

What The Evaluation Says

In order to learn from and gain an external perspective on the effectiveness of the Deaconess Impact Partnership, the Foundation has engaged the national firm TCC Group to evaluate the initiative. Through site visits, in depth interviews, program data analysis and the regular administration of an organizational assessment tool, TCC is gauging how each of the Impact Partners is progressing in capacity building. The findings will inform Deaconess Foundation as it refines and designs a second round of the Impact Partnership. What has TCC found thus far?

Executive Directors report stronger leadership skills.

Through participating in training, executive coaching and monthly peer learning exchanges, Impact Partner executive directors have strengthened their leadership skills.

Boards are becoming more effective. Through board training and clarification of goals and roles, many Impact Partners are reporting that their Boards are thinking more strategically, deepening their involvement in

fundraising, and taking ownership of the organizations' missions.

Funding streams are diversifying. A common goal amongst Impact Partners was to diversify their funding streams. Thus far, 100% of the Impact Partners have made progress in strengthening their ability to raise funds.

More children are being served. Seven of Deaconess' Impact Partners have been able to expand programming and reach more children.

Impact Partners are becoming more data driven. Some Impact Partners are using Deaconess funds to develop or strengthen their outcomes tracking systems. As a result, the organizations are beginning to make program decisions based on results. The ability to identify and fine-tune successful program interventions enables them to continuously improve the quality of their services.

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 In the spirit of our faith heritage, the mission of Deaconess Foundation is the improved health of the St. Louis metropolitan community and its people.



211 North Broadway, Suite 1260
St. Louis, MO 63102
Telephone: (314) 436-8001
Fax: (314) 436-5352
www.deaconess.org



IMPACT PARTNERSHIP UPDATE



SUMMER 2007

The Importance of Leadership

In the real estate business, it is all about location, location, location.

At Deaconess Foundation, we have found that in the capacity building business, it is all about leadership, leadership, leadership.

"If we have learned one thing about capacity building in this first round of the Impact Partnership, it is that leadership development is crucial to the whole capacity building process. Leadership of the organization is critical to the success of the programs and long-term sustainability," reports Rev. Jerry W. Paul, President and CEO of Deaconess Foundation. Impact Partners that have embarked on capacity building are often restructuring and retooling their organizations. Change is a constant motif and executive directors must navigate with conviction, confidence and grace. "Capacity building is both an amazing opportunity and a daunting challenge," notes Rev. Eugene Bartell, Executive Director of Neighborhood Houses, one of the eight Impact Partners.

As a result, Deaconess Foundation has infused the Impact Partnership with substantial opportunity for leadership development. "This was not overtly part of the plan from the beginning," notes Rev. Paul, "however, very early on, we realized that providing leadership training opportunities and support was one of the most valuable contributions we could make." Since a first executive in October 2004, Deaconess Foundation has hosted a wide range of leadership training for Impact Partner senior leaders, boards and mid-level staff. Topics have

included introductions to leadership styles, management techniques, fund development strategies, human resources training, board relations and media relations. Trainers have been local experts as well as nationally known leaders such as Cynthia Silva Parker from the Interaction Institute for Social Change and author Peter Brinckerhoff from Corporate Alternatives.



The Deaconess Impact Partnership, started in 2004, is a capacity-building effort to strengthen operations and leadership of eight exemplary child-serving nonprofits in the St. Louis region. Deaconess Impact Partners are receiving four- to five-year investments from the Foundation, as well as participating in a range of consulting and training opportunities. Since 2004, Deaconess Foundation has allocated approximately \$XX million to the Impact Partners.

What is Capacity Building? The Foundation defines capacity building as a set of activities and decisions that strengthen an organization and enable it to better achieve its mission.

Many of the Impact Partners have allocated funds from Deaconess Foundation for coaching and customized professional development training. Impact Partners also tap Deaconess Foundation staff to be sounding boards, strategy partners and coaches. Additionally, the Foundation convenes the Deaconess Impact Partner executive directors once a month. By sharing lunch and experiences, the executive directors have developed a trusting community in which they can explore the challenges of leading an organization to new levels. (See article on page 4 for more on peer learning.)

