

Friday, October 17, 2008 - 11:53 AM CDT

Greenlights gathering concerned nonprofits to meet on financial crisis

Austin Business Journal

The current economy has many people—including the normally philanthropic—watching their spending. And that has nonprofits around Central Texas concerned.

[Greenlights for Nonprofit Success](#), the group that provides resources and services to area nonprofits, is hosting a town hall meeting on Oct. 30 to offer advice on weathering the current economic crisis.

“Many of the nonprofits we work with have been calling us in recent weeks, and they’re very concerned,” says Matt Kouri, executive director of Greenlights, which touches about 700 nonprofits annually.

Kouri says nonprofits in general are in a difficult predicament: just as the declining economy is creating a growing need for their services, they’re likely to have a tougher time raising the money necessary to fund those services. While some major nonprofits have already raised the money they need for 2009, the vast majority are relying on the money they receive in the last quarter of the year and first two quarters of next to fund their 2009 budget, he says.

“The people who nonprofits rely on as donors may be worried themselves about losing their jobs,” says Kouri. At the same time, family and other foundations that take a financial hit from their investments could curb their giving in coming years.

The nonprofit town hall will start with an overview of the economic situation from Austin economist John Hockenyo who will discuss how the local area is likely to be affected by the downturn.

Greenlights has also lined up longtime PeopleFund executive director Margo Weisz who will discuss how she led her nonprofit through previous downturns, and Jackie Mata of the [KDK-Harman Foundation](#) who will talk about how foundation giving will be affected by the current economy. Finally, James Landrum of Comerica Bank will discuss nonprofits’ relationships with their banks.

“This year, more than any other, we’re advising nonprofits to develop at least a couple scenarios for their budgets to deal with what comes,” says Kouri.

Other discussion topics will include creative ways to maximize revenue and cut expenses.

“Nonprofits are very mission-focused and it’s sometimes difficult for them to have to tighten their belts,” says Kouri. “But in a situation like this, when pullbacks and cuts are needed, they need to be prepared and have the best analysis they can get to inform that decision making.”

Kouri says, so far, Greenlights has received more than 160 reservations for the meeting. Details and takeaways from the event will be available on the group’s [Web site](#) afterwards.