

Nonprofit Worker Shortages: Continued Advocacy Urged

08.01.22 | Linda J. Rosenthal, JD



As the summer of 2021 opened, there were broad hopes of the pandemic coming under control and the American workplace returning to at least some sense of normal.

None of that unfolded as expected. One of the particular oddities was "[The Great Resignation](#)." As jobs came back, the workers did not.

The National Council of Nonprofits was following this trend with increasing concern. In [The Scope and Impact of Workforce Shortages](#) (An Updated Analysis, December 13, 2021), NCN officials wrote: "[T]he current shortage of workers in all sectors is a matter of common knowledge, but the significance of the crisis affecting the work of charitable nonprofits – often involving human lives and wellbeing – is different."

It's different than for businesses which have some ability to increase prices in order to entice new hires with good pay and benefits. But "[w]hen nonprofits have unfilled jobs, it obviously limits (sometimes even eliminates) the volume of services they can deliver, meaning people relying on those services suffer."

For our story on this December 2021 NCN report, see [The Nonprofit Labor Crunch: An Update](#) (December 15, 2021).

Now, six months later, NCN has issued an important new report. See [Nonprofit Workforce Shortages: An Issue That Affects Everyone](#) (An Update: July 2022) [7 pp. PDF]. Separately, on the NCN website, there is a [helpful review](#) of developments and summary of these latest findings and recommendations.

A Continuing Problem

In a nutshell, the workplace shortages continue to be a significant issue – perhaps the predominant one – for the nonprofit sector.

And two major developments affecting the entire economy are ravaging America's charitable organizations particularly hard. First, of course, is inflation. With more money from organizational budgets being drained to pay all manner of higher costs, there is less to retain existing workers or to lure new hires. Second, the pandemic is far from over with each new Omicron variant taking a vicious hold. This developing is wreaking havoc on nonprofits' ability to plan even for the short term and, in some cases, to resume in-person revenue-generating events.

NCN's "freshly updated report" adds "some new data, lays out challenges nonprofits are facing, and identifies positive policy solutions." See NCN Advocacy Update, July 25, 2022.

In short, "[c]haritable nonprofits around the country are reporting significant difficulties retaining staff and filling vacancies. What was initially considered a challenge has now become a workforce crisis in need of immediate remedy and commitment to overcome longstanding problems exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic."

That's not to underestimate the "disappointment and lost profits" that the business sector continues to experience due to the staffing shortages. It's certainly real and difficult. But "the lack of adequate nonprofit staffing" has ripple effects throughout American society because "the public suffers delayed or complete loss of needed services.

Additional Advocacy

The thrust of the advocacy efforts by the nonprofit sector, spearheaded by NCN, is one key phrase: there have been "...longstanding problems exacerbated by the" pandemic.

We reported several months ago that "a broad coalition of more than 60 national charitable nonprofit organizations sent a letter to President Biden and congressional leaders calling for 'urgently needed pandemic and workforce shortage relief that will enable charitable organizations to fulfill their roles in our nation's relief, recovery, and rebuilding.'" See "Pandemic and Workforce Shortage Relief for Charitable Nonprofits, dated February 14, 2022, updated June 13, 2022; also, NCN's "Action Alert" dated February 15, 2022. NCN wanted as many nonprofits as possible to sign onto the letter, share it in their social-media networks, and contact legislators.

The July 2022 Update has a similar focus on the need for continued advocacy and action in Washington, D.C., and all around the nation. "Since the publication of the special report in December 2021, governments at all levels have taken some, although limited actions to alleviate workforce shortages. However, the crisis continues to grow,.... Now is the time for public officials to commit to advancing policy solutions at the local, state and federal levels to eliminate a crisis that affects everyone."

Conclusion

As with all of its reports on this topic, NCN takes special effort to list and describe specific innovative progress by the nonprofit sector in partnership with the government to ameliorate this crisis. These successes can serve as inspiration and stepping stones to future collaborations in

more communities.

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