

for Understanding Nonprofit Capacity in Houston

2023 INAUGURAL COHORT REPORT

LAUNCH REPORT

This report was prepared for the Houston Health Foundation by the Alliance of Community Assistance Ministries (ACAM) to compile the data and feedback collected over the course of the Learning Institute for Understanding Nonprofit Capacity in Houston (LAUNCH) program.

Thank you to Tina Council, Marie Wehrung, Ronnie Haggerty and Your Part-Time Controller for their contributions to developing and presenting the LAUNCH curriculum.

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ABOUT ACAM

Founded in 2004, the Alliance of Community Assistance Ministries, Inc. (ACAM) is a Houston-based 501(c)(3) public charity and management support organization (MSO) with a mission of advancing high impact collaboration, service excellence and organizational development among community assistance ministries. While ACAM has traditionally provided its services solely to community assistance ministries, the organization is growing and evolving into a broad-based nonprofit capacity builder as part of the growing field of management support organizations (MSOs) that assist nonprofits in developing capacity.

ACAM builds nonprofit capacity to increase organizational sustainability and help groups proactively respond to growing and changing community needs.

ACAM has responsibilities to sets clients: of two nonprofits to which capacity building assistance is provided, and the funding community which expects measurable results from their investment in ACAM's various programs and projects. ACAM has a history of being a responsive, relevant, productive organization and that arms community-minded nonprofits with the tools and programs they need to face a multitude of issues that affect the quality of life in the Greater Houston region.

OUR MISSION

The ACAM Network advances collaboration to create community-wide solutions for thriving nonprofits, neighborhoods, and families.

OUR VISION

An innovative, connected network that ensures families in need have a path to stability, health, and wealth.



Together We Do More.

CAPACITY BUILDING

For ACAM, capacity building and organizational development are synonymous. We define it as any activity that increases a nonprofit's or network's efficiency and effectiveness and enhances the impact on people's lives and their communities. ACAM focuses on both sustaining high-performing organizations and high impact programming. Capacity building is whatever is needed to sustain or achieve a high level of operational and programmatic effectiveness. From this view, organizational development is not something that is ever really "finished." In fact, a lack of capacity building will likely result in a decline in performance.

Through the services of trained consultants, ACAM's core partners complete comprehensive on-site assessments to determine whether increased collaboration, new learning, and growth services resulted from participation in ACAM's programs their from and use organizational assessments, planning documents, and goal assessments. At the heart of ACAM's capacity buildina is helping program nonprofit organizations become stronger and more sustainable. From the beginning, rigorous assessment nonprofits' of organizational capacity and substantive goals for building capacity have been key components of ACAM's mission.



NINE ELEMENTS OF ORGANIZATIONAL ASSESSMENT®

HISTORY



Since 2004, ACAM has worked to create a high-performing network linking its members, who are basic needs providers, with funders and other community partners in the Greater Houston area. The heart of ACAM's service strategy is helping its member organizations increase their capacity to serve those in need. To guide this program, ACAM initially obtained permission from the Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) to utilize four modules of CapMap®, a capacity building tool developed by LISC for community development organizations.

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- Working with CapMap® helped establish and confirm ACAM's capacity
- building program model: provide member organizations with a rigorous, external evaluation of their organizational capacity; assist
- them in establishing capacity building plans with substantive, measurable goals; and award grants for implementing these plans.
- ACAM and its members realized that they needed a capacity building tool designed specifically for Community Assistance Ministries (CAMs).
- In 2010, a committee of CAM Executive Directors and ACAM staff members began work developing the Nine Elements of Organizational Assessment Tool (NEAT)

THE NEAT®

The NEAT© is an evidence-based system resulting from years of collaboration between CAMs, ACAM staff, and funders to develop the assessment model, instruments, and procedural guidelines that form NEAT©. These stakeholders recognized that they lacked a common language for discussing organizational development and began researching nonprofit capacity building. Through this process, they agreed upon a list of nine elements, or core capacities, that they considered important to developing sound practices and programming:

