

Hartford Foundation for Public Giving Nonprofit Support Program

Assessment and Evaluation Report
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Overview

The Hartford Foundation for Public Giving (the Foundation) provides a wide range of capacity building services to nonprofit organizations in the Greater Hartford region through its Nonprofit Support Program (NSP). As part of its commitment to continuous learning and improvement, NSP commissioned this assessment and evaluation of its programs in the fall of 2015.

The goals of this evaluation are to:

1. Evaluate existing programs, services, and resources and assess the impact on NSP's grantees.
2. Learn about current and future needs of grantees, and about trends and best practices in the field that might influence future programming of NSP.
3. Identify areas for potential improvements to programs, services, and resources that will increase the potential for impact on NSP grantees.

The evaluation used three primary methods to gather information that would help to answer NSP's questions – review of NSP's materials, telephone and in-person interviews, and review of best practice capacity building literature and trends. The inquiry gathered the perspectives of a total of 97 people.

Summary of Key Findings

1. NSP's approach and services are effective and having a meaningful impact on the community.
 - NSP provides a unique and highly valuable contribution to the nonprofit community in Greater Hartford. Quality programming, combined with a flexible approach and a diverse range of resources is a successful formula for capacity building.
 - NSP has had a meaningful impact on the individuals who participate, the organizations they work for, and the communities they serve.
 - Consultants are a critical resource for nonprofits in Greater Hartford to develop and implement strategies that strengthen their organizations and their impact in the community.
 - NSP plays a strategic role within the Foundation, adding value in numerous ways. More opportunities exist for NSP as the Foundation implements its new strategic plan.
2. All of NSP's programs are seen as valuable. Those that combine group learning opportunities with consultant and funding support provided added benefits especially in facilitating implementation of best practices.
 - Organizational assessments help organizations understand their current reality and develop a shared plan for future actions.
 - Technical Assistance Grants are essential in helping grantees implement best practices, especially in support of organizations becoming more proactive and strategic.
 - The Strategic Technology Program is an effective means for ensuring that Greater Hartford's nonprofits have the tools and systems to reach their strategic goals. As with other NSP programs, it is especially important to enable organizations to participate more than once after the initial five-year cycle.
 - The Financial Management Program was praised for the comprehensive and complementary array of services it offers and its impact on strengthening the financial infrastructure of grantees.
 - The Building Evaluation Capacity Program is highly effective at both building skills and knowledge and at the same time, supporting organizations to institutionalize evaluation practices. Grantees have begun to implement program improvements as a result of lessons learned through evaluation activities.

- The Executive Transition Program provides a vital set of resources to organizations going through a leadership transition.
 - The Board Leadership Program has contributed to building more engaged Boards of Directors with stronger governance practices and heightened leadership in fundraising.
 - Executive Management Institute and other learning circles for Executive Directors have a proven track record of strengthening leadership capacities.
 - Grantees benefit from peer to peer networking especially during the multi-session learning programs.
 - Grantees who participated in multiple programs such as pairing Strategic Technology with Building Evaluation Capacity, or with Financial Management reported added benefits.
3. Grantees report certain barriers to their capacity building efforts.
- Institutionalizing improvements has been accomplished by some grantees but is still a challenge for others, especially smaller organizations.
 - Some organizations report a continuing challenge of consistently engaging board members in capacity building efforts.
 - Some consultant matches were not as on-target as others especially for the programs with pre-selected consultants. Further assistance to help nonprofits become better consumers of consulting services, and to build the capacity of consultants, is needed.
 - The pool of consultants available to nonprofits does not sufficiently match the diversity of the community's needs.

Summary of Key Recommendations

- Continue to provide the wide array of excellent programs with a flexible approach that responds to grantee needs.
- Supplement existing practices with additional support to grantees to help them determine the next level of capacity building that is right for them with periodic visits and check-ins.
- Consider ways to expand efforts to support implementation including adjustments to the size of the TAGs or other resources that provide ongoing coaching.
- Create more linkages between programs to facilitate the combined benefits such as coordinating technology, financial management, board development and evaluation capacity programs.
- Infuse adaptive capacity and evaluation capacity into the assessment format, in strategic planning, and in other initiatives undertaken by the grantees to the degree feasible.
- Identify and support programs that build emerging leaders, reinforce bench strength, and support shared leadership models to foster sustainability.
- Examine how to balance the learning objectives for participants at varying levels, and consider program adjustments such as advanced curriculum or forums for more experienced organizations.
- Explore new trends in governance and consider additional content or expanded programs for the board as a whole and board chairs, or for Executive Directors and board chairs.
- Support grantees to become even better consumers of consulting services and support consultants with professional development opportunities and assistance in tailoring their work to meet the needs of grantees.
- Explore innovative programs aimed at increasing the bench strength and diversity of the consultant pool.
- Build on the evaluation data already collected to create a more comprehensive approach to evaluating the impact of NSP funding and programs, which will require additional resources.

Section1: Introduction

1.1. Purpose and Goals of the Evaluation

The Hartford Foundation for Public Giving provides a wide range of capacity building services to nonprofit organizations in the Greater Hartford region through its Nonprofit Support Program (NSP). As part of its commitment to continuous learning and improvement, NSP commissioned this assessment and evaluation of its programs in the fall of 2015.

NSP has grown out of a small grants program started by the Hartford Foundation in the late 1980s. Since then it has come to include a mix of assessments, grants, major workshops, and sequenced training and consultant services to support the capacity building of nonprofits in a broad range of topics fundamental to effective operations and strategic development. NSP serves approximately 200+ organizations per year. The Foundation supports its commitment to improving the organizational capacity of its grantees through an investment in NSP annually. In Fiscal Year 2015, NSP's annual grantmaking budget was \$1,740,467.

The goals of this evaluation are to:

1. Evaluate existing programs, services, and resources and assess the impact on NSP grantees.
2. Learn about current and future needs of grantees, and about trends and best practices in the field that might influence future programming of NSP.
3. Identify areas for potential improvements to programs, services, and resources that will increase the potential for impact on NSP grantees.

1.2. Evaluation Methodology

NSP designed the evaluation to answer a number of questions it had about its overall impact combined with specific areas of inquiry for each of its distinct programs. See *Appendix A* for a full list of the key questions and areas of inquiry that were used to guide the evaluation.

The evaluation used three primary methods to gather information that would help to answer NSP's questions – review of NSP's materials, telephone and in-person interviews, and review of best practice capacity building literature and trends. NSP developed the criteria for grantee and consultant selection. NSP provided a list of 35 grantees who had taken advantage of multiple services over the past few years and 18 consultants who serve in a primary role with the grantees.

The evaluation gathered the perspectives of a total of 97 people:

- Grantees – 39 individuals: (30 Executive Directors + 9 Board of Directors leaders)
- Consultants – 17 individuals
- NSP and other staff at the Foundation – 21 individuals: (7 NSP staff; 9 Foundation Program Staff; 4 Foundation Vice Presidents; and the Foundation's President)
- Capacity builders and field leaders – 20 individuals: (8 capacity builders; 8 foundations; 2 consultants; 2 academics)

Interviews were confidential; the findings are presented in the aggregate. Quotes are used to illustrate a point and are not attributed. See *Appendix B* for a list of interviewees.

1.3. Description of Organizations Participating in the Evaluation

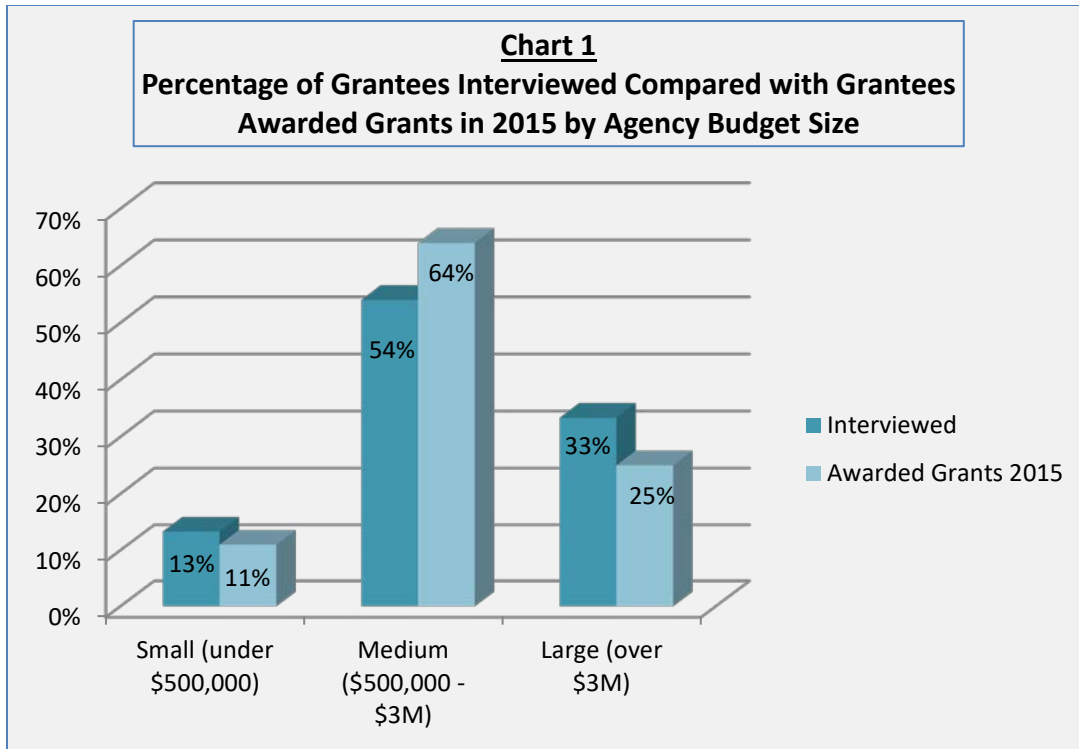
NSP's staff provided a detailed list of the grants, assessments, workshops and comprehensive programs each group participated in dating back to the late 1990s. While some longer tenured Executive Directors could speak to all of the services, not all of the Executive Directors were in their current positions when some services were provided, and therefore their feedback was focused on the more recent programs.

Grantees engaged in all of the types of NSP programs/ services, ranging from participation in five programs to 17, with an average participation rate of 9.9 programs (not including attendance at the half-day stand-alone workshops which ranged from zero to 42, with an average of 16 programs attended.)

Prior to the interview, the Executive Directors received a copy of the list of grants, programs and workshops their organization received plus the interview guide. [Table 1](#) illustrates the profile of the services and grants received by the 30 organizations interviewed.

Table 1		
NSP Grantee Service Profile		
Service/ Program Type	# of Organizations Interviewed	% of Interview Pool
Strategic technology	29	97%
Strategic planning TAG	24	80%
Strategic technology - 2nd	23	77%
Financial assessment	22	73%
Board development series	22	73%
Other TAG	20	67%
Financial management series	20	67%
Organizational assessment	17	57%
Building evaluation capacity	14	47%
Fund development series	14	47%
Fund development TAG	14	47%
Executive management institute	13	43%
Strategic technology - 3rd	11	37%
Leaders circles	11	37%
Human Resources series	11	37%
Building evaluation capacity alumni	9	30%
Board development series - 2nd	9	30%
Executive transitions	6	20%
Senior leaders circles	5	17%
Building evaluation capacity - grant	3	10%

The grantees reflect a range of sizes of organizations. The percentage of grantees interviewed by agency budget size is similar to those awarded grants by NSP in 2015, with slightly more 'large' organizations and slightly fewer 'medium' sized organizations interviewed. ([Chart 1](#))



The grantees represent a range of types of organizations – advocacy, service, leadership and community development; a range of foci – housing, art, education, health, anti-racism, disability; and serve a range of constituencies – youth, elders, women, girls, Latino and other communities of color, as well as diverse neighborhoods.

With these statistics in mind, it is fair to state that the evaluation gathered feedback from a representative sample of NSP’s clients.

The evaluation findings are divided as follows:

- Section 2 discusses general evaluation findings including feedback about NSP’s approach and overall results;
- Section 3 discusses feedback on the major programs evaluated during this project; and
- Section 4 discusses future trends for NSP to consider.

Section 2: Evaluation Findings - General

2.1. Overview to NSP

KEY FINDINGS

1. *NSP provides a unique and highly valuable contribution to the nonprofit community in Greater Hartford. Quality programming, combined with a flexible approach and a diverse range of resources is a successful formula for capacity building.*
2. *NSP has had a meaningful impact on the individuals who participate, the organizations they work for, and the communities they serve.*
3. *Implementing and institutionalizing best practices as well as consistently engaging board members in capacity building efforts remain challenging for some grantees.*

Discussion of Findings

1. *NSP provides a unique and highly valuable contribution to the nonprofit community in Greater Hartford. Quality programming, combined with a flexible approach and a diverse range of resources is a successful formula for capacity building.*

Stakeholders universally praised NSP for its high quality programming, flexible and responsive approach, and invaluable contribution to strengthening the nonprofit community of Greater Hartford. *“We have the deepest respect for NSP, the jewel of the Foundation grant side.”* Executive Director

Repeatedly, interviewees spoke about the unique role NSP plays in the region, noting that no other funder locally or in other parts of the state are comparable. Others went further to say that they are hard pressed to find anything similar being offered by a community foundation in other parts of the country. *“Organizations like ours across the country are envious about our relationship with our community foundation; programs like this don’t seem to exist in other parts of the country.”* Executive Director. This finding is consistent with the conclusion drawn by Third Sector New England’s (TSNE) *Leadership New England* study¹. In their brief for the Hartford Foundation, TSNE states, *“HFPG leaders may have more supports around developing structures and systems than do other New England leaders.”* They specifically cited the NSP programs as a source of support to the grantees in the region in this context.

Consistent with the Foundation’s Awareness and Perception Study (September 2014), Executive Directors and Board members noted that it is not just the funding that is important but that NSP is helping their organization to become high functioning. *“The Foundation grants are critical, but NSP has played a behind the scenes role in our development -- we would not be where we are today without them.”* Executive Director

Program Quality

Programs are rich in content, illustrating best practices in a wide host of capacity areas needed for effective nonprofit management and governance, including strategic planning, strategic technology, financial management, fundraising, board development, evaluation, marketing, and human resources. *“We feel supported by the Foundation and know it [NSP] is high value, and has credibility. This makes us more open to them because we trust them to provide high quality.”* Board leader

¹ *Leadership New England*; A Report by Third Sector New England: Essential Shifts for a Thriving Nonprofit Sector; Brief for the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving; 2015

The trainers were by and large noted to be gifted and knowledgeable. Consultants have also benefited from the learning process afforded them by NSP.

Grantees have deep respect and appreciation for NSP, describing all NSP programs as adding value. In fact, grantees were hard pressed to identify an NSP program that was not valuable. (While grantees are reluctant to criticize the Foundation, some recommendations for program improvements or additional program suggestions were offered and are included below.)

NSP's Approach

NSP was described as both flexible and responsive to the current and changing needs of the nonprofit community. NSP demonstrates an appreciation for the realities of running a nonprofit and the challenges groups face in simultaneously serving their mission and at the same time, attending to their own organizational needs. The NSP approach means that grantees don't need to chase capacity building funding, but rather can rely on where the fit is right and strategic for them at the time. A Director said, *"Everything sounds like a good idea; but it has to relate to your strategy and mission. If you don't prioritize it doesn't fit. Everything we've done has been tied to our strategic plan, otherwise we would be overwhelmed."* Grantees describe their relationship with NSP as one of mutual respect and trust, and appreciate that it is up to them to *"call the shots"* about content, sequence and timeframe for capacity building efforts. NSP pairs this model with support to those who need it in determining the best program and sequence of programs. As a result, NSP supports organizations to build from their strengths, recognizing the unique assets organizations already possess.

Going forward, Executive Directors suggested that NSP augment its current practices with a periodic or at least annual check-in with grantees to review progress, discuss the organization's status, and offer insights into what might be a good next step in capacity building.

