



**Colin Powell School**  
for Civic and Global Leadership



The City College  
of New York

**MASTER IN PUBLIC  
ADMINISTRATION  
PROGRAM**

# **MONEY TALKS: NAVIGATING BUDGET COMMUNICATION FOR NONPROFITS BEST PRACTICES AND IMPACTS**

## **TEAM 4**

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# ABOUT THE PROJECT



Our team recognized that communication and transparency regarding budgets allocation within non-profit programs are scarce or limited in information.\*



**GOAL:** To help identify best practices, talking points, and suggestions so that professionals can establish a pathway to healthy and productive budget conversations within their organizations, aligned with their mission.



\*Based on a survey conducted with a small focus group

# THE PROBLEM

## UNDERSTANDING THE LINK BETWEEN BUDGET COMMUNICATION AND PROGRAM QUALITY

### Concerns



As professionals in the nonprofit sector, cohort members gathered and identified common challenges regarding budgeting and budget allocations as well as the communication surrounding these processes. These concerns have led to several unintended negative impacts, including:

### NEGATIVE IMPACTS

- Scarcity mindset
- Underdeveloped financial management = ineffective program services
- Lack of communication
- Negatively impacts resources that drive the mission (serving clients, etc.)
- Lack of programmatic autonomy



# SURVEY SAYS?

## Gather Research

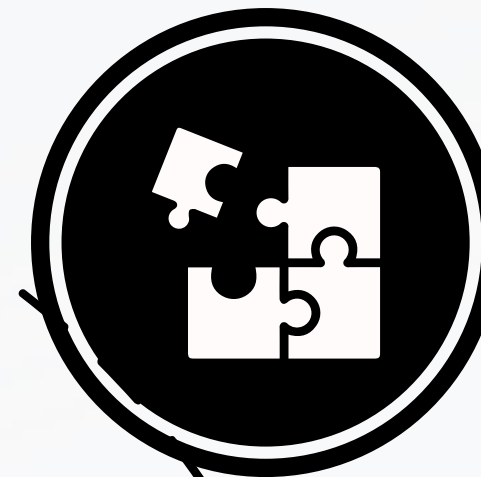
Our focus group consisted of managers in various non-profit organizations with various levels of experience managing and forecasting budgets

## Collect Data

Information was gathered via anonymous survey to protect the identities of those completing it.

## Define Best Practices

Based on scholarly articles and data collected, what next?





# RESEARCH: GROUNDING LANGUAGE & INTENTION

- “Nonprofit budgets should be considered flexible documents.”
- Center budget around primary goals and mission of organization.
- A budget can be both a management and communications tool.

# RESEARCH: HIGH LEVEL LEARNINGS

- Strong systems in place
  - Forecasting cash flows
  - Receive, Review and Respond
- Strong governance, performance, and quality staff = greater transparency
- Transparency = value added for stakeholders

## Sources:

- [Communication Strategies for Increasing Nonprofit Organizations Fundraising Revenue](#)
- [High-Performing Organizations Embrace Transparency](#)
- [Determinants and Consequences of Nonprofit Transparency](#)

# HONEST RESPONSES

**Hingle McCringleberry** ★★☆☆☆

"I ask how much money we have and if I have the ability to spend that money on something"



**Xmus Jaxon Flaxon-Waxon** ★★☆☆☆

"I meet with me, myself, and I"



