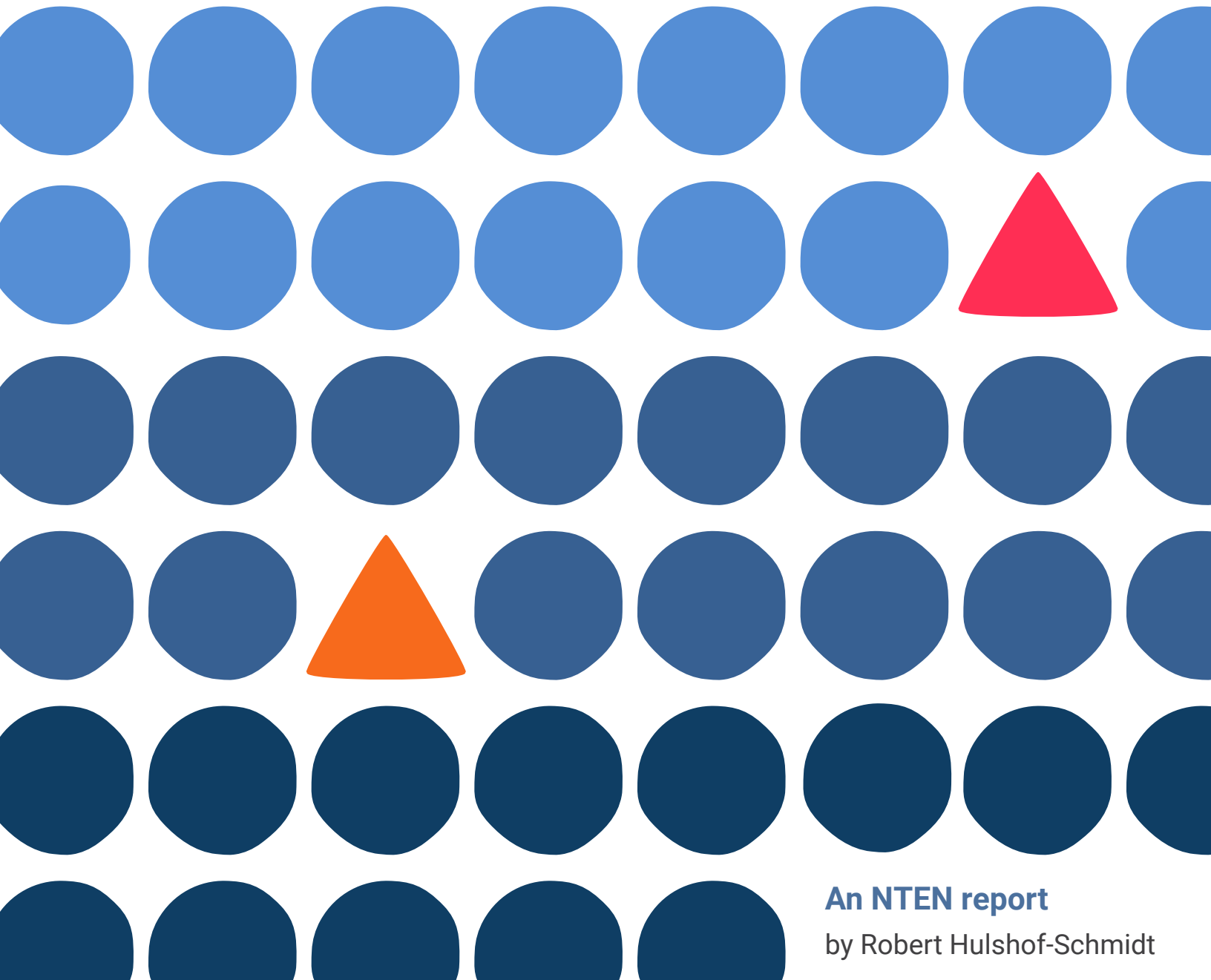


nten

Managing Nonprofit Tech Change

2022 REPORT



An NTEN report

by Robert Hulshof-Schmidt

What's Inside

- Introduction 1
- Demographics 3
- Making Technology Decisions..... 5
- Assessing Technology Needs 9
- The Impact of Change 11
- Making Room for Change 14
- Appendix: Data Tables 16

Introduction

As the second year of the COVID-19 pandemic, 2021 was complicated for nonprofit organizations of all sizes and missions. Many organizations that had made rapid technology changes in 2020 to continue program and service delivery found that some of those changes were sustainable and others simply were not. While there were many different opinions about and efforts toward returning to in-person work in offices, the realities of our ever-changing technical needs were evident regardless of whether an organization ever had an office again.

NTEN and Salesforce partnered on a survey to better understand some of the realities, challenges, and areas of strength for change management in nonprofits. For the purposes of the survey and this report, “change management” includes the processes, policies, and culture in an organization as they relate to decision-making, budgeting, and planning, especially for technology-related projects.

Findings to action

No matter your organization’s budget or staff size, there’s a clear opportunity for strengthening change management by creating documented decision-making processes and ensuring that everyone on the team understands them. Our survey found that only a third of respondents had a decision-making policy, and only 10% were sure that all staff knew about it.

Staff are an essential part of technology decisions, and including people from every team across an organization is a valuable way to surface needs and priorities. It’s great to see a focus on staff involvement in the survey results, but the participation level of community members was not as positive. The systems and digital services we use to manage, deliver, and track our programs and services also impact our community members and participants. All organizations can increase the opportunities they provide, including community needs, experience, and perspective in planning and decision-making.

While we often hear the assumption that budget is the most significant barrier for organizations to be successful with technology, survey respondents indicated it is actually staff time that takes the lead, with over 80% of respondents saying it is an issue for their organization. Considering the finding above that only 10% of respondents were sure all staff in their organization knew about decision-making processes, it is not surprising that staff time is a challenge. Invest time now to establish processes and rhythms for evaluating needs. Integrate technology conversations into existing organizational meetings to decrease the drain on staff time and increase the effectiveness of the time you have together.

Thank you

Thank you to all of the organizations who participated in this survey and all of NTEN’s research. We appreciate the generosity of our committee because when we share our experiences, we can all learn together. We hope you’ll find new ideas from this report that you can use to make changes in your work – and that when you do, you’ll let us know so that we can support and celebrate you!





About NTEN

We are creating a world where missions and movements are successful through the skillful and equitable use of technology.

We build transformative power by connecting people who are putting technology to work for social change. We build their individual and collective capacity for doing good by offering expert trainings, researching effective approaches, and providing places where relationships can flourish. We relentlessly advocate for the redesign of the systems and structures that maintain inequity.

NTEN's amazing community is made up of nonprofit staff, volunteers, board members, funders, consultants, and vendors from all walks of life.

Join us at nten.org.



About Salesforce

Salesforce.org is a social impact center of Salesforce. We build powerful technology for, and with, our community of nonprofit, educational and philanthropic organizations to help them operate effectively, raise funds and connect.

Demographics

Nearly 350 nonprofits responded to the survey, representing organizations in many service areas, sizes, budgets, and ages. This diversity helps ensure the overall usefulness of the results.

