

The State of Rhode Island's Nonprofit Sector

Results from the 2023 Rhode Island Nonprofit Survey

GCRI | Grantmakers Council
OF RHODE ISLAND



THE **Alliance**
for **NONPROFIT IMPACT**
at United Way of Rhode Island

Thank you

We are grateful to the 329 Rhode Island nonprofit organizations that took the time to participate in this lengthy survey, as well as the members of Grantmakers Council of Rhode Island who helped to distribute the survey.

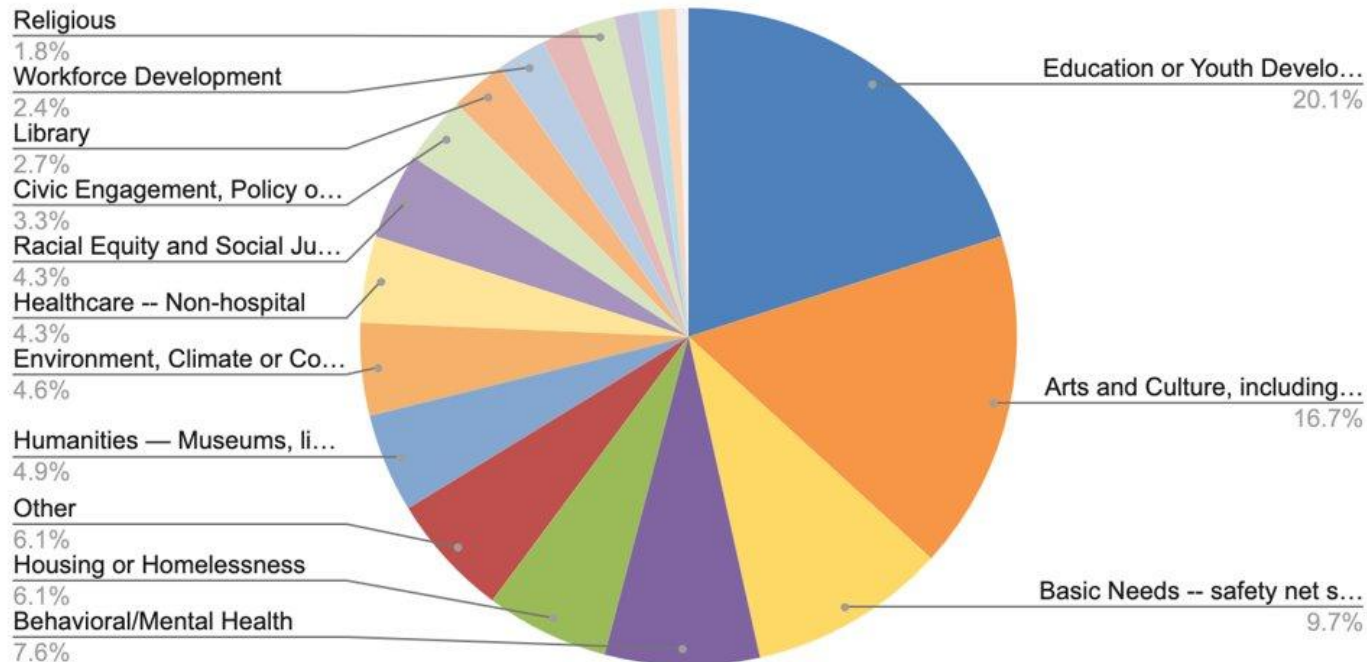
Thank you for your help in collecting this important data.

Respondents



Issue Areas

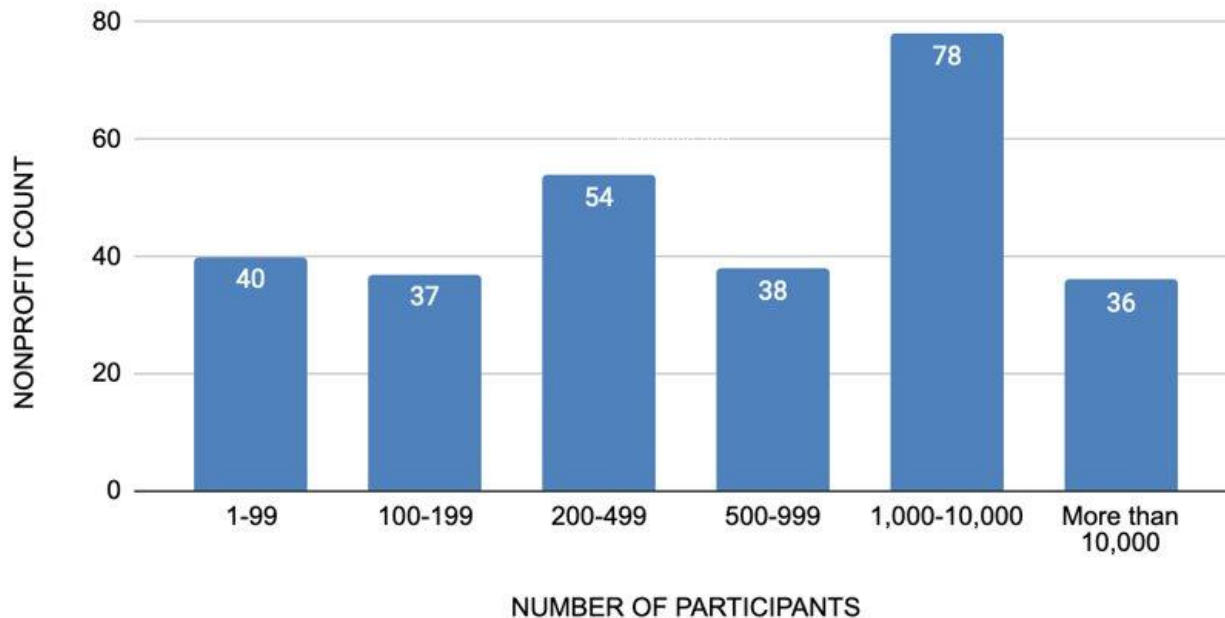
What is the focus of your organization's programs and services? (n=329)



One in five responding organizations are focused on education/youth development. Arts and Culture organizations made up the second largest category at 16.7%.

Programs and Services

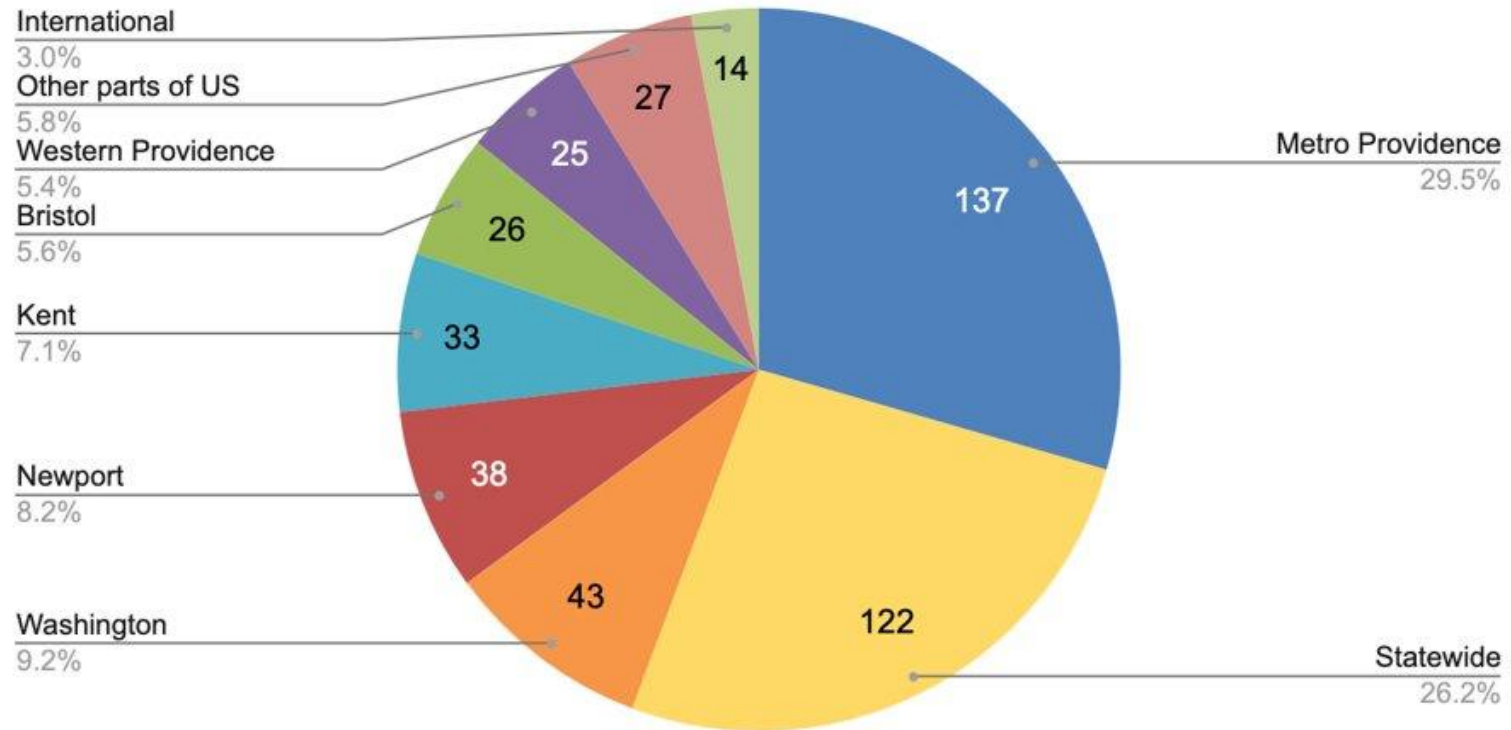
Approximately how many people have participated in your programs and services in the last 12 months? (n=283)



86% of responding organizations provide direct services or work directly with clients/participants.

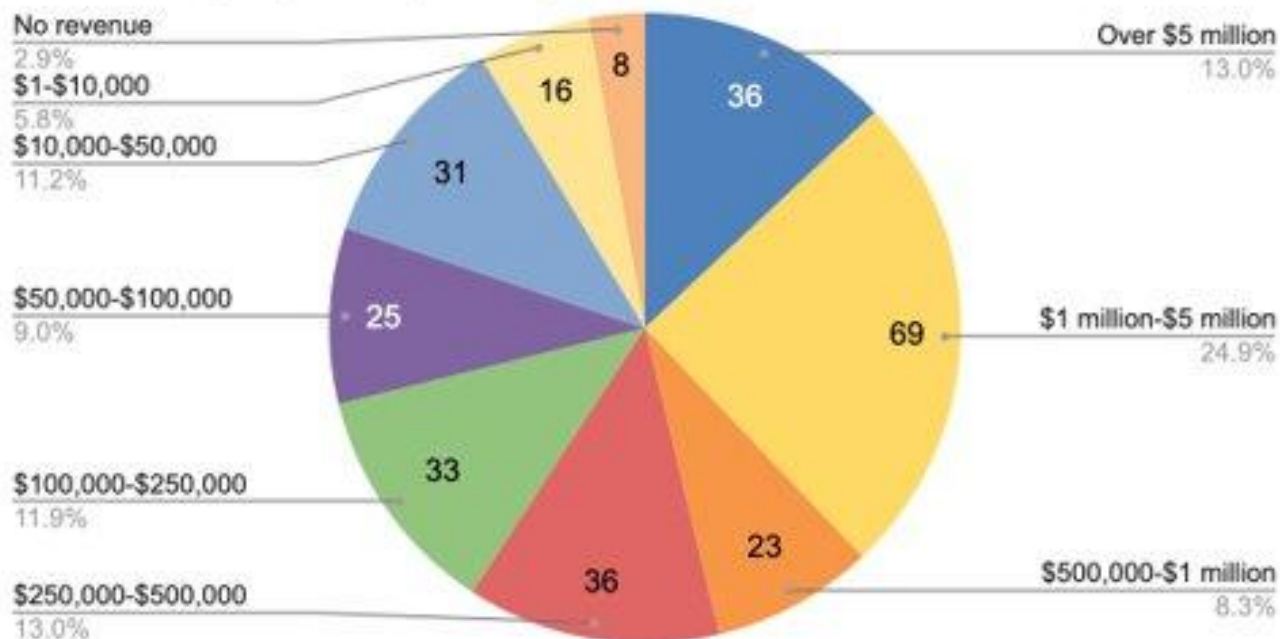
Geography

What county/ies do your participants/clients primarily live in? (n=292)



