

Powering Purpose: How Energy Efficiency Strengthens Nonprofits and the Communities They Serve

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ABSTRACT

Community-based nonprofits anchor the nation's social infrastructure, providing housing, food, education, health care, childcare, and other essential services across the United States. Representing nearly 10% of the private-sector workforce, they are major employers and critical service providers. Yet many operate in aging, inefficient facilities that strain budgets and constrain mission delivery. Because energy is often the second-highest operating expense after personnel, utility costs function as a hidden tax, diverting resources from people and programs.

Energy efficiency in nonprofit facilities represents an investment in community resilience, equity, and operational stability. Drawing on Southface Institute's GoodUse portfolio and sector data, this paper finds that nonprofit buildings show significant untapped savings potential, particularly in HVAC, envelope, lighting, controls, and solar-ready upgrades. These measures lower operating costs and free up scarce dollars for mission-critical services.

This paper explores mechanisms that can make investments feasible at scale, including pooled grant models, public-private partnerships, revolving loan funds, and on-bill financing. These approaches overcome the sector's unique barriers: limited reserves, tenancy constraints, fragmented incentives, and low internal capacity for capital project management. Southface's experience shows that when technical assistance is paired with capital, nonprofit projects generate strong returns and deliver lasting benefits.

Finally, this paper elevates nonprofit facilities as resilience infrastructure. These organizations often serve as trusted anchors during disruptions, so investments deliver benefits beyond the utility bill. By aligning policy, philanthropy, and capital around this opportunity, stakeholders can help nonprofits operate efficiently, serve more people, and strengthen the social and energy systems communities depend on.

Introduction

Nearly two million nonprofits operate across the United States (Internal Revenue Service 2026) employing approximately 13 million people - nearly 10% of the private sector workforce (Bureau of Labor Statistics 2024). These nonprofits sustain social infrastructure by providing housing, food, education, health care, childcare, and other essential services in every community. For the majority of these organizations, energy is the second-highest operating expense after personnel (Yañez-Barnuevo 2022), making rising utility rates, extreme weather, and deferred maintenance often translate directly into cuts to staff, reduced hours, and disrupted programs at the very moment communities need them most. Inefficient buildings further undermine comfort, indoor air quality, and resilience during outages or heat waves, affecting staff retention, client experience, and the ability to safely shelter vulnerable populations.

Because nonprofits overwhelmingly prioritize program delivery over capital investment, most deliver essential services from aging, inefficient facilities that waste an estimated 30% of the energy they consume (Yañez-Barnuevo 2022). This results in a hidden tax exacerbated by the “nonprofit starvation cycle,” (Gregory and Howard 2012) in which funders under-resource operations relative to visible program spending. Strategic energy upgrades in these buildings can therefore power purpose by transforming an ongoing burden into a source of resilience. Cost-effective measures such as lighting upgrades; envelope and duct improvements; high-efficiency heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC); smart controls; and solar-ready or solar-plus-storage configurations reduce operating costs. At the same time, these investments also strengthen the ability of nonprofits to act as disaster response anchors: cooling and warming centers, food distribution hubs, clinics, child services, and emergency shelters.

Beyond organizational benefits, nonprofit facilities are system-critical assets for the energy transition. Their energy loads, especially HVAC and refrigeration in schools, community centers, clinics, shelters, and houses of worship, often coincide with regional peaks, creating a high-leverage demand-side management opportunity for the grid and the nonprofit. For the grid, every kilowatt-hour saved eases grid stress. Nonprofits can redirect unrestricted dollars back into frontline community services.

This paper investigates the current state of nonprofit facilities and the role of energy efficiency in strengthening organizational and community outcomes. It begins by examining the current state of nonprofit facilities and presents evidence from Southface Energy Institute’s GoodUse program demonstrating measurable energy savings and organizational benefits. It then evaluates financing and implementation barriers, outlining pooled grant models, public–private partnerships, revolving loan funds, and on-bill financing as pathways forward. Finally, the paper proposes reframing nonprofit facilities as critical resilience infrastructure and outlines policy interventions to scale these investments. Together, these sections make the case for treating nonprofit energy efficiency as essential to climate, equity, and resilience goals.

