



Center for  
Nonprofit  
Management

# HOW THE 2025 **LA Wildfires** Reshaped the Social Impact Sector



When the wildfires tore through Los Angeles in 2025, they left more than just a trail of destruction in their wake. They disrupted lives, displaced families, and reduced homes to ash. But beyond the visible devastation, the fires have also struck at the heart of the city's **social impact sector**—those organizations working tirelessly to support the most vulnerable.

Over 10% of all nonprofits in LA County were located in areas affected by wildfires or under evacuation orders. That represents a total of 4,195 nonprofits in affected regions, including 1,790 within the fire perimeter and 2,405 in at-risk areas. The impact of the wildfires extends beyond property damage, significantly disrupting nonprofits that provide critical community services. These disruptions represent a significant part of the sector, jeopardizing the safety nets for vulnerable populations. The organizations in these impacted areas represent over \$9 billion in assets and resources that provide community support and programming.

This sector plays a vital role in sustaining caring and inclusive communities through impacted neighborhoods. Nonprofits provide essential support in **critical areas like healthcare and homelessness services**, providing **medical care, shelter, mental health support, and long-term housing assistance** to vulnerable populations. With **strong community ties**, these organizations understand local needs and offer **culturally**

**responsive services**, making them indispensable in times of crisis. However, the fires severely disrupted their ability to meet these needs.

To better understand the extent of this impact, **we conducted a survey** of nonprofits in the fire regions, to assess how they might have been affected, the challenges they face, and the ways they are working toward recovery. Our survey found that, in the immediate days and weeks following the start of the fires, the sector found itself at a breaking point. Some lost offices, supplies, and even the ability to operate. Many had staff that were impacted and unable to show up for work. Others, though spared direct damage, were overwhelmed by a surge in demand for services. Families who had never needed assistance before were suddenly in crisis, seeking shelter, financial support, and even basic necessities like food and clothing. Already stretched thin, these organizations were asked to do the impossible—serve more people with fewer resources.

For many, the financial strain was immediate and severe. Events and fundraisers, once lifelines for operational costs, had to be canceled. Donations dwindled as the community itself struggled to recover. Increased expenses—emergency supplies, overtime pay, temporary staff—piled up, and some organizations faced the grim reality of shutting their doors. Others battled disruptions in funding cycles, uncertain if the support they relied on would continue in the wake of so much loss.

But perhaps the greatest challenge wasn't financial—it was emotional. The weight of the crisis bore down not just on those seeking help but on the staff and volunteers providing it. Many had lived through the fires themselves, experiencing the same fear and uncertainty as the people they served. **The need for mental health resources became just as urgent as the need for financial aid.**

As the sector looks toward recovery, its needs are clear. **Direct financial assistance is critical**—grants, donations, and emergency funds to keep programs running and staff employed. **Capacity-building resources and strategic partnerships** can strengthen resilience for future crises. And above all, **the people on the frontlines need support**—volunteers to ease staff shortages, mental health services to sustain them, and a community that recognizes their role in rebuilding what was lost.

The **social impact sector has always been the backbone of community support**, and now, more than ever, it needs that same support in return. By coming together—through funding, collaboration, and care—we can ensure that these organizations not only survive but thrive. **Recovery and rebuilding for a more resilient LA is not possible without a thriving social impact sector.**





## Introduction & **Survey Methodology**

The goal of this report is to highlight the immediate impact of the Los Angeles wildfires on local nonprofits-- the challenges organizations face from disruptions in operations and funding to the increased demand for services in affected communities to how these organizations are navigating the path to recovery.

