Evolving Nonprofits for Good

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Propel Nonprofits Strategic Services
Our Mission

Fuel the effectiveness of nonprofits with guidance, expertise, and capital.

Accounting & Finance, Board Connector, Fiscal Sponsorship, Leaders Circles®, Lending, Resources, Strategic Consulting, and Training
Gifts of Covid

Challenged “the way we have always done this”

Revealed siloes and fostered (or forced) collaboration

Humility: We learned a lot about what we don’t know

The goal now is to avoid returning to the status quo without integrating the learning!
What We Have Tried

- Board effectiveness
- Better fundraising
- Social entrepreneurship
- Foundation-favored reforms
- Return on investment
Why Hasn’t It Worked?

Structures were inherited from places of power and privilege- *the means of achieving the goal cannot be counter to the goal*.

Culture of competition, not collaboration.

Organizations are at the center, when the “smallest unit of health is the community” (Wendell Berry).

Focus on fixing what is wrong, instead of creating what is right.
A Paradigm Shift for Impact

Gottlieb, H. Creating a Better World Means Asking Better Questions By Hildy Gottlieb 24 July 2020
https://ssir.org/articles/entry/creating_a_better_world_means_asking_better_questions
Collaborate with Intention and Creativity

What other types of collaboration are you seeing?

- Sector focused capacity building initiatives
- Space sharing, staff sharing
- Merged organizations
- “Care-team” models of programming
3 Descriptions of Organizations

**Frontline**
Frontline organizations who are in the trenches, responding in the moment to make sure we are okay.

**Emergent**
Organizations who are creating something new: dreaming, and imagining, piloting a new way forward.

**Evolve or Die**
Here now, but may have outlived usefulness, can evolve into something or resource share to create fertile ground for the future.
Discussion

Which of the three seems most reflective of your organization’s current state?
What Works

**Center** power and decision making in community

**Believe** that communities know best what future they want and how to get there

**Ground** your organization in curiosity and humility

**Support** the community to lead its own change
Center Power in Community

- We are stewards of community - the foremost accountability is to the people you serve.

- Programs and initiatives are designed, and decisions are made by the community - with support, process and resources from the organization.

- Boards/employees are the supports to community leaders and those with lived-experience.

Key Question

What can we accomplish together that we cannot accomplish alone?
The Community Knows Best

- Cultivate the space for more people to be able to dream and build
- Rethink the role of “expert”
- Stay future oriented and strengths based
- Believe that a different future is an achievable goal

Key Question

How can we cultivate space for community creativity and dreaming?
Ground Your Organization in Curiosity and Humility

• First: Do No Harm.

• Stay grounded in inquiry, listening & learning

• Normalize the flow of ideas, information and resources across your sector

• Use evaluation as a tool for learning

Key Question
What are the relationships that will help create change?
Support the Community to Lead

• Resourcing social change is different: sharing, relationship, equity, and trust are the primary units of measurement (not only $)

• Create conditions and provide resources for people to be their best

• Lean into mutual support, shared vision and shared values

• Invest in existing & emerging community leaders

Key Question
What might our role be in supporting the change (rather than leading the change)?
What can we do together that we cannot do alone?

What might our role in supporting the change, rather than leading the change, be?

How can we engage in this work with love for ourselves and our communities?
References

PJ Wei-Skillern, PJ and Kooistra, M. Reimagining Boards for High Impact - An Introduction and Invitation. 9 Nov 2022
https://blog.boardsource.org/blog/reimagining-boards-high-impact


Gottlieb, H. Creating a Better World Means Asking Better Questions By Hildy Gottlieb 24 July 2020
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Thank you!

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