

Connecting Positive Program Evaluation Results to Increased Nonprofit Organizational

Efficacy to Achieve Fundraising Goals

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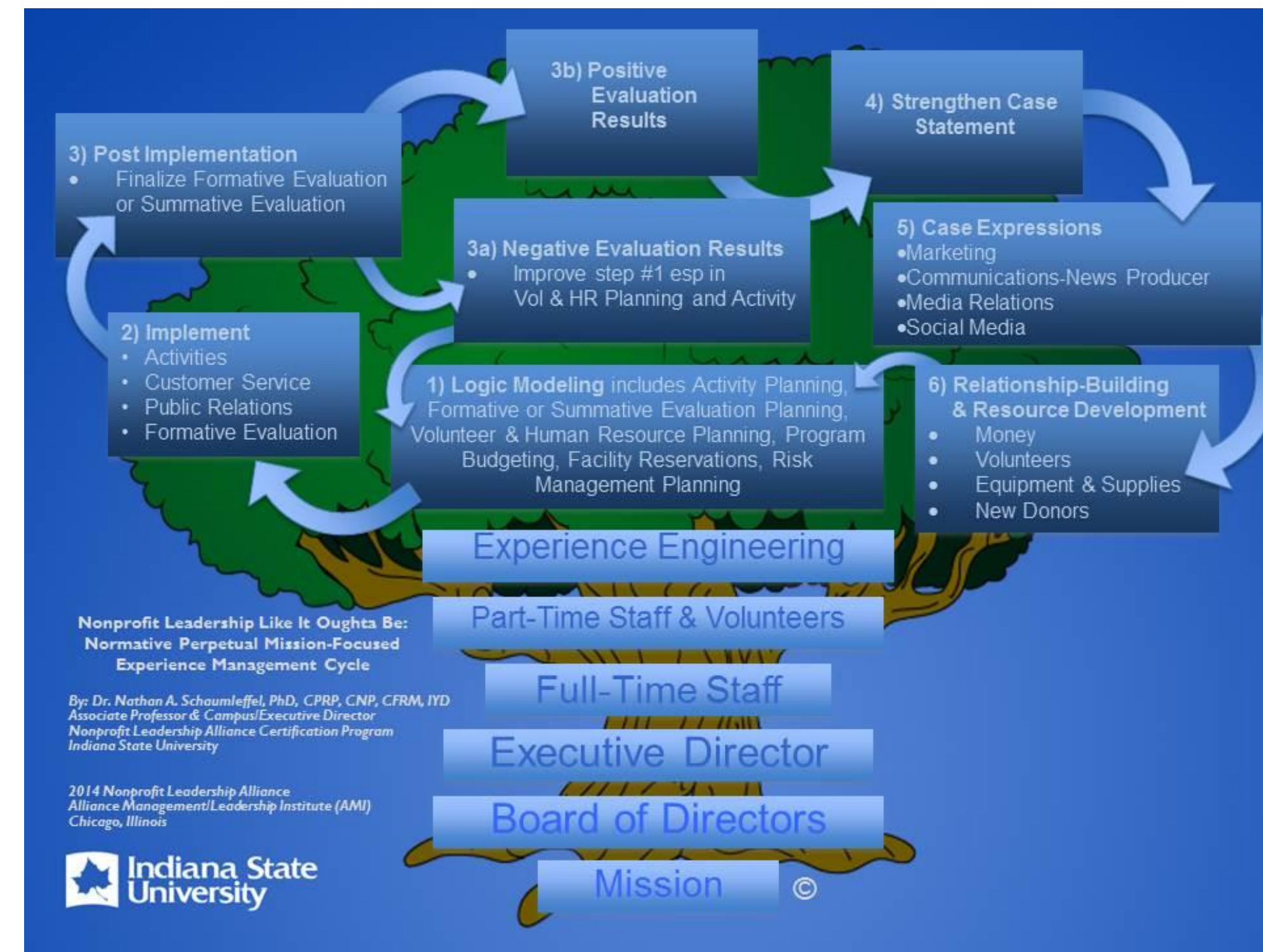
Abstract

Many nonprofit organizations today still do not conduct program evaluation or fail to conduct effective program evaluation and, as a result, may unknowingly experience mission drift instead of mission-focus. This undergraduate honors thesis will connect the Nonprofit Leadership Alliance competencies of Program Development and Financial Resource Development. This exploratory research project explores the organizational efficacy of Colorado-based nonprofits with outdoor/environmental education missions to meet and even exceed fundraising goals by integrating positive program evaluation results into fundraising case statements and case expressions. This thesis will connect strategic planning to logic modeling to funding future programming.