The survey, conducted between January 21 to February 5, 2025, gathered responses from 420 leaders within the social impact sector, with 85% of respondents holding senior leadership roles such as CEOs, Executive Directors, or Senior Managers. Responding organizations were asked to identify whether they were directly impacted by the wildfires by being within fire perimeter area and/or evacuation zones/evacuation warning zones, indirectly impacted by falling outside this area, or not at all impacted. Among these organizations:

- **80% reported being directly or indirectly affected by the wildfires\*.**
- **41% were small organizations with 10 or fewer employees.**
- **60% served populations earning \$30,000 or less annually.**

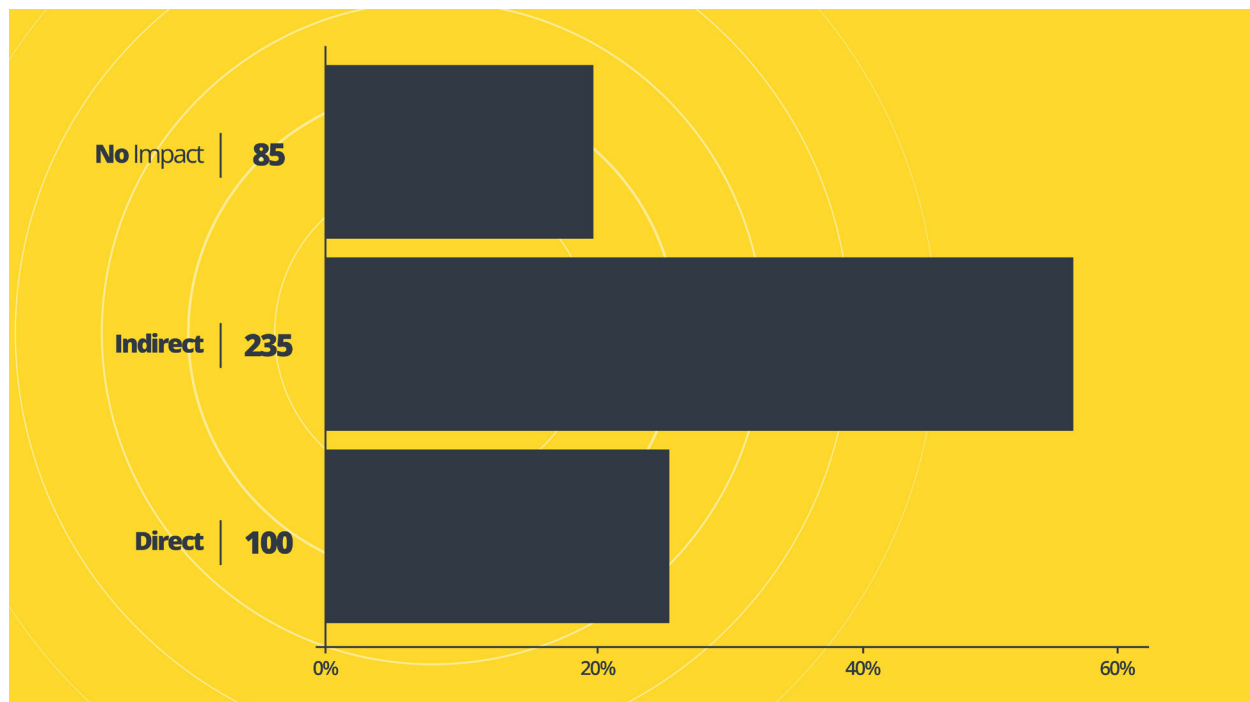
To ensure a focused analysis, we excluded organizations that reported no impact, refining our sample size to 335. Of these, 100 organizations identified as being within the fire perimeter or evacuation zones, experienced the fires' devastation firsthand. However, the majority of respondents fell into the category of indirectly impacted, which demonstrates the broad-reaching consequences of this disaster beyond immediate fire zones.



