



February 2006

Greetings!

We are pleased to bring you the February 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. All VANNO members will receive a packet of information in February, describing specific benefits and cost-savings now available. In addition, the VANNO website is undergoing a major redesign to offer more information and practical tools for everyone.

Grant Writing Workshop in Fredericksburg

The Bragg Hill Family Life Center, in partnership with Grant Writing USA, will present a two-day grant writing workshop in Fredericksburg on March 9-10, 2006. 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. All nonprofit and government disciplines are welcome to attend. Tuition includes all materials and is \$395; register online to reserve your spot.

For more details and registration...

Carol Pitchersky Fellowship

The Leadership Conference on Civil Rights Education Fund (LCCREF) announces the Carol Pitchersky Development Fellowship to develop and broaden the capacity of social justice organizations to raise funds necessary to serve their respective missions and further the civil rights community’s goals of equality, equal opportunity and mutual respect. The fellowship program will identify and support persons of color who are aspiring development professionals, who have demonstrated a commitment to civil rights and social justice, and who wish to advance

their careers in nonprofit fundraising. Visit the LCCR website to learn more.

For more information and an application...

VANNO Leads Discussion of Accountability Standards

On January 12 VANNO presented a successful workshop on [Walking the Talk of Accountability] in Northern Virginia, in partnership with the Reston and Dulles area Chambers of Commerce. Over 50 participants joined in a practical discussion about how to create an environment of transparency, accountability and integrity within their organizations, based on a forthcoming publication from VANNO.

If you would like to offer a similar session for nonprofit leaders in your part of Virginia, contact VANNO Administrator Katie Campbell at 804.794.8689 or info@VANNO.org. All it takes is a local host, a location, and 60-90 minutes. VANNO will provide panelists to lead the discussion, as well as handouts, at no charge.

Learn Volunteer Management Techniques

Volunteer Fairfax announces a professional development series for volunteer coordinators and program managers at nonprofit organizations. The monthly trainings give volunteer administrators tips, tools and tricks for creating, managing and growing a successful volunteer program.

Scheduled sessions include:

- February 13: Demographics of Fairfax County Volunteers
- March 22: Volunteer Management Boot Camp
- May 24: How Does Your Program Measure Up?
- June 14: Risk Management
- July 25: Getting Youth Involved
- August 24: The Fine Art of Supervising Volunteers
- September 27: Communication Basics

Experienced Volunteer Fairfax staff members or expert consultants teach each workshop. Fees range from \$35 to \$55 per session. To register for any of these sessions visit the Volunteer Fairfax website or for more information contact Erin Whyte at ewhyte@volunteerfairfax.org.

For more information and registration...

How Can We Promote Diversity, While Avoiding Tokenism?

To avoid creating token positions on your Board, start with a firm commitment to diversity. Announce it; put it in writing. Creating a sense of ownership of the organization is difficult if new Board members are recruited to represent a specific group in the constituency. No Board member wants to fill a quota. No one should be expected to [and no one is able to [speak for an entire subsection of the population. Board members contribute according to their skills and knowledge. See the entity as a diverse mixture, not as a group of individual spokespersons.

Remind all Board members of their duty to loyalty. Board members need to represent the organization and its best interests. Tokenism tends to promote individual commitment to a population group or interest.

To avoid creating token positions, treat each Board member equally. Expect the same from everyone; each Board member, new or old, has the same responsibilities. Involve every new member immediately. Assign tasks independently of cultural or ethnic background. Recruit several members at the same time from the same group. Value Board members as individuals, not as representatives.

Source: BoardSource e-newsletter, January 12, 2006. [e-news@boardsource.org]

Measuring the Impact of Your Organization: Why Do It?

By Trina Willard, MS, Transformation Systems, Inc.

In recent years, non-profit organizations have been encouraged to embrace a new mindset. This groundswell of change invokes terms such as "performance outcomes" and "results measurement," but focuses on one primary concept: accountability. As funding becomes increasingly competitive, the demands of foundations, government agencies, and benefactors have shifted accordingly. Specifically, the bar is being raised in the service sector, following trends in the corporate environment, for organizations to demonstrate their impacts in clear and meaningful ways.

