People's Choice Voting in Pageantry: Fundraising Outcomes, Revenue Measurements, and Financial Implications

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Author Note

The author is the founder of Pageant Post, a pageant management and People's Choice voting platform, and has a financial interest in its adoption. External campaign observations and industry research presented in this paper are drawn from publicly available sources. References to Pageant Post are based on the platform's published pricing and services. The findings do not establish that Pageant Post generates higher voting receipts than competing platforms.

Abstract

Paid People's Choice voting provides pageants with an additional source of financial support, but published amounts do not consistently distinguish gross fundraising from money retained. This research review evaluates 14 identifiable campaigns with exact displayed totals, an approximately $20,000 result reported by independent journalism, selected Miss America contestant fundraisers, national contest rules, and two pageant software benchmarks. The 14 public campaign pages display amounts from $1,549 to $62,178, with combined displayed receipts of $224,657. Their median is $8,332.50, a descriptive statistic for a selected group rather than an industry estimate. Three organizations provide repeated campaign observations. Their records show both substantial growth and a later decline, making general claims of predictable growth inappropriate. Eventista, Miss Cosmo's voting partner, reported more than nine million votes and 87,000 successful transactions in 2024, but did not disclose corresponding revenue. Likewise, individual contestant records cannot be added to overall campaign totals without risking duplication. Published research on crowdfunding, social information, and competition offers explanations for fundraising behavior without establishing causal effects in pageants. Results indicate substantial potential alongside large differences in scale, campaign rules, measurement, and payout arrangements. Better reporting of paid transactions, participant counts, fees, and net proceeds is needed before reliable industry estimates can be produced.

Keywords: People's Choice voting, pageant fundraising, voting revenue, online contributions, gross receipts, net proceeds

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Pageant organizations rely on entry fees, ticket sales, sponsors, and other event activities to pay for competitions. People's Choice voting creates another opportunity by giving supporters a direct way to recognize a contestant. Depending on the rules, a supporter may cast a free ballot, purchase votes, or contribute to a fundraiser connected with an award. Each arrangement can attract attention to the event, but they do not produce the same financial result. Evaluating the value of paid voting requires knowing what the supporters purchased and how much of the amount collected was available to the pageant.

Consider two pageants that report $10,000 in voting activity. One may be showing gross payments before fees, while the other may be reporting the amount deposited after its platform deductions. The difference affects what a director can actually spend. It is equally important to separate paid purchases from votes awarded through free promotions, social activity, or bonus rounds. A large audience may create useful publicity without producing corresponding revenue. Financial claims become much less reliable when these measures are treated as interchangeable.

Recent national competitions illustrate why these distinctions matter. Miss USA introduced several fan voting opportunities during 2026, and its chief executive discussed money received from the initiative (Konstantinides, 2026). Public fundraising pages also preserve results from Miss America, festival competitions, and regional scholarship pageants. In a few cases, the same organization has records covering more than one year. That makes it possible to examine both significant gains and unexpected declines rather than relying on a single successful event. Yet each source uses its own reporting conventions. An individual contestant's fundraiser,

an entire pageant campaign, and a platform's annual customer statistics describe different units. They should not be combined simply because each includes a dollar figure.

This paper examines the documented financial value of People's Choice voting and the limits of what existing records can establish. Published campaign totals form the primary numerical evidence. Separate sections evaluate individual contestant fundraisers, repeated annual outcomes, industry provider benchmarks, and major international voting programs. Research on charitable giving and crowdfunding offers possible explanations for supporter behavior, although these studies do not measure pageant sales directly. The purpose is not to suggest a national average from selected success stories. Instead, the analysis identifies what pageant directors can reasonably learn about receipts, participation, net proceeds, and the decisions involved in offering paid voting.

Evidence Selection and Measurement

This review uses publicly accessible campaign records rather than a representative sample of pageants. A campaign qualified for the principal comparison when its public page identified a People’s Choice fundraiser and displayed an exact monetary total. Fourteen campaigns met those criteria, representing 10 organizers, with multiple observations available for three organizations. The displayed amounts were rechecked against their public campaign pages on November 9, 2026. These figures reflect the amounts visible at that time rather than independently verified final settlements. The selection was not intended to capture every eligible pageant, and the resulting figures should be interpreted as documented examples rather than an industry estimate. Public campaign pages establish the amounts displayed by organizers or platforms but do not independently verify deposits after expenses. Additional sources serve different purposes within the analysis. News coverage provides context for national

competitions, official rules explain how voting affects competition outcomes, and platform summaries offer preliminary financial benchmarks. Individual contestant fundraisers remain separate because their amounts may overlap with broader campaign totals. Scholarly research is used to examine potential explanations for giving behavior without treating those findings as direct measurements of pageant revenue. No private payment statements or bank settlement records were available for independent reconciliation.

Five measures should remain distinct. Publicly displayed campaign amounts are the monetary totals shown on fundraising pages, which may not have been reconciled to actual payment records. Gross receipts represent payments collected before applicable deductions, while net proceeds reflect the amount remaining after processing charges, platform fees, refunds, and other costs borne by the organizer. Charitable distributions identify amounts transferred to designated beneficiaries and should not automatically be treated as either gross receipts or unrestricted operating funds. Vote counts measure credited voting activity, which may include free ballots, promotional credits, social media participation, and paid purchases. A reported vote total cannot be converted into a reliable monetary amount without verified payment information and an accounting of free or promotional voting.

The term revenue also requires attention to the reporting entity. A pageant director may refer to the amount voters paid as voting revenue, while a platform may report its processing volume as a fundraising total. Those measures can differ from the amount deposited into the organizer's account. A nonprofit may further distinguish the receipts available for program activities from money it has promised to distribute to another organization. Without payment records, these relationships cannot be reconciled accurately, so the primary campaign comparisons use the more cautious description of publicly displayed receipts. A later financial

illustration demonstrates how costs can change the funds retained without attributing hypothetical expenses to any specific pageant.

There are limits to the evidence before any calculation begins. Archived pages may have missing details or totals that changed after the event. Providers sometimes advertise unusually successful customers, and reporting from national events may describe a large result without identifying a precise amount. Millions of credited votes can also include free ballots, promotions, and voting multipliers. These problems call for separating the evidence according to what was actually observed. They do not justify discarding a valid campaign total, but neither do they permit an unsupported estimate of net proceeds. Throughout this review, a displayed amount remains a displayed amount unless the supporting record establishes more.

Documented National Pageant Fundraising

Miss America and America's Choice

America's Choice 2022, associated with the Miss America centennial competition, offers a clearly identified national fundraising example. Its Spotfund campaign reports $49,799 and states that each dollar donated represented one vote (Spotfund, n.d.-a). The page also describes a $10,000 scholarship for the winner and makes clear that the award would not affect the judges' final placement. The campaign demonstrates that supporters were willing to contribute a substantial amount for a separate recognition opportunity. It does not disclose the expenses associated with accepting those payments or the amount ultimately available for scholarships and other purposes. The page also states that contributions were not tax deductible, an important distinction when a contest uses the language of donations.

The campaign title creates a possible date misunderstanding. It refers to America's Choice 2022, but the description says that voting ended on Thursday, December 16, during the

centennial competition. That closing date corresponds to the December 2021 event, when the 2022 titleholder was selected. The year attached to the campaign should not be mistaken for evidence that the fundraiser took place during calendar 2022. The distinction matters when comparing a campaign with annual financial results because its title year may differ from the calendar year in which money was collected.

