

NONPROFIT NEWS

Information and connections for Minnesota's nonprofit sector

MINNESOTA
COUNCIL OF
NONPROFITS

Spring 2020

Centering racial equity and nonprofit values during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond

MCN believes that racial equity and nonprofit values and practices are paramount to keeping our communities and networks vibrant and thriving during this unprecedented public health crisis. It is easy to say “we are all in this together.” When everyone is in need of help, it is easy to forget for a moment that disparities that have existed are even more amplified during times of crisis. We need to, and do, acknowledge that the way we all experience this moment varies greatly, depending on our positions of privilege we have held (in accessing resources, power, and money) as individuals and organizations.

We recognize the growth MCN still needs to do as an organization in centering racial equity. As we hone in on our strengths in public policy, trainings, research, and as a convener of resources to rapidly respond to the needs of our sector, we will be vigilant and intentional on how they are accessed and used. We will listen and follow leaders of color who know their communities better than we do. Will it be enough? No. But we will do everything we can to lessen the harm on organizations, communities, and individuals who have been historically oppressed by existing systems and policies.

Jon Pratt and Nonoko Sato's column on page 2 highlights the many ways we are responding to member and sector-wide needs, including:

- Prioritizing first, the health and safety of our staff, members, and community.
- Advocating through the Minnesota Budget Project policy solutions that

prioritize those people who are likely to bear the greatest economic impacts of COVID-19 and service disruptions. Read their blog, pointed to by one public leader as essential reading, “Racial equity should be at the core of coronavirus responses.”

- Advocating for nonprofits at all levels of government for inclusion in stimulus and relief policies ranging from unemployment compensation to short term emergency loans. On April 7, MCN sent this letter urging 100 percent Unemployment Compensation coverage for reimbursing nonprofit employers to the office of the Governor and Lt. Governor, as well as legislative leadership and appropriate committee leadership, and their staff, with 105 signatories, describing the economic effects of COVID-19 on their organizations.
- Equipping our regional coordinators to play a crucial role in offering technical assistance and support to GreaterMN nonprofits, linking organizations to MCN's virtual trainings and resources, and relaying regional needs to the full MCN team.

Our vision is that our members, the threads who make up our network, can accomplish their missions for a healthy, just, cooperative society. That vision remains true, especially in the face of the current challenges our state, nation, and the world are facing together. Together, we can build on the strengths and resiliency of our sector and co-create structures to center folks furthest from justice, spaces where we can do better together. MCN is dedicated to creating an environment where that work can thrive.

The mission of the **Minnesota Council of Nonprofits** is to inform, promote, connect, and strengthen individual nonprofits and the nonprofit sector.

NONPROFIT BITS

Minnesota nonprofits are the backbone of a strong and healthy state. Every day, we work to find innovative solutions to community problems, advocate for those who have no voice, and strive for a more equitable Minnesota for all. This is why the Minnesota Council of Nonprofits created the Nonprofit Mission Awards over three decades ago. If you know of a nonprofit doing award-worthy work in the area of advocacy, anti-racism, innovation, or responsive philanthropy, we invite you to nominate them for a 2020 Mission Award by Monday, May 18 at www.minnesotanonprofits.org/mission.

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Where We Stand

Nonprofit Responses to COVID-19

by Jon Pratt, MCN executive director, and
Nonoko Sato, MCN associate director

We appreciate that this is an intense time for all of our organizations, our communities, and for our families — and hope you are doing as well as possible!

With the closure of most nonprofit facilities and services, organizations have been forced to lay off staff, work remotely where possible, and cope with catastrophic revenue loss. MCN has been active across three fronts to mobilize the nonprofit sector's response to the pandemic:



Connecting state and federal policies to nonprofit realities

Along with our counterparts at other state associations of nonprofits around the U.S., MCN has been in constant communication with the Governor's office, legislators, and members of Congress to demonstrate the enormous effects of the pandemic on nonprofit services. Weekly MCN briefings with Governor Tim Walz and Lt. Governor Peggy Flanagan have provided nonprofits with a forum to present their questions and hear directly from state leaders and commissioners.

The Minnesota Budget Project and MCN policy teams have been continuously advocating on federal and state policy issues, including the CARES Act, DHS Regulations, unemployment insurance for reimbursing employers, child care assistance, and continued Census 2020 outreach. Making nonprofits eligible for large parts of the CARES Act was a public policy victory, delivered on short notice, and welcome progress from past Congressional practice.

