

NONPROFIT NEWS

Your Nonprofit's Story

[The power of
nonprofit
storytelling](#)

[New research spotlights
current conditions of
Minnesota nonprofits](#)

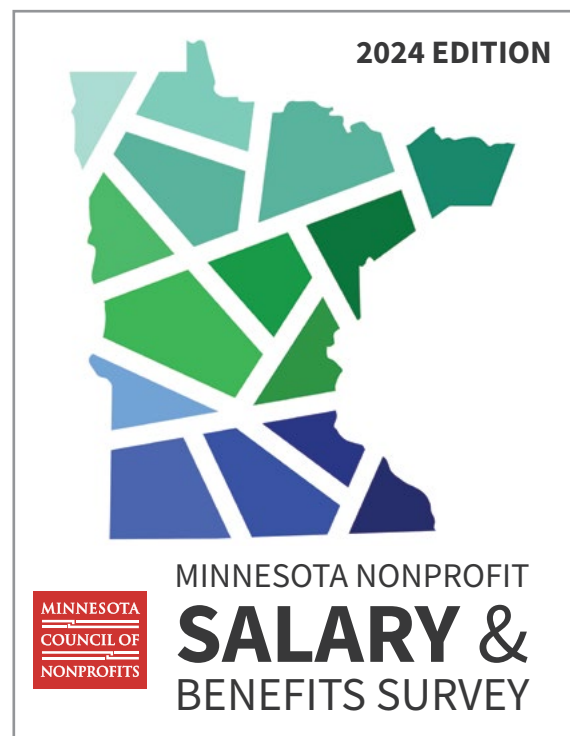
[Six misperceptions
about communicating
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[Using coffee to provide tools for success with
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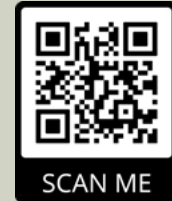
2024 MINNESOTA NONPROFIT SALARY & BENEFITS SURVEY

Now available in print and web access formats from the Minnesota Council of Nonprofits, the *2024 Minnesota Nonprofit Salary and Benefits Survey* contains current total compensation data from 540 participating nonprofits, making this bi-annual resource the most reliable tool to help your organization comply with IRS regulations and maintain fair and competitive compensation practices.

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The power of nonprofit storytelling

“Facts matter, but stories change hearts and minds”

— Beth Schoeppler, MCN board member and managing director of Loft Literacy Center

In 2007, I suddenly found myself being offered the role of executive director for an organization I had worked for over the past four years. As the program director, I knew the organization well, but I had never been trained in many of the other important skills I would need to run an effective business, including fundraising.

Many folks who don't truly understand development work find “asking for money” as something distasteful and difficult to do, and I certainly felt the same in the beginning. Early on, when I met with donors, I relied almost exclusively on our impactful data (number of students served, matriculation into high school and college, attendance records, etc.), which were certainly good snapshots of our work but didn't really give a sense of why our work deeply and personally mattered to so many.

One time, a potential donor asked about my own background, which largely mirrored my students' academic and personal experiences. I shared the myriad challenges of navigating a small private college as a first-generation student relying on financial aid. My peers who had attended private high schools seemed to easily traverse the culture and the unspoken expectations embedded in institutions used to primarily work with students from privilege, resources, and wealth. I was a strong, engaged student in high school, yet I almost dropped out of college my freshman year.

These personal life experiences gave me first-hand insight into what my own students needed from an educational access organization like ours, and I was praised (yes in some ways it felt patronizing, but that's a story for another day) for my passion, deep understanding of the work and the

students, and the vision I held to ensure their successes. Suddenly, fundraising felt less like “begging” and more like an invitation for donors to invest in the future of these incredible students — like me.

The nonprofit sector is too often misunderstood. According to a report by Indiana University Lilly Family School of Philanthropy, only 5 percent of respondents thought they had received services from a charitable organization or a nonprofit in the past year. Many did not know that the vast majority of their places of worship, colleges and universities, animal shelters, theaters and museums, hospitals and clinics, among other vital programs, are often nonprofits. While nonprofits are dependent on public trust to meet our mission, it is easy for the general public to perpetuate harmful assumptions of nonprofits when they don't have personal connections or understanding of our complex work and our role as vital community institutions.



