

# Protecting Vital Services: Mobilizing Support for Nonprofit Federal Funding

February 5, 2025



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## Executive Summary

The new administration's sudden disruption of federal funding has thrust the role of nonprofits into the spotlight. A recent survey of 2,500 U.S. adults ( $\pm 2.0\%$  margin of error) conducted in Q4 2024 reveals a clear narrative: Americans see nonprofits as indispensable, particularly during challenging times, and their support for government funding grows when these organizations demonstrate trustworthiness and a direct impact on critical community needs.

The survey shows that public backing for federal support is not merely a matter of opinion—it's closely linked to how essential people perceive these services to be and the level of confidence they have in nonprofit accountability. While some political and regional differences exist—Republicans and Midwest residents tend to be more cautious—the overall sentiment is one of strong endorsement for continued federal funding when nonprofits are seen as a vital force in addressing issues like healthcare, education, and emergency relief.

## Key Findings

**83% of Americans consider the services delivered by charities and nonprofits in the U.S. to be essential to the well-being of the country and its citizens.**

- **Essential Impact:** Respondents who view nonprofit services as indispensable are over four times more likely to support federal funding than those who don't.
- **Trust Matters:** Even a modest boost in perceived trust, stemming from transparent and effective management, can significantly increase public endorsement of federal investment in nonprofits.
- **Crisis Perspective:** Individuals who believe that crises such as climate disasters or economic downturns intensify the need for nonprofit services are roughly three times more likely to favor government support for nonprofits.
- **Political & Regional Differences:** Although overall support for federal funding varies by political affiliation and region, there is bipartisan agreement on the essentiality of nonprofits and strong personal alignment with causes demonstrates accountability can bridge these gaps.

## Call to Action

The current funding uncertainty places essential services at risk. In response, the nonprofit sector must mobilize with targeted, unified advocacy. By highlighting their role in crisis response, demonstrating clear financial and operational accountability, and aligning closely with the causes that matter most to local communities, nonprofits can build broad-based, bipartisan support. Immediate, coordinated efforts are essential to protect and ultimately expand federal funding, ensuring that these critical services continue to benefit millions of Americans.

# Foreword

Dear Colleagues,

Recent events have made one thing abundantly clear: **the stakes for nonprofits and the communities we serve could not be higher.** The new administration's abrupt interruption of funding of vital federal grants and critical programs threatens to upend countless services that Americans and our constituents depend on—from food assistance and educational programs to vital medical research.

The uncertainty surrounding these decisions is wreaking havoc and further depleting strained resources. We at The Nonprofit Alliance believe this is both a moment of **great urgency** and a **critical opportunity**—a call to action to document our collective impact and make the strongest possible case for safeguarding these essential funds.

We are engaged with elected Congressional leaders. **They need precise, quantifiable data** about how suspending federal support would harm your organization's ability to serve its mission. Numbers speak louder than anecdotes—particularly in this charged environment on Capitol Hill.

- **Number of services or programs** that would not occur without federal funding
- **Count of individuals** who would lose assistance if grants are halted
- **Dollar amounts** of critical aid that would be suspended
- **Potential staff reductions** or layoffs caused by funding gaps

Please visit <https://tnpa.org/federalfunding/> for ways you can support this collective effort. As new developments continue to unfold over the coming days, this information will be **crucial** in demonstrating to lawmakers just how devastating the loss of funding would be.

If we act swiftly and work collaboratively, we can turn this moment of confusion and fear into a powerful rallying cry for the sector. With your help, we can show that nonprofits—and the millions of people who benefit from their work—cannot afford such uncertainty. Seize this chance to protect the lifelines our communities rely on.

Thank you for your immediate attention and support.

Sincerely,



**Shannon McCracken**  
CEO, The Nonprofit Alliance

# 1. Essentiality & Crisis Context

Nonprofits act as frontline responders during emergencies, and our data show that recognizing their essential role in crises significantly boosts support for government funding.

## A. Nonprofits as First Responders


- **Key Finding:** Respondents who believe crises—such as pandemics or economic downturns—increase reliance on nonprofit services are nearly three times as likely to support government funding.
- **What That Means:** When emergencies highlight the critical role of nonprofits, people expect stable public funds to underwrite support for nonprofits' rapid response and service delivery.
- **Action:** Incorporate these insights into policy communications and public statements, stressing that cuts in funding during crises could cripple emergency response efforts.