CHART 1

What best describes your organization's primary issue area?

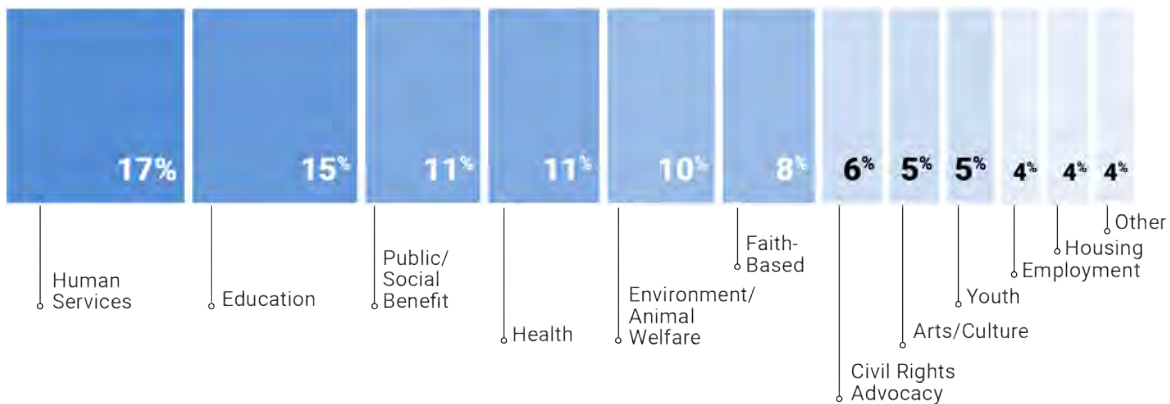


CHART 2

What is the size of your overall organization staff?



CHART 3

About how long has your organization existed?

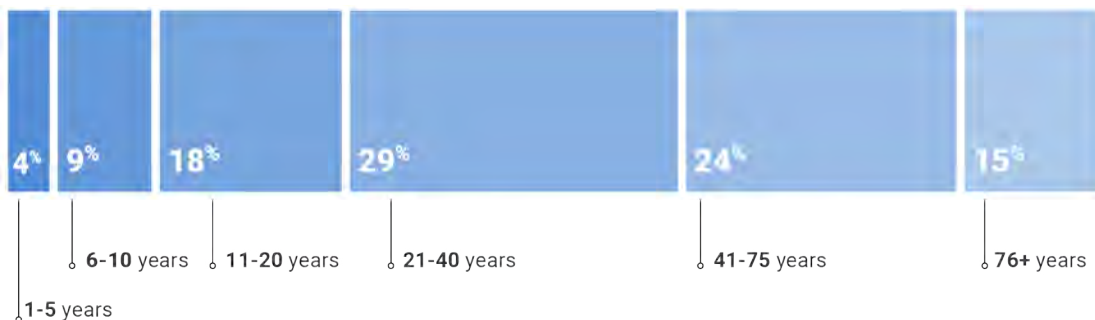


CHART 4

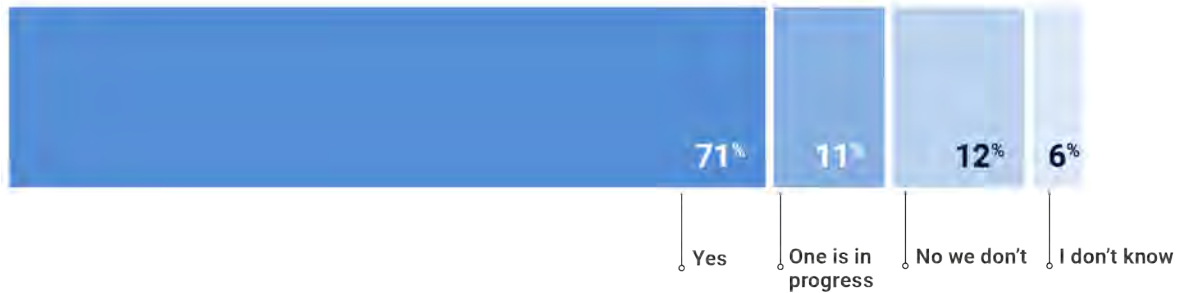
What is the approximate annual budget of your organization?



CHART 5

Does your organization have any stated commitment to equity?

This may be named Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, DEI, IDEA, Inclusion and Belonging, or other similar titles.



Making Technology Decisions

Nonprofits have a variety of decision-making strategies, policies, and tools for their use of technology.

CHART 6

Who has the authority to make final decisions about technology products or services in your organization?

Most organizations have clearly identified decision-makers when it comes to technology products and services. In most cases, top leadership – Executive Directors, Finance or Operations Directors, and IT Directors – have the most authority. Other groups and staff ranked at less than 20% as final decision-makers.

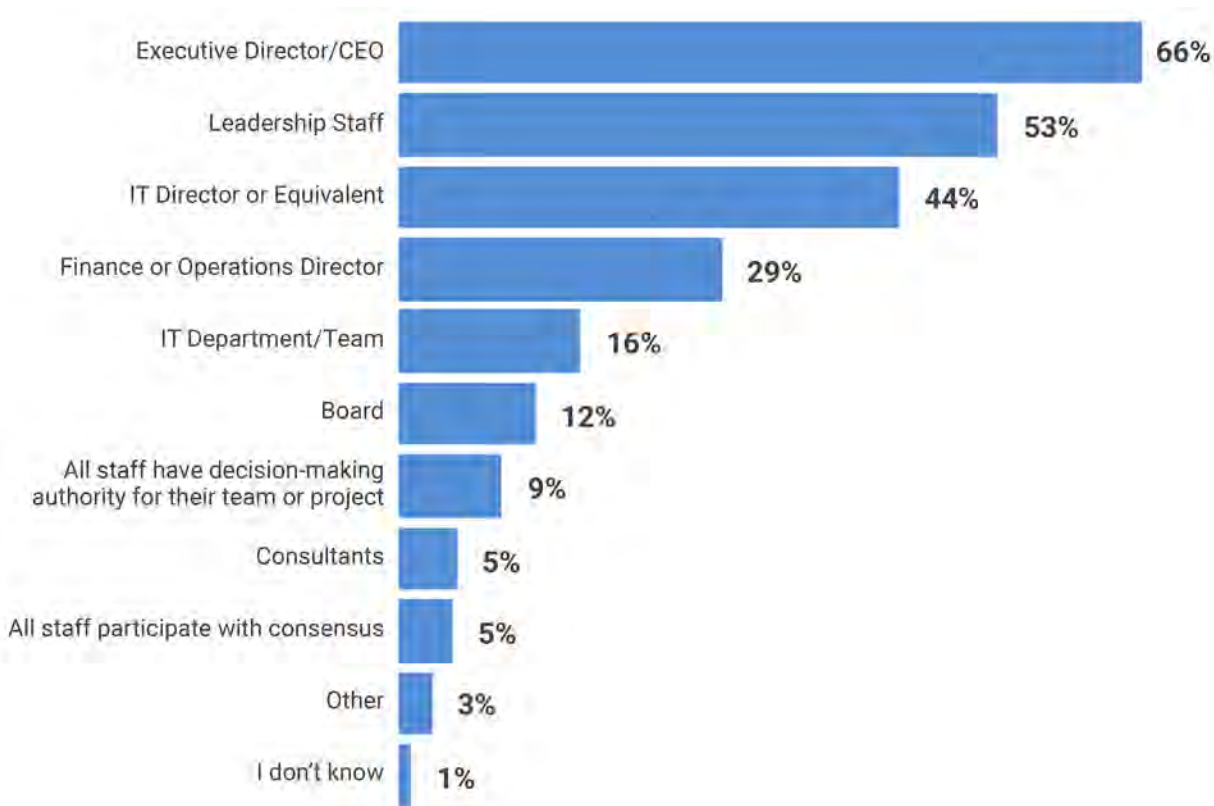


CHART 7

Which groups or individuals are included in decisions about technology products or services?