Background

Community-based nonprofits anchor the nation’s social infrastructure, serving as trusted institutions that residents rely on for basic needs, stability, and recovery before, during, and after crises. They provide housing, food, education, health care, childcare, and other essential services in communities of all sizes. Taken together, 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations employ roughly 10% of the private sector U.S. workforce (Bureau of Labor Statistics 2024), making the sector a major economic actor as well as a social one. Their physical facilities represent a sizable, distributed portfolio within the small commercial building sector, where buildings under 50,000 square feet account for 95% of the number of commercial buildings and 47% of commercial building energy use (Lee et al. 2015). For nonprofits, energy costs typically rank just behind personnel as the highest operating expense, making efficiency a critical lever that can relieve budget pressure without reducing services.

Yet most nonprofits are tenants or own only a single building and lack the scale, balance sheet strength, and internal staff capacity that large commercial portfolios use to negotiate financing, manage complex retrofit projects, or navigate fragmented incentive offerings. According to the Nonprofit Finance Fund’s 2025 State of the Nonprofit Sector data, 32% of nonprofits surveyed own at least one facility, with ownership strongly correlated with operating budget size (Nonprofit Finance Fund 2025). Additionally, this survey indicated that 52% of nonprofits operate with only a few months of cash reserves and 32% rent their space (Nonprofit

Finance Fund 2025), further limiting access to conventional credit and constraining their ability to invest in cost-effective efficiency improvements. These structural constraints mean that even when the economics of efficiency are favorable on paper, nonprofits are often unable to access or execute on an opportunity without dedicated technical assistance, tailored financing, and program designs that recognize the unique structure.

Southface Institute’s work on over 700 nonprofit projects since 2008 through its GoodUse program illustrates how deeply these challenges are embedded in existing building stock. Through technical assistance, education, and matching grants, the GoodUse program implements high-impact energy and water efficiency measures that reduce a nonprofit facility’s utility burden, ultimately saving nonprofits mission-critical funds that they can invest back into their core services to the community. As seen in Figure 1 below, the GoodUse program is deployed in five stages beginning with an application process through which nonprofits apply to receive investments from the program. Selected nonprofits receive an efficiency audit by Southface engineers, who compile results in a nonprofit-friendly report that acts as both a roadmap for efficiency improvements and a fundraising tool. This report differs from a conventional report in that it simplifies the underlying technology of the recommendations, heavily uses pictures and graphs to illustrate recommendations, and includes nonprofit input to ensure recommendations support both efficiency and mission-serving outcomes. Southface engineers then assist with bid review and implementation of selected projects. Southface engineers then assist with bid review and implementation of selected projects.

HOW IT WORKS

HANDS ON SUPPORT FROM ENERGY AUDIT TO VERIFIED SAVINGS

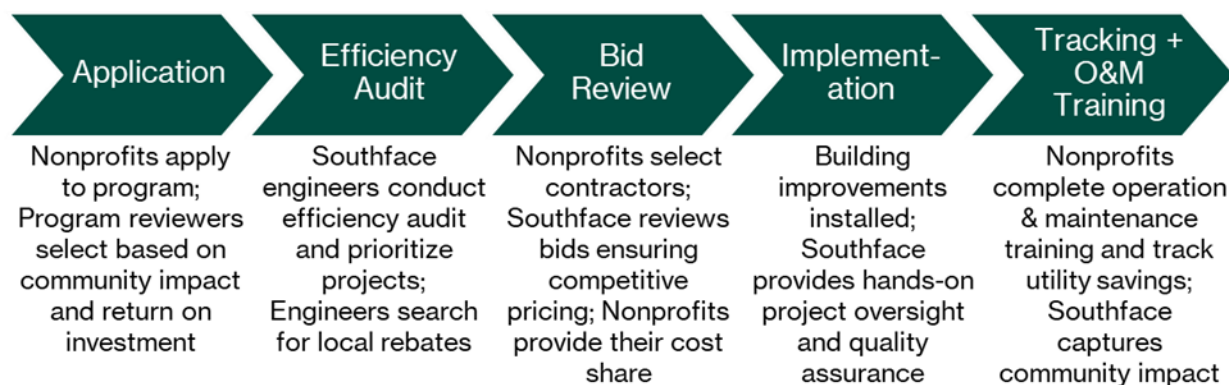


Figure 1. GoodUse program process. *Source:* Southface Institute 2025.