We know that impact can take many forms: helping others create financial wealth, providing healthy meals that give the gift of better health, tutoring children to enhance academic achievement, developing employees to achieve higher job satisfaction, or creating beautiful works of art that feed the soul. Unfortunately, we often work hard and long, but are not able to demonstrate that desired impacts for our customers, clients or program participants have occurred. There are numerous reasons why we may wish to show impact, rather than assume our efforts are creating results.

For example, impact measures give our organizations the competitive edge to gain supporters, investors, and referrals. To demonstrate this point, consider two non-profit organizations that serve disenfranchised children. Both agencies expend tremendous effort providing educational services, such as tutoring, homework assistance, and time management techniques, to youth who are at high-risk for academic failure. In preparation for the next funding cycle, Agency One creates a detailed report of all services they have provided in the past year. While the data doesn't include follow-up measures for program participants, the documentation for service provision is impressive: charts, graphics, and information galore. Agency Two provides similar services and wishes to compete for the same funds. While their program report is not as glossy, it includes a review of data that shows marked improvement for their participants, when comparing grades before and after participation in the program. If you worked for a foundation and had to make a choice between the two, who

would you fund?

To develop programs successfully, it is also critical to remember that every organization has room for improvement. However, if you haven't measured results, how do you determine the critical areas for enhancement? Imagine an attorney who senses that word-of-mouth referrals for her services are decreasing. The data that she routinely collects tell her that caseloads, billable time, and profits are all down. The attorney wants to improve her business, but where should she start? Is she too expensive? Do her clients think she is too aggressive, or perhaps not aggressive enough? Is her receptionist unprofessional? Does she have difficulty communicating with her clients? Are cases requiring too long to close? Without results measures, she is unable to effectively choose a course of action. Her next step could be the perfect solution...or a complete waste of time and resources.

The lesson: meaningful information is a powerful tool. Collect it, analyze it, and use it to let your true impact shine through.

For more information on how to measure the impact of your organization, please view the complete article...

Online Certificate in Nonprofit Management

This program, offered by the University of Illinois at Chicago, offers a convenient way to gain the management skills you need to face today's challenges and tomorrow's opportunities. Whether you are new to the nonprofit sector or seeking to enhance your expertise, courses in nonprofit management will help you meet the challenges of your job. UIC's web-based instruction allows you to weave professional development into your busy life. Choose from courses focusing on Financial Management, Nonprofit Governance, Fundraising, Marketing, Strategic Management, and Operations.

For complete details...

Advice About Online Donation

Here's a new source of information to help you decide which online credit card software product to use. Idealware is a new site dedicated to helping nonprofits with technology products. They have reviewed 27 lower-priced online software tools for accepting donations on your website, providing a very helpful comparison.

To download the guide...

Sarbanes-Oxley and Beyond

Currently, two provisions of the Sarbanes-Oxley Act - the whistle-blowing protection and destruction of documents - apply to the nonprofit sector, but many believe that nonprofits will face additional reform.

The report "Strengthening Transparency, Governance and Accountability of Charitable Organizations" was issued to Congress in June 2005 by the

Panel on the Nonprofit Sector.

The Report proposes several Sarbanes-Oxley-like recommendations, including:

- **Financial Audits and Reviews** ¶ Congress should require charitable organizations with at least \$1 million or more in annual revenues to conduct an audit and attach audited financial statements to their Form 990 series returns, and those with annual revenues between \$250,000 and \$1 million to have their financial statements reviewed by an independent public accountant;
- **Structure, Size, and Composition of Governing Boards** ¶ To qualify for recognition as a 501(c) (3) tax-exempt organization, an organization should generally be required to have a minimum of three members on its governing board. Further, to qualify as a public charity (rather than a private foundation), at least one-third of the members of the organization's governing board should be independent. All boards should establish strong and effective mechanisms to ensure that the board carries out its oversight functions and that board members are aware of their legal and ethical responsibilities in ensuring that the organization is governed properly.
- **Audit Committees** ¶ Every charitable organization that has its financial statements independently audited, whether legally required or not, should consider establishing a separate audit committee of the board having members with financial literacy.
- **Conflict of Interest and Misconduct** ¶ As a matter of recommended practice, charitable organizations should adopt and enforce a conflict of interest policy consistent with its state laws and organizational needs.
- **Disclosure of Performance Data** ¶ Every charitable organization should, as a recommended practice, provide more detailed information about its operations, including methods it uses to evaluate the outcomes of programs, to the public through its annual report, website, and other means.

