

What Local Governments Can Do To Build Effective Relationships with Nonprofits:

Minimize the frustration, misunderstanding, or mistrust nonprofits experience during the budgetary planning stages by sharing information about the following:

- **The amount of money available for funding through the local government.** *Nonprofit staff wants to know what the parameters of the decision-making process are, even when the process is inflexible or when some agencies are essentially excluded from the process.*
- **The governmental priorities for funding.** *Many communities could come up with logical reasons to support several different priority paths. There may be no single right answer, but there should be plausible reasons for the final choices.*
- **The process nonprofits may use to apply for funding.** *Application processes become a barrier to effective working relationships when they are not consistently applied among agencies or not openly defined.*
- **The process and criteria governments use to evaluate funding applications.** *Nonprofit directors who do not have the opportunity to make presentations to staff or elected boards often express both a desire to do so and the perception that such presentations were not encouraged due to time limitations or lack of interest.*
- **The government's expectations for reporting and accountability.** *Nonprofits should receive a clear definition of administrative and reporting expectations at the beginning of the application process.*

Coordinate the application process and/or agency presentations with the United Way or other local grantmakers to minimize duplication of effort and improve communication among local funders.

View problems or needs as belonging to the whole community, not just to the nonprofit.

- Recognize that the clients of nonprofits are community members deserving of resources.
- Express appreciation for the organizational missions of nonprofits.

Acknowledge nonprofits as serious businesses.

- Recognize and value the difference professional employees can make to an organization.
- Support nonprofits in their efforts to strengthen professionalism within their organizations.
- Consider the economic impact nonprofit payrolls and programs can have on the local economy.

What Nonprofits Can Do To Build Effective Relationships With Local Governments:

Inform local governments about your progress throughout the year, not just during the funding application process.

- Send out regular newsletters and reports.
- Use formal and informal opportunities to talk about current events.
- Talk about more than funding requests and immediate crises.
- Invite a government official to serve on the nonprofit's board.

Pay attention to the workings of the whole community, not just your particular client population.

- Create and maintain the agency's place in the fabric of the whole community.
- Present a steady presence as a knowledgeable resource for your issue.
- Stay informed on current events and personalities in your community.
- Regularly attend and contribute to community meetings, even if there is no obvious or immediate benefit for your agency.

Be as financially responsible and accountable as possible, and present evidence of your accountability to the public.

- Share information about completed audits or agency review processes
- Regularly update and make available all policies and procedures.
- Institute and faithfully practice financial checks and balances.
- Invite professional financial managers to serve on oversight committees.

Reinforce your agency's trustworthiness by presenting a reliable, professional image.

- Convey consistent messages about the agency's mission, goals, and activities.
- Dress and speak in the professional norms of your community.
- Pay attention to detail, such as using the same logo, typeface, and format on all agency documents.

To help your community learn how to deal with nonprofit issues that are overwhelming, unattractive, or frightening to the general public:

- Identify the source of any reluctance to address your issue.
- Devise strategies to retain the community's attention.
- Minimize any superficial characteristics that could be used as an excuse to discount your work.
- Communicate in a style and manner that demonstrates to people how to talk about your issue with respect.

What Nonprofits and Local Governments Can Do Together To build Effective Relationships:

Share information among nonprofits and local government:

- To build relationships between individuals and organizations.
- To openly establish mutual expectations.
- To enhance professionalism and accountability.
- To make it possible to collaborate in solving community problems or in obtaining new resources.
- To make relevant information available for everyone to use in addressing current situations or in identifying new trends.

Create opportunities to share information more broadly than through direct working relationships:

- Hold regular meetings between nonprofit directors, county department heads, and/or program staff in both nonprofits and local governments.
- Sponsor an annual human service forum that includes government and nonprofit staff, elected officials, and community volunteers.
- Undertake joint strategic planning efforts, especially around specific issues, such as homelessness or juvenile delinquency.

Share resources:

- Invite other staff to participate in training opportunities your organization naturally offers.
- Offer to share your expertise by providing training or meeting with the staff of other organizations.
- Invite another program to hold a staff meeting in your facility.
- Provide or share office, training, or meeting space.
- Make it possible for your staff to serve on community boards, committees, and task forces.
- Make second-hand furniture or equipment available for others to use.

Jointly develop clear, written guidelines about mutual expectations and/or work to be accomplished together.

Recognize that, if you choose to do so, you can be each other's best personal support for understanding and handling the stress associated with working in the public sector. You are all dealing with similar challenges.