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# NONPROFIT LEADER STUDY

Exploring Change Management in the Nonprofit Sector

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In a post-pandemic context of societal divides, economic pressures, and persistent staffing shortages, nonprofit organizations face challenges in implementing change. A comprehensive study conducted by DickersonBakker, in partnership with Arbor Research Group, involving 615 nonprofit leaders, reveals critical insights into the obstacles and opportunities facing the sector. This report explores the key findings of the 2024 Nonprofit Leaders Survey, offering a roadmap for nonprofit leaders to navigate change effectively.

The respondents were predominantly in the 45-64 age range, with younger individuals (under 25) being underrepresented. There was a nearly even split between women and men.

In terms of roles, the largest groups were Directors or Supervisors (21.3%), Chief Executive Officers (16.7%), and Associate/Staff members (15.6%), indicating a good mix of leadership and frontline perspectives. The respondents came from diverse nonprofit sectors, with K-12 Education (22.6%), Social Services (21.0%), and Higher Education (13.1%) being the most represented. The organizations varied widely in size, with annual budgets ranging from less than \$500,000 to over \$100 million, providing insights from both small and large nonprofits.

1. **Leadership** while not commonly seen as a hindrance to change, is universally recognized as crucial in driving organizational transformation in nonprofit work. The view of the effectiveness and role of leadership within an organization can differ when comparing the leader's perspective and that of the staff or employees.

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2. **Staff Exhaustion and Limited Staffing** are the most common obstacles and challenges that nonprofits face.
  - 78% of respondents identified limited staffing and time as significant obstacles, affecting their capacity to implement necessary changes and manage operational demands effectively.
  - The two significant challenges under staffing issues include operational overload (23%) and staffing shortages (21%).

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3. **Communication Gaps** were identified by 61% of respondents as hindering growth and change implementation. Ineffective communication strategy was the top issue (50%), affecting coordination and engagement across the organization.

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4. **Budget Constraints** are a significant concern, with 72% citing limited budget/resources as a challenge. The leading budget challenges include fundraising and donor management (19%), financial constraints or funding challenges (17%), and staff/personnel needs (16%).

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5. **Technology and Systems** were a persistent challenge, with 57% reporting limited IT as an obstacle to change. Consistently connected to budget problems, technology and systems were identified to have integration issues (20%) or be obsolete (16%). Technology inhibits change by limited communication and donor management.



**6. Change Management and Strategy.** Fear of change was identified by 52% of nonprofit leaders and staff as a barrier, with the resistance often tied to organizational inertia and tradition (24%). Another 49% noted unclear strategy as the challenge, with decision-making issues (21%) and a lack of clear strategic direction (19%) also significant. Surprisingly, fewer than half (43%) of organizations are actively modifying their strategies in the current post-pandemic context.

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**7.** There's considerable variance in the types of changes organizations are implementing. In the last five years, 49.3% of the organizations had expanded operations or staffing while 36.9% had a significant reorganization. Surprisingly, due to the strength of responses around this category, just 24.3% of respondents said that their organization had a significant reduction in staff in the previous five years.

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“ Limited staffing, squeezed budgets and gaps in communication create the perfect storm for employee exhaustion and staff turnover. This severely hinders efforts to introduce change — and the ability to change is crucial at a time when organizations face multiple challenges to adapt, grow, and even just to survive.

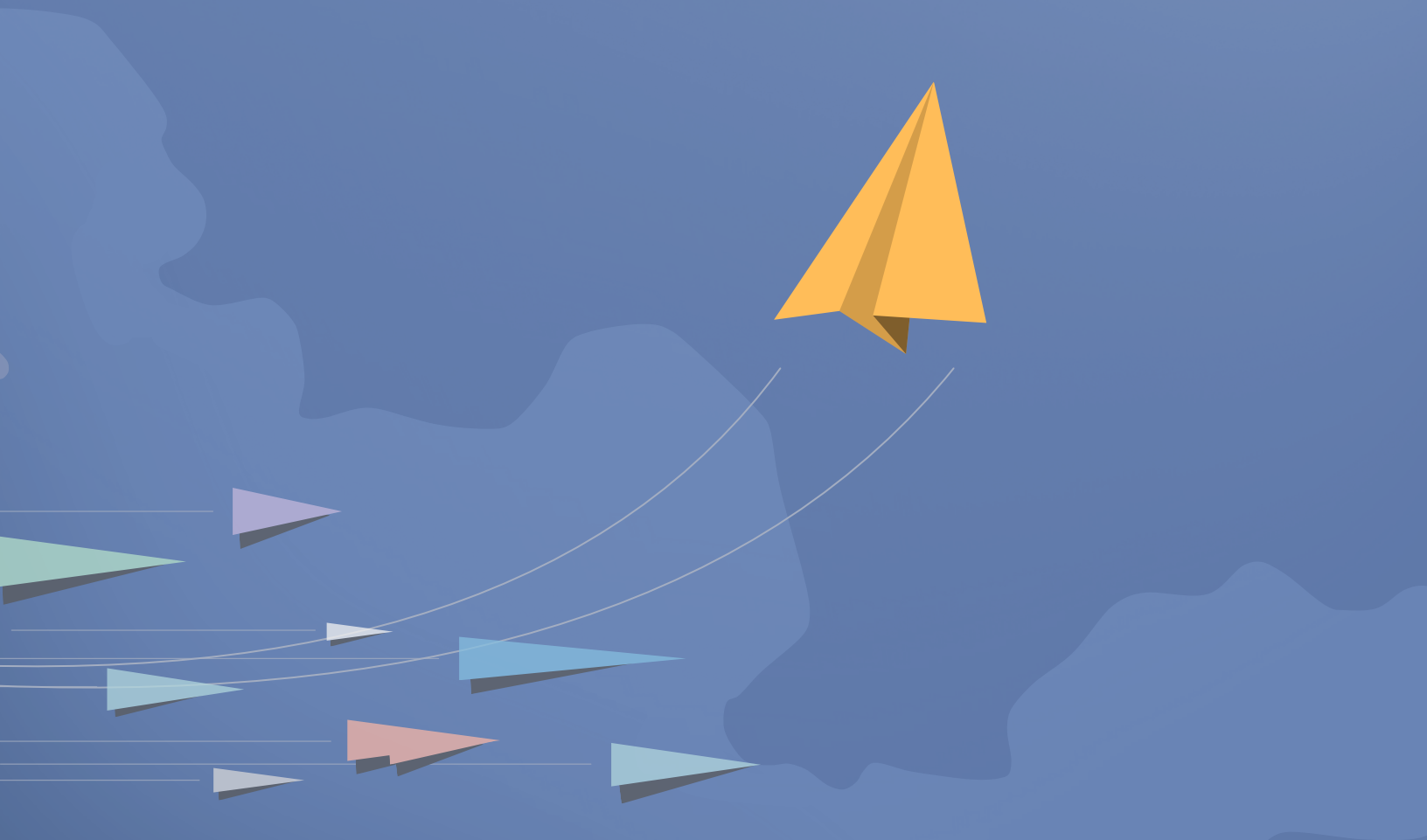
However, despite all the challenges, there has never been a better time for nonprofits to grasp the opportunities and expertise available to them to change and grow. ”

**-Derric Bakker, MBA**

President & CEO, DickersonBakker

# MAJOR FINDINGS

We asked a series of detailed questions around ten common obstacles to change, asking respondents if this area had limited change within their organization or not. If they indicated it was a problem, we then asked them for examples. Limited staff/time (78%) and limited budget/resources were significantly more problematic while lack of leadership (51% said it was not an obstacle), personal agendas/politics (43%), and unclear strategy (40%) were significantly less often identified as obstacles.