Across a portfolio of 494 existing nonprofit buildings with individual energy and water assessments, the average building age was 64 years (built around 1962), substantially older than the national median for commercial buildings of 36 years (The Real Estate Roundtable 2022) reflecting the older, less-efficient structures that many organizations occupy. GoodUse assessment data indicate that around 30% of a nonprofit’s resource use – 37.9% of energy and 27.7% of water (based on 80 detailed audits over the past seven years that exclude solar potential) – is effectively wasted. In these projects, much of the savings’ potential is concentrated in HVAC, lighting, and building envelope improvements, which are also the end uses most closely tied to peak demand. This represents a major opportunity to capture savings that strengthen organizational health and enable nonprofits to reinvest in staff, programs, and additional upgrades, creating a sustainable cycle of impact.

Based on Southface's nonprofit portfolio with completed efficiency measures, energy and water efficiency can economically multiply dollars spent on mechanical, plumbing, lighting, and envelope upgrades. GoodUse nonprofit projects have averaged a 7.1% return on investment (ROI) across 236 buildings over the last seven years. Assuming a 15-year equipment life, this equates to an economic multiplier of roughly 2.1: every dollar invested is effectively doubled through ongoing utility bill savings over the life of the upgrades. Typical upgrades at a facility reduce annual utility spending by 28% per building, translating into an average of over \$9,000 per year in avoided costs that can be redirected to program delivery. Applying the average savings potential observed in GoodUse projects across the broader nonprofit building sector suggests a national opportunity measured in tens of billions of kilowatt-hours and hundreds of millions of dollars per year in avoided utility costs. Capturing even a fraction of this potential would redirect substantial, recurring operating dollars from energy bills back into frontline services, staff retention, and capital reserves, while improving resilience and health outcomes in the communities these nonprofits serve.

In addition, nonprofits disproportionately serve disadvantaged, low-income, and rural communities, which already experience higher household energy burdens and greater climate risk - as evidenced in Southface's GoodUse program. Across 88 nonprofit organizations that track this data and are served by the program, an average of 76% of people served by each of these nonprofits have an annual household income of under \$50,000. In this context, inefficient buildings function as a hidden tax on the very communities public and philanthropic policy aims to prioritize.

Financing Strategies

Nonprofits, like most organizations, look at ROI metrics when considering capital deployment. In Southface's experience, energy efficiency measures tend to be overlooked, even during fundraising efforts such as capital campaigns. However, a commitment to cost-effective energy efficiency can help nonprofits over the life of their facility's use. Making informed long-term plans based on utility usage has the potential to deliver significant financial benefits over time.

Information barriers and funding are critical issues nonprofits face when making investment decisions. A procurement policy emphasizing best price may overlook long term savings delivered by highly efficient equipment. Additionally, energy and water savings that come from efficient equipment replacing older inefficient equipment may miss ROI analysis that can support extra investment during equipment purchase. Both issues can be overcome by benchmarking and ROI analysis performed by professional or volunteer technical assistance.

Since 2008, Southface has assisted nonprofit organizations with making energy and water efficiency improvements to their buildings, completing over 700 projects in 33 states. Southface has researched and deployed a wide variety of innovative funding and financing mechanisms to help nonprofits overcome funding hurdles. Additionally, programs such as Southface's GoodUse program help nonprofits overcome a wide range of additional hurdles from inexperience with facilities management and building mechanical systems to qualifying vendors and overcoming challenges managing long-term projects, such as personnel turnover. Leveraging Southface's successes can help program designers and administrators consider design options that generate ongoing reinvestment and help nonprofits turn one project into a domino effect of operational cost reductions and community benefits.

