

NONPROFIT

ELECTION

PREPAREDNESS

REPORT

2024



The background features a series of overlapping, wavy lines in various shades of blue and purple, creating a dynamic, flowing pattern. The lines originate from the left side and curve towards the right, with some lines being more prominent than others, creating a sense of depth and movement.

We work across sectors to drive
strategies for social impact and
support clients working to make
their communities

***better, stronger, and more
vibrant places to live.***

We understand your social impact because **we're making one, too.**

We can advise philanthropy because **we practice it.**

We get fundraising because **we've raised it.**

We're experts at storytelling and thought leadership because we've **crafted and placed it.**

We can co-design your strategy because we've **planned, built, and implemented them for your peers.**

about kmsg

KM Strategies Group (KMSG) is a strategy, social impact, management, and communications consulting firm. Led by founder and managing director Kindred Motes, KM Strategies brings more than a decade of communications, social impact, philanthropic, and digital strategy experience to its practice. KMSG provides unique expertise at the intersections of philanthropic strategy and program management, nonprofit advocacy and mission-oriented communications and strategic engagement, and social impact partnerships.

We are the bridge between the worlds of culture, social impact, issue advocacy, philanthropic engagement and donor advisory, and multimedia and cultural content creation – and we want every one of those bridges to be a conduit for collaboration and partnership. We’ve represented clients, partners, funders, and employers at major global events tied to public affairs, policy, governmental advocacy, multilateral convenings, NGO conferences and events, human rights, social justice, pop culture, and entertainment initiatives:

The United Nations
The United States Congress
The Parliament of the United Kingdom
Summit of G20 Heads of State & Government
The UN Climate Conference of Parties (COP26)
Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict
The World Bank
South by Southwest (SXSW)
The Sundance Film Festival
TriBeCa Film Festival
Paris Peace Forum

Global Citizen Festival
Milken Institute Global Conference
Aspen Ideas Festival
AtlanticLIVE
Sidewalk Film Festival
The White House & USDOS COVID-19 Summit
Social Media Week New York
Social Media Week Los Angeles
UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW)
Democracy Alliance
Confluence Philanthropy

some of our clients

 FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE				
				
				
				
				

corporate & philanthropic campaigns














INTRODUCTION

The 2016 presidential election was a wake-up call for the nonprofit sector. Many organizations found themselves unprepared for the immediate and long-term impacts of the political shift. This realization prompted us to conduct the KMSG Election Preparedness Assessment ahead of the 2024 election to understand the current state of the nonprofit landscape, ensuring that the sector is better equipped to face future political changes.

The findings were revealing: a significant portion of the sector is not fully confident in its ability to adapt to potential political shifts, especially regarding digital and social media strategies. Nonprofits reported low to moderate confidence in these crucial areas, indicating a gap in readiness that needs attention. Moreover, concerns around funding stability are front and center for many organizations surveyed. This highlights a widespread apprehension about financial resources in times of political turbulence, which could impact the delivery of essential services and advocacy efforts.

However, it's not all dire. Our assessment also highlighted a sector that is keen on adapting and evolving. Organizations recognize the need to fine-tune their advocacy strategies, viewing potential vulnerabilities as opportunities for growth with the right approach. This demonstrates a proactive mindset and a willingness to learn from past experiences to ensure future resilience.

Communication strategies are another area earmarked for improvement, with a strong majority of nonprofits acknowledging the need to adjust their approaches. This reflects an understanding that effective communication is crucial in engaging communities and mobilizing support, particularly in a polarized political environment.

The lessons from the 2016 election have clearly influenced how nonprofits are approaching the 2024 election. The sector is actively seeking ways to shore up its strategies and operations to withstand and capitalize on political changes. This shift towards proactive preparation and strategic agility is a positive development, reflecting a commitment to not only survive but to make a meaningful impact regardless of the political climate. But our data indicates there is more to be done. As we move closer to the election, nonprofits must continue to prioritize preparedness and adaptability to ensure that organizations remain resilient, effective, and ready to navigate the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead.

Thank you for reading and sharing this report – and for the work you do.



