

# Best Databases for River and Watershed Groups, 2012-2013

(from the LeadGreen Survey of Databases for River and Watershed Groups. 91 organizations submitted surveys in 2012 and 2013.)

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## Trends

- River and watershed organizations are moving increasingly to online databases, such as eTapestry, DonorPerfect Online, or those built on Salesforce.
- Organizations with online databases rely on them to do more and more – generate email, capture web signups, and receive online donations automatically. They are taking their databases out of the “fundraising closet.” More staff are using them to track programs and do outreach. This improves data quality, fundraising and management. But it also requires more internal agreement on protocols and permissions and the like, which requires more time.
- The amount paid for databases is rising, mainly due to the online products. Respondents report that the average online database cost \$3,380 to set up, and \$1,481 in annual support and upgrades.
- Respondents with online databases are generally more satisfied than users of installed programs (a group which includes Microsoft Access and Excel).
- The pool of good “installed” databases is shrinking. (Databases come in two flavors: online databases that run on the web through a browser, and installed databases that run on your computer or network.) Installed databases tend to be less expensive (Microsoft Access and Excel are free). But the most highly rated installed database, Giftworks, was recently purchased and its users are now required to move to a more costly online version.
- Satisfaction correlates closely with the perceived quality of support, especially for smaller organizations which use their databases sporadically.
- The largest family of online databases are those based on Salesforce, a web-based “client relationship management system” (CRMS) offered free to nonprofits. Although it’s free, the Salesforce platform requires extensive customization. Respondents seem to prefer its pre-customized versions.
- Among online databases with two or more responses, the most recommended web products are:
  - WaterGrass<sup>1</sup>, a version of Salesforce customized for river and watershed groups;
  - Wild Apricot, a basic, inexpensive online database suitable to small groups with simple needs; and
  - CiviCRM, an open-source product recommended by groups with substantial staff expertise.

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<sup>1</sup> WaterGrass is created by LeadGreen, the organization which did this survey.

## Survey Results for Databases with More Than One Response

(All figures are averages of the responses submitted. Ranking questions based on a scale of “0-Not at all” to “4 – Absolutely”)

	Installed or n Web-based	Initial Software Cost	Annual Cost	Would you recommend it to others?	Is the All key staff or volunteers use it.	database worth its cost?	Enough of us know how to use it.	It's easy to enter information.	It's easy to get data out as we need.	It's reliable - it always runs.	It does what we need it to now.	It will meet our needs in the future.	The company gives good support promptly.	The information is always up to date.	We never lose data.
CiviCRM	3 Installed	\$ 5,833	\$ 2,167	3.67	3.67	4.00	3.67	3.33	2.67	3.67	3.33	3.67	2.67	3.67	3.67
Convio Common Ground (bought by Blackbaud, phasing out)	2 Web-based	\$ 2,000	\$ 10,750	2.00	1.50	2.00	1.50	3.50	1.50	3.50	3.00	2.50	1.00	3.00	2.50
DonorPerfect installed on your computer	3 Installed	\$ 5,685	\$ 837	2.00	2.67	2.33	2.00	3.00	2.00	3.00	2.67	2.00	3.00	2.00	2.67
DonorPerfect Online	3 Web-based	\$ 3,167	\$ 912	3.00	2.67	3.67	2.67	3.33	2.33	3.33	3.33	3.33	2.33	3.00	3.67
EasyWare	3 Installed or hosted	\$ 2,250	\$ 225	2.50	1.50	3.50	2.50	2.50	2.50	3.50	2.50	2.50	3.50	3.00	4.00
eTapestry (owned by Blackbaud)	5 Web-based	\$ 1,970	\$ 960	2.80	1.00	3.00	1.00	3.40	2.00	2.80	3.00	3.20	2.80	3.25	3.40
Filemaker	4 Installed	\$ 565	\$ 100	1.80	1.20	2.70	1.30	2.50	2.20	3.70	1.90	2.00	1.60	3.00	3.20
Giftworks (these restuls are for the installed version, now being phased out)	6 Installed	\$ 221	\$ 17	3.83	2.00	4.00	2.40	3.67	3.50	3.83	3.83	3.67	3.60	3.83	3.83
Microsoft Access	5 Installed	\$ 105	\$ -	1.00	2.00	2.00	1.50	2.20	2.00	2.75	2.00	1.25	0.25	2.75	2.75
Quickbooks or other accounting software	2 Installed	\$ 250	\$ 150	2.00	1.00	2.50	1.00	3.00	2.00	4.00	3.00	1.50	2.50	3.00	3.00
Raiser's Edge (Blackbaud)	2 Either	\$ 4,000	\$ 3,750	3.00	1.50	3.00	1.50	2.50	2.00	3.00	2.50	3.50	3.00	2.00	3.50
Salesforce	8 Web-based	\$ 6,031	\$ 156	2.75	2.38	3.00	2.50	3.00	2.57	3.63	2.75	3.57	2.50	3.00	3.57
Spreadsheets (Excel)	16 Installed	\$ 97	\$ 5	1.75	2.33	2.56	2.88	2.88	2.40	3.53	2.40	1.13	1.62	1.56	2.53
WaterGrass	4 Web-based	\$ 4,523	\$ 938	3.75	2.25	4.00	2.50	3.25	2.50	4.00	3.50	3.50	4.00	3.75	3.50
Wild Apricot	2 Web-based	\$ 100	\$ 370	3.50	2.50	2.50	3.50	3.50	3.00	3.50	3.00	3.00	3.50	3.50	3.00
Average: 68		\$ 1,900	\$ 802	2.35	2.11	2.90	2.24	3.04	2.36	3.37	2.61	2.37	2.26	2.63	3.10

Numbers highlighted in green are 3.5 or above; yellow 3.00 to 3.5; red 1.99 or below.

## Looking Ahead

Marketers and large institutions are increasingly relying on data-driven campaigns to cultivate donors, but so far few river and network organizations use databases as an information hub to systematically cultivate volunteers, donors and leaders. We believe that in the future successful organizations will embrace these techniques, called “engagement strategies,” and manage them through their databases.