



ECONOMIC IMPACT OF NONPROFITS IN NEBRASKA

*For the Nonprofit
Association of
the Midlands*

December 2025



UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA AT OMAHA
CENTER FOR PUBLIC
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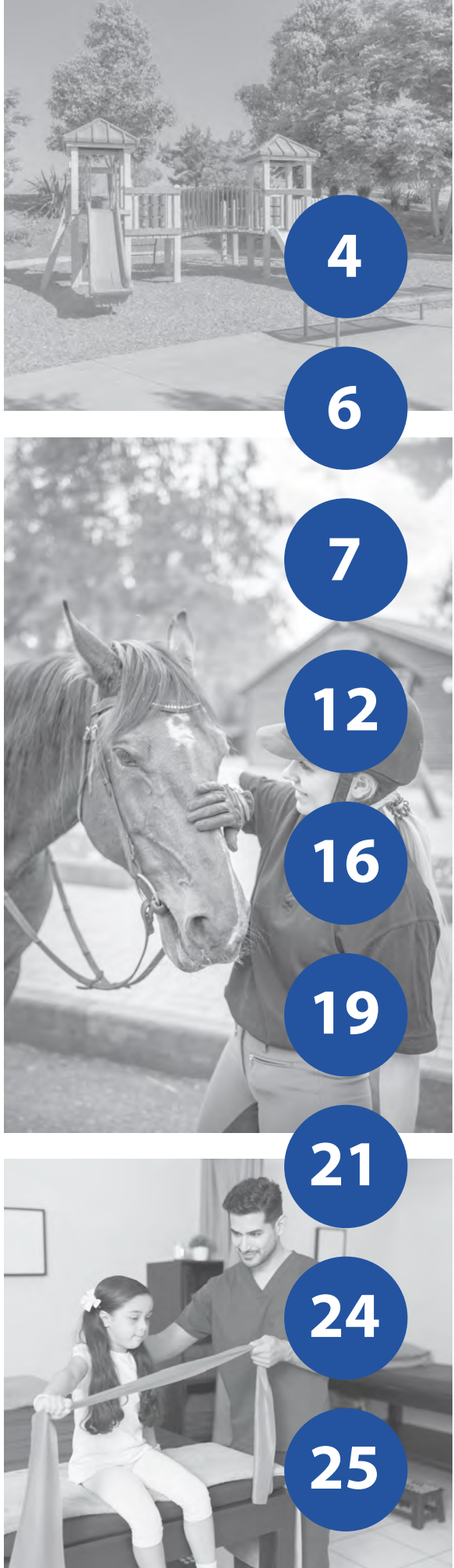
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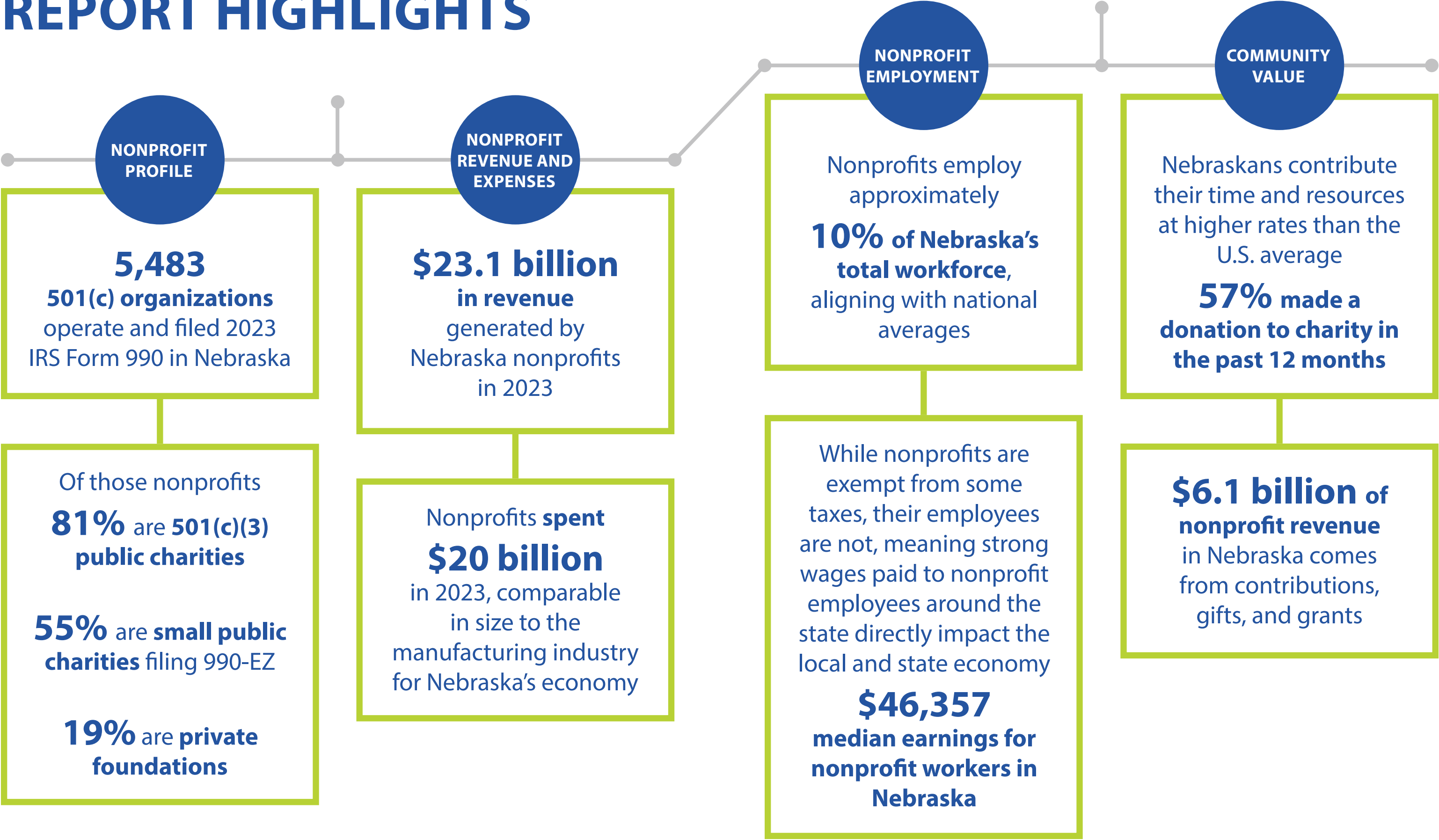
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OVERVIEW AND FRAMEWORK

