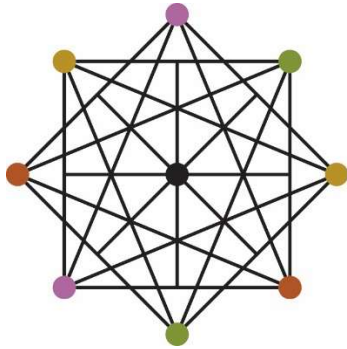




**NATIONAL
PRESERVATION
PARTNERS
NETWORK**

2026 NPPN MEMBER ORGANIZATION SURVEY

Summary Report

& Executive Summary

Prepared by the National Preservation Partners Network

47 member organizations responding · March–June 2026

Executive Summary

The 2026 NPPN Member Organization Survey gathered responses from 47 member organizations between March and June 2026, offering the Network its clearest picture yet of the field's operating conditions, funding health, staffing, governance, and priorities heading into 2027. The findings below are organized to mirror the survey itself and are intended to inform NPPN programming, event planning, and advocacy on behalf of its members.

47 Organizations responding	96% Are members served by everyday NPPN offerings	89% Employ paid staff	50% Have adopted a DEI policy
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WHO RESPONDED

Respondents were overwhelmingly local (45%) and statewide (30%) organizations, with smaller shares of regional (15%) and national (6%) groups. Nearly all (98%) are 501(c)(3) nonprofits, and most run lean: 61% report annual operating budgets under \$1 million, and the median organization has a small core staff supplemented by part-time and seasonal help.

FINANCIAL HEALTH IS STABLE, BUT FRAGILE

Seventy-nine percent of organizations say they are meeting their current operating budget, and fundraising has been growing (49%) or holding stable (38%) over the past two years for most respondents. That said, open-ended responses point to real strain underneath these numbers: reduced federal and state funding, board members reaching retirement without being replaced by equally generous successors, and heavy reliance on a small paid (or entirely volunteer) staff to sustain the work.

NPPN'S CORE OFFERINGS ARE HIGHLY VALUED — AND MEMBERS WANT MORE

Affinity Groups and the monthly newsletter are each valued by 74% of respondents, followed closely by webinars/workshops (68%). When asked what to expand, members most often pointed to deeper webinar programming, an expanded mentorship program, more infographics and data to support advocacy, and more structured, agenda-driven Affinity Group conversations.

TWO-THIRDS OF MEMBERS SUPPORT CONSOLIDATING NPPN IN-PERSON EVENTS

Opinion is close to a three-way tie on whether to keep separate fall and spring convenings or combine them into a single annual event: 36% prefer one combined event in the spring, 32% prefer combining in the fall, and 32% prefer keeping both events. The real question is less about whether to consolidate than about when — cost and staff capacity to travel are the dominant factors cited in open-ended responses.

CAPACITY AND THE POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT ARE THE TOP CHALLENGES

Capacity — staffing, time, and resources — is by far the most-cited challenge (83%), followed by the political environment at the local, state, or federal level (55%), and board development (43%) and

development pressure (43%), tied. These pressures are consistent with the field's small average staff size and heavy reliance on a handful of senior staff.

DEI PROGRESS IS REAL BUT UNEVEN

Half of organizations have adopted a DEI policy or statement, and 56% report their board and/or staff is more diverse than five years ago. Still, only 19% feel their membership or supporter base closely reflects the community they serve, and 30% have no current plans to take further DEI action — signaling room for NPPN to provide more structured guidance and peer learning in this area.

EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION CLUSTERS IN THE \$75K-\$149K RANGE

Among the 39 organizations that shared confidential salary data, the highest-paid staff member — typically the Executive Director — most often earns between \$100k and \$124k (31%), with 59% falling somewhere between \$75k and \$149k. Compensation compresses quickly further down the staff ladder, with fifth-highest-paid roles (often part-time or entry-level) frequently earning under \$60k.

PRESERVATION'S STORY IS SHIFTING TOWARD PEOPLE, NOT JUST BUILDINGS

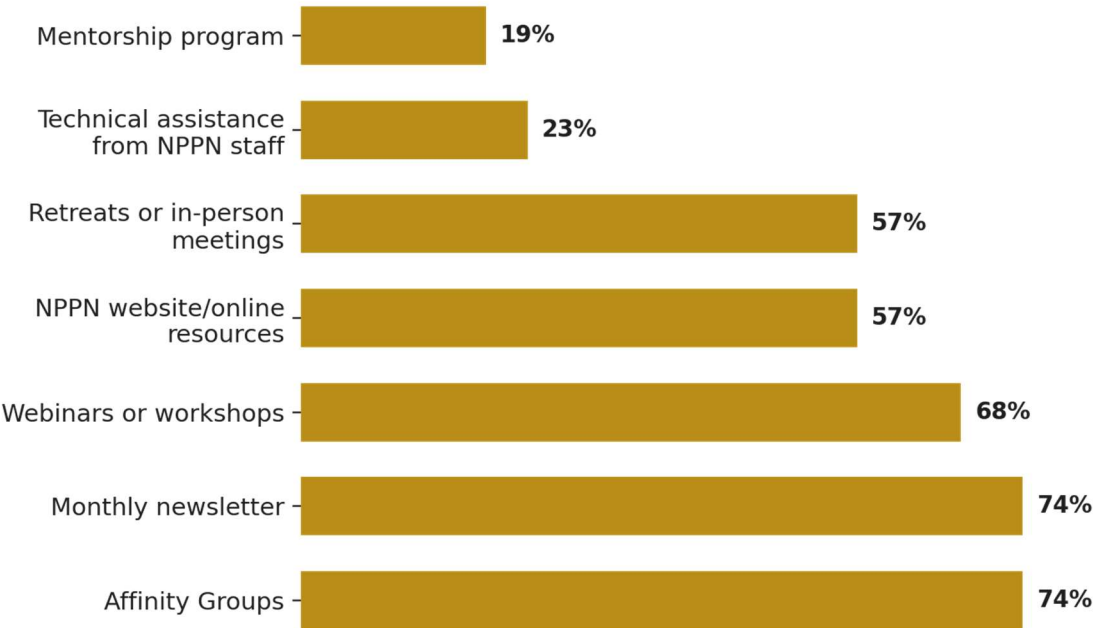
Across dozens of open-ended responses, a consistent theme emerged: organizations are reframing preservation around housing, affordability, community identity, and inclusion rather than architectural significance alone. Many described actively adapting strategic plans, programs, and messaging to meet this shift, while others flagged funding cuts and a challenging political climate as headwinds to that evolution.

