaster victims in Asia.
Local Initiatives Support	212/455-9800	\$89,424,941	83.88%	\$6.10	N	Invested \$1.06 billion in community revitalization across the country.
Helen Keller International	877/535-5374	\$74,306,097	94.32%	\$1.09	N	Performed 20,000 eyesight restoration operations in Asia.
American Near East Refugee Aid	202/842-2766	\$68,072,562	96.64%	\$0.48	N	Constructed 42 greenhouses for farmers in the West Bank.
Tides Center	415/561-6300	\$66,755,102	78.98%	\$8.73	N	Has operated 677 socially responsible projects since 1996.
World Emergency Relief	888/484-4543	\$60,317,763	95.97%	\$3.28	Y	Hospitals/orphanages in Honduras received \$5.7 million worth of medicine.
Opportunity International	800/793-9455	\$58,761,307	88.92%	\$12.75	N	Provides microloans to 40,000 in India; will reach 80,000 by 2010.
TechnoServe	202/785-4515	\$41,598,994	83.84%	\$5.50	N	Business development programs led to 32,600 new jobs.
Project C.U.R.E.	303/792-0729	\$40,582,123	98.61%	\$0.45	N	Shipped 83 forty-foot containers of medical supplies abroad.
Lutheran World Relief	800/597-5972	\$28,508,110	91.06%	\$3.93	Y	Responded to four Haitian hurricanes with food, medical supplies.
Action Against Hunger USA	212/967-7800	\$25,941,906	89.20%	\$1.25	N	Staff of 380 experts and 4,000 volunteers work in 40 developing countries.
Hope for the City	952/897-7799	\$23,175,736	97.22%	\$2.14	N	Distributes companies' excess food and medical supplies to the poor.
Children's Health Fund	800/708-7589	\$22,744,371	87.20%	\$6.89	N	Provided 23,190 children and families with medical care.
Global Fund for Women	415/248-4800	\$16,922,555	77.95%	\$13.02	N	Awarded \$7.7 million to 617 international women's groups.
Baptist Medical & Dental Mission Int.	601/544-3586	\$11,996,207	93.12%	\$0.47	N	Establishes churches, homes and medical centers in Central America.
Global Fund for Children	202/331-9003	\$8,187,108	85.87%	\$6.14	N	Will invest \$10 million in childhood programs in the next decade.
Food Gatherers	734/761-2796	\$7,592,506	96.74%	\$1.42	N	Lead agency for hunger alleviation in Washtenaw County, Mich.
Mazon: A Jewish Response to Hunger	310/442-0020	\$6,547,833	80.90%	\$9.32	N	Grants \$4 million annually to 300 hunger-relief agencies nationwide.

Organization	Phone Number	Direct Public Support	Spending Efficiency	Cost to Raise \$100	Joint Costs	Recent Accomplishments/Organizational Goals
Educational/Cultural						
Public Broadcasting Service	703/739-5000	\$298,203,884	96.14%	\$0.11	N	Received 10 daytime and 10 primetime Emmy Awards for its programs.
WGBH Educational Foundation	617/330-5400	\$231,464,266	77.37%	\$4.38	N	Produces several Emmy award-winning TV programs, including "Frontline."
New York Public Library	212/900-8000	\$144,241,215	85.84%	\$4.78	N	Summer reading program served 54,000 children and 14,300 teens.
Smithsonian Institution	202/357-4300	\$161,991,092	77.86%	\$12.28	Y	19 museums contain more than 136 million items.
Metropolitan Opera Association	212/362-6000	\$122,641,466	88.22%	\$11.44	N	Expanded "Live in HD" movie theater showings to 700 locations.
Metropolitan Opera of Art, New York	212/535-7710	\$114,933,623	84.33%	\$8.02	N	Reopened American Museum in May 2009 after 2 years of renovations.
Institute of International Education	212/984-5381	\$102,368,725	98.35%	\$0.56	N	Sponsors student exchange programs that serve more than 18,000.
Art Institute of Chicago	312/443-3626	\$97,223,916	86.55%	\$6.69	N	Collection encompasses 260,000 works of art, furniture and architecture.
American Museum of Natural History	212/769-5100	\$92,889,316	81.53%	\$5.81	N	Collections include over 32 million specimens and artifacts.
Scholarship America	800/279-2083	\$89,375,899	93.82%	\$1.83	N	Supported 100,666 scholarships through 1,160 local chapters.
Population Services International	202/785-0072	\$79,229,058	92.98%	\$2.28	N	Delivered 18.4 million insecticide-treated mosquito nets to fight malaria.
Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory	516/367-8397	\$75,755,498	89.00%	\$2.41	N	Research institution studying genetics, cancer, plant biology and other fields.
National Public Radio	202/513-3232	\$65,465,706	82.30%	\$2.81	N	Won three Peabody Awards for outstanding radio broadcasting.
National Gallery of Art	202/737-4215	\$59,773,526	82.60%	\$6.93	N	Program distributed 2,500 works of art to museums.
