



# Front and Center

Non-profit trends and insights from the Center for Non-Profits and guests

## First things first: What should everyone know about New Jersey non-profits?

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By Linda M. Czipo

At long last, after a period of good intentions and a couple of false starts, the big moment has arrived: our first Center for Non-Profits blog! Although I've been privileged to guest post on the [Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation blog](#) on topics from [non-profit trends](#) to [property taxes](#) and [federal grant and contract guidelines](#), launching the Center's own blog has taken longer. For me, it's like exercising regularly – the hardest part is getting started (still working on that one).

Considering a topic for our first post, I remembered a question I was asked during a recent [Live from Trenton](#) podcast: ***what are the most important things the public should know about New Jersey non-profits?***

Here's my starting list – and I hope you'll chime in with your additions:

1. **The non-profit community is deep, broad, pervasive and indispensable.** New Jersey's 30,000 501(c)(3) non-profits touch our lives every day in every way, in ways that are more and less visible. Educating children and adults alike. Treating and curing illness and disease. Providing comfort and counseling. Building affordable housing. Uplifting our spirits and souls. Protecting our natural resources. Speaking out on critical policy issues. Training our work force. Informing our citizenry. Everywhere you turn, [non-profits are saving lives and making life better](#).



2. **Non-profits are vital contributors to our state’s economic well-being.** In New Jersey, 501(c)(3) organizations employ over 314,000 people – nearly 10% of the state’s private work force, and more than many major for-profit industries – generating payroll and income taxes, and helping to reduce public assistance and unemployment rolls. New Jersey non-profits spend upward of \$37 billion each year, much of it in the Garden State. Non-profits purchase goods and services from local businesses; pay utilities, telecommunications and related taxes; AND provide essential services to people in the community. Their employees live, pay taxes and patronize merchants in the area. Many provide vital job training and skill building to prepare and enhance a high-quality workforce. Non-profits provide the kinds of amenities, programs and services that make communities attractive to for-profit businesses and their employees as well as visitors and tourists.
3. **Non-profits can’t do their work without money.** Sounds obvious, right? But the reality for many non-profits is that demand for their services continues to skyrocket while the financial resources needed to do this work are not keeping pace. As the government continues to reduce its role in providing important services, non-profits are being expected – unreasonably and unrealistically – to shoulder an increasing burden without any extra funds. The situation is not only unfair, it’s completely unsustainable.
4. **Non-profits also can’t do their work without people.** Again, pretty obvious. People – employees, volunteers, board members, supporters and constituents – are what make non-profits run. And non-profits need you.
5. **YOU can help.** Fortunately, there are countless opportunities to get involved. Volunteer. Donate. Join a committee. Commit to board service. [Consider non-profit employment as a career path.](#) Talk up the causes and organizations you care about. Be a non-profit evangelist! These actions are not mutually exclusive. And the best part? You get just as much out of them (or more) as you put in. It’s a win-win for you and society.

Clearly, these items are just the tip of the iceberg. We could talk about overhead, infrastructure support, advocacy and so much more – and we will. This blog will feature posts not only from the Center’s staff, but also from our board members and guest authors covering a variety of topics.

We’re looking forward to the conversation.

***What would YOU say? What else should the public know about non-profits?***

*Linda M. Czipo is executive director of the [Center for Non-Profits](#), New Jersey’s statewide umbrella organization for the charitable community. Through advocacy, public education, technical assistance and cost-saving member services, the Center works to build the power of New Jersey’s non-profit community to improve the quality of life for the people of our state.*