

In April 2010, ALPS Foundation Services conducted a survey of 138 nonprofit executive directors throughout the state of Montana. The purpose of the survey was to explore common problems faced by nonprofits in rural and urban Montana, and inform nonprofits about the external and internal issues faced on a day-to-day basis.

The survey serves as preliminary research, and will be bolstered by further investigations, eventually producing a final report by ALPS Foundation Services on the state of nonprofit executive directors in Montana. The final report will examine difficulties that executive directors of nonprofits face, and how they can overcome those difficulties in order to achieve their organization's mission as effectively as possible.

The survey focused on the areas of executive director satisfaction, governance, support, communication, and resources in Montana nonprofits. The responses were analyzed to determine differences between rural and urban nonprofits,¹ especially in the area of executive director satisfaction; however, the survey showed that there are few differences between rural and urban nonprofits.

The preliminary report shows that, despite high levels of satisfaction with their positions, Montana executive directors intend to remain in their positions for surprisingly short periods of time. Some key findings include:

- When asked how satisfied they are with their current positions, 91% of the executive directors surveyed responded that they were satisfied or very satisfied.
- 73% of executive directors surveyed said that they intend to remain in their positions for five years or less.²
- 58% of respondents are age 54 or younger and therefore are not likely planning on leaving their current positions to retire.
- 72% of respondents rated the stress level at their current positions as high or very high.
- The top factors contributing to stress were financial management, fiscal matters, fundraising, and board involvement.

These findings indicate potential areas of concern and improvement for nonprofits in Montana. High turnover of executive level positions, especially without adequate succession planning, causes nonprofits to focus attention on recruiting and training, and away from programs, fund development, financial management, and public relations.

ALPS Foundation Services will continue its research by conducting in-depth interviews with executive directors. Current executive directors who are interested in being interviewed are encouraged to [click here](#). These confidential interviews will provide useful insight into how to increase the efficacy of Montana's nonprofits.

¹ For the purpose of this survey, rural areas were defined as having populations under 49,999 people and urban areas as over 50,000 people.

² 78% of urban nonprofit executive directors and 70% of urban nonprofit executive directors reported they are planning to leave their positions in the next five years.