Nonoko Sato

Executive Director

Facts and data points matter, but storytelling represents a compelling way of simplifying complex issues and connecting with people more personally. Storytelling builds empathy and a strong sense of connection

between people and mission. Storytelling is used in many different cultures to preserve history for the next generation. Storytelling evokes emotions needed to push people out of complacency, challenges assumptions, and inspires each of us to do better. And, yes, storytelling changes hearts, minds, and lives.

Storytelling is a vital form of advocacy, stronger than data and statistics alone. An ability to tell a story that resonates with people can inspire action and drive meaningful change.

I look forward to hearing your stories.

In community,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nonoko Sato".

The great Greater Minnesota road trip



Jackie McNeil

*Southern Minnesota
Regional Representative*

Just as the New Year dawned, MCN’s membership manager Jes Wysong stopped in Duluth and knocked on the door of Kelly LaCore, regional representative for Northern MN.

“Hop in, Kelly,” she said, gesturing to the rented SUV, already packed with snacks. “We’re headed south!”

Kelly bundled up, grabbed her bubble water, and climbed into the warm vehicle. They headed

down 35, waved at the MCN office in St. Paul, and kept going, exhausting their Minnesota indie playlist. Just south of the metro, Jes veered off the highway and turned east towards Northfield, where they picked up a newbie.

“Hey Jackie, jump in!” exclaimed Jes. “We’re adding you to the team. Look to the east, look to the west ... all that you see south of the metro shall be your territory.”

Jackie sized up her traveling companions, looked at the map, and replied, “Okay, but I need to stop for a soda – my caffeine comes carbonated.”

Jes then examined the map and plotted a route west, then north, then west again, eventually landing in Sartell, MN.

“You all look lost,” said Emily Steinmetz. “Can I help you?” “We’re with MCN,” said Kelly, “It’s the Minnesota ...”

“...Council of Nonprofits,” Emily finished their sentence. “Yes, I know. I used to work there.”

“Well, we’re searching Central Minnesota for the perfect teammate,” they continued. “You in?”

“Do I get to hang out with cool nonprofit leaders at coffee shops?” Emily asked. “If so, I’m in!”

And thus the regional representative road trip began ... heading north to Duluth for a conference with local history museums, then spying the world’s largest Northern Pike in Erskine, trolling for trolls in Detroit Lakes, walking along the Mississippi in Winona, exploring Robbins Island in Willmar, and waving to Paul Bunyan & Babe in Bemidji, before rounding up scores of nonprofits for rest and reinvigoration at the Greater Minnesota Nonprofit Summit in beautiful Walker.

All along the journey, the MCN regional team has met and talked with the brilliant, dedicated nonprofit leaders and staff who are committed to improving communities in every corner of Minnesota in every way.

Our regional representatives are problem-solvers, ambassadors, and weavers of strong nonprofit connections. But more than anything, they are frequent listeners and occasional story-tellers, who have been lucky enough this year to hear many of your stories — stories of joy and celebration, of stress and struggle, of resilience and renewal.

And the road trip continues ... So reach out if you’d like us to visit your neck of the prairie!

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Current conditions of Minnesota's nonprofit sector



Shonni Kregel
Research Manager

MCN is pleased to release our latest reports on current key trends in Minnesota's nonprofit sector across two new reports: [2024 Current Conditions of Minnesota's Nonprofit Sector](#) and [2024 Minnesota Nonprofit Economy Report](#).

These reports take an in-depth look at the current wellbeing of nonprofits and the sector's impact on Minnesota's economy. Our goal in collecting and analyzing this data

is to provide you with a broad context to place your individual situation in perspective for decision-making and communications.

Special thanks to Jon Pratt, senior research fellow, and Lars Rostad, research intern, for their contributions to these reports.

Key Findings

- ▶ Number of nonprofits fluctuates, but mass closing fears unrealized
- ▶ Increase in inactive and/or dissolving nonprofits
- ▶ Gender pay parity closer in nonprofit sector compared to other sectors
- ▶ Financial stability is threatened for a vast majority of nonprofits
- ▶ MN wages across sectors struggle to keep pace with inflation
- ▶ Nonprofit ingenuity fills increasing gaps despite stagnated support

▶ Number of nonprofits fluctuates, but fears of mass closings unrealized



In 2023, nonprofit employers accounted for over 13 percent of Minnesota's workforce, matching the size of government, which also employed approximately 13 percent of the state's workforce. For-profit employers account for the remaining 73 percent of the state's employees.

