2025-06-03 Board Fundraising Pitch

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Please Take Notes

If you have a clarifying question, please ask it live.

Otherwise, please write down your question/comment until the end. We have a lot (50 slides) to get through.

Apology

I'll be using some marketing, sales, and growth terminology.

It doesn't quite apply everywhere and some of it may sound weird in the context of a non-profit.

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- Coda: Parallel Activities
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5-Year Plan

The 5-year plan is incredibly hard to read, partly due to the inclusion of brainstorming "tactics".

Once we take those out, it's very sensible and something the we already all agree upon.

People

✅ **Shared Vision**

🟩 **Big #a11y (access for all)**

🟨 **Economy (Flathub, hardware, mobile)**
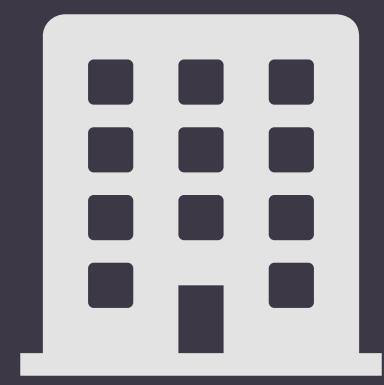
Services

🟥 **Fund Development**

🟨 **Strong Infra (security, Flatpaks)**

🟨 **GUADEC++**

Foundation

🟨 **25+ Years!** 🎉

🟥 **Funding**

🟥 **Health & Wellness**

Definitions

Recurring	Repeatable	One-Off
🔄 Monthly	🔁 Annual…ish	❌ No symmetry
🤖 Automatic	🙍 Automatic…ish	😴 Manual
🟢 The action is to STOP	🟠 The action is to STOP …but it is noticed. We might have to ask.	🔴 Action is to START
💳 Credit Cards (mostly)	💳 Credit Cards, Ad Board contributions, GUADEC sponsorships, merch, etc.	🏦 Wire transfers

Principles

Recurring > Repeatable > One-Off

🟢 **This is the focus.**

This is the lesson learned by every software company.

Subscriptions / SaaS are sticky.

🟠 **When we have to.**

🔴 **We won't *stop* doing this, but it will never make us sustainable.**
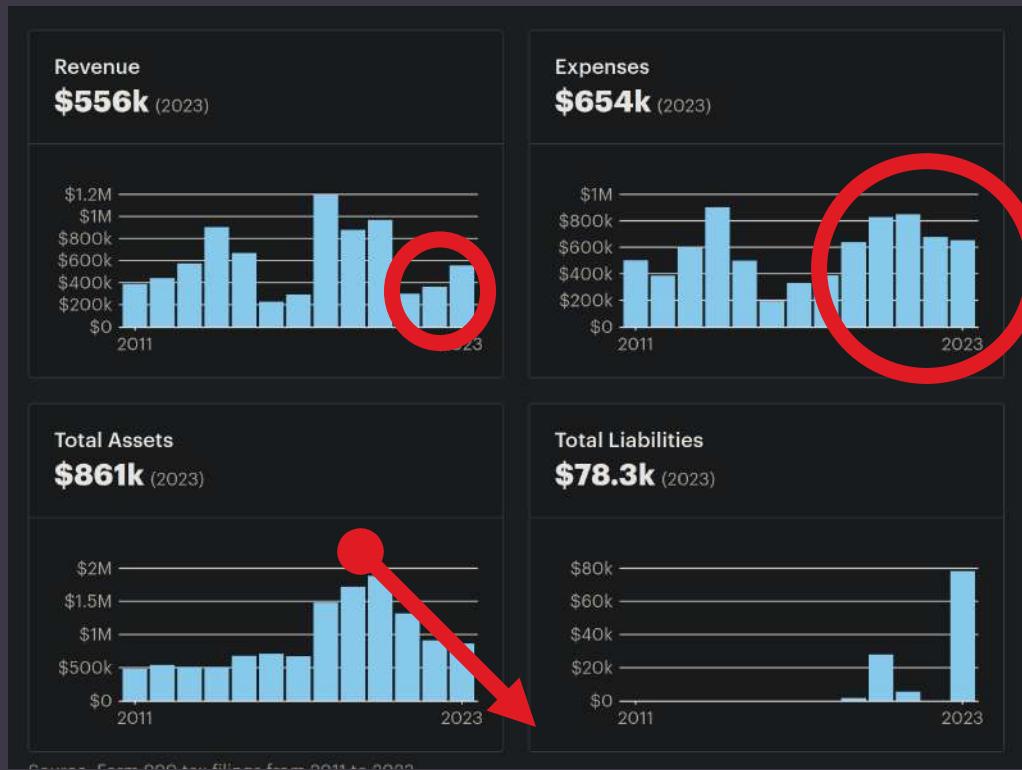
It's tempting to chase one-time donations because they're big cheques … but then we double our staff one year and fire half of them the next.