Diverse Range of Resources

Grantees praised the *"cafeteria menu"* that provides access to a variety of technical assistance support options and that employs a range of learning styles. NSP was described as taking a holistic approach recognizing that not one size fits all. One Director referred to the menu literally as one *"from which I could serve to the organization the programs we were hungry for and ready for."* Specific areas of noted-value included:

- **Funding for implementation:** Putting good ideas to work is always a challenge. Grantees referred to NSP's financial support for implementation such as to implement their strategic technology plans and to upgrade those plans during a second round of support as critical. This point was also reiterated when grantees were assessing the impact of the financial management staffing support. And although some felt that the funds should be increased, grantees also appreciate that NSP supports strategic planning implementation.
- **Consultant follow-up assistance:** Leaders repeatedly cited tailoring lessons to an organization's unique circumstances and implementing those lessons as some of the more challenging aspects of capacity building. As such, the sequenced programs that are combined with a grant to support and a consultant to tailor the work to the group were highly praised as some of the most effective ways to institute best practices. More than one interviewee referred to this as *"the pot of gold"* at the end of the session. Some leaders described the work with the consultant following the governance workshops as a *"galvanizing experience"* for the board, and reiterated the reality that at times, a board is more inclined to listen to an outside expert (the trainer + the consultant) more than the Executive Director. Other capacity builders confirmed the value of ongoing coaching and consultant engagement. For example, MAP for Nonprofits in Minnesota reports that they are providing more resources for coaching after major initiatives to keep organizations focused on the aims of the new

plan and to foster greater accountability within the nonprofit itself when they know that the consultant will be back to review progress.

“It was most powerful when we had the consulting piece built in. [The consultant] forced us to do something about the workshop. After you come back without the consultant, and if you don't do something about it, it stays in your brain but you can't implement it. The combo approach meant that we implemented things that we learned.” Executive Director

- **Team participation:** Leaders value attending programs, especially the multi-session programs, with a team of staff and board members which facilitates the agency's ability to implement the ideas learned and to build shared knowledge across the organization. This strategy was confirmed by others. CompassPoint Nonprofit Services in California pointed out that engaging teams promotes organizational change. During the NSP evaluation interviews, leaders provided numerous examples of how they benefited from attending sessions with their team. One Director said that right after the Human Resources workshop her team would go out to lunch and come up with a check list to make sure they were all on the same page about areas that needed to be implemented.

“I brought my team together and my board-- we had a shared experience. We discussed how does this impact us and what would be a positive action we could take. We made several changes to our governance policies - we came back together in sync about the changes that would be beneficial.” Executive Director

2. *NSP has had a meaningful impact on the individuals who participate, the organizations they work for, and the communities they serve.*²

Grantees talked about the important role NSP has played in nearly every aspect of their organizations. While some of the changes are difficult to measure, nonprofit leaders stressed that on a practical level, there are very obvious and meaningful results: clear messaging and strategic direction, phones that work, desk tops that are running effectively, fundraising software in place, ability to evaluate their work – these changes would not have been possible without NSP according to the grantees.

The consultants agreed that NSP has not only built specific capacities but went further to note that NSP has created a hunger for capacity building. Some grantees were described as “*serial capacity builders.*” A consultant said “*Grantees have gone from having to do certain kinds of work, e.g. strategic planning, to now looking for the next opportunity.*” Grantees and consultants agreed that the climate and approach to capacity building has shifted. “*The value of continuous improvement has been embraced by the nonprofits... it is now baked into the way they think.*” Moreover, greater accountability for results has been established - between the Executive Director and the Board of Directors, and between the organizations and the Foundation and other funders.

A. Impact on Individuals

NSP's programs have had a profound impact on the individuals who participated, and they in turn believe this impact has spread to the rest of their organization in numerous ways.

- **Staff:** Staff professionalism and efficiency has increased as have specific skills and knowledge in areas such as supervision and management, resource development, program evaluation and outcome measurement, financial management, technology and many others.

² The framework for evaluating the impact of NSP's programs is consistent with recent research conducted and reported on in this paper: *The Individual, Group, Organizational, and Community Outcomes of Capacity-Building Programs in Human Service Nonprofits: Implications for Theory and Practice*, by Tara Kolar Bryan and Catherine H. Brown, University of Nebraska Omaha, 2015

"I've been able to get staff in to whet their appetite, get them out of the office setting and know what's going on... no other entity to this point that has provided the level of assistance to us."

Executive Director

- **Executive Directors:** Regardless of their background – whether they had never served in the position or had been in the position for decades - Executive Directors reported knowledge and skill development, as well as greater levels of confidence and peer networks as a result of their participation in NSP programs. An Executive Director stated, *"It changed my whole notion of being an Executive Director and when I changed, the organization has changed."* Executive Directors pointed out that the deeper their skills became, the more readily they were able to both delegate to other staff, and the more they were able to pass along knowledge they gained at trainings to others. As a result, the training actually benefited more people than even those in attendance.

Numerous Executive Directors cited the impact the NSP programs have had on them personally and professionally from the basics of learning how to lead a nonprofit, to becoming a better and more strategic manager, to having greater capacity to work with their boards of directors. *"We've grown - I've grown, and now I have a Board that is more willing to work with me."* Executive Director

At least four of the Executive Directors came from the private sector, noting that they didn't have a full understanding of nonprofits.

"I came from a corporate/ academic field - the workshops and support were so important in giving me the information and the guidance and the encouragement that now I know I would be able to do the work. I've been able to do it - I know I wouldn't have been as effective without them. It's not just the grants, but those technical supports and the workshops have been key."

Executive Director

Executive Directors appreciate NSP's sole focus on organizational capacity as contrasted with programmatic training offered by others. One Director noted that as he moved from a position within the agency to that of executive leader, NSP's attention to operations was critical to his success.

"I can't believe how lucky I am to be an Executive Director in Greater Hartford. I wouldn't be here without the training of NSP. I sing their praises all the time." Executive Director

"The Foundation has educated me into the role; you can't imagine what this has meant to me. I'm not college educated -- my 'degree' is from the Foundation. They helped me learn to be an Executive Director." Executive Director

- **Board Leaders:** Board members have a better understanding of their roles, and have learned how to improve meeting management, build more effective governance structures, and increase their role in fundraising. Some boards transitioned from a largely volunteer led organization to one that is more professional with paid staff, which required a new understanding of the distinctions between the roles of board and staff. Board members who attended training sessions readily shared what they learned with others, contributing to greater capacity for the whole board.

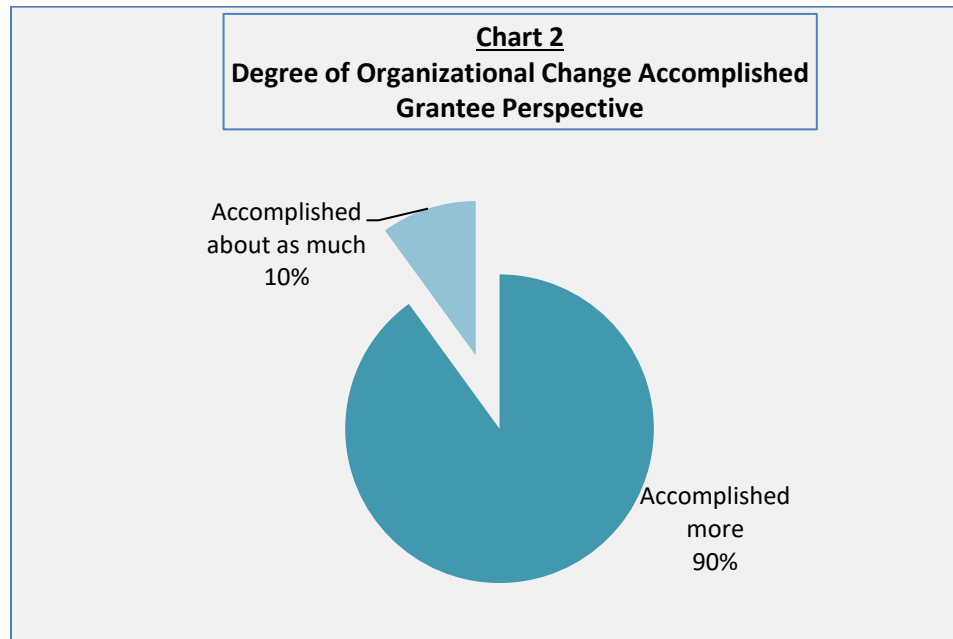
"It exposed me to a whole different world, a different set of concerns. It was very helpful and focused us on big lessons. We now have people we've recruited who bring more assets to the organization than in the past. The training helped us think about recruitment and the assets/expertise we needed to get things done." Board leader

- **Consultants:** Attendance at specific training programs and interaction with grantees, peers, and the Foundation have built consultant skills and helped create a community of practice in Greater

Hartford. Sharing and learning best practices further reinforces a stronger nonprofit sector in the region.

B. Impact on Organizations

Interviewees reported significant measurable changes at the organizational level, with some referring to the change as transformational. Interviewees were asked to comment on whether they accomplished more, about as much, or less organizational change than they had anticipated. As [Chart 2](#) below illustrates, nearly all respondents felt they accomplished more change than anticipated.



The types of impacts reported on the organizational level span from increasing survival to becoming more strategic, and continuing on the spectrum to growth along a number of dimensions.

- **Survival:** A number of leaders stated that their agencies wouldn't exist without NSP's technical and financial support. *"Coming in as a new CEO if it had not been for the Foundation, this agency wouldn't be here. We weren't even making payroll but now we have a surplus. We were lost and they gave us the road map for how to get out of it."* Executive Director
- **Stable and Strategic:** From both the Executive Director and the board leadership perspective, NSP has been a catalyst to help organizations go from survival to stability, with greater maturity and sophistication. A repeated refrain from the leaders was that *"NSP gave us the capacity to be strategic."* Board members and Executive Director's alike said that the planning processes helped get them on the *"same page working towards the same goals."* Many cite strategic planning as a critical turning point in their ability to be clear about their vision, strategies, and goals. As one Executive Director noted, NSP programs helped *"create the organization over time that we are today. It defined who we are."* The Foundation provided the foundation for growth.

"We are so busy doing the day to day work and providing services to the community that we don't take much time if any to look internally to make sure our own house is in order. The foundation of the agency is solid now. NSP's programs fed the trunk of the tree and shored it up. It helped us grow some deeper roots without toppling over." Executive Director

Participation in NSP has also supported organizations to become stronger on a practical level. For nearly all, practices and lessons are being institutionalized into the life-blood of their organizations,

e.g. having an up-to-date strategic plan, raising funds to pay for financial staff after the grant expires and using evaluation data to improve programs. Leaders pointed to specific changes they have been able to make to increase capacity and build a stronger team such as improved hiring practices, employee performance evaluation system, and clearer supervision structures. Results cited included improved job performance, ingrained culture of professional development, and a deeper bench of leaders. These improvements contributed to greater organizational stability.

Finally, NSP was credited with helping grantees to become more proactive. As one board leader stated, NSP supported us *“to move from a place where our service offerings were reactive to a place where we are now, a framework that is proactive.”*

- **Growth:** Using the support from NSP and the backing from the Foundation as a catalyst, organizations report that they have built name recognition, legitimacy and credibility, can present themselves as highly functioning nonprofits when applying for grants, and thus have leveraged these resources to increase the size of their organizations. Budgets and the funding bases have grown, as have endowments, cash reserve funds, and capital improvement funds. Moreover, with greater delineation of roles (between the board and the staff, and among the staff) the Executive Director has been freed up to focus on external relationship building, networking, fundraising, and marketing that has enabled expansion.

“Without question the Foundation, in particular NSP, has been the gateway to where we are today. NSP played an instrumental role in the development of our agency from mom and pop bodega with a small budget, little infrastructure, very little technology, and not much of a board to today. Our staff has grown, we have a very high functioning board, and we are called the flagship youth serving agency in Hartford.” Executive Director

C. Impact on the Community and Clients

Although difficult to measure, interviewees pointed to a number of examples that demonstrate NSP’s impact on the clients and communities served.

- **Scale:** With a more focused, proactive strategy and greater ability to attract resources, grantees reported increases in the number of programs and the number of people served across different fields and populations. Services were added and expanded, new product lines developed, and hours of operations were expanded. Organizations are in a better position to identify services they are best suited to offer and where to develop partnerships, which has facilitated expanded services to the community without diluting resources.
- **Quality:** Grantees reported a more client-centric approach to their work, increased constituent engagement, and greater effectiveness in program delivery models, which has enhanced quality. Through strategic planning and building evaluation capacity, grantees cited examples of shifting and adapting programs to meet the needs of their community. By examining what’s working and what’s not, organizations are able to improve quality and make programs more effective.

Grantees have increased the quality of customer service and responsiveness to clients and the community by creating more effective communications systems through technology and strategic marketing. Several organizations described the tremendous impact of functioning telephones, websites, and other means of communicating with the public.

“Our phone systems were so old, we were losing calls and we were frequently overwhelmed because the lines were freezing up. The strategic technology support improved our responsiveness and the community’s access to us.” Executive Director

- **Results:** The evaluation was not designed to collect outcomes specific data at the client or community level. Yet Executive Directors and board leaders said they felt that NSP’s support has contributed to their ability to increase community level outcomes. One leader described an increased ability to address public policies and include the voice of clients at different public policy tables. Others noted that they have increased partnerships which has led to greater outcomes for clients and the community.
 - **Community Capacity:** Grantees and consultants also noted that by working with such a broad array of organizations for many years across the Greater Hartford region, NSP has had an important impact on the broader community. There is a shared understanding of the kinds of capacities an organization needs to succeed, and a shared commitment to strive towards those standards. Staff and leaders who move from one organization to another carry with them the skills they developed, thereby spreading the capacity more broadly.
3. *Implementing and institutionalizing best practices as well as consistently engaging board members in capacity building efforts remain challenging for some grantees.*

Implementing and operationalizing lessons learned through capacity building programs is generally considered to be one of the most difficult aspects of this work. While the evaluation found a remarkable amount of success in accomplishing this challenging task, not all organizations have reached the level of sustainability they seek, and some still struggle with institutionalizing practices and incorporating the ability to learn and improve as they go.

Maintaining board engagement in capacity building efforts is a challenge for some grantees, which has an impact on their overall ability to sustain improvements. Another factor is the challenge of “*fixing the plane while flying it*” and addressing systemic issues while a crisis is unfolding. For those grantees that have benefited from NSP programs over a long period of time, they have found that NSP supports them through those periods of crisis, and when they are ready for deeper engagements, NSP is there to help.

Conclusions and Recommendations – General Findings

1. Grantees expressed a deep sense of mutual respect with NSP. They appreciate that NSP does not require a specific sequence of services. The evaluation confirmed that NSP’s current approach is working for most grantees. There are some groups who will continue to benefit from guidance from NSP as to the most appropriate services to use, and the order for those services. Furthermore, all would likely benefit from periodic visits or check-ins to assess progress and help organizations to determine what might be the best course of action to pursue.
2. Nearly all of the grantees accomplished more organizational change than they had anticipated. The combination of services, especially the ability to attend sessions with a team, workshops plus follow up consultation, and funding to support a variety of kinds of implementation are critical to NSP’s success. Implementation can still be challenging for many groups despite the wealth of resources provided. Specific recommendations for addressing this and other possible program adjustments are included in the following sections.
3. Grantees attest that the array of NSP services has had a dramatic effect on their organizations. Outcomes for individuals and for organizations were described in detail. Although grantees believe that NSP has had an impact on their ability to reach higher outcomes in the community, it is difficult at this time to point to specific results. NSP should consider establishing a process to expand their evaluation system in order to aggregate results achieved through their support.

2.2. Consultants

KEY FINDINGS

1. *Consultants are a critical resource for nonprofits in Greater Hartford to develop and implement strategies that strengthen their organizations and their impact in the community.*
2. *Some consultant matches were not as on-target as others, and further assistance to help nonprofits become better consumers of consulting services, and to further build the capacity of consultants is needed.*
3. *The pool of consultants available to nonprofits does not sufficiently match the diversity of the community's needs. NSP should explore innovative programs aimed at increasing the bench strength and diversity of the consultant pool.*

Discussion of Findings

1. *Consultants are a critical resource for nonprofits in Greater Hartford to develop and implement strategies that strengthen their organizations and their impact in the community.*

NSP relies on consultants to carry out various programs whether they are assigned by NSP such as to conduct assessments, provide support in strategic technology planning efforts, or present information at workshops, or if they are hired by the agencies themselves to help with planning or board development efforts. In these and other ways, consultants are an essential partner to NSP in helping grantees achieve organizational improvements.