The $49,799 team result remains visible, but the current public view no longer exposes the individual fundraiser stories associated with that centennial campaign (Spotfund, n.d.-a). Consequently, it is not possible to reconstruct the distribution of support among those contestants from that team page alone. Separate Spotfund records do identify large individual fundraising results from later Miss America and Miss America's Teen competitions. Those appear in Table 2. They are kept outside the 14 campaign observations because a contestant amount may already appear within a broader team total. The distinction protects the paper from double counting while retaining evidence about the scale individual supporters can generate.

Miss America's rules also provide an important example of how paid voting can be separated from the judged title. The program offered a scholarship and public recognition while expressly stating that America's Choice votes would not alter placement on final night (Spotfund, n.d.-a). This differs from contests in which paid votes determine a semifinal position or influence a judging score. The financial difference cannot be isolated from these published totals, but the comparison is useful for understanding program design. Supporters in the Miss America example were contributing toward recognition and a separate scholarship rather than directly purchasing influence over the primary judging results. The distinction can affect how directors communicate the award and how contestants perceive its fairness.

Miss USA in 2026

Miss USA offers a newer national case, although its public financial reporting is considerably less specific. Konstantinides (2026) reported that chief executive Thom Brodeur described fan voting receipts in 2026 as reaching five or six figures. Brodeur did not provide an exact number. The statement indicates that voting was financially relevant to management, but it cannot verify gross receipts, the amount retained, or the period covered. Nor does it establish that any particular six figure amount was collected. A precise estimate would require payment data that the article does not provide. The report is useful evidence of commercial significance, not an audited revenue figure.

The competition included multiple voting stages with different purposes. Miss USA Organization (2026) describes a three round People's Choice process conducted separately for Miss USA and Miss Teen USA. Each division began with 51 contestants before narrowing to 25, then 15, and finally three winners who received guaranteed positions in the Top 20 of their respective competitions. Supporters could cast one free daily vote, and totals reset at the beginning of each new round. During the Miss USA national competition, fans also participated in a separate live voting opportunity involving the Top 20 (Konstantinides, 2026). These mechanisms should be evaluated separately because their rules, timing, and effects on competition placement differed.

Live voting at Miss USA illustrates how quickly credited votes can diverge from dollars paid. Supporters could use a free ballot or buy packages, including 50 votes for $50, 250 for $250, and 500 for $500 (Konstantinides, 2026). Voting occurred within a limited window as the leaderboard changed on screen. At one point, votes counted double. A person spending $50 during that promotion could thus receive more credited votes than the standard purchase alone

would imply. The published leaderboard cannot be converted into a reliable sales total by applying the ordinary dollar per vote price. Financial reconciliation would have to start with completed payments, refunds, and any promotional credits. Without those records, the visible voting activity is evidence of engagement rather than a measure of receipts.

The 2026 changes also produced disagreement among contestants. Some participants saw voting and other commercial activities as ways to expand the pageant's audience and fund additional prizes. Others questioned whether the opportunity to advance depended too heavily on contestants' supporter networks and purchasing power (Konstantinides, 2026). The chief executive said part of the voting money helped finance new cash prizes for women who placed in the Top Five. That claim identifies one intended use of receipts, not the total amount spent on the program. From a financial perspective, the controversy illustrates why organizers should distinguish the ability to generate cash from the broader effect of a fundraising design on credibility and participation.

Miss Nepal U.S. and Independent Reporting

An additional national competition supplies a different form of evidence. Basnet (2018) reported in The Kathmandu Post that voting for the Miss Nepal U.S. Public Choice award cost $1 per vote and generated approximately $20,000 in purchases. The report also identified a charitable beneficiary, the Soarway Foundation, and described the winner as receiving more than 8,000 votes. Unlike the exact amounts displayed in Table 1, the $20,000 figure is an estimate contained in a news article. It has value because it comes from reporting on a named event, but it should not be combined with exact platform totals to produce a supposedly precise campaign sum. The source does not disclose payout records or processing costs.

The Miss Nepal U.S. example reinforces an important distinction between a pageant's fundraising purpose and the financial interests of the organizer. The news article described the proceeds as intended for charitable work in Nepal rather than identifying them as unrestricted funds available for production expenses (Basnet, 2018). An organization could conduct a commercially successful voting campaign while retaining little of the amount collected for its own operations. The intended recipient and any restrictions on funds matter as much as the headline total when assessing financial sustainability. That issue becomes especially relevant when comparing scholarship programs with pageants whose voting programs principally fund the event itself.

Published Local and Regional Outcomes

Publicly accessible local and regional campaigns provide financial information that is largely absent from national pageant reporting. Table 1 brings together 14 identifiable People's Choice campaigns spanning scholarship programs, festivals, and community competitions. Some platforms report the number of supporters or unique voters, while others provide only the displayed monetary amount. These differences limit direct comparisons of participation but allow readers to examine the scale and variation of published fundraising outcomes. The figures document what these particular campaigns reported and should not be interpreted as the expected result for a typical pageant in the United States.

Table 1

Publicly Documented People's Choice Campaign Receipts and Participation

Campaign	Competition	Amount displayed	Participation
Miss America: America's Choice	2022 title; event 2021	$49,799	Not disclosed
Queen Juneteenth scholarship pageant	2024	$36,624	468 supporters
Queen Juneteenth scholarship pageant	2026	$62,178	689 supporters
Miss Clark County	2024	$1,987	66 supporters
Miss Clark County	2025	$13,697	194 supporters
Miss Clark County	2026	$4,604	61 supporters
Miss Tennessee's Teen	2025	$6,601	Not disclosed
Miss Tennessee's Teen	2026	$13,544	Not disclosed
Miss Wildcat People's Choice	Date not stated	$10,064	269 supporters
Louisiana Sugar Queen	2024	$10,443	203 unique voters
Andouille People's Choice	2024	$6,075	240 unique voters
Miss Stephenson County Fair	2024	$5,285	Not disclosed
Miss Orem	2024	$2,207	85 supporters
Mizz Bizarre People's Choice	2026	$1,549	62 supporters

Note. Fourteen campaign pages with exact displayed dollar totals were retained. Values reflect platform displays, not independently audited net receipts. Supporter and unique voter metrics are not necessarily equivalent. The America's Choice title refers to 2022, although the centennial event occurred in December 2021. Sources: 99Pledges (n.d.); EVE, Inc. (n.d.); Heritage 365 (n.d.-a, n.d.-b); Lexington High Booster Club (n.d.); Louisiana Sugar Cane Festival Association (2024); Miss Clark County Scholarship Foundation (n.d.-a, n.d.-b, n.d.-c); Miss Orem Scholarship and Miss Orem Outstanding Teen Pageant (n.d.); Spotfund (n.d.-a, n.d.-c, n.d.-d); and St. John Parish (2024).

The 2024 Louisiana Sugar Queen Pageant reported $10,443 against a $10,000 goal, with 13 entries and 203 unique voters (Louisiana Sugar Cane Festival Association, 2024). Its rules priced votes at $1 each and did not impose a stated limit on purchases. The page identified the Louisiana Sugar Cane Festival as the beneficiary. Dividing receipts by unique voters produces approximately $51.44 per voter, although that figure is not the average transaction amount. One supporter may have purchased votes several times.

The $10,443 total also provides a measure of financial support relative to contestant participation. Spread evenly across 13 entries, it equals approximately $803 per contestant, although the actual amounts raised were not equal. The leaderboard shows differences in support among contestants, so this figure should not be interpreted as the typical contestant's contribution. Nor does the public page show whether receipts were concentrated among a few large contributors. The campaign exceeded its $10,000 goal, demonstrating its fundraising success on the platform. However, the amount remaining after processing fees and other expenses is not disclosed.

