THE VANNO VOICE

April 2006

Greetings!
We are pleased to bring you the April edition of the VANNO Voice – your link to news and resources for Virginia's nonprofit sector! We encourage you to forward this valuable information to your colleagues, both inside your organization and throughout your community.

Contents At-A-Glance

News from VANNO

- Discounted Directors and Officers Insurance is one of the member benefits now being offered to VANNO members through Monitor Liability Managers Inc., a national company specializing in nonprofit coverage. If you are interested in learning more, contact VANNO's representative: Andy Cooley, 703.564.0513 or acooley@lighthousecompanies.com.
- Discounts on a variety of other products and services are also available to all current, renewing and new members. For more details, see the fact sheet on the website. Not a member yet? Join now and start saving money! (click here for the membership application)
- Congratulations! The winner of the free VANNO membership is Marilyn Breslow, Refugee & Immigration Services, Catholic Diocese

of Richmond. Her name was randomly selected from all those who responded to the electronic survey conducted by VANNO during December and January.

- VANNO's re-designed and greatly expanded website will be launched in late April, providing more tools, resources and links to assist your work.

First Report on Virginia's Nonprofit Sector Now Available

How many nonprofits are there in Virginia? Where are they located and what are their characteristics? VANNO is pleased to provide the first statistical report on the nonprofit sector here the Commonwealth. This easy-to-read document summarizes the most current data and provides useful information for nonprofit staff, Board members, funders, elected officials and the media.

Click here to view and print your free copy...

Governor Kaine Introduces New Budget Language

Current Virginia law relating to nonprofit sales and use tax exemption requires a financial audit if the entity's gross annual revenue was $250,000 or greater in the previous year. Delegate Clarke Hogan from South Boston in Southside Virginia was approached by a Volunteer Rescue Squad whose revenue went a little above the $250,000 threshold. This nonprofit learned that a "financial audit" would cost them more than $5,000, thus eliminating the savings from the sales and use tax exemption. Delegate Hogan worked with the Virginia Tax Commissioner and the governor introduced the following amendment in SB 5002, the budget bill for 2006-2008:

"§ 3-5.06 SALES AND USE TAX EXEMPTIONS FOR NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS

Notwithstanding the provisions of § 58.1-609.11 C 4, Code of Virginia, in the case of a nonprofit entity seeking to qualify for a sales and use tax exemption pursuant to § 58.1-609.11 B, Code of Virginia, the Department of Taxation shall accept a review of the financial statements performed by an independent certified public accountant in lieu of a full audit. Such review is deemed to meet the requirement for a "financial audit" as that term is used in § 58.1- 609.11 C 4, Code of Virginia."

Persons and organizations supporting the Governor's amendment are urged to contact both the Governor's office and members of the House and Senate. We understand that the Virginia Society of CPAs are opposing this change.

Click here for a list of those to contact...

The Nonprofit Congress: Planning Continues

The leaders of the state associations have long had a vision of bringing charitable organizations together to fully involve nonprofits in prescribing, guiding, and influencing the direction of the sector and our country. In fall 2005, Audrey R. Alvarado, Ph.D., executive director, NCNA and Robert Egger, executive director, D.C. Central Kitchen, met to develop preliminary plans for a Nonprofit Congress – an unprecedented initiative to unite America’s diverse nonprofit organizations. The state association network, of which VANNO is a member, was quickly identified as a key link to grassroots and “front-line” nonprofits.

The goals of the Nonprofit Congress are to help nonprofit leaders and allies in communities across the country to:

- Forge a collective identity for the nonprofit sector based on shared values;
- Develop a unified vision and platform for the sector; and
- Exercise a collective voice.

The Nonprofit Congress strives to create a forum where nonprofits can look beyond their own areas of interest and begin to see the power and possibility of forging new partnerships and alliances across subsectors. More details are available at www.nonprofitcongress.org.

Phase I: Personal Declaration – Individuals across the country are showing their support of charitable organizations and the Nonprofit Congress by signing the Declaration for America’s Nonprofits, a call to unite the nonprofit sector. Click here to demonstrate your belief in the collective power of nonprofits by signing the Declaration today!

