

Nonprofit and Philanthropic Organization Resource Guide

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This guide describes databases, free internet, and print sources that provide information on nonprofit organizations, including those that describe and evaluate charitable and philanthropic organizations. Keep in mind that you will not find the same level of detailed information on a nonprofit group that you would for a public company. So, if you face an assignment where you must analyze company financials and industry information, you should (whenever possible) NOT pick a nonprofit organization for your assignment.

Library Databases

[Business Source Complete](#)

The best of the business databases, BSC provides indexing and abstracts for the most important scholarly business journals back as far as 1886. Full-Text is provided for over 1600 trade journals and magazines, as well as full-text to over 1600 peer-reviewed (scholarly) journals. It covers nearly every area of business, and that includes the public sector (government management), as well as all manner of nonprofits. Specific nonprofit-oriented publications available full-text here include *Nonprofit World*, *International Journal of Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Marketing*, *New Directions for Philanthropic Fundraising*, and *Nonprofit Management & Leadership*.

[General BusinessFile ASAP](#)

Although the database is less robust than BSP above, General BusinessFile is also a good general business database. In addition, in "Advanced Search," there is a subset file for Company Profiles. This does include a limited number of nonprofit groups.

[Public Administration Abstracts](#)

An indexing and abstracting database just for public management, PAA has no full-text on its own, but because we get it from Ebsco, there are a great many linked articles, nonetheless. Good coverage of topics in the nonprofit sector.

[LexisNexis Academic](#)

Provides full-text searching of newspapers, trade journals, law, law journals and law reviews, wire services, and transcripts of broadcasts. This database would be especially useful if you wanted to track a particular nonprofit in its regional press, or if you were interested in legal aspects of nonprofit governance.

[Massachusetts Newsstand](#)

While LexisNexis covers news from the entire country (and world), Massachusetts Newsstand covers just Bay State newspapers including Boston's *Globe* and *Herald*, the *Lowell Sun* and the *Worcester Telegram & Gazette*. So if you are looking for a local approach to services for the homeless, or news about a local nonprofit (like Rosie's Place or Harvard Pilgrim Health Care), then this could be a very useful resource.

[Academic Search Complete](#)

Our best general database, ASP indexes thousands of journals and reproduces many in full-text. Because it covers everything, it can be very useful in picking up literature that does not show up in the business databases--topics related to policy issues, social impacts, and general news reportage. Full-text titles include *Chronicle of Philanthropy*, *Voluntas*, and *Development Policy Review*.

[Wall Street Journal](#)

The national newspaper of the business community, WSJ does provide limited coverage of topics related to the nonprofit sector and philanthropy. Full-text should be available for indexed articles.

[EconLit with Fulltext](#)

The American Economic Association's database, which provides indexing and abstracting of international economic literature. That literature includes coverage of economic issues related to nonprofits, NGOs, and charities. Our Ebsco version of EconLit is enhanced with full-text articles, and link to many in other databases, as well.

[Political Science Complete](#)

Another Ebsco database with lots of full-text in areas of government, public policy and international relations, this file would be especially useful for political topics like how governments provide (or fail to provide) humanitarian aid or social services.

[Hoovers Online](#)

The company profiles included in the Hoovers database include a very limited number of nonprofits like United Way of America and Habitat for Humanity International. In Hoovers, if you look below the general search box you will see the option to Browse Industry. Although nonprofits don't handily fit into most private sector industry categories, Hoover industries do include useful designations for "Charitable Organizations," "Foundations," "Health Care Services," and "Membership Organizations." Don't expect extensive information, but possibly worth a look.

[First Research](#)

An affiliate database to Hoovers, First Research provides useful, short industry snapshots. Oriented towards private sector (and small business, to boot), First Research doesn't have a lot to offer. However, if you look at the "Profile Sectors" on the opening screen, the "Public Services, Education, Recreation" category includes a few applicable profiles like *Churches & Religious Groups, Colleges and Universities* and *Nonprofit Institutions*.

[Emerald](#)

Of secondary interest, Emerald indexes and provides full-text to scores of academic management journals, with full-text archives back to 1994. Although more concerned with for-profit business, the database does include some discussion of nonprofit practices, especially in journals like *International Journal of Social Economics* and *International Journal of Public Sector Management*.

NOTE: Keep in mind that other databases might also be useful. So stay flexible, and consider your topic. If your topic related to the nonprofit status of the nation's Universities, for example, then an education database like [Education Research Complete](#) might also be a good option.

