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For nonprofits, raises are not out of the question

By [Leslie Kwoh/The Star-Ledger](#)

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Fundraising in the middle of a downturn might just get you a raise.

While the recession drove some New Jersey nonprofits to slash jobs and benefits last year, the overwhelming majority actually doled out slight raises, according to a report being released today.

Despite dwindling donations, three out of four nonprofits offered small pay increases "where appropriate," according to a salary study conducted by Professionals for NonProfits, a Manhattan-based staffing agency.

Organizations also paid more for new hires in two key areas. Salaries rose on average by 10 percent for fundraising positions, and by 7 percent for high-level finance jobs, the study found.

"Nonprofits paid for what they needed," said Gayle Brandel, the firm's president and CEO. "During this particular period of time, you needed a top team. You had to have the best, otherwise you might go under."

That's not to say the sector was immune to the economic downturn. The study, which polled 332 nonprofits from November to January, found that 31 percent laid off staff, 23 percent reduced employee benefits and 15 percent cut programs. In addition, some smaller startups were forced to close altogether, Brandel said.

Nevertheless, for those that survived, salaries remained healthy.

Median pay for presidents and chief executives held steady from last year, ranging from \$120,000 for smaller nonprofits, to as high as \$250,000 for larger groups. Other high-ranking executives also fared well, including chief operating officer (\$90,000 to \$180,000) and chief financial officer (\$80,000 to \$180,000). Wages for the lowest-paid position, a fundraising assistant, ranged from \$30,000 to \$50,000.

Identical studies being released today for New York City and Washington, D.C. show similar findings, with the exception of one area: optimism.

Ninety-three percent of New York respondents said they thought the "worst is over," compared to only 39 percent in New Jersey and 32 percent in Washington, D.C.

Brandel said New York donors appear to be resurfacing in the wake of the financial crisis, whereas other regions have yet to emerge from a period of cautious spending.