Phase II: Town Hall Meetings – Nonprofit leaders and their allies are coming together through local town halls to share their dreams, express their concerns, and find their voices. Supporters who are unable to attend local town hall meetings are sharing their thoughts online.

Phase III: National Meeting – State nonprofit delegates will gather in the nation’s capital on October 16 -17, 2006, to review the summaries from the town hall meetings and the online discussions. Delegates will amplify the values and needs from local nonprofits and craft a unified vision and message for the sector. The deadline for applying to be a delegate is April 30. If you are interested in being considered as a delegate from Virginia, click here to apply.

Phase *IV: Promoting the Message* – From October 2006 – December 2007, the Nonprofit Congress will work with state and local nonprofits and their allies to take the Nonprofit Congress platfrom to local communities, state capitals, and Washington, D.C. Through its new-found solidarity, the nonprofit sector will be able to share its passion with the public, the media, government officials, and business and civic leaders.

Stay tuned for more news from VANNO about how Virginia nonprofits can be involved in this process.

National Volunteer Week Is Almost Here!

Inspire by Example
NATIONAL VOLUNTEER WEEK
April 23-29, 2006

There are many ways to show appreciation and respect for all the volunteers who are involved in your organization's work.

Although its important to say thank you all year long, National Volunteer Week is one ideal opportunity. Here are a few ideas:

- Shop at VolunteerResource.org for customized items with this year's logo and theme.
- Send a note to the volunteer's family or employer, thanking them for their support of this person's involvement.
- Hold a party for staff and volunteers to celebrate their joint success and accomplishments.
- Give each volunteer a photo related to their work, or a note of thanks from staff or clients with whom they interact.
- Post a display of photos and information about who volunteers with your organization and the work they do.
- Add a special thank you and acknowledgement on your website.
- Remember that Board members are volunteers too – this week celebrates them as well!

Grant Writing Workshop in Richmond, June 22-23, 2006

The Community College Workforce Alliance Center for Entrepreneurial Development, in partnership with Grant Writing USA, will present a two-day grant writing workshop in Richmond, June 22-23, 2006. More than 4,500 government and nonprofit agencies across America now turn to Grant Writing USA for grants training. All nonprofit and government professionals are welcome to attend.

Grant Writing USA delivers nationwide training programs and workshops that dramatically enhance performance in the areas of grant writing, national foundation and government grant maker research and relations, program planning, and personal and organizational excellence. Each element plays an important role in grant writing success and all are covered in this, Grant Writing USA's signature, two-day workshop. This workshop is suitable for beginning and experienced grant writers who desire to increase their fundraising competitiveness and broaden their funder focus.

Tuition is $395 and includes all materials: workbook and accompanying 250MB resource CD that's packed full of tools and more than 200 sample grant proposals. Seating is limited, online reservations are necessary and walk-ins are not allowed. Tuition payment is not required at the time of enrollment. Please read the "Payment Policy" section of our online registration.

Click here for more information including venue location and maps, graduate testimonials and instant, online enrollment...

April 19th Training for Non-profits on Logic Models

Have you ever wondered how logic models can fit into your program? Are you still confused about how to develop a logic model (i.e. goals, objectives, strategies, inputs, outcomes, etc.)? Well there's good news!

On Wednesday April 19, 2006 the Division of Injury and Violence Prevention at the Virginia Department of Health will host two logic model training sessions. These sessions will share information on how to plan a prevention program using a logic model design.

These sessions will also show how to develop a logic model for a program that is already being implemented within an organization. The information in these trainings is useful for grant-writing, program development, program evaluation and to share with new staff, community members and possible funders.

These trainings will be held downtown in the Monroe Building, and you can attend either the 9:30 a.m.- 12:00 p.m. training session or the 1:00 p.m.-3:30 p.m. training session.

Limited parking is available, so please respond by April 12, 2006. To sign up please contact Karen Burruss with the session you want to attend (morning or afternoon), and whether you will need a parking pass at 804.864.7929 or Karen.Burruss@vdh.virginia.gov.