Remote delivery: timely information from new modalities

MCN has placed a priority on getting information to nonprofit boards and managers as the shape of the crisis developed. Our last in-person event was the Greater Minnesota Nonprofit Summit on March 10, with 130 nonprofit leaders in Marshall. Like many other organizations, MCN's own revenues have taken a major hit with event cancellations — large events and conferences were the first to go by mid-March.

From that point on, MCN has hosted dozens of free events via Zoom and GoToMeeting, partnering with allied organizations, most frequently Propel Nonprofits and the Minnesota Council on Foundations (MCF).

A special edition of the *Minnesota Grants Directory* is now in its 3rd edition, highlighting over 45 new dedicated COVID-19 response funds. When SBA loans became available to nonprofits MCN sponsored [How to Apply for a Payroll Protection Program Loan](#) with Propel Nonprofits and Sunrise Banks, drawing 400 participants, and significantly, 200 questions.

Nonprofits working together: building on the logic of collective action

As an economic collapse gets added to the public health crisis, it is clear that no single organization can confront this new climate alone, and the recovery will be grim for many organizations. At the same time, within the last six weeks we have seen multiple demonstrations of new combinations and partnerships across the spectrum of nonprofit activity areas.

From the openness of the Governor's office and the IRS extension on filing 990's to the rapid response from Minnesota foundations and MCF's Disaster Recovery Fund, there is an encouraging increase in flexibility and commitment to overcome bureaucratic barriers.

The scope and scale of the shrinking COVID-19 economy is epic, as we are just beginning to find out what it will mean for our individual organizations and the sector at large. To help assess the impact on nonprofits, MCN is partnering with the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis to conduct a very quick pulse survey to gain a deeper understanding of how COVID-19 is impacting nonprofit organizations. MCN will be making the results available shortly.

Nonprofits Count! Campaign encourages communities to use their voice

MCN believes nonprofits have a critical role to promote community participation and build power. The census is a vehicle for equity and justice by ensuring fair political representation and distribution of resources in our communities. We are all stronger when communities are using their voice and power to help shape and change the systems that impact them every day — especially communities that have been historically systemically oppressed.

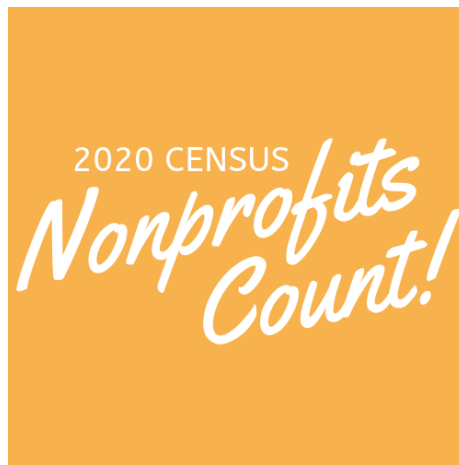
During this unprecedented time, counting communities remains paramount to future allocation of government resources. In November of 2019, the Minnesota Council of Nonprofits (MCN) granted 36 organizations \$2,000-\$5,000 grants to conduct census outreach. We recently reached out to some of those grantees to hear what they are doing to get Minnesota counted in the 2020 census.

What Intercultural Mutual Assistance Association is doing to get communities counted

Intercultural Mutual Assistance Association (IMAA) was created in 1984 in response to the growing immigrant and refugee population in Rochester, MN. The organization now has a staff of 30+ and provides a range of services including: interpretation, victim services, health care assistance, and job placement. Rawhi Said, IMAA's Project Coordinator, describes the organization as a "One stop shop for refugees and immigrants." IMMA received \$5,000 from MCN to promote the census to immigrant and refugee community in Rochester.

"Nonprofits play a critical role in making sure immigrants and refugees know how the data [collected in the census] impacts them and how they can be counted accurately," Said said.

For example, in 2010, U.S. census data reflected that the Bosnian population decreased. Many Bosnians did not realize they could self-identify by checking the "some other race" box and writing in "Bosnian." This is prevalent in many communities not just for the Bosnian community. Being able to self-identify beyond the options of White, Black, Asian, Native American captures the changing demographics which helps governments and organizations understand how to best serve the growing and diverse Minnesota community.



"As an organization whose sole mission is to build bridges between cultures, the census is a key tool. [Helping our community to] participate so the census data reflects the true demographics of this community benefits all of us," Said said. "This is why IMAA is invested in this work".

