CREATORS FINANCIAL

VERMONT NONPROFIT RESERVE REPORT · NOVEMBER 2026

43% of midsize Vermont nonprofits that rely on government money have less than a three-month safety net

IRS filings for Vermont nonprofits with $1 million to $10 million in revenue that get at least 30% of it from government grants.

What this report is. An analysis of the latest full year of IRS filings from 1,230 Vermont public charities with revenue up to $10 million that file the full Form 990: returns filed in 2025, most of them covering fiscal 2024.

No organization is named in this report. Organizations appear only inside groups, and no group smaller than 10 is shown.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Thin reserves, and thinnest where government money matters most

Operating reserves are an organization's unrestricted funds: money no donor or grant has tied to a specific purpose. They don't include buildings or equipment, which can't be used to pay the bills. Reserves measure how long an organization can keep its programs running when revenue is late, reduced or gone. A widely used minimum is three months of expenses. Three to six months is the commonly cited healthy range.

Here is what the filings show for Vermont nonprofits with $1 million to $10 million in revenue:

- **43%** of those that rely on government grants for at least 30% of their revenue have less than three months of reserves.
- **35%** of all of them, more than one in three, have less than three months. About one in six (**17%**) has less than one month.
- **If government grants stopped tomorrow** and all other revenue stayed the same, one in four (**26%**) of those that receive them would burn through their reserves within six months.
- **One in three (33%)** spent more than it took in during the filing year.

Across all 1,230 organizations, the bigger they get, the thinner the cushion. As Vermont nonprofits grow, their reserves get thinner and their dependence on government money rises.

The typical midsize Vermont nonprofit ($1M to $10M) holds about five months of reserves. The concern is the large group below three months, and it is larger among the organizations most exposed to changes in government funding.

> **Public filings show the past**
>
> These numbers come from returns filed in 2025, most of them covering fiscal 2024. They show where Vermont's nonprofits stood, not where they stand today. What a board needs is the current answer, and the last page of this report explains how to get it.

THE FINDING

Government-funded nonprofits hold the thinnest cushions

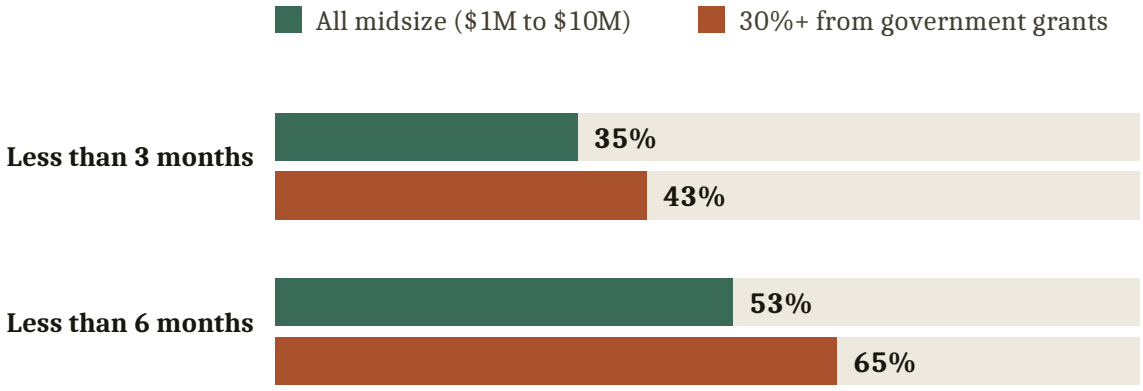
43%

of midsize Vermont nonprofits that rely on government money have less than three months of reserves

50 of 116 organizations with $1M to $10M in revenue and at least 30% of it from government grants

Nearly one in three midsize Vermont nonprofits (30%) depends on government grants for at least 30% of its revenue. Those organizations are more likely to have thin reserves. More than four in ten have less than three months, compared with just over one in three across all organizations that size.

Share of organizations below each reserve level, $1M to $10M in revenue



Of the 1,230 organizations in this report, 385 are midsize ($1M to $10M in revenue). Of those 385, 116 get at least 30% of their revenue from government grants. Three to six months is the commonly cited healthy range, so the six-month bars include organizations inside that range.

If government grants stopped

Assume government grant revenue stops entirely and everything else stays the same. Of the midsize Vermont nonprofits ($1M to $10M) that receive government grants, **26%** would run through their reserves within six months and **39%** within twelve.

