An aerial photograph of a hot air balloon festival. Numerous colorful balloons are scattered across the sky, some near a winding river in the foreground and others against a backdrop of mountains. The scene is captured during the "golden hour" of sunrise or sunset, with soft lighting and long shadows. A green semi-transparent box with a white border is overlaid on the right side of the image, containing the title and subtitle text.

# **Working Towards the Common Good:**

Findings from the 2014  
New Mexico Nonprofit  
Survey



**Building Movement Project**  
Equipping Nonprofits to Advance Social Change

## About The Building Movement Project

For over a decade, The Building Movement Project (BMP) has been working at the national level to support and advance the potential for nonprofit organizations to be sites for progressive social change. We develop research, tools, and training materials that bolster nonprofit organizations' ability to support the voice and power of the people they serve.

Over the past several years, BMP has partnered with New Mexico nonprofits—such as Albuquerque Health Care for the Homeless Inc., Encuentro, Center for Nonprofit Excellence, New Mexico Voices for Children, SouthWest Organizing Project, and others—to foster connection and collaboration between service providers, advocates, and organizers.

## About The Author

**Tina Law** is a Research Associate at The Building Movement Project, where she focuses on the organization's research and learning efforts.

## Acknowledgements

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*Report designed by Emily Herrick.*

*Cover photo: Len Radin via Flickr (<https://www.flickr.com/photos/drurydrama/10403531196>)*

## Partners



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**RECOGNIZING THE INTEGRAL ROLE** of New Mexico nonprofits in ensuring the well-being of the state, The Building Movement Project and several organizations worked together to develop the 2014 New Mexico Nonprofit Survey. The goal of the survey was to learn more about the key issues that organizations are working on, the opportunities and challenges they face, and how they can continue to work together to advance the common good. The survey, which expanded on a similar effort the year before that focused on direct service providers, was completed by a total of 232 nonprofits. In *Working Towards the Common Good: Findings from the 2014 New Mexico Nonprofit Survey*, we present results from the survey.

## Overview of New Mexico Nonprofits

The nonprofits that participated in the survey are a diverse set of organizations. Key characteristics include:

- **Nonprofit type.** The vast majority of organizations identify as direct service organizations. Advocacy organizations are the second most common nonprofit type, followed by community organizing groups and other organizations such as funders, technical assistance providers, and media groups.
  - **Geographic scope.** Surveyed organizations most commonly serve Bernalillo County and tend to be located in the city of Albuquerque, though many describe their work as spanning multiple counties, the entire state of New Mexico, or even multiple states.
  - **Populations served.** Organizations tend to support a multi-racial client base and focus on the state's most vulnerable populations, such as individuals living at or below the poverty line and children, youth, and families.
- **Annual budget.** Organizations are distributed fairly equally across three budget ranges—(1) under \$250,001, (2) \$250,001–\$1 million, and (3) over \$1 million—though budgets tend to vary by nonprofit type, with community organizing groups clustering toward the lowest range.
  - **Issue areas.** Surveyed organizations report working on over 35 different issue areas, with the top three issue areas being education, health, and youth development.

Figure 1. Types of Nonprofits

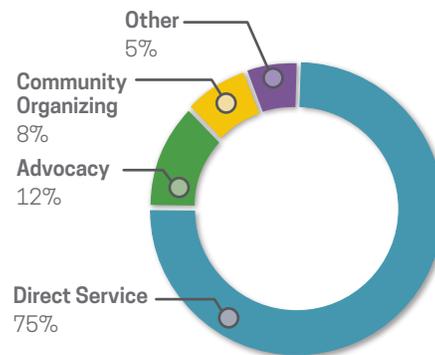
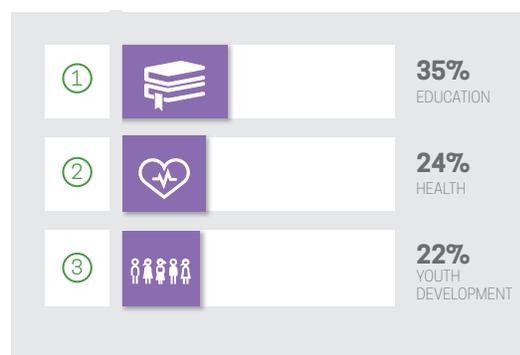


Figure 2. Top Issue Areas



## Key Findings

In learning about surveyed organizations' experiences over the past year, several findings emerged:

- **While New Mexico nonprofits tackle a diverse array of issues and serve many different populations, they also face a number of significant challenges.** Top challenges include: decreased and unstable funding; increased demand for services; limited resources for staff training and development; limited opportunities to engage in long-term and strategic planning; and limited management capacity.
- **One way that nonprofits are addressing organizational challenges is by working in coalitions and alliances.** Nearly three-fourths of surveyed organizations report participating in one or more coalitions in 2014, and they most commonly collaborate with coalition partners on issues regarding education, health, behavioral/mental health, and housing.
- **Nonprofits have also responded to challenges facing their communities and organizations by working to advance broader change.** More than half of all surveyed nonprofits report taking part in advocacy over the past year, engaging staff and community members in activities such as education on policy issues affecting their communities and trainings on how to engage in advocacy.
- **New Mexico nonprofits are beginning to weave an emerging network of nonprofits working together to advance the common good in the state.** A social network analysis of over 600 organizations in the state reveals that a substantial number of organizations have already begun to coalesce and could serve as the foundation for a more robust network. Even more encouraging is that these organizations tend to collaborate across nonprofit type (i.e., direct service, advocacy, community organizing), as well as across issue areas (i.e., education, health, youth development).

Figure 3. Issue Areas Addressed in New Mexico Coalitions

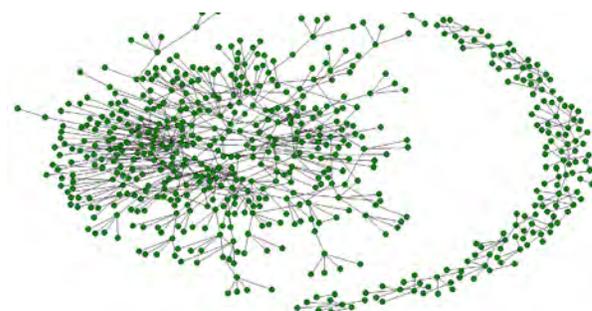


## Recommendations

We offer three recommendations for supporting New Mexico nonprofits moving forward:

1. **Foster collaboration among organizations.** There is great potential to build upon the emerging network of nonprofits committed to promoting the common good in New Mexico. As networks require ongoing coordination and dedicated staff time, increasing investment in intentionally fostering collaboration is key to growing a network (or multiple networks) in the state. Towards this end, an important first step is to support interested organizations and intermediaries in the state to convene and explore opportunities for collaboration.
2. **Support organizations to expand capacity.** Surveyed New Mexico nonprofits are eager to expand their capacity, particularly in terms of hiring and training staff, developing leadership, and/or strengthening financial management skills. Because organizational capacity building comes in many forms (i.e., grants, intermediaries, consultants, peer learning initiatives), it is important to ask groups what type of capacity building works best for them.
3. **Increase investments in organizations.** The lynchpin in the overall success and sustainability of New Mexico nonprofits is more funding. Surveyed organizations, most of whom have now been responding to the effects of the Great Recession for several years without reprieve, consistently spoke about challenges stemming from inadequate or unstable funding. To ensure the well-being of these vital organizations, more funding—particularly multi-year funding—is needed.