- 1) Board Leadership
- 2) Human Resources (Staff & Volunteer)
- 3) Financial Management
- 4) Fund Development
- 5) Program Strategies & Outcomes
- 6) Community Relationships
- 7) Technology
- 8) Facilities
- 9) Executive Director Leadership



The NEAT© evaluation model is designed to help organizations that strive to be high performing achieve strategic goals and assess organizational capacity. In all, the NEAT© measures 212 indicators used to pinpoint current status, growth, and decline using measuring instruments, a reporting system, and procedural guidelines for the assessment process, which is conducted on site by consultants. The NEAT© assessment results can objectively guide future development plans, monitor capacity changes, market strengths, and assess areas of opportunity and needed improvement.

The leaders of ACAM's partnering organizations use the NEAT© to identify their developmental needs and establish goals for meeting them. The results can provide demonstrable evidence of organizational development to promote their work to a variety of audiences to gain resources.

DIMENSIONS

The dimensions are summaries of the core competencies organizations should develop to excel in that Element. The NEAT [©] measures specific indicators that assess and identify goals for improving organizational capacity in each dimension.

Indicators also assess and identify organizational development phases: **Infrastructure**: This phase helps build the organization's foundation, the fundamental structure and processes needed to be legally compliant and to operate its programs.

Growth: This is an expansion phase in which the organization continues to develop and build on the foundation established during the Infrastructure phase.

Sustainability: This phase defines the ideal, a high-performing organization that responds to opportunities and challenges.

NEAT® ELEMENT (9)		DIMENSIONS AND COMPETENCIES (27)	
Board Leadership	Composition and Development	Roles and Responsibilities	Strategic Direction
Human Resources	Policies and Procedures	HR Management	HR Planning
Financial Management	Policies and Procedures	Reporting and Analysis	Performance
Fund Development	Stability	Planning	Ethics
Program Strategies & Outcomes	Program Development	Program Delivery	Program Evaluation
Community Relationships	Communication	Collaboration	Education/ Involvement
Technology	Technical Resources	Technology Management	Information Management
Facilities	Workspace	Safety	Environment
Executive Director Leadership	Organizational Culture	Performance Management	Competencies

Through the years of assessment experience ACAM has gained, one thing has become predominantly clear – an organization's capacity is fragile and dynamic. People leave, systems become obsolete and priorities change. ACAM has developed a tool which can help an organization measure its progress, identify shortcomings and capitalize on identified strengths and opportunities at any point in time. The NEAT©, while developed for a specific subset of nonprofits, can be utilized by any variety of organizations that have the desire to be high performing, efficient, impactful stewards of funding and programs.

Based on the NEAT, ACAM's Learning Academy for Understanding Nonprofit Capacity in Houston (LAUNCH) program was designed specifically for the Houston Health Foundation to provide Health Equity grantees with a framework for planning future capacity building activities.

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LAUNCH CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

From January 2, 2023 to July 31, 2023, ACAM's LAUNCH program:



- developed an abbreviated NEAT assessment for 22 Houston Health Foundation grantees (see page 10 for the list),
- hosted a series of training workshops designed specifically to address key findings of the survey responses, and
- developed an exit survey to identify priority areas to strategically inform a growth plan for participating agencies.

ACAM additionally developed a survey for the Element of Executive Leadership, which is measured separately.

THE LAUNCH TEAM

www.acamweb.org/our-talent



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NEAT CONSULTANT
Tina Council, I Am Pleased
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TRAINING
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HHF GRANTEES

- 100 Black Men of Metropolitan Houston
- Agape Love House
- Back to Eden Fellow Program
- Bread of Life Prison Ministry
- Brick Hard 4 God
- The Changing Communities Movement (CCM) Foundation
- Center for Recovery and Wellness Resources
- Collective Action For Youth (CA4Y)
- Community Family Centers (CFC)
- Credible Messengers United (CMUTX)
- Sunnyside Community Redevelopment Organization (SCRO)
- Girls on the Run Greater Houston (GOTR Greater Houston)
- Hope To Empower
- Houston reVision (reVision)
- Melanin Minds
- R.E.A.L. Youth Outreach Foundation
- Rupani Foundation
- Sister 2 Sistah
- Twelve 11 Partners
- Victorious Wellness Center