There are bookshelves of theories on leadership, and Deaconess Foundation does not intend to espouse any specific theory. Rather, in our work with the Impact Partners, we have found that there is a collection of leadership traits or abilities that are essential to maximizing an organization's potential. Capacity building works best with leaders who:

Inspire: Nonprofit work is neither easy nor lucrative—in the traditional financial sense—and burn out is all too common. However, if a leader is able to define the mission and inspire board, staff and volunteers toward achieving a common vision, this can make the hardest days feel rewarding. As one development director commented about her executive director, "On my most frustrating days, when I feel like I cannot face another 'no,' I always gain strength from tapping into our director's passion."

Delegate. Before joining the Impact Partnership, many executive directors

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Celebrating Capacity Building Successes

Every Deaconess Impact Partner has made significant accomplishments in implementing its multi-dimensional capacity building plans. Below is what the Impact Partner Executive Directors consider their biggest wins:

Annie Malone Children and Family Services Center,

a multi-service center for children and families in North St. Louis, www.anniemalone.com. According to Richard King, CEO, capacity building has helped Annie Malone to:

- ❖ Established a Resource Development Department;
- ❖ Upgrade IT so that every staff person now has access to a computer; and
- ❖ Complete a strategic plan.



Christian Activity Center,

a community-based youth center in East St. Louis, www.cacesl.org. According to Rev. Chet Cantrell, Executive Director, the Impact Partnership has helped the Center to:

- ❖ Learn what it takes to become a full-fledged organization, with infrastructure and systems in place to support the mission;
- ❖ Gain fiscal and organizational sustainability; and
- ❖ Track the achievements and impact the program has on the 4,000 children served each year, and learn from the results.



Citizens for Missouri's Children, www.mokids.org.

This agency advocates for the well-being of the children of Missouri by promoting the development of good public policy. Key accomplishments have been to:

- ❖ Upgrade office space and establish a more prominent profile in the community;
- ❖ Complete a strategic plan that outlines clear policy goals and a sustainable business model; and
- ❖ Provide ongoing staff development and coaching to strengthen core staff.



Foster and Adoptive Care Coalition,

an initiative designed to strengthen and support foster and adoptive families, www.foster-adopt.org. Melanie Scheetz, Executive Director, credits the Impact Partnership for helping Foster and Adoptive Care Coalition to:

- ❖ Build a stronger and more engaged Board that will sustain the agency;
- ❖ Expand the agency's programs to serve more children and families; and
- ❖ Diversify the agency's funding streams to include new special events revenue.



Neighborhood Houses, a settlement house in St. Louis City that offers a range of programs at four sites in North St. Louis as well as in St. Louis Public Schools, www.neighborhoodhouses.org. For Rev. Eugene Bartell, Executive Director, the Impact Partnership has helped Neighborhood Houses to:

- ❖ Create a platform—including a strong senior administrative leadership team and management capability throughout the organization—to produce quality work;
- ❖ Significantly expand—nearly double—some key programming;
- ❖ Develop an extensive evaluation system and train senior leaders to track and learn from results; and
- ❖ Strengthen human resources by standardizing job descriptions, policies and creating a handbook.

Nurses for Newborns Foundation,

an organization dedicated to providing care to medically fragile or at-risk newborns and their families, www.nfnf.org. Sharon Rohrbach, CEO, says that the Impact Partnership has helped Nurses for Newborns to:

- ❖ Cultivate a well trained, justly compensated staff and infrastructure that can support future growth;
- ❖ Create policies/procedures and protocols that are standardized between Missouri & Tennessee offices;
- ❖ Develop a succession plan for executive leadership; and
- ❖ Promote the results of Nurses for Newborns Foundation impact on a national level.