## Section 1: Extent of the Damage

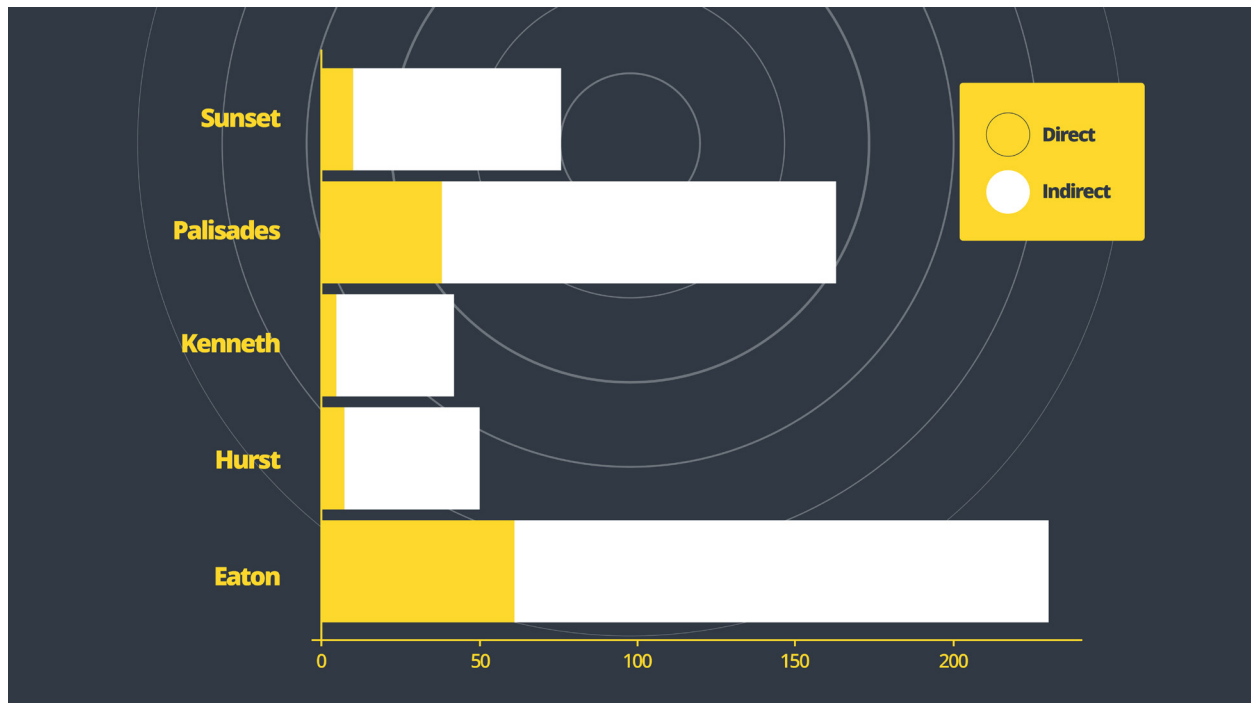
### How were **organizations impacted** by the wildfires?

The 2025 LA wildfires disrupted the social impact sector, with many organizations losing facilities or facing surging demand and financial strain. Even those outside fire zones struggled with staff displacement and funding gaps. To support recovery, funders can provide flexible grants and emergency aid, while elected officials should invest in disaster preparedness and nonprofit resilience. Strengthening partnerships and funding long-term recovery efforts will be key to rebuilding a more resilient sector.



- **85 organizations** experienced no direct impact.
- **235 organizations** were indirectly affected, facing increased demand, funding challenges, or operational disruptions.
- **100 organizations** were directly impacted, suffering damage to facilities, staff displacement, or significant disruptions to their programs and services.