**Kenny Miller** ★☆☆☆☆

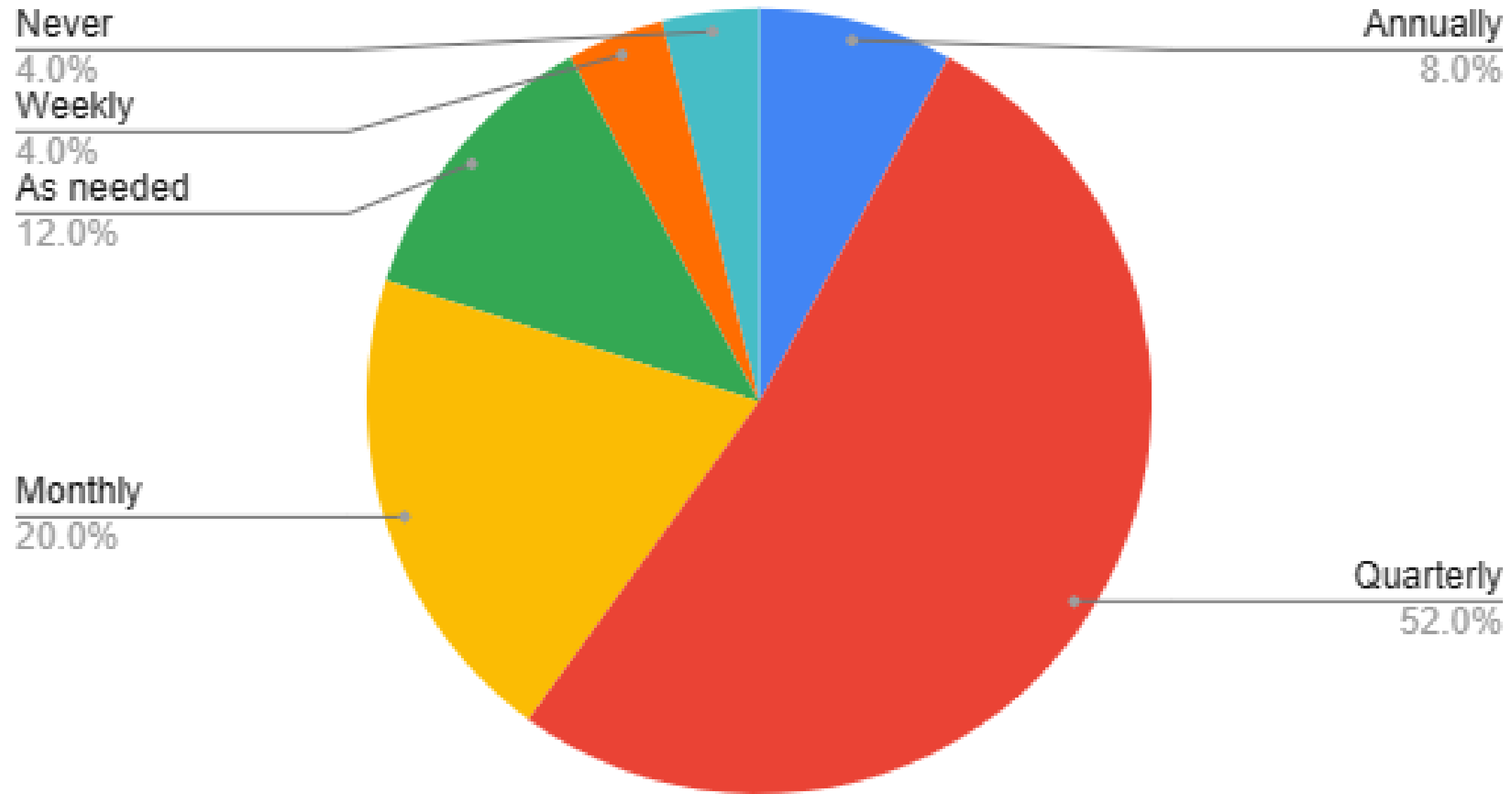
"Wait...you guys meet about your budget?"



\*Based on a survey conducted with a small focus group

# GRAPHS AND SURVEY DATA

## Budget Meeting Frequency



52% of survey responses stated that they meet quarterly, while almost 80% indicated they would like monthly meetings