## B. Beneficiaries Expect Federal Protection

- **Key Finding:** Those who directly benefit from nonprofit services show a strong expectation for federal support, as their firsthand experience aligns with the view of nonprofits as essential.
- **What That Means:** Beneficiaries of food aid, education, or senior care rely on these programs and naturally advocate for consistent funding to secure their ongoing support.
- **Action:** Amplify beneficiary voices through testimonials in legislative briefings and media campaigns, clearly illustrating the everyday impact of sustained federal funding.

## C. Support for Expanding Federal Funding

- **Key Finding:** Donors who view nonprofits as essential are not only more likely to support maintaining current federal funding but are also more open to increasing funding during crises.
- **What That Means:** The public sees federal funding as a strategic investment—both as an immediate safety net and as a means to enhance long-term community resilience.
- **Action:** Frame funding appeals as investments that pay off in future savings and stronger emergency preparedness, using data to underline the potential for expanded support.



58% of Americans say that the federal government should provide ongoing funding for charitable organizations to cover their core operational and administrative expenses.

## 2. Trust & Accountability

Public trust in nonprofits is a major driver of support for government funding; even small gains in trust can significantly boost backing.

### A. More Trust Means More Support

- **Key Finding:** Every one-point increase in trust in nonprofits on our seven-point survey scale is associated with a 31% higher likelihood of supporting government funding.
- **What That Means:** When people believe nonprofits are honest, effective, and well-managed, they are far more likely to endorse public funding for these organizations.
- **Action:** Nonprofits should actively share detailed success stories, transparent financial reports, and measurable performance metrics to build and maintain public trust.

### B. Clear Accountability Boosts Confidence

- **Key Finding:** The strong relationship between transparency and funding support underlines that clear accountability measures are crucial for winning public backing.
- **What That Means:** Openly sharing audits, budget details, and program outcomes reassures the public that taxpayer dollars are managed responsibly and effectively.
- **Action:** Commit to regular, easy-to-read reports and engaging impact stories that highlight responsible stewardship and tangible results.

### C. Collaboration Builds Legitimacy

- **Key Finding:** The analysis shows that political and regional factors affect funding support—respondents identifying as Republican or living in the Midwest are less likely to back federal funding.
- **What That Means:** Even when overall trust is high, local cultural and political views can influence opinions on funding, requiring tailored outreach strategies.
- **Action:** Develop targeted, nonpartisan messaging that emphasizes rigorous oversight and shared community benefits, engaging local leaders to bridge ideological gaps.



86% say a strong reputation for delivering on its promises drives their decision to support nonprofits.



### 3. Cause Alignment & Personal Relevance

People favor federal funding for nonprofits which pursue causes they care about. When services are seen as essential, support for government funding rises dramatically.

#### A. Public-Private Synergy

- **Key Finding:** Respondents who view nonprofit services as essential are over four times as likely to support government funding compared to those who don't.
- **What That Means:** When people recognize that nonprofits effectively tackle big challenges—like hunger, homelessness, or healthcare—they expect government funds to complement private donations for a stronger overall impact.
- **Action:** Emphasize co-investment in your communications to showcase how public funds work in tandem with private contributions to build a more robust safety net.

#### B. Donors as Federal Funding Advocates

- **Key Finding:** Individuals with a strong personal connection to nonprofit causes are significantly more inclined to support federal funding.
- **What That Means:** When donors invest in a cause, their personal commitment makes them more sensitive to funding cuts, and they become natural advocates for sustaining government support.
- **Action:** Motivate these supporters to engage directly with policymakers by urging them to share their personal stories about how funding reductions could harm programs they value.

#### C. Universal Issues and the Power of Alignment

- **Key Finding:** Nonprofits which address universally appealing issues—such as disaster relief or children's welfare—garner robust funding support, even in times of political dissension.
- **What That Means:** When services have broad, cross-cutting appeal, personal alignment with the cause drives a strong endorsement for federal funding, transcending partisan divides.
- **Action:** Use nonpartisan messaging which highlights the universal benefits of these essential services, stressing that all communities stand to gain from sustained government support.



74% say a having a personal passion for the cause drives their decision to support nonprofits.

## 4. Urgency & Call to Action

Nonprofits must move swiftly to sustain momentum, highlight the **real-world impacts** of potentially lost support, and rally the public, donors, and elected officials to demand **restoration** of any lost federal funding.

### A. Essential Services Amplify the Call for Action

- **Key Finding:** Respondents who consider nonprofit services essential are over four times as likely to support government funding.
- **What That Means:** Recognizing the indispensable nature of these services motivates people to demand immediate action to restore and secure federal funding.
- **Action:** Launch a dynamic public campaign featuring real-life impact stories and compelling data that illustrate how funding losses can lead to critical service shutdowns.

