



M·J·Murdock  
Charitable Trust

# PACIFIC NORTHWEST NONPROFIT SURVEY

M.J. Murdock Charitable Trust  
Nonprofit Support Organizations  
Aggregated Results 2013



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# INTRODUCTION & SURVEY APPROACH

For five years, beginning in 2008, the M.J. Murdock Charitable Trust has supported five key capacity building organizations serving nonprofits in the Pacific Northwest:

- Foraker Group in Alaska
- Idaho Nonprofit Center
- Montana Nonprofit Association
- The Nonprofit Association of Oregon
- The Nonprofit Center in Washington (funded 2008-2010)



The overall goal of this five-year initiative has been to build the capacity of these statewide organizations so that they, in turn, are better positioned to strengthen the nonprofits within their communities. For the last four years, TCC Group has been responsible for assessing and documenting progress in achieving the goals of the initiative. To that end, one of the tools used to facilitate this process has been a survey of nonprofit groups.

TCC, in collaboration with the statewide organizations, developed a base survey instrument that the groups were able to disseminate on their own. The statewide groups were asked to distribute the survey widely with the understanding that they would use their membership as a base.

This is the second year that the survey was utilized and there was broad buy-in to the process with all five statewide organizations completing data collection at the same time. However, unlike the previous year, this year each statewide group was able to make slight adjustments to the survey. In addition, they were responsible for their own data collection, as opposed to use of a single survey and single point of data collection, which was previously handled by the Montana Nonprofit Association.

This report includes aggregated results from the five independent surveys, including comparisons to 2012 results wherever possible. We have provided both individual state data as well as total results. Comparisons between states and against the 2012 findings must be made with extreme caution as the samples differ markedly.

Once the data analysis of the survey data was completed, a draft report was prepared and semi-structured interviews were completed with representatives from each of the five statewide organizations to further interpret the findings. Guiding questions for these interviews were:

1. What findings, if any, surprise you?
2. What are the two or three major implications of the findings for your work?
3. What findings, if any, should receive more attention in the draft?  
What have we left out?
4. What conclusions or interpretations, if any, did we get wrong?  
What is inaccurate?
5. What suggestions do you have for continuing this work into the future?

We have integrated findings from these interviews into this report, particularly in the *Implications* section.

# SURVEY SAMPLE

The cohort members did not use the same strategy for collecting survey data:

- Foraker Group distributed the survey to its entire database of 1,200 current and former partners.
- Idaho Nonprofit Center distributed the survey to its total database of 3,176 nonprofit organizations.
- Montana Nonprofit Association distributed the survey to approximately 3,000 nonprofits.
- The Nonprofit Association of Oregon used multiple means of making nonprofits aware of the survey including links in their email newsletter, an email to 8,060 addresses in its database, and a posting on its website.
- Washington Nonprofits distributed the survey to all 48,000 tax-exempt nonprofits registered with the Secretary of State.

The large number of survey recipients in Washington led to a higher number of responses from this state than from others in the cohort. As a result, Washington respondents comprise nearly 60% of the 2013 survey sample; the remaining 40% is relatively evenly distributed among the other four states (see Table 1 and Figure 1).

Washington’s large data set skews the overall results, but the report provides cross-state comparisons to mitigate that influence. Finally, Washington state data was not collected for the 2012 survey because the organization was just getting off the ground that year.

