NONPROFITS: FINANCE

Why Now Is the Perfect Time for Nonprofits to Get Their Financial House in Order

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Most nonprofit tax exempt organizations file a tax extension in May and breathe a sigh of relief — but the time between now and November is the perfect window to get your financial systems in order.

May 15th just passed — and if you're a nonprofit with a calendar year-end, that date probably meant one thing: **your tax (form 990) deadline.**

Well... sort of.

If we're keeping it real (and we always do), you probably filed that very convenient **automatic extension**. That buys you six more months — giving you until **November 15th** to get your financials in order and submit your return.

That extension is a gift. But it's also a trap — because it's easy to push things off and pretend you don't need to think about it again until the fall.

But here's the thing: **this in-between season is actually the best time to get serious about your organization's financial policies, procedures, and accounting systems.** You're not in panic mode. You're not buried in holiday campaigns. You've got space.

And that makes it the perfect time to fix what's broken, upgrade what's outdated, and build systems that will actually support your mission long-term.

Why Financial Policies and Procedures Aren't Just Bureaucratic Fluff

Let's bust a myth real quick: having solid financial systems is *not* about bureaucracy. It's about **trust, protection, and sustainability.**

You may have a passionate team, an amazing mission, and a long list of goals — but if your financial systems are shaky, **the whole operation is on unstable ground.**

Here's why:

- **Trust matters.** Donors, grantmakers, and partners need to know you're handling money responsibly. Financial policies aren't just internal tools — they're *signals* that you're running a legitimate, professional operation.
- **Consistency matters.** When your policies are documented and your procedures are clear, there's no confusion about who approves expenses, how reimbursements work, or how revenue is tracked. That consistency protects everyone — from your executive director to your bookkeeper to your board.
- **Accountability matters.** When something goes sideways — a missing receipt, a budget overrun, an unexpected audit — strong systems give you the backup you need. Without them, you're relying on memory, good intentions, and a whole lot of stress.

This isn't just about having rules. It's about having *clarity*. And clarity is the key to confident decision-making.

The Form 990 Is a Mirror — And It's Telling a Story

Your Form 990 isn't just a form you fill out once a year and send off into the IRS void.

It's a public document. A storytelling device. A snapshot of how your organization operates, leads, and stewards its resources.

Funders look at it. Major donors review it. Journalists, watchdog organizations, and even potential board members pull it up before deciding whether to work with you.

And what they see is shaped entirely by the quality of your financial systems. If your numbers are messy, your categorizations are inconsistent, or your documentation is incomplete, it's going to show — and not in a good way.

But when your financial house is in order? Your 990 becomes a powerful asset. It reflects strength. Integrity. Competence. It reassures your supporters that you're the kind of organization they want to invest in.

That's why getting your systems in shape **now** isn't just about avoiding chaos later. It's about building the kind of trust that opens doors.

So, Why Now?

This post-tax-season window — the time between the May 15th deadline and the late summer rush — is a unicorn. It's quieter. It's calmer. And it's full of potential.

Here's why this timing is so ideal:

1. You're already thinking about your numbers.
You've just wrapped up your fiscal year. You've been reviewing statements, pulling reports, answering your accountant's questions. All that financial info is top of mind — and that makes it way easier to spot what's working… and what's not.

2. Summer gives you space.
The next few months tend to be slower for many organizations. Board meetings taper off. Major events pause. That space gives you the breathing room to take a step back and look at your systems strategically, instead of reactively.

3. Small changes now = massive relief later.
You do *not* want to be scrambling in October, realizing your chart of accounts is a mess or your grant tracking is incomplete. Putting systems in place now means your fall season will be focused, clean, and (dare we say it?) even peaceful.

This isn't about doing everything at once. It's about recognizing the moment — and using it wisely.

It's Not About Perfection — It's About Progress

If you're reading this and thinking, "Yikes… we don't have *any* of this in place," take a deep breath. You're not alone.

Most nonprofits don't start out with robust financial policies. They evolve as you grow. But growth without structure? That's where burnout and breakdowns happen.

So start small. Look at the gaps. Talk to your team. Identify one area — maybe it's your expense approval process, or how you document restricted grants — and tackle that first. Every improvement builds momentum.

And remember: you don't have to figure this out alone. Whether you're setting up your very first policies or rebuilding after years of winging it, there are folks (hi, that's us) who specialize in exactly this kind of work.

Let's Set You Up for Success — Long Before November

November 15th might feel far away, but it's coming. And it'll hit differently if you've spent the summer setting your organization up for success.

Imagine reviewing your 990 draft with zero panic. Having clean financial reports for your board. Knowing your policies are aligned with your actual practices — and that you're ready to show funders, auditors, and the IRS that your nonprofit is rock solid.

That's the kind of calm, confident energy we want for you.

So if you're ready to finally get your nonprofit's financial infrastructure where it needs to be — let's make it happen.

We'll help you build the systems your mission deserves.