About This Survey

NPPN fielded the 2026 NPPN Member Organization Survey to its membership between March 10 and June 15, 2026, using an online questionnaire. Forty-seven organizations completed the survey; 45 identified as current NPPN members, one indicated they were not a member, and one was unsure. Not every respondent answered every question — answered/skipped counts are noted where relevant — so subtotals vary by question. Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole point and may not always total 100% due to rounding or multi-select questions.

NPPN Membership & Engagement

Respondents are engaged users of NPPN programming, with Affinity Groups and the monthly newsletter standing out as the most valued offerings.

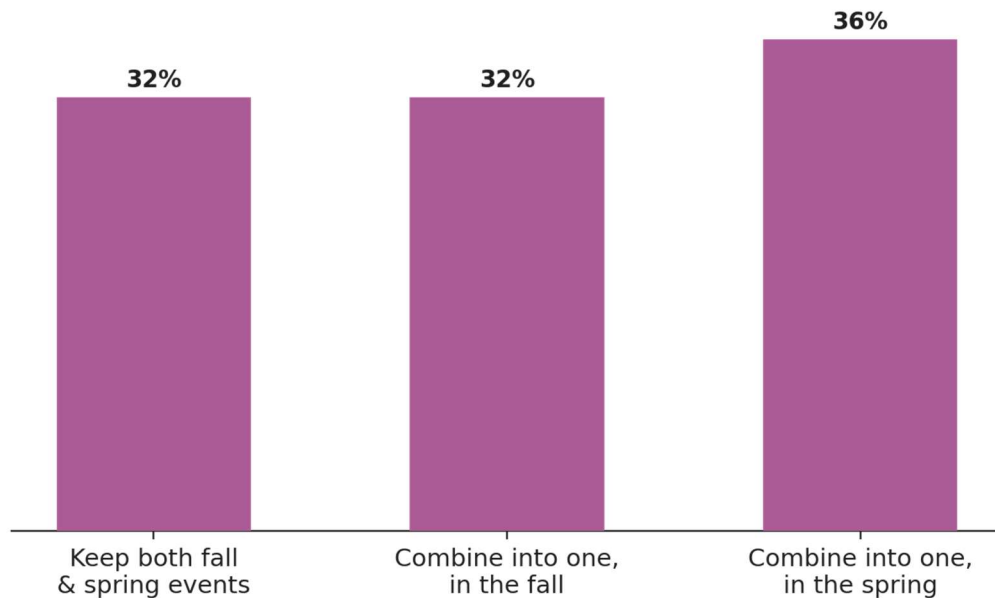


Q5. NPPN activities or resources currently found valuable (% of 47 respondents, multi-select)

"I am thrilled about the opportunities available through NPPN, I don't think there needs to be an expansion. I am so grateful to have NPPN in our corner!"

PREFERENCES FOR NATIONAL CONVENINGS

NPPN has historically held both a Fall Convening and a Spring Retreat, alongside a National Preservation Easement Summit and a National Historic Properties Redevelopment Programs (HPRP) Summit. Looking to 2027 and beyond, opinion is closely split three ways:

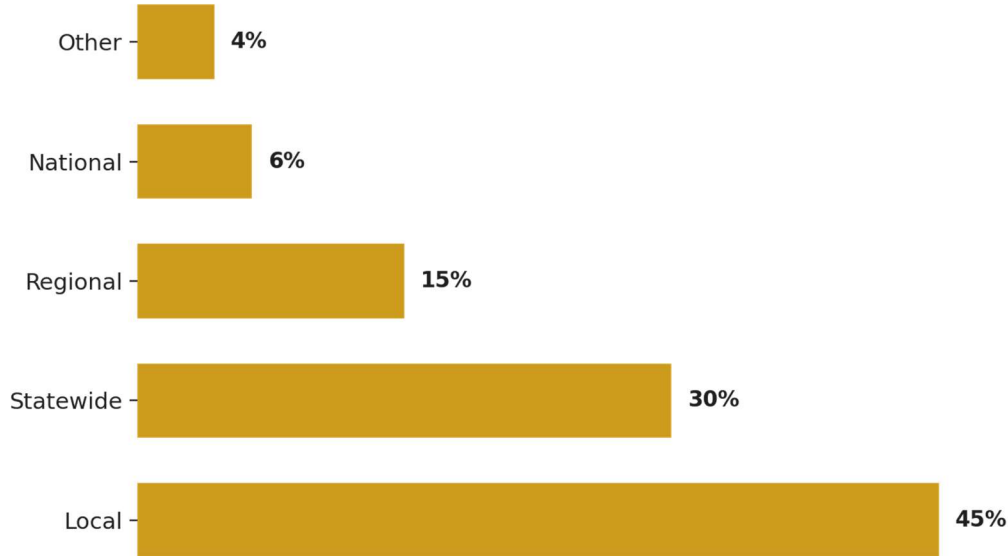


Q7. Preference for future national convenings (% of 47 respondents)

Sixty-eight percent of respondents favored shifting from two in-person NPPN events per year to one in-person event per year.