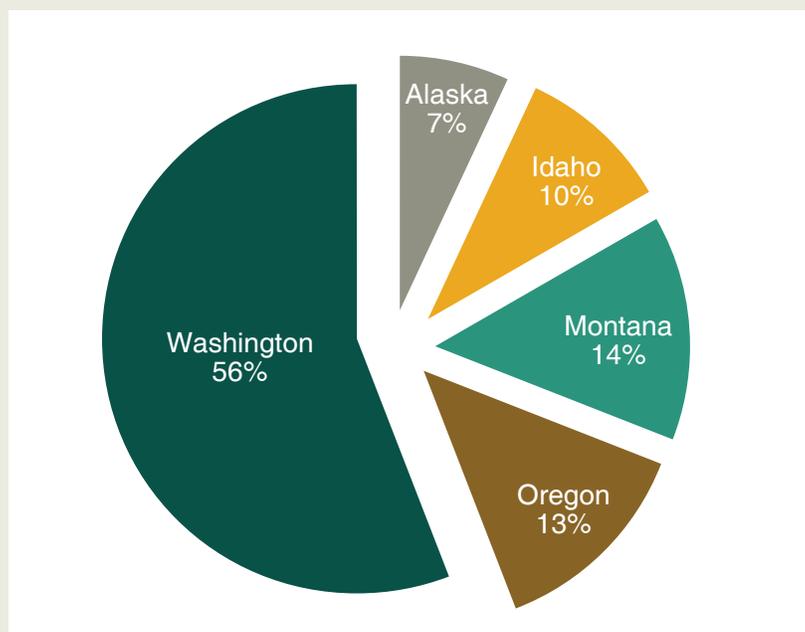
TABLE 1. SAMPLE SUMMARY

STATES	2012 NUMBER	PERCENTAGE	STATES	2013 NUMBER	PERCENTAGE
Alaska	90	18%	Alaska	135	7%
Idaho	184	36%	Idaho	189	10%
Montana	143	28%	Montana	277	14%
Oregon	89	18%	Oregon	256	13%
Washington	0	--	Washington	1085	56%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>506</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1942</b>	<b>100%</b>

The number of survey respondents in 2013 shows a significant increase over 2012, even when accounting for the impact of Washington state. The number of respondents among the four states participating in 2012 was 506 and that same cohort had 852 respondents in 2013, an increase of 68%.

Individual states showed a significant uptick in respondents, nearly 100% in Montana and over 200% in Oregon. This suggests the cohort members improved their ability to reach constituents and convince them to take the time to complete the survey. It may also demonstrate greater “ownership” of the survey process on the part of cohort members that bodes well for the future of this survey.

FIGURE 1. STATEWIDE DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS



# ORGANIZATION BUDGET

Table 2 presents budgets for respondents in each state. Overall, the largest category of organizations responding to the survey is small groups – those with budgets under \$500K. Each of the participating state associations confirms that the nonprofit sector in their individual state conforms to the national profile where 75% of public charities have budgets under \$500,000 while 25% have budgets in excess of \$5M.<sup>1</sup> Thus, the sample of respondents for this survey does not necessarily reflect the general population of nonprofits in the states, with the exception of Washington.

TABLE 2. BUDGET DISTRIBUTION BY STATE

ORGANIZATION BUDGET	ALASKA (N=135)	WASHINGTON (N=1037)	OREGON (N=254)	IDAHO (N=189)	MONTANA (N=277)
<\$500K	37%	82%	49%	67%	55%
\$500K-\$1M	19%	9%	11%	9%	14%
\$1M-\$2M	13%	5%	17%	11%	10%
\$2M-\$4.9M	12%	4%	13%	7%	12%
\$5M+	19%	0	10%	6%	9%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

While acknowledging that fewer of the smaller nonprofits in each state except Washington responded to this survey, the predominance of small groups in this analysis is nonetheless significant because it frames all other findings. Specifically, smaller grassroots organizations tend to be more financially stressed and must focus on maintaining basic operations in their daily work often at the expense of expanding programs to meet demand, building reserves, and, taking on the additional requirements of engaging in collaborations or active policy work.

In fact, Table 3 underscores the sensitive financial state for many of these groups: in every state, at least 50% of respondents have less than three months of operating reserve. Alaska has the fewest number of organizations with “no reserve” while Washington has the highest. This is not surprising given that nearly half of Alaska’s respondents have budgets of more than \$1M while 91% of Washington’s respondents have budgets less than \$500,000 and larger organizations have greater capacity to build reserves. Collectively, the cohort’s constituents are in a modestly better position than nonprofits nationally where 56% had less than three months of operating reserve in 2013.<sup>2</sup>

TABLE 3. RESERVE LEVELS BY STATE

ORGANIZATION BUDGET	ALASKA (N=102)	WASHINGTON (N=930)	OREGON (N=230)	IDAHO (N=181)	MONTANA (N=202)
No Reserve	10%	24%	18%	19%	13%
1-3 Months	45%	31%	38%	36%	37%
4-12 Months	34%	33%	32%	33%	38%
12 Months +	11%	12%	12%	12%	12%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