This is not respecting the health or wellbeing of staff — and it *really* damages the brand.

Current Financial Position: Bad

990s In The Public Eye (Brand Repair)
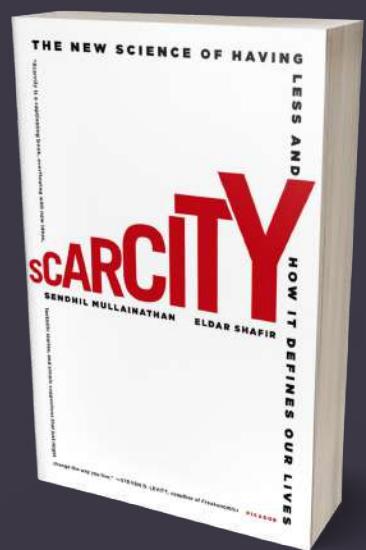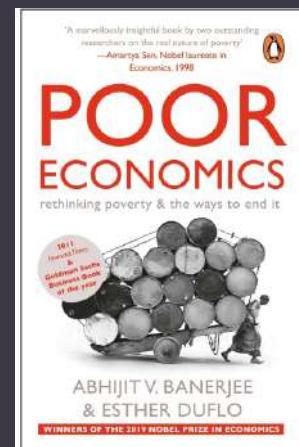
Poverty Trap: Treading Water

- **Psychology:** all brain cycles are wasted on survival, not the mission

- **Goal inhibition:** focus on immediate concerns at the expense of long-term goals

- **Juggling / No Slack:** patch crises by shifting resources toward imminent needs

- **Shock Risk:** Covid, ED exit, big political shifts, etc. grind the org to a halt - they shouldn't

Monthly Expenses

Monthly Revenue

{ elided
– these slides contained salary data }

{ the salient point was that the Foundation was operating with a $30,000/mo recurring revenue/expenses shortfall when I joined, a fact that can be derived from 990s and annual reports }

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Problem: Our Revenue Is Inside-Out

MRR

Mostly comprised of GNOME contributors. ☹️

~200 x $10

$10/mo/ea (median)

In our ideal world, we're handing out grants to contributors instead of taking their disposable income.

We need to find different donors. We need 3000 - 6000 people.

ARR

**Red Hat
SUSE
Canonical
Google (?)**

**$2000/mo/ea
⇒ $25,000/yr/ea**

The ED job description says "your first task is to raise your own salary."

I think this is the wrong framing. We should set the bar higher.

Solution: Right-Side-Out Revenue

MRR

**We want users,
not contributors.**

*** Negative lift
* "Donate Less"
* Longevity, not parades**

$10/donor/mo

"lift"