San Francisco Opera Association	415/861-4008	\$58,158,984	76.91%	\$8.73	N	87th season features nine operas, including "Faust" and "Die Walküre."
Philadelphia Museum of Art	215/763-8100	\$55,902,176	83.31%	\$9.57	N	Galleries house more than 225,000 objects, spanning 2,000 years of art.
Academy for Educational Development	202/884-8000	\$51,993,352	90.78%	\$0.61	N	Provided 600,000 Indian village residents with water filtration programs.
John F. Kennedy Center for Performing Arts	800/444-1324	\$50,479,490	84.69%	\$16.05	N	Launched Arts in Crisis in 2009; will tour to support struggling nonprofits.
Robert W. Woodruff Arts Center	404/733-4200	\$40,624,193	80.27%	\$16.17	N	Received a \$12 million grant to expand K-12 educational programs.
National Trust for Historic Preservation	800/944-6847	\$35,546,983	84.19%	\$18.47	Y	Completed restoration of President Lincoln's cottage in Washington, D.C.
Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art	816/751-1278	\$26,416,745	83.07%	\$8.65	Y	Opened renovated American Art gallery as part of 75th anniversary.
Common Cause Education Fund	202/833-1200	\$4,282,124	91.18%	\$3.71	N	Lobbies on behalf of citizens' interests to Congress and executive offices.
TEAK Fellowship	212/288-6678	\$2,386,873	84.40%	\$4.22	N	Dispenses scholarships for low-income New York City students.
International Peace Institute	212/687-4300	\$1,176,290	87.90%	\$20.84	N	Works with the UN and governments to develop solutions for world issues.

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Environment/Wildlife						
Nature Conservancy	703/841-5300	\$753,810,465	80.25%	\$10.06	Y	Purchased 1.7 million acres of water-rich land in the Australian Outback.
Conservation International Foundation	800/429-5660	\$222,985,406	84.64%	\$3.12	Y	Conservation agreements have protected 7,700 square miles of forests.
Trust for Public Land	800/714-5263	\$18,807,661	89.12%	\$6.22	Y	Completed 231 projects park-building projects, totaling 202,600 acres.
Environmental Defense	212/505-2100	\$118,194,135	81.57%	\$9.35	Y	Began "catch share" program for sustainable fishing off the West Coast.
World Wildlife Fund	202/293-4800	\$111,618,233	79.45%	\$20.00	Y	Efforts in Nepal reduced the number of rhino poachings from 13 to 1.
The Conservation Fund	703/525-6300	\$102,346,700	97.12%	\$1.58	N	Works to both protect the environment and stimulate economic growth.
Natural Resources Defense Council	212/727-2700	\$99,046,953	83.20%	\$8.54	Y	Won lawsuit protecting the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge from oil exploration.
Humane Society of the United States	202/452-1100	\$85,224,988	82.77%	\$13.68	Y	Rescued more than 2,000 dogs from puppy mills in four states and Quebec.
Ducks Unlimited	800/453-8257	\$77,840,935	80.24%	\$32.21	Y	Conserved 300,000 acres of wetlands in 2008.
National Audubon Society	212/979-3000	\$63,090,282	76.78%	\$24.52	N	Opened Wildcat Glades Conservation & Audubon Center in Joplin, Mo.
Am. Soc. for Prev. of Cruelty to Animals	212/876-7700	\$62,671,111	81.29%	\$19.58	Y	Rescued more than 400 animals; investigated 5,227 cases of abuse.
National Wildlife Federation	800/822-9919	\$62,190,563	79.30%	\$20.23	Y	Secured 500,000 acres near Yellowstone National Park.
Wildlife Conservation Society	718/220-5100	\$44,324,660	84.91%	\$16.67	N	Conservation Cotton Initiative promotes eco-friendly farming.
Jewish National Fund	888/563-0009	\$41,689,892	83.11%	\$10.07	N	Began project to provide sustainability for 250,000 Negev residents.
Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution	509/457-2000	\$39,401,953	96.02%	\$6.35	N	Areas of research include industrial pollution, geology and global warming.
Union of Concerned Scientists	617/547-5552	\$30,733,594	85.72%	\$5.98	Y	Serves as independent scientific voice for public policy guidance.
Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation	800/225-5355	\$26,950,229	94.41%	\$7.08	N	Purchased 99,348 acres of wildlife habitat in nine states.
African Wildlife Foundation	202/939-3333	\$20,150,054	83.05%	\$9.36	Y	Secured 7,000 acres for conservation in 2008.
Chesapeake Bay Foundation	443/482-2045	\$16,086,060	80.12%	\$17.44	Y	Worked with several states to reduce nitrogen pollution in waterways.
National Arbor Day Foundation	888/448-7337	\$14,699,280	88.13%	\$26.04	Y	Planted 3,456,747 trees in forests across the United States.
Trout Unlimited	800/834-2419	\$12,308,628	84.52%	\$19.07	N	Launched 2007 campaign in New Mexico to re-introduce cutthroat trout.
Rainforest Alliance	212/677-1900	\$8,941,779	94.67%	\$13.42	N	Certifies sustainable forests through Forest Stewardship Council program.