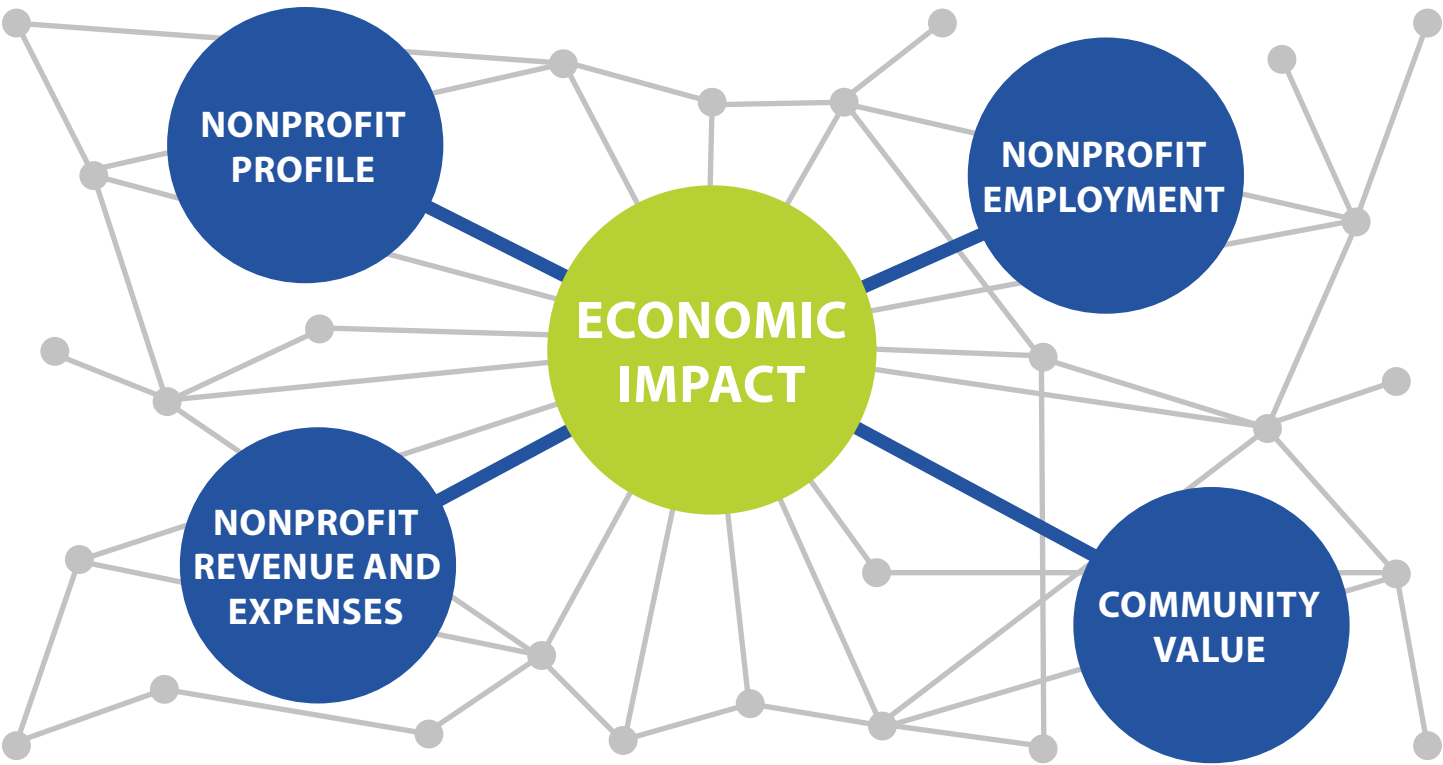
Nonprofits are essential to Nebraska’s economy and communities. They employ Nebraskans, purchase goods and services, and manage billions of dollars that circulate through the state’s economy each year. Beyond their size, nonprofits play a unique role in directing financial and human resources toward community well-being — filling gaps that markets and governments alone cannot. Their economic importance lies not only in their operations but also in how they mobilize funding, talent, and infrastructure to advance public purposes.

This report uses a broad framework to explain how nonprofit activity translates into economic impact in Nebraska. The goal is not to measure every form of nonprofit value or to reduce the sector’s influence to just a few numbers. Instead, it explores the ways nonprofit activity generates lasting and widespread economic value across Nebraska.

We use a four-part framework to explore nonprofits’ economic value:

- 1. Nonprofit Profile
- 2. Nonprofit Revenue and Expenses
- 3. Nonprofit Employment
- 4. Community Value

Taken together, these interconnected dimensions represent the framework for understanding the economic impact of Nebraska’s nonprofit sector throughout this report.



NONPROFIT PROFILE

To build a profile of Nebraska’s nonprofit sector, it is essential to distinguish how nonprofit organizations are defined and recognized at both the federal and state levels. Data for this section comes from the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) Form 990 filings for 2023.

Defining Nonprofits at the Federal and State Level

| | FEDERAL | NEBRASKA |
|-----------------------|--|--|
| Legal Basis | Section 501(c) of the Internal Revenue Code | Nebraska Nonprofit Corporation Act |
| Primary Categories | 501(c) Organizations 501(c)(3) Charitable Organizations | Recognizes IRS designations for state-level incorporation and compliance |
| Purpose | Must serve public, educational, charitable, religious, or scientific goals | Must operate for public benefit under state incorporation laws |
| Tax-Exempt Status | Exempt from federal income tax; 501(c)(3)s eligible for tax-deductible contributions | May apply for state-level exemptions (sales, property, or use) depending on purpose and uses |
| Oversight & Reporting | Must file IRS Form 990 annually (or 990-EZ, 990-N) | Must maintain incorporation status and meet state filing requirements |





Within these primary categories for incorporation, there are important distinctions that help to further profile nonprofit organizations.

501(c) Organizations

- Broad category of entities recognized by the IRS as exempt from federal income tax under Section 501(c) of the Internal Revenue Code.
- Includes both charitable and non-charitable organizations, such as professional associations, labor unions, and membership clubs.

501(c)(3) Organizations

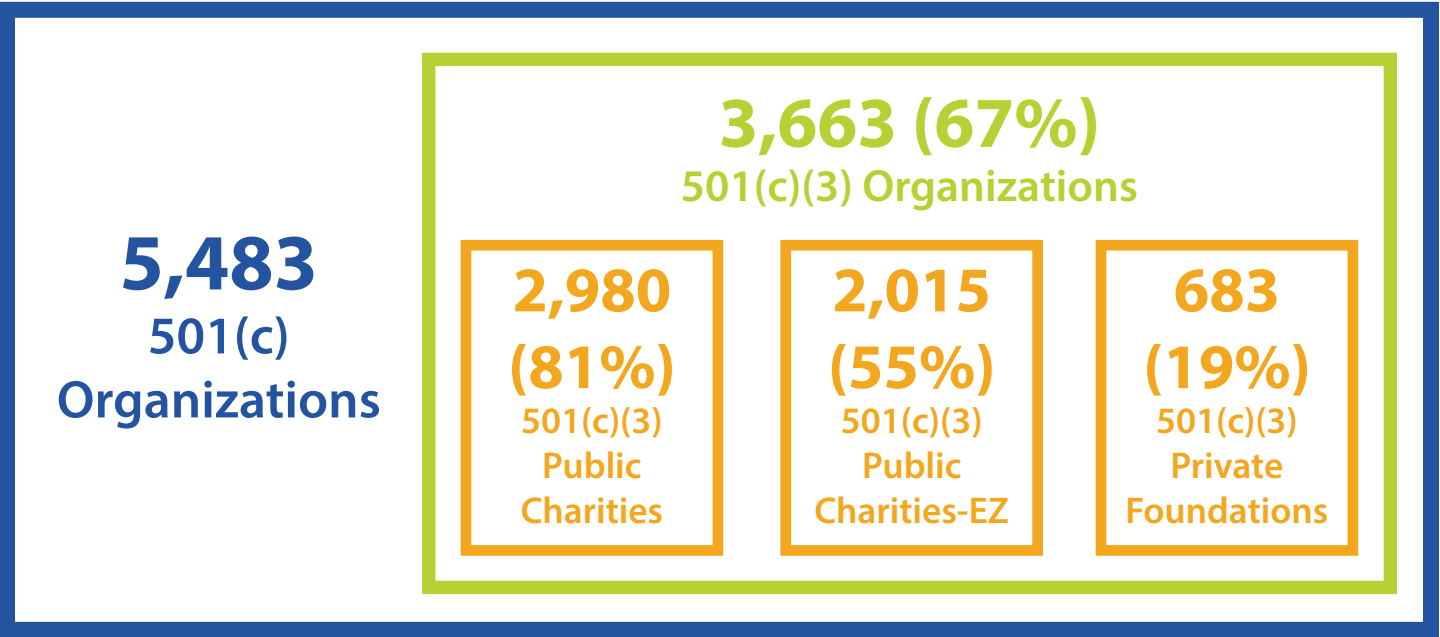
- Subset of 501(c) organizations organized and operated exclusively for charitable, educational, religious, or scientific purposes.
- Serve the public good rather than private interests.
- Subject to stricter limits on political activity than other 501(c) types.
- The only 501(c) organizations eligible to receive tax-deductible contributions.

Types of 501(c)(3) Organizations

- **Public Charities:** Operate programs or services that directly benefit the public.
- **Private Foundations:** Primarily provide grant funding to other organizations or individuals.
- **EZ Filers:** Smaller organizations meeting specific revenue and asset thresholds that file an abbreviated IRS Form 990-EZ.

501 (c)(3) organizations are the focus of this report and are referred to collectively as “nonprofits”

Number of Nonprofit Organizations by Type in Nebraska



Note: Since 2020, the IRS has implemented data system updates and the permanent transition to electronic Form 990 filing. These changes have reduced duplication and improved data accuracy. As a result, overall counts of these organizations are lower than in previous iterations of this report but do not necessarily reflect a decline in the number of active nonprofits.

