

# Civic Nonprofit Agenda

**Civic Nonprofit (CNP) Identity Statement:** The Civic Nonprofit is a demonstration of the Minnesota Active Citizenship Initiative. It produces a new approach to policy making—*civic policy making*—within the nonprofit sector that builds the civic imagination, capacity, and infrastructure needed to be a just society.

CNP does this in partnership with other demonstrations of the Minnesota Active Citizenship Initiative. (MACI)

**Civic:** The work of citizens. “Civic” is a qualifier that indicates that our work is framed in the tension between democratic principles and develops the capacity of the *populous* to govern for the good of the whole within that tension.

**Govern:** To rule over by right of authority; to exercise a directing or restraining influence over; to guide; to define problems, contribute to solutions and act as a policy maker.

**Policy:** Principled course of action. Policies provide a compass for governance; they are the result of taking bearing and setting direction. They provide the basis for rewards and sanctions. Policies require continual evaluation and feedback. Individuals and institutions have policies.

**Agenda:** Plan for action. “We believe in this principled course of action (policy) and therefore we will do x, y and z (agenda).”

*We believe*

## All citizens can develop the civic capacity to govern for the common good

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*Every individual has the capacity to know what is good, to grow in that knowledge, to govern for the common good and to be a co-producer of justice in the world. In a democracy, citizenship is the role individuals have to carry out this capacity.*

### **Glossary**

#### **Common Good-**

Found in the tension between what is good for the parts and what is good for the whole. The common good is found by organizing people with diverse interests to the common obligation of active citizenship and negotiating to find mutually acceptable agreements that advance the common good.

#### **Justice-**

The right relationship among us, in alignment with transcendent principles and values and respectful of human capacity and human dignity.

#### **Self-interest-**

Literally means “self among others.” Derived from the social connections and influences that form identity. All human beings have self-interest. It is understood to be the basis for action or non-action. Civic Organizing grows *enlightened* self-interest by linking self to transcendent civic principles.

### **Because**

- A strong nonprofit sector addressing key public issues impacting the common good, is of value to Minnesota.
- There are indicators of an inability for nonprofit organizations to provide sustainable progress towards addressing challenging public problems. A case can be made that this is tied to the current approach to nonprofit governance which reflects a hierarchical and bureaucratic model for delivering services and is sustained through IRS governing codes. The result is little investment, imagination, incentive, or debate on the function of building civic capacity in the process of achieving goals and in governance.
- We continue to make huge investments in developing and proposing specific policy changes related to public issues without focusing on the governing capacity for current systems to implement them.

### **Therefore, we propose these policies:**

- Nonprofit governance is a primary policy issue.
- The sector needs a common civic purpose: developing the imagination, leadership, and infrastructure needed to govern for the common good while achieving the organization’s particular goals.
- Board, staff, and members should be accountable for establishing and sustaining a governing structure to support this purpose.
- Support is needed to develop a new civic model for nonprofit governance.