The 14 write-in responses were dominated by cost and travel-time concerns — several respondents noted they can only realistically attend one national event per year, and multiple suggested co-locating with the National Trust's PastForward conference or similar gatherings to reduce travel costs.

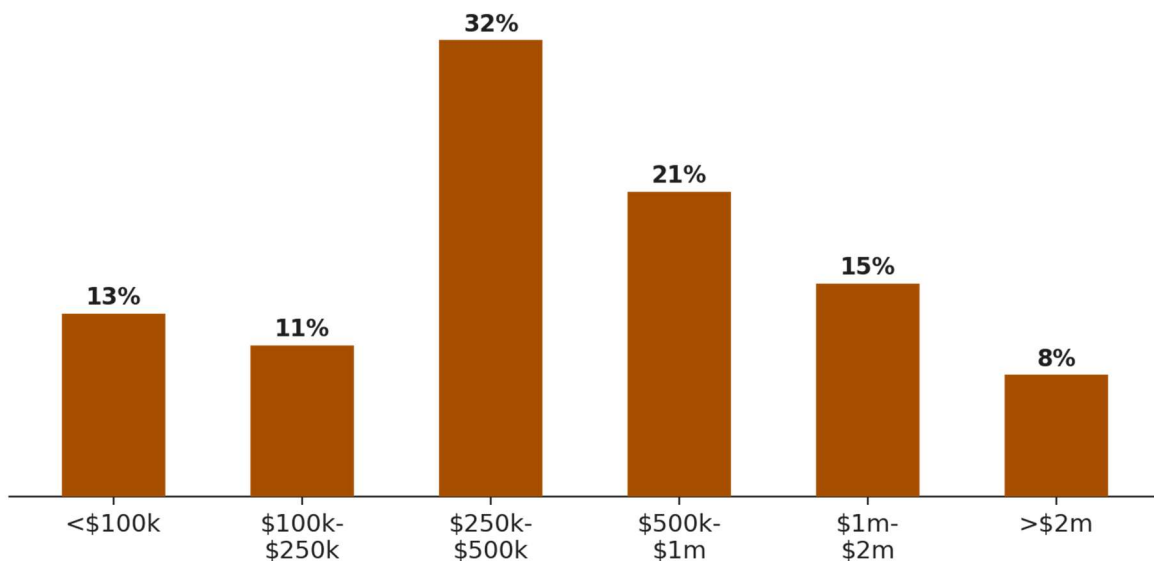
Organizational Profile



Q8. What type of organization are you? (% of 47 respondents)

Ninety-eight percent of respondents are 501(c)(3) nonprofits (one respondent identified as a government office). Among the 34 organizations that are membership-based, most (59%) report between 100 and 999 members; 28% of respondents said they are not membership-based at all.

OPERATING BUDGETS

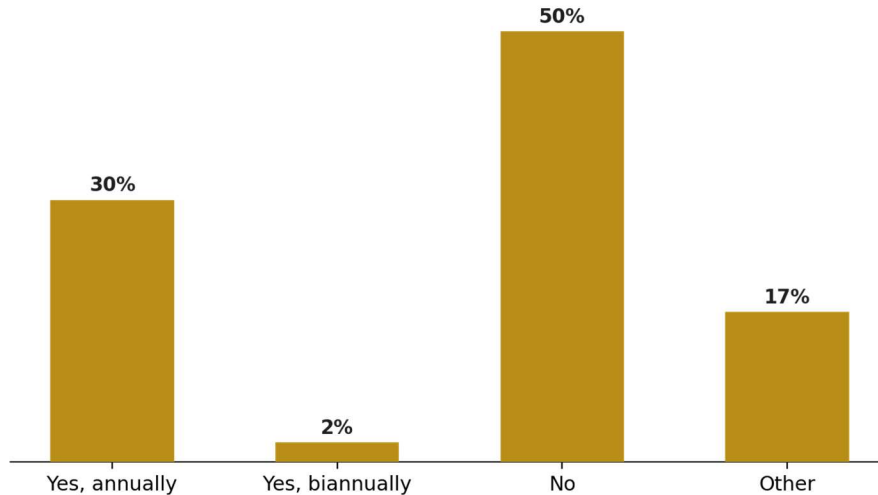


Q11. Most recent fiscal year operating budget (% of 47 respondents)

Budgets skew modest: 61% of organizations operate on less than \$1 million annually, and just 8.5% report budgets above \$2 million. Despite these lean budgets, 79% say they are meeting their current operating budget, 11% are exceeding it, and 11% are not currently meeting it.