Kindred Motes
Founder and Managing Director, KM Strategies Group



PARTICIPANTS

- **American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU)**
- **ACLU of Alabama**
- **The Anti-Recidivism Coalition**
- **Catalyze Justice**
- **Foreign Policy for America**
- **The Formerly Incarcerated College Graduates Network**
- **Fountain House**
- **Global Citizen**
- **Girl Rising**
- **Global Project Against Hate and Extremism (GPAHE)**
- **The Initiative for Medicines Access and Knowledge (I-MAK)**
- **Jeremiah Program**
- **Quaker Voluntary Service**
- **REFORM Alliance**
- **Rewiring America**
- **Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights**
- **Run for Something**
- **The Urban Institute**
- **Youth Represent**



SUMMARY:

KM Strategies Group (KMSG) launched a survey to evaluate the effectiveness of a specialized Election Preparedness Assessment. We gathered perspectives from a select group of thought leaders and organizations. This assessment was designed to help nonprofit organizations assess and prepare for the potential impacts of a Trump presidency on their operations, messaging, and strategy.

The survey, which engaged a diverse group of nonprofit leaders from some of the nation's leading organizations including the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), The Urban Institute, Global Citizen, Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights, Run for Something, and Girl Rising, showcases a broad spectrum of perspectives from some of the largest and most impactful organizations in the nonprofit sector.

HIGHLIGHTS:

- **Low to moderate confidence in digital and social media strategies:** 70% of nonprofits express low to moderate confidence, signaling a need for significant changes to adapt to political shifts.
- **Significant concerns about funding stability:** Nearly 44% of organizations have moderate to high concerns regarding donor engagement and funding stability, pointing towards potential vulnerabilities in funding strategies amidst political uncertainties.
- **The majority acknowledge advocacy strategy vulnerabilities:** 70% of nonprofits recognize the need for adjustments in their advocacy strategies, indicating potential challenges in maintaining influence and effectiveness in a changing political environment.
- **Communication strategies require adjustments:** A notable 82% of organizations foresee the need for changes in their messaging and public engagement strategies, highlighting gaps in current approaches to effectively reach their target audiences.
- **Strategic agility and preparedness essential:** The findings underscore a critical need for strategic agility and preparedness within the nonprofit sector, as organizations navigate the uncertainties of the political landscape ahead of the 2024 presidential election.
- **Culture/wellness risks loom:** 43% of organizations surveyed identified a significant risk of staff burnout, engagement, and retention issues in the wake of a second Trump presidency.



NONPROFIT ELECTION PREPAREDNESS REPORT

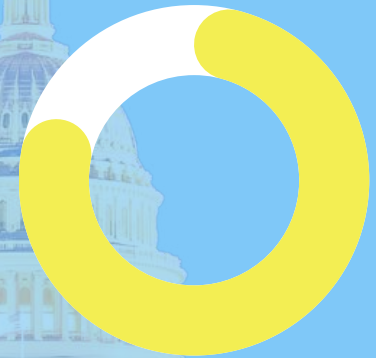


KEY INSIGHTS 2024

In the run-up to the 2024 presidential election, the nonprofit sector faces a pivotal moment. KM Strategies Group's Election Preparedness Assessment sheds light on the sector's readiness for potential political shifts. The findings reveal a landscape of concern and adaptation among nonprofits, highlighting areas of strategic vulnerability and the urgent need for preparedness.

44%

of nonprofits have moderate to high concerns regarding donor engagement and funding stability



70%

of nonprofits recognize the need for adjustments in their advocacy strategies

70%
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LOW TO MODERATE
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These findings suggest a **cautious optimism** among organizations about adapting to the political shifts of a Trump presidency, with significant emphasis on the need for strategic adjustments in digital strategy, advocacy, messaging, and donor engagement. Concerns about funding stability and the effectiveness of communication strategies are prominent, alongside a recognized need for potential realignment in mission and operations.

As nonprofit organizations know all too well, a Trump presidency in 2025 could significantly threaten rights-based nonprofits through potential legislative changes undermining civil liberties and human rights, leading to funding challenges and donor engagement issues in a conservative fiscal climate. Organizations will likely face increased censorship, self-censorship, and pushback in advocacy and public messaging, struggling to effectively communicate and operate in a less receptive or hostile political landscape. This may lead to organizations shifting away from proactive and innovative advocacy strategies toward a more reactionary and risk-reduction approach. Additionally, such an administration could polarize public opinion, impacting nonprofits' ability to advocate, attract new donors, and maintain financial stability, potentially diverting resources away from their core missions.