## Chart 1 - Reflect on your organization's change initiatives over the last two years. From your point of view, have any of the following introduced significant challenges or obstacles for you or your team, impacting your organization's success in achieving its goals?

Investment Area	No	Yes	Not Sure
Limited budget/resources	24%	72%	4%
Lack of leadership	51%	41%	8%
Lack of necessary skills	39%	49%	12%
Personal agendas/politics	43%	43%	15%
Organizational cultural problems	36%	56%	8%
Fear of change (risk aversion, the status quo)	34%	52%	14%
Limited technology/systems	34%	57%	9%
Limited staffing/time	17%	78%	4%
Communication gaps	29%	61%	10%
Unclear strategy	40%	49%	10%

### The top challenges/obstacles were far & away:

- Limited Staffing/Time (78%)
- Limited Budget/Resources (72%)
- Communication Gaps (61%)

### There was a middle group of:

- Limited Technology/Systems (57%)
- Organizational Cultural Problems (56%)

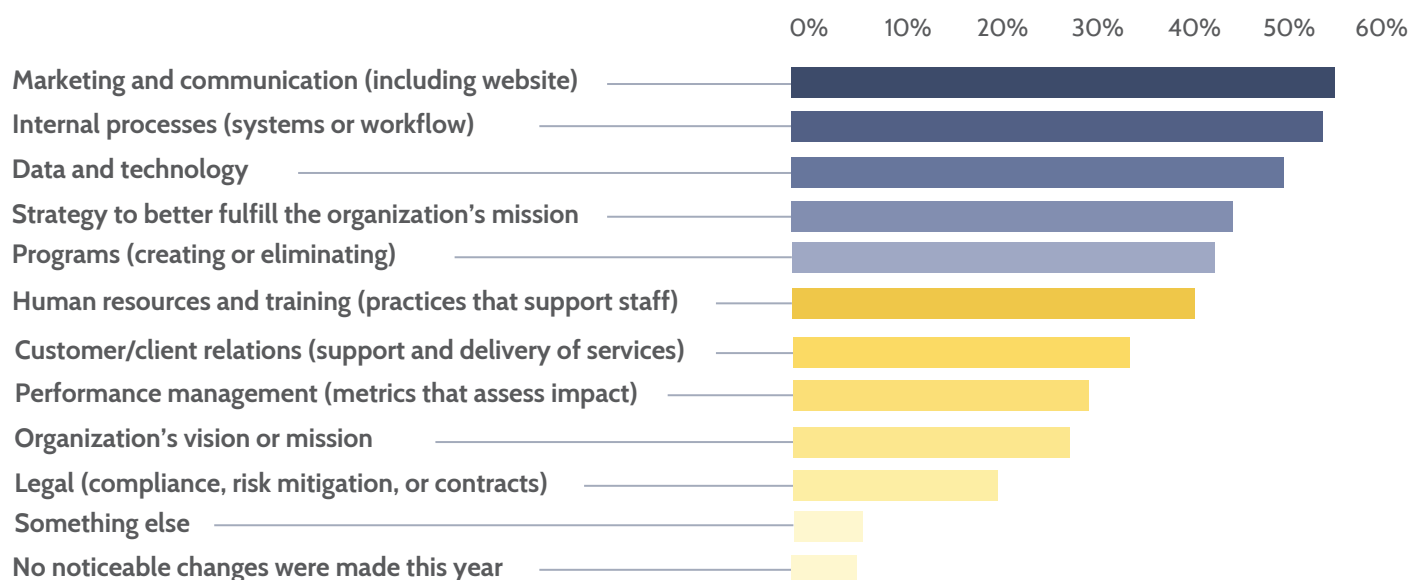
It's notable that the lowest percentage (Lack of Leadership) was over 40% (41%), suggesting that a fair number of organizations are experiencing many challenges to change.

We can say further that nonprofit organizations are trying a lot of things as they face a range of challenges to adapt, grow, and survive. Organizations are changing a mix of marketing, internal processes, technology, and other areas at significant levels. “Human resources and training” was sixth on the list (39.8%).

In fact, the top six are significant enough that it seems like organizations are currently considering changes in many areas.

Interestingly, while marketing and communication (54.2%) and internal processes (53.7%) top the list of areas where changes have been implemented, human resources and training practices that support staff (39.8%) rank sixth. This discrepancy between the recognized need for addressing staffing issues and the actual implementation of supportive practices presents a paradox that nonprofit leaders must address.

## Chart 2 – Reflecting on the past 18-24 months, in what key areas has your organization implemented changes?



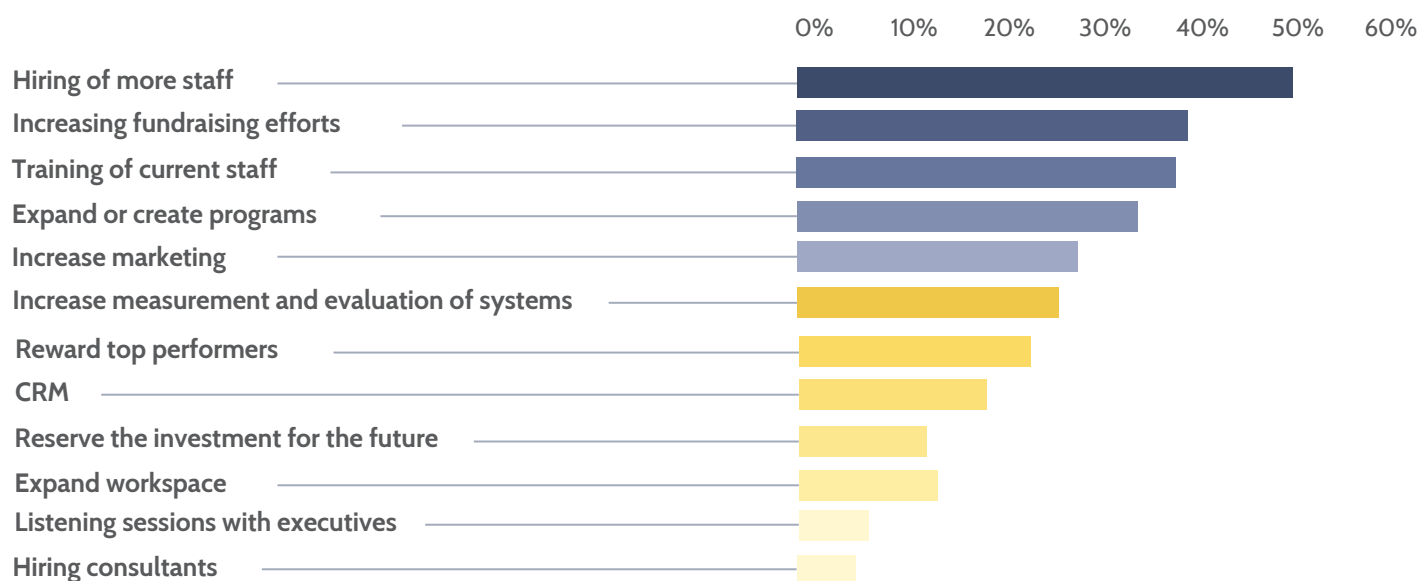
Area of Change	Percent
Marketing and communication (including website)	54.2%
Internal processes (systems or workflow)	53.7%
Data and technology	48.3%
Strategy to better fulfill the organization's mission	43.1%
Programs (creating or eliminating)	42.5%
Human resources and training (practices that support staff)	39.8%
Customer/client relations (support and delivery of services)	34.6%
Performance management (metrics that assess impact)	30.6%
Organization's vision or mission	23.8%
Legal (compliance, risk mitigation, or contracts)	20.0%
Something else - Write in	9.0%
No noticeable changes were made this year	6.3%

