

Executive Summary for Practitioners

# 2026 North American Prospect Development Benchmark Study

Preliminary insights from our ongoing study of prospect development operations features data from 220 North American organizations, revealing key benchmarks, best practices, and actionable strategies to empower practitioners.

## About the report

We're building out the first comprehensive, data-driven benchmark for prospect development operations in North America.

**220 organizations · 44 questions · 5 core analytical tests**

 [Read the full in-progress report at kindsight.io/benchmark](https://kindsight.io/benchmark)



**Be a part of history!**

Take part in the report.

[Complete the survey](#)

## The numbers that matter *most*

These are the core metrics drawn from the 220 organizations participating so far. To give you the clearest picture of the current landscape, all figures are presented as medians with interquartile ranges (IQR). Think of these numbers as a powerful compass rather than a strict map.

Use these as benchmarks—not prescriptions—for your own shop.

For definitions of these terms, read the full report at [kindsight.io/benchmark](https://kindsight.io/benchmark)

Metric	Median	IQR
Research FTE	1.5	0.2 – 3.0
Annual research spend	\$112,450	\$12.5K – \$225K
Annual tool/tech spend	\$17,450	\$5K – \$37.5K
Prospects researched/year	175	50 – 750
Prospects qualified/year	75	25 – 300
Cost per qualified prospect	\$500	\$500 – \$1,500
Prospects per FTE	200	117 – 250
Portfolio size	75	25 – 125
Inactive prospect rate	17%	5% – 32%
PRMI Score (0-100)	65	55 – 75

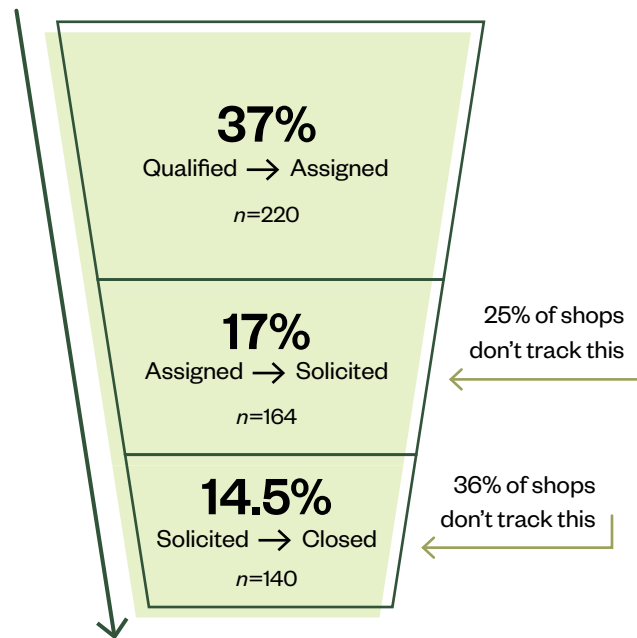


### Median conversion rates reported for each pipeline stage

## The pipeline conversion funnel

This is where research meets fundraising. The median conversion rates to the right show what happens after a prospect is qualified—and where the pipeline narrows.

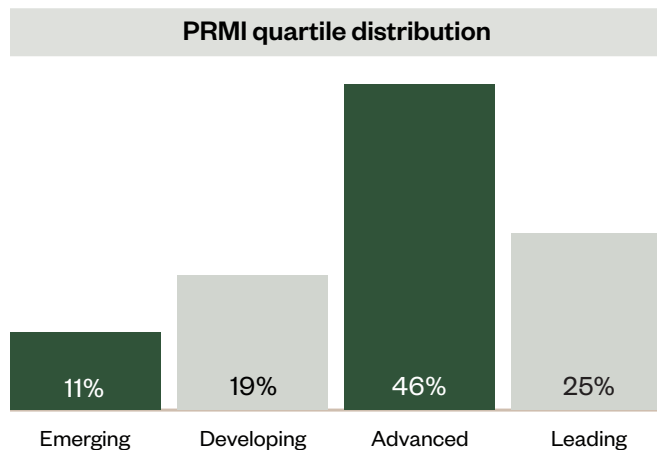
The shrinking *n* at each stage is itself a finding. If your organization doesn't track solicitation or close rates, you're not alone—but you're also flying blind on whether your research is translating into asks and gifts.