How to Write an Effective Position Description

by Laura Gassner Otting, President, Nonprofit Professionals Advisory Group (This article was originally published by www.NonprofitOyster.com, as part of their NonprofitOyster Pearls series.)

5 PEARLS OF WISDOM
Before you sit down to write a position description, take time to do your research, asking key staff, funders, community members or other stakeholders these important questions:

1. What is the context within which this person must work? What are the particular challenges facing the organization at this time? Which will the new person be faced with tackling? What is the timeline to meet these challenges? What tools will they have at their disposal?
2. What fundamental differences do you see in this organization 12 months, 18 months and 24 months after this person is on board? What outcomes, subjective and objective, will be used to determine success?
3. Describe the education and training background ideal for this position. From what kinds of organizations might this person come? What types of roles might they have held in the past?
4. What activities, programs, staff need to be sustained? Which need to be enhanced, initiated, diversified, recalibrated, reassessed or eliminated?
5. Are there resources or advertising vehicles that should be considered, such as online discussion forums, newsgroups, publications or websites that are organized to assist nonprofit organizations reach out to potential candidates? In addition, are there any candidates or other sources of candidates that ought to be tapped?

The departure of a key employee causes a great deal of consternation in most nonprofits. The first worry- driven thought that runs through many managers' minds is "How can I find someone who combines the skills and experiences of this person, as well as the knowledge of and connections to our constituents?" Yet, instead of just filling the shoes of the former worker, the replacement of an employee, or the creation and filling of a new position, can provide an opportunity for strategic reflection and redirection and therefore deserves serious thought.

Components of a Well-Written Position Description
Position descriptions are read by candidates and colleagues alike and may serve many purposes. A good job description will excite candidates to apply, especially some that might not have after reading only a few paragraphs of boilerplate information. According to Joyce Lapenn, a Vice President with DRG in New York City and the former Executive Director of Graham Windham, a major family and children's services agency, "Crafting an attractive position description to generate genuine interest comes after a very thoughtful assessment of the needs of the organization and how the open position relates to these needs. The employer should put some real effort into this document and exclude, for example, such usual 'pat' phrases such as 'good interpersonal skills.' How and to whom this position relates is more fundamental and ultimately more meaningful for potential candidates."

A good position description will also bring together a nonprofit around the central themes and challenges facing the new hire, many of which will be used in both the interview and weighing of candidates as well as their performance evaluation in the months and years to come. In other words, a good position description will sell the organization, serve as a mini-strategic planning session, and provide performance evaluation clear to the hire and the supervisor. Becky Klein, partner with The Phillips Oppenheim Group whose position descriptions are often six or seven pages long, states that "position descriptions really become marketing tools for both the position and the client itself and include a detailed (and hopefully enticing) description of the organization, an overview of the basic function, lists of key responsibilities, experience required and personal characteristics, and, most importantly, a section listing the priorities for the successful candidate in the first year."

The Executive Summary:
Every position description should start with an executive summary. Not all of your colleagues (those people who provide helpful ideas for candidates or outreach techniques) will want to read the entire position description. Further, some outreach vehicles will only let you post a paragraph or two, and having this summary done ahead of time will make you more efficient later.

The executive summary begins with a clear statement of purpose, i.e., "Founded in 1978, YouthBuild USA is a comprehensive youth and community development program committed to giving at-risk youth life and job skills that lead to economic independence, while helping them rebuild their communities. We are currently seeking a Vice President of XYZ who will...." It finishes by describing that the rest of the document lays out some information about the current state of affairs at YouthBuild, as well as the particular challenges facing the VP of XYZ.

Background:
A nice way to ease into the duties, responsibilities, challenges and potential problems facing the next hire is to describe the inspirational story of the founding of the organization and the context in which this hire will have to work. Providing a framework in which the candidate can imagine day-to-day activities and long term projects helps candidates rule themselves in or out of a search before wasting your time. More importantly, the background elicits intelligent questions and conversations from your candidates, helping you to determine which candidates are stronger than others.