MRR++

**We want consumer orgs,
not producer orgs.**
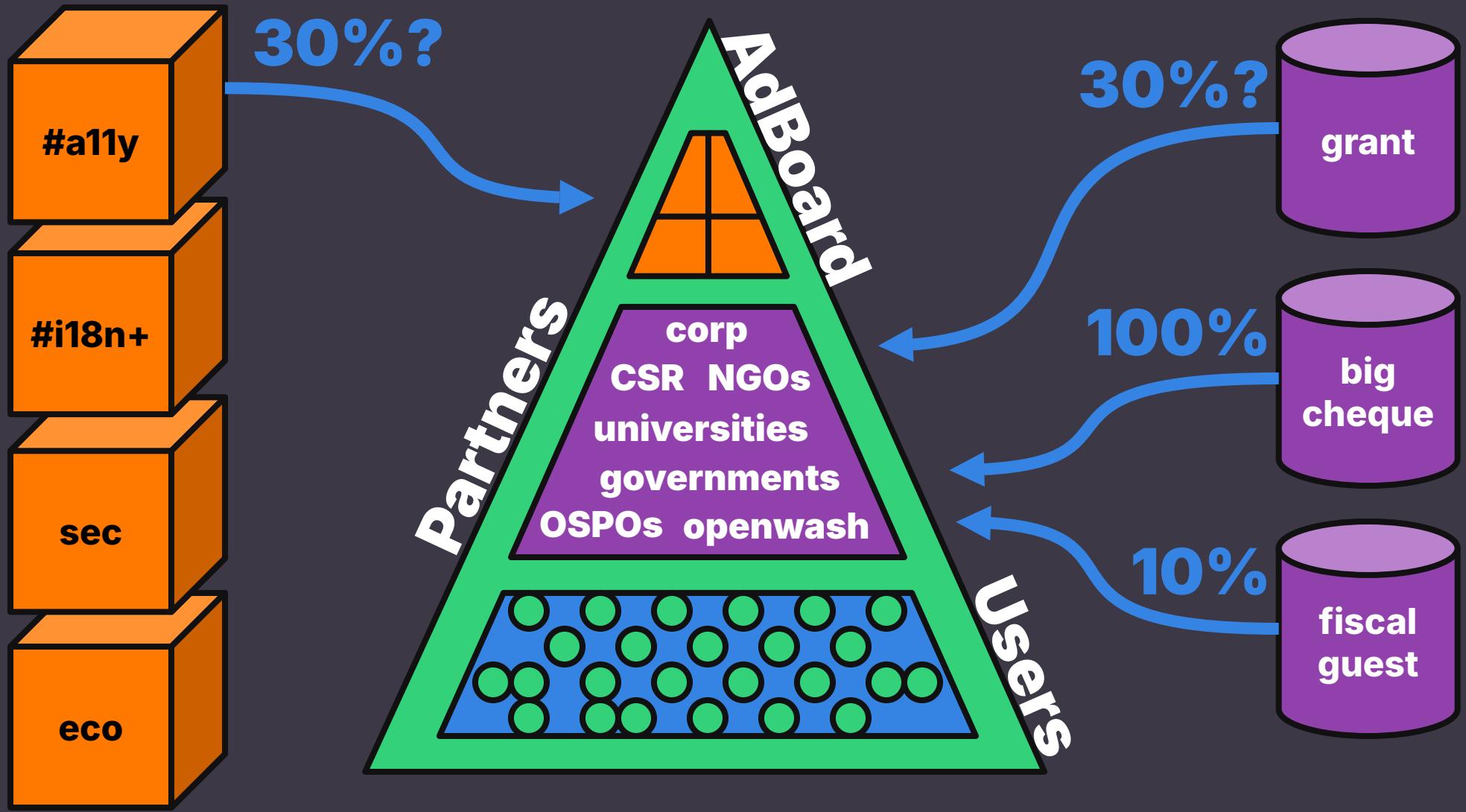
$1000/org/mo

**The ED job description could say:
"grow ARR YoY by {{your-salary}}"**

**ex. $60k/mo = $720k/yr
⇒ grow to $870k/yr for $150k/yr salary
⇒ ~1250 users/yr or ~13 orgs/yr**

This is what I'm asking you to ask of me.
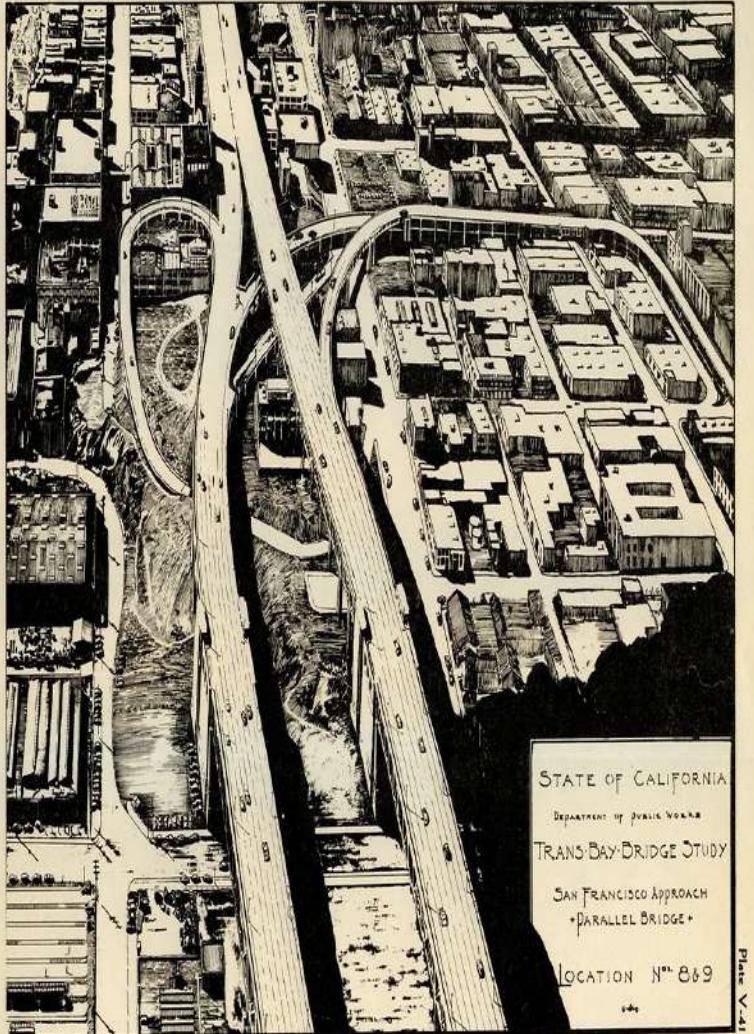
# Diversified Portfolio

Market Research: Our Audience

"What do I want?"
"What do I get?"

These Are Not Serialized

We'll discover our value proposition to recurring donors as we go.

We will do this work in parallel.

Individual Donors
(+ Foundation Members)
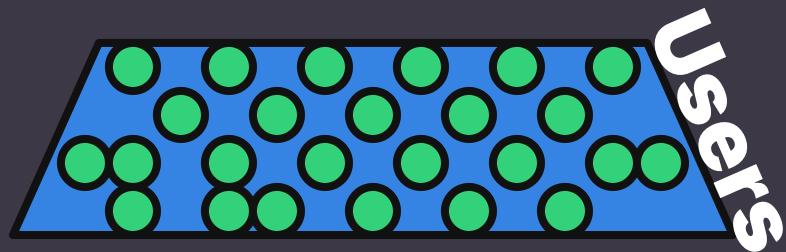
- Note / Suggestion

- Quarterly Newsletter

- Stickers?

- Feedback channel? (but no one's asked)

I had a friend ask me recently "how does GNOME make money?" — he didn't know it was a nonprofit.

The truth is, users don't want much.

"I just wish someone would ask me to give.

I don't pay attention."

Users

Partners

- Trademark Exchange - #135

- Idea Exchange?

- Complaints Box?

- Support Channel? (later)

- Something else?

We need some kind of **CRM** because we'll have to talk to these people every year and the next ED will have no idea who they are.

GitLab and Nextcloud are not CRM.

corp
CSR NGOs
universities
governments
OSPOs openwash
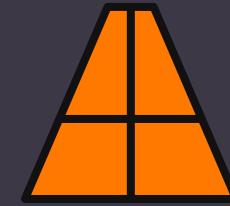
Advisory Board

- What do they get now?
- Lunch?
- Prestige?

