State of Nonprofit Professional Development

March 2019

An NTEN Report
By Robert Hulshof-Schmidt

Professional development in nonprofits has room to improve in 2019

As organizations who provide professional development and the support for career growth in a number of ways, both NTEN and Cornerstone were interested to better understand what trends, challenges, and successes may exist in the nonprofit sector with regard to both the cultural practices around professional development and the specific structure and financial support for it in organizations of all different sizes and types.

This is the first time we've surveyed the community on this topic and the results include some surprises and confirm our experience. We were disappointed to see the number of folks who don't have equal access to training opportunities and funds, but heartened to hear that even if professional development isn't a formal part of staff evaluations now the practice is desired and seen as valuable.

Nonprofit staff want to learn and grow in their jobs and careers. As the partners on this report, we hope that this report supports organizations making adjustments and improvements to the way professional development is encouraged and supported for all staff.
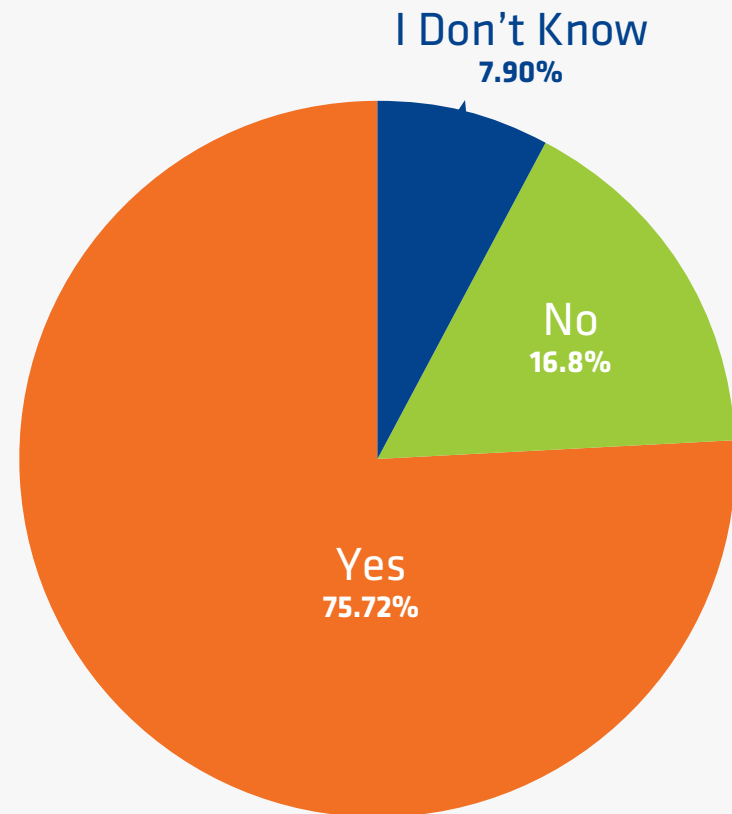
Amy Sample Ward
CEO, NTEN

Jeremy Spake
Principal, Thought Leadership and Advisory Services
Cornerstone OnDemand

Availability of Professional Development

Do you have organizational funds available to you as an individual staff member to use towards professional development?

I Don't Know
7.90%

No
16.8%

Yes
75.72%

What is the amount of those funds available to you as an individual staff member to use towards professional development?

$501-$1,000
26.45%

$1,000-$2,500
30.05%

$100-$500
25.20%

More than $2,500
13.62%

Less than $100
4.69%
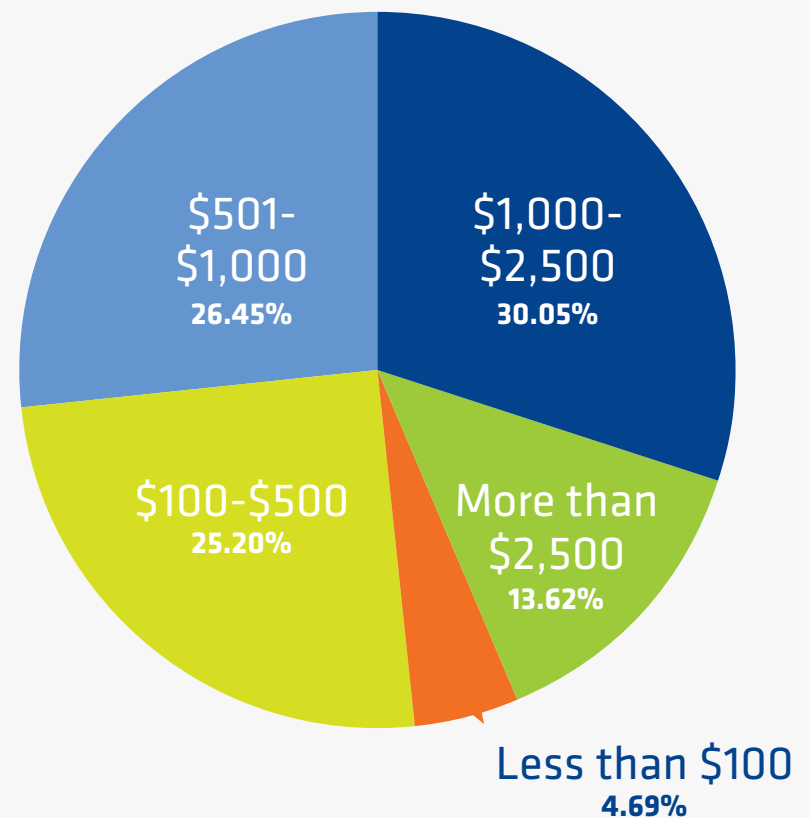
Are organizational funds (or the absence of funds, depending on your previous answer) available to all staff equally?

No 31.86%

I'm Not Sure 39.79%

Yes 39.79%
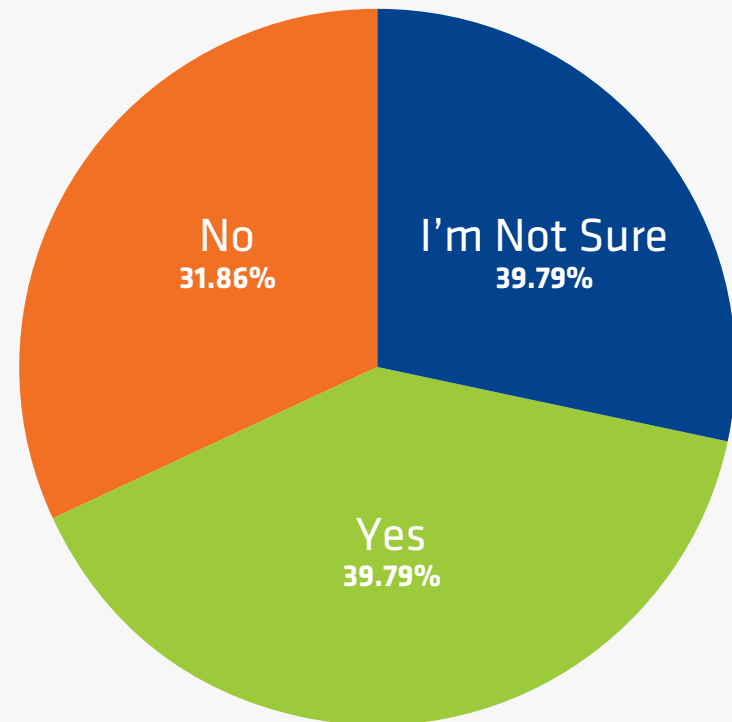
What types of professional development activities are you able to use your organizational funds on?