The Andouille Pageant's 2024 People's Choice contest reported $6,075 from 240 unique voters and 14 entries (St. John Parish, 2024). Voting was priced at $1, and the funds supported the Andouille Festival. Based on the campaign display, receipts amounted to approximately $25.31 per unique voter and $434 per contestant if the total is spread evenly for comparison. The campaign did not reach its $10,000 goal. More people participated than in the Louisiana Sugar Queen event, yet the total collected was substantially lower. This is a useful reminder that attracting voters and generating receipts are related but distinct tasks.

The contrast between those two Louisiana campaigns is informative because each used a stated $1 voting model and occurred during 2024. Even with that apparent similarity, the receipts

per unique voter were approximately twice as high for the Louisiana Sugar Queen Pageant as for the Andouille competition. Possible explanations include differences in how frequently supporters purchased votes, the amounts spent by highly active supporters, and the strength of particular contestant networks. The published pages do not identify the reason, so the difference cannot establish that one festival used a superior strategy or attracted a more engaged contestant group. What the comparison establishes is the extent to which financial results can differ without a major difference in the number of identifiable voters.

A third local case is the 2024 Miss Stephenson County Fair People's Choice fundraiser. Its 99Pledges page displays $5,285 in contributions toward a $4,750 goal and lists 19 contestants (99Pledges, n.d.). The campaign explains that the People's Choice award would be determined by the highest combined amount from online donations and donations collected on pageant night. It also states that the award was separate from the judges' decision.

The displayed campaign total exceeded the posted goal by $535, or approximately 11.3%. The public description does not establish whether donations collected on pageant night were included in the platform total. Unlike the Louisiana festival campaigns, which assigned a fixed price to each vote, the Stephenson County Fair fundraiser emphasized monetary contributions made in support of individual contestants. The page also explains that the proceeds help cover pageant expenses (99Pledges, n.d.). With 19 listed contestants, the $5,285 campaign total represents approximately $278.16 per contestant when distributed evenly for comparison. Actual fundraising results were not necessarily equal across contestants, so this calculation should not be interpreted as typical contestant performance. The example demonstrates how a People's Choice program can generate financial support through contributions without necessarily using the same transaction structure as a fixed price voting competition.

Additional Publicly Documented Campaigns

Queen Juneteenth provides one of the clearest examples of meaningful fundraising at a scholarship pageant. Its 2024 campaign displays $36,624 from 468 supporters, and the 2026 campaign displays $62,178 from 689 supporters (Heritage 365, n.d.-a, n.d.-b). The later result is the largest exact whole campaign amount included in Table 1. Although both pages describe an educational purpose, neither supplies an audited breakdown of scholarships, other participant benefits, and operating expenses. The 2026 page also includes $20,491 attributed to one contestant.

The $20,491 attributed to one contestant is already included in the broader Queen Juneteenth campaign and should not be counted separately. Between 2024 and 2026, the displayed campaign total increased by $25,554, or approximately 69.8%. The number of supporters also increased from 468 to 689, representing growth of about 47.2%. Receipts per reported supporter rose from approximately $78.26 to $90.24. Although these figures demonstrate stronger fundraising activity in the later observed year, they do not identify the average purchase amount or whether the same supporters contributed to both campaigns. The financial benefit to the organization also remains uncertain because the public records do not disclose the final proceeds after expenses.

Miss Clark County is particularly revealing because three consecutive campaign records are available. The scholarship foundation shows $1,987 from 66 supporters for its 2024 campaign, $13,697 from 194 supporters for 2025, and $4,604 from 61 supporters for 2026 (Miss Clark County Scholarship Foundation, n.d.-a, n.d.-b, n.d.-c). After the substantial increase in the 2025 campaign, the displayed total declined sharply in the following campaign. This sequence matters more to budgeting than a single record result.

It demonstrates that the same organization can achieve a strong result without being able to assume that the next campaign will match it. The reasons for the changes are not visible in these public records. The 2025 Miss Clark County amount was about 6.9 times the 2024 total, representing an increase of approximately 589.3%. The following campaign declined by approximately 66.4% from 2025 to 2026. Displayed receipts per supporter were $30.11, $70.60, and $75.48 across those three campaigns, respectively. Supporter counts and average reported contribution per supporter did not move in the same direction during the final year. In particular, the drop in total receipts accompanied a larger decline in supporter count, even though the amount per displayed supporter increased slightly. Those ratios cannot explain why participation changed, but they help a director identify the difference between attracting supporters and increasing their total contributions.

Miss Tennessee's Teen also has two publicly accessible annual campaign totals. Spotfund lists $6,601 for 2025 and $13,544 for 2026 (Spotfund, n.d.-c, n.d.-d). Under the published rules, one dollar donated equaled one vote and the winning contestant advanced to the semifinals. The later total is approximately 105.2% higher. That is an important observed increase, but the pages do not provide comparable counts of paying supporters or transactions.

A larger contestant network, longer campaign, or changes in spending could all contribute to the result. It would be premature to attribute the growth to any single design choice. Other smaller and midrange campaigns broaden the picture. The Miss Wildcat People's Choice campaign organized by the Lexington High Booster Club displays $10,064 and 269 supporters (Lexington High Booster Club, n.d.). The 2024 Miss Orem People's Choice awards campaign displays $2,207 and 85 supporters (Miss Orem Scholarship and Miss Orem Outstanding Teen Pageant, n.d.). A 2026 Mizz Bizarre People's Choice fundraiser benefiting EVE, Inc., displays

$1,549 and 62 supporters under a stated dollar per vote arrangement (EVE, Inc., n.d.). These programs differ in scale and purpose, which is precisely why they are useful additions. They provide examples below the larger national and scholarship campaign outcomes without implying that small pageants necessarily raise little money.

The newer cases also illustrate why source definitions matter. Givebutter reports supporters, while the OSMOS voting pages describe unique voters, and Spotfund primarily reports dollars in its team campaign views. A supporter count should not automatically be substituted for a unique paying voter count if the platform's terminology and counting method have not been verified. Even when dividing displayed receipts by these counts, the result is a campaign level ratio rather than the median contribution of an individual. The visible differences may reflect campaign design, contestant networks, and audience involvement, but they do not identify a causal explanation.

Interpretation of the Observed Amounts

The 14 campaign pages collectively display $224,657, with a median campaign total of $8,332.50 and individual results ranging from $1,549 to $62,178. These are publicly reported amounts rather than independently reconciled gross payments or net proceeds. Several observations come from the same organizers in different years, and campaigns that remain publicly available may not represent those that were less successful. The study also cannot determine how many pageants offered paid voting without producing a publicly visible fundraising total. For directors, the most useful finding is the range of documented outcomes rather than an average that should be inserted directly into an operating budget.

The results also challenge the assumption that a nationally recognized pageant will necessarily generate the most money. Queen Juneteenth displayed $62,178 in 2026, exceeding

the $49,799 shown for the older Miss America centennial campaign (Heritage 365, n.d.-b; Spotfund, n.d.-a). Mizz Bizarre, by comparison, displayed $1,549 (EVE, Inc., n.d.). These campaigns differ in purpose, audience, competition rules, and timing, so the figures do not establish which approach is more effective. They demonstrate why directors should consider their own contestant base and supporter participation rather than relying on the recognition of a pageant's name. The approximate Miss Nepal U.S. result and individual contestant fundraisers remain outside this total to avoid combining different types of financial observations.