Amid COVID-19, IMAA canceled in person census events and pivoted to providing multilingual staff who are available through the phone to assist the Rochester immigrant community with any census questions. The organization will also continue sharing language specific information through social media.

Interested in hearing more census stories?

MCN will be sharing grantee stories on social media including how grantees are shifting their pre-COVID-19 plans to digitally organize in their communities during this time of crisis. Stay tuned by following our facebook, twitter, and instagram where these stories will be highlighted.

Additional Census Updates

Census Invitations were delivered on March 12, 2020. Look out for a letter in a sealed envelope with a 12-digit ID and instructions to complete the census. If you have not received an invitation in the mail, you can still fill out your form, go to my2020census.gov and click "I do not have a Census ID."

Operational Timeline Adjustments

To ensure a fair and accurate 2020 Census, and to protect the health and safety of U.S. Census Bureau employees and the public, the U.S. Census Bureau announced adjustments to their operational timeline due to COVID-19. Most notably, self-response is extended to August 14, 2020; non-response follow-up is delayed until May 7, 2020; and Group Quarter Enumeration starts April 16, 2020. For more details, visit 2020census.gov/en/news-events/operational-adjustments-covid-19.

Live Response Map: Are you curious how many people in your community have responded to the 2020 census? Check out the response rates map from the Census Bureau at 2020census.gov/en/response-rates.

Michelle Chang

*MCN policy and equity coordinator
mchang@minnesotanonprofits.org*

Nonprofits and philanthropy collaborate to support Greater Minnesota in midst of COVID-19

Across Minnesota, nonprofits and communities are stepping up to support one another during this turbulent time. We wanted to highlight three examples of successful collaborations created by our member nonprofits across Greater Minnesota.

The six Minnesota Initiative Foundations (MIFs) are offering an emergency childcare grants for licensed child care programs caring for children of emergency and essential personnel. The MIFs are partnering with organizations across Greater Minnesota to ensure proper childcare is still in place, especially for those working to protect the health and safety of the state. Many other foundations are stepping up to provide emergency response grants with a variety of focus to help meet the basic needs of Minnesotans.

Another example of collaboration between nonprofits and private organizations comes from a member organization in Mankato. Feeding Our Community Partners (FOCP) has expanded their BackPack Food Program to meet the needs of families with children who are learning from home. FOCP has partnered with many local restaurants to provide meals for the families being served. Volunteers have stepped up to pack and delivery the food directly to families during the closure of schools.

In Rochester, the Diversity Council has taken to social media to spread the word about their “pandemic privilege check.” Since the COVID-19, there has been an increase in acts of racism against our neighbors of Asian descent.

Further, the Diversity Council notes that Black and Latinx workers are less likely to have jobs where they can work at home. Only thirty percent of jobs can be done from home, which has caused many workers of all ethnic backgrounds to be struggling.

As a nonprofit community, we can partner together locally and across the state to support the needs of Minnesotans. We shared examples of partnership created by three member nonprofits. What has your community doing? How can you work with partners to support your mission during this turbulent time? Make sure to share your positive stories of partnership and collaboration!

Dr. Bradley Wolfe
MCN southwest MN regional coordinator
bwolfe@minnesotanonprofits.org

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Jack Duffy, Consultant
952.356.3578 | jack_duffy@ajg.com

Michaela O'Brien, Consultant
952.356.0757 | michaela_obrien@ajg.com

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COVID-19: What Nonprofits Should Know

MCN understands how the continuously developing situation regarding COVID-19 has been impacting nonprofits and the communities we serve in myriad ways, including cancellation of programs or events, staff and volunteer layoffs, increased demand for services from your clients

and communities, and budgetary implications related to all the above.

As these challenging days evolve, MCN will continue to provide updates as to how our work will be changing in the coming months, as well as resources that may help you navigate

the issues you and your nonprofit may currently be facing. This includes recordings of a recent [How to Apply for Paycheck Protection Program Forgivable Loans](#) webinar and virtual chats with the Governor Tim Walz, Lt. Governor Peggy Flanagan, and Senator Tina Smith.

Agendas and Action

Government is a lot of boring work...that is actually really important

by Marie Ellis, MCN public policy director

Government is big, it can be confusing and frustrating, and there will always be ways it can improve. Recently, I saw this line by J. Patrick Coolican in the *Minnesota Reformer*, “Government is a lot of boring work that is actually really important,” and I can’t think of a better thesis for this column.

