



THE
Vermont Community Foundation

Non-Profit Executives' Perceptions of the Vermont Non-Profit Sector

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Methodology:

In the spring of 2010 the Center for Rural Studies contracted with the Vermont Community Foundation to develop and administer two studies on the non-profit sector in Vermont. This second study aimed to develop a statistically valid understanding of Vermont non-profit executives' perceptions of the Vermont non-profit sector.

On the week of August 2, 2009 the Center for Rural Studies (CRS) mailed out a survey participation request to a list of all 4,040 non-profits registered in the state of Vermont. This list was obtained by the Vermont Community Foundation (VCF) through a commercial provider and provided to CRS for the purpose of this study. The survey request consisted of a brightly-colored postcard with a brief introduction to the research, CRS and the VCF. The postcard was directed at Executive Directors or others that could answer the questions on behalf of their organization. A link to the online survey instrument and an identifying code were also included on the postcard. Anonymity of response was guaranteed. The postcard also notified readers that they could choose to be entered to win a \$250 mini-grant from VCF as an incentive for their participation.

In addition to the CRS mailing, the VCF utilized its own database of approximately 690 email addresses to send out an initial (and subsequent reminder emails) request for participation. The VCF email list was cleaned and merged with the original 4,040 registered non-profits list to ensure non-duplication.

The total number of valid responses to this survey was 470. Given the population total of 4,040, a response rate of 470 for the survey provides a confidence level of 95% with a margin of error (confidence interval) of +/- 4.25%. In lay terms, this means that if asked these questions, 95% of the time the entire population would respond within +/- 4.25% of the percentage responses found in this report. CRS staff utilized the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) analysis software to analyze and report the following findings.

Overall, do you feel the state of philanthropy in Vermont is:	Frequency	Percent
Improving a great deal	7	1.5
Improving somewhat	70	15.1
Staying about the same	154	33.3
Getting somewhat worse	147	31.7
Getting a great deal worse	22	4.8
Unsure	63	13.6
Total	463	100.0

Please choose the sector that best describes the primary work your organization does.	Frequency	Percent
Animal/Animal Rights (mission focus on the rights of animals, such as animal protection organizations and humane societies)	9	1.9
Arts and Culture (mission focus on the promotion of the arts or a cultural group, such as theaters, museums, historical societies, choral groups, and media outlets)	100	21.3
Education (mission focus on education, such as private educational institutions of any level, vocational training, and private libraries)	108	23.0
Foundations/Giving Programs (mission focus on the practice of charitable giving and volunteering or to represent and serve a wide range of philanthropic and charitable institutions)	9	1.9
Religious/Spiritual (mission focus on spiritual or religious devotion, such as churches, synagogues, mosques, and their related organizations, as well as non-mainstream religious organizations)	10	2.1
Health and Human Services (mission focus on physical or mental health, medical research, or specific diseases and disorders, such as hospitals, nursing services, alcohol and drug treatment facilities, support groups, and Alzheimer's or lung associations)	83	17.7
Environment (mission focus on environmental quality, protection and beautification, such as recycling programs, forest conservation, garden clubs, and wildlife preservation sanctuaries)	36	7.7
Civil Rights/Social Justice (mission focus on civil rights or social justice, such as international organizations, crime-related groups, social action groups, domestic abuse prevention, alternative dispute resolution, public interest law, civil liberties advocates, and those who advocate for the civil rights of specific communities)	21	4.5
Civic Engagement (mission focus on ensuring broad participation of community residents in government decision making and the political process, such as citizen interest groups, collective action programs, and grassroots organizations)	7	1.5
Affordable Housing/Homelessness (mission focus on meeting the basic shelter needs of communities by providing temporary shelter for people who are in emergency situations, home improvement programs, housing location assistance and a variety of housing alternatives)	19	4.1
Community/Economic Development (mission focus on strengthening, unifying and building the economic, cultural, educational and social services of a community or neighborhood and improving the quality of life for all)	46	9.8
Agriculture (mission focus on providing information and services in an effort to improve food resources and to ensure that the basic nutritional needs of the community are met)	6	1.3
Transportation (mission focus on providing or coordinating free or low-cost transportation services for older adults, people with disabilities, people with medical conditions, people who are indigent, students and other eligible individuals)	2	0.4
Hunger/Food Security (mission focus on alleviating and preventing hunger)	13	2.8
Total* <i>“Other” responses were coded into existing categories as applicable.</i>	394	100.0

