

Get named when a donor asks **AI where to give**

Your nonprofit's full answer-engine playbook. How to get cited inside ChatGPT, Claude, Perplexity, and Google AI answers, beginner to advanced, with a copy-paste prompt for every step.

Donor: "What are the best organizations for this cause?"

Right now, someone who cares about your cause is typing your mission into ChatGPT. They are not typing "best children's charity." They are typing four sentences about their kid, their diagnosis, and the bill they cannot pay. And AI gives them three names. If your organization is not one of those three, there is no page 2 to scroll to.

I adapted this playbook, with permission, from Sabrina Ramonov's "AI SEO for Beginners" and rebuilt it for mission-driven organizations. Every section ends with a prompt you can paste straight into ChatGPT or Claude, so you are not just reading. You are doing.

SECTION 1

What is SEO, and what just broke?

SEO means making it likely a search engine shows your page to someone looking for what you do. For years the shape was simple: someone types a question, Google shows 10 blue links, you want to be near the top. Every piece of SEO advice assumed one thing: **the person will click.**

That assumption just broke. When someone asks ChatGPT, Claude, or Perplexity now, they do not get 10 links. They get a short answer with maybe three organizations named inside it, and they usually stop there. If nobody clicks, ranking number one is worth nothing by itself. **The prize is being named in the answer.**

Why AI search is good news for nonprofits

AI traffic is tiny but far warmer than search traffic. The person already described their exact situation and got a shortlist. They are not browsing, they are deciding. So a small local nonprofit named in 20 answers can outperform a giant organization with 100,000 random visitors who never convert.

Big organizations move slowly: comms gets approved, legal reviews the language, four people sign off before a page goes live. You can publish one tomorrow. Speed and consistency are the only advantages you need.

2.8x

the increase in citation odds when a page uses clear, question-style headings in sequence (AirOps, 2026). Structure is the mechanism, not decoration.

Pick the one thing you want to be known for

This takes five minutes and it is the one page you fully control. AI models read LinkedIn constantly, both your org page and your executive director's profile. When an AI decides whether you are credible enough to name, LinkedIn is one of the top things it trusts.

Most nonprofits write "501(c)(3) dedicated to making a difference." That tells a machine nothing. Lead with the specific outcome, for a specific group, in a specific place:

"We close the pediatric wound-care gap for families across the Southeast."

Everything after it exists to prove the claim: children served, clinicians trained, named partnerships, a recognizable grant, years doing the work. The structure is **[the one thing] + [proof] + [proof] + [proof]**. "Serving the community" tells a model where you filed. "Gets wound-care supplies to uninsured kids in rural Georgia" tells a model what to recommend you for.

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Here's our nonprofit: [paste your mission, About page, or describe what you do, who you serve, and where]. Suggest 5 options for the one thing we could realistically be known for. Each should be a specific claim about the change we create for a specific group in a specific place, not our tax status. For each, list which of our actual facts (people served, partners, grants, outcomes) would prove it, and tell me which claim we have the most evidence for right now.

Paste your answer into your LinkedIn headline and About field before you close this page. Later means never.

Say the same thing everywhere

A nonprofit writes a good description on their website. Their Candid profile says something different. Charity Navigator says a third thing. An old grant application says a fourth. An AI reading all of that gets a fuzzy picture, and fuzzy means it will not risk recommending you.

A model is not looking up a fact in a database. It notices which words keep showing up next to your name across the web. If your name sits next to "wound care for uninsured children" on 30 sites, it repeats that. If it sits next to four different descriptions, it has nothing confident to repeat, so it names a peer instead. **Consistency is the actual mechanism.**

First, check that your host is not blocking AI crawlers. Open your robots.txt and allow OAI-SearchBot (ChatGPT), Claude-SearchBot (Claude), PerplexityBot (Perplexity), and Googlebot. If they are blocked, everything on your own site is invisible.

Then paste a version of your claim into: your website About page and homepage; your LinkedIn, Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, and X bios; your Candid, Charity Navigator, and GreatNonprofits profiles; your annual report's opening paragraph; the boilerplate in every grant application; your email signature; and your ED's speaker bio. While there, ask five people you have served or five long-time volunteers to leave a GreatNonprofits review. Real reviews with specifics get quoted far more than a star rating. Follow your consent and privacy practices.

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Here's the one thing we want to be known for: [paste claim]. Here are the descriptions currently live on our website, LinkedIn, Candid, Charity Navigator, and [other profiles]: [paste each]. Point out every place these contradict each other. Then rewrite each so they all make the same core claim, adjusted for that platform's length and tone. Keep the exact same key phrase in all of them.

Which pages do AI answers actually quote?

Guides that compare options, "best of" lists, and "how to help" pages get cited far more than a blog post about your gala, because they answer the exact question asked. Three formats do the work:

1. The "best [cause] organizations" list

"Best charities for pediatric health in 2026." A clear, honest list of organizations doing the work, with what each one does.

2. The "how to help with [problem]" guide

For the donor or volunteer who knows the problem but not who is solving it.

