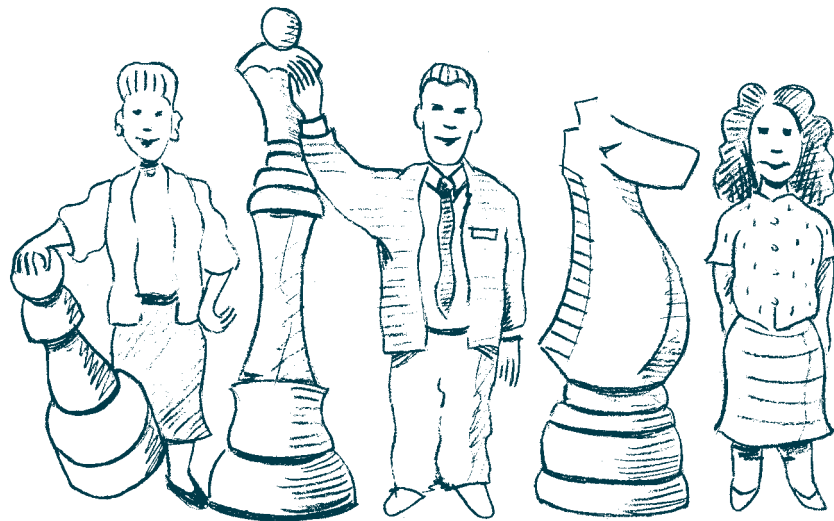


# Maryland Nonprofits

Strategic Plan 2004 - 2009



QUALITY

EFFECTIVENESS

EFFICIENCY

INFLUENCE

MARYLAND  
ASSOCIATION OF  
NONPROFIT  
ORGANIZATIONS



December 18, 2003

Dear Fellow Nonprofit Sector Leaders,

On behalf of the Board of Directors and Staff of the Maryland Association of Nonprofit Organizations ("Maryland Nonprofits"), we are pleased to present the Association's Strategic Plan for 2004 – 2009.

At its core, the plan has four major themes - Quality, Effectiveness, Efficiency and Influence - which inform our overall objective to help nonprofits in Maryland to:

- Provide the highest quality of services to the community, effectively and efficiently;
- Demonstrate the highest standards of ethics and accountability in their governance, management and operations;
- Advance and protect the public interest of the people and communities nonprofits serve; and
- Enjoy recognition, trust and support from the broader community.

This plan is the culmination of a lengthy effort that began in the Fall of 2002 and that included an exhaustive review of our past and current operations, including interviews of almost 100 Maryland Nonprofits' stakeholders, as well as spirited examination of prospects for the future. Within the Plan, you will find our newly revised Mission Statement, a statement of vision for the future of the nonprofit sector in Maryland and a statement of vision for the future of Maryland Nonprofits. Structurally, each of five succinct goal statements is followed by a short narrative that is intended to provide further context and explanation of the goal and then by a number of bulleted points describing the impact we expect to see if we are successful in achieving the goal. Following each goal are the strategies that describe how Maryland Nonprofits will pursue the particular goal.

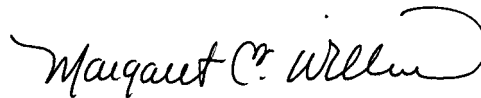
Unanimously adopted by the Board of Directors in November 2003, the Strategic Plan will guide Maryland Nonprofits' work over the next five years. However, we consider the Plan to be a living document that may be reinterpreted, modified or adapted as conditions change.

We thank the Planning Committee, Board of Directors and Staff for their hard work and proudly present Maryland Nonprofits' Strategic Plan. We also look forward to hearing your comments, reactions and suggestions in response to the Plan and to working with you to realize the greatness of Maryland's nonprofit sector.

Sincerely yours,



Steven H. Morgan  
President, Board of Directors



Margaret Williams  
Chair, Strategic Planning Committee



Peter V. Berns  
Executive Director

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## Mission Statement

The Maryland Association of Nonprofit Organizations' (Maryland Nonprofits') mission is to strengthen and support nonprofits' ability to serve the public, while promoting the highest standards of ethics and accountability in nonprofit governance and management. Maryland Nonprofits strives to increase recognition of, trust in and support for the nonprofit sector and to expand the influence of the nonprofit sector on issues that impact the people and communities it serves.