Websites on Nonprofit and Philanthropic Topics

[The Foundation Center](#)

<http://foundationcenter.org/>

The Foundation Center, which is "supported by close to 600 foundations,...is a national nonprofit service organization recognized as the nation's leading authority on organized philanthropy, connecting nonprofits and the grantmakers supporting them to tools they can use and information they can trust." Alas, although the website provides a gateway to information on foundations, not-for-profit organizations, grantseeking, and related information, almost everything costs money here. In addition, registration is needed to access even some of the free areas. Still, even if you have no money to spend, the site can be worth visiting. For example, an area detailing the current economic crisis included a MapShot, with links, to the "Best ARRA [American Recovery and Reinvestment Act] Funding Resources by State. Their [Catalog of Nonprofit Literature](#) can also be handy as some of the items it identifies are free documents out on the general web.

[Center on Nonprofits and Philanthropy](#)

<http://www.urban.org/center/cnp/index.cfm>

The Center on Nonprofits and Philanthropy (CNP) is part of the Urban Institute. They produce the National Center for Charitable Statistics (NCCS) listed in the next section of this guide. But they also produce research reports and other publications on topics like "The Role of Faith-Based and Community Organizations in Post-Hurricane Human Services Relief Efforts" and "The Broader Movement: Nonprofit Environmental and Conservation Organizations, 1989-2005." They even developed "990 Online©," a web-based application that allows nonprofit organizations and nonprofit accountants to electronically prepare and submit IRS Forms 990, 990-EZ and 8868 (Extension Request).

[Idealist.org](#)

<http://www.idealist.org/>

"Idealist is a project of Action Without Borders, a nonprofit organization founded in 1995 with offices in the United States and Argentina. Idealist is an interactive site where people and organizations can exchange resources and ideas, locate opportunities and supporters, and take steps toward building a world where all people can lead free and dignified lives." From the opening screen, you can look for volunteer opportunities or volunteers, internships or speakers. Sign up for a free account to use the site fully. There is a charge for postings by consultants and U.S. organizations and agencies, but not for postings by most individuals. The [Nonprofit FAQ](#) is especially useful for those interested in the workings of nonprofits. They have been building this FAQ in five topical indexes, since 1994.

[USA.gov for Nonprofits](#)

<http://www.usa.gov/Business/Nonprofit.shtml>

Looking for government information on nonprofits? Start with this page, with links to Grants, Loans, and Other Assistance, Management and Operations and Tax Information. Although oriented towards the federal government--want a quick link to the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance? You can find it here--the site also provides links to State Filings for Nonprofits, including [this page for Massachusetts](#).

[BoardSource: Glossary](#)

<http://www.boardsource.org/Knowledge.asp?ID=1.1016>

BoardSource is dedicated to "Building Effective Nonprofit Boards." Most of their publications and services are fee-based. But this handy glossary of terminology used by nonprofits is available for free. Many of the materials listed to the left, like the "Q & As" and "White Papers" are also available to view and use at no charge. An M (in a circle) icon will mark members-only materials. The entire [website](#) is worth exploring. Topical articles are often linked from the homepage, like a recent one on how the "Madoff Scandal Provides Painful Lesson in Board Investment Policymaking."

[Nonprofit Virtual Library](#)

<http://staff.lib.msu.edu/harris23/grants/znonprof.htm>

"This web site focuses on nonprofit directories and other web sites (over 100 in all) providing advice or information about running nonprofits." Hosted by Michigan State University Libraries (which accounts for the preponderance of websites related to Michigan), this annotated list of web resources is updated from time to time, so there are few dead links. But listings include many fee-based and membership-only web resources, as well as the freely accessible resources you'd hope to find. Still, even though some links may lead to frustration, with so many listings provided, you will likely find something of interest here. And the same is true of its companion webpage, [Nonprofit Resource Guide:A Directory of Organizations of Interest To or Serving Nonprofits](#).

[Nonprofit Resource Center](#)

<http://www.not-for-profit.org/>

This metasite includes a great many links in thirty subject categories. Sadly, it has not been well-maintained. On the opening screen, look at the topic areas in the top frame. If you are just starting out, you might also want to take a look at the "mini-primer on Nonprofits" for a very basic introduction. Be warned, however, that many of the pages the NRC links to are either dead links or associated with fee-based services. All in all, you are better off with Michigan State's "Nonprofit Virtual Library" above.