Please select all that apply.

Professional development options are widely available and reasonably well funded. Fully three-quarters of respondents indicated access to professional development, and two-thirds of those had a personal budget of over $500. Availability is not distributed evenly, however, as only 40% indicated that organizational funding is available to everyone.

Organizations that provide professional development tend to offer a variety of options. While online courses are the most common, conferences, professional memberships, and platform-specific training were all available to over half of respondents. Those that indicated "other" mostly fit into three categories: books/manuals, certifications, and degree programs.

Availability of professional development and funding does not depend on the size of the organization. Larger organizations with bigger budgets understandably provide more funding than smaller ones do.

Bar chart categories (x-axis 0% to 100%):
- Webinars or other online courses
- Conferences NOT inclusive of travel costs
- Conferences inclusive of travel costs
- Specific technical or skills-oriented training accessed thrugh established vendors (ie CRM training)]
- Professional memberships
- Online content, publications, and resources
- Other (please specify)

Professional Development and Supervision

Is professional development included in your annual evaluation?

No
29.63%

Yes
56.79%

I don't have an annual evaluation
29.63%
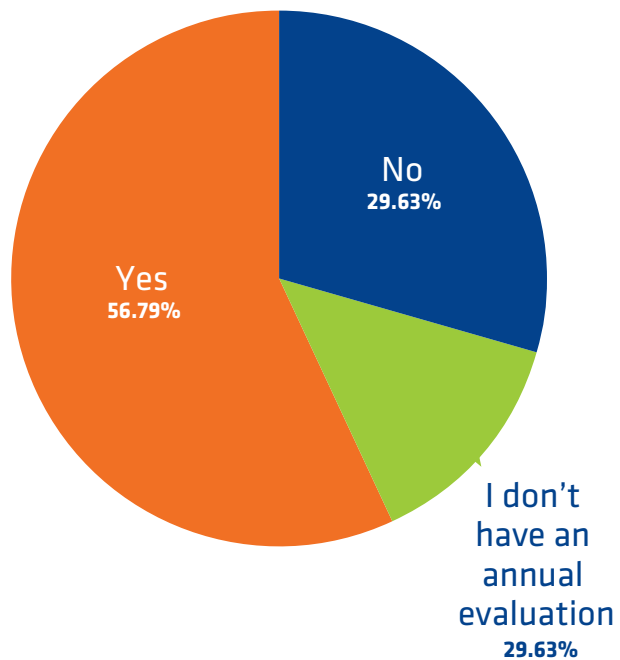
Is the inclusion of professional development in your annual evaluation meaningful to you? Why?

No
9.56%

Mixed
7.23%

Yes
83.22%
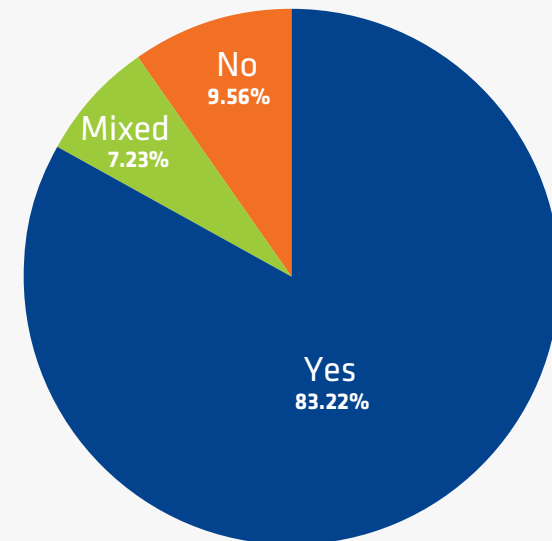
If professional development was included in your annual review, would you feel more likely to participate in it or more engaged in your job? Why?
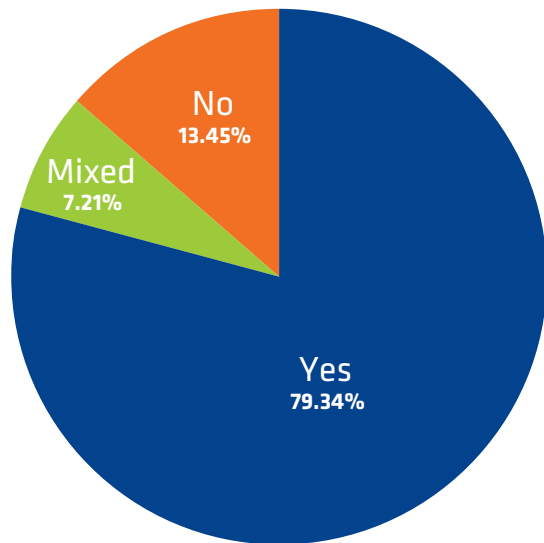
No
13.45%

Mixed
7.21%

Yes
79.34%

Is professional development included in your annual goals?

No
10.98%

I don't have annual goals
29.39%

Yes
59.63%
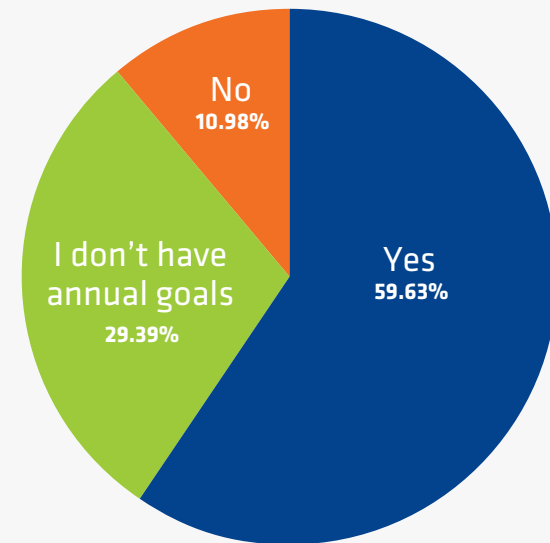
Over half of respondents indicated that professional development is included in their review and planning process. A slightly larger percentage have specific goals for development than are evaluated on it.