## Our Vision for Maryland's Nonprofit Sector

Maryland's nonprofit sector is a diverse and thriving set of organizations that is integral to the social and economic well being and fulfillment of individuals, families and communities in Maryland and elsewhere.

Generally recognized as an essential vehicle through which an active and engaged citizenry works together to enhance the quality of life and to promote equity, justice and respect for the rights and dignity of all people, Maryland's nonprofit sector enjoys widespread recognition, influence, and respect.

Marshalling private effort for the public good, and operating consistent with values such as honesty, integrity, openness and compassion, nonprofits in Maryland:

- Improve conditions and enhance opportunities for all members of society.
- Foster a sense of community and mutual respect while celebrating diversity.
- Unite as a distinct sector and work together to preserve and protect the special qualities that are integral to the sector's success.
- Uphold the principles of freedom of expression, freedom of association and openness in the public policymaking process.
- Shape the outcomes of public causes, speaking out on important issues and encouraging civic involvement that gives voice to both majority and minority interests and concerns.
- Garner trust; uphold accountability and stewardship of public and private resources.
- Manage efficiently and effectively, readily demonstrating impact and accomplishments, as well as excellence in governance, executive leadership, financial and human resources management and resource development.

## Our Vision for the Maryland Association of Nonprofit Organizations

The Maryland Association of Nonprofit Organizations (Maryland Nonprofits) is recognized across the nonprofit sector and among policymakers, media, opinion leaders, and the general public, as the leading representative of and the authoritative source of information about the state's nonprofit sector.

Maryland Nonprofits is an effective and respected convener, facilitator, partner, analyst and strategist, capable of addressing key strategic issues facing the sector, including the people and communities it serves.

Through Maryland Nonprofits, the nonprofit community has access to a staff of entrepreneurial, dedicated and talented professionals and a network of peers with expertise in all facets of nonprofit governance and management. The Association assembles, synthesizes and provides a full range of information resources that anticipate and meet the learning needs of our diverse group of nonprofit members.

Maryland Nonprofits is a national leader in the fields of nonprofit performance, ethics and accountability, and capacity building in governance, management and operations. The Association has advanced insights into effective nonprofit operation and disseminates that knowledge widely. Our programs and services are creative and proven to be effective. The Association strives to be a role model in its own practices.

## Goals and Strategies

### Goal 1

#### NONPROFITS IN MARYLAND WILL ENJOY RECOGNITION, TRUST AND SUPPORT FROM THE BROADER COMMUNITY

In order to serve the community, Maryland's nonprofit sector depends upon the broad support and favorable opinion of the public, including individuals, foundations, corporations, media and government agencies. The Maryland Association of Nonprofit Organizations' goal is to enhance the public's opinion of and dedication of resources for the sector by increasing understanding of the nonprofit sector's value and trustworthiness. If successful in achieving this goal:

- The nonprofit sector will demonstrate and publicize its economic and social value to the broader community.
- The public will understand the activities, programs and services that the sector provides and appreciate the sector's value and impact.
- The public will have a high level of trust in the nonprofit sector and recognize and value the fact that nonprofits uphold high standards of ethics and accountability.
- The public will provide the sector with support that is sufficient to override the stresses and limitations that compromise the sector's ability to meet community needs.

### Strategies

#### To advance recognition of the sector, Maryland and Nonprofits will:

1. Marshal existing research and information, and conduct or collaborate with colleges, universities and others to conduct research that describes the nonprofit sector, demonstrates its impact and effectiveness, documents trends in public support for the sector and illustrates the difference the sector would make with more resources.
2. Disseminate information about the nonprofit sector in a variety of venues, including to elected and appointed government officials, business, philanthropic, religious and community leaders, the media and the general public.
3. Document the impact of the *Standards for Excellence* on public attitudes about nonprofits and on governance and management practices in the nonprofit sector.

4. Collaborate with the funding community to promote greater understanding between operating nonprofits and funders about each group's needs and concerns.
5. Develop partnerships with media organizations to increase coverage of the nonprofit sector.

