



2016  
Washington State  
**Nonprofit Sector**  
R E P O R T

# Executive summary

Washington Nonprofits' 2016 sector survey, completed in cooperation with state associations in Alaska, Montana, Oregon and Idaho, tracks progress in creating a resilient nonprofit sector. This report focuses on results for Washington state, drawn from surveys of 992 nonprofits. A companion report profiles the Northwest region and provides more detailed analysis of trends.

Focus areas for the survey are:

## Mission effectiveness and capacity gap

Despite facing marked economic barriers, organizations see themselves as effective and know how to meet their missions. In contrast, when they are asked if they have sufficient capacity to meet their mission the scores drop notably. Top rated capacity needs are personnel and facilities.

## Collaboration

Despite the frequent praise for collaboration in the media and among sector leaders, survey respondents report moderate collaboration levels. Collaboration is strongest with other nonprofits, followed by government and then business. Respondents identified what both helped and hurt collaboration.

## Use of data

The sector survey results reveal that nonprofits lag in developing cultures anchored in data-based decision making, independent of their level of capacity constraints. Survey findings suggest that data and evaluation take a backseat to seemingly more important and pressing components of mission achievement.

## Public policy

Positive attitudes about public policy and advocacy work continue to gain prominence among nonprofits in Washington. Respondents ratings along with their qualitative comments show a tension between the importance of public policy and doubt that one's organization can actually make a difference.

For the first time, we are able to break out some data related to financial and organizational health by region. While there are some regional variations, most areas of the state have similar rates of reserves, use of budgets and strategic plans.

In the future, consistent use of this survey will yield more trend data, and we hope to report that our collective efforts to build a stronger sector are paying off for Washington State.

## About the survey

- This survey is part of a larger effort by five Northwest nonprofit associations to measure sector capacity and track trends.
- We had 992 Washington state respondents in 2016, up from 689 in 2014.
- Responses were collected from November 2015 to January 2016.
- A majority of respondents were small nonprofits, which is consistent with sector demographics.
- Ratings are on a 0 to 10 scale unless indicated.

## About Washington Nonprofits

Washington Nonprofits makes sure you have what you need to succeed. We help nonprofits learn, increase their influence and connect to people and resources. We are Washington's state association for all nonprofits.



**EDUCATION:** Washington Nonprofits, together with our partners around the state, creates and delivers programs that lead to stronger, more connected nonprofits.

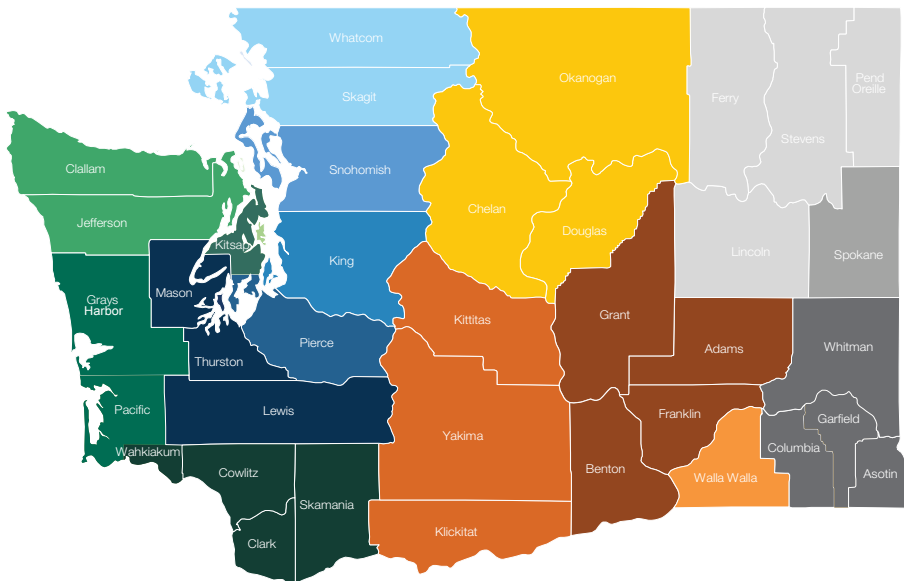
**POLICY:** Washington Nonprofits supports the advocacy rights of nonprofits. We seek to build the capacity of the nonprofit sector to fully participate in public policy in order to increase the positive impact of their work.