A sizable majority of respondents who are evaluated on professional development indicated that this inclusion was meaningful to them. Most of their answers indicated an appreciation that development was taken seriously and considered important by the organization. Those who had mixed responses tended to want more help and structure in figuring out what development goals were appropriate.

A similar majority of those who are NOT evaluated on development said that including development in evaluation would be a motivator for pursuing it.

Is professional development regularly discussed with your manager?

You may select all that apply.

Over half of respondents indicated that they discuss professional development with their manager. This was mostly true for those who said that development was part of their review or their goals, but not exclusively. Most respondents who discuss development indicated more than one type of discussion. Those who selected "other" tended to indicate more casual interactions and mostly did not have development as part of their evaluation or goals.

Yes, they approve any planned for professional development and/or budget

Yes, they encourage me to participate in professional development

Yes, we regularly share articles or opportunities for professional development

No

Other (please specify)

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60%
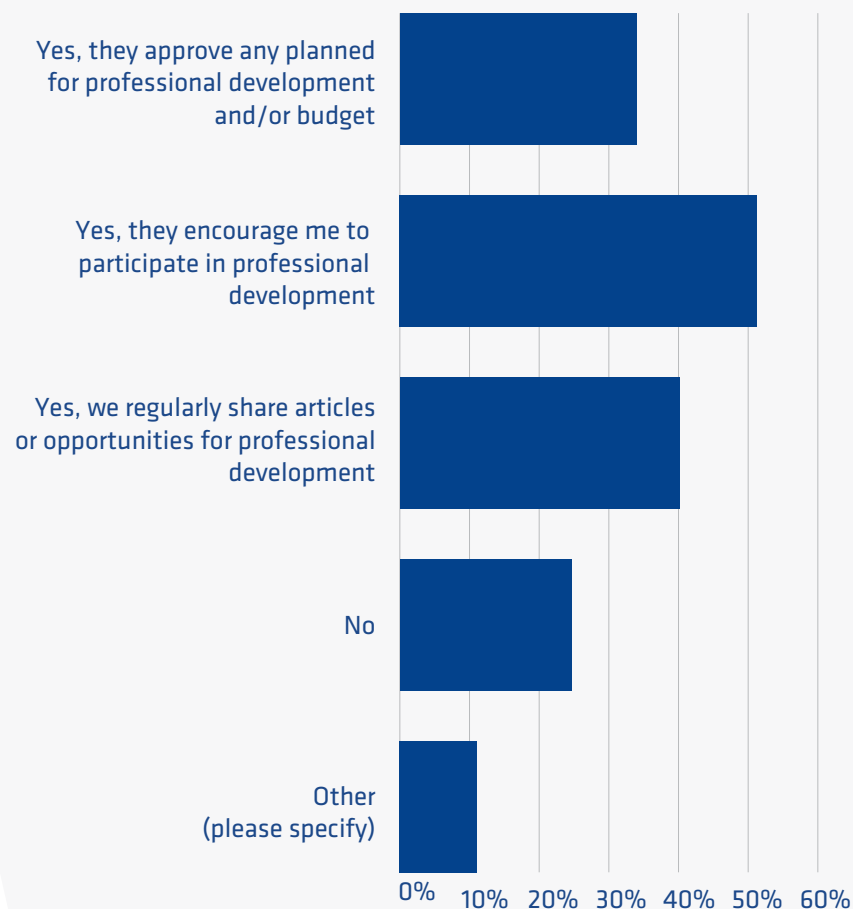
Does your team or organization have a process for reporting back after professional development?

This may look like sharing resources or learnings with other staff, presenting on material learned, or other ways of sharing.

For those who participate in professional development activities, about half have a system for sharing what they learn with their co-workers.

Yes
47.80%

No
46.46%

I Don't Know
5.73%
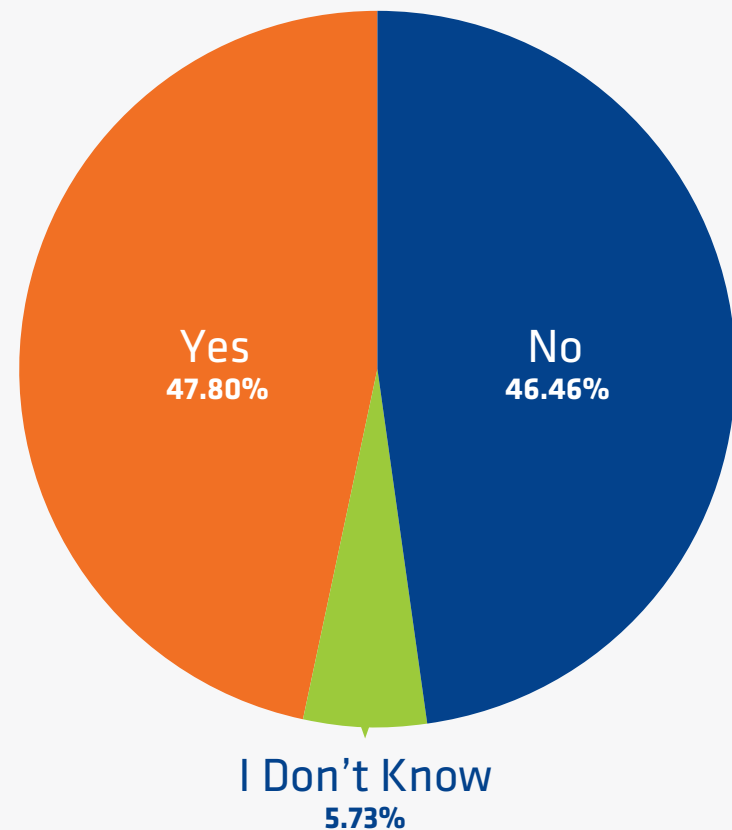
Professional Development and Supervision

Do you feel better able to succeed in your job because of professional development that you've participated in?

Nearly 90% of respondents feel better able to succeed at work because of their professional development opportunities. When it comes to employment opportunities, over half indicated that they are motivated to stay in their jobs due to professional development, and a similar number would look for professional development support when job hunting.