For the most part, grantees praised the consultants as highly effective and an important resource to support their capacity building projects. For programs such as Building Evaluation Capacity, the consultant was described as a critical feature as to why the program has been so successful. Grantees and consultants alike describe their relationship as mutually respectful. *"Nobody tried to change us. They worked with us to help us learn how we can be the best we can be. They were very respectful of what we do and who we are, and a few even learned something from us."* Executive Director. A number of consultants were singled out repeatedly as exceptional.

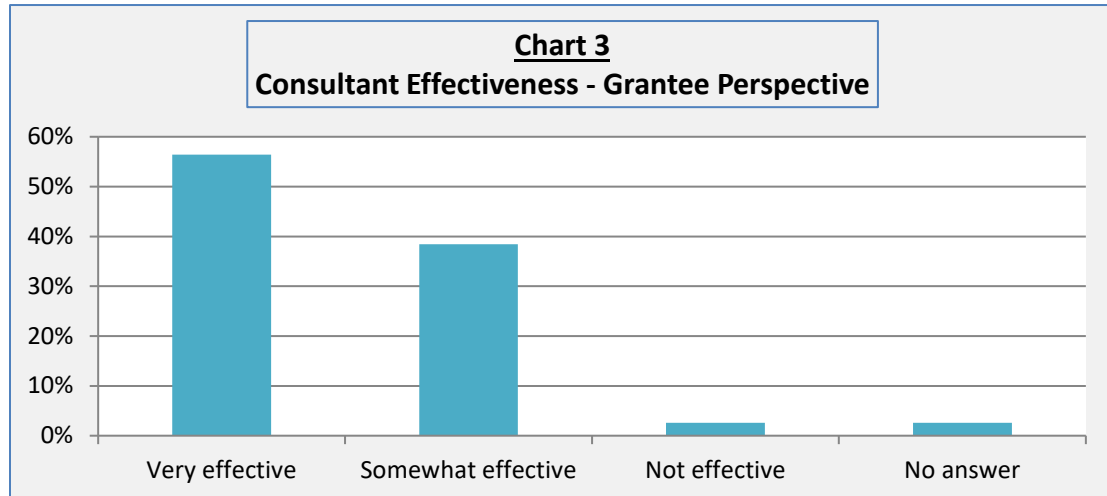
Consultants interviewed for this evaluation appreciate the relationship with NSP and with grantees, and the professional development programming NSP has provided to them as well.

2. *Some consultant matches were not as on-target as others, and further assistance to help nonprofits become better consumers of consulting services, and to further build the capacity of consultants is needed.*

Taken as a whole, nearly everyone interviewed for this evaluation rated the consultants as effective to some degree. As [Chart 3](#) illustrates, just more than 55% of grantee respondents rated the consultants overall as *very effective* and just shy of 40% felt the consultants were *somewhat effective*. Although the percentage of grantees who rated their consultant as *very effective* is still high, it is notably lower than some of the responses to other questions discussed with the grantees and warrants further discussion.

Some grantees described the consultants as *"hit or miss,"* and others said some consultants did not provide enough challenge or push the organization to think expansively enough. Some Executive Directors described the prescribed selection of consultants for the specific programs as too limiting, and for others, felt it just wasn't a good match in terms of skills or scope with their organization's needs and culture.

“There is a difference in the people who give the seminars – they are like bull dogs saying this is best practice, but with some of the consultants, I’ve noticed they are not as pushy as I’d like them to be. We want an outside voice challenging our assumptions; putting our work in the context of the best practices in the industry. I’ve noticed that some consultants will roll over when challenged.” Executive Director



It is also important to point out that a few Directors felt very reluctant to criticize the consultants; in fact, two said they were not honest with the Foundation in their evaluation of the consultants because they don’t want to be critical and wanted to express their gratitude for the services.

“Sometimes it is just the wrong match between the consultant and the task. It is such a small community, it may be difficult sometimes to name [the person] when there is a problem without fear of repercussions for the consultant or the organization. How do we do this in a way without blaming?” Executive Director

Many grantees reiterated NSP’s flexibility in allowing agencies to pick consultants, with the exception of the pre-set programs, and even in those, some Executive Directors noted that they requested, and received permission to work with their own chosen consultant, which was greatly appreciated. In the specific program areas such as strategic technology, it was agreed that it is logical for NSP to have a small group of consultants who are trained to work on this more technical consulting. For other programs such as the Board Leadership, grantees want a broader selection of consultants to consider. One Executive Director said that he didn’t apply for a particular program because he didn’t want to work with the prescribed consultant. Some questioned whether the size of the grant was a barrier to hiring the most qualified person.

Hiring a consultant is akin in many ways to hiring an employee -- it has to be the right fit and one person might excel in one environment and not perform as well in another. The relationship and the match in style, communication, approaches, as well as content expertise are critical to a successful consultancy. Therefore these results are not surprising.

Going forward there are three ideas that NSP should consider to address this issue. First, several grantees would like additional help in knowing what to look for in a consultant, how to generate an effective MOU or scope of services, and suggested NSP offer workshops and help to review consultant deliverables before a project begins. NSP already offers this option, but it should consider additional ways to further improve grantee’s capacity to be better consumers of consulting services and ensure that the client and consultant both have the same expectations for the project.

Secondly, some leaders suggested that NSP do more to actually vet the consultants. (There is some confusion on this latter point. Grantees understand that NSP does vet consultants in their preselected programs, but some grantees are also under the wrong impression that NSP already does vet the consultants in the general pool.) However, this is admittedly a time and labor intensive activity and may not be practical for the open consultant pool.

Finally, NSP already provides training and professional development opportunities to the consultants, which is appreciated. The consultants interviewed for this evaluation offered suggestions for future programming and services which included:

- Annual “show me” what I need to know about technology
- Consultant roundtable and other opportunities for regular interaction
- More in-depth learning opportunities such as on transformative consulting, cultural competency, dealing with diversity and race/ racism issues, mergers
- Exposure to best practices through Board Source, CompassPoint or other national leaders

Consultants would also benefit from receiving feedback from grantees on their work. They noted that the nonprofits evaluate the projects, but that the consultants don’t see the feedback which would help them to learn from the experiences to improve their practices. Similarly, consultants would like the opportunity to provide feedback on the impact of the projects from their perspective as well, which might pose its own challenge given that Hartford is a small community.

3. *The pool of consultants available to nonprofits does not sufficiently match the diversity of the community’s needs. NSP should explore innovative programs aimed at increasing the bench strength and diversity of the consultant pool.*

All stakeholders involved in this evaluation concurred that the consultant pool does not sufficiently reflect the community along a number of dimensions – age, race, ethnicity, language, among other factors. Cultural competency is also a consideration for nonprofits when seeking an effective consultant relationship. With the exception of the preselected list for specific programs, grantees can select consultants from anywhere and are not restricted to consultants in the Greater Hartford region. Unfortunately, the consultant industry in other areas often faces some of the same barriers as the one in Hartford in terms of having a limited number of consultants from diverse backgrounds.

Interviewees were asked if they had recommendations about what NSP could do to increase the diversity of the consultants. Their suggestions fell into four categories:

1. **Proactive Marketing and Recruitment:** NSP should widely publicize they are looking for a diverse range of consultants to provide services to Hartford area nonprofits. Suggestions including issuing an RFP/ RFQ, using the website as publicity tool, putting notices in commonly read publications that are targeted to diverse communities, and having Foundation officers talk about the call for consultants when they are making public speeches.
2. **Networking:** A number of existing organizations were mentioned as a possible source for consultants, or who could play a role in the marketing efforts. Those included the Encore Program, Leadership Greater Hartford, and the University of Connecticut Nonprofit Leadership Program.
3. **Nonprofit Leaders:** Current Executive Directors who may be retiring, leaders from diverse boards of directors, and current staff at organizations who may want to expand their roles in the field were mentioned as potential sources for a more diverse consulting pool. As such, peer to peer consulting was raised as an option. Although there are challenges with this model, namely that current staff have jobs to do at their “home” organization, some might also be interested in expanding their skill

base and would welcome the opportunity to share what they know with other organizations. NSP could play a role as convener and trainer for these emerging consulting leaders.

4. **Training and Apprenticeships:** A promising approach is being piloted by TSNE in a program entitled: *Emerging Consultants Training*. TSNE worked with a group of 18 leaders (out of 100 who applied for the program) and provided training in the art and science of consulting. The program included group learning sessions, learning circles, peer mentoring, and coaching to identify their consulting skill sets through the process of project scoping and implementation. TSNE started from the position that there are likely people in the community who either are or who would want to become consultants but may not see themselves in this role yet or who need more support. A related idea is to couple a training program with an apprenticeship whereby an experienced consultant works with an emerging consultant on a team project. Initial feedback on the TSNE pilot has been positive and is worth further exploration. An evaluation of the project is underway.

Conclusions and Recommendations – Consultant Resources

1. Consultants are an important resource for nonprofits to help build their capacity. Grantees have largely been satisfied with the consultants they worked with through NSP and many consultants were praised as highly effective. For others, NSP should consider how to offer additional support to grantees to help them learn how to find the right match, develop an effective scope of services and deliverables, and more broadly, to build their capacity to better consume consulting services. NSP should also consider if it is feasible to expand the pool of consultants for some of the prescribed programs such as the Board Leadership Program.
2. The consultants working most closely with NSP have benefited from professional development, networking, and exposure to national best practices. NSP should consider how to continue these services to further boost the capacity of the consultants working in the Greater Hartford region.
3. For programs and projects that are evaluated, close the loop with the consultants so that they learn about the feedback provided by the grantees.
4. Due to the lack of diversity and the aging population of consultants, NSP is interested in exploring methods for expanding the pool of consultants to better reflect the diversity of the community and have the cultural competency to best serve the community's needs. Stakeholders offered a number of suggestions. The most promising example worth further exploration is a training program piloted by TSNE.

2.3. NSP's Strategic Role within the Foundation

KEY FINDING

1. *Grantees view NSP as a highly valuable component of the Foundation, reporting significant benefits from the Foundation's investment in NSP programs and services.*
2. *NSP plays a strategic role within the Hartford Foundation. As the new strategic plan is implemented, the Foundation should continue to capitalize on NSP's strategic contributions to the community.*

Discussion of Findings

1. *Grantees view NSP as a highly valuable component of the Foundation, reporting significant benefits from the Foundation's investment in NSP programs and services.*

Grantees expressed deep appreciation for the programs and services that NSP provides and as was described in an earlier section, significant impact has been realized for the individuals, the organizations, and the communities they serve. The evaluation confirmed that NSP generates considerable return on the Foundation's investment.

NSP was also described as providing added value to the Foundation, namely in their capacity to touch a broader array of organizations than is possible through the Foundation's regular grantmaking, and through the strong relationships NSP has built throughout the community, which adds to the Foundation's positive name recognition and reputation. And, NSP has helped to raise funds for the Foundation, a fact confirmed by board leaders who spoke of their decision to donate to the Foundation as a result of the benefits they received from the NSP programs.

2. *NSP plays a strategic role within the Hartford Foundation. As the new strategic plan is implemented, the Foundation should continue to capitalize on NSP's strategic contributions to the community.*

The evaluation explored the strategic roles played by NSP within the whole Foundation. Since the last evaluation, there have been more intra-departmental collaborations and more instances where NSP is serving as a resource to other Foundation staff. For example, NSP's staff are part of the team making decisions about the General Operating Support grants and the Foundation has relied more on NSP for complex analysis of grantees. And NSP's Director was actively involved in the recent strategic planning process.

Going forward, there is an important opportunity for NSP to play a role in the implementation of the new strategic plan. In particular, NSP has the skills and capacity to ensure that the grantees who are aligned with the Foundation's strategic priorities have the capacities they need to deliver outcomes. It will be important that the Foundation as a whole presents itself to the community as one entity, inclusive of NSP. During the interviews, a few grantees commented that they felt the '*two sides of the house*' were not in as close contact or communication as they should or as would be beneficial. There continues to be some confusion about how the various parts of the Foundation connect.

Conclusions and Recommendation – NSP Role within the Foundation

1. NSP is an integral and vital component of the Hartford Foundation. Executive Directors and board leaders universally praised the support NSP provides in helping them to build more effective organizations that can deliver impact in the community. The evaluation confirmed that NSP is already making significant contributions to strengthening the nonprofit community in Greater Hartford. As the Foundation's overall strategic plan begins to be implemented, it will be beneficial to continue to assess the ways that NSP can further align its work with the strategic priorities for the Foundation. There are more opportunities to build on this success by further aligning NSP's grantee portfolio and programs with the specific direction and desired outcomes set forth by the Foundation.

Section 3: Evaluation Findings - Program Specific Feedback

3.1. Organizational Assessments

KEY FINDINGS

1. *Organizational assessments help organizations understand their current reality and develop a shared plan for future actions.*
2. *For some organizations, the prescribed consultant was not the best match for their needs.*
3. *The structure of the organizational assessments can be expanded to encompass a greater focus on sustainability and adaptive capacity.*

Discussion of Findings

1. *Organizational assessments help organizations understand their current reality and develop a shared plan for future actions.*

More than half of the grantees interviewed (57%) participated in an organizational assessment (OA), however, not all of the Executive Directors who were interviewed were at the organization at that time and therefore could not comment on its impact.

For those who were able to provide feedback, the evaluation confirmed that organizational assessments continue to serve their intended purposes. Leaders noted that the OA helped everyone get a better understanding of how an organization should run and further, helped ground them in the reality of their own organization. OAs have been effective in building buy-in and creating a roadmap for the future.

“When I became the Executive Director we changed our organization’s work but our mission was not aligned with our strategic goals. We started small with an organizational assessment. We knew what would come out but it was eye opening for the board members. It helped us to narrow it down to what we have to do to move the organization forward. This was incredibly helpful to our board and got everyone to rally around the next steps.” Executive Director

Grantees appreciate that NSP does not require them to go through a prescribed set of steps before they can ‘advance’ to certain services and programs. Thus, grantees would like NSP to maintain its current approach which does not require an OA before groups can participate in other services. However, for some, this is clearly an important step in reaching a more universally shared perspective on the path forward and should be continued.

2. *For some organizations, the prescribed consultant was not the best match for their needs.*

While, for the most part, grantees were pleased with the facilitation of the assessment process, a few respondents noted examples of where the consultant was not the right fit. One consultant was described as *“not a great facilitator, not a lot of energy,”* and slow to get the report to the organization. Another Executive Director felt the assigned consultant didn’t fully grasp the nature of his agency’s work and therefore the content of the assessment was off the mark. This leader also suggested that the short timeframe for the assessment (two meetings lasting two hours plus background material review by the consultant) may have hindered its effectiveness.

“The consultant didn’t understand us – she wasn’t the right person for us. Some of her suggestions weren’t even doable. In a short period of time, she didn’t have the tools to really understand us and work with us to move forward. I wish we could get more support. None of it worked – personalities

didn't work, the time didn't work...the OA may not be enough to help an organization to prioritize what to work on." Executive Director

Going forward, it will be helpful for NSP and the consultant to help clarify shared expectations for the assessment process.

3. *The structure of the organizational assessments can be expanded to encompass a greater focus on sustainability and adaptive capacity.*

Leaders in the field and best practice literature point to a growing need for organizations to consider a broad definition of sustainability, which has relevance for how NSP frames its organizational assessment process.

Nonprofits are being encouraged to build more sustainable organizations by creating a deeper bench of staff not only for succession planning purposes, but just as importantly to spread capacity, leadership, and knowledge throughout the organization. For example, evidence from organizations where the Executive Director was on a sabbatical show that staff at all levels built capacities for leadership and management. Even for those who had no intention of becoming an Executive Director, the sabbatical ultimately contributed to a more sustainable organization regardless of whether the Director did ultimately step down after his/her return.³

Secondly, to be sustainable, organizations need to have adaptive capacity⁴ – the ability to monitor, assess, respond to, and create change, and the ability for generative thinking and planning. TCC Group has defined a Core Capacity Model (the Core Capacity Assessment Tool) to assess effectiveness overall and with an eye to adaptive and generative capacity. In a recent briefing paper by TCC – *Capacity Building 3.0*⁵ – they suggest that leadership and adaptive capacity are “*first among equals.*” TCC goes further to describe the kinds of capacities an organization needs to move towards what they refer to as “*organizational actualization*” which include the ability of an organization to structure itself in response to the broader and evolving ecosystem.