What is notable is comparing these changes to what nonprofit leaders and staff would invest in if they were in charge of unassigned funds (Chart 2.1), nearly half would spend it on hiring additional staff.

## A CEO in the social services sector said:

*“It is amazing how many hats each person has to wear at a nonprofit. You really do have to be a jack of all trades. Unfortunately, that can take people away from what they are very good at. It can hinder movement and strategy when you are always being pulled into multiple job duties.”*

**Chart 2.1 – Considering your organization's immediate future and critical needs, if you had discretion over unassigned funds, which three areas would you prioritize for investment? Please select the options that would most effectively prepare your organization for making changes.**



Desired Option	Percent
Hiring of more staff	49.3%
Increase fundraising efforts	39.3%
Training of current staff	37.8%
Expand or create programs	32.2%
Increase marketing	26.3%
Increase measurements and evaluation of systems	25.2%
Reward top performers	21.1%
CRM	18.1%
Reserve the Investment for the future	13.7%
Expand workspace	12.6%
Listening sessions with executives	6.7%
Hiring consultants	6.3%

*When we dialed in to see if leaders, middle managers/directors, and frontline staff differed in where they would invest, there was general unanimity.*



## Chart 2.2

Investment Area	Executive Leaders	Managers & Directors	Staff & Employees	NET
Hiring of more staff	46%	51%	49%	49%
Increase fundraising efforts	37%	44%	27%	39%
Training of current staff	38%	34%	51%	38%
Expand or create programs	40%	22%	33%	32%
Increase marketing	30%	31%	20%	27%
Increase measurement and evaluation of systems	28%	28%	20%	26%
Reward top performers	24%	17%	31%	21%
CRM	9%	23%	20%	18%
Reserve the investment for the future	17%	11%	13%	13%
Expand workspace	12%	10%	13%	12%
Listening sessions with executives	6%	9%	2%	7%
Hiring consultants	6%	5%	7%	6%

Staff and employees said they would be significantly more likely to invest in training (51%) while executive leaders would most likely select expanding or creating programs (40%). Ironically, managers would be LESS likely (22%) to invest in expanding or creating new programs. The top three, hiring of more staff (49%), increase fundraising efforts (39%), and training of current staff (38%) were largely agreed upon needs.

## A VP in the healthcare sector said:

*“ Overburdened staff leads to burnout and reduces their ability to engage in strategic initiatives, affecting overall organizational performance. ”*

## THE STAFFING CONUNDRUM: EXHAUSTION AND LIMITATIONS

The most pressing issue facing nonprofits is the state of their human resources. A staggering 78% (Chart 1) of respondents identified limited staffing and time as the most common and significant obstacle to implementing change. This challenge is compounded by widespread staff exhaustion, with 73.8% of leaders agreeing that it poses a substantial barrier to implementing change.

Chart 3 shows the severity of staff exhaustion, with 73.8% agreeing that it was an obstacle or challenge to organizations implementing change. The exhaustion is always statistically tied to staffing issues (both in levels and turnover), which is always tied statistically to budgetary limits.

**Chart 3** – *Reflecting on your personal experiences and observations, please assess the impact of each area listed below on its challenge to implement change. For each area, indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with the statement: ‘This area has posed challenges to implementing change in my organization.’*

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Staff turnover	9.1%	17.1%	11.8%	33.1%	23.6%
Volunteer attrition	9.4%	18.9%	23.6%	22.4%	7.5%
Inadequate support from board members	15.0%	19.3%	16.1%	27.6%	14.2%
Staff exhaustion/feeling overwhelmed	2.7%	8.2%	14.1%	36.5%	37.3%

When we look deeper into the data, staff turnover was most prominent in the education (35.4%) and social services (23.6%) sectors. When we isolated those who said that exhaustion and feeling overwhelmed were factors, we found that they said “YES” to nearly every identified challenge or obstacle and

overwhelmingly said that hiring more staff would be their priority. Over half (56.7%) of participants from nonprofit organizations reported that staff turnover had limited their ability to implement change. About a quarter 26.2% said that it wasn’t an obstacle.

***Exhausted and overwhelmed respondents faced pervasive challenges, prioritizing staff expansion as a solution.***

Staffing problems aren't always a lack of staff – they could be missing skills or inexperienced/new staff. When someone answered “yes” to this significant challenge/obstacle, we asked them to share examples via three open-ended responses. Under the challenge of limited staffing and time, two themes were significantly higher on the list – “operational overload” and “staffing shortages.”

We dove in deeper into the data, looking for other significant relationships in the data. Two dominant and consistent problems emerged:



When there is high staff turnover, there is a significant relationship to low employee morale. High turnover leads to loss of institutional knowledge and continuity, impacting the organization's ability to implement and sustain changes effectively.



If there is a time constraint, there is limited time for strategic planning. This can create a vicious cycle in nonprofit leadership, where the lack of strategic planning aggravates other challenges, potentially leading to further time pressures.

The issue at hand is closely tied to staffing, but not necessarily in terms of adding more staff members. Rather, it's about fulfilling specific functions within an organization more effectively. Many organizations don't require additional personnel; instead, they need to better utilize existing resources or acquire specialized skill sets. This might involve hiring fractional employees with particular expertise rather than full-time staff. The absence of individuals with these crucial skills can often be a significant bottleneck for organizational progress.

From an organizational perspective, these missing elements frequently relate to what could be termed “human skills.” When these skills are not adequately represented or utilized within an organization, it can lead to noticeable gaps in performance or capability where a closer examination can reveal a wealth of untapped potential. This underscores the importance of identifying and addressing these skill gaps to enhance overall organizational effectiveness.

# COMMUNICATION: A CRITICAL WEAKNESS AND STRENGTH

The data shows that communication plays a dual role in organizational change. On one hand, it's a significant barrier (61% cited communication gaps as a major obstacle). On the other hand, when done well, it's a key factor in facilitating change (43.2% cited open communication as a positive influence). Poor communication can lead to misunderstandings, resistance,

and ineffective implementation of change. Good communication can create clarity, build trust, and foster engagement in the change process. While many organizations struggle with effective communication, those that excel in this area are better positioned to navigate change successfully.

