

Meeting the Moment:

Building Human Centered Workplaces

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Welcome to *Meeting the Moment: Building Human Centered Workplaces* with Fioletowa (Fiolet) Ksenyak, Principal Consultant and Co-founder of [Intersecting Solutions](#). Together we explore what it takes to address burnout in the nonprofit sector, not just through wellness perks and programs, but through organizational culture, trust, and human-centered practices, especially for POC, LGBTQIA+, and other marginalized leaders navigating added pressures. From organizational culture and trust to flexible schedules and supervision practices, Fiolet shares practical, human-centered strategies nonprofits can use to move beyond burnout prevention checklists and toward sustainable change.

This resource packet was created to accompany the interview and provide additional tools for nonprofit leaders to interrupt the cycle of burnout in the nonprofit sector with structural and cultural shifts.

Burnout Data & Intersectionality:

Burnout in the nonprofit sector is not a personal failing; it is a sector-wide pattern with measurable consequences for mission delivery, staff retention, and organizational health.

The Center for Effective Philanthropy's study [State of Nonprofits 2024: What Funders Need to Know](#) reports:

- **95%** of leaders expressed some level of concern about burnout, and **34%** reported that staff burnout has been "very much" a concern to them in the last year.
- **33%** of leaders said that they are "very much" concerned about their own burnout.
- The nonprofit sector's turnover rate sits at approximately 19%, compared to 12% in other sectors. One in three nonprofits struggles with retention and turnover, and 59% reported significantly more difficulty filling staff positions in 2024 than in prior years.



- **A study from** 2022, reported 22% of nonprofit employees lived in households unable to afford basic necessities like housing and healthcare.

Fiolet defined intersectionality as the understanding that we are all a collection of multiple identities, some visible, some not, and that centering that reality is essential to building truly human-centered workplaces. [Intersectionality, a term coined by legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw](#), describes the way multiple identities overlap and interact to shape a person's experience of the world. Race, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, neurodivergence, class, and other dimensions of identity don't operate in isolation. They compound. And in the workplace, that compounding has real consequences for how people experience stress, support, belonging, and ultimately, burnout. For nonprofit professionals from marginalized communities, the baseline experience of work often carries weight that colleagues with more dominant identities don't carry.

Addressing burnout without addressing intersectionality risks designing solutions that work for some people and leave others further behind. Focus on a model where organizations take responsibility for the conditions they create: where trust, transparency, equity, and genuine listening are treated as operational priorities, not aspirational values. Considerations while moving through the content:

- How do we move past "how do we get people to use our wellness benefits" to "why don't people trust us enough to use them, and what would it take to change that?"
- How do we support leaders of color beyond one-time gestures but an ongoing, structural commitment from leadership?
 - The glass cliff describes what can happen after the glass ceiling is broken, when a leader from a marginalized community reaches a top position, and finds themselves isolated, under-resourced, and without the peer community or board support needed to sustain them.
 - Building Movement Project's [Trading Glass Ceilings for Glass Cliffs: A Race to Lead Report on Nonprofit Executives of Color](#)



- How do we build an inclusive culture before recruiting for diversity? Culture is what makes retention possible. Organizations that build inclusive cultures first tend to attract the candidates they're hoping for and keep them.

Practical Tools for Burnout Prevention

- A **flexible schedule** means staff can change their work hours, work from home, or adjust days to balance personal and job needs. Common types include hybrid models, flexible start and end times, and compressed workweeks.
 - National Council of Nonprofits: [The Four-Day Work Week](#)
 - *"While nonprofits are never going to lead the way in wages against the tech and business sectors or even government jobs, nonprofits can provide you with meaningful work, pay you the best we can, and offer you the chance for balance in your life."* Adam Jespersen, Associate Director, Montana Nonprofit Association
 - Nonprofit Tech for Good: [Why & How to Implement a 4-Day Workweek](#)
 - Nonprofit Learning Lab: [How Flexible Work Policies Improve Retention & Inclusion](#)
 - Nonprofit Quarterly: [Return to Office-What's Happening in the Nonprofit Sector](#)
 - "Regardless of rationale, for employees, return-to-office trends are hitting historically marginalized workers the hardest."
- **Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs)** are employer-sponsored benefits that give employees free, confidential access to short-term support for personal and work-related challenges that might affect their well-being or job performance. EAPs may cover a broader range of needs than people realize, including mental health counseling, financial counseling, legal referrals, work-life support, and crisis support.
 - EAPs are chronically underutilized, not because employees don't need them, but because they don't know what's available, or don't trust the confidentiality of the program.
 - Nonprofit HR: [Championing Wellness: EAPs and Beyond](#)
 - AllOneHealth: [5 Tips for Finding the Best EAP in Colorado](#)



- **Third-party performance reviews** involve an independent agency providing feedback that keeps performance and well-being entirely separate. This has shown to open conversations that wouldn't have happened otherwise.
- Contracting with an **outside therapist** to visit regularly for casual check-ins and office hours with staff.

Building a Culture of Trust

Policies without culture are just paperwork. What makes structural supports work is trust built through consistent and transparent application of policies, calibration among leadership to prevent disparate treatment, removing stigma from accommodation requests, and creating feedback loops so employees see that their input leads to real changes.

- **Build real relationships with leadership:** check in consistently, realign vision, and recognize that when staff ask for support-- it likely took significant courage to do so.
- **Start and continue honest team conversation:** not a one-time meeting, but an ongoing dialogue about how burnout is showing up and what employees are asking for.
 - Ask how burnout is showing up.
 - What specific supports are they asking for?
 - Consider bringing in an outside facilitator, especially in organizations where trust is still being built.
- **Demographic surveys:** conducted with intentionality and anonymity to better understand who is in the organization. This can help leadership understand the full range of identities and experiences present on the team.
 - Consider including questions to support neurodivergence in the workplace. Employer Assistance & Resource Network on Disability: [Neurodiversity in the Workplace](#)
- **Audit of practices:** a process that examines not just what policies say, but how they are actually lived day-to-day, and where gaps exist between stated values and employee experience.

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Notes