This is a measure of exposure, not a forecast.

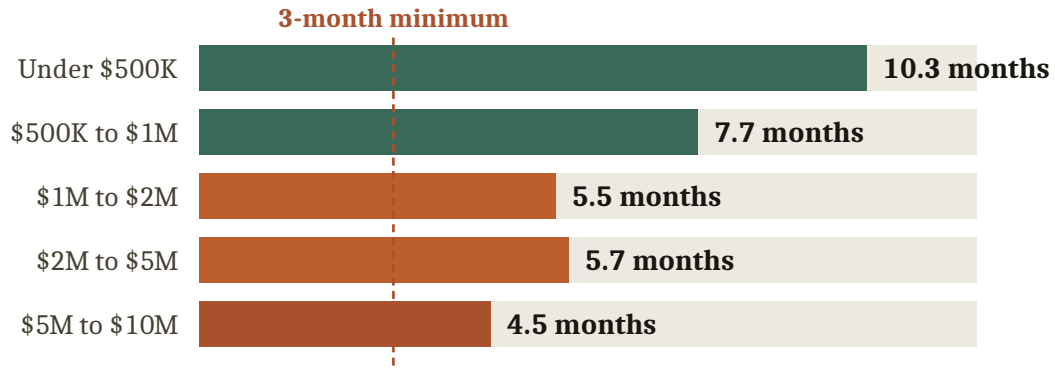
BY SIZE

The bigger the organization, the thinner the cushion

It is natural to assume larger nonprofits are on firmer ground. On reserves, the filings show the opposite. As Vermont nonprofits grow, their reserves get thinner and their dependence on government money rises. The typical organization under $500,000 holds about ten months of reserves. The typical organization between $5 million and $10 million holds four and a half.

That matters because of who stands behind the bigger organizations. When a $7 million nonprofit has to cut back, more staff are affected and more Vermonters lose a service they rely on. The organizations with the thinnest safety nets are also the ones with the most people depending on them.

Typical (median) months of reserves, by revenue



Revenue	Orgs	Median months	Under 3 months	Ran a deficit	30%+ from government
Under $500K	616	10.3	22%	40%	17%
$500K to $1M	229	7.7	26%	31%	21%
$1M to $2M	155	5.5	32%	33%	27%
$2M to $5M	154	5.7	36%	35%	30%
$5M to $10M	76	4.5	41%	30%	37%

The pattern continues above $10 million

Organizations over $10 million are not part of this report's main analysis. Run separately, 48% of them (53 of 110) have three months of reserves or less, which continues the same pattern.

BY TYPE OF ORGANIZATION

Education and human services hold the least

Among midsize Vermont nonprofits ($1M to $10M), the thinnest reserves are in education and human services, where the typical organization holds less than five months. Housing and community development and environment and animal organizations hold the most.

This is not a ranking of how well organizations are run. Different kinds of work are funded differently, carry different costs and hold different kinds of assets, and the reserve picture likely reflects that.

Type of organization	Orgs	Median months	Under 3 months
Education	50	3.6	46%
Human services	82	4.6	39%
Health	51	5.1	33%
Recreation & sports	17	5.4	41%
Arts & culture	39	5.9	33%
All other	89	6.8	31%
Housing & community development	29	7.3	34%
Environment & animals	25	7.8	24%

Midsize organizations only: $1M to $10M in revenue. Ordered from thinnest to strongest median. Youth development is not shown because it has fewer than 10 organizations. It is not folded into another row, but its organizations are included in every statewide figure. Three months is the commonly used minimum.

BY COUNTY

Reserves vary widely by county

Measured by the typical (median) organization's months of reserves, Orleans County is thinnest at 2.8 months, though with only 11 organizations it should be read with caution. Of the larger counties, Washington is thinnest at 3.6 months, followed by Lamoille (4.1) and Windsor (4.3). Chittenden, which has the most organizations, is in the middle at 6.3 months. Windham (7.8) and Addison (7.2) have the strongest reserves. All figures are for midsize organizations ($1M to $10M).

