FRONT PAGE

Capacity-Building News to Use for Wiregrass Organizations

HOT TOPIC
Investing in the Organization

As a nonprofit organization, have you ever been asked this question, "What percentage of your revenue (including donations) goes toward administration?" If you are like many nonprofits, you almost feel like you have to apologize in advance if your answer is in double-digits. Add to this the watchdogs (either private entities or governmental regulators) that regularly curtail or criticize expenditures. But how can an organization develop and strengthen if it is not allowed to invest in itself? Would anyone ask General Motors not to hire the best engineers or train new mechanics or update its manufacturing facilities? For lots of reasons, nonprofits (even grantmakers like WF) are held to a different standard.

There are good rationales behind the requirement for us to be excellent stewards of the dollars entrusted to our care. Nonprofit CEO's and our Boards have a fiscal responsibility to invest prudently and spend our dollars in fulfillment of our stated missions. It does not matter if funds come from government grants, private donors, investments, or other sources. We are expected to be frugal. But as one local nonprofit leader has said many times, '"Nonprofit does not mean non-business." Fair compensation is a factor in attracting and retaining the best talent. Facilities do not have to be luxurious, but they do have to meet the needs of our staff and clients. Basic services cost as much for us as they do for any business in town. If you have not yet heard of Dan Pallotta, you may want to read his book, *Uncharitable..*, or tune in to one of his TED Talks. It will reaffirm what you, as a nonprofit director, already know—that you must have adequate resources to do your jobs well.

But let's be real. As nonprofits, the yardstick will always be different for us. So we have to do our homework. What are the reasonable expenses for similar organizations; in our region? What are comparable salaries for the skills of our staffers in our fields; in our community? What are commonly accepted costs for the goods and services to run our operations? A lot of data is available online. Gathering this information and sharing it with our Boards takes time, but it is an essential part of our fiscal responsibility—and theirs. Along the way, we also build the fact-based, common sense answers to the continuing question, "How much of your revenue goes toward administration?"

GRANTS UPDATE

Wiregrass Foundation's grantmaking "season" begins in April and ends in October. Deadlines for applications are posted on our website, and they apply to all three categories of grants---Project, Capital, and Micro-grants. We are always available to talk with you about ideas for projects, and we will advise if something you want to do is not eligible for a WF grant. However, all award decisions are made by the WF Board of Directors during regular meetings. As you complete your grant application, we will readily assist with any technical difficulties you may experience with our on-line system.

See our Annual Report for 2015 on our website starting Monday, March 14th!

MILESTONES

Wiregrass Foundation believes in the power and potential of our area nonprofit organizations. With the assistance of local nonprofit leaders and TCC Group, Inc. we have developed ***CapCONNECT***, a local nonprofit capacity building program in which 20 area organizations are currently enrolled. During this first year of ***CapCONNECT***, organizations have attended workshops presented by nationally known consultants addressing topics of importance to successful nonprofits. Participants also have received professional coaching tailored to their specific organizational needs. Plans are underway for year-2 programming for this group. However, some area nonprofits were not able to participate in the first cohort and you have asked us if there will be another chance to sign-up. We are considering that option. In the next few months, you will receive a request for response regarding your interest in being part of a possible second cohort of ***CapCONNECT***. As with the first group, participation will require a commitment—to undertake self-assessments; attend three, five-hour workshops each year; and engage in one-on-one coaching from TCC Group. Participation is required from the CEO, key staff, and Board members. If you think you have an interest in ***CapCONNECT***, be on the lookout for our questionnaire and thoughtfully consider whether ***CapCONNECT*** would be right for your organization at this point in time. Our decision about a second cohort will be based, in part, upon the response we receive.