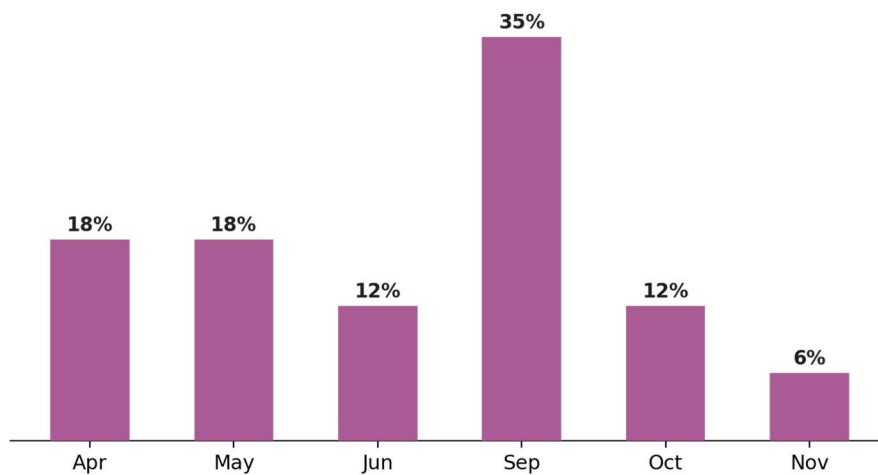
PRESERVATION EDUCATION CONFERENCES

Half of respondents (50%) do not hold a regular, full-day-or-longer preservation education conference. Thirty percent hold one annually, and a further 17% offered a write-in answer — most describing a conference held in partnership with their SHPO or another organization, one just launching its first conference this year, and one shifting from an annual to a biannual model.



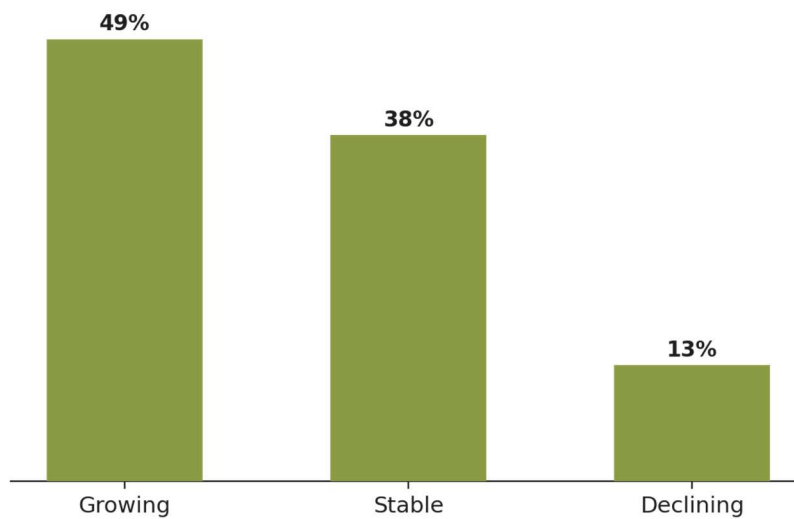
Q19. Does your organization hold a regular preservation education conference? (% of 46 respondents)

Among the 17 organizations that specified timing, conferences cluster in September (35%), with April and May each accounting for 18%. A handful of respondents noted their timing varies by year or by regional host availability.



Q20. If yes, in what month is it generally held? (% of 17 respondents who specified a single month)

Finances & Fundraising



Q14. Fundraising trend over the past two years (% of 47 respondents)

WHAT'S DRIVING GROWTH

Among the 23 organizations reporting growing fundraising, the most common drivers were dedicated development staff, working with fundraising consultants, capital campaigns, and growing individual-donor bases fueled by increased community visibility and programming.

"We had a capital campaign and that has put us on the map with donors, and our annual appeal was amazing the following [year]."

WHAT'S DRIVING DECLINE

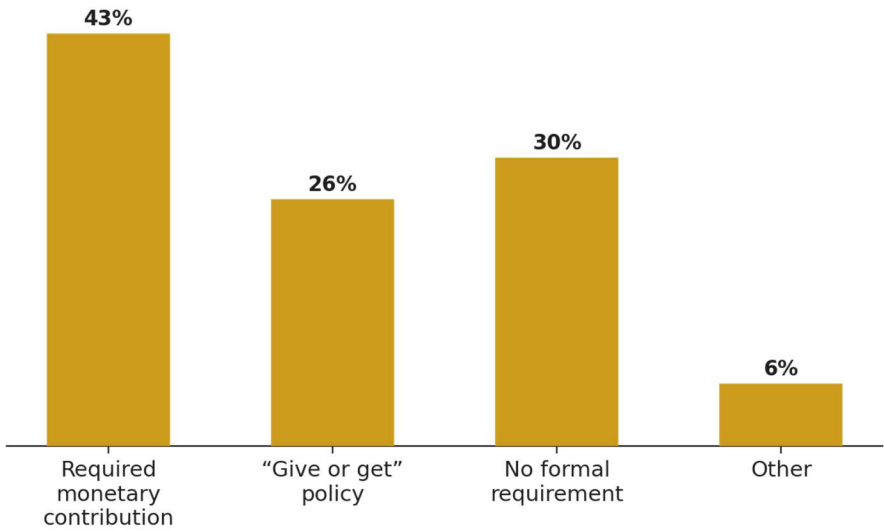
The six organizations reporting declining fundraising most often cited reduced federal and state funding, fiscal uncertainty at the state and federal level, retirement of longtime major-donor board members, and shrinking membership revenue.

"Retirement of longstanding board members who give a lot, replaced by new ones who don't give nearly to the old-guard level."

FUNDING SOURCES

When asked to rank their largest funding sources, respondents most often placed individual donors (30%) and grants (27%) at the top, followed by earned income (23%) and memberships (22%). As a second-largest source, individual donors (25%) and sponsorships (21%) were most common — suggesting a fairly diversified funding mix across the field rather than reliance on any single source.