Revenue

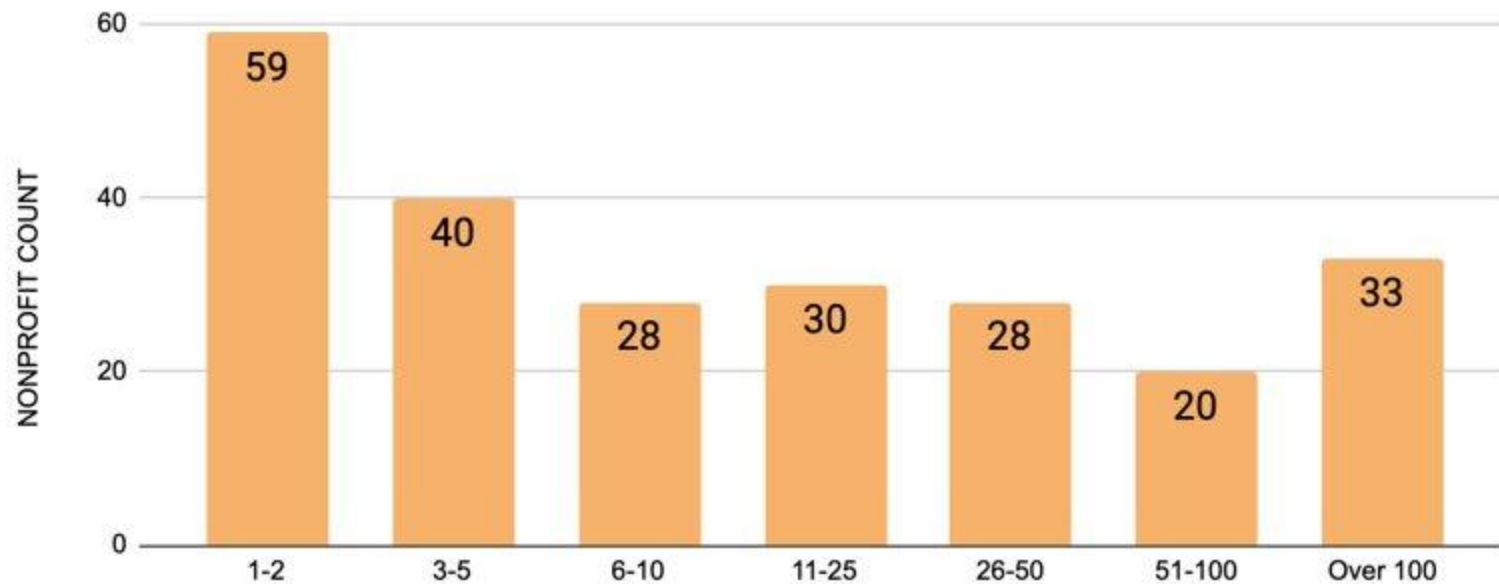
What was your organization's revenue for your last fiscal/budget year? (n=277)



More than half (53.8%) of responding organizations have less than \$500,000 in annual revenue.

Staff Size

How many full-time equivalent, paid staff members does your organization have? (n=325)



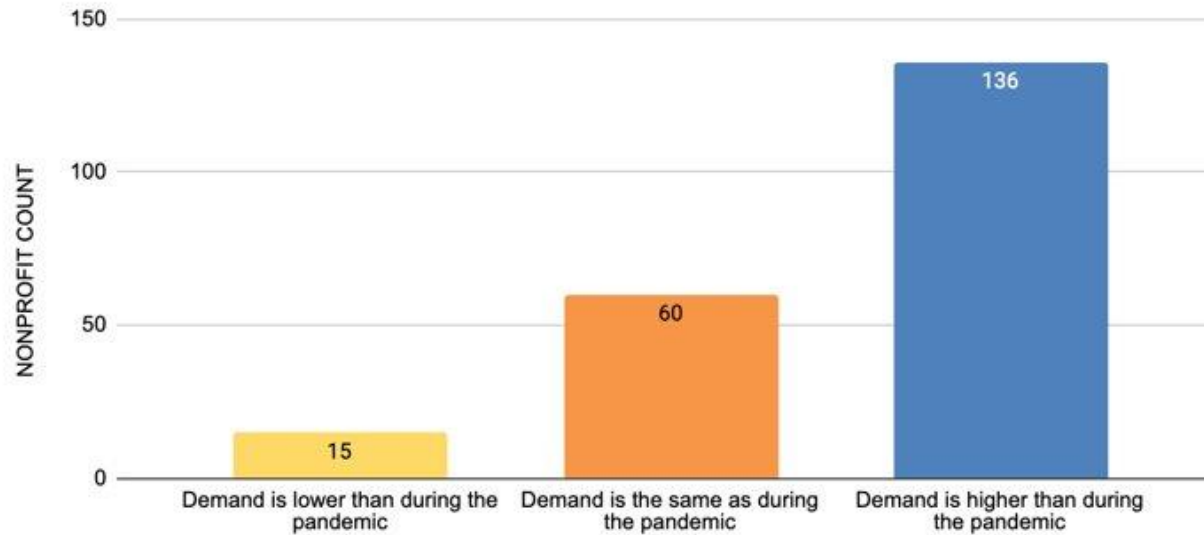
One third of responding organizations have five or fewer paid staff members.

Post-Covid



Community Need

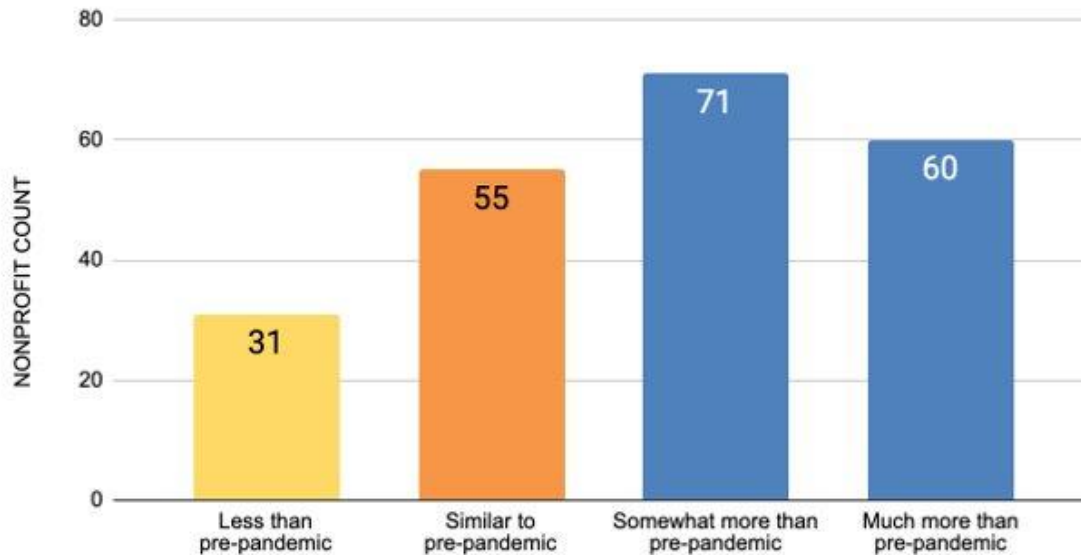
If your program provides services to community members in need, how does the demand for your services compare with the demand during the pandemic (March 2020-December 2021)? (n=211)



While the pandemic is generally regarded as the height of community need, two thirds (64.5%) of responding organizations providing direct service are seeing a higher level of need now than during the pandemic.

Participation

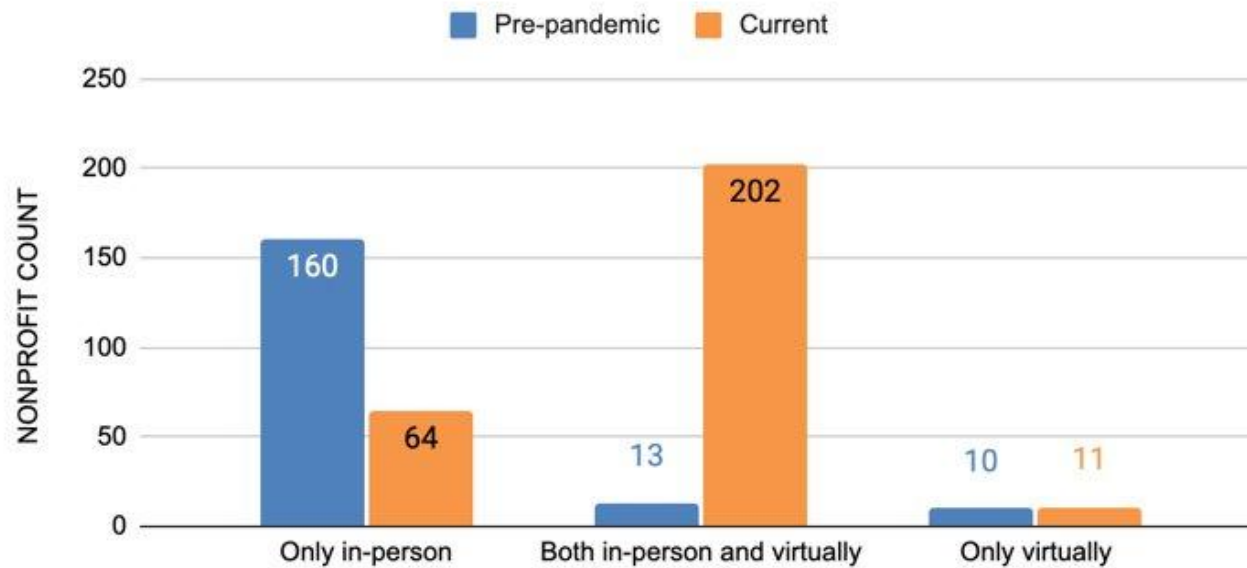
If your organization offers programs and services that are not focused on basic needs, how does the current participation in your programs or services compare? (n=217)



Community engagement has rebounded -- the majority of programs (60.4%) that are unrelated to basic needs are seeing a higher level of participation now than pre-pandemic.

Service Delivery

How have you changed in the ways you offer programs and services since the pandemic? (n=288)



After pivoting to virtual service delivery during the pandemic, most nonprofits (70.1%) have maintained virtual offerings, while also resuming in-person programming.

Primary Challenges

Primary Challenges	N=262
Financial	62.2%
Organizational capacity	56.4%
Staff recruitment and hiring	46.3%
Marketing/communication	36.6%
Facility issues	36.3%
Volunteer recruitment and management	33.2%
Board leadership and governance	27.4%
Leadership transition or succession planning	26.5%
Staff retention	24.4%

Almost two thirds (62.2%) of responding organizations cited finances as a primary challenge, while 56.4% are struggling with organizational capacity issues. Almost half (46%) have issues with hiring staff, and more than one third of respondents reported challenges in marketing, facilities and volunteer management.

Primary Challenges

	2023	2022
1	Financial	Financial
2	Organizational capacity	Organizational capacity
3	Staff recruitment and hiring	Staff recruitment and hiring
4	Marketing, communications, public relations (PR)	Volunteer recruitment and management
5	Facility Issues	Staff retention

The top three organizational challenges cited in 2023 are consistent with the most frequently cited challenges in the 2022 survey – finances, capacity and recruitment and hiring.

