



Viewing capacity through a fund development lens

Our firm's principal, Victoria Thurlow, recently spoke to students at Antioch University about applying a development mindset to build organizational capacity. Here, she shares a few important points from her presentation to the class.

I was privileged to present a class for final-year students in Antioch University's master's in nonprofit management program, this month. As part of their studies, participants in the class are considering how organizational life cycle, leadership and other factors influence nonprofit capacity and success.

In our firm's experience, while organizational development is often considered and addressed as a somehow stand-alone issue, it's really part and parcel of anything and everything an organization does. (That sounds obvious, but somehow it sometimes seems to get lost in practice.) In particular, we're interested in the intersection between organizational development and fund development.

Our experience at Thurlow/Associates has clearly demonstrated that viewing organizational development issues through a fund development lens can help to create a new sense of urgency — and promote success. By way of example:

Budgeting and financial analysis — When internal reporting alone is the impetus to strengthen budgeting and financial analysis, it's easy to delay. But when it becomes clear to an organization's leaders that future fundraising success is imperiled because of how the budget is presented, or because of inaccurate allocation of overhead costs (for example), there's a greater stimulus to evolve.

Evaluation — Frequently, when an organization lacks good data, leaders argue that more dollars are needed before evaluation can be improved. So long as an organization is unable to demonstrate its impact, though, funding will be harder to come by. Understanding this can help to encourage at least a modest allocation of resources for evaluation right away. And leaders may also be more motivated to incorporate a rigorous quality assessment and improvement program into the organization's budget and fundraising plan, moving forward.

Does *your* organization's budget clearly convey the need for support? Do you have a way to demonstrate results that support both quality assurance *and* fund development? Are there other aspects of your organization's work (outdated strategic plan, weak financial data, etc.) that need to be addressed before you approach funders?

No matter what aspect of nonprofit capacity you consider, it's true: Strong fundraising capacity relies on strong organizational capacity, and vice versa. To learn how Thurlow/Associates can help enhance your organizational capacity, contact us for a no-cost consultation. You can reach us at (310) 675-6497 or at hello@thurlowassociates.com.