1 Nonprofit Almanac 2012, Prepared by National Center for Charitable Statistics and published by the Urban Institute.

2 Nonprofit Finance Fund “2013 State of the Sector Survey,” [www.nonprofitfinancefund.org](http://www.nonprofitfinancefund.org)

# REVENUE & INCOME DIVERSITY

Diversity of revenue sources, and the presence of earned income, is a key indicator of a nonprofit organization's health. Among the nonprofits surveyed, Table 4 shows that the top three sources of revenue across all states were earned income, individual giving and government grants (similar to the 2012 survey). The predominance of earned income is consistent with national findings.<sup>3</sup> The revenue sources that consistently ranked in the bottom three include bequests, investments, gaming and corporations.

TABLE 4. RANKING OF REVENUE SOURCES

ALASKA (N=102)	WASHINGTON (N=930)	OREGON (N=230)	IDAHO (N=181)	MONTANA (N=202)
Earned Income	Earned Income	Earned Income	State/Fed Grants	Earned Income
Special Events	Individual Giving	State/Fed Grants	Earned Income	Individual Giving
State/Fed Grants	State/Fed Grants	Foundations	Individual Giving	State/Fed Grants
Gaming	Special Events	Individual Giving	Special Events	Local Gov't Grants
Foundations	Foundations	Special Events	Foundations	Special Events
Corporations	Local Gov't Grants	Local Gov't Grants	Corporations	Foundations
Investments	Corporations	Gaming	Local Gov't Grants	Bequests
Local Gov't Grants	Gaming	Corporations	Investments	Corporations
Individual Giving	Bequests	Bequests	Gaming	Gaming
Bequests	Investments	Investments*	Bequests	Investments*

\*Denotes a revenue category not included in the survey instrument.

It is interesting to note that foundation funding falls right in the middle of the revenue mix for all five states suggesting that while many nonprofits may receive foundation support, it comprises a limited portion of an organization’s contributed revenue.<sup>4</sup>

The low ranking for bequests, with the exception of Montana which has a charitable endowment tax credit, is not surprising given that very few nonprofits, even the largest, have planned giving fully integrated into their development programs.

The relatively high ranking of various government funding sources among the respondents is consistent with national survey findings where 87% of nonprofits had government contracts or grants. However, it does raise questions about organizational stability and sustainability. It is well known that government is an increasingly unreliable source of funding given the recent sequestration combined with ongoing reductions in federal, state and local funding since the recession in 2008. Over the past five years, federal employment has reached an historic low and state/local government contributions to GDP growth is still dragging on the economy.<sup>5</sup>

Funding sources should be evaluated for both their reliability and the autonomy they offer nonprofits. An article by Jon Pratt in *Nonprofit Quarterly*<sup>6</sup> in which nine common funding sources were rated for reliability and autonomy, concluded that government contracts and grants offered recipients low to medium reliability and low autonomy while individual donors, endowments and fee for service all provided high reliability and high autonomy. This suggests that helping their constituents identify the “right mix” of financial resources to thrive and be effective is an important role for the cohort members.

3 Nonprofit Almanac 2012, Prepared by National Center for Charitable Statistics and published by the Urban Institute.

4 A note of context for this observation is warranted: a very large percentage of respondents were religious organizations which are primarily funded by individual gifts and receive few if any foundation grants; this may have skewed the results of this question.

5 US Treasury, “Recent US Economic Growth in Charts”, [http://www.treasury.gov/resource-center/data-chart-center/Documents/20120502\\_EconomicGrowth.pdf](http://www.treasury.gov/resource-center/data-chart-center/Documents/20120502_EconomicGrowth.pdf)

6 Volume 9, Issue 3, 2002

# BOARDS OF DIRECTORS

Nonprofit groups often lament the difficulty they face in engaging their boards of directors. This year's survey shows that the boards of a large percentage of respondents regularly participate in board meetings. Table 5 indicates that at least 65% of groups report average board attendance exceeding 80%. This compares somewhat unfavorably with a national sample from *BoardSource's Nonprofit Governance Index 2012* which reported 88% of boards surveyed averaged meeting attendance exceeding 75%.

