

# Capacity Map

## A practical tool for nonprofit leaders

Many nonprofits feel stretched not because they lack commitment or effort, but because the work they've taken on has quietly outgrown the organization's actual capacity.

This Capacity Map is designed to help leaders make the invisible visible. It creates space to look honestly at what your organization is carrying today, where strain is showing up, and what tradeoffs may need to be named.

This is not about doing less for the sake of it. It's about aligning work with reality so impact can be sustained.

### How to use the Capacity Map

Use this tool when:

- Everything feels urgent
- Your team is busy but progress feels slow
- Leaders are holding too much context or decision-making
- Burnout feels close, or already present

This is a reflection and planning tool. There are no right answers—only clearer ones.

### Step 1: Name the Current Work

List the major areas of work your organization is currently responsible for.

- Core programs and services
- Administrative and compliance requirements
- Fundraising and revenue activities
- Partnerships and external commitments
- Internal leadership and management work
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## **Step 2: Identify Who Is Carrying the Load**

For each area of work, reflect on where responsibility actually sits.

- One person carries most of it
- Responsibility is shared across a team
- Ownership is unclear or informal
- Work frequently routes back to leadership

**Where work concentrates is often where strain shows up first.**

## **Step 3: Assess Capacity Honestly**

For each major area of work, ask:

- Do we have enough time and attention to do this well?
- Do we have the right skills and experience in place?
- Are we relying on people to consistently stretch or absorb extra work?

**Capacity gaps often show up as urgency, rework, or quiet exhaustion.**

## **Step 4: Surface the Hidden Costs**

Some costs don't appear in budgets but still matter.

- What important work is being delayed or deprioritized?
- Where are mistakes, rework, or dropped balls becoming common?
- What stress or burnout signals are we noticing?

**Naming these costs allows leaders to respond before damage is done.**

## Step 5: Clarify What Needs to Change

Based on what you see, consider:

- What work may need to pause, slow down, or stop
- What responsibilities should be redistributed or delegated
- What systems or supports need strengthening
- What expectations may need to be reset

Not every change requires growth. Many require clarity.

## Final reflection

If the only way work gets done is through constant urgency or personal sacrifice, the organization is operating beyond its true capacity.

Sustainable impact comes from aligning work with people, systems, and reality—not from asking more of already stretched teams.