Figure 4. Connections Among New Mexico Nonprofits



# INTRODUCTION

**IN NEW MEXICO**, nonprofit organizations have long played an integral role in ensuring the well-being of the state by caring for its people, environment, and natural assets. A study in 2006 found that nonprofits serve as important health care and social service entities, and that the sector as a whole is vital to the state's economy.<sup>1</sup> Since that time, however, the state has been hit hard by the Great Recession, and demand for services has increased while the number of nonprofits has decreased.<sup>2</sup> For the nearly 2,000 nonprofits that remain on the ground, how are they faring given these new realities? And in a time where collaboration is more important than ever, how are New Mexico nonprofits working together towards the common good?

Recognizing the important role of nonprofits in New Mexico, The Building Movement Project (BMP) and several organizations in the state worked together to develop the 2014 New Mexico Nonprofit Survey. The goal of the survey was to learn more about the key issues that organizations are working on, the opportunities and challenges they face, and how they can continue to work together to advance the common good. The survey expanded on a similar effort the year before that focused on direct service providers.<sup>3</sup>

In the following pages, we share findings from the survey. This report consists of six main sections:

- ***Serving New Mexico*** provides an overview of the diverse nonprofits that took part in the survey;
- ***Facing Challenges*** shares key challenges identified by nonprofits;
- ***Working Together*** discusses how nonprofits collaborate in coalitions;
- ***Advancing Broader Change*** examines how nonprofits engage in advocacy;
- ***Making Connections*** explores the emerging network of New Mexico nonprofits; and
- ***Growing Stronger*** recommends supports that could help nonprofits to strengthen and thrive.

## Methodology

From October to December, BMP and its partners distributed the 2014 New Mexico Nonprofit Survey to individuals working in nonprofits. The short and confidential online survey asked respondents questions about the following aspects of their organizations: work and communities served; current challenges and supports needed; participation in advocacy; involvement in coalitions; and collaboration with other organizations. Respondents who identified as being part of a direct service, community organizing, or advocacy organization were asked additional questions tailored to their kind of work. A total of 251 nonprofit organizations ultimately participated in the survey effort. The report appendix provides a copy of the survey tool.<sup>4</sup>

While 251 nonprofits took part in the survey effort, this report focuses exclusively on the 232 nonprofits that completed the survey in full. This report certainly does not capture the experiences of all New Mexico nonprofits; however, it offers some useful insight into the strengths and opportunities facing the state's nonprofit sector.



# SERVING NEW MEXICO

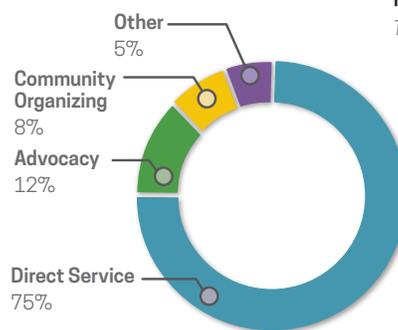
**THE NONPROFITS THAT** participated in the 2014 New Mexico Nonprofit Survey are a diverse set of organizations that collectively build and promote the common good in New Mexico. Below are some key characteristics of these organizations.

**Nonprofit type.** As shown in *Figure 1*, the vast majority of organizations (75%) identify as direct service organizations. 12% of organizations focus on advocacy and eight percent are community organizing groups. Other types of nonprofits represented in the survey include funders (3%), technical assistance providers (1%), and media organizations (1%).

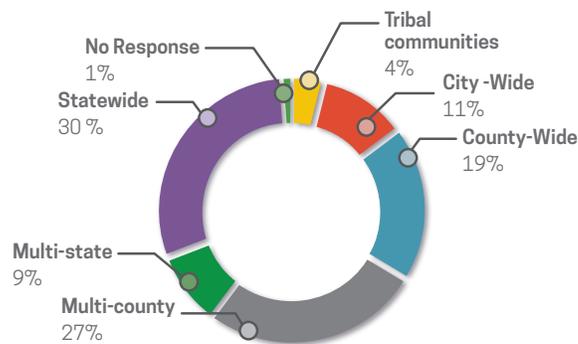
**Geographic scope.** The surveyed organizations collectively work in all 33 New Mexico counties, but they most commonly serve Bernalillo County (70%) and tend to be located in the city of Albuquerque (51%). Despite this concentration in the state's most populous county, nearly two-thirds of all organizations (65%) describe their work as spanning multiple counties, the entire state of New Mexico, or even multiple states (see *Figure 2*).

**Populations served.** *Figure 3* shows that organizations tend to focus on the state's most vulnerable populations, as the vast majority describe serving individuals living at or below the poverty line (75%) and working with children (5-12 years), youth (12-21 years), and/or families (85%). Organizations also tend to support a multi-racial client base, with most (79%) serving two or more racial groups. Consistent with the state's demographic trends, almost all organizations report serving Hispanics/Latinos (88%).<sup>5</sup> Most groups also serve whites (75%), American Indians/Native Americans (66%), and African Americans (50%), and more than one-third work with Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (37%). Serving diverse populations *within* racial groups is not uncommon, as American Indian/Native American-serving organizations identify working with more than 23 distinct nations and pueblos.