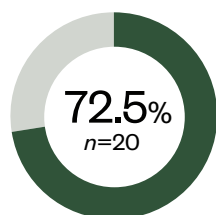
## Where the field stands on maturity

The PRMI measures five practices—CRM logging, gift officer action on research, pipeline tracking, portfolio hygiene, and demonstrating ROI—to distribute participating organizations into four tiers. Nearly half the field sits in the Advanced range—organizations that have adopted most practices to some degree but haven't yet achieved the full, measurable integration that defines Leading shops.

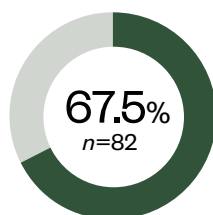
**A note on the PRMI:** This is an exploratory index based on five self-assessed items. Its internal reliability (Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.733$ ) is below the conventional 0.75 threshold. It's a useful directional tool, not a diagnostic instrument. We will refine it in future administrations.



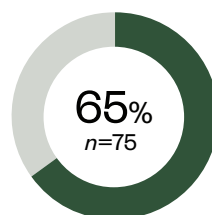
### Median PRMI score by organization type



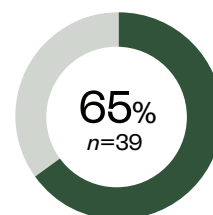
Healthcare



Higher Education



Independent Nonprofit



Other

For more details on PMRI methodology (and to get your organization's PRMI score!) visit [kindsight.io/benchmark](https://kindsight.io/benchmark)

# 5 essential insights *every* prospect development professional should know

Use these insights to advocate or prioritize improvements, and reframe budget requests.

## 1 | Maturity correlates with revenue influence

The strongest signal in the study is that organizations reporting higher maturity practices also report influencing more philanthropic revenue. This holds even after controlling for organizational size. In plain language: it's not just that bigger shops report more revenue. Organizations that log research in CRM, track their pipeline, prune dead prospects, and can demonstrate ROI tend to report higher revenue influence—regardless of size.

**What this means for you:** When you advocate for process improvements—better CRM workflows, regular portfolio reviews, pipeline dashboards—you're not asking for overhead. You're investing in the practices most strongly associated with revenue outcomes across 220 organizations.

## 2 | Spending more doesn't automatically mean producing more

There is no significant correlation between research spending and productivity per FTE. This is a null result, and it matters. It means you can't justify a bigger budget by promising "more research per dollar."

**What this means for you:** Rather than framing budget requests as input → output stories, advocate for what the investment enables: better pipeline quality, stronger assignment rates, and the maturity practices linked to revenue influence. Show the value chain, not the production line.

## 3 | Assignment is the bottleneck

Only 37% of qualified prospects reach a gift officer. That means nearly two-thirds of your identification output may be sitting unused. Furthermore, maturity correlates with assignment rate, meaning higher-maturity organizations are significantly better at getting research into the hands of gift officers.

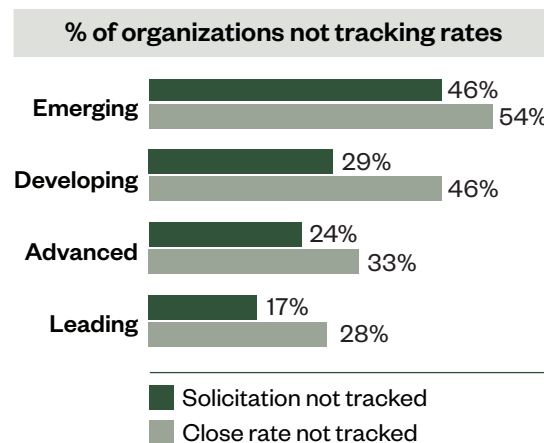


**What this means for you:** Track your assignment rate! If it's below 37%, that's your single highest-leverage improvement. Work with your MGO team to understand what prevents assignment—capacity, portfolio limits, handoff friction, individual behaviors—and build a process to close the gap.