**MEMBERSHIP:** Washington Nonprofits invites you to join our unique network of over 650 organizations and individuals. Members receive special discounts and member-only opportunities to learn and connect.

# Survey demographics

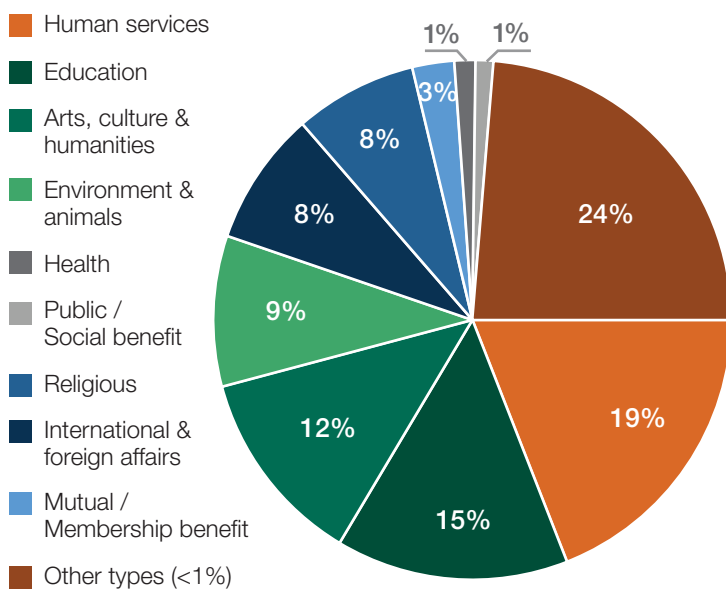
## Regions for this report

Washington Nonprofits defines 16 regions dividing the state into reasonable groupings of nonprofit organizations working in communities. In addition, some nonprofits identify as statewide and others provide services across multiple regions.

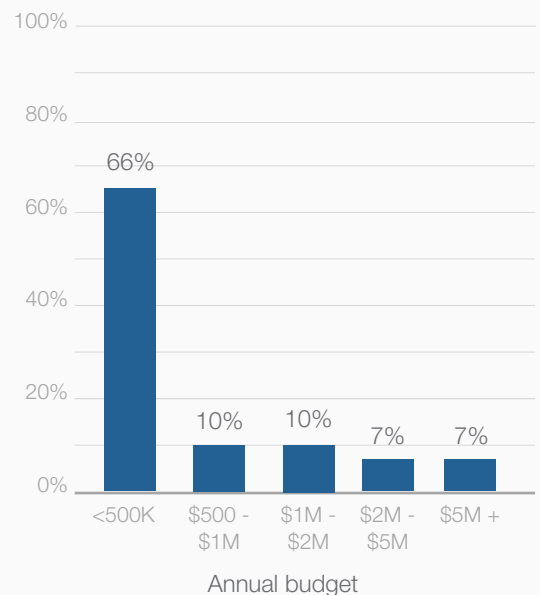


Region	Sector survey
King Co.	17%
Northwest Washington	8%
Spokane Co.	6%
Southwest Washington	6%
Snohomish Co. & Island Co.	5%
South Sound	5%
Central Washington	4%
Pierce Co.	4%
Olympic Peninsula	3%
South Eastern Washington	2%
Kitsap Co.	2%
North Central Washington	2%
South Central Washington	2%
Pacific Coast	2%
Walla Walla Co.	1%
North Eastern Washington	<1%
Multi - Western WA	12%
Multi - Eastern WA	2%
Statewide	14%
Outside of Washington	3%