#### To improve the public's trust in the sector, Maryland and Nonprofits will:

6. Educate the public about the governance, management and operation of nonprofits.
7. Raise public awareness of specific types of nonprofits' (e.g. sub-sectors) program operations and of the nonprofit sector's collective needs.
8. Develop and implement a methodology and process to address public complaints, and media inquiries, about the conduct of individual nonprofits.

#### To generate higher levels of support, Maryland and Nonprofits will:

9. Promote the *Standards* certified organizations in particular, and member organizations generally, as the preferred beneficiaries of support from individuals, foundations, corporations and government agencies.
10. Advocate, on its own and in collaboration with others, for increased public giving and volunteering as well as promoting public policies that support increased giving and volunteerism.
11. Assist nonprofits to diversify the sources and increase the amounts of their funding, including identifying, gathering and disseminating information about new ideas for generating financial resources.
12. Encourage federal, state and local governments to provide adequate funding for public programs and services affecting the people and communities nonprofits serve.
13. Help organizations learn about and effectively maximize funding through government reimbursement systems and advocate for government to allow more nonprofit activities to qualify.

14. Promote reforms in government procurement and contracting systems to ensure that nonprofits are not disadvantaged in comparison with for-profit businesses, are compensated for the real costs, including overhead of the programs and services they provide and to simplify proposal and reporting requirements, and eliminate other constraints, that create inefficiencies.
15. Encourage foundations and corporations to fund general operating support of successful organizations and to recognize and fully fund overhead expenses.

## **Goal 2**

### **NONPROFITS IN MARYLAND, WORKING BOTH INDIVIDUALLY AND COLLECTIVELY, WILL SUCCESSFULLY ADVANCE AND PROTECT THE PUBLIC INTEREST OF THE PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES NONPROFITS SERVE.**

The nonprofit sector has a long history of utilizing advocacy as a tool to accomplish the mission of an individual nonprofit or a sub-sector of nonprofits. The Maryland Association of Nonprofit Organizations' goal is to build on this rich tradition and broaden and strengthen the sector's societal influence and impact. By working together, nonprofits in Maryland will advance and protect the public interest of the people and communities they serve. If successful in achieving this goal, nonprofits in Maryland will:

- Routinely and effectively utilize advocacy and public education in furtherance of their individual missions and to improve the current and future status of the nonprofit sector and the people and communities it serves.
- Be capable of developing, uniting behind and taking concerted action in furtherance of a common agenda to advance the public interest in Maryland.
- Be understood and recognized by public officials, media and opinion leaders as integral to the overall well being of individuals, families and communities in Maryland.
- Advocate for and uphold principles of freedom of expression, freedom of association and transparency in public policymaking processes.
- Support the essential role of government in serving the needs and interests of the people and communities nonprofits serve and forge more effective working relationships with government.

## **Strategies**

### **To assist nonprofits in successfully advancing and protecting the public interest, Maryland and Nonprofits will:**

1. Cultivate nonprofit sector champions among leaders in the executive, legislative and judicial branches of government, and build greater credibility for the nonprofit sector in the eyes of government, for-profit businesses and community leaders.
2. Develop and promote public policies addressing issues that are critical to Maryland's nonprofit sector or conducive to its continued health and success. This includes, but is not limited to: preserving and protecting tax exemption, increasing funding for and strengthening the infrastructure for nonprofits, and forging a more effective partnership between government and nonprofits.
3. Communicate the needs and interests of, and encourage recognition and support for, the sector and the people and communities it serves, among the general public and for-profit business, government, the media and community leaders.
4. Promote and support the role of nonprofits as a vehicle for civic engagement, safeguard the rights of nonprofits to engage in advocacy and encourage and enable all nonprofits to utilize public policy advocacy and public education as a strategy for achieving mission impact.
5. Empower nonprofits to be more persuasive and successful in their advocacy by supplying them, via the Maryland Budget and Tax Policy Institute, with research and analysis on policy issues affecting important community programs and services.
6. Encourage and support nonprofit board, staff and volunteer leaders to shape public opinion and affect policy outcomes on critical issues affecting the sector and the people and communities it serves.
7. Serve as a convener and facilitator, helping individual nonprofits to develop and implement coordinated strategies to advance their public education and public policy objectives.
8. Convene nonprofit leaders and facilitate the development of new strategies to maximize the influence and impact of the nonprofit sector, exploring all available advocacy tools and methods, and to unite the sector around common sets of public concerns.