Staffing



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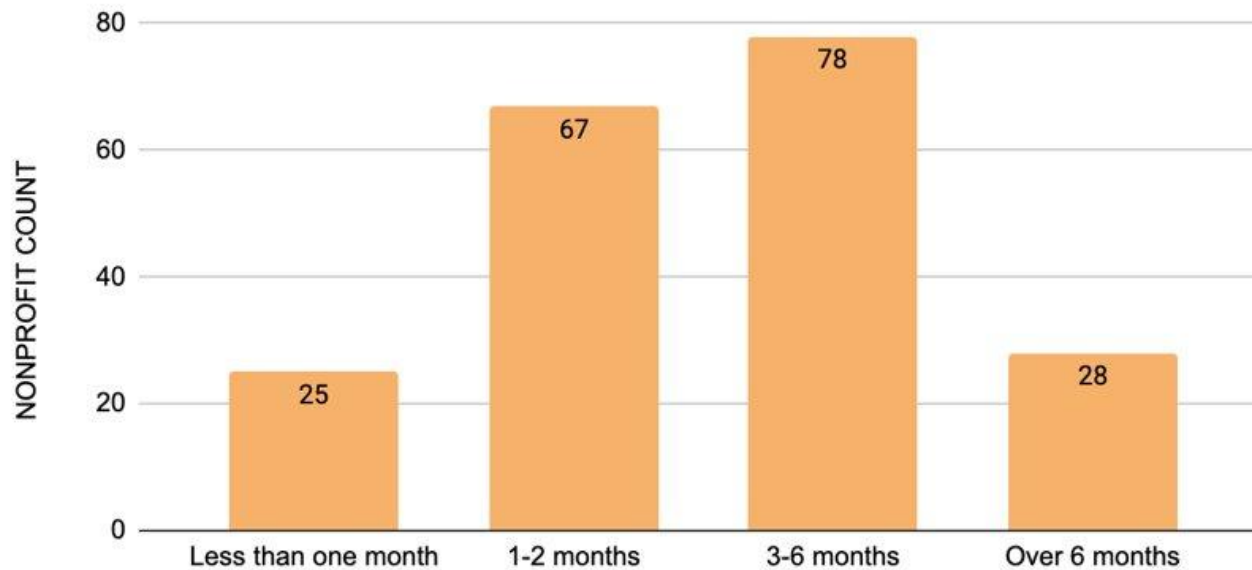
Staffing Activities

Staffing Activity	N=306
Hiring to fill existing positions	64.7%
Hosted college intern or apprentice	36.6%
Hiring to fill new positions	55.9%
Hosted a high school intern/summer jobs participant	
Leadership transition/succession planning	29.1%
Hired a person with "significant barriers to employment"	
Received a Governor's Workforce Board grant	
Received Employee Retention Tax Credit	
Staff layoffs or furloughs	
Reimbursed state for self-funded unemployment costs	

The sector continues to see extensive staff turnover -- Two thirds (64.7%) of responding organizations were involved in hiring to fill existing positions in 2023, 55.9% hired for new positions, and almost a third (29.1%) had a leadership transition or succession planning.

Vacancies

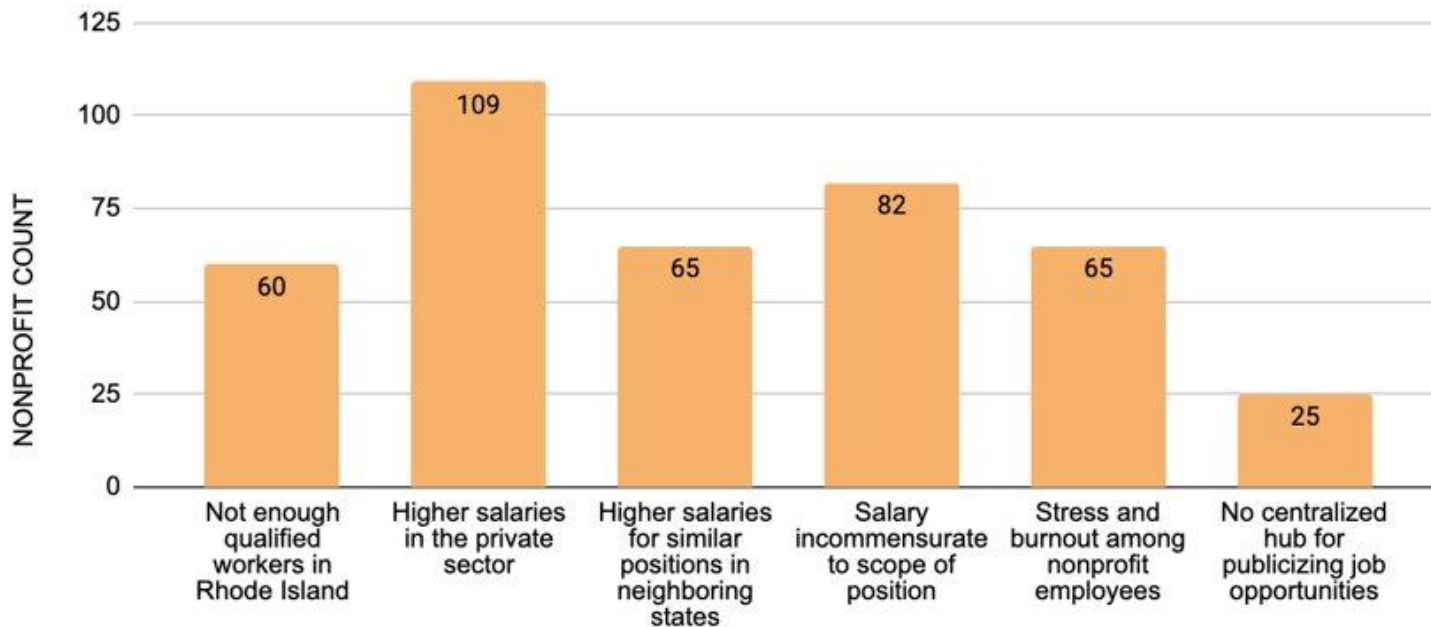
In 2023, how long has your typical vacant position remained open before you were able to hire someone? (n=198)



Nonprofits continue to have difficulty in staffing. Over half (53.5%) of organizations that tried to hire in 2023 had vacancies over 3 months, and 14% had vacancies lasting more than 6 months. These long-term vacancies further burden remaining employees, who have to take on additional responsibilities.

Hiring Challenges

If you have had difficulty in filling vacant positions, to what do you attribute that challenge? (n=205)



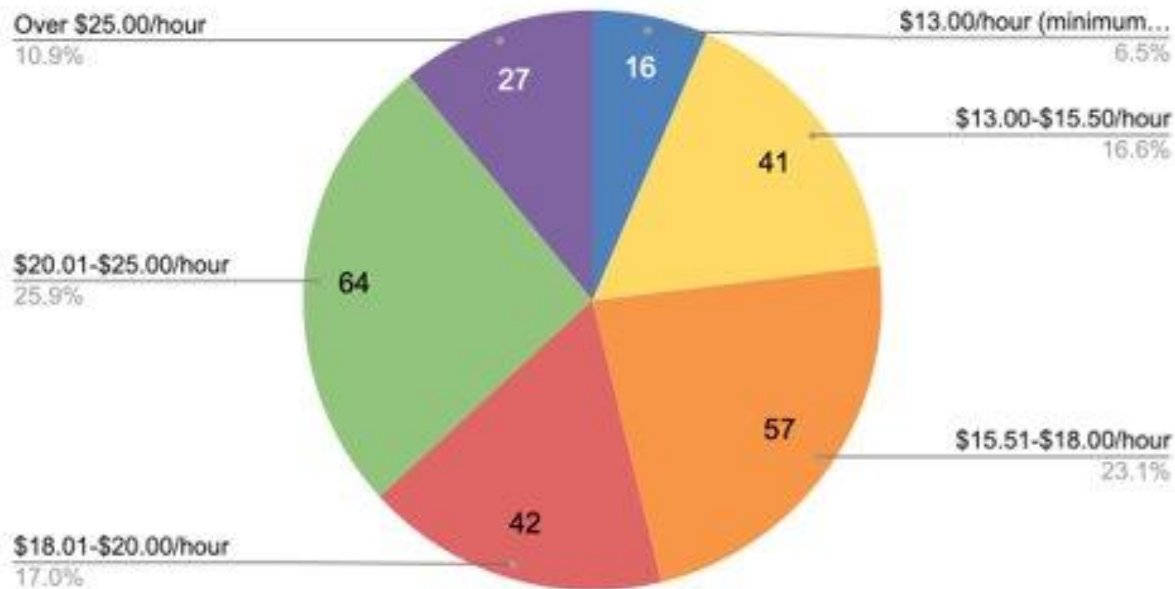
Compensation (53.2%) and burnout (31.7%) are the most frequently cited hiring challenges. One third of organizations (29.2%) cite an overall lack of qualified workers in Rhode Island.

Hardest Positions to Fill

- Clinical positions – particularly bilingual (behavioral health, medical, speech, PT, etc.)
- Case management, direct service professionals
- Childcare, youth, and education
- Fundraising
- Finance
- Technical skills

Compensation

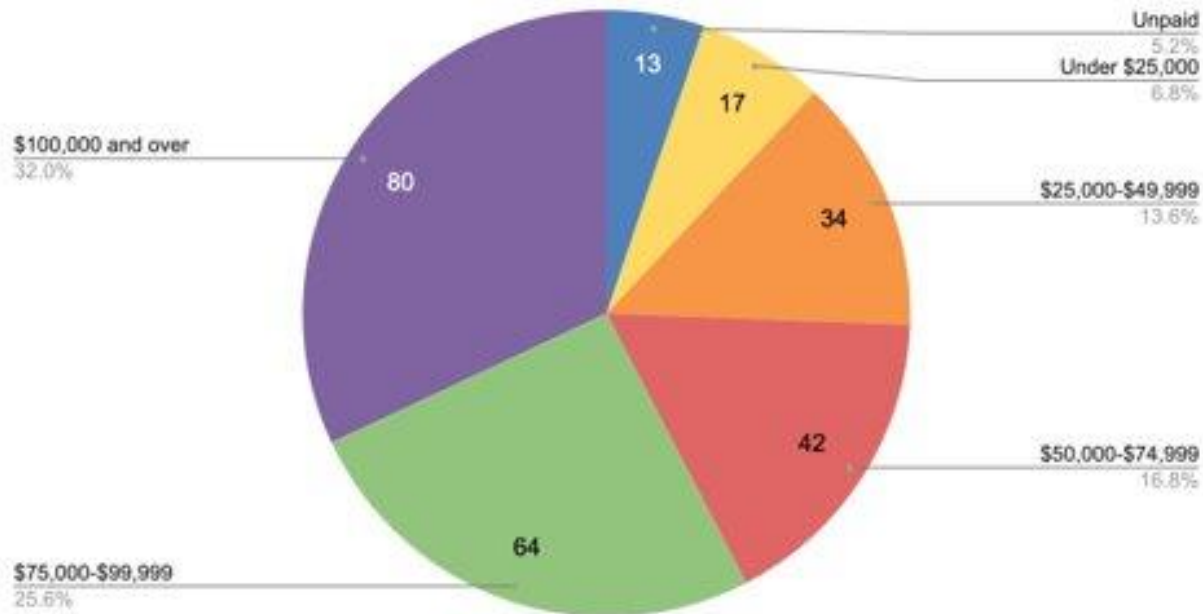
What is the approximate hourly pay of your lowest paid staff member(s)? (n=247)



23.1% of responding organizations paid their entry level workers under \$15/hour. This means that staff may qualify for government assistance programs. It also makes recruitment and retention much more difficult.

Compensation

What is the approximate salary range of your organization's senior management (Executive Director/CEO and senior leadership)? (n=250)



12% of executive directors/senior leadership make salaries less than \$25,000, pointing to the difficulty of moving from all volunteer leadership to compensated staff. One in four (25.6%) responding organizations are paying their executive directors/senior leadership less than \$50,000.

Benefits

Benefit	N=257
Paid vacation	72.0%
Paid sick leave	72.0%
Medical coverage	62.9%
Dental coverage	59.9%
Retirement plan	49.4%
Vision coverage	44.7%
Life insurance	38.5%
Paid family and medical leave	37.0%
Tuition reimbursement	17.5%

Almost three quarters (72.0%) of responding organizations who have paid staff offer vacation and sick time. 62.6% offer medical benefits and 59.9% offer dental coverage. Less than half (49.4%) offer retirement benefits.

Hiring Challenges

"Our commitment to hiring racially diverse candidates has meant we have had to slow down, and sometimes adjust our hiring practices and process to attract qualified, racially diverse candidates in a tight talent market."

"Many want remote positions when looking for office staff. Plenty apply and never return calls or show up for interviews. Others don't qualify."

"Lack of bilingual applicants, lack of interest in or familiarity with community organizing and co-op development in the overall job market, lack of experience in our field."

"Stress of jobs and lack of child care at night and affordable child care."

"We have people who would quit their private sector jobs to work for us if we were able to pay them what they currently receive and offer comparable benefits."

