



STRATEGIC PLAN

2018 - 2021

Mission

We make sure nonprofits have what they need to succeed through learning, advocacy and collaboration.

Vision

A strong, united nonprofit sector that is a valued partner in creating thriving communities across Washington.



Equity Statement

As part of our commitment to revolutionize nonprofits' place in our state and world, Washington Nonprofits is committed to be a champion and a leader in the quest for diversity, equity, and inclusion in the nonprofit sector. For us, this means using a diversity, equity, and inclusion lens in all the work we do, including looking at ourselves as a nonprofit. We know this means constant learning. If we err, we ask for grace and further discussion so we can hold ourselves accountable to communities of color, rural communities and others who have been marginalized, and can continue learning and being challenged. We welcome the greater discussion, so we can make the strongest decisions for the issues that affect our membership and become a leader in learning and supporting diversity, equity, and inclusion for our state's nonprofit organizations.

Powerful Programs

Learning & Networks: Build on the success of our learning program, expanding our offerings and strengthening networks among nonprofits

Public Policy Advocacy: Create a positive climate for nonprofits, enhance nonprofit partnerships with government, and empower nonprofits to advocate for their missions

Collaboration: Work together with partners to create a powerful, equitable nonprofit sector

Strong Organization

Communications: Be a visible, leading voice and champion for nonprofits

Financial Strength: Build membership, diversify funding partners and increase earned revenue

Organizational Health: Run a functional organization with good infrastructure and sound human resources practices that attract and retain excellent staff and board members



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- Goal 1 -

Learning & Networks: Build on the success of our learning program, expanding our offerings and strengthening networks among nonprofits

Context: Learning is our biggest program serving nearly 10,000 people per year through over 150 learning events. We are recognized as leaders in adult education, and we have a great platform for online learning. We have been ambitious in this area with great results, but we need to look at staffing levels and ensure that the work in this area is sustainable. In general, this area has been executed very strategically, but five years in, it is time to update our strategy.

Why is this important now?

- Only a small segment of nonprofit community is fully engaged
- Need to keep pushing the sector forward/help nonprofits be their best and evolve
- Learners are demanding it/respond to member needs
- We need to clarify our contribution in a crowded field
- We want to maintain our competitive advantage in serving the entire state

Objectives

- 1. Continue to expand our tools and resources**
 - a. Create an advocacy toolkit
 - b. Develop other toolkits and resources when the right combination of demand, funding and partnership is present
- 2. Grow our capacity to offer high-quality learning events**
 - a. Offer train-the-trainer events that increase the number and diversity of effective trainers who can partner with us
 - b. Build out our e-learning capability
- 3. Convene the community at the Washington State Nonprofit Conference**
 - a. Celebrate the 25th anniversary of the conference in 2019
 - b. Continue to increase relevance and accessibility of the conference
 - c. Expand pre and post learning opportunities
- 4. Develop new, advanced offerings**
 - a. Provide a learning opportunity for executives
 - b. Grow our 201 and 301 level offerings
- 5. Use an equity lens to improve accessibility across all programs**
- 6. Develop community-based regional strategies to build power and expertise at the local level**
- 7. Bridge and connect regional networks**
 - a. Launch affinity groups
 - b. Encourage participation at statewide convenings such as conferences

Success Measures

- Increased activities aimed at more experienced nonprofit leaders/show impact
- Diversified demographics and unique participants
- Nonprofits have stronger capacity (staff/leadership retention, other markers of health)

- Goal 2 -

Public Policy Advocacy: Create a positive climate for nonprofits, enhance nonprofit partnerships with government, and empower nonprofits to advocate for their missions

Context: The time for nonprofits to engage more fully in public policy advocacy is now. Washington Nonprofits was founded in large part to be an advocate for nonprofits. In the past year, Washington Nonprofits has been more active in lobbying at the state and federal levels, with good results. We hear from nonprofits that they want to engage in public policy advocacy but lack the skills and confidence to do so. Federal spending cuts are looming, and trusted relationships between nonprofits and government leaders are needed to navigate through tough times.

Why is this important now?

