ROSE COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

BOOST

END-OF-INITIATIVE ASSESSMENT

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

BOOST – Building Organizational Operating Support Together – is a three-year initiative of the Rose Community Foundation that was initially launched in 2004. Eight growth-stage nonprofits were selected to participate in this cohort-based, capacity building program that included strategic business planning, consulting, and strategic investment grants.

At the foundation of BOOST are concepts developed by Dr. Susan Kenny Stevens, author of <u>Nonprofit Lifecycles: Stage-Based Wisdom for Nonprofit Capacity</u>. Dr. Stevens has consulted with similar initiatives across the country and found that successful capacity building initiatives shared several essential components: cohort learning, grantee leadership teams, multi-year investments, and one-on-one consulting.

The cohort program and strategic investment grants were intended to have a positive impact on grantee learning and capacity building as expressed in the following goals:

1) Develop organizational capacity in governance, management, program and administrative issues beyond the capacity starting points outlined in their self-assessments.
2) Understand their individual program economics and the financial levers or benchmarks needed to attain financial success, and use this knowledge to aid future financial planning, budgeting and decision-making.
3) Value financial health and adhere to sound financial practices as evidenced by annual revenues that exceed expenses.
4) Develop a network of peers to serve as an ongoing support and resource, and thus break the sense of isolation.
5) Develop a common vocabulary for use among peers and within their organizations.
6) Use business plans as a holistic "master plan" within which all programmatic, operational, and financial decisions are made.
7) Effectively learn to use a leadership team concept to promote organizational change, champion business planning strategies, and implement organizational changes necessitated by the plan. The leadership team reinforces the fact that organizational sustainability cannot rest on the shoulders of one or two staff members alone.

Two of the unique and powerful aspects of BOOST are its focus on "learning through experience" and "learning with others." These underlying principles are woven into BOOST through two proven learning models – Action Learning and Communities of Practice. This Communities of Practice model distinguishes BOOST from other capacity building initiatives created by Dr. Stevens – master trainer, consultant, and designer of the BOOST process.

At the ends of 2005 and 2006, the grantees, consultants, Rose Community Foundation staff, and Dr. Stevens were asked to reflect on their progress as well as the changes they had experienced since BOOST began in 2004. They were also asked to share their opinions and perspectives on the BOOST process itself. (Note that, although this report examines some of the general findings from the 2005 assessment, detailed findings from that assessment can be found in a separate report.)

These qualitative data were analyzed as the research team sought to answer three questions:

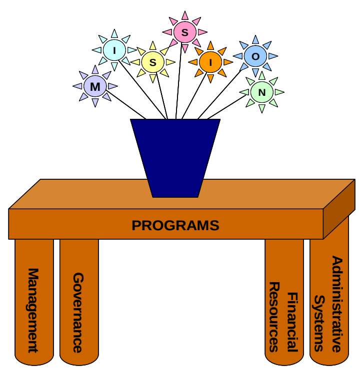
- What have we learned – as individuals and organizations – since we engaged in BOOST in 2004?
- How have we changed – as individuals and organizations – as a result of our participation in BOOST?
- How could we improve the cohort program?

As noted above, BOOST incorporates the lifecycles theory developed by Dr. Stevens. The theory presumes that nonprofit organizations, like people, develop through stages. Dr. Stevens' lifecycles model has seven stages, as outlined in the diagram below.

Nonprofit Lifecycles Model

Dr. Stevens' book also presents the concept of internal capacity that is both stage appropriate and balanced. The model recognizes that an organization's capacity needs vary by stage of development. The concept of capacity balance is illustrated by the table diagram below, which shows that strong mission and programs rest on "strong legs" of management, governance, administrative systems, and financial resources.

Nonprofit Capacity Table



BOOST encouraged grantees to examine their internal capacity in each of the five areas and to address those areas as they implemented their three-year business plans. This approach resulted in significant improvements as described on the following page.

OVERALL BENEFITS OF BOOST

Grantees were overwhelmingly pleased with the results their organizations realized from BOOST. A number of the grantees observed that the timing of the BOOST process was critical to their success. As one respondent noted, "It was a time when we needed to think about the future and develop a plan, but would not have had the discipline to do so."

The remaining comments about BOOST varied greatly. Rather than attempt to combine all of the responses into one central theme, therefore, the quotations below summarize the responses by grantees about their BOOST experiences:

- "BOOST provided us with a framework to assess our organization's strengths and weaknesses and a 'toolbox' for building our future."
- "There is NO WAY we would be where we are today without the investment made in us by the Rose Community Foundation…. Our results have been far beyond what we expected."
- "[BOOST] gave us permission to think big. Instead of how we were going to keep the doors open, we were able to think about how we would make an impact on the community."
- "Just as personal reflection is critical to becoming our best, so institutional self-reflection is a step toward seeing our customers and community well."
- "We had identified growth/capacity issues, but were uncertain with how to deal with them. BOOST and Rose Community Foundation gave us the resources and structure to do it."
- "BOOST for us was truly transformational. It forced us to focus on issues that needed to be addressed."
- "BOOST has been the single-most important initiative we've undertaken in the past several years! The funding helped, but it truly was secondary to the effective business planning process and consultant-led facilitation that we received over the past three years."
- "Change and growth are the operative words for us…. The benefits of BOOST will linger with [our organization] for years to come."

"'Thank you' remains an understatement!"

KEY FINDINGS

CAPACITY BUILDING

In reviewing grantee, consultant, and foundation feedback over the past two years, it is clear that a few concepts are pivotal to building capacity and sustainability in growth-stage nonprofits: board engagement, strong financial management, and relative balance between the five capacity builders (programs, governance, management, financial resources, and administrative systems). Organizations that achieved results in these three areas made more progress along the nonprofit lifecycle than their peers. Of course, it all begins with a sense of organizational readiness and buy-in to the process.

"We believe one of the most important factors in our success with the BOOST process was the fact that we were **ready for BOOST** when the opportunity came to us – and that's huge," stated one grantee. Readiness meant that grantees were psychologically ready for change. Strong **buy-in** was also seen as critical. The commitment of time and energy required from BOOST necessitated involvement from all levels of the organization, especially the Executive Director and the Board of Directors. Without strong buy-in over the three-year initiative, organizational growth and change would not have been sustained.

> *"The staff and board were poised for capacity building – BOOST gave us the structure, support and tools.."*

Board engagement is crucial in driving a growth-stage organization forward. Grantees that struggled overall seemed to have difficulty in getting their boards to take true ownership of their organizations. As one consultant noted, "It really does begin and end with the board…a committed board [that] understands their roles and responsibilities." Without an engaged board everything seemed to "fall on the [Executive Director's] plate." Conversely, an organization that was more successful noted that "board members are much more engaged in the organization and more fully knowledgeable in the program areas. Their involvement in our program planning has helped considerably." Engaged boards took more ownership of decision making overall and in their governance role specifically.

Next, when asked to identify the elements of healthy growth-stage nonprofits, consultants placed leadership and **financial management** at the top of their lists. As one consultant summarized, "You can wing it [in the area of financial management] for a while, but if you rely on that, it will stall out your evolution." Building financial management capacity at the growth stage is especially challenging as it requires a fundamental shift in thinking, practices, and systems if an organization is to achieve long-term sustainability. This was especially critical for the BOOST grantees as their financial resources "leg" was less developed than the other legs of their capacity table. At the time BOOST began, Rose Community Foundation staff believed that grantees had sufficient growth-stage capacity in financial management and were surprised at the end of 2005 to discover this was not the case. "Going in, we didn't understand how weak [the grantees] were from a staffing perspective financially… [or how weak they were in terms of] financial understanding….[We] thought they were fine financially."

It is not surprising, therefore, that BOOST grantees that achieved sound financial management practices considered themselves to be more successful overall. While many grantees made significant improvements in their financial resources, the most successful organizations experienced a fundamental shift in thinking and began to take a long-term perspective on both financial management and resource development. Grantees used a combination of strategic financial decision making, more sophisticated systems, increased expertise on board and staff (including chief financial officers and development directors), and more diversified funding. They used a variety of tools to understand their program economics; made use of financial information in planning and decision making; valued financial health; and adhered to sound financial practices. "For the first time we looked at what we were actually spending on programs…learned that we needed new software… increased the hours of our accountant and [built] a financial reserve," noted one grantee.

Finally, **organizational balance** is clearly a key to growth. Though specific comments were not made by grantees regarding this concept, the organizations that had made progress across all of the capacity builders were, generally, more successful overall. "All four [legs] are better functioning in healthy nonprofits than in unhealthy nonprofits," remarked one consultant. These organizations were consistently focused on understanding the progress they had made and the steps that must be taken for them to continue to move forward in the future. These facts seem to confirm the concept presented by Dr. Stevens that "nonprofit capacity demands an equally balanced support system of management, governance, financial resources, and systems."

"BOOST isn't a program; it's a way of life."

TOOLS, PRACTICES, AND WAYS OF THINKING THAT REALLY MADE THE DIFFERENCE

What did these growth-stage nonprofits do to achieve increased capacity and sustainability? They focused on the fundamentals in each area and recognized that growth is comprised of small, but significant, changes that build upon one another over time.

Capacity Area	New Tools, Practices, and Ways of Thinking
Mission and Programs	Clarified mission, vision, and values. Shifted from making decisions based on intuition to making decisions grounded in mission, values, business plan, and financial analysis. Eliminated programs that didn't fit mission or weren't financially viable. Improved programs to better align with mission, financial needs, and strategic direction. Added programs and services to achieve mission and new strategic direction. Implemented program evaluation. Expanded partnerships and collaborations. Used financial management tools (such as program-based budgets) to better understand financial reality of each program. Increased program-specific funding.
Management	Implemented new organizational chart. Added new positions. Hired people that were the right fit for the growth stage. Freed up the executive director's time to focus on strategic issues. Created new brand and marketing materials. Implemented new succession plans, job descriptions, employee evaluation, and management teams. Paid more attention to financial management on a regular basis. Shared financial information with managers.
Governance	Implemented new job descriptions, committee structures, and officers. Improved board recruiting processes. Added new board members. Conducted board self-assessment. Implemented new policies. Increased board engagement in fund-raising and financial management.

CAPACITY AREA	NEW TOOLS, PRACTICES, AND WAYS OF THINKING
Financial Resources	Recognized that sustainable funding is a necessity. Changed attitude from "survive" to "succeed." Implemented more accurate, responsive, and timely financial management system. Engaged board and management staff in financial management thinking and planning. Established strong finance committee. Used financial data to guide program decisions and expansion plans. Shared a "dashboard" of key financial information with the board. Pursued new funding opportunities. Hired development director for the first time. Hired in-house financial staff for the first time. Distributed regular financial reports to board and management staff. Implemented program-based budgets. Used multi-year planning and budgeting. Upgraded accounting software. Performed cash flow analysis. Used accrual accounting. Reported "budget to actual" financial performance.
Administrative Systems	Implemented new policies and procedures for human resources, financial management, and other areas. Strengthened technology – website, computers, and database upgrades. Purchased accounting and fundraising software. Moved to new office space. Purchased new phone system.

MOST VALUABLE ELEMENTS OF BOOST

At the end of the initiative, grantees and consultants reported that they were pleased with it overall. A number of grantees expressed their gratitude and sentiments with statements such as, "Change and growth are the operative words for us…. The benefits of BOOST will linger with [our organization] for years to come." This feeling was echoed among consultants. As one consultant remarked, "I really applaud [the Rose Community Foundation. They] go beyond…providing grants…to really focus on capacity building in such an important arena."

In addition to overall positive impressions of BOOST, respondents mentioned a number of resources and tools that were especially helpful in driving progress among the grantees. Grantees and consultants were asked to rank the BOOST resources and tools in terms of their perceived usefulness in driving the grantees forward during the three-year initiative. These rankings were "averaged" across each community of practice to provide an overall ranking for grantees and an overall ranking for consultants. A summary of those rankings is shown below:

Resource or Tool	Grantee Ranking	Consultant Ranking
Consultants and coaching	1	
Capacity building grants made to your organization from 2004-2006	2	
Strategic business plan	3	3
Initial self-assessment	4	1
Leadership team	5	6
Program-based budget	6	4
Susan Kenny Stevens coaching and resources	7	7
Foundation program officers	8	11
Nonprofit lifecycles model	9	2
Executive Directors meetings	10	10
Interim 2005 and final 2006 self-assessments/ evaluation tools	11	8
Cohort trainings	12	9
Consultant Convenings with Dr. Stevens		5

Note: Gray boxes represent items that were not provided as possible responses for each community of practice (grantees or consultants).

Not surprisingly, the grantees ranked consultants, coaching, and capacity building grants as being the most useful resources provided by BOOST. It is interesting to note, however, that three grantees changed consultants during the BOOST process. One would expect that a change in a resource ranked so highly by grantees would cause a significant disruption in their progress. Instead, none of these three grantees mentioned consultant turnover as being a lingering problem for their organization. This fact speaks very highly of the flexibility of BOOST to accommodate change and the importance of working with the grantees "where they are."

In addition to consultants and capacity building grants, it is interesting to note that three other aspects of the initiative are considered especially helpful: the initial self-assessments, the strategic business plans, and the nonprofit lifecycles model. Each of these resources is discussed in detail below.

First, the **initial self-assessment** was viewed by many of the grantees and consultants as being the first "aha" moment that spurred progress. Many felt that the tool was very helpful in getting the organizations started and giving them a better understanding of where they are in their own development. As one consultant explained, grantees were constantly reevaluating where they were on the lifecycle curve because "even if it appears they have moved backward…the more [they] learn, the more accurately they can assess where they are."

Next, the majority of grantees and consultants pointed to the **strategic business plans** as being critical to the grantees' success. As one grantee noted, "The business plan has been THE critical document…for directing new goals and their accomplishment in 2006." A consultant added that the strategic business plan "articulates where the organization wants to go" and "embodies" so many critical decisions. Interestingly, over half of the grantees have made substantial revisions to their business plans based on new information gained while using them. One consultant noted that this was particularly important because updating the plan showed the grantee that the plan is a living document that can't be put aside.

Finally, nearly all of the consultants believed that the **nonprofit lifecycles model** was very useful during BOOST. For some, using the model was more a matter of formalizing terminology or putting the information in a new "framework." For others, though, it was a fundamental addition to their practice. As one consultant remarked, "Not that I was unaware of the nonprofit lifecycles model before this…but [we] focused on it in a way that can be easily translated to the clients that I work with." Surprisingly, however, this tool was ranked relatively low by the grantees themselves. This phenomenon was partially explained by one consultant, noting that the "lifecycles model is very helpful to the consultants, but I didn't see the organization internalize it."

These final comments echoed those shared in the mid-term assessment at the end of 2005 as well as the one-on-one meetings with Dr. Stevens in the fall of 2006 (see Appendix).

"[The] money was frosting on the cake."

IN CONCLUSION

So, what were the most significant lessons learned from BOOST? BOOST grantees made notable progress along the nonprofit lifecycle over three years. The experiences of these eight growth-stage nonprofits, as evidenced by their self-assessments, allow us to draw several important conclusions about nonprofit capacity building and Dr. Stevens' framework.

- We can confirm that organizational change is not a linear process. Some grantees made significant strides towards maturity, while others advanced within the growth stage, and a few others found they needed to go backwards in order to move forward over the long term.

- We can conclude that readiness and buy-in are critical when undertaking an initiative like BOOST. Without those two key ingredients – and the commitment to sustained change – change would have stalled out along the way and the results would have been less significant.

- We can conclude that changes in awareness, knowledge, and practices can result in increased capacity and sustainability. Over the course of the two years of business plan implementation, grantees experienced "aha" moments, gained the knowledge they needed to move forward, implemented new practices, and in many cases built capacity and increased sustainability. Examples shared by grantees cover all five capacity builders.

- We can conclude that relative balance among the capacity builders is critical to sustainability and progress along the lifecycle curve. Grantees that strengthened all five capacity builders made more progress towards mature capacity than their peers.

- We can confirm that the lifecycles model is a useful tool in nonprofit capacity building. Whether referring to the model itself or the thought-provoking BOOST table, it was a critical component of the initial assessment and a useful tool for participants. It provides a framework for thinking about stage-appropriate capacity while it depersonalizes issues. While the grantees did not rate the lifecycles model very highly, their consultants did, thus aiding their grantees.

- We can validate the significant role that boards play in nonprofit development and the critical importance of board engagement for growth-stage nonprofits. As noted earlier, board engagement is crucial in driving a growth-stage organization forward. Organizations that achieved higher levels of board engagement progressed further along the lifecycle.

- We can validate the fundamental importance of strong financial management practices and diversified revenue streams. Those organizations that really worked on their financial resources "leg," both in terms of revenue generation and solid financial management, achieved more capacity and sustainability over the three years.

We can also draw a few conclusions about the initiative overall.

- Sustained change requires more time, energy, and commitment than the grantees originally expected. In hindsight, it probably isn't really surprising how much sustained effort was required of the grantees' boards and staff members over the three-year initiative. While some may continue to say "it took more than we expected," all would agree that the return was worth the investment.

- The most helpful tools and resources provided through BOOST were the consultants, strategic investment grants, strategic business plans, and self-assessments. It is interesting to note the interdependencies between these four core components of BOOST. Without the consultants, the assessments and plans would not have been possible. Similarly, the plans would not have been viable without the strategic investment grants. One cannot underestimate the important synergies between these four components.

- Team members will change over the course of the three-year initiative. Staffing changes occurred at Rose Community Foundation, the grantees, and among the consultants. Leadership teams changed as well, as board members rotated on and off their respective boards.

- A significant amount of learning happened across the initiative. As was noted in the 2005 assessment report, program officers learned about the lifecycles model and the indicators of capacity. As evidenced in this report, the consultants, while very experienced, learned quite a bit as they sharpened their skills in this work and took the BOOST tools out into the community with other nonprofit clients.

- A "community of practice" becomes reality when the community members want to become one. The Executive Directors' community of practice was seen as valuable by most and a tool to overcoming the isolation commonly faced. In contrast, the larger cohort meetings were not very valuable to grantees and did not serve to build a large grantee community of practice. This may be based in part on the structure of those sessions and the content presented. It could also be attributed to the fact that a true community cannot be forced; it must be invited. Similarly, the program officers and consultants did not develop true communities of practice, as was expected at the onset of BOOST. While both groups benefited from new insights and tools (such as the nonprofit lifecycles model), neither evolved into a learning cohort.

- Complex, multi-year initiatives like BOOST require ongoing relationship management. Issues emerge that were unexpected, such as addressing grantee-consultant "mismatches," clarifying the consultants' roles during business plan implementation, and teaching nonprofits how to work with consultants. Rose Community Foundation also sought to engage program officers in a meaningful way. While the intent was valid, the implementation was somewhat problematic as program officers had varying levels of comfort with learning more about their grantees and some consultants felt uncomfortable with the resulting three-way relationship.