General technology decisions have a broader set of participants, with leadership of all varieties typically participating. Note that consultants and Boards have noticeably more involvement at the general level than they do with final decision-making.

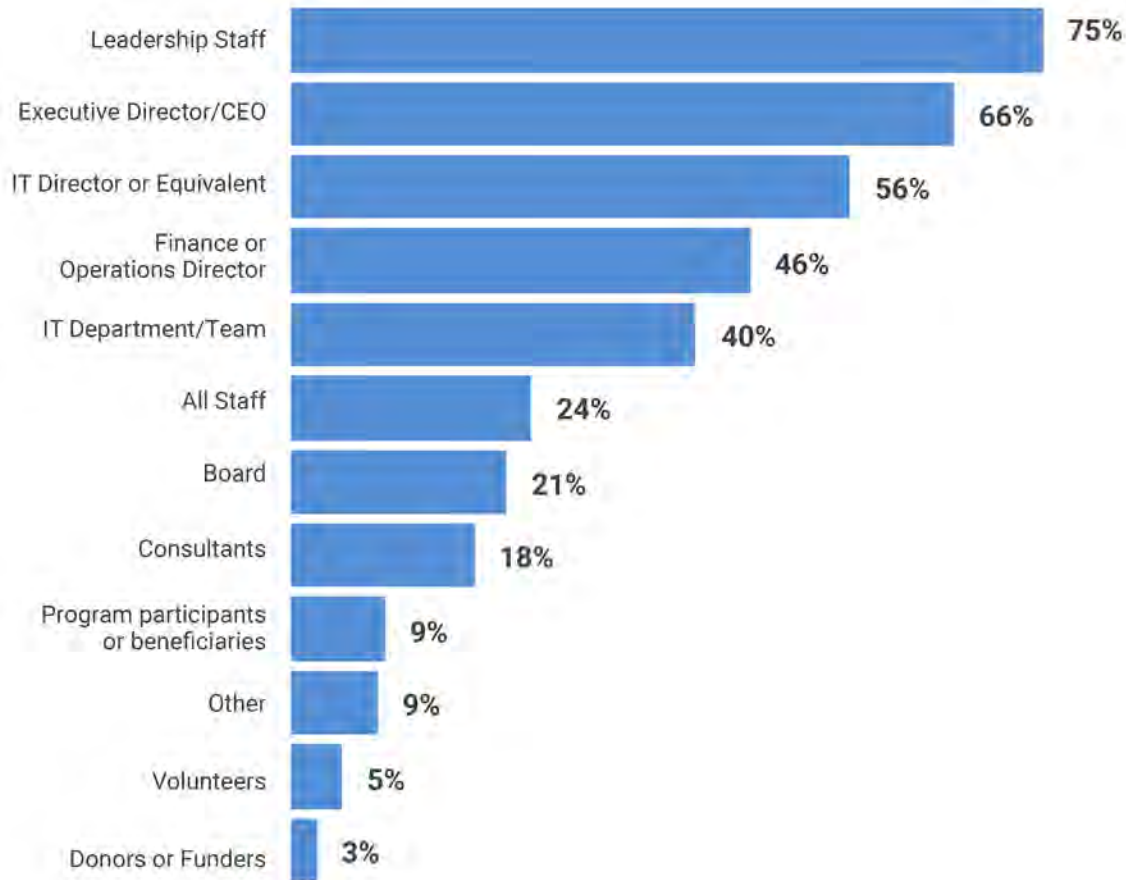
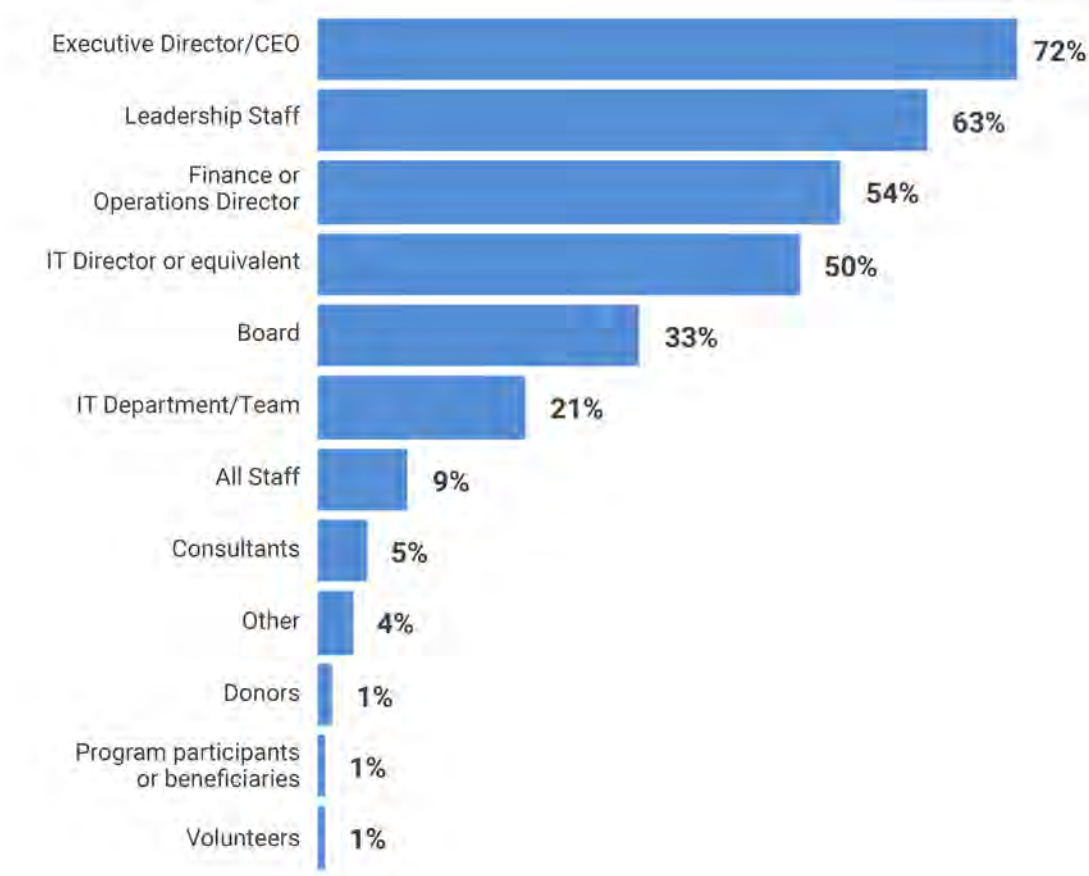


CHART 8

Which groups or individuals are included in the budgeting process for technology products or services?