Finally, the importance of evaluation capacity – the ability to not only collect data but also to integrate analysis and lessons from data into strategy and operations – is a key component of sustainable organizations. TCC and others have found that organizations that have the ability to evaluate their work and incorporate the lessons into their future efforts are more sustainable than those who do not have this capacity.

With these thoughts in mind, NSP should consider adding to the organizational assessment format to help organizations better understand:

- The depth of the bench and the skills/ capacities of others in the organization for leadership and management;
- Their capacity for adaptive capacity and generative thinking; and
- The degree to which they are or have the capacity to be a learning organization that knows how to use evaluation feedback effectively.

³ *Creative Disruption: Sabbaticals for Capacity Building & Leadership Development in the Nonprofit Sector*, by Deborah Linnell and Tim Wolfred, 2009

⁴ *The Sustainability Formula: How Nonprofit Organizations Can Thrive in the Emerging Economy*, Peter York, TCC Group, 2009

⁵ *Capacity Building 3.0: How to Strengthen the Social Ecosystem*, Jared Raynor with Chris Cardona, Thomas Knowlton, Richard Mittenthal, and Julie Simpson, TCC Group; 2014

Conclusions and Recommendations - Organizational Assessment

1. Organizational assessments are a valuable tool for many organizations, especially for those unsure of the most strategic capacity building activities to pursue. NSP should continue to offer this resource and at the same time, continue the practice of not requiring this as a necessary step towards other services given that some groups come prepared with a fairly clear picture of their capacity building needs.
2. As with all capacity work, the right match between an organization's needs, culture, and style with those of the consultant are critical. Given that the organizations are not selecting the consultant, NSP should ensure the consultant match meets the expectations and goals for the client. NSP can further assist grantees to learn how to assess consultants at the start, ensure that there is agreement on the approach and deliverables, and in general to become better consumers of consulting services even in instances where NSP provides the consultant directly to the organization. Moreover, it is important for NSP to help clarify the expected outcomes for the assessment process to ensure that not only the person facilitating the assessment is appropriate, but that the grantee also understands what is reasonable to expect they might glean from the process.
3. Currently the organizational assessment covers a wide range of important topics. NSP should consider how to expand the content to include an assessment of the organization's ability for adaptability and generative/ strategic thinking and actions, organizational sustainability and bench strength, and evaluation capacity.

3.2. Technical Assistance Grants

KEY FINDINGS

1. *Technical Assistance Grants are essential in helping grantees implement best practices, especially in support of organizations becoming more proactive and strategic.*
2. *The size of TAG grants and the use to which they may be put may be insufficient to support certain projects including the implementation phase for strategic planning.*
3. *NSP has an opportunity to promote greater integration between strategic planning engagements and building evaluation and adaptive capacity.*

Discussion of Findings

1. *Technical Assistance Grants are essential in helping grantees implement best practices, especially in support of organizations becoming more proactive and strategic.*

Technical Assistance Grants (TAGs) are highly valued by grantees and praised as one of the ways NSP helps groups to plan and carry out best practices. Strategic planning grants were cited most frequently as a critical step in the development and maturation of the organization, which in turn helped them to measure outcomes, market to new audiences, raise additional funds, and set a clear direction for the future. 80% of the grantees interviewed engaged in strategic planning through NSP.

Numerous leaders referred to their strategic plans as “*real road maps*” and “*living documents*” and ones that are regularly used to chart their course and measure their progress – they are not “*on the shelf.*” Taking a hard look at their environment and their organization's niche, some groups changed their mission statement to become more inclusive of who they actually serve, and others used the opportunity to broaden their scope of work to meet growing community needs.

For many, not only the end result was beneficial, but the process itself was described as an opportunity to reflect and as a unifying force to bring disparate parts of the organization together. To ensure that plans are more than a written document, some leaders reported that they changed their organizational culture to *think more strategically* on an ongoing basis. The TCC Group's analysis documented in *The Sustainability Formula* reinforces the notion that linking strategic planning with data-driven learning process resulted in organizations that were more sustainable. Consistent with TCC's finding, those organizations who also either participated in Building Evaluation Capacity and/or combined strategic planning with outcome measurement work reported that they had tools to reflect and understand outcomes data during implementation. *"I'm using the strategic plan. We review the outcomes by department quarterly and it has to be congruent with the strategic plan."* Executive Director

Nearly every organization interviewed benefited from at least one TAG and some from multiple TAGs over the years. Grantees also reported benefits from TAGs in the areas of fund development, human resource systems, and marketing. However, fund development planning was not as universally praised as the strategic planning process, in part due to some dissatisfaction with the consultants. The Board leader and the Executive Director from one organization said that the fund development consultant was too cookie-cutter – *"It was a problem both that she had a script and that the script wasn't tailored to the organization --she didn't listen to us; she had a plan for everyone."* Another organization using the same firm suggested the same problem – the consultant offered techniques and an engagement tool that were not right for the organization.

2. *The size of TAG grants and the use to which they may be put may be insufficient to support certain projects including the implementation phase for strategic planning.*

While grantees are hesitant to criticize the Foundation because they are overwhelmingly grateful for the resources, three issues surfaced about the grants.

- **Size of the grants:** Grantees and others suggest that the amount for strategic planning or other consultations should not be based solely on the size of the organization. Several people pointed out that in fact some smaller organizations may require more funding and time with a consultant to get the work completed than a larger organization. Grantees suggest NSP revisit the overall amount for TAGs for strategic planning in particular.
- **Implementation dollars:** For the most part, the implementation dollars seem insufficient to design an effective implementation plan. This is especially true if an organization also wants to incorporate outcome measures and a process for measuring results. Three suggestions were offered by grantees. First, increase the amount and, secondly, spread it out over time so that consultants can help with the initial planning process and also come back in a year to facilitate a retreat to reflect on results and help adjust the plan based on the reality of implementation. Third, NSP can clarify the relationship between the initial TAG for strategic planning and the additional \$3,000 for implementation. There is some misconception about this – one Executive Director pointed out that the \$3,000 implementation funding isn't seen as a discreet grant. He went on to say, *"some consultants view the strategic planning project as a \$13,000 engagement."* In addition, although organizations already can hire a different consultant for implementation than the initial person who facilitated the strategic planning, clarity on this issue is also warranted.
- **Organizational funding:** Some grantees reported the need for funding for the organization to cover some of the time they commit to the process. *"Let's just say it - with every TAG couldn't there be a percentage to go to the organization to cover their costs (materials, staffing)? No one wants to tell the Foundation. It was at a Listen and Learn - a couple of people said we wanted to say it but no one would. There is a little bit of - we are so grateful for everything the Foundation does - so people are*

afraid to say things that are negative. The Foundation does provide financial support to do different things and we don't want to sound greedy.” Executive Director

3. *NSP has an opportunity to promote greater integration between strategic planning engagements and building evaluation and adaptive capacity.*

As with the organizational assessments, strategic planning is an opportunity for an organization to examine its ability to become adaptive. Moreover, during strategic planning, organizations can consider sustainability in the broadest terms including the depth of their bench. Lastly, using the strategic planning process to set measurable outcomes, learn from their practice, and implement changes are best practices that more and more nonprofits will need to adapt in order to be sustainable and relevant. NSP has an opportunity to support and encourage organizations to pair strategic planning with outcome measurement work, either through BEC or through an extended grant for the overall planning to be done with the consultant.

Conclusions and Recommendations - Technical Assistance Grants

1. Technical Assistance Grants remain a critical component of NSP’s portfolio. They provide a vital resource for grantees to take good ideas and put them into action. NSP should continue to offer flexible TAGs which are responsive to the needs of grantees.
2. Plans without the details that help an organization understand how they will make the ideas a reality are not as useful as those that provide a clearer road map for success. Many of the grantees interviewed for this evaluation would like to see NSP consider greater funding for implementation which would enable both assistance in the initial planning as well as supporting work with the consultant six months to a year later.
3. Recognizing that NSP should not be in a position to provide the full amount of a strategic planning or other engagement, grantees would like NSP to consider a re-examination of the size of the grant, especially for large projects such as strategic planning, and the policy that the amount of grant is tied to the organization’s budget size.
4. NSP has an opportunity to link strategic planning with the goals of becoming more adaptive and sustainable. The evaluation recommends that NSP consider how to further link the Building Evaluation Capacity program with grantees that are undergoing strategic planning and to promote more strategic planning to be infused with outcome measurement practices.

3.3. Strategic Technology Program

KEY FINDINGS

1. *The Strategic Technology Program is an effective means for ensuring that Greater Hartford nonprofits have the tools and systems to reach their strategic goals.*
2. *Grantees praised the comprehensive approach of the program. While admittedly difficult, grantees largely concurred that the process was beneficial. Most felt that the amount of time with the consultant was sufficient, but some would like to see more direction from the consultant.*
3. *By enabling organizations to participate in the program in a five-year cycle, the Foundation is ensuring that organizations are able to stay current with technological advances.*
4. *Grantees who paired Strategic Technology with Building Evaluation Capacity or with Financial Management reported added benefits.*
5. *Some further tailoring of the program to meet the needs of grantees should be explored, including the option of more advanced curriculum.*

Discussion of Findings

1. *The Strategic Technology Program is an effective means for ensuring that Greater Hartford nonprofits have the tools and systems to reach their strategic goals.*

Strategic Technology was cited repeatedly as one of the most unique services offered by NSP. Grantees praised the multi-faceted approach, the high quality of the program, and especially the funding to actually purchase equipment, software, and other technology. All but one of the organizations interviewed participated at least once in the strategic technology program, and several participated more than once. 77% participated twice; 37% three times.

Many grantees noted that other funders will not support infrastructure let alone the planning process to ensure that it is strategic.

"I don't know of another funder who gives this kind of money - other funders we have to hide it. This is explicitly different. It forces you to think about a topic that it is easy to cobble together. We don't necessarily think about technology in a playful way. The process is work we should be doing but no one has time for it. But we had to make time for it and it was worth it." Executive Director

In describing the program, leaders used words such as "awakening," and going from the "dark ages" to being current with the technology they need to serve the community. Technology has facilitated work in the field through the use of smart boards and tablets, and in the board room through the use of screens/ television to review financial statements. Grantees have been able to enhance their communication systems to the community and clients, attract and expand donor bases, raise their visibility and strengthen their brand, and improve financial management and reporting. Streamlined operations and systems help organizations to maximize resources that are deployed in the community.

2. *Grantees praised the comprehensive approach of the program. While admittedly difficult, grantees largely concurred that the process was beneficial. Most felt that the amount of time with the consultant was sufficient, but some would like to see more direction from the consultant.*

Grantees found NSP's approach of combining program components (assessment, workshop, consultant), and funding to purchase and implementing the recommendations comprehensive and

beneficial. While admittedly arduous, most grantees felt the planning process was worthwhile, affording them the chance to be goal-oriented and strategic about technology. Leaders commented on the importance of the level of detail and thoughtfulness required. This was true even for organizations that went through the process a second time. However, some groups felt the process was too difficult and time consuming, especially for smaller organizations who have limited staff capacity.

The designated consultants were praised as knowledgeable, flexible, and a critical source of support to thinking through the plan and tailoring it to the organization's circumstances. Grantees were asked if the amount of time with the consultant was sufficient. For the most part, the answer was yes, although a few leaders specifically stated that they either wanted more time with the consultant or a different kind of interaction – namely more direction. The latter responses tended to come from smaller organizations with limited staff capacity. Other Directors stressed the need for a more hands-on consultant.

"I didn't get the kind of guidance I wanted...I asked the consultant directly about what to do, but he wouldn't tell me directly. I would like more direction. This was outside of our realm. It would have been more helpful to us if we could say – this is what we want to do, and then the consultant would tell us how to do it." Executive Director

3. *By enabling organizations to participate in the program in a five-year cycle, the Foundation is ensuring that organizations are able to stay current with technological advances.*

Interviewees stressed the importance of allowing grantees to participate more than once in the program. This enables them to remain current given the rapid evolution of technology. Changes in staff, program needs, and technology require organizations to re-think both their strategy and technology needs on a regular basis. *"We can't be still or we become stale. I owe it to the community to stay current."* Executive Director

The consultants concurred. They pointed out that "repeat" grantees who come back to the program after the initial five-year cycle approach the work in a more sophisticated and knowledgeable manner. The leaders already understand the importance of proper infrastructure and have already begun to change their culture.

4. *Grantees who paired Strategic Technology with Building Evaluation Capacity, or with Financial Management reported added benefits.*

There is anecdotal evidence that linking other NSP programs with Strategic Technology offers added benefits to grantees.

- Pairing Strategic Technology with Building Evaluation Capacity helped organizations create and use effective database systems for inputting and analyzing outcome measures.
 - Pairing Strategic Technology with Financial Management meant that organizations had the technology they needed for effective financial management record keeping and reporting. Others talked about how they used technology to review financial statements at board meetings, which enhanced the board's access to financial information.
 - Pairing Strategic Technology with marketing programs led to greater clarity about the messages and brand they wanted to communicate which was then translated into more effective websites and social media activities.
5. *Some further tailoring of the program to meet the needs of grantees should be explored, including the option of more advanced curriculum.*

Executive Directors had mixed opinions as to whether the second round of training should continue as is, or if it should be shortened. Some leaders noted that it was too long and that maybe an

abbreviated second training would be helpful. Yet others felt the second training was still very useful and that they learned valuable information. *“The distance between these is great enough that the workshop doesn’t have to change. We might learn things that we didn’t need to know the first time.”* Executive Director. The idea of an alumni group was raised as potentially beneficial.

Grantees were also asked if the way the Foundation gives money influenced whether they purchased or went to cloud based services. Grantees were mixed on the issue: a few said yes, a few said no, and others weren’t sure.

“The grant was generous and very flexible. We didn’t make any other decisions based on Foundation funding.” Executive Director

“The way the Foundation gave us money definitely influenced our decision to rent vs. buy. One of our board members was advising us and said we should just subscribe [to cloud based services] but then it’s not covered.” Executive Director

In the first year grantees can cover their costs with the grant, but if they go to cloud based services, in future years they will need to incorporate the costs into their operations. Some Directors said they had already figured out how to incorporate these costs into their monthly budget, but others were concerned about future years. *“In a perfect world, it would be good if there is a way to have the costs projected out and find out what could be reimbursed from the Foundation over time.”* Executive Director.

Conclusions and Recommendations - Strategic Technology Program

1. The Strategic Technology Program has a proven track record in helping organizations develop thorough and thoughtful plans for technology that match their strategic goals. NSP should continue to offer this valuable program and its practice of enabling organizations to participate in multiple rounds after the planned five-year cycle to ensure that their technology continues to be current and is aligned with the organization’s strategic mission and direction.
2. The support of a knowledgeable consultant with expertise in technology is critical to the success of this program. For some organizations, especially those with limited staff capacity, it may be necessary to offer more direction from the consultant. Organizations should still be encouraged to set the goals for what they want the technology to help them accomplish, but NSP should explore how consultants can provide more direction on how the technology could be used to reach those goals. As with other programs, NSP should continue to help clarify expectations with the grantees.
3. Some grantees reported challenges in getting the plans written in a timely manner. This was true for smaller groups with limited staff capacity and even for some larger groups who reported having too many other things going on and had trouble finding time to focus on this activity. NSP should also consider creating a deadline for the submission of the technology plans.
4. Many of the leaders who participated in the program for a second or third time thought the curriculum was fine as is, but others suggested that NSP consider some additions to enhance the experience for “repeat” customers such as an advanced course for groups that have participated in the training in prior cycles. There is no easy answer to this question -- NSP will continue to need to balance the different levels and learning needs of a broad group of participants.
5. Other program enhancements were recommended by grantees:
 - Create a ‘community of practice’ after the training where grantees and consultants alike can share ideas and an alumni network to continue sharing best practices.

- Create a targeted webinar that goes deeper on outcomes tracking or other topics or a short add-on to the main workshop.
6. Explicitly linking Strategic Technology with other NSP offerings appears to provide added benefits to grantees. It helps ensure that they have the technology to support their evaluation, financial management, and marketing goals among other areas. NSP should consider how to continue and strengthen these linkages.