For our purposes, this analysis focuses only on nonprofits that file IRS Form 990, meaning organizations with recognized 501(c) tax-exempt status. Some nonprofit corporations do not file with the IRS — such as newly formed organizations, certain religious entities, or groups that have not sought federal exemption — which is why external estimates of the total number of nonprofits in Nebraska are higher. The total number of 501(c) organizations that file is 5,483 and there are 3,663 501(c)(3) organizations that file. Estimates from national sources on the numbers in Nebraska for 501(c) organizations are approximately 14,000¹ and approximately 9,000² for 501(c)(3) for 2023. **This report focuses on the 501(c)(3) organizations that file Form 990. Nonprofits are defined not only by their legal status but also by their primary area of service, using the National Taxonomy of Exempt Entities system.**

- **Human Services:** Organizations providing direct assistance and social support, such as food banks, housing, or family services.
- **Public and Societal Benefit:** Groups focused on philanthropy, community development, civil rights, or public affairs.
- **Education:** Schools, scholarship funds, and organizations promoting educational access and learning.
- **Health:** Hospitals, clinics, and health-support organizations addressing physical and mental well-being.
- **Arts, Culture, and Humanities:** Museums, performing arts groups, and cultural institutions.
- **Religion-Related:** Faith-based organizations that promote spiritual development and community support.
- **Environmental and Animals:** Organizations protecting natural resources, wildlife, and animal welfare.
- **International and Foreign Affairs:** Groups providing aid, development, or exchange programs outside the United States.
- **Unknown or Unclassified:** Organizations with incomplete or ambiguous IRS filings that prevent clear classification.

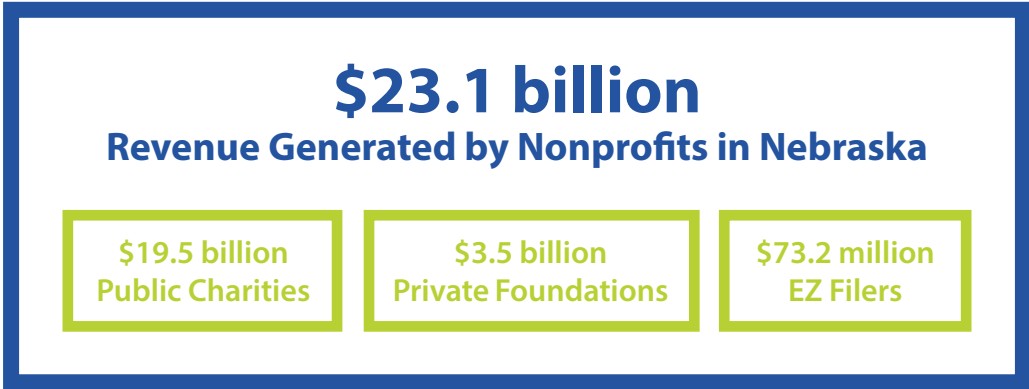
¹ <https://candid.org/impact-insights/us-social-sector/organizations/>
² <https://www.nonprofitimpactmatters.org/data/state-nonprofit-data/>

NONPROFIT REVENUE AND EXPENSES

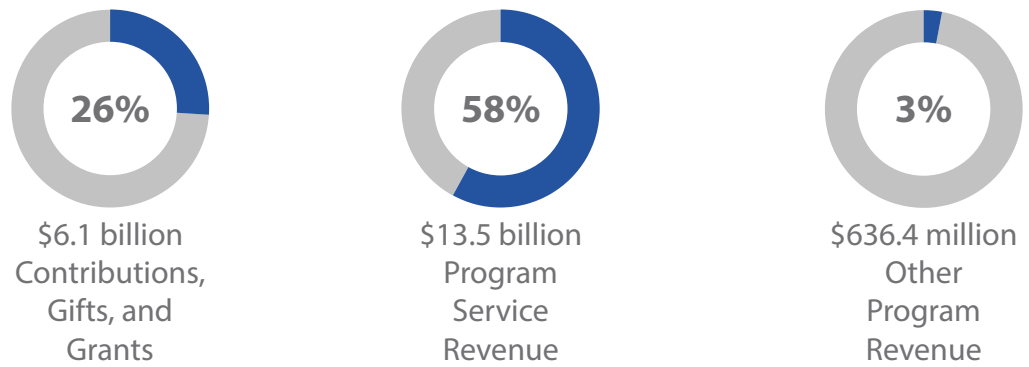
The economic influence of nonprofits extends from both the revenue they generate and the expenses they incur. Revenue represents the funds that flow into the sector — resources secured through grants, contributions, service contracts, and program fees that enable nonprofits to operate. Expenses, in contrast, reflect the funds that flow out into Nebraska’s economy through wages, purchasing, and investment in services and facilities. Together, these two dimensions show how nonprofits both attract and circulate money in ways that strengthen communities and drive economic activity. Data on nonprofit revenue and expenditure are drawn from analysis of IRS Form 990 filings for 2023, the most recent year available.

Revenue

Revenue generation is a major source of the sector’s economic impact. These dollars are mobilized through nonprofit work, representing funds that would likely not otherwise flow through the economy without the organizations that secure and direct them.



Nonprofit Revenue is Reported in Three Main Categories

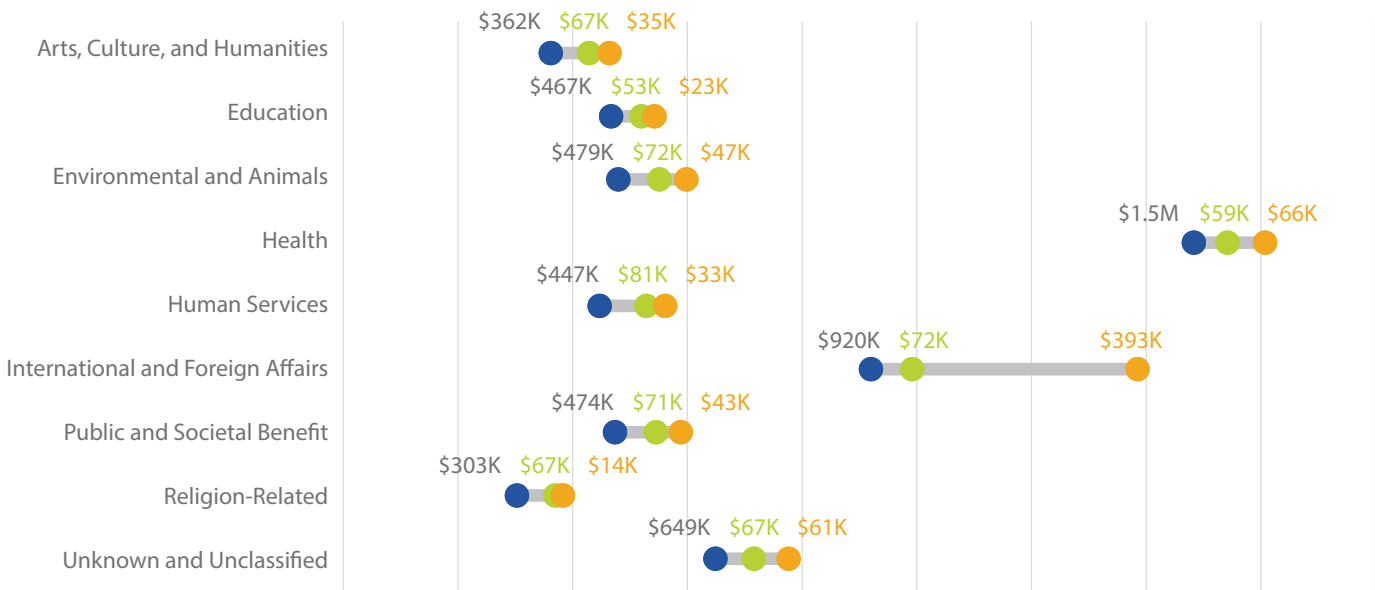


Note: These totals do not include all data for private foundations and do not add to the total revenue reported.

Examining the median revenue collected by area provides further insight into how nonprofit funds are generated and mobilized. Among public charities, those in health report the highest median revenue, while religion-related organizations report the lowest. For EZ filers, which represent smaller nonprofits, human services organizations have the highest median revenue and education the lowest. Private foundations report the greatest median revenue in international and foreign affairs.