No, it has not been beneficial
4.63%

No, I don't have access
5.49%

Yes
89.88%
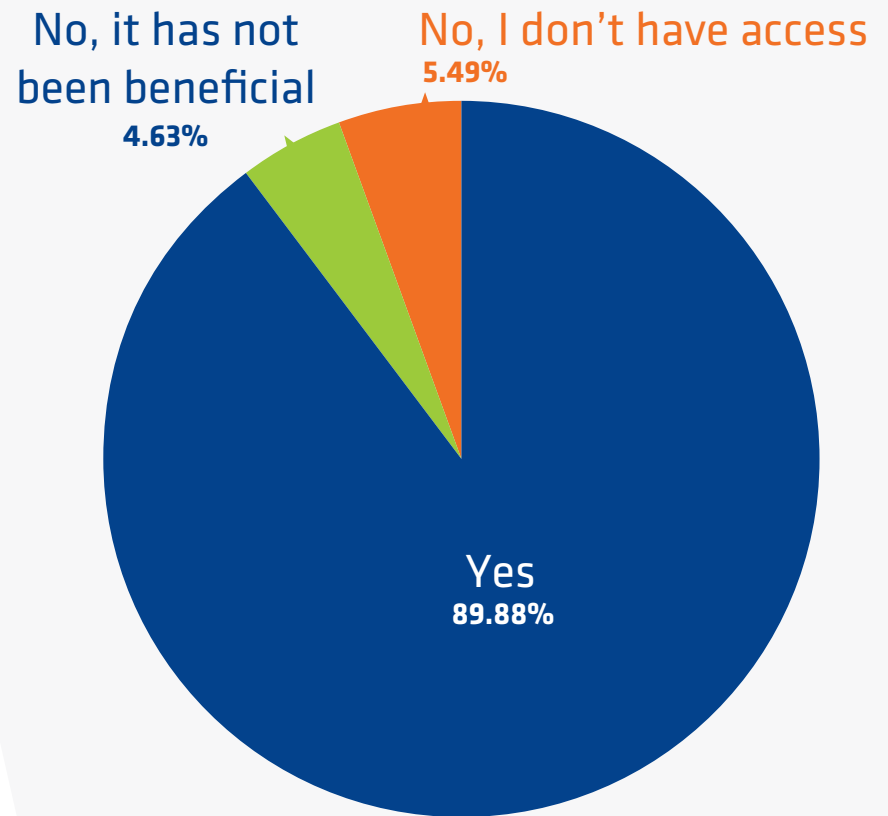
Does support for professional development influence you to stay at your organization?

Yes
55.00%

No, it doesn't influence me to stay
30.37%

No, we do not recieve support
14.63%
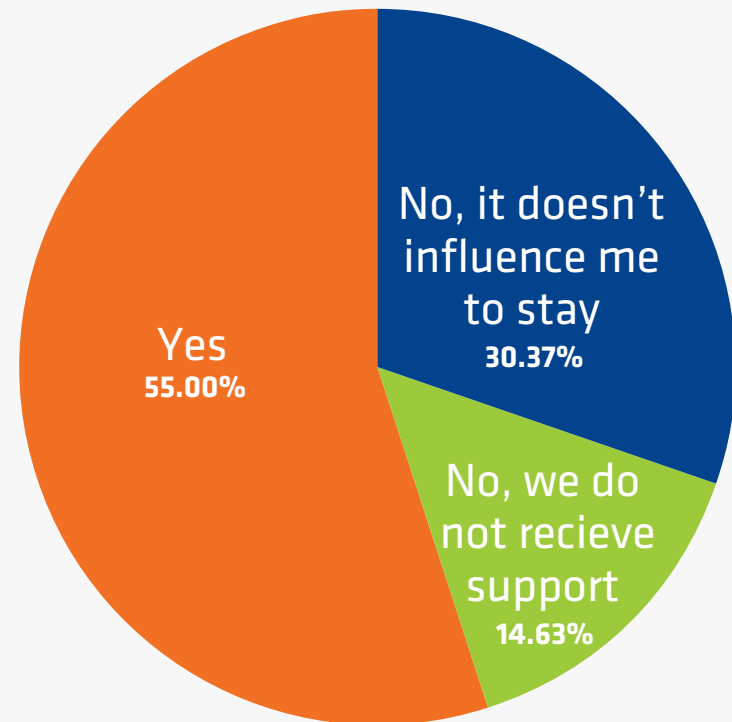
If you were to look for a new employment opportunity outside of your current organization, would support for professional development in that job be a deciding factor in accepting a new position?

Yes, I would want development support in my next job
53.05%

Yes, though it wouldn't be a strong influence on my decision
38.29%

No
8.66%
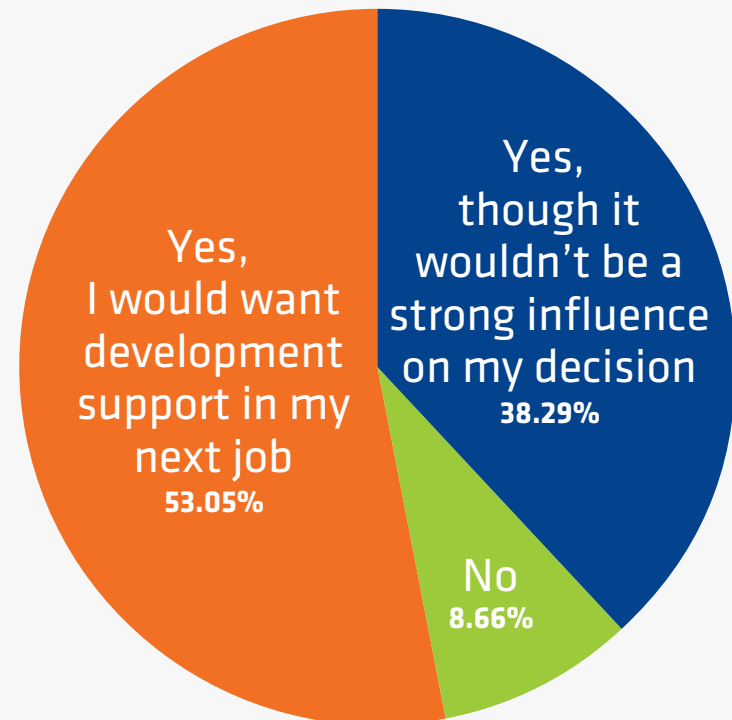
Organizational Tools

Does your organization have an online system for tracking professional development participation of staff?

Only 15% of respondents have a tracking system in place for professional development. Three times that amount work for organizations with subscriptions to online learning or development systems, although a third of them do not know how to access the system. There is no clear relationship between the size of the organization and the presence of either kind of tool.