- Multi-year capacity building initiatives require sustained commitment from foundations. They are often more work than expected and necessitate course corrections along the way that range from rethinking the evaluation process to revamping the cohort convenings and reassigning consultants midstream. Rose Community Foundation and Dr. Stevens set the tone for collaboration, action learning, and "working with people where they are." The Foundation and Dr. Stevens learned along the way; they were open to admitting when things went wrong and flexible in considering what was needed, and they made changes based on real-time feedback.

"How do you describe when you've been transformed?"

INTRODUCTION TO BOOST AND THE ASSESSMENT

BACKGROUND

BOOST – Building Organizational Operating Support Together – is a unique, three-year Rose Community Foundation grant initiative. The Foundation selected eight growth-stage nonprofit agencies to participate in BOOST. Through BOOST, the Foundation made an investment in building the capacity of these nonprofits through business planning, consulting, and strategic investment grants.

At the foundation of BOOST are concepts developed by Dr. Susan Kenny Stevens, author of Nonprofit Lifecycles: Stage-Based Wisdom for Nonprofit Capacity. Dr. Stevens had consulted with similar initiatives across the country and had found successful capacity building initiatives shared a few essential components: cohort learning, grantee leadership teams, multi-year investments, and one-on-one consulting.

ORIGINAL GOALS OF BOOST

The cohort program and strategic investment grants were intended to have a positive impact on grantee learning and capacity building as expressed in the stated goals of the initiative.

1) Develop organizational capacity in governance, management, program, and administrative issues beyond the capacity starting points outlined in their self-assessments.

2) Understand their individual program economics, the financial levers or benchmarks needed to attain financial success, and use this model in future financial planning, budgeting, and decision-making.

3) Value financial health and adhere to sound financial practices as evidenced by annual revenues that exceed expenses.

4) Develop a network of peers to serve as an ongoing support and resource, and thus break the sense of isolation.

5) Develop a common vocabulary for use among peers and within their organizations.

6) Use their business plans as a holistic "master plan" within which all programmatic, operational, and financial decisions are made.

7) Effectively learn to use a leadership team concept to promote organizational change, champion business planning strategies, and organizational changes necessitated by the plan. The leadership team reinforces the fact that organizational sustainability cannot rest on the shoulders of one or two staff members alone.

PHASES OF BOOST

BOOST was divided into three phases, as described below.

Phase I – 2003: Eight (8) growth-stage nonprofits were selected to participate in BOOST. Program officers recommended grantees in their program areas. Dr. Stevens assessed each organization and its lifecycle stage. Also, during this time, the consultants were vetted and matched with the growth-stage grantees.

Phase II – 2004: Nonprofits completed a facilitated self-assessment of their organization and capacity. Each grantee leadership team participated in training in the nonprofit lifecycles model. Grantees then received a $20,000 grant to invest in their infrastructure, and worked with their consultants to develop a comprehensive three-year business plan.

Phase III – 2005-2006: Grantees received $50,000 grants to implement their business plans. They attended cohort convenings designed to encourage learning and sharing. With coaching from their consultants, they addressed key capacity issues including programs, governance, management, financial resources, and administrative systems.

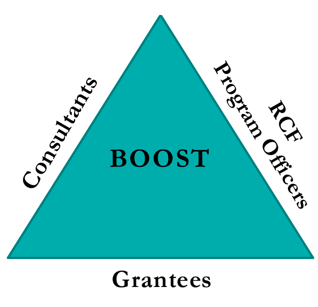
LEARNING THROUGH BOOST

The ideas of "learning through experience" and "learning with others" were woven into BOOST through two proven learning models. These models are evidenced in the tools and processes used throughout BOOST including the leadership teams, self-assessment process, application of the lifecycles model, and financial management tools.

Action Learning	Communities of Practice
Informal learning that takes place through relationships between people and connections between knowledge and activity.	Collaborative groups (or cohorts) that feature peer-to-peer activities to build professional skills and organizational capabilities. People come together to share ideas, solve problems, build tools, and develop relationships.

One of the unique and powerful aspects of BOOST is its involvement of three cohorts: nonprofits, consultants and the Rose Community Foundation Program Officer, as depicted below. Additionally, Dr. Susan Kenny Stevens, the architect of BOOST, served as the Master Trainer and lead facilitator of the initiative.

BOOST Communities of Practice



This Communities of Practice model distinguishes BOOST from other capacity building initiatives designed by Dr. Stevens. "The Community of Practice concept is the part that is different [about BOOST]. Program officers are involved, [as are] executive directors, consultants, [and] boards," commented Dr. Stevens. She went on to say, "I don't know of any other program that is this holistic."

FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION LEARNING

The Action Learning Framework depicted below recognizes that learning and change are demonstrated by increased awareness, increased knowledge, changes in internal practices, and ultimately, with increases in internal capacity and sustainability. This model outlines the continuum of learning and change that would occur through BOOST. It was expected that the BOOST cohorts would experience increased awareness and knowledge throughout the three-year initiative, and that changes in practices, capacity, and sustainability would begin to emerge in the third year of the initiative. It was also hoped that those long-term changes in capacity and sustainability would continue after BOOST.

Action Learning Framework - Continuum of Change and Learning

Increased Awareness ⇨ Increased Knowledge ⇨ Changes in Internal Practice(s) ⇨ Changes in Capacity and Sustainability

This framework for action learning is a key component of the assessment, as is the lifecycles model presented on the next page.

> *"What I feel good about at the end of the day was that we did create a safe place for people to talk about their real problems…a safe place for them to grow and learn. That doesn't happen very often."*

BOOST incorporates the lifecycles theory developed by Dr. Stevens. The theory presumes that nonprofit organizations, like people, develop through stages. Dr. Stevens' lifecycles model has seven stages, as outlined in the diagram below. Central to that concept are the following principles as documented in Dr. Stevens' book.

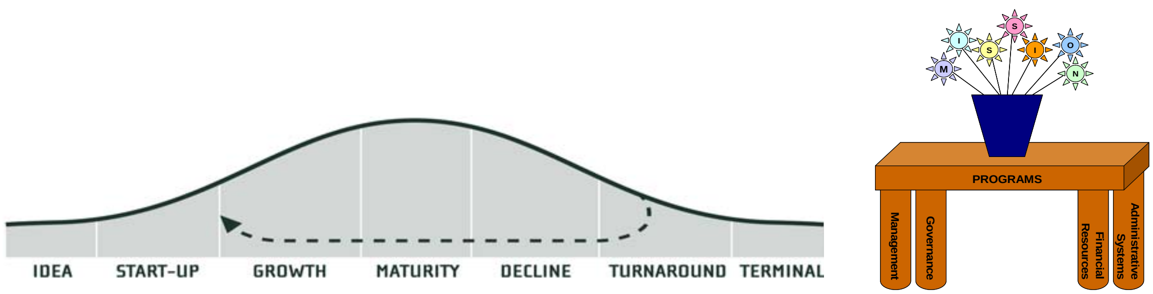
- Nonprofits progress through seven developmental lifecycle stages, as illustrated below. This progression is not linear, nor is it guaranteed.

- Between the ends of the spectrum are growth and maturity — the ideal position for organizations.

- Each stage in the lifecycle is unique in its challenges and calls for stage-appropriate strategies.

- Organizations familiar with the lifecycle, and their placement on it, are better prepared to deal with challenges effectively.

Nonprofit Lifecycles Model and Capacity Table



The initiative included grantees in the growth stage of development. BOOST encouraged them to examine their internal capacity in five areas: programs, governance, management, financial resource development, and administrative systems. Dr. Stevens uses a metaphor of a table, pictured above, to assist nonprofits in understanding the importance of balanced capacity to support effective mission and programs (e.g., equally strong legs of the table).

ASSESSING BOOST

Using the models described above -- Action Learning and Nonprofit Lifecycles – Corona Research's task was to understand BOOST's impact on the three Communities of Practice (grantees, consultants, and Rose Community Foundation staff) and to answer the following questions:

- What have we learned – as individuals and organizations – since we engaged in BOOST in 2004?
- How have we changed – as individuals and organizations – as a result of our participation in BOOST?
- How could we improve the cohort program?

PROCESS

END OF YEAR 2

To answer these questions, grantees were asked to reassess their capacity in December 2005, thereby serving as an update and comparison to the self-assessment conducted in 2004, as well as to reflect on their own growth and change since that baseline period. Consultants were asked to reflect on their own growth and change as consultants, as well as share general observations of change and learning in growth-stage nonprofits over the past year or more. The grantees and consultants submitted written assessments to Corona Research. Program officers were interviewed as a group by Corona Research and asked to reflect on changes within themselves and Rose Community Foundation. Finally, Dr. Stevens was interviewed by Corona Research to capture her perspective as the Master Trainer of the initiative.

END OF YEAR 3

Each of the growth-stage grantees was asked to complete a thorough self-assessment of its progress from 2004-2006. The assessment was due in early 2007 and consisted of a series of questions very similar to those used at the end of 2005. The assessment tool was designed by the research team and submitted to Rose Community Foundation for feedback. Once approved, the tool and an introductory memo were distributed to the executive directors electronically.

Consultants were asked to report on their experiences and learnings through BOOST. Those qualitative data were gathered via one-on-one interviews using a standard interview guide distributed in advance. A modification was made in the gathering of feedback and learnings from Rose Community Foundation staff members. Rather than focus on the program officers as a cohort, the consultant and client elected to conduct a group interview with the project management team, including Dr. Stevens.

Copies of the assessment tools are included in the Appendix.

REPORT OF BOOST LEARNINGS

Corona's task was to create a comprehensive portrait of the learnings and changes that happened over the course of the three-year initiative. This report focuses primarily on the experiences of the grantees. It begins with a reflection on the initial self-assessments in 2004, growth and change in 2005, and, finally, the full impact of BOOST at the end of 2006.

The research team created a unique approach to summarize the comprehensive changes experienced by the grantees. Using Dr. Stevens' table metaphor, the research team examined the table top and the legs. The analysis of each capacity builder is organized into two parts: Lifecycle Development and Progress Along the Action Learning Framework. In the Lifecycle Development section, each of the grantees was asked to place itself on the nonprofit lifecycle curve. (In order to ensure confidentiality among the grantees, each organization's self-assessments are represented by a colored dot on each diagram, with the same color used to represent that grantee throughout the report.) The analysis for capacity builder then focuses on identifying the common themes among the nonprofits that made the most significant progress along the curve and comparing those to the themes among the organizations that were in earlier stages of development.

In the Action Learning Framework section, the grantees' comments were placed along the framework by the research team. The team used a standard methodology when assigning placement along the continuum, as illustrated in the example below.

Example – Progress Along the Action Learning Framework

A change in…	**Was indicated by…**
Awareness	Realizing that additional capacity was needed in fund-raising.
Knowledge	Identifying the need to hire a development director.
Changes in Internal Practice(s)	Creating a job description and hiring process for the position.
Changes in Capacity and Sustainability	Hiring a new development director. Engaging the board in fund-raising.

It is important to note that grantees were given two years to implement their business plans. While two years allows time for true change to take place, the research team realized that increases in capacity and sustainability would be indicated by additional capacity first, such as new positions and new databases, and that sustainability would follow from those intentional investments. The research team believed that a few organizations might experience increased sustainability within the two-year implementation period, but not all, and that was okay.

Once each grantee's comments were categorized, the grantees were placed along the action learning framework. The research team employed a simple averaging method to categorize the self-assessment data. For example, an organization that made three comments regarding *Changes in Internal Practice* and three comments about *Changes in Capacity and Sustainability* would be considered to be halfway between the two. While this method has some limitations, it was considered to be the most objective way to categorize self-reported qualitative data as a means of understanding progress made via BOOST.

Finally, each analysis highlights the common changes that occurred among the grantees. These appear to be driving the building of capacity and sustainability among these eight growth-stage nonprofits.

Since this is not a third-party evaluation with a statistical overtone, the research team elected to present the selected findings that told the broadest story of BOOST and its impact on the growth-stage grantees. Data were provided directly by the grantees, summarizing their opinions, experiences, accomplishments, and challenges.

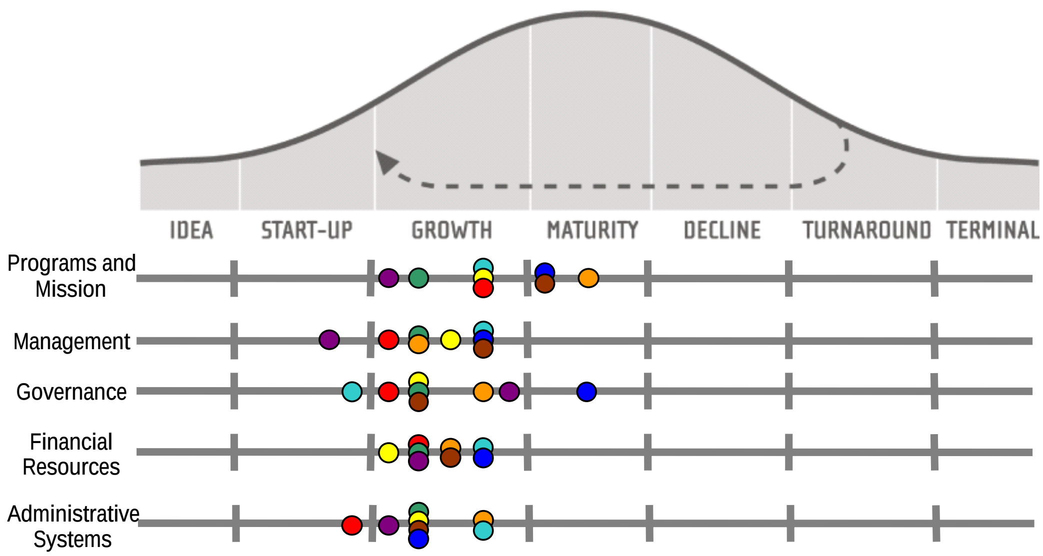
Names of individual grantees, consultants (with the exception of Dr. Stevens), and program officers are not included in the body of this report, although they are listed in the Appendix as a means of documenting the individuals and nonprofits that participated in the process.

"Life is what happens when you are busy planning."

SUMMARY OF LEARNINGS FROM GRANTEES

Grantees were asked to perform a thorough self-assessment to identify their lifecycle stages as well as the key issues that needed to be addressed in their business plans. Those initial placements are indicated on the diagram below.

2004 Lifecycle Placement



It is interesting to note the diverse spread of initial placements for each of the five capacity builders. While a few grantees believed they had some relative balance across their capacity builders (e.g., each "dot" is in relatively the same place along the curve), others indicated a range of capacity stages. Governance appeared to have the most diversity of stages, ranging from late start-up to mid-maturity, while financial resources exhibited the most clustering in the growth stage.

COMMON ISSUES TO BE ADDRESSED IN THE BUSINESS PLANS

As noted above, each grantee was asked to identify the critical issues to be addressed in the business plan. The following common issues were identified in 2004.

Programs

- Revisit mission as needed.
- Evaluate current programming to determine ongoing need and viability of all programs.
- Expand marketing capacity.

Governance

- Clarify expectations of board members.
- Establish well functioning board committee structure.
- Implement board development activities.
- Recruit new board members.
- Engage in succession planning.
- Develop a strategic orientation.
- Increase fundraising capabilities of the board.

Management

- Redesign organizational structure.
- Increase staff capacity.
- Attract and retain staff with the necessary skills and abilities for the future.
- Engage in succession planning as needed.
- Improve communication.

Financial Resources

- Create the comprehensive and strategic fundraising plan.
- Diversify revenues, including individual donors, planned gifts, and earned income.
- Build working capital, reserves, and/or endowments.
- Achieve increased financial stability/sustainability.

Administrative Systems

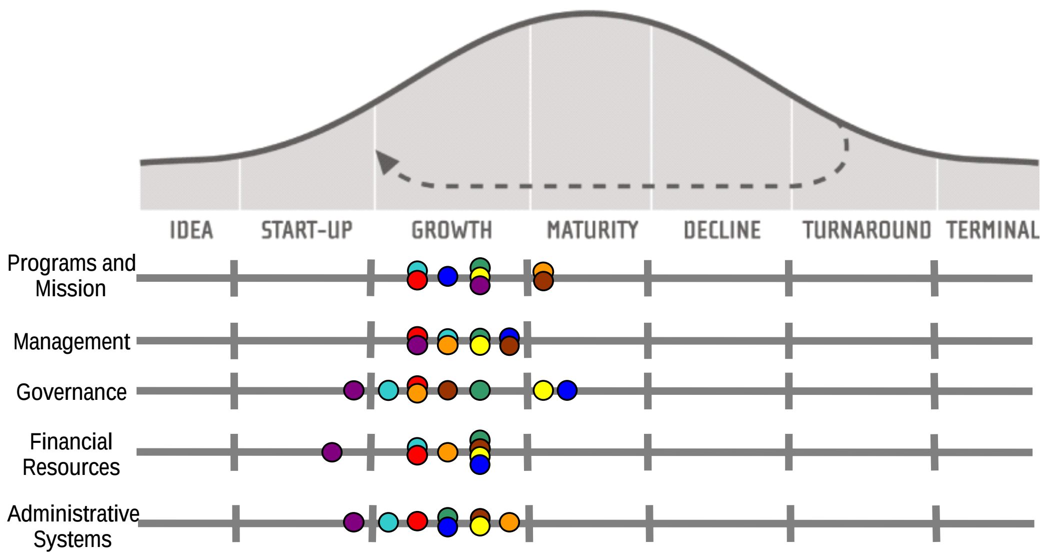
- Address facility needs.
- Improve information technology – databases, computers, networks, and websites.
- Establish policies and procedures.

As the reader will find, these issues (and more) were addressed by the end of BOOST. For a look at grantees' progress at the end of 2005, please read the next section.

By the end of 2005, each grantee had completed a full year of business plan implementation.[1] When they reassessed their lifecycle stages, five of the eight growth-stage grantees observed they were not as far along the nonprofit lifecycle as they had identified in the 2004 self-assessment. This was one of several important "aha" moments experienced that year.

In general, grantees recognized that their programs and governance weren't as far along the curve as they had originally diagnosed, whereas their management and administrative systems were largely in the growth stage. Several organizations had begun to achieve more balance across their "legs," thus indicating a balanced approach to capacity building as evidenced in the remainder of this section.

2005 Lifecycle Placement



Grantees were focused on implementing their business plans and working to address many of the "aha"s that had emerged during the self-assessment process. The implementation period also led to new realizations as highlighted below and detailed on the following pages.

- Six (6) refined or rewrote their missions.
- Three (3) refined or rewrote their vision statements.
- Two (2) recognized that program expansion couldn't occur without sufficient support.

[1] The Center for African American Health and Boulder Jewish Community Center were given additional time to complete their business plans in order to complete feasibility studies.

- Three (3) added new programs; three (3) discontinued programs.
- Four (4) created succession plans.
- Six (6) identified mental shifts among board or staff in the way finances were viewed, due to their adoption of program-based budgeting.
- Three (3) developed a strategic financial focus.
- Two (2) supplied staff with monthly financials.
- Three (3) had board members who demonstrated greater understanding of the board's role.
- Four (4) utilized board self-assessment tools.