Southface has completed the majority of its projects utilizing pooled grant funding models followed by public and private partnerships. Southface is currently engaging lenders to understand their green finance and revolving loan fund (RLF) programs. Southface has also researched the viability of on-bill financing via commercial property-assessed clean energy (C-PACE) financing. Information on the maturity, access, and reliability of each of these funding sources follows.

Pooled grant funding models tend to be organized around private donations or “impact funds” to pay for energy efficiency improvements. Southface has experienced the most success with pooled grant models and has demonstrated significant impact results with funding from a variety of funders, including The Kendeda Fund and the Freedom Together Foundation. Pooling investments in the millions of dollars, Southface’s GoodUse program provides grant funding covering between 50% and 66% of total equipment costs, based on the nonprofit’s annual operating budget. Importantly, GoodUse helps nonprofits make energy and water efficiency upgrade decisions by evaluating both ROI and other context-specific metrics, including service to mission. As implementation projects are completed, Southface provides resources for sustainable operations and maintenance, helping ensure investments produce long-term benefits and create a mindset of operating efficiently.

The pooled grant nature makes this program especially successful. Southface can deploy funds to nonprofits as grants based on its evaluation of each organization’s specific situation. Close collaboration with funders ensures funder goals are met while the efficiency of the turnkey program ensures funding is deployed reliably and maximizes community benefit. As noted in the Background section, the average project investment equates to an economic multiplier of roughly 2.1, due to the annual utility savings over the life of the upgrades. However, if the grant is deployed as a matching grant covering only 50% of project costs, the economic multiplier of the funder’s investment increases to 4.2. In Southface’s experience, the pooled grant model is the most mature solution for assisting nonprofits. The GoodUse program makes these funds accessible to nonprofits with buildings of all sizes, ages, and uses, and is able to provide technical assistance whether the nonprofit has trained facilities managers or volunteers with limited facilities experience.

Public and private partnerships provide the next most reliable source of capital for nonprofit building upgrades. Public-private partnerships leverage public funds and marry it with flexible, deployable capital from the private sector to help reduce investment risk and lower borrowing costs, as demonstrated by the U.S. Department of Energy’s (DOE’s) Renew America’s Nonprofits (RAN) grant program (Yañez-Barnuevo 2023). As a RAN grant awardee, Southface is able to deploy its GoodUse program to target investments in nonprofits that can secure additional private funds to pay for upgrades and maintain alignment with DOE’s affordability goals. However, the complexity of federal government contracting—including provisions related to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and Davis-Bacon Act—requires an organization like Southface to aggregate portfolios of buildings to receive investments. Otherwise, overhead and administrative tasks would require an unnecessarily large portion of a program budget. Successes of the program include total portfolio size and total predicted utility costs saved. Once again, Southface serving as an aggregator and technical advisor, not only for the energy audit but also for compliance, increases access to more nonprofits, especially those typically underserved by federal investment programs.

Seeking to innovate additional financing mechanisms for its GoodUse program, Southface has explored programs offered by a wide variety of lenders including community

development financing institutions (CDFIs) and green banks. These programs, sometimes in the form of RLFs that reinvest in secondary projects over time, can be capitalized by private or public sources. Southface’s overarching insight from this exploration is that these programs are not nearly as mature and turnkey as Southface understood them to be when it started its exploration. While many programs are designed to achieve energy efficiency, the requirements to demonstrate utility savings vary widely. Some require an energy audit while others provide a list of mechanical equipment that can be purchased. Limited technical expertise by lenders in evaluating energy audits or verifying mechanical equipment as truly energy efficient means savings may not always pan out. As such, Southface has observed fairly limited uptake of these programs by nonprofits. Once again, an aggregator and facilitator for access to these types of funds for nonprofits would increase demand and ensure reliability of savings for payback.