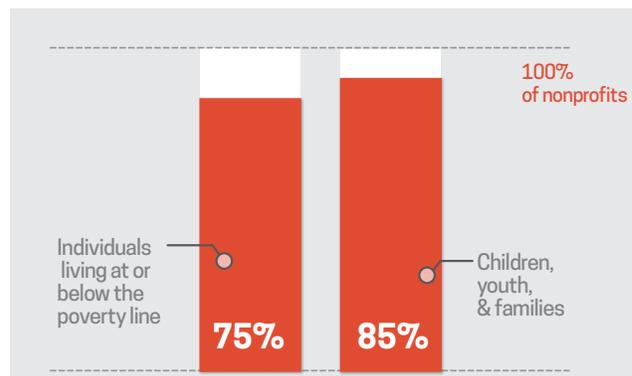
**Figure 1.**  
Types of Nonprofits

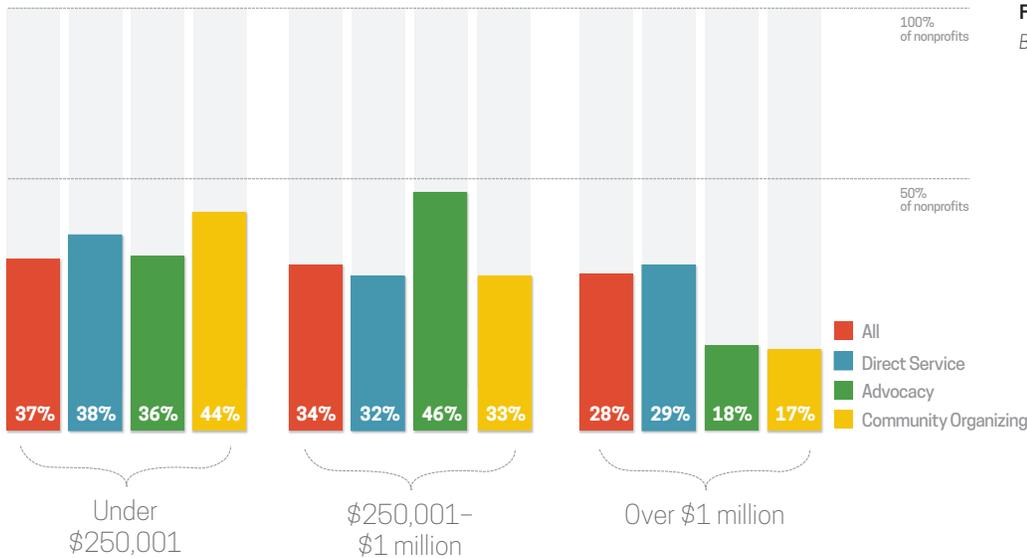


**Figure 2.** Geographic Scope of Work



**Figure 3.** Vulnerable Populations Served





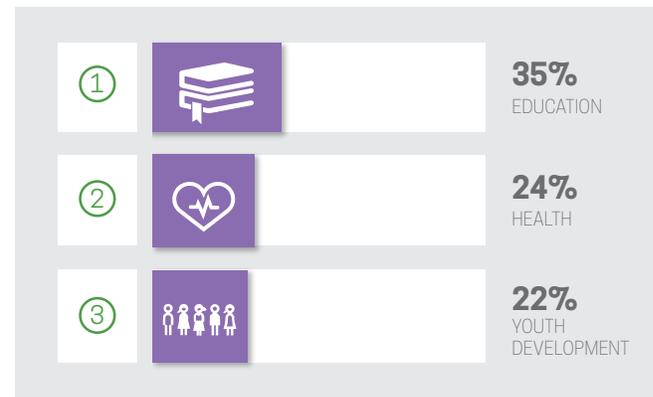
**Figure 4.** Annual Organizational Budget by Nonprofit Type

**Annual budget.** Organizations are distributed fairly equally across budget size: 37% have budgets under \$250,001; 34% have budgets between \$250,001 and \$1 million; and 28% have budgets over \$1 million. Notably, nearly one-fifth of all organizations (15%) report budgets under \$50,001. Budgets also vary by nonprofit type: direct service providers are distributed across the three ranges, while community organizing groups cluster toward the lowest range of under \$250,001 and advocacy groups are more in the middle range of \$250,001 to \$1 million (see *Figure 4*).

**Issue areas.** Organizations that took part in the survey report working on over 35 different issue areas, ranging from homelessness to food access to domestic violence. As seen in *Figure 5*, the top three issue areas are education (35%), health (24%), and youth development (22%). Other top issue areas include behavioral/mental health (13%), as well as housing (12%) and issues involving the well-being of families such as child care and supports for parents (12%). Organizations tend to be multi-issue in their work, as most (71%) describe working on two or more issue areas.

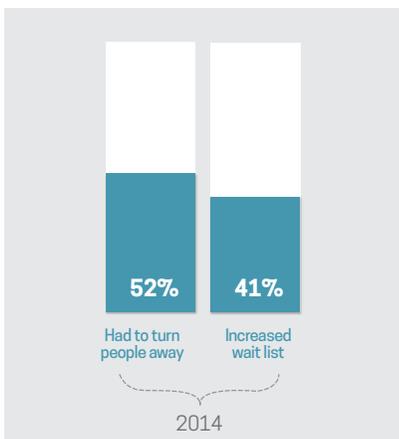
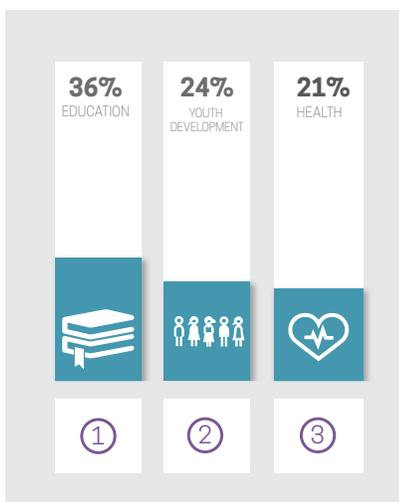
In the next three pages, we take a closer look at the distinctive characteristics of each of the three main nonprofit types represented in the survey: (1) direct service organizations, (2) advocacy organizations, and (3) community organizing groups.

**Figure 5.** Top Issue Areas



# DIRECT SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS

**Figure 6.** Top Issue Areas among Direct Service Providers



**Figure 7.** Direct Service Providers Reporting Turning People Away and Growing Wait Lists in 2014

New Mexico's direct service organizations primarily help community members overcome personal challenges and improve their lives. While direct service organizations comprise three-fourths of all surveyed organizations, they encompass a vast array of services, from health services to supportive housing to arts and culture programming. The following are key characteristics of these service providers.

**Top issue areas are education, youth development, and health.** Direct service providers collectively identified working on 33 different issue areas. As shown in *Figure 6*, the top three issue areas are education (36%), youth development (24%), and health (21%). Other top issues include behavioral/mental health (16%) and housing (14%).

**Demand for programs and services continues to outpace organizations' capacity.** More than half of all direct service providers (52%) report having to turn people away for programs and services over the past year. Nearly half of all direct service providers (41%) also note that waitlists for their programs and services grew in 2014 (*see Figure 7*). These findings are nearly identical to the proportion of direct service providers who reported having to turn people away (58%) and experiencing increases in their waiting lists (42%) in 2013.