Introduction

While the research on positive program evaluation results and their implications on participants and the corresponding nonprofit organization exists, it is still unclear how positive program evaluation affects fundraising efforts. The target of this exploratory research was delimited to Colorado-based nonprofit organizations with outdoor and environmental education missions.

Strategic, mission-focused program goals and outcomes are one of the best methods to showing significant impact to a donor base and other civic leaders. These outcomes should be expressed through case statements and case expressions. This can be represented graphically by Dr. Schaumleffel's Normative Perpetual Mission-Focused Experience Management Cycle.



The following research questions helped frame the study:

- Do the organizations annually conduct program outcome evaluation?
- Do the organizations possess and annually maintain a fundraising case statement?
- Do the organizations express their case on a weekly basis through multiple channels?
- Do the organizations significantly integrate program outcome evaluation results into a case statement?
- Do the organizations integrate program evaluation results into case expressions on a weekly basis?

Methods

To begin the data collection process, the researcher made contact with the Colorado Nonprofit Association's Membership Directory from coloradononprofits.org. Then, construction of a database for organizations with environmental and outdoor education missions began. A total of 43 nonprofit organizations were contacted via email with a document request. Data was analyzed using content analysis procedures, a qualitative method, to assess the quality of organizational documents and processes. Part of the assessment included a rubric comparison for the organization's case statements.

	Case statement needs significant revision and is not useful for documenting or communicating the case for support, nor would it be helpful in being the foundation for launching case expressions.	Case statement is average to below average and does not effectively document and communicate the case for support, and likely would not be effective at launching case expressions.	Case Statement somewhat documents and communicates the case for support, as well as may assist in launching case expressions.	Case Statement should effectively document and communicate the case for support, as well as serve as the foundation for launching case expressions.
Writing Skills	Unsatisfactory Grammar, spelling, punctuation, sentence structure, etc. do not meet expectations.	Needs Improvement Grammar, spelling, punctuation, sentence structure, etc. are significantly below expectations.	Meets Expectations Grammar, spelling, punctuation, sentence structure, etc. meet expectations, but needs improvement.	Exceeds Expectations Grammar, spelling, punctuation, sentence structure, etc. exceeds expectations.
Organization's History and Accomplishments	Unsatisfactory This section is close to or non-existent lacking information related to when the organization was founded and by whom, and/or major accomplishments, and milestones. Program evaluation data is not included in this section.	Needs Improvement This section significantly lacks information related to when the organization was founded and by whom, and/or major accomplishments, and milestones. Program evaluation data is lacking in this section.	Meets Expectations This section somewhat includes when the organization was founded and by whom, as well as major accomplishments, and milestones. Program evaluation data is somewhat included in this section.	Exceeds Expectations This section thoroughly includes when the organization was founded and by whom, as well as major accomplishments, and milestones. Program evaluation data is included in this section.
Whom does the organization serve?	Unsatisfactory This section is close to or non-existent lacking demographic information of target audience, their needs, and describes a real-person who benefits from the organization, as well as the pressing problems the org addresses and the challenges of the target audience (as well as lacks needs assessment data).	Needs Improvement This section significantly lacks information related to demographic information of target audience, their needs, and describes a real-person who benefits from the organization, as well as the pressing problems the org addresses and the challenges of the target audience (as well as lacks needs assessment data).	Meets Expectations This section somewhat includes demographic information of target audience, their needs, and describes a real-person who benefits from the organization, as well as the pressing problems the org addresses and the challenges of the target audience (based on needs assessment data).	Exceeds Expectations This section thoroughly includes demographic information of target audience, their needs, and describes a real-person who benefits from the organization, as well as the pressing problems the org addresses and the challenges of the target audience (based on needs assessment data).
How are challenges addressed?	Unsatisfactory This section is close to or non-existent lacking information related to what programs are offered by the organization and what services are provided for people in need.	Needs Improvement This section significantly lacks information related to what programs are offered by the organization and what services are provided for people in need.	Meets Expectations This section somewhat includes what programs are offered by the organization and what services are provided for people in need.	Exceeds Expectations This section thoroughly includes what programs are offered by the organization and what services are provided for people in need.
Organization's Managerial Reputation and Business Acumen	Unsatisfactory This section is close to or non-existent lacking information related to evidence pertaining to the organization's stability and fiscal responsibility.	Needs Improvement This section significantly lacks information related to evidence pertaining to the organization's stability and fiscal responsibility.	Meets Expectations This section somewhat includes evidence pertaining to the organization's stability and fiscal responsibility.	Exceeds Expectations This section thoroughly includes evidence pertaining to the organization's stability and fiscal responsibility.
Organizational Planning Processes	Unsatisfactory This section is close to or non-existent lacking information related to who participated in the planning process, as well as how broad-based and thorough the planning process was.	Needs Improvement This section significantly lacks information related to who participated in the planning process, as well as how broad-based and thorough the planning process was.	Meets Expectations This section somewhat includes who participated in the planning process, as well as how broad-based and thorough the planning process was.	Exceeds Expectations This section thoroughly includes who participated in the planning process, as well as how broad-based and thorough the planning process was.
Organization's Goals for the Future	Unsatisfactory This section is close to or non-existent lacking information related to the organization's program, financial, facility, technology, administrative and governance resource and diversity goals, as well as does not mention needs assessment data or the org's strategic plan. This section also lacks how the org's goals will better serve those in need.	Needs Improvement This section significantly lacks information related to the organization's program, financial, facility, technology, administrative and governance resource and diversity goals, as well as does not mention needs assessment data or the org's strategic plan. This section also lacks how the org's goals will better serve those in need.	Meets Expectations This section somewhat includes the organization's program, financial, facility, technology, administrative and governance, and human resource and diversity goals by tying in the needs assessment data and org's strategic plan. This section also somewhat includes how the org's goals will better serve those in need.	Exceeds Expectations This section thoroughly includes the organization's program, financial, facility, technology, administrative and governance, and human resource and diversity goals by tying in the needs assessment data and org's strategic plan. This section also includes how the org's goals will better serve those in need.
Use of Donor's Investment	Unsatisfactory This section is close to or non-existent lacking information related to why the fundraising campaign is being conducted, the org's key budget items, and how these expenditures relate to the org's mission and service to people in need.	Needs Improvement This section significantly lacks information related to why the fundraising campaign is being conducted, the org's key budget items, and how these expenditures relate to the org's mission and service to people in need.	Meets Expectations This section somewhat includes why the fundraising campaign is being conducted, the org's key budget items, and how these expenditures relate to the org's mission and service to people in need.	Exceeds Expectations This section thoroughly includes why the fundraising campaign is being conducted, the org's key budget items, and how these expenditures relate to the org's mission and service to people in need.
Donor Acknowledgment	Unsatisfactory This section is close to or non-existent lacking description related to gift opportunities and the intangible benefit the donor receives by his/her philanthropic investment.	Needs Improvement This section significantly lacks description related to gift opportunities and the intangible benefit the donor receives by his/her philanthropic investment.	Meets Expectations This section somewhat describes gift opportunities and the intangible benefit the donor receives by his/her philanthropic investment.	Exceeds Expectations This section thoroughly describes gift opportunities and the intangible benefit the donor receives by his/her philanthropic investment.

