



How Vanguard Charitable launched an industry-changing tool with Product Concept Analysis



1,000+
responses to
initial survey

Over
\$1.5 billion in
grants in 2020

3 hour
turnaround time with
expert solutions

THE CHALLENGE

Meeting the needs of hyperlocal communities

Vanguard Charitable sponsors donor-advised funds that seek to make giving easy, convenient and smart. With over 1.7 million registered 501(c)(3) organizations in the U.S. alone, finding an organization that is a meaningful fit can be time-consuming and complex for philanthropists. As one of the largest donor-advised fund providers in the country, Vanguard Charitable wanted to make it easier for their donors to discover nonprofit organizations where their grant dollars would make the biggest difference in response to the COVID-19 outbreak.

As a research project strategist at Vanguard Charitable, Magda Swanson and the research and strategy group (RSG) work to understand and connect with individual donors, and find new ways to anticipate the needs of her clients. The pandemic raised new issues in ensuring that donor dollars were better aligned with the actual needs on the ground in individual communities facing unique challenges in responding to the pandemic, she says.



“Being able to develop a tool that was reactive to the full spectrum of viewpoints that our donors represent was the real challenge we needed to solve.”

Magda Swanson, Research Project Strategist

Using SurveyMonkey, Vanguard Charitable sent out a survey in early spring 2020, asking donors how the donor-advised fund could best help them with their giving efforts. The overwhelming response was that these charitably minded people wanted to get hyperlocal with their giving, and do it as quickly as possible. Many donors were unsure how to find and support local nonprofits that often have the power to make an immediate and localized impact, but don't necessarily have the resources to make themselves known to the broader public.

Magda's team wanted to create an online resource that could answer these questions for donors, but the solution would involve complex mapping software and technical expertise to be done right; requiring a significant upfront investment. Getting buy-in on the project and the associated budget from Vanguard Charitable leadership would require a proof of concept. The RSG team found the market research solution the team needed in SurveyMonkey's Product Concept Analysis, one of seven expert solutions for creative and concept testing.

THE SOLUTION

Road-testing the Nonprofit Aid Visualizer (NAVi)

Magda and her team began crafting a concept platform. They wanted to ensure it had detailed local information as well as specific information about pandemic response organizations and incidence rates by area. The team worked with a mapping technology specialist to scope a solution.

"At this stage, we knew we needed to road-test the concept in more detail in order to move forward with the necessary investment," Magda says.

Using SurveyMonkey Product Concept Analysis, Vanguard Charitable set benchmarks and began testing with a targeted demographic.

Vanguard Charitable then turned to expert solutions to test branding and names for the new platform, eventually landing on Nonprofit Aid Visualizer™ (NAVi). With the proof in hand, Vanguard Charitable was able to create and roll out NAVi quickly, launching the free platform for use both by donors and the general public. The team also leveraged SurveyMonkey to connect with donors who had used the tool to get their feedback on the experience.

THE TAKEAWAY

A "big step" and opportunity for the industry

Vanguard Charitable leveraged SurveyMonkey at 4 key points of the development and launch process: concept generation, product concept testing, branding analysis and adjustments. The initial "How can we help?" survey in early spring collected 1,000 responses within a week, one of the highest response totals for any survey the organization sent. Expert solutions provided a speedy turnaround, delivering initial results within 3 hours, Magda says.

Vanguard Charitable donors exceeded \$1.5 billion in grants in 2020, which Magda credits in part to the launch of NAVi and the ability to curate opportunities for donors in new ways. NAVi is no small feat —as a free public offering, it's a "big step towards providing accessible, timely, and actionable data to donors at a critical moment in which smart and effective philanthropy is needed—perhaps more than ever," Magda says.

Learn more at surveymonkey.com/enterprise

Company:

Vanguard Charitable

Strategic goal:

Offer hyperlocal insight to donors
Quickly test and launch a brand new platform
Prove a product concept without upfront software investment

Solution:

Enterprise + Product Concept Analysis (expert solutions)

Success factors:

1,000+ responses
Launched NAVi within months
Created an industry-first platform