

# Nonprofit Business Advisor

Latest and Best Strategies to Survive and Grow in Tough Times

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## Maximize the impact of your humanitarian work

*Review guiding principles for effective relief services*

Nonprofit organizations are created out of a desire to do well, whether on a local, regional, national or international level. But wanting to do good deeds isn't enough.

"Some nonprofits approach human work with a charity mindset," said Kelly Gibson, program director at National Relief Charities, a nonprofit organization dedicated to serving Native Americans on remote reservations. "While nonprofits may have any number of good intentions, there may be inconsistencies in their approach. People affected by a humanitarian crisis have certain rights, and organizations that serve them have a responsibility to provide them with appropriate aid, but we have to be careful—it's possible to make mistakes without certain guidelines."

Earlier this summer, NRC signed the Red Cross' voluntary "International Code of Conduct for NGOs

in Disaster Relief." After careful review of the Code's principles, NRC determined it "meshed" well with its own principles and could be implemented when providing not only disaster relief, but self-help to a community, as well.

"While doing the research, I realized the Code was an affirmation of how we work and the principles we use to guide our programs on Indian reservations in the United States," Gibson said. In fact, she believes the guidelines are helpful to nonprofits in several ways. They:

- Provide a professional standard nonprofits can use when providing humanitarian aid.

(See **Humanitarian** on page 8)

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### Market instability leads nonprofits to reevaluate

SEI, a leading global provider of outsourced asset management, investment processing and investment operations solutions, has released a Quick Poll showing that nonprofit foundations and endowments are thoroughly evaluating their overall investment management process in response to continued market volatility. Nearly one-third (31 percent) of nonprofits currently using a consultant model for investment management said they are concerned about the consultant-based approach and are looking into other options. Almost half (45 percent) of that group said they feel there should have been a higher level of proactive communication from the consultant during recent market turmoil. Nearly one-third (30 percent) of all those polled said that defining investment management fiduciary responsibilities for trustees and investment consultants is a top priority.

For more information or a complete summary, visit [www.seic.com/institutions](http://www.seic.com/institutions) or e-mail [seiresearch@seic.com](mailto:seiresearch@seic.com). For more nonprofit research, see page 9. ■



**HUMANITARIAN** (continued from page 1)

- Increase the effectiveness of an organization's humanitarian work.

- Let the community served and donors know what they can expect from the organization.

Delivering material aid to those in need is not an easy task, Gibson said. Nonprofits may face any number of environmental, political, cultural or religious challenges while trying to get aid to those who need it most. There's also the danger of undermining local strategies that are already in place to cope with a community's needs. For instance, if a community has developed job training for contract painters, it wouldn't be helpful for an organization to bring in painters. It would be helpful to donate paint.

"You must try to find out what strategies are already in place and support that local determination," Gibson said. "The code's principles can guide an organization in this approach."

This past April, Gibson was a keynote speaker at a conference sponsored by World Vision and Mercy Corps, "Exploring Gifts in Kind," where she co-facilitated the session, "Creating Impact Through Material Aid." Below are some of NRC's lessons learned from her presentation:

- **Know the history and culture of the region where you work and let it guide your work.** In other words, be respectful of local customs, traditions and service structures in place.

- **Always be mindful of the responsibility you have to the people you serve.**

- **Know the area inside and out.** This means more than the local demographics. Learn about the local capacity that already exists and build on it. This enhances the community's skill and helps ensure long-term social change—not just immediate relief, Gibson said.

- **Base projects on need.** Providing aid shouldn't be about what the donor wants. Listen and learn from the community what it lacks. This will make for a better fit, Gibson said. It also shows neutrality that helps locals accept the aid and assures it gets to the most vulnerable.

- **Incorporate opportunities for the community to learn and earn in any project.** This approach builds dignity and hope for the community and challenges dependence on aid.

- **Identify outcomes.** Continuously identify and monitor the services you provide and share the lessons you learn to improve your next project.

### Improve your impact, develop guiding principles

Kelly Gibson, program director at National Relief Charities, said organizations should make sure that any code of conduct they use "meshes" with their organizations' mission and the values that guide their work.

If you'd like to review your principles or create your own code of conduct, Gibson suggests you:

- Start with a clear and honest review of your vision, mission and the goals of the organization.
- Research professional standards such as those offered by AERDO, SPHERE, Red Cross or NRC.
- Ask yourself whether these are the types of principles that could guide your organization.

For more information, you can contact Kelly Gibson at [kgibson@nrc1.org](mailto:kgibson@nrc1.org). To view the Red Cross Code of Conduct, go to [www.gdrc.org/ngo/codesofconduct/ifrc-codeconduct.html](http://www.gdrc.org/ngo/codesofconduct/ifrc-codeconduct.html). ■

- **Partner with the people you are serving.** It's essential to have staff on the ground and a consistent presence where you work. Know the lay of the land, and have a proven distribution system, Gibson said. If your organization is unfamiliar with a region but wants to help during a disaster, she suggests contacting an area organization and learning how your resources can enhance existing efforts.

"It's important to have a set of lessons or principles to guide your work," Gibson said. NRC used their lessons to develop the NRC Way and more recently to support the Red Cross Code of Conduct.

(For more on how to review your organization's principles, see the box above).

### For more information

National Relief Charities is a nonprofit dedicated to quality of life for Native Americans living on remote, poverty-stricken reservations. NRC has served Native Americans for 20 years and works on over 75 reservations year-round through a strong network of nearly 900 reservation partners. For more information, go to [www.nrcprograms.org](http://www.nrcprograms.org) or contact Kelly Gibson at [kgibson@nrc1.org](mailto:kgibson@nrc1.org). To read the Red Cross' complete International Code of Conduct for NGOs in Disaster Relief, visit [www.gdrc.org/ngo/codesofconduct/ifrc-codeconduct.html](http://www.gdrc.org/ngo/codesofconduct/ifrc-codeconduct.html). ■

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