Earth Island Institute	415/788-3666	\$7,808,541	85.46%	\$8.33	N	Managed 46 environmental projects in 2007.
Elephant Sanctuary of Tennessee	931/796-6500	\$5,116,018	88.39%	\$0.80	N	Shelters old, sick or needy elephants and provides constant care.
American Forests	202/737-1944	\$3,036,069	81.89%	\$5.77	N	Awarded grants that led to planting of 3.7 million trees across the US.
Animal Welfare Institute	202/337-2332	\$2,056,353	95.82%	\$1.91	N	Successfully lobbied for Congress to pass bill protecting wild horses.
Environmental Health Coalition	619/474-0220	\$1,398,834	74.97%	\$3.65	N	Supports renewable energy, cleanup and conservation efforts.

Organization	Phone Number	Direct Public Support	Spending Efficiency	Cost to Raise \$100	Joint Costs	Recent Accomplishments/Organizational Goals
Health						
American Cancer Society	800/227-2345	\$977,654,276	73.31%	\$22.34	Y	Relay for Life campaign has raised \$1.5 billion in donations since 1985.
American Heart Association	800/242-8721	\$468,132,071	75.37%	\$24.09	Y	Achieved goal of reducing heart disease/stroke death rates by 25 percent.
Mayo Clinic	507/284-5005	\$350,945,822	83.67%	\$9.66	N	Opened 214-bed hospital in Florida, combining two outdated facilities.
Leukemia and Lymphoma Society	800/955-4572	\$251,821,608	74.33%	\$17.07	Y	Pursuing 388 active research projects as of June 2008.
Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center	212/639-2000	\$238,605,800	95.11%	\$13.72	Y	Opened Cell Therapy and Engineering Facility for biological research.
March of Dimes Foundation	914/997-4488	\$230,737,298	75.70%	\$15.18	Y	Invested \$26.8 million in birth defect and infant mortality research.
National Multiple Sclerosis Society	800/344-4867	\$223,844,524	77.18%	\$16.88	Y	Invested \$50 million in 440 MS research programs nationwide.
Cystic Fibrosis Foundation	800/344-4823	\$223,787,015	89.70%	\$9.20	Y	Helped to develop breakthrough anti-cystic fibrosis drug.
Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation	800/533-2873	\$204,641,278	85.43%	\$10.35	Y	Funded nearly 40 human clinical trials with \$156 million in grants.
Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Fdn.	877/465-6636	\$201,631,357	86.45%	\$8.51	Y	Reaches more than 200 countries with education and awareness programs.
Alzheimer's Association	312/335-8700	\$173,204,078	76.64%	\$15.09	Y	Funded over \$26 million in research initiatives.
American Diabetes Association	800/342-2383	\$165,411,492	74.30%	\$29.63	Y	Funded \$42 million in diabetes research programs in 2007.
National Cancer Coalition	919/821-2182	\$151,890,569	97.46%	\$1.78	Y	Programs have provided \$500 million in medical care since 2003.
Dana-Farber Cancer Institute	617/632-3000	\$141,795,043	88.45%	\$10.78	N	Affiliated with Harvard Medical School; has 400 ongoing clinical trials.
Muscular Dystrophy Association	800/572-1717	\$136,822,818	78.40%	\$15.89	Y	Allocated \$47 million for 330 research studies in 2008.
Cleveland Clinic Foundation	800/223-2273	\$122,716,344	88.56%	\$8.74	N	Ranked America's top heart care hospital by U.S. News & World Report.
IMA World Health	877/241-7952	\$121,211,287	99.07%	\$0.12	N	Treated 750,000 cases of Neglected Tropical Diseases in Haiti in May 2009.
Help the Children	323/980-9870	\$101,195,786	99.30%	\$0.45	N	Building hospital in Guatemala to serve more than 300,000 people.
City of Hope	626/256-4673	\$99,345,692	85.07%	\$19.07	Y	Has California's largest prostate cancer program.
American Lung Association	800/586-4872	\$97,362,358	77.60%	\$18.67	Y	Helped draft legislation allowing FDA to regulate tobacco.
The Scripps Research Institute	858/784-8134	\$71,250,483	94.13%	\$4.39	N	Discovered two antibodies that might be able to fight HIV.
Project ORBIS	646/674-5500	\$55,013,652	85.67%	\$10.13	N	Trained 40,000 doctors and health care employees in eye care fields.
Christian Blind Mission USA	800/937-2264	\$54,159,731	98.42%	\$0.81	N	Has treated more than 2 million people around the world for cataracts.
International Medical Corps	310/826-7800	\$47,816,314	91.66%	\$0.89	N	Delivered 5.76 tons of medical supplies to 45,000 displaced by cyclone.
Breast Cancer Research Foundation	646/497-2600	\$39,814,172	91.81%	\$5.45	N	\$34.5 million in grants awarded to 166 international researchers.
Crohn's and Colitis Foundation	646/943-7430	\$36,418,857	79.71%	\$12.36	N	Funded 53 research programs with \$15.5 million in fiscal year 200