The background section of a job description for Share Our Strength, for example, starts with the story of Billy Shore corralling a few local chefs in the basement of a Capitol Hill row house, and follows by describing the $70 million Share Our Strength has invested in more than 1,000 local, state, national and international hunger and poverty organizations over the past 18 years. This information, like most of the other material needed for this section, has probably already been written in one of the following documents, and should be kept handy for exercises like this: publicity materials, web content, brochures, annual reports, grants, financial statements, department budgets, mission statement, a predecessor's position description, board presentations, articles, biographies, or anything public from a recent strategic planning session. Finally, this section, once written, can be cut and pasted into other position descriptions as much of it centers around general historical facts of an organization and not the specifics of any one particular job.

Position-Specific Challenges:
Each role in an organization fulfills some basic need that keeps that organization running smoothly as well as, hopefully, raises it to a new level. These are the challenges set forth in a particular job. Challenges allow the realities of an organization's past to meet the hopes for its future. A well-written challenge statement can be measured during the interview process against the candidate's past track record, and then later against his or her performance on the job. When challenges are met, they allow hiring managers and supervisors to measure fundamental differences in an organization such as whether difficulties have been abated or new opportunities opened.

Qualifications:
From the challenges facing this job, a clearer picture will appear regarding the specific professional and personal qualifications needed for success. Professional qualifications include a candidate's career track record, education and training; further, these qualifications can be tailored to the size and scope of the position at hand. Personal qualifications might include a candidate's background, experience, character, personality, exposure or outlook. Continues Phillips Oppenheim Group Partner Klein, "Spelling out qualifications not only gives a prospective candidate an understanding of the needs, but helps to ensure that the client organization is clear about what is going to be required of the individual hired and how to measure that individual's performance. The more specific a position description is, the more targeted the response from appropriate candidates should be."

Conclusion:

Finally, be sure to include any compensation, application deadlines and contact information relevant to the position. A trick used by nonprofit executive recruiters when the compensation is open or when they want to survey the field is to avoid listing the compensation and, instead, ask for a salary history from applicants. From there, a nonprofit can determine what they need to pay for the level of talent they wish to hire without upsetting or offending potential applicants.

Gathering Information

As you write any position description, it is helpful to garner information not just from written materials circulating around the office and throughout your constituents, but by asking questions of key staff and stakeholders. Some of these questions are difficult; some of them are not. Each will inform the challenges section of the position description, and in turn, the interviewing and evaluation process both presently and in months and years to come.

At the beginning of any new search for a middle- to senior-level position, start by meeting with those who will surround the new hire. These stakeholders will be able to answer many of the questions that define and individualize an organization. Meeting with them early will also increase the likelihood that they will become invested in the process and the success of your newest staff member.

Those to be interviewed include but may not be limited to the Executive Director, members of the senior management team, direct reports to this position, outside stakeholders such as consultants, clients and funders and board members as relevant. In discussing the details of the position with each of these stakeholders, make sure to ask questions about specific candidates they might know, online discussion forums or newsgroups they might read, or web pages they visit or have heard about. These will form the core of a nonprofit's outreach and will help a nonprofit increase its knowledge base about outreach methods for the future.

By putting forth a strong effort at the beginning of a search to quantify and assess an organization's needs, nonprofit managers can assure a more strategic search, a broader candidate pool and a smarter hire.

Source: Laura Gassner Otting is founder and president of Nonprofit Professionals Advisory Group, a niche consulting firm dedicated to strengthening the capacity of nonprofits and their staff, and specializes in helping nonprofit organizations nationwide with their hiring processes.

2006 Standard Mileage Rates

The Internal Revenue Service has announced the 2006 optional standard mileage rates used to calculate the deductible costs of operating an automobile for business, charitable, medical or moving purposes.

Beginning Jan. 1, 2006, the standard mileage rates for the use of a car (including vans, pickups or panel trucks) will be —

- 44.5 cents per mile for business miles driven;
- 18 cents per mile driven for medical or moving purposes; and

- 14 cents per mile driven in service of charitable organizations, other than activities related to Hurricane Katrina relief.

The new rate for business miles compares to a rate of 40.5 cents per mile for the first eight months of 2005. In September, the IRS made a special one-time adjustment for the last four months of 2005, raising the rate for business miles to 48.5 cents per mile in response to a sharp increase in gas prices, which topped $3 a gallon.