3. The "how to get help with [problem]" page

For the people you serve. AI sends someone in crisis to the org that plainly answers their question.

You can write a "best organizations for [your cause]" guide that includes yourself. The rules: be honest (if a peer is better, say so); include the orgs that genuinely belong, even strong national ones; give real specifics; put a comparison table near the top. Nonprofits are not competitors the way software companies are, and a generous, accurate guide earns more trust, not less.

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We serve [who] by [what], primarily in [place]. Peer organizations include [list 3 to 5]. Give me a prioritized list of 10 pages to write, using only these three formats: "best [cause] organizations" guides, "how to help with [problem]" guides, and "how to get help with [problem]" pages. Rank them by how likely they are to be quoted by an AI answering a donor, volunteer, or help-seeker question, and tell me which one to write first and why. Keep the framing honest and collaborative, not competitive.

Find the questions your people actually ask

Pull them from your own donor inquiries, volunteer applications, intake and help-line questions, and grant reviewer questions. Those are the exact words your people use. Do not guess. Look for three buckets:

- **Decision terms:** "is [org] a good charity," "best nonprofit for [cause]," "where does my donation actually go at [org]."
- **Need terms:** the problem you solve in the person's own words. Not "food insecurity" but "my kids and I ran out of food and rent is due Friday."
- **Fit terms:** "nonprofits helping [cause] in [state]," "volunteer opportunities for [skill]," "grants for families dealing with [condition]."

Skip anything purely educational. "What is a 501(c)(3)" brings in students, and AI answers it without naming an organization. And here is what differs from old keyword research: when someone asks a long question, the AI quietly breaks it into several smaller ones and searches each. Every one of those is a door into your page.

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The people we serve and the donors who fund us are [describe]. Here are real things they've said in inquiries, applications, and intake notes, de-identified: [paste 10 to 20 quotes]. Turn these into 20 questions someone would type into ChatGPT when ready to give, volunteer, or ask for help, sorted into 3 buckets: decision, need, and fit terms. Then take our top 5 and, for each, list the 5 smaller sub-questions an AI would need to answer. Skip anything purely educational.

Format a page so AI can quote it

An AI grabs one passage with none of the surrounding context, so every chunk has to stand by itself. Five changes:

- **Headings into real questions.** Not "Our Programs" but "How do I get wound-care supplies if I'm uninsured?" Question-style headings in clean H2 to H3 order roughly triple citation odds.
- **Answer in the first two sentences.** A found chunk has about 40 to 60 words to be useful. Say the answer, then explain.
- **Trade vague for specific.** "87 cents of every dollar goes to programs" beats "most of your donation goes to our mission." "We served 1,240 children" gets quoted; "we help many families" never does.
- **Say where the info came from.** "Figures from our 2025 annual report and IRS Form 990" does real work; models weigh visible sourcing.
- **Table rows that stand alone.** "Free wound-care kits for uninsured children 0 to 18 in Georgia" can be quoted straight into an answer.

Then three jobs make the page findable: link your own pages to each other (5+ internal links per key page); add Organization schema on your homepage and FAQPage schema on any page with questions; and refresh what already ranks every three months. About 83% of AI citations for evaluation questions come from pages updated in the last 12 months.

COPY-PASTE PROMPT

Here's a page from our website: [paste text]. Rewrite it so an AI can quote any single paragraph out of context. Turn headings into the questions donors, volunteers, and the people we serve actually ask. Put a direct answer in the first two sentences under each heading. Replace every vague phrase with a specific number or fact, and flag anything I need to fill in. Add a comparison or program table where every row makes sense on its own. Then write the Organization and FAQ schema markup.

Get AI to mention your nonprofit

Get other websites to name you. Roughly 85% of the brand mentions AI makes come from sites that are not yours, so your own site has a ceiling until outside pages talk about you. The free version takes an afternoon: ask ChatGPT, Claude, and Perplexity "what are the best organizations helping with [your cause] in [your area]?", write down every article each one cites, open each one, and see whether you are on it. If not, email the author:

"Hi [name], I read your piece on the best [cause] organizations. I run [your org], and we [specific thing the others don't do]. Happy to send our latest program numbers, outcome data, and a family story we have consent to share, if useful for your next update. No pressure either way."

Every author who adds you becomes a source an AI can quote. While you are at it, claim the free listings AI models lean on: Candid (GuideStar), Charity Navigator, and GreatNonprofits, each filled out completely with the same claim from Section 3.

COPY-PASTE PROMPT

Here are the articles ChatGPT, Claude, and Perplexity cited when I asked about the best organizations for [our cause] in [our area]: [paste titles and links]. Our organization is [name] and our genuine, specific contribution the others don't cover is [specific thing]. For each article where we're missing, write a short, warm outreach email to the author. Mention something specific from their piece, state our honest differentiator in one sentence, and offer real program data plus a consented story. No hype, under 120 words each.

