

# Generation Z's Philanthropic Engagement in the United States Agrofood Sector: Perceptions, Motivations, and Intentions

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Generation Z is rising as a new potential donor base for agrofood nonprofits and NGOs. In order to effectively recruit and retain this generation as donors, an understanding of their perspectives and motivations regarding philanthropy is essential. A phenomenological study was conducted with 15 members of Generation Z that have made donations of time and, in some cases, money to agrofood organizations. After conducting semi-structured interviews that guided participants in sharing their experiences, the interview transcripts were inductively coded to ascertain participant attitudes and intentions toward philanthropy in the agrofood sector.

## Key Findings:

- 1. Participants expressed uncertainty in defining philanthropy.** Some were also unsure about defining who was a philanthropist. This uncertainty lay in the conviction that some sort of threshold was necessary to define these terms. Participants varied in whether or not their own activities met the thresholds they set for their definitions.
- 2. Participants demonstrated mixed motivations for donating.** Commonly there was some sort of blend of gratitude for their own abundance and a desire to connect to their communities or other groups. Sometimes they were also motivated by what they could receive in return for giving, such as career preparation and socialization. This reciprocal nature of their giving was both acknowledged and embraced by participants.
- 3. Participants exhibited other-oriented behavior.** Often they self-identified by the way they connected to other people. This self-identity led them to be deeply invested in causes they saw as

helping particular groups. This cause devotion was often a motivator for donation.

- 4. Participants saw their future as one of service.** Regardless of the variation in future plans, participants generally wanted to use giving as a means of social integration, both into family and community. Overwhelmingly they wanted to continue donating time, as well as increase their financial giving.
- 5. Participants donated as a means of fulfilling a deep desire for connection.** The underlying theme among participant interviews was a desire for and pursuit of meaningful connection. It seemed that they fulfilled this desire through their donation experiences.

## Recommendations for Practice:

- Appeal to Generation Z as partners pursuing a common goal, integrating them into the organization.
- Provide social opportunities for donors to create a donor community to help fulfill their desire for connection.
- Demonstrate full transparency and integrity at every level of the organization, so that donors may remain assured that it aligns with their deeply held values.
- Clearly show the direct impact the organization has on the community it serves to solidify donor investment and loyalty.
- Maintain a robust online presence where Generation Z is searching for donation opportunities.
- When recruiting, target schools and university programs in the same disciplinary field as the organization, since career preparation is a motivator for Generation Z.