Budgeting discussions are less broadly shared, with Board and Finance leadership having the greatest increase in participation as compared to final decision-making.

Responses were fairly consistent for all participants in the survey. The larger an organization's staff, the more likely it was to rely on top-level decision-making with input from solution-specific teams.



For all decision and budget questions, respondents who indicated “other” most often referred to program staff who would specifically use the technology in question.

CHART 9

Does your organization have a documented or otherwise established policy for decision-making specific to or inclusive of technology decisions?

Regardless of who makes the decisions, most respondents lack an established decision-making policy. Only one-third indicated the definite existence of a policy, and only 10% were sure that all staff knew it.

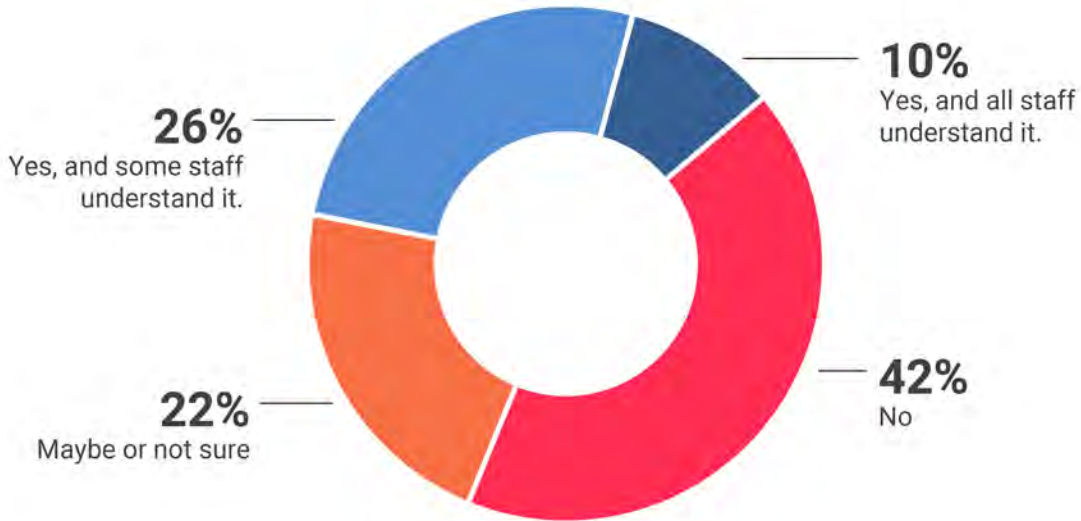
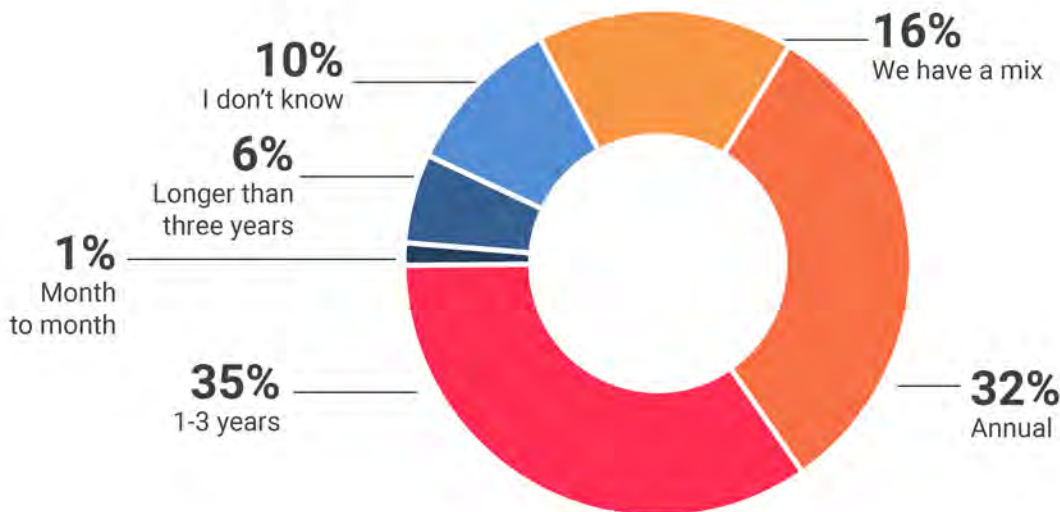


CHART 10

What is the most common length for technology product or service contracts in your organization?

Respondents prefer a balance of consistency and flexibility in their technology contracting. One-third had mostly annual contracts, and similar number had contracts between one and three years in length.



Assessing Technology Needs

Nonprofits use a variety of strategies to understand their technology needs. These assessments are typically made annually or less frequently.

CHART 11

In which of the following ways do you collect feedback about your technology products and services, including your website and digital communications?

Respondents indicated a mix of strategies for collecting input on technology needs. Staff input was the most common, with three channels – focus groups, interviews, and committees – all having 30% or more use. Community input was less common, especially in smaller organizations with smaller budgets.