Several of the newer campaigns report both dollars and participation counts, but the resulting ratios should be used cautiously. The Louisiana Sugar Queen event displayed about $51.44 per unique voter, while Andouille displayed about $25.31 (Louisiana Sugar Cane Festival Association, 2024; St. John Parish, 2024). Queen Juneteenth displayed about $78.26 and $90.24 per supporter in its two observed years, and the Miss Wildcat page displays approximately $37.41 per supporter (Heritage 365, n.d.-a, n.d.-b; Lexington High Booster Club, n.d.). These figures combine different platform definitions and are therefore most useful as within platform context rather than a direct performance ranking. They cannot identify the distribution of transaction sizes or the proportion contributed by a small group of supporters. A more complete assessment would require individual payment records aggregated without disclosing private donor information.

Miss America Contestant Fundraising Records

Spotfund's competition showcase lists unusually large individual fundraising amounts from Miss America and Miss America's Teen programs (Spotfund, n.d.-b). Table 2 records nine examples from different years. Several exceed the $49,799 displayed for the earlier centennial

team campaign, but that is not a contradiction. Different years and different units are being compared.

The individual totals demonstrate that a contestant's personal network can generate more than $60,000 in published fundraising receipts. That is substantial compared with several of the complete local campaigns examined in this paper. However, Spotfund's showcase highlights selected successes rather than everyone who participated (Spotfund, n.d.-b). It does not show how many contestants raised smaller amounts or identify the proceeds retained by each organizing pageant. An average calculated from these highlighted records would likely overstate what an ordinary contestant might raise. Their value is as evidence of what has occurred rather than a reliable estimate of expected performance.

Table 2

Selected Individual Miss America and Teen Fundraisers Shown by Spotfund

Contestant	Campaign listed	Displayed amount
Ginger Ragaishis	America's Choice Teen Vermont, 2024	$69,074
Courtney Wages	America's Choice Kansas, 2024	$67,682
Fiona Treiber	America's Choice Teen Iowa, 2026	$57,284
Monica Nia Jones	America's Choice Illinois, 2023	$52,830
Jada Samuel	America's Choice South Carolina, 2024	$39,205
Elizabeth Lynch	America's Choice West Virginia, 2023	$33,717
Alexandra Lotko	America's Choice Colorado, 2025	$29,791
Madison Miller	America's Choice Ohio, 2024	$21,967
Laura Jane Kirkpatrick	America's Choice Teen Louisiana, 2024	$20,626

Note. These are selected individual fundraising pages featured by the platform, not a complete sample of contestants or total pageant receipts. Their values must not be added to the campaign totals in Table 1 because overlap cannot be ruled out. Source: Spotfund (n.d.-b).

The nine listed contestants raised amounts ranging from $20,626 to $69,074 on their individual pages. The observations illustrate a distribution among highlighted success cases, not among all contestants enrolled in the corresponding competitions (Spotfund, n.d.-b). They also cannot establish how much money a national organization ultimately retained. Some fundraising pages may serve scholarship purposes, while others may support competitive advancement or different award structures. Without the original team reconciliation and the treatment of payment expenses, the individual amounts should remain an illustrative supporting dataset rather than part

of the whole campaign sample. The distinction prevents artificial inflation of the paper's combined receipts.

Repeated Campaigns and Year Comparisons

A repeated campaign provides more information than a single annual snapshot because it reveals whether the result was sustained. Table 3 brings together the available years for Queen Juneteenth, Miss Clark County, and Miss Tennessee's Teen. Queen Juneteenth has observed totals in 2024 and 2026, with no 2025 value included in this study. Miss Clark County has three consecutive campaign displays, and Miss Tennessee's Teen has two. These are comparisons within named organizations, not controlled tests of the causes of revenue growth. Missing years and differences in campaign conditions limit what can be inferred from the changes.

Table 3

Repeated Whole Campaign Fundraising Amounts for Selected Pageants

Pageant	2024	2025	2026	Relevant Change
Queen Juneteenth	$36,624	Not included	$62,178	2024–2026: +69.8%
Miss Clark County	$1,987	$13,697	$4,604	2025–2026: −66.4%
Miss Tennessee's Teen	Not included	$6,601	$13,544	2025–2026: +105.2%

Note. Values are published campaign totals rather than audited proceeds. "Not included" means that the specified observation was not part of the verified comparison, not that no campaign occurred. Sources: Heritage 365 (n.d.-a, n.d.-b); Miss Clark County Scholarship Foundation (n.d.-a, n.d.-b, n.d.-c); Spotfund (n.d.-c, n.d.-d). The Miss Clark County years refer to campaign titles rather than verified calendar year receipts. Available fundraiser records show that campaigns began during the preceding calendar year. The comparisons therefore concern named campaign cycles, not annual financial reporting periods.

Miss Clark County illustrates the budgeting risk particularly well. An organizer using the $13,697 displayed for its 2025 campaign as a firm expectation for the 2026 campaign would have projected $9,093 more than the following result. The opposite error would occur if the director relied only on the $1,987 displayed for the 2024 campaign when evaluating the potential of the next competition. Neither comparison identifies changes in participants, promotion, or campaign duration. The sequence nevertheless makes one point clear.

Voting can be financially consequential without producing a predictable amount every year. An operating budget should account for that uncertainty instead of treating a record result as recurring income. The Tennessee sequence moves in the opposite direction, with the posted amount more than doubling between 2025 and 2026. Yet those figures do not identify whether the program’s contestant count, voting period, or public interest changed. Queen Juneteenth also records higher amounts in its later observed year, with both supporter count and displayed receipts increasing. The three patterns should be discussed together rather than selecting only the growth cases. They support a conclusion that paid voting can be financially meaningful while remaining difficult to predict from the available public information. A representative multi year study would need comparable information about the number of contestants, transactions, campaign days, and promotional activity to determine what changed.

An Industry Benchmark With Important Limitations

Bombyhead (n.d.) provides a broader provider benchmark based on 36 director years since 2022. The guide reports a median voting income of $4,338, and 26 of the 36 observations exceeded $2,000. Seven exceeded $10,000, with a reported maximum of $22,776. Of particular importance, voting income was greater than entry fee income in 16 director years. The

comparison suggests that paid voting can sometimes rival or exceed a traditional source of pageant receipts.

Yet these are records from a platform's customer base, not a representative sample of all directors. Their definitions and selection procedures must remain part of the interpretation. The reported relationship between voting and entry fees adds another dimension. According to Bombyhead (n.d.), the median director raised about $0.94 through voting for each $1 in entry fee income across the observations. Its guide also reports a change from $0.18 in voting income per dollar of entry fees in 2022 to $1.13 for the 2026 median. The time comparison is potentially important because it suggests that paid voting became a more significant revenue source among the platform's observed directors. However, the provider does not publish a complete series of director records that would establish whether the same directors appeared in both years. Changes in the composition of the customer base could contribute to the reported difference.

The observation unit is especially important. A director year represents one director's activity during a year and may contain more than one event. It cannot automatically be treated as the earnings of a single pageant. The benchmark also comes from the provider's own customer population, not a random selection of U.S. pageant organizations. Directors choosing a platform that emphasizes voting may differ from those who do not use paid voting at all. The public summary does not provide underlying transaction files, independent assurance, or sufficient detail to evaluate nonresponding and inactive customers.

The $4,338 median reported by Bombyhead describes its observed director years rather than a national benchmark. Directors also need to consider whether each record covers one competition or several. The provider associates higher receipts with factors such as earlier voting launches, prize presentation, and contestant engagement, but these relationships do not establish

which factor produced the result (Bombyhead, n.d.). Some findings also draw on activity from a related platform, so the percentages may not describe identical groups. These recommendations can help a director identify practices worth testing, but their financial effects should be evaluated against actual event records rather than assumed from vendor marketing.