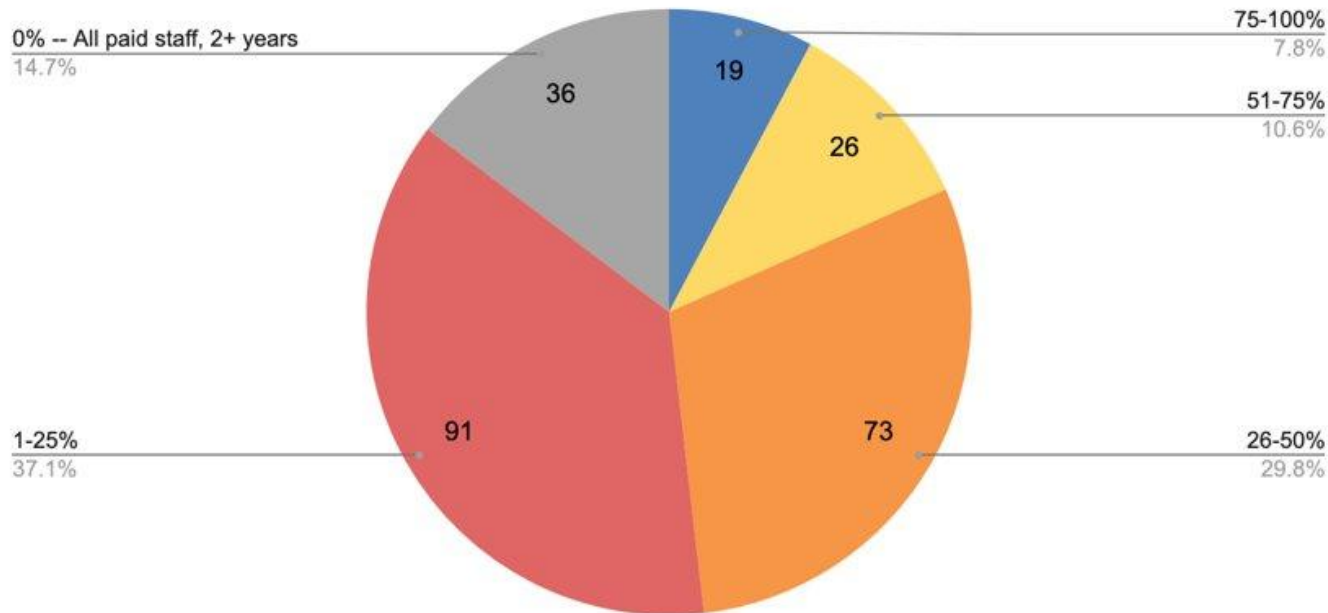
"Although we have significantly increased salaries in the past five years, it is hard to keep up with RI housing prices and general inflation. We find that entry level candidates are very concerned with workload/burnout and we have had strong candidates who felt that the job would be too taxing-this never happened in the early 2000s."

"Some positions, higher salaries for same skills available elsewhere. Other positions, we can't find qualified candidates."

"Need help with higher ed preparing students and creating pipelines in RI for the jobs our sector needs to fill to care for the most vulnerable in RI."

Staff Turnover

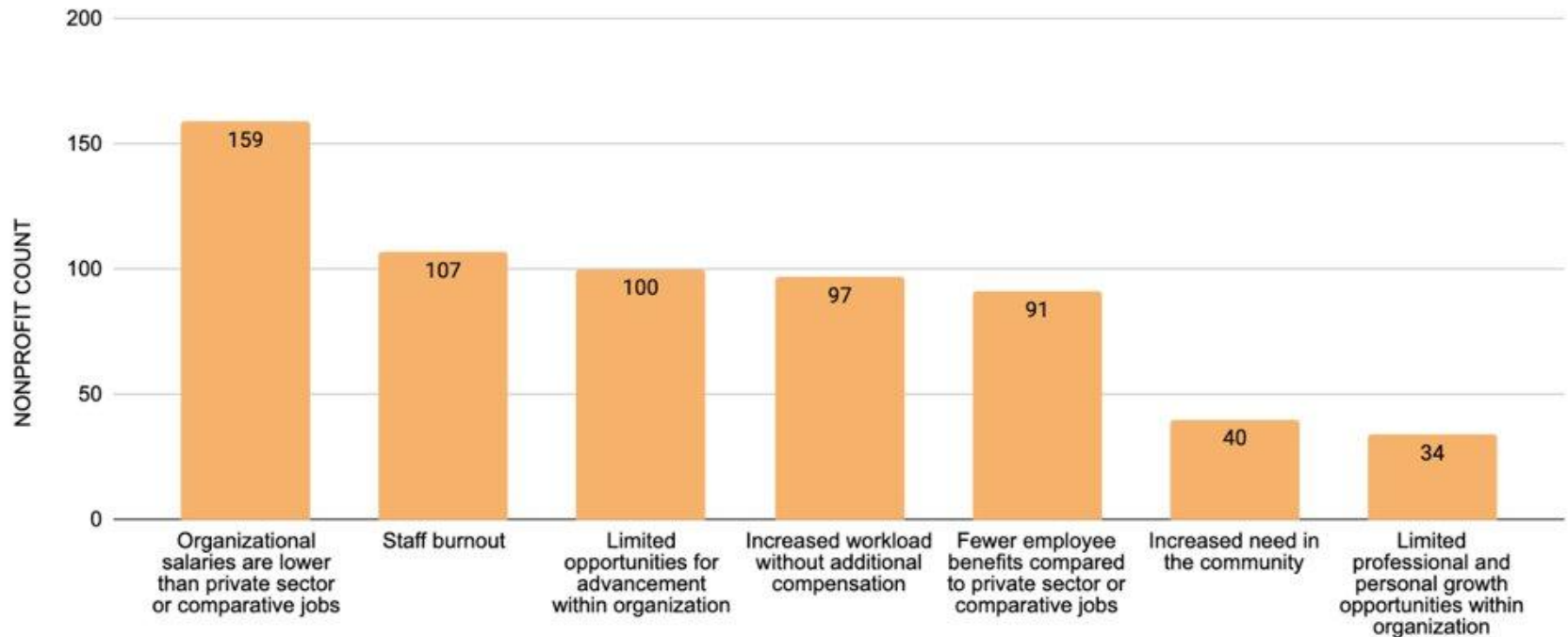
Many nonprofits have experienced significant staff turnover in the last several years. What percent of your paid staff positions are currently filled by staff who have been with your organization for less than two years? (n=245)



At almost one in five organizations (18.0%), over half of the staff has been with the organization for less than two years. This staff turnover comes with a tremendous loss of institutional knowledge and expertise.

Retention

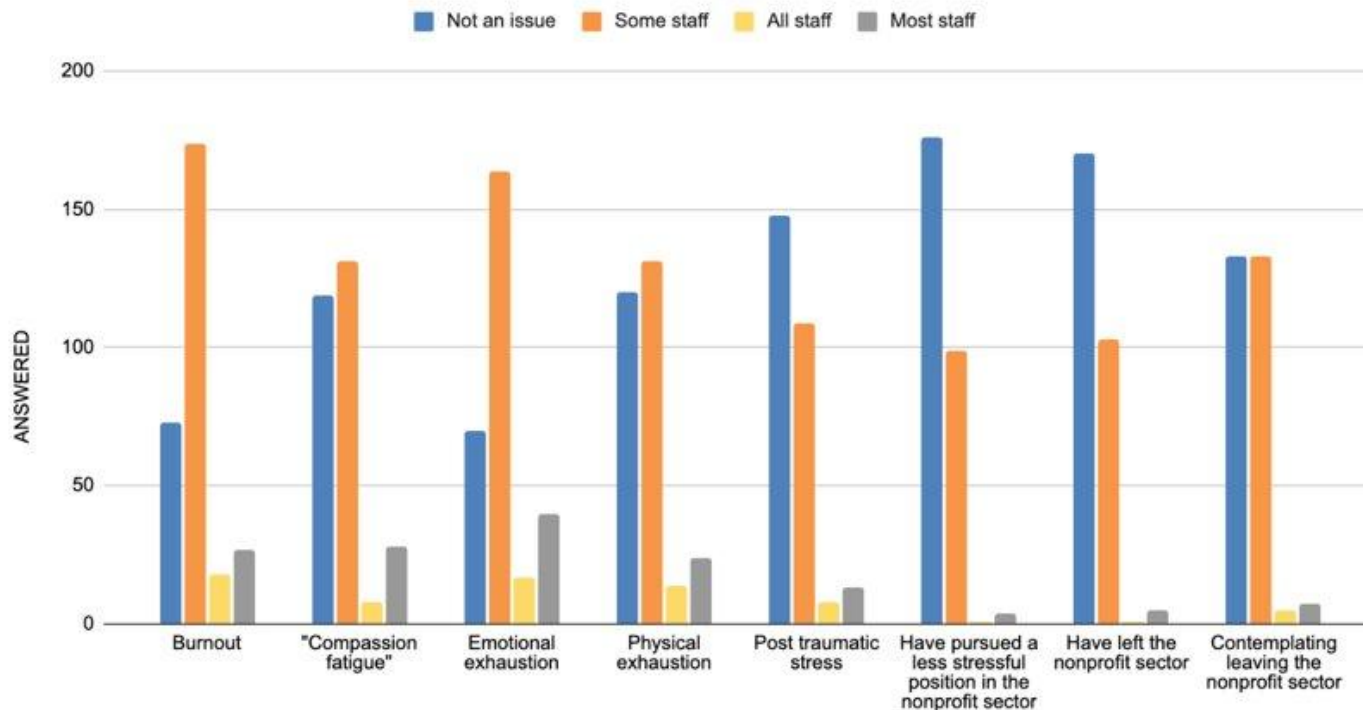
What are the biggest challenges you face in retaining qualified staff? (n=243)



Compensation (65.4%) and benefits (37.4%) are among the top challenges in retaining staff. Other challenges affecting almost half of responding organizations were staff burnout (44.0%) and limited advancement opportunities (41.1%).

Staff Burnout

To what extent are your staff currently experiencing: (n=310)



Burnout and exhaustion continue to be significant challenges for Rhode Island's nonprofit sector, with three-quarters of responding organizations saying that some or all of their staff is burnt out, and emotionally exhausted.

Burnout

- 75% say some or all staff are **experiencing burnout** (decrease from 82% in 2022)
- 58% say some or all staff have **“compassion fatigue”** (76% in 2022)
- 76% say some or all staff are **emotionally exhausted** (83% in 2022)
- 59% say some or all staff are **physically exhausted** (67% in 2022)
- 39% have lost staff who have **left the sector entirely** (47% in 2022)
- 52% have staff who are **contemplating leaving the sector** (60% in 2022)

While there has been a decrease in burnout data, three-quarters of responding organizations have some or all staff experiencing burnout, which continues to be alarming. Some organizations report making positive changes to improve retention, but some of the decrease could also be due to attrition – those who were most burnt out have left their jobs or left the sector entirely.

Burnout

"I have been lucky to retain line staff and first level leadership in 2023. In 2022, I lost leadership to other sectors due to burnout, and the leadership team is struggling to meet all the demands of keeping the agency going financially."

"We are seeing significant recovery from the high levels of stress and burnout staff experienced during the pandemic. Our staff now works at home 1-2 days a week, but we all agree that having core days in the office improves morale."

"The burnout is not due to the organization itself, but because they are working multiple jobs."

"Because our staff is so driven by the mission and because we need more staff for all we do, we are working beyond the job description and struggle with the balance between work and personal/family life."

"Need to offer higher pay rate for direct services staff due to the stress and demand on their time. It's hard to maintain staff through burn out and fatigue if they cannot support their families without taking on additional employment. We have had staff homeless, lose use of vehicles due to lack of funds, etc."

"Our ED is currently the only staff taking on the organization's leadership and most work. Without financial support, we can't hire more staff, leading to burnout in our ED."

"Behavioral health staff, child welfare staff and community health are exhausted."

"We adopted a 4-day workweek (32 hours/wk with no change in compensation or benefits) which has SIGNIFICANTLY helped with all the above issues."

Retention

"We lost a great staff member to a much higher paying job at DCYF."

"I'm the only 'staff' – founder of the organization and still with lots of energy, hope, and healthy dose of anxiety/worry."

"It is both exhausting and exhilarating to empower people to age independently."

"Increasing salaries and helping to support a more work-life balance has helped staff."

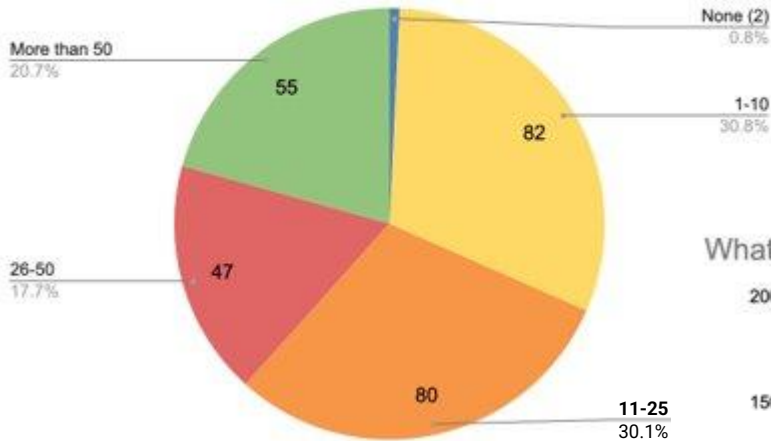
"We reduced our staff significantly during the pandemic, and have not increased back from that yet. Our function also changed permanently. For bookkeeping, we opted to go with outsourcing rather than rehire for a reduced staff and scope."