While some industry observers feared the ripple effects of the COVID-19 pandemic would lead to a high number of nonprofits closing, state and national statistics reveal the fears of mass closings remain unrealized to date.

▶ Increase in inactive and/or dissolving nonprofits

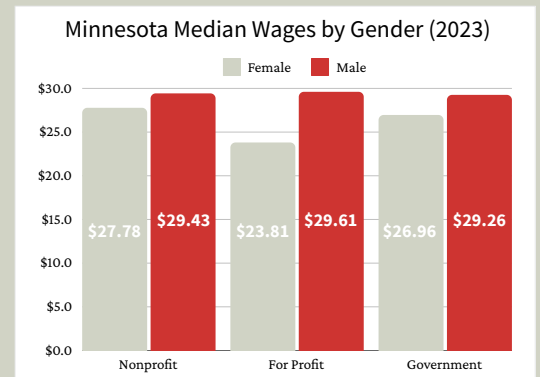
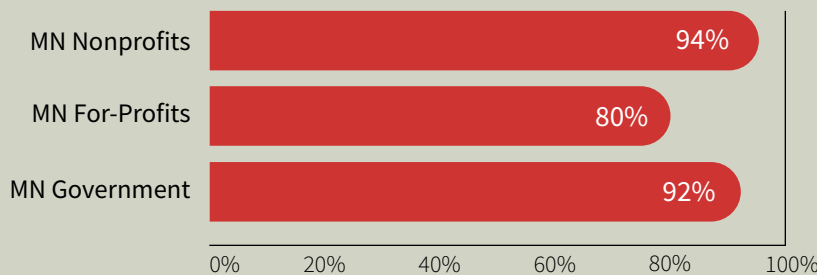
While the nonprofit sector in Minnesota is showing growth, the number of nonprofits becoming inactive or dissolving is on the rise in Minnesota, and the closing of even one nonprofit can have a significant impact on communities.

For the first time in this report series, data was obtained from the Minnesota Attorney General's Office and Secretary of State's Office on organizations who have become inactive and/or have dissolved over the last 10 years. In both datasets, there has been an increase since 2020 in the number of nonprofits becoming inactive (due to their failure to submit annual filings to the Secretary of State's Office) and/or dissolved (proactively disclosed to the Attorney General's Office).

▶ New Data: Gender pay gap persists, but parity remains closer in nonprofit sector compared to total workforce

The most recently available data shows that 74 percent of nonprofit employees identify as female. Overall, female nonprofit workers are paid 94 cents on the dollar compared to what their male colleagues are paid. This remains a much smaller gap when compared to Minnesota's for-profit workforce, where females earn 80 cents on the dollar compared to their male colleagues are paid.

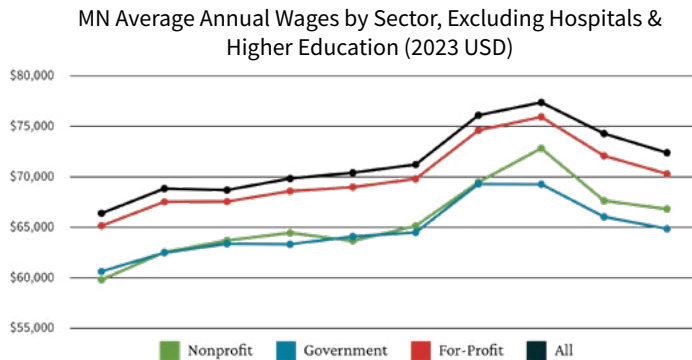
Female's average wages as a percent of male's average wages



► Minnesota waves across sectors struggle to keep pace with inflation

All three workforce sectors in Minnesota (nonprofit, government, and for-profit) saw a drop in inflation-adjusted average annual wages, reflecting the challenges employers across all sectors face in keeping their wages in step with the continued impacts of high inflation.