Median Revenue by Nonprofit Type and Industry, 2023

- Median 501(c)(3) Public Charities
- Median 501(c)(3) Public Charities EZ
- Median 501(c)(3) Private Foundations



Expenses

As revenue flows into the sector, expenses represent how those funds flow back out into the economy. Nonprofits may own or rent the building from where they operate and pay for utilities and repairs to maintain that presence. They purchase supplies and materials to support their work and also contract for services to support and enhance their work. Through all of these ways, nonprofits make a direct injection of funds into the economy. Data on nonprofit spending comes from analysis of nonprofit 990 data reported to the Internal Revenue Service for 2023.

Nebraska nonprofits reported total expenses exceeding \$20 billion.

To put the scale of nonprofit activity in economic terms, Nebraska’s total private industry produces about \$189 billion in gross domestic product (GDP) each year. GDP measures the total value of goods and services generated within the state — essentially, the size of Nebraska’s economy. Nonprofits reported \$20 billion in annual expenses. While expenses are not the same as GDP, both reflect annual flows of economic activity, making this a useful point of comparison. Nonprofit expenses are about 10% of private industry output.

The nonprofit sector’s direct spending rivals that of Nebraska’s manufacturing industry (\$20.2 billion) and exceeds that of agriculture (\$9.7 billion) — industries traditionally viewed as pillars of the state’s economy.

Median Expenses of Nonprofit by Type



The median expense by nonprofit type contextualizes how the \$20 billion in expenses is distributed across nonprofits.

Further demonstrating the economic enormity of nonprofits’ contributions are their net assets, which include everything the organization owns with measurable value, such as buildings, land, equipment, and inventory. Net assets of nonprofits in Nebraska are over \$33 billion.

The largest expense for most nonprofits, similar to private industry, is salaries and wages. These costs account for roughly 31% of total nonprofit expenses, with about \$6.2 billion paid across the sector. In addition, nonprofits contributed more than \$413 million in payroll taxes, underscoring the scale and economic significance of nonprofit employment — discussed further in the next section.

While Nebraska nonprofits’ expenses circulate through the economy and generate measurable impact, a common critique is that they do not contribute to state revenue because of their tax-exempt status. While it is true that nonprofits are exempt from federal income tax, they are not exempt from all state and local taxes. Most Nebraska nonprofits still pay or collect several types of state taxes, including sales, income, and property taxes under specific circumstances. Moreover, nonprofit employees pay state and local taxes on their wages just as workers in private industry do, further connecting the sector to Nebraska’s overall fiscal health. The table below summarizes the key areas where nonprofits remain financially linked to state revenue.

Nonprofits and State Revenue

| Tax Type | Nebraska ^{3,4} | Regional Comparison ⁵ |
|---------------------------------|--|--|
| State Income Tax | Exempt on mission-related revenue; tax applies only to unrelated business income | Consistent with most other states |
| Sales Tax on Purchases | Required on taxable purchases, with limited exemptions (e.g., some health facilities) | Several nearby states, including South Dakota and Iowa, exempt all nonprofit purchases |
| Sales Tax on Items Sold | Required to collect on sales, with limited exemptions (e.g., educational, religious, and zoo-related sales) | Consistent with most nearby states, except Iowa and Missouri, which exempt all nonprofit sales |
| Employee Income Tax Withholding | Nonprofits with paid employees must withhold and remit state income tax from wages, just as other employers do | Consistent with most states that have an income tax |
| Property Tax | Exempt when property is used exclusively for charitable/public purposes; otherwise taxable | Consistent with most surrounding states |

The Nebraska Department of Revenue does not produce a report that specifically identifies nonprofit tax exemptions. However, the state’s Tax Expenditure Report for 2024⁶ provides some context for the scale of these exemptions. Drawing on data from the National Center for Charitable Statistics, the report estimates that churches, nonprofit colleges, and medical facilities were exempt from approximately \$212.9 million in sales tax on purchases. In addition, the report includes about \$2.3 million in sales tax not imposed on memberships or admissions to zoos and aquariums.

³ Nebraska Department of Revenue. (n.d.). *Nonprofits, government & exempt tax exemptions*. Retrieved from <https://revenue.nebraska.gov/about/information-guides/nonprofits-government-exempt-tax-exemptions>

⁴ Nebraska Department of Revenue. (n.d.). *Information guide for nonprofit organizations* (Form 7-215). Retrieved from <https://revenue.nebraska.gov/sites/default/files/doc/info/7-215.pdf>

⁵ Platte Institute. (2025, October). *Nebraska’s nonprofit sector: A report on economic and community impact*. Retrieved from <https://files.platteinstitute.org/uploads/2025/10/Non-Profit-Report.pdf>

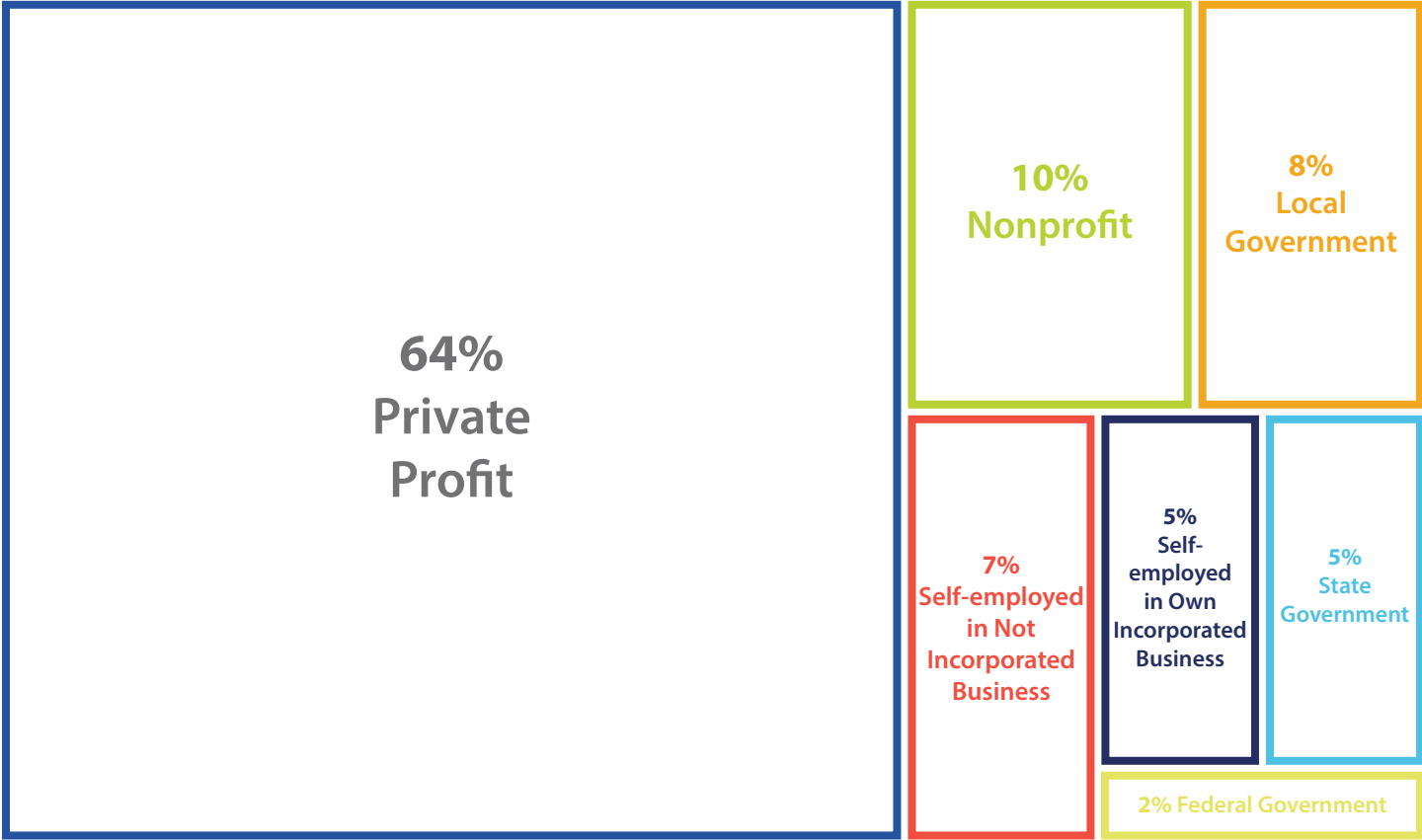
⁶ Nebraska Department of Revenue. (2024). *Tax expenditure report*. Retrieved from https://revenue.nebraska.gov/sites/default/files/doc/research/tax-expenditure/2024_Tax_Expenditure_Report.pdf

NONPROFIT EMPLOYMENT AND WAGES

In our framework, nonprofits spend on wages and income as noted, but nonprofits also make a measurable contribution to Nebraska’s economy through the jobs they provide and the wages they pay. As part of the state’s labor market, nonprofit organizations employ workers, providing skills and opportunities. The wages earned in these positions are taxed and then flow directly into Nebraska’s economy, supporting household spending and reinforcing demand for local goods and services. Data for analysis in this section are drawn from the U.S. Census Bureau’s American Community Survey (ACS) 2023 5-year estimates and 2024 1-year estimates.