"While we have committed to being on the front lines, working to be of service to our most vulnerable and under-served community members, the work can be both physically and emotionally traumatizing. And so we have learned that in order to truly be of service, we have to first become a strong unit by loving and caring for each other, validating each other feelings and being there to "pick up" when a member of the team isn't 100% at any given time. We have to take time to celebrate the wins!"

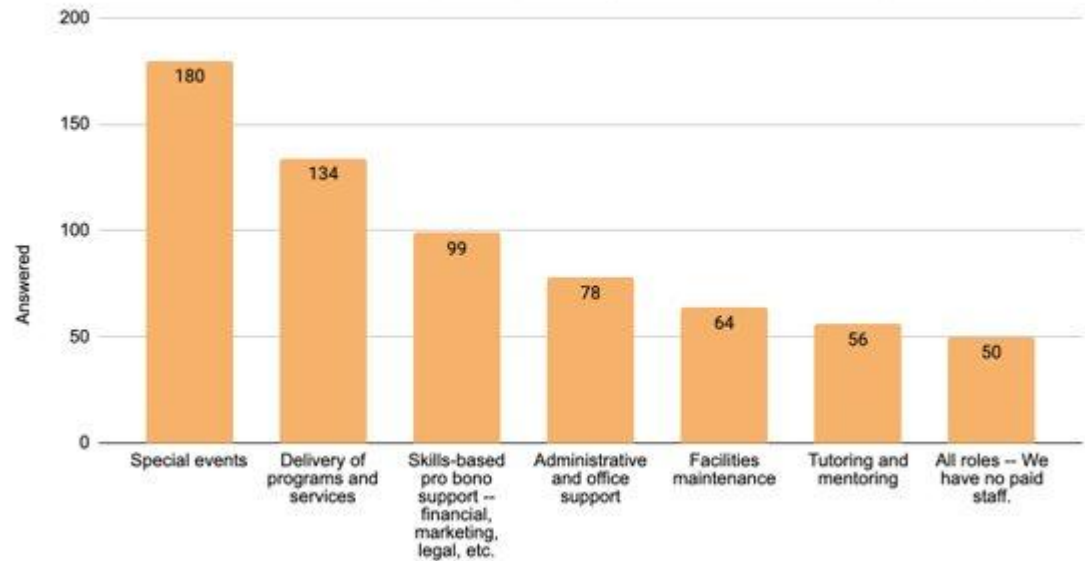
"Our health insurance rates are skyrocketing with diminished benefits. We're told that combining our risk-group with other charter schools is not an option for reducing insurance premium costs. As a comment not a complaint- the increase in my insurance cost last year was more than the raise I received. I'm grateful for both - but this isn't sustainable for the organization or my household as it's not keeping pace with the rising rate of inflation in our country."

Volunteers

How many volunteers have worked in your organization in 2023? (n=266)



What roles have volunteers played in your organization in 2023? (n=265)



Volunteers

"We need easier access to background checks for volunteers and reduced costs for checks."

"Volunteers are getting older and it's difficult to obtain and retain younger volunteers."

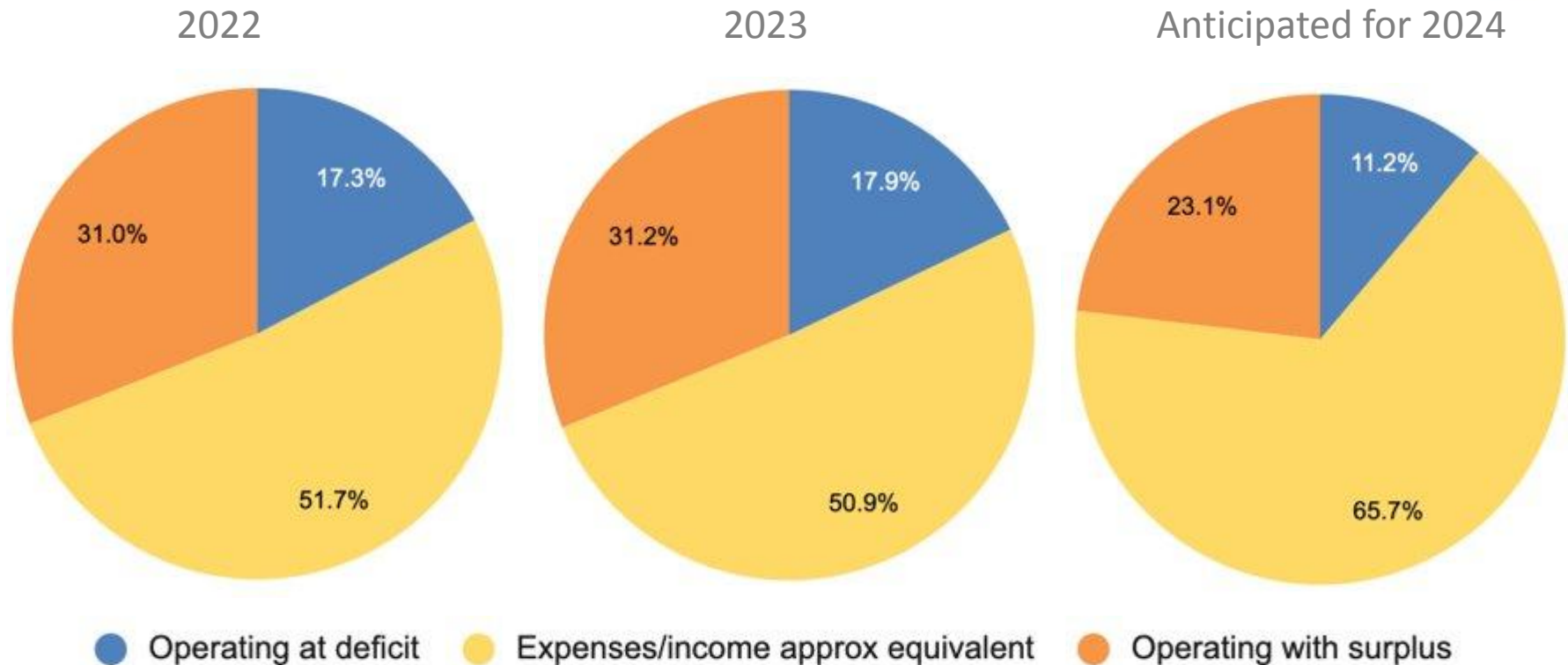
"Most of our volunteers come from local colleges/universities, and the challenge is that they are so internally disorganized that we have to pursue volunteers through multiple channels within the same institution."

"We have no problem attracting volunteers, but managing them effectively would be a .5 FTE or volunteer that we do not have."

Finances



Finances



While it is encouraging that some organizations operating at a deficit anticipate a better financial position in 2024, there are a concerning number of organizations currently operating with a surplus who do not expect that to continue in 2024, potentially because of the end of pandemic-related funding sources.

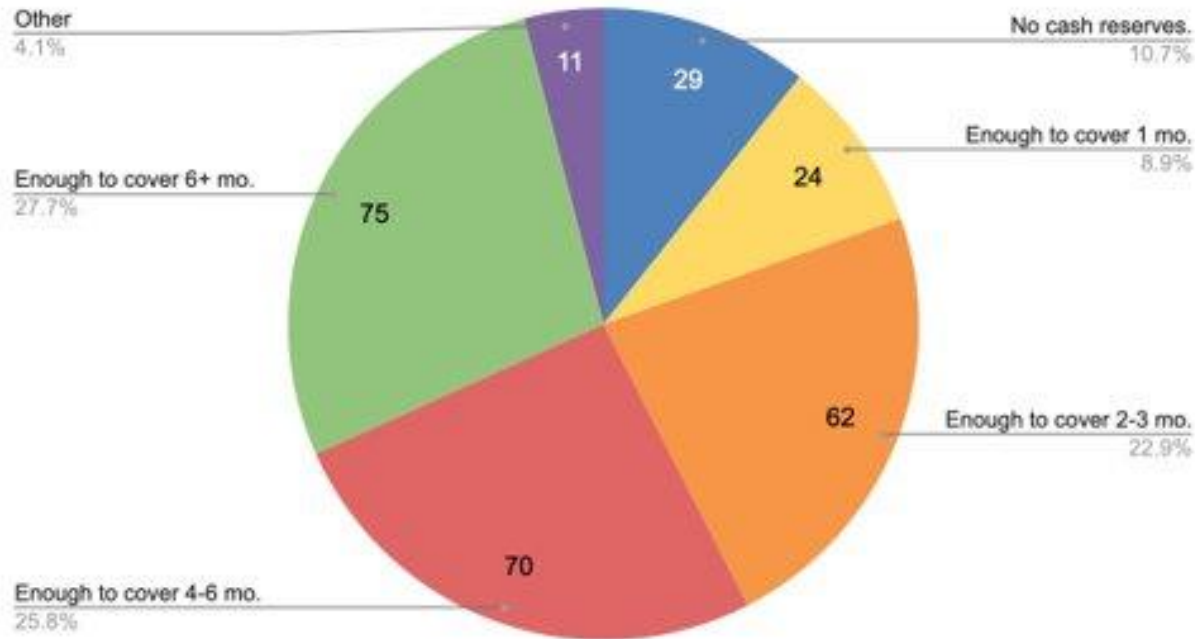
Revenue Diversification

Revenue Stream	N=283
Individual donations	20
Grants from private funders	15
State grants and contracts	10
Federal grants	10
Social enterprise or for-profit enterprise	4
Sponsorships	1
Investment income or endowment	1
Other fee for service	1

Most responding organizations had at least some diversification of revenue. However, the above organizations, accounting for about one quarter (23.0%) of the total, received almost all (75% or higher) of their revenue from one source.

Cash Reserves

How extensive are your organization's cash reserves (2023)? (n=279)



The number of organizations with over 4 months cash reserves declined by about 3% from last year. One in five nonprofits have 1 month or less of cash reserves.

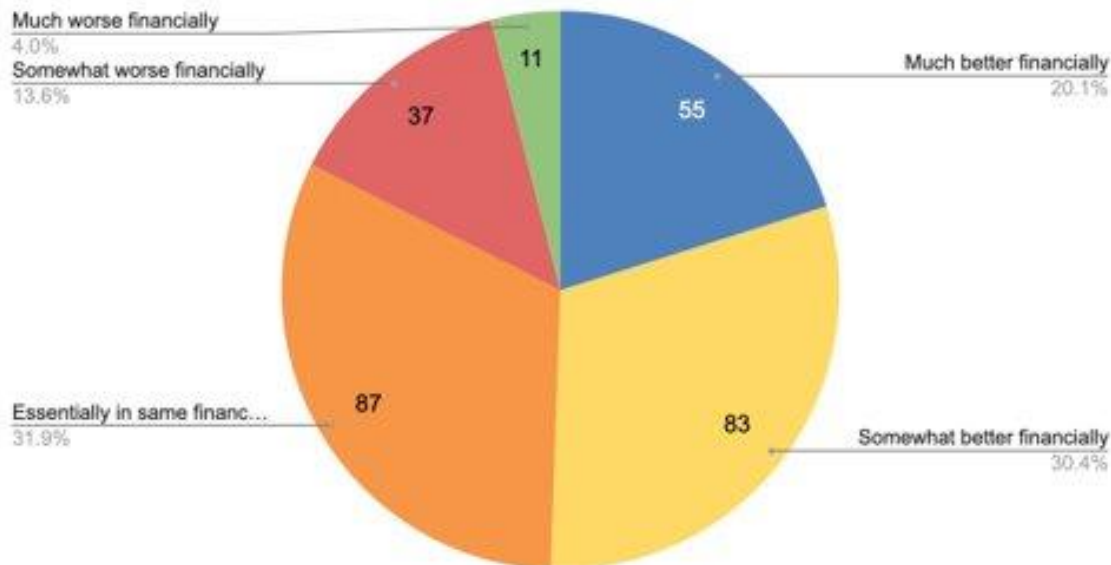
Impact of Inflation

Impact	N=276
Increased expenses	84.4%
Decreased individual giving	34.1%
Decreased purchases to cut costs	20.3%
Postponed hiring to cut costs	14.5%
Cancelled/reduced programs or services	13.8%
Funders have increased/adjusted grants	9.1%
Increased borrowing costs	8.3%
Reduced salaries or benefits to cut costs	5.8%

While 9.8% of responding organizations said that inflation had not impacted their work, most nonprofits have seen continued detrimental effects from inflation, with 84.4% reporting increased expenses, and 14% reporting that they had to cancel programs or services to cut costs. We also continue to see inflation affect revenue as well, with **34.1% reporting a decline in individual giving.**

Finances

How does your organization's overall financial standing compare with its status pre-pandemic (before March 2020)? (n=273)



It is very good news that about half of nonprofits say they are doing better financially than before the pandemic, but it should be noted that a significant number of organizations ramped up services and staffing during the pandemic to deal with the community need. They were able to do so with the influx of pandemic-related funding, and as that runs out, some organizations may struggle to sustain their growth without extensive fundraising planning.

