

Nonprofit Toolbox

The Many Hats of Small Nonprofit Leadership

Tip Sheet 2 for Small Nonprofits

Running a small nonprofit means juggling *all the jobs*: Executive Director, Fundraiser, HR, Event Planner, Social Media Manager, and sometimes Chief Problem-Solver. Here's how to keep things moving without burning out.

1 You Can't (and Shouldn't) Wear Every Hat Forever

As your organization grows, some hats stop fitting.

Ask yourself:

- Which roles truly need *you*?
- Which can you delegate or share?

Growth happens when you stop trying to be everyone at once.

2 When It's Time to Hire Help

If you're constantly over capacity, missing deadlines, or turning down opportunities, it's time.

You're ready to hire when:

- You're working beyond your limits.
- You can fund a position for at least a year.
- You're doing tasks others could handle.
- Your mission's impact is suffering.

Start small: part-time, contract, or shared staff with another nonprofit.

3 Hire for Heart (Not Just Skill)

In a small shop, everyone pitches in.

Look for people who:

- Believe in your mission.
- Are flexible and proactive.
- See “wearing many hats” as a perk, not a problem.

4 Build a Team You Can Trust

Delegating = Empowering.

Give ownership, invite ideas, and let your team run with projects. Trust builds pride — and frees you up to lead instead of micromanage.

5 Don't Drop the Self-Care Hat

You can't lead on empty.

- Take time to recharge.
- Connect with peers.
- Celebrate small wins.

Leading a nonprofit is a marathon, not a sprint (especially not in heels).

You'll always wear many hats — but the real skill is knowing which to keep, which to share, and when to pass one on. Leading well means letting others wear some, too.