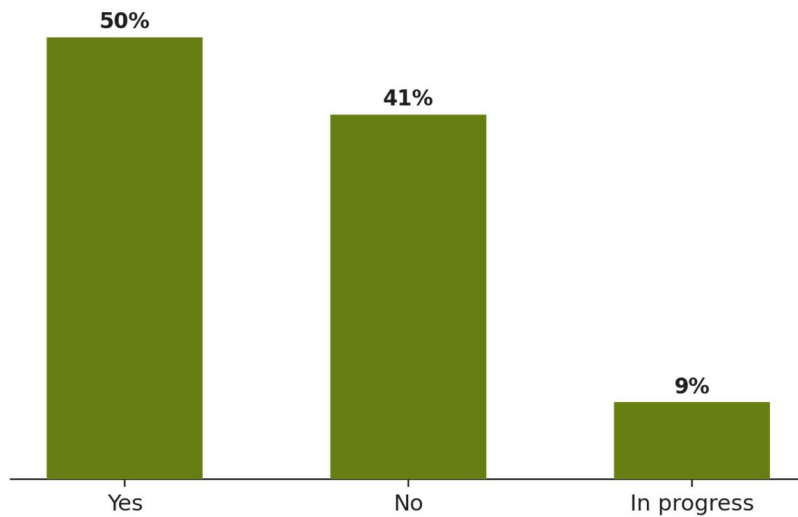
BOARD GIVING



Q16. Does your organization have a board giving expectation? (% of 47 respondents)

Among organizations with a giving expectation, dollar thresholds varied widely — from “give what you can” and membership-level minimums (as low as \$35) to fixed asks of \$500, \$1,000, or \$2,500 per board member per year. On average, respondents estimate that 80% of their board meets the give-or-get expectation, though several noted the policy exists on paper but is not strictly enforced.

Governance, Diversity & Inclusion

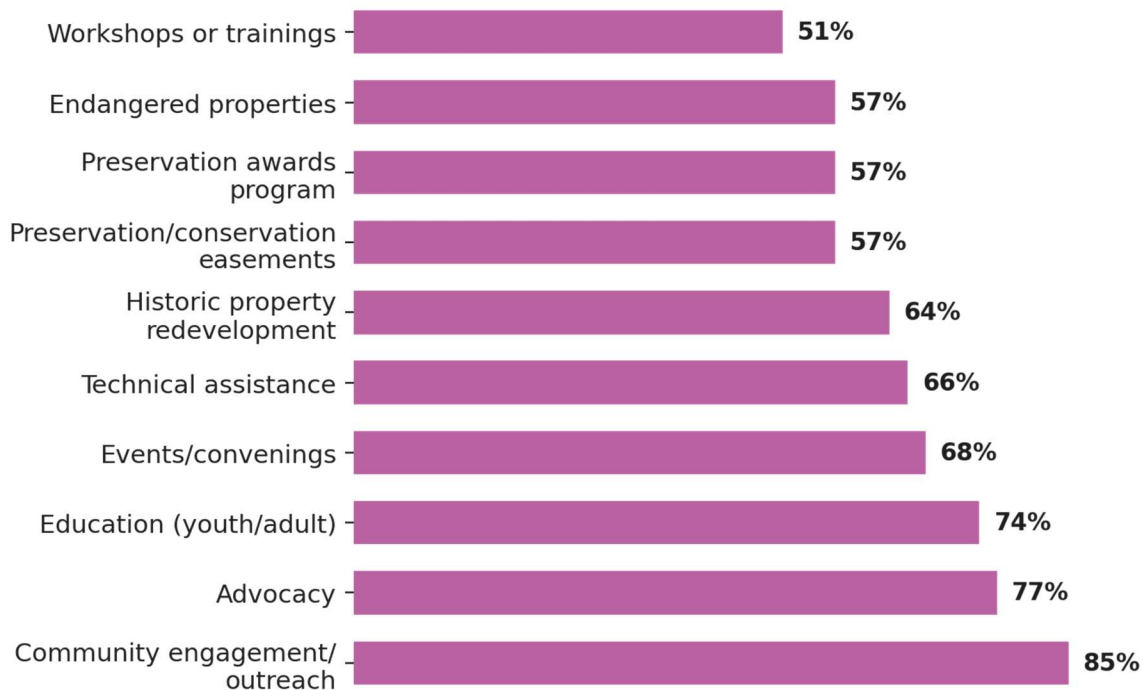


Q21. Has your organization adopted a DEI policy or statement? (% of 46 respondents)

QUESTION	RESPONSE	ANSWER
More diverse/inclusive than 5 years ago	56%	Yes
	29%	No
	16%	Not sure
Planning DEI actions in the coming year	34%	Yes
	30%	No
	36%	Exploring options
Membership/supporters reflect community served	19%	Yes, closely
	51%	Somewhat
	28%	Less than we would like

Taken together, these results suggest steady but incomplete progress: half of organizations have formalized DEI commitments and a majority report real change in board/staff composition, yet fewer than one in five feel their supporter base closely mirrors the community they serve, and 30% have no current plans for further action — an area where NPPN peer-learning and resources could add the most value.

