# The Cybersecurity Skills Your Nonprofit Needs




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Let’s face it: Few of us leap for joy when we see that one of our software programs has released a new update. That can mean 10 minutes or more of waiting to download it and often additional time to navigate changes in the user interface or functionality.

It’s no wonder many nonprofit employees snooze those messages repeatedly. I certainly have.

But those updates are often software makers’ effort to patch vulnerabilities that could leave you and your organization open to hackers. When I learned how important software updates were for cybersecurity, I changed my approach. Each time I get an update notification, I set a calendar reminder to download the update on my next lunch break. I don’t have to waste time waiting, and I return from lunch to a safer, more secure machine.

If only all aspects of cybersecurity were so simple.

When the NRMC team talks with nonprofit executives and board members these days, cybersecurity is almost always top of mind.

We understand why. The average cost of a data breach has reached more than $4 million, according to IBM. And nonprofits that experience a breach face lots of stressors and ripple effects beyond the costs, like potential damage to their reputation.

We advise nonprofit leaders that while hackers are persistent and no measures are foolproof, spending time to strengthen your organization’s cyberdefenses is always worthwhile. And investing in cybersecurity can benefit your nonprofit in other ways—like improving employee morale and client trust.

That doesn’t have to mean spending millions of dollars on systems, although you should invest in protecting systems where you can. Other things we often recommend to clients, like cyberbreach tabletop exercises, require some staff time and effort but often no additional cost.

NRMC’s in-person 2025 Risk Summit will offer an array of sessions to help your team master the basics and level up on your cybersecurity and adjacent topics. Here’s a preview.

On Monday, October 27, Gerry Zack, CEO of Risk Trek LLC and former CEO of the Society for Corporate Compliance and Ethics, will lead a session on Privacy Considerations in Fraud Risk Management. In this interdisciplinary session, attendees will learn how many of the techniques used to manage fraud risk and

investigate fraud raise serious data privacy considerations, both legal and ethical. This scenario-based session will help attendees learn to balance personal and information privacy while managing fraud risk.

Later on Monday, Austin Colehamer of Tech Impact will lead When Structures Collapse: Three Cybersecurity Scenarios. Participants will work hands-on in groups to address cybersecurity situations any nonprofit might face. They'll walk away with tactics to help shore up potential failure points for nonprofit cybersecurity programs.

On Tuesday morning, October 28, I'll lead Stable Yet Flexible: Build the Artificial Intelligence Policy Your Nonprofit Needs. Many organizations are eager to start using AI to automate tasks and allow team members to spend more time on high-impact work that requires a human touch. But AI presents cybersecurity risks to nonprofit teams and constituents, along with safety and ethical risks. This hands-on session will give you tools to build a flexible AI policy that supports your nonprofit's cybersecurity.

Also on Tuesday, the Democracy Security Project will lead Cantilevering Your Approach to Cybersecurity: Practical Evolution to Better Cyber Practices. The session will empower participants with practical and pragmatic solutions to a broad range of ever-evolving cyber vulnerabilities and threats.

Many of a nonprofit's most difficult choices in this area happen when cybersecurity measures conflict with another important organizational goal, like making the employee or client experience a smooth one. This year's Risk Summit will give participants tools to navigate those decisions and craft smart cybersecurity approaches that honor their nonprofits' mission and ways of working. Register today.

*Rachel Sams is Lead Consultant and Editor at the Nonprofit Risk Management Center. She believes time upgrading digital security is time well spent. Reach her with thoughts and questions about cybersecurity risk at rachel@nonprofitrisk.org or (505) 456-4045.*