KMSG's assessment framework, informed by this survey's findings, is designed to prepare organizations for the potential impacts of a Trump presidency on their operations and strategy, knowing that such a result would have significant consequences and/or impact across all areas of work and operations. This comprehensive assessment focuses on four key areas: **communications, fundraising, advocacy, and overall public messaging and engagement.**



FULL RESPONSE BREAKDOWN

Confidence in Digital and Social Media Strategy

QUESTION: How confident are you in your organization's current digital and social media strategy to adapt to the political shifts of a Trump presidency?

- 39.1% are moderately confident: “requiring minor adjustments.”
- 30.4% are somewhat confident: “needing significant changes.”
- 17.4% are unsure or have no current strategy.
- 13% feel very confident, “with no major changes needed.”

Concerns Regarding Donor Engagement and Funding Stability

QUESTION: What concerns do you have regarding donor engagement and funding stability in the event of a Trump presidency?

- 34.8% have mild concerns, anticipating possible fluctuations in donor engagement.
- 34.8% express moderate concerns about potential significant shifts in funding sources.
- 13% are unsure or lack current data.
- 8.7% have high concerns regarding the risk of major funding losses.
- 8.7% report no concerns, feeling their donor base is stable.

Advocacy Strategy Vulnerabilities and Benefits

QUESTION: Can you identify areas in your current advocacy strategy that might be vulnerable or beneficial in the context of a Trump presidency?

- 65.2% see some vulnerabilities: “needing minor adjustments.”
- 17.4% are unsure or have no clear strategy.
- 8.7% believe their strategy aligns well with political changes, indicating no vulnerabilities.
- 4.3% see many vulnerabilities: “requiring a major overhaul.”
- Another 4.3% feel their strategy benefits significantly from political shifts.

Messaging and Public Engagement Strategies

QUESTION: How do you anticipate your organization's messaging and public engagement strategies will need to change in response to a Trump presidency?

- 59.1% foresee minor adjustments needed.
- 22.7% believe significant changes are needed.
- 13.6% are unsure or have no current strategy.
- 4.5% feel no changes are needed.



Culture, Wellness, and Staff Engagement

QUESTION: What impact do you anticipate a Trump presidency might have on your staff engagement, burnout, and retention?

- 47.8% foresee minor impact with manageable staff concerns.
- 39.1% expect moderate impact with significant staff welfare considerations.
- 4.3% expect a major staff impact with critical staff retention issues.
- 4.3% expect no observable changes or impact.
- 4.3% are unsure.

Corporate Social Responsibility Partnerships

QUESTION: What potential challenges and opportunities do you foresee in maintaining or developing corporate social responsibility partnerships under a Trump presidency?

- A majority (52.2%) are unsure or have no current partnerships, indicating a significant uncertainty or lack of engagement in this area.
- 30.5% expect minor to moderate impact, with adjustments and reevaluation required.
- 13% expect no impact and stable partnerships.
- 4.3% expect a significant strategy shift will be required.

Mission and Operations Alignment

QUESTION: How equipped is your organization to handle shifts in public sentiment or response that may arise from a Trump presidency?

- 36.4% feel mostly aligned, requiring minor adjustments.
- 36.4% see a partial alignment, needing significant realignment.
- 18.2% believe they are fully aligned, with no concerns.
- 4.5% believe they are misaligned and a full shift is required.
- 4.5% are unsure.

External Funding Shifts

QUESTION: How do you foresee external funding to your organization (e.g. foundational giving, individual donations) shifting under a Trump administration?