## Types of nonprofit respondents

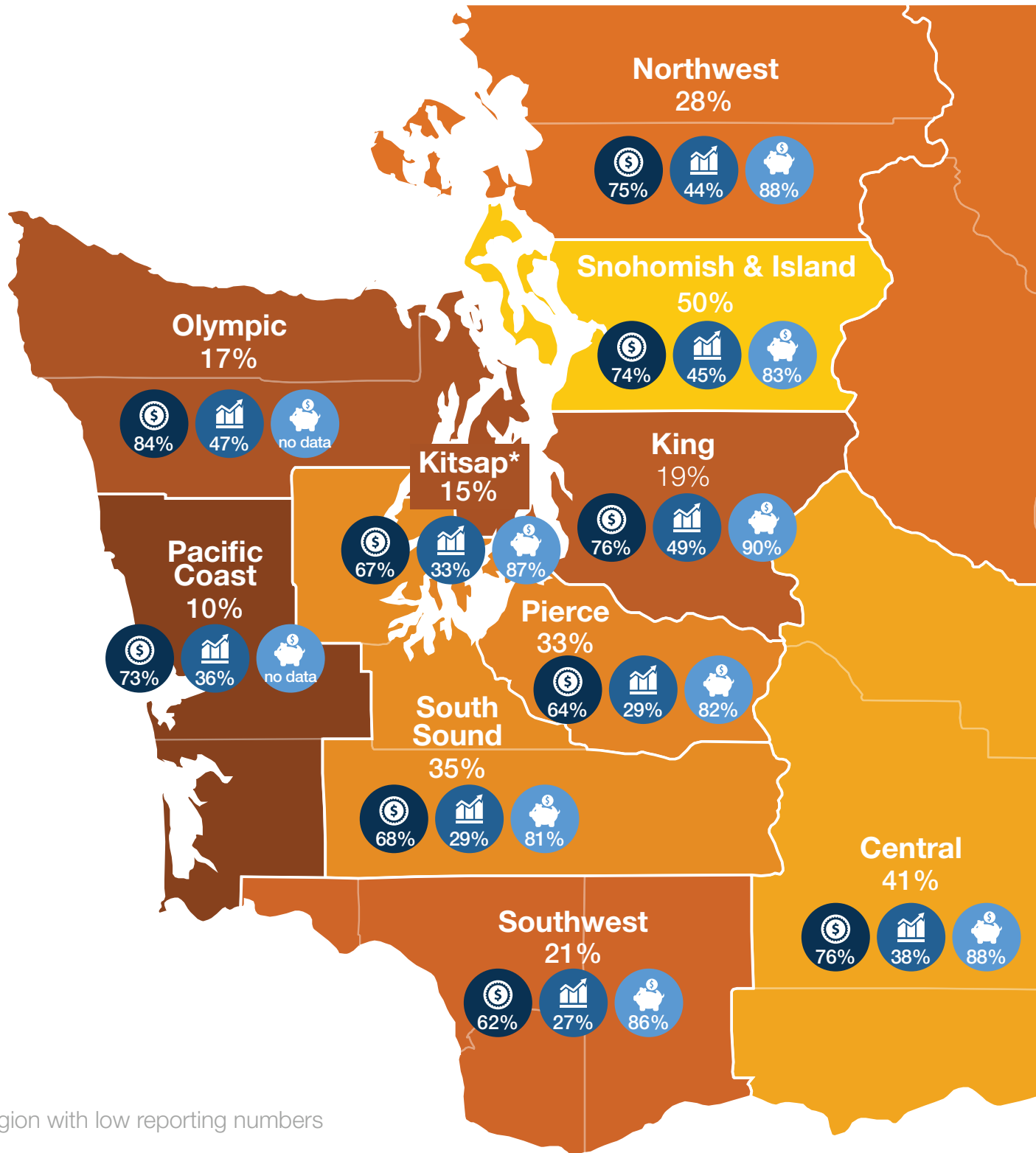


## Respondents by organization size



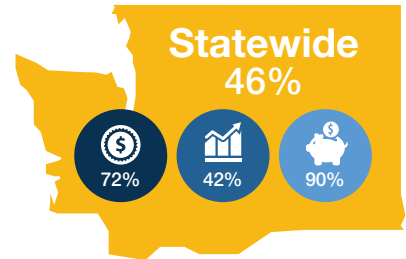
