

## **Single Portal Multistate Charities Registration A NASCO Public Interest Initiative for Information Sharing and Data Transparency**

The Multistate Registration and Filing Portal, Inc., a Delaware nonprofit corporation (MRFP),<sup>1</sup> working with the National Association of State Charities Officials (NASCO), and the National Association of Attorneys General (NAAG), continues moving forward with its plan to build an online system that will allow nonprofit organizations and their professional fundraisers to comply with all states' registration and annual filing requirements through a single online portal ("The Single Portal Initiative").

Our goal is to maximize efficiency, data transparency, and information sharing by enabling compliance with registration and reporting requirements for any state, or any combination of multiple states, without duplication of data entry, at the single portal, and then making the collected registration data from all states available to the public in a searchable and interactive format. Academics, policy makers and interested members of the public will be able to conduct their own inquiries. Availability of the data in electronic format (rather than in paper or static pdf format), will enable analytics that will lead to better understanding of charitable resources, better targeting of law enforcement and fraud prevention resources, and better policy making for protection of charitable resources.

For multistate registrants, it will greatly reduce administrative costs and inefficiency of complying with the different requirements of each of the 39 states that require registration, allowing the resources saved to be devoted to charitable mission. Single state filers will avoid the inconvenience and uncertainties of paper filings. The 33 states that still require that paper registrations and annual reporting be mailed to a state office, will realize the efficiencies of electronic data collection and management. Electronic submission of data will relieve state offices of the costs associated with processing and storing paper, allowing the states to redirect limited resources to the core missions of preventing fraud and misuse of charitable funds. Our goal is to enable population of data fields from electronically filed Forms 990, thus avoiding reentry of data between state and federal filings. The system will be able to receive data by electronic downloads from registration service providers who maintain electronic data for their clients. State filing fees will be collected and disbursed to states through the Single Portal.

Over the past year, MRFP has reevaluated the approach to funding and development of the Single Portal. We have engaged with multiple professionals and our Advisory Committee to learn more about creative models for funding development of a portal that is efficient for registrants, the states, and all interest groups. What we have learned is that, while we know what efficiencies and functionality we want from the envisioned portal, we do not have the expertise needed to figure out how to achieve the best possible system, especially in the current environment of rapidly expanding and changing models for development and funding for electronic efficiencies in government processes.

Acting on what we have learned, we will follow an expanding industry standard by promulgating, in October 2015, a Request for Information to ask the experts, vendors who provide such services, to tell us how to achieve the goal of a Single Portal multistate registration and renewal website. We welcome suggestions from everyone. We anticipate launching an operational website in phases beginning in 2016.

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<sup>1</sup> MRFP members are state agencies (Attorneys General, Secretaries of State, or other agencies) with direct oversight responsibility for charitable assets and charitable solicitations. The National Association of Attorneys General (NAAG) will serve as fiscal agent for the Single Portal operations and NAAG's offices in Washington DC will serve as headquarters for administration of the Single Portal system.