Do you feel that the current state of the economy has caused giving from individuals to your organization to be:	Frequency	Percent
Much more generous than usual	3	0.7
Somewhat more generous than usual	49	10.8
About the same as usual	117	25.9
Somewhat less generous than usual	223	49.3
Much less generous than usual	49	10.8
Unsure	11	2.4
Total	452	100.0

Do you expect that the support your organization may receive from each of the following sources will increase, stay the same, or decrease in the next fiscal year?	Increase	Stay the Same	Decrease	Unsure
Government Grants	15.8	35.5	35.5	13.2
Membership Dues	19.8	50.7	21.6	7.9
Fundraising Event	22.8	39.9	28.5	8.8
Gifts from donors via direct solicitations	19.2	46.8	26.8	7.1
Unsolicited/unexpected gifts from donors	7.1	45.3	27.5	20.1
Program service revenue	22.5	49.1	23.7	4.8
Gifts from corporations	11.3	39.5	38.0	11.3
Time given by volunteers	32.0	55.2	10.0	2.7
Government contracts	11.6	38.7	33.5	16.1
Foundation Grants	16.3	34.9	37.7	11.0
Special events	22.7	43.3	22.4	11.7

During the first half of the calendar year 2010, compared to the first half of calendar year 2009, how has the following changed?	Increased	Stayed the Same	Decreased	Unsure
Total revenue	33.2	32.5	33.6	0.7
Total expenses	46.2	32.9	20.7	0.2
Total revenue from donations alone	25.1	30.9	41.7	2.3
Fundraising activities	31.8	39.5	26.8	2.0
Overall staffing level	19.8	58.3	21.3	0.8

Please choose the option that best describes the current financial health of your organization.	Frequency	Percent
We are financially healthy and not currently vulnerable	159	36.2
We experience chronic financial problems but expect to survive	107	24.4
We are financially healthy to date but may be vulnerable in the next fiscal year	158	36.0
We don't know how we will survive through 2010	6	1.4
Unsure	9	2.1
Total	439	100.0

Please choose the option that best describes the current financial health of your organization: Other
We have money to cover our commitments to scholarship recipients, and a small amount of admin \$. We have no income or fundraising plan.
We have improved our financial health and expect to survive
We have been surviving on a shoe string for 20 years and wish it could be better--have had to lay staff off over the last three years
we find the money before we spend it
We are winding down because we have accomplished our mission.
We are vulnerable but not stressed
We are slowly digging out of long-term financial problems exacerbated by the recent economic uncertainty.
We are new -
We are financially healthy, but lack unrestricted or operating funds to are challenged to create the infrastructure to match the project funding we are growing
we are financially healthy, but experience chronic shortfalls in operating revenue
We are financially healthy but wary of what the future holds - who's not?
We are all-volunteer and aging!
We are active in name only
We are a 4-H club we fundraise in order to survive
Very worried about finances
Very low level of current activity, so no financial problems
Our short-term financial health is always fragile; but we are not relatively vulnerable in the long-term.
Our fund raising is to restore the building, if not enough money is raised the project is put off for another year
Lean now, next two years look ok, long term unsure at this point.
financially healthy, but using investments to meet the budget--unsustainable
Financially healthy, but raise all dollars spent annually, so we are always vulnerable if one or more current partners exit
Financial challenges but new plan in place to generate fund support
Because of the success of our capital campaign we will face one more difficult year (5 to 10% shortfall in general fund revenues and then we should be stable.
2010 and 11 have proven to be challenging, but in the past we have been very healthy financially.

In the past 12 months, have you cut costs due to budget constraints?	Frequency	Percent
Yes	233	53.0
No	207	47.0
Total	440	100.0

How have you cut costs? (Choose all that apply)	Frequency	Percent of 233 respondents who reported having cut costs*
Laid off staff (Includes “other” responses such as: “reduction through attrition” and “reduced staff hours”)	66	28.3
Frozen new hires	47	20.2
Frozen salaries	79	33.9
Reduced salaries	33	14.2
Reduced benefits	34	14.6
Eliminated benefits	8	3.4
Changed benefits (From “other” responses)	2	0.9
Reduced/cut programming (From “other” responses)	26	11.2
Reduced operating expenses (mileage, supplies, etc) (From “other” responses)	62	26.2
Other (Includes payroll deferrals-2, increase donations-2, increase collaboration-1) (From “other” responses)	5	2.1
Total	362	155.4