Lastly, utilities or other providers can offer on-bill financing to eliminate upfront costs of cost-effective energy efficiency improvements that are repaid over time via a utility or property tax bill line item. C-PACE and other on-bill financing programs are growing in availability; however, the designs of these programs vary widely among administrators. The lack of consistency and limited use of these programs for other types of financial investments requires a significant investment of time to convince nonprofits of their value. Additionally, poor outcomes for some early users have stained the reputation of the sources of funds generally (McAlister and Sandler 2023). Once again, an aggregator and facilitator, serving as a trusted advisor, may increase use of these funds.

Summarized in Table 1 below, these funding and financing strategies generally exist in the earliest stages of the product and service lifecycle¹ with reliable funding the main challenge of scalability.

Table 1. Advantages, barriers, and opportunities to increase access for programs that offer funding and financing for energy efficiency upgrades in nonprofit buildings

Funding/Financing Strategy	Advantages	Barriers	Opportunities to Increase Access
Pooled grant funding	Most flexible funding; Funding goals beyond ROI	Typically, nonprofits are not required to pay back grants, which requires continuous program fundraising	Larger pools of grant funding are necessary for scale; Pay back incentives may increase number of projects possible

¹ The product and service lifecycle is a framework that tracks the market growth and adoption of products and services across four stages from introduction to growth, reaching maturity, and withdrawing from the market in decline.

Funding/Financing Strategy	Advantages	Barriers	Opportunities to Increase Access
Public and private partnerships	Lowers risk among funders; Increases community development goals	Additional sources of funding typically result in additional requirements	Portfolio aggregators can help ensure compliance with requirements while spreading administrative burden
Revolving loan funds/green financing	Most closely matches traditional loan products; Provides best opportunity for scalable impact once model matures	Many programs but none have national scale; Payback of upgrades may be uncertain without technical expertise	A dominant design* needs to be established before a national program takes off
On-bill financing/C-PACE	Payback enabled by pre-existing billing processes	Unfamiliar approach to financing; Unknown entities in marketplace	Portfolio aggregators can serve as trusted advisors

*A dominant design is a product or service's set of features that becomes the industry standard, achieving widespread market acceptance and defining the accepted norm for that category (Asel 2024).

Programs like GoodUse demonstrate implementation of energy efficiency projects at nonprofits of all sizes and missions is possible at a national scale; however, long term reliability of funding sources presents a primary challenge. Nonetheless, considering the three case studies below which demonstrate how nonprofits can turn one project into a domino effect of operational and community benefits, it is clear how early successes can generate ongoing reinvestment.

Case Studies

Goodwill Rome Store, Donation Center, and Career Center

A good example of a typical individual project, the Goodwill Store in Rome, Georgia received an energy and water audit from Southface and then received a 50% matching grant for the energy and water upgrades. They converted all lighting to LEDs (fixtures with light-emitting diodes), installed lighting occupancy sensors, replaced five roof top HVAC units with high efficiency units equipped with demand controlled ventilation, installed ten smart thermostats, and installed WaterSense low flow faucet aerators, urinals, and toilets. Tracked in ENERGY STAR® Portfolio Manager, their weather-normalized energy usage was reduced by 21% and their water usage was reduced by 60%. Current annual utility savings equal 105,996 kilowatt-hours per year, 920 therms per year, and 368,500 gallons of water per year compared to their 2023 baseline with a total avoided annual utility cost of \$24,791. This money that is saved every year on utilities goes back into supporting Goodwill's employment mission.

The Salvation Army Metro Atlanta Area Command

Over the past decade, Southface's GoodUse program has supported upgrades at ten Metro Atlanta Salvation Army facilities (called the Atlanta Area Command), achieving approximately \$300,000 in annual utility cost savings across those sites. GoodUse's interventions have included solar photovoltaics, LED lighting and controls, high-efficiency plumbing fixtures, and upgraded HVAC systems with advanced filtration. The annual utility savings at all ten of these sites goes back into supporting the Salvation Army's mission and programs such as food pantries, shelters, financial assistance programs, summer camps, and more.