For example, imagine it is last August and you are at a nonprofit gala making small talk with another attendee and discover that she works for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, overseeing contracts compliance and maintenance. Even though your mind screams “SNOOZE,” and you’ve used the two toothpicks your appetizers came on to prop your eyelids open after hearing her job title, this person seems nice and you have no one else to talk to, so you press on and inquire further.



Turns out her office is in a dispute with a business that maintains the nation’s stockpile of ventilators. Your new friend tells you, in great detail, why ventilators cannot be stored without maintenance, and then walks you through the disputed provisions in the contract. She is very concerned that the contract will lapse and thousands of ventilators will not have proper maintenance. Mercifully, dinner begins and you are left with a boring new friend and gratitude that your job isn’t as boring as hers.

Had COVID-19 not become a global pandemic, you might’ve forgotten this conversation, but as is the case, in today’s reality, governors are bidding against each other for ventilators to save their constituents’ lives. Thousands of ventilators were maintained, and are saving lives right now.

So, right now, after weeks of intense distance advocacy and lobbying, I’m choosing to focus on what government is doing right, and appreciating our elected leaders and their staff. Prior to last week, most Americans had no idea that our country has a national stockpile of ventilators and other medical equipment, but years ago smart, strategic people determined the necessity of that and made it happen.

We are seeing government in action right now, and we need it to succeed.

In just a few days’ time, our state leaders enacted social distancing measures that most people agree are sensible. Minnesota’s Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) has managed more applications for unemployment insurance in a two-week period recently than in all of 2019, and because in years past someone like your friend from the gala painstakingly drew out a plans regarding DEED’s authority, the agency is now able to make quick decisions and prioritize appropriately.

Our federal leaders quickly passed three large relief and stimulus packages, including the CARES Act, a bipartisan \$2 trillion relief package, providing \$349 billion in forgivable loans to small employers, expanding unemployment insurance coverage to more workers, and providing direct payments to individuals. It shouldn’t take a pandemic for Congress to act this efficiently, but it’s nice to know that our leaders can put partisanship aside. Perhaps this will be a catalyst for more bipartisanship. (Yes, I’m an idealist. I know.)

MCN continues to be a solid presence at the state and federal levels, connecting with leaders like the Governor, Lt. Governor, legislative leaders, and Minnesota’s U.S. Senators and Representatives, ensuring that decision-makers understand the challenges nonprofits are facing and lobbying for what we need to remain strong and vibrant.

The important work of government right now is to center equity and to be responsive and nimble. In all of these changes, our work is to ensure that the systems created in the wake of this pandemic are inclusive, equitable, and so well-crafted that they are downright boring.

Nonprofit News and Advancements



The Family Partnership named Lorena Pinto as vice president of programs.

Alicia Fitzpatrick joined Margaret A. Cargill Philanthropies as program director of Animal Welfare and Quality of Life.



The National Eagle Center named Meg Gammage-Tucker as its new executive director

Kate Wilinski joined Opportunity Partners as vice president of advancement. Additionally, David Dorn and Patty Sagert joined the board of directors.



The Nature Conservancy named Ann Mulholland as director of the Minnesota, North Dakota and South Dakota chapter.

Erin Anderson, Robert W. Craggs, and Janet M. Newberg joined the board for Conservation Corps Minnesota & Iowa.

Michelle Basham was named the president and CEO of YWCA Minneapolis.



Linda Bryant was named executive director at HOPE 4 Youth.

The Epilepsy Foundation of Minnesota named Glen Lloyd executive director and Katy McFall development director.



Caroline Hood was named president and CEO of RS Eden, succeeding founder Dan Cain after his 45 year leadership tenure.

Arts Midwest named Anne Romens vice president of revenue and communications. Additionally, Katie Ortman and Carlianne Hayes joined the organization as program associate for international initiatives and administrative associate, respectively.



Mill City Commons welcomed Elise Linehan as executive director.

West Central Initiative welcomed Sarah Casey as its new director of strategic communications.



Wingspan Life Resources celebrated the birthday of Betty Nordin of Skillman House, who turned 108 on February 22. Happy birthday, Betty!

MCN Staff Update



The Minnesota Council of Nonprofits is excited to announce Warsame Warsame as Central Minnesota regional coordinator and St. Cloud VISTA coordinator. Prior to joining MCN, Warsame served as program coordinator at Joshua's Journey and project officer at Rural Organization for Advocacy and Development International. He is currently completing his Master of Public Administration at St. Cloud State.