- We need to improve government/nonprofit partnership
- Nonprofits have great expertise developed through work on the ground in communities. This expertise should be tapped to inform better solutions to complex social challenges.
- The nonprofit sector needs a strong voice in policymaking

Objectives

- 1. Build a strong public policy advocacy program for Washington Nonprofits**
 - a. Identify and focus on sector-wide issues and help sub-sectors understand the importance of these issues to encourage their participation
 - b. Maintain a strong, broadly representative policy committee and engaged board to guide policy priorities; develop criteria for vetting our positions
 - c. Establish a visible presence/influence in Washington State Legislature
 - d. Represent the nonprofit industry with state agencies, e.g. participate in rule-making
 - e. Act as a channel for information and action alerts on federal issues, taking action ourselves as appropriate, in partnership with the National Council of Nonprofits network.
 - f. Provide technical assistance to nonprofits advocating on local municipal and county issues with broad implications for the sector
 - g. Establish meaningful evaluation metrics for advocacy, preferably a common framework developed collaboratively
- 2. Create a powerful “Advocacy for Nonprofits” toolkit and provide a robust program of advocacy education to empower nonprofits across Washington State to take action**
- 3. Use an equity lens in our policy work**
 - a. Listen to and lift up voices of underrepresented groups within the nonprofit sector
 - b. Vet our policy positions to ensure that they promote greater equity

Success Measures

- Engagement by a broad range of nonprofit leaders (all regions of the state, different fields of service, people of color, rural and urban)
- Nonprofits are consulted and at the table for key policy conversations
- Elected officials and government agencies view us as valued partners
- More nonprofits are involved in advocacy and have increased skills and confidence
- Washington Nonprofits has a fully-functioning system for surfacing, vetting and moving policy solutions suggested by a diverse base of member nonprofits
- Working with peers and funders, we have developed a common framework for advocacy evaluation
- Policy change (legislative successes, rules changes)

- Goal 3 -

Collaboration: Work together with partners to create a powerful, equitable nonprofit sector

Context: Improving the nonprofit sector is dependent on our ability to agree upon priorities and work together with partners, including other capacity building organizations, philanthropists and public and private sector leaders. Washington Nonprofits was founded with a strong commitment to complement rather than duplicate efforts, and we believe that a strong network is more effective and more resilient than a single organization operating in isolation. We promote the principles of network leadership. Our collective work is informed by quality data. We have a mandate from our members to advocate to improve the practice of foundation and government funders, as well as to make our own organization and the sector as a whole more equitable.

Why is this important now?

- As a small organization, achieving impact requires working collaboratively with others
- Our ability to stay relevant depends on keeping up with new learning and changing needs in our field
- Nonprofits need an advocate they can trust to educate grantmakers about their realities and how philanthropic practices can help or hinder nonprofits' impact
- Partnership and collaboration is crucial to solving complex problems and increasing our sector's resilience
- Diversity, equity and inclusion are mission critical for nonprofits

Objectives

- 1. Inspire a functioning network among organizations, businesses and associations supporting nonprofits in Washington state**
 - a. Clearly map the nonprofit support ecosystem
 - b. Play well with others/strengthen relationships
 - c. Support connections and collaboration among capacity builders
 - d. Determine future of the Nonprofit Support Organizations Convening (NSOC)
- 2. Advocate with funders on behalf of nonprofits, with a strong focus on equity**
 - a. Identify key messages such as the importance of unrestricted funding and equitable distribution of resources
 - b. Build relationships with funders and speak out on behalf of nonprofits
 - c. Show solidarity with and make space for partners led by people of color, rural people
- 3. Collaborate with universities and other partners in identifying, analyzing and interpreting data that can inform all of our work and advance knowledge**
- 4. Help the nonprofit and philanthropic sectors become more equitable, working in partnership with others**

Success Measures

- Strong reputation among capacity builders and funders in Washington state
- More useful data available about the nonprofit landscape
- Washington Nonprofits is viewed as a credible voice for nonprofits and frequently asked to weigh in on policy and practice issues
- We have an equity statement in place and our website and other materials reflect our commitment
- The nonprofit and philanthropic sectors are more equitable

- Goal 4 -

Communications: Be a visible, leading voice and champion for nonprofits

Context: Washington Nonprofits does not have sufficient visibility or clear branding. We should continue to develop a messaging toolkit and consider a name change. Our messaging will be most appealing when we tie our success to the success of the social sector. To counteract negative messages and myths about nonprofits, Washington Nonprofits will intentionally emphasize what works and celebrate nonprofits.

Why is this important now?