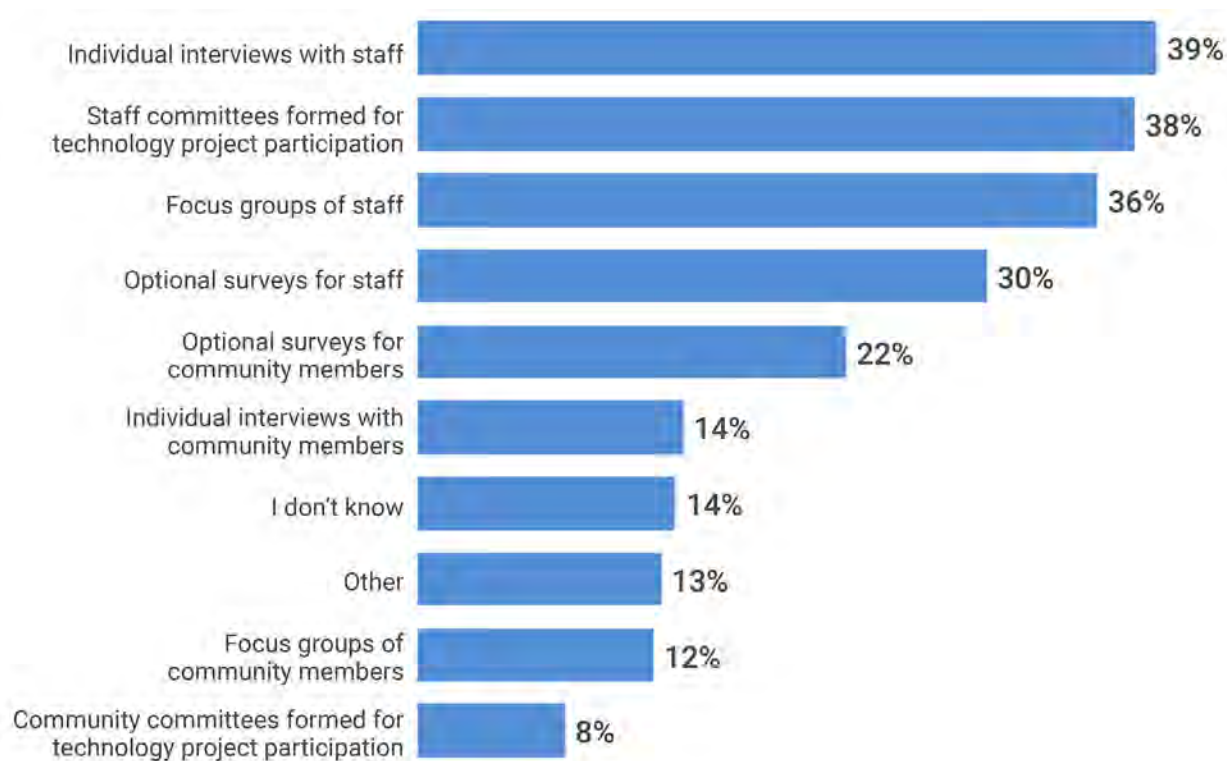


CHART 12

How often do you assess technology needs for the following groups in your organization?

Similarly, technology needs for staff were the most frequently assessed. Nearly 60% of respondents indicated annual or more frequent review. Program participants were the next most common at 40%. Other groups were assessed less frequently, in many cases rarely or not at all.

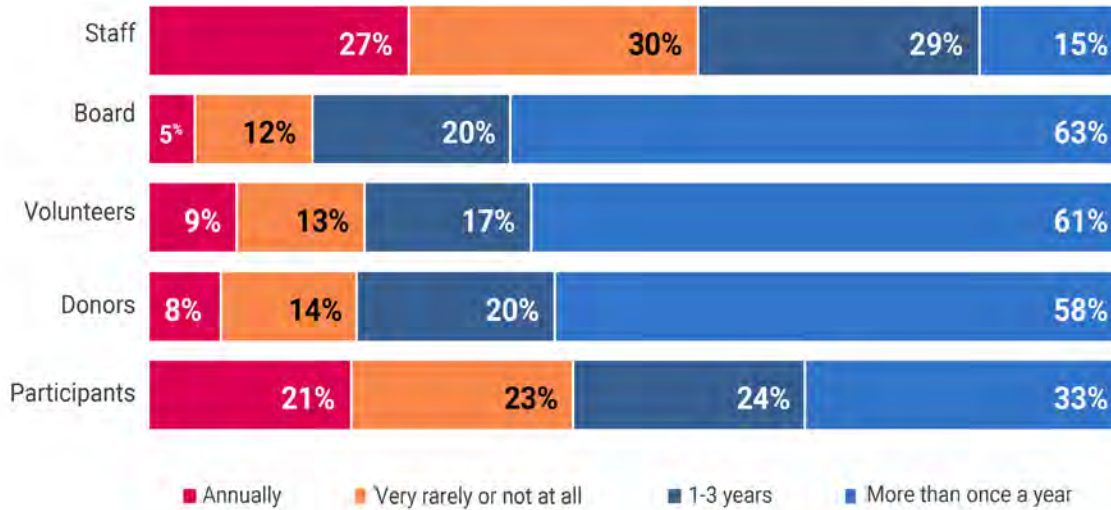
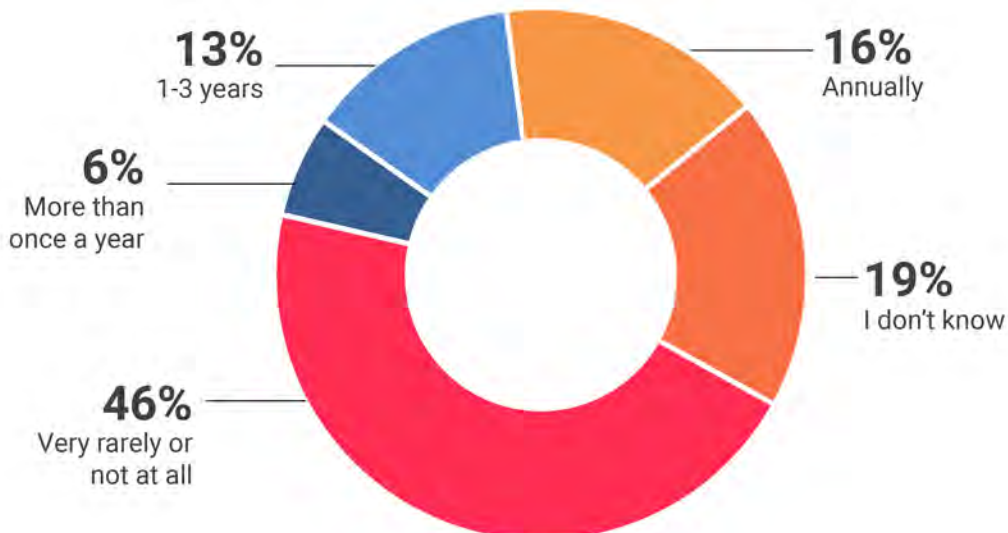


CHART 13

How often do you evaluate the return on investment (ROI) of your technology products and services?

Few respondents perform regular evaluation of Return on Investment. Only about one-third review this every three years or more frequently.



The Impact of Change

Many factors influence the ways that nonprofits deal with change. These include budgets, staff time and skills, and feedback from constituents.

CHART 14

How often do the following considerations limit change in your organization?

Resources are the biggest obstacles to technology change. Over two-thirds of respondents indicated that financial concerns are an issue. Staff time was even more prevalent at over 80%. Skills and comprehension were both noted as meaningful by 60%.