**Many direct service providers are a key resource for populations that are often overlooked.** A number of direct service providers describe serving populations with multiple barriers and for whom it is often difficult to find supports and resources. For instance, some mention serving groups such as older youth who are hard to place in the foster care system and formerly incarcerated women who may also face drug addiction. Given that these populations are dealing with multiple challenges and complex public systems, it is especially difficult for these "go-to" direct service providers to turn away such individuals because of limited organizational capacity.



# ADVOCACY ORGANIZATIONS

New Mexico's advocacy organizations work to bring about systems change through advancements in policy and law. As the second most common nonprofit type among surveyed organizations, advocacy organizations represent a range of issues and strategies. Below are some key characteristics of these advocacy organizations.

## Top issue areas are health, education, family issues, and youth development.

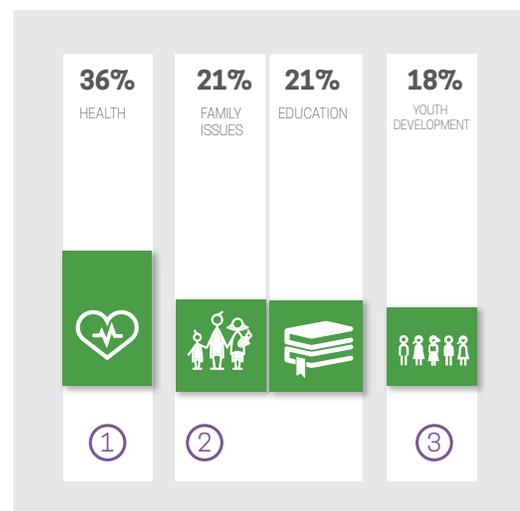
Advocacy organizations collectively address 26 different issue areas. Like direct service providers and community organizing groups, the top three issue areas for advocacy organizations include health (36%), education (21%), and youth development (18%) (see *Figure 8*). However, advocacy organizations also have a unique focus on family issues (i.e., child care, supports for parents), as a greater proportion of these organizations describe addressing this issue area as compared to direct service providers and community organizing groups.

**Engaging in multiple types of advocacy work is common.** Most advocacy organizations (71%) are involved in two or more types of advocacy work. The most common type of advocacy work among organizations is legislative advocacy (64%), followed by advocacy involving media and administrative agencies (61% and 57%, respectively). A small number of organizations (11%) also do legal advocacy.

## Legislative advocacy primarily occurs at the state level.

The vast majority of organizations involved in legislative advocacy describe working at the state level (78%), with a few others working across multiple states (17%) or with tribal communities (6%). Most organizations focused on state-level legislative advocacy also identify needing supports that reflect the complicated political process of building support for policy change, such as support with messaging and polling (71%) and more opportunities to collaborate with other advocacy organizations (50%). Fewer organizations seek support with policy research (43%) or policymaker engagement (14%).

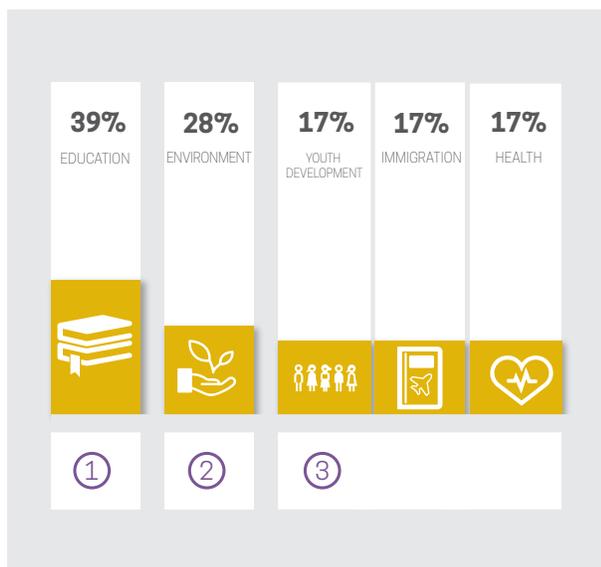
**Figure 8.** Top Issue Areas among Advocacy Groups



# COMMUNITY ORGANIZING GROUPS

Community organizing groups in New Mexico focus on helping community members work together to promote social change, often by putting direct community pressure on politicians and policy makers. Though community organizing groups make up the smallest proportion of all surveyed organizations among the three nonprofit types, they are far-reaching in terms of the diverse issues and communities they touch. The following are key characteristics of these community organizing groups.

**Figure 9.** Top Issue Areas among Community Organizing Groups



**Top issue areas are education, environment, youth development, health, and immigration.** Community organizing groups describe working on 21 distinct issue areas. As seen in *Figure 9*, community organizing groups share direct service providers and advocacy organizations' focus on education (39%), health (17%), and youth development (17%). They also have a distinct interest in issues regarding the environment (28%) and immigration (17%). A small number of community organizing groups also address issues related to families, economic security, culture and language preservation, racial equity, and LGBT equity.

**Common types of community outreach include community learning, online outreach, and coordination with local schools and public agencies.** All surveyed community organizing groups report using multi-pronged approaches to connect with their communities.

Half of all groups regularly provide learning opportunities to community members in the form of workshops, leadership development, and popular education. Many also use online outreach (44%) and engage local schools and public agencies (39%). In addition, one-third of the organizing groups report frequently hosting community forums.

**Common public action tactics include legislative testimony and campaigns involving traditional and social media.** Most community organizing groups use two or more public action tactics, with nearly half (44%) reporting that they often engage in legislative testimony. At least one-third of all groups also conduct social media (39%) and traditional media campaigns (33%), and more than one-fourth lead petition and letter-writing campaigns and prepare public statements (28% each).



# FACING CHALLENGES

**WHILE NEW MEXICO NONPROFITS** tackle a diverse array of issues and serve many different populations, they also face a number of significant challenges. Surveyed organizations report encountering 16 main types of challenges. The top two challenges are funding (81%) and increased demand for services (43%). Other common challenges are limited resources for staff training and development (19%), limited opportunities to engage in long-term and strategic planning (18%), and limited management capacity (14%).

## RESPONDING TO DECREASED & INCREASED FUNDING

Decreased and increased funding in 2014 affected surveyed New Mexico nonprofits in many different ways. The following are some common examples of how organizations responded to decreased and increased funding.

