



GOODMAN NONPROFIT FELLOWSHIP

2026-2027

Overview

This year-long program focuses on professional leadership development for a cohort of nonprofit leaders who gather monthly, enhance their skills in nonprofit management, grow as leaders and build relationships with each other. Monthly educational modules are led by experts on each topic area and include substantial time for facilitated reflection and discussion about how to pragmatically implement lessons learned. Content is intended to be relevant for new executive directors as well as more veteran executive directors looking to strengthen their skills.

The inaugural cohort is designed for current executive directors who:

- Lead 501(c)3 nonprofit organizations in the Greater Madison area (Dane, Columbia, Green, Iowa and Sauk counties),
- Have organizations with more than one paid employee, and
- Are committed to growing their skills and capacity and helping create a supportive community with other leaders.

Sessions will run from September 2026 to June 2027 and will be held at various locations in and around Madison. Tuition for the program is \$1,000. (Note: the cost of the program is heavily reduced thanks to generous donors. Some additional scholarship funds are available).

The Goodman Nonprofit Center is committed to providing a high-quality educational experience that delivers practical knowledge nonprofit leaders can implement in their work. We are also committed to creating a safe, creative and positive learning environment that allows participants to connect meaningfully with other leaders and have access to resources that will be valuable during the fellowship and beyond. Program alumni also will have opportunities to engage after completing the Fellowship.

We expect participants to commit an average of 12 hours a month – nine hours of formal in-person coursework and three hours of work outside – for a total of 120 hours over the course of the fellowship program. We also expect that participants will actively contribute to building a

positive learning community for themselves and fellow cohort members by committing to the following:

- Being present and prepared for all scheduled sessions.
- Approaching the experience with curiosity, openness, respect and generosity for each other's expertise, wisdom, lived experience and humanity.
- Making space and taking space by being mindful of how much they speak and the role power and privilege play in our interactions.
- Being open to growth and discomfort and allowing each other to make mistakes without judgement or defensiveness.
- Honor confidentiality by ensuring what is said stays within the group but what's learned leaves.

Session Descriptions and Schedule

1. PROGRAM ORIENTATION AND BEING A LEADER – September 2026

Wednesday 9/23, noon to 5:00 p.m. (lunch provided)

Thursday 9/24, 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Orientation will focus on discussing the complex role of a nonprofit leader, beginning to build relationships with fellow cohort members, explaining what to expect in the coming year and discussing your hopes for the program. We will also zoom out and think about the key features of the broader nonprofit sector.

We will take time to reflect on your journey thus far as a leader, guide you in a self-assessment of skills, and discuss various forms of effective leadership. This session will set the stage for exploring how each subsequent session and skill set is integrated into your role as a leader. We will discuss dynamics and challenges that the cohort will continue to explore throughout the fellowship, such as managing stress, navigating power dynamics, and being a public figure.

2. CRAFTING A POWERFUL VALUE PROPOSITION FOR YOUR NONPROFIT AND PROGRAMS TO MATCH – October 2026

Wednesday 10/14, noon to 5:00 p.m. (lunch provided)

Thursday 10/15, 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

In Session 2, you will learn how to define and communicate a compelling value proposition for your organization. We will explore key elements of an effective value proposition, including identifying target audiences, articulating impact and differentiating yourself from other organizations. You will work to develop a clear, actionable statement that conveys your nonprofit's unique value to beneficiaries, funders, partners and the community. The instructor

will then guide you in a process to evaluate how well existing programs align with that value proposition and ways you could modify programming to better align.

3. GOVERNANCE AND BOARD MANAGEMENT – November 2026

Wednesday 11/18, noon to 5:00 p.m. (lunch provided)

Thursday 11/19, 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Session 3 will examine the roles and responsibilities of boards and their relationship to staff. Gain tools for strengthening relationships with board members and increasing board effectiveness.

The instructor will cover:

- The role and responsibilities of the board, including the fiduciary, strategic and generative roles for broader mission impact.
- Establishing a clear and balanced division of responsibilities and decision-making between you and the board and building an effective working relationship between staff and board.
- Proven practices for board recruitment, development and member engagement, and board assessment.

4. FINANCIAL LEADERSHIP – December 2026

Wednesday 12/9, noon to 5:00 p.m. (lunch provided)

Thursday 12/10, 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

In Session 4, we will analyze the principles of financial leadership for nonprofits and how to balance your strategy for mission impact with your financial strategy.