Submit Your Announcements

MCN member organizations are invited to submit your organization's awards, staffing announcements, and other news to asanow@minnesotanonprofits.org. MCN cannot guarantee that all announcements will make it into *Nonprofit News*.

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St. Cloud State University, a member of Minnesota State

2019 Nonprofit Mission Award Recipient for Responsive Philanthropy: Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota Foundation

Established in 1986, the mission of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota Foundation is to make a healthy difference in communities by advancing health equity and improving conditions where people live, learn, work and play. The Foundation focusses on the fundamental social and economic issues that drive health: education, employment, income, family and social support, and community safety.

While the Foundation has long worked with nonprofits who serve populations facing structural barriers to optimal health, the aftermath of the most recent Presidential election — and a variety of subsequent administration decisions negatively impacting under-served communities — motivated the Foundation to take additional action. Both threatened and actual physical harm, emotional stress, and family separation was affecting the day-to-day security of our immigrant, refugee and Muslim neighbors, as well as impacting their ability to create a healthy future.

In response, the Foundation board of directors approved a new grants program: Responsive Grants in

Uncertain Times. The goal of the \$300,000 fund was to make grants available to enable organizations to plan and take action to engage and protect their communities.

The Foundation committed to working quickly as well as wisely, narrowing the time from application submission to cutting a check to an average of three weeks from the typical average of 12 weeks.

In 2017, the Foundation met with, invited, and deployed the \$300,000 to fund ten nonprofits working on the front lines with their communities to promote safety and quell fears. The board approved additional funds in 2018 to continue this work and ten additional grants totaling \$250,000 were approved. In 2019, the Foundation funded \$1M in grants aimed at helping to create safer, more welcoming and more connected communities.



The Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota Foundation (and friends) accepting their Mission Award at the 2019 MCN Annual Conference.

As a result of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota Foundation's dedication to being responsive to community interests, acting quickly to address immediate needs, and committing resources to those experiencing significant, the Minnesota Council of Nonprofits was pleased to present the organization with the 2019 Nonprofit Mission Award for Responsive Philanthropy.

Learn more about the Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota Foundation at www.bluecrossmnfoundation.org.



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Urgent agenda: Economic turning point added to health emergency

The COVID-19 pandemic has threatened the health and safety of us all. The necessary actions to reduce the spread of the virus has resulted in sudden economic disruption that leaves many wondering how they'll pay the bills.

State and federal policymakers have acted quickly to shore up critical health care resources, while also directing billions of dollars to jobless workers, struggling families, and states and local governments to try to ease the initial force of the economic fallout.

But while important steps forward have been made, there are still unacceptable gaps in policy responses that left too many of our neighbors and family members behind. For example, the federal CARES Act provides stimulus rebates to millions of Americans, but leaves out many of our immigrant neighbors — even some of their citizen children — because someone in their family uses an ITIN (Individual Tax Identification Number) when they file their taxes.

The Minnesota Budget Project has aimed our advocacy and research efforts toward those Minnesotans who will bear a greater burden in these times of stretched health care resources and economic turmoil.

Early in the COVID-19 crisis, we joined with other advocates to lift up the

importance in maintaining access to critical health care and income supports and called for increased flexibility at the state's Department of Human Services (DHS) to make this happen. We also joined a large network of child care advocates in making the case for supporting our child care infrastructure. One of our roles was to support a civic engagement effort through which more than 2,500 Minnesotans contacted their elected officials. We've heard this impressive response from Minnesotans was an important factor in getting \$30 million in emergency child care funding enacted in recent COVID-response legislation.

And more needs to be done. We are seeing that the public health emergency and resulting economic recession is also causing a state fiscal crisis. Specifically, we're advocating for additional federal resources for states to continue to fund essential services in the face of expected significant revenue losses, to expand health care coverage and SNAP food assistance, and ensure recovery rebates include folks left out of the first round.

We're calling for every level of government response to be rooted in equity. Recessions inflict the greatest harm on those who have the least resources to weather the storm: people with low incomes and people of color. Both of these groups are more likely to lose their jobs in an economic downturn.

Moreover, Minnesotans of color already often have much less income and wealth than they would have otherwise because of the impact of historical racism and ongoing forms of bias and discrimination.