**Respondents were asked to “choose all that apply” and could be counted multiple times.*

How many months of operating reserve does your organization currently have?	Frequency	Percent
1-3 months	143	34.0
3-6 months	67	15.9
6-9 months	52	12.4
9-12 months	48	11.4
More than 12 months	72	17.1
Unsure	39	9.3
Total	421	100.0

Are you running an operating deficit in the current fiscal year?	Frequency	Percent
Yes	122	27.2
No	327	72.8
Total	449	100.0

Do you expect to run a deficit in the coming fiscal year?	Frequency	Percent
Yes	86	20.7
No	329	79.3
Total	415	100.0

Do you offer direct services?	Frequency	Percent
Yes	285	67.4
No	138	32.6
Total	423	100.0

Compared to this time last year, is the demand for your services:	Frequency	Percent
Increasing a great deal	72	25.5
Increasing somewhat	130	46.1
Staying about the same	62	22.0
Decreasing somewhat	15	5.3
Decreasing a great deal	2	0.7
Unsure	1	0.4
Total	282	100.0

How confident are you that you can meet the demand for services in the next 12 months?	Frequency	Percent
Very confident	108	38.4
Somewhat confident	122	43.4
Somewhat unconfident	31	11.0
Very unconfident	10	3.6
Unsure	10	3.6
Total	281	100.0

Are charitable gifts & contributions:	Frequency	Percent
Increasing relative to overall demand for services	5	1.9
Keeping pace with overall demand for services	90	34.7
Declining relative to overall demand for services	135	52.1
Unsure	29	11.2
Total	259	100.0

How would you characterize the ability of your organization to sustain itself over the long-term?	Frequency	Percent
Very able	136	29.7
Somewhat able	268	58.5
Somewhat unable	27	5.9
Very unable	5	1.1
Unsure	22	4.8

Total	458	100.0
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Do you currently collaborate with another nonprofit to share resources (accounting, IT, program services, etc.)?	Frequency	Percent
Yes	171	37.9
No	280	62.1
Total	451	100.0

Have you explored collaboration with another nonprofit to share resources (accounting, IT, program services, etc.)?	Frequency	Percent
No	195	72.8
Yes, within the past month	14	5.2
Yes, within the past 1-6 months	19	7.1
Yes, within the past 6-12 months	15	5.6
Yes, 12 months or more ago	25	9.3
Total	268	100.0

Have you explored merging with another nonprofit?	Frequency	Percent
No	352	78.9
Yes, within the past month	17	3.8
Yes, within the past 1-6 months	21	4.7
Yes, within the past 6-12 months	18	4.0
Yes, 12 months or more ago	38	8.5
Total	446	100.0

Has your management team or board of directors considered closing the organization?	Frequency	Percent
No	421	92.3
Yes, within the past month	4	0.9
Yes, within the past 1-6 months	9	2.0
Yes, within the past 6-12 months	9	2.0
Yes, 12 months or more ago	13	2.9
Total	456	100.0

Does your organization have a succession plan in place for your executive director/president?	Frequency	Percent
Yes	140	34.7
No	263	65.3

Total	403	100.0
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Please choose the option that best fits your organization's entire operating budget in its most recently completed fiscal year.	Frequency	Percent
Less than \$100,000	204	45.0
Between \$100,000 - \$250,000	90	19.9
Between \$250,000 - \$500,000	61	13.5
Between \$500,000 - \$1 million	36	7.9
Between \$1 million - \$5 million	48	10.6
More than \$5 million	14	3.1
Total	453	100.0

What County or Counties does your organization serve? (Choose all that apply)	Frequency	Percent of 470 respondents*	Percent of VT Pop.**
All Vermont Counties	137	29.1	100.0
Addison	65	13.8	5.9
Bennington	34	7.2	5.9
Caledonia	39	8.3	4.9
Chittenden	67	14.3	24.6
Essex	21	4.5	1.0
Franklin	30	6.4	7.7
Grand Isle	22	4.7	1.2
Lamoille	44	9.4	4.0
Orange	37	7.9	4.7
Orleans	37	7.9	4.4
Rutland	42	8.9	10.2
Washington	56	11.9	9.5
Windham	56	11.9	6.9
Windsor	55	11.7	9.1
Total	742	157.9	100.0

**Respondents were asked to "choose all that apply" and could be counted multiple times. **Source: 2008 US Census Population Estimates Program*