TABLE 5. AVERAGE BOARD MEETING ATTENDANCE

AVERAGE ATTENDANCE	ALASKA (N=135)	WASHINGTON (N=925)	OREGON (N=242)	IDAHO (N=183)	MONTANA (N=0)
< 60%	5%	7%	3%	8%	--
60-79%	24%	8%	21%	25%	--
80-89%	40%	28%	40%	32%	--
90-100%	31%	57%	36%	35%	--
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>--</b>

In addition to regularly attending meetings, board members are expected to make a personal financial contribution. The latter is both a measure of organizational leadership and board engagement. The 2012 survey findings showed that, “on average, about 75 percent of...board members had contributed financially to the organization in the last year.” This year’s survey reflects a downward trend in the percentage of board members making contributions with an average of 59% across four states. Nationally, data shows between 71%<sup>7</sup> and 75%<sup>8</sup> of board members make donations. And, as Table 6 reveals, there is also noticeable variation between the four states, with Alaska and Oregon having a significantly higher number of contributing board members than Washington and Idaho.

TABLE 6. PERCENT OF BOARD MEMBERS CONTRIBUTING TO THEIR NONPROFIT

BOARD CONTRIBUTION	ALASKA (N=84)	WASHINGTON (N=567)	OREGON (N=221)	IDAHO (N=177)	MONTANA (N=170)
<25%	6%	27%	15%	29%	13%
26-50%	10%	10%	9%	8%	9%
51-75%	14%	17%	9%	10%	17%
76-100%	70%	46%	67%	53%	61%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

Overall, survey data suggest that responding organizations have drawn clear distinctions between staff and board roles. This conclusion is supported by the results in Table 7, which shows that the large majority of groups do not have staff members serving as voting board members, thereby avoiding potential conflicts of interest. This is similar to the findings of the 2012 survey and on a par with national averages.<sup>9</sup>

TABLE 7. STAFF AS VOTING BOARD MEMBERS

STAFF AS VOTING MEMBERS?	ALASKA (N=102)	WASHINGTON (N=925)	OREGON (N=255)	IDAHO (N=187)	MONTANA* (N=199)
Yes	3%	11%	9%	11%	16%
No	95%	89%	90%	88%	84%
Don't Know	2%	<1%	1%	1%	--
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

7 Nonprofit Finance Fund “2013 State of the Sector Survey”

8 Boardsource *Nonprofit Governance Index 2012*

9 86% of CEOs/EDs do not serve as voting board members per BoardSource Nonprofit Governance Index 2007.

# WRITTEN PLANS & INFORMATION CULTURE

Survey results show that responding organizations have taken important first steps toward building an information rich culture which can be relied upon when making strategic decisions. Not surprisingly, large majorities of respondents (though not all) have written annual budgets. The next most frequently written document is a strategic plan. In contrast, few organizations have transition plans or a theory of change/logic model. Table 8 identifies the percentage of groups with specific types of written plans and Table 9 presents the same information by organization budget.

TABLE 8. PERCENTAGE OF GROUPS WITH SPECIFIC WRITTEN PLANS (BY STATE)

HAVE THE FOLLOWING WRITTEN PLANS?	A/K (N=135)	WA (N=1085)	OR (N=256)	ID (N=189)	MT (N=277)
Annual budget	93%	59%	90%	87%	--
Strategic plan	75%	28%	62%	57%	48%
Business plan	31%	16%	19%	21%	17%
Operations plan	29%	24%	28%	29%	38%
Fundraising plan	26%	29%	38%	37%	33%
Communications plan	17%	11%	13%	16%	16%
Emergency Succession	17%	7%	15%	6%	12%
Exec. Transition plan	11%	8%	15%	9%	12%
Theory of Change/Logic Model	11%	--	11%	8%	--

TABLE 9. PERCENTAGE OF GROUPS WITH SPECIFIC WRITTEN PLANS (BY BUDGET)