Press releases and other people's platforms

News sites get crawled constantly and carry weight, so one wire release can put your name on outlets you would never reach by pitching. Use a service like EIN Presswire (they have nonprofit rates). Nonprofits have real news constantly: a grant awarded, a new program, a milestone, a hospital or school partnership, a new board chair, an impact report. Front-load the news in the first paragraph (who, what, why anyone should care, under 50 words), write it in third person with one substantive quote from your ED, and point your two or three link slots at your donate, program, and help pages, not your homepage.

Then get onto platforms that keep working. A podcast show-notes page sits there with your ED's name on it forever and gets re-crawled every month; twelve guest spots build twelve permanent pages. Search your cause on listennotes.com and email the small and mid-size shows. YouTube is the one you do not wait to be invited to: make short videos answering the exact donor and help-seeker questions from Section 6. Sector publications and conference talks also create trusted pages with your name on them.

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Our organization works on [cause] and our audience is [donors, volunteers, families we serve]. Here's our background: [paste bio]. Find me 10 podcast or guest-post angles that would genuinely interest a host in the nonprofit, health, or community space, not just promote us. For each, write a 100-word pitch with a specific title, 3 talking points, and one surprising thing our ED could say. Rank easiest to hardest to book. Then tell me which 3 we could film as our own YouTube videos this week without waiting for anyone.

Automate the writing with a skill file

A skill is a plain text file of instructions Claude follows every time, so your comms person or a volunteer can produce a citation-ready page without relearning any of this. The essentials to put in it:

- **Before writing:** pull current numbers from your latest annual report and Form 990, never from memory. Note which articles the AIs already cite. List one genuine strength and one honest limit for your org and every peer named.
- **Structure:** open with the real problem, name your top recommendation in the first 100 words, comparison table right after the intro, one clear H2 per section phrased as a question.
- **The quotable-row rule:** every table cell must stand alone. "Who they serve" = a specific group and place, never "the community." "How to give or get help" = a real, concrete path.
- **Quality rules:** every org named must genuinely belong; proportional coverage; name a real limit of your own program; collaborative tone; never expose an individual you serve.
- **Style:** 1,800 to 2,800 words, numbers as digits, no em dashes, no empty superlatives, FAQ schema on any question section.

The point is that the rules live in a file instead of in your head. Once the writing is systematized, your team publishes more than it can keep track of.

Track whether AI is recommending you

Ask the AI models your donors' and families' questions every month and log whether you got named. That count, not traffic, is your scoreboard now. Re-run the crawler check from Section 4 first, because a blocked crawler makes this scoreboard read zero for reasons that have nothing to do with your value. Then measure three things, in order:

- **Ask the AIs yourself, monthly.** Paste your 10 buyer questions into ChatGPT, Claude, Perplexity, and Google's AI answers. Log whether you got named and which peers did. That spreadsheet is your ranking report now.
- **Watch searches for your own name.** Getting named leads people to look you up. Track branded-name searches in Google Search Console.
- **Count what matters, not sessions.** Tag where donations, volunteer signups, and help requests come from. A trickle of AI-referred people who act beats a flood who don't.

COPY-PASTE PROMPT

We serve [who] by [what] in [place]. Write the 10 questions our donors, volunteers, and the families we serve would most likely type into ChatGPT when deciding who to support or where to get help. Make them realistic and detailed, the way a real person describes their situation, not short keywords. Then build me a tracking table with columns for the question, the date, whether our organization was named, which peers were named, and which sources the answer cited.

This takes time and it compounds. Every page, profile, and mention stacks on the last one, which is why it keeps paying long after you stop.

The board conversation

Do not ask your board to fund "AI SEO." It is abstract. Sell them the result: "In 90 days, when a donor asks ChatGPT which organizations to trust for [our cause] in [our region], our name comes up. Right now it doesn't. Here is the proof." Then run the 10 questions on your own organization, screenshot every answer, and show the board a peer's name highlighted and yours missing. You are not asking for a big budget. You are showing a gap a competitor for the same donors is already filling.

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I'm doing an AI-visibility audit for a nonprofit working on [cause] in [location] called [name]. Peer organizations donors compare them to are [list]. Write the 10 questions their donors, volunteers, and the people they serve would ask an AI when choosing where to give, serve, or seek help. Then give me a one-page audit template with a summary line a non-technical board member would understand, a table showing who got named for each question, the top 3 reasons they're likely missing, and a 90-day plan split into months.

The whole playbook, in one breath

If you do exactly one thing, do Section 3: pick the one thing you want to be known for and make it the first words of your LinkedIn and About page. Everything else is that same claim, repeated in more places, by more people, in more trusted outlets.

A model does not rank your website. It reads your site, your profiles, other people's lists, a news story, a podcast page, and repeats the version of your organization that shows up the most. The winner is not whoever writes the cleverest page. It is whoever is described the same way in the most trusted places. It is still early. Not for much longer.

Want this run on your organization?

AI Powered Dahlia runs AI-visibility audits and 90-day AEO plans for mission-driven organizations. We show your board exactly where donors' AI answers name a peer and not you, then build the pages, profiles, and mentions that close the gap.

Book an AI-visibility audit

aipowereddahlia.com/blog/ai-seo-for-nonprofits-playbook