

Nonprofit IT Staffing: Spending, Salaries, and an Infrastructure for Success

Executive Summary of the 2006 Nonprofit IT Staffing Survey

Conducted by NTEN: The Nonprofit Technology Network

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As a sector, we spend little time considering the investments that nonprofits make in information technology (IT). Yet, no organization today would be successful without any investments in technology. It is an area that raises questions that are difficult for any organization to answer on their own: How many IT staff members should we have? What should we budget for IT? What salaries are appropriate? How should our IT staff members spend their time?

We undertook the 2006 Nonprofit IT Staffing Survey to more systematically understand the nature of technology staffing in nonprofit organizations. As the first survey of its kind, we received a tremendous response. More than 1,000 nonprofit staff members from various types and sizes of nonprofit organizations took the time to answer detailed questions about their staff, salaries, and budgets.

- **Salary and budget expenses:** Nonprofits' IT salary and budget investments varied widely. They didn't just differ from smaller organizations to larger ones, but between organizations of the same size. Larger organizations not only had more IT expenses, but invested more *per employee* as well.
- **Technology adoption and investment:** Technology "Early Adopters" and "Fast Followers" invested substantially more in all aspects of their IT infrastructure.
- **Nonprofit IT staffing levels:** Nonprofits on average had about one staff member with some IT responsibility for every five organizational staff members. Smaller organizations had more IT staff per employee than larger ones.
- **IT within the organization:** Where does the responsibility for IT live in nonprofit organizations? Small nonprofits most frequently answered that they had no one with official IT responsibility. Large organizations most typically had a separate IT function. It was also common to consider IT part of general operating functions, or part of the finance department.
- **Staff time across functions:** Nonprofit IT staff spent the most time on desktop and application support, but they devoted significant time to management and strategic issues as well.
- **The understaffed perception:** The majority of organizations felt they were understaffed in the IT area. While larger organizations were slightly more satisfied with their staffing level, there was not a substantial gap between large and small organizations. Organizations with higher turnover or lower salaries were more likely to feel they were understaffed.

- **Salary baselines:** The survey provides some baselines for typical salaries. Some positions, like CTOs, paid a wide range of salaries, while others, like Webmaster, were fairly low for everyone. The salaries were not significantly different by level of education, nonprofit sector, or geographic region.
- **Outsourcing:** Nonprofits tended to outsource fairly technical things the most – the most commonly outsourced functions were website hosting, telephone services, and custom software development.
- **Organizational digital divide:** Smaller organizations appear to be notably behind on the IT adoption curve – indicating a substantial organizational digital divide.

Overall, the survey provided initial benchmark figures and a more positive picture of nonprofit IT staffing than we had expected. There's no question, however, that challenges exist: in particular, how can we reduce the IT gap between large and small nonprofits?

For the full NTEN Nonprofit IT Staffing Survey report, please go to www.nten.org/itstaffing

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