HAVE THE FOLLOWING WRITTEN PLANS?	<\$500K (N=1310)	\$500K-\$1M (N=160)	\$1M-\$2M (N=144)	\$2M-\$4.9M (N=115)	\$5M+ (N=75)
Annual budget	57%	82%	73%	70%	71%
Strategic plan	32%	59%	68%	64%	76%
Business plan	17%	26%	17%	14%	23%
Operations plan	26%	27%	32%	31%	40%
Fundraising plan	30%	41%	40%	33%	27%
Communications plan	11%	14%	18%	19%	21%
Emergency Succession	7%	12%	16%	16%	26%
Exec. Transition plan	8%	16%	16%	13%	21%
Theory of Change/Logic Model	2%	6%	4%	5%	8%

As indicated at the outset of this report, the majority of survey respondents are small organizations with budgets under \$500,000 and this likely influences the response to questions about written plans. Organizations with less staff and infrastructure have less capacity to devote to developing written plans. This can be seen in the results for the Washington state respondents of which 82% have budgets under \$500,000 and correspondingly low percentages of those using what might be considered common planning documents (budget, operations).

Also of note is the fact that across organizations of all sizes in all five states there is a low number of respondents using written fundraising plans: in Oregon, only 38% report using fundraising plans (this is the high end) while in Alaska, only 26% use them. The cohort is not out of sync with other states: a CompassPoint survey of California nonprofits found 24% had no fundraising plan.<sup>10</sup> Fundraising plans are an indicator of an organization's overall fundraising capacity (along with related technology and systems, cross-organizational engagement and a development director who is viewed as a key leader).<sup>11</sup>

The average number of written plans per organization appears to have grown since 2012; the mean number of plans per organizations grew within each state. (It is important to note, however, that this finding is limited by the fact that there were a different number of plans listed in the survey instrument in both 2012 and 2013). As shown in Table 10, Alaska organizations have the greatest number of written plans while Montana groups have the fewest.

10 *Underdeveloped: A National Study of Challenges Facing Nonprofit Fundraising*, a joint project of CompassPoint and the Evelyn and Walter Haas, Jr. Fund.

11 *Ibid*

TABLE 10. AVERAGE NUMBER OF PLANS IN 2012 AND 2013

STATE	AVERAGE NUMBER OF PLANS IN 2012 (of 7 potential plans)	AVERAGE NUMBER OF PLANS 2013 (of 9 potential plans)
Alaska	1.85	3.10
Oregon	2.30	2.87
Idaho	1.80	2.69
Montana	1.86	1.76
Washington	--	1.82

Responses to a series of ratings questions pertaining to information culture support a conclusion that nonprofits integrate ongoing data reflection into their operations. As shown in Table 11, with the exception of Washington, the average ratings for these questions were all above the mid-point with the highest among Alaska nonprofits. Though, it is striking that wherever comparisons can be made to 2012 results, the scores are lower.

TABLE 11. RATINGS OF INFORMATION CULTURE (CHANGES FROM 2012)

Scale equates 1.0 with “Not at All” and 10.0 with “A Great Amount”

STATEMENT ABOUT INFORMATION CULTURE	AK (N=135)	OR (N=256)	ID (N=189)	MT (N=277)	WA (N=1085)
In the last month I read professional lit about NPO sector	8.3	7.3	6.7	7.8	4.4
Our org is very good at using program data to inform plans	6.4 (-.1)	6.1 (-.8)	5.5 (-.9)	5.8 (NC)	4.8
Our org is very good at using community data to inform plans	6.1	5.9	5.1	5.4	4.2
Extent of quality data about the sector in our region	5.7 (-.1)	5.3 (-1.2)	5.0 (-.8)	5.7 (-.5)	4.4
Everyone in the org is aware of the strategically developed plans	5.9	6.3	6.0	6.1	5.8

Finally, given that smaller nonprofits have fewer written plans guiding their work, and their staff are stretched to manage mission-critical work, it is not that surprising that updating Guidestar profiles is a low priority and occurs infrequently, even though this is an effective public reputation tool. Table 12 shows that the large majorities of groups do not regularly update these profiles.