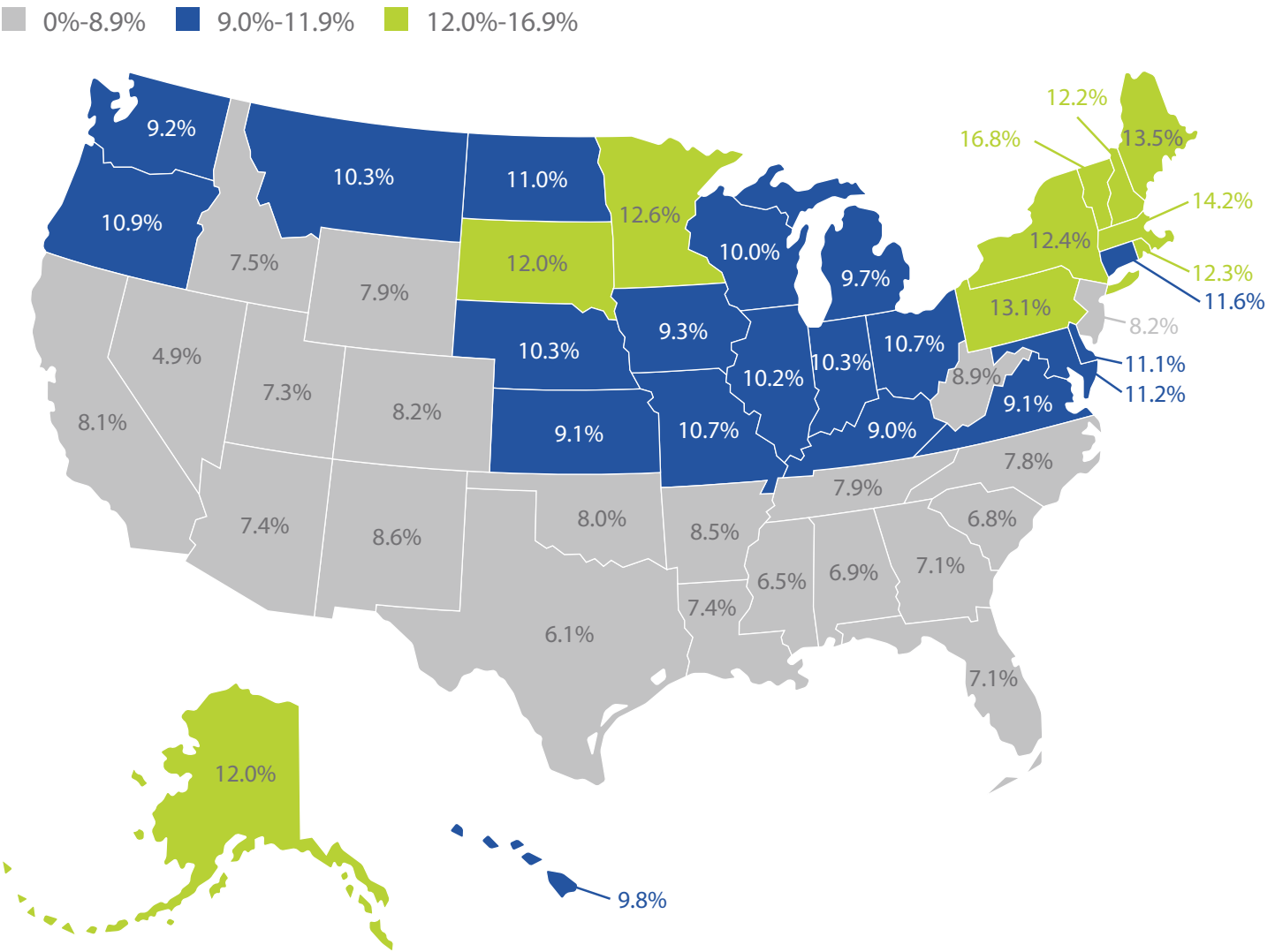
10% of Nebraska’s workforce is employed by nonprofits, or about 100,000 individuals. About 73% of those are employed full-time.

Percent of Total Workforce by Sector



Nebraska’s share of nonprofit employment is comparable to that of neighboring states and mirrors the national average, indicating that the sector’s role in the labor market is consistent with broader economic patterns across the region and country.

Percent and Rank of Workforce Employed in Nonprofits



Nebraska averages about 27 employees per nonprofit organization. This number is computed by comparing employment counts from the ACS data with the number of nonprofit organizations reported in the IRS Form 990 data.

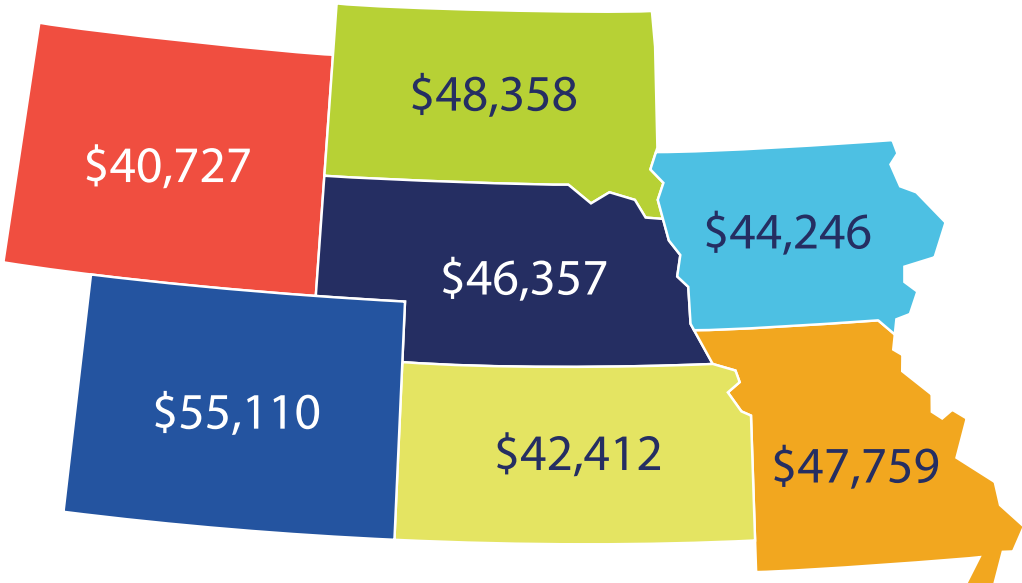
Median earnings in the nonprofit sector are slightly higher than the median for all employed persons, with especially strong pay in areas where nonprofits are more concentrated.

Median Earnings for All Nonprofit Employees and Full-Time Nonprofit Employees in Nebraska and Douglas, Lancaster, and Sarpy Counties

| | MEDIAN EARNINGS FOR ALL NONPROFIT EMPLOYEES | MEDIAN EARNINGS FOR FULL-TIME NONPROFIT EMPLOYEES | MEDIAN EARNINGS ALL EMPLOYED POPULATION |
|------------------|---|---|---|
| Nebraska | \$46,357 | \$55,776 | \$46,068 |
| Douglas County | \$51,487 | \$62,327 | \$50,082 |
| Lancaster County | \$40,435 | \$50,552 | \$43,043 |
| Sarpy County | \$60,936 | \$69,096 | \$53,925 |

Nebraska’s nonprofit sector employs tens of thousands of workers across the state, offering stable, well-paying jobs that represent a vital share of the state’s economy and contribute meaningfully to community prosperity. Median earnings for all nonprofit workers in Nebraska are about average for the region.