3.4. Financial Management Program

KEY FINDINGS
1. <i>The Financial Management Program was praised for the comprehensive and complementary array of services it offers and its impact on strengthening the financial infrastructure of grantees.</i>
2. <i>Institutionalizing improvements has been accomplished by some grantees but is still a challenge for others, especially smaller organizations.</i>
3. <i>Further linking Financial Management with other programs and offering a more advanced curriculum should be explored.</i>

Discussion of Findings

1. *The Financial Management Program was praised for the comprehensive and complementary array of services it offers and its impact on strengthening the financial infrastructure of grantees.*

Twenty of the grantees (67%) interviewed participated in the financial management program at one point or another but as with some of the other programs, not all of the Executive Directors were working at the organization during the program. The structure of the prior program (assessment and grants) as well as the new program (assessment, workshops, consultations, and grants) were praised by participants.

Impressive results were reported: a stronger financial position based on sound systems and best practices, greater internal accountability, enhanced staff capacity to understand the finances, greater transparency within the whole organization about the finances, and a more educated and engaged board of directors. Boards have increased their ability to access the information they need to fulfil their fiduciary responsibilities. Several leaders reported that both the Treasurer and the Finance Committee are more active and agreed that the new course is helping them to access financial information in a different way and clarify the board's responsibility in financial oversight.

Even experienced leaders reported gaining knowledge from the sessions. One Executive Director with prior CFO experience said, *"I went into it because I thought it would be helpful to my COO and our board members. After our first session - I was so happy I was in it. I learned a lot even from my perch. Little did I know I would be sitting at the edge of my chair during the session."* Executive Director (participant in the new program.)

The program has contributed to organizational growth. With improvements in financial systems, organizations that rely on third party billing are maximizing collections, thereby increasing revenue. Others reiterated that it is only from a stable financial base that growth is possible. Moreover, organizations are able to generate increased revenue in part because it is easier to present a cohesive picture of their finances and have stronger financial controls, which appeals to donors and funders.

“We weren't maximizing 3rd party billing and [after the program] improved this to 95%. We now ensure we are collecting billable services, and authorizing services we can bill for. We changed our process and made people accountable. The Board is accessing financial information now – the board Treasurer had been off-hands, now the Treasurer has started conducting finance meetings more and became more active.” Executive Director

2. *Institutionalizing improvements has been accomplished by some grantees but is still a challenge for others, especially smaller organizations.*

The follow-up grant to support finance staff was described as a critical component in the organization's ability to implement the new systems. Most groups reported that they are now able to sustain those staffing positions on their own by building the staff function into the budget or raising more unrestricted funds for this purpose. Moreover, leaders report more staff and managers understand the financial position and systems of the organization, which contributes to a more sustainable organization overall.

For others, particularly smaller organizations or groups managing through crises, operationalizing this function is still a challenge.

3. *Further linking Financial Management with other programs and offering a more advanced curriculum should be explored.*

Some grantees talked about the interplay with the Strategic Technology program and how together these programs have had a transformational impact on their organization. Examples included the introduction of TVs in the Board room and the usage of Go-To Meeting technology that is being used for financial meetings online. Other leaders talked about how the impact of this program was increased when they were also building capacity of their board by participating in the Board Leadership Program.

Finally, some leaders would like to see the option of a more advanced curriculum, especially for more experienced executives and board leaders.

Conclusions and Recommendations - Financial Management Program

1. The Financial Management Program provides a vital service to organizations to strengthen the foundation of their organization by developing coherent, best practice systems for managing their finances. The new course that brings board leaders together with staff has received initial positive reviews. The funding for staffing is also another key ingredient in the program's success and should be continued.
2. As with other programs, linking Financial Management with other NSP offerings, especially Strategic Technology and Board Leadership, appears to offer added benefits to grantees. NSP should consider ways to foster more overlap and linkages between these programs where feasible.
3. Organizations come to NSP with a wide variety of skills. If feasible, NSP should explore the availability of a more advanced curriculum for groups with existing financial management capacities.

3.5. Building Evaluation Capacity Program

KEY FINDINGS

1. *The Building Evaluation Capacity Program is highly effective at both building skills and knowledge and at the same time, supporting organizations to institutionalize evaluation practices.*
2. *Grantees have begun to implement program improvements as a result of lessons learned through evaluation activities. Realizing long term gains from the program for the community will only be achieved over time.*

Discussion of Findings

1. *The Building Evaluation Capacity Program is highly effective at both building skills and knowledge and at the same time, supporting organizations to institutionalize evaluation practices.*

There was unanimous and enthusiastic praise for every aspect of the Building Evaluation Capacity Program (BEC). Nearly half of the grantees interviewed have participated in BEC - 14 of the grantees (47%) interviewed have participated, and three have received grants. Nine grantees are or have participated in the alumni group. BEC was described as being effective at both building knowledge – “*taking the mystery out of evaluation*” - and helping organizations on a very practical level to develop, and ultimately to institutionalize evaluation best practices.

The lead consultant - Anita Baker – was one of the consultants repeatedly referred to as outstanding during the evaluation. Executive Directors also valued attending the sessions with a group, working on a concrete project, and the opportunity for peer learning and sharing.

All of the organizations reported learning important features of evaluation. While a few noted that evaluation is still challenging, especially given different funding requirements and the barrier posed by staff turnover, nearly all of the Executive Directors cited specific impacts on their organizations. Executive Directors reported that they and their staff have more confidence in using evaluation methods to learn about their work, and in turn, now have the knowledge base to know how and in what ways their efforts have had an impact on the community.

Types of skills built and knowledge gained included:

- Learning the basics of logic models and the associated components of an evaluation system, including a deeper knowledge of the difference between outputs and outcomes, and learning how to create tools to measure impact
- Learning how to ask the right questions such as – Is it measurable? What will we do with the data we get?
- Using surveys to collect feedback and demographic information from clients and the community
- Developing spreadsheets and charts, data mapping, dashboard development and reporting processes
- Learning how to use data to improve programs and the organization

Ten of the 14 organizations (roughly 70% of participating agencies interviewed) specifically reported approaches and practices that have been or are being institutionalized in their organizations. Evaluation is now viewed as a core operating principle that enables them to know if the organization is having the desired impact. Three of the seven organizations who have received grants through this program attested to the importance of the grant in helping them to improve evaluation systems. The Alumni group has helped organizations go even deeper by looking at another program with additional staff.

“Yes, this is totally institutionalized. Everyone asks about feedback forms now; it is not dependent on me. We’ve looked at data and made changes in programs as a result of what we learned.” Executive Director

“It [evaluation] permeates all of our thinking now and all the programs now have tried to have people involved in this, even those who were not necessarily thrilled at first... they now have an understanding of why it’s important.” Executive Director

Some examples of how groups have institutionalized evaluation capacity included:

- Evaluation permeates the thinking behind the actions of an organization
- More staff have taken on evaluation functions and have incorporated evaluation into their own workplans
- Logic models are now being developed across more programs
- Using a dashboard and learning from the data has now been ingrained
- Combining evaluation capacity with a new strategic plan which enables the organization to measure the outcomes of its new direction
- Generating monthly reports that are shared widely across the agency and using it for program planning
- Using audience demographics and constituent feedback to evaluate the strength and relevancy of a program, and changing the curriculum as a result
- Board subcommittees are now being educated in the board’s role in evaluation

“Sitting down with Anita made us think about when we are evaluating something, what will we do with the information. And also she made us say why we would ask constituents about this, if we can’t change that issue. We are now more precise when asking about something of our community.”
Executive Director

For some organizations, institutionalizing evaluation has not yet taken hold because of staff turnover or because it continues to be challenging to get the idea of outcomes measurement to resonate across the organization. Yet even those who said this isn’t fully integrated felt it was very worthwhile to begin to ask these questions and learn how to think differently about the work they do.

2. *Grantees have begun to implement program improvements as a result of lessons learned through evaluation activities. Realizing long term gains from the program for the community will only be achieved over time.*

With greater ability to collect outcome data from the community and from their work, organizations have shifted and expanded programs to meet community needs, enhanced fundraising capacities by being able to show meaningful results and data, and created greater internal integration and program coordination within their organizations.

Executive Directors reported that they have learned how to incorporate what they heard from their clients into their program design, program improvements, and organizational improvements. One Executive Director went further to state that the evaluation capacity his agency has built now has an impact on the broader field he works in as he is now able to share data analysis with a network of similar organizations that can ultimately lead to collective action.

Another Executive Director pointed out that she is now able to step out of direct programming and focus more on fundraising in part due to being able to show funders the impact they are achieving. *“BEC has enabled us to statistically show the impact of our programs on youth in the first year, the second year on teachers, and the third year with parents.”* As a result, this organization has been able to make changes to the programs based on what they learned from these feedback loops.

Measuring the impact of their work on the community is a process that takes time. Some suggested NSP invest in more longitudinal studies. At present, only staff members are participating in BEC. Building the capacity of the board of directors to set outcomes and understand their role in measuring impact will be important towards both sustaining outcome measurement and evaluation work, and to helping grantees to actually reach their desired community-level outcomes.

Conclusions and Recommendations - Building Evaluation Program

1. The Building Evaluation Capacity Program is a highly effective program and should be continued, and expanded to more organizations as resources allow, including the provision of a grant to further implement evaluation systems.
2. For this work to take hold and have a meaningful impact on the organization and the community, the board of directors must be engaged and embrace the importance of outcome measurement. Currently the audience for BEC is primarily staff. As organizations collect data from the community about their work, it is critical that the board help prioritize the measures that are most meaningful to the organization. NSP should consider how to engage the boards of directors more fully in both understanding the importance of evaluation and their role in evaluation. Expanding the educational component to include the boards of directors and tailoring workshops to the board's role in measuring impact are options to consider. Adding a component to the Board Leadership Program specifically featuring the role of evaluation can also help accomplish this important goal.
3. Technology is critical to an effective evaluation system, and more explicit links between the programs can result in enhanced technology that meets the needs for the organization's evaluation purposes. NSP can look for ways to coordinate BEC and Strategic Technology.
4. Executive Directors talked passionately about how much they have gained from BEC in terms of knowledge and practical application. Through the interviews, they shared examples of the impact BEC has had on their organization and in turn the community. To further demonstrate the impact of BEC, NSP should consider how to aggregate data across the program's participating agencies which can further boost support for the program and can help to demonstrate the overall impact NSP is having on the community. Longitudinal studies should be considered.

3.6. Board Leadership Program

KEY FINDINGS

1. *The Board Leadership Program has contributed to building more engaged Boards of Directors with stronger governance practices and heightened leadership in fundraising.*
2. *Sustaining board member engagement and finding the best match with a consultant have been challenging for some grantees.*
3. *"Best Practice" governance models and practices should be explored.*

Discussion of Findings

1. *The Board Leadership Program has contributed to building more engaged Boards of Directors with stronger governance practices and heightened leadership in fundraising.*

Twenty-two out of 30 (73%) grantees participated at least once in the Board Leadership Program, and of those, nine participated twice. All 22 of the participating agencies commented on the program. The Board Leadership Program's multi-session workshops with Chuck Loring, followed by individualized consultation to tailor the lessons to each organization's unique circumstances was applauded as an

effective approach to strengthening boards and governance practices. The sessions with Chuck Loring were noted to be of the highest quality. *“I’ve been on a fair number of boards and all of them have done well but all would have benefited from these sessions.”* Board leader

Having the consultant follow-up is critical for groups to be able to implement the ideas presented in the sessions. As noted by one Executive Director, *“It forced us to do something about what we learned. It raised the level of performance of our board.”*

Major changes in Board functioning were reported, including recruitment and retention of effective new leaders, clearer delineation of roles and enhanced fundraising capacity. One Executive Director said that *“Fundraising is now in our DNA; the board views this as a core responsibility now.”* In addition to increasing the board’s attention to its role in fundraising, the program helped increase accountability by providing a structure to track board engagement in giving and soliciting donations.

Leaders reported a shift towards more strategic and generative discussions at board meetings and an increased understanding of the difference between an operational board and a fiduciary board. Some interviewees went as far as to say that their board *“reinvented themselves”* through this process. Grantees also revised by-laws, created term limits, upgraded policies such as whistle blower policies, and created succession plans and a year-round cultivation process for new board members.

Education about the respective roles of the board and the staff has led to greater efficiencies as staff and volunteer leaders are no longer duplicating actions. As a result, Executive Directors can increase their focus on external work such as raising funds, networking, raising visibility, and overseeing the strategic growth for the organization.

“The board sessions were very powerful – the dynamics changed on the board. There had been a little bit of a sense that the board was there to advise, bless plans but not to really be involved...Now there is much more of a sense that we are in this together. Board members are ambassadors. Today a board member and I went to a corporation and met with their foundation person. She got us in the door because she knows the regional director of the company. Before the training, our board wasn't doing any of this.” Executive Director

“I came away energized. I found that all the programs are solid in terms of helping board members learn what it turns out is important to know. We made real changes. I see the difference. I’m very confident I’ll have board candidates in the pipeline [as a result of the training lessons.]” Board leader

As with other NSP offerings, grantees appreciate the option to participate more than once in the Board Leadership Program. This has been especially important as Boards bring in new members. Finally, as noted in earlier sections, linking participation in this program with Strategic Technology and with Building Evaluation Capacity offers added benefits to the grantees.

2. Sustaining board member engagement and finding the best match with a consultant have been challenging for some grantees.

To implement the lessons from the sessions and apply those during the follow-up consultation, sustaining engagement and momentum is important but some groups found this to be challenging, making it even more difficult to *“actualize the knowledge.”* Some leaders suggested more workshops to be held in the evenings but there was not a consensus as to whether this would be useful for everyone. Another Executive Director reported that while the program was excellent, because it was hard to get board members to commit, it wasn’t as valuable overall as some other programs.

The other challenge cited pertained to the consultant assistance. Some grantees did not think the follow-up work with the consultant was as effective as possible due a limited selection of consultants some of whom they didn't feel had the needed skill level or the right approach.

"The consultant delivered the same thing that she delivered everywhere; it was demoralizing. I was clear what we wanted but it was a waste of time. It was too cookie cutter and didn't match what we wanted." Executive Director

Finally, even for those who found the consultant a good match, more follow-up especially later down the road, would help the board to implement the ideas. Several leaders would like the consultant to come back in six-months to a year later and facilitate another retreat.

3. "Best Practice" governance models and practices should be explored.

The "best practice" research conducted during this evaluation highlighted a shifting role in governance and the need for new models that can appeal to the next generation of leaders. While the current NSP program has made significant progress in helping grantees in the region strengthen their board structures and engage members, research suggests evolving needs and models that NSP should consider for future programming.

Third Sector New England's *Leadership New England* report calls for greater focus on sustainability and a shift towards governance models that are rooted in generative and transformative partnerships. As with the aging of the Executive Directors in the region, so too are many board members aging, and new models for board engagement may be needed to attract and retain younger leaders. The study's authors suggest that board members learn how to apply a generative leadership approach as described in *Governance as Leadership: Reframing the Work of Nonprofit Boards*⁶. Other field leaders interviewed for this evaluation also point to a more recent book – *The Practitioner's Guide to Governance as Leadership*⁷ - that takes the ideas from Chait, Ryan, and Taylor and offers a practical guide to implementation of the three modes of governance: fiduciary, strategic, and generative.

Interviewees also talked about the support needed for an effective Board Chair, and an effective relationship between the Executive Director and the Board Chair. The Third Sector New England study points to a disconnect between the Executive Director and the board members perception of board effectiveness. The study found that *"HFPG leaders rated their boards significantly lower than HFPG board members rated themselves on all criteria for board effectiveness except 'financial oversight' and 'constructive support during conflicts.' The gaps in perceived effectiveness were around both external and internal organizational issues, with large gaps in the areas of community ambassadorship and public policy advocacy, as well as in upholding mission and strategic planning."*

The Alliance for Nonprofit Management⁸ recently completed a study of 635 Board Chairs from local, regional, and national organizations from 26 states. The study has not yet been published, but the Alliance previewed their findings and suggests added support for boards in identifying what they expect from their chairs and from the Chair-CEO relationship. They also recommend capacity building initiatives for mentoring peer learning and support and using research-based leadership and board practices.