At one of these ten Metro Atlanta facilities, the Red Shield Services emergency and transitional shelter, integrated efficiency measures alone are projected to save over \$96,000 per year in utility costs, while simultaneously reducing emissions and enhancing occupant comfort and health. Shelters, administrative buildings, and other command facilities benefit not only financially but also through improved indoor air quality, which facility leaders credit with mitigating infectious disease transmission during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Agnes Scott College

At Agnes Scott College in Decatur, Georgia, the Green Revolving Fund (GRF) has served as an innovative financing mechanism to support campus sustainability investments since 2011. Created to address constraints in operating budgets for energy and water efficiency projects, the GRF established a dedicated pool of capital to fund sustainability upgrades whose cost savings are returned to the fund and reinvested. Initially backed by donor contributions and alumni support as a "seed" investment, the GRF has supported nearly \$2 million in projects, including comprehensive LED lighting replacements, water-saving retrofits, solar photovoltaics, and geothermal HVAC installations for historic buildings. These investments have reduced utility costs, lowered the institution's greenhouse gas emissions, and contributed materially to Agnes Scott's broader climate goals, including a substantial reduction in energy consumption and ongoing progress toward carbon neutrality. Southface completed campus-wide energy and water assessments which guided implementation for many of the projects.

Policy Interventions to Support Community Resilience

The need for increased support for energy efficiency in the nonprofit sector is established. And there is a toolbox of effective financing mechanisms that can be leveraged to help investments reach scale. Policy interventions are necessary to unlock greater investments in nonprofits and deliver multiple energy and non-energy benefits for communities these essential organizations serve.

A strong nonprofit sector is a source of resilience for enduring unfavorable economic conditions as well as climate impacts. Nonprofits are currently experiencing stress, overwork, and fierce competition for scarce resources following the withdrawal of federal support (National Council of Nonprofits 2026). Energy efficiency can provide a multiplier effect: less spent on wasted energy results in more money available to accomplish the core mission that drives nonprofits to serve. Nonprofits fortified by energy efficiency can serve as resilience hubs that inspire and help unlock durable, equitable, and self-sustaining impacts that strengthen communities from the inside out.

Given the number and diversity of nonprofits, the demand for investments to support individual organizations would quickly outstrip supply. Policy changes that apply to the entire nonprofit sector offer a more cost-effective approach. This discussion is focused on actual, tangible improvements to physical facilities that reduce waste from the consumption of electricity, natural gas, and other fuels. There could be other systemic changes to the tax code, for example, that would lead to more philanthropic investment in energy efficiency, but those are outside the scope of this paper.

If the goal of new and expanded policies is a more energy-efficient nonprofit sector, several interventions should be pursued at once to increase the potential to leverage investments of public dollars. Policy could help lower barriers that currently discourage investment: a lack of information about the potential of energy efficiency and available solutions, insufficient capital available to finance cost-effective energy efficiency measures, and diffuse networks that prevent nonprofits from working together across state lines.

Standardized information resources can be infinitely leveraged, which argues for a single resource collectively developed and widely disseminated. The information barrier facing nonprofits is universal and applicable across the sector regardless of the mission of the organization. Although its continuation is continuously at risk, an invaluable resource already exists: ENERGY STAR.

ENERGY STAR provides basic information, information-sharing and technical assistance, and benchmarking support to help nonprofits overcome information and financial barriers. This collection of resources is used by utilities and other state and local program administrators to identify energy-efficient measures and establish performance tiers to justify incentives. At about \$40 million per year for the entire program, which addresses consumer and commercial needs as well, ENERGY STAR is an unequivocal value.

Information gaps can prevent a nonprofit from investing in energy efficiency, but closing those information gaps does not actually put the improvements in place. Several of the financing mechanisms that can mobilize capital suitable for nonprofits are generally implemented by states or local governments. Federal policies like the State Energy Program provide essential baseline support for state energy offices that offer grants and RLFs and support implementation of C-PACE and other innovative financing mechanisms. Block grant funds for community development agencies can meet a similar need.

