



REPORT

Outcome Evaluation Project



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Outcomes Project Report

Introduction

DCNP is a program of the DeKalb County Community Foundation that seeks to improve the capacity of nonprofit organizations in DeKalb County through training, collaboration, access to resources, and professional development opportunities. In terms of a logic model, DCNP initiatives are intended to achieve the mission of DCNP.

Inputs:

Current performance measurements of these initiatives include inputs (volunteer and staff hours, budget etc.).

Activity:

Measuring activity tracks what was actually done such as the number of workshops delivered or the total number of hours spent.

Outputs:

Output measures assess things like how many people participated in a particular training or event and comparing that to a goal or previous participation, as well as the direct result of that effort such as the total dollars raised or total number of donors and organizations participating in Give DeKalb County. Quality can be assessed by determining if the expectations of the participants were met. DCNP routinely assesses the effectiveness of their initiatives by collecting evaluation data from participants attending the trainings and events. This type of summative evaluation generally measures satisfaction at the conclusion of that training or event.

This research project came about because of the desire to assess the long-term impact of these programs and thereby determine the degree to which DCNP is contributing to a stronger nonprofit sector, to examine the impact (long-term outcome) of these initiatives.

Outcomes:

Outcome measures seeks to measure what happens after the event after a certain amount of time has passed and generally fall into four categories: change in behavior, change in attitude, change in condition, and/or change in knowledge. This project is aimed at the changes at the individual level (intern supervisors and interns) as well as the organization level.

The purpose of this research project is to examine the outcomes of three specific DCNP initiatives.

1. Give DeKalb County:

DCNP-member 501c3 nonprofits can participate in an annual giving day in May that raises unrestricted funds with the goal of encouraging philanthropy in DeKalb County. Beginning in 2014, the number of participating organizations, the total number of gifts and the total dollars raised continues to increase each year.

Research focused on gathering perceptions of Give DeKalb County stakeholders defined for this program as nonprofit organizations that were a registered organization for Give DeKalb County during 2018 or 2017. These organizations were asked about the importance of the

day to the organization's overall fundraising goals; if the organization has changed their fundraising goals or plans as a result of the Giving Day; what the organization has done with those unrestricted dollars; how the organization has changed as a result of participation; future plans for Give DeKalb County; etc.

2. DCNP Internship Program:

Started in 2014, the DCNP internship program is a collaboration between DCNP, NIU's Center for Nonprofit and NGO Studies, and NIU Career Services. Interns receive a stipend of \$575 supported by the Douglas C. and Lynn M. Roberts Family Foundation. Each student completes a minimum of 120 hours over the course of a semester.

DCNP sponsors undergraduate interns from a variety of NIU majors to work in DCNP member organizations. Over 100 interns have participated in the program and demand for interns continues to grow as well.

The stakeholders of this program include the interns themselves and the internship placement organizations. For these organizations, research focused on the effect these internship placements have had on the participating organizations in the short and long term; what has changed in terms of the organization's overall capacity, what has the internship program allowed the organization to do; how has the increased human resources benefited or challenged the organization; what are the barriers to continued participation in the internship program.

3. DCNP Training Programs/Nonprofit Day:

DCNP presents several trainings throughout the year, which are free for DCNP members, including the annual Nonprofit Day held in July. Organizations that have a board member attend five of DCNP's designated Board Excellence trainings receive public recognition at Nonprofit Day.

Research focused on the extent organizations have benefited from participation in these trainings in the short and long term; how have trainings affected their strategic planning, staffing plans, marketing efforts, fundraising etc.; if there challenges to participation; what has been their board's participation in the trainings.

Trainings ideally have learning objectives for each one, which match the level of proficiency expected. There are also needs to be a sufficient number of events or activities to achieve that certain level of proficiency.