*Statistically significant disparities in vision and other factors may indicate that leadership should examine how their behaviors and perspectives align with those of departing or burned-out employees, potentially influencing turnover rates.*



Clear vision was cited by a higher percentage of leaders (52.6%) as compared to staff (26.7%), indicating that leaders may have a clearer understanding or commitment to the organizational vision.



Open communication was more emphasized by leaders (47.4%) than staff (40.0%), suggesting differences in perceived communication effectiveness.



Communication gaps were most common in organizations with budgets of \$5 million –\$10 million.

While communication gaps were identified by a majority of respondents, limited technology and outdated systems emerged as a prevalent challenge, possibly reflecting a hesitancy to invest in these resources despite their impact on crucial functions like donor management and engagement. The presence of obsolete systems often leads to employee frustration and low morale, exacerbating organizational issues.

These technological constraints, combined with communication challenges, contribute to broader cultural problems within organizations, highlighting the interconnected nature of these barriers to change. Coming out of the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been an impact of work from home or hybrid work in some of these organizations. That will have a direct connection to communication gaps and the ways that leaders work...and it's going to have a direct connection to a feeling of culture. Analysis of the data reveals three significant correlations with communication gaps:



Those experiencing communication issues are more likely to also report an unclear strategy, suggesting a potential link between effective communication and strategic clarity.



Organizations experiencing communication problems are less likely to perceive their C-suite or vice-presidential teams as supportive of change initiatives, indicating a possible disconnect between leadership and the wider organization in change-ready environments.



Organizations with communication gaps are more prone to undergoing reorganizations or experiencing staff turnover.

While the exact figures vary, these correlations are statistically significant and underscore the far-reaching implications of communication deficiencies within organizational structures.

## The Role of Leadership in Change

While lack of leadership was not widely identified as an obstacle to change (51% said it was not an obstacle), the importance of leadership in driving change is unquestioned. 44.1% of respondents identified leadership support as the top factor influencing an organization's willingness to embrace change.

## Real Quotes From Survey Respondents: ▶▶

*“ Staff didn't seem to understand the importance of following the new communication protocols. ”*

*“ Senior management and owner make decisions without the buy-in of the department managers. ”*

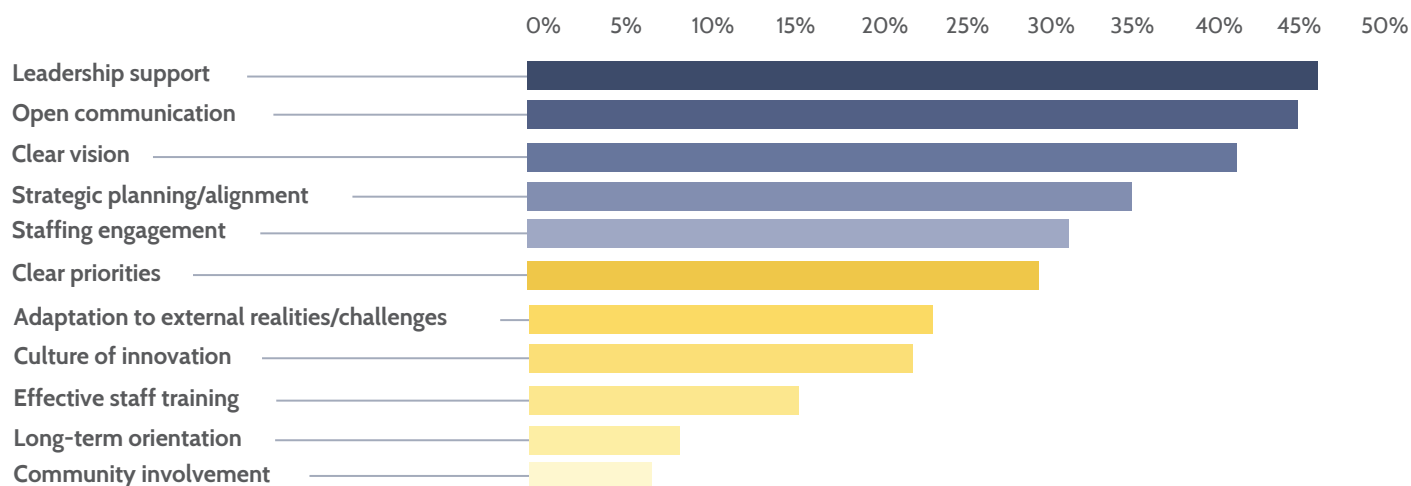
*“ New staff committee created to break down silos. Instead, they seem to have all the power at the organization without letting the rest of know what's going on. ”*

*“ The communication related to the unclear or changing strategy has limited us. ”*

*“ [There is no] clarity on who is making decisions, what is expected, or how to implement change. ”*



## Chart 5 – From your personal experience, which top *THREE* factors do you believe most strongly influence your organization's willingness to embrace change?



Value	Percent
Leadership support	44.1%
Open communication	43.2%
Clear vision	39.9%
Strategic planning/alignment	32.9%
Staff engagement	31.0%
Clear priorities	29.1%
Adaptation to external	22.5%
Culture of innovation	21.6%
Effective staff training	15.0%
Long-term orientation	8.0%
Community involvement	7.0%

In Chart 5 the perceived strength of effective leadership (44.1%), open communication (43.2%), and clear vision (39.9%) can be seen. Since we know that communication gaps was one of the top three obstacles, it follows that good communication helps lead change. Lack of leadership was viewed as a challenge by 50.0% of staff but only 27.9% of leaders, indicating a possible underestimation of leadership gaps by those in leadership positions themselves.

## *Have we come to terms with remote/hybrid work?*

*We asked three open-ended questions for each “yes” answer and remote or hybrid work only appeared seven times in over 5,000 responses, even among 555 responses regarding limited technology and 678 responses regarding limited staffing/time. Anecdotally it still seems like an issue nonprofit organizations are working on, but post-pandemic this population didn’t see it was part of the change process or future.*

That only 31% identified staff engagement as influential was a surprise, especially since respondents could select as many answers as desired. However, that percentage falls closely to the 27.8% that comprise “frontline staff” and “associate” roles. Is there a disparity between how leadership and staff see their role and influence in moments of change?