### *Common Responses to Decreased Funding*

- Scaling back or eliminating programs and services
- Assisting fewer community members
- Cutting staff hours, salaries and benefits, or even entire positions
- Dedicating more staff time to fundraising and grant writing

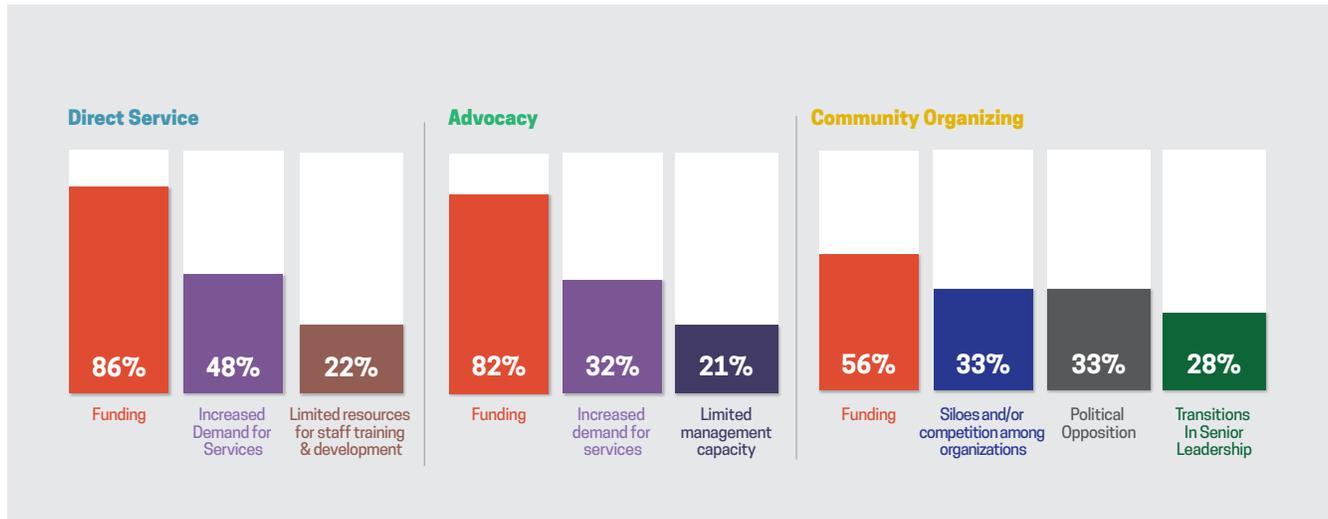
### *Common Responses to Increased Funding*

- Expanding programs and services
- Taking on new areas of work
- Hiring additional staff members
- Investing in organizational capacity and financial sustainability

By far, the top challenge identified by organizations is funding. In looking at organizations' reports of actual changes in funding over the past year, this challenge becomes more complex. Many organizations (38%) did experience decreases in funding in 2014. These groups tended to identify foundations (54%) and individual donors (38%) as sources of decreased support, and most responded by scaling back programs and services rather than cutting them entirely (see sidebar). Community organizing groups—who already tend to operate with smaller budgets—were most negatively impacted. These groups report decreased funding (44%) or no changes at all to their funding (28%). However, many organizations faced increases in funding (37%) and some encountered both increases and decreases in funding within the same year (10%). This suggests that both decreased and unstable funding are challenging to organizations. One survey respondent explains aptly: *“Roller coasters are no fun when it comes to funding. Losing funding means layoffs of mature staff; increases mean enduring the cost in time and money of recruiting and training new staff.”*



**Figure 10.** Top Organizational Challenges by Nonprofit Type



While almost all groups report challenges in funding, organizations tend to emphasize different challenges based on nonprofit type (see *Figure 10*). Both direct service providers and advocacy organizations describe facing increased demand for services; however, the former group tends to identify limited resources for staff training and development as a top challenge whereas the latter is concerned with limited management capacity. Community organizing groups, on the other hand, report particular difficulties due to political opposition (33%), siloes and/or competition among organizations (33%), and transitions in senior leadership (28%).



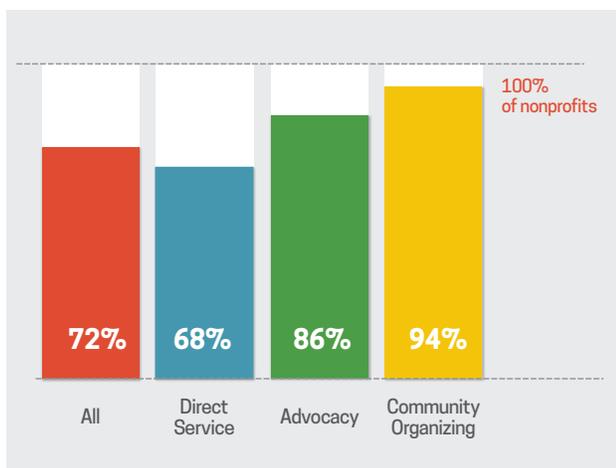
# WORKING TOGETHER

**ONE WAY THAT NEW MEXICO** nonprofits are addressing organizational challenges is by working in coalitions and alliances. The majority of surveyed organizations (72%) report participating in one or more coalitions in 2014. In fact, organizations tend to be involved in five coalitions on average, with some participating in 20 or more different coalitions. As seen in *Figure 11*, coalition participation also varies among different nonprofit types, as significantly greater proportions of community organizing and advocacy groups take part in coalitions compared to direct service providers (94%, 86%, and 68%, respectively).

On the whole, organizations are active coalition partners: 86% report being “highly” or “very highly” involved in their coalitions. Organizations identify a range of purposes for their participation in coalitions. Most groups (73%), particularly direct service providers, take part to share information (i.e., best practices) with other organizations. Many groups (64%) are also interested in coordinating services. In addition, working together to advocate for policies beneficial to local communities makes coalitions attractive to many organizations (59%), especially community organizing and advocacy groups. Only one-third of organizations identify maintaining funding as the reason for their participation in coalitions.

Organizations describe working in coalitions to address over 30 different issue areas in total. *Figure 12* provides a visual representation of these issue areas, where issues addressed most often appear more prominently. Organizations most commonly collaborate with coalition partners on issues regarding education (31%), health (26%), behavioral/mental health (16%), and housing (16%). Other issue areas that organizations seek to respond to in coalitions include youth development (15%) and family issues (13%). Organizations also tend to be involved in state-level coalitions (76%), though many are part of coalitions focused on issues at the county and local levels (41% and 40%, respectively).