Policymakers could provide resources for grant programs like RAN, which was authorized and funded on a bipartisan basis in the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act. Critically, RAN was not just a grant program. Instead, DOE chose an implementation pathway that attracted attention with available dollars and then promoted information-sharing, encouraged bulk purchases, and project aggregation on a regional scale. Scarce public-sector resources must leverage private-sector capital and catalyze investments across jurisdictions to meet the overwhelming demand of nonprofits. Not all barriers to energy efficiency are financial, and flexibility and simple, streamlined processes that accommodate nonprofit governance and decision making are essential for good policies to become transformational.

Conclusion

Nonprofit facilities represent a high-leverage segment of the small commercial building sector, with substantial, proven savings potential and powerful secondary benefits for increased community resilience, health, and equity. Southface's GoodUse portfolio demonstrates that when technical assistance and mission-aligned capital are paired, investments can reliably reduce

utility costs, generate attractive long-term returns, and trigger a domino effect of reinvestment in which one project seeds the next round of upgrades, staff retention, and program expansion. Case studies of GoodUse projects presented in this paper show that HVAC, building envelope, controls, and solar-ready upgrades routinely generate tens to hundreds of thousands of dollars in lifetime savings per site while stabilizing facilities such as food warehouses, clinics, and shelters. Yet the sector's structural constraints, for example limited reserves, complex tenancy arrangements, limited facility expertise, and fragmented incentives, can mean that even strong project economics often don't translate into action without dedicated intermediaries and tailored program designs.

Nonprofits serve as delivery systems for funders' priorities in health, housing, disaster response, and climate resilience, making infrastructure upgrades ecosystem investments rather than isolated grants. The Stanford "nonprofit starvation cycle" documents chronic underinvestment in operations that efficiency can help break by lowering overhead long-term, while emerging philanthropic guidance such as the Nonprofit Finance Fund's Resourcing Resilience report emphasizes nonprofits as essential local-scale partners. Given that nonprofits often operate with limited reserves in communities facing disproportionately high energy burdens, aggregation becomes a critical design principle. Portfolio-level approaches can unlock revolving loan funds, guarantees, and utility demand-side management offerings for peak-coincident building types, such as schools, clinics, shelters, and community centers, limiting risk and spreading administrative load.

The central challenge is therefore not whether nonprofit efficiency is cost-effective or offers a strong return on investment, but how quickly policy, philanthropy, and capital markets can normalize and scale the opportunity. Pooled grant models and public-private partnerships have emerged as some of the most equitable near-term pathways, while green lending, revolving funds, and on-bill mechanisms will only fulfill their promise once standardized, trusted program designs and nonprofit-friendly support structures are in place. Policy makers can accelerate the pace of change across the financing landscape by protecting and expanding foundational resources such as ENERGY STAR and the State Energy Program, underwriting technical assistance and portfolio aggregators, and explicitly treating nonprofit facilities as resilience and equity infrastructure in climate, housing, and economic development strategies.

Three critical next steps emerge from the evidence:

1. **Nonprofit-specific financial incentives and program designs** that address capacity constraints and tenancy realities and position nonprofits as stable investments/delivery partners for climate, equity, and resilience goals;
2. **Regional aggregation pilots in high nonprofit-density areas** to overcome scale limitations and expand access to financings, technical assistance and incentives designed for larger commercial portfolios;
3. **More comprehensive and consistent data on nonprofit facilities** - including building operations, ownership patterns, and participation in existing programs - to refine and tailor solutions and track long-term outcomes such as financial stability and community resilience.

If these interventions align, energy efficiency can act as a durable multiplier at a moment of intense strain on the U.S. social and energy infrastructure safety net, therefore, enabling nonprofits to do more with every donated and appropriated dollar, to operate as resilience hubs

during crises, and to model a low-carbon, community-centered energy future. Investing in nonprofit energy efficiency is not only an emissions or cost-reduction strategy; it is a way to power purpose itself, strengthening communities from the inside out.

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AI-assisted Tools Disclosure

AI-assisted tools used: Perplexity

Used for: Editing (condensing or smoothing out language and aligning tone) and Light Research (identifying gaps, thought-partner for initial draft).

Extent: Light editing/minimal individual sentence drafting/light research to reveal gaps/direction.

Human review: The authors reviewed and verified all content, calculations, and citations.