LAUNCH SURVEY

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ACAM developed an online self-assessment tool and growth plan survey with the goal of providing participants with data on four of the nine proprietary NEAT Elements:

- Board Leadership
- Program Strategies & Outcomes
- Fund Development
- Financial Management

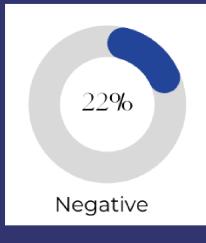
ACAM additionally developed a survey to assess the Element Executive Leadership, which is reported separately.

22 agencies participated in the self-assessment which included:

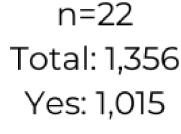
- 10 Program Strategies indicators,
- 8 fund development indicators,
- 24 financial management, and
- 17 board leadership indicators (59 total indicators).

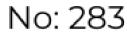
An additional 4 questions rated confidence levels in each of the 4 elements.

Overall, about 3/4 (78%) of all the responses were positive – indicating that the respondents believed that the indicator of capacity was already in place at the organization. About 1/4 of the responses indicated a future need to develop capacity in those specific measured areas.



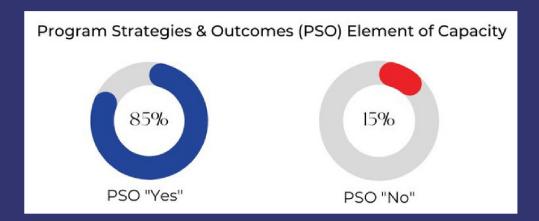






GROUP RESULTS BY ELEMENT

A full 85% of the questions related to Program Strategies were answered affirmatively. With 15% answered in the negative, reflecting approximately a 15% room for growth.

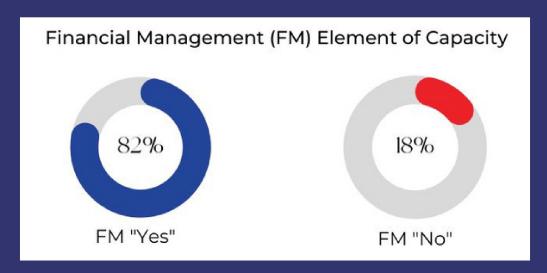


Results indicfate that the focus is strongly on program development and delivery but less so on evaluation:

- 100% reported that the organization's programs and services are clearly linked to the organization's overall mission.
- 91% reported that the organization considers its vision and mission, material resources, core competencies, community assets, and collaborative options when making decisions about expanding, terminating, restructuring, or adding to its programs.
- 5% reported that the staff members and volunteers are encouraged, and given the tools and training they need, to provide clients with helpful information (e.g. referrals, directions, public benefit eligibility).
- 77% reported that the organization has established policies regarding client eligibility for agency services.
- 77% stated that the organization has a stated goal to evaluate its programs and performance.
- 77% reported that the organization provides appropriate staff with information about client needs and relevant research (e.g. program model and goals, community assessment data, evaluation report, etc.) that will help the staff provide effective and efficient client services.

GROUP RESULTS BY ELEMENT

The Financial Management Element had the most questions with a total of 24 indicators. Organizations reported having the infrastructure to perform the financial management functions with 82% affirmative responses. Interestingly, the percentage of affirmative responses declined by dimension: 91% for the Financial Performance Dimension, 86% for Financial Reporting & Analysis, and 80% for the Financial Policies & Procedures Dimension.



An examination of some of the highest affirmative responses and lowest seems to indicate belief that the structures are in place to complete the accounting function but that external review, procedure development and division of duties may be areas for growth in financial capacity. Most reported that their organization files its IRS Form 990, can produce proof of transactions and financial statements.