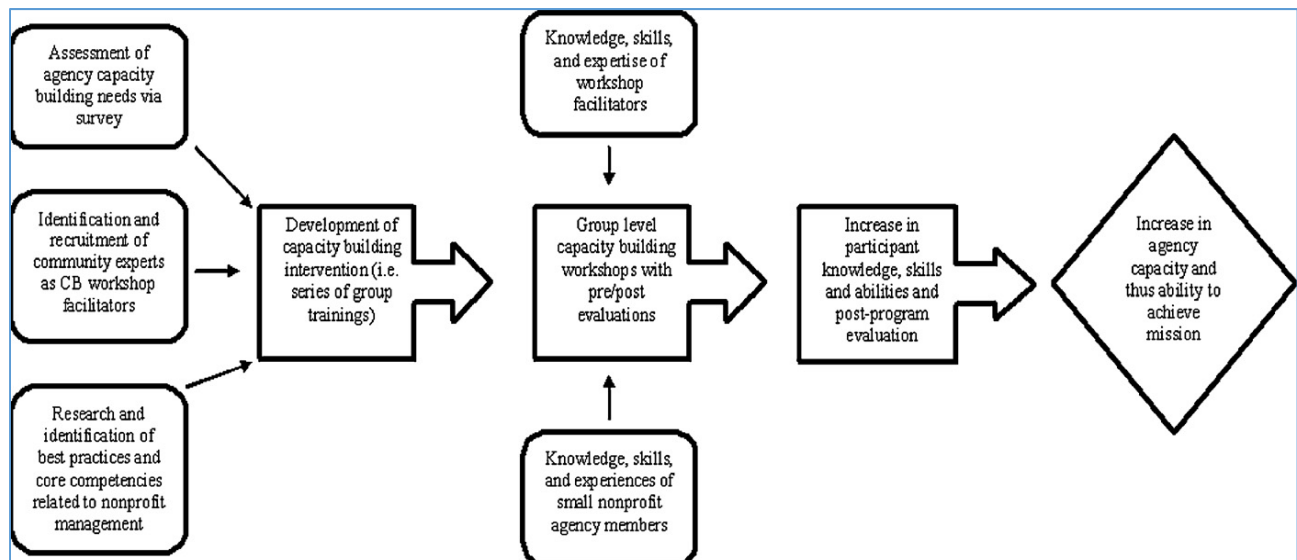
Literature Review

Definitions

There are many definitions of capacity building. We will use the definition from Linnell (2003) for the purposes of this study, which defines it as a “continuum of interventions...that improve an organization’s ability to achieve its mission” (p. 13). Building nonprofit organizational capacity refers to “the resources, effective leadership, skilled and sufficient staff, a certain level of institutionalization, and links to the larger community from an organization might draw help” (Eisinger 2002, p. 118). This continuum of interventions that Linnell (2003) refers to includes:

- Individualized organizational assistance
- Group trainings
- Field-building work that brings organizations with similar missions together
- Peer learning groups
- Geographically focused capacity building activities

The following model (Kapucu, Healy Arslan, Tolga, 2011) summarizes the process of effective nonprofit capacity building.



Nonprofit Opportunities to Build Organizational Capacity

Organizations that are able to invest in building their capacity are more likely to be successful in carrying out their mission. Researchers from the Center for Public and Nonprofit Management at the University of Central Florida studied the capacity building efforts with 450 partner agencies of Second Harvest Food Bank of Central Florida (Kapucu, Healy Arslan, Tolga, 2011). Wal Mart Foundation had provided a grant to fund a yearlong capacity-building program for these partner agencies. The series of workshops offered as part of the program did have a positive effect on aspects of nonprofit management in these small organizations. Furthermore, the participating agencies agreed that

having the opportunity to take these workshops at no cost to the organization was the only way they could have participated. In addition, the series of workshops were specifically designed for small nonprofits, all working in the same issue area, and facing roughly the same management challenges. This research also pointed out the need to determine if organizations have the agency capacity for capacity building, meaning are they ready to adapt, change, learn to incorporate new skills and technology learned through capacity building programs.

Nonprofit Challenges with Building Organizational Capacity

Nonprofit organizations are challenged to focus on capacity building when they are often caught in a starvation cycle, “leaving nonprofits so hungry for decent infrastructure that they can barely function as organizations – let alone serve their beneficiaries” (Gregory and Howard 2009 p. 49). In the public, and often the media, this is portrayed as “overhead”, a myth further perpetuated by nonprofit watchdogs like Guidestar and the arbitrary percentage of expenses reported in the IRS Form 990 allocated to program, administration, and fundraising. The perception is that building capacity, which may require an investment of staff and resources into “overhead” is not a good investment of donated dollars. However, if donors are incorrectly counseled that administration is not a worthy investment, then how does that investment happen if at all? Certain funders, like many foundations, restrict grants and contributions to direct program costs only, further limiting the ability of nonprofits to build their capacity. Government funding, which historically had provided general operating support, or unrestricted dollars that could be used to invest in capacity, are narrowing their focus to direct program costs as well. So even if nonprofit organizations, and the research backs this up, that investing in technology systems, financial systems, skills training, fundraising and other essential administration costs, the funding to do so is extremely limited. Nonprofits combat this by underinvesting and conforming to these unrealistic expectations by underspending, which further perpetuates the “starvation cycle”. Nonprofits have an opportunity to educate donors and funders to address this misunderstanding and create new opportunities to build capacity by focusing on organizational effectiveness, not expense allocations or administration costs.