This list illustrates the significant changes in awareness and knowledge that occurred in 2005 as well as the new practices that were put into place.

> *"For the first time in its history [our nonprofit] now <u>has</u> a strategic plan."*

MISSION AND PROGRAMS

Several grantees recognized that clearer mission and vision statements were the first step in making tough decisions about programs offerings. One grantee shared the "monumental change" they experienced when they separated from a sister organization. "This significant realignment has allowed [us] to move ahead with clarity of mission and a unified purpose for the board of directors and staff."

"We came into our unique competence," recognized another nonprofit. "We decided to transform the organization to build off of our unique competence, not because of program decline. We are charting our own course," they wrote as they reflected on their choice to pursue a more focused strategic direction and their decision to eliminate programs that were no longer a fit. Likewise, another grantee recognized that they needed a new mission statement "to better capture the reality of the organization today." They also made the decision to create a vision statement "to guide us towards achieving the mission."

One grantee shared the "aha" moment when they analyzed the numbers and discovered that, "even if we maxed out the potential [of the program] we would be unlikely to [meet our overall goal for program participation]. In other words: keeping [a specific program] alive was keeping us from fulfilling our mission. Once that light bulb came on, the decision…was inescapable."

Most of the BOOST grantees indicated a change in their programs and services from the prior year. Three organizations added new programs, two discontinued programs, and three increased or changed the reach of their services. As one grantee noted, "The focus of the [program] department is now much clearer…. [T]hough the mission remains the same, our service delivery vehicles in both [departments] have changed." These changes in program offerings were driven by refocused missions, as some programs were determined to be "keepers" and some needed to be let go.

"Perhaps the most significant illustration of that improved understanding of mission and how to best execute it, is the decision to shut down [a particular program]," commented a grantee.

Several also implemented new evaluation systems for their programs. The reasons for these changes ranged from having a greater understanding of the financial impact each program or service had on the organization as a whole to gaining increased clarity on the organization's mission and the programs or services that fit with the new strategic focus. As one grantee noted, "By defining our focus more strategically, we have set in motion a more accountable organization, which does not make promises it cannot keep. Our customer service has improved significantly."

Some grantees noted the inherent challenges for staff when refocusing programs. "The staff as a whole struggled until recently to regain clarity concerning the agency's mission, following the organizational restructure. After a difficult initial adjustment time, the program staff generally applauds the clearer and more directed agency focus."

> *"As a result of the BOOST process—and the type of critical thinking that was required for such an intense undertaking—[our] staff has the skill to analyze its programs critically and strategically, and to make changes accordingly."*

MANAGEMENT

The growth-stage nonprofits realized that they needed to strengthen their management structure and staffing. Recognizing that they didn't have to do it all themselves, BOOST also assisted one grantee in looking beyond traditional partnerships and encouraged the organization to consider forming strategic alliances. This thoughtful way of looking at community relationships is now beginning to open doors for funding opportunities for the organization. One organization also noted its acknowledgment – thanks to BOOST – of the importance of fit with the organization's stage along the lifecycle when hiring. The organization deepened its thoughts regarding board recruitment, and moved beyond merely looking for "time, talent, and treasure" to find volunteers who could effectively address the organization's current reality and stage of development. Another grantee learned this past year "to support staff turnover when needed (as opposed to hanging on)."

For many, changes in programs necessitated staff changes as well. Several implemented new organizational structures – including new positions and specializations – and new management team structures. As one grantee noted, "An appropriate and effective staffing structure has made a positive difference. We were able to hire more qualified, experienced and effective employees. By adding responsibility for marketing to the Development Director's position, marketing (always a challenge for us) is becoming much more of a priority and much more is being accomplished." Several grantees added chief financial officers to implement more robust systems and practices.

While some grantees eliminated programs and thereby downsized program staff positions, others brought on management-level staff with increased skills and expertise. "The presence of a Program Director working to build and manage our program has also freed the Executive Director to focus on more strategic issues."

A grantee noted in its report that "our improved understanding of how to further our mission has translated into new management approaches." We have "learned more about the needs of [our program participants] and how to best meet those needs." This increased awareness of mission fit and participant need led them to change "our context for looking at the [staff] positions we have and need. We now look through the lens of 'What furthers our mission?' That has moved us away from fitting the person to the job, and toward fitting the job to the organization."

Several grantees put new human resources policies, procedures, and systems in place this past year. Management teams were created for the first time at some grantees, thereby lessening the load on the executive directors. A new job description for the executive director and an emergency succession plan were implemented at a participating nonprofit. One grantee spoke of the desire to increase flexibility because "supporting flexible work schedules for program staff has reduced the risks associated with burnout." Other changes of note include creating personnel policies and procedures which help to "clarify expectations" for staff. One grantee had program staff members document their duties to formalize the previously undocumented policies and procedures. Another has instituted performance evaluations for all staff, while a third has established clear lines of responsibility and reporting for staff.

Many BOOST grantees are focusing on marketing efforts, building largely from issues raised through "BOOST moments." Much of this is related to organizations having a stronger sense of who they are through refining their mission statement, defining their niche program or service market, developing their brand, and in some cases separating themselves from other organizations. One organization noted that, "the identity of [our organization] is now clear, [and we] no longer need two logos for everything." The marketing efforts grantees are undertaking include greater outreach through new or improved websites, annual reports, branding consultation, and marketing plans.

Finally, grantees noted that the business plan itself was a valuable tool in 2005. "The exercise of developing the business plan gave us the chance to lay out what our organization would look like in 2007 and 2008. In late 2005 we realized that we couldn't do all that was outlined to be done in the business plan. It caused us to prioritize, placing the highest priority on governance, [and] board and staff development." Frequent use of the work plan and a simple visual tool for tracking progress "was instrumental in keeping us on track." Another grantee noted that "there is more accountability throughout the agency. Each staff member is now responsible for collective goals in addition to their individual goals."

GOVERNANCE

Several grantees became aware that change was needed to increase engagement, retention, and role clarity.

> *"[BOOST] has forced us to think about how we function as a board and where we need to make changes."*

For some organizations, 2005 was a year of realizations, even if actions and new practices weren't fully implemented. "The big 'a-ha' I got at the last cohort meeting was that of hiring for fit for the lifecycle stage, [and] this also caused us to revise our thinking about board recruitment," noted a leadership team member. One grantee noted the "struggle with developing a smooth and ongoing recruitment process" and the "ongoing challenge" of successfully orienting and engaging new board members.

While two organizations struggled with a lack of board engagement, the majority was able to further educate their boards about their governing role, their fiduciary responsibility, the organization's financials, and their role as fund-raisers. Many grantees also noted the important role that the business plan, work plan, and time line played in increasing their boards' engagement and understanding.

In some cases, a change in board leadership and turnover resulted in new practices for succession planning, including the addition of "Chair Elect" and "immediate Past Chair" leadership positions. Other boards were strengthened through the addition of committees, increased participation at board meetings, or a more comprehensive board recruitment process.

FINANCIAL RESOURCES

The assessments clearly demonstrate that, with the increased awareness and knowledge of financial systems and tools, there have been proactive efforts to change what might have been long-standing practices within the organization and to create sound financial policies, procedures, and systems that foster a more stable fiscal reality. These changes in practice were profound, affecting all levels and operations of an organization, including board of directors, management team, staff operations, and service delivery.

In a practical sense, the fundamental change for grantees was in the strategic perspective and focus they began to give to the financial underpinnings and structure of initiatives, programs, and delivery systems within their organizations. BOOST grantees clearly gained an important appreciation for finance and accounting theory. Even the grantees that had some level of financial management sophistication prior to BOOST gained a deeper understanding of financial planning and management tools and their application. Several organizations looked to new chief financial officers (CFOs) to help them implement strategic financial management systems and practices.

Overall, grantees did not characterize their sense of financial management enlightenment in terms of theory; rather, they tended to focus on the efficacy of one tool or application. Through the BOOST process, many of the organizations began to recognize the importance of multi-year funding, the value in diversifying their funding sources, and the difference between opportunistic and strategic funding. One grantee stated that they no longer view "opportunistic foundation grants or programs spread a mile wide as an acceptable means of achieving a balanced budget."

The addition of program-based budgeting helped many grantees understand that they needed to have an "intentional focus on program development and growth with funding." One grantee said that they have a greater awareness of the financial component and have begun to ask the question "Who pays for that?" when determining which program and service opportunities to pursue. This tool played a significant role in guiding organizations' decisions about strategic growth of programs and services. Organizations began to grasp the implications of continued growth without sufficient support and made conscious choices not to pursue one without the other.

> *"In our pre-BOOST days, we looked at the [organization's] financial health through the lens of: 'Do we have enough money to keep the doors open?' Now, we ask: 'Do we have enough money to grow as we wish and fulfill our business plan?' In other words, we have begun to plan our financial future strategically."*

Some grantees recognized the need to build their in-house financial management capacity. For example, one grantee recognized that "the need for an individual to serve both the CEO and the bookkeeper by providing CFO expertise is more apparent now than ever." Another shared that, "We are converting to a new accounting system that will not only allow us to do program-based budgeting, but generate the monthly financials directly from the accounting system."

Grantees diversified their funding sources and began to pursue fees for service, federal or state dollars, and social venture capital opportunities, in combination with their existing fundraising methods. "The new budget relies far less on grant funding; it requires [program fee] increases in key areas, and the budget involves the board more effectively," shared a grantee. That grantee also is "looking to share more information and responsibility for departmental income and expenses with the respective department heads, so that the burden of ensuring financial sustainability is shared by the entire management team." Another grantee implemented additional fee-based services in response to its original self-assessment.

Four performance indicators were selected to provide a snapshot of improvement in financial resources. The Business Plan projection compared the grantee's performance to its estimate of performance – a measure of how well the organization did compared to its plan. The other measures, including gross income increase, net income increase, and fund balance increase, are a comparison of the actual financial performance to the previous year's performance – a relative measure of longitudinal financial health and stability.

It is interesting to note that two of the grantees met all four of the performance indicators. In contrast, one grantee failed to meet any of the performance indicators due to extenuating circumstances (e.g., the grantee took a loss from making the data-driven decision to terminate one of its key activities, with the resultant impact on income, expenses, and net income).

Performance Indicator	Actual Performance*
Business Plan Revenue Projection - 2005**	Two (2) exceeded income projections, two (2) were on track with projections, and three (3) were below projections
Gross Income Increase From Previous Year	Six (6) exceeded the previous year's gross income
Net Income Increase From Previous Year	Five (5) exceeded the previous year's net income
Fund Balance Increase From Previous Year	Five (5) exceeded the previous year's fund balance

* Based on seven grantee responses to Part II questionnaire and data request. Due to financial reporting issues self-identified by one grantee, its financial data were not used in the performance indicator analysis. Additionally, Corona used the financial statements of the grantees, which cover varying fiscal years.

** The Business Plan had a number of possible indicators that could be used (e.g., change in fund balance), but adherence to income projection was selected since this estimate had an impact on all of the other values in the financial model.

ADMINISTRATIVE SYSTEMS

Grantees implemented a variety of new policies, procedures, systems, and supports in 2005. Two grantees moved their offices in 2005. All eight grantees implemented information technology improvements ranging from telephones, websites, and computers to new software packages in fund-raising and accounting. Several built capacity in multiple aspects of administrative systems.

One grantee used the 2005 assessment process to reflect on the technology issues that had long plagued the organization. "While we recognize that we had new equipment, we don't believe our systems were at the mature stage, as we aren't able to use the systems effectively and we have questions about what we really need. We still need help getting unstuck from where we are at."

A variety of new practices was also implemented. Policies and procedures were written by one grantee to "guide day-to-day operation and [to] aid continuity if a staff change or extended absence should occur." Another grantee "created and implemented several new policies and tools which streamline management operations." Another organization "established a monthly Directors' Meeting to review our goals, discuss problems and increase communication."

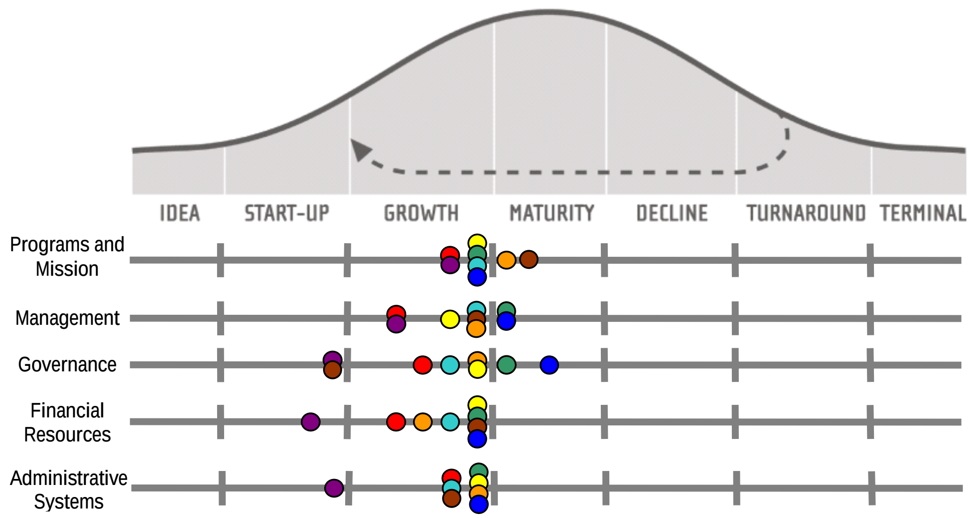
WHAT MADE THE DIFFERENCE?

The first year of business plan implementation was a busy year for grantees, one full of realizations and efforts to convert new ways of thinking into new practices and systems that supported strategic growth. The following table lists the new tools, practices, and ways of thinking that really made a difference in 2005.

Capacity Area	New Tools, Practices, and Ways of Thinking that really made the difference
Mission and Programs	Clarified mission, vision, and values. Shifted from decisions based on intuition to decisions grounded in mission, values, business plan, and financial analysis. Eliminated programs that didn't fit mission or weren't financially viable. Added programs and services to achieve mission and new strategic direction. Improved programs to better align with mission, financial needs, and strategic direction. Implemented program evaluation. Expanded partnerships and collaborations. Used financial management tools (such as program-based budgets) to better understand financial reality of each program. Increased funding to support programs.
Management	Implemented new organizational chart. Added new positions. Hired people that are the right fit for the growth stage. Freed up executive director's time to focus on strategic issues. Created new brand and marketing materials. Implemented succession plans, new job descriptions, employee evaluation, and management teams. Paid more attention to financial management on a regular basis. Share financial information with managers.
Governance	Implemented new job descriptions, committee structure, and officers. Improved board recruiting process. Added new board members. Conducted board self-assessment. Implemented new policies. Increased board engagement in fund-raising and financial management.

Capacity Area	New Tools, Practices, and Ways of Thinking that really made the difference
Financial Resources	Recognized that sustainable funding is a necessity. Changed attitude from "survive" to "succeed." Implemented more accurate, responsive and timely financial management system. Engaged board and management staff in financial management thinking and planning. Established strong finance committee. Used financial data to guide program decisions and expansion plans. Shared a "dashboard" of key financial information with the board. Pursued new funding opportunities. Hired development director for the first time. Hired in-house financial staff for the first time. Distributed regular financial reports to board and management staff. Implemented program-based budgets. Used multi-year planning and budgeting. Upgraded accounting software. Performed cash flow analysis. Used accrual accounting. Reported "budget to actual" financial performance.
Administrative Systems	Implemented new policies and procedures for human resources and financial management. Implemented new job descriptions for board and staff. Strengthened technology – website, computers, and database upgrades. Purchased accounting and fundraising software. Moved to new office space. Purchased new phone system.

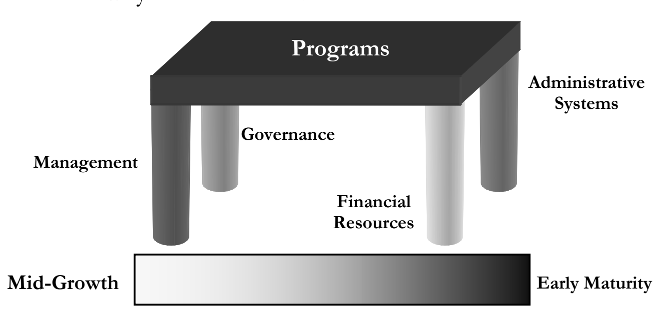
The eight grantees made significant progress in developing into more mature and sustainable nonprofits. It is important to note, however, that some grantees made more progress than others. The diagram below summarizes the placements of the organizations in each of the five parts of the nonprofit lifecycle curve in order to better understand the underlying reasons for these differences.



Note: The placement of the brown dot in the Governance "leg" represents an organization in the late turnaround stage. Given that the organization is not approaching termination, however, the issues facing it will be similar to those facing a late start-up organization. For the purposes of this illustration, therefore, it has been placed in that location.

In examining the diagram above, and comparing it to the comments made by grantees, the most successful organizations have one thing in common: balance. The organizations represented by the yellow, green, blue, and teal dots reported that their progress along the nonprofit lifecycle curve has been relatively consistent among the different components of the table. When examining the comments made in the self-assessments, these nonprofits are consistently focused on understanding the progress that they have made and the steps that must be taken to continue to drive their organizations forward in the future.

The issue of balance is further illustrated by the table illustration below. This illustration provides an overall representation of how far along the nonprofit lifecycle curve the grantees have come as a whole by "averaging" the placements of all eight grantees. In general, grantees' missions and programs are very near the maturity stage of development. However, the financial resources leg is generally less developed than the other legs. In order to be successful in the long run, the organizations must find a way to add more balance.

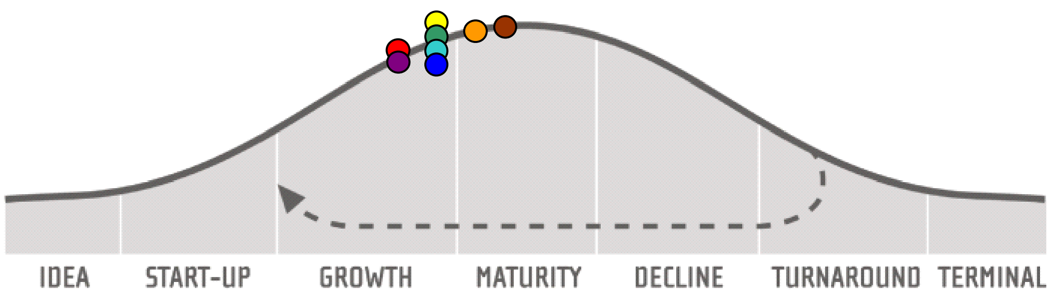


MISSION AND PROGRAMS

> *"[There is] no more 'half-baked, do the best we can with what we've got' philosophy among our staff team. We now have capacity."*

LIFECYCLE DEVELOPMENT

As noted above, each of the eight BOOST grantees was asked to place its organization's mission and programs on the nonprofit lifecycle curve. In order to ensure confidentiality among the grantees, each organization's self-assessments are represented by a colored dot on the diagram. Additionally, responses for all of the grantees regarding their mission and programs have been synthesized and are presented below the diagram.