Source: Clifton Gunderson LLP, 9515 Deereco Road, Suite 500, Timonium, MD 21093, 410.453.0900

Foundation Directory Online

The leading grantseeking database on the web has five plans to meet your needs:

BASIC: the top 10,000 foundations
Choose from up to 12 search fields to identify funders that support organizations like yours. A great tool for beginners. From $19.95 a month.

PLUS: the top 10,000 foundations plus half a million grants
Includes 68,000+ trustees, officers, and donors. A terrific value. From $29.95 a month.

PREMIUM: the top 20,000 foundations and half a million grants
Includes 117,000+ trustees, officers, and donors. Ideal for mid-size nonprofits. From $59.95 a month.

PLATINUM: 80,000 grantmakers and half a million grants
Foundations, corporate funders, and public charities, and 360,000+ trustees, officers, and donors. Designed for larger nonprofits. From $149.95 a month.

NEW PROFESSIONAL: top-tier intelligence on grantmakers and their grants
Text-searchable database of 250,000+ IRS 990s; unique funder portfolios with news, RFPs, and grant distribution charts; and our most comprehensive database of foundations and grants. From $179.95 a month.

Click here to Take the Guided Tour and here to subscribe online.

Free Book: *"Why Bad Presentations Happen to Good Causes"*

A new resource to help you avoid the common mistakes when making oral presentations, with tips for using PowerPoint, structuring your information and increasing your confidence. Based on research across the public interest sector and advice from many public speaking experts, this booklet is free to full-time employees of nonprofits, foundations, government and educational agencies.

Click here to order your free copy...

Guide for Hurricane Evacuees

A new Gulf Coast Recovery Resource Guide is now available as an internet-based tool for faith-based and community organizations nationwide. It allows service providers to submit changes and additions as they continue to adjust to the demands of supporting new evacuee populations in their communities. Visitors can sort services by program type, by agency and by state, and listings include both government agencies and nonprofits.

Click here to access the guide...

New Monograph on Nonprofit Accountability

Johns Hopkins University has released another title in their Listening Post Project series. A joint project of the University and seven national organizations, this monograph focuses on Nonprofit Governance and Accountability. Key findings are shared in the areas of board roles and involvement, finances, ethics, best practices, organizational change and nonprofit law.

Click here to check out the Listening Post Project and this research...

Could a Technical Volunteer Help Your Organization?

If you lack staff with technical expertise, perhaps its time to consider recruiting a volunteer with the skills you need. Here are some questions to help you decide if this is an appropriate option:

- Is your need short-term or ongoing? For regular maintenance like backups and user support, consider training someone on staff. Volunteers' schedules are often variable, so it's best not to count on a commitment of more than a few months. An example of a good volunteer project might be helping you decide which donated computers are worth using and making recommendations for upgrades and recycling options.
- Is your project urgent? If so, it's best to hire a consultant or system administrator. If your time line is flexible, however, a volunteer may fill your need. For instance, if you need training on how to use your database for a deadline several months from now, a volunteer might be perfect. Volunteers are excellent for one-on-one tutoring.
- Is the project limited in scope? An ideal volunteer project is one you can break into specific tasks with a clear deliverable at the end. For instance, creating and managing a database or Web site is almost always too big a project for a volunteer. Instead, engage a volunteer for components of the job, such as helping you evaluate Web hosting companies.
- What time commitment does the project require? If your project requires more than 20 hours over two or three months, a consultant might be a better solution.
- What kind of follow-up will be needed? If the project requires ongoing maintenance, you may want to hire or dedicate a staff member.
- How large is your organization? If you have more than 15 or so computers, consider hiring a part-time or full-time system administrator or contracting a consulting form to do regular maintenance. Volunteers can still be useful on specific tasks but

can't substitute for on-going support.

- EXTRA TIP: Technical support is one area that lends itself to collaboration. Several small nonprofits can easily share the expense of one full-time worker and all reap the benefits!

For more advice, see "Working with Technical Volunteers: A Manual for Nonprofit Organizations" at www.compumentor.org.

Source: "Nonprofit World" magazine, Vol. 23, No. 3, May/June 2005