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The Role and Impact of State Associations of Nonprofits

As the last few weeks have shown, news travels fast and there is only so much time to process and respond to the policy proposals and decisions that impact charitable nonprofits' ability to carry out their mission. Some of these impacts take time to sink in while others immediately affect nonprofit finances and operations. When it comes to keeping up with the changes happening at the federal, state, and local level, and filtering the information impacting nonprofits, state associations of nonprofits have convened, informed, and advocated for the sector. Whether it is organizing a day at the Capitol, creating a resource page, or responding to policy decisions, the role of a state association goes beyond their membership.



Often, sharing stories of impact is followed up with a question around data or some specificity around the scope of the problem. When the U.S. Office of Management and Budget [issued its first memo](#) calling for the pausing of all OMB grants and loans, nonprofits around the country shared the harm it would cause on their staff and services. The **Delaware Alliance for Nonprofit Advancement (DANA)**

immediately conducted an [online survey](#). The findings showed that “more than \$229 million would be lost should federal funding be withheld,” and these funds “directly benefit more than 500,000 individuals.” Of the more than 300 responses received, nearly 90 percent of individuals responded that the halt is “extremely concerning.” In addition to funding losses, many nonprofits shared that without federal funding, services could not be provided, staff would be laid off, and the nonprofit itself would be at risk of closing. With these data points, Delaware nonprofits can reach out to their local, state, and federal offices with the information provided by DANA.



On February 20, the **Kentucky Nonprofit Network (KNN)** held its annual Nonprofit Day at the Capitol, and this year there was an increased need for the Commonwealth’s lawmakers to hear from local nonprofits. With the [recent executive orders](#) and potential funding freezes for more nonprofits, days at the capitol organized by organizations like KNN create opportunities for advocates to share their story of impact with people who can propose and enact legislation to address current and future challenges. KNN’s CEO, Danielle Clore, [emphasized](#) the importance of these events: “Frankly, nonprofits are the experts on any number of community issues, and if they are not voicing their expertise, then it is difficult for state legislators, members of our federal delegation, local government officials, to often make good policy decisions without the information that they need.”



Earlier in February, the **Florida Nonprofit Alliance** held its inaugural [Florida Nonprofit Day](#) in Tallahassee, where advocates from around the state met legislators to “explain the strength and needs of nonprofits.” More than 65 people attended the two-day event and prior to their day at the statehouse, advocates were welcomed

with an orientation, reception, and performance by the Young Actors Theater. The 40 meetings allowed legislators to learn from their local nonprofits and establish relationships that will continue to make Florida Nonprofit Day a success.



State associations of nonprofits also share the range of impact with the media so more audiences can learn about their local nonprofit, the policies affecting their work, and their state contact. A Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) funding source was supposed to be disbursed at the beginning of the month, but many nonprofits are already reporting the impact of the payment delays. These and other stories were shared with the **North Carolina Center for Nonprofits**, and [captured](#) the uneasiness when speaking with a local news outlet: “For a lot of organizations, they're thinking about, if they don't get a grant disbursement soon, do they need to furlough staff? Do they need to think about laying off staff? Do they need to think about stopping or cutting back on services they provide?”



The **Utah Nonprofits Association (UNA)** created a [resource page](#) on the executive actions impacting nonprofits that includes a timeline, press releases, and other coverage. More importantly, it includes what nonprofits can do: “Don’t Panic: Many people are working to make sure nonprofits’ voices are heard...You’re not in this alone—the nonprofit community is rallying to make sure people like you have advocates.” There are other practical steps for nonprofits ranging from assessing funding and following UNA updates for the latest information.



In Alaska, **the Foraker Group** also created a [resource page](#) on federal actions and impacts on the state’s nonprofits. Emphasizing nonprofit nonpartisanship and that

the information on the page is not legal advice assures local nonprofits that the links have been verified and the Foraker Group is a reliable source. It is also clear that there are things nonprofits know, don't know, and can do to ensure that they are able to provide services in communities. These resources make it easier for local nonprofits to access the latest and most reliable information in one place.

If you haven't had the chance, [find and connect](#) with your state association of nonprofits. Collective advocacy has made a difference in every level of government and will continue to show the reach and impact of charitable nonprofits. Advocacy can be attending the day at the capitol, filling out a survey, or sharing your story with others to address challenges and propose solutions.