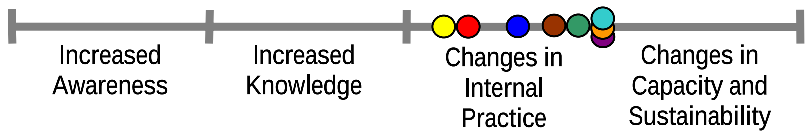
All of the grantees felt that their mission and programs were in the late-growth or early maturity stages of development, as can be seen in the exhibit above. The majority of the grantees was very pleased with the progress that their organizations had made, expressing thoughts like "Tremendous progress has been made in this area," and "[We are making moves that will] allow considerably more client capacity." In addition, nearly all of the grantees made substantial changes to their programs, often moving away from programs that were not aligned with their mission and implementing new programs that were better aligned.

The two nonprofits that felt that their mission and programs had reached maturity saw noticeably different changes in this area than their growth-stage counterparts. One of these nonprofits noted that many of the changes made were in the idea of strategic discipline. They remarked that "[We] don't have to jump into every opportunity as it appears," and that there have been improvements in "focus, intentionality, strategy, feasibility analysis, long-term sustainability, and confidence." The other organization made changes primarily focused on extending existing programs, noting that "growing our [program] and providing a great new facility for the program" was one of the most significant capacity improvements since 2004.

Among the six grantees that placed their mission and programs in the growth stage, many of the organizations were continuing to make changes to their mission, branding, and programmatic focus. One grantee went through a "reaffirmation of the mission by the board of directors," while another "began working with a team of consultants to identify [our organization's] unique brand and a set of marketing strategies to carry that brand…in 2007."

PROGRESS ALONG THE ACTION LEARNING FRAMEWORK

In addition to examining the grantees' self-assessments of their progress along the nonprofit life cycle, each grantee was assigned a placement along the Action Learning Framework based on its comments. It is interesting to note that, generally speaking, grantees whose comments were further to the right end of the framework tended to rank themselves closer to maturity on the nonprofit lifecycles model discussed previously.



One of the performance outcomes identified for growth-stage organizations by Dr. Stevens is that the "organization is known for a distinctive programming approach which distinguishes them from their peers." Six grantees made comments that demonstrated their organization's progress in this area. As one respondent noted, "We adopted a programmatic theme, which – for the first time – created integrity around our programming choices." Another grantee mentioned that "[We] moved from an approach of finding money for 'our' programs to more collaboration on the ground floor – a critical shift."

In addition to creating distinctive programs, six of the organizations have made staffing changes that have helped to drive improvements in programmatic capacity and sustainability. "With the Program Assistant staff position, long-term follow-up has improved dramatically," remarked one grantee. Another mentioned that "…the hiring of two new program directors [has] brought a higher level of quality and consistency to our volunteer and board development programs."

Many grantees also experienced success by establishing new partnerships with other organizations and strengthening existing partnerships. One grantee said, "Partnerships have been the key to increasing the efficiency of the services we provide." Nearly half of the grantees expanded their partnerships in some capacity during BOOST.

Based on the grantees' assessments of their programs and mission, it is clear that a number of changes are key to building capacity and sustainability in programs, including:

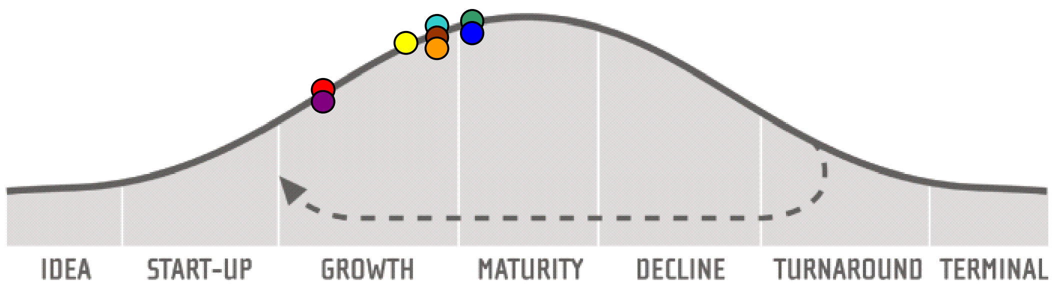
- Building a distinctive programming approach.
- Obtaining adequate staffing to support programs.
- Forming strategic partnerships with other organizations.

MANAGEMENT

> *"The current staff is a strong and cohesive group focused on building the organization."*

LIFECYCLE DEVELOPMENT

Placements of the grantees' management on the nonprofit lifecycle are considerably more dispersed than placements of their programs.



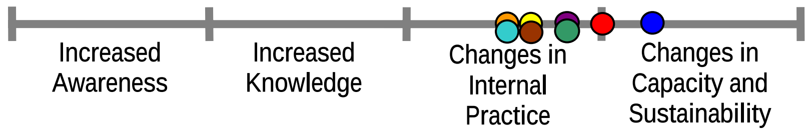
While the majority of the organizations continue to rank themselves in the late-growth and early maturity stages, two of the grantees ranked themselves in the early growth stage. Regardless of their placement on the curve, however, nearly all of the grantees have made significant staffing changes. Half of the grantees created new managerial positions, and most were very happy with their changes. One grantee remarked, "Our investment in this relatively new position remains important and has contributed to exceptional fundraising success over the past two years," while another said, "Hiring an operations/finance manager gave us the boost we needed."

It should be noted, however, that creating new positions will not always yield a positive effect on the organization as a whole. One of the organizations ranked in the early growth stage "hired a development director who, unfortunately, was not a good match for our early growth-stage organization." The organization is now in the process of hiring a replacement who might be a better fit. This emphasizes the importance of not just hiring new people, but finding people who will fit into the organization's business plan, lifecycle stage, and future goals. This is further confirmed by another organization that remarked that "clarity on the importance of having good people" had helped them to succeed. This example also illustrates that change is not linear, which is another underlying assumption in the BOOST model.

While the nonprofits in the early growth stages are focused on filling positions and setting policies, the other organizations are now putting their new staff and policies to use. One mature-stage grantee remarked, "[Our] staff is able to serve in the appropriate capacity." Another late growth-stage respondent mentioned, "[We are now able to] run the organization more like a business." These responses make it very clear that a key of advancing past the growth stage is not only developing new policies, but integrating those policies into the way the organization is managed.

PROGRESS ALONG THE ACTION LEARNING FRAMEWORK

Each grantee's comments about its management area were analyzed to assign a placement along the Action Learning Framework. Though there is some correlation between placement on the framework and placement on the nonprofit lifecycle, the correlation is not as strong as was seen in the area of mission and programs. It seems that even the grantees in the early mature stages continue to increase their knowledge base and make changes in their internal practices.



Over half of the grantees mentioned that the changes they had made in their management had allowed their executive directors to more effectively fill the executive director role. One organization said that there was now "less micromanagement," while another remarked that the "executive director can oversee the entire operation rather than filling in as [a program director]." One such executive director mentioned that "the most immediate indicator [that our management is stronger] for me is to observe how many activities and management tasks do not involve me." It is clear that allowing executive directors the time to do their jobs is key to building management capacity.

Related to the above, six of the grantees noted that sharing responsibility among managers has been a key to their capacity development. "[There] has been an increase in shared leadership and management responsibility throughout the [organization]," recalled one respondent. Two organizations formed formal management teams, one of which resulted in "increased capacity to do excellent operational planning, etc.." Still another grantee noted that there has been "more ownership of organizational issues" among all managers. This shared responsibility seems to be a very important driver of capacity building.

Next, a few grantees saw a shift in the sustainability of their organizations away from the founder and toward the organization as a whole. Dr. Stevens identified the outcome that the "founder separates personal needs from those of the organization" as being key to moving forward in the growth stage, and this seems to have happened in some of the organizations. One of the grantees concluded that "our success to date can be attributed to management processes and management team efforts – not simply to the vision and efforts of the founder." Another group is preparing for the retirement of its executive director, noting that "The [executive director] is working on her transition plan and involving staff as the months go by."

The comments in this section of the self-assessment make it clearer than ever that a shift in ownership from the executive director to the management team is vital for the long-term sustainability of an organization. Specific capacity-building measures, as discussed above, include:

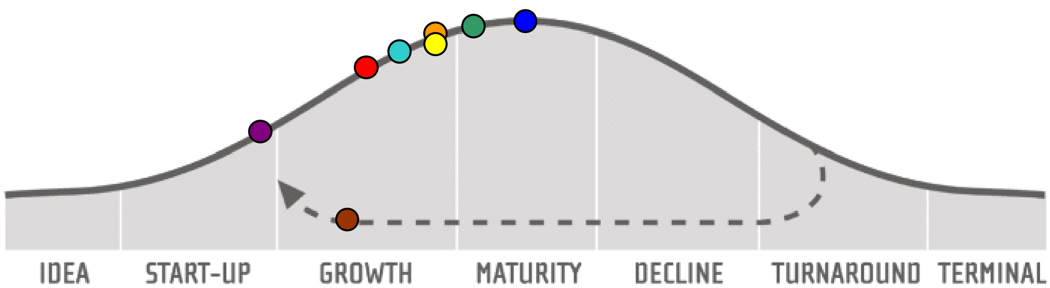
- Allowing managers the time to do their own jobs (e.g., "let [executive directors] be [executive directors]").
- Sharing responsibility for the organization's sustainability among all managers.
- Making decisions based on the organization's needs, rather than on the desires of the executive director or founder.

GOVERNANCE

> *"[The] BOOST process gave us the backbone to move strongly in these directions."*

LIFECYCLE DEVELOPMENT

Next, grantees placed their organization's governance on the nonprofit lifecycle curve. The combined results of their assessments are shown on the diagram below.



Grantees varied greatly in their placement of their governance on the nonprofit lifecycle curve. While two of the organizations felt governance was in the mature stage, the rest were divided among the start-up, growth, and even turnaround stages. Grantees had a more diverse experience with this capacity builder than they did with the other four.

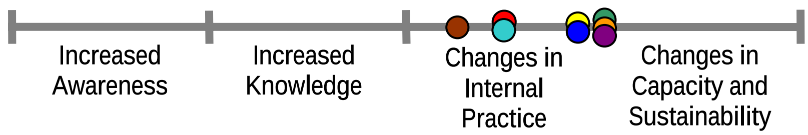
Despite the variety of stages, grantees shared a number of common themes. The majority of the comments made by grantees centered around the idea of board composition, including identifying gaps in skills, improving recruiting practices, and increasing diversity among the board. Interestingly, progress in these areas seems to be the primary driver of progress along the nonprofit lifecycle curve.

Many of the organizations that identified themselves as being in the late-growth or early maturity stage added new board members who brought a diversity of backgrounds and skills. These changes were universally seen as positive. "[We] recruited four new board members in 2006 which add strength and diversity to our board of directors," observed one late-growth grantee. Another late-growth grantee mentioned, "Fundamentally, the board is stronger because of greater skill diversity, broader perspectives and a number of new and enthusiastic members."

Conversely, the late start-up and late turnaround organizations focused primarily on identifying the skills needed for their boards rather than actually filling those positions. The start-up grantee noted, "We now use a board matrix to help identify areas of expertise we need to add to the board. [However,] we have not yet developed a board orientation, which we consider to be an important part of board recruitment and retention." The turnaround-stage grantee made a number of board member changes that resulted in "more structure…it feels like we are a bigger organization." However, that same respondent also conceded, "Our board committees need to be more active." It is clear from these statements that recruiting and retaining good board members is vital to the organizations' governance.

PROGRESS ALONG THE ACTION LEARNING FRAMEWORK

Each grantee's comments were analyzed to assign a placement along the Action Learning Framework. For the most part, grantees whose comments were further to the right side of the framework tended to rank themselves closer to maturity on the nonprofit lifecycles model. It is interesting to note that the organization that reported itself as being in the start-up stage actually saw significant changes in capacity and sustainability.



Grantees made a number of changes in internal practices that had helped their boards become more effective. One of the most common accomplishments was the formation of new committees to better fit the organizations' needs; half of the grantees either formed new committees or clarified the roles of existing committees. One respondent reported that they had "formed and launched a Strategic Task Force as part of ongoing organizational culture," helping to get people "actively involved in strategic level thinking." Another nonprofit responded, "We have created a Governance Committee, which has done significant work to strengthen our board of directors and the policies which support our work."

Perhaps the most important improvement in governance, as reported by almost all of the grantees, was an increase in the board's engagement in the organization. Dr. Stevens identifies this as one of the key performance outcomes in the growth stage, saying that the "nonprofit transitions from a staff-driven model to one of shared board/staff ownership; members understand their governance roles." At some level, the grantees universally experienced this transition.

Many of the grantees saw their boards become more engaged in the financial stability of the organizations. One such organization "for the first time…asked the board to conduct a fundraising project. The goal was small, but it was a good first step." Another group had a similar experience, noting, "Our spring fundraiser…represents the first board involvement in the fundraising capacity." Finally, another grantee answered, "The staff can't do it all." This involvement is imperative for an organization to succeed financially.

Finally, many of the organizations saw their boards begin to take ownership of the decision-making process. In one organization, "Board members [have begun] talking to each other without the executive director being the focal point…bouncing ideas off of each other" and that the "executive director occasionally is overruled by the executive committee or board – no rubber stamping." Another organization observed, "Board members are much more engaged in the organization and more fully knowledgeable in the program areas. Their involvement in our program planning has helped considerably."

Board member engagement is, without a doubt, the key to moving an organization's governance out of the growth stage and into maturity. The comments in this section of the self-assessment reinforce the importance of board ownership. Specific capacity-building measures, as discussed above, include:

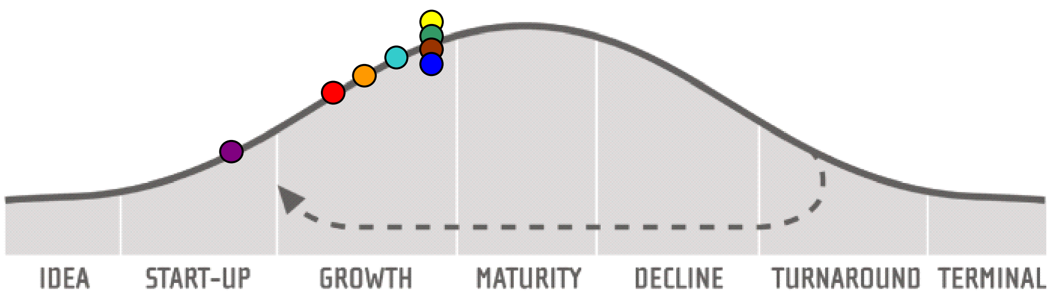
- Attracting energetic new board members.
- Forming new committees or clarifying roles of existing committees.
- Effectively involving board members in decision-making and fundraising processes.

FINANCIAL RESOURCES

> *"The budget grew [significantly] during 2006 and cash flow was not an issue for almost the entire year!"*

LIFECYCLE DEVELOPMENT

The majority of the grantees felt that their financial resources were in the middle- to late-growth stages of the lifecycle curve.



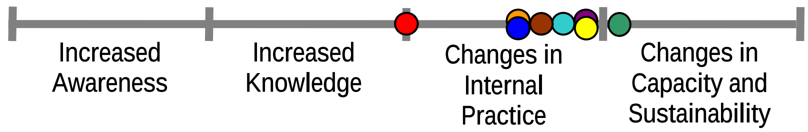
Regardless of their progress along the lifecycle curve, grantees have universally improved their understanding of their financial positions and the requirements necessary to keep their organizations functioning smoothly. One grantee stated, "We have a financial discipline that did not exist a few years ago." Another grantee mentioned that there is now a "willingness to talk about fund-raising at board meetings…now a regular agenda item." This shift in focus is vital for the long-term success of any organization.

Among the grantees that reported themselves as being in the late-growth stage of development, one recurring theme is the concept of board involvement in financial decision making. One of the most successful organizations reported, "Our 2006 actuals far exceeded our hopes for the year…. Our tremendous success in fund-raising helped to widen this surplus due, in large part, to a more active board…." Another successful group pointed out, "We are moving to stronger financial management and more involvement in financial control by the board treasurer and finance committee." Board involvement is, without a doubt, a major factor in moving an organization's financial resources forward along the nonprofit lifecycle curve.

On the other end of the spectrum, the organizations that self-assessed as being in earlier stages of the nonprofit lifecycle found themselves searching for consistent sources of funding. One early-growth organization admitted, "Our financial resources capacity remains essentially unchanged from 2005 and is one of the challenges facing the organization." Though that organization met its planned revenue goals for the year, it was only able to obtain approximately one-fourth of its projected revenues from individual donors. Another mid-growth organization has begun to investigate the possibility of generating revenues from its programs. However, this process has required a great deal of learning by the organization and is a slow-moving process.

PROGRESS ALONG THE ACTION LEARNING FRAMEWORK

Each grantee's comments were analyzed to assign a placement along the Action Learning Framework. For the most part, the organizations that ranked themselves higher along the nonprofit lifecycle curve also seemed to make more progress toward capacity and sustainability (and vice versa). It would seem that the grantees have a good feel for the steps required to achieve financial sustainability and are aware of their progress toward that end.



Nearly all of the organizations built capacity and sustainability by making changes to their financial management practices. Many of the grantees implemented program-based budgeting techniques, while other organizations implemented financial reserve accounts. Another organization has implemented a monthly financial review, noting, "Each month we renew the financials, focused on where we are to goal and [on determining] adjustments that must be made immediately to ensure that we make our financial goals for the year." Each organization is different, but a focus on improving financial management is clearly a strong driver of capacity and sustainability.

Another common theme expressed by respondents was the idea of making financial decisions strategically rather than opportunistically. One grantee mentioned, "We have begun to focus more of our grant applications on specific projects…[which] may serve as a benefit because foundations can choose to specifically fund initiatives or program activities." Another organization took a different approach at the same idea, reporting, "We eliminated a special event that was draining money and instituted an event that raised almost double its projected income." Still another group began to choose funding sources based on the organization's strengths, reporting, "We've passed on a host of funding and partnership opportunities [from a variety of sources] that are interesting but are not a good fit for our current stage of growth."

Finally, a number of grantees built capacity by diversifying and balancing their sources of funding. Prior to BOOST, some of the organizations were heavily reliant on one type of funding (such as grants, corporate sponsorships, or individual donations). As one organization stated, "We are accessing all available sources of funding. Our funding is more balanced." By diversifying sources of funding, the organization can ensure stability even if one funding stream is interrupted.

The comments in this section of the self-assessment point out that a number of factors contribute to developing capacity and sustainability of financial resources. Specific measures, as discussed above, include:

- Developing financial practices that fit the organization's needs.
- Making financial decisions strategically instead of opportunistically.
- Balancing and diversifying funding sources.
- Hiring staff with expertise in resource development and financial management.