[Aspen Institute:Program on Philanthropy and Social Innovation](#)

<http://www.aspeninstitute.org/policy-work/nonprofit-philanthropy>

Part of the Aspen Institute, the PSI offers "leadership development initiatives, convenings, and communications" to social sector "actors committed to advancing the good society." Many of their reports are available as free PDF downloads. And, in 2002, the group produced a [State of Nonprofit America](#), which Sawyer Library has in both print and ebook form.

[Basic Guide to Non-Profit Financial Management](#)

http://www.managementhelp.org/finance/np_fnce/np_fnce.htm

This page, written by Carter McNamara of Authenticity Consulting, LLC, offers links to various websites that provide introductory advice to "help you understand basic practices in financial management, and build the basic systems and practices needed in a healthy business." Some of the links were dead when last checked, but still connects the user to some useful information. The webpage also lists several useful books at the bottom of the page.

[Not For Profit Resources and Publications - Grant Thornton LLP](#)

<http://www.grantthornton.com/portal/site/gtcom/menuitem.484ecb29dfc23197f22c5b10633841ca/?vgnextoid=023bd45d001c5010VgnVCM100000308314acRCRD>

Grant Thorton is one of the largest accountancy firms outside of the Big Four. They produce a variety of publications and reports related to nonprofit governance, listed on the center and left frame of this webpage. One interesting item is their annual "National Board Governance Survey for Not-for-Profit Organizations." In the 2008 report, they polled "652 CEOs, CFOs, board members and other senior officials of higher education institutions, trade and professional

associations, social and human service organizations, religious organizations, museums, cultural organizations, health care organizations and foundations, gauging their perspective on issues from governance policies to executive compensation."

[NonProfit Times](http://www.nptimes.com/)

<http://www.nptimes.com/>

Calling itself "The Leading Publication for Nonprofit Management," numerous features and special reports from this monthly are accessible through their website. Especially useful are the "NPT Top 100" of America's top 100 nonprofits, and their "Salary Survey."

[Chronicle of Philanthropy](http://philanthropy.com/)

<http://philanthropy.com/>

This is the website of "The Newspaper of the Nonprofit World." Updates and current topical features can be viewed here. Although some content at the website is available only to subscribers. Some useful content--like an extensive annotated list of "Internet Resources"--are available for free.

[Hauser Center for Nonprofit Organizations](http://www.ksg.harvard.edu/hauser/)

<http://www.ksg.harvard.edu/hauser/>

The Hauser Center, part of the Kennedy School at Harvard, "pursues disinterested research and education, promoting critical thinking about the importance, roles and performance of civic organizations." Some of the staff working papers here are available for free download, and they link to (but don't, of course, provide free access) to fee-based Harvard Cases related to nonprofit organizations.

[The NGO Cafe](http://www.gdrc.org/ngo/)

<http://www.gdrc.org/ngo/>

This webpage, maintained by the Global Development Research Center, is worth a browse. "NGO Café was set up on the internet as a meeting place for NGOs to discuss, debate and disseminate information on their work, strategies and results." Categories--with strange headings like "NGO Bungee Jumps" do have some interesting links attached.

[Giving Institute/GivingUSA Foundation](http://www.aafrc.org)

<http://www.aafrc.org>

Formerly identified as the AAFRC, these twin groups promotes ethical standards related to philanthropy and provides professional fundraising resources, research, and current information. Supports not-for-profit activity in all areas. The Giving USA group publishes *Giving USA*, an annual guide to philanthropic activity (which Sawyer Library has in its Reference collection). The website itself provides little that is worthwhile.

[National Council of Nonprofits](http://www.councilofnonprofits.org/)

<http://www.councilofnonprofits.org/>

"The National Council of Nonprofits is the network of state and regional nonprofit associations

serving more than 20,000 member organizations. By linking local nonprofit organizations across the nation through state associations, the National Council helps small and midsize nonprofits manage and lead more effectively, collaborate and exchange solutions, engage in critical policy issues affecting the sector, and achieve greater impact in their communities." They do produce some useful web resources like a short [How to Start a Nonprofit Organization](#) guide. .

[Providers' Council](#)

<http://www.providers.org/>

When the National Council of Nonprofits above links to a "State Association of Nonprofits" for Massachusetts, they link to this organization, based in Boston. The Massachusetts Council of Human Service Providers, Inc. is a statewide association of health and human service agencies, founded in 1975. Unfortunately, the website is an awkward one, and oriented towards organizational or other forms of membership. So it is not a browser's delight. Additional Note: As of June of 2009, this website will not function in Firefox, so use your IE to access this resource. .