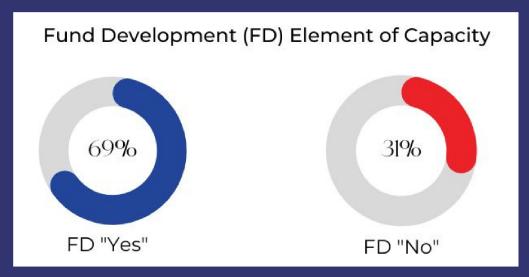
GROUP RESULTS BY ELEMENT FINANCIAL MANAGEMNT (CONT)

- 95% reported that the organization can provide a copy of its most recently filed Form 990 or 990-EZ and the 990 filing date is within federal guidelines.
- 100% indicated that the organization can produce supporting documentation for financial transactions.
- 91% reported that the organization has a balance sheet and a revenue and expense statement for the most recent month or quarter.
- 73% of organizations reported that they can provide the most recent financial statement or audited financial statement (Revenues < \$500,000: External review required; management letter is not required. Revenues > \$500,000:External audit required; management letter is required.)
- 64% Bank reconciliations are performed monthly by an individual who does not write or sign checks.
- 59% indicate that the agency has a Gift Acceptance policy that addresses the types of gifts the organization will and will not accept, under what circumstances gifts will be accepted, how gifts will be recognized and tracked, and how major gifts (e.g. real estate, stock) will be handled. (8a)



GROUP RESULTS BY ELEMENT

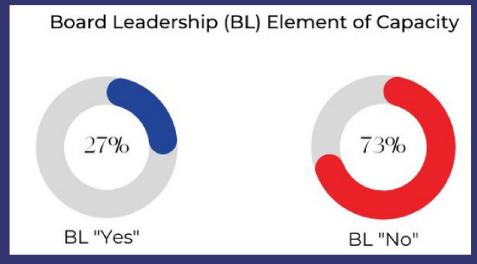
Fund Development was the element with the most negative responses (31%). This was true for both Funding Stability and Fund Planning dimensions.



- 86% indicated that the staff work collaboratively to support fund development and fulfill grant requirements (e.g. nonprofit staff share financial and program reports with fundraising staff, program and fund development staff work collaboratively, etc.)
- 82% reported that the organization demonstrates ability to obtain funds from sources beyond original supporters (e.g. the nonprofit has successfully solicited donations from new supporter(s) or received grant funds).
- 82% reported that the organization's leadership articulates a clear and authentic vision of the organization's mission. The vehicles used to communicate this vision to donors and prospective donors, such as annual reports, website, and brochures, are consistent, accurate, and complete.
- 55% reported that requests for support are made to prospective donors on a regular basis.
- 50% indicated that monthly fundraising reports are produced and reviewed by management.
- 64% reported that the organization has a solid base of funders with two or more funders in most categories (e.g., individual, foundation, corporate, etc.).

GROUP RESULTS BY ELEMENT

73% of responses were affirmative in the area of Board Development. The highest % of affirmative response was in the Dimension of Board Composition & Development with 85% affirmative, and the lowest was in the Dimension of Board Strategic Direction with only 68% affirmative.



- 86% responded that the number and characteristics of board members are consistent with an established set of by-laws or the organization's Articles of Incorporation.
- 86% reported that board member/officer term limits are honored, and elections are held in accordance with the bylaws.
- 86% indicated that the organization has a conflict-of-interest policy that is annually reviewed, updated, and signed by all board members at the beginning of each term.
- 50% of respondents indicated that each board member makes a personal monetary contribution each year.
- 55% reported that the organization provides a board manual to all board members. The manual includes at least the following documents: Bylaws, IRS determination letter; mission, vision, and values; contact information for board and key staff members; budget and other financial information; and program descriptions.
- 55% reported that a majority of board members actively assists in fundraising activities (e.g. cultivates potential donors, identifies prospects, acknowledges donors, volunteers for and/or attends fundraising events, etc.).

Executive Leadership Survey

This survey collected feedback on NEAT Dimensions including Organizational Culture, Performance Management, ED Competencies.

STRUCTURE

Online survey with 18 Questions: 6 Open questions or multiple select 2 Additional information items 10 Likert scale (strongly agree to strongly disagree).