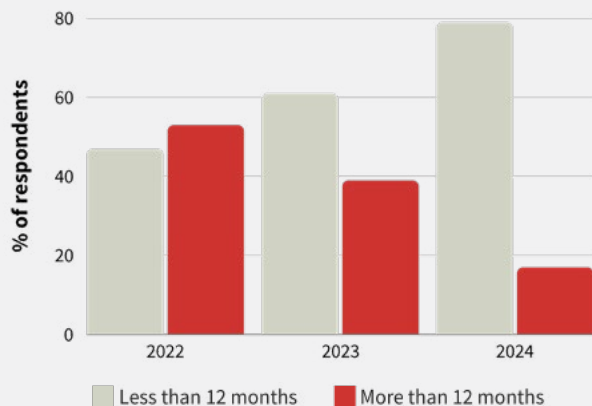
Despite this cross-sector downward trajectory, nonprofit sector compensation levels dropped by a smaller percentage when compared to wages in other sectors.



► Financial stability is threatened for a vast majority of nonprofits

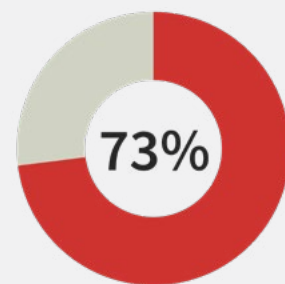
When asked how many months their nonprofit could operate in the current environment before exhibiting financial distress, 79 percent reported less than 12 months, compared to from 47 percent in 2022. Based on respondents, three factors drive the continuous financial distress: increased expenses, fluctuations in charitable giving, and COVID relief funding being mostly distributed and spent.

How many months can you operate in the current environment before exhibiting financial distress?



► Nonprofit ingenuity fills increasing gaps despite stagnated support

Since funding, donor support, and/or staffing has largely remained stagnant across Minnesota’s nonprofit sector, many nonprofits have been forced to adapt to the increase in demand for services with the resources currently at their disposal.



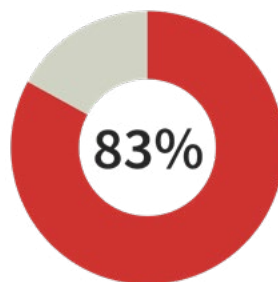
Although nonprofits, in large part, have been able to adapt, many state that the growing workload and increased expenses being incurred are not sustainable for employees and the organization as a whole.

Approximately 73 percent of survey respondents reported that the demand for their services has increased over the past 12 months. When asked to elaborate, some discussed the increase in severity of core societal issues, such as food insecurity, homelessness, mental illness, and lack of access to health care, among others.

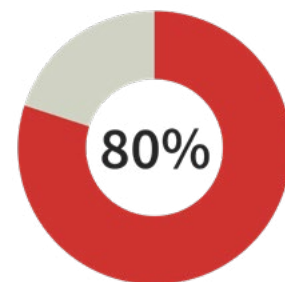
► Nonprofits are actively working towards creating a healthy, cooperative, and just society

When asked if their nonprofit is actively working towards racial equity, 83 percent of the respondents replied affirmatively. Some of the major successes that organizations celebrated included (1) securing funding for racial equity work, (2) developing or expanding on programming and initiatives, and (3) creation or expansion on internal policies and practices.

Additionally, 80 percent of survey respondents reported engaging in advocacy work in the last year. This includes participating in coalitions, promoting voting, contacting elected officials about topics related to their mission, and more.



Nonprofits that reported actively working towards racial equity.



Nonprofits that reported engaging in advocacy work.

Nonprofit news & advancements



The Saint Paul & Minnesota Foundation announced Kimberly Long as events manager.



The Blandin Foundation named Kyle Erickson director of rural grantmaking.



Hamse Warfa joined **World Savvy** as the organization's chief executive officer.



Niila Hebert joined the **Minnesota Alliance for Volunteer Advancement** as executive director.



Andrea Sanow was promoted to marketing and communications director and Mario Hernandez was promoted to chief program officer, both at **Propel Nonprofits**.



Can Do Canines welcomed Dan Garry as director of finance and operations.



Sadikshya Aryla and Carson Faust joined the **Northwest Area Foundation** as program officers.



True North Goodwill Northern Minnesota and Northwestern Wisconsin welcomed Emily Edison as chief mission officer.