The status quo is fine.
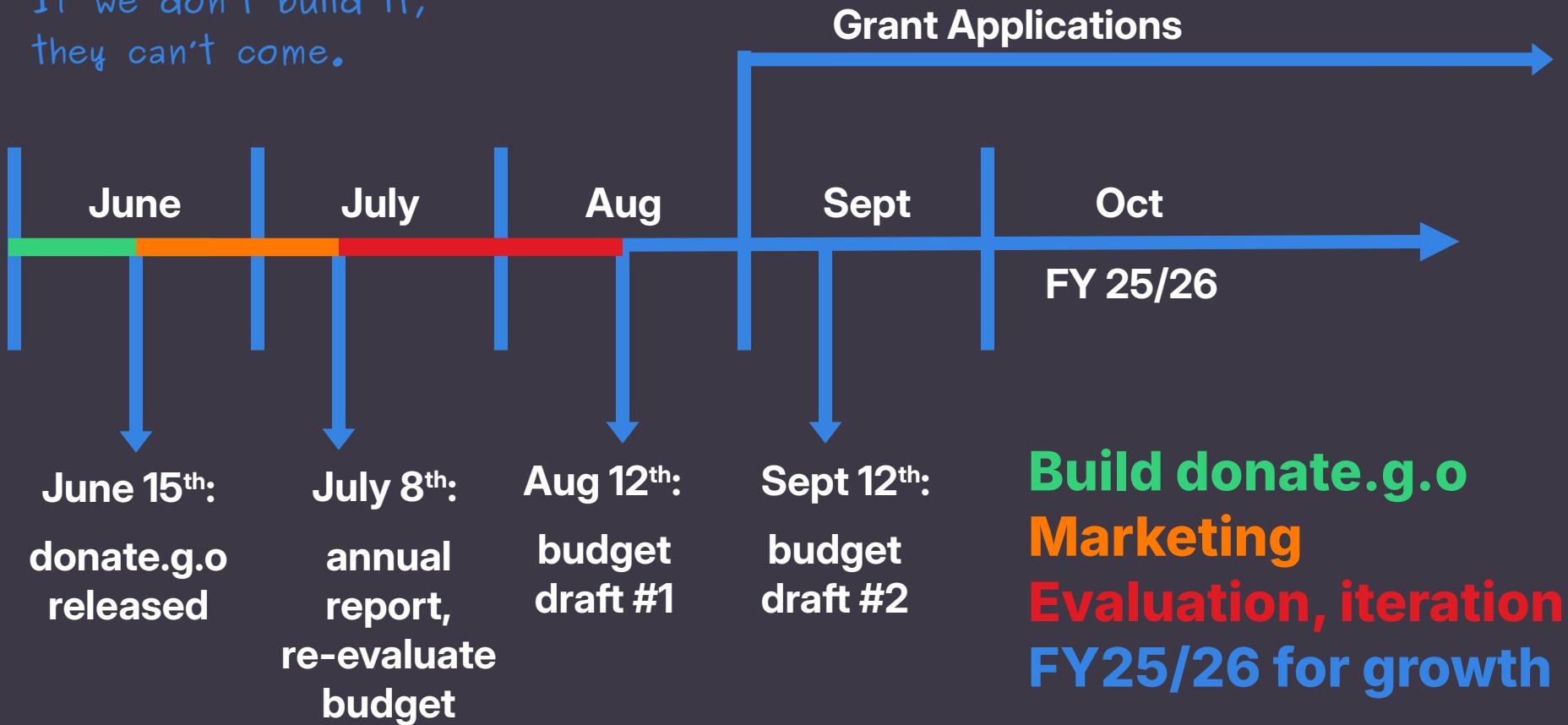
But we should figure out how to keep the Advisory Board happy even if we can't meaningfully grow it.

Timelines

Timelines: Start Early

If we don't build it, they can't come.

Grant Applications

June · July · Aug · Sept · Oct

FY 25/26

June 15th:
donate.g.o released

July 8th:
annual report, re-evaluate budget

Aug 12th:
budget draft #1

Sept 12th:
budget draft #2

Build donate.g.o
Marketing
**Evaluation, iteration**
FY25/26 for growth

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CTA: Shaping Up The Experience

Attention Span

- Users leave in 10 - 20 seconds
- Attention flags < 8 seconds
- CTA in < 3 seconds
- Flow in < 5 seconds

Our Advantages:

We're not selling anything! We're not onboarding! We do *not* want to capture the user's attention.

We don't need them to stay on the site, stay engaged, or read more.

We just need them to swipe a credit card and they came to donate.gnome.org to do exactly that.

