



# INDIANA NONPROFITS

*Scope and Community Dimensions*

Nonprofit Survey Series  
Report #7

## INDIANA NONPROFITS: A PROFILE OF RELIGIOUS NONPROFITS AND SECULAR CHARITIES

A JOINT PRODUCT OF

THE CENTER ON PHILANTHROPY  
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## VI. CONCLUSION

Several conclusions and implications result from our analysis.

1. ***Religious congregations are distinct from other faith-based organizations.*** Our findings show that religious congregations and other FBOs show distinctive characteristics, challenges and capacities on almost every dimension examined here.

For example, congregations are generally much older—the median age of other FBOs (31 years) is only half that of congregations (62 years)—and much more likely to rely on volunteers. However, congregations that provide health or human services are more likely to have formal capacities such as written personnel policies and job descriptions and volunteer recruitment and training programs. Policy-makers must be aware of these differences when designing initiatives meant to address religious organizations instead of lumping them together.

2. ***Congregations, other FBOs and secular charities differ markedly in their approach to health or human services.*** Over half of all congregations and other FBOs provide some type of health or human services compared to less than four-fifths of secular charities. (The rest focus on such other activities as arts, culture, humanities; education; environment/-animals; international affairs; or public benefit activities of various kinds).

In particular, among those that provide health or human services, secular charities and other FBOs are more likely than congregations to serve only the general public (rather than their own members) and to target their services to low income groups. However, secular charities are more likely than congregations or other FBOs to receive government funding and to have completed a recent evaluation of program outcomes or impacts. Congregations are more likely to say that strategic planning is a major challenge (regardless of whether they provide health or human services), than other FBOs or secular charities. Such findings have important implications for decisions about how to target specific types of technical assistance to Indiana's religious and charitable nonprofits.

3. ***Limited awareness of and interest in “Charitable Choice” by congregations.*** Only a third of congregations are aware of the “Charitable Choice” initiative, regardless of whether they provide health or human services, compared to about two thirds of other FBO that provide such services. The latter are more likely to already receive government funds and to say they might seek such funds in the future. These findings suggest that while congregations frequently provide some health or human services (but usually to both their own members and the general public), by the time this survey was completed in 2002 they were not necessarily ready and eager to seek government funding to support these activities. These attitudes may have changed since then.
4. ***Congregations are more likely to depend on volunteers.*** While congregations report more challenges in recruiting and keeping volunteers, they are also more likely to say they are essential to their missions. Congregations that provide health or human services are considerably more likely to have formal volunteer recruitment and training programs, suggesting that they also have greater capacity to utilize them.
5. ***Organizations use Information Technology in different ways.*** Detailed analysis shows that congregations that provide health or human services are especially likely to possess computers and have computerized financial records. However, we also find that other FBOs that provide health or human services are especially likely to have Internet access and an organizational email address. This suggests that congregations are more likely to use IT for internal management tasks while other FBOs use it for interfacing with the general public.

The IT revolution and its introduction of the Internet and email have made communication and dissemination of information not only instantaneous but very cheap. Health or human service providers that have these tools for interfacing with the general public have distinct advantages in not only reaching potential clients but in learning about new funding opportunities, collaborative projects, government information, etc. If congregations are to compete with other FBOs and secular charities for government funds they should consider enhancing this capacity.

6. ***Congregations have greater capacity to manage facilities.*** Detailed analysis shows that congregations

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which provide health or human services are significantly more likely to report reserves dedicated to capital improvement as well as reserves for maintenance and/or equipment. This is an important indicator of financial planning capability. However, congregations, regardless of whether they provide health or human services, are nevertheless more likely to say that managing facilities is a challenge than other FBOs or secular charities.

7. ***Catholic congregations appear to be more formalized.*** There were only a few cases in which congregational type differed significantly in management capacities. However, in each of those cases, Catholic congregations appeared to come out ahead. They report fewer challenges in attracting members and are more likely to have computerized client/member records, written personnel policies, formal volunteer training programs, computerized financial records, and capital and maintenance reserves. Most likely, these differences reflect the substantially larger size of Catholic congregations compared to evangelical and mainline protestant denominations.