- 30.4% expect a slight increase in donor engagement.
- Another 34.8% are unsure of any change.
- 21.7% anticipate a slight decrease in funding.
- 8.7% expect a significant increase.
- 4.3% foresee a significant decrease, necessitating a major funding strategy review.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The nonprofit sector demonstrated its ability to spring into action and adapt in the immediate aftermath of the 2016 presidential election and throughout the subsequent rollout of many of the Trump administration's policies. The potential for a second Trump term, as well as the increasing likelihood of a Congress, multiple state legislatures, and numerous governor's mansions under the control of right-wing officials who share Trump's agenda, requires further strategic planning. Drawing from this survey and lessons learned from major political shifts over the past eight years, we offer the following recommendations to better equip your organization for 2025:

- **Understand your development/fundraising landscape and plan ahead so you know likely partners and supporters – *before you need them.*** Nonprofits are understandably concerned about donor engagement and funding stability under a second Trump administration. While competition for funding is likely to intensify, philanthropies may also rise to the occasion. There was a surge of giving from progressive philanthropy and coalitions focused on defending vulnerable communities and safeguarding democracy between 2016 and 2020; doing due diligence research to identify key supporters will be critical to ensuring you've got a strong bench of donors and supporters should you need them moving forward. The best time to start building those relationships is right now!
- **Make sure you're spotlighting who your organization exists to serve on a personal level. Don't let the message get lost in an overreliance on data or extensive details.** It is crucial, now more than ever, to incorporate the voices and stories of clients and communities served into all aspects of organizational work. As policies affecting your organization's constituents emerge, advocating for them and crafting compelling narratives can attract new audiences, individual donors, and foundations, facilitating growth and increased impact.
- **Begin election scenario planning ASAP to enable your organization to develop advocacy strategies that are adaptable and capable of responding promptly to potential policy regressions.** Navigating advocacy during political shifts can be challenging; there's too much going on and strategies can become muddled. Planning will allow flexibility if needs arise, but you'll have a core base to build from. During the Trump presidency, many organizations had to transition from proactive to reactive advocacy as programs like DACA faced continual threats and funding for housing assistance and community development was consistently reduced. Building coalitions is vital; a unified voice, bolstered by additional resources and ideas, can significantly enhance and fortify your advocacy objectives.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Get your messaging, style/voice, and communications templates ready ahead of time.** Crafting tailored messaging and storytelling for your campaigns and work is crucial, especially in a political landscape fraught with empty and aggressive rhetoric that may contradict your organizational messaging. Amid all that noise, maintaining a consistent voice across all platforms is key for ensuring uniqueness and resonance with diverse audiences. Crafting a voice guide, for example, will help ensure that your communications continue to uplift the communities you serve, even amidst the turmoil, and also underscore your singular commitment to amplifying your organization's priorities.
- **Plan for as much as you can ahead of time – then remain flexible.** Seek input from your board members, colleagues, and key stakeholders to explore new ideas while staying true to your organization's values. Your organization's mission may shift in response to changing policies and political dynamics, and that's OK. The most successful organizations to respond to the chaos and volatile policies of the Trump administration – including participants in this survey – enacted new avenues to accomplish their advocacy and communication goals.
- **Don't forget that your staff are also a key constituency.** Engage with them, speak to them, listen to them, and consult them. As demands rise in the lead-up to the election, remember that culture and work-life balance issues will be especially important and may make all the difference between being a successful team or suffering from unnecessary struggles, burnout, turnover, and reduced impact.
- **Ask for support if you need it.** Understandably, you may be too busy doing the actual day-to-day work of running your organizations – from strategy and tactical implementation to direct services, advocacy, and coalition-building – to build up your own internal infrastructure and strategic planning around risk mitigation, messaging strategy, fundraising, and culture support for staff. That's where advisors, teams, agencies, and firms like KMSG come in!

If you have questions, ideas, or feedback for KMSG, please email us!

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KMSG IS A
NEXT GENERATION FIRM LEADING
INNOVATIVE AND
NECESSARY REFORMS.
ITS EARLY SUCCESS
IS A COUNTER-NARRATIVE TO THE MISGUIDED
NOTION THAT BUSINESSES MUST CHOOSE
BETWEEN PROFIT
AND SOCIAL
RESPONSIBILITY.

-FORBES MAGAZINE

our values

KMSG is proud to be a **certified LGBT-owned and operated enterprise** led by a first-generation college graduate. We are committed to reflecting the principles and values of equity, inclusion, and belonging espoused by our clients.

To date, 86% of KMSG's client work has been for projects led by women and people of color and we're proud to work with a team of strategic advisors and partners who reflect that diversity.

affiliations and memberships



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