Pageant Planet Benchmarks and Historical Claims

Pageant Planet previously reported that directors using its People's Choice service earned an average of $4,961.18 (Pageant Planet, 2017). The company also described one director who raised $89,000, although it expressly acknowledged that this result was not typical. Its article suggested that fundraising opportunities between $1,000 and $5,000 could be achievable depending on the number of contestants, the popularity of the competition, and the software used. The company also identified results from Princess of America and Miss World Canada as examples of fundraising activity. These claims provide useful historical context, but the published article does not disclose the sample size or calculation method behind its reported director average. The $89,000 example also lacks an independently reconciled campaign record and should not be treated as a representative outcome.

These historical claims provide context about the financial opportunities associated with paid voting, but they are not additional verified campaign observations. Pageant Planet's support article, updated in August 2026, reports average net profit of $123.40 per contestant and states that the calculation includes every contest hosted on its platform (Swank, 2026). The company also explains that its 25% charge on gross earnings is returned to directors through lead credits, which can provide a separate marketing benefit. Those credits should not be treated as cash proceeds without additional information about their use and economic value. The company's published terms present a different description, stating that pageants receive 25% of dollars

raised through People's Choice votes (Pageant Planet, n.d.). These statements do not provide a consistent basis for calculating retained cash revenue, although the support article adds useful context to the provider's financial model. The company does not disclose the number of contests underlying its average or the distribution of their results. Consequently, the reported per contestant profit cannot be directly compared with the earlier director average or the Bombyhead director year median without additional information.

The financial definitions in vendor material must also be considered carefully. Bombyhead (n.d.) reports a median director year, Pageant Planet (2017) described a historical director average, and Swank (2026) presents average net profit per contestant. A median and an average respond differently to unusually large successes. Director years may include more than one event, while contestant based values depend on roster size. Combining those numbers into an industry average would be statistically invalid. The more defensible conclusion is that providers report meaningful client outcomes but have not published the standardized, independently verified records needed to compare them directly.

Financial Value of Paid People's Choice Voting

A director should begin by identifying what paid voting needs to accomplish financially. If an event collects $5,000 through voting but has already committed $2,000 toward scholarships and awards, the amount available for other expenses cannot be determined from gross receipts alone. The director must also consider platform fees, payment processing, refunds, and any additional costs associated with promoting the contest. Paid voting may reach supporters who would never purchase a ticket or enter the competition, creating a different source of potential receipts from traditional event activities. The available campaign records show that those payments can be substantial, but they do not establish how much is additional to what supporters

would otherwise have spent. The useful question is how much money remains available for the event after its financial commitments have been satisfied.

The provider benchmark makes the comparison with traditional revenue particularly relevant. Bombyhead (n.d.) reports that voting income exceeded entry fee income in 16 of 36 director years. That is a notable result within its customers, although the sample may include several events per director and is not nationally representative. The documented Queen Juneteenth and Miss Clark County campaigns also demonstrate that large and small pageants can attract financial support beyond contestant registration (Heritage 365, n.d.-b; Miss Clark County Scholarship Foundation, n.d.-b). These observations support considering voting as a material budget category rather than simply a ceremonial award. They do not support entering an assumed amount into every future budget without reference to the organization's own experience.

Another potential benefit involves relationships with supporters. A vote gives someone outside the contestant roster a concrete reason to interact with the event, and that interaction may draw attention to future competitions. The available sources do not quantify whether this attention results in higher ticket sales, sponsorships, or contestant registrations. Such benefits should be treated as possible secondary outcomes, not additional revenue that has already been earned. The most defensible financial measure remains the net contribution from actual payments after costs and commitments. Participation measures can then be reviewed alongside revenue to determine whether the voting program also served broader engagement goals.

The annual comparisons reveal the need for caution. Miss Clark County displayed $13,697 for its 2025 campaign but only $4,604 for its 2026 campaign (Miss Clark County Scholarship Foundation, n.d.-b, n.d.-c). A director funding a recurring expense from a single strong voting result could face a shortfall if participation declines. Voting proceeds may be better

suited initially to discretionary awards, scholarships, or event improvements until a longer record demonstrates dependable performance. The choice depends on the event's costs and financial flexibility. Treating this income as an opportunity rather than a guarantee makes the argument for its value more credible.

Voting Prices, Incentives, and Revenue Design

Published contest rules show how much voting models vary even before participation is considered. United States of America Pageants (n.d.) sets a price of $1 per vote and requires a minimum purchase of five votes in each transaction. USA National Miss (n.d.) advertises a People's Choice program for its preteen division at $2 per vote with a five vote minimum. For a supporter purchasing ten votes, those schedules imply a contribution of $10 and $20, respectively, before any additional charges.

The higher price does not establish higher total revenue because participation may respond to cost, the award's value, and the supporter's personal relationship with a contestant. Published price schedules describe the opportunity to collect money, not actual money collected. The purposes attached to the award vary as well. The Stephenson County Fair program describes its People's Choice award as separate from judging, while United States of America Pageants explains that its division winners receive automatic entry into the semifinals under its published policy (99Pledges, n.d.; United States of America Pageants, n.d.). Miss USA used People's Choice standings to determine three guaranteed Top 20 contestants in 2026 (Miss USA Organization, 2026). A scholarship, an honorary crown, and a competitive advancement position may create different reasons for supporters to spend. Financial comparisons should measure how the incentive structure, not merely the existence of voting, relates to receipts and participant satisfaction.

Campaign duration is another factor that directors should consider when comparing fundraising results. The Louisiana Sugar Queen campaign ran from August 26 through September 28, 2024, while Andouille voting was available from September 17 through September 28 (Louisiana Sugar Cane Festival Association, 2024; St. John Parish, 2024). The Sugar Queen competition had a substantially longer voting period and collected more money, although the available records cannot establish whether the additional time contributed to that difference. Contestant networks, promotional activity, and audience involvement may also have influenced the results. Directors comparing their own events would benefit from recording how long voting remained open and when purchases occurred. Those records could help identify periods of stronger fundraising activity without assuming that extending a campaign will automatically increase revenue.

Universal Miss, AmeriFest, and Other Programs

Universal Miss and AmeriFest offer useful examples of why fundraising and voting revenue must be kept separate. Universal Pageant System (n.d.) reports raising $2,000 for St. Jude Children's Research Hospital in 2023 and more than $3,000 for Give Kids The World Village in 2024. Those figures document charitable work described by the organization. The page does not show that the amounts came from paid People's Choice votes, so they are not included as voting revenue.

Adding them to Table 1 would treat evidence of charitable fundraising as evidence of a different activity. Their proper role is to demonstrate that pageant organizations may operate several fundraising channels with different financial purposes. AmeriFest's prize materials identify People's Choice voting as part of its national pageant activities and even describe an option awarding 100 free votes through an advertising related prize package (AmeriFest

Nationals, n.d.). A related Miss Kentucky Bluegrass State page describes People's Choice winners advancing to AmeriFest nationals and lists a wide range of awards (Miss Kentucky Bluegrass State, n.d.). Neither source provides a verifiable gross voting receipts total. The available information helps establish how prize incentives and promotional credits can affect the structure of a competition. It cannot support an estimated dollar amount from votes. Crediting free ballots through prizes also reinforces the reason not to multiply a reported vote count by a standard price.

Miss Cosmo USA similarly publishes a People's Choice process with a minimum donation of $5 and available voting bundles, but its public voting page does not report total dollars raised (My People's Choice, n.d.). The campaign is valuable for discussing price presentation and the relationship between voting and semifinal advancement. It is not an additional financial observation. When a pageant has clear rules but no published receipts, the appropriate result of research is an explicitly documented information gap. A rigorous dataset should not fill that gap with an assumption simply because the pageant is recognizable.

