



## Nonprofit Trends to Watch in 2015

### What are the implications for nonprofit staff, board members, donors, and community leaders?

**The resource squeeze:** Nonprofit leaders' biggest challenge for 2015 remains finding resources, including raising the money needed to sustainably advance nonprofit missions. (*You can read more about this and the next three trends [on our blog.](#)*)

**Increasing needs in communities:** In a trend that started just before the Great Recession hit, increasing needs in communities will continue to outpace the nonprofit sector's current capability to meet those needs.

**Governments shifting burdens to nonprofits:** State and local governments will likely continue to look to the limited resources of charitable nonprofits to fill their own budget holes or expect nonprofits to fill the gaps when governments walk away from existing needs in communities.

**Advancing missions through advocacy:** Nonprofit staff, [board members](#), and [grantmakers](#) alike are becoming more aware of the need to engage in advocacy to remove barriers and protect and promote nonprofit missions.

**Truth trumps myths about overhead:** Nonprofits are increasingly pushing back against the widespread [misunderstanding of overhead](#) and using transparency to help donors, grantmakers, and governments understand that it costs something to deliver a nonprofit's mission. [#OwnYourOwnCosts](#)

**The sharing economy:** Collaboration in the age of the sharing economy looks a little different than in the past. In addition to more shared back office operations, [space sharing](#) by nonprofits is more common; we're seeing a trend that is expanding sharing to many administrative functions, including [shared workers](#).

**Donor don't just give, they engage:** Today a donor's "engagement journey" to a nonprofit looks very different from the past. Different donors take different journeys, which is driving nonprofits to segment their messages and strategize communications across multiple channels and devices. This is bigger than just "mobile." Being up-to-speed with the latest technology and best practices in communications/marketing is no longer optional – it's mandatory for a nonprofit's sustainability and effectiveness.

**I'm your leader but where are we going?** An alarming number of nonprofits report that they have no [succession plans](#), meaning that as Baby-Boomers retire and/or burn-out, the Millennials and Gen Xers taking the reins too often are forced to do so without the support of an intentional process. While the for-profit sector invests gobs in its own leadership, unfortunately [the nonprofit sector is woefully behind](#).

**Skilled volunteers are the new pro bono:** It used to be that [pro bono](#) was only for lawyers and CPAs. Now all types of skilled volunteers are looking for ways to contribute their expertise to causes. They are linking up with nonprofits through "supported pro bono" programs that streamline the process, ensure that the project is teed up and ready for a volunteer, and that the volunteer has the right expertise and also understands the nonprofit landscape.

**Crowdfunding:** We didn't need the ALS ice-bucket challenge to tell us that [crowdfunding](#) is a new, highly interactive way for nonprofits to attract donations. Query: Is it a fad that will fade with donor fatigue? Are dedicated "giving days" just aggregating giving that would occur anyway? Despite all the fun and hype, crowdfunding has its drawbacks, such as the legal liability concern that will remain as long as state laws regulating nonprofits that solicit funds across state lines remain murky.

## About the National Council of Nonprofits

The National Council of Nonprofits (Council of Nonprofits) is a trusted resource and advocate for America's charitable nonprofits. Through our powerful network of State Associations and 25,000-plus members – the nation's largest network of nonprofits – we serve as a central coordinator and mobilizer to help nonprofits achieve greater collective impact in local communities across the country. We identify emerging trends, share proven practices, and promote solutions that benefit charitable nonprofits and the communities they serve.

The National Council of Nonprofits highlights trends that affect charitable nonprofits throughout the year through [two e-newsletters](#), Nonprofit Knowledge Matters and Nonprofit Advocacy Matters, and on the [nonprofit sector trends hub on its website](#).