Below are several resources to stay up to date on health and economic information, and specific policy changes:

Minnesota Council of Nonprofits COVID-19 resource page: www.minnesotanonprofits.org/COVID-19

Minnesota Department of Human Service's frequently updated website of changes allowing ongoing delivery of essential services: www.mn.gov/dhs/waivers-and-modifications/

Governor Walz's executive orders: www.mn.gov/governor/news/executiveorders.jsp

MDH covid landing page: www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/index.html

Department of Employment and Economic Development for workers (www.mn.gov/deed/newscenter/covid/workers/index.jsp) and employers (www.mn.gov/deed/newscenter/covid/employers/)

Read more from the Minnesota Budget Project at Budget Bites blog

The Budget Bites blog is where the Minnesota Budget Project team analyzes the latest happenings at the Capitol, feature insights into new policy research, and highlight ways you can take action. In recent weeks, Budget Bites has featured a number of blog posts vital to understanding the impact of COVID-19 on communities across Minnesota.

Click on titles below or visit www.mnbudgetproject.org/minnesota-budget-bites-blog to read more:

- >> [Minnesota's April economic update \(4.14.20\)](#)
- >> [Racial equity should be at the core of coronavirus responses \(4.7.20\)](#)
- >> [The Federal CARES Act: What's in the economic stimulus bill, who is left out \(4.3.20\)](#)
- >> [Minnesota Legislature takes additional action on COVID-19 \(4.1.20\)](#)

Now is the time for unprecedented COVID-19 era philanthropy

Every year, foundations contribute hundreds of millions of grant dollars to make essential services available to Minnesota communities. As we face an era where the impact of COVID-19 is already resulting in increased demands on nonprofit organizations, operational challenges, and funding disruptions, the work of grantseeking will be vital. Unlike other sources of revenue for nonprofits, grant funding is more nimble, flexible, and quick in times of crises. MCN calls upon the funding community to reduce administrative burdens and make grant funds available to nonprofits as quickly and as easily as possible.

MCN offers profound appreciation for the funders that have stepped up with a speedy public commitment of funds to address the crisis, increased flexibility and partnership, and direct communications with their grantees. The Minnesota Council on Foundations also deserves special recognition for building leadership and collaboration at this crucial time.



MCN's advancement and member services teams have been compiling information on responsive grant opportunities as they become available, both within Minnesota and nationally and have produced a free special COVID-19 response edition of the Minnesota Grants Directory.

As of the publication date of the first version of the directory (March 23, 2020), dozens of funders have announced that they have committed funds to disaster relief, are changing application and reporting processes, or will be announcing changes soon.

In most cases the processes for applying to and accessing these funds is still being determined. Due to the rapidly evolving nature of this work, MCN intends on publishing multiple versions of this special edition of the *Minnesota Grants Directory* in order to equip Minnesota's nonprofits with the latest information. The most recent edition of the directory can be downloaded at www.minnesotanonprofits.org/covid-19.

Even in unprecedented times, the MCN team finds hope in the nonprofit sector. While the outlook is unknown, nonprofits and foundations together bring essential ingredients — a strong public will, human resiliency, a belief in a better world, and a drive to do what is right.

Kari Aanedstad
MCN advancement director
kaanestad@minnesotanonprofits.org



Minnesota Council of Nonprofits
2314 University Ave. W, Ste. 20
St. Paul, MN 55114

Phone: 651-642-1904
Toll Free: 800-289-1904
Fax: 651-642-1517

info@minnesotanonprofits.org
www.minnesotanonprofits.org

Mission

MCN works to inform, promote, connect, and strengthen individual nonprofits and the nonprofit sector.

Correction to previous article: Advancing Equity and Justice in the Nonprofit Sector

In our last issue of *Nonprofits News*, we used language in our piece “Advancing Equity and Justice in the Nonprofit Sector” that intimated the history of the United States begins with colonization, when in fact there were people living and thriving in societies long before the forcible removal and genocide of Indigenous peoples and tribal citizens. Additionally, we didn't capitalize the word Indigenous — failure to do so leads to further erasure. We apologize for these mistakes, and thank those who invested energy in educating us, though it was not their job.

MCN recognizes that we are not experts in this work, and yet we have a positional privilege with our nonprofit members. We absolutely and gratefully accept this feedback as a learning moment for us, and we will commit to furthering our own education and knowledge as we push for change in our sector. The printing of this correction and apology is part of other steps we are taking. For example, we included the word Indigenous (capitalized) in our own style guide, and commit to identifying leaders/scholars for us to learn from and will pay them appropriately for their time and expertise.