## 4 | If you're not tracking it, you can't improve it

Among organizations in the lowest maturity tier (Emerging), 46% don't track solicitation rates and 54% don't track close rates. Among the highest-maturity organizations (Leading), those figures drop to 17% and 28%. The ability to see your own pipeline is itself a marker of organizational maturity.

**What this means for you:** If you can't pull a report showing how many of your qualified prospects were solicited and closed, make that your first infrastructure project. You don't need a new tool—you need a reliable field in your CRM and a quarterly reporting habit.



## 5 | Screening discipline drives qualification volume

Regular batch screening correlates significantly with the number of prospects qualified. Organizations that screen quarterly or more frequently identify more qualified prospects than those screening ad hoc or annually.

**What this means for you:** If your screening is purely reactive (ad hoc), consider establishing a regular cadence—even quarterly. Systematic screening fills the top of the funnel, which feeds every downstream metric.

# How to use these benchmarks

This study is being built for working practitioners, not academics. Here are four ways to put these numbers to work.

## 1. Benchmark your own shop

Pull your own numbers for the metrics in the table on page 1. Compare your medians to the field. Where are you above or below? Don't panic about any single metric—look for patterns. If you're below the median on assignment rate AND you don't track solicitation rates, that's a systemic pipeline visibility issue, not a staffing problem.

## 2. Build a maturity roadmap

The PRMI measures five practices: CRM logging, gift officer action on research, pipeline tracking, portfolio hygiene, and demonstrating ROI. The lowest-scoring item across the field is portfolio hygiene (mean 3.28 out of 5). Score yourself on each item (1-5) and focus improvement efforts on your weakest area. The data suggests that improving these practices is associated with better outcomes.

Practice	Field Mean	Your Score (1-5)	Priority?
CRM logging	3.76		
Gift officer acts on research	3.59		
Pipeline tracking	3.54		
Demonstrate ROI	3.55		
Portfolio hygiene	3.28		

## 3. Make the budget case

The data shows that spending more doesn't predict productivity—but maturity predicts revenue influence. Frame your budget request around what the investment enables: "With this investment, we can move from ad-hoc screening to quarterly reviews (associated with 3× more qualified prospects), improve our assignment rate from X% toward the field median of 37%, and implement pipeline tracking—the practices most strongly correlated with revenue influence across 220 organizations."

## 4. Start a conversation with your MGO team

Share the pipeline conversion funnel. Ask your gift officers: "Do you know what percentage of assigned prospects you've solicited this year?" If the answer is no, you've identified a shared visibility gap. Prospect development doesn't end at assignment—and these benchmarks give both teams a shared language for tracking outcomes.

### Important research caveats:

Responsible use of these findings requires understanding their limits:

- **Correlation, not causation.** Every finding in this study describes an association. We cannot say that maturity causes higher revenue influence—only that they move together in this sample.
- **Self-reported data.** All metrics come from survey responses, not audited records. They reflect what respondents believe to be true, filtered through banded response options.
- **Convenience sample.** The 220 participating organizations are not a random sample. They represent organizations where someone cared enough to complete a 44-question survey—which likely skews toward more engaged, better-resourced shops.
- **Band estimation.** Revenue and operational figures use midpoint modeling of categorical bands. Treat these as order-of-magnitude benchmarks, not precise figures.

## Help us build the benchmark you deserve

This study is designed to be replicated annually. Your participation this year directly shapes the benchmarks that the entire profession will reference.

The next time you need to justify a hire, defend a budget, or explain the value of research to a board—**these are the numbers you'll reach for.**

**Make sure they include your voice.**

With 220 responses, we have a solid foundation—but every additional response makes the benchmarks more reliable, the subgroup analyses more robust, and the findings more defensible when you take them to your leadership.

**Participate in the study.** Grow the dataset.  
Share it with your peers.

Take survey