Yes
15.70%

I don't know
6.92%

No
77.38%
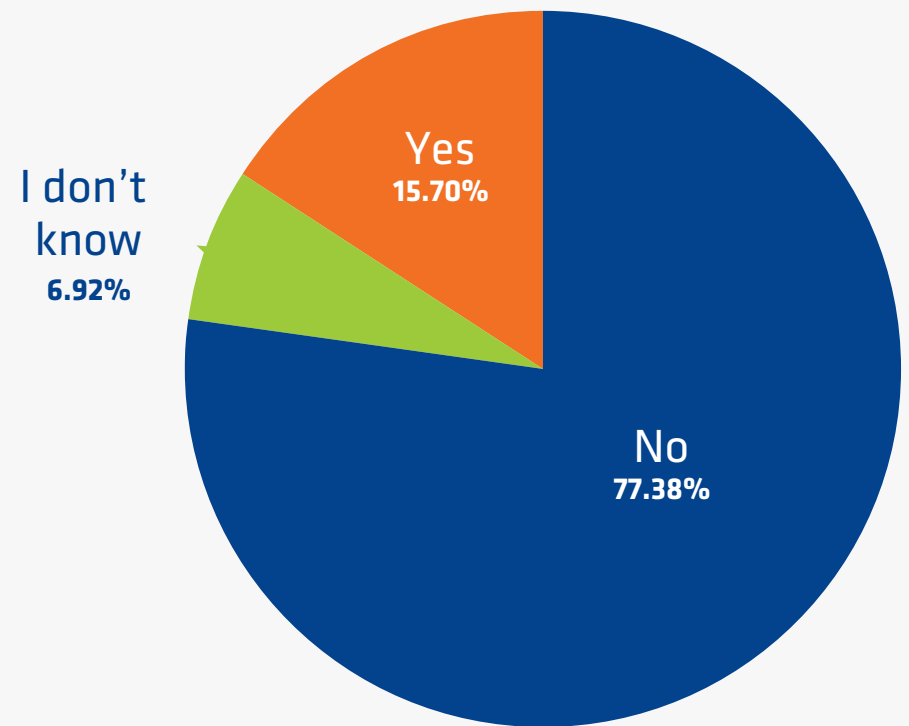
Does your organization maintain a subscription/s to online learning or professional development platforms (this may include sites like Lynda.com).

Yes, I don't know how to access it
49.32%

No
49.32%

Yes, I know how to access it
31.52%

I don't know
13.97%
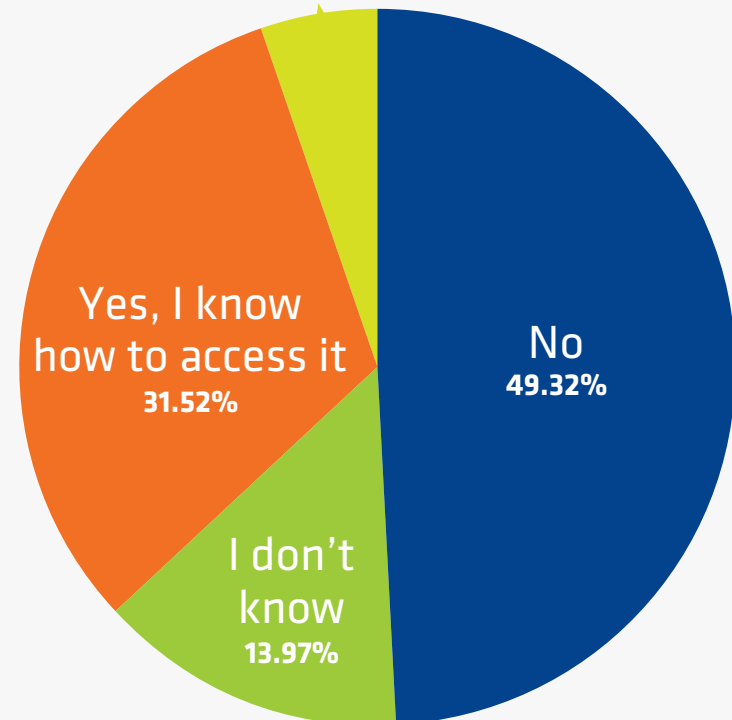
Professional Development Topics and Interests

What types of professional development do you participate in currently?

You may select all that apply.

Most respondents who take advantage of professional development opportunities use a variety of learning types. Free webinars are the most common, used by over 80%. In-person opportunities and printed tools are also very popular.

Free webinars
Paid online courses or webinars
In-person workshops (single day events)
In-person conferences (muliti-day events)
Continuing eduation credits and/or certification/s
Books and publications
Product-specific training from a vendor
Other (please specify)

0%   20%   40%   60%   80%   100%

Does your current participation in professional development meet your expectations and needs?

About two-thirds of respondents are satisfied with the professional development they receive. This is true regardless of the learning tools they use.

I don't currently have access to professional development
2.10%

No
33.75%

Yes
64.15%
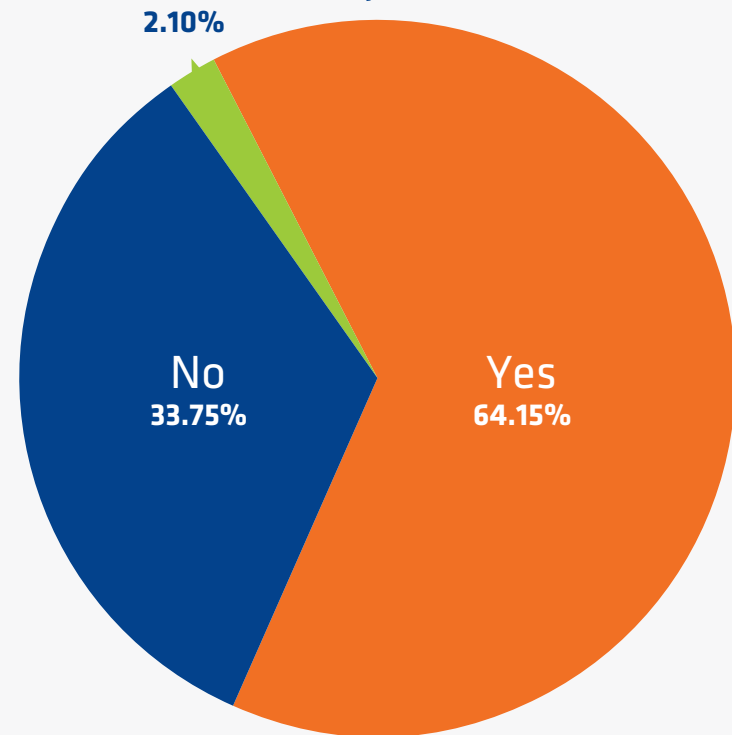
What types of professional development are you interested in?

