



Charting the Course:

Establishing a Public Policy Agenda for an Effective, Efficient, and Essential Nonprofit Sector in Massachusetts

The nonprofit sector is a significant economic and social engine in Massachusetts. Nearly 35,000 nonprofit organizationsⁱ employ 1 in 6 state residents,ⁱⁱ and generate nearly \$250 billion in annual revenues.ⁱⁱⁱ Nonprofits are the cornerstones of our communities and the lifeblood of the Commonwealth. They enrich the culture and beauty of our state, provide essential services for those at risk, and impact the quality of life of every single resident.

The Massachusetts Nonprofit Network (MNN), and its more than 650 member organizations, are committed to strengthening nonprofit organizations and professionals; protecting the integrity of the sector; and supporting efforts to advance the common good. Critical to these efforts is a robust public policy agenda that supports an effective, efficient, and essential nonprofit sector.

At nine statewide focus groups in early 2014, MNN convened nearly 300 nonprofit leaders to identify public policy ideas to strengthen and protect the state's nonprofit sector. The participants spanned the rich geographic and organizational diversity of the sector. The following report details the insights that came out of these sessions and will serve as the foundation for a long-term legislative agenda for the sector.

MNN's Public Policy Foundation

The Massachusetts Nonprofit Network is the voice of the state's nonprofit sector and will focus on the following themes that emerged during the focus group discussions:

Build A Strong & Stable Nonprofit Workforce

The nonprofit sector is built on its human capital and is a significant employer in Massachusetts. By focusing on recruiting, retaining, and training a strong and stable nonprofit workforce, nonprofits improve both the lives of the citizens they serve and those who are employed in the sector.

Invest in Promising Ideas & Proven Solutions

New approaches and tools for tackling historically persistent challenges are emerging—or are already in practice—across the country. Massachusetts, well known as a hub of innovation, can strengthen the sector and solidify its position as a social innovation leader by investing in knowledge and resources that advance promising ideas and proven solutions.

Promote Citizen Philanthropy & Volunteerism

Civic engagement is the backbone of the nonprofit sector. Policies that encourage citizen participation with nonprofits, such as philanthropy and volunteerism, are crucial to advancing the mission of nonprofits and helping to strengthen the fabric of civil society.

Preserve & Protect the Nonprofit Tax Exempt Status

Nonprofits exist to serve the public interest and advance the common good. As a result, the sector has been granted tax exempt status to further these efforts, and it is important to protect this benefit and to preserve the public trust that makes it possible.

Strengthen Nonprofit & Government Collaboration

Nonprofits provide critical social safety net and quality of life services, often in close partnership with government. Strengthening nonprofit and government collaboration, by ensuring that nonprofits have a voice in the decision-making process, will improve the ability of nonprofits to deliver on their mission and will result in more effective use of government resources.

Identifying Issues that Impact the Sector

Within each theme, specific public policy ideas emerged repeatedly across the nine discussions:

Strong and Stable Nonprofit Workforce

- Complete implementation of the nonprofit retirement program
- Address the affordability of healthcare
- Increase resources and access to nonprofit-specific training and professional development
- Expand student loan forgiveness
- Protect the role and responsibility of boards to establish compensation levels

Promising Ideas and Proven Solutions

- Create a fund to support innovative ideas, validate promising approaches, and scale proven solutions to persistent challenges
- Increase the availability and sharing of relevant research, data, and best practices
- Explore and expand results-driven funding models (e.g. pay-for-success, social impact bonds)

Citizen Philanthropy and Volunteerism

- Re-establish the state charitable tax deduction and protect the federal deduction
- Develop tax credits (similar to the Community Investment Tax Credit) to incentivize private investment in critical social issues
- Streamline volunteer CORI, SORI, and fingerprinting procedures
- Provide incentives to private companies for providing space or human capital
- Further service-learning opportunities for youth

Nonprofit Tax Exempt Status

- Oppose efforts that might jeopardize the nonprofit tax exempt status
- Protect nonprofits from efforts to tax their property assets
- Preserve the integrity of nonprofit tax exemption by clarifying rules related to political involvement and expenditures
- Establish reporting and administrative requirements that are commensurate with an organization's size and complexity