## Goal 3

### NONPROFITS IN MARYLAND WILL BE ABLE TO PROVIDE EFFECTIVELY AND EFFICIENTLY THE HIGHEST QUALITY OF SERVICES TO THE COMMUNITY

Maryland's nonprofit sector exists to serve the community. The Maryland Association of Nonprofit Organizations' goal is to champion sector excellence, ensuring that nonprofit organizations have the knowledge, skills and resources necessary for high performance. If successful in achieving this goal, nonprofits in Maryland will be:

- Adaptable and sustainable in the face of changing organizational and economic conditions.
- Innovative and strategic with respect to needs analysis and program development.
- Structured and organized to deliver most efficiently programs and services.
- Capable of measuring performance and using the results of program evaluation to improve programs and organizational effectiveness.
- Competitive in the employment marketplace and able to attract and retain the best and the brightest workers by providing a supportive working environment, adequate salaries and benefits and opportunities for professional advancement.

### Strategies

#### To advance nonprofit performance, Maryland and Nonprofits will:

1. Provide a comprehensive training and technical assistance program to support existing and new nonprofit board members, executives and staff, enabling them to demonstrate the impact and accomplishments of their organizations and to achieve excellence in governance, executive leadership, financial and human resources management, legal and regulatory compliance and resource development.
2. Provide board members and staff with access to high quality professional resources and services to meet their organization's consulting and technical support needs, including services tailored to critical stages in the organizations' lifecycles (e.g. leadership transition).
3. Provide tools and resources for nonprofits to learn how to design and implement evaluation systems that measure program impact.
4. Facilitate linkages between the educational and nonprofit communities to leverage academic resources and expertise to enhance the performance and impact of nonprofit organizations, while also assisting academic institutions to maximize their relevance to the community and to current and future nonprofit professionals and practitioners.
5. Collect, develop, and disseminate research about best practices in nonprofit governance, leadership, management and operations.
6. Encourage funders to provide resources to support program evaluation and organizational capacity building.
7. Help nonprofits recognize the value of and take advantage of training for organization and professional development.
8. Encourage funders to provide more resources to support organizational capacity building

#### To strengthen and support the nonprofit workforce, Maryland and Nonprofits will:

9. Promote nonprofit employment, volunteerism and board service.
10. Work with educational institutions to promote the nonprofit sector as a positive career choice for those entering the workforce and to assure, where appropriate, the availability of relevant courses and certificate and degree programs.
11. Serve as the go-to resource for nonprofit jobs in Maryland.
12. Provide employees of nonprofits at all levels with a diverse array of professional development and networking opportunities.
13. Research and disseminate information about the cost of talent in the nonprofit sector, including information about current salaries and benefits, and encourage stakeholders to support competitive compensation practices in the nonprofit sector.
14. Provide access to group buying programs that facilitate availability of competitive benefits programs.

## To promote organizational sustainability, Maryland Nonprofits will:

15. Formalize a holistic approach to organizational assessment, examining organizational structure, operations and long-term viability, and provide tailored plans for improvements that take advantage of the full range of Maryland Nonprofits' staff expertise and programs.
16. Assist individuals and groups in the community to evaluate the need for and feasibility of starting new nonprofits.
17. Assist existing nonprofits to explore the feasibility of corporate expansion, diversification and restructuring, including the development of new business enterprises, replication of existing programs, and the use of collaborations and alliances, and support implementation where appropriate to achieve greater impact.
18. Provide directly or indirectly, or encourage others to provide outsourced management options in areas such as financial management, human resources management, information technology and fundraising.