Kevin Hebert joined **EquaSpace** as director of community collaboration.



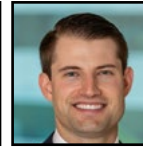
Cheryl T. Schiele joined **Margaret A. Cargill Philanthropies** as program director of arts & culture.



Briana Joyner joined the **Women's Foundation of Minnesota** as executive vice president of people & culture.



Carly Eckstrom joined the **Minnesota Budget Project** as deputy director.



Kristin Hannon joined **Big Brothers Big Sisters of Central Minnesota** as advancement director. Additionally, Jake Krippner and Preston Kopel joined the organization's board of directors.



Minnesota Community Action Partnership welcomed Pam Johnson as director policy, advocacy, and impact.



Kathryn Coleman, Ph.D., joined **Washburn Center for Children** as vice president, culture.

Celebrate your new staff and board members!

MCN member organizations are invited to submit your staff and board announcements to [Laura Dunford](#).

Please include their name, title, and photo if available. MCN cannot guarantee all announcements will appear in *Nonprofit News*.

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Guest column by JaNaé Bates

The power of a values-based narrative in advancing a better story for the win

In today's dynamic world, nonprofit organizations have the ability to be at the heart of transformative change. But our impact doesn't come solely from the services we provide or the policies for which we advocate. It comes from the stories we tell, the agency in people unlocked, and the values we center in our work.

As a narrative strategist and co-executive director of ISAIAH — a statewide, grassroots vehicle organizing a half million Minnesotans for racial and economic justice — I've seen first-hand how a values-based narrative is an essential driver of our collective mission. It empowers nonprofits to align their work with the deeper purpose of justice, equity, and community — creating a powerful voice that resonates not just locally, but across the nation. AND, it helps you win things!

The Power of Storytelling

Storytelling isn't just about sharing successes or making our work more relatable. It's about amplifying the values that fuel our mission and shaping the world we want to see. Every nonprofit exists to solve a problem or to uplift a community. However, the way we talk about those problems and that community can either reinforce the very issues we seek to dismantle or build the collective will to create meaningful change.

When we center our stories on scarcity, fear, and isolation, we may unintentionally reinforce a sense of helplessness. But when we flip the narrative — shifting from scarcity to abundance, from fear to faith, from impossibility to possibility — we cultivate a sense of hope and agency. This narrative shift activates people's belief that change is not only possible but inevitable, because that person is ready to take action to make it happen with others. It is through storytelling that we foster a sense of shared responsibility, making our mission part of a larger collective effort to transform society for the better.

A Unified Narrative Strategy: Race Class Gender Narrative in Minnesota

One of the most effective tools I've encountered in recent years is the Race Class Gender Narrative. In Minnesota, we've used this approach to build a shared narrative across dozens of organizations through a collective called the Narrative Justice League. There, we are aligning our messages around values that uplift community, equity, and collective action. But just as a good story needs a plot, conflict, a protagonist, and a villain,

so do our stories that work to engender the hope that people need to make to change.

This research-based and time tested narrative framework emphasizes that people's lived experiences and values across race, class, and gender are interconnected, and that there are a handful of people who make decisions that create systems that oppress, scapegoat, and pit communities against each other, often harming us all. We then get to tell our own hero's journey for how we create newness, allowing us all to flourish. By leveraging this framework, we have been able to tell more complete and powerful stories that build bridges rather than divisions.

The Race Class Gender Narrative has helped us create an echo chamber of values-driven storytelling that gets people in the driver's seat. And because this narrative is durable and rooted in shared values rather than isolated issues, it has been incredibly effective at bringing together organizations across different sectors — whether they work on climate justice, workers' rights, healthcare, or democracy.

We are no longer working in silos but in unison, creating a unified message that challenges the entrenched powers that have hoarded wealth and resources, while trying to make us afraid of each other and pitting us against each other. To do the very Minnesotan thing of quoting Paul Wellstone, we've realized that, "we all do better, when we all do better."

Winning Big by Telling a Bigger Story

From the most racially and gender-equitable Paid Family and Medical Leave policy in the U.S. and the most substantial child tax credit in the country to the restoration of voting rights of 55,000 formerly incarcerated Minnesotans and securing driver's licenses for all, regardless of immigration status — these victories didn't happen in Minnesota by chance. They happened because we told a story of abundance, justice, and possibility.