Consistent with these findings, Executive Directors and board leaders interviewed for this evaluation are interested in additional networking and interaction among board members. Modeled on the concept

⁶ *Governance as Leadership: Reframing the Work of Nonprofit Boards*, by Richard P. Chait, William P. Ryan, and Barbara E. Taylor. BoardSource (2005). John E. Wiley & Sons, Hoboken, N.J.

⁷ *The Practitioner's Guide to Governance as Leadership: Building High-Performing Nonprofit Boards*, by Cathy A. Trower. Jossey-Bass (2013). John Wiley & Sons, San Francisco, CA.

⁸ <https://allianceonline.org/alliance-publishes-one-largest-national-studies-board-chairs>

that has worked well with Executive Directors and senior staff, NSP can explore organizing a leader circle for Board Chairs. As an example, the Fairfield County Community Foundation has been successfully running two Board Chair Roundtables⁹ per year which serves approximately 40 board chairs.

Finally, the *Excellence in Governance*¹⁰ program, sponsored by NeighborWorks America and BoardSource, is worth exploring to see if this kind of model might be of benefit to grantees in the Hartford region. In this 18-month program, a leadership team comprised of the Executive Director plus three or four board members, participate in training sessions and engage with a coach to tackle one or more performance challenges faced by the board. The performance challenge is a useful tool in addressing issues and has led to boards increasing their capacity for generative, strategic thinking and actions, and strengthened governance practices. The model also builds peer to peer interaction across the organization's boards which helps to reinforce sharing of best practices and lessons being learned.

Conclusions and Recommendations - Board Leadership Program

1. The Board Leadership Program has been successful in supporting boards of directors to clarify their role as a governance body, to increase their engagement in fundraising, and to strengthen recruitment, retention, and other aspects of a high functioning board. NSP should continue to offer this program which is sought after by grantees in the region.
2. To ensure that the grantee and the consultant are a good fit, NSP can offer more guidance to the grantee as they develop a scope of work and define deliverables and in general to become better consumers of consulting services.
3. Given that there were some comments about the consultants being "too cookie-cutter," NSP should also examine the consultant roster for this program and expand it to include other consultants who offer a more tailored approach to consulting services.
4. Grantees are interested in follow up work with the consultants after the initial period to assess progress and adjust strategies as needed. NSP already offers flexible grants through the TAG program, but can also consider a specific follow-up board development grant that is modest in amount but sufficient to support the consultant's return to the organization 6-12 months later.
5. Grantees appreciate the opportunity to attend the workshop sessions and participate in the program more than once. Some leaders would like to see an advanced version – "a Chuck Loring 201 or 301" or other more advanced topics. NSP should consider how to structure this option, or look into bringing other practitioners to Hartford to offer a workshop series on governance as leadership, building generative and transformative partnerships between the CEO and Board Chair, or exploring other evolving governance models. NSP should also examine the NeighborWorks Excellence in Governance as a more in-depth governance program.
6. Building on the success of NSP's Leader Circles for executives and for senior staff, NSP should explore creating a Leader Circle for Board Chairs or for Executive Directors together with Board Chairs.
7. To ensure that boards fully understand and are engaged in evaluation, NSP should look for more alignment and linkages between board programs and BEC. Similarly, to ensure that boards understand finances and have the technology they need to fulfil their roles, board member engagement in other NSP programs, and linkages between those programs should be fostered.

⁹ <http://fccfoundation.org/fairfield-countys-center-for-nonprofit-excellence/center-nonprofit-excellence/>

¹⁰ http://www.neighborworks.org/Documents/TrainingandServices_Docs/NonProfitLeadership_Docs/BoardLeadership_Docs/Excellence-in-Governance-2016-concept-paper

3.7. Executive Transitions Program

KEY FINDINGS

1. *The Executive Transition Program provides a vital set of resources to organizations going through a leadership transition and should be continued to meet the growing need in Greater Hartford.*
2. *The concept of succession planning should be broadened to focus on deeper issues of sustainability. NSP should consider programs such as leadership sabbaticals and other programs that build bench strength and create shared leadership.*

1. *The Executive Transition Program provides a vital set of resources to organizations going through a leadership transition and should be continued to meet the growing need in Greater Hartford.*

Six organizations (20% of grantees interviewed) participated in the Executive Transitions Program (ET). Of those, comments were provided by only a few people who directly participated in the process. Although there was considerably less feedback about the ET program, the interviewees who did comment said that the program was very helpful in structuring and managing a process about which they knew very little at first and would not have been able to support on their own. The consultants were described as very helpful in guiding the process. Auxiliary benefits accrued from the process including becoming clearer about their strategic direction, revising bylaws, updating personnel manuals, and improving governance practices.

The need for succession planning and executive transitions will continue to grow in Greater Hartford as the leadership ages. According to TSNE's *Leadership New England* study, Hartford area leaders are older than the New England sample as a whole. (59% of Hartford area leaders were older than 55 as contrasted with 53% of the full sample; 88% of Hartford leaders are over 45 years old compared with 80% of the full sample.) The report concludes that the Hartford area may experience age-related turnover faster than other areas of New England. In keeping with TSNE's finding that the Hartford area nonprofits have capacity building supports in place through the Foundation, TSNE also found that Hartford nonprofits were significantly more likely to have succession plans in place.

2. *The concept of succession planning should be broadened to focus on deeper issues of sustainability. NSP should consider programs such as leadership sabbaticals and other programs that build bench strength and create shared leadership.*

In addition to the TSNE report, other interviewees agreed that one of the most pressing challenges facing the nonprofit sector across the region will be the leadership transitions due to the aging population of current Executive Directors. Succession planning has taken on a broader definition already to include more than simply finding a new leader. An even deeper understanding of sustainability to include building bench strength, shared leadership models, and generative/ adaptive capacity is warranted.

Leadership sabbaticals or fellowships such as the one sponsored by the Barr Foundation is an example of a program that both supports the current leadership and at the same time, offers an opportunity for building a more sustainable organization over the long haul. In an article about the Barr Fellowship program,¹¹ the authors describe the results to include "an increase in individual social capital, leaders'

¹¹ *Only Connect: How an Investment in Relationships Among Social Change Leaders Is Changing Them, Their Organizations, and Their City*; The Foundation Review, Volume 5, Issue 1; by Stefan Lanfer, Patricia Brandes, and Claire Reinelt, 2013

tenure and distributed leadership, and network health and the emergence of boundary-crossing collaborations in the city.” Although skeptics of sabbaticals worry that Executive Directors will automatically depart after the sabbatical, the Barr Foundation found that even seven years after the fellowship, more than two-thirds were still with the same organization.

As importantly, these sabbaticals and fellowships enabled the organization itself – the staff who remained when the Director took the sabbatical and the board of directors – to build new leadership skills and capacities. In fact, these organizations became more sustainable in part because of a structured departure of the Executive Director. The Barr Foundation findings were consistent with a report entitled *Creative Disruption* by Third Sector New England and CompassPoint Nonprofit Services. In addition to finding that Executive Directors who go on sabbatical were more likely either to remain in their positions or extend their tenure, they discovered that for those who did ultimately decide to leave their organizations, the transitions were better planned and healthier for the leader and the organization.

The *Creative Disruption* report highlighted two important unanticipated outcomes for organizational capacity and sustainability. First, the sabbatical led to an increase in effective governance as a result of the planning and learning associated with the process both before and after the leader’s sabbatical. Secondly, there was an increase in capacity among the staff as a whole, not only for the person who was the interim director. While the Executive Director was on sabbatical, staff members took on new roles, built their skills, and created more shared-decision making processes. This had a pay-off for the staff, the board, the Executive Director, and the organization upon the return of the leader.

“A benefit for organizations is the realization that when sabbatical recipients leave, the organization does not fall apart. They gain a keener appreciation of their staff’s abilities. This in turn builds confidence for the staff members...This one realization opens many interesting doors post-sabbatical for organizational development, including delegation and more shared decision –making, board members stepping up, a change of perspective for the leader on how much task level management he or she should be handling, and the concept that succession planning is healthy and does not imply the imminent departure of the leader.” *Creative Disruption, page 7*

Whether the Hartford Foundation considers a sabbatical program or not, there is an interesting lesson gleaned from the evaluations of these programs that pertains to building ‘bench strength’ that NSP may want to examine. According to Deb Linnell, one of the authors of the *Creative Disruption* report and an interviewee for this evaluation, a considerable number of the people who either served as interim leaders or who stepped up while the Executive Director was on sabbatical did not want to leave their work as deputy director or program director. Not everyone is aspiring to be the Executive Director, yet when called upon to assume greater leadership and responsibilities in other ways, they rose to the occasion. This speaks to a core feature of the research on sustainability – the need to create shared leadership models, build and spread knowledge and capacity across the organization, and develop deeper skills among program managers, senior leaders, and others on the staff.

NSP already has a foot-hold in work geared towards building the capacity of emerging leaders. The Senior Leaders Circle received high praise during this evaluation, and Executive Directors agreed that bringing other staff leaders to training sessions and working with the consultants built their ‘bench strength.’ In 2016, NSP intends to support the Leadership Development Roundtable to continue this work. The evaluation endorses this approach and suggests that NSP go further in future years to explore other ways of building emerging leader capacity with an eye towards sustainability and shared

leadership. This finding is consistent with TSNE’s *Leadership New England* study which calls for building bench strength and for an exploration of shared-decision making and leadership structures.¹²

Conclusions and Recommendations - Executive Transition Program

1. The Executive Transition Program offers a valuable service to organization going through a leadership change. NSP should continue to provide this to grantees. The evaluation did not closely examine the program and did not receive extensive feedback about it. Consistent with the recommendations pertaining to the Organizational Assessment program, ET services should include a broader look at organizational sustainability including the capacity of emerging leaders and how to build bench strength beyond the specific aspects of finding a new Executive Director if it does not already do so.
2. Towards the goal of creating more sustainable organizations, there are a number of interesting program suggestions for NSP to consider, including Executive Director sabbaticals, enhanced programs for emerging leaders, and seminars or other learning opportunities focused on shared-leadership models. Additional research into the best program(s) to consider is likely to be needed.

3.8. Executive Workshops and Other Learning Opportunities

KEY FINDINGS

1. *Executive Management Institute and other learning circles for Executive Directors have a proven track record of strengthening leadership capacities.*
2. *Short-term learning opportunities and workshops are valuable to participants but it is more challenging to implement best practices.*
3. *Grantees benefit from peer to peer networking especially during the multi-session learning programs.*

Discussion of Findings

1. *Executive Management Institute and other learning circles for Executive Directors have a proven track record of strengthening leadership capacities.*

Of the organizations interviewed, 13 participated in the Executive Management Institute (EMI), six in Advanced Leader Circles (ALC) for Executive Directors, and five organizations in Senior Leader Circles (SLC) for emerging leaders. The EMI received rave reviews, including from those who participated in the prior iteration – the mini MBA. Words like “*phenomenal*” and “*the best training of my life*” were repeatedly used to describe this program. Leadership, managerial, and analytic skills have been developed, as has overall confidence.

The Advanced Leader Circle was described as “*life changing*” and “*transformational.*” Organizations as a whole benefited from these learning opportunities. “*We are a stronger agency and team, our services are stronger – the impact trickled down to the other leaders in the organization.*” Executive Director

¹² A considerable amount of research has been done on alternative models of leadership. Three interesting reports include: *Structuring Leadership: Alternative Models for Distributing Power and Decision-Making in Nonprofit Organizations* by Caroline McAndrews, Frances Kunreuther, and Shifra Bronznik, The Building Movement Project, 2011; *What Works: Developing Successful Multigenerational Leadership* by Caroline McAndrews; the Building Movement Project, 2010; *Next Generation Organizations: 9 Key Traits*, by Maria Cornelius and Tim Wolfred; CompassPoint Nonprofit Services, 2011

A few people commented on the value of the Senior Leaders Circle and would like to see more programs geared to their staff such as this. One Executive Director noted that this program was a key factor in a staff person’s interest in ultimately becoming an Executive Director noting that “*she found the support and skills she needed*” to do the job. Another Director reported that the SLC was transformative for the staff who participated, helping to build confidence and broader skills for leadership – capacities needed even if the person is not interested in becoming an Executive Director.

2. *Short-term learning opportunities and workshops are valuable to participants but it is more challenging to implement best practices.*

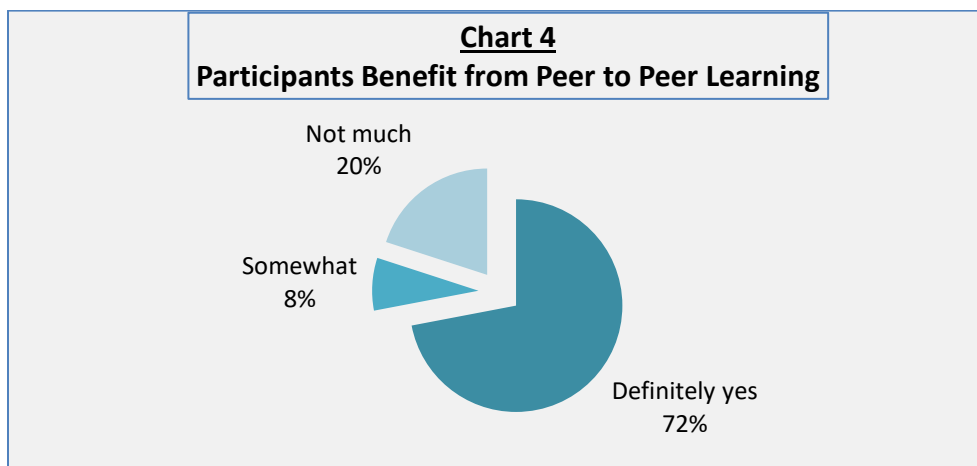
Workshops at the Pond House and other half-day sessions were also praised for the caliber of the presenters, the topics, and the value of the materials. Leaders noted feeling energized afterwards and valued seeing that they are not alone. They appreciated that the sessions are offered at no cost, the convenient location, and the ability to bring other staff, which supports professional development and team building. Often these sessions help interest staff and board to further engage in other kinds of capacity building activities.

A few people mentioned some sessions that weren’t quite as on the mark as other sessions, and there is interest for more advanced level content. And yet while the leaders all find value in the sessions, the biggest challenge is implementation of ideas. For this reason, the multi-part sessions that are combined with funding and support for a consultant were described as having a more long-lasting impact on their organization.

“You leave the workshops hyperventilating...these are things we should have done. We walk away with the book but then say, how am I going to do these things and realize you are not doing it, and/or doing it wrong. Sometimes it is almost depressing. Maybe there is some way we can get some help with achieving some of the things you need to be doing.” Executive Director

3. *Grantees benefit from peer to peer networking especially during the multi-session learning programs.*

Grantees were asked to comment on whether they gained insights and knowledge from interactions with their peers. Among those who shared their comments on this question (4 of the 39 interviewees did not comment), almost three-quarters said they definitely benefited from peer to peer interactions.



The programs that were described to lend themselves to greater peer interaction were the multi-session cohorts including BEC and EMI/ ALC. The Executive Directors who have participated in the EMI or Leadership Circles for the most part felt very strongly that connections were made and have been

sustained outside of the context of the sessions. Directors noted sharing of best practices, building long standing relationships and friendships, hearing ideas from different viewpoints, and using each other as a resource after the sessions.

In contrast, the sessions at the Pond House did not lend themselves to continued interaction. However, as one leader noted, the half-day sessions aren't structured for peer to peer learning and the Executive Directors and board leaders would in fact prefer to learn with their team which facilitates implementation. Yet there were community wide benefits noted even in these half-day sessions, namely that leaders see each other over the course of the year which makes it easier to pick up the phone later.