Program Areas & Expertise



Q25. Top 10 organizational program areas (% of 47 respondents, multi-select)

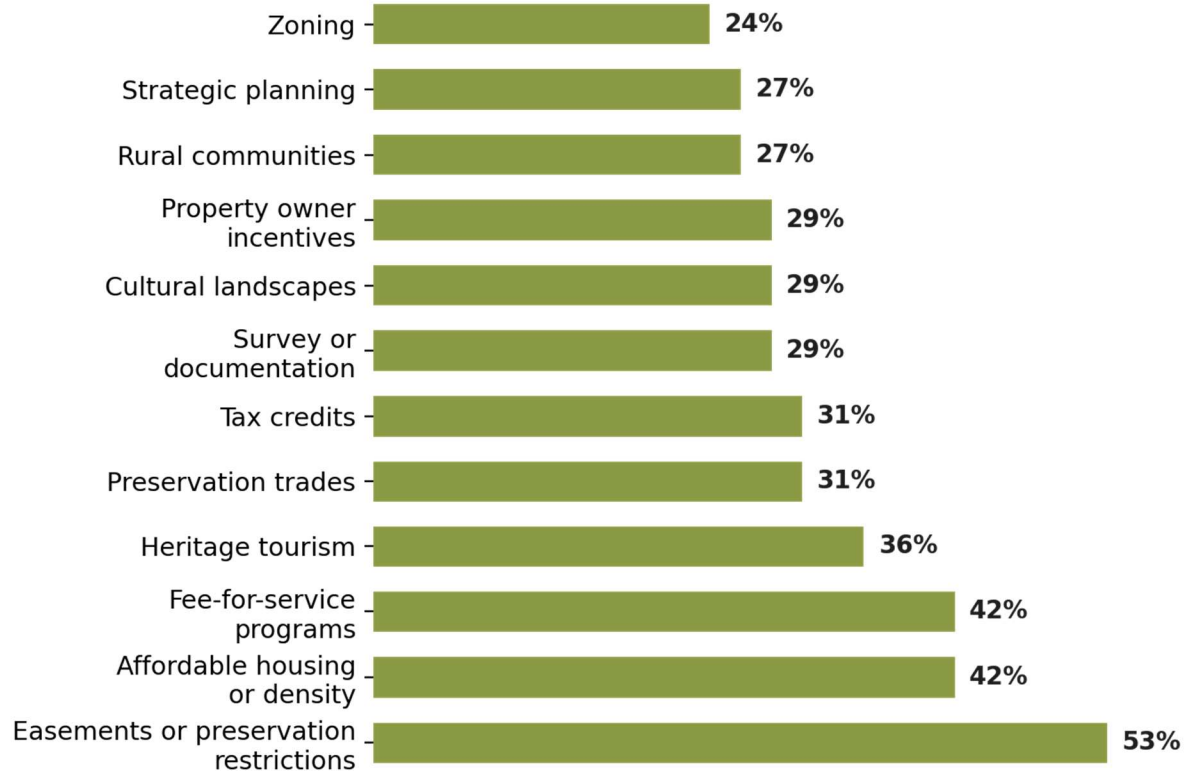
Beyond the top 10 shown above, meaningful shares of respondents also work in heritage tourism (36%), preservation trades/workforce development (23%), research/documentation/GIS (26%), and historic site management (32%) — underscoring the breadth of the field beyond traditional advocacy and easements.

EXPERTISE MEMBERS ARE WILLING TO SHARE

Forty of 47 respondents indicated a willingness to share expertise with fellow members via webinars, conference sessions, newsletter articles, or one-on-one consultation. Advocacy (50%), community engagement (43%), and historic property redevelopment (33%) were the most commonly offered topics — a ready-made speaker and mentor pool NPPN can draw on for future programming.

CURRENT FOCUS AREAS

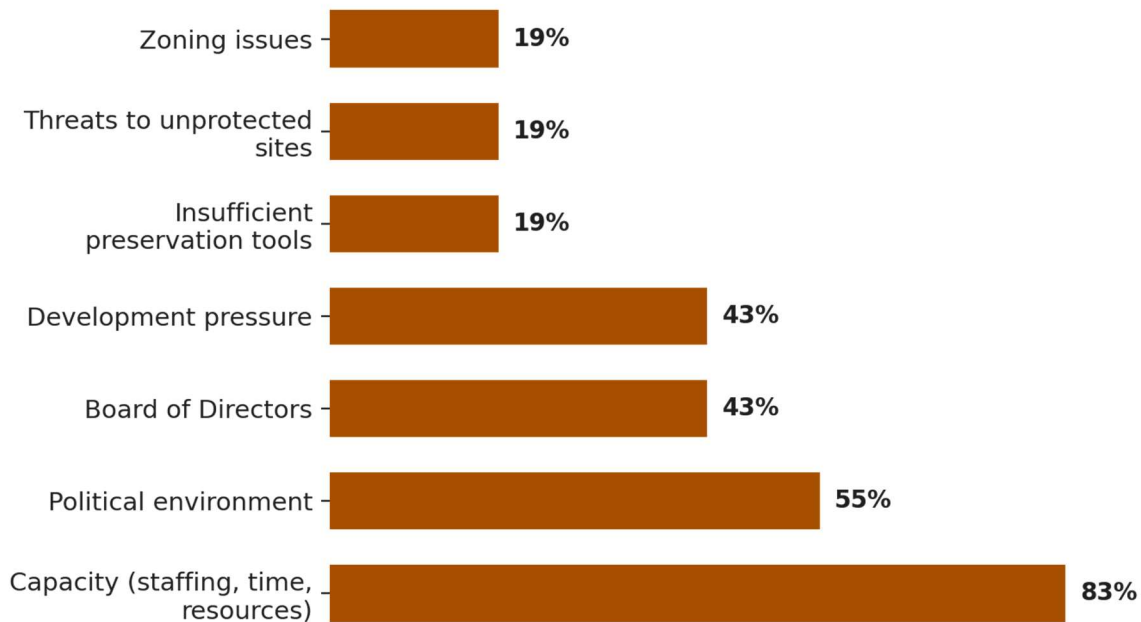
Separate from their core program areas, respondents were asked which specific topical areas they are actively working in today. Forty-five of 47 responded. Easements or preservation restrictions (53%) top the list, followed by affordable housing or density (42%) and fee-for-service programs (42%) — reflecting how directly preservation organizations are now engaging with housing policy and earned-revenue models alongside traditional easement work.