Above The Fold
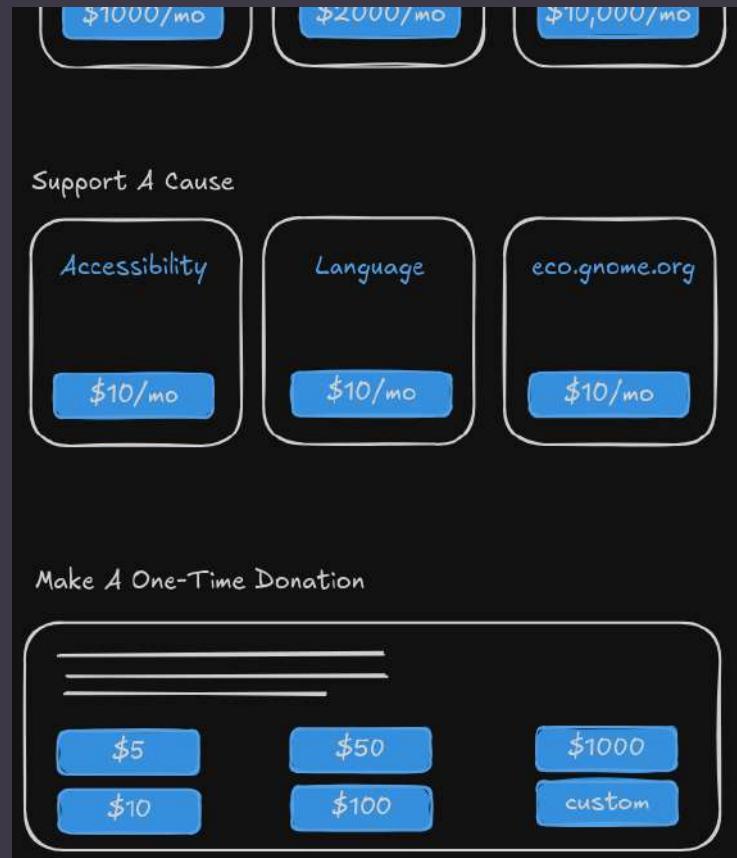
Below The Fold

Non-Functional Requirements

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{ elided – these slides contained an explanation of why we moved our recurring donation payment processor to Stripe and were quite critical of our previous payment processor }

Non-Functional Requirements (cont)

{ elided – these slides contained an explanation of why we moved our recurring donation payment processor to Stripe and were quite critical of our previous payment processor }

Non-Functional Requirements

Cheap Integration

* Emails for quarterly newsletter
* Memo / Suggestion on donation

We'll do the cheapest things we
possibly can, to start with.

Expensive Integration

* Ideas Exchange
* "Complaints Box"
* Other Channels
* Support Channels
* etc.

The Message

The Message

* GNOME Is Infrastructure
  * 25+ years of history! (a good base, but there's no ribbon-cutting for work done in 2008)
  * funding security ⇒ Flatpak, Flathub ⇒ supply chain, clean up old code
  * funding #a11y
  * funding #i18n++
  * funding eco.gnome.org ⇒ getting Linux on more dead laptops, dead phones
  * funding services (maybe) ⇒ location, GOA, whitelists, blacklists

* Being App-Forward in a post-Apple world
  * "the youth" hate websites and webapps (Pariyatti, SK Covid Wallet)
  * Apps *feel* like they're "yours", even if Apple and Google own them - and our apps really do belong to the user
  * desktop apps are now easier to discover and install than Windows *and* MacOS
  * mobile GNOME is the dreamy future my Gentoo install on a Compaq Presario was back in 2003

* #lofi future depends on Native Apps

* hardware partners: Framework is the new Mac

Hey! It's part of the 5-year plan!

But how do we get people to the CTA?

Marketing: Where do we take the message?

Rule #1: Meet people where they are.

Talk To GNOME Users… Via GNOME

The KDE-style "Popup"

- **AdwAboutDialog** - @alice (libadwaita#865)

- **os.gnome.org** - @alatiera says there are many enthusiasts on the site

- **Full Popup** - KDE-style, desktop-level bi-annual popup

Marketing Phase One: User Donors

Individual User Donors

- "Donate Less" - we want to ask for monthly donations users can afford to pay, even on difficult months
- YouTube / TikTok / Instagram / etc
- Twitter? Our Asian community is still there.
- Reddit
- Journalists / interviews / news outlets
- Non-FOSS developer conferences / networks

Marketing Phase Two: Org Donors

Organization Donors / Partners

- CRM, please

- A million meet.gnome.org calls for Steven

- Industry confs (again, not purely FOSS-focused), giving talks

Marketing Phase Three: Rinse, Repeat

Repeat Our MRR Approach

- Avoid attrition / churn
- Keep donors happy
- Demonstrate that the Foundation supports the project, with evidence

Strategic Buy-In

Why am I asking for *strategic* buy-in?

This will not happen overnight.

It's going to be a slog. (For me.)

The end result will be worth it so we can stop treading water.

Coda: Parallel Activities

Parallel Activities

Grants in parallel.

Restricted funds / campaigns in parallel.

One-off donations in parallel.

Conference Sponsorships in parallel.

Fiscal hosting in parallel:

Why aren't we getting 10%?
Why aren't we charging for Bitcoin conversion, given all the risk we're taking on?

Questions?