Source: Posted on Connect-Richmond listserv on January 3, 2006 by J. David Faulders, Executive Counsel, PLC, General Counsels Representing Business, www.exec-counsel.com

To view the full report...

Sample Conflict of Interest Policy

Three straightforward safeguards can go a long way towards preventing and avoiding conflicts of interest. First, the organization can establish a policy related to conflict of interest, which is signed by all Board members at the time they join the Board and perhaps renewed annually. The statement may be a simple declaration or it may require detailed information about the Board members' financial interests.

Second, establish disclosure as a normal habit of practice. Board members should find it customary for someone to say for example: ¶ This next agenda item relates to joining a collaboration with other mental health

agencies that receive county funds. Because I am on the staff of one of the agencies involved, I have a potential conflict of interest and I am going to excuse myself from the room for this discussion. In another situation a Board member might say, "I have started to date the Clinic Director and as a result feel that I must resign from the Board. I would like to continue as a member of the Fundraising Committee, but not as a Board member." Disclosures and excusal from voting should be recorded in the meeting's minutes.

Third, if major purchases are involved, competitive bids should be obtained, to ensure that prices and product are comparable if there will be a financial benefit to a Board member.

Perhaps even more than written policies, Board and staff leadership must establish by example and attitude an atmosphere of personal integrity. Some situations may need only a brief informal comment to maintain that climate. In other situations a decision may be delayed because of the need to ensure that the decision has been made truly in the best interests of the organization. Each of us, by our words and actions every day, contributes towards a culture of integrity and responsibility.

Sample policy:

The standard of behavior at the XYZ Organization is that all staff, volunteers and Board members scrupulously avoid any conflict of interest between the interests of the XYZ Organization on one hand, and personal, professional, and business interests on the other. This includes avoiding actual conflicts of interest as well as perceptions of conflicts of interest.

I understand that the purposes of this policy are: to protect the integrity of the XYZ Organization's decision-making process, to enable our constituencies to have confidence in our integrity, and to protect the integrity and reputation of volunteers, staff and Board members.

Upon or before election, hiring or appointment, I will make a full, written disclosure of interests, relationships, and holdings that could potentially result in a conflict of interest. This written disclosure will be kept on file and I will update it as appropriate.

In the course of meetings or activities, I will disclose any interests in a transaction or decision where I (including my business or other nonprofit affiliation), my family and/or my significant other, employer, or close associates will receive a benefit or gain. After disclosure, I understand that I will be asked to leave the room for the discussion and will not be permitted to vote on the question.

I understand that this policy is meant to be a supplement to good judgment, and I will respect its spirit as well as the wording.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Source: The Best of the Board Café, available at www.compasspoint.org/bookstore. Related articles available free at www.boardcafe.org

The Purpose Prize

Civic Ventures, with generous grants from The Atlantic Philanthropies and The John Templeton Foundation, is launching a major initiative investing in a new generation of social innovators - individuals in the second half of life who are marshalling their accumulated experience to tackle some of America's most urgent issues.

At the heart of the effort is The Purpose Prize, which will celebrate and support five outstanding individuals 60 or older who are already producing significant social innovation and accomplishing work of great importance.

Unlike any other major national award or fellowship, The Purpose Prize will challenge prevailing perceptions by investing significantly in carefully screened social innovators over the age of 60. Each year we will award \$100,000 prizes to five individuals who have demonstrated uncommon vision, determination and entrepreneurialism in addressing community and national problems. The Purpose Prize will tell the stories of these and dozens of other innovators in the second half of life.

To learn more...

Contact Information

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