In addition to answering general comments about their organization's progress along the lifecycle curve and progress toward capacity-building, grantees were asked to conduct a detailed examination of their financial standing. First, they were asked to compare their 2006 actuals to the projections in the business plan. Overall, three of the grantees exceeded their revenue projections, two were on track with projections, and three were below their projections. It should be noted, however, that one grantee terminated one of its key programs, resulting in changes in income, expenses, and net income.

It is important to note that the organizations that only met or fell below their expectations were very aware of the reasons that their campaigns fell short. Each organization was able to look at its projections in the business plan for each source of funding and identify the areas that had fallen short. For example, a number of organizations fell short of their projections for individual and corporate donations. As one of these groups observed, however, "We simply did not have a personal giving campaign…[This is] a high priority for 2007." The groups have, generally, identified their financial weaknesses and are making plans to compensate for them in the future.

Next, the grantees were asked to evaluate how they have used their business plans' projections to set their 2007 budgets. Generally speaking, most of the organizations expressed that the projections originally outlined in the business plan were no longer accurate, given the results of the past years. However, it is important to note that most of the grantees used a combination of their past years' results and the *concepts* of the business plan to develop their new budgets. As one grantee expressed, "We have not used the business plan projections in budgeting. We have, however, used all the 'lessons learned' in the past several years to do more realistic budgeting."

Finally, grantees were asked to discuss their use of program-based budgeting in their organization. Overall, half of the organizations expressed positive remarks about the implementation of program-based budgets, two were simply using them as they always have, one was only beginning to implement them, and one had decided to use income-based budgeting instead. Those that were using program-based budgets, however, were unanimously pleased with the usefulness of the concept. One group stated, "Program-based budgeting is now integrated into the entire budgeting process," while another grantee mentioned, "The program-based budgeting that we have used for these programs will be critical in re-structuring the organization." For the most part, it is clear that program-based budgets have been a very useful tool for the grantees.

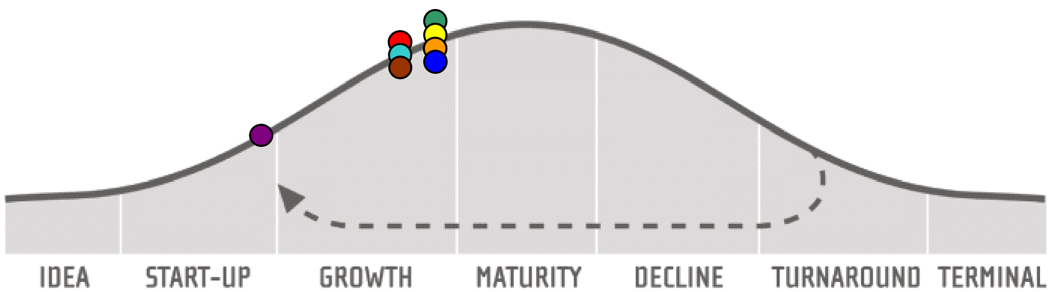
In addition, the research team evaluated the financial statements and business plan projections to objectively examine the successes achieved by the grantees as a whole with regard to increases in revenues and increases in net income. These measures are a comparison of the actual financial performance to the previous year's performance, a relative measure of longitudinal financial health and stability. Overall, five of the organizations experienced increases in gross income, while four organizations saw increases in net income over the previous year. It should be noted, however, that one organization was omitted from this analysis due to self-identified reporting issues in the previous year. In addition, two of the organizations that did not see increases in revenues or net income had completed large-scale capital campaigns in the previous year.

ADMINISTRATIVE SYSTEMS

> *"…[A]dministrative tasks were handled with greater precision than I had ever witnessed."*

LIFECYCLE DEVELOPMENT

Nearly all of the organizations ranked their administrative systems in the late-growth stages on the nonprofit lifecycle, as illustrated below.



In examining the comments made by the grantees, the major difference between the characteristics of a start-up organization and the characteristics of a growth-stage organization seems to be the *implementation* of new administrative systems. Where all the grantees had at least identified the new systems that were needed to drive the organization forward, those who were successful actually put those systems into place and began using them.

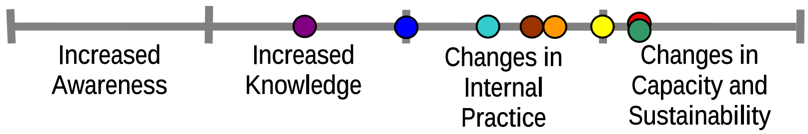
Most of the organizations had made improvements to the overall structures of and the communication between the various entities in their organizations. For example, one grantee has developed "administrative checks and balances" and a "functional organization chart [that is] working in practice as on paper." Another organization stated that there is a "board partnership with staff" and that the "board is appropriately involved in macro administration." Developing a sound organization structure and clarifying the board's role in the day-to-day operations of the organization were key to moving many of the organizations forward.

When considering the progress made by the organizations' administrative systems, it is important to note that the organization ranked in the start-up phase has recently experienced rapid growth of one of its major activities. The majority of the comments in the area of administrative systems centered around the identification of new systems that were necessary to support this new growth. Even though the organization's administrative systems are not currently sufficient to handle their new growth, however, the organization has identified its weaknesses in its administrative systems and is actively working to implement new systems in preparation for the next "spike" in annual activity.

Regardless of an organization's development, it is vital that the organization be constantly reevaluating its systems and anticipating improvements that need to be made as the organization continues to move forward.

PROGRESS ALONG THE ACTION LEARNING FRAMEWORK

Each grantee's comments were analyzed to assign a placement along the Action Learning Framework. While nearly all of the grantees ranked their administrative systems at the same level of development on the nonprofit curve, their comments varied dramatically when examined in terms of this framework. It appears that grantees were able to point to specific areas in need of improvement in their administrative systems than they could for other parts of the "table," shifting their "average" response toward the left end of the framework. This could be due to the more tangible nature of these changes as they are present on a day-to-day basis.



Nearly all of the organizations made numerous improvements to their administrative systems' capacity and sustainability. A number of respondents noted that they had made improvements in their technology and communications systems that have resulted in increased productivity. One organization observed, "Several staff members have chosen to use laptop systems which increase flexibility," and that "The ability to telecommute…has improved our overall productivity and job satisfaction." Another organization added high-speed internet access to its locations, resulting in "greater access to information…the upgrade to our computer system has been great."

In addition to technology, many grantees improved their financial systems. Two organizations transitioned their financial systems into QuickBooks, one of which noticed that "Moving from our old accounting system to QuickBooks has reduced the time [required of] the executive director." Another organization mentioned general improvements to its financial system, noting that the improvements had resulted in "systematized and purposeful communication to the board."

Some grantees established databases of their donors, some improved their billing systems, and some improved their internal policies, such as job descriptions. In all of these cases, the organizations were generally pleased with the results. One grantee remarked that its "administrative support is transparent…humming in the background." Another reported, "Our improved infrastructure contributed to more efficient use of staff time."

Grantees identified a number of their administrative systems that still had room for improvement. Two responses noted that their expanding staff has caused a shortage of space. Others observed that their improvements in other areas had resulted in a need for better databases and resource management.

It is clear that most of the grantees have more to do if they want achieve balance between their administrative systems and the other legs. However, as one respondent remarked, "This leg has not grown quite as much as the other legs, but our awareness of the need to develop more systems has grown, and that's what's important."

Specific capacity-building measures that strengthen the administrative systems' "leg" include:

- Implementing new systems and approaches.
- Using new software.
- Changing policies and procedures.

Grantees were asked a series of questions about the value of the various components of BOOST and their experiences with a few, in particular. We begin this section with a reflection on the perceived value of various resources and tools provided through BOOST.

PERCEIVED VALUE OF BOOST RESOURCES AND TOOLS

Each of the grantees was asked to rank each of the resources and tools provided during the BOOST program in terms of their usefulness. The results of those rankings are shown below:

Resource or Tool	Overall Ranking	Highest Ranking	Lowest Ranking
Consultants and coaching	1	1	5
Capacity building grants made to your organization from 2004-2006	2	1	5
Strategic business plan	3	1	10
Initial self-assessment	4	1	7
Leadership team	5	1	10
Program-based budget	6	4	12
Susan Kenny Stevens coaching and resources	7	4	11
Foundation program officers	8	5	10
Nonprofit lifecycles model	9	5	12
Executive Directors meetings	10	5	12
Interim 2005 and final 2006 self-assessments/ evaluation tools	11	5	12
Cohort trainings	12	7	12

Although all of the resources and tools were perceived as having value for at least some of the organizations, five of them were particularly useful to respondents:

- Consultants and coaching
- Capacity building grants
- Strategic business plan
- Initial self-assessment
- Leadership team

Each of these tools was ranked as being the most useful by at least one of the eight grantees, and none of them were ranked last by any of the respondents. It is interesting to note, though, that all twelve tools were ranked 7th or higher by at least one respondent. Though a resource may not be universally useful to the grantees, all of them are seen as useful by at least one grantee.

USING THE BUSINESS PLAN

> *"We're now living it [instead of] just reading it!"*

Grantees were nearly unanimously pleased with the benefits they had realized from the use of the business plan. One respondent noted, "The business plan has been THE critical document…for directing new goals and their accomplishment in 2006," while another expressed, "Having a business plan to include in grant proposals and other communications has been a tremendously positive way to demonstrate that we are strategic in our thinking and focused on our programs."

Most of the respondents also noted that the business plan had become a guiding document and that it had become core to their organization's operation. One such organization remarked that the business plan has been "essential to keeping [us] on track and consistently on top of our goals for the year." Even one organization, which noted that "many assumptions in the original plan no longer hold true," confirmed that "all activity, from programs to sales, is based on moving toward the business plan goals."

It is interesting to note that over half of the grantees have already made substantial revisions to their business plans based on new information gained while putting them to use. Over the course of BOOST, one grantee realized, "Our initial business plan did not reflect our organization's future" and began to make changes to make the document more effective. Another respondent observed, "Revising [the] plan based on learning during its implementation is healthy [compared to] our former approach of flying by the seat of our pants."

LEADERSHIP TEAM EXPERIENCE

> *"The workload for all has been at times overwhelming…but we can see the light at the end of the tunnel, and we're certain it's not the oncoming train."*

For the most part, grantees were pleased with the progress made by their leadership teams. However, many of the grantees were met with significant challenges. Half of the organizations experienced the turnover of major players on their leadership teams during the BOOST process, possibly limiting their effectiveness. As one respondent put it, "We had a lot of transition and change in both our staff and volunteer members of the team, and that has resulted in a team that never really coalesced after the first year and a half or so." The organizations that had the most successful leadership teams had some turnover, but were better able to deal with the situation. It seems clear, therefore, that handling turnover on the leadership team is vital to its success.

Another significant challenge expressed by some of the grantees was a seemingly endless work load for team members. One group suggested, "The major challenge has been time and division of duties and responsibilities." Other noted, "At times, our leadership team suffered from BOOST fatigue."

A final challenge observed by the grantees was keeping the leadership team involved over time; three of the respondents specifically noted that the leadership team was most useful in the first year of the project. One such group stated, "We have found [the leadership team] to be less necessary in this past year than it was in the beginning." A number of the other organizations have seen their leadership teams morph into other groups in the organization, like executive committees or strategic task forces.

Despite the challenges of the leadership team, many respondents attributed the success of many aspects of BOOST to the ability of their leadership teams to drive the process forward. As one respondent put it, "The leadership team drove the development of our business plan." Another group noted, "[The leadership team] offers an avenue for refining and crafting recommendations for the full board's discussion." Clearly, the leadership team can be an invaluable tool for implementing new strategies. However, organizations must be able to handle the challenges it brings in order to succeed.

INCREASING BOARD ENGAGEMENT

> *"We have talked less about the business plan and more about the actual activities that will help us accomplish the goals in the business plan."*

The grantees seem to be somewhat divided on the level of board engagement achieved through BOOST. While three of the organizations reported that their boards were more engaged, a number of the organizations experienced challenges along the way. As was discussed above, one of the major challenges for many grantees was board turnover. With a rotating group of board members, grantees found it difficult to keep all of the new members involved. As one group expressed, "In our short-term efforts to expand the board, most, if not all, needed orientation…to the major challenges and their roles."

Despite the challenges, however, many of the organizations implemented strategies to more effectively foster board engagement. One of the groups that was particularly proactive held a board retreat and a board social event, and intentionally involved inactive members in committee work. Another group created a visual tool that it used at board meetings to help board members better understand the organization's progress toward reaching the goals of its business plan. Though there is still progress to be made in getting boards engaged in their organizations, the grantees seem to understand the progress that has been made and the steps that must be completed in order to move forward.

USE OF THE BOOST GRANTS

> *"All those investments have paid off handsomely in terms of increased capacity to deliver our programs and services."*

Grantees reported a wide variety of ways in which they put the BOOST grants to use. By far, the most common use was the hiring of additional staff. Over half of the groups used at least a portion of their grant money to hire new employees, such as development directors, secretaries, and accountants. These new hires have given each of the organizations a significant boost to its capacity. For one respondent, "[Our new development director] has been a tremendous asset to [our organization] and to our ability to accomplish more, both in marketing and programs."

Related to the above, three of the grantees spent a portion of their grant funding on marketing activities and three organizations used the funding to develop and evaluate new programs. As one respondent stated, "These items lined up perfectly with our priorities for 2006 and were critical to our success moving forward."

Respondents also reported a number of other uses for their grant funding. Two organizations were able to spend more time on their business planning because of the grants. Two others were able to improve the training of their staff. Still another grantee was able to upgrade its internal infrastructure of technology and databases with the BOOST funding. Regardless of the use, grantees were able to accomplish many things with the grant that they would not have been able to otherwise. One respondent noted this specifically, saying, "Whenever we encountered something that was important for us to do as a program…and were faced with the question 'How in the world do we pay for that?' BOOST [was the answer]."

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MEETINGS

> *"I often think 'I don't have time to go to this ED meeting today,' but I always go, and I always come away with a new thought, a new insight, and the realization that my time was very well spent."*

By far the most successful intervention in decreasing isolation were the regular meetings of executive directors. When asked how BOOST helped them to develop a network of peers to address the sense of isolation that many executive directors felt, one grantee reported, "The most significant factor has been the creation of the executive directors' group. The monthly facilitated meetings have allowed the executive directors' group to coalesce, forming a remarkable resource and support. This was a totally unexpected benefit of the BOOST initiative." Another executive director shared the feeling that this group "can be a forum to explore more in-depth issues," while a different executive director stated that s/he had benefited greatly from the interaction with peers. The meetings were "very helpful in addressing shared topics" and "facilitation has been instrumental." The meetings are continuing in 2007 with support from Rose Community Foundation.

Very few of the directors pointed out any improvements that they would like to see in the meetings – a testament to their success. However, two respondents did note that they would like to see more focus "on management and leadership issues and less on personal issues" in order for meetings to be a more productive use of their time.

FEEDBACK ON THE ASSESSMENT PROCESS

> *"Considering the investment that's been made in [our organization], the effort was very reasonable."*

For the most part, the grantees were content with the assessment process, and many of them used the process as an evaluation tool for themselves. One executive director remarked that "I was delighted and amazed each year to see in writing the incredible progress we have made." Another respondent noted, "Defining and describing our successes and challenges has been a critical component to dealing effectively with our growth."

Furthermore, most of the grantees were content with the amount of effort required to complete the assessment process. Though many of the respondents noted that the work required was substantial, they were generally content with the process due to the benefits received. As one grantee noted, “Considering the investment that’s been made in [our organization], the effort was very reasonable.”

On the other hand, some of the organizations felt that the evaluation process was too much. One grantee remarked that “By the time we got to the final assessment, we felt that we had been ‘evaluated out.’ Each evaluation required numerous hours to complete.” Another respondent noted that “I don’t think we anticipated the amount of work, and perhaps would not have felt as overwhelmed at times if we’d been prepared.”

Finally, some of the grantees felt that the evaluation process was overly repetitive. Most frequently, respondents pointed to the evaluation of the table and legs as needing improvement. One such grantee expressed that “When responding to the questions on the table and legs, it became fairly repetitive, so perhaps a more concise set of questions would have made more sense,” while another group noted that “perhaps less narrative” would make the process more efficient.

COHORT TRAININGS

The cohort trainings were attended by leadership teams, consultants, Rose Community Foundation staff members, and Dr. Stevens. Overall, these sessions received the lowest ranking by grantees, several of whom felt that the sessions were “not good use of cohort time – too much preaching to the choir,” and that there was “not good pedagogy in seminars.”

OVERALL BENEFITS OF BOOST

> *"'Thank you' remains an understatement!"*

Grantees were overwhelmingly pleased with the results their organizations had realized from their participation in BOOST. A number of the grantees observed that the timing of the BOOST process was critical to its success in their organizations. As one respondent noted, "It was a time when we needed to think about the future and develop a plan, but would not have had the discipline to do so." The grantees' comments clearly express how important it is to begin the program with organizations that are in the appropriate stages of their life cycles.

The remaining comments on BOOST varied greatly. Rather than attempt to combine all of the responses into one central theme, therefore, the quotations below summarize the responses by grantees about their BOOST experiences:

- "BOOST provided us with a framework to assess our organization's strengths and weaknesses and a 'toolbox' for building our future."
- "There is NO WAY we would be where we are today without the investment made in us by the Rose Community Foundation…. Our results have been far beyond what we expected."
- "[BOOST] gave us permission to think big. Instead of how we were going to keep the doors open, we were able to think about how we would make an impact on the community."
- "Just as personal reflection is critical to becoming our best, so institutional self-reflection is a step toward seeing our customers and community well."
- "We had identified growth/capacity issues, but were uncertain with how to deal with them. BOOST and Rose Community Foundation gave us the resources and structure to do it."
- "BOOST for us was truly transformational. It forced us to focus on issues that needed to be addressed."
- "BOOST has been the single-most important initiative we've undertaken in the past several years! The funding helped, but it truly was secondary to the effective business planning process and consultant-led facilitation that we received over the past three years."
- "Change and growth are the operative words for us…. The benefits of BOOST will linger with [our organization] for years to come."

SUMMARY OF LEARNINGS FROM CONSULTANTS

INTRODUCTION

At the end of the second and third years of BOOST, consultants were asked to give feedback about the initiative as a whole, their experiences working with grantees, and how BOOST had changed them. A standard set of questions was asked of each consultant at the end of 2005 and 2006. Data were then gathered via electronic submittal (2005) and one-on-one interview (2006). The findings and commentary have been synthesized and reported anonymously.

LEARNINGS FROM THE CONSULTANTS

Consultants were asked to provide feedback at the end of the second and third years. A review of their comments on both occasions reveals overall similarity. The research team has elected to report the end-of-initiative findings as they provide a three-year review.

OVERALL ASSESSMENT

ELEMENTS OF HEALTHY, GROWTH-STAGE NONPROFITS

When discussing with consultants what they learned about healthy nonprofits in the growth stage, there were two main areas of emphasis: financial management and leadership. Nearly all consultants made some reference to having the right people involved with the organization, from the executive director to the board. According to one consultant, governance and leadership "are pretty critical." Another consultant stated that organizations "need to have leadership in place that is balanced by the board and executive staff to make critical decisions." While one consultant said that healthy nonprofits in the growth stage call for "mature executive leadership," another noted that, "It really does begin and end with the board…a committed board [that] understands their roles and responsibilities." One consultant summed up this issue by stating that there are "different kinds of people who are in the different stages…the people in the growth stage have to become kind of different when they get to the mature stage."