You may select all that apply.
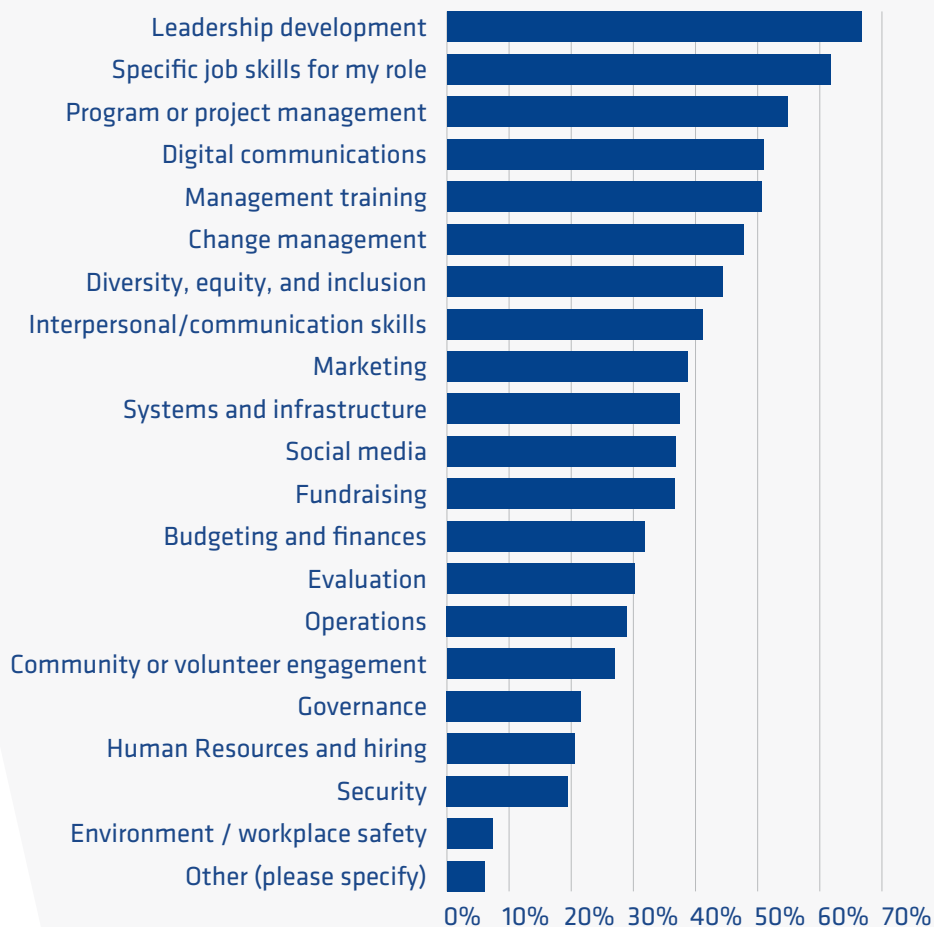
Respondents show high interest in most of the various learning tools used for professional development. In-person opportunities – both workshops and conferences – are the most popular, but online options and printed materials have strong support as well. Those who responded "Other" indicated mentorships, leadership seminars, and a variety specialized or internal opportunities.

Please identify the topic areas of professional development that you feel would be most helpful to your personal and career growth?
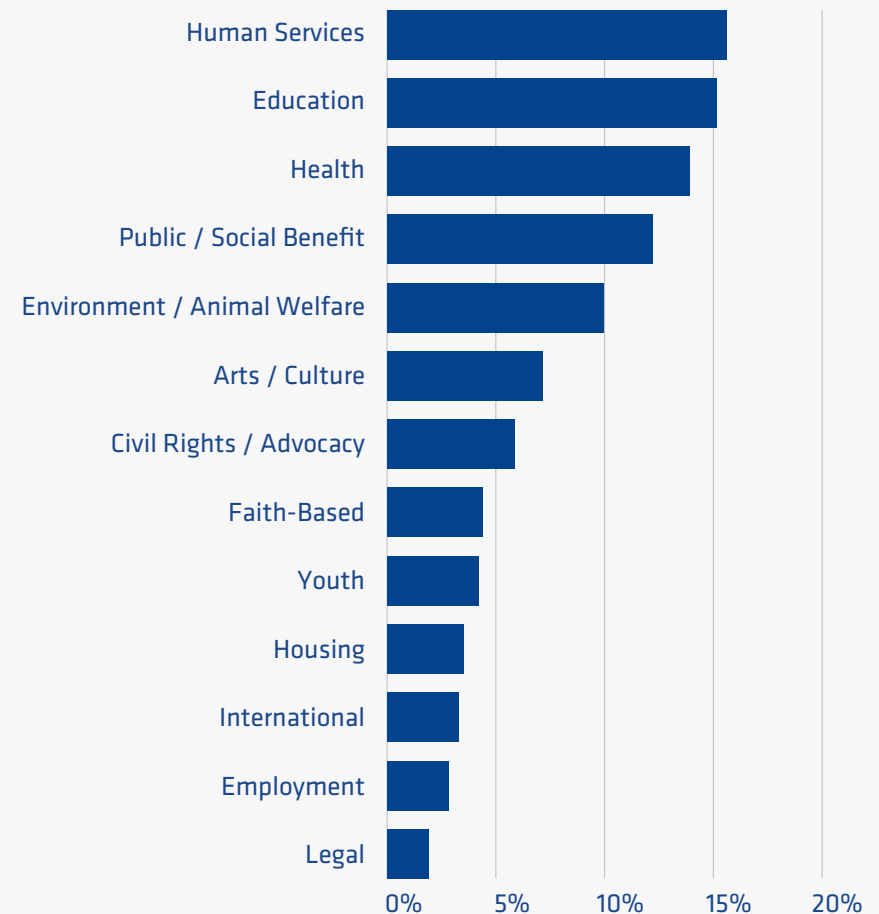
You may select all that apply.

Most respondents indicated two or more areas of interest. The most popular were job-specific, leadership skills, and project management. Management, digital communication, and fundraising round out the high-demand areas. Those who indicated "other" had a wide variety of answers, with data analysis and specific technology skills being the most common.

Horizontal bar chart (ordered from highest to lowest):

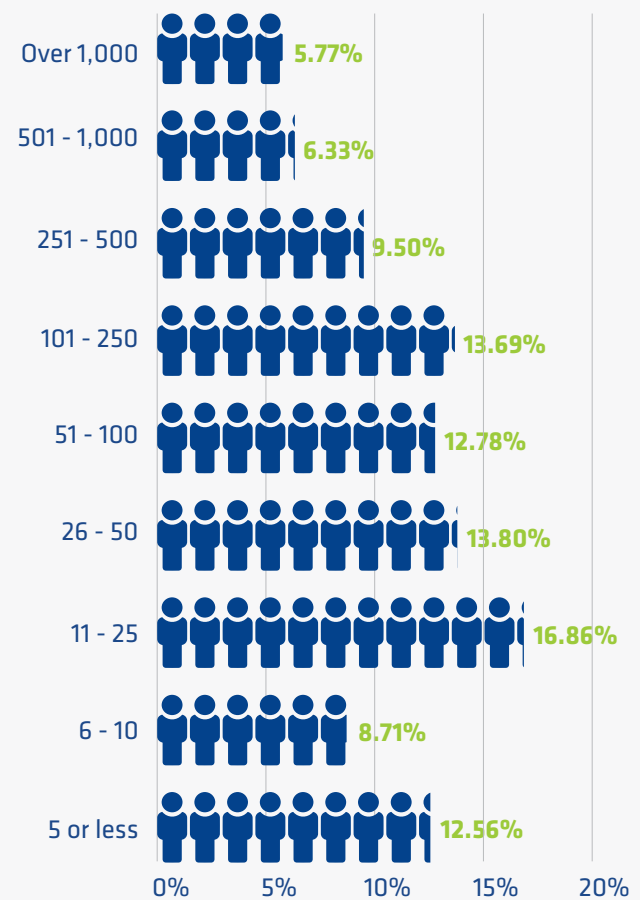| Topic	
Leadership development	
Specific job skills for my role	
Program or project management	
Digital communications	
Management training	
Change management	
Diversity, equity, and inclusion	
Interpersonal/communication skills	
Marketing	
Systems and infrastructure	
Social media	
Fundraising	
Budgeting and finances	
Evaluation	
Operations	
Community or volunteer engagement	
Governance	
Human Resources and hiring	
Security	
Environment / workplace safety	
Other (please specify)	

Axis: 0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70%

Demographics

What best describes your organization's primary issue area?