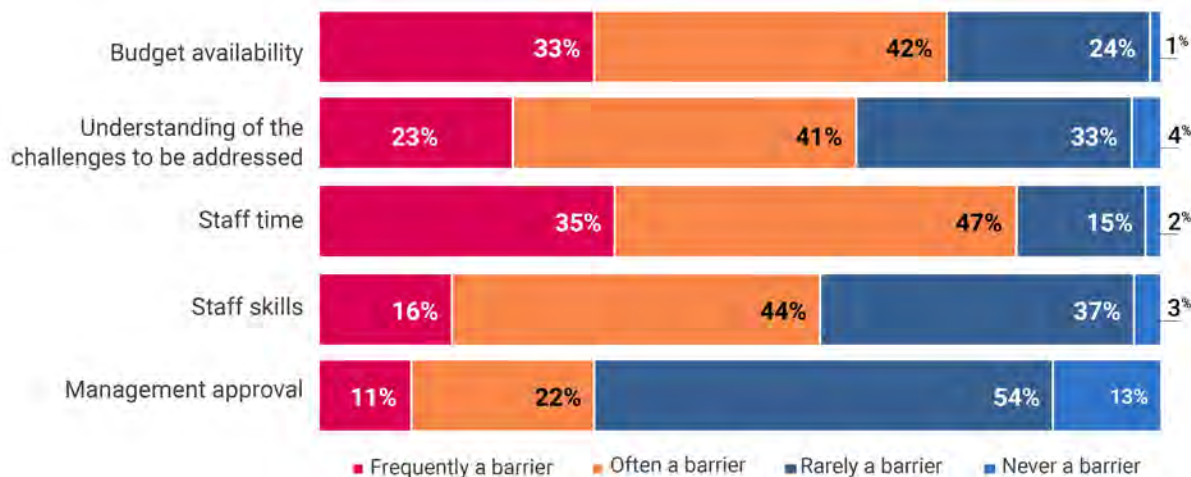


CHART 15

How willing is your organization to change technology products or solutions based on feedback by the following groups?

Staff input regarding technology needs is highly valued, with over 90% of respondents indicating that they were very or somewhat likely to consider it. Inputs from Boards and program participants were also valued at about 65% each. Input from volunteers and donors is not ignored (both rate about 40%), but is much less frequently collected.

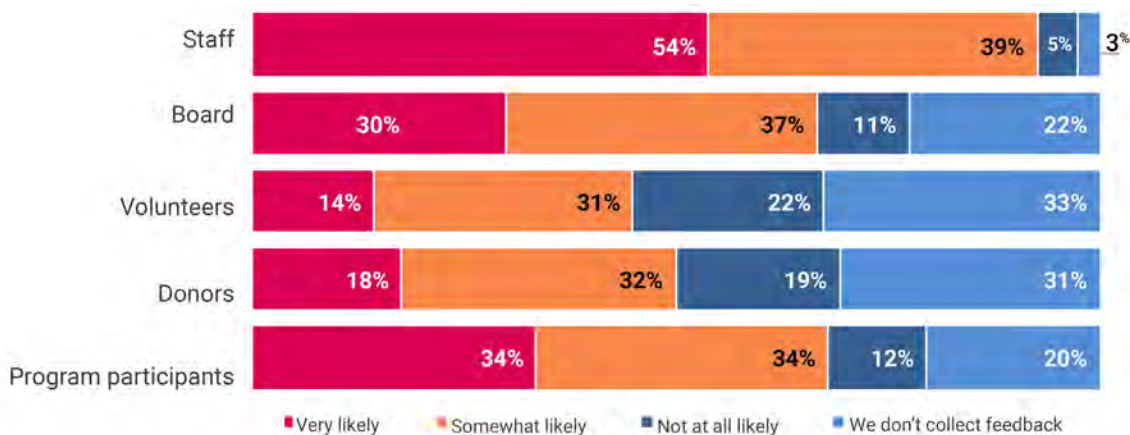


CHART 16

What kind of changes have nonprofits made?

Almost 50% of respondents provided examples of organizational changes that they had implemented. The most common category of change cited related to improving use of or implementing new systems. Process changes – most often workflows – was the next most common category. External facing changes—website improvements and client requests – each accounted for about 10% of respondent examples.

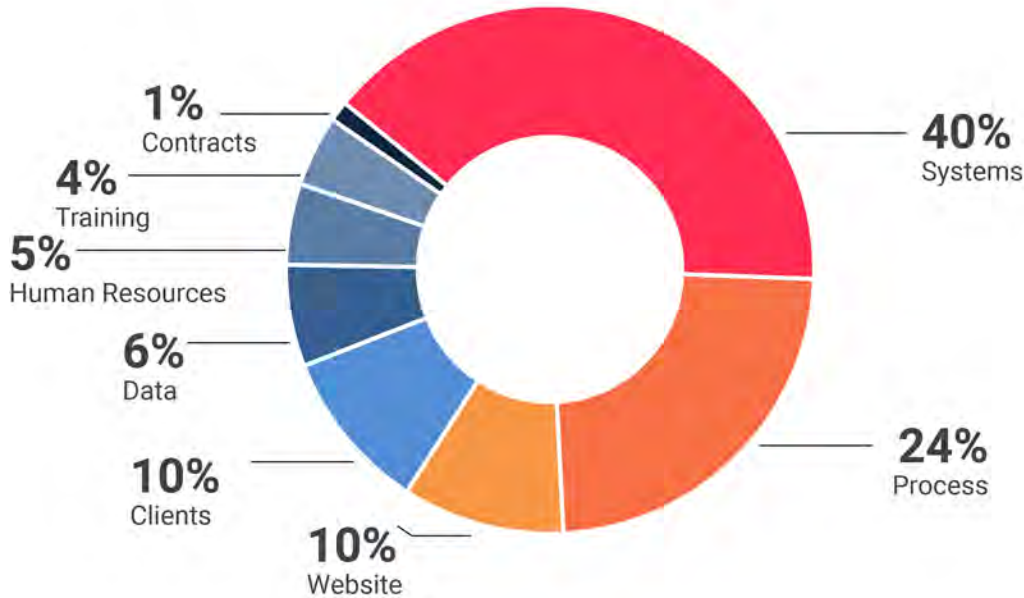
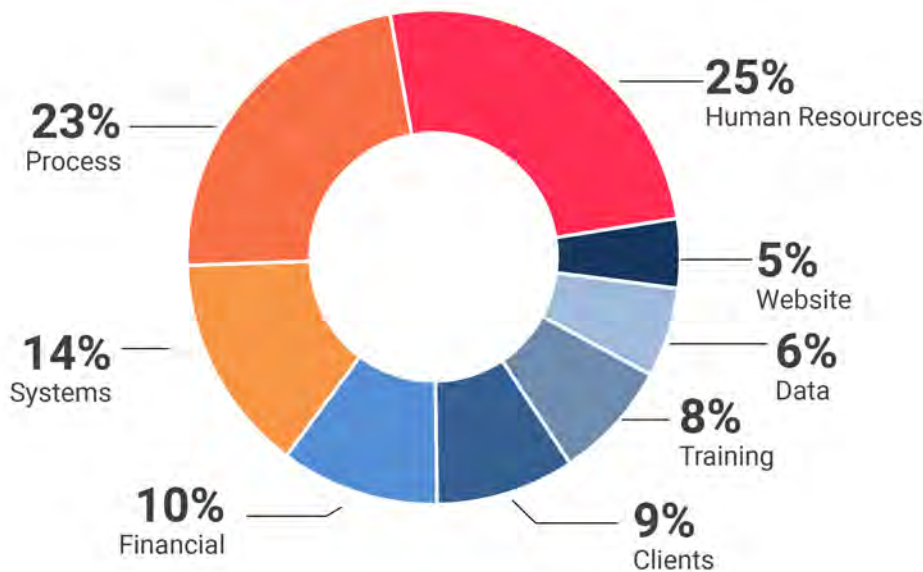


CHART 17

What kind of changes do nonprofits need?

