



# H I S T O R Y

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The Nonprofit Chamber's development can be traced to 2000, when Sedgwick County Government partnered with Wichita State University's Hugo Wall School and the Self-Help Network to develop a report on "Enhancing the Delivery of Public Services by Nonprofit Agencies".

Following the report, the Sedgwick County Board of County Commissioners partnered with the Kansas Health Foundation and asked the Self-Help Network to facilitate an implementation process that would take the report's concepts and ideas to tangible results and action. A "design team" was established and comprised of nonprofits, county government officials, and other local funders to plan a process that would involve both nonprofits and funders and help build the capacity of nonprofits to meet their own needs.

In 2001 a series of retreats for nonprofits and funders to discuss how they can better work together, develop more streamlined and improved contract monitoring and reporting, best practices regarding the use of national accreditation findings, checklist for a strong nonprofit, and future joint activities that could build the capacity of nonprofits. Over **175 nonprofits and funders** participated in these retreats and started to develop the possible structure and propose of a Nonprofit Association or "Nonprofit Chamber of Service". By providing these retreats, Sedgwick County Government provided the opportunity for a "working group" of 20 local nonprofit directors and representatives to explore the development of a nonprofit association that could assist and be a voice for the nonprofit community in Wichita.

Based on the input from the "working group" of nonprofit directors and representatives two fronts to establish a nonprofit association were established. First, a conference was provided where three nationally recognized Nonprofit Associations from Colorado, Maryland, and Florida discussed their prior experiences in starting a Nonprofit Association and its benefits to the nonprofit community. Through these discussions, Sedgwick County nonprofits were able to clarify what they hoped to gain from an association and how other communities have built the capacity of nonprofits through similar nonprofit associations. Secondly, a joint committee of funders and nonprofits formed to design ways to recruit and develop an expanded pool of nonprofit board members.



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This committee developed the Leadership and Governance Development Project which has piloted a program that brings together “up and coming” business leaders to serve on the boards and committees of local nonprofits.

The initiative continued in 2003 when **over 70 nonprofits and funders** were brought together to clarify the mission and create a one-year strategic plan for the Nonprofit Chamber of Service. The group also established a set of guiding principles for the Nonprofit Chamber of Service that included:

- The Nonprofit Chamber is a neutral, independent organization;
- The Nonprofit Chamber provides services that nonprofits can not provide individually;
- The Nonprofit Chamber values the assets and capacities of nonprofits to learn from one another;
- The Nonprofit Chamber remains focused on serving nonprofits...we are not all things to all people;
- The Nonprofit Chamber of Service will remain “state of the art” providing high quality and affordable services

A group of approximately 10 nonprofit directors became incorporators for the Nonprofit Chamber and met to draft bylaws of the Nonprofit Chamber of Service, complete IRS 501 (c)(3) application, and other requirements to achieve a nonprofit status. Following the work of the incorporators, nonprofits and funders were brought together again for a final review of the bylaws and organizational activities of the Nonprofit Chamber of Service and for nonprofits to sign letters of intent to join the Nonprofit Chamber of Service. To date, over **110 nonprofits** have signed a letter of intent to join the Nonprofit Chamber of Service.

In January of 2004 the Nonprofit Chamber of Service held its first annual meeting with nearly **100 participants**. A keynote speaker from the Maryland Nonprofit Association provided an overview of the future state of nonprofits in the United States and answered questions from participants about trends in the nonprofit sector. **A board of 15 nonprofit directors** was elected and has held two board meetings to organize and begin to plan initial services.