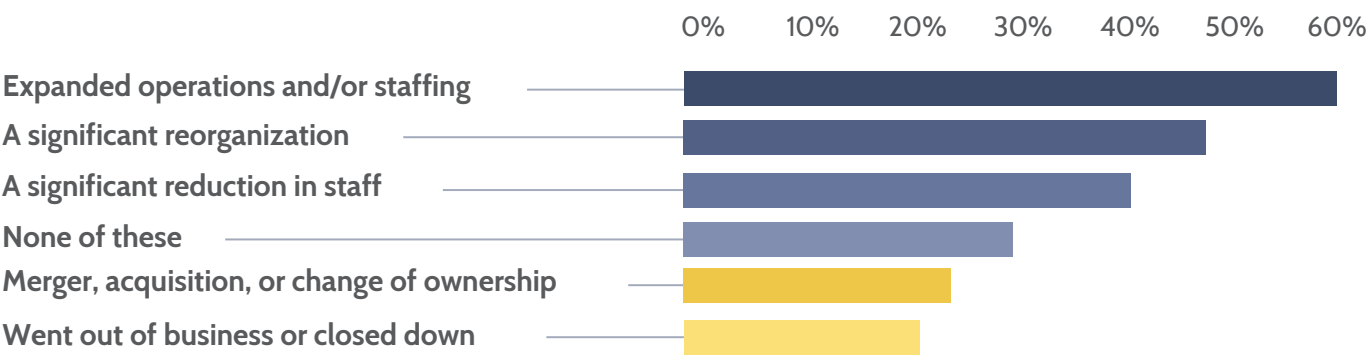
This data reveals an interplay between leadership styles, communication, and organizational dynamics. While leaders may perceive themselves as decisive, there's evidence of a disconnect where employees feel excluded from decision making processes. This situation is both recognizable and addressable in many organizational contexts. Notably, the specificity with which respondents describe these issues suggests a high level of awareness about organizational challenges.

Additionally, it's crucial to recognize that not every problem identified as a communication issue is solely about information flow. Often, what appears on the surface as a communication problem may, in fact, be rooted in power dynamics within the organization. The patterns emerging from this data strongly indicate that many of these perceived communication gaps may actually be expressions of underlying power imbalances or structural problems.

# WHY CHANGE IS SUCCESSFUL

It is obvious that the nonprofit sector has experienced significant changes over the past five years, as evidenced by our survey results. There is a dynamic nature of organizational shifts within the sector that contributed to BOTH growth and challenges. Nearly half of the surveyed organizations reported expansion, while over a third underwent major restructuring. The survey also reveals instances of staff reductions, mergers, and even closures, painting a complex picture of the evolving landscape of nonprofits.

**Chart 6 – In the last five years, what type of change has your organization experienced?**



Change	Percent
Expanded operations and/or staffing	49.3%
A significant reorganization	36.9%
A significant reduction in staff	24.3%
None of these	20.5%
Merger, acquisition, or change of ownership	15.3%
Went out of business or closed down	4.1%

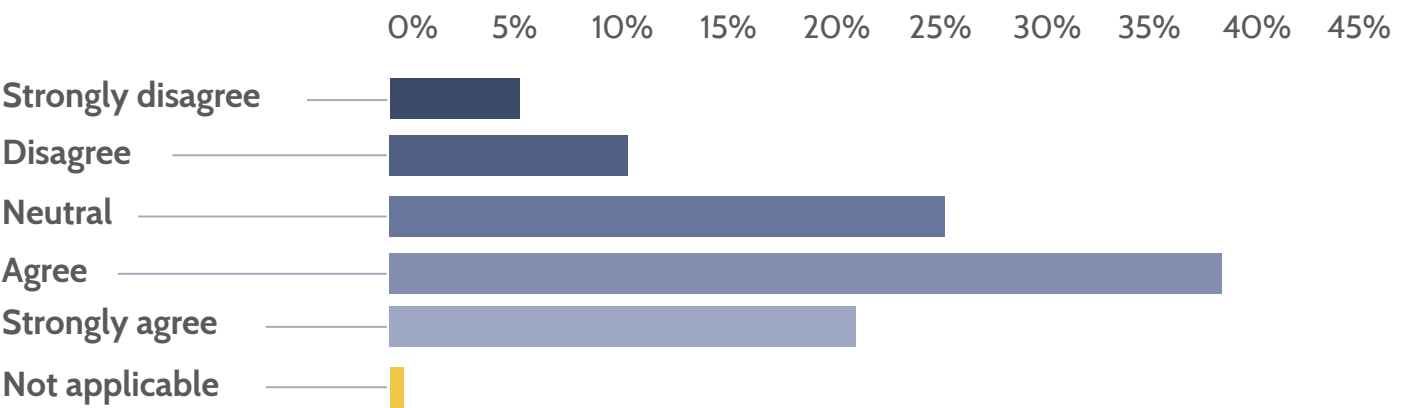
# THIS CHART SHOWS THREE MACROTRENDS...

- 1. Growth and Expansion:** Nearly half (49.3%) of the surveyed organizations reported expanding their operations and/or staffing in the last five years. This suggests a generally positive trend in the nonprofit sector, with many organizations experiencing growth despite potential challenges.
- 2. Significant Organizational Change:** A substantial portion of nonprofits have undergone major internal changes. 36.9% reported a significant reorganization, while 15.3% experienced a merger, acquisition, or change of ownership. This indicates that many nonprofits are actively adapting their structures and operations, possibly in response to changing environments or to improve efficiency in a challenging economic context.
- 3. Resilience Amid Challenges:** The fact that only about a quarter (24.3%) faced major staff cuts, despite various challenges, suggests a level of resilience in the sector. However, the data also highlights that a notable portion of nonprofits are facing difficulties that have required downsizing or closure.

**In the dynamic nonprofit sector, it seems as if change has become a defining characteristic.**

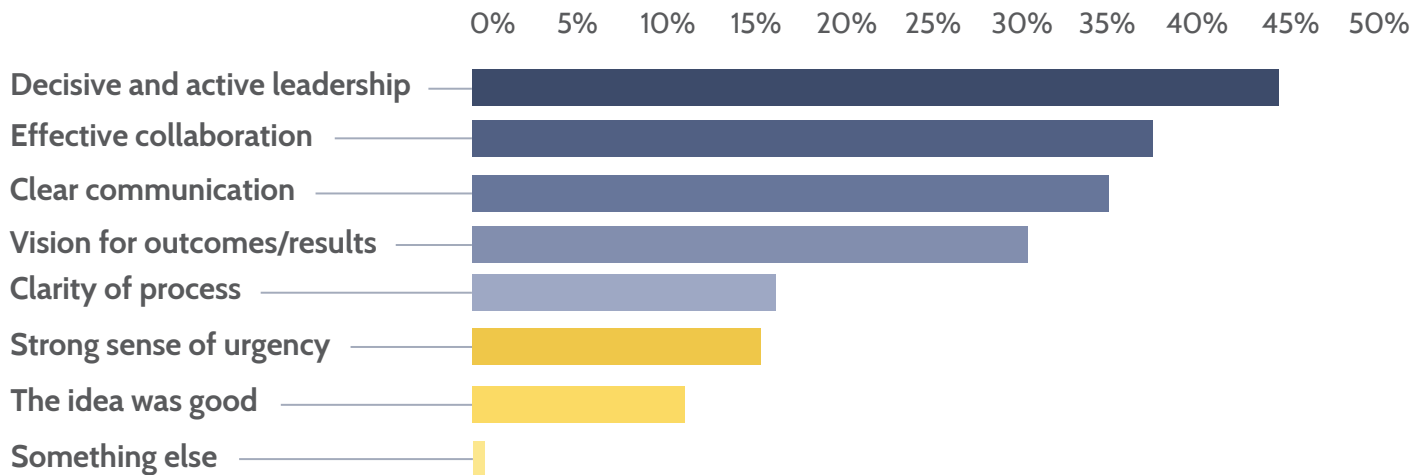
However, the critical question remains: How effectively are these organizations implementing these changes? We asked these nonprofit leaders to assess their organizations' recent performance in change management. Their responses offer a compelling snapshot of a sector in transition, where the ability to navigate change effectively is increasingly vital to an organization's success and sustainability.