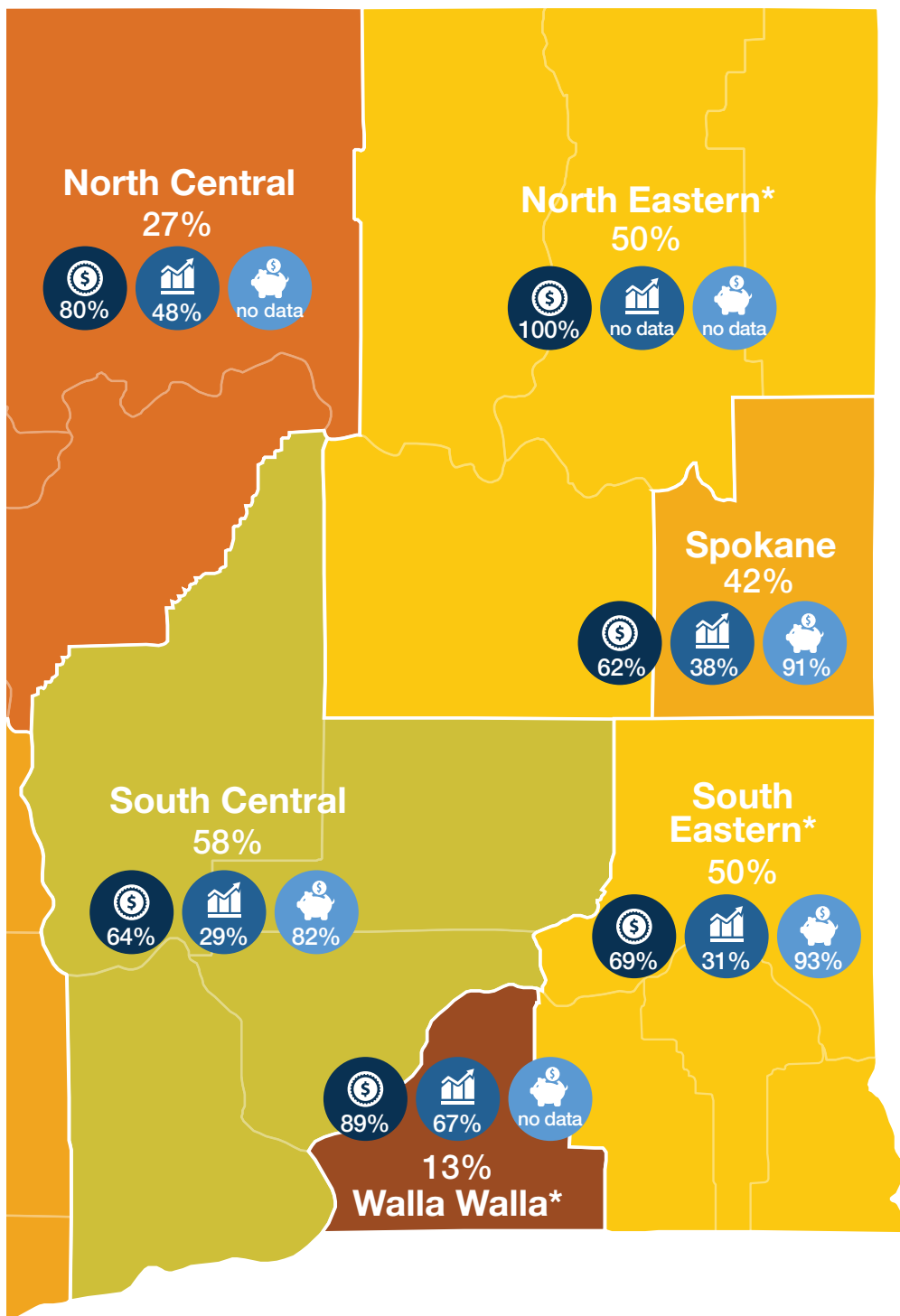
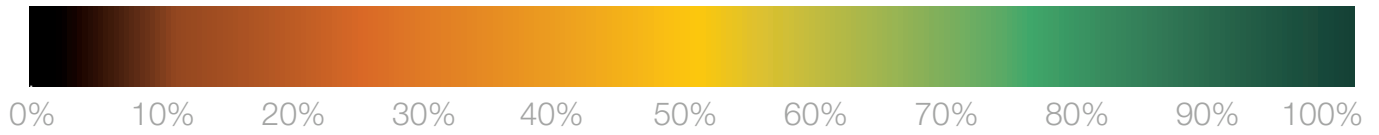
# Regions: Board giving, budgets, plans and reserves