Median Earnings for All Nonprofit Workers in the Region



COMMUNITY VALUE

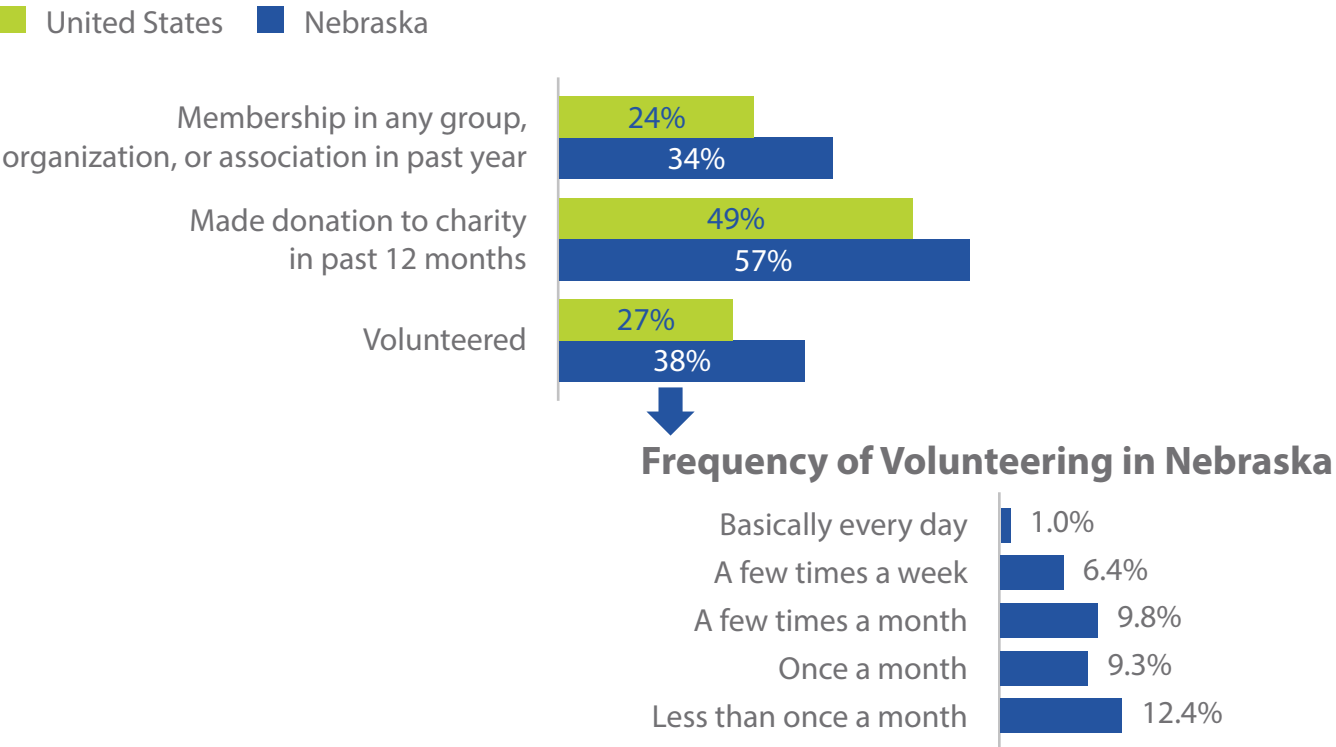
The value of Nebraska’s nonprofit sector extends beyond its financial and employment impact — it is reflected in the wide range of organizations that serve nearly every aspect of community life. Nonprofits operate across diverse areas. Each area contributes uniquely to Nebraska’s social and economic well-being by addressing specific community needs, strengthening civic engagement, and improving quality of life. Equally important are the individuals who support these missions. Nebraskans contribute not only financial resources but also their time through volunteerism, providing the labor, leadership, and community connection that help nonprofits deliver critical services statewide.

This section examines the ways in which nonprofits contribute to their community and explores how both organizational efforts and individual engagement sustain and enrich communities across the state. Data for this section comes from the IRS 990s as well as the U.S. Census Bureau’s Current Population Survey (CPS).

One of the clearest expressions of how Nebraskans value the work of nonprofits is their willingness to give not only financial resources but also their time. Data from the Volunteer and Civic Engagement Supplements of the CPS illustrate this commitment. To ensure a reliable sample for Nebraska, data were pooled across multiple years and accessed through Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (IPUMS) CPS.

Across multiple measures, Nebraskans were more likely to contribute their time and resources to their communities than the national average.

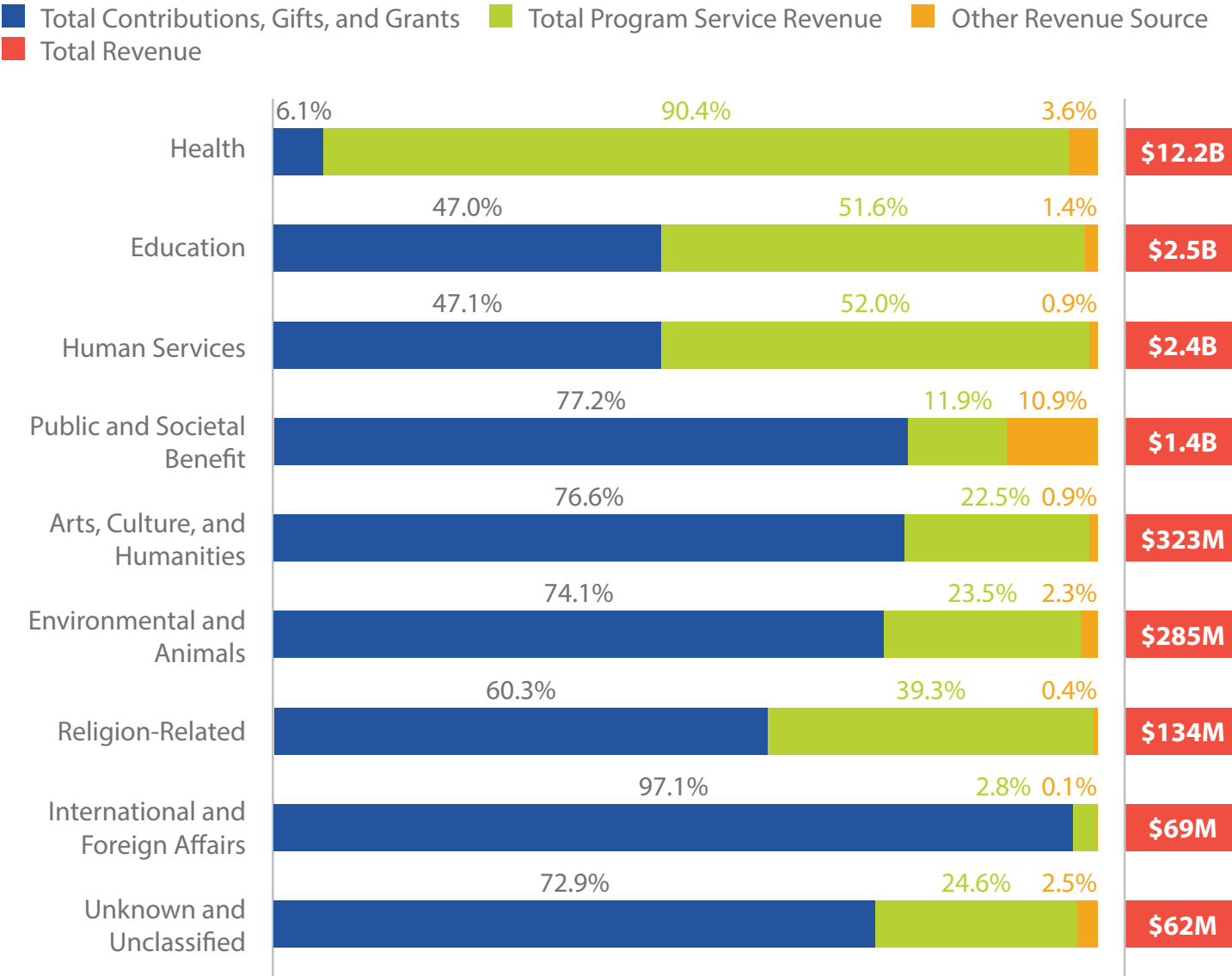
Percent of Time Volunteered and Financial Contributions



The composition of revenue sources across nonprofit areas, specifically here public charities, offers insight into what and how Nebraskans value and support their community organizations. Most nonprofit areas generate the largest share of their revenue from contributions, gifts, and grants, reflecting broad public and philanthropic investment in their missions. The health sector is an exception, relying primarily on program service revenue, such as payments for patient care and medical services. Human services and education nonprofits also derive substantial portions of their funding from program service revenue, illustrating a mix of charitable support and earned income that sustains many of Nebraska’s community-serving organizations.