"We get a good view that the problems we are facing are not exclusive. The connections we make helps make the entire community stronger." Executive Director

Conclusions and Recommendations - Executive Workshops and Other Learning Opportunities

1. The Executive Management Institute and other multi-learning opportunities geared to Executive Directors were highly praised for building the skills, confidence, and networks for executive leaders and should be continued.
2. As NSP has already planned, the evaluation recommends an expansion of learning opportunities for emerging leaders.
3. There are clear benefits to the half-day sessions for staff, executive directors and board members who attend. These should be continued, but NSP should consider how to balance the number of these programs which are labor intensive to organize with the available resources for other priorities. As feasible, scheduling should be coordinated with other providers in the area, namely the CT Association of Nonprofits.
4. In designing workshops for the future, NSP should determine the appetite for more advanced level content which some leaders in this evaluation recommended. As with the other programs, NSP will continue to have to consider the balance of needs in setting the level of content.
5. Given the successful impact the other programs produce for grantees, NSP has set a fairly high bar. The short workshops are fulfilling various needs but it is unrealistic to expect the same level of results that grantees get from the longer programs. Yet, grantees are eager to implement what they are learning. NSP can consider if there are other ways to support implementation to build on what they are already doing such as continuing to encourage the speakers to discuss implementation suggestions at the end of the session, promoting team participation in the sessions, and reminding grantees they can apply for a TAG to support further exploration and implementation.

Section 4: Future Trends

4.1. Trends

Interviewees were asked to describe trends or challenges grantees are facing that NSP should take into consideration as it plans for the future. Many of these are consistent with Third Sector New England's *Leadership New England* study.

1. **Leadership:** Aging Executive Directors and impending retirements of executive leaders and for some board leaders is of growing concern to the sector in the Hartford region and across the country. Efforts to build a stronger bench of staff who share knowledge about the organizations' systems and operations, institutionalizing best practices, and supporting a pipeline for new and engaged leaders for the boards of directors are all needed to create sustainable organizations. Research into shared leadership models points to an interest in creating a shift in how organizations are structured.
2. **Funding:** Financial constraints, shrinking governmental resources, and continued competition for private philanthropic dollars is an ongoing challenge for the sector. Some organizations are still struggling with financial resources as a result of the recession. The continued pinch often effects smaller organizations and those in social services that do not have inherent means for generating revenue. Improving financial management structures has proven to be effective in maximizing potential resources, as has boosting fundraising skills of staff and the board. More broadly, nonprofits that are both able to combine evaluation capacity with strategic planning often have the ability to adapt and ultimately sharpen their focus and tell a compelling story of impact to funders. Yet the cost of delivering services and public sector cut-backs will likely continue to be an ongoing challenge for nonprofits.
3. **Evaluation:** Nonprofits and funders alike are interested in measuring outcomes especially those achieved at the community level. Within the evaluation field, this is one of the more challenging aspects to master. It is also difficult to measure an organization's ability to be adaptive and generative rather than reactive but the pressure on nonprofits to assume those capacities continues. Outcome measurement and evaluation can be time consuming, costly, and daunting. While capacity builders and funders are investing in this pursuit to varying degrees, there is also not wide availability of the resources to implement meaningful evaluation systems.

NSP has already made great strides to support nonprofit capacity through the BEC which will likely be in even greater demand as the need to document impact grows.

Evaluation considerations also pertain to NSP and the Foundation as a whole. Consultants and Foundation staff were asked to comment on whether NSP's current evaluation tools are effective in evaluating impact and for suggestions in how these tools or processes might be improved. The current methodology which combines surveys, site visits, and specific program evaluations was described largely as "quality control" to ensure that satisfaction is high and to learn about how to strengthen program delivery and content. While NSP developed logic models for each program in 2005-2006, these are not universally used to measure outcomes given staffing and resource constraints. NSP has yet to be able to take a systematic, data driven approach to evaluation.

Interviewees, including grantees, credited NSP with commissioning this assessment and evaluation, as well as conducting prior evaluations of its work. Grantees and consultants are interested in seeing the results of the evaluation and learning together with NSP about how programs will continue to meet their needs. However, internal and external stakeholders are interested to learn more about the impact the programs are having on organizational effectiveness and on the community. This evaluation gleaned some anecdotal evidence that shows NSP is having a meaningful impact on the

people, the organizations, and the community, but more can be done to demonstrate and aggregate these impacts.

The Hartford Foundation is not alone in trying to tackle this issue – other foundations and capacity builders are developing systems or exploring the best route to take. NSP, together with the Foundation as a whole, can discuss how to approach evaluation of impact and outcomes - a consideration that goes beyond only the purview of NSP - and the financial and staffing resources it would take to further invest in outcome measurement.

4. **Collaborations:** Interest in collaborations, alliances, and collective impact is high in the Hartford region and around the country. Grantees interviewed for this evaluation concurred that they want to know more about the various options but are unsure of what these ideas mean for individual organizations and their communities, or how to implement collaborative strategies that make the most sense. In order to achieve broader scale change at the community level, capacity builders and others believe that more investment is needed in collective impact models. Significant challenges remain to increasing collaborations however. In a new report by the Independent Sector called *Threads – Insights from the Charitable Community*¹³, nonprofits and funders agreed that collective action is needed to address shared concerns, but that working together was one of the key challenges identified. The report is based on conversations with 2,037 participants in 13 cities. They note, “In every city, *Threads* participants lamented the lack of collaboration among sector organizations. They noted that competition, rather than communication, often defines relationships among nonprofits.” In fact, participants in the conversations cited the lack of collaboration as a significant limitation to the sector’s impact overall.¹⁴

MAP for Nonprofits in Minnesota has a project that convenes leaders across sub-sectors to support alliances in an organic and intentional manner, and is working with BoardSource to create a national campaign to develop greater interest among board leaders about the idea of collaboration, alliances, and even mergers. NSP has also already taken needed steps by committing to increasing resources towards education about the concepts of collective impact and the factors contributing to successful collaborations.

¹³ *Threads: Insights from the Charitable Community*, The Independent Sector, 2015

¹⁴ MAP for Nonprofits provides a summary of the findings from the *Threads* report at <http://www.mapfornonprofits.org/magnitude-of-problems-require-organizations-to-work-together/>

Section 5: Conclusions and Recommendations

The Nonprofit Support Program should be applauded for its commitment to and excellence in delivering effective programming that builds and sustains highly functional nonprofits serving a range of fields in the Greater Hartford area. All aspects of NSP were praised for quality services, and there is ample evidence that the programs are achieving meaningful outcomes for the individuals who participate and for their organizations. The Foundation through NSP is a major contributor to creating a stronger community of nonprofit organizations in Greater Hartford. The programs taken as a whole and the high degree of grantee participation, speaks to the linkage between programs, and the ripple effect that happens from the individual to the organizational level. While the evaluation was not intended to measure specific quantifiable community level outcomes, leaders attested to the fact that they believe the NSP capacity building has in fact contributed to their ability to improve outcomes for the clients and communities they serve.

The evaluation confirms that NSP is providing the types of support to nonprofits that are successful in building capacity and effectiveness -- no major areas that require substantial changes were found. There are however, some recommendations for ways NSP can further enhance its impact through greater coordination of programs, more focus on a holistic approach to organizational adaptability and sustainability, and providing the next level of learning on a range of capacity areas. Moreover, NSP and the Foundation as a whole should examine the kinds of community level outcomes it seeks, and together determine how to increase resources towards measuring those outcomes.

Based on the lessons from this evaluation and the trends and challenges leaders described, NSP should consider the following recommendations:

Programs and Services

1. Adaptive capacity and sustainability

- Expand the content and focus of the assessments to include an exploration of adaptive capacity, organizational sustainability/ bench strength, and evaluation capacity.
- Promote strategic planning that is infused with outcome measurement, and further helps to build adaptive and evaluation capacity.
- Expand the definition of succession planning towards a greater understanding of sustainability, including the need to further boost the overall capacity of other staff beyond the top leadership and explore alternative models of shared leadership.
- Increase the number and content of Advanced Leader Circles for emerging leaders, or other programs geared towards emerging leaders.
- Explore sabbaticals or fellowships for Executive Directors.

2. Governance

- Boost Board capacity by organizing Leader Circles for Board Chairpersons or a program for Executive Directors together with Board Chairs.
- Explore the next level of governance training through a model such as the NeighborWorks Excellence in Governance program and other more advanced sessions.
- Further build the Board's capacity to engage in evaluation and outcome measurement.

3. Outcome Measurement/ Evaluation Capacity

- Continue to invest in and expand where feasible the programs that help build evaluation capacity.
- Support organizations to look at outcomes over time, especially those that relate to community-level impact.

4. Collaborations/ Community – Level Impact

- Organize programs focused on collaboration and the range of options for groups to work together towards community level outcomes.
- Explore ways to create an environment where nonprofits can work together with others towards collective impact.
- Further explore the cohort model of learning by looking at the type, size, and tenure of participants that both builds knowledge and can also lead to collaborations.

5. Program enhancements and coordination

- Consider the various additions/ changes to specific programs referred to earlier in this report.
- Examine how to integrate or coordinate participation in various programs such as technology, evaluation capacity, financial management, and board leadership.
- Offer more advanced workshops especially in the multi-series format.
- If resources do not permit enhancing the current level of activity with any additional services, consider scaling back the stand-alone workshops in favor of more cohorts, and more coordination among multi-series programs that enable groups to learn from their peers and implement best practices over a longer period of time.

NSP Approach and Resources

1. Grantee-driven approach

- Remain flexible and responsive to the grantees in determining the most appropriate and strategic programs and steps to take.
- Consider adding periodic visits or calls to help organizations think through their next strategic move towards greater capacity.

2. Consultant Resources

- Market the availability of joining the pool to a broader array of consultants and potential consultants with an eye towards increasing the diversity of the pool.
- Explore a potential pilot in Hartford based on the Emerging Consultant Training currently being developed by Third Sector New England to increase diversity.
- Provide additional support to grantees to become better consumers of consulting services and to ensure the best possible match between the consultant and the grantee.
- Continue to support professional development and networking for consultants. Consider where feasible to expand the pool of consultants for certain pre-selected programs.

3. Funding and Implementation Support

- Continue the availability of grants to support capacity building in strategic planning, financial management, technology, executive transitions, and evaluation.
- Re-examine the amount of certain grants, especially those geared towards implementation.
- Consider expanding the available resources to support consulting services and other steps needed to implement best practices and plans.

4. NSP Strategic Role within the Foundation

- Examine how to expand the investment in NSP which has proven to produce significant results for the Foundation and the community as a whole.
- Identify ways NSP can support the implementation of the Foundation's strategic plan. Consider how some grantees in the NSP portfolio can align with the Foundation's strategic direction while at the same time retaining some resources to serve the broader Greater Hartford region.
- Determine how NSP can enhance its own approach to evaluating outcomes, how the Foundation as a whole can invest in outcomes evaluation, and the resources it would require.

Appendices

APPENDIX A

EVALUATION GOALS AND GUIDING QUESTIONS

1. Goal: To evaluate existing programs, services, and resources and assess the impact on NSP grantees.

Responds to NSP questions:

- What is NSP's impact on the nonprofits it serves, and the connection between its offerings and this impact? Are NSP's current evaluative tools sufficient for its purposes? Are there other ways to assess the impact of its services?

2. Goal: To learn about current and future needs of grantees, and about trends and best practices in the field that might influence future programming of NSP.

Responds to NSP questions:

- What can we learn from current research and best practices about capacity building and organizational development?
- Are there existing innovative capacity building approaches, programs or services that NSP should consider adopting or modifying?
- Given the evolution of and the research in the areas of collaboration and systems development, are there services or resources NSP should be considering?

3. Goal: To identify areas for potential improvements to programs, services, and resources that will increase the potential for impact on NSP grantees.

Responds to NSP questions:

- How can this evaluation inform NSP's future programmatic choices?
- Is NSP covering all of the bases it should? Are there other services NSP should be providing to the nonprofits it serves?
- What can NSP learn from this evaluation about the conditions at the nonprofit that are contributing factors to their ability to increase impact as a result of NSP resources? What can NSP learn about the combination or sequence of services that may have contributed to greater impact?
- Should NSP make structural changes to better coordinate the timing of offerings, streamline sequencing, or make other changes to ensure that nonprofits take advantage of the programs that will best boost their capacity?
- How might NSP incorporate findings from TSNE's recent Leadership study into its work?
- Should NSP increase its attention on deeper organizational sustainability and more effective governance?
- How can NSP be more proactive in expanding and diversifying the consultant pool?

Specific Programmatic Questions to Explore

Organizational Assessments

1. How effective are the OAs in helping an organization better understand the areas they need to attend to in order to build capacity and improve their own ability to consume consulting/ capacity building services?
2. How can OAs be used to help nonprofits determine the most appropriate programs and sequence of programs that would help it address pressing challenges and boost capacity/ impact?

Technical Assistance Grants

1. How helpful are the implementation dollars in ensuring that plans are implemented?
2. How effective are the use of the grants in addressing the challenges the nonprofit faces, and/or helping the organization increase its impact in specific ways?
3. Are there different levels of impact achieved by the different foci of the TAGs? (Board Development, Marketing and Public Relations, Fund Development, Strategic Planning)

Strategic Technology Program

1. Are there innovative ways to provide strategic technology assistance to smaller organizations? Is there any preliminary feedback on NSP program enhancements made in 2015 (web-based training and partnership with *idealware*)?
2. Are there other bona fide opportunities for web based platforms or learning opportunities?
3. Did grantees shift their decision making about purchase vs. rent based on the Foundation's funding stream and structure?

Financial Management Program

1. Is there any preliminary feedback on the new course for nonprofit teams developed in 2015? Did the course increase participant's knowledge about key financial management issues and further engage participants in the overall FMP?
2. Were local consultants able to undertake business analysis at a lower cost for the nonprofits and did this have an impact on the organization's ability to increase their financial capacities?

Executive Transition Program

1. In addition to finding a new leader for the organization, were there any additional benefits of having gone through the program, i.e, board functioning, putting new systems in place, etc.?
2. Is there any preliminary feedback on NSP's ability to broaden the consultant resources for ET work beyond referring agencies to TSNE?

Building Evaluation Capacity

1. Are the program objectives appropriate given client needs?
2. Is the program content/ length appropriate to meet these objectives?
3. Has the program increased participant capacity to conduct their own program evaluations?
 - a. Are there more effective ways to do this, and what if any improvements might be recommended?
4. Are there innovative ways to continue to engage Executive Directors over the 18-month period? How can NSP ensure that the program meets the needs of ED/CEOs as well as agency staff that participate in the program?
5. What has been the impact on agencies who have participated in BEC on their ability to learn from program data and make organizational improvements? What lessons can be learned from BEC about best practices to institutionalize outcome measurement systems and learning processes?
6. For grantees in the BEC Alumni Group, how did the additional consultation opportunity increase organizational evaluation capacity beyond that provided by the basic BEC course? Is this the best way to provide this additional capacity building support?

Executive Workshops and Learning Opportunities

Half-Day Workshops

1. What is the value-added to the nonprofit organizations who participate in the half-day workshops?
2. How do these workshops contribute to raising awareness about NSP in general and the visibility of the HFPG?
3. Are there ways to maximize learning and the organization's ability to implement what they learn?

Board Leadership Program

1. Were there any significant board development topics that you would have liked to have included in the workshops?
2. How did the consultations work as a follow up to the workshops?
3. Are there other innovative formats or components NSP should consider for this program?
4. Are there innovative ways to continue to engage Executive Directors during the program?

GRANTEE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

The protocol will include general questions and specific questions based on the programs the grantee participated in. The interview will begin with an explanation about the process and the fact that the conversations are confidential; feedback will be shared with NSP in the aggregate.

NSP Impact

1. What programs, assessments, grants, or other workshops have you and others from your organization participated in through NSP?
2. What kinds of impacts did the NSP programs have on your organization?
 - a. Has your participation in NSP built your organization's capacity to achieve greater impact in the community? What have been the primary short and long range outcomes you accomplished as a result of your work with NSP?
 - b. Did you accomplish more, less, or about as much organizational change as you anticipated?
 - c. What factors contributed to your ability to effectively use NSP resources and to achieve the above noted outcomes?
3. Are there particular services, or combination of services that you have found to be of most value? What elements, or sequence of services, do you feel work well together?
4. Are there particular services that you would assess to be of less value to your organization? How would you suggest these services might be changed in order to increase their value to you or others?
5. If you worked with a consultant through NSP, how effective was the consultant in supporting your efforts? Do you have suggestions for how NSP can work with the consultants to strengthen effectiveness if needed?
6. Have you benefited from interaction, learning, and networking with your peers in the nonprofit community? If so, how did these interactions advance your own organizational capacity and ability to achieve outcomes?