**Figure 11.** Coalition Participation by Nonprofit Type



**Figure 12.** Issue Areas Addressed in New Mexico Coalitions

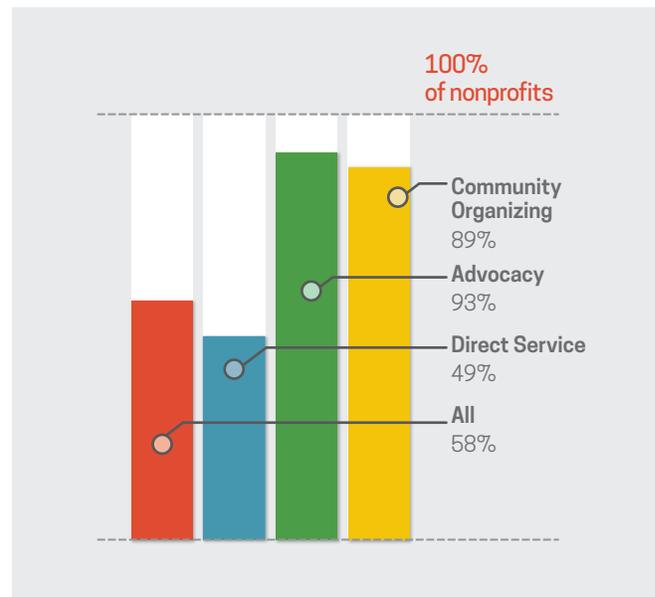


# ADVANCING BROADER CHANGE

**NEW MEXICO NONPROFITS HAVE** also responded to challenges facing their communities and organizations by working to advance broader change. More than half of all nonprofits (58%) report engaging in advocacy over the past year, with advocacy being broadly defined to cover both engaging policymakers directly and also supporting community members to have more voice and power over the decisions that affect their lives. Not surprisingly, advocacy and community organizing groups describe high levels of advocacy (93% and 89%, respectively). But in addition, close to half of all direct service organizations (49%) share that they had taken part in advocacy in 2014 (see *Figure 13*). Several direct service providers explained that although advocacy is not their main focus, it is often inseparable from their work. One such provider remarks: “*Advocacy is not our primary mission but it is important in supporting the mission.*”

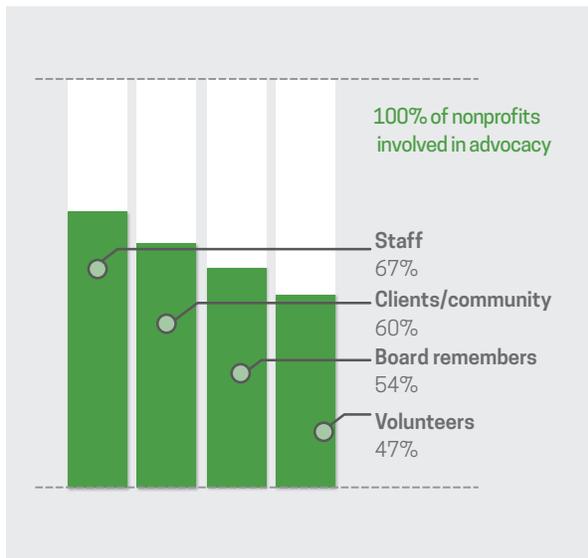
Organizations involved in advocacy tend to engage in several different types of activities, with more than half (67%) sharing that they participate in two or more activities. Most of these organizations focus on providing education on various policy issues affecting their community members (48%), as well as on systemic factors (i.e., laws, attitudes) contributing to these issues (57%). Many organizations also offer training on how to engage in advocacy (49%) and civic engagement and voter education (40%). The least common advocacy activity among groups is providing training on policy issues affecting organizational funding (38%).

**Figure 13.** Advocacy Participation by Nonprofit Type



As seen in *Figure 14*, more than half of all surveyed organizations provide trainings to staff members (67%) and clients/community members (60%). Involving clients and community members in advocacy tends to occur more frequently among community organizing groups and advocacy organizations as compared to direct service providers (69%, 65%, and 58%, respectively). A greater proportion of direct service providers also provide advocacy training to staff members as compared to advocacy and community organizing groups (70%, 62%, and 56%, respectively). However, it is more often the case that all nonprofits involved in advocacy engage multiple groups in these types of activities. One survey respondent shared that because their organization’s goal is to both “*make sure staff have training to be good advocates*” and “*train clients/consumers to become their own self advocates,*” they have a formal team of staff members, consumers, and community members who work together on legislative advocacy throughout the year.

**Figure 14.** Types of Groups Engaged in Advocacy



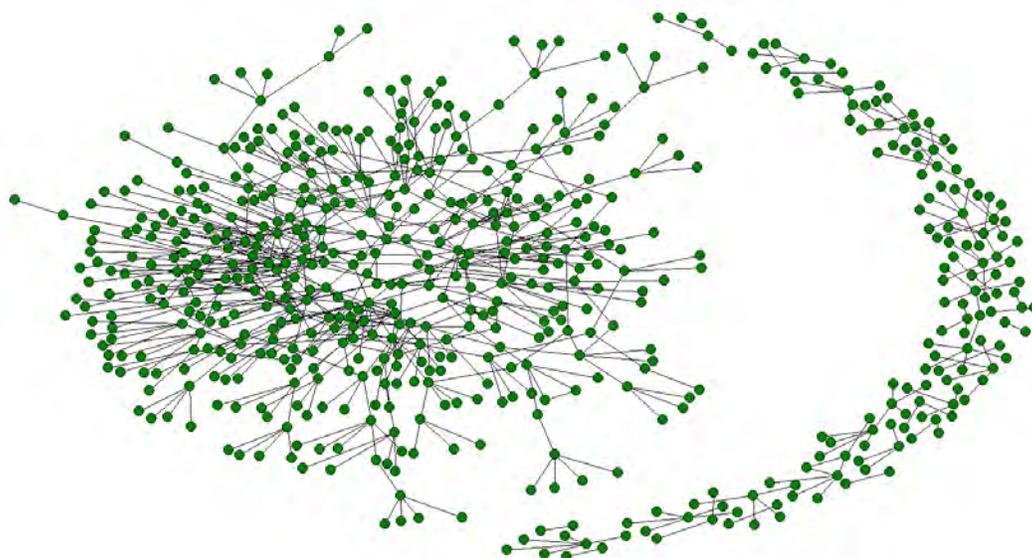
More than one-third of all surveyed organizations (40%) are not involved in advocacy, and they provide a number of reasons for not engaging in this type of work. Most of these organizations (51%), many of whom are direct service providers, do not consider advocacy to be within their mission. One direct service provider notes: “*Advocacy activities would not be in harmony with our traditions.*” Others explain that their lack of involvement in advocacy is primarily due to issues of capacity, such as lack of adequate funding and resources (28%) or lack of advocacy skills and expertise (23%). Only a small number of all surveyed organizations (8%) describe not taking part in advocacy because they mistakenly believe such activities are not permitted under 501(c) status requirements.<sup>6</sup>



# MAKING CONNECTIONS

**RECOGNIZING THAT ORGANIZATIONS** do not exist in isolation but rather as part of a broader network of interdependent groups, we asked each survey participant to identify their five closest organizational partners.<sup>7</sup> Using social network analysis, we were able to map an emerging network of New Mexico organizations, comprised of 603 organizations in total.<sup>8</sup> *Figure 15* presents a visualization of this network, where circles represent organizations and lines represent the connections between them.<sup>9</sup>