In overall revenue generation, health public charities are the largest, followed by education, human services, and public and societal benefit.

Revenue Sources Across Nonprofit Areas



COVID-19 IMPACTS

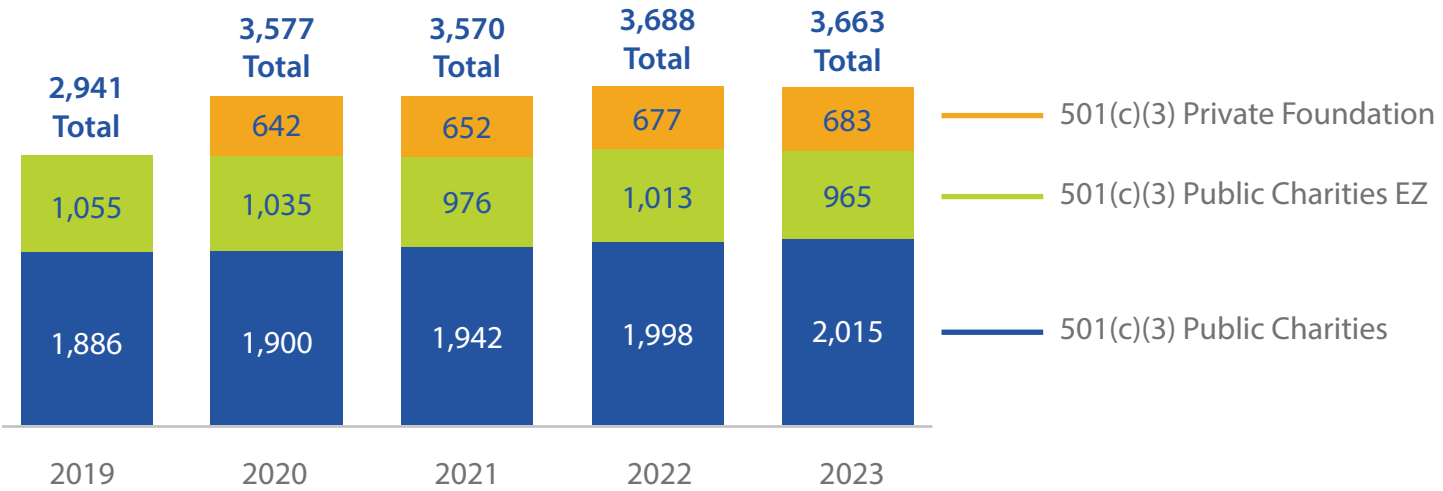
Nonprofits demonstrated remarkable durability through the COVID-19 pandemic, likely reflecting their essential role in supporting Nebraskans during a period of widespread uncertainty and disruption. While many industries experienced deep economic losses, the nonprofit sector maintained a steady presence across the state. This resilience underscores both the adaptability of nonprofit organizations and the critical services they provide — particularly in times of crisis. It should be noted that the nonprofit sector’s durability during this period was reinforced by unprecedented federal relief funding that flowed through states and communities during the pandemic, helping to stabilize funding streams for nonprofits delivering critical services. For example, in the Omaha metro area alone, an estimated 55 local nonprofits received a combined \$15 million in grants from the City of Omaha’s allotment of the American Rescue Plan Act (APRA) money for pandemic relief and recovery efforts.⁷

This section briefly examines changes in nonprofit presence and employment overtime to illustrate how the sector remained a stabilizing force amid the economic turbulence of the pandemic. Data for this section comes from analysis of the Internal Revenue Service’s 990s and the U.S. Census Bureau’s American Community Survey’s 5-year estimates.

The data shown in the figure highlight the stability of Nebraska’s nonprofit sector through the COVID-19 pandemic. From 2019 to 2023, the total number of 501(c)(3) public charities and EZ filers remained steady, with a slight increase in both categories by 2023. The number of private foundations also held consistent, though data for 2019 are unavailable, suggesting only a modest difference in overall totals.

This pattern demonstrates that, even during a period of significant economic disruption, nonprofit presence did not decline.

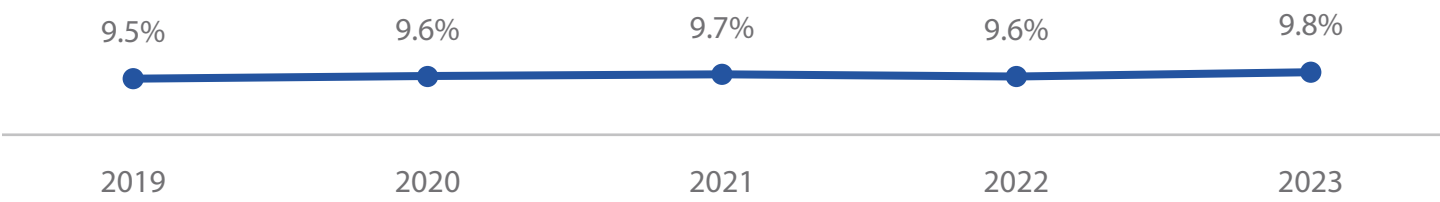
Nonprofit Presence



⁷ United Way of the Midlands. (2022, June 30). 55 nonprofits get combined \$15 million of Omaha’s federal COVID recovery money. Retrieved from <https://unitedwaymidlands.org/55-nonprofits-get-combined-15-million-of-omahas-federal-covid-recovery-money/>

Similarly, the share of the workforce employed by a nonprofit is consistent through the pandemic.⁸

Nonprofit Workforce



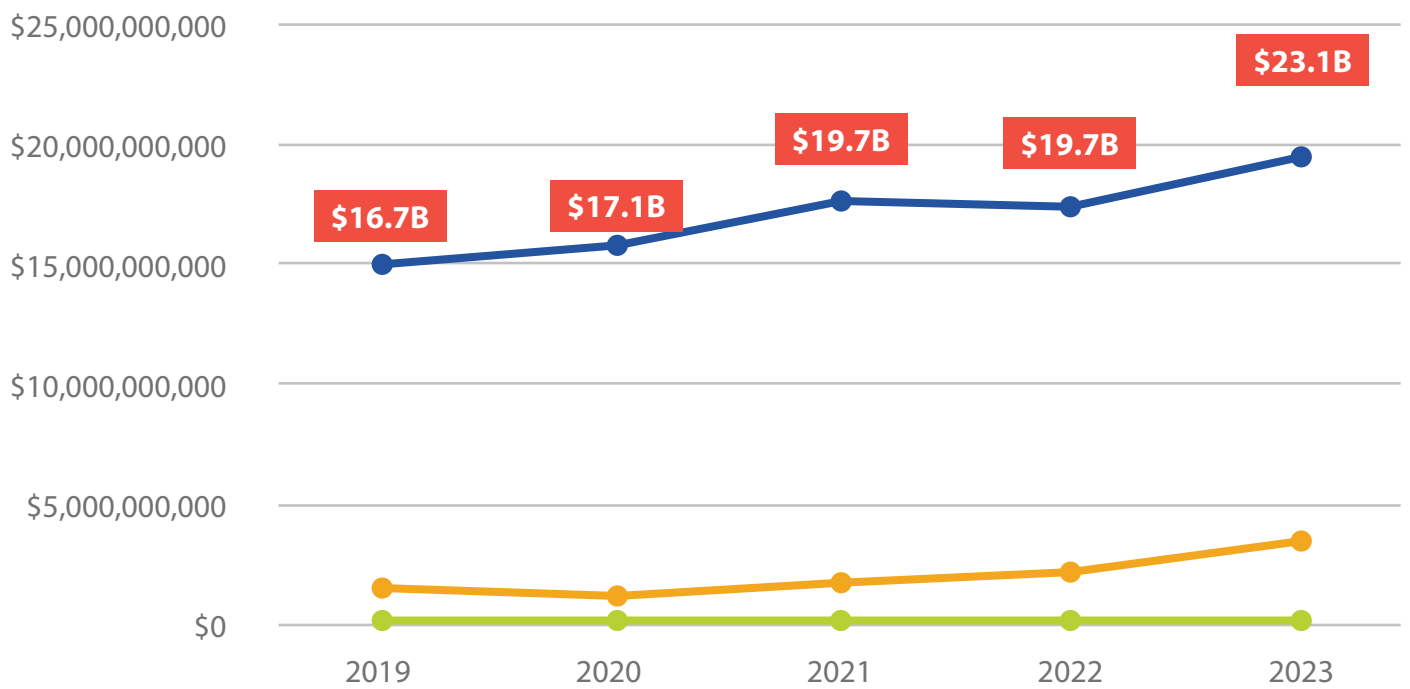
⁸ Percentage of workforce employed in a nonprofit over time uses ACS 5-year estimates instead of 1-year estimates due to data availability in 2020.