**Chart 7** – *Think about your organization's history with change initiatives over the last two years and respond to this statement: 'My organization has a recent history of success with change initiatives.'*



Response	Percent
Strongly disagree	4.8%
Disagree	9.9%
Neutral	23.3%
Agree	38.7%
Strongly agree	21.8%
Not applicable	1.5%

**Chart 8** – Based on your experience, what TWO factors contributed most to that change effort's success? (for those who selected 'Agree' or 'Strongly Agree' on Chart 7)



Success Source	Percent
Decisive and active leadership	45.9%
Effective collaboration	39.1%
Clear communication	35.6%
Vision for outcomes/results	29.6%
Clarity of process	17.2%
Strong sense of urgency	15.9%
The idea was good	11.2%
Something else	2.1%



The relationship between leadership roles and organizational change success is complex and potentially subject to bias. While decisive leadership is often cited as a key factor in successful change initiatives, leaders may have blind spots that prevent them from recognizing communication gaps or other issues within their organizations. This gap could lead to a situation where leaders attribute success solely to their decisiveness, overlooking other critical factors that may have contributed to or hindered the change process.

The reminder here is that 38% of respondents did not agree that their organization had success with change initiatives. So, more than a third of organizations would not identify as having been successful in changes recently.

The COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 exposed significant weaknesses in traditional strategic planning approaches, making many long-term plans obsolete. In the aftermath, organizations have had to adapt rapidly, leading to increased staff turnover and burnout

*“This fits well with some of Jim Collins’ work. All organizations have good luck and bad luck. The question is, what do you do with the luck? What do you do with the unexpected situation? So, looking at the fact that everybody’s the same, dealing with many of the same problems, but there are ways for nonprofits to overcome. And communication seems to be one of those ways. Staffing is a problem we all have, but some organizations are still able to overcome and change, with staffing problems, and accomplish change.”*

*- Dr. Jon Swanson, Arbor Research Group*

as they navigated unprecedented challenges without established frameworks. This situation presents a unique opportunity for strategic planners to develop more resilient and comprehensive approaches that address not only future market conditions but also internal organizational recovery and sustainability.

## Organizations are facing a crucial question:

How can they develop a strategic plan that effectively addresses internal dynamics, including the aspect of fostering healing among overwhelmed staff, while still accomplishing the organization's goals?

# TECHNOLOGY AND CULTURAL CHALLENGES

Limited technology and systems were identified as a significant obstacle by 57% of respondents, while 56% pointed to organizational cultural problems as barriers to change. These issues, while not as prominent as staffing and communication challenges, represent important areas for improvement.

The technology gap, often tied to budgetary constraints, can lead to inefficiencies and frustration among staff, potentially contributing to the broader issues of staff exhaustion and turnover.

Organizations, especially smaller ones, struggle to keep up with technological changes and costs. Some nonprofits are finding it hard to work efficiently and connect with donors because their tech is outdated. Money's tight, so they can't buy new software or hire tech experts, which makes it tough to grow and improve how they work. Getting different systems to talk to each other is a headache, creating messy data and communication issues that make it hard to make smart decisions.

## Chart 9

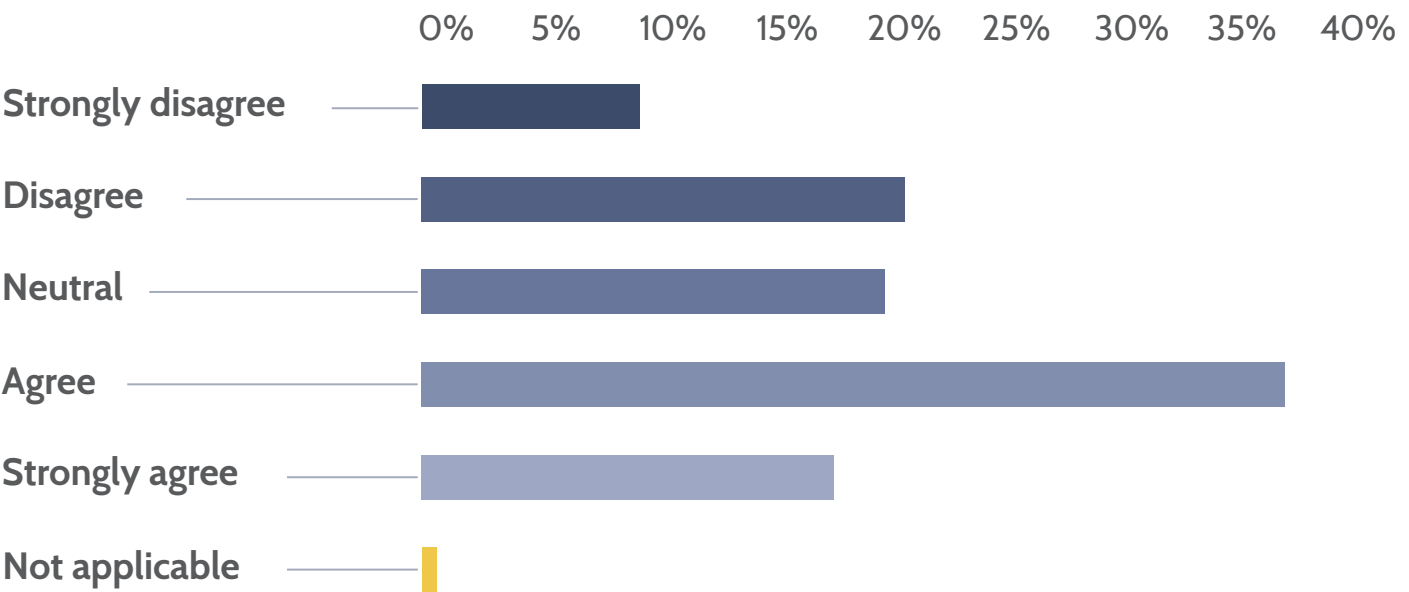
Technology & Systems Challenges	Percent
Software and System Integration	20%
Technology/Equipment Obsolescence	16%
Financial Constraints/Budgeting Issues	16%
Adoption and Utilization of Technology	12%
Infrastructure & Connectivity Problems	10%
Organizational Change and Growth Pains	8%
Internal Communication Struggles	5%
Data Management and Security Concerns	5%
Inadequate Training and Development	4%
Insufficient IT Support and Services	4%

It's not surprising that smaller organizations are hit the hardest. This study showed that 43% of groups with budgets under \$1 million say that getting their software to work together is a major roadblock to change. On top of that, staff often don't get enough training on new tech, so they can't use it to boost productivity or come up with new ideas. All of this makes it really difficult for these organizations to adapt and grow in a world that's becoming more technologically dependent every day.

