



Winter 2016

# InterChange



## Innovative Projects Underway at The Nonprofit Center

Most organizations like to see themselves as being on the cutting edge, and The Nonprofit Center is no exception. Several recent projects are great examples to back up that claim. Many of you are already involved, but we want all our Constructors to be aware of these activities that keep us on the forefront of capacity-building organizations.



### National Park Service Training

Our work with the National Park Service, which began in 2013 to deliver trainings to park partners in the Northeast (Friends groups) continues to evolve into far-reaching regional and now national assignments. Groups in Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, Virginia, Washington, DC, Connecticut, Rhode Island, Maryland and New York, experienced a total of 21 Days of Clarity. Other sessions have covered volunteer management, fund development, collaboration, building community support and launching a Friends group. Additional sessions have helped park staff and superintendents to better understand the non-profit culture.

A new national project will develop and deliver a curriculum to all parks and partners in support of Director's Order #21, which contains guidelines for park managers surrounding the acceptance of donations and working with organizations that raise money for the parks and their programs. To address this, The Nonprofit Center will be presenting a certification program for superintendents to better understand the nonprofit culture and their role in relation to agreements, donor vetting and donation acceptance, as well as a program for park partners to understand the order itself and how to collaborate with parks to create a sense of common purpose and alignment. As you might suspect, there is a fair amount of bureaucracy involved in working with these governmental groups, but the potential has already begun to be realized with the tremendous growth from a regional to a national project.



### Streamlined Suite of Services

While best practices are at the heart of all our services, we find that budgetary restrictions and time constraints are two powerful reasons why clients decide not to work with us, particularly on strategic planning. Sometimes they choose another consulting practice which makes compromises that we find detrimental; and perhaps even more often, they abandon or postpone the project, or let a board member take the helm.

Being respectful of the limitations of so many nonprofits, we are developing a "streamlined" suite of services, the first of which was the [MAP Management Assessment](#), with a fundraising audit in its planning stages. The target audience for [Strategic Planning Streamlined](#) is the organization seeking a shorter (approximately six month), more economical process that directly involves the board in the creation of the plan. The consultant conducts the data collection, facilitates a board retreat and then guides the organization through the process of writing its own strategic plan, based on proven templates we've developed. This process has to be the right fit for an organization and thus, we've created an application process that can help determine that based on type, size and complexity of the nonprofit. We urge you to keep Strategic Planning Streamlined in mind when you meet with clients (remembering that the application is the first step), and don't hesitate to reach out if you have any questions or comments.



### Lehigh Valley Outreach

For years, we've been concerned about the lack of capacity-building services available to nonprofits in the Lehigh Valley, which includes PA counties Lehigh and Northampton and Warren County, NJ. People will often travel several hours to avail themselves of our classes in Philadelphia. A new partnership with [Northampton Community College](#) is a big step forward in addressing this dearth of programs, as we prepare to offer our Certificate in Nonprofit Management, beginning this February. All 10 classes will be presented at NCC's Bethlehem campus and taught by our same talented instructors. There has already been an enthusiastic response to our northerly outreach and we hope that the success of this pilot will lead to additional educational and consulting opportunities in that region.



**Innovative Projects (cont'd)****Dow Volunteer Program**

Seeking to increase the number of employees who volunteer in their local communities, Dow Chemical Company is partnering with The Nonprofit Center to boost the number and variety of volunteer opportunities for staff at all levels and locations within the company.

This initiative, known as DowGives in the Delaware Valley, will build upon Dow's existing volunteer program by facilitating additional partner-

ships with nonprofits in each of the six locations where Dow has offices and plants and further encouraging employees to commit to community service, including group activities during regular working hours.

**Leo Otting** is the new volunteer program manager who serves as the recruiter for both the community organizations.

This effort also includes volunteers with expertise in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM),

to work with nonprofits that share their commitment to sustainability. and solutions to lead the transition to a sustainable planet.

Volunteer projects will be both regional, as well as focused on the six Delaware Valley sites where Dow employees work.

This initiative should lead to other opportunities to showcase our skills in volunteer program development and management.

**1st in a series****Best Practices for Nonprofit Center Consultants****Stop! Wait! Get that Contract Signed!**

Beginning a new consulting project is always an exciting time, leaving us ready to dive right into the work. But it's also the time to be sure to set a productive tone for the entire consulting relationship.

The client may also be anxious to move ahead with the project. After spending time vetting consultants to find the best fit, they want to start seeing some results. In the midst of all this enthusiasm, it's critical to be sure the client understands the defined scope of the project, as well as their roles and responsibilities and financial commitment.

Energized by momentum, some consultants have the tendency to begin work with the client prior to obtaining a signed contract. They want to move before the client gets distracted by the pressing needs that occur in most nonprofits. So the consultant has a meeting, or begins preliminary research, thinking that those hours will simply be included in the first invoice.

The risk we have found is that once the client sees the consultant moving forward, the incentive to promptly execute the contract is lost. Human nature says that work is being done, so how important could the paperwork be? That leaves a situation where there is nothing official that obligates the client. They could decide not to move forward with the project because an expected grant wasn't received. That means no project and no one to pay for the time the consultant already expended without a signed contract.

Therefore, when you undertake a project for The Nonprofit Center, you will *not be paid* until we receive the signed contract from the client. If you start work before we inform you of this and the project gets scrapped, we cannot pay you for the work done prior to receipt of the signed document. Waiting for the signed contract is best for you, the client and The Center. As capacity-builders, we hold clients accountable for conforming to recognized business practices. And that's a good way to begin a consulting relationship.

Thanks,

**-Lori Moffa, Director of Consulting, 215-951-1709,**

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### What the Future May Hold



**W**hile this is not meant as political commentary, I do believe that the next several years will be particularly interesting for the nonprofit sector. Times were already tough enough, what with exponential growth of the sector, diminishing pools of dollars, from all sources available to support the sector, increasing competition for those dollars from many outside the sector (the \$100 million gift from the William Penn Foundation to the City of Philadelphia is but one example), and so much more.

The future portends all kinds of possibilities that I don't pretend to know. But it would appear that portions of our sector will have their missions put to the test, others may find themselves overwhelmed with demand, while still others may see dollars shift from their missions to other missions as donors feel or see other important things being threatened by the direction in which the country appears to be going.

We certainly saw this latter phenomenon in the aftermath of the election as organizations like Planned Parenthood, ProPublica, the Trevor Project and missions serving immigrants and civil rights received large amounts of unsolicited donations. Some may say this is the cycle of our sector: it ebbs and flows as does the economy, the political tenor, and the world. Thus, some would also say, we should all be used to this way of life.

What we know as capacity builders, is that not everyone is used to this way of life, nor plans for it. Fortunately, for all of the organizations—the ones caught unprepared to deal with the good or the bad, and for those that just need some strengthening—we are here to help them with all of their needs, from developing strong advocacy campaigns, to reconfiguring staff to better meet demand; from designing a strategy to capitalize on new-found donor interest in their missions, to strengthening their boards so they are able to guide them through interesting times. As we push into our 36<sup>th</sup> year of doing business, we are delighted that each and every one of you is here working with us, helping to reinforce the amazing nonprofit sector we have in this region and beyond.

On behalf of all of us on the staff of The Nonprofit Center, our most appreciative thanks and best wishes for a wonderful holiday season.

A small, stylized handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Laura Otten'.

Laura Otten, Ph.D.  
Director