The instructor will cover:

- Understanding your organization's business model and engaging staff and board in understanding it too.
- Building and improving internal financial infrastructure – adequate staffing, internal controls, segregation of accounting duties – to ensure accuracy and meaningful financial reporting.
- Reviewing key financial statements, such as balance sheets and income statements, and how to educate and engage staff and board using these tools.
- Assessing organizational financial health by reviewing cash flow, reserves, revenue strategies, and expenses.
- Budgeting strategically and planning for both financial and programmatic sustainability.

5. MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS – January 2027

Wednesday 1/13, noon to 5:00 p.m. (lunch provided)

Thursday 1/14, 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

In Session 5, we will explore how to develop marketing and communications strategies. We will identify effective approaches for communicating with different constituencies.

During the session, we will work through:

- Defining your various audiences, the purpose of outreach and communication with those audiences and creating compelling messages with clear calls to action for those audiences.
- Brand development and implementation practices that best communicate and amplify your organization's mission, vision, value proposition and results.
- Identifying the best modes of communication to expand and deepen your network of supporters, including considerations for social media usage.
- Compelling and ethical storytelling best practices to balance your organization's marketing needs of with the dignity of clients and the communities you serve.

6. FUNDRAISING AND RESOURCING THE MISSION – February 2027

Wednesday 2/10, noon to 5:00 p.m. (lunch provided)

Thursday 2/11, 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

In Session 6, we will examine effective fundraising practices in ways that are rooted in your organization's mission, including the features of ethical fundraising and how to create successful fundraising strategies that involve both staff and volunteers.

Specifically, we will look at:

- Models of an effective fundraising and development team, whatever your organization's size.
- Adopting the right donor database.
- Setting fundraising goals, policies and accountability practices.
- Building a thriving culture of philanthropy rooted in authentic relationships.
- Creating a feasible and strategic annual development plan for appropriately diverse range of funding sources.
- Effectively engaging staff, donors, board and volunteers in the fundraising process.
- Stewarding and engaging your donors for retention and enhanced giving.

7. HUMAN RESOURCES AND ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE – March 2027

Wednesday 3/10, noon to 5:00 p.m. (lunch provided)

Thursday 3/11, 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

In Session 7, we will examine fundamental aspects of building a thriving organizational culture and effectively managing a team. The module will be split into two parts.

- **Part 1: Essential Human Resources Practices.** Topics include recruitment and onboarding, performance management, employee development and retention, legal compliance, and policies and procedures in a nonprofit context.
- **Part 2: Cultivating a Healthy, Inclusive and Productive Organizational Culture.** Topics include effective communication and collaboration, leadership's role in shaping culture, balancing productivity with employee well-being, and creating an inclusive and equitable workplace where everyone feels valued. You will learn practical strategies to create an environment and align staff activities with your organization's mission, values and goals, ensuring long-term success and engagement.

8. ADVOCACY AND COLLECTIVE IMPACT – April 2027

Wednesday 4/14, noon to 5:00 p.m. (lunch provided)

Thursday 4/15, 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Explore why advocacy is so important to nonprofit work, the role of public funding in the nonprofit sector, and how public policies support or limit your ability to achieve your mission. This session will dispel myths about nonprofits and advocacy and demonstrate practical and achievable ways for nonprofits to engage in advocacy and organizing for collective impact.

The instructor will cover:

- The basic rules for nonprofit advocacy and the difference between advocacy and lobbying.
- Effective strategies of advocacy for any 501(c)3 organization.
- The connections between general nonprofit communications and advocacy work.
- How to engage your board, volunteers, donors and other supporters in advocacy.
- Opportunities to join, strengthen or form coalitions for broader and deeper mission impact work.

9. STRATEGY AND EVALUATION – May 2027

Wednesday 5/12, noon to 5:00 p.m. (lunch provided)

Thursday 5/13, 8:30 a.m. 12:30 p.m.

In Session 9, we will explore effective practices in strategic and evaluative thinking and how to better align specific program activities with longer-term strategies. We will learn how to develop feasible processes for evaluating progress and reporting to constituents and funders.

Specifically, we will learn:

- The difference between strategy and tactics.
- How to develop goals aligned with a long-term vision and create actionable plans to maximize impact.

- How to use tools such as logic models or theories of change that incorporate both strategy and evaluation, and how to do so in a way that is feasible within an organization's resources.
- How to create a culture of learning and continuous improvement.

10. CELEBRATION AND REFLECTION – June 2027

Wednesday 6/16, noon to 5:00 p.m. (lunch provided)

Thursday 6/17, 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Time to celebrate all your hard work, learning and relationship building over the previous year! We will facilitate an in-depth conversation about the program, what worked well, what could be improved and ways to stay connected with each other and the Nonprofit Center.

There will also be more of a public celebration where fellows can connect with program supporters and funders.