HIGHLIGHTS

- 57% report having a Board approved Strategic Plan
- 57% report that they give staff and/or volunteers opportunities to interact socially
- 50% report their agency has performance assessments administered at regular intervals
- 50% report their agency has staff goal plans

GROUP RESULTS

Executive Leadership Competencies

I am knowledgeable about the demographics of the area and the organization's clients, history of the community.



I participate in activities and opportunities related to the organization's mission outside the workplace.



Executive Leadership Survey Group Results (cont.)

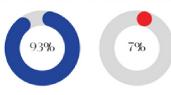
Organizational Culture

My communication with direct reports is frequent and positive.



Agree Disagree

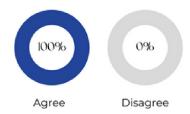
I intentionally create a work environment that raises morale.



Agree

Disagree

I encourage a standard of excellence within my organization.



I have the conflict resolution skills necessary to deal directly with conflict between employees that is disruptive to the work environment.

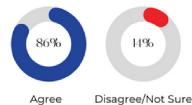


Agree

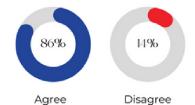
Disagree/Not Sure

Performance Management

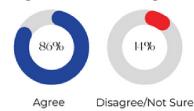
I am familiar with the day-to-day schedules of my direct reports, financial and operational deadlines, and staffing needs of my agency.



My team supports and counsels me on strategic initiatives and provides the expertise and leadership necessary to manage daily operations.



I am directly involved in identifying and developing potential new leaders and recruiting needed talent into the organization.



LAUNCH WORKSHOPS

The LAUNCH training workshop series included three inperson and virtual sessions addressing five of the nine proprietary NEAT Elements:

1.Program Strategies & Outcomes

2.Executive Leadership

3.Board Leadership

4.Fund Development

5. Financial Management

WORKSHOP 1 LAUNCH Intro and Program Strategies & Outcomes

On March 21st 2023, ACAM hosted the first LAUNCH workshop in person at the United Way for 34 attendees from 19 different organizations. The presentation slides are included as Attachment 1.

ACAM's CEO introduced a framework to add knowledge to participants' existing and future plans to enhance infrastructure and took a dive into the results of the self-assessments. The Element of Program Strategies & Outcomes was explored through a case study activity.

100% of participants rated the meeting as excellent/good in anonymous surveys given after the event, 100% of respondents found the workshop informative and useful, and 100% relevant to their work. Pre-/post-tests specifically designed for the workshop revealed an average 127% increase in knowledge.

WORKSHOP 2

Elements of Financial Management

On May 5th, 2023, ACAM hosted the second LAUNCH workshop via Zoom for 26 attendees from 14 different organizations. The presentation slides are included as Attachment 2.

Based on the LAUNCH survey responses measuring indicators of Financial Management, YPTC designed this workshop to provide tips and tools you can use to monitor and plan for the long-term financial health of participating agencies.



100% of participants rated the meeting as excellent/good in anonymous surveys given after the event, 100% of respondents found the workshop informative and useful, and 100% relevant to their work.

Pre-/post-tests specifically designed for the workshop revealed an average 22% increase in knowledge.



Learn more at www.yptc.com

WORKSHOP 3

Board Leadership, Fund Development and Executive Leadership

On June 29th, 2023, ACAM hosted the third LAUNCH workshop at the United Way of Greater Houston for 20 attendees from 11 different organizations. The presentation slides are included as Attachment 3.



Based on the LAUNCH survey responses measuring indicators of Board Leadership, Fund Development and Executive Leadership, Ronnie Hagerty of the United Way of Greater Houston designed custom sessions to cover the basics of nonprofit board participation and fundraising. Tina Council used her extensive experience with conducting Executive Leadership interviews to illustrate the dimensions and competencies of the Executive Leadership Element.

100% of participants rated the meeting as excellent/good in anonymous surveys given after the event, 100% of respondents found the workshop informative and useful, and 100% relevant to their work.

Pre-/post-tests specifically designed for the workshop revealed an average 154% increase in knowledge.