80%



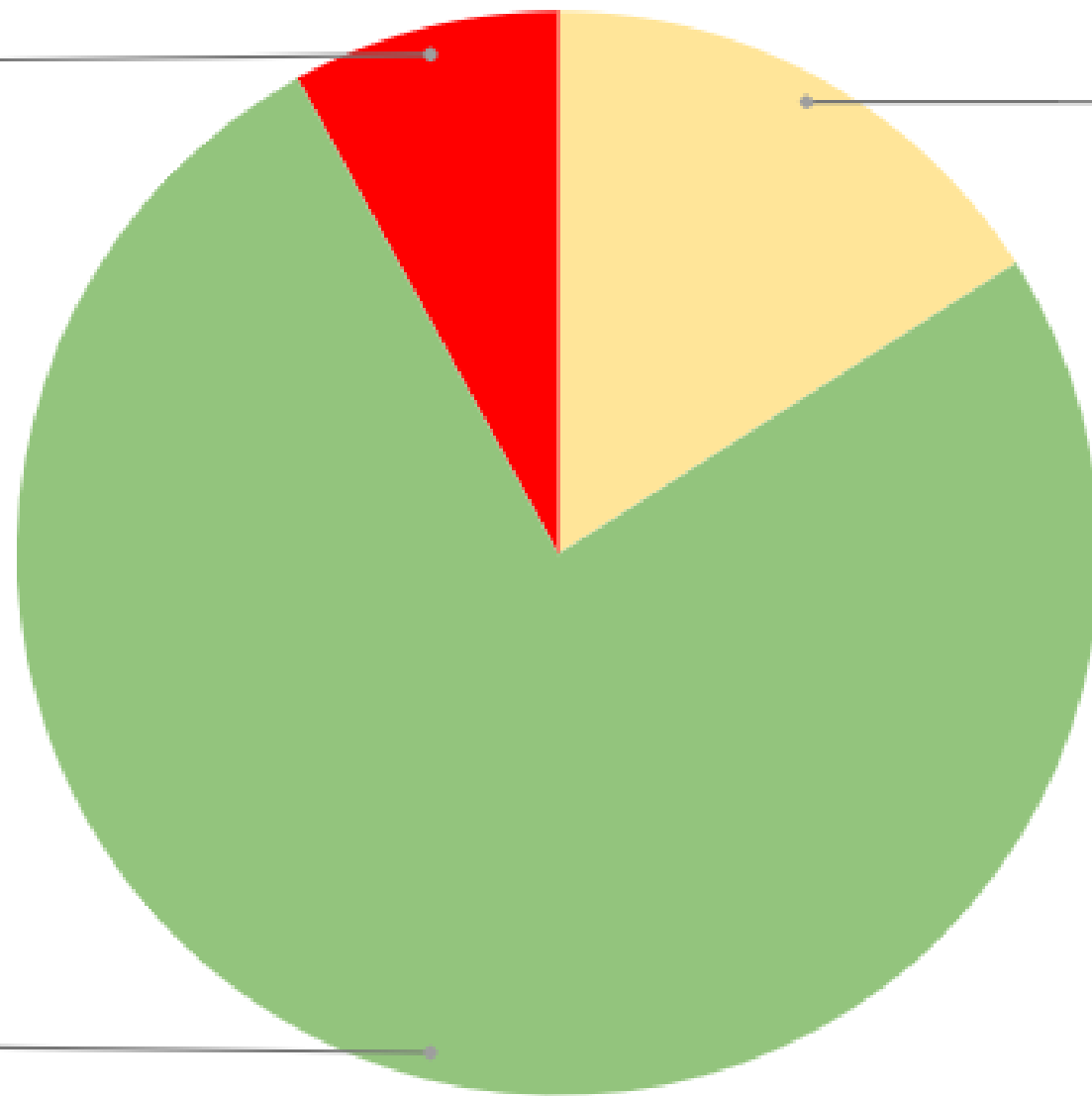


# GRAPHS AND SURVEY DATA

Preferred Meeting Frequency

Unsure  
8.0%

Quarterly  
16.0%



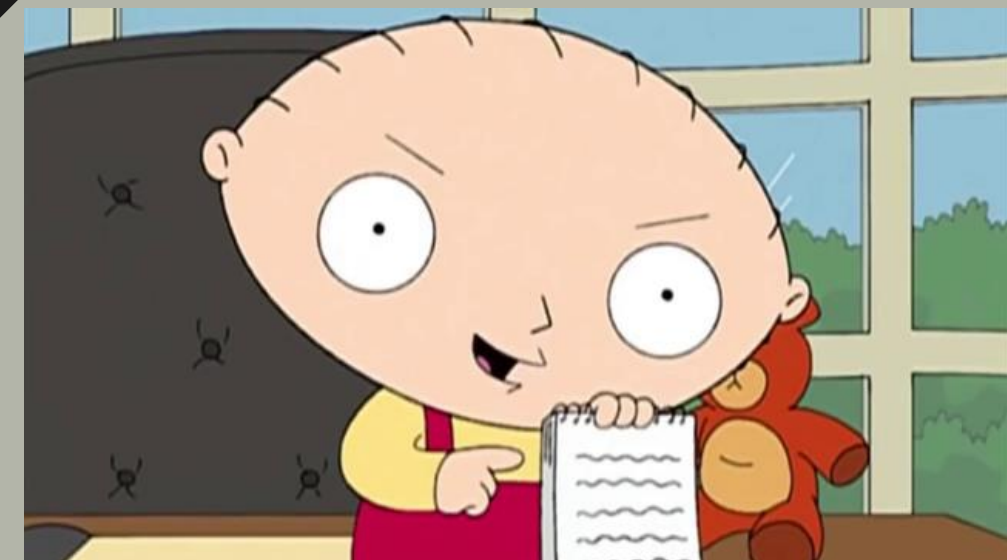
Monthly  
76.0%

Provides:

- Transparency
- Consistency
- Closer look at tracking expenses

# GRAPHS AND SURVEY DATA RECORDED NEEDS

- 1.Regular Reporting & Analysis
- 2.Effective Meetings
- 3.Transparency & Collaboration
- 4.Scenario Analysis & Planning
- 5.Involvement of the Finance  
Department



# IDENTIFIED SOLUTIONS



## True Internal Alignment

Starting the year with shared understanding, definition and intention

STRATEGY N°1



## Reports

Steady cadence, readily available to team members

STRATEGY N°2



## Communication

Consistent meetings, from ideation, to implementation and monitoring

STRATEGY N°3

# Best Strategy

## Meetings with Purpose

1

2

3

4

5

### ANNUALLY

To provide a comprehensive review for the fiscal year

### MONTHLY

Quicker adjustments to changing circumstances or unexpected expenses

### QUARTERLY

Provides opportunity for adjustments and strategic planning for anticipated expenses

### INFORMAL CHECK-INS

Best used to assess the affordability of immediate needs

### AD-HOC MEETINGS

To address unforeseen expenses and adjustments.

# CLOSING THOUGHTS & NEXT STEPS

While these are just suggestions, our team encourages managers to have healthy, open, and transparent conversations with their team involved in handling their budget

## **Suggest with intention:**

Aim to participate in meetings with a purpose



## **Don't be afraid to ask:**

Ask questions. If you don't know, then as a manager and professional, you should always ask



## **Learning is ongoing:**

Always be open to learning and constructive criticism



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# THANK YOU!

TO PASE, COLIN POWELL  
SCHOOL @ CCNY, PANELISTS,  
INSTRUCTORS, AND  
COLLEAGUES