Financial Support

What type of support would be valuable to your organization's financial management and sustainability? (n=251)

Support	N=251
Shared subscription services	50.6%
Backoffice support organization	46.2%
Pool of trained volunteers	42.6%
Collective buying for benefits and supplies	39.4%
Training on establishing endowments	31.5%
Training or mentoring in financial management	28.7%
Improved access to capital	27.5%

There is interest in shared purchasing (50.6% for shared subscription and 39.4% for collective buying and benefits), as well as backoffice support (46.2%), access to pro bono experts (42.6%) and training (31.5% and 28.7%). 27.5% wanted improved access to capital.

Fund Development



Fund Development

Activities	N=279
Apply for foundation or donor advised grants	89.2%
Fundraising appeal to donors	75.6%
Apply for corporate grants	62.0%
401Gives	61.6%
In-person fundraising events	59.1%
Apply for state/federal contracts, grants or Medicaid billing	55.9%
Apply for sponsorships	55.6%
Giving Tuesday effort	47.6%
Virtual fundraising – peer to peer, crowdfunding, etc.	30.5%
Planned giving	12.5%

More respondents applied for grants (89.2%) than engaged in fundraising appeals to their donors (75.6%) in the last year. Virtual fundraising has declined (30.5%) as the public health conditions have once again allowed for in person events (59.1%). Only 14% of respondents included planned giving activities in their fund development efforts, and only 6.1% have a social enterprise.

Fund Development Support

"Access to an affordable grant research database and a dedicated grant writer who isn't trying to juggle the role of marketing communications, board development, executive team management, with donor cultivation, maintaining community partnerships, annual fundraising and grant funding priorities."

"More time to write grants and fulfill reporting requirements"

"Need the communications capacity to support the fundraising capacity"

"Push notices when grants become available."

"Referrals from one foundation to another, and build connections from current funders to potential funders."

"We need a part-time grantwriter in order to train other members of our fundraising committee and build our capacity for grant applications in the future."

"Staffing capacity and technical support."

"A larger group of volunteers willing and able to learn the art of grant-writing and commit the time to the process and follow-through of the project."

"Operating support to fund staff to fundraise!"

"More program staff capacity to free up senior leadership staff to devote to fundraising and donor development activities and not involved in daily operational activities."

"Simplified applications. Not hunting for opportunities on multiple state/city sites, etc."

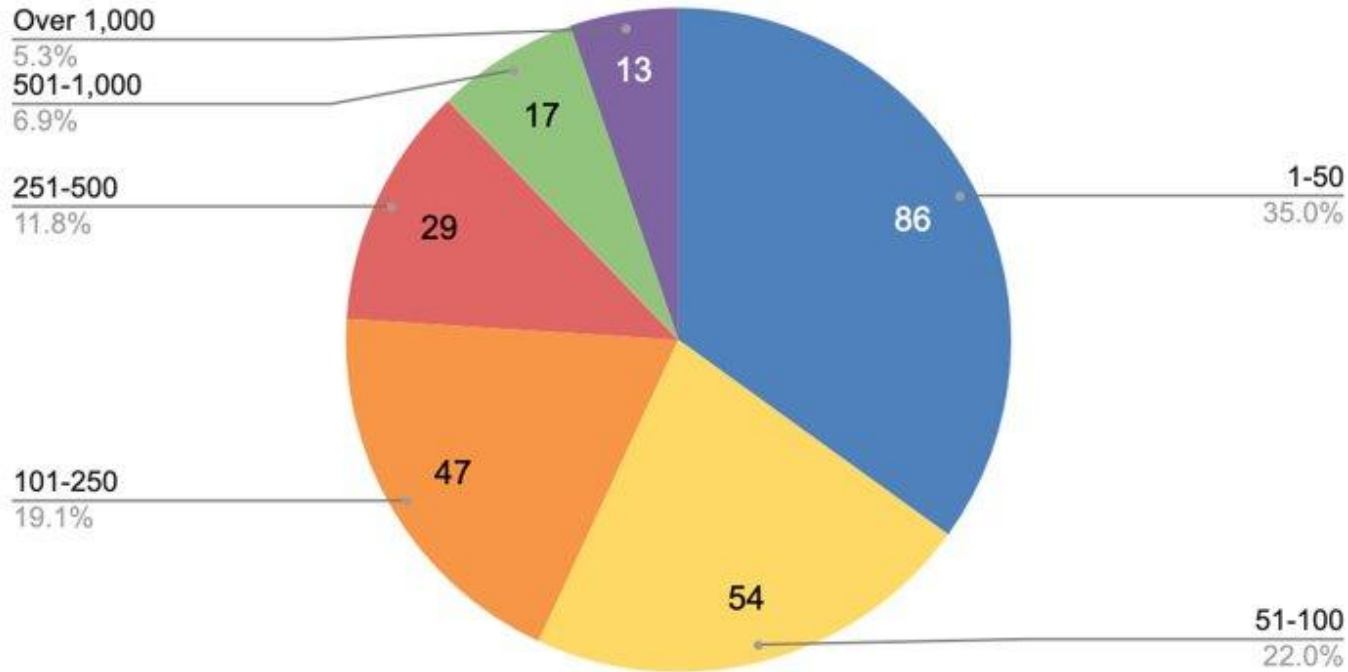
"Help with advice to diversify income sources -- increased donations, corporate sponsors"

"We need to attract additional board members with connections to other communities or financial institutions interested in sponsoring our programs, both educational and for general audience."

"More time!"

Donor Base

In your last fiscal/budget year, how many individual donors gave to support your organization? (n=246)



The majority of responding organizations (57.0%) have fewer than 100 individual donors.

Corporate Partnerships

Activity	
Received in-kind donations from a business	76.3%
Received grant(s) or monetary donations	69.1%
Received event or program sponsorship	64.2%
Hosted group of business volunteers for project(s)	33.3%
Appointed Board member(s) from local businesses	32.9%
Business(es) hosted supply drive	23.7%
Coordinated volunteer project at business site	19.7%
Collaborated with business volunteer(s) on pro bono/skill-based project	15.7%

There is widespread engagement of nonprofits with local businesses. Three-quarters (76.3%) of responding organizations had received in-kind donations, and more than two-thirds received funding from companies (69.1% received a donation and 64.2% received event sponsorship). About one-third had engaged business volunteers in a project (33.3%) or as a Board member (32.9%).

Corporate Support

"Would love to learn about how to create cause-related marketing partnerships and be introduced to companies that are interested in this type of relationship."

"Having a volunteer coordinator that could work with corporate partners to develop meaningful programs."

"Enforcement of Community Reinvestment Act, and not just for companies advancing their own sales missions through our clients but meeting their real needs. For example, attending a class on how to open a bank account [is not helpful] when you are hungry, homeless, and/or working through extensive trauma."

"I think that corporate partners need to understand that hosting volunteers often incurs significant labor costs for non-profits. The current system where a non-profit hosts a corporate volunteer group with the hopes of then getting financial consideration such as a grant or sponsorship feels a little unfair from the non-profit side."

"Information about corporate giving programs in the area of our work."

"How to better communicate how our mission and goals can connect with their corporate goals."

"Several businesses have offered volunteers, but failed to follow through."

"Corporate fair for nonprofits."

"Annual round table discussions to meet with community relationship representatives, learn about their giving preferences, and to discuss some of the issues that will have been raised by survey participants, so that corporate and grant funders can adjust their giving guidelines, to better meet the needs of the communities they serve."

"Board members from companies."

"We need more staffing for reaching out to businesses, PR/Marketing materials for outreach, and we need more space to be able to have more volunteer groups in."

Government Funding Issues

"Applying for federal and state funding tends to be an incredibly tedious and highly competitive process. Management of such grants also tend to be incredibly tedious and draining so we prefer not to apply in order to not deal with the hassle."

"We have recently applied to the NEA for funding.... because we hired a grant writer. The application process is a bear! Someone to assist with the online portals would be helpful!"

"Federal portal and process is overwhelming and confusing for anyone without extensive training and expertise. State funding when received through School Districts or Town is often slow to reach us to complete project/program that we are sub-contracted for."

"Challenges with reporting systems– no increase in award amounts - higher workload demands, need consistent level funding, outcome measurements are unattainable for our population and there is no help in finding alternate ways to measure."

"Our back room support is non existent. Staff capacity to manage and implement grants government contracts are terrifying and cumbersome. We could use a guide to help us through the process."

"We have not yet completed application for Medicaid billing for home stabilization because the front line staff we have who are providing eligible case management activities do not have the current minimum education requirements. We have been told that RI is seeking to make a change to this in the state plan with CMS and our current staff should be approved as eligible staff by Jan 2024."

"Unfair metrics on state level (i.e. not taking into consideration prior experience, rating only on technical writing)"

"Cumbersome reporting process on outdated tech platforms. Not easy to access funds even after receiving award."

Government Funding Issues

"All of it all the assistance we could possibly get in order to apply and hopefully ensure that we receive funding actually do programs in their entirety. For example, if I apply for \$10,000 please don't give me \$4000 and expect for me to do a \$10,000 project with it."

"We could benefit from support learning if we qualify for Medicaid billing. Also, we don't learn about all state opportunities."

"We will apply for NEA funding for the first time in 2024. The application is highly technical, and a 'coach' or advisor to walk us through the process would be helpful. If we were to receive funding, the report process is daunting, and we would welcome a mentor/tutor to walk us through."

"Government pays very slow. . .so cash flow issues."

"Application, implementation, and reporting are all manageable. Delayed payments, significant year-over-year cuts to available funding for the same amounts and types of services are not. The welfare state is expensive but supports are necessary. The local, state, and federal governments need to provide better resources."

"REPORTING IS A MAJOR ISSUE."

"Late payments, as a small BIPOC led organization we cannot function through reimbursement practices. That is a barrier."

"Navigating the rules, computer passwords, getting access, getting codes, ID numbers, etc."

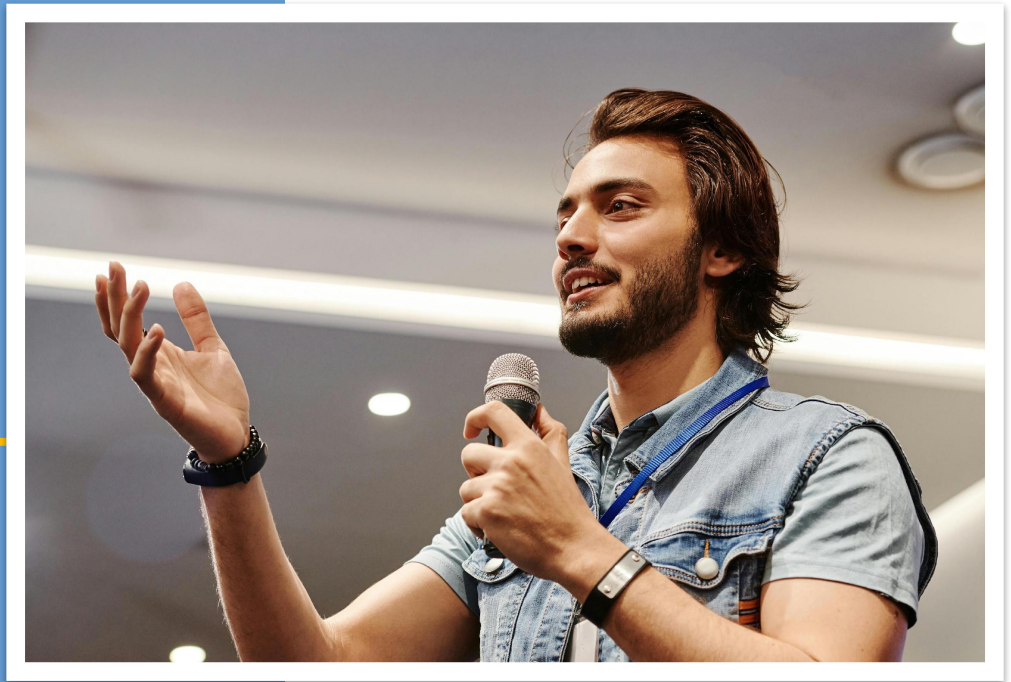
"We filled out a federal grant app for the first time this year- lots of 'technical jargon'/acronyms that needed to be looked up and understood. Getting someone knowledgeable to review our app prior to submission would have been helpful."