Nonprofit and Government Collaboration

- Establish a cabinet-level liaison to the nonprofit sector
- Advocate for adequate revenue, that will strengthen our communities, support vulnerable residents, and improve overall quality of life
- Create an advisory body to improve collaboration and coordination across the nonprofit, public, and private sectors
- Enhance the stability and sustainability of state funding through long-term funding continuity and full and timely payment for services provided, including indirect and administrative costs
- Simplify and streamline procedures related to grant and contracts
- Improve and safeguard the flexibility of funds to account for regional differences and unique community needs

Next Steps

During the summer of 2014, with its members and partners, MNN will use these ideas to develop specific short- and long-term policy and legislative priorities. These priorities will be used to educate and advocate candidates engaged in the current election cycle, especially in the gubernatorial race. They will also result in a concrete package of legislation that MNN will introduce and/or monitor during the next legislature.

Strategic Partners

The focus groups were convened in each region with strong support and partnership from following organizations:

BERKSHIRE COMMUNITY COLLEGE
BERKSHIRE COMMUNITY FOUNDATION
THE BOSTON FOUNDATION
CAPE COD VOLUNTEERS
COSA HAMPSHIRE COUNTY
FRANKLIN COUNTY RESOURCE NETWORK
HUMAN SERVICE FORUM
METROWEST NONPROFIT NETWORK

NONPROFIT ALLIANCE OF GREATER LOWELL
UNITED WAY OF CENTRAL MASSACHUSETTS
UNITED WAY OF FALL RIVER
UNITED WAY OF GREATER ATTLEBORO/TAUNTON
UNITED WAY OF GREATER NEW BEDFORD
UNITED WAY OF GREATER PLYMOUTH COUNTY
UNITED WAY OF HAMPSHIRE COUNTY



Nonprofit and Government Collaboration at Work: The Massachusetts Nonprofit Retirement Program

The Massachusetts Nonprofit Retirement program is an example of how nonprofits can work together on meaningful issues that strengthen the entire sector. In late 2012, Massachusetts became the first state in the nation to enact legislation that will provide affordable, accessible retirement

savings plans for nonprofit organizations, by leveraging existing state infrastructure at no additional cost to taxpayers. The legislation was signed into law by Governor Deval Patrick, following a joint advocacy effort led by the Massachusetts Nonprofit Network and the Office of the Treasurer, and supported by the Massachusetts Nonprofit Legislative Caucus and nonprofits across the Commonwealth.

The effort stemmed from a Boston Foundation/MNN study showing that fewer than 40% of small nonprofits provide retirement savings options to their employees. The impact of this finding was reinforced by a recent national study, conducted by Independent Sector and TIAA-CREF, showing that concerns about retirement represent a significant talent recruitment and retention challenge for the sector.

The nonprofit retirement program remains a strong public policy priority for MNN, which is working closely with the Treasury to obtain necessary program authorization from the IRS.