Board giving and having budgets, plans and financial reserves in place are markers of nonprofit health and stability. This map is color-coded by the percentages of survey respondents in each region that report receiving financial gifts from at least 75% of their board members. Best practice is 100% of board members giving at a personally significant level. Also shown are the percentages of organizations with budgets, strategic plans and at least one month of reserves in place. Many nonprofits still struggle to accomplish these good practices. Despite greater access to resources and capacity building services, organizations in Pierce, King and Snohomish counties appear to have similar struggles to the rest of the state.



\* region with low reporting numbers

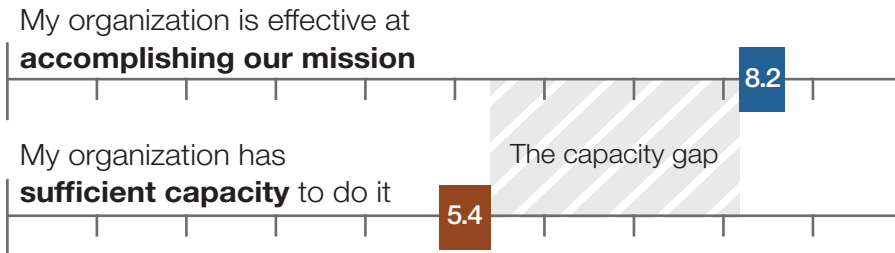
Percent of organizations reporting that at least 75% of their board members gave a financial gift this year:



- Percentage with budgets
- Percentage with strategic plans
- Percentage with at least one month of reserves

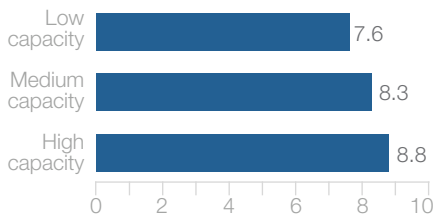
# Mission effectiveness and capacity gap

The perceived gap between nonprofit effectiveness and their capacity is quite large: 2.8 points on average. Reinforcing the adage that you need capacity to build capacity, organizations that rated themselves above an 8 out of 10 for financial capacity also scored the highest on effectiveness, capability and skills as well as being on target to complete their plans.

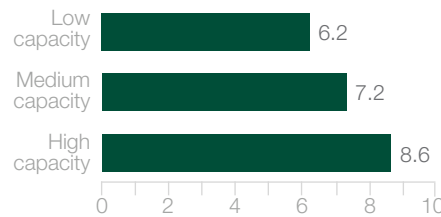


Higher financial capacity organizations express greater confidence that they are effective and will meet their goals.