The majority of respondents work in the areas of human and public services, with four categories accounting for over half of the responses.
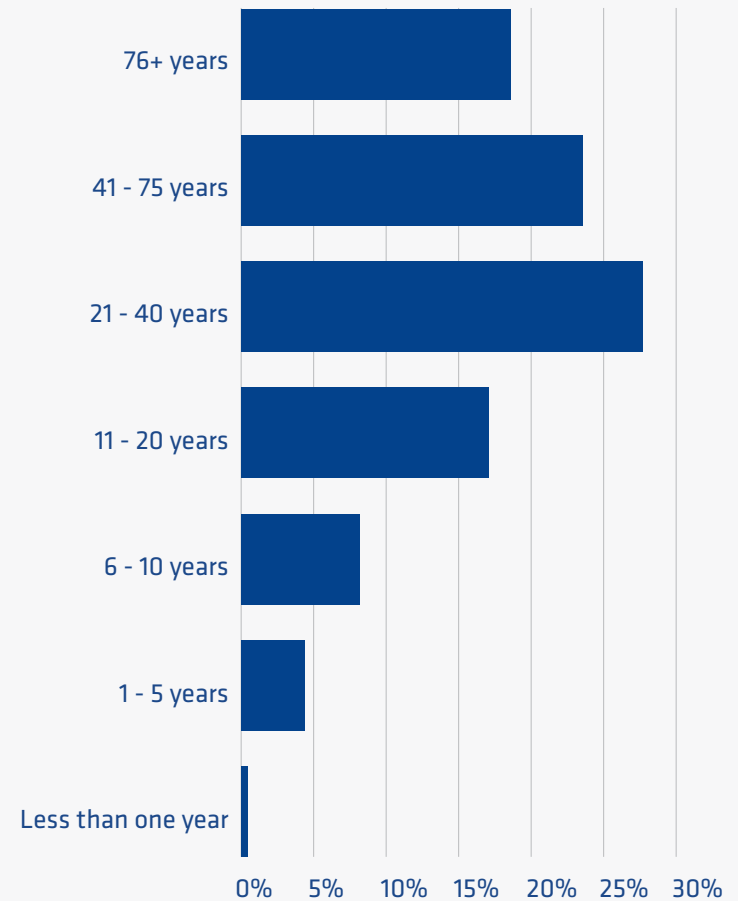

Human Services
Education
Health
Public / Social Benefit
Environment / Animal Welfare
Arts / Culture
Civil Rights / Advocacy
Faith-Based
Youth
Housing
International
Employment
Legal

0%   5%   10%   15%   20%

What is the size of your overall organization staff?

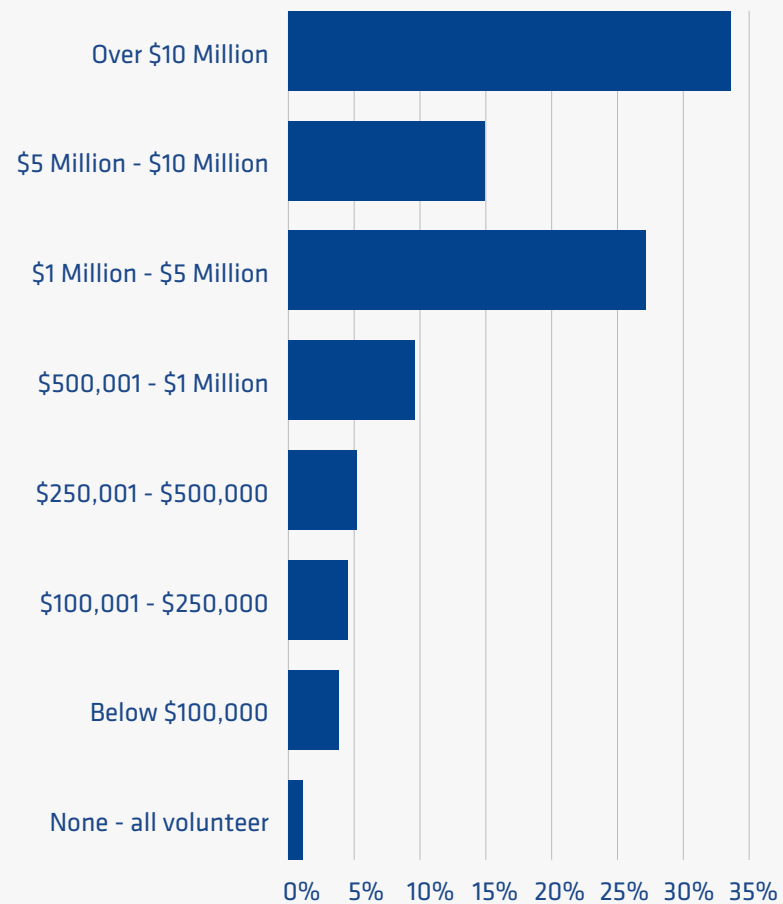| Staff Size	Percentage
Over 1,000	5.77%
501 - 1,000	6.33%
251 - 500	9.50%
101 - 250	13.69%
51 - 100	12.78%
26 - 50	13.80%
11 - 25	16.86%
6 - 10	8.71%
5 or less	12.56%