LAUNCH CONFIDENCE RATING SURVEYS

ACAM developed and recorded survey responses for confidence questions rating participants' confidence on a scale of 1 to 5 on four key elements before and after the workshop series. Responses from 17 agencies were recorded, indicating that overall participants seemed more confident in their agency's performance across the elements with a few exceptions noted in the following pages.

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The questions:

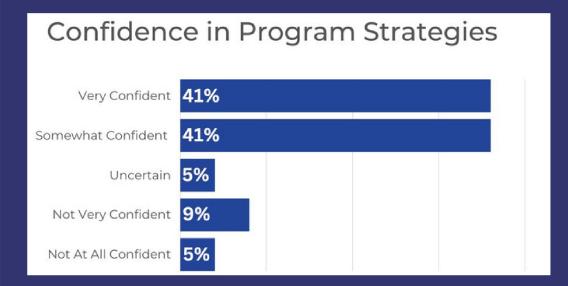
Please rate your confidence on a scale of 1 (Not at All Confident) to 5 (Very Confident) that your agency meets or exceeds industry standards in each of the elements:

- Board Leadership
- Program Strategies & Outcomes
- Fund Development
- Financial Management

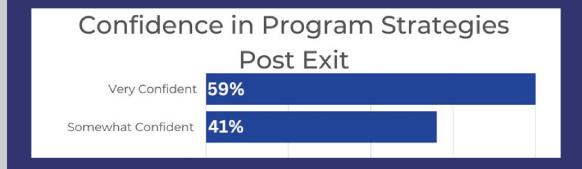
The scale:

- 5 Very Confident
- 4 Somewhat Confident
- 3 Uncertain
- 2 Not very Confident
- 1 Not at all Confident





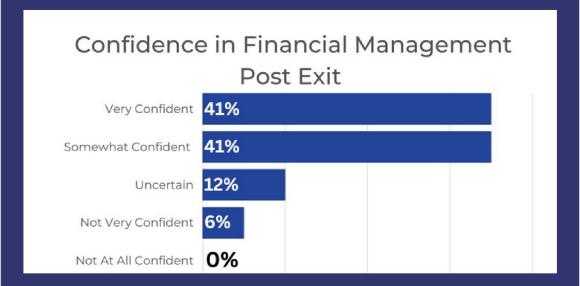
In the initial survey, the average group score was 4.1. Most respondents indicated that they were very confident or somewhat confident that the agency meets or exceeds industry standards in Program Strategies & Outcomes (82%). 14% reported not being confident that their organization met or exceed standards.



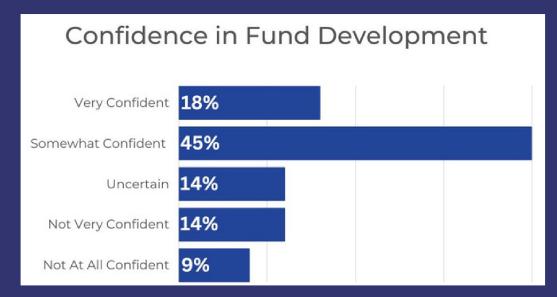
In the post-survey, the average group score went up to 4.6. Unlike in the initial survey, no respondents reported confidence levels of uncertain, not very confident or not at all confident. All respondents reported very confident (59%) or somewhat confident (41%).



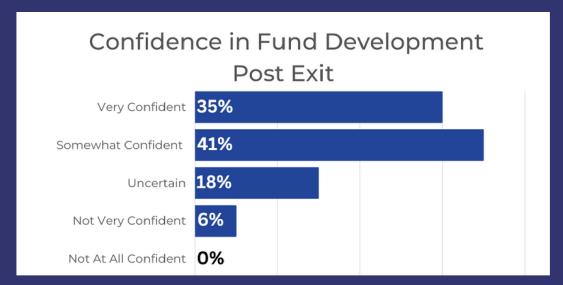
In the initial survey, the average group score was 4.77% of respondents indicated that they were very confident or somewhat confident that the agency meets or exceeds industry standards. 14% reported not being confident that their organization meets or exceeds standards in Financial Management.



