

MCN's Strategy Roadmap

Executive Summary

Background and Process

The Minnesota Council of Nonprofits (MCN) was established in 1987 and has grown to be the largest state association of nonprofits in the country. MCN's efforts include serving its members, advancing the nonprofit sector across the state, and improving the state of Minnesota at large.

MCN contracted with La Piana Consulting in spring of 2014 to guide a strategy development process built around identifying and responding to key strategic opportunities that could best leverage MCN's differentiating strengths. MCN used the La Piana methodology, prioritizing agreement on decision-making criteria to drive major organizational decisions and using that guidance to develop its new strategic priorities.



La Piana worked closely with a Steering Team of three staff leaders and the Board Chair as well as a Strategic Planning Committee ("the Committee") of five board members and five staff members to develop the following recommendations.

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Competitive Advantage

Following a review of the strengths of other organizations and itself, MCN identified three differentiating organizational assets.

- MCN is the **central connecting point** for Minnesota's nonprofit sector. Its staff and board know the sector, its strengths, challenges, and needs and use this knowledge to consistently deliver relevant programs and to lead on public policy issues. MCN connects nonprofits to the resources (knowledge, nonprofit peers, financial resources, partners outside the sector) that they need.
- MCN has **earned trust** and its **strong reputation** through long-standing excellent programs and bold leadership on policy issues that is responsive to the sector's ongoing needs and emerging challenges and opportunities.
- MCN's strategic income mix affords the organization **autonomy** in its approach to relationships, strategy, and smart risk-taking

Strategy Screen

Will this decision...

-
- √ Be the best way to achieve MCN's high mission impact?
-
- √ Leverage and sustain MCN's competitive advantages?
 - MCN is **the central connecting point** for Minnesota's nonprofit sector.
-
- √ Leverage and sustain MCN's competitive advantages?
 - MCN has **earned trust** and its **strong reputation** through long-standing excellent programs and bold leadership on policy issues that is responsive to the sector's ongoing needs and emerging challenges and opportunities
-
- √ Leverage and sustain MCN's competitive advantages?
 - MCN's strategic income mix affords the organization **autonomy**.
-
- √ Be responsive to the emerging needs of state?
-
- √ Be able to access MCN's available capacity? (staffing, funding, expertise)
-

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Will this decision...

-
- √ Be a sustainable effort (with or without a defined timeframe)?

 - √ Provide a potential benefit that outweighs opportunity cost?

 - √ Meet a need that is *not* already being met effectively by another organization?

 - √ Respond to a compelling need?

Organizational Strategy

Based on the work accomplished during this process, the Committee recommends affirmation of MCN's overarching organizational strategy. This strategy describes the way MCN will work and how it will move into the future:

MCN will aggregate and engage a large nonprofit membership to increase the sector's effectiveness, influence, and bargaining power through robust programs, bold leadership on public policy issues, and valuable member services.

In order to carry out this organizational strategy, the Committee recommends adoption of two strategic priorities described below.

Strategic Priority: Include and Engage to Address Inequities in our Communities

MCN will launch broad efforts aimed at strengthening nonprofits' inclusion and engagement practices and increasing the sector's effectiveness in serving new and underrepresented as well as existing populations and needs. Work within this priority will include three core components:

- Assist nonprofits to develop organizational accessibility and inclusion and engagement efforts
- Improve MCN's accessibility
- Increase access to resources for underserved communities through targeted capacity-building efforts

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Strategic Priority: Promote Nonprofits as Essential Community Resources

MCN will develop a communications and outreach campaign to increase the sector's influence. The campaign will:

- Leverage MCN's understanding of nonprofit effectiveness into powerful messages
- Develop MCN's capacity to respond to opportunities to educate the public about the field
- Build deeper relationships between nonprofits and key audiences

Implementation

MCN will prioritize these two areas for investment and organizational growth. Internally, MCN will embed activities that support these strategic priorities into its current work. Staff, board, and member training will focus efforts to carry out these key strategic priorities.

Ongoing Decision Making

As part of this process, organizational leaders (including the Board of Directors and staff managers) developed a strategy screen consisting of criteria to be weighed when making critical decisions. The Strategic Planning Committee recommends that the board formally adopt the strategy screen and commit to reviewing these criteria when making critical decisions in future.