0%   5%   10%   15%   20%

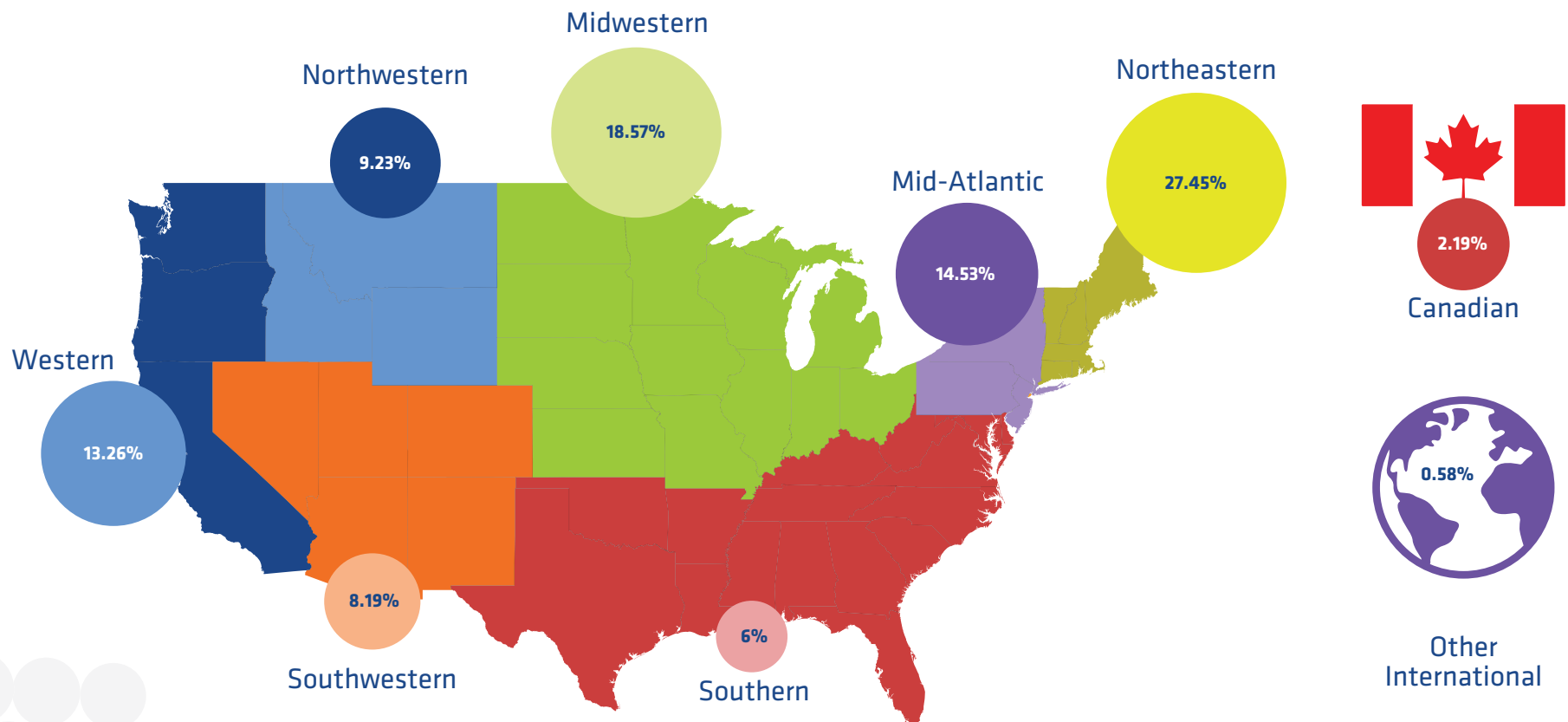# About how long has your organization existed?

The majority of respondents represented well-established organizations; over two-thirds have operated 20 years or longer. Approximately 5% were relatively new (five years or fewer).

What is the approximate annual budget of your organization?
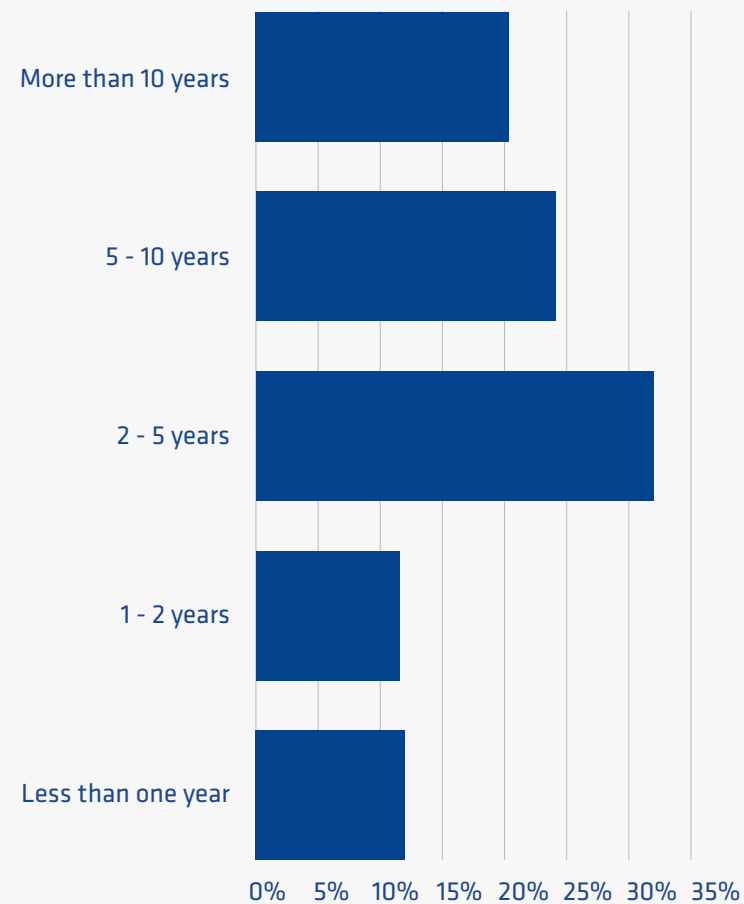

Over $10 Million

$5 Million - $10 Million

$1 Million - $5 Million

$500,001 - $1 Million

$250,001 - $500,000

$100,001 - $250,000

Below $100,000

None - all volunteer

0%   5%   10%   15%   20%   25%   30%   35%

Where is your organization located? If more than one location, select your headquarters' location.

Northwestern 9.23%

Midwestern 18.57%

Northeastern 27.45%

Mid-Atlantic 14.53%

Western 13.26%

Southwestern 8.19%

Southern 6%

Canadian 2.19%

Other International 0.58%

What is your job category?

About how long have you been employed at your current organization?

| | 0% | 5% | 10% | 15% | 20% | 25% | 30% | 35% |

- More than 10 years
- 5 - 10 years
- 2 - 5 years
- 1 - 2 years
- Less than one year

About NTEN

We envision a more just and engaged world where all nonprofits use technology skillfully and confidently to meet community needs and fulfill their missions. We support organizations by convening the nonprofit community, offering professional credentials and training, and facilitating an open exchange of ideas.

NTEN reports support the growth and development of the sector through benchmarking the technology goals and challenges of nonprofits, and identifying areas of need. For more, visit **nten.org/reports.**

About Cornerstone

Cornerstone is pioneering solutions to help nonprofit organizations realize the potential of the modern workforce. As a global leader in cloud-based learning and human capital management software, Cornerstone is designed to enable a lifetime of learning and development that is fundamental to the growth of your nonprofit and its employees, volunteers and members. For more, visit **csod.com/nonprofit.**