## Which wildfire(s) impacted organizations?



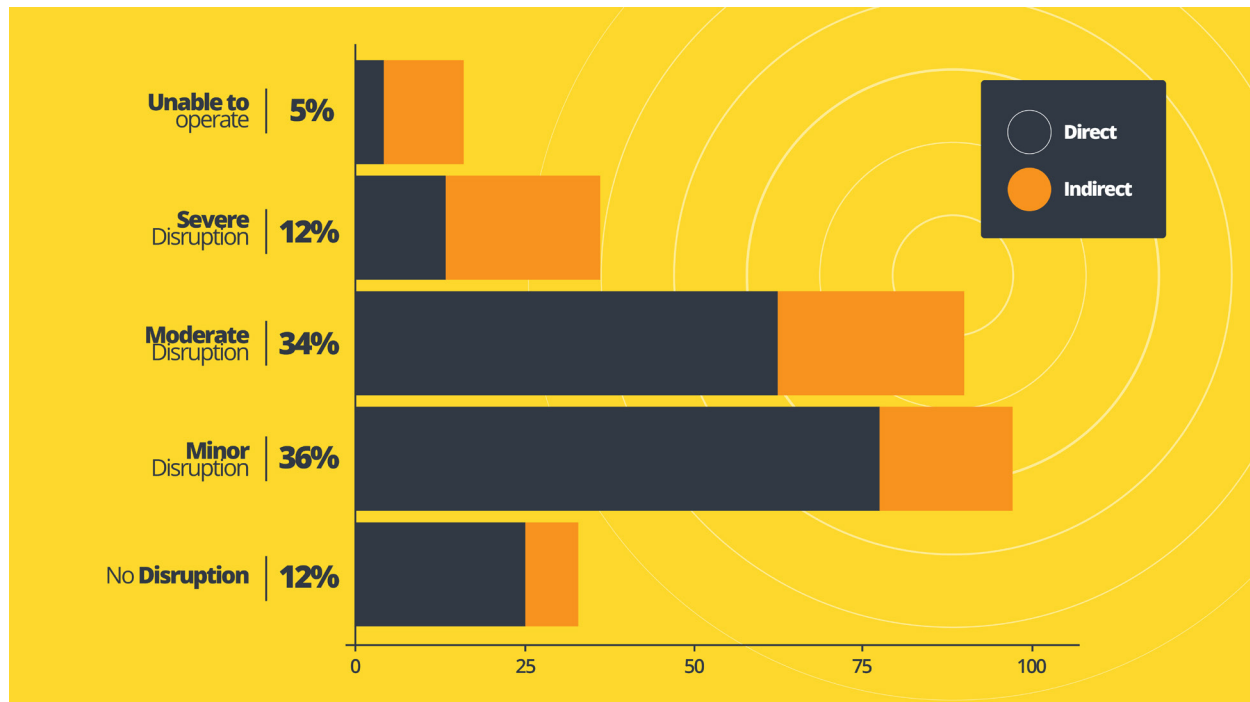
Among organizations reporting direct or indirect impacts from the 2025 Los Angeles wildfires, many were affected by multiple fires. Respondents identified the specific wildfires that impacted them, revealing the following:

- The **Eaton Fire** had the most significant impact, affecting over two-thirds of respondents impacted **230 organizations**.
- The **Palisades Fire** impacted more than half of respondents, with **163 organizations** affected.
- The **Hurst Fire** also took a toll, impacting **50 organizations** in our survey.

Nonprofits with smaller staff size appear to be more impacted, reporting greater negative disruption to both their operations and services. Smaller organizations also appeared less confident in their ability to recover.

## To what extent, did **the wildfires disrupt** the organizations' regular programs and services?

About 17% of responding organizations also reported experiencing significant disruptions to or being unable to function their programs and services. Another third experienced moderate disruptions.



## What specific **financial challenges** did organizations experience due to the ongoing wildfires?

About 18% of responding organizations reported experiencing significant disruptions to their operations (such as issues with facilities, communication, workforce, technology, etc.) or being unable to function at all. Specifically, a portion of surveyed organizations reported

- **Inability to access organizational offices**, venues and spaces (31%)
- Impact on human resources, particularly with staff availability due to evaluation or personal impacts (90%). In 9 out of 10 organizations, staff are experiencing emotional and mental health challenges including burnout. Also, 175 organizations (61%) indicated that their **staff are impacted by loss of housing or displacement**. Ensuring mental health resources and staffing support for frontline workers will strengthen their ability to serve communities in times of crisis.
- Impact on finances with **increased expenses for emergency supplies, equipment, or services** (52%) and operational costs such as staff overtime (49%).



The financial strain on nonprofits was immense—rising costs for emergency needs and staff overtime drained budgets, while canceled events and declining donations cut off revenue. Funding disruptions made recovery planning difficult, putting many at risk of long-term instability. The sector needs sustained support to remain operational during crises. To help, funders may consider providing flexible, unrestricted funding, while elected officials may consider pushing for emergency grants and policy changes that ensure sustainable disaster relief. Investing in these organizations now will strengthen the community's safety net for future crises.