One of the most durable indicators of how much Nebraskans value their nonprofit sector during the COVID-19 pandemic was the increase in nonprofit revenues throughout that period. Donations to public charities rose consistently from 2019 to 2023, contributing to the overall growth in nonprofit revenue across the state. Although private foundations and smaller EZ filers experienced a modest decline in 2020, both categories rebounded in 2021 and have continued to grow since, reflecting the enduring support for nonprofit organizations during and after the pandemic.

Nonprofit Revenues

- Median 501(c)(3) Public Charities
- Median 501(c)(3) Public Charities EZ
- Median 501(c)(3) Private Foundations
- Total



Together these data indicate that nonprofits and their employees continued to operate and, even, expand their capacity — underscoring the sector’s resilience and essential role in supporting Nebraskans through the pandemic.

CONCLUSION

Nebraska’s nonprofit sector is a powerful and stabilizing force in the state’s economy and community life. With 3,663 501(c)(3) organizations filing Form 990, the sector is deeply embedded in every part of Nebraska, from large population centers to rural communities. Nonprofits direct billions of dollars, thousands of jobs, and immeasurable community value toward public benefit, advancing missions that neither governments nor markets can fulfill on their own.

This report demonstrates the sector’s expansive scale. Nebraska nonprofits generated \$23.1 billion in revenue in 2023 and spent \$20 billion — a level of economic activity comparable to major private industries such as manufacturing. Their investments in earnings, goods, and services circulate money throughout the state and strengthen local economies.

Nonprofits are also a major employer, providing jobs to about 10% of Nebraska’s workforce, with competitive earnings throughout the state. These earnings flow directly into local economies as nonprofit employees contribute meaningfully to state and local tax revenues.

Equally significant is the community value nonprofits help create. Nebraskans give their time and resources at higher rates than the national average. Across nonprofit areas, most nonprofits generate the largest share of their revenue from contributions, gifts, and grants, evidence of broad public trust and commitment to the sector.

Findings show that Nebraska’s nonprofit sector is strong, resilient, and indispensable.



ABOUT THE DATA

Internal Revenue Service (IRS) Form 990 Filings

The IRS Form 990 is the annual information return that most tax-exempt organizations must file. It provides detailed financial, operational, and categorical data on each nonprofit’s revenues, expenses, assets, and mission area. Form 990 data for all active Nebraska nonprofits were downloaded from the IRS website by year, with most reporting here reflecting 2023. To profile all nonprofits, four types of filings were downloaded: (1) Form 990, (2) Form 990-EZ, (3) Form 990-N, and (4) Form PF. These forms were used to classify nonprofits by type (e.g., 501(c)(3), 501(c)) and by mission category using the National Taxonomy of Exempt Entities codes. UNO CPAR analyzed these records to produce counts of active organizations; distributions by type; total and median revenues and expenses; and county-level geographic distributions. The 990 data also supported comparisons of the nonprofit sector’s size and economic scale relative to Nebraska industries. As noted in this document, since 2020 the IRS has updated its data systems and permanently transitioned to electronic Form 990 filing. These changes have reduced duplication and improved data accuracy. As a result, nonprofit counts and financial estimates downloaded in 2023 for previous years may differ slightly from earlier reports.

U.S. Census Bureau — American Community Survey (ACS)

The ACS is an ongoing nationwide survey that provides detailed data on demographic, economic, and social characteristics of the U.S. population. The 5-year estimates offer stable figures for smaller geographies, while the 1-year estimates reflect more recent statewide trends. ACS microdata were used to estimate nonprofit employment as a share of Nebraska’s total workforce and to compare wages and gender composition across nonprofit and other employment sectors. County-level and regional comparisons were drawn from the 5-year estimates for geographic consistency, while 1-year estimates supplied the most recent state-level data for 2024. These analyses quantified nonprofit employment’s scale and economic contribution.

Current Population Survey (CPS) — Volunteer and Civic Engagement Supplements (via IPUMS CPS)

The CPS is a monthly labor force survey jointly conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau and Bureau of Labor Statistics. The Volunteer and Civic Engagement Supplements collect information on volunteering, charitable giving, and organizational participation. CPAR accessed pooled multi-year CPS supplement data through IPUMS CPS to ensure adequate Nebraska sample sizes. The data were analyzed to estimate state-level rates of volunteering, charitable donations, and group memberships. Nebraska results were compared with national averages to illustrate how civic engagement contributes to the state’s nonprofit ecosystem and overall community value.

MISSION

The Center for Public Affairs Research collaboratively produces and disseminates high-quality public scholarship about topics that impact the lives of Nebraskans and the region.

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Ongoing projects from CPAR include policy analyses for the Planning Committee of the Nebraska State Legislature, the Nebraska Rural Transit Project, and designation by the U.S. Census Bureau as a statewide liaison for disseminating a range of data products. CPAR hosts an annual professional development program, the Data and Research Series for Community Impact, to assist state and community partners in accessing, utilizing, and analyzing data to inform decision-making. View our recent projects, publications, and presentations at cpar.unomaha.edu.

We understand nonprofits because that's who we are.

The NAM staff shares a purpose: to build stronger communities through stronger nonprofits. They exemplify the phenomenon that nonprofit professionals understand best — when your team comes to work every day with a common bond, you can navigate anything together.

There are thousands of nonprofits in our area — each trying to make a difference on their own. We bring them together so that each member can benefit from our collective strength.

Nonprofit Association of the Midlands is the only membership organization in Nebraska dedicated exclusively to working with nonprofits in the Midlands, including Western Iowa. By connecting organizations with information, education, advocacy, and collaboration, we help members focus their energy on the people and communities they serve.

Our Mission

We strengthen the collective voice, leadership, and capacity of nonprofit organizations enriching the quality of community life throughout Nebraska and Western Iowa.

To achieve this mission for our growing base of nonprofit organizations, NAM is committed to the following goals:

- Enhance public recognition of the importance and role of the nonprofit sector to the people of Nebraska.
- Provide access to high quality assistance and information on effective nonprofit management and practices.
- Advocate on issues that affect the capacity of all nonprofits to address their communities' needs.
- Foster communication and cooperation among nonprofits.

Our Values

- Integrity
- Accountability
- Innovation

NAM makes employment decisions based on the job requirements, qualifications, experience, and the successful completion of our background check process. Employment practices shall not be influenced or affected by virtue of an applicant's or employee's race, color, creed, religion, gender, gender identity, genetic information, familial or parental status, veteran status, disability, sexual orientation, national origin, age, marital status, or any other characteristic protected by law. In addition, it is the organization's policy to provide an environment that is free of unlawful harassment of any kind, including that which is sexual, age related, racial or ethnic. This policy governs all aspects of employment, promotion, assignment, discharge, and other terms and conditions of employment. Any incident or situation believed to include discrimination should be brought to the immediate attention in writing to the CEO or Board President. This policy applies to the recruitment of board members as well. Some positions at NAM may require a background check.

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