## Strategic Planning Gap

A concerning finding is that nearly half of the respondents could not agree that their organization has an effective strategic plan for addressing change. This lack of strategic direction may contribute to the variance in change implementation approaches observed across the nonprofit sector.

**Chart 10** – *Reflecting on what you've observed and experienced, to what extent do you agree with the statement: 'From my perspective, my organization has a strategic plan that effectively addresses change.'*



Response	Percent
Strongly disagree	8.2%
Disagree	19.5%
Neutral	19.3%
Agree	36.1%
Strongly agree	16.4%
Not Applicable	0.5%

We took a deeper look into the responses and found that a greater percentage of executive leaders (45.6% agree, 16.8% strongly agree) feel that their organization has an effective strategic plan addressing change, compared to those who serve as staff or employees (29.2% agree, 15% strongly agree). This could indicate a disparity in how strategy is communicated or perceived at different levels of an organization.

## Real Quotes From Survey Respondents: ▶▶

- “ Sometimes “change” ideas (even very good ones) get placed on the back burner due to limited resources/funds. ”
- “ Departments operate as silos. ”
- “ We have no clear development, fundraising plans or strategies to work in. ”
- “ We have clear ideas and frameworks, but are just beginning the strategic phase. ”
- “ Executives / board rarely understand the situation on the ground. Often times their solutions or initiatives are a bit out of touch where the community actually is. ”
- “ The change is communicated without thorough forethought of how it will impact everyone. ”
- “ Unclear strategy means direction changing too often. ”
- “ Technology is moving so fast that I, as a leader, have a hard time giving a clear vision of where we are headed. ”
- “ Limited time to plan strategy. ”
- “ Passive communication (i.e. “We will figure it out as we go”) has made strategic priorities unclear. Our outcomes are also unclear. ”

# DEMOGRAPHICS

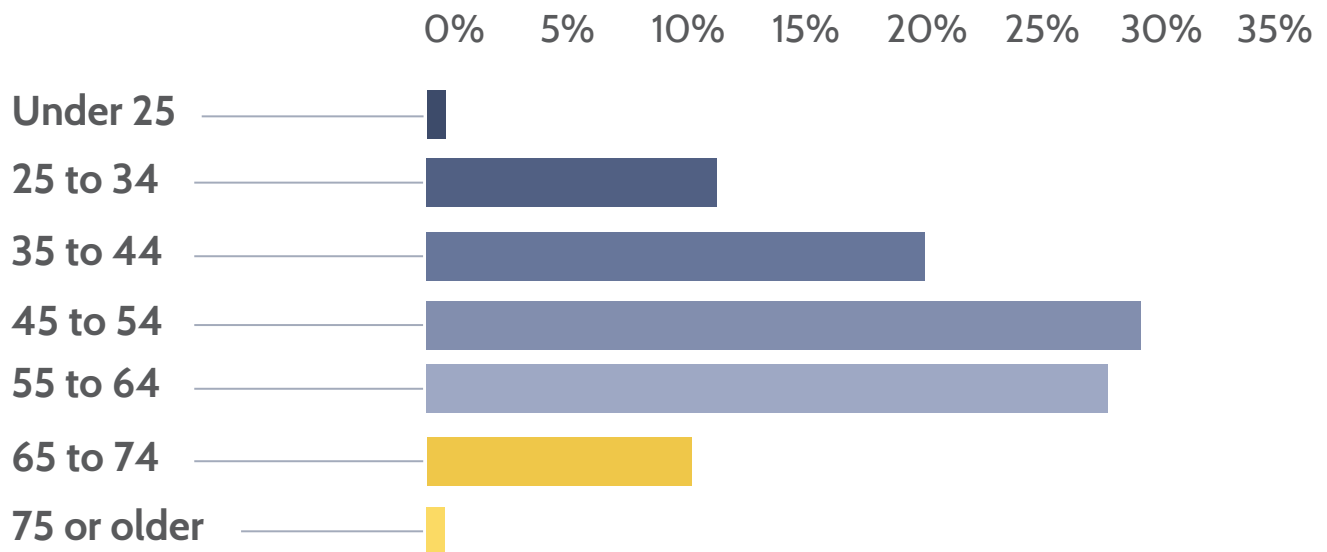
This research report presents findings from a comprehensive survey of nonprofit organizations across various sectors, with K-12 Education, Social Services, and Higher Education emerging as the top three represented fields. The respondent pool was nearly evenly split between women (48.5%) and men (47.3%), with a diverse range of roles represented, including Directors, CEOs, and staff members.

Organizations of varying sizes participated, from those with annual operating budgets under \$500,000 to those exceeding \$100 million, providing a broad spectrum of perspectives. The survey also captured membership in professional associations, with the Association of Fundraising Professionals (AFP) and the Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI) being the most common affiliations.

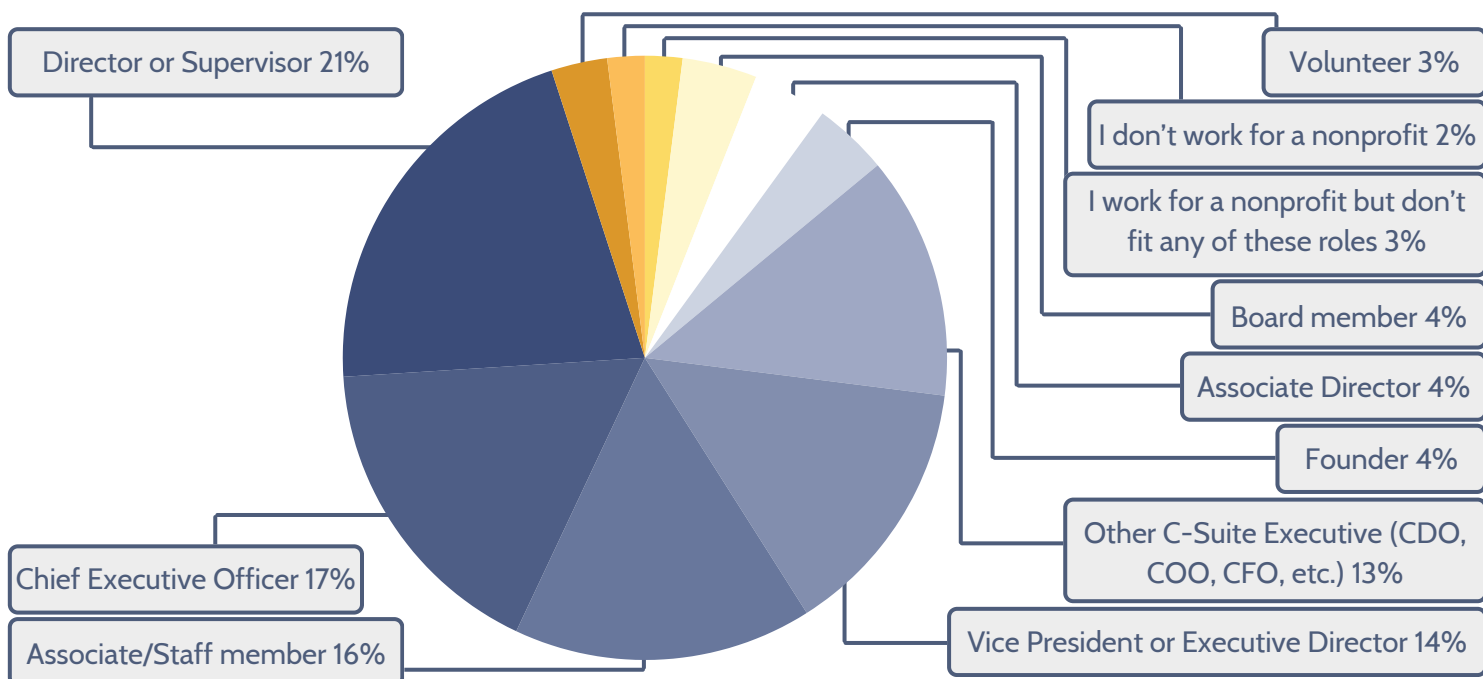
## Chart 11 – Which one of the following categories of nonprofit sectors best describes the work of your organization?