Financial management was another key area of focus among consultants. Several agreed that this stage challenges the organizations and their leadership to learn more about financial management as well as obtain new financial tools, resources, and skills. One consultant noted that this "is often driven by staff experience" and "You can wing it for a while, but if you rely on that, it will stall out your evolution." "Organizations reach this stage where they really have to make investments," noted one consultant, while another emphasized, "Really understanding the financials is important."

Some consultants offered more general feedback about their experiences working with growth-stage nonprofits. "All four table legs are better functioning in healthy nonprofits than in unhealthy nonprofits," remarked one consultant. Another added that the "stages are not clear-cut…not as clear as the lifecycle book chart."

LONG-TERM SUSTAINABILITY FOR GROWTH-STAGE NONPROFITS

Echoing comments that consultants made in regard to learning about healthy nonprofits in the growth stage, several consultants noted that financial strength, understanding, and management are critical to long-term sustainability. This was the most commonly heard theme. Specifically, one consultant explained, "Financial discipline, which doesn't come easy, is very important…." A few consultants agreed that "perseverance" is important, especially when related to "financial management [because] without that perseverance, it's easy to fall back into old habits." Identifying, sustaining, and diversifying revenue streams were also noted. One consultant remarked, "Well-balanced sources of revenue are really critical" as is "increasing attention to sources of earned revenue so that an organization is not overly dependent on grants." A few other consultants more generally noted that "understanding your economic model" is important for an organization.

Other comments, unrelated to financial systems and financial management, included "structuring a feasible and realistic plan that a nonprofit really uses to guide them as a roadmap." A few others thought that it takes a conscious "shift" on behalf of those involved. One consultant described this as a "fundamental shift in attitude on the part of the board and executive leadership," while another consultant added that "a mind shift" really needs to take place.

CHANGES IN CONSULTING PRACTICES

Next, consultants were asked to provide feedback about how their BOOST experience has changed their consulting practice. Nearly all consultants noted that the nonprofit lifecycles model and content from Dr Stevens' book were helpful and positively affected their consulting practice. While, for some, using this model was more a matter of formalizing terminology or putting the information in a new "framework," for others it was a more fundamental shift or addition of tools to their practice.

One consultant remarked, "Not that I was unaware of the nonprofit lifecycles model before this…but [we] focused on it in a way that can be easily translated to the clients that I work with." Another consultant added that many of the consultants had previously worked with the same concepts and tools, "but to have it put in a coherent, cohesive form…really made a big difference" and "articulating it was helpful." Another consultant echoed these comments and added that s/he had previously been using models that were typically more appropriate for for-profit companies.

Some consultants also noted how the nonprofit lifecycles model changed the way they think about nonprofits. One explained that it changed the way s/he thinks about nonprofits in terms of capacity. Another consultant said that the focus on program-based budgeting made an impact on her consulting practice as she uses it more frequently now. She noted that when organizations understand how a program is doing financially, "It engages and mobilizes the board effectively." Additionally, a consultant said that s/he is now "more patient with an organization" and that s/he doesn't "expect a mature type of behavior if it really is a startup board," for example.

TOOLS UTILIZED

Consultants were asked to provide feedback about the BOOST resources and tools. First, consultants were asked to rank each of the eleven tools from 1 to 11, based on which they thought was the most useful. This exercise proved to be very interesting as several of the consultants would have preferred to provide qualitative feedback about the tools and resources, which they did subsequently. In addition, one consultant chose not to rank the tools. A few consultants said they would have rather "graded" the tools based on how helpful they were, rather than ranking them, and some consultants remarked that they were less familiar with some tools, such as the executive directors' meetings, and thus they gave these tools a lower score. The table below shows the consultants' rankings and overall score. Lower scores and rankings indicate that consultants thought the tools were more useful.

Rankings of BOOST Resources/Tools – Most Useful

Resource or Tool	Overall Ranking	Highest Ranking	Lowest Ranking
Initial self-assessment	1	1	3
Nonprofit lifecycles model	2	1	3
Strategic business plan	3	1	5
Program-based budget	4	1	7
Consultant Convenings with SKS	5	4	10
Leadership team	6	4	7
Susan Kenny Stevens coaching and resources	7	5	8
Interim 2005 and final 2006 self-assessments/ evaluation tools	8	6	9
Cohort trainings	9	6	10
Executive Directors meetings	10	4	11
Foundation program officers	11	8	11

As noted in the table above, the most highly ranked tool was the initial self-assessment. Interestingly, the one consultant who decided not to rank the tools thought that the initial self-assessment was not very helpful because the grantees "don't know what they don't know." Others, however, who ranked this tool higher, thought the tool was very helpful in getting the organization started and having members understand where they are. One consultant explained that this is where organization members had most of their "aha" moments. A consultant also explained that one grantee was constantly reevaluating where the organization was on the lifecycle curve because "Even if it appears they have moved backward…the more you learn, the more accurately they can assess where they are."

The strategic business plan was also ranked highly, and most of the consultants referred to the business plan several times during the interview. One consultant noted that having the grantee update the business plan was particularly important because updating showed the grantee that the plan is a living document that can't be put aside. Another consultant added that the strategic business plan "articulates where the organization wants to go" and "embodies" so many critical decisions.

Finally, the nonprofit lifecycles model was continually mentioned throughout the interviews and was also ranked highly as a tool among consultants. Several consultants noted that the model was also helpful with their non-BOOST clients and that they appreciated a consistent "terminology" or "framework." However, one consultant stated that the "lifecycles model is very helpful to the consultants, but I didn't see the organization internalize it."

In a follow-up question, consultants were asked which tools and practices they are using with their BOOST clients. As they provided open-ended feedback, the tools and practices they named are listed below. The number of consultants who mentioned each tool is noted in parentheses if the tool was mentioned by more than one.

FINANCIAL TOOLS

- Financial dashboards (2)
- Income-based budgeting
- Financial trainings with staff and board
- Cash flow chart
- Fundraising & resource development templates

MANAGEMENT TOOLS

- Simplified business plan/business plan dashboard (2)
- Rolling 3-year work plan
- Management team meetings
- New policies and procedures
- Emergency succession plan
- One-on-one meetings with board members, staff, and executive director
- Lifecycle workshops

BOARD DEVELOPMENT TOOLS

- Board retreats/planning retreats (3)
- Job descriptions for the board and board committees
- Board development processes

OTHER TOOLS

- Decision learning trees about product development
- Checklists
- Myers-Briggs personality preference testing
- Mind Map (from Future Search Technology)
- Appreciative Inquiry
- Change management tools (William Bridges' book, *Managing Transitions)*

CONSULTING WITH YOUR GRANTEE

Next, consultants were asked about their overall experience working with their grantee(s).

SPECIFIC COMMENTS AND EXPERIENCES RELATED TO WORKING WITH YOUR GRANTEE

In this section, consultants were asked to provide information about their experience working directly with their grantee(s). Consultants discussed various experiences they were proud of or disappointed in, or any particular areas of the work that were rewarding or problematic.

Proud and Rewarding Moments and Experiences

For most of the BOOST consultants, the most rewarding experience was witnessing the various positive changes and the overall growth that occurred with the grantees. One consultant described this as "seeing the fruits of the labor" and "seeing them really truly turn the corner." Another consultant noted that watching "them mature as an organization…[and] seeing the board have strategic discussion" was particularly rewarding. For one consultant, the proudest moment was realizing that the organization has "really taken seriously the idea that strategic planning does not end with BOOST…." Yet another consultant was proud to see positive growth and described this as "fundamental decision changes." One consultant summed up the overall feeling of accomplishment and reward of being part of BOOST and stated that, "[I] would say that I'm proud of them for the depth of change that they've been willing to embrace as part of this process."

Some consultants also valued the personal relationships that they developed during the consulting engagement. For one consultant, working closely with the management team was "rewarding but challenging," as was "deepening the relationship with the executive director." Another consultant had nearly the same feeling and stated that the "depth of the relationship" that developed while working one-on-one with the executive director was particularly rewarding.

Disappointing Moments and Experiences

Few consultants indicated that they were disappointed in their grantees. Instead, most focused on the growth and positive outcomes that occurred as a result of their BOOST client work. A few, however, offered very specific ways in which they wished their organization had progressed further.

For example, one consultant revealed that her grantee did not make as much progress from a financial management and financial understanding standpoint as she had hoped. Another added that the board had not taken much ownership, which was a bit disappointing. One consultant also expressed some disappointment that the executive director had not "embraced as much change" as was anticipated or hoped. Another consultant also expressed some disappointment in the executive director, though this was related to the executive director's lack of "willingness to deal with some performance issues" in addition to the fact that the executive director "did not get any less risk averse."

Overall, though, consultants had much more positive feedback and rewarding moments than disappointments to share. One consultant said, "I'm not disappointed in them at all…they had such incredible progress in the past three years."

Fulfilling Moments and Experiences

Similar to comments noted above, most consultants offered some big-picture feedback about seeing their grantee progress as being the most fulfilling aspect of BOOST for them personally. A few consultants agreed that the most fulfilling aspect was helping position these organizations to do better work and help them along the way. One consultant described this as "helping an organization through a major life event" and another explained that her organization was ready to have "better impact." A few other consultants said that just "being involved for the long haul" was fulfilling because so often "you only work with a client a few times" and that "being a mentor along the way was probably the most gratifying thing." Another consultant added that "you almost never get to stick with something long enough to see the needle move…to see some lasting change."

Other fulfilling moments included:

- Working with Dr. Stevens
- Being part of the consultant cohort
- Developing meaningful relationships with members of the leadership team
- Being able to facilitate strategic interventions with board and leadership team members

Problematic Issues in Working with your Grantee

Only a few consultants noted that they had any problematic experiences working with their grantees and that these were largely related to organizational and functional aspects of going through the BOOST program. Specifically, one participant said that "losing the key leadership team member was problematic" as was "board turnover…even though it was needed." Another consultant added that the leadership team didn't "take hold" and "didn't really own" the BOOST process. This consultant described it as a "missed opportunity" for the organization. One consultant also described some "unilateral decision making" that was problematic at the onset of BOOST, though this consultant noted that "they really came full circle on that one."

CHALLENGING ASPECTS OF BOOST WORK

Some consultants seemed stumped and thought hard to come up with the most challenging aspect of the work as they seem more focused on the positive aspects of the experience. However, consultants provided the following insight into the challenges of their BOOST work during the past year.

The most commonly heard themes related to challenges in 2006 were around working with the board and leadership teams. Specifically, some consultants explained that it was challenging to get the board fully engaged, and, as one consultant stated, everything seemed to "fall on [the] ED's plate." One consultant said that some of the board members "acknowledged that they only think about [organization name] when they're there." Another consultant described an experience having to "integrate" a new leadership team member into the organization in the third year of BOOST, which was challenging. Yet another consultant mentioned some challenging times working with an executive director who exuded a "poor-me attitude."

From a program management perspective, one consultant mentioned challenges in the "lack of structure in years two and three" and that the expectations for the consultants seemed less clear. This consultant questioned, "What is really required of us…how can I provide the best value for the dollars?"

Finally, one consultant found herself in somewhat of a unique situation in which the nonprofit had received another grant from another foundation, and she had to be careful that the BOOST funding didn't overlap with the projects funded by the other grant.

RECOMMENDING OTHER CONSULTANTS

About half of the grantees worked with other consultants during BOOST, though only some of these were recommended or brought in by the BOOST consultants. Within the group of BOOST consultants, only Gail Hoyt was tapped for her financial expertise, and she worked with two other organizations in addition to working with Senior Hub. One consultant said the nonprofit utilized an outside technology consultant in upgrading its computers and network. A few other consultants were less specific when they said that their grantees used consultants other than through BOOST.

BOOST CONSULTANT COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

To what extent did you call on other BOOST consultants?

Most consultants indicated that they did not call on other BOOST consultants during the three-year initiative. Some indicated that they had known other BOOST consultants previously and may have called on them for things that were not BOOST-related. One exception was that one consultant, as noted earlier, brought in Gail Hoyt to assist with some financial consulting. Another consultant acknowledged that this was not really mentioned as an option at the onset of BOOST and that "there wasn't really any process for tapping into other consultants." One suggested that it would have been helpful to have other consultants' biographies and backgrounds so they knew more about each other's areas of expertise.

Were the two to three meetings per year enough, and were they valuable?

While all of the consultants agreed that the meetings were valuable, it was clear that some got more out of this experience than others. Most seemed to enjoy and value the meetings for the social and relationship-building aspects. One consultant stated that the meetings were "valuable from a relationship standpoint but not from a learning standpoint," and another remarked that it's "always great to get together with others who are doing similar work."

A few consultants, however, seemed to value them more, and they mentioned things such as spending time working with Dr. Stevens or doing "some problem solving." One consultant thought that once trust was initially established among all the consultants, "The environment created was excellent." This consultant thought the group would have benefited from more sharing.

Overall, most consultants agreed that the two to three meetings per year were enough, though a few indicated that they would have liked to attend more sessions with the consultant cohort.

In what ways did you consult with Dr. Stevens?

BOOST consultants called on Dr. Stevens when they were in "tricky spots" or if they had specific issues with their grantees through which they needed to work. One consultant noted that she called on Dr. Stevens when she felt that her grantee was "slipping backwards" and she wanted some advice for new strategies. A few of the consultants that took over and added a grantee midway through BOOST said that they called upon Dr. Stevens in these cases. While some consultants indicated that they did so more than others, those who didn't or did so rarely thought Dr. Stevens was always available, if needed. As one consultant noted, "I never felt like I couldn't" consult with Dr. Stevens. Though most consultants didn't call upon her often, all valued her input and advice and several indicated that they would have liked the opportunity to call upon her more frequently or work with her directly more often. One consultant stated, "Whenever they worked up the budget agreement, they didn't build in enough time for Dr. Stevens to be available." Most were trying to be considerate of her time. Another consultant added that "I'd sit in a meeting with her any day."

Did you experience a sense of community as you learned from or worked with the other consultants?

All consultants agreed that they felt like part of a community when working with or convening with the consultant group. Some indicated that they enjoyed being in the group and having peers who were working on the same project and doing the same work. One consultant remarked, "We're all in this together," while another said that "just the fact that we were all experiencing the same thing" helped form a sense of community.

A few consultants indicated that they could have taken more advantage of the opportunity but that all the consultants probably have "full plates" and busy schedules with non-BOOST clients. Another noted that there was a more cohesive sense of community after the first year and that by the end, it "didn't feel competitive, just open and honest…mutually supportive [and] very collegial." Another consultant thought it was remarkable how the consultants were able to develop a sense of community "because consultants don't always play well together."

Recognizing that all the consultants have their own practices and methods of doing things with clients, why do you think the consultant cohort was so willing to buy into the BOOST process?

Most consultants acknowledged that they wanted to and were willing to learn, and that this was also a key piece in why they wanted to be part of BOOST. One consultant said that it is "not often that [consultants] get paid to use new tools" and that consultants "don't always have a chance to put [things] into practice in a learning community." Another consultant stated, "When we first talked about getting involved, we were excited about how much we were going to learn personally." One consultant agreed and said, "As a professional, I'm always looking for opportunities for development."

Many consultants also agreed that there was a degree of flexibility that allowed them to use their own processes and skills while having a "common framework and common terminology." One consultant remarked that the "structure was loose enough that you could still use your own style…[it] never felt confining." Another consultant added that the "flexibility piece is key." For one consultant, the combination of structure and flexibility within the program was the "best of both worlds."

PROGRAM MANAGEMENT

In this section, consultants were given the opportunity to provide feedback on the overall structure and program management of BOOST.

IN WHICH AREAS HAS ROSE COMMUNITY FOUNDATION DONE A GOOD JOB IN MANAGING BOOST OVER THE PAST THREE YEARS?

Overall, consultants revealed two main areas where they thought Rose Community Foundation did a good job managing BOOST. First, many consultants agreed that BOOST offered the right balance of structure and involvement without micromanaging. One consultant stated, "Again there is a tricky balance between providing enough structure and not providing too much that it becomes overwhelming." Another liked the fact that Rose Community Foundation was responsive and available, but not "heavy handed." For one consultant, the fact that the program officers were somewhat hands-off was important because they were taking a "huge leap of faith" that "the resources are well spent…[and that] your grantees are achieving something."

Secondly, consultants were impressed with the fact that the Foundation "had the right intent" and really wanted the program to succeed. One consultant remarked that Rose Community Foundation "walked the talk….[They] wanted this to be a learning process and they learned from it and took action, which I really admired." The consultants generally agreed that Rose Community Foundation was "responsive," and they appreciated the fact that the foundation wanted "candid feedback" and that the Foundation "changed things if they didn't work." In sum, "they were excellent…[and] constantly reinforced how important this program was to them."

SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVING THE PROGRAM MANAGEMENT

While overall feedback about BOOST and the program management was positive, consultants did have some suggestions for improvement. Most suggestions were related to specific incidents or unique situations as opposed to the overall program management.

A few consultants mentioned that there could be improvement in communication on behalf of Rose Community Foundation. One consultant noted that the initial information they received was "kind of skimpy" and another explained that having a better sense of what they were supposed to do or what type of preparation was needed before the convenings would have been helpful. Another consultant added, "I've heard from some grantees saying they wished they'd known about something ahead of time…." One consultant also thought it would have been helpful to have "more communication up front about the consultant time commitment."

A few consultants also agreed that there was a lack of a clear role for them in years two and three of the program. Some said they struggled with trying to figure out their roles and how they could best utilize their funding to assist the grantees.

Cohort convenings could have been more productive and a better use of time, noted a few consultants. One consultant stated, "Cohort meetings were not a good use of time." While most agreed that they liked the concept of meeting with the other grantees, consultants, and Dr. Stevens, some felt the time was "not optimally productive." One explained, "For many of the grantees, somehow the lecture format didn't seem to be very well received." A consultant even shared feedback from the grantee who remarked that the "convenings represented as what we know not to be good as effective teaching."

Consultants who took over for another consultant partway through BOOST offered some feedback to make the transition process less painful. One consultant explained the situation and said that the grantee was "conflict avoidant" and that the grantee would not confront its original consultant about the relationship that was not working. Eventually, the second consultant was forced to let the first consultant know, and the second consultant stated, "If the grantee isn't in a position to let the consultant know, then Rose Community Foundation should." Another consultant who took on an extra grantee explained, "It is important to honor and respect the work of consultants before them…but not get stuck in it…." Finally, one consultant who transitioned and took on a new grantee in the middle of BOOST had a less positive experience and explained that "changing consultants and changing leadership was at the root of the issue…." Overall, consultants thought that Rose Community Foundation could have helped make the transition between consultants a bit more seamless.