Saint Louis Crisis Nursery, a respite facility dedicated to helping children and families weather the storms of life, www.crisisnurserykids.com. According to DiAnne Mueller, Executive Director, participating in the Impact Partnership has helped the Nursery to:

- ❖ Network all four Crisis Nurseries and two outreach centers so that staff can communicate in “real time” about families;
- ❖ Implement a new client data base system that will improve intake and tracking families;
- ❖ Strengthen fund development and ability to attract major donors; and
- ❖ Open the Crisis Nursery West and two St. Charles outreach centers.



Voices for Children is an organization that provides legal advocacy for City children in the foster care system, www.voicesforchildrenstl.org. Voices for Children has experienced leadership change while in the Impact Partnership, but has also advanced in its capacity building efforts. Notable successes include the following:

- ❖ Restructured staff-volunteer model to include Child Advocacy Specialists who focus on particularly difficult cases;
- ❖ Created “Vision for Success,” a new outcome measurement system; and
- ❖ Upgraded the Administrative Director position which has led to improving the budgeting, fiscal management, human resources and planning systems.



Leadership Evolution

Executive directors comment on how their leadership style has evolved during the Impact Partnership.

“My leadership style was top down prior to the Impact Partnership. In our first Deaconess retreat, I learned about participatory management and began trying to develop leadership and transparency throughout the organization.”

— Sharon Rohrbach, CEO,
Nurses for Newborns Foundation.

“I have learned to better utilize the Board, build relationships with donors and recruit and hire the best staff using the Good To Great model!”

— DiAnne Mueller, Executive Director,
Saint Louis Crisis Nursery

“Through capacity building, my leadership style has become more team-oriented. There is a kind of energetic and creative synergism that is very identifiable to me. Working together we have become much greater than the sum of our individual parts.”

— Rev. Eugene Bartell,
Neighborhood Houses

“Capacity building has helped me to become a more visionary leader.”

— Melanie Scheetz, Executive Director,
Foster and Adoptive Care Coalition

“The way I hire people has changed. Yes, I want the right people on the bus, and I also want to make sure they want to go to the same place as our organization.”

— Beth Griffin, Citizens for
Missouri's Children

“My attitude about some things has changed and my approach to some things has changed as well. So, I have changed as a leader.”

— Richard King, CEO and President,
Annie Malone Children and Family
Service Center

“I think much more about the Center's long range needs and goals because I want to build an agency that will be able to serve this neighborhood for a long time. I am in a process of growing.”

— Rev. Chet Cantrell, Executive Director,
Christian Activity Center

Getting Help From Your Friends: Peer Exchanges

Once a month, over turkey sandwiches and chef salads, the eight Impact Partner Executive Directors come together. When the Executive Director Meetings began in May 2004, the agendas were dominated with business of the day and exchanges stayed on the formal, courteous zone. However, with time and shared adventure of capacity building, roots have grown. Today, the regular Executive Director Meetings have become a place for sharing experiences, providing moral and management support, and networking.

“We are in the process of moving our agencies to the next level...and there are significant risks, significant bumps in the road. It is nice to know you have a cohort of others that are going through the same challenges,” explains DiAnne Mueller, Executive Director of Saint Louis Crisis Nursery.

On a sunny Wednesday in May, the executive directors start their monthly meeting by touring the new Infant/Toddler Room opened by Neighborhood Houses. The Executive Director Meetings rotate among the different Impact Partner sites. “This has been eye opening,” notes Sharon Rohrbach, CEO of Nurses for Newborns Foundation. “You learn about the neighborhoods our peers serve, you envision ways you could work together, and you see that you are not the only leader who has to improvise with workspace.”

After the tour, the Impact Partners settle into conversation. The topic for the day is management headaches. And there are plenty. One executive

director solicits ideas for how to diffuse staff tensions. “How do I manage an employee that is spreading the wrong message about us?” she asks. The responses range from her veteran peers, but one thing is clear, “You have to nip this in the bud. You have to be firm,” advises her peers. Together they craft a game plan for the executive director.

“Our get-togethers are the best prevention for burnout.”