"Seed money for reimbursable grants."

"We receive a relatively small federal grant with very high reporting requirements."

"The data collection is a big lift. Our IT systems do not easily capture all that is needed so we have some manual lifts to do."

Policy and Advocacy



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Policy and Advocacy

Activity	N=209
Advocacy to state legislators about state legislation	72.2%
Advocacy to Congressional delegation about federal legislation, budget or earmarks	62.7%
Collaborated with state agencies/departments on program or policy initiatives	60.1%
Advocacy to state legislators about state budgeting	57.4%
Submitted feedback about federal or state regulations or program implementation	52.6%
Mobilized stakeholders to advocate for legislation, policy, or funding	51.7%
Advocacy to state executive branch about state budgeting	43.1%

72.2% of respondents said that they had advocated around state legislation and almost two-thirds said that they had collaborated with state agencies on program or policy initiatives.

Collective Advocacy



Which issue areas, if any, are you interested in learning more about and/or joining with other nonprofits to advocate for? (n=223)

Issue	N=223
Racial equity	52.5%
Education	49.3%
Workforce development	37.2%
Housing	36.3%
Federal and state contracting/grant improvements	35.0%
Childcare	28.3%
Climate	26.0%

There is widespread interest in learning more about issues and the potential of collective advocacy with other Rhode Island nonprofits, particularly around racial equity, education, workforce development, housing, federal and state grant/contracting improvements.

Advocacy Support

"Beginner breakdown of what it means, guidance and support through process"

"We would need a volunteer manager to engage our families, educate them about issues that affect their child's education and their family's well-being, and lead concrete activities with simple to implement action steps so that people feel like they're doing something deliberate and helpful rather than just talking about issues. For example - educate and answer questions about a specific bill and ask them to sign a letter to their district rep or state legislator about that topic before they leave the meeting."

"Discretionary funding to cover staff time for direct lobbying in addition to policy advocacy activities; federal and state funding prohibits this type of work, and funding it with donations is challenging."

"We would need more volunteers or someone available to do so. We do not have the bandwidth right now."

"We would need clarity that we are able to advocate without violating our bylaws or 501c3 status."

"Someone asking us to join. No bandwidth to research and know to join. If asked, will engage."

"Communications around advocacy is an unfunded expense and capacity for this work is limited."

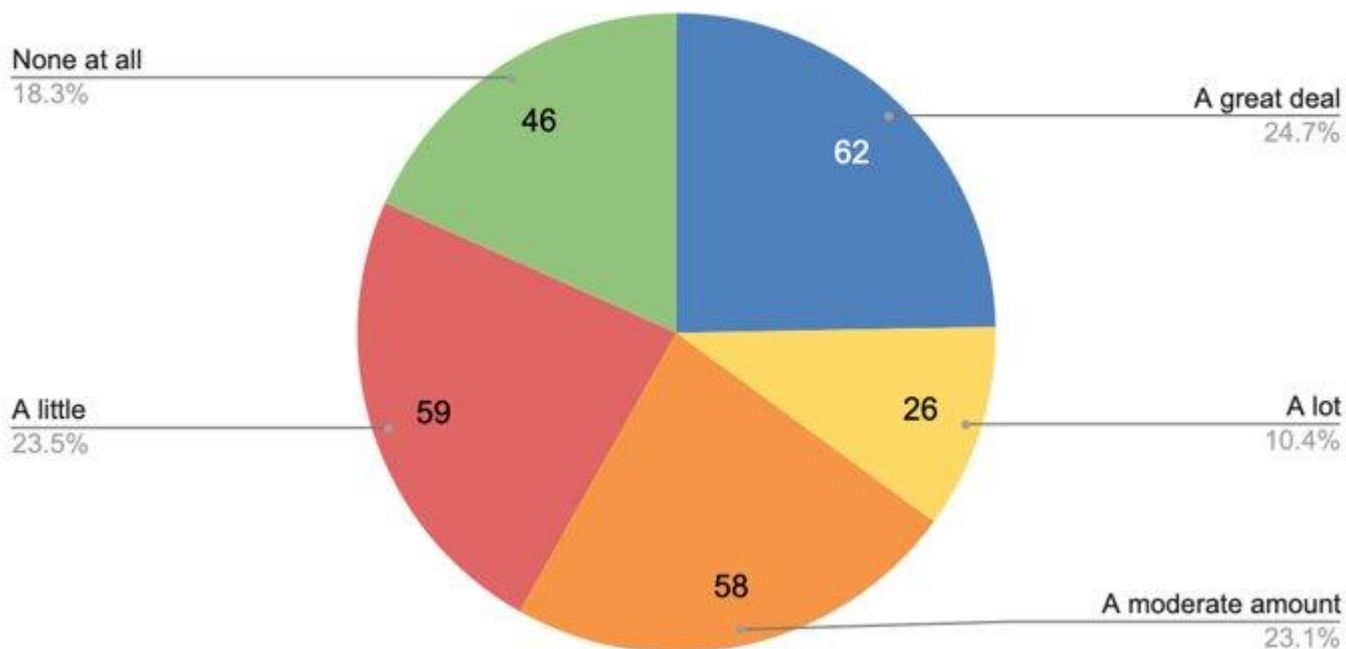
"Share opportunities with me and make it "easy" to get involved."

"Having a plan for a campaign and knowing where I can best "plug" in."

"Ample advance notice and really easy ways to engage. It's so hard to step out of our daily routine and get to the state house otherwise."

Civic Health

To what extent does your organization orient its mission and activities towards impacting civic health in Rhode Island? (n=251)



For more information on Civic Health in Rhode Island, please see the *Rhode Island Civic Health Index* developed by the Rhode Island Council for the Humanities.

Racial Equity



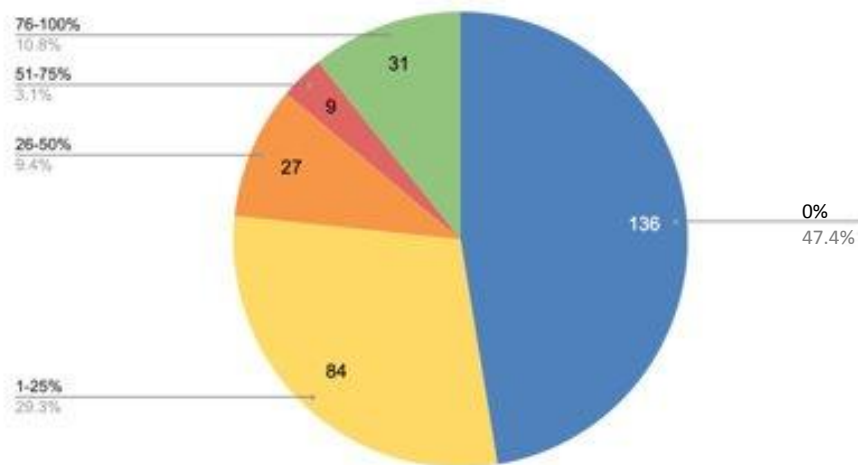
Leadership Diversity

Executive Director	N=287
Woman	63.1%
Black, Indigenous, Person of Color	10.7%
LGBTQIA	4.9%
Person with a Disability	1.8%
Veteran	.89%
Multiple/Other	18.7%

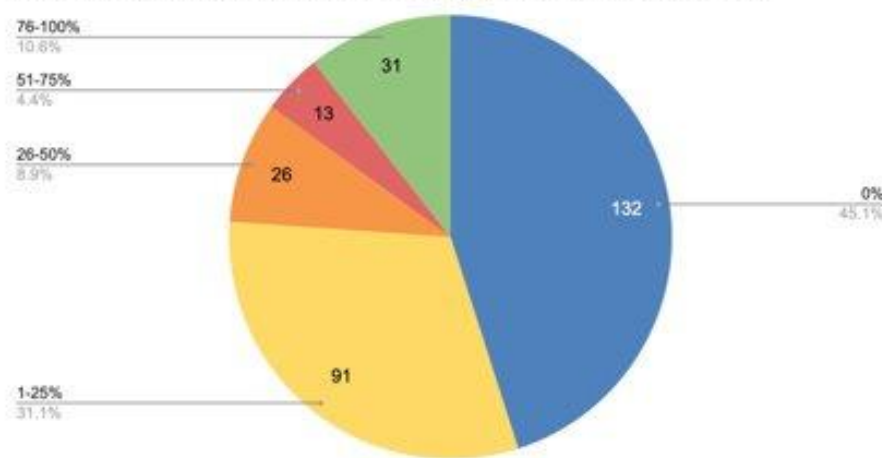
This question about Executive Directors was not asked in previous surveys, but shows a racial leadership gap. People of color make up 17.2% of Rhode Island's population, almost twice the rate of respondent organization leadership.

Leadership Team Diversity

What percentage of your organization's senior leadership consisted of Black, indigenous and people of color (BIPOC) in 2022? (n=294)



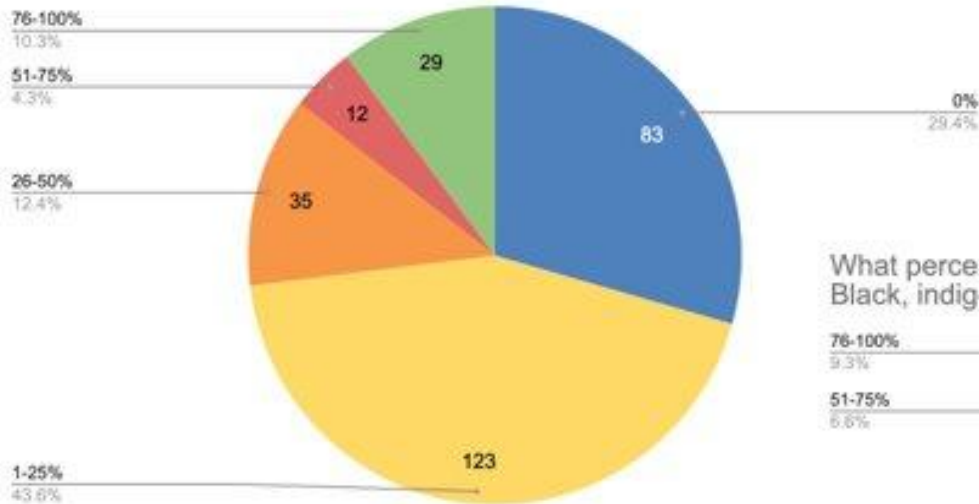
What percentage of your organization's senior leadership consisted of Black, indigenous and people of color (BIPOC) in 2023? (n=294)



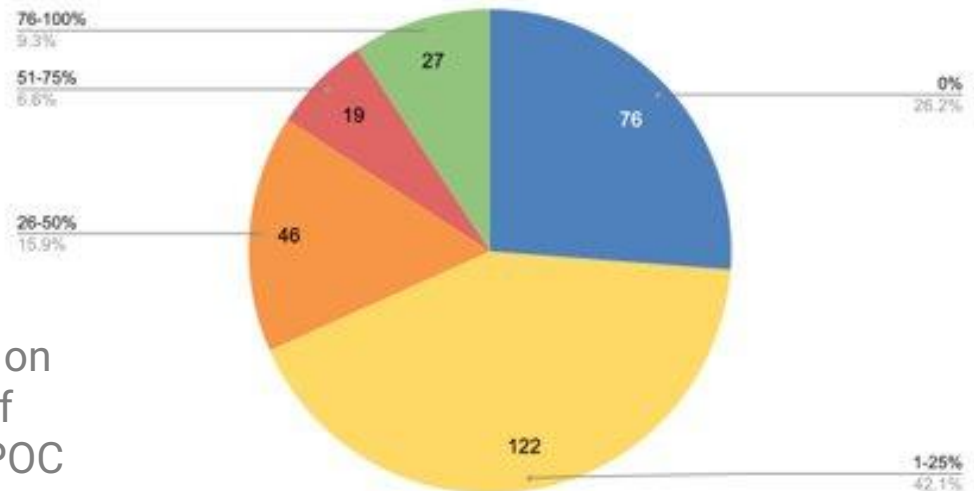
Diversity of senior leadership has remained relatively steady in responding organizations from 2022 to 2023. **Half of the responding organizations have no people of color in senior leadership.**

Governance

What percentage of your organization's Board of Directors consisted of Black, indigenous and people of color (BIPOC) in 2022? (n=297)



What percentage of your organization's Board of Directors consisted of Black, indigenous and people of color (BIPOC) in 2023? (n=297)



There has been some positive movement on diversifying nonprofit Boards, but 26.2% of responding organizations still have no BIPOC Board members.