- Greater awareness of what we do and value of what we do
- Increase participation and support for our work.
- Alignment with our mission to strengthen and inspire nonprofits
- Shows new energy and direction

Objectives

1. Position WN as a leading voice for nonprofits

- a. Speak out via op-eds and letters to the editor
- b. Strengthen our social media presence
- c. Use videos to communicate key messages

2. Strengthen our communications

- a. Create a communications plan
- b. Explore rebranding, development of a messaging platform and/or a name change
- c. Articulate our strengths/value add
- d. Add staff capability

3. Highlight nonprofit success stories

- a. Work with media partners for better coverage of the nonprofit sector
- b. Develop bank of photos, stories, video that tells the story of nonprofit impact

4. BHAG: Work collaboratively with others to develop a communications strategy to elevate the social sector as a whole.

Success Measures

- Supporters, partners, and funders will seek us out
- People will know what we do and others will tell others what we do
- Nonprofits are more confident and proud
- Nonprofits appreciate our role as a cheerleader and promoter of their contributions
- We have a social media strategy and a video strategy

- Goal 5 -

Financial Strength: Build membership, diversify funding partners and increase earned revenue

Context: At seven years old, Washington Nonprofits is on the map and providing excellent service to nonprofits. Our funding comes primarily from foundations, government contracts, program fees, and membership dues. We have an unusual level of foundation support. We want to maintain these relationships but also ensure that we have a diverse and reliable funding model by expanding other sources.

Why is this important now?

- We want to build a strong, sustainable organization
- Reduced dependence on foundations and increased earned revenue improves our independence and stability
- Increase in fee with Nonprofit Corporation Act passage could be an opportunity
- We help government meet their goals around legal compliance

Objectives

- 1. Develop a more compelling member value proposition and build membership**
 - a. Implement a strategy to engage larger nonprofits (Big nonprofits are all in)
 - b. Engage board members fully in promoting Washington Nonprofits membership
 - c. Connect large and small nonprofits with better benefits options
- 2. Strengthen partnerships with private philanthropy**
- 3. Increase government investment in nonprofits and nonprofit capacity building**
 - a. Diversify our government partners
- 4. Explore earned revenue strategies**
 - a. Expand paid webinar series
 - b. Expand partnerships with other state associations to send attendees to our webinars
 - c. Resolve IP issues associated with licensing of learning materials
 - d. Utilize our strengths to generate revenue via consulting with others, licensing of curriculum and public speaking
- 5. Identify appropriate metrics for financial strength, establish a baseline and monitor progress**

Success Measures

- Membership growth (across different fields of service, budget sizes, locations)
- High marks from members, including referral to others
- Increased earned revenue
- New foundation and government funding partners

- Goal 6 -

Organizational Health: Run a functional organization with good infrastructure and sound human resources practices that attract and retain excellent staff and board members

Context: Washington Nonprofits seeks to operate as a model nonprofit. However, we are still a young organization, and we are working to establish healthy infrastructure. We recently strengthened our bookkeeping function and added healthcare benefits for staff. We are continuously improving our database and related technology and striving to establish a positive and equitable culture.

Why is this important now?

- Practice what we preach
- Be as effective as we can be
- Reach new levels of impact

Objectives

- 1. Strengthen the staff team and hire the staff needed to do the work**
 - a. As resources allow, increase regional staffing
- 2. Develop board and committees**
- 3. Optimize our use of technology**
 - a. Continue to leverage technology and automate routine tasks
 - b. Utilize our database to map and strengthen networks, build engagement
- 4. Affirm and demonstrate our commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion**
 - a. Define what equity means to Washington Nonprofits by developing an equity statement
 - b. Complete an equity audit and ensure that our internal practices promote equity
 - c. Implement audit recommendations

Success Measures

- Staff are appropriately compensated
- Staff retention and satisfaction
- Ability to recruit diverse and well-qualified staff members
- Strong internal systems and policies
- Up-to-date technology systems

- Goal 7 -

Monitoring Our Progress

This plan was approved by the board of directors in August 2018. The time horizon for this plan is three years. The board is committed to monitoring progress toward these goals by reviewing the plan regularly.

- Each summer, staff will set annual goals that align with the strategic plan and share these with the board.
- Each fall, the board will set aligned annual goals for board committees
- Leadership from management staff and the board will formally report on progress made toward annual goals at the mid-year point and again at the year-end, with mid-course corrections made as needed.
- Recommendations for any interim changes to the plan should address the following questions:
 - Why should the changes be made?
 - What specific changes to goals, objectives, timelines and responsibilities should be made?

The plan is intended as a flexible roadmap that sets direction but should not unduly limit the agency's ability to seize new opportunities or respond to emergent community issues.