TABLE 12. PERCENTAGE OF ORGANIZATIONS UPDATING THEIR GUIDESTAR PROFILE

MOST RECENT GUIDESTAR UPDATE	ALASKA (N=102)	WASHINGTON (N=923)	OREGON (N=255)	IDAHO (N=187)	MONTANA (N=197)
< 1 year ago	10%	15%	25%	18%	27%
> 1 year ago	18%	12%	18%	14%	17%
Don't know/Never	72%	73%	57%	68%	56%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

# PROGRAM EVALUATION

Both Oregon and Idaho customized their surveys to ask the responding nonprofit if it evaluated any part of its work during the previous year; 78% of Idaho respondents and 80% of Oregon respondents indicated that they had. Idaho also asked how respondents used their evaluation findings. Table 13 indicates the ways that the respondents use evaluation findings.

TABLE 13. PERCENTAGE OF ORGANIZATIONS USING EVALUATION FINDINGS (IDAHO ONLY)

USE OF EVALUATION FINDINGS	PERCENT
Plan and revise programs	63%
Update the board	56%
Plan and revise strategies	47%
Report to funders	43%
Use in proposals to funders	39%
Make resource allocations	38%
Make staffing decisions	37%
Communicate with stakeholders	33%
Share best practices	23%
Support advocacy/policy work	18%
Have not used/no evaluation	15%

# MISSION ACHIEVEMENT & CAPACITY

The survey results show that nonprofits rank themselves relatively high for achieving their mission. Table 14 lists the average rating across the states. The consistency in the ratings – with decreases for three of four states compared to 2012 – suggests that self-assessment of mission achievement is independent of geography.

TABLE 14. RATINGS OF MISSION ACHIEVEMENT (CHANGES FROM 2012)

Scale equates 1.0 with “Not at All” and 10.0 with “A Great Amount”

STATEMENT ABOUT MISSION ACHIEVEMENT	AK (N=135)	WA (N=1085)	OR (N=256)	ID (N=189)	MT (N=277)
How effective is your org at accomplishing its mission?	8.4 (-.2)	8.3	8.5 (-.4)	8.2 (-.1)	8.2 (NC)

Perhaps more interesting is the fact that mission achievement remains relatively stable across organization size with only a slightly increasing trend as organization budget grows. Table 15 lists the results of the same mission achievement question but by organization budget. Clearly, the high rating respondents gave regarding mission achievement, no matter their size or location, reflects a subjective reading of the question and is more an indicator how respondents felt about their accomplishments than an objective measure of what the organization actually achieved.

TABLE 15. RATINGS OF MISSION ACHIEVEMENT (BY BUDGET)

Scale equates 1.0 with “Not at All” and 10.0 with “A Great Amount”

STATEMENT ABOUT MISSION ACHIEVEMENT	<\$500K (N=1133)	\$500K-\$1M (N=160)	\$1M-\$2M (N=144)	\$2M-\$4.9M (N=115)	\$5M+ (N=75)
How effective is your org at accomplishing its mission?	8.2	8.6	8.5	8.7	8.8

The relatively high ratings in Tables 14 and 15 differ markedly from the ratings in Tables 16 and 17. The latter show that respondents rate themselves much lower as having capacity to complete all aspects of their written plans. The Oregon Nonprofit Association made a similar observation in their survey report when assessing how organizations use data to accomplish their missions. Their explanation is applicable:

Not surprisingly, nonprofits feel very effective in accomplishing their missions and meeting their core purpose. They feel much less effective in using their own planning tools to focus their work across the organization, and in using internal and external data to inform decision-making. They feel the least confident that they are good at using community data to inform their program data and have sufficient capacity to implement their plans.

Tables 16 and 17 show the difference between organizations’ self-assessment of their mission achievement compared to their view of their operating capacity.

