NJ Non-Profit Survey Report: “Clear and Persistent Gap” Between Demand for Services, Funding

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Mercerville, NJ – A “clear and persistent gap” between steadily rising demand for the programs and services provided by New Jersey’s non-profit organizations and lagging resources threatens to compromise their ability to provide those services according to a new report released by the Center for Non-Profits.

New Jersey Non-Profits 2018: Trends and Outlook, the Center’s annual survey of the non-profit community, was conducted online in January 2018 to gauge the experiences, trends and expectations of New Jersey’s non-profit groups. The survey tracks prior year funding and expenses, outlook for the coming year and actions taken by non-profits to address trends. The Center has conducted this survey since 2001. The 2018 survey report is based on responses from 252 New Jersey 501(c)(3) organizations.

The survey shows a continuing trend of escalating need for non-profits’ programs and services while resources have failed to keep pace. For example:

• An overwhelming majority (71%) of responding organizations reported that demand for services had increased during the past year, and more than three-quarters (77%) expected demand to continue rising in 2018.
• Two-fifths (42%) reported receiving more total funding in 2017 vs. 2016, but more than half (56%) reported that their expenses were higher than in the previous year.
• Only 28% indicated that support and revenue had exceeded expenses during their most recently completed fiscal year.
• Nearly two-thirds (64%) expected their total expenses to increase in 2018, but only 48% expected total 2018 funding to increase. About one-third (30%) expected total funding to remain the same as 2017, and 13% anticipated a decrease.

“Not only do non-profits improve all of our lives by providing vital programs and services in all corners of the state, but as employers of 10% of the workforce and partners and patrons of local businesses, they are also critical to the state’s economic engine,” noted Linda M. Czipo, president & CEO of the Center. “If their ability to do that work is compromised, it has an impact on everyone.”

Actions Taken
Non-profits reported a wide array of actions, including extra fundraising, advocacy, program and budget adjustments to address internal and external trends.

• Organizations continued to seek additional resources such as funding and volunteers to support their work, whether through new fundraising appeals, pursuing funding from alternative sources, or recruiting volunteers.
• Half reported that they were considering new partnerships or collaborations in 2018, close to 45% were contemplating adding a special event or new programs, and nearly one-third (30%) planned to conduct more advocacy for their programs, fields or constituencies.

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Center for Non-Profits is a New Jersey non-profit corporation and a federally recognized 501(c)(3) publicly supported charity.
At the same time, responses also seemed to reflect the uncertainty regarding the current economic and funding environment. For example, 34% said that they might add staff in 2018, but only 13% definitely planned to, and only 4% had already done so when the survey was taken. One quarter indicated that they might raise salaries, while 20% said that they might freeze or cut salaries.

Uncertainty was also the watchword in terms of non-profits’ attitudes regarding their current and future situations. Roughly half of this year’s respondents (53%) reported that their organization’s circumstances had improved over the past year, while 14% said that their situation was worse and 34% said it was no different. Looking ahead to the coming year, only 44% expected their organization’s circumstances to improve, 9% predicted that it would worsen, and 35% were unsure or felt it was too soon to tell. Many cited external factors such as the potentially negative impact of the new federal tax law, volatility in the economy, and public policy concerns as contributing to their mixed outlook. Others identified opportunities to strengthen communications with donors and a heightened interest in advocacy and civic engagement activities.

“Non-profits continue to do extraordinary work under very challenging circumstances, but the stressors of chronic underfunding, the economic and public policy environment are all cause for concern,” stressed Czipo. “Expecting them to be able to ‘do more with less’ year in and year out is unsustainable and unrealistic. We need to foster a legislative and funding climate that will strengthen these organizations and programs for the good of our people and communities.”


The Center for Non-Profits is New Jersey’s umbrella organization for the charitable community. Founded in 1982, the Center exists to build the power of New Jersey’s non-profit community to improve the quality of life for the people of our state. The Center provides professional education, advocacy, resources, training and information to strengthen non-profits and help them thrive in pursuit of their charitable work. For more information, visit www.njnonprofits.org, or call 732-227-0800.

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