Results

Of the original 43 organizations contacted, seven nonprofits responded to the request. Of those that responded, two organizations provided material. The remaining five organizations did not have documents or did not understand what the document request was asking for.

Findings from content analysis provided the following information on the seven organizations that responded :

- Beaver Ponds Environmental Education Center- Does not annually conduct program evaluation. Does not possess a fundraising case statement. Does not produce case expressions
- Breckenridge Outdoor Education Center- Possesses some form of quality program evaluation. Does not annually maintain a fundraising case statement. Does not integrate evaluation results into a case statement.
- Colorado Children's Campaign- Does not conduct program evaluation. Does not possess a case statement.

- Colorado Storm Soccer Association- Does not conduct program evaluation. Does not possess a case statement.
- Colorado Youth at Risk- Unaware of program evaluation or case statements and expressions.
- Denver Roller Derby- Does not possess program evaluation. Does not possess a case statement.
- Invest in Kids- Does not conduct program evaluation. Possesses and maintains case statements to a high standard of quality.

Conclusions

Overall, the majority of the organizations in this study underperform in the following ways:

- The organizations do not conduct program evaluation.
- The organizations do not possess case statements or case expressions.
- The organizations do not integrate program evaluation results into case statements.

Through this research, it has become obvious that nonprofit organizations are not being run like they ought to be. With 36 nonresponses and only two organizations providing material, there are a variety of implications that can be deduced. These nonresponses can indicate that the organizations perhaps do not conduct program evaluation, or do not understand that these processes are necessary.

This can be problematic in a variety of ways. Without case statements and expressions, the successes of the organization cannot be accurately expressed, and without program evaluation, case statements and case expressions cannot be created with intentionality. In conclusion, proper funding for future programming cannot occur when program evaluation processes are nonexistent.

Acknowledgements

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