What Research on Online Giving Can Explain

The broader research on giving provides possible explanations for the support observed in pageant campaigns. Van Teunenbroek et al. (2023) reviewed 198 studies and identified the relevance of project creators, social information, rewards, and project descriptions. Those factors have obvious parallels in People's Choice voting. Contestants create a personal connection, leaderboards reveal relative support, and the award gives the contest a specific goal. However, the review does not measure pageant voting income. It can inform questions about design and participation without supplying a pageant revenue forecast.

Smith et al. (2015) found evidence of peer effects in online fundraising. In their study, a £10 increase in the mean of previous donations was associated with approximately £2.50 more in subsequent giving. The authors also examined the difficulty of distinguishing influence from similarities among people connected to the same fundraising network. A pageant supporter might respond to visible votes or contributions in a comparable way. Yet the motives associated with charitable running fundraisers and competitive pageant voting are not identical. The study suggests a mechanism worth examining, not a percentage that can be applied to expected pageant sales. A credible pageant study would need to measure how visible support changes actual purchases.

Competition may change the willingness of participants to contribute. Charness and Holder (2019) examined charitable giving through a laboratory experiment that varied matching arrangements and competition. They reported that donations represented 23% of participants' endowments without matching, 33% with matching, and 47% when anonymous teams competed for matching funds. The authors interpreted the stronger result as evidence that group identity and competition can influence prosocial behavior.

Visible standings may motivate some supporters to vote again when their preferred contestant falls behind. That possibility is consistent with the competition findings discussed earlier, but laboratory giving behavior should not be treated as a forecast of pageant purchases. Chan et al. (2024) found that 89% of participants in a charity crowdfunding experiment chose not to seek peer information even when it was available for free. This finding raises an important question about whether every supporter wants to participate in a publicly visible competition. Directors may prefer live leaderboards, partial standings, or hidden totals depending on their competition rules and the experience they want to provide. Comparing actual voting and

payment records across these arrangements would be more informative than assuming one display format will always generate higher receipts.

Morvinski et al. (2022) add an important qualification regarding campaign progress. Across observational and experimental settings, the authors found that when a fundraising goal was nearly complete, information about a smaller number of existing donors could encourage larger contributions than information about many donors. The result challenges a simplistic assumption that displaying the largest possible crowd always generates more giving. In pageantry, supporters might respond differently to a close race, a nearly completed fundraising goal, or a large apparent lead.

Campaign language presents another factor that pageant directors can control. Adena and Huck (2022) compared donation and contribution framing in a crowdfunding experiment and found greater revenue when participants were asked for donations. The two approaches also produced different responses to suggested contribution amounts. People's Choice campaigns frequently use terms such as votes, donations, support, and purchases to describe financial participation. These descriptions may affect how supporters interpret the request, particularly when proceeds are divided among event expenses, scholarships, and charitable causes. Directors should explain those purposes clearly rather than assume that using charitable language will increase contributions. Although the experiment provides useful evidence about how financial appeals are presented, it does not establish which wording would be most effective in a pageant.

A more recent crowdfunding study provides evidence that early signals of commitment can matter. Liu et al. (2025) examined a large online education fundraising platform and found that visible contributions from project stewards were associated with stronger donation pace, amounts, and project success. Their analysis emphasized the signaling value of a contribution

that other donors can observe, especially near the start of a project. A pageant director might see an analogy in a contestant sharing an active campaign or a sponsor visibly supporting an event.

However, the study concerns fundraising for educational projects rather than competitive votes, and it cannot establish the financial consequences of any specific pageant promotional practice. The relevant lesson is to study credible signals of commitment, not to assume a guaranteed return from an early contribution. The research does not point to one universally effective voting design. Smith et al. (2015) examine actual giving behavior, while Charness and Holder (2019) vary competition in a laboratory setting. Chan et al. (2024) and Morvinski et al. (2022) show that social information may have different effects depending on how and when it appears. Van Teunenbroek et al. (2023) place these mechanisms within a broader crowdfunding literature. Together, the studies help explain why contestant relationships, incentives, and presentation might matter. They do not establish the size of those effects in pageantry, and they should not be cited as though they do.

Why Large Voting Counts Cannot Be Valued as Revenue

Miss Universe supplies an important example of why vote counts should be interpreted separately from fundraising. A case study published by voting technology company Telescope (n.d.) reports 116,392,748 votes from 6,547,130 unique voters during a global Miss Universe campaign. The program included online voting and participation through Twitter hashtags, along with voting opportunities during the live event. The company also reported substantial internet traffic and social media activity.

Those measures demonstrate the scale of audience participation handled by the platform. They do not show how many paid votes were purchased or how much money the pageant collected from voting. It would be particularly misleading to multiply the Miss Universe total by

$1 and report more than $116 million in voting revenue. The cited case study includes forms of participation that were not described as purchases, and it does not disclose a monetary total. In fact, campaign technology can produce very high counts through free ballots, social activity, repeated engagement, or promotional voting mechanisms. Miss USA's 2026 contest similarly allowed free daily votes, and each vote counted double during part of a live round (Konstantinides, 2026; Miss USA Organization, 2026). A reliable revenue analysis must start with payment records, not with the appearance of a large number on a leaderboard. This is one of the most significant safeguards against inflated financial claims in the pageant industry.

Miss Cosmo and the Difference Between Transactions and Dollars

International voting results can be enormous without disclosing a corresponding dollar amount. Eventista (2024), the technology partner for Miss Cosmo, reported more than nine million votes and over 87,000 successful transactions during the 2024 competition. The company also reported 11 million page views from 145 countries and a 35% increase in transactions using local payment methods. These figures demonstrate substantial activity through the voting platform, but they do not establish total paid receipts, the value of individual transactions, or the amount ultimately transferred to the pageant. The reported increase in local payment transactions also lacks a disclosed baseline, limiting its usefulness for evaluating changes in revenue.

Eventista also described free voting and double point promotions. Consequently, the credited vote count cannot be converted into revenue by multiplying it by an assumed price. A transaction count can be more informative financially than a vote count because it may refer to completed payment activity. However, the phrase successful transactions does not independently establish the amount of each transaction, its currency, whether every transaction was paid, or how promotional credits were handled. Even if all 87,000 transactions involved payments, the

aggregate receipts would require a verified distribution of transaction values. These differences may appear technical, but they determine whether a cited figure represents cash or engagement. A strong financial paper must preserve that distinction rather than give an unsupported revenue estimate a false appearance of precision.

A 2025 Miss Cosmo leaderboard offers a further illustration of the scale of credited voting. The published ranking displays 28,308,943 votes for the leading contestant from the Philippines and more than 27 million for the next contestant (1Voting, n.d.). These figures describe credited votes in a particular competition. The site does not disclose the amount paid for each credited vote or the proceeds of the overall campaign. The top contestant's vote total by itself also cannot be treated as the total number of ballots sold in the event. Adding the figures to a monetary table would create a category error rather than a meaningful increase in the financial sample.

Gross Receipts, Retained Proceeds, and Financial Reporting

A campaign can display $10,000 without leaving the organizing pageant with $10,000 to spend. Payment processors and platforms may assess charges, and refunds or disputed transactions can reduce the final settlement. The event itself may also be responsible for awards, scholarships, promotion, or promised charitable distributions. Who absorbs each cost depends on the contracts and voting rules. The same gross figure can therefore lead to different net results for different directors. Useful reporting should show gross payments, adjustments, fees, the money paid out, and the obligations that remain. Without that reconciliation, a pageant's displayed fundraising success cannot be treated as unrestricted operating income.