TABLE 16. RATINGS OF CAPACITY (BY STATE)

Scale equates 1.0 with “Not at All” and 10.0 with “A Great Amount”

STATEMENT ABOUT ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY	AK (N=135)	WA (N=1085)	OR (N=256)	ID (N=189)	MT (N=277)
Our organization has sufficient capacity to complete all aspects of our plan	6.4	6.6	6.7	--	6.2

TABLE 17. RATINGS OF CAPACITY (BY BUDGET)

Scale equates 1.0 with “Not at All” and 10.0 with “A Great Amount”

STATEMENT ABOUT ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY	<\$500K (N=1133)	\$500K-\$1M (N=160)	\$1M-\$2M (N=144)	\$2M-\$4.9M (N=115)	\$5M+ (N=75)
Our organization has sufficient capacity to complete all aspects of our plan	6.1	6.3	6.3	6.4	6.7

# COLLABORATION

Collaboration is an ongoing aspiration in the nonprofit sector—in part because nonprofits intrinsically understand the value of working together and in part because the funding community has been prioritizing it for many years. The concept of *collaboration* was not clearly defined in the survey; rather, questions were framed as “coming together [with other groups] to address issues that are bigger than an individual organization.” Nonetheless, there is national data to provide perspective on some of the reasons nonprofits choose to collaborate: the Nonprofit Finance Fund found in its 2013 *State of the Sector Survey* that 39% of respondents partner with other nonprofits to increase or improve their services, 16% do so to reduce administrative expenses, and 43% do so to advocate to government.

The findings from the cohort survey mirror these modest findings. Table 18 displays the average ratings for a series of questions concerning nonprofit collaboration. The ratings are generally just over the mid-point for the scale, with the exception of Washington where the ratings are consistently lower which is likely due to the large number of small nonprofits among survey respondents. For the state associations working to increase collaboration in the sector, these findings suggest there is more work to be done.

TABLE 18. RATINGS OF COLLABORATION  
(CHANGES FROM 2012)

Scale equates 1.0 with “Not at All” and 10.0 with “A Great Amount”

STATEMENT ABOUT COLLABORATION	AK (N=135)	WA (N=1085)	OR (N=256)	ID (N=189)	MT (N=277)
NPO orgs come together to address big issues	6.5 (+.1)	4.2	5.9 (-.6)	5.8 (NC)	5.6 (-.7)
NPO orgs come together with businesses to address big issues	5.6	3.6	4.8	5.0	6.3
NPO orgs come together with govt to address big issues	5.8	3.8	5.3	4.6	6.0

# POLICY ENVIRONMENT

Some nonprofits have increased their commitment to advocacy in recent years as public funding for their work has declined precipitously and the federal budget crisis has led some to call for restructuring the charitable tax deduction. The National Council for Nonprofits “encourages all nonprofits to be meaningful participants in the state budget process”<sup>12</sup> to ensure their voices are heard and favorable policies are passed into law. Northwest nonprofits were asked to assess both the local policy environment as well as their role and voice in the policy decision-making process. The average ratings in Table 19 are relatively modest and with the highest being 6.2 on a 10-point scale.

TABLE 19. RATINGS OF POLICY ENVIRONMENT  
(CHANGES FROM 2012)

Scale equates 1.0 with “Not at All” and 10.0 with “A Great Amount”

STATEMENT ABOUT POLICY ENVIRONMENT	AK (N=135)	WA (N=1085)	OR (N=256)	ID (N=189)	MT (N=277)
The state/local policy environment is friendly to NPOs	6.1 (-.4)	5.3	5.9 (NC)	5.3 (NC)	5.9 (+.1)
NPOs have a role in the public policy decision-making process	5.9	5.0	6.2	5.2	6.0
NPOs have a voice in the public policy decision-making process	5.8	4.7	5.8	--	5.8

12 National Council of Nonprofits, 2014 Public Policy Agenda, <http://www.councilofnonprofits.org/public-policy/2014-public-policy-agenda#1>

# STATEWIDE ASSOCIATION

The nonprofit associations appear to be well regarded by their constituents as seen by the high average ratings in Table 20. The associations do not have as strong of a reputation for their work in raising the profile of the nonprofit sector statewide. However, for some of the groups this is a relatively new activity (and Washington’s association was established only in 2011) and as they continue to increase program and branding efforts, it will be interesting to see if a stronger reputation for this work is reflected in future surveys.