NSP Future Programming, Services, and Approach to Capacity Building

7. What are the major challenges your organization or others in the community are currently facing now? Are there any unmet needs or emerging organizational capacity issues for the nonprofit community?
8. Are there additional services or capacity building efforts or format/ structural changes that NSP should consider to help you and other to address those challenges and achieve impact?
9. NSP's current approach allows grantees to come to NSP whenever you need support and ask for what you feel would be most helpful.
 - a. How would you assess this approach to providing capacity building services?
 - b. Are there other ways NSP should consider to help nonprofits in deciding the most appropriate services/ programs that would address pressing capacity issues?

- c. Are there ways NSP can help nonprofits sequence engagement in programs in the most effective way?
10. NSP is interested in referring consultants to nonprofits that reflect the diversity of the community. Do you have any thoughts about what NSP might consider to increase the diversity of the consultants available to work with nonprofits in Greater Hartford?
 11. Do you have recommendations for other ways NSP might improve its effectiveness in working with the nonprofit community in Greater Hartford?
 12. Is there anything we haven't discussed that you believe will be important to include in the NSP evaluation?

CONSULTANT INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

NSP Impact

1. In what capacities have you participated with NSP grantees and programs?
2. What impact do you think NSP has had on the nonprofit community in Greater Hartford? What is your perspective on the most valuable NSP resources? How have services helped grantees achieve greater impact in the community?
3. What individual, or combination of services do you feel are of most value to grantees? What elements, or sequence of services, do you feel work well together?
4. What services do you feel are least valuable and should be adjusted?
5. What are the internal organizational factors that seem to be at play when capacity building is most effective? Are there common factors when capacity building is less effective?
6. Are NSP's current evaluation tools effective in evaluating impact? Are there improvements you would suggest to these tools or processes?

NSP Future Programming, Services, and Approach to Capacity Building

7. What challenges do you think nonprofits in the Greater Hartford area are facing right now? Are there any unmet needs or emerging organizational capacity issues for the nonprofit community? How might NSP organize its services to address those challenges?
8. How might consultants further support NSP's goals and assist nonprofits in the region to achieve greater outcomes?
9. Are there other capacity building programs or combination of services that you are aware of that NSP should consider? In specific,
 - a. How should NSP support nonprofits in the areas of collaboration and systems development?
 - b. Should NSP increase its attention on deeper organizational sustainability and effective governance?
10. NSP's current approach allows grantees to come to NSP whenever they need support and ask for what they feel would be most helpful.
 - a. How would you assess this approach to providing capacity building services?
 - b. Are there other ways NSP should consider to help nonprofits in deciding the most appropriate services/ programs that would address pressing capacity issues?
 - c. Are there ways NSP can help nonprofits sequence engagement in programs in the most effective way?
11. NSP is interested in referring consultants to nonprofits that reflect the diversity of the community. Do you have any thoughts about what NSP might consider to increase the diversity of the consultants available to work with nonprofits in Greater Hartford?

12. Do you have other recommendations for ways NSP can improve or enhance its work to be of further assistance to the nonprofit community in Greater Hartford?
13. Is there anything we haven't discussed that you believe will be important to include in the NSP evaluation?

HARTFORD FOUNDATION STAFF INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

NSP Group Discussion Questions

NSP Impact

1. What impact do you think NSP has had on the nonprofit community in Greater Hartford? What is your perspective on the most valuable NSP resources? How have services helped grantees achieve greater impact in the community?
2. What individual, or combination of services do you feel are of most value to grantees? What elements, or sequence of services, do you feel work well together?
3. What services do you feel are least valuable and should be adjusted?
4. What are the internal organizational factors that seem to be at play when capacity building is most effective? Are there common factors when capacity building is less effective?
5. Are NSP's current evaluation tools effective in evaluating impact? Are there improvements you would suggest to these tools or processes?

Relationships between HFPG and NSP

6. What do you feel is the value-added NSP provides to HFPG?
7. How do you see NSP fitting into the overall structure and goals of the HFPG?
 - a. How do the NSP programs support and align with the goals of the HFPG?
 - b. Are there ways to strengthen alignment if needed?
 - c. Are there ways to strengthen the structural connection and fit within HFPG?

NSP Future Programming, Services, and Approach to Capacity Building

8. What challenges do you think nonprofits in the Greater Hartford area are facing right now? Are there any unmet needs or emerging organizational capacity issues in the nonprofit community? How might NSP organize its services to address those challenges?
9. Are there other capacity building programs or combination of services that you are aware of that NSP should consider? In specific,
 - a. How should NSP support nonprofits in the areas of collaboration and systems development?
 - b. Should NSP increase its attention on deeper organizational sustainability and effective governance?
10. NSP's current approach allows grantees to come to NSP whenever they need support and ask for what they feel would be most helpful.
 - a. How would you assess this approach to providing capacity building services?
 - b. Are there other ways NSP should consider to help nonprofits in deciding the most appropriate services/ programs that would address pressing capacity issues?
 - c. Are there ways NSP can help nonprofits sequence engagement in programs in the most effective way?

11. NSP is interested in referring consultants to nonprofits that reflect the diversity of the community. Do you have any thoughts about what NSP might consider to increase the diversity of the consultants available to work with nonprofits in Greater Hartford?
12. Do you have other recommendations for ways NSP can improve or enhance its work to be of further assistance to the nonprofit community in Greater Hartford?
13. Is there anything we haven't discussed that you believe will be important to include in the NSP evaluation?

FOUNDATION LEADERS AND STAFF INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

NSP Impact

1. What impact do you think NSP has had on the nonprofit community in Greater Hartford? What is your perspective on the most valuable NSP resources? How have services helped grantees achieve greater impact in the community?
2. What individual, or combination of services do you feel are of most value to grantees? What elements, or sequence of services, do you feel work well together?
3. What services do you feel are least valuable and should be adjusted?
4. What are the internal organizational factors that seem to be at play when capacity building is most effective? Are there common factors when capacity building is less effective?
5. Are NSP's current evaluation tools effective in evaluating impact? Are there improvements you would suggest to these tools or processes?

Relationships between HFPG and NSP

6. Under what circumstances do you refer grantees to NSP?
7. What kind of value-added does NSP provide to HFPG?
8. How does NSP fit within the overall structure and goals of the HFPG?
 - a. How do the NSP programs support and align with the goals of the HFPG? Are there ways to strengthen alignment if needed?

NSP Future Programming, Services, and Approach to Capacity Building

9. What challenges do you think nonprofits in the Greater Hartford area are facing right now? Are there any unmet needs or emerging organizational capacity issues in the nonprofit community? How might NSP organize its services to address those challenges?
10. Are there other capacity building programs or combination of services that you are aware of that NSP should consider? In specific,
 - a. How should NSP support nonprofits in the areas of collaboration and systems development?
 - b. Should NSP increase its attention on deeper organizational sustainability and effective governance?
11. NSP's current approach allows grantees to come to NSP whenever they need support and ask for what they feel would be most helpful.
 - a. How would you assess this approach to providing capacity building services?
 - b. Are there other ways NSP should consider to help nonprofits in deciding the most appropriate services/ programs that would address pressing capacity issues?
 - c. Are there ways NSP can help nonprofits sequence engagement in programs in the most effective way?

12. NSP is interested in referring consultants to nonprofits that reflect the diversity of the community. Do you have any thoughts about what NSP might consider to increase the diversity of the consultants available to work with nonprofits in Greater Hartford?
13. Do you have other recommendations for ways NSP can improve or enhance its work to be of further assistance to the nonprofit community in Greater Hartford?
14. Is there anything we haven't discussed that you believe will be important to include in the NSP evaluation?

BEST PRACTICE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. Are you familiar with the Hartford Foundation's NSP programs?
2. Do you have a perspective on how effective these programs have been in building capacity among Greater Hartford area nonprofits?
3. What can you share about current research on best practices in capacity building and organizational development that might help inform NSP's approach and programs?
4. Are there innovative capacity building approaches, programs, or services that NSP should consider adopting or modifying?
5. How should NSP support nonprofits in the area of collaboration?
6. How should NSP support nonprofits in the area of systems development?
7. Are there innovative programs that NSP should consider to help nonprofits achieve deeper organizational sustainability and more effective governance?
8. NSP is interested in referring consultants to nonprofits that reflect the diversity of the community.
 - a. Do you know of capacity building programs that have successfully built and sustained a diverse registry of consultants and how they went about doing so?
9. Do you have any thoughts about what NSP might consider to increase the diversity of the consultants available to work with nonprofits in Greater Hartford?
10. Do you have other recommendations for NSP to consider to increase their impact in the Greater Hartford community?

APPENDIX B: Interview/ Focus Group List

Grantees	Evaluation Participant	Position
4-H Education Center at Auerfarm	Jack Hasegawa	Executive Director
4-H Education Center at Auerfarm	Bob Lyle	Board Chair
AIDS Connecticut	John Merz	Executive Director
Amistad Center for Art & Culture	Olivia White	Executive Director
Andover, Hebron, Marlborough Youth Services	Joel Rosenberg	Executive Director
Billings Forge Community Works	Cary Wheaton	Executive Director
Blue Hills Civic Association	Lee Hunt	Executive Director
Brain Injury Alliance of CT	Julie Peters	Executive Director
Center for Children's Advocacy	Martha Stone	Executive Director
Center for Latino Progress	Yanil Teron	Executive Director
Center for Latino Progress	Luis Caban	Board member, former Chair
Center for Latino Progress	Time Cole	Board member, former Treasurer
COMPASS Youth Collaborative	Bob Pawloski	Executive Director
COMPASS Youth Collaborative	Rich Holland	Board Chair
CT Historical Society	Jody Blankenship	Executive Director
CT Historical Society	Steve Nightingale	Board Chair
Families in Crisis	Joyce Betts	Executive Director
FOCUS Center for Autism	Donna Swanson	Executive Director
Girl Scouts of CT	Mary Barneby	Executive Director
Hands on Hartford	Barbara Shaw	Executive Director
Hands on Hartford	Karen Bailey-Francois	Board Chair
HartBeat Ensemble	Jennifer Yanko	Managing Director
Hartford Behavioral Health	Josie Robles	Executive Director
Hartford Food Systems	Martha Page	Executive Director
Hartford Preservation Alliance	Frank Hagaman	Executive Director
Hartford Preservation Alliance	Jack Kemper	Board Chair
Hartford's Camp Courant	McKinley Albert	Executive Director
Hispanic Health Council	Jose Ortiz	Executive Director
Hockanum Valley Community Council	David Engelson	Executive Director
Leadership Greater Hartford	Ted Carroll	Executive Director
Mercy Housing and Shelter Corporation	David Martineau	Executive Director
National Conference for Community and Justice	Andrea Kandel	Executive Director
North Central Area Agency on Aging	Maureen McIntyre	Executive Director
Operation Fuel	Pat Wrice	Executive Director
Urban League of Greater Hartford	Adrienne Cochrane	Executive Director
Women's League Child Development Center	Iris Rich	Executive Director
Women's League Child Development Center	Lynne Spann	Board Chair
YWCA Hartford Region	Deb Ullman	Executive Director
YWCA Hartford Region	Britt-Marie Cole-Johnson	Board Chair

Consultants		Source
Lindsay	Bealko	Phone interview
Nancy	Brennan	Focus Group
Rebecca	Bryan	Focus Group
Linda	Campanella	Focus Group
Francine	Christiansen	Focus Group
Cathy	Cohen	Focus Group
Susan	Kohler-Gray	Focus Group
Priya	Morganstern	Focus Group
Gavin	Murphy	Phone interview
Michael	Negron	Focus Group
Feza	Oktay	Phone interview
Dorothy	Paleologas	Focus Group
Janna	Pedersen	Focus Group
Bruce	Putterman	Focus Group
Martey	Rhine	Focus Group
Roosevelt	Smith	Focus Group + Phone Interview
Ann	Thomas	Focus Group

Hartford Foundation Staff		Source	NSP Staff		Source
Yvette	Bello	Focus group	Betsy	Johnson	In person
Nancy	Benben	Telephone	Monica	Kelly	In person
Virgil	Blondet	Telephone	Sedrick	Miles	In person + call
Susan	Bruckner	Focus group	Annemarie	Riemer	In person + call
Cheryl	Gerrish	Focus group	Doug	Shipman	In person + call
Dawn	Grant	Focus group	Meher	Shulman	In person + call
Linda	Kelly	In person	Amy	Studwell	In person + call
Judy	McBride	Focus group			
Sharon	O'Meara	Focus group			
Pete	Rosa	Focus group			
Deborah	Rothstein	Telephone			
Judy	Rozie-Battle	Telephone			
Sara	Sneed	Focus group			
Rich	Sussman	Focus group			

Best Practice Research		
Name	Organization	Type
Judy Alnes	MAP for Nonprofits	capacity builder
Elaine Mintz	Fairfield County's Community Foundation	foundation
Kimberly Haskins	Barr Foundation	foundation
Karen Maciorowski	CT Association of Nonprofits	capacity builder
Gail Randall	Greater Worcester Community Foundation	foundation
Heather Harker	TSNE	capacity builder
Hez Norton	TSNE	capacity builder
Peter Kramer	Catalyst Fund	foundation
David Hunter	Edna McConnell Clark Foundation - former	foundation
Margo Kelly	Consultant	consultant
Carl Sussman	Consultant	consultant
Luz Zambrano	Center to Support Immigrant Organizing	capacity builder
Judy Friewirth	Alliance for Nonprofit Management	capacity builder
Jeanne Bell	CompassPoint Nonprofit Services	capacity builder
Jennifer Aronson	The Boston Foundation	foundation
Stephanie Guidry	The Boston Foundation	foundation
Daniel Alexandre	Hartford Public Library	capacity builder
Deb Linnell	Van Buren Foundation	foundation
Tara Bryan	University of Nebraska	academic
Naim Kapucu	University of Central Florida	academic

APPENDIX C

Papers and Research Reviewed

The Sustainability Formula: How Nonprofit Organizations Can Thrive in the Emerging Economy, Peter York, TCC Group, 2009

Capacity Building 3.0: How to Strengthen the Social Ecosystem, Jared Raynor with Chris Cardona, Thomas Knowlton, Richard Mittenenthal, and Julie Simpson, TCC Group; 2014

Structuring Leadership: Alternative Models for Distributing Power and Decision-Making in Nonprofit Organizations by Caroline McAndrews, Frances Kunreuther, and Shifra Bronznik, The Building Movement Project, 2011

What Works: Developing Successful Multigenerational Leadership by Caroline McAndrews; the Building Movement Project, 2010

Next Generation Organizations: 9 Key Traits, by Maria Cornelius and Tim Wolfred; CompassPoint Nonprofit Services, 2011

Only Connect: How an Investment in Relationships Among Social Change Leaders Is Changing Them, Their Organizations, and Their City; The Foundation Review, Volume 5, Issue 1; by Stefan Lanfer, Patricia Brandes, and Claire Reinelt, 2013

Creative Disruption: Sabbaticals for Capacity Building & Leadership Development in the Nonprofit Sector, 2009, by Deborah Linnell and Tim Wolfred

Leadership New England; A Report by Third Sector New England: Essential Shifts for a Thriving Nonprofit Sector; Brief for the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving and the primary report; 2015

Governance as Leadership: Reframing the Work of Nonprofit Boards, by Richard P. Chait, William P. Ryan, and Barbara E. Taylor. BoardSource (2005). John E. Wiley & Sons, Hoboken, N.J., 2005

The Practitioner's Guide to Governance as Leadership: Building High-Performing Nonprofit Boards, by Cathy A. Trower. Jossey-Bass, John Wiley & Sons, San Francisco, CA, 2013

The Catalyst Fund for Nonprofits: An Interim Assessment by Margaret Leipsitz, 2013

Case Study: Networking a City by Marianne Hughes and Didi Goldenhar, Stanford Social Innovation Review, 2012

The Individual, Group, Organizational, and Community Outcomes of Capacity-Building Programs in Human Service Nonprofits: Implications for Theory and Practice, by Tara Kolar Bryan and Catherine H. Brown, University of Nebraska Omaha, 2015

Evaluation of Capacity Building: Lessons from the Field, by Deborah Linnell, The Alliance for Nonprofit Management, 2003

Threads: Insights from the Charitable Community, The Independent Sector, 2015