

# **VALLEY NONPROFIT RESOURCES**

**Building Stronger Nonprofits in the San Fernando Valley**

## **TORIE'S TOP TEN TIPS FOR NONPROFITS TO BECOME CHANGE AGENTS**

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1. **Retool your relationship to government.** Think of yourself as connected to government, not as an antagonist. The most creative coalitions that Mayor Villaraigosa has initiated, for education reform, greening LA, living wage jobs, affordable housing – all involve new strategic links between nonprofits and philanthropy and government.
2. **Mobilize as a sector.** Educate government, business and the public about our role. We're a growing sector of the economy -- 5% of jobs in LA County -- and I was shocked how invisible this sector is in City Hall. Organize yourselves and identify your common agenda. As time goes on, you will have increasing opportunity to weigh in on policy measures, as the momentum for change expands. Join in the conversation, with vigor!
3. **Advocate, advocate, advocate.** Don't be afraid to advocate! Time and again, we see what keeps nonprofits from advocating on behalf of their clients or the issues they care about is ignorance about the law. Know your rights. It's your responsibility. Visit the Alliance for Justice website – [www.AFJ.org](http://www.AFJ.org). Build your policy advocacy capacity! Don't let the conversation about change bypass you because of a skills deficit.
4. **Become Changemakers.** Build capacity for making change, whether it's media advocacy, lobbying for your constituents, joining coalitions, or even, developing capacity for community organizing. Think of yourself not just as an isolated agency but as part of a social change movement.

Think hard about how you will reach out to capture the new activists. Just on the Democratic side, just in California, there are 750,000 volunteers on the presidential campaign, 250,000 active at any given time. And 75% of them are new to this – or back after 20 or 30 years of cynicism and apathy! What happens to these energized activists on November 5? Even if 90% of them retreat to their previous lives, there are tens of thousands of new potential donors, volunteers, Board members. How will you reach them? Certainly not with business as usual!

The other issue here – particularly if you are a social services agency -- is retooling your relationship to the folks you serve. I'm aware that it's a significant mindset shift for service groups to think about their clients as constituents, or as partners in change, not just recipients of services. *The Building Movement Project: Inspiring Activism in the Nonprofit Community* is housed at Demos in New York ([www.buildingmovement.org](http://www.buildingmovement.org)).

They have developed a curriculum for turning social services CBOs into social change organizations.

5. **Cross boundaries.** Silo Bust. Build unlikely coalitions. In LA, for example, the United Way is working to bring business actively into partnership with nonprofits and local government to solve poverty. I learned, doing homelessness work in the Mayor's Office, that ONLY in cities where key nonprofits worked with faith-based groups AND business did homelessness get seriously tackled.
6. **Build a culture of collaboration.** It's much easier to be siloed, to talk only to people in a similar field, and to think of yourself and your team as adversarial to foundations or to business or to government. But in a new era of common purpose and problem-solving we need SYNERGY that only comes from finding our common points of interest.
7. **Do NONPARTISAN voter engagement, and build it into your programs.** Go to [www.nonprofitvote.org](http://www.nonprofitvote.org) Make VOTING part of what you promote, especially if you serve underserved communities. You are the trusted place for many people who have been marginalized and are the nonvoters in America: young people, single women, immigrants, low income folks, people of color. If you help people get registered to vote, and knowledgeable about what it takes, you can help continue this turnaround in America's apathy and cynicism that is just starting.
8. **Engage the Millennials.** Soon. Develop new leaders. My former shop, the Liberty Hill Foundation, once did a survey of the most effective groups they funded, and they shared one common trait: they engaged young people and had a culture of developing leaders, of mentoring, built into the fabric of the organization at every level. Along with awesome tech skills, this generation coming up has all the traits to be the next Greatest Generation, particularly dedication to service and the common good. Grab them early!
9. **Use technology.** The internet has changed everything. Imagine if FDR, facing fascism and the Great Depression, had had Google – the capacity for knowhow at his fingertips. The internet does not substitute for the real human energy of community but it does allow us to mobilize, energize, fundraise, reach out to, connect in revolutionary new ways. Twitter! Blog! One journalist at the June 2008 MENDING Poverty conference suggested creating a blog for clients to participate in! What a great idea!
10. **Build what Dr. King called "the beloved community".** It may sound corny, but social movements thrive in organization cultures that are kind and patient and fun places to be. I have spent a month working full time for the Obama campaign and I have been deeply impressed with the culture inside the campaign – where they say at every Camp Obama, the training ground for volunteers, that the mantra is "Respect/Empower/Include." There is a space created that invites new people in, that encourages diverse opinions, that does not engage in any form of political correctness. It's a safe, loving place to be of service and work with others.