Over 40% of respondents provided information on specific technology change needs at their organizations. While systems and processes were also prevalent on this list (about 36% between the two), they were not the biggest categories. Changes relating to staffing, personnel issues, training, and other HR topics accounted for another third of the changes needed, three times as much as the change examples provided. Finance-related changes – which were not mentioned in the examples – accounted for another 10%.



Please share an example of something your organization changed based on staff or constituent feedback.

"We had feedback from clients, staff, and contractors that our client portal was challenging and made it difficult to schedule and pay for therapy sessions. Working with portal developers, we created a new app, and tested it with staff and clients."

- OPERATIONS DIRECTOR
Medium-sized nonprofit/Human Services sector

"Staff wanted a consistent familiar suite of products, and many were using Google products already on their own. We had no organizational policy about using Google, but the use of multiple personal accounts created a lack of consistent access and a risk of data loss. Google products were added as supported solutions, and everyone got a work account for Google and are required to use that and not their personal account."

- DIRECTOR OF ENTERPRISE APPLICATIONS
Large Nonprofit/Faith-Based sector

"Staff received significant customer feedback – at events, by email, on the phone, and in casual conversation – that our online event registration system created challenges for booking and membership renewal. We used this information to select and implement a new AMS which will allow us to improve customer's online experience registering for events, starting and renewing membership, and making donations."

- VICE PRESIDENT
Large nonprofit/Arts and Culture sector

What's the most pressing need for change in your organization today?

CHANGE NEEDED: DATA GOVERNANCE

"We've realized we work in pillars and that's how we have viewed data ownership/maintenance and it doesn't work."

- DIRECTOR OF IT
Large nonprofit/Environmental sector

CHANGE NEEDED: ACCOUNTABILITY

"It's difficult to make a case or make new usage "stick" if training is not attended. Staff are uninterested, but no one makes them do it."

- DATABASE ASSOCIATE
Medium-sized nonprofit/Education sector

CHANGE NEEDED: DEFINED STRATEGIES

"We need a governance model and change management strategy. Decisions around tools and protocols are ad-hoc and decentralized, meaning we spend more time putting out fires than planning for success in advance."

- CRM MANAGER
Medium-sized nonprofit/Civil Rights sector



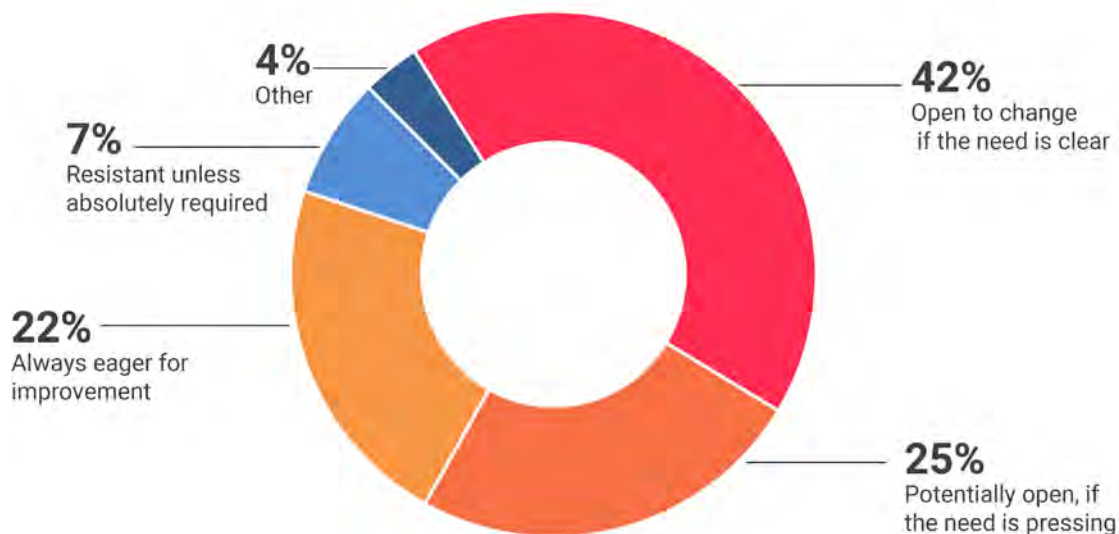
Making Room for Change

Change can be challenging. Nonprofits vary in their openness to change, typically in conjunction with the forces driving the change.

CHART 18

How would you describe your organization's openness to change?

Respondents generally indicated a willingness to embrace change. Not surprisingly, the most frequent responses required some clarity on the need for the change. Those who indicated "Other" mostly indicated either resource constraints interfering with willingness or conflicting levels of willingness across organizational groups.



Please rank the following elements in order of how much they contribute to your organization’s level of openness to change, as described in the previous question (1 is the element that contributes the most and 6 is the element that contributes the least).

The most significant factors in openness to change were leadership buy-in and connection to the strategic plan. These responses align well with the desire to understand the need for a change reflected in the prior question. Consistent with the feedback used, staff input was also rated fairly highly and ranked third of the options provided. Community input was consistently rated lowest.

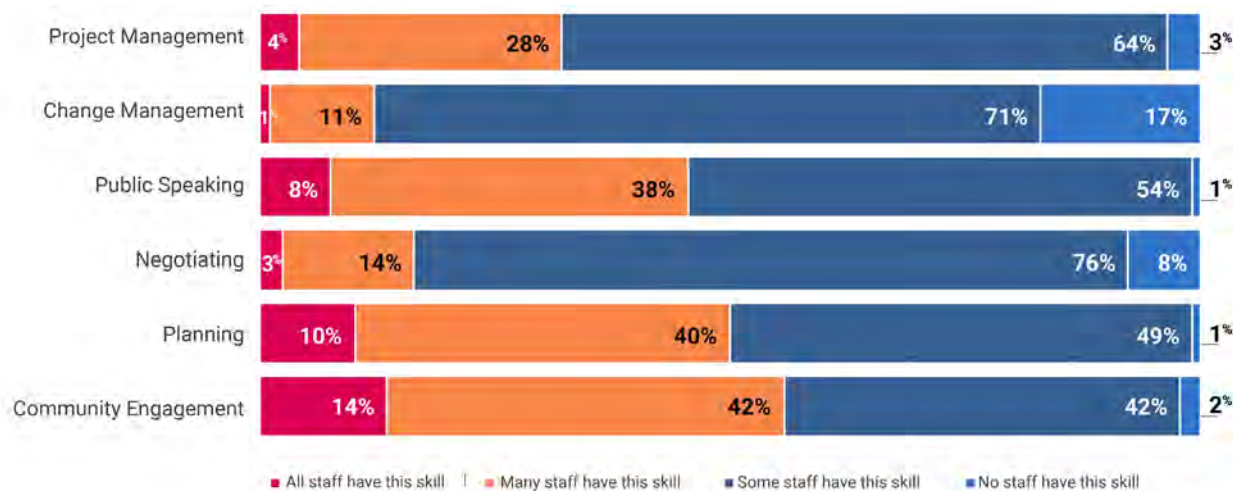
Element contributing to openness to change	Average	Rank
Leadership buy-in for technology	2.46	1
Organizational strategic plan	2.68	2
Staff buy-in for technology	3.01	3
Adequate staff training	3.72	4
Technology roadmap	3.88	5
Community buy-in for technology	5.24	6

CHART 19

What kind of training do nonprofits have?