We've shown that when people and organizations unite around shared values, they can push back against those who've long wielded disproportionate power and resources. Good storytelling doesn't just talk about how terrible everything is, nor does it paint a utopia, ignoring forces that prevent its manifestation. With a Values, Villains and Vision framework that leans into race, gender, and class, we can scaffold the hope that people need to envision and work towards a better future.

Six misperceptions that need to go away



Marie Ellis

Public Policy Director

Communicating with elected officials can be extremely impactful in setting or changing public policy (the laws and rules we all have to follow). Nonprofits communicate with volunteers, donors, partners, clients, customers, and the public everyday, but are often hesitant to share those same messages with elected officials. Here are some common misperceptions about talking to legislators, with important reality checks.

Misperception 1: I'm not an expert, I don't have anything to tell a legislator.

Reality: Imagine you stop ten people randomly at the Minnesota State Fair. Would all ten of them perfectly understand the work you do, why it is important, and how things are going in the communities with whom you work? If not, don't assume your legislators do either!

Your lived experience and knowledge of your organization's work make you an important resource for legislators. They cannot be everywhere and rely on you to share information on what's happening in their district.

Keep in mind that it's always okay to say, "I don't know, but I'll find out and follow up," then actually do it. This shows you are a great resource for information, and provides another connection point after the meeting.

Misperception 2: There's no reason to talk to a legislator, if I don't have a specific ask for them.

Reality: You may hear this from many seasoned advocacy professionals, but I disagree. When legislators think of nonprofits, top-of-mind for many are the nonprofits at the center of large-scale, heavily-reported on fraud. This skewed perception is harming the entire nonprofit sector, leading to unnecessary and burdensome regulations and decreased public trust.

It's crucial to share that your nonprofit does vital, honest work for your community. You have a unique opportunity — and responsibility — to help legislators see the many positive sides of the sector.

Misperception 3: Advocacy isn't part of our mission.

Reality: Even if public policy advocacy isn't explicitly part of your nonprofit's mission, engaging with lawmakers can help remove barriers and create opportunities that directly impact the people and issues you serve. By influencing public policy, you can create a stronger foundation for fulfilling your mission in the long run.

Misperception 3: My nonprofit will get in trouble if we talk to a legislator.

Reality: Nonprofits can legally lobby, as long as we follow IRS guidelines (IRS information on lobbying and nonprofits) and Minnesota's rules (MN information on lobbying), and there are no limits on how much we can educate elected officials! If you're not sharing an opinion on specific legislation or asking the elected official to take a position legislation, what you're doing is called advocacy, and is not lobbying. Share stories, data, and other information to your heart's content.

Misperception 4: Only people who donate money have any influence.

Reality: It has been my experience over the last 20 years that most legislators are genuinely interested in talking to nonprofit staff and learning about their work. They rely heavily on our expertise to understand the real-world impact of policies on their constituents.

Misperception 5: I don't have the time.

Reality: You know your time constraints best, but legislative advocacy can be easier and more impactful than most people realize. There are ways to engage that can be scaled to your organization's abilities, such as signing on to coalition letters, emailing legislators, or inviting a lawmaker to tour your site.

Misperception 6: I don't know how to do a legislative meeting.

Reality: If you have ever communicated with another person, you're all set. There's no special formula for conversations with legislators!

Are there other reasons you're hesitant to connect with your lawmakers? [Let me know!](#)

Twin Cities nonprofit provides tools for success to youth experiencing homelessness...one cup of coffee at a time



John Wurm

Organizational
Development &
Engagement Director

Each year, nonprofits across Minnesota make incredible contributions to our state's high quality of life. The Minnesota Nonprofit Mission Awards were created specifically to honor these contributions. Since 1987, MCN has been showcasing the work of Minnesota's outstanding nonprofits through the Nonprofit Mission Awards in the categories of Advocacy, Anti-Racism, Innovation, and Responsive Philanthropy.

Voted by member nonprofits, MCN is honored to celebrate [Wildflyer Coffee](#), the 2024 Minnesota Nonprofit Mission Award recipient for Innovation.