Participating Nonprofit Organizations

<p>22q Nation A Positive Place - CDHCC Acre Family Child Care Alexandra Rollins Associates Alliance for Nonprofit Management Alliance of MA YMCAs America SCORES Boston American Textile History Museum The Art Connection Arts Foundation Cape Cod Associated Grant Makers Bay Path College Graduate Programs in Nonprofit Management Ben Speaks Berkshire County Head Start Berkshire Film and Media Collaborative Berkshire Historical Society at Herman Melville's Arrowhead Berkshire Natural Resources Council Berkshire South Regional Community Center Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation Beverly Historical Society The Bidwell House Museum Big Brothers Big Sisters of Central Mass/Metrowest Big Brothers Big Sisters of Franklin County Big Brothers Big Sisters of Massachusetts Bay Blue Rider Stables Boston Cares Boston Center for the Arts Boston Chinatown Neighborhood Center The Boston Foundation Boston Women's Fund Boys & Girls Club of Fall River Boys & Girls Club of Webster Dudley Brockton Area Workforce Investment Board Brookline Teen Center Cape & Islands Dept. of Transitional Assistance Cape Abilities The Cape Cod Foundation Cape Cod Volunteers CASA Center for EcoTechnology Center for Nonprofit Management at Stonehill College Central Berkshire Habitat for Humanity Charles River Conservancy Citizens' Housing and Planning Association City Year Boston Close to Home Coalition for a Better Acre Community Access to the Arts Community Action Community Dispute Settlement Center Community Health Programs Community Servings Community Teamwork, Inc.</p>	<p>Community Foundation of Western Massachusetts Community Foundation for Nantucket Country Dance & Song Society Cutchins Programs for Children and Families Dalton Historical Commission Danforth Art Dimock Community Health Center The Discovery Museums The Educational Foundation for Dennis & Yarmouth Emerson College Family Service Association Family Services of Central MA Fertility Within Reach Flying Cloud The Food Bank of Western Massachusetts Friends of the Homeless FUEL Education Gill-Montague Regional Schools Girl Scouts of Eastern MA Gladys Allen Brigham Community Center Goodwill Industries of the Berkshires Gould Farm The Great Barrington Historical Society Greater Lowell Elder Mental Health Collaborative Greater Worcester Community Foundation Habitat for Humanity of Greater Lowell Hancock Shaker Village Harwich Chamber of Commerce Healing Abuse, Working for Change Health Imperatives Healthy Smart Homes Hockomock Area YMCA Home Funders Collaborative Homes for Families The Independent Transportation Network of Greater Boston Interfaith Social Services IS183, Art School of the Berkshires Jane Doe, Inc Jericho Road Project JVS Lanton Cheesecakes Company Leadership Metrowest Lee Youth Association Legal Center for Nonprofits The Lenny Zakim Fund LifeLinks The Literacy Project, Inc. Lowell Association for the Blind Lowell Community Health Center Lowell House, Inc. Lowell Telecommunications LUK, Inc. Main Street Partners Mass Mentoring Partnership</p>	<p>Massachusetts Alliance of Portuguese Speakers Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts Massachusetts Education and Career Opportunities Massachusetts Service Alliance MassBudget MASSCreative Maudsley Parents Merrimack Valley Food Bank Metrowest Nonprofit Network MetroWest Tourism & Visitors Bureau MetroWest YMCA Nantucket Interfaith Council/Rental Assistance National Parents Organization National Senior Network Nativity School of Worcester NCAR</p>	<p>Screening for Mental Health, Inc. Seafarer's Friend Shakespeare & Company SHARE Foundation Sight Loss Services, Inc South Coast Regional Network to End Homelessness Southeast Asian Coalition of Central MA Southeastern Massachusetts Pine Barrens Alliance STRIVE Temple Israel of Natick Third Sector New England Trips for Kids New Bedford UMASS Boston - John W. McCormack Graduate School of Policy Studies UMass Lowell/NonProfit Alliance of Greater Lowell United Teen Equality Center</p>
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Nearly 300 leaders, from more than 200 organizations, participated in the 9 focus group discussions.

<p>New Art Center New England Outreach Program New England Paralyzed Veterans of America NHN Food Pantry Northeast Center for Youth and Families Northeast Institute for Quality Community Action Northern Berkshire Community Coalition OpenAirBoston/TechGoesHome Operation A.B.L.E. of Greater Boston, Inc. Otis Library Pittsfield Family YMCA Presente.org Railroad Street Youth Project Rainbow Child Development Center Reader to Reader Regional Environmental Council of Central Massachusetts RFK Childrens Action Corps Rick's Place Riverbrook Residence Rose Kennedy Greenway Conservancy RSVP of Hampshire & Franklin Counties Scleroderma Foundation New England</p>	<p>United Way of Greater Attleboro/Taunton United Way of Greater Fall River United Way of Greater New Bedford United Way of Greater Plymouth County United Way of Hampshire County United Way of Massachusetts Bay and Merrimack Valley United Way of Tri-County UMASS Amherst USS Constitution Museum WAM Theater Watertown Community Foundation Wayside Youth & Family Support Network Western Mass. Network to End Homelessness Wheelock College Department of Leadership and Policy Williamstown Community Chest The Women's Center Worcester Community Action Council YNPN Boston YWCA of Central Mass YWCA Southeastern Massachusetts</p>
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