Two categories of training needs accounted for half of the responses provided. Respondents indicated significant need for training on specific tools (especially CRMs, and office tools) and on organizational processes and procedures.

Other significant categories were soft skills and people skills, security – especially related to online behavior, and general understanding of the role of technology and its implementation.



Appendix:

Data Tables

The following tables are provided to increase the accessibility of this report for readers with disabilities. Each table corresponds to the chart with the same number in the narrative of this report.

Demographics

Table 1. What best describes your organization's primary issue area?

Response	Percent
Arts/Culture	5%
Civil Rights/Advocacy	6%
Education	15%
Employment	4%
Environment/Animal Welfare	10%
Faith-Based	9%
Health	11%
Housing	4%
Human Services	17%
Public/Social Benefit	11%
Other	4%
Youth	5%

Table 2. What is the size of your overall organization staff?

Response	Percent
Fewer than 5	14%
6 - 10	10%
11 - 25	17%
26 - 50	19%
51 - 100	13%
101 - 250	14%
251 - 500	7%
501 - 1,000	4%
Over 1,000	3%



Table 3. About how long has your organization existed?

Response	Percent
1 - 5 years	4%
6 - 10 years	9%
11 - 20 years	18%
21 - 40 years	29%
41 - 75 years	24%
76+ years	15%

Table 4. What is the approximate annual budget of your organization?

Response	Percent
None - all volunteer	1%
Below \$100,000	6%
\$100,001 - \$250,000	7%
\$250,001 - \$500,000	5%
\$500,001 - \$1 Million	8%
\$1 Million - \$5 Million	33%
\$5 Million - \$10 Million	13%
Over \$10 Million	27%

Table 5. Does your organization have any stated commitment to equity?

Response	Percent
Yes, we do	71%
One is in progress	11%
No, we do not	12%
I don't know	6%

Making Technology Decisions

Table 6. Who has the authority to make final decisions about technology products or services in your organization?

Job Title	Percent
Executive Director/CEO	66%
Leadership staff (as your organization defines this)	53%
IT Director or equivalent technology management staff person	44%
Finance Director or Operations Director	29%
IT department or team	16%
Board	12%
All staff have decision-making authority for their team or project	9%
Consultants	5%
All staff participate with consensus	5%
Other (please specify)	3%
I don't know	1%

Table 7. Which groups or individuals are included in decisions about technology products or services?

Role/Title	Percent
Leadership staff (as your organization defines this)	75%
Executive Director/CEO	66%
IT Director or equivalent technology management staff person	56%
Finance Director or Operations Director	46%
IT department or team	40%
All staff	24%
Board	21%
Consultants	18%
Program participants or beneficiaries	9%
Other (please specify)	9%
Volunteers	5%
Donors or funders	3%

Table 8. Which groups or individuals are included in the budgeting process for technology products or services?

Role/Title	Percent
Executive Director/CEO	72%
Leadership staff (as your organization defines this)	63%
Finance Director or Operations Director	54%
IT Director or equivalent technology management staff person	50%
Board	33%
IT department or team	21%
All staff	9%
Consultants	5%
Other (please specify)	4%
Donors or funders	1%
Program participants or beneficiaries	1%
Volunteers	1%

Table 9. Does your organization have a documented or otherwise established policy for decision-making specific to or inclusive of technology decisions?

Response	Percent
No	42%
Maybe or not sure	22%
Yes, some staff understand it	26%
Yes, all staff understand it	10%

Table 10. The most common length for technology product or service contracts in your organization?

Length of Time	Percent
Longer than 3 years	6%
1 - 3 years	35%
Annual	32%
Month to month	1%
We have a mix	16%
I don't know	10%

Assessing Technology Needs

Table 11. In which of the following ways do you collect feedback about your technology products and services, including your website and digital communications?

Way to Collect Feedback	Percent
Individual interviews with staff	39%
Staff committees formed for technology project participation	38%
Focus groups of staff	36%
Optional surveys for staff	30%
Optional surveys for community members	22%
Individual interviews with community members	14%
I don't know	14%
Other (please specify)	13%
Focus groups of community members	12%
Community committees formed for technology project participation	8%

Table 12. How often do you assess technology needs for the following groups in your organization?

How Often	Staff	Board	Volunteers	Donors	Program participants
More than once a year	27%	5%	9%	8%	21%
Annually	30%	12%	13%	14%	23%
1 - 3 years	29%	20%	17%	20%	24%
Very rarely or not at all	15%	63%	61%	58%	33%

Table 13. How often do you evaluate the return on investment (ROI) of your technology products and services?

Frequency	Percent
More than once a year	6%
Annually	16%
1 - 3 years	13%
Very rarely or not at all	46%
I Don't Know	19%

The Impact of Change

Table 14. How often do the following considerations limit change in your organization?

Frequency	Budget availability	Level of understanding of the challenges to be addressed	Staff time	Staff skills	Management Approval
Frequently a barrier	33%	23%	35%	16%	11%
Often a barrier	42%	41%	47%	44%	22%
Rarely a barrier	24%	33%	15%	37%	54%
Never a barrier	1%	4%	2%	3%	13%

Table 15. How willing is your organization to change technology products or solutions based on feedback by the following groups?

Likelihood	Staff	Board	Volunteers	Donors	Program participants
Very likely	54%	30%	14%	18%	34%
Somewhat likely	39%	37%	31%	32%	34%
Not at all likely	5%	11%	22%	19%	12%
We don't collect feedback	3%	22%	33%	31%	20%

Table 16. What kind of changes have nonprofits made?

Category	Percent
Clients	10%
Contracts	1%
Data	6%
Human Resources	5%
Process	24%
Systems	40%
Training	4%
Website	10%

Table 17. What kind of changes do nonprofits need?

Category	Percent
Clients	9%
Data	6%
Financial	10%
Human Resources	25%
Process	23%
Systems	14%
Training	8%
Website	5%

Making Room for Change

Table 18. How would you describe your organization's openness to change?

Level of Openness	Percent
Always eager for improvement	22%
Open to change if the need is clear	42%
Potentially open if the need is pressing	25%
Resistant unless absolutely required	7%
Other (please specify)	4%

Table 19. What kind of training do nonprofits have?

Skill Level	Project management	Change management	Public speaking	Negotiating	Planning	Community engagement
All staff have this skill	4%	1%	8%	3%	10%	14%
Many staff have this skill	28%	11%	38%	14%	40%	42%
Some staff have this skill	64%	71%	54%	76%	49%	42%
No staff have this skill	3%	17%	1%	8%	1%	2%