One consultant had a somewhat negative experience trying to work with a grantee and felt that Rose Community Foundation did not ameliorate the situation. This consultant stated that "[program officer] put her friendship with [grantee] above the integrity of the process." The consultant also felt it was "ugly, messy, undignified and very disrespectful to me." Overall, the consultant was disappointed and felt that the grantee was not held to the same standards and requirements as other grantees. "It's like when a teacher keeps passing a student because they are paying high tuition," remarked this consultant. This consultant suggested that the person managing BOOST *not* have any grantees so that the management can be unbiased and hands-off.

Nearly all consultants agreed that the changes in leadership and staff at Rose Community Foundation did not affect the process. One consultant said, "[I] missed Katherine [but] Lisa filled in for her almost seamlessly." Several just stated that this was not really an issue.

Finally, there were a few cases in which consultants made suggestions not mentioned by any other consultants. These include the following:

- Seemed to be a very "bureaucratic" process in 2004 just to get the $20,000. Grantee had "to jump through hoops" to get the first grant, but then they would get an additional $50,000 early the next year.

- One consultant mentioned that there was "some fatigue on the part of the grantees with respect to evaluation." This consultant acknowledged that while it was "still good for learning," the process was a bit lengthy and cumbersome, particularly in the third year.

ADVICE FOR CONSULTANTS COMING INTO BOOST 2

All consultants thought that there should be a BOOST 2, and several mentioned that they would enjoy the opportunity to be part of the second round. In general, most of the consultants thought that flexibility and readiness to learn were important. Since consultants offered a wide range of suggestions for future BOOST consultants, their direct comments are noted below.

- "Be open, remain flexible…got to have a really open and compassionate heart around this, a lot of trust around this…pay a lot of attention, ask a lot of questions."

- "Most important thing is for the grantees to understand how much effort this is going to take…the commitment. That would make the consultant's role much easier….you get really involved in this organization…not just doing strategic planning with the board…you have to be open to learning."

- "To be very flexible…. Bringing your expertise, being willing to change, to learning to be ready to be frustrated but to hold your line…."

- “Be ready to move quickly…get up to speed.”
- “[It] is likely to be more intense, involve more time and at the end of the day be more rewarding that you expect it to…also more rewarding because the consultant has the opportunity to spend three years with a client supported by a foundation this way….”
- “I think we need to do our own vetting as well. You need to bring your own experience to the table as well. All the consultants had different ways of approaching things….”

PROGRAM STRUCTURE

Consultant—Grantee Matching Process

In general, some consultants acknowledged that there were at least a few mismatches at the onset of BOOST. They would like to see that process improved and perhaps have more grantee involvement. One consultant described this as an “issue of fit” and generally suggested that there needs to be a “more substantial match-making piece.” A few consultants already knew their grantees or had worked with them in the past, and, for them, the fit seemed natural. A few consultants also mentioned that their grantees had never before worked with consultants so they really didn’t know what to ask or what to look for in a consultant. One consultant stated, “Many of them had never worked with a consultant, would not know how to select one, but more than that, they don’t know how to use one successfully.”

A few other consultants thought there should be a more stringent application process for the grantees. One stated that Rose Community Foundation needs to “make sure the grantees have been screened and trained on why they are there” because if they “think they don’t need a consultant and…just want the money, then you have a problem from the get-go.” Another consultant added, “I feel strongly that they need to apply, not just [be] selected.” One suggested that the Foundation “do a little more due diligence on selecting grantees for board and leadership team [to] buy into the process from the beginning.”

Consultant Selection Process

Most consultants did not offer much feedback on the selection process. Some acknowledged that they didn’t remember a whole lot about it. One consultant remarked, “I liked it since I was selected…[but] I don’t remember much about it.” Most consultants did recall some type of “discussion” or “interview” with Dr. Stevens. However, another consultant mentioned that “three [consultants] didn’t really work out,” so perhaps there should be something “more measurable” in the selection process. Other consultants were more focused on the match-making process, as that was the critical reason, they thought, why the relationships did or did not work out.

Three-Year Time Period

Many consultants thought that the three-year length of the program was just about right and they needed the time to see “systemic change.” However, some admitted that it began to feel “a little long” toward the end of the third year. One consultant stated that it “started to feel too long…but [I] couldn’t advocate for it to be any shorter.” Another said it felt long in the second and third years because “there was so much less structure.” “Beyond [three years] it is hard to sustain energy,” mentioned a consultant. Only one consultant advocated for making the program longer and suggested "definitely not make it any shorter…if anything, add a year."

ADDITIONAL SUGGESTIONS AND FEEDBACK

One common theme heard from many consultants at different points in the interviews was that change management was a huge piece of what the grantees went though, but there was not much discussion or programming around this concept. One consultant stated, "More attention in BOOST 2 would be a well-thought-out plan of change management." Another consultant stated, "Change management was never really addressed. Even a convening…could be on change management because we're asking them to make a lot of changes."

Throughout the interviews, most consultants also mentioned the need for emphasis on financial management and financial training for the grantees as well as for the consultants. One consultant remarked, "Maybe some [consultants] have the depth of financial skills needed…but I have an MBA and I haven't used the financial part enough." This consultant also suggested for BOOST 2 that there should be "one or two financial consultants like Gail for all the OD consultants to work with." Another consultant echoed these comments and remarked that there "could have been more…initial trainings that they ran for us in the finance side of it…this was hard for those who don't have a financial background." Most consultants also thought the grantees needed more training and bandwidth related to financial management, as noted earlier.

Finally, many consultants acknowledged that they felt proud to have been a part of the process and they really admired Rose Community Foundation's commitment to capacity building. One consultant said they are "making an investment in change and it's huge." Another stated, "I really applaud them…[they] go beyond…providing grants…to really focus on capacity building in such an important arena." It is "great that Rose is willing to do this kind of investment…hopefully this is a trend in building the capacity of organizations because it is expensive in terms of time and money." One consultant added that the "beauty of this is the commitment to seeing this thing through." A consultant also believes that Rose Community Foundation is unique in its approach to capacity building initiatives because "most foundations are not willing to do something over the long haul…this program is a standout."

SUMMARY OF LEARNINGS FROM ROSE COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

INTRODUCTION

Corona Research input information from Rose Community Foundation program officers in 2005 and the program management team in 2006. The research team initially developed the interview guides and then submitted drafts to Rose Community Foundation for review. After taking their suggestions and comments into account, final drafts were developed.

LEARNINGS FROM PROGRAM OFFICERS

The lifecycles model has been helpful to the program officers as they look at other organizations. As one program officer said, "I've learned to manage my expectations," given that all nonprofits aren't in a mature stage. "I'm more careful to look at where they are in their lifecycle and how we as a funder can be helpful." Another officer mentioned that BOOST has given him/her a new language to use when talking to nonprofits.

Program officers noted that the lifecycles model was helpful in their work with other grantees. Their understanding of the different lifecycle stages has caused them to do their work differently when they evaluate grant applications and talk to potential grantees, and in their own service on nonprofit boards.

"The lifecycle tool helps me do my grant making better."

Program officers also spoke of the ways in which BOOST had opened their eyes in regards to their grant making. They felt that BOOST provided a coordinated model and framework for things they were already doing. One person mentioned that the process has helped him/her to recognize the importance of all the components such as assessments and business plans that are needed, rather than just the "magical $5,000 strategic plan that solves everything."

In regards to their grant making, one program officer commented that funders tend to invest in a good executive director, but don't truly understand the role that the board plays in the success of the organization. This person recognized the importance of supporting organizations that were strong in both elements of their leadership. Another echoed this sentiment and added that having buy-in from the board was key to an organization's success.

As with the consultants, program officers observed several "aha" moments in their grantees in 2005. One program officer shared that s/he had seen an executive director make the change from doing everything to sharing responsibility with the management team. Another commented that her/his grantee had figured out how to find focus through organizational changes. "They finally decided who they were. This will make them stronger than they've ever been," noted the program officer.

LEARNINGS FROM THE PROGRAM MANAGEMENT TEAM

OVERALL EXPECTATIONS

When asked to reflect on the three-year initiative, members of the program management team were somewhat surprised with BOOST, though the surprises and unexpected events varied depending on the person's role, as well as with instances related to specific grantees. For example, one staff member said she expected "a lot of [administrative] work" and ended up doing "more event planning type work." In addition, one person noted that not all of the grantees ended up being growth-stage grantees, so that was a surprise. Another participant stated, "I expected just to be a program officer helping out here and there." Added another interviewee, "My expectations were that it would be big, take time, be a vehicle for all the program officers to work together…towards something bigger than just their grantee."

Overall, the program management team members indicated that many of their initial expectations were altered midcourse by various events, but that they learned much from the process. As one interviewee summed up, "[I had] expectations that it would be the first time so we would be learning a lot."

CHANGES IN PERSONNEL AT THE FOUNDATION

There was some natural discussion about the transition of personnel, including the transition of program manager from Katherine Pease to Lisa Farber Miller. While no one expected this change to occur, the group members felt like they dealt with it rather easily. One participant noted that Katherine Pease had different expectations for the program than other staff members. This participant stated, "I think Katherine had the expectation that there would not be a lot of involvement from the program officers….[She] did not anticipate what it would be like to manage this type of work from her perspective."

IMPACT ON GRANTEES

With respect to the grantees and their board members, some interviewees had different expectations. One participant thought that they had not been conscious enough of the board members' time and that the program may have been asking for "too much time" from them. Some participants indicated unexpected issues with grantees or specific grantee personnel, and one interviewee stated that it was "foolish of us to go through the process and expect not to have these moments." Further, one participant questioned whether it was all right that the Foundation was "getting very, very close to these grantees." Another participant added that she did not expect the grantee leadership teams to change so much and that, as a result of this change, they had to offer another orientation for leadership team members. This participant noted that "some [leadership teams] look completely different" than when they started, which was unexpected.

INITIATIVE COMPONENTS THAT WERE MORE CHALLENGING THAN EXPECTED

Most of the interviewees agreed to some degree that BOOST program management was more challenging than they had anticipated. One participant noted that at the onset of the program, the Foundation "didn't have the internal project management system" in place. Another participant noted that it was a very complicated program with multiple grants and contracts to manage. Another interviewee added that they "began the process during the change of a database tool used internally."

One participant added that in the original proposal, the project management would have been outsourced to LarsonAllen, but Rose Community Foundation decided to keep project management internal. Several interviewees agreed that, overall, the "lesson is that it takes hands-on management" and that there are "many different people involved [and] lots of moving pieces."

In addition to the overall project management, many participants agreed that managing the financial side was a challenge as well. For example, the overall initiative budget had to be adjusted several times to accommodate changes, such as the facilitated cohort sessions.

With respect to grantees, some participants thought that the grantee relationships were more challenging than expected at times. One participant mentioned a situation with a grantee and noted that, "[organization name] wasn't going to get its money if it didn't get its act together." Another example was a grantee that didn't want to work with a consultant. Overall, working well with grantees was referred to as a success of BOOST, but some participants also acknowledged that it was challenging at times.

INITIATIVE COMPONENTS THAT WERE EASIER THAN EXPECTED

Most interviewees explained that working with the different consultants was much easier than they expected. One participant noted "how great the consultants were" and that they were each "different in their own way." Dr. Stevens, having run programs similar to this, said that she was very pleased with the consultants and that they were "far better than what I thought they might be, and that they were also very willing to work with me and learn from each other."

All of the Rose Community Foundation staff members said that it was a pleasure to work with Dr. Stevens, as well. One participant stated, "Susan let us be more flexible than most initiatives are…she was willing and encouraging."

Most of the participants noted that it was easier than they expected to make changes along the way, such as changes in personnel or changes with the original evaluation process. Several participants agreed that while it was a difficult process to think about changing the evaluation process and changing consultants, it was still the right thing to do. While one participant questioned rhetorically, "Is it okay to tell our grantees we made a mistake?", another replied, "When you do the right thing, you can pull things off."

BOOST SUCCESSES AND CHALLENGES

In this section, the interview participants discussed challenges that arose throughout the program, as well as successes throughout BOOST.

BOOST CHALLENGES

Managing relationships and the role of the program officer were noted as challenges. One participant stated, "I remember being extremely uncomfortable with one of the consultants in a meeting," explaining that the consultant wanted a program officer to use "her power as a weapon." It was a challenge, some noted, for the program officers to maintain their roles while also overseeing the big picture because "These are grantees we are going to be working with for several years." Overall, the idea of maintaining the integrity of the Foundation as well as that of Dr. Stevens and her work was important, and the program management team had to find a way to meet this challenge while still maintaining BOOST's progress.

Similarly, some participants noted that there were a few sticky situations with grantees and their perceived relationships with the Foundation because grantees may have felt "forced" by the Foundation or the program officers to do something as part of the BOOST process. One participant remarked, "To make this thing work the BOOST project did use a club, but not the Foundation." Another person added that several foundations use intermediaries because of this type of problem, and that in cases like this, sometimes Dr. Stevens ended up acting as the intermediary.

Another challenge discussed by the program management team was that of finding the appropriate role for program officers. Some agreed that the "tension between the cohort and non-cohort program officers lingered a bit." Others noted that the expectations of the program officers were all different and that "Some people had more of an appetite than others." As another interviewee stated, "I think there is an intimacy about this kind of work that some of them were not comfortable with…[some] felt like they were knowing too much…seeing things that they shouldn't see [and] others think that they already know the info." Overall, the program management team agreed that managing expectations and roles among the program officers was a challenge and that defining their roles more clearly would help in BOOST 2.

BOOST SUCCESSES

One area in which members of the program management team seemed pleased was the way that challenges were handled. All the participants agreed that there were several changes and that the Foundation as a whole handled all very smoothly. Some changes included changes in personnel, altering the evaluation process and consultant, adding and changing leadership teams, new program officers, "learning different work styles," and trying to improve communication, as well as others.

"I loved the mid-course correction," noted Dr. Stevens of the decision in 2005 to change from an external evaluator approach to one focused on learning from a more intimate, internal perspective. She went on to say, "That evaluation was not hitting the mark in terms of being a learning community. Now it is more like capturing learning as its happening, making it a dynamic reality." Rose Community Foundation and Dr. Stevens realized that a change was needed. They agreed on a change in approach and announced it to the consultants and leadership team members. "I feel good about how [we] were able to publicly say [we] were going to regroup. We were able to adapt our own practices to the reality of the situation," said Dr. Stevens.

Several members agreed that working with the grantees "where they were" was a success of BOOST. Rather than forcing grantees to stick strictly to the program, they were able to find ways to "take them where they are [and] find some appeal to them." One participant noted, "We tried to intervene in ways that weren't always confrontational but that kept to the program [and tell them] 'here's why this may be good for you.'" Another participant explained that instead of getting upset with a grantee for lack of compliance or not meeting a deadline, they chose to "sit down with them and learn the bigger picture…." Overall, they were reminded that, "We live and breathe it every day…but we are just a slice of what they do every day."

Creating a positive environment of trust was also cited as a BOOST success. One participant stated, "What I feel good about at the end of the day was that we did create a safe place for people to talk about their real problems…a safe place for them to grow and learn. That doesn't happen very often."

REFLECTIONS ON AND LEARNINGS FROM BOOST

In this section, participants reflected on what they learned during the three-year initiative.

> *"What I watched was this was ten times more 'high touch' than I had expected. It's personal work. Growth is not easy."*

RELATIONSHIPS

The team learned about the unique relationships between the key parties in BOOST and the unique position of each (e.g., consultants, program officers and grantees). In some cases, the consultant-grantee relationship didn't work out and the grantees had to "learn how to let someone go." With respect to this issue, the program management team learned how to manage conflicts of interest as well as help grantees learn how to work with consultants. During this session, group members agreed that it would be a good idea to do some training in this area for BOOST 2 and that they would specifically "have meetings on working with a consultant," when to call Rose Community Foundation, and overall "role clarification." Similarly, the group acknowledged that consultants "don't usually work with grantees or clients for that long" and that for some it was difficult to go from a "doer to a coach role." As noted earlier, there was discussion about the proper role and involvement of the program officers and how to get them involved to the right degree while being mindful of their time. One participant stated that they have "spent a lot of time" addressing program officers' concerns about the program and their time in BOOST 2. Overall, the program management team agreed that all parties involved faced new and different roles than may have been anticipated.

ASSESSING GRANTEES

The initial assessments provided opportunities to more learn about the BOOST process and individual grantees. To most, this was eye-opening, not only because they discovered that two of the grantees were not really in the growth stage, but because they "learned that [nonprofit] would split from [nonprofit]," that there was a consultant conflict that needed to be managed, and "a few other instances where we could see the consulting was not working out." Overall, through the initial assessment, the program management team members indicated that they learned more than just where the grantees were positioned on the lifecycle curve. In addition, there was some discussion about tweaking the initial assessment based on what they learned about the grantees midcourse in order to give a better initial picture of the organization and its position.

With regard to the 2005 assessment, the program management team agreed that there was value to the organizations to reflect on their progress up to that point. One participant shared, "People said the time of reflection was actually an intervention" and that there was "value in them asking these questions intrinsically [and] not just for the Foundation to know." Others noted that everyone – including program officers, consultants, program managers and grantees – learned more about where the grantees really were in terms of internal capacity than they learned from the initial assessments. Specifically, one participant stated that the "initial assessment needs to be tweaked" in order to gain a better understanding of the organization's financial health and economic models. Another person added, "Going in, we didn't understand how weak [the grantees] were from a staffing perspective financially…[or how weak they were in terms of] financial understanding…[we] thought they were fine financially."

FINAL COMMENTS

When asked to recap the most important things they learned throughout the three-year process, group members noted how important it is to be flexible in order to meet the needs of the grantees so they grow and progress. One participant remarked that it is important to be "flexible because things happen. Problems and crises happen." Another participant emphasized the importance of "having a proactive project manager" because "In the moment, when you don't have time, it doesn't feel worth it." Finally, as one participant summed up, quoting John Lennon, "Life is what happens when you are busy planning."

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: PARTICIPANTS IN THE ASSESSMENT PROCESS

The following organizations and individuals comprise the current BOOST cohorts and submitted oral or written assessments that were used in this report:

GRANTEES

Boulder Jewish Community Center

Center for African American Health*

Colorado Agency for Jewish Education

Colorado Bright Beginnings

*Formerly Metro Denver Black Church Initiative

Hillel of Colorado

Metro Volunteers

The Senior Hub

Women's Bean Project

CONSULTANTS

Bourge Hathaway
Ordinary Magic

Gail Hoyt
Financial and Accounting Support Specialists, Inc.

Gurudev Khalsa
Trilight Development

Sharon McClew
Developing Managerial and Organizational Capacity

*Consultant assigned to startup-stage grantees

Karla Raines
Corona Research, Inc.

Pat Sterner
JFB & Associates

Janine Vanderburg*
JVA Consulting

Master Trainer and Lead Consultant
Dr. Susan Kenny Stevens
LarsonAllen Public Service Group

ROSE COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

Sheila Bugdanowitz

Denise Delgado

Lisa Farber Miller

Lynda Ricketson

Denise Delgado

Therese Ellery

Phil Gonring

Elsa Holguin

Barbara Yondorf

BACKGROUND

In September 2006, meetings were held with the leadership teams of the eight growth-stage nonprofits, their consultants, Rose Community Foundation program officers, and Dr. Stevens, Lead Consultant. The sessions were designed to gather input on several aspects of BOOST and to allow the nonprofits to obtain advice from Dr. Stevens. This report summarizes the responses from leadership team members to these questions:

- What has BOOST meant to your organization?
- As you reflect on the initiative, what was most valuable to you? Not valuable?