JEDI/DEI Support

"Support for our annual Undoing Racism trainings that we're trying to open up to our communities/participants. For funders to not move away from this work."

"An opportunity to post board opportunities on a site that engages BIPOC individuals who are interested in board service."

"Resources on how to address anti-Blackness within the nonprofit sector, how to address anti-Blackness within an abolitionist organization, how to talk about abolition and nonprofits, how to address the contradictions that exist within nonprofits"

"Funding to support the DEI work/training needed to take our organization to the next level. Additional staffing to coordinate these efforts - and staffing to lead the recruitment/support efforts for leaders and staff of color."

"We need to take more time to make the work around racial equity more deliberative; as we get overwhelmed with day-to-day demands, the process isn't as smooth or complete as it should be."

"Actually, it is hard to do diversity equity and inclusion work when organizations, usually white lead, pretend, as if they are interested in being diverse and inclusive when in actuality, it is just a box that they want to check. Just wasting our time when we spend a lot of quality time, working with them, only for them to now not retain our services after stringing us along for a long period of time. As a small grassroots organization, we cannot afford this financially. The time we spend wasting with organizations that are not serious about DEI work we could be using that time with organizations that are serious. Thus the financial gap."

"One of the challenges is recognizing that part of the issue is the low wages in the non profit world.... as an equity/justice issue"

"Workforce development in local colleges and universities to expand BIPOC clinical employee candidates"

JEDI/DEI Support

"Resources, DEIB work is expensive. We have invested 75K in this work and we are just scratching the surface."

"Our organization could use some outside support in evaluating job functions and then considering where to find BIPOC candidates to "fill the roles, rather than relying on specific degrees."

"Opportunities for BIPOC staff to meet with and learn from BIPOC staff at other organizations – affinity groups; support for development of formal policies to support internal racial equity work"

"We would be interested in the JEDI training to bring the organization's board and team members to an understanding of the agency's racial equity and racial justice practices."

"Training and exposure to excellent models of racial equity in practice in organizations, that center humanity and lift up the human spirit."

"We are interested in learning about national best practices as well as working with other local organizations that are dealing with the same local culture as our organization"

Climate



Climate and Environment

Activity	N=252
Not currently implementing climate/environmental activities	41.7%
Utilization of green energy	24.2%
Providing climate/environmental programming	23.0%
Prioritization of sustainable vendors/products	17.9%
Advocacy or support for affected communities/people	17.0%
Sustainability policy for decision making	14.7%
Energy efficient facilities	12.7%
Legislative advocacy for environment and climate change	11.5%
Climate resilient facilities	6.7%

41.7% of organizations said they are not doing anything related to climate change or environmental issues, even though **only 12.7% are working in energy efficient facilities**, which results in increased operating costs. There were a number of organizations that expressed interest in solar energy but were in search of additional funding.

Climate and Environment

"Funding to modify and improve buildings to be climate resilient."

"Support with working with our property manager/landlord on environmental improvements. Support with developing environmental policies that can be implemented at little to no cost. Ideas/collaborations for incorporating climate change issues into education-related youth organizing"

"Would love to be able to do more; we recycle, but rent space so we have no control over the building."

"Engineering report on energy efficiency to create an action plan."

"Time/convening with funders and others working in these areas, opportunities to get funding and collaborate with others across sectors who are working on same issues. 1) green audit of our programs, client needs, infrastructure; 2) funding to address audit needs; 3) project management to implement greening needs."

"While agreeing with the need to do more related to climate change, we do not have the staff to give the issue the needed attention."

"Easy access to grants or capital for nonprofits to go solar"

"We need fully training on understanding these issues and what we can do to implement."

"Funding opportunities for transitioning to green energy "

"Having access to relevant and user friendly, culturally appropriate materials and hands on resources"

"Education, climate experts to tell us about state and regional environmental concerns."

"More public awareness of how climate change will impact the poor- the inequities"

Accessibility



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Disability Access

Activity	N=257
Programming for, by, or with people with disabilities	50.2%
Accessibility information on website	23.0%
Identified accessibility point person	19.8%
Board approved access/accessibility statement	15.6%
Access advisory committee comprised of people with disabilities	3.5%
None of the above	22.2%

An increasing number of organizations responded that they have developed programming for, by or with people with disabilities, but **almost one in four respondents (22.2%) are not currently working on disability issues at all.**

Many nonprofits are located in facilities that are not fully ADA accessible. This is particularly an issue for those who rent their facilities, and the landlord is not receptive to renovations.

Disability Access Support

"Access to more grants for ADA physical improvements; funding; helpful auditing for ADA improvements"

"Grant funding for a new stair lift or elevator installation that does not require building ownership."

"Better review of our website accessibility, access to interpreters and translators."

"We only lease our growing spaces so the owners would need to make them accessible... Website would need funding for an accessibility review."

"A ramp for our steps (two). Perhaps an audit that shows us what we can do specifically to be more accessible as an organization."

"We are constructing a new building that will be fully accessible. But we are needing to implement policies beyond the structure of the building. We will need some guidance on how to approach the creation of these policies/statement."

"Small grants for easy upgrades like automatic doors."

"More funding to find a better space"

"We have an old building. Some updates are not possible, but some are just expensive. Funding to do what we can would be helpful. Having a free, non-punitive assessment of our facilities' accessibility would be helpful."

"Financial supports for improvements to facilities and added accessibility services such as ASL interpretation."

"Money. It's incredibly expensive to implement the accessibility changes we need to implement. We have identified the changes we'd like to implement, but it will take us years, given the financial constraints."

Capacity Building



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External Capacity

Professional Services	N=238
Accounting/bookkeeping	53.4%
Human resources/payroll	43.7%
IT and cybersecurity	39.1%
Grantwriting	31.5%
Communications/marketing	24.8%
Benefits administration	23.5%
Fund development	21.0%
Database management	18.5%
Facilities monitoring and security	17.2%
Facilities management	12.6%

Less than half of respondents (46.6%) currently or plan to keep the accounting function in-house. Similarly, approximately 40% of respondents currently or plan to outsource HR (43.7%) and IT functions (39.1%) in the next 24 months.

Capacity Building

Potential Service	N=262
Hub for data and research	90.0%
Professional development/leadership development	89.3%
Year round searchable public online giving platform	90.5%
Centralized calendar for nonprofit events	83.4%
Cohort programs for nonprofit leaders and aspiring leaders	83.2%
Peer networking and support	80.2%
"Job alike" gatherings	78.6%

With the anticipated launch of the Alliance for Nonprofit Impact, respondents were asked to rate the value of potential programs and services.

Nonprofits overwhelmingly rated these planned activities as valuable or extremely valuable, led by data and research at 90% and professional and leadership development opportunities at 89.3% respondents rating the offering as valuable or extremely valuable.

Takeaways



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Community Need

- Community needs remain higher than pre-pandemic.
- Many nonprofits added additional services during the pandemic, which they are continuing. They also have continued virtual programming while reinstating in-person work. This has resulted in an increased workload, even as pandemic funding dries up.

Moving RI Nonprofits Forward

- ❑ **Significant post-pandemic investment in safety net programs and ongoing nonprofit capacity is needed.**

Staffing

- Nonprofits continue to experience significant hiring, retention and burnout issues, with extended vacancies that place more burden on remaining staff.
- Salary and benefit levels make recruitment and retention more difficult.
- There are too few trained workers for some types of positions, and it is extremely challenging to find bilingual staff for clinical and technical positions.
- Staff turnover and leadership transitions have resulted in loss of institutional knowledge and expertise.

Moving RI Nonprofits Forward

- ❑ Significant investment in workforce pipelines and leadership development are necessary to ensure the continuity of essential programs and services.
- ❑ Supports need to be developed to help nonprofit staff deal with stressful work and secondary trauma.
- ❑ State contracts should be updated to address below-market wages.

Finances

- Operating revenue and surplus income is declining as pandemic-specific funding ends. Many nonprofits expanded services and added staff during the pandemic, and will need to find new sources of revenue. This is especially concerning because the need in the community remains higher than pre-pandemic, so eliminating services will be difficult.
- The number of organizations with at least 4 months of cash reserves has declined from 2022. Limited cash reserves can also prevent organizations from applying for government and philanthropic funding that pays on a reimbursement basis.
- The majority of nonprofits currently, or plan to, outsource accounting/bookkeeping services, and there is a limited pool of qualified professionals in Rhode Island. This can also affect their ability to find an auditor if they are required to do so.

Moving RI Nonprofits Forward

- ❑ Nonprofits could benefit from shared purchasing and subscription services, as well as shared backoffice support.
- ❑ There is a need for more trained financial volunteers, to serve on Boards and in treasurer roles, as well as to mentor leaders on best practices in nonprofit financial management.



Fund Development

- More nonprofits applied for grants than implemented donor appeals, which is concerning since most organizations have a very limited donor base of less than 100 individual donors. It is important for nonprofits to expand their network of individual donors to provide additional sustainability.
- Smaller organizations can struggle to expand their fund development activities and diversify revenue because of limited staff time, limited access to funders, and lack of experience with fundraising strategy.
- Nonprofits struggle with the application and reporting processes for government grants, which limits the resources available to the organizations and to Rhode Island communities.

Moving RI Nonprofits Forward

- ❑ Rhode Island ranks among the least charitable states in the nation, based on individual charitable giving. Growing individual giving is necessary for the growth and sustainability of nonprofits and the sector as a whole.
- ❑ Supports need to be developed to help prepare nonprofits to apply for government grants and to build the infrastructure necessary for grant management and reporting. Advocacy is also necessary to push for more streamlined government grantmaking, and address equity issues in the reimbursement model.

Policy and Advocacy

- Almost three-quarters of respondents had advocated for legislation on the state level, but many said that it is difficult to find staff time and bandwidth to engage in advocacy. It can also be more challenging to engage Board members and clients/participants, so it is often only senior staff that get involved in advocacy.
- Some respondents need training on permissible advocacy activities, and many requested easy action steps and notifications since they are unable to track relevant legislation.
- There is interest in advocacy efforts around policies affecting the nonprofit sector, as well as issues such as racial equity, education and federal and state contracting improvements.

Moving RI Nonprofits Forward

- ❑ Rhode Island nonprofits are interested in advocacy, but need training on allowable activities.
- ❑ Most organizations lack the staff bandwidth to research issues and track legislation, so they need support such as advocacy alerts and easy action steps.

Racial Equity

- There is increased awareness around justice, equity, diversity and inclusion (JEDI) issues, and more organizations are providing staff and Board training, but it can be prohibitively expensive for smaller organizations.
- There is a racial leadership gap -- while almost 11% of responding organizations had leaders of color, this is significantly below the state demographics of 17.2% residents of color.
- Almost half of organizations had no people of color in senior leadership, and one-quarter of nonprofit Boards had no BIPOC representation.

Moving RI Nonprofits Forward

- ❑ **Nonprofits need additional recruitment and retention efforts directed at BIPOC and bilingual staff and Board members, and additional investments are needed in workforce and leadership pipelines that are accessible to BIPOC and bilingual Rhode Islanders.**
- ❑ **Additional funding is necessary for nonprofits to be able to offer high quality JEDI training for staff and Board members.**

Climate and Accessibility

- A significant number of nonprofits are not currently working on either climate-related activities, or disability-related issues.
- Training and audits of climate upgrades and ADA accessibility changes are needed, as well as funding for renovations and upgrades.
- Many nonprofits regard climate as beyond the scope of their mission, instead of recognizing the ways that energy efficiency and climate resilience can reduce costs and ensure sustainability.
- Nonprofits that rent their facilities are at the mercy of their landlords when it comes to climate and accessibility improvements.

Moving RI Nonprofits Forward

- ❑ Nonprofits need support in applying for new federal funds for climate resilience and energy efficiency.
- ❑ There is also a need for pro bono expertise in renovation, design, and capital improvements.

The 2023 RI Nonprofit Survey
is the fourth annual statewide survey.

It was joint effort by
Grantmakers Council of Rhode Island
and
United Way of Rhode Island.

