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US NonProfit Gateway <http://www.nonprofit.gov>

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1. Introduction

Thank you for your interest in Federal interagency Web sites.

I'll be describing the US NonProfit Gateway, a one-stop Web site and network, that serves as an initial starting point for nonprofit organizations that wish to access Federal information of particular interest to them. For nonprofits this might mean grant announcements, or new regulations, or information about the specific field that they serve, whether it is health care, or the environment, or community development, or something else.

First though, a disclaimer. I am a volunteer, based in a nonprofit organization, so I don't speak officially for the White House or for any of the other agency partners that are responsible for posting the final content. However, I've been closely involved with the project from its earliest planning, and have participated during all its many stages of development up until the present.

I will describe the NonProfit Gateway: its benefits as well as its shortcomings.

I will also ask for your assistance: to review and send comments about how to improve the site for your patrons; and to help us identify best practices for classifying the information.

2. Some background about nonprofits

Almost everyone has been associated with nonprofits in some way in receiving or giving services. Or, with most people, during their lifetimes they have done both.

When I was growing up I was a member of the Boy Scouts. And in college I remember buying a winter coat from the Hadassah thrift store. And when my mother died, we donated her furniture to a local shelter for homeless women.

Maybe you volunteer or donate to local charities. Or support a local orchestra, or choral group, or dance company, or soup kitchen.

Formally, the term nonprofit includes more than one million separate organizations, large and small, that have registered for tax benefits from the IRS. But in the broader sense of social and civic participation, the term nonprofit, in spirit, also includes all sorts of informal responses to local needs, such as natural disaster relief, or neighborhood watch safety programs, or food or clothing drives: community response to obvious needs.

It includes everything from the Girl Scouts, to the YMCA and YWCA, Goodwill and the Salvation Army, the Red Cross, the National Education Association, and local performance groups, community centers, and volunteer fire departments, and of course the American Library Association and many other professional associations you might belong to.

It also includes policy and research centers that closely track and review Government performance, provide an early warning system for potential problems, and offer suggestions for possible solutions.

Needless to say, libraries are an exceptionally important potential resource for all these groups, so I'm delighted to offer the NonProfit Gateway as another tool for you to use.

3. So, where is all the Government information these nonprofits need?

Virtually every Federal department, bureau, administration, agency, office, or project has at least some information that nonprofits need.

We knew much of it would be at HHS, and Labor, and Education, and HUD, and of course the IRS, which decides on the tax categories for nonprofits.

But there were so many surprises that we finally concluded that the information was everywhere. For example, the Department of Defense, which we hadn't expected would be a major participant, was actually one of the earliest and most active supporters. Why? They contribute surplus equipment to nonprofits, make their facilities available, and work actively in communities where their bases, and the families of their service personnel, are located.

4. How did the White House respond?

Basically, the White House began by reviewing the US Business Advisor Web site which Vice President Gore's Government reinvention team developed and concluded that they could probably do an even better job for nonprofits, now that they had a model to build from.

It activated its forum of "nonprofit liaison officers" who were already based in agencies throughout the Administration. It encouraged them to recruit technical and

content experts from within their agencies to volunteer for a Governmentwide Task Force to develop a "one-stop" Web site for nonprofits. And, it convened a few hundred nonprofit representatives in large and small groups, and individually, to learn what information they wanted and to collect examples of the Web sites nonprofits used most often.

It turned out that the challenge was much larger than anyone expected. It became a microcosm of all the larger information issues facing the Federal Government. We needed to respond to virtually every issue and point of view, and do it openly and fairly.

5. **The resulting US NonProfit Gateway**

The Task Force quickly realized that nonprofits, collectively, wanted virtually every bit of information that the Federal Government produced. They wanted to be able to search it easily. And they wanted to be able to compare and contrast information across agencies.

This probably sounds familiar to most of you: everything for everyone, but with very limited resources.

The Task Force also realized that they, as a centrally-located volunteer Task Force, couldn't guarantee that they could collect and post information on a timely basis, or sustain the service once the Task Force disbanded.

Basic model

The solution was to jointly design a central site and then to assign each participating agency to create its own local nonprofit site, which was to be built on their own local information so that they could assemble locally. The result is a central site (which is hosted by GSA, the General Services Administration) plus a network of 15 local sites. These local sites have a core of common elements -- such as grants, directories, and volunteer opportunities -- and then an open-ended challenge to find and post whatever else they think might be useful.

6. **Demonstration of key screens**

NonProfit Gateway home page

Includes a basic directory of key Federal resources, direct links to all the 15 participating local sites, a search function, and links to instructions, comments, etc.

Chart of Cabinet departments screen

Includes a listing of all participating Departments, each with options for additional locations within each Department (its home page, nonprofit links page, GILS, and their local search engine).

Example of a local Department nonprofit page:
HUD, Housing and Urban Development

This includes all the links within HUD that might be of interest to nonprofits.

Example of one of HUD's connections from this nonprofit page -- "Funding"

This includes a full range of information, including access to its GIS mapping service.
Key Information sites screen
White House, GPO Access, FedWorld, CFDA, etc.

GPO Access screen

Direct connection to GPO Access and all its resources, including search function.

GOVBOT screen

Developed by The Center for Intelligent Information Retrieval at the University of Massachusetts. Currently searching more than 625,000 <gov> and <mil> Web pages.

How can libraries help?

How can the NonProfit Gateway assist your Library patrons? Send us your own professional critiques of the site.

Comments to:

<http://www.nonprofit.gov>

Visit the site and click on the "comments" button at the bottom of any page.