[Massachusetts Nonprofit Network](#)

<http://www.providers.org/>

Massachusetts Nonprofit Network, or MassNonprofitNet, is a newer group that is still in the process of "developing steps to fulfill its mission: to strengthen Massachusetts through nonprofit advocacy, capacity-building, and public awareness." They sponsor events, provide group purchasing and other services, and have a nice [Resource Directory](#) of local consultants, trainers, and other professional services for Bay State nonprofits.

[Associated Grantmakers of Massachusetts \(AGM\)](#)

<http://www.agmconnect.org>

Associated Grantmakers of Massachusetts (AGM) is a regional association of grantmakers that provides a forum for grantseekers and grantmakers to exchange information, in order to facilitate the grantmaking process and to promote philanthropy. AGM has an extensive on-site library and an excellent on-line collection of web links. Includes links to members' web sites--which is most grantseeking nonprofits in Massachusetts, and many elsewhere in New England.

[massnonprofit.org](#)

<http://www.massnonprofit.org/index.php>

massnonprofit.org identifies itself as "the premier information and advice resource for nonprofit organizations in Massachusetts." The frontpage features recent news from the local nonprofit sector, and other parts of the site include resource links and a service directory. The website has little depth at this point, but because of its local focus, might still be worth perusing.

[The Massachusetts Nonprofit Sector](#)

http://www.massinc.org/index.php?id=216&pub_id=1328&bypass=1

This 2005 research report from MassINC, was sponsored by the Mellon Charitable Giving Program/Alice P. Chase Trust, The Boston Foundation, the University College of Citizenship and Public Service at Tufts University. Its "research finds that the nonprofit sector is among the

largest in the nation, employing more than 13 percent of the state's workforce – nearly double the national average." Look below the summary on this page for a link to the full PDF.

[Catalogue for Philanthropy--Massachusetts](http://www.catalogueforphilanthropy.org/ma/)

<http://www.catalogueforphilanthropy.org/ma/>

CFP is a charitable organization sponsored by individual donors, foundations and corporations. They select charities each year "by a competitive process—this year we received 550 applications for about 90 places—54 new listings and 36 Progress Reports; usually the applicant/selection ratio is 3-4:1....Since our purpose is donor education and our subject is philanthropy, we look for donor-educational value, and philanthropic "excellence." In reality, scores of important Bay State charities are not listed here. Still, the year's descriptive [Directory of Charities](#) can be useful. The National CFP has also produced (although not apparently recently) a somewhat controversial ["National Generosity Index"](#) that ranks states by their generosity.

Websites for Charity Evaluation and Statistics

[Charity Navigator](http://www.charitynavigator.org/)

<http://www.charitynavigator.org/>

Billing itself as "America's premier independent charity evaluator," Charity Navigator says that it "works to advance a more efficient and responsive philanthropic marketplace by evaluating the financial health of over 5,400 of America's largest charities." Top 10 lists on the opening screen feature topics like "10 Charities with the Most Consecutive 4-Star Ratings" and "10 Highly-Rated Charities with Low Paid CEOs." You can browse by topic or search for a specific nonprofit. Besides a star rating, profiles provide historical data, and even comments (when available). Ratings are based on Organizational Efficiency and Capacity. Income data is provided along with EIN number and links to the group's website. Easier to use and less intrusive than most of the non-profit research sites on the web.

[GuideStar: The National Database of Nonprofit Organizations](http://guidestar.org/)

<http://guidestar.org/>

GuideStar calls itself "the source of information about U.S. nonprofits. Search our database of 1.8 million IRS-recognized organizations to find a charity, benchmark your nonprofit's performance, research the sector, and more." Information posted includes the IRS 990 filings (equivalent to annual reports), and--if posted by the group--annual reports, audited financial statements, letters of determination, and other documents. You must register to access their complete database. The group also hopes to get nonprofit organizations themselves to sign up for a fee-based "premium" membership.