## Goal 4

### NONPROFITS IN MARYLAND WILL ADHERE TO THE HIGHEST STANDARDS OF ETHICS AND ACCOUNTABILITY IN THEIR GOVERNANCE, MANAGEMENT AND OPERATIONS

Maryland's nonprofit sector leads the nation in its recognition that ethics and accountability are integral to the sector's success. The Maryland Association of Nonprofit Organization's goal is to set high standards of ethics and accountability in nonprofit governance and management and promote and facilitate adherence to those standards by all nonprofit organizations. We also seek to replicate our *Standards for Excellence* program, nationally and internationally, as a model for effective nonprofit sector self-regulation. If successful in achieving this goal, nonprofits in Maryland will:

- Subscribe to and observe clearly defined and readily accessible principles and standards of operations for responsibly governed and well-managed organizations.
- Make standards of ethics and accountability a priority and part of each organization's corporate culture.

- Recognize that ethical, accountable governance and management practices positively impact long-term success and sustainability.
- Achieve improvements in governance and management practices while maintaining program activities.

In addition:

- The *Standards for Excellence: An Ethics and Accountability Code for the Nonprofit Sector* will be recognized and accepted throughout the United States as the standard for nonprofit governance and management practices and the *Standards program* will be widely replicated.

## Strategies

### To assist individual nonprofits in adhering to high standards of ethics and accountability, Maryland Nonprofits will:

1. Provide comprehensive educational resources and support to enable nonprofits to implement the *Standards*.
2. Encourage nonprofits to become certified under the *Standards* by participating in a rigorous application and peer review process, and to use the application process as an opportunity for organizational assessment and improvement.
3. Develop operational benchmarks that enable organizations to assess and improve their financial performance and sustainability and fundraising efficiency.
4. Serve as a standard bearer, raising the bar on nonprofit governance and management practices by aggressively promoting the *Standards for Excellence* as the national standard for the nonprofit sector. Maryland Nonprofits will also continue to promote replication of the Standards for Excellence.

## Goal 5

### THE MARYLAND ASSOCIATION OF NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS WILL BE AN EFFECTIVE, RESPONSIVE AND SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY INSTITUTION.

In order to serve the community well, nonprofit organizations need ready access to a broad range of high quality professional services and information resources. The Maryland Association of Nonprofit Organization's goal is to meet the changing needs of the nonprofit community by being an effective, responsive and sustainable community institution. Toward this end, Maryland Nonprofits will be:

- A learning organization, continually involved in gathering data about the quality and impact of its programs and services and about the needs of the state's nonprofit community and utilizing that information to guide program activities and resource allocation.
- Well informed of trends affecting the nonprofit community and the latest theory and practice about the governance, management and operations of nonprofits.
- A repository of knowledge for the state's nonprofit community through the expertise of its staff and through its library, website and other resources.
- A organization with a growing membership that remains representative of the diversity of the state's nonprofit community.
- An effective and respected partner and collaborator in its interaction and working relationships with other organizations serving the nonprofit community.
- A responsible manager of resources to ensure its' financial sustainability.
- A model of best practices in its own operation.
- Adaptable in restructuring as necessary to achieve the goals in this strategic plan.

## Strategies

As an effective, responsive and sustainable community institution, Maryland Nonprofits will:

1. Continue and expand program evaluation efforts to assure relevance and value of association programs and services.
2. Expand its presence and the level and availability of its programs and services in all geographic regions of the state through the use of additional regional offices, formal or informal chapters or other appropriate mechanisms.
3. Pursue diversity in all facets of the organization's operation, including in the composition of its Board of Directors, staff, membership, volunteers and vendors.
4. Develop and maintain a working environment that is both productive and supportive of high levels of performance and job satisfaction among all of its employees.
5. Develop criteria or protocols to guide decision-making regarding partnerships and collaboration with other organizations serving the nonprofit community.
6. Expand its fundraising program to include individual donors, both from within and outside the nonprofit sector.
7. Increase the cash reserve portion of unrestricted net assets through judicious budgeting and possible endowment fundraising.
8. Target membership marketing to those sub-sectors and geographic regions that are under-represented in the membership.
9. Expand marketing efforts and refine product offerings for fee-generating programs and services such as contract training and consulting, general training, and cooperative buying.
10. Expand capacity in the area of member communications, including higher levels of investment in website and email broadcast systems and making greater use of communications professionals.

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