Stripe (n.d.) lists a standard U.S. domestic card price of 2.9% plus $0.30 per successful transaction, although actual merchant arrangements may differ. On a hypothetical $10,000

campaign with 500 transactions of $20, that schedule would produce $440 in card charges and leave $9,560 after this one expense. One thousand transactions of $10 would instead produce $590 in fees and leave $9,410. Both campaigns collected the same gross amount. The difference arises from the fixed charge being applied more often in the second example. These calculations do not describe the expenses of any pageant in the observed sample.

Table 4

Illustrative Payment Processing Costs for $10,000 in Gross Voting Receipts

Average purchase	Transactions	Estimated card fees	Receipts after card fees
$10	1,000	$590	$9,410
$20	500	$440	$9,560
$50	200	$350	$9,650
$100	100	$320	$9,680

Note. Hypothetical calculations use Stripe's advertised standard U.S. domestic card price of 2.9% of the charged amount plus $0.30 per successful transaction (Stripe, n.d.). Figures exclude platform charges, taxes, refunds, disputes, prizes, and any negotiated processing price.

The comparison in Table 4 demonstrates why the number of payments matters even when gross revenue does not change. With smaller purchases, the fixed charge is assessed more frequently. A director comparing two events should therefore ask how many transactions produced each reported total. Other contracts may add a platform charge or place a separately disclosed service fee on the supporter instead of reducing the director's payout.

Because those arrangements vary, the paper does not impose a single fee structure on all 14 campaigns. The question for budgeting is how much of each dollar collected will remain available for the event after the applicable costs. Charitable commitments can create another distinction. United States of America Pageants (n.d.) states that it has donated more than $50,000 to charitable causes through its People's Choice program since 2019. Its policy also explains that

the organization determines the share of proceeds to be donated and may use the remaining amount to offset production expenses and fund prizes. The $50,000 statement refers to cumulative charitable distributions, not total paid voting receipts and not the results of a single year. It does not reveal the amount collected before costs or the exact percentage distributed to charity. Treating the charitable distribution as equivalent to the entire voting program's revenue would obscure both the fundraising scale and the organization's use of funds.

The settlement process should begin with the amount charged to supporters, then identify refunds, disputes, and any taxes collected. Processor and platform charges can be reconciled against the amount ultimately paid out. A second record should identify scholarships, prizes, charity commitments, and other program expenses that the voting proceeds are expected to support. These steps allow a director to explain the difference between the public campaign total and cash available for operations. They also make annual comparisons more credible. An increase in gross receipts could coincide with higher processing costs or larger awards, leaving the financial contribution unchanged. Organizations with different legal structures may report these items differently, but they all benefit from a traceable record of the transaction and payout process.

Practical Implications for Voting Platform Selection

Published platform pricing provides another consideration when evaluating the financial value of People's Choice voting. Pageant Post retains 12.5% of the face value of votes and charges supporters a separate service fee calculated as 2.9% of the total payment plus $0.37 per transaction (Pageant Post, n.d.). Under this arrangement, a supporter purchasing $20 in votes pays $20.98, while the organizing pageant receives $17.50. A campaign generating $10,000 in vote purchases would produce a director share of $8,750 under the published fee structure,

before any refunds, disputes, or other applicable adjustments. This example demonstrates how published pricing can be used to estimate the amount available to an organizer. It does not establish that Pageant Post generates higher fundraising totals than competing platforms or predict how many votes a particular pageant will sell.

Platform selection involves more than comparing the percentage deducted from vote purchases. Directors should examine the complete fee structure, including the amount charged to supporters, the share retained by the organization, and the treatment of payment processing costs. Refund policies, disputed payments, and payout schedules can also influence the financial value of a voting program. A platform with a lower advertised percentage may not necessarily have a lower total cost if another provider uses a different arrangement for processing charges. Directors can make more meaningful comparisons by applying each platform's published terms to the same assumed voting volume and transaction sizes. This approach provides a clearer understanding of potential financial outcomes without assuming that any particular platform will produce higher participation or revenue.

Reconciliation Issues in Scholarship and Charity Programs

Scholarship and charity oriented voting introduces additional reporting questions beyond gross receipts and processing costs. A platform campaign may identify a charitable organization as the recipient, while its rules describe scholarships, participant fundraising, operating expenses, or a combination of purposes. For example, Miss America expressly distinguished a separate $10,000 America's Choice scholarship from the broader competition outcome, and Miss Nepal U.S. reported an intended charitable beneficiary (Basnet, 2018; Spotfund, n.d.-a). The amount available for unrestricted operations cannot be inferred merely from the amount a voter paid.

An organization should disclose what was promised to supporters and should maintain records showing when those commitments were satisfied. This also reduces the risk of confusing charitable distributions with the platform's total payment volume. For a director evaluating financial sustainability, the useful outcome is the contribution that voting makes after direct expenses and committed distributions. A program can raise considerable money and still require substantial cash for scholarships, awards, travel benefits, or production. Conversely, a modest gross amount may be financially useful if direct costs are limited and supporters understand its purpose. Neither situation can be evaluated from the campaign displays alone. Internal records need to connect each charge with refunds, fees, any taxes collected, amounts paid to beneficiaries, and deposits into the appropriate accounts. Such a reconciliation would support a financial comparison across years without treating a growing gross total as proof of a growing net result.

Scenario Analysis for Directors

The documented campaigns establish that paid voting can generate money, but they do not supply a reliable forecast for any particular director. A practical planning model begins with a contestant count, an assumed number of distinct paying supporters per contestant, and the amount each supporter is expected to spend. Multiplying those values produces a gross scenario, not net income. Table 5 uses three sets of assumptions to demonstrate the effect of participation and spending. It intentionally avoids describing those assumptions as an industry average. A director with past transaction records should replace the illustration with observations from that director's own events.

Table 5

Hypothetical Gross Receipts Under Three Participation Scenarios

Scenario	Contestants	Paying supporters per contestant	Average supporter spending	Gross receipts
Limited reach	10	10	$15	$1,500
Moderate reach	20	15	$25	$7,500
Broader reach	30	20	$35	$21,000

Note. Every value is an assumption for illustration, not an observed outcome or an industry forecast. Supporters are assumed not to overlap across contestants, and amounts exclude all fees and costs.

The moderate scenario in Table 5 assumes 20 contestants, 15 distinct paying supporters per contestant, and an average contribution of $25. The calculation produces $7,500 in gross receipts before any deductions. Doubling the assumed number of paying supporters would double the arithmetic result if spending remained unchanged, but real campaigns may not respond in that simple way. Contestants can share supporters, and some people may contribute to more than one candidate.

A significant portion of a contest's receipts may also come from a handful of larger purchases. Directors should replace these assumptions with the observed distributions from their own prior campaigns whenever reliable records are available. A scenario becomes useful when it is connected to the actual event budget. A director planning to use voting proceeds for venue expenses needs to know the expected payout date and the costs deducted before settlement. Scholarships or promised charitable distributions reduce what remains for other purposes. Staff time and marketing may also have costs, even when the voting software is easy to operate. None of these obligations makes voting financially unattractive by itself. They do determine whether a

campaign contributes meaningfully toward its stated purpose. Gross receipts should be treated as the starting point rather than the final measure of success.

Operational and Ethical Implications

Voting programs involve more than payment collection. Supporters need to understand whether ballots are free or paid, whether purchases can be repeated, how rounds advance, and whether totals reset. Contestants should know whether votes affect the judged results or produce a separate title. Miss USA's official rules and the Miss America campaign illustrate substantially different relationships between fan voting and competitive placement (Miss USA Organization, 2026; Spotfund, n.d.-a).