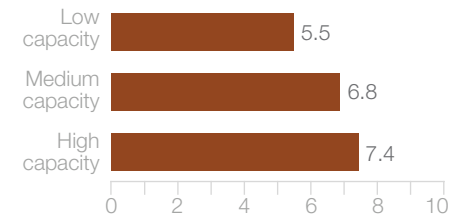
Our organization is **effective** at accomplishing our mission



Our team has the **right capability** and skills to accomplish our mission



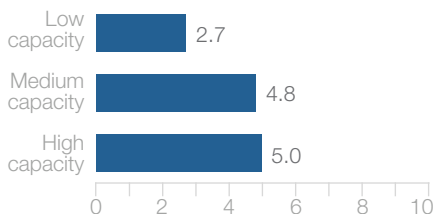
Our organization is **on target** to complete all aspects of our plan



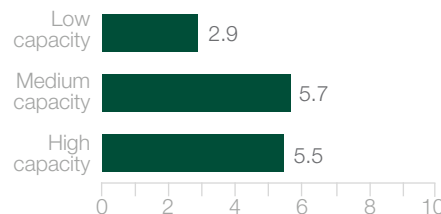
## Use of data

Overall use of data for our respondents was quite low. The nonprofits that rate themselves with higher financial capacity do not seem to use data and evaluation at any greater rate.

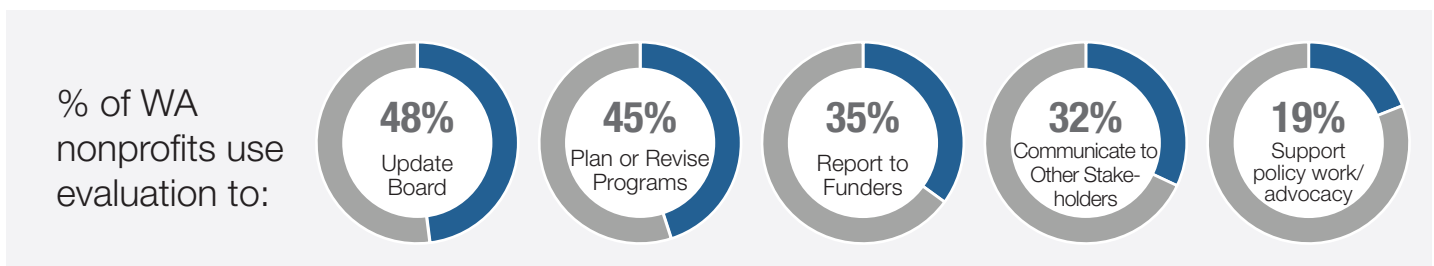
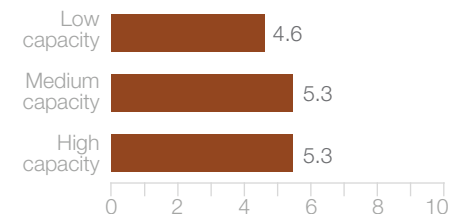
There is **quality data and information** on the sector in my region



Our organization **uses data from our community** to inform our strategy



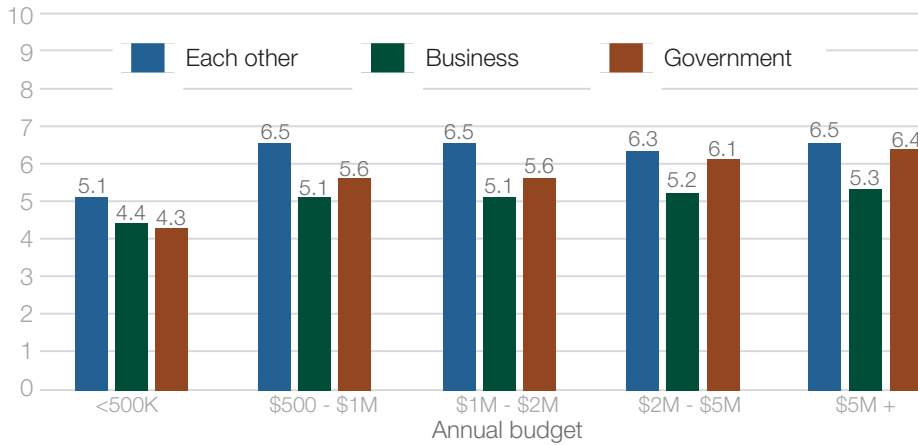
Our organization **uses program evaluation** to promote continuous improvement



# Collaboration

Overall levels of collaboration are low to moderate. Ratings from all sizes of organizations are below 6.5. Engagement with business and government are lower than with nonprofits working with each other. The amount of collaboration is roughly the same for low, medium and high financial capacity organizations.

