

NONPROFIT NEW YORK

A relentless,
collective
force for good.

NONPROFIT NEW YORK'S DECLARATION OF NONPROFIT RIGHTS Summary

The nonprofit sector is a mighty force for change. Nonprofits are critical members of our communities, strong economic engines, employers of millions of workers, and contribute to the growth and stability of the United States by improving the social conditions and remedying the marginalization of the most vulnerable members of society. The nonprofit sector is a barometer of the health of the entire nation. A vibrant nonprofit sector contributes to a high level of civic engagement, government transparency and accountability, human dignity, nondiscrimination, and participation of all members of society. A robust nonprofit sector generates jobs, health, ability, and hope.

As communities are threatened by harsh and punitive public policy and law, an engaged nonprofit sector ensures economic, social, political, and cultural livelihood. As nonprofits face reduced funding and weakened infrastructure, the sector needs a collective strategy for what will keep nonprofits healthy and effective.

Nonprofit New York champions the nonprofit sector and advocates for nonprofits and policies that create a brave, innovative, equitable, and effective sector. Nonprofit New York helps nonprofits lead policy dialogue, assuring “nothing about us without us.”

Nonprofit New York is nonpartisan and works to build a powerful nonprofit community that not just survives, but thrives. Nonprofits require the best possible environment to fulfill their mission. To that end, Nonprofit New York's public policy advocacy agenda is rooted in this Declaration of Nonprofit Rights.

In order to ensure the nonprofit sector's continued vibrancy, strength and capacity, Nonprofit New York will protect, uphold and sustain the following four principles:

NONPROFIT NEW YORK'S DECLARATION OF NONPROFIT RIGHTS

We have a right to sustainable resources and a responsibility to serve our communities well.

We have a right to engage in advocacy and a responsibility to share our expertise.

We have a right to be fairly treated as a workforce and a responsibility to champion equity.

We have a right to be powerful forces of change and a responsibility to advance the future of all communities.

NONPROFIT NEW YORK'S DECLARATION OF NONPROFIT RIGHTS

Detail

1. The **right to sustainable resources and the responsibility to serve all communities well.** Nonprofits must have the capacity to achieve their charitable goals, and to build the sustainability and resiliency of the individuals and organizations comprising the sector. Nonprofits have the responsibility to execute goals well, with transparency, integrity, and impact. This means that the nonprofit sector needs:
 - a. Financial support: Nonprofit funding must pay for the true cost of the work that nonprofits do to achieve their goals, which includes the direct program costs, indirect costs, and the costs of capital investments necessary to maintain their programs. This funding must be multi-year, general operating support that allows investment in programs, infrastructure, capacity, and partnerships.
 - b. Non-monetary support: Nonprofits must have access to non-financial support, such as volunteers and pro bono resources. Nonprofits can engage community members by providing meaningful opportunities for volunteering which provide immense value to volunteers, the sector, and communities. Nonprofits must also integrate their work into wider civic engagement, drawing on the commitment, passion, and engagement of civic actors and leaders.
 - c. Fair oversight: The nonprofit sector must be regulated through a robust legal, political, and regulatory framework that safeguards freedoms and treats nonprofits equitably. This oversight must promote the work of the nonprofit sector through the preservation of charitable deductions and all relevant tax exemptions that the nonprofit sector receives in return for its charitable work. The sector must not be subject to unnecessarily complex, duplicative regulations that result in unfunded mandates with high costs and administrative burdens.
 - d. Accurate calculations of true costs: Nonprofits must clearly calculate and define the cost of their work, including indirect costs necessary to fully meet their missions. In doing so, nonprofits can more accurately assess, and communicate, the true cost of their short and long-term goals, including costs not covered by current funding and resources necessary for future capital needs.
 - e. Real impact: Nonprofits' work is often hard to measure, and success can happen over decades or even generations. Funding must include resources for nonprofits to thoughtfully establish, monitor, and report metrics that show progress in work and, where possible, the impact of community activities and programs. Nonprofits must determine for themselves the key performance indicators when measuring impact, as they are best situated to define success and progress of their work.