Q31. Is your organization currently working in any of the following areas? (Top 12 of 20, % of 45 respondents, multi-select)

Beyond the top 12 shown above, respondents also reported work in schools (18%), DEI initiatives (18%), modernism (18%), religious properties (22%), intangible heritage (22%), sustainability or climate resilience (22%), Main Street (13%), and public lands (2%).

Challenges & Advocacy



Q30. Biggest current challenges (% of 47 respondents, select up to 3)

LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY WINS

Twenty-three respondents shared a recent legislative or policy success. Common threads included expanded or protected state historic tax credits, new or improved local landmarking and demolition-review processes, successful pushback against harmful development proposals, and growing recognition of preservation as a tool for housing and sustainability policy.

"Ohio's governor increased our state historic tax credit from \$60m to \$75m."

"We successfully opposed [a] proposed pedestrian bridge through Civic Center Park — a clear example of what organized, informed advocacy can accomplish."

WHERE THE FIELD IS HEADED

Thirty-two organizations reflected on how preservation is changing. A dominant theme: the field is shifting from protecting architecturally significant buildings toward centering people, housing, affordability, and community identity — while organizations simultaneously navigate funding cuts and a more difficult political environment.

"Preservation is evolving from a discipline focused primarily on protecting buildings to one centered on people and their stories ... the future demands we ask whose history we're preserving, and for whom."

"With local governments cutting more staff we see their ability to support neighborhood preservation reduced, and we are actively trying to fill that gap."

Staffing & Benefits

89% Have paid staff	6.3 Avg. full-time staff	9.2 Avg. total staff	7.5 yrs Avg. ED tenure
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Eighty-nine percent of respondents (42 of 47) employ paid staff. Among those, the average organization has roughly 6.3 full-time, 2.3 part-time, and 2.3 seasonal/temporary staff, for an average total of about 9.2 employees — though the field's median organization is considerably smaller, and a number of respondents operate with just one or two staff.

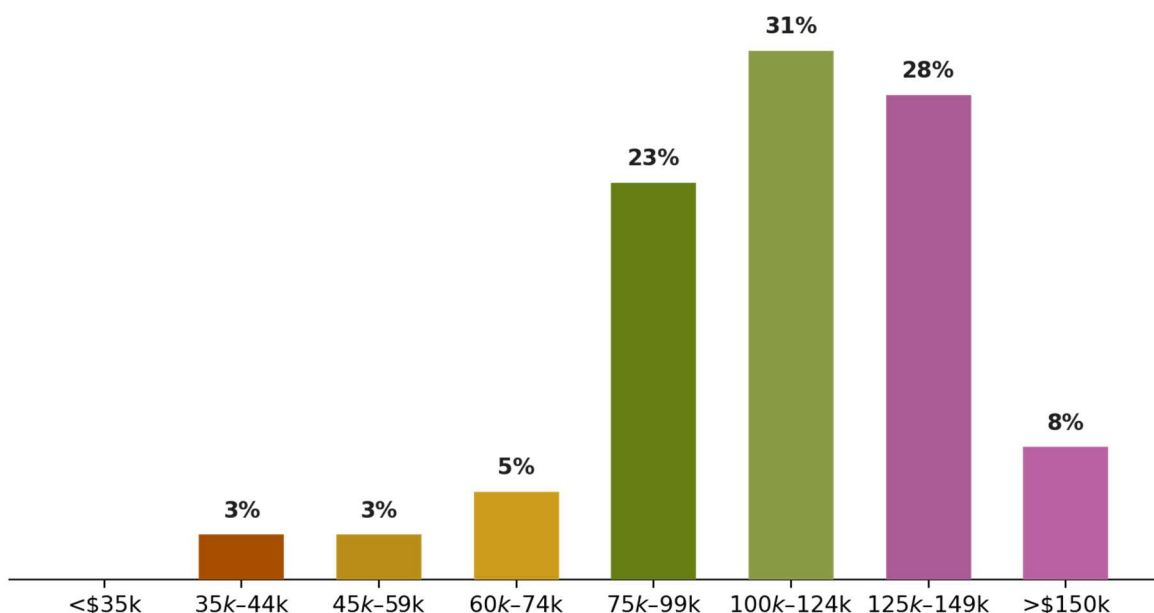
ORGANIZATIONS WITHOUT PAID STAFF

Five respondents reported having no paid staff. Among these, organizational work is most often carried by the board chair or president (2 of 5) or a board committee (1 of 5); the remaining two described a board member serving in a de facto executive director capacity. No respondent in this group relies primarily on non-board volunteers or outside contractors to carry the organization's day-to-day work.

"Board member serves as Executive Director."

COMPENSATION & SALARY RANGES

Thirty-nine of 47 respondents (8 skipped) shared confidential salary-range data for their five highest-paid employees, including the Executive Director. Because Employee 1 is overwhelmingly the President/CEO/Executive Director (95% of Employee-1 responses carried one of those two titles) and is reported as "Executive Leadership" focus 76% of the time, this position is the clearest available proxy for executive compensation across the field.