The Rose Community Foundation program officers and Dr. Stevens took notes during their sessions. Those notes were then reviewed and summarized for this report. All findings are reported anonymously, with quotes used to illustrate main points.

> *"BOOST isn't a program; it's a way of life."*

WHAT HAS BOOST MEANT TO YOUR ORGANIZATION?

This question elicited a mix of responses, from feelings about BOOST to reflections on the significant growth and change experiences as a result of BOOST.

> *"How do you describe when you've been transformed?"*

It is clear that BOOST changed organizations profoundly, helping them shift from "small nonprofit" mindsets to "where we are today." Several grantees referred to BOOST as a catapult or catalyst. This image illustrates the power of BOOST to not only launch a change process but to sustain it, as well. A few of the comments are listed below:

- "[Our] organization has catapulted."
- "Catalyst [for] moving us. [Otherwise] we would have been stuck."
- "Catalytic resource. [BOOST is] powerfully enabling."

Grantees used other phrases to describe what BOOST has meant to them:

- "[BOOST] gave us a safety net [to] experiment and move things."
- "BOOST became the cement that allowed all this to happen because it gave [us] the framework for the commitment."
- "[It] feels like more of a business."
- "[We are] much more professional."

"BOOST gave us the means to move forward [and a] new sense of direction," said a grantee. Another stated that it offered "capacity that gave us traction." For some, this was a change they knew they needed to make, providing additional resources to focus on capacity and future growth. BOOST "gave us context and tools to depersonalize [and] cover at a time we needed to change things." One nonprofit's members commented that they "felt they got chosen to do something they wanted to do anyway."

Finally, an organization commented that the "proactive grant made us feel special."

"It feels like we are hitting our stride."

INTERNAL CAPACITY BUILDERS

BOOST also meant a change in the internal capacity builders that Dr. Stevens describes as "the legs," namely, governance, management, financial resources, and administrative systems. Selected quotes for each of the "legs" are presented below to illustrate what BOOST has meant in terms of internal capacity.

Governance. BOOST resulted in significant change for several boards of directors:

- "Changed [our] board and how it functioned."
- "We claimed our board."
- "There is a lot more for [the] board to do, [with] more expected of members."
- "Completely engaged board."

Management. In the management area, BOOST meant a shift to more business-like practices and strategic thinking. This shift sums up many of the growth-stage changes, and more than one grantee noted distinct, positive changes from the founder-organization era. Other grantees commented that they learned to say no.

Several noted that they now have a plan and are following it. While this may sound simplistic, the statement represents a significant change for these organizations, as reflected in the comments below:

- "We think more strategically."
- "[We're] forced to be thoughtful rather than intuitive."
- "Changed whole attitude. Now we are looking at big issues."
- "Changed [the] way we look at strategic planning."

One organization commented on the personnel turnover they experienced as they determined what was needed for the growth stage. They recognized that they needed to focus on the organization and growth-stage fit instead of trying to "save the people to help them fit when they don't."

Financial Resources. BOOST meant that one grantee could hire a development director for the first time and gave another the "discipline to go into the capital campaign." The "infusion of resources caused us to do more [than just] incremental change," another grantee said.

"[The] money was frosting on the cake."

Administrative Systems. Grantees recognized the need to implement systems in a variety of areas, including accounting, human resources, financial management, and/or information technology. We "moved from a place where individuals held things together and now [we're] where systems will hold [us] together." It "made [us] feel like programs were real and needed infrastructure," commented another nonprofit.

WHAT WAS MOST VALUABLE? NOT VALUABLE?

Grantees were also asked to identify the aspects of BOOST that were most valuable and those that were not valuable.

MOST VALUABLE

When asked to identify the most valuable aspects of BOOST, the leadership teams covered all aspects of BOOST from new concepts, to increased strategic thinking, and to specific elements of the program itself. Their comments validate the overall design of the program and are listed below, with few edits to retain the flavor of the original statements.

Category	Comment – Most Valuable
Aha's	▪ What we needed at the right time. Timing matters. (2) ▪ Dr. Stevens' involvement. Expert wrote the book. First time we heard Dr. Stevens – when she spoke pre-BOOST – light bulbs went off. (2) ▪ Helping us understand we were further behind [lifecycle] than we were. ▪ Shift from founder organization to growth organization. ▪ Identified competencies and incompetencies.

Category	Comment – Most Valuable
	▪ Pushed me to do things I wouldn't have done. ▪ Changed our culture.
Strategic Thinking	▪ Having an opportunity to reset our vision. Gave us the ability to think big. ▪ Set aside time to focus on future. ▪ Stimulated thinking. ▪ Changed the way we think about strategic planning.
Program Structure	▪ Consultant. Facilitator. Saw for first time the value of a consultant. (4) ▪ Deadlines. Structured, formalized road map. Tools and process. (3) ▪ Language of BOOST engenders staff ownership. Changed my language. Table and legs. (3) ▪ Leadership team. Have staff as part of leadership team. (2) ▪ Self-assessment. (2) ▪ Multi-year commitment.
Convenings	▪ BOOST ED meetings. (3)
Business Planning	▪ Market research. ▪ Three-year plan in writing. Business plan – gave the architecture. (2)
Capacity Investments	▪ Funding for technology, staff, and software. ▪ Branding. ▪ Money mattered a lot, especially the first $20,000. How money would be used. What infrastructure would make a difference.
Tracking Progress	▪ Took business plan, made it into six slides for board, and used it to measure [progress]. ▪ Financial dashboard.
Staffing	▪ Hiring for fit, not just right skills. ▪ New staff energizes the ED.
Governance	▪ Board information – hearing what they go through, expand thinking. ▪ Board that wants you to grow as a team. ▪ Executive director needed board as partner instead of taking all the load. ▪ Board training. ▪ Many different ways to create ownership.

Note: A number in parentheses ( ) indicates more than one grantee made the same or a similar point.

NOT VALUABLE

Leadership teams also spoke about a few aspects of BOOST that were not valuable to them.

Category	Comment – Not Valuable
Program Structure	▪ BOOST notebook. (2) ▪ Initial evaluation approach.
Convenings	▪ Convenings. (4) ▪ Unaffiliated breakout session. Shorter presentations and work groups. Board member sharing. (3) ▪ ED sessions.
Business Planning	▪ Work plan didn't work.
Process	▪ Consultant change didn't work.

SUMMARY

These interviews provided each leadership team with an opportunity to meet with Dr. Stevens, their consultants, and program officers as they reflected on the three-year BOOST journey. Never before in the program had these four key stakeholders had the chance to exchange information about the distance traveled since 2004. The overall sentiment was that BOOST was worth the investment of time, energy, commitment, and leadership of all involved.

"[The] return on investment is far greater in BOOST than if we'd taken [the money] and put it in [a] money market."

APPENDIX C: GRANTEE ACTION LEARNING TOOL

INSTRUCTIONS

Please follow these instructions as you complete the 2006 self-assessment. The report you submit, along with the attachments listed below, will serve as your end-of-the-year report to Rose Community Foundation.

- **Step 1 - Conduct the assessment**

We are asking you to update your assessment report from 2005. We have made some modifications to the series of questions as you will see on pages 2-4. We have also combined the lifecycle assessment and financial assessment into one report.

You have a few options to complete the report:

  - Meet with your leadership team and Consultant to answer the assessment questions. (This is similar to last year's approach); or
  - Meet with your leadership team *only* to answer the assessment questions; or
  - Assign an individual to answer the assessment questions and route to the leadership team and the Consultant for feedback.

- **Step 2 - Write the assessment report**

- **Step 3 - Submit the report and attachments by February 28, 2007**

  - Answers to the questions that are listed on pages 2-4.
  - Lifecycle diagram indicating 2005 and 2006 placements (page 5).
  - Your most recent Audited Statement of Activities and Statement of Financial Position for comparison to last year. If you do not have audited financials, please include both your year-end Statement of Activities and your Statement of Financial Position (i.e., Balance Sheet and Profit and Loss Statement)
  - 2006 Budget
  - 2006 Actuals (non-audited) Statement of Activities and Statement of Financial Position

<u>Please submit your reports to:</u> Denise Delgado, Grants Manager
Rose Community Foundation
600 S. Cherry Street, Suite 1200
Denver, CO 80246
ddelgado@rcfdenver.org

2006 LIFECYCLE FINAL SELF-ASSESSMENT

For this final self-assessment, you are being asked to reflect on your organization's journey this past year and since BOOST started in 2004. We would like to know what your experiences have been as you've worked to build capacity and ensure the future sustainability of your organization. Refer to the following background materials as you answer the self-assessment questions.

- 2005-2007 Strategic Business Plan
- 2005 BOOST Assessment Report (attached)
- Dr. Stevens' *Nonprofit Lifecycles* book

Questions 1-5 address your "table top" and "legs."

1. For your **programs/mission**, please answer the following questions.

    - What has changed since 2006?
    - What interventions or tools created movement along the lifecycle in 2006?
    - Thinking back to where your organization was in 2004, please tell us about the most significant capacity improvement you have made in this area.
    - What remains unfinished in 2007? What are your plans to address these areas?

2. For your **management capacity area**, please answer the following questions.

    - What has changed in 2006?
    - Is this leg stronger now than it was in 2005? How do you know? Please share a few indicators.
    - Thinking back to where your organization was in 2004, please tell us about the most significant capacity improvement you have made in this area.
    - What remains unfinished in 2007? What are your plans to address these areas?

3. For your **governance capacity area**, please answer the following questions.

    - What has changed in 2006?
    - Is this leg stronger now than it was in 2005? How do you know? Please share a few indicators.
    - Thinking back to where your organization was in 2004, please tell us about the most significant capacity improvement you have made in this area.
    - What remains unfinished in 2007? What are your plans to address these areas?

4. For your **financial resources capacity area**, please answer the following questions.

    - What has changed in 2006?
    - Is this leg stronger now than it was in 2005? How do you know? Please share a few indicators.
    - Thinking back to where your organization was in 2004, please tell us about the most significant capacity improvement you have made in this area.
    - What remains unfinished in 2007? What are your plans to address these areas?

5. For your **administrative systems capacity area**, please answer the following questions.

   - What has changed in 2006?
   - Is this leg stronger now than it was in 2005? How do you know? Please share a few indicators.
   - Thinking back to where your organization was in 2004, please tell us about the most significant capacity improvement you have made in this area.
   - What remains unfinished in 2007? What are your plans to address these areas?

6. Indicate your December 2005 placement and end of 2006 placement on the Lifecycle diagram on page 5.

7. We would like to know how your organization has benefited from the resources and tools provided through BOOST over the past three years. Please rank the items below from most useful (1) to least useful (12) to your organization.

   List of BOOST Resources and Tools

   ____Initial self-assessment

   ____Strategic business plan

   ____Nonprofit lifecycles model

   ____Program-based budget

   ____Consultants and coaching

   ____Susan Kenny Stevens' coaching and resources

   ____Executive directors' meetings

   ____Cohort trainings

   ____Foundation program officers

   ____Leadership team

   ____Capacity building grants made to your organization from 2004-2006 ($120,000 total)

   ____Interim 2005 and final 2006 self-assessments/evaluation tools

8. Tell us if and how you've used the business plan to make programmatic, operational and financial decisions in 2006. Share a few specific examples.

9. Tell us about your experiences using the leadership team this past year. What difference has the team made to the organization overall? What challenges, if any, have you experienced along the way?

10. What challenges have you encountered in getting your board engaged in business plan thinking and implementation in 2006? What strategies have helped foster engagement? What has hindered engagement?

11. In your business plan you designated how you wanted to invest the $50,000 BOOST grant you received for capacity building in 2006. Please reflect on your request and tell us about the most significant capacity investment you made with those funds.

12. Executive Directors: How have you benefited from the Executive Director meetings? What would make this group a productive use of your time in 2007?

13. We would like your feedback on this assessment process. Our goal is to capture the learnings from BOOST.

    a. From your perspective, did this process (2005 year-end assessment and this final assessment) achieve that goal?
    b. How would you rate the effort required on your part? Was it too little, just right or did we ask too much of you? (Please be honest.)

14. We would like to know how has your organization benefited, or not, from BOOST since 2004. Please share any final reflections with us regarding your personal and/or organizational experiences.

2006 FINANCIAL SELF-ASSESSMENT

Please answer the following questions as you review your 2005 and 2006 financials.

1. Compare your 2006 actuals to the projections included in your business plan. What is on track? What isn't? What are you doing to address the areas that aren't on track? For example, did you achieve annual revenues in excess of expenses in 2006? Please share specific examples.

2. How have you used the 2005-2007 projections from the business plan to set your budget for 2007? Please share specific examples.

3. How have you been using the program-based budget this past year with staff, program managers and the board? Let us know where you've had successes and challenges using this tool. (Consider financial planning, program planning, budgeting, and decision making.)

Please attach your:

1. Most recent Audited Statement of Activities and Statement of Financial Position. If you do not have audited financials, please include both your year-end Statement of Activities and your Statement of Financial Position (i.e., Balance Sheet and Profit and Loss Statement)

2. 2006 Budget

3. 2006 Actuals (non-audited) Statement of Activities and Statement of Financial Position

APPENDIX D: CONSULTANT ACTION LEARNING TOOL

OUR PROTOCOL FOR REPORTING WHAT WE'VE LEARNED

BOOST growth-stage grantees, consultants, and program staff are being asked to reflect on learning and change in 2006 as well as over the course of the three-year initiative. Consultants are being interviewed one-on-one by Corona Research. These interviews will be confidential, and findings will be synthesized and reported in the aggregate and will be anonymous.

Names of individual grantees, consultants, and program officers will not be included in the body of the report, although they will be listed in the Appendix as a means of documenting who participated in this process. When quotes are used to illustrate findings, they will not be attributed to a particular individual or organization.

YOUR TASK

A staff member from Corona Research will call you to arrange a telephone interview. Please allow 45-60 minutes for the interview. You are encouraged to prepare in advance by reflecting on the following questions. Some of these questions may look familiar, as they are the same as last year, while some are new.

Overall Assessment

1. As you reflect back on the past three years, what have you learned about the elements of healthy nonprofits in the growth stage?

2. As you reflect back on the past three years, what have you learned about what it takes to achieve long-term sustainability for growth-stage nonprofits?

3. As a result of BOOST, how has your consulting practice changed? Please share a few stories or examples.

4. BOOST included a variety of tools and resources designed to benefit grantees. We would like to know how you would rate the usefulness of these tools to your work with your grantee(s). Please rank the items below from most useful (1) to least useful (11). If you had more than one grantee, please create a composite list (most useful overall to least useful overall).

   <u>List of BOOST Resources and Tools</u>

   ____ Initial self-assessment

   ____ Strategic business plan

   ____ Nonprofit lifecycles model

   ____ Program-based budget

   ____ Susan Kenny Stevens' coaching and resources

   ____ Consultant convenings with Susan Kenny Stevens

   ____ Executive directors' meetings

____ Cohort trainings

____ Foundation program officers

____ Leadership team

____ Interim 2005 and final 2006 self-assessments/evaluation tools

Consulting with Your Grantee

5. Please discuss your experience working with your grantee.

    a. What have you found to be most rewarding in your BOOST client work this past year? Please elaborate.

    b. In what ways, if any, are you proud of or disappointed in your grantee?

    c. Was anything problematic about your BOOST work or your relationship with your grantee?

6. What has been the most challenging aspect of your BOOST work this past year? Please elaborate.

7. What tools and practices are you using with your BOOST grantees that are helping them make progress? Please tell us about each.

8. Did you bring in other consultants/recommend consultants to your grantee? If so, how were they involved? What was the result?

9. As you look back over the past three years, what has been the most fulfilling aspect of BOOST for you personally?

10. Please share any thoughts or feedback on the consultant Community of Practice.

    a. To what extent did you call on other BOOST consultants?

    b. Were the 2-3 meetings per year enough and were they valuable?

    c. In what ways did you consult with Dr. Stevens?

    d. Did you experience a sense of community as you learned from or worked with other consultants? Please elaborate.

Program Management

An initiative like BOOST is multi-faceted and requires ongoing program management. As part of the final assessment, we would like ask you a few questions about program management.

11. In which areas has Rose Community Foundation done a good job in managing BOOST over the past three years?

    a. As needed, inquire about communication, flexibility, responsiveness, openness to change, making additional investments, etc.

12. What problems, if any, have you encountered in working with Dr. Stevens or Rose Community Foundation over the past three years? What suggestions do you have to address each problem or issue?

    a. All (explore as needed) – communication, clear expectations, etc.

    b. All (explore as needed) – roles and relationships between consultant, grantee, program officer, and Dr. Stevens. Was this an issue for you? What can we do to minimize it?

    c. All (explore as needed) – changes during the course of the program (i.e., Katherine and Annie leaving, change in evaluation process)

    d. Gurudev, Bourge and Karla – explore their experiences with changing consultants mid-BOOST. What worked? What didn't?

13. What advice would you give to a consultant coming into BOOST 2 (should there be one)?

14. Please share your thoughts and experience about the BOOST program structure.

    a. Consultant-grantee matching process at the beginning of BOOST. What do you remember about this process? How could it be improved?

    b. What feedback do you have about the consultant selection process at the onset of BOOST?

    c. Was the 3-year program length the right amount of time? Too long? Too short?

15. Please share any final comments you would like to make to Rose Community Foundation.

YOUR TASK

Please answer the following questions. Please provide specific examples or stories where possible without naming the particular client organizations.

Program Management

An initiative like BOOST is multi-faceted and requires ongoing program management. As part of the final assessment, we would like ask you a few questions about program management.

1. What did each of you expect BOOST to be like when you started in 2003?
2. What has been more challenging than you expected? Tell us why.
3. What has been easier than you expected? Tell us why.
4. What has been most different from what you initially expected? Say more.
5. What has come to fruition as you thought it would? Say more.
6. In which areas has the foundation done a good job in managing BOOST over the past three years? Share specific examples.
    a. As needed, inquire about communication, flexibility, responsiveness, openness to change, making additional investments, etc.
7. What challenges and problems, if any, have you encountered as you have managed BOOST over the past three years? What suggestions do you have to address for each one?
    a. Working together – Rose and Susan
    b. Consultant, grantee, program officer and Susan
    c. Changing players (Rose staff, consultants)
8. As you reflect back on BOOST from initial idea to final year of implementation
    a. What does it take for this to work from the foundation side? What does a foundation need to have in place – sensibility, staffing, leadership, grantee relationships, board relationships, etc.?
    b. From the lead consultant/master trainer perspective?
9. What did you learn from the 2005 assessment? How did the final year of BOOST change as a result?
10. Please share any final comments with us.