— Impact Partner
Executive Director

The conversation then turns to board relations. “I have a Board member who is issuing specific instructions and deadlines to my staff. What can I do?” asks an executive director. Most of the leaders have encountered this problem. “It's hard because you have to admire the Board member's passion,” comments one, “but in a non-public forum, you are going to have to tell the Board member why her actions are counterproductive.” Later, the executive directors collectively brainstorm with a peer to package an update to the media that stresses good news while also acknowledging ongoing struggles.

“As this group has gelled, there is much less ‘white glove’ treatment,” explains

Deaconess Foundation Vice President Elizabeth George. “The executive directors are committed to honesty. They value each others' missions and will cheer on accomplishments, but are not bashful about pointing out when they think a peer should try another course.”

The Deaconess Impact Partnership has engaged a national firm, TCC Group, to conduct a formal evaluation of the capacity building initiative. Early results show that the peer learning opportunities are a significant contributor to the success of the program. The first year evaluation found that “the opportunity for peer learning and exchanges has been a critical facilitator of success and means of cultivating leadership skills in the Impact Partnership.”

In addition to the moral support that peers lend each other, there have been tangible gains amongst the Impact Partners. Foster and Adoptive Care Coalition's Executive Director, Melanie Scheetz got advice and a prototype from Sharon Rohrbach, CEO of Nurses for Newborns Foundation, on how to establish a junior board. Saint Louis Crisis Nursery and Christian Activity Center, in East St. Louis, are exploring ways to collaborate to bring a Crisis Nursery to that community. The Impact Partners also frequently exchange

information on consultants, potential board members to pursue, staff to hire and funding opportunities. Other ideas for partnership are brewing. Everything from sharing board members to joining in shared program design is under discussion.

“I always know I can come to this group and leave with a new idea, some encouragement or just a renewed feeling,” comments DiAnne Mueller. “I leave thinking, if my Impact Partners are trying something new, why not us?”

“I have learned so much from my colleagues — from solving personnel problems to hiring an auditor to learning the importance of time off. I value these relationships and they will continue when our turn in the Impact Partnership ceases.”

— Beth Griffin,
Citizen's for Missouri's
Children

Impact Partner Development Directors convene.

As a result of the success of the Executive Director Meetings, Deaconess Foundation began to bring together the Development Directors in August 2006. They have participated in communal training on topics such as annual development plans and cultivating major donors. Like the Executive Directors, the Development Directors greatly value the connections. “We spend so much time competing for similar funding sources, we don't take the time to learn from each other,” one noted. “Our get togethers are providing a forum for honest exchange.”



Executive Directors share their thoughts in monthly peer exchanges.



Cynthia Parker from Interaction Institute for Social Change co-led a two-day leadership training session for more than forty staff from Impact Partners in May 2007.

The Importance Of Being A Leader *Continued from page 1*

noted that they felt as if the future of the organization was all on their shoulders. However, through training and planning, many executive directors are seeing that they can delegate. “I am learning to piece myself out,” commented an executive director, “The day-to-day operations of our organization are not all my job.”

Learn from Results. Many Impact Partners have used Deaconess Foundation funds to invest in more sophisticated evaluation systems. The strongest executive directors have gone the next step and use the data to make program planning decisions. For instance, one organization learned that a “staple” program it included in its client training was not having an impact. “That was a shock since the program had been part of our repertoire forever. But we learned we had to retool,” explains the leader.

Play Well in the Sandbox: “I am not interested in doing what other organizations do better. I am interested in partnering with them,” states one executive director. Territorialism is an unfortunate inevitability in the non profit world, since resources are very scarce. However, many Impact Partners have learned to ally themselves with similar organizations to advance a cause. For instance, two Impact Partners,

Foster and Adoptive Care Coalition and Citizens for Missouri’s Children, joined forces in spring 2007 to advocate for better State support for foster families.

Stay Open Minded. “The Impact Partnership has helped me look at our agency through a whole new lens,” comments one executive director. “I have been able to put my social services background to the side and function more as a leader of a multimillion dollar enterprise.” Another executive director initially balked at changing the format of her board meetings, but she decided to give more responsibility to the board members. “Our meetings are now more efficient and board members no longer just attend meetings, they are taking on our collective goals,” she concludes.