Top Seven Sectors	Percent
K-12 Education	22.6%
Social Services (Food/Shelter/Housing/Counseling, etc.)	21.0%
Higher Education (College/University/Professional)	13.1%
Evangelism & Discipleship	9.5%
Health/Medical	7.5%
Broadcast Media	6.3%
Church	5.2%

**Chart 12- Which one of the following age ranges do you fit in?**

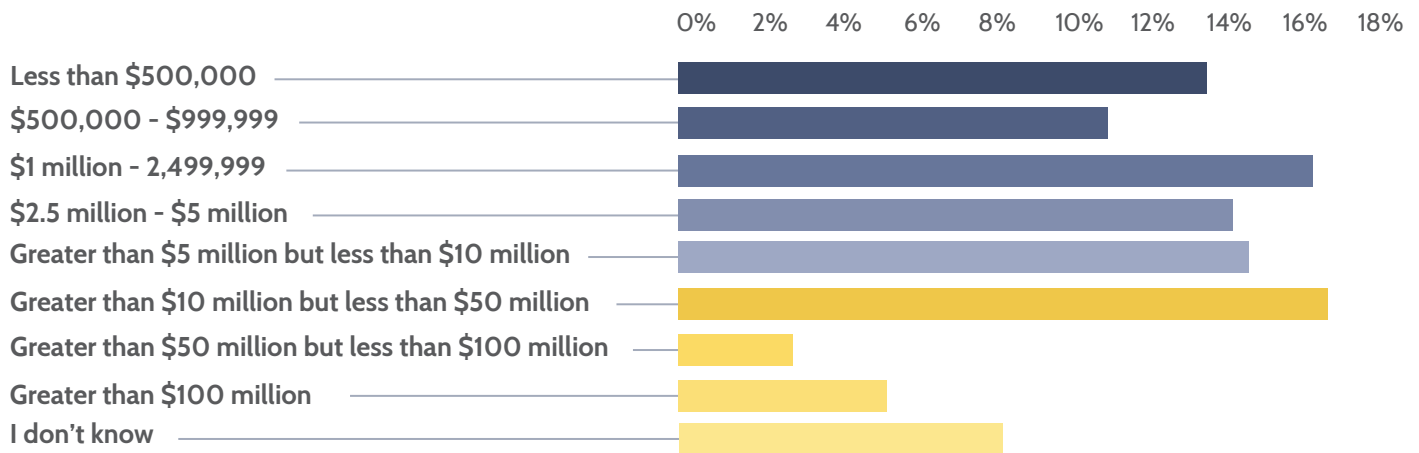


**Chart 13 – Which one of the following categories best describes your role in your organization?**





## Chart 14 – What is your organization's approximate annual operating budget for the last fiscal year?



Value	Percent
Less than \$500,000	13.4%
\$500,000 - 999,999	10.3%
\$1 million - 2,499,999	15.6%
\$2.5 million - \$5 million	13.7%
Greater than \$5 million but less than \$10 million	14.5%
Greater than \$10 million but less than \$50 million	16.4%
Greater than \$50 million but less than \$100 million	2.7%
Greater than \$100 million	5.3%

## Chart 15 – Please indicate the organizations or associations your organization is a member of.

Network/Organization	Percent
Association of Fundraising Professionals (AFP)	34.6%
Association of Christian Schools International	25.1%
ECFA (Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability)	21.2%
ABHE/CCCU/AAC&U/AAU/CASE (Higher Education)	17.3%
Association of Professional Researchers for Advancement (APRA)	12.8%
The Nonprofit Alliance (TNPA)	10.1%
Christian Leadership Alliance	9.5%
Citygate/AGRM/FRGM (Rescue Missions)	7.8%
NRB/CMB/Public Radio/TV (Media)	7.3%
Missio Nexus (International Missions)	5.6%
Center for Advancement of Christian Education (CACE)	4.5%
The Salvation Army	3.4%

# RECOMMENDATIONS TO NONPROFITS

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- 1. Prioritize Staff Well-being:** Given the prevalence of staff exhaustion and limited staffing, organizations should prioritize initiatives that support employee well-being and work-life balance. This may include flexible work arrangements, mental health support, and efforts to alleviate overloads.

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  - 2. Invest in Communication:** Improving communication strategies should be a top priority. This includes not only enhancing both internal and external communication but also ensuring clear and consistent messaging around change initiatives. Organizations should consider developing a culture of trust and collaboration, reducing resistance to change by involving staff in decision making, and clearly communicating strategic goals and changes.

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  - 3. Strategic Financial Management:** Improve financial health through enhanced fundraising efforts, invigorated donor management, and strategic budgeting focused on critical areas like technological improvements and staff support and development.

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  - 4. Leverage Technology:** While budget constraints may limit technology investments, organizations should explore cost-effective solutions that can improve efficiency via technology and reduce staff workloads. Upgrading technological infrastructure and investing in continuous staff training will help nonprofits keep pace with digital/technological advancements and operational needs.

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  - 5. Clarify Strategic Direction:** Establish a clear, well-communicated strategic plan that aligns with the organization's goals and addresses the challenges identified by stakeholders.

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  - 6. Develop Comprehensive Strategic Plans:** The lack of effective strategic plans for change is a significant gap that emerges from this study, especially since all of us had to enact change during the pandemic. Organizations should prioritize the development of comprehensive, flexible strategic plans that can guide them through periods of change and beyond.

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  - 7. Consider External Support:** The findings reveal a clear opportunity for consultants to provide crucial support. Organizations should consider engaging external expertise to address specific challenges, particularly in areas like strategic planning and change management.
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## We Are DickersonBakker

DickersonBakker has been dedicated to offering expert consulting services to nonprofit clients for close to five decades. The consulting firm has garnered a notable reputation by assisting thousands of organizations in raising billions of dollars through capital campaigns, fund development, agency services, executive search, and grant services.

With offices in North Carolina, Texas, and Indiana, and with a consulting team spread throughout the country, DickersonBakker has formed partnerships with nonprofit groups all over the United States and extended its services to Canada and other countries overseas. Visit [www.dickersonbakker.com](http://www.dickersonbakker.com) to learn more.

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