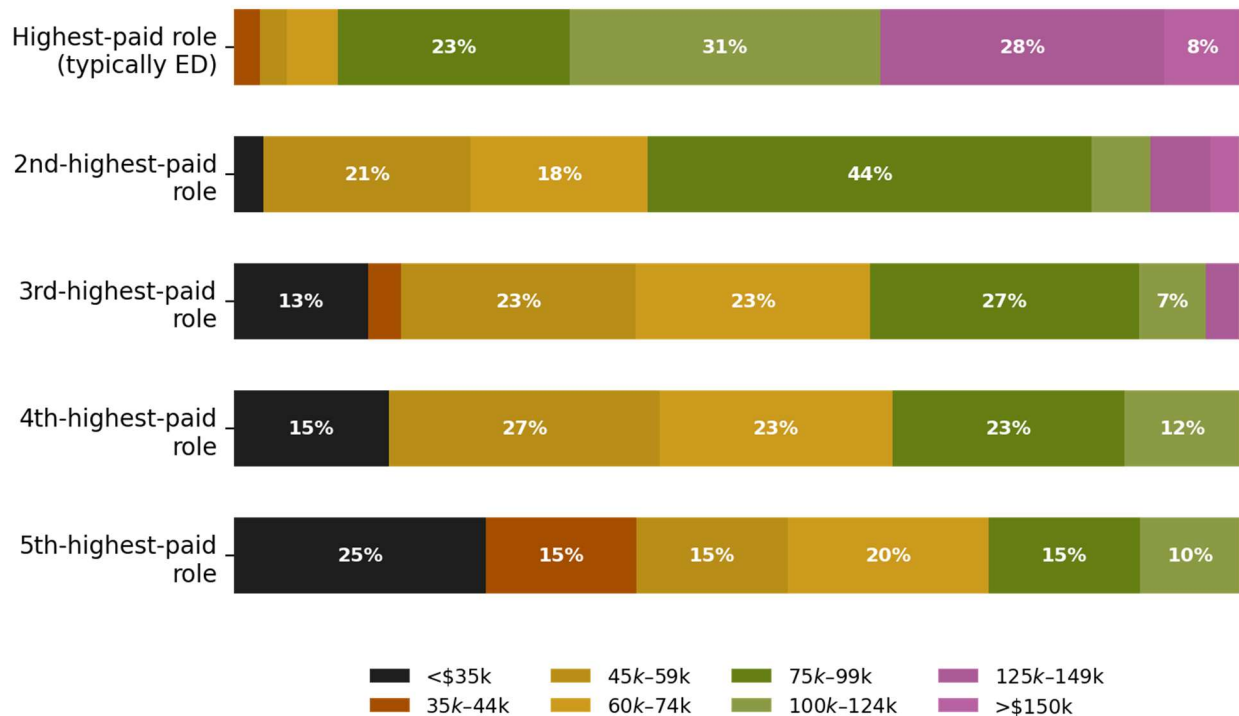


Q40. Salary range, highest-paid employee — typically the Executive Director (% of 39 respondents)

The largest single band is \$100k–\$124k (31%), closely followed by \$125k–\$149k (28%) and \$75k–\$99k (23%). Combined, 59% of top-paid staff earn between \$75k and \$149k, while 8% earn \$150k or more and just 5% earn under \$60k — pointing to a fairly concentrated, mid-range compensation band for executive leadership across NPPN's largely small and mid-sized member organizations.

COMPENSATION ACROSS THE STAFF LADDER

Salary bands compress quickly moving down the org chart. The second-highest-paid role (often a Director-level position, 44% Director/Associate Director/Manager combined) clusters most heavily in the \$75k–\$99k band, while the third-, fourth-, and fifth-highest-paid roles are increasingly concentrated below \$75k — with a quarter of fifth-highest-paid staff earning under \$35k, consistent with entry-level, part-time, or seasonal positions (45% of Employee 5 responses were part-time, versus just 3% for Employee 1).



Q40. Salary range distribution by role rank, five highest-paid employees (% of respondents reporting each role)

ROLE FOCUS BY RANK

ROLE RANK	MOST COMMON TITLE	MOST COMMON FOCUS	EMPLOYMENT STATUS
Highest-paid (n=39)	President/CEO/ED (26%), Executive Director (69%)	Executive Leadership (76%)	97% full-time
2nd-highest-paid (n=34)	Director (44%), Manager (26%), Associate Director (15%)	Finance/Operations (26%), Fundraising (18%)	94% full-time
3rd-highest-paid (n=30)	Director (30%), Manager (27%), Associate Director (10%)	Finance/Operations (13%), Fundraising (13%)	83% full-time
4th-highest-paid (n=26)	Director (31%), Manager (27%)	Fundraising (23%), Finance/Operations (15%)	92% full-time
5th-highest-paid (n=20)	Director (30%), Manager (20%)	Finance/Operations (20%), Education (15%)	55% full-time

The pattern suggests a fairly consistent leadership structure across the field: a full-time Executive Director, supported by one or two full-time Director- or Manager-level staff focused on finance/operations and fundraising, with more junior or part-time roles — often in education or program delivery — rounding out the top five.

EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP TENURE

Current executive directors (or board presidents, where there is no ED) have served an average of 7.5 years, with a median of 5 years — pointing to a reasonably stable leadership layer across the field, alongside a meaningful cohort of EDs in their first year.

BENEFITS OFFERED

Paid time off is nearly universal (94% employer-provided among those offering it), and life, dental, vision, and health insurance are each offered by roughly half of employers who provide benefits, typically employer-paid or shared. Remote and hybrid work is common: 54% of organizations with a policy offer a hybrid arrangement and 12% are fully remote, though only 10% provide an at-home stipend. A recurring theme in write-in responses was interest in NPPN exploring a group health-insurance option for members.

In Members' Own Words

"NPPN is such an important part of the preservation community!"

"We're grateful for what NPPN does to connect and elevate this field, and we hope this feedback is useful as you continue to evolve the survey." — Historic Denver, Inc.