**Figure 15.** *Connections Among New Mexico Nonprofits*

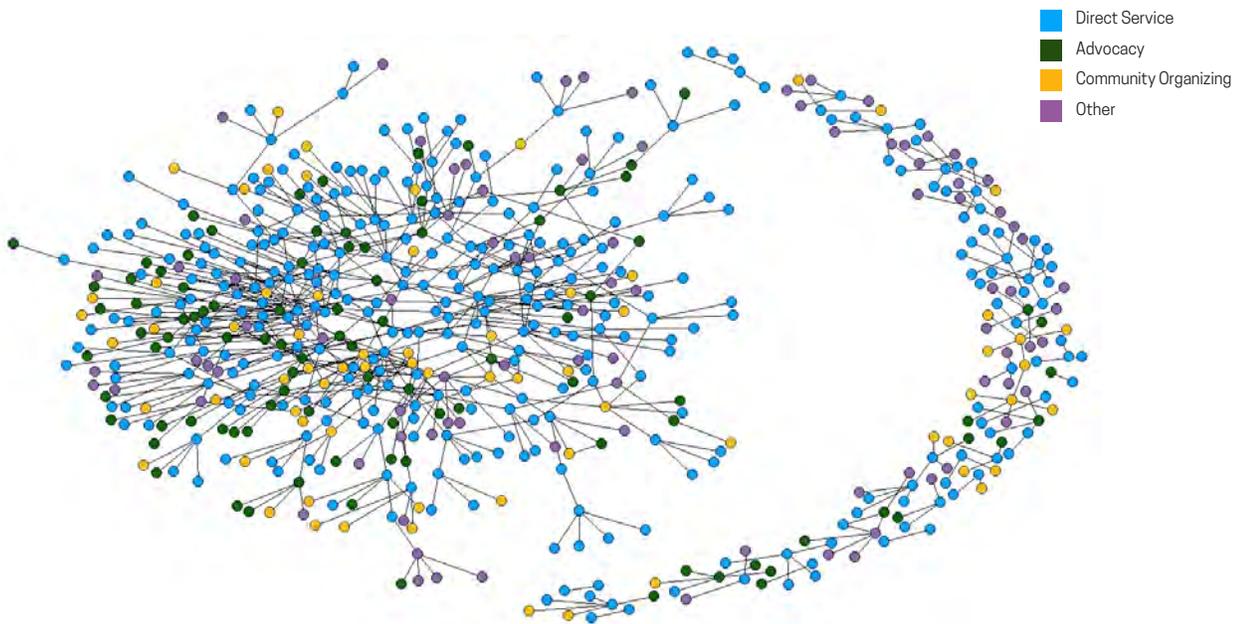


The overall findings from this social network analysis are promising and suggest that New Mexico nonprofits have great potential to weave together a strong, dynamic, and collaborative network to advance the common good in their state. This social network analysis illustrates that a substantial number of organizations in the state have already begun to coalesce and could serve as the foundation for a more robust network. This is shown in the network map in *Figure 15*, where there is a discernable web of connected organizations (on the left) and a collection of smaller groups of linked organizations (on the right). A more disconnected network, in contrast, would look less like a web and more like non-overlapping branches. While increased efforts to intentionally foster collaboration may help these organizations to form a more cohesive network, it is striking that they already resemble the beginnings of one.



It is also promising that New Mexico nonprofits seem to collaborate often across nonprofit type (i.e., direct service, advocacy, and community organizing). As shown in *Figure 16*, there are many direct connections between different types of organizations. Organizations also do not appear to cluster by nonprofit type, which suggests minimal nonprofit type siloes.<sup>10</sup> Indeed, almost all advocacy and community organizing groups, as well as most direct service providers, report working regularly with at least one different nonprofit type.<sup>11</sup>

**Figure 16.** *Nonprofit Types in New Mexico Nonprofit Network*



Equally encouraging is that nonprofits in the state appear to collaborate across issue areas. In looking at maps of the network that focus on organizations' involvement in different issue areas (i.e., education, health, youth development), organizations do not form clear clusters nor occupy particular parts of the network based on the issues they address. This suggests that there is a lack of issues-based siloes among organizations, as a map of a network with greater fragmentation based on issue areas would have more readily apparent borders separating organizations focused on different issues. This collaboration across issue areas may be due in part to the fact that most organizations tend to be multi-issue in their work. Yet, this inclination to work across issue areas, combined with habits of working across nonprofit type, suggests that New Mexico nonprofits are committed to a deeper kind of collective engagement that is more than the sum of its parts.

While this social network analysis shows that New Mexico nonprofits have already made strong strides towards meaningful collaboration and would likely benefit from increased investment in network building, we have only illuminated a small fraction of this emerging network's true potential. Our analysis only looked at a small sample of connections among organizations, but organizations report maintaining partnerships with 26 other organizations on average—with some working with 100 or more partners.<sup>12</sup> Considering that collaboration among nonprofits may be even more robust and dynamic than described here, what could New Mexico stand to do with a larger, more well-connected, and more sustainable network of nonprofits working together to advance the common good?



# GROWING STRONGER

**OVER THE PAST YEAR,** New Mexico nonprofits have worked tirelessly to ensure the well-being of their state, tackling the most complex of issues and serving the most vulnerable populations. They have also done this work in the face of many significant challenges, such as decreased funding and increased demand for services. And perhaps most importantly, they have done this work *together*, collaborating across organizations and issue areas in partnerships and coalitions to advance the common good.

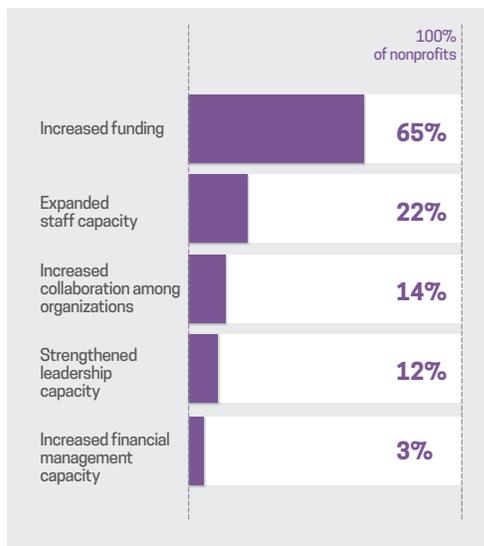
Reflecting on survey respondents' experiences, particularly their feedback on organizational needs (*see sidebar*), we offer three recommendations for supporting New Mexico nonprofits moving forward.