In the post-survey, the average group score went up to 4.2. Even though a slighter smaller percent reported they were very confident in Financial Management, no respondents reported not confident at all.



The average group score in the initial survey was 3.5. Again, most respondents indicated that they were very confident or somewhat confident that the agency meets or exceeds industry standards in Fund Development (64%). 23% reported not being confident that their organization meets or exceeds standards in Fund Development.



The average group score went up to 4.1 in the post-survey with a large increase of respondents reporting very confident (17% increase) and a decrease in all other categories.



In the initial survey, the average group score was 3.6. 73% reported being confident that their organization meets industry standards in the area of Board Leadership while 27% reported that were not confident that their organization meets industry standards in Board Leadership.



The average group score went up to 4.2 in the post-survey with a large increase of respondents reporting very confident (15% increase) and not very confident (6%) and a decrease in all other categories.

FINAL SURVEY RESULTS

The final exit survey was developed to identify priority areas to strategically inform a growth plan for participating agencies. Feedback was solicited from agency representative on indicators that scored less than 75% to gauge

their future plans for focusing resources on those indictors. For example, less than 75% of responders indicated that their agency receives funding from multiple categories of funding, so the question asked was "How likely is it that your agency will create and implement a plan to obtain funding from multiple categories of funding sources over the next year?" No indicators scored below 75% in Program Strategies & Outcomes.

The scale:

- 5 Very Likely
- 4 Somewhat Likely
- 3 Uncertain
- 2 Not very Likely
- 1 Not at all Likely

FUND DEVELOPMENT

76% reported it is very likely that their agency will create and implement a plan to obtain funding from multiple categories of funding sources over the next year. 71% reported it is very likely that their agency will grow the number and type of funders over the next year.

71% reported it is very likely that their agency will make requests to prospective donors on a regular basis over the next year.

65% reported it is very likely that their agency will implement a strategy to organize accessible fundraising records in the next year (e.g., adopt CRM, update or create fund development policies, processes, and/or procedures).

53% reported it is very likely that their agency will produce monthly fundraising reports for review by management in the next year.

In total 67% of respondents indicated that they plan to include one or more capacity building indicators as a goal in next year in the area of Fund Development.

FINAL SURVEY RESULTS

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

59% reported it is very likely that their agency will be able to provide the most recent financial statement or audited financial statement per the above guidelines over the next year.

71% reported it is very likely that their agency will provide either a cover letter (for an external review) or a management letter (for an external audit).

59% reported it is very likely that their agency will ensure that bank reconciliations are performed monthly by an individual who does not write or sign checks over the next year

71% reported it is very likely that their agency will have general liability, Directors and Officers, and Fidelity Bond Insurance over the next year

59% reported it is very likely that their agency will have a gift acceptance policy in the next year.

65% reported it is very likely that their agency will have a record retention policy over the next year.

59% reported it is very likely that their agency will have an executive compensation policy that adheres to the above guidelines in the next year.

In total 63% of respondents indicated that they plan to include one or more capacity building indicators as a goal in next year in the area of Financial Management.



FINAL SURVEY RESULTS

BOARD LEADERSHIP

71% reported it is very likely that their agency will have a process for orienting new board members that includes an orientation packet outlining their duties and fiduciary responsibilities over the next year.

59% reported it is very likely that their agency will have a board manual or updated board manual in the next year.

65% reported it is very likely that their Board/committee members will review financial documents thoroughly at each meeting over the next year.

53% reported it is very likely that each board member will make a personal monetary contribution to the organization over the next year.

65% reported it is very likely that the board will actively participate in developing strategies for fundraising and otherwise generating revenue over the next year.

53% reported it is very likely that a majority of board members will actively assist in fundraising activities over the next year.

82% reported it is very likely that the majority of the board will be able to articulate the mission of the organization, describe at least one major past accomplishment or future planned project or initiative, and articulate how the organization impacts the community it serves over the next year.

53% reported it is very likely that their agency will have a current board approved, board developed strategic plan with measurable goals and objectives in the next year.

In total 63% of respondents indicated that they plan to include one or more capacity building indicators as a goal in next year in the area of Board Leadership.

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