### B. Trust in Nonprofits Empowers Urgent Advocacy

- **Key Finding:** Higher levels of trust in nonprofits are strongly linked to increased support for government funding during crises.
- **What That Means:** Confidence in the effectiveness and transparency of nonprofits turns passive approval into active advocacy for immediate funding protection.
- **Action:** Strengthen communication efforts by sharing clear, measurable impact data and mobilize respected community figures to call for urgent government intervention.

### C. Bridging Political and Regional Divides is Critical

- **Key Finding:** Republicans and Midwest residents are notably less likely to endorse federal funding.
- **What That Means:** A uniform message won't resonate across diverse groups or even from one individual to the next; advocacy must account for varying cultural and political perspectives.
- **Action:** Craft tailored messages that stress shared values, the benefits of strong oversight, and the universal importance of essential services, engaging local voices and bipartisan coalitions.



**Republicans (83%) and Democrats (88%) both agree that nonprofits are essential to the well-being of our country.**

## Conclusion

The analysis is clear: nonprofits are a cornerstone of America's social safety net, and strong public support exists for not only maintaining but also expanding federal funding. When communities see nonprofits as essential—especially during crises—they are much more inclined to back government support. Increased trust and clear accountability further elevate this backing, as even modest improvements in transparency can significantly boost funding support. Moreover, aligning federal funding with causes that resonate on a personal level and addressing ideological differences are crucial to building a unified voice for action. Now is the time for our sector to take action to protect and enhance vital services.

## Key Action Items

- **Essentiality & Crisis Context**

Present contemporary data and compelling case studies which show how nonprofits are bridging critical gaps during emergencies to justify urgent and sustained funding.

- **Trust & Accountability**

Publicize rigorous stewardship by sharing detailed audits, impact dashboards, and clear financial reports. This transparency builds the credibility needed to secure long-term public and political support.

- **Cause Alignment & Personal Relevance**

Mobilize personal stakeholders by empowering donors, beneficiaries, and local advocates who have a direct emotional connection to the causes. Their voices will help demonstrate the indispensable nature of federal support.

- **Urgency & Call to Action**

Launch targeted, rapid-response campaigns using petitions, social media blitzes, and direct outreach to policymakers. Stress the immediate risks of funding freezes and urge Congress to establish robust, bipartisan protections for nonprofit funding.

## Moving Forward

By embracing these four actions, nonprofits can transform public goodwill into persuasive evidence for the critical value of long-term, stable government support. The stakes are too high—and the need too great—to allow critical services to hang in the balance whenever there is a change of administration or funding freeze. Through urgency, transparency, targeted messaging, and mobilization of core supporters, the nonprofit community can safeguard the vital programs millions rely on. Seize this moment to champion bold, proactive measures that protect and advance the common good, ensuring that neither communities nor the critical services that empower them are left at risk.

# Acknowledgments

## To Nonprofit Organizations

We extend our heartfelt admiration to all the nonprofits whose tireless work, creativity, and relentless pursuit of impact have sustained communities through extraordinary challenges. From meeting basic needs to championing long-term social change, these organizations stand strong in times of crisis and beyond. Their unwavering commitment, adaptability, and compassion affirm the power of collective action to create a more just and caring world. We are honored to stand beside them as they continue to bring healing, opportunity, and resilience to those they serve.

## To Pooya Pourak

We extend our appreciation to Pooya Pourak for his expertise in analyzing and shaping this report. His dedication to overseeing the survey analysis and illuminating the real-world impacts of federal funding decisions provided the foundation for the advocacy strategies outlined here. Together, our tireless efforts help equip nonprofit leaders, policymakers, and stakeholders with actionable insights to safeguard vital community services.



## Learn More About The Nonprofit Alliance

To discover how the Nonprofit Alliance can support your organization in navigating these challenging times, visit [www.tnpa.org](http://www.tnpa.org). At TNPA, we offer a wealth of resources designed to empower nonprofits, including advocacy tools, professional development opportunities, and a robust network of like-minded organizations. By joining our community, you gain access to expert guidance, exclusive training sessions, and collaborative platforms that enhance your capacity to make a meaningful impact. Whether you're looking to amplify your advocacy efforts, connect with peers, or leverage strategic resources, the Nonprofit Alliance is here to help your organization thrive. Explore the benefits of membership today and take the next step in strengthening your mission and expanding your reach.