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When Saying “No” Isn’t Enough

In September, New York City Mayor Eric Adams directed every city agency to submit plans to cut spending by up to 15% during the current fiscal year, citing slowing revenue growth and the financial strain caused by housing and caring for migrants. He held out hope that the cuts won’t be needed if the federal and state governments provided resources, but otherwise did not share much information about the depth of the crisis or the rationale for across-the-board reductions.

Since the City government depends heavily on local nonprofits to provide social services and other programs to residents on behalf of the government, the Mayor’s plan makes clear that dollars for programs performed by nonprofits may soon become scarce. Charitable nonprofits now must choose between (1) accepting the City’s deep cuts and trying to make do as best they can, (2) saying “no” in the face of dire predictions about human suffering, or (3) mobilizing to demand that the voices of nonprofits and the people they serve are part of the decision-making process. **Nonprofit New York** and others are launching this third approach.



Called the [#WHY15 campaign](#), New York nonprofits are taking to social media with a two-pronged plan to get the facts and finances used to justify the draconian cuts and raise awareness about who they are and what they do. The first step is a [sign-on letter to the City government](#) calling for “transparency about the basis of the 15% reduction, calls for clarity about which services will be cut, and urges that the nonprofit sector be meaningfully included in the budget planning process.” The letter states, “Nonprofits want to serve our communities, and we cannot do that without clarity about what proposed cuts would mean.” It points out that NYC nonprofits have the expertise, perspective, and connection to community needed to make effective budgeting and programmatic decisions. “We are not asking for a pass on making necessary cuts,” the letter explains. Instead, nonprofits “are asking to be respected partners with real opportunities to help develop equitable and effective solutions.” See the [Open Letter to City Government from New York City’s Nonprofit Sector](#).

The second prong of the campaign taps the creativity of the nonprofit sector. Calling it the “15 Days of 15 Cuts Storytelling Campaign,” the organizers are seeking video testimonials to “illustrate what a 15% reduction in City funding would mean for our crucial organizations and the communities we serve.” They invite interested persons to contact Nonprofit New York via a [form](#). The videos and other information will be collected and shared through social media to provide a clearer picture for policymakers and the public of what a simplistic budgeting exercise will mean in the

real world.

The campaign's call to action is succinct and inspiring:

Please join us to help make the case that all New Yorkers win when nonprofits have substantive, timely, and influential roles in developing and implementing problem-solving plans for our communities.