2. The **right to engage in advocacy and the responsibility to share their expertise**. Nonprofits work directly with communities most impacted by the problems they are trying to solve. Many nonprofits are led by or employ community members. Within the nonprofit sector is expertise and experience that is vital to the public dialogue. Nonprofits have developed deep and broad expertise on the most pressing societal issues and have a responsibility to contribute to public policy discussions that impact the sector and the entire nation. Nonprofits require:
 - a. Advocacy: Nonprofits must take public positions on issues central to their mission and work without fear of recrimination or being subject to derogation and de-legitimization. The nonprofit sector must be able to contribute recommendations critical to decision-making processes regarding policies, laws and regulations that impact the sector and the nation.
 - b. Knowledge sharing: The nonprofit sector must be an active participant in conversations that promote and receive free flow of information, data, policy, and ideas from diverse sources to promote innovation and engagement. Nonprofits can and must actively contribute their expertise throughout the sector and with the government and business sectors. Nonprofits should be a key partner in government and business initiatives aimed at solving social problems.
 - c. Sector promotion: The nonprofit sector comprises efficient, effective, and well-run institutions, but are often subject to baseless myths or stereotypes of lack of competence that harm the sector and their important work. Nonprofits' expertise and experience with operations, programs, policy, and governance, and that of the communities served, must be promoted when talking about the value of the sector.
 - d. Transparent nonpartisanship: Nonprofits are and must be nonpartisan organizations. Nonprofits must ensure that the public's trust in the sector, and therefore their independence and effectiveness, is not threatened by any perception of being partisan.

3. The **right to be fairly treated as a workforce and a responsibility to champion equity**. The nonprofit sector is a significant national workforce, with expert and skilled workers, whose jobs are devoted to the achievement of the sector's missions. Nonprofits must be able to invest resources that allow workers to devote the time necessary to support constituent and community needs, and the ability to provide for themselves and their families an existence worthy of human dignity. This means that the sector requires:
- a. Safety and security of the workforce: This includes the freedom from threat or imposition of any surveillance, arrest, deportation, registration, and other similar acts directed at any employees or volunteers simply because they are nonprofit workers. This freedom must extend across age, race, gender, ability, sexual orientation, national origin, religion, immigration status, socioeconomic status, culture, and political affiliation.
 - b. Fair labor standards: Nonprofits must provide just compensation, decent hours, work/life balance, diverse and inclusive workplaces. Facilities must provide professional development, intentional leadership paths, and opportunities to increase worker expertise and authority. Adequate health and retirement benefits are necessary to assure the health of nonprofit workers during and after their careers.
 - c. Freedom from violence: Nonprofit workers may face violence or the threat of violence simply because of the issues they champion. Nonprofits must have the resources and support to prevent harm to any workers, organizations, or communities. The government must support these efforts through policies that protect nonprofit workers' safety.
 - d. Leadership on workplace equity: Nonprofits are agents for social change and must lead and champion the work for equity within the sector. This includes investing in diverse staff, Board members, and volunteers at all stages of their work. This also means intentionally creating inclusive leadership pipelines and shifting policies and procedures to promote equity.
 - e. Leadership on sector equity: Nonprofits must bring an intersectional, inclusive, and equitable lens to all of their work, programs, and positions, including assessing and changing nonprofit sector goals that may intentionally or unintentionally maintain or replicate systemic oppression.

4. The **right to be powerful forces of change and the responsibility to advance the future of all communities**. Nonprofits will continue to evolve as communities' needs for support and services grow, political landscapes shift, and the government continues to outsource some of its obligations for human services, culture, health, environment, and education progress to nonprofits. Through this evolution, our goal will remain constant – to promote the wellbeing of our communities. To do this nonprofits need:
 - a. To develop proactive solutions: The nonprofit sector is closest to the challenges it seeks to address and the communities most impacted. Nonprofits can and must use its expertise and leadership to create and amplify proactive solutions to societal problems.
 - b. To invest in long-term innovation: Nonprofits must invest in long-term innovation for their operations, program, and vision. This innovation must be incorporated into strategic goals and recognized as integral to current program success and future innovation.
 - c. To build intersectionality: Nonprofits must develop effective partnerships with the government and private sectors to strengthen the collective ability to establish charitable ventures and endeavors, support emerging activism, and engage with social entrepreneurs to catalyze innovation for the public good.
 - d. Community leadership: Nonprofits help communities solve problems and must respect and promote the strategies of people most affected by the problems. Nonprofits must create positions of power and leadership for affected community members by sharing resources, strategies, knowledge, and the public platform.