The clearer these distinctions are before the contest begins, the less likely participants are to misunderstand what their purchases accomplish. Accurate rules are also necessary for financial analysis because changes in vote weights can separate credited vote totals from cash collected. The use of charitable language demands particular care. Some competitions state that proceeds support a festival, while others identify a charitable beneficiary or explain that money helps finance production. The Louisiana Sugar Queen and Andouille pages explicitly connect their campaigns to festival support, whereas United States of America Pageants describes a policy allowing charitable distributions and operating expense allocations (Louisiana Sugar Cane Festival Association, 2024; St. John Parish, 2024; United States of America Pageants, n.d.). Those are different commitments. Supporters may be willing to pay in each arrangement, but the purpose of their payment should be described accurately. An organizer should not imply that the entire purchase price is a deductible charitable donation without a legal and factual basis for that statement.

Financial incentives can also influence how fair the competition appears. When paid votes determine advancement, a contestant with a large or affluent support network may receive an advantage that is unrelated to the qualities scored by judges. This concern emerged directly in coverage of Miss USA's 2026 changes (Konstantinides, 2026). A separate People's Choice title may reduce that conflict because the paid award can be recognized without replacing the judged outcome.

That design is not inherently superior for every pageant, but it makes the relationship between money and placement more explicit. Directors should evaluate the importance of participant trust alongside the amount a fundraising campaign may generate. A related operational responsibility is honoring the promised award. Bombyhead (n.d.) argues that the People's Choice winner should receive meaningful recognition and should not be treated as an afterthought. That recommendation reflects the provider's experience rather than an independently measured causal revenue effect. Even so, the underlying concern is legitimate: supporters make payments in response to a stated contest and expect the organization to follow its rules. A director who reports substantial fundraising success but fails to deliver the published recognition may damage future participation. Financial performance is better evaluated over repeated events than through a single campaign total isolated from the reputation of the organization.

Research Gaps and Opportunities for Stronger Data

The largest remaining limitation is the lack of a representative dataset connecting pageant characteristics with verified financial outcomes. This review includes 14 selected campaign displays, but it does not capture every pageant that offered paid voting or every campaign that generated little revenue. Spotfund's showcase emphasizes individual fundraising successes, while

Miss Cosmo provides extensive voting and transaction figures without reporting monetary totals (Eventista, 2024; Spotfund, n.d.-b). Miss USA's executive also discussed the commercial significance of voting without providing a precise amount (Konstantinides, 2026). These sources provide useful context but cannot replace a dataset that consistently records gross payments, fees, net proceeds, and participation for individual events.

These sources answer different questions. They cannot establish a trustworthy national mean, median, revenue distribution, or probability that voting will exceed entry fees for a randomly selected pageant. A stronger study could use historical transaction records from multiple pageant platforms and participating directors, with identifying information removed when appropriate. Each event record would include event year, pageant level, number of contestants, length of the voting period, free and paid voting rules, gross payment volume, number of unique paying supporters, transaction counts, refunds, processor charges, platform charges, and payouts. Additional variables could identify whether People's Choice affected judging, whether the prize involved advancement or a separate title, and what share of funds was committed to charity. These measures would permit comparisons that are not possible with isolated screenshots and public summaries. They would also allow researchers to examine the influence of exceptionally large contributors without exposing private information about individual voters.

The analysis would also need to address selection and timing. Directors who choose a voting platform may differ in size and marketing experience from those who do not offer paid voting. Repeated events from the same director may share practices and supporter networks, while a single unusually successful year could distort an average. A useful design would

distinguish individual pageants from director years and report both the mean and median alongside the distribution of results.

Where directors change voting features over time, comparisons should account for changes in contestant counts, event size, and the broader environment. Such a study could estimate associations with greater confidence, but causal effects would still require credible identification rather than relying on correlations between successful contests and their chosen features. Directors could improve the research base without releasing sensitive customer information. A standardized annual report could disclose total charged payments, total refunded payments, total processor and platform charges, net proceeds, number of distinct paying supporters, and number of contestants. Amounts allocated to scholarships or charity could be reported separately. Using these categories would allow independent comparisons and help organizations make informed decisions about budgeting for future competitions. Over time, multiple years of consistent reporting could establish more useful benchmarks than the selected public examples currently available. The absence of such reporting is the main reason the financial potential of People's Choice voting can be documented but not reliably generalized.

A Practical Research Design for the Expanded Dataset

A feasible first stage of research would assemble every accessible campaign from several platforms during a defined period, rather than searching primarily for high fundraising outcomes. Each observation would be identified by the organizer, year, event, voting mechanism, and campaign URL. Researchers would also need a rule for handling archived pages that change over time, pageants with multiple divisions, and individual contestant pages linked to team campaigns. Where an organizer provides several years of results, those observations should be retained with an identifier that preserves their relationship.

This process would reduce the risk of double counting and allow the data to support clearer descriptive comparisons. The present 14 campaign sample demonstrates the usefulness of this approach, but its selection process is not yet exhaustive. The second stage would seek permission to match campaign displays with aggregated transaction and payout records. That would allow gross receipts, unique paying supporters, transaction counts, refunds, and direct costs to be measured consistently. A model could then examine whether differences in campaign duration, contestant count, round structure, and visible standings are associated with gross and net proceeds. Fixed effects for organizers with repeated observations might help account for some stable differences, although changing contestant networks and platform practices would remain important concerns. The current evidence supports developing that research question, not answering it causally. A completed study would have to explain the population sampled, missing data, and the limits of any conclusions drawn from the models.

Conclusion

Paid People's Choice voting has demonstrated the potential to provide pageant organizations with an additional source of financial support. The 14 publicly documented campaigns examined in this paper display a combined $224,657, with individual totals ranging from $1,549 to $62,178. These amounts demonstrate the scale of fundraising reported by particular competitions, although they do not independently establish the payments deposited or proceeds retained after expenses. Additional evidence from Miss Nepal U.S. and selected Miss America contestant fundraisers further illustrates the amounts generated through these programs (Basnet, 2018; Spotfund, n.d.-b). Together, the findings support considering paid voting alongside traditional funding sources, including registration fees, sponsorships, and ticket sales, while recognizing that the selected campaigns do not establish an industry average.

Comparisons across campaign cycles offer one of the most practical lessons for pageant directors. Miss Clark County's displayed total increased from $1,987 for its 2024 campaign to $13,697 for 2025 before falling to $4,604 for 2026 (Miss Clark County Scholarship Foundation, n.d.-a, n.d.-b, n.d.-c). Queen Juneteenth and Miss Tennessee's Teen recorded increases in their later observed campaigns (Heritage 365, n.d.-a, n.d.-b; Spotfund, n.d.-c, n.d.-d). These patterns make it difficult to justify funding recurring expenses based on one unusually successful voting season. A more responsible approach is to use previous receipts, participation counts, and net settlements to develop a range of possible outcomes. Such planning preserves the financial opportunity without turning a successful historical result into an unsupported guarantee.

The evidence supports treating paid People's Choice voting as an additional financial opportunity rather than an automatic source of profit. A pageant that establishes clear rules, honors its winners, and maintains accurate payment records is better positioned to evaluate the program over time. Directors should compare what supporters actually paid with the final amount available after fees, refunds, awards, and charitable commitments. They should also determine whether the contest encouraged engagement without undermining confidence in the judged competition. These measures provide a practical standard for selecting a voting platform and deciding whether the program is worth repeating. They also make a stronger case for paid voting than any unsupported promise of guaranteed fundraising success.

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