



2022 Membership Outreach Tour Summary

January 2023

Between July and November 2022 NYCON CEO Megan Allen met with 123 NYCON members across New York, representing the broad range of the state's nonprofits. Below are highlights of what she learned. While different regions of the state face their own unique issues, the ideas included below were heard across the state.

Summary information on the challenges nonprofits face are also part of NYCON's 2023 State of the Sector report, available on the [NYCON website](#). Page 3 of this summary also lists ways everyone can help the nonprofit sector thrive.

Pandemic's lingering impact

Conversations during the Membership Outreach Tour reflected that many nonprofits remain financially challenged by the lingering effects of the pandemic. A [survey of the state's nonprofits released in January 2022](#) by NYCON, Nonprofit New York and Nonprofit Westchester reported that the majority of nonprofits saw increased expenses and decreased revenue in 2020 and 2021; as of late 2021, 46% said they had not recovered financially, a situation that continues into 2023.

Some nonprofits are still experiencing increased need for their services, particularly food pantries and food banks, and domestic violence and substance abuse support providers.

Depending on the type of organization, some were able to adapt to online service delivery. Examples include those providing job-hunting services who quickly trained staff to take calls from home and storytelling charities that found a new resource on Zoom (sometimes resulting in increased audiences). Nonprofits are now deciding how to provide services going forward, and at what pace. For instance, some organizations that provide in-person activities are seeing participation levels similar to those before the pandemic; others are finding audiences hesitant to resume in-person contact.

Challenges for 2023 and beyond

A common issue heard across the sector and different types of nonprofits is finding and retaining staff. Nonprofits are not typically able to offer high salaries. The tight job market has resulted in many competing with fast food restaurants that can pay more, and in some cases offer a less stressful work environment. Hiring has been particularly difficult for entry-level positions; some nonprofits (for

example, those providing childcare) report not having returned to full programming due to inadequate staffing. In addition to needing to raise salaries to attract new employees, nonprofits have also been required to raise salaries to meet state labor laws for exempt employees and minimum wage increases. Nonprofits want to provide living wages for all employees, but such mandatory increases can be challenging to implement and maintaining equity in existing workforce salaries is difficult with the sector's ongoing financial challenges.

Funding has always been a challenge for the nonprofit sector, as organizations often juggle a mix of earned income from providing services, government contracts, private foundations and individual donors. Unlike for-profit businesses, nonprofits can't simply raise prices when inflation and other factors hit.

Nonprofits cited the federal stimulus funds (Paycheck Protection Program) made available during the pandemic as a lifeline allowing them to maintain staffing and keep services flowing. Some also saw record donations from individuals during the last two years, giving that has in most cases now returned to pre-pandemic levels. Many nonprofits voiced concern about what 2023 would bring, without federal funding and inflation that may prevent individual donors from giving.

A persistent financial concern was also a common theme of the tour: the slowness and insufficient levels of funding from New York State to provide programming. Nonprofits receive state funding to provide critical services, from helping children and families in crisis to substance abuse treatment, but in some cases have not seen increases in funding in decades. Meanwhile, the processing of payments to nonprofits can take months or even years, requiring some to operate in a deficit while awaiting state funds – for work already provided. Note this is not a new issue: NYCON and others have advocated on behalf of nonprofits on this issue for years.

High staff stress and burnout were other challenges often cited by nonprofits across the state. Nonprofit jobs can be emotionally taxing even in the best of times, between financial pressures and tackling some of society's most stubbornly persistent issues, from human trafficking to homelessness. The pandemic exacerbated those feelings particularly as some long-time nonprofit leaders elected to retire and nonprofits were serving communities under additional stress as well.

Hopeful for the future

Most nonprofits were able to pivot in the last two years, quickly adapting new technology and finding new ways to meet their communities' needs. This showed the creativity of the sector, and the ability of nonprofits to try new ideas, concepts the sector looks to continue in the future. Many nonprofits also eagerly adopted diversity, equity, inclusion, accessibility and justice (DEIAJ) as an organizational goal, educating themselves and looking for ways to improve their internal practices and the services they provide to help make the world a better place for everyone.

But, nonprofits need help to remain healthy and grow in the future.

How to help

A strong nonprofit sector benefits everyone, as these organizations help those in need while enriching life for all of us. Lawmakers and individual community members can support the sector in many ways, helping others while also benefiting from the joy of such work:

Everyone:

- **Donate money or items** – even the smallest financial gift can help make a difference, and many nonprofits also seek donations of items such as food, used clothing and books.
- **Volunteer** – an hour a year, an hour a week... nonprofits need a variety of help and greatly appreciate and benefit from any time individuals (and families and work groups) can volunteer, whether it be walking homeless animals or talking with seniors to teaching students a new skill or sorting donated clothing. Try a local nonprofit's website to see what help they need or contract your [local United Way](#) or [regional foundation](#) for suggestions. Or, Volunteer Match and Idealist.org have searchable lists of volunteer opportunities. NYCON also has a searchable list of its 3,000+ members at: <https://www.nycon.org/membership/our-current-nonprofit-members>. To find a nonprofit near your home, search for “nonprofits near me” in Google Maps.
- **Join a nonprofit board** – Looking for a way to make a difference while gaining invaluable leadership skills and boosting your resume, at the same time? All nonprofits have a volunteer board of directors, and many are seeking board members. Board members must be 18 years old, but there are no other eligibility requirements – though nonprofits are often seeking board members with particular skills or backgrounds to diversify. Board members often are asked to give financially to their nonprofit, though most ask for a ‘gift of personal significance,’ not a particular dollar amount, enabling more individuals to participate. To find a list of nonprofits currently seeking board members, visit [BoardStrong.org](#).
- **Work for a nonprofit** – Make a difference in the world every day! Working for a nonprofit means giving back to your community. For current job openings check Idealistic.org, Indeed.com or a local nonprofit's website. NYCON also has a [job board on its website](#).

Elected officials:

- **Provide fair payments for critical work** – The state needs to increase rates and timeliness of payments to nonprofits for the critical work they provide every day. Nonprofits are impacted by inflation and must pay fair rates to staff like other organizations; underpaying nonprofits often results in them having to fundraise to support programming, time-consuming work that can have unpredictable outcomes year to year. Nonprofits would also be better able to manage the fiscal management and reporting of such funding if they could hire more staffing, again requiring adequate funding by the state. ([See the 2023 State of the Sector report for data on the impact of state funding.](#))