County	Orgs	Median months	Under 3 months
Orleans*	11	2.8	64%
Washington	61	3.6	46%
Lamoille	19	4.1	32%
Windsor	50	4.3	44%
Bennington	26	5.0	42%
Chittenden	110	6.3	25%
Rutland	19	6.6	37%
Caledonia	14	7.1	21%
Addison	26	7.2	31%
Windham	36	7.8	28%

*Midsize organizations only: $1M to $10M in revenue. *Orleans has only 11 organizations, so read it with caution. Orange, Franklin and Grand Isle are not shown because each has fewer than 10. Essex has none. Their organizations are included in every statewide figure.*

Why no table combines county, size and type

Each grouping is safe to publish on its own. Combined, they are not. In a state this small, a given type and size of organization in a given county can describe exactly one entity. Apart from limiting some tables to midsize organizations, every table in this report uses one grouping at a time.

LIMITS AND METHOD

What public filings can't see

A Form 990 is a tax document, not a management report. Three gaps matter most.

- **Whether the money is ready to spend.** Months of reserves counts everything an organization owns that is truly its own (cash, money it is owed, investments), minus what it owes, not counting its building. It is not a count of cash in the bank. An organization with five months of reserves might have much of that tied up in payments it is still waiting on, such as a grant payment that hasn't arrived yet. The 990 shows the total, not how much is ready to spend today.
- **Whether one funder could sink you.** The 990 reports revenue by type, such as a single total for all government grants, and that is how this report measures government dependence. It does not name individual donors or funders. So it cannot show a risk we see regularly in our own work: an organization that depends on one or two major funders. When one of them walks away, the organization can be forced to cut deeply, with layoffs and fewer people served. That risk is invisible in public data, so a board has to ask about it directly.
- **Whether you are on budget.** There is no budget on a 990. How an organization is tracking against its own plan, the most useful number a board sees each month, cannot be found in public data.

How we did this

Source. IRS Form 990 e-file data: every return filed by a Vermont 501(c)(3) public charity in calendar year 2025. Mostly fiscal 2024, some fiscal 2025.

Who is included. 1,230 charities with revenue up to $10 million that file the full Form 990. Excluded: organizations over $10 million (110), returns with zero revenue or expenses (13), private foundations, and smaller charities that file the 990-EZ or 990-N.

Months of reserves. Net assets without donor restrictions, minus the net value of buildings and equipment (plus any mortgage on them), divided by one month of total expenses. In plain English: how many months the organization could cover its expenses from money that is truly its own, not counting the building.

Government dependence. The share of revenue that comes from government grants, as reported on the 990. The 990 treats two kinds of government money differently. A grant, such as a state grant to run an afterschool program, is counted here. A payment for services, such as Medicaid paying a health center for each patient visit, is reported as earned revenue and is not counted. So for organizations paid that way, dependence on government is, if anything, understated.

Caveat. The 990 lets organizations that do not follow standard nonprofit accounting rules report their balance sheet a simpler way, without separating restricted money. 271 organizations in this report filed that way. Of those 271, nearly 9 in 10 have less than $1 million in revenue. That is allowed, but it means restricted money may be counted in their reserves, so their reserves may be overstated. Only 31 of the 385 midsize organizations filed this way, so the midsize findings are barely affected, and the size pattern holds when all 271 are removed.

Privacy. No organization is named. Groups smaller than 10 are not shown. Each table uses one grouping: size, type or county. The type and county tables are limited to midsize organizations ($1M to $10M). Any organization may request its own figures privately.

WHAT TO DO WITH THIS

The question your board needs answered

These numbers come from returns Vermont nonprofits filed with the IRS in 2025, most of them covering fiscal 2024. What your board needs to know is where you stand today. So ask your finance person one question this week:

> **If no new money came in, how many months could we cover our expenses with money that's truly ours?**

If the answer doesn't come quickly, that's the warning sign, and it usually points to how the books and reporting are set up. That's worth fixing before you need the number.

Work it out yourselves. We've put together a free one-page guide to working out the number, at creatorsfinancial.com/vermont.

Your organization is in this data

If your organization is a Vermont 501(c)(3) public charity that filed a full Form 990 in 2025 reporting revenue and expenses up to $10 million, it was included in this report. We'll send you your organization's private scorecard and walk you through it in 20 minutes, at no cost. Nobody else sees it.

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Creators Financial is the outsourced accounting department for New England nonprofits: bookkeeping, controllership, planning and forecasting, and CFO-level financial leadership.