

# Inside Philanthropy

A blog on philanthropy and nonprofit news and issues. A publication of Philanthropy Journal.

December 8, 2008

## Recession is prime time for giving sector

By Todd Cohen

Times are tough and getting tougher, and the giving sector needs to step up and lead.

Even in good times, nonprofits are overworked, underpaid, underappreciated, always scrounging for support, and always under pressure from givers and funders to build their operating capacity and show their impact.

Now, instead of fearing the worst from the sinking economy and capital markets and hiding its collective head in the sand, the giving sector must dig deeper to better cope with urgent social needs that only will get worse.

Nonprofits should be laser-focused on serving their clients, streamlining their operations, minimizing their risk, sharpening their message, and understanding and engaging their donors, funders and partners.

Using passion, metrics and compelling stories, nonprofits must make crystal clear the needs they address and the impact they have, helping charitable foundations, corporate giving programs and individual givers see the need to give more.

And givers and giving organizations need to pay closer attention to the real operating needs of nonprofits and the rising demand they face for services.

In short, the giving sector needs to return to its roots, focusing on the nuts and bolts of serving clients well, running smart shops and securing the right resources.

Coping tools for nonprofits in the recession will be the focus on an online [webinar](#) Dec. 9 sponsored by the Philanthropy Journal and featuring a panel of national experts, including Eileen Heisman, president and CEO at the National Philanthropic Trust; Doug Bauer, senior vice president at Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors; and Jennifer Pryce, director of advocacy at the Nonprofit Finance Fund.

The panel will examine how nonprofits can build their organizational capacity, minimize their risk, make contingency plans, approach givers and grantmakers, build awareness about their cause and their needs, and make their fundraising case.

In tough times, the challenge for the giving sector is to be the best it can be, with nonprofits and givers alike looking for ways to dig deeper and work smarter to help make our communities better places to live and work.