

The Complete DAM Buying Checklist for Nonprofit Organizations

Your Strategic Guide to Selecting the Right Digital Asset Management Platform

Introduction: Why Nonprofits Need Purpose-Built DAM

The nonprofit sector operates differently than other verticals. Your digital asset management platform needs to handle:

- **Campaign and fundraising** cycles with tight, non-negotiable deadlines
- **Organization-wide teams** coordinating across programs, communications, development, and marketing
- **Massive visual libraries** with thousands of assets across multiple initiatives and causes
- **Complex rights management** for photographer contracts, beneficiary consent releases, and media agreements
- **Multi-channel distribution** from official websites to social to donor and partner environments
- **Real-time collaboration** between creative teams, program staff, and board/governance stakeholders

This checklist will help you evaluate DAM platforms based on what actually matters for nonprofit operations—not generic enterprise features that don't address your specific challenges.

How to Use This Checklist

As you evaluate DAM vendors:

- Check each requirement that applies to your organization
- Star critical must-haves that are non-negotiable
- Take notes on how each vendor addresses your specific needs
- Compare responses across platforms using this standardized framework

Scoring Guide:

- **Essential (Must-Have):** Platform cannot be considered without this
- **Important (Should-Have):** Strong preference, willing to compromise if other areas excel
- **Nice-to-Have:** Differentiator between otherwise equal platforms

SECTION 1: Nonprofit-Specific Asset Management

Campaign & Program Organization

- ☐ **Organize assets** by campaign cycle and fiscal year (Fall Appeal 2025, Spring Campaign 2026, etc.)
Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have
- ☐ **Hierarchical categorization** (Organization → Program → Initiative → Campaign)
Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have
- ☐ **Link multiple assets** to a single campaign (impact photography, event coverage, beneficiary stories, videos, awareness content)
Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have
- ☐ **Messaging and branding** variant management across programs and special campaigns
Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have
- ☐ **Archive completed projects** and programs while maintaining searchability
Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have
- ☐ **Support** for field documentation, impact reporting, and behind-the-scenes imagery
Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have

Nonprofit-Specific Metadata

- ☐ Custom metadata fields for nonprofit-specific attributes:
 - Program and initiative name
 - Beneficiary or community name and consent status
 - Location and region
 - Campaign name and date
 - Outcome or impact category
 - Fiscal year attribution
 - Funder or grant affiliation
 - Ethical use and usage restrictions**Priority:** ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have
- ☐ **Controlled vocabularies** for consistent naming (e.g., "Youth Programs" vs. "Youth Services")
Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have

- ☐ **Beneficiary and subject information** tracking (name, consent status, usage terms, sensitivity flags)

Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have

- ☐ **Photographer/creative** credit management

Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have

- ☐ **Impact story** and case study tagging for donor-facing and fundraising assets

Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have

Visual Search & Discovery

- ☐ **Visual** similarity search (find similar program moments, locations, or compositions)

Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have

- ☐ **Color-based** search and filtering (brand colors, campaign palette variants)

Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have

- ☐ **Advanced filtering** by multiple attributes simultaneously (program + content type + region + campaign)

Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have

- ☐ **Saved searches** for frequently used queries (e.g., "Youth Program Fall2025 Impact Approved")

Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have

SECTION 2: Workflow & Collaboration

Multi-Department Coordination

- ☐ **Role-based access** control for different teams:

- Communications (upload/edit capabilities)
- Compliance/Legal (view/approve)
- Development/Fundraising (approved assets only)
- Program Staff (mission-facing materials)
- Regional/Field Teams (location-specific assets)

Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have

- ☐ **Program-level** permissions (give program-specific staff access to relevant initiatives)

Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have

- ☐ **Asset approval** workflows with multi-level review (communications → program leadership → compliance)

Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have

- ☐ **Comments and annotation** tools directly on assets

Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have

- ☐ **Version control** to track asset iterations (raw edit, final, audience-specific variants)

Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have

Campaign Launches & Deadlines

- ☐ **Project-based** asset organization (Annual Gala, Year-End Appeal, Awareness Month, Impact Report Launch)

Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have

- ☐ **Scheduled publishing** for embargo releases (press, funder, partner, public-facing content)

Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have

- ☐ **Deadline tracking** and reminders for asset deliverables

Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have

- ☐ **Task assignment** for editing, translation, and regional/chapter adaptation

Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have

Multi-Agency & Regional Support

- ☐ **Regional asset** variations (different messaging and branding by location or audience)

Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have

- ☐ **Brand consistency** tools (approved logos, fonts, color palettes accessible to all programs and chapters)

Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have

SECTION 3: Digital Channel Integration

Website & Donor Platform Integration

☐ **Integrations with construction management platforms:**

- Blackbaud
- Salesforce Nonprofit
- Classy / GoFundMe Charity
- Custom platforms via API

Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have

☐ **Multiple document variants** per campaign (thumbnail, hero, gallery, impact story)

Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have

☐ **Automated file** resizing and format conversion for different digital channels

Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have

☐ **Synchronization** with donor and constituent databases

Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have

Social Media & Public Communications

☐ **Direct publishing** to social platforms or integration with social management tools

Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have

☐ **Ambassador, volunteer, and partner** content management v

CMS & Records Integration

☐ **Content management** system integration (Drupal, WordPress, etc.)

Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have

☐ **Constituent and program** data platform (CRM/PIM equivalent)

Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have

SECTION 4: Rights Management & Legal Compliance

Photographer & Creative Contracts

- ☐ **Contract attachment** to assets (photographer agreements, beneficiary consent and image releases)
Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have
- ☐ **Usage rights** tracking (internal only, public-facing, funder restrictions, time limits)
Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have
- ☐ **Expiration date** alerts for time-limited usage rights or contract terms
Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have
- ☐ **Automatic watermarking** for non-approved, restricted, or embargoed assets
Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have

Brand & Compliance Protection

- ☐ **Unauthorized** use prevention (secure access, download tracking)
Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have
- ☐ **Embargo management** for pre-announcement content (campaign launches, partnership announcements, grant awards)
Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have
- ☐ **Asset download** auditing (who downloaded what, when)
Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have
- ☐ **External portal** for controlled sharing with media, funders, and partner organizations
Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have

SECTION 5: Technical Requirements

File Format & Quality Support

- ☐ **RAW file support** (CR2, NEF, ARW, etc.) for original photography

Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have

- ☐ **High-resolution** image handling (100MB+ files)

Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have

- ☐ **Video format** support (MP4, MOV, broadcast formats for public meetings and events)

Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have

- ☐ **Design and document** file support (PSD, AI, INDD, PDF for official publications and signage)

Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have

Performance & Scale

- ☐ **Storage capacity** for your asset volume

- Current needs: _____ TB
- 3-year projection: _____ TB

Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have

- ☐ **Upload speed** for large batch imports (daily site photos, drone surveys, scan data)

Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have

- ☐ **Search performance** with hundreds of thousands of assets across multiple active projects

Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have

- ☐ **Concurrent user support** (how ow many staff members can work simultaneously?)

Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have

Security & Compliance

☐ **Encryption** (in transit and at rest)

Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have

☐ **SOC 2 compliance**

Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have

☐ **GDPR/CCPA** compliance for jurisdictions with applicable privacy laws

Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have

☐ **Two-factor authentication**

Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have

☐ **Single sign-on (SSO) support**

Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have

☐ **Regular security audits and penetration testing**

Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have

Backup & Disaster Recovery

☐ **Automated backup** schedule and retention

Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have

☐ **Geographic redundancy** (multiple data center locations)

Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have

☐ **Disaster recovery SLA** (recovery time objective/recovery point objective)

Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have

☐ **Document versioning and recovery** (restore previous drawing revisions)

Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have

SECTION 6: User Experience & Adoption

Interface & Usability

- ☐ **Intuitive interface** that non-technical staff can navigate without extensive IT support
Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have
- ☐ **Mobile access** (responsive web or native app) for field staff and inspectors
Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have
- ☐ **Bulk operations** (upload, tag, download, approve multiple documents at once)
Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have
- ☐ **Drag-and-drop functionality** for uploads and organization
Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have
- ☐ **Customizable dashboards** dashboards by role/department
Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have

Asset Sharing & Distribution

- ☐ **Shareable links with expiration dates** (for RFI responses, submittal reviews)
Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have
- ☐ **Password protection** for sensitive shares
Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have
- ☐ **Branded portals** for external stakeholders (press, partner agencies, community organizations)
Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have
- ☐ **Lightbox/collection** creation for assembling asset packages
Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have
- ☐ **Download format options** (original, optimized, accessible, print-ready)
Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have

Training & Support

- ☐ **Onboarding program** for implementation
Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have
 - ☐ **User training** (live sessions, recorded tutorials, documentation)
Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have
 - ☐ **Customer support hours** and response time SLA
Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have
 - ☐ **Dedicated account manager** or customer success contact
Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have
 - ☐ **Regular platform updates** and feature releases
Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have
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SECTION 7: Analytics & Reporting

Usage & Activity Tracking

- ☐ **Timeline** (asset download reports)
Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have
- ☐ **User activity reports** (who's accessing what, when)
Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have
- ☐ **Asset lifecycle tracking** (from upload to archive)
Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have

SECTION 8: Cost & Business Model

Pricing Structure

☐ **Transparent pricing** (no hidden fees)

- Base platform cost: _____
- Per-user fees: _____
- Storage costs: _____

☐ **Scalability of pricing** as your needs grow

Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have

☐ **Contract flexibility** (annual vs. multi-year, exit terms)

Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have

Implementation & Migration

☐ **Implementation timeline** (how long to go live?)

Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have

☐ **Migration support** from existing systems

Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have

☐ **Data migration tools** (automated vs. manual)

Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have

☐ **Metadata preservation** during migration

Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have

Total Cost of Ownership

☐ **Initial setup costs**

Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have

☐ **Ongoing maintenance** requirements and costs

Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have

☐ **Additional fees** (overage charges, add-on features)
Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have

☐ **Internal resource requirements** (IT support needed?)
Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have

SECTION 9: Vendor Evaluation

References & Case Studies

☐ **Nonprofit organization** references at similar size/mission scope

Requested references: _____

☐ **Case studies** demonstrating nonprofit sector success
Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have

☐ **Peer reviews** and industry recognition
Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have

Decision Matrix

Use this framework to score and compare vendors:

Mission - Specific Features	%			
Workflow & Collaboration	%			
Digital Channel Integration	%			
Rights Management	%			
Technical Requirements	%			
User Experience	%			
Analytics & Reporting	%			
Cost & Value	%			
Vendor Stability	%			
TOTAL WEIGHTED SCORE	100%			

Next Steps

After completing this checklist:

1. **Schedule demos** with your top 3 vendors
 2. **Request live walkthroughs** of nonprofit-specific features
 3. **Talk to reference customers** in the nonprofit sector
 4. **Negotiate trial period** to test with your actual workflows
 5. **Involve key stakeholders** communications, program leadership, development, compliance, and IT
 6. **Calculate total cost of ownership** over 3-5 years
 7. **Review contracts** carefully (exit terms, data ownership, SLAs)
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About NetX

NetX provides enterprise digital asset management solutions trusted by leading nonprofit organizations worldwide. Our platform is built to handle the unique demands of mission-driven work: campaign cycles, global program teams, massive visual libraries, complex consent and rights management, and seamless donor and partner platform integration.

Ready to see NetX in action? Schedule a personalized demo focused on your specific nonprofit workflows and challenges.

This checklist is provided as a strategic resource for nonprofit organizations evaluating DAM platforms. For more information about how NetX addresses these requirements, contact our team.