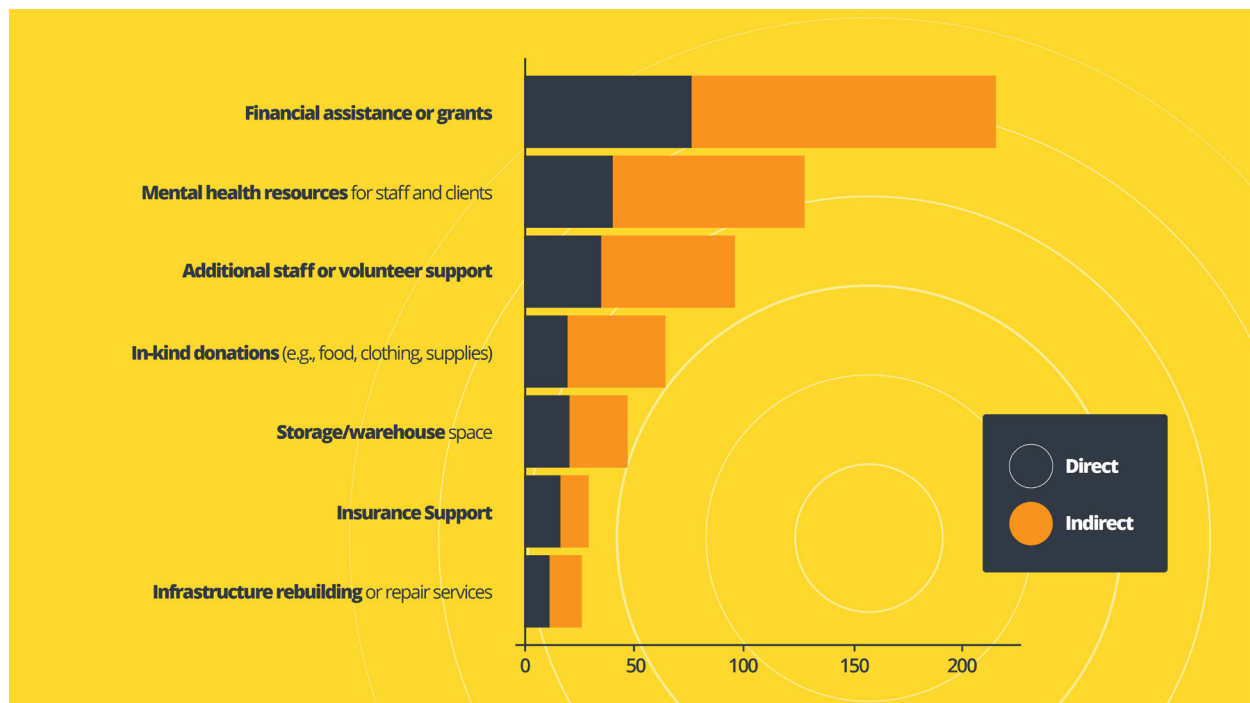




## Section 2: Community Needs & Rebuilding

### What do **Nonprofits Need** to **Recover**?

The 2025 LA wildfires left the social impact sector overwhelmed and under-resourced, with facility damage, staff displacement, and soaring demand for services. Rising costs, lost donations, and funding disruptions put many organizations at risk of long-term instability. The immediate recovery may focus on the top-reported needs of clients or community members at these organizations. Both directly and indirectly impacted organizations report similar needs to rebuild:



Top recovery focuses reported include:

- **89% would like financial assistance or grants**
- **52% would like mental health resources for staff and clients**
- **39% would like additional staff or volunteer support**

# What the Sector Needs **Now!**

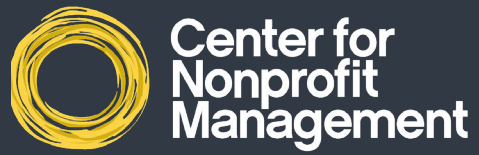
For organizations impacted by the Palisades fire, 30.3% of respondents said CNM could support their recovery efforts through engagement, partnerships, and collaborations with other organizations.

For organizations impacted by the Eaton fire, 29% of respondents said CNM could support their recovery efforts through capacity-building resources.

Through our findings, we have identified the ways shown below to help nonprofits navigate the long road of recovery.



For more in-depth data exploration, [CLICK HERE](#)



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