TABLE 20. RATINGS ABOUT STATEWIDE ASSOCIATION  
(CHANGES FROM 2012)

Scale equates 1.0 with “Not at All” and 10.0 with “A Great Amount”

STATEMENT ABOUT STATEWIDE ASSOCIATION	AK (N=135)	WA (N=1085)	OR (N=256)	ID (N=189)	MT (N=277)
My state’s NPO Association amplifies sector’s voice in public policy decision-making	6.7	4.2	6.5	6.0	7.0
I personally value my state-wide NPO Association	7.8	4.2	7.3	6.9	7.5
NPO sector is valued in my community	7.0 (-.1)	6.6	7.2 (NC)	6.7 (-.1)	7.2 (-1.4)
There is a strong collective identity of NPO sector in our state	6.6 (+.3)	4.4	5.7 (-.8)	5.3 (-.5)	6.4 (-.4)

# SUMMARY OF STATE COMPARISONS

When comparing some key metrics of the nonprofit sector between the 2012 and 2013 surveys, the mean dropped across all measures. While decreases are relatively modest and one cannot draw definitive conclusions with data from just two years, it is nonetheless important to note the downward trend shown in Table 21.

TABLE 21. COMPARISON OF MEAN RATINGS ON STATEMENTS (2012 VS. 2013)\*

Scale equates 1.0 with “Not at All” and 10.0 with “A Great Amount”

STATEMENT	2012 MEAN	2013 MEAN*
How effective is your org at accomplishing its mission?	8.37	8.33
There is a strong collective identity of NPO sector in our state	6.36	6.04
NPO orgs come together to address big issues	6.15	5.77
The state/local policy environment is friendly to NPOs	5.80	5.78
NPO sector is valued in my community	7.10	7.02
Our org is very good at using program data to inform plans	6.36	5.91
Extent of quality data about the sector in our region	6.04	5.35
My state’s NPO Association amplifies sector’s voice in public policy decision-making	6.72	6.53
I personally value my statewide NPO Association	7.58	7.33

\*Data excludes Washington

# IMPLICATIONS

The survey findings were discussed and debriefed with representatives of each of the five statewide organizations. During these conversations, there was a range of responses to the findings. In particular, there was disagreement about the implications of the findings for the work of each of the groups. For some, the results were an affirmation of their consulting and training foci. For them, the survey results suggested that they are placing the right emphasis on helping boards of directors step up to their fundraising responsibility and working to boost the operating reserves of nonprofit groups. Several people also felt that the results established a set of norms against which they could compare their organization's performance. In contrast, other members of the cohort felt that the survey's limited and inconsistent sample got in the way of its usefulness. These groups felt that the findings did not accurately reflect the nonprofit sector within their states.

Despite this seeming conflict, we identified several overarching themes in the interview feedback that there was general agreement on. These themes focus on the key needs of the nonprofit sector within the Pacific Northwest:

- 1** Strengthen policy work: Although some groups felt that the ratings for policy work were relatively strong for their states, there was a clear belief that more needed to be done to advance policy work by nonprofits and that the ratings across all of the states needed to improve over time.

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- 2** Enhance board governance and engagement: The findings suggest that more needs to be done to strengthen board members' understanding of their governance role and their critical importance as fundraisers for their organizations. Although board members are volunteers, they play essential roles in the organization, and in rural regions and states, such as Montana and Idaho, board members often hold key community leadership roles which further accentuates their leadership roles within the nonprofits they serve.

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- 3** Diversify fundraising: The statewide groups all commented on the revenue mix of the organizations surveyed and they noted that somewhat different policy environments played a role in minor differences among the revenue profiles across the states. Several interviewees also noted that their organizations needed to continue helping nonprofits diversify their sources of revenue in order to build their financial resiliency. A number of interviewees felt that the survey results underscored the need for nonprofits to build robust operating reserves.

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- 4** Determine ways to accurately measure mission achievement: Interviews suggest that the nonprofit sector, as a whole, needs to develop better measures of mission achievement. Some representatives from the statewide groups expressed frustration with survey questions that asked respondents to self-assess their overall progress in reaching their missions. These questions were not viewed as objective and interviewees were concerned that survey respondents portrayed themselves in a flattering light and inflated their ratings.

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