[NOZA](http://www.noza990pf.com/)

<http://www.noza990pf.com/>

Formerly GrantSmart, Noza took over this massive database of IRS reports on nonprofits in

2008. The site claims to offer free access to 551,210 990-PF tax returns filed by 99,824 private foundations and charitable trusts. A companion database, www.nozasearch.com offers "more than 1,000,000 foundation grant records." Unfortunately the 990 database returned zero results for every charity I tried (even using EIN number), and the nozasearch requires a free signup to look at the foundation grants it has, and an annual subscription of \$800 to look at Individual and Corporate Donation Records. (And searches keep trying to shift to the costly options.) With patience, you can search by "Cause," state, city and donation amount and put together a list and export to a spreadsheet. But the most useful information is "subscription required," so this website should not be your first choice.

[How to Read the IRS Form 990 and Find Out What it Means](#)

http://www.npcny.org/Form_990/990.htm

As noted above, financial information available on nonprofit groups is usually in the form of an IRS 990 form. However, how do you read and understand such information? This clearly written and illustrated webpage will definitely help. Peter Swords, former Executive Director of the Nonprofit Coordinating Committee of New York, wrote it with the assistance of Victoria Bjorklund of Simpson Thacher & Bartlett and Jon Small, Executive Director of NPCC, so it is reliable as well as useful. The Foundation Center also has a nice step-through group of pages called [Demystifying the 990-PF](#).

[National Center for Charitable Statistics](#)

<http://www.nccs.urban.org/>

The National Center for Charitable Statistics (NCCS) collects and disseminates data on the U.S. nonprofit sector. It provides standardized databases for national, state, and regional level research on charitable organizations--some data going back to 1990. There are also state nonprofit profiles available here.

[BBB Wise Giving Alliance](#)

<http://www.bbb.org/us/charity/>

The Better Business Bureau webpage "For Charities and Donors," links you to the BBB's reports (and letter grades) on charities and other soliciting organizations. These reports are definitely worth looking at, but since not all charities have "BBB Accreditation," many reports have little detail to them. And those that are accredited sport a BBB seal instead of a letter grade!

[American Institute of Philanthropy](#)

<http://www.charitywatch.org/>

"The American Institute of Philanthropy (AIP) is a nationally prominent charity watchdog service whose purpose is to help donors make informed giving decisions." The AIP would like you to order a copy of their *Charity Rating Guide*, but they do provide limited information at their website, including an A-Z list of charities that have provided documentation and financials, and a list of [Top-Rated Charities](#) organized by charity-type, assigning them a letter grade.

[MinistryWatch](#)

<http://www.ministrywatch.com/>

Interested in evaluating the types of charities that claim to be "building the Kingdom of Christ"? MinistryWatch "is an online database with profiles on more than 400 of the largest church and parachurch ministries in the United States. It is also a place where you can learn about how to be a 'responsible giver'." The group provides ratings and efficiency ratings on profiled groups. A similar evaluative site can be found at [Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability](#).

Selected Print Resources

[Nonprofit Almanac](#)

REF HD2769.2 .U6 N64 (Latest at Ref. Desk)

A handy compendium of facts and figures produced by the Urban Institute Press, detailing "the nonprofit sector and its place in the national economy." A nice 8 page summary of selected data and information can be found at the [UI website](#).

[Giving USA](#)

REF HV89 .G5

"Giving USA, the Annual Report on Philanthropy, is published by Giving USA Foundation™ AAFRC Trust for Philanthropy, a public service initiative of the Trust for Philanthropy of the American Association of Fundraising Counsel. The study is researched and written at The Center on Philanthropy at Indiana University." Charts, statistics, and general information are provided in this annual. Although you used to be able to access a few free charts online, this is no longer the case.

[Associated Grant Makers Directory](#)

REF HV20.M4 A7

This directory provides substantive listings for "Massachusetts and New Hampshire Funders." It is your best source for profiles of local foundations.

[Foundation Directory](#)

REF AS911.A2 F65

The Foundation Center's Directory is the best known national directory of funders. It is now published in three parts. The Foundation Center also publishes some how-to advice in publications like [The Foundation Center's Guide to Proposal Writing](#).

[Annual Register of Grant Support](#)

REF AS911.A2 A67

Another printed directory of funding sources. It's subject-grouping approach can be useful for browsing.

[Human Service Referral Directory of Massachusetts](#)

REF HV98.M4 H86

This guide doesn't provide extensive listings, but it can be useful in identifying local nonprofits and service agencies throughout Massachusetts. Once identified, these can usually be researched on the web.

[Hoover's Handbook of Private Companies](#)

REF HG4057 .A28616

This private company directory from Hoovers primarily lists for-profit private companies. However, it does include a limited number of not-for-profits, charities, universities, and government-owned corporations.

rev. 6/09