While many think of coffee as a magic elixir of sorts — helping countless souls open their heavy eyelids each morning — assertions of the caffeinated beverage being able to end youth homelessness may feel like a bit of a stretch.

While Wildflyer Coffee makes no such claims, the Twin Cities-based nonprofit has found an innovative way to connect our love of coffee, tea, and peanut butter & banana toast (yes, I said PB & banana toast!) with a results-rich program designed to help youth experiencing homelessness build the skills necessary to forge a positive path forward.

Founded in 2017, Wildflyer Coffee creates employment opportunities and cultivates life skills to empower youth experiencing homelessness and housing instability. To achieve their vision of ending youth homelessness, the nonprofit works with youth aged 16-24, offering a four-month employment training program to cultivate the personal and professional skills needed to find and maintain stable employment and leave homelessness for good.

Wildflyer's work skills training happens at their coffee shops located in Minneapolis and St. Paul, where they serve nearly 60 youth each year between Hennepin and Ramsey County. Through the organization's four-month Work and Life Skills cohort program — which services 15 youth at a time — youth employees work 20 hours per week in the coffee shop (earning \$15 per hour plus tips), where they experience hands-on skills training and coaching.

In addition to their time in the cafe, youth spend several hours each week developing skills to help them succeed in long-term employment, including customer service, mental health and the workplace, and financial wellness. As a result, they develop both the necessary soft and hard skills to successfully transition into long-term stable employment.

In 2023, Wildflyer Coffee employed nearly 30 youth, provided 4,063 hours of paid employment, paid out \$61,000 in wages to youth experiencing homelessness, provided 250 programming hours to help youth develop critical personal and professional skills, assisted seven youth in moving into housing, and served 72,000 different customers.



Wildflyer Coffee employees enjoying a break at the organization's Minneapolis location.

Through these outputs, Wildflyer Coffee achieved the following outcomes:

- 100 percent increase in Job Readiness Assessment scores
- 85 percent of youth were involved in ongoing post-graduate support
- 80 percent of youth remained stably employed/enrolled in education at three-month, post-graduation check-in

While these quantitative achievements are important, the stories of youth remain most effective in showing the impact of dignified, supportive employment opportunities. At the end of her time in the Wildflyer program, one youth shared: "I honestly didn't think I was worth much of anything before Wildflyer. But seeing what I've done through the short program and what it has helped me with, has shown me I'm always capable of more than I think as long as I keep going. I can do more than I can imagine."

MCN was pleased to present the organization with the 2024 Mission Award recipient for Innovation. Watch a video [Learn more about Wildflyer Coffee.](#)



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9 a.m. - 4 p.m. | <i>Virtual</i>
<u>Grantwriters Incubator</u> |
| 11.13.24
9 a.m. - 4 p.m. | <i>Virtual</i>
<u>Beginner Grantseeking</u> |
| 11.14.24
9 a.m. - 3:30 p.m. | <i>Virtual</i>
<u>Spotlight: The Board Member's Guide to Good Governance</u> |
| 11.14.24
10 a.m. - 12 p.m. | <i>Virtual</i>
<u>Delivering Employee Feedback</u> |
| 11.19.24
1 - 3 p.m. | <i>Virtual</i>
<u>Creating a Trauma-Informed Workplace</u> |
| 11.26, 12.3, & 12.10
10 a.m. - 12 p.m. | <i>Virtual</i>
<u>Practical Leadership 2.0: Building Engaged Teams</u> |
| 12.05.24
9 a.m. - 3:30 p.m. | <i>Virtual</i>
<u>Spotlight: Building Your AI Confidence Muscles</u> |
| 12.12.24
10 a.m. - 12 p.m. | <i>Virtual</i>
<u>Universal Design in Mind: Inclusive Program Development and Communication</u> |
| 1.17.25
10 a.m. - 12 p.m. | <i>Amherst Wilder Foundation, St. Paul</i>
2025 Session Lineup
<i>Registration opening soon!</i> |
| 1.28.25 & 1.30.25
Varied times | <i>Virtual (Statewide, Twin Cities Metro, and Greater MN offerings)</i>
2025 Minnesota Grantmakers
<i>Registration opening soon!</i> |



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