Innovate. To create a more compelling program, one organization is hiring former clients as case managers. Another organization has a tradition of taking “off the shelf” program models and “turning up the volume,” enhancing them to maximize their clients’ outcomes. Capacity building is a great opportunity and the best leaders are those who stay imaginative, nimble and braid together opportunities.

Laugh. Capacity building does not always follow a rosy path. “We have found a good number of thorns along the way,” notes one executive director. “I don’t think I could do this job without having a good sense of humor.”

It's Not Always Easy.

Every Impact Partner has faced challenges. Below are reflections from the Impact Partners on the demands of capacity building.

❖ Change is difficult...I hadn't ever tried to build leadership throughout the agency before. We also created complete transparency in our finances throughout the organization. This has been worthwhile but a challenge to implement as we have all sorts of personalities and workstyles here.

❖ Five years go by quickly (the duration of the Impact Partnership). There is a lot to accomplish in a relatively short time.

❖ Managing the impact all of this growth has on our staff is a big challenge. We are a different place than we were three years ago—with more systems in place and a growing staff—and the transformation can be bittersweet.

❖ Keeping up with capacity building is difficult. You have to learn to have dual priorities—keeping your organization going, while keeping it growing.

❖ Knowing that our support from Deaconess Foundation will end with the completion of the capacity building plan is a tough thing to accept. You want to make sure you have expanded in a way that is sustainable.



Boardroom Dancing

At a recent Impact Partner Executive Directors Meeting, Rev. Jerry Paul, CEO and President of Deaconess Foundation, reflected on his experiences working with Boards of Directors. Here are some of the lessons he has learned along the way.

ON GENERAL BOARD RELATIONS

- Your number one job as an executive director of a nonprofit is to support your board. They are the ultimate trustees of your organization’s mission.
- Always assume the best about each board member. Be transparent in your belief that they care deeply about your organization’s mission and the people you serve.
- Be honest and open with your board. They need to hear the bad news as well as the good news. One-sided information is a weak basis on which to build trust.
- You don’t always have to be the one with the right answer or the best idea. Be willing to yield to other points of view with graciousness. Never harbor grudges or bitterness.
- As CEO or Executive Director, you are the buffer between staff and board. Board members should not assign tasks or direct staff without your consent. Staff

should all understand that they work with the board directly only with your knowledge and approval.

- Next to your loved ones, board members should always be your priority for access.
- The board is only the board when it is in session. You report to the whole board and not a single member.
- Listen! Listen! Listen!

ON GETTING THE RIGHT PEOPLE

- Adding the right people to your board is a critical task. Work closely with your nominating committee and always keep your eye out for good, potential board members.
- Meet and get to know candidates before you elect them. Go for character over job title. It is the executive director’s job to develop a positive culture on the board. Never nominate a Board member whom you think might jeopardize your board’s culture.

- Spend time orienting prospective board members. Always try to do this with another member of your board. This is a joint responsibility.
- Ensure that your board members understand what is expected of them. Never lure a board member by saying things such as: “this won’t require too much time.” Also, be very clear at the beginning that every board member needs to make a financial contribution.
- Meet individually with all of your board members. Schedule lunches or coffees often. Understand their motivations for serving your organization, and never stop asking what you can do to make their experience a better one.

ON LEADING POSITIVE BOARD MEETINGS

- Carefully plan board meetings with the board chair. When your organization is faced with a significant decision, ensure that you have developed

a process for everyone’s opinion to be heard and considered.

- Try to structure Board meetings so that every board member has a chance to talk at a meeting. Meetings should never be a collection of staff reports.
- Make sure that Board members take responsibility for championing ideas in a board meeting. Hearing board members speak passionately about a new project is far more powerful than hearing it from staff.
- If a board member has an idea for a new initiative whose impact is unclear or potentially divisive, affirm their contribution and offer to meet with a small group of board members to discuss it before taking a vote. Let the board members test its feasibility, rather than you simply saying, “It won’t work.”
- Clarify votes before voting. Too often people’s understandings of what decision is being made vary.