- 1. Foster collaboration among organizations.** A key finding from the survey and the social network analysis in particular is that there is great potential to build upon the emerging network of nonprofits committed to promoting the common good in New Mexico. Many organizations share in the survey that they welcome increased opportunities to collaborate with one another. Networks can help to tackle challenges that are too complex for individual organizations to address alone, reduce duplication, and spur innovation.<sup>13</sup> As networks require ongoing coordination and dedicated staff time on behalf of involved organizations, increasing investment in *intentionally* fostering collaboration is key to growing a network (or multiple networks) in New Mexico. Towards this end, an important first step is to support interested organizations and intermediaries in the state to convene and explore opportunities for collaboration. For example, what are some shared goals? How could a network approach support and advance these goals? And what might this network look like in terms of roles, infrastructure, and processes?
- 2. Support organizations to expand capacity.** The survey also shows that New Mexico nonprofits are eager to expand their capacity, as over one-third of all surveyed organizations describe looking to hire and train staff, develop leadership, and/or strengthen financial management skills. Building organizational capacity comes in many different forms, such as grants that allow for hiring additional staff, intermediaries that offer training and advice, consultants that provide individualized support, and peer learning initiatives that encourage sharing of best practices. An issue for further exploration is to ask groups what



## TOP ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORTS SOUGHT BY NEW MEXICO NONPROFITS

In addition to learning about New Mexico nonprofits' experiences over the past year, we were interested in hearing about their organizational needs. We asked surveyed organizations to identify supports that would be most helpful to them. The responses clustered into 15 main types of supports, with the top three supports being: (1) increased funding; (2) expanded staff capacity; and (3) increased collaboration among organizations (see *Figure 17*). Other key needs include support with strengthening leadership capacity and increasing financial management capacity.



**Figure 17.** *Top Organizational Supports Sought By New Mexico Nonprofits*

type of capacity building works best for them. Understanding more about the capacity building needs of New Mexico nonprofits and the best ways to meet them would help individual organizations and the sector as a whole to operate more effectively.

- 3. Increase investments in organizations.** The lynchpin in the overall success and sustainability of New Mexico nonprofits is more funding. Indeed, as one survey respondent put it: *“Sorry to be so simplistic but increased funding answers a myriad of challenges.”* Surveyed organizations, most of whom have now been responding to the effects of the Great Recession for several years without much reprieve, consistently spoke about challenges stemming from inadequate or unstable funding. To ensure the well-being of these vital organizations, more funding, particularly multi-year funding, is key. Additional support with different aspects of fund development, as such as diversified funding and sustainability planning, would also go a long way in bolstering this sector.

Ultimately, this report provides a snapshot of New Mexico’s nonprofit sector, providing information that can serve as building blocks for conversations among nonprofits working towards the common good in New Mexico. More importantly, we hope that this report shows that while New Mexico faces the difficult challenge of having some of the lowest rankings in the nation in terms of education, health, and economic well-being, this state is also an innovator in collective engagement.<sup>14</sup> New Mexico’s nonprofits have much to share with other parts of the country on what it means and what it takes to work collaboratively towards the common good.



## End Notes

<sup>1</sup> University of New Mexico Bureau of Business and Economic Research. "The Economic Impact of Nonprofit Organizations in New Mexico." January 2006. Available at: <https://bber.unm.edu/pubs/EconImpactof-NMNonprofits.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> Recent data from National Center for Charitable Statistics show that the number of other 501(c) nonprofit organizations has decreased by 27% between 2003 to 2013, dropping from 3,143 nonprofits to 2,285 nonprofits during this ten-year span. Available at: <http://nccsweb.urban.org/PubApps/profile1.php?state=NM>.

<sup>3</sup> See "Meeting Need, Making Change: 2013 Survey of Nonprofit Service Providers in New Mexico." Available at: [http://www.buildingmovement.org/pdf/Meeting\\_Need\\_Making\\_Change.pdf](http://www.buildingmovement.org/pdf/Meeting_Need_Making_Change.pdf).

<sup>4</sup> The report appendix is available at: [http://buildingmovement.org/reports/entry/working\\_towards\\_the\\_common\\_good](http://buildingmovement.org/reports/entry/working_towards_the_common_good).

<sup>5</sup> According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the racial composition of New Mexico in 2013 consisted of: Hispanics/Latinos (47.3%), Whites (39.4%); American Indians/Native Americans (10.4%); African Americans (2.5%); and Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (1.8%).

<sup>6</sup> Bolder Advocacy, an initiative of Alliance for Justice, provides a number of resources to support nonprofit organizations to navigate 501(c) status rules on advocacy. These resources are available at: <http://www.bolderadvocacy.org>.

<sup>7</sup> 182 survey respondents participated in this section of the survey, identifying connections to other survey respondents and to over 400 organizations that had not taken part in the survey effort.

<sup>8</sup> Social network analysis is an approach to understanding relations among a set of actors that uses both quantitative analysis and graphical representation.

<sup>9</sup> In network maps, the location of specific actors in a network is also significant as mathematical calculations are used to place actors based on both the strength of their ties to other organizations and their centrality to the network as a whole. As such, actors who share strong ties appear closer and actors who are more central to the network tend to be located towards the center. This network map, along with subsequent maps, was generated using social network analysis software UCINET.

<sup>10</sup> It is important to note that siloes based on nonprofit type may not be as evident given that direct service providers make up the bulk of the network.

<sup>11</sup> 167 survey respondents participated in this section of the survey. The results are as follows: 92% of advocacy organizations report working regularly with either community organizing groups or direct service providers; 92% of community organizing groups work regularly with either direct service providers or advocacy organizations; and 61% of direct service providers work regularly with either community organizing groups or advocacy organizations.

<sup>12</sup> 168 survey respondents participated in this section of the survey, with the minimum number of partners reported being one and the maximum number of partners being 612.

<sup>13</sup> Network Impact and Center for Evaluation Innovation. "Framing Paper: The State of Network Evaluation." July 2014. Available at: [http://www.networkimpact.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/NetworkEvalGuidePt1\\_FramingPaper.pdf](http://www.networkimpact.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/NetworkEvalGuidePt1_FramingPaper.pdf).

<sup>14</sup> The Annie E. Casey Foundation's "2013 Data Book on State Trends in Child Well-Being" found that New Mexico ranked last in terms of overall child well-being. This ranking was based on rankings in four domains: (1) economic well-being, (2) education, (3) health, and (4) family and community. In each of these domains, New Mexico ranked 49th in the nation. This data book is available at: <http://www.aecf.org/m/resourcedoc/AECF-2013KIDSCOUNTDataBook-2013.pdf>.



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For more information, please visit  
The Building Movement Project at  
[www.buildingmovement.org](http://www.buildingmovement.org)

or contact us at  
[info@buildingmovement.org](mailto:info@buildingmovement.org)

