

Chautauqua Nonprofit Feedback Session on Capacity Building

On January 16th, 2020, the Chautauqua Funders Group convened a group of nonprofits and other key stakeholders from across Chautauqua county to share and discuss the results of their 2019 assessment of nonprofit capacity in the region. During the convening, representatives of nonprofits shared what they see as their main challenges and needs around six key areas of the assessment, and brainstormed ideas for capacity building supports that could help with those challenges/needs.

Below are notes on the ideas generated in those discussions, as recorded on flip charts during the convening. If you have any questions about this document or the assessment, please reach out to Wes Gifford of Community Wealth Partners at WGifford@communitywealth.com

Diversity of Board Experience & Composition

Challenges/needs

- Youth advisory
- Board members of different ages have different needs
- Longevity
- Local ties vs. national/international representation
- Moving away from “Hey, I know this guy” recruitment
- People want to be asked
- Don’t want to cast too broad a net

Ideas for capacity building supports

- Dedicated community outreach
- Provide referrals of high-quality board members to non-profits
- Fund training for board on their responsibilities & processes
- Focus on recruitment strategies, e.g., participants in Chautauqua Leadership Network

Fundraising & Finance

Challenges/needs

- Long term vs. short term fundraising plans/strategies
- Improve donor management process (info, recognition)
- More ‘certain’ sources of funding
- More overall funding available to support our needs
- Multi-year commitments of funding vs. one-time
- More collaboration between organizations to request funding
- Third party fundraising support
- More financial staff support – planning, budgeting, analyzation
- Board training for financial report interpretation & evaluation
- Timing of grant awarding & budgeting/planning for expenses

Ideas for capacity building supports

- Shared staff to provide financial support (evaluation of finances, recommendations, report translation, budgeting, grant management)
 - Potential challenge: Need for shared staff to prioritize between organizations
- Other shared support services (e.g., health care, supplies & ordering)

- Non-profit 'collective' – a one-stop shop for all non-profits
- Business proposal from non-profits to local professional financial services companies to have collective financial services
- Collective non-profit list-serve to help answer questions, collaborate, etc....
- Shared HR person
- Revised timeline for grant awards to better fit organization's fiscal year

Human Resources

Challenges/needs

- Time for HR function/development
- HR expertise & resources (best practices), including on how to handle cultural/generational changes
- Recruitment strategies (e.g., loan reimbursement)
- Developing hard and soft skills/cross-training
- Retention

Ideas for capacity building supports

- Shared HR resources/people – specialty areas, communications for policy changes
- Strategies for small organizations – how to structure an organization for limited staff
- Shared job board (full-time & seasonal)
- Benefit pools
- Shared trainings (e.g., policy requirements, professional development)
- Analysis of market compensation to help organizations know if they're in line in terms of compensation, benefits, alternative compensation, and to help organizational planning
- Peer learning/sharing (potentially grouped by roles)
- Creating & strengthening talent pipelines

Race, Ethnicity, Equity and Inclusion

Challenges/needs

- Building trust
- Finding connections
- Want to diversify workforce, leadership and people service (e.g., provide services in Spanish to Spanish speakers in order to reach that community)
- Inclusion of the voice of the people served in our programming
- Deeper representation of groups (not just one person)
- Understanding of need & changes
 - Recognition of value that diverse representation brings (from both sides) – how does it manifest in the work?
- Race, ethnicity, equity and inclusion initiatives integrated into organizations' core work

Ideas for capacity building supports

- Faith-based organizations might help – talk to them about how they could be involved
- For some orgs: benchmarks for board representation
- Toolkit/roadmap for orgs: benchmarks, recommendations

- Tailored trainings for whole orgs – not just one representative/training on cultural competency, but how do you meet people and get beyond bias to see someone's humanity? How do we get connected and stay connected?
- Dedicated staff time to community outreach

Strategic Planning

Challenges/needs

- Nonprofits need county-level plans (not just state-level plans)
- Capacity to give planning the time it deserves/needs (including compiling all board & staff viewpoints, then moving the planning process forward)
- Need to first understand board's vision & role in the process
- Right-sizing the board, getting the right meeting frequency to most effectively support and/or drive the planning
- Inclusive planning, beyond boards

Ideas for capacity building supports

- Breakdown sections of strategic plan and have teams work on them
- Shared person/support, who can give a nonprofit an outline and facilitate the process for developing a strategic plan.
 - A shared person could stagger their time across Chautauqua nonprofits
- Board committees responsible for moving the plan forward
- Trainings for boards and EDs on strategic planning (with peer organizations)
- Survey to collect honest viewpoints before/at the start of the planning process
- Visioning time at the beginning of the planning process
- Staff-driven action teams

Succession Planning for Leadership

Challenges/needs

- Overlap time afforded to a new ED
- The non-profit leadership pipeline; getting the right person with the right hard and soft skills
- Sense of shared ownership/stewardship of an organization
- Culture changes – different leadership styles and needs by generation
- Eliminate scarcity mentality

Ideas for capacity building supports

- Leadership capacity building program (e.g., Get Set)
- Encourage people to come to the area with a lot of support for them
- Awareness in community/community pipelines
- Support during the succession process, including coaching, tools, peer support, and funding for overlap time (salaries, facilities, resources)
- Cross-training