Nonprofit organizations in your area come together to address big issues with...



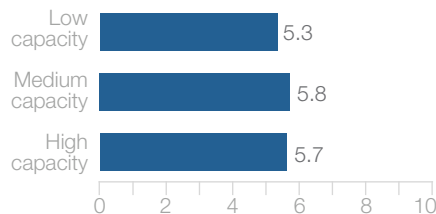
## Helpful for collaboration

- Events convened with other nonprofits and with the public
- Shared goals and interests
- Culture of open communications and transparency
- Funding to support collaboration

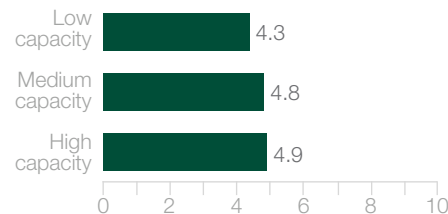
## Barriers to collaboration

- Lack of capacity
- Competitiveness and negative attitudes among nonprofits
- Communication barriers and not knowing who to work with
- Mission and culture differences among nonprofits

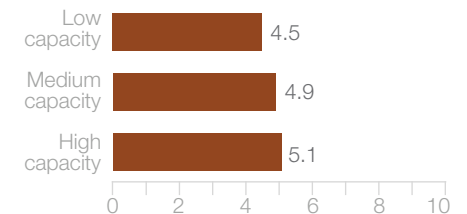
### Nonprofits come together to address big issues



### Nonprofits come together with businesses to address big issues

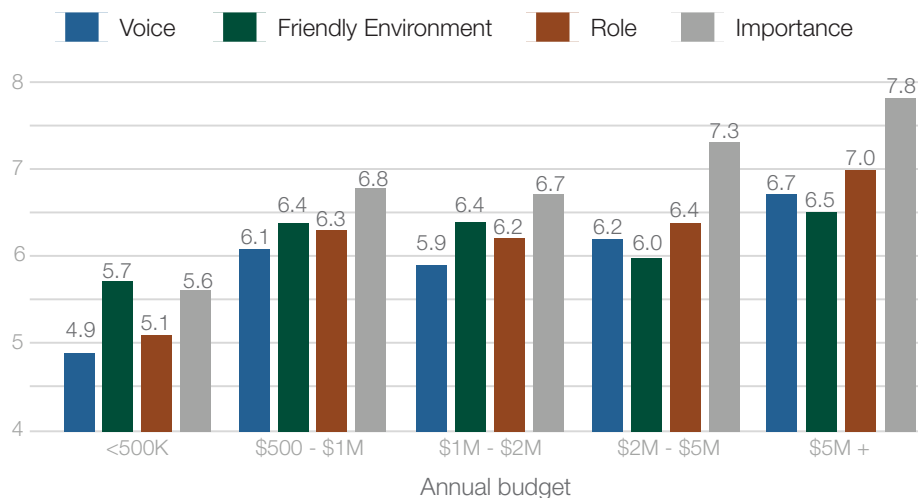


### Nonprofits come together with government to address big issues



# Public policy

Survey respondents rated the voice, role and importance of public policy. The political environment was rated to be moderately friendly with ratings between 5.7 and 6.5. The highest ratings consistently come from larger organizations.



## Helpful for policy work

- Engagement by legislators
- Collaboration with colleagues across advocacy networks
- Advocacy organizations/coalitions
- Knowledgeable communities

## Barriers to policy work

- Red tape
- Lack of funding specifically for advocacy
- Poor economy
- Issue specific barriers



As the state association for nonprofits, Washington Nonprofits makes sure nonprofits have what they need to succeed.

[www.WashingtonNonprofits.org](http://www.WashingtonNonprofits.org)