Effectiveness of Community Foundations

According to the Council on Foundations, there are over 750 community foundations operating across the United States, widely ranging in asset size and mission. They have a unique mission as a public granting agency, unlike many other types of nonprofit organizations (Finkler 2004). Community foundations are also one of the fastest-growing segments of the nonprofit sector (Renz, Lawrence and Kendzior 1999). They have pressure to demonstrate effectiveness because community foundations must pass a public support test and then give that money back to the community (Ostrower 2004). Foundations would typically measure their effectiveness in terms of their grant making, attaining foundation goals, financial performance, helping a specific geographic area, having an impact, strong fundraising and meeting donor expectations (Ostrower 2004). Community foundations might also assess their own effectiveness by collecting information from their grantees through grant reports back to the community foundation. There has been some research to determine the performance of community

foundations as measured by fiscal efficiency and grant making performance (Guo and Brown, 2006; Benjamin 2010, Prewitt 2006), social capital (Graddy and Wang 2009), effectiveness (Ostrower 2007), impact on public policy (Graddy and Morgan 2006), and community development (Carman 2001, Lowe 2004). This research addresses a gap in the literature how community foundations measure their effectiveness in building the capacity of the nonprofit sector.

Nonprofit organizations have many associations they can join, either because of their unique focus such as children or the environment, but they also may join local, regional, state or national associations focused on their nonprofit form. Typically nonprofit associations engage in a number of membership-based areas such as advocacy, conferences, group purchasing, back-end services such as payroll, joint marketing efforts, public outreach, research, capacity-building opportunities, leadership initiatives, legislation tracking. Community foundations have played a role in bringing nonprofits together, either informally through loose networks or more formally, acting as a membership-based association to take on association-type work such as training and advocacy. It is likely rare that community foundations take on this role of association-type work and also act as a funder for the sector. More commonly, a community foundation will act as a convener of their grantees, provide community grants, and provide capacity building training.

Evaluating Capacity Building by Foundations

The evaluation of capacity building can be placed along a continuum according to Connolly and York (2002) all based on the specific circumstance. Evaluation takes place at the activity level. This type of evaluation would track attendance, participation, organizations served, and the quality of the service provided. This type of data is captured in surveys, direct observation, and registration information. The next level of evaluation measures short-term outcomes, such as learning or knowledge acquisition, shifts in attitudes, or some altered behavior. Data would also include observation, surveys, and pre and post tests or comparison studies. The effect under study is also at the individual level. To track long-term outcomes related to the organization, the people they serve or the community, data may include organizational governance and management capacities or community-level information from surveys, interviews, focus groups, financial data, administration assessments, performance data and review of evaluation data. For this research study, the emphasis is on long term outcomes, organizational level data, since DCNP already collects individual level data.

Admittedly, there is little research on the linkages between capacity building efforts and either organizational or community-level outcomes. We lack a standard framework to assess what these nonprofit capacity building programs achieve since we tend to focus on outputs (e.g., plans developed, technology installed), while neglecting outcomes (e.g., increased productivity, sustainability, efficiency) and/or mission and community impact (e.g., improvement in air quality, test scores) (Hanleybrown, Kania and Kramer, 2012; Kania and Kramer, 2011; Light and Hubbard, 2004).

Research suggests that evaluation of capacity building includes learning at the individual, group, and organization levels. At the group level, “foundations, especially perhaps community foundations, may be able to play a role in facilitating the development of communities of practice” (Bryan and Brown 2015, p. 14). These communities, which includes individual level

outcomes, aid in the transfer and absorption of knowledge at the organizational level and therefore changes in knowledge and behavior are formalized and institutionalized (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 2000).

We have some research how foundation's capacity-building for financial management and development affect a nonprofit's financial growth (Faulk and Stewart 2016). In an evaluation of one foundation's capacity-building grant program for 260 organizations over 15 years, researchers found that "financially focused capacity grants do not lead to greater financial performance outcomes" but general capacity building does build nonprofit financial growth (p. 318). Their research suggests that foundations should focus on longer-term evaluations beyond self-reported, short-term assessments such as using financial information from the IRS 990 form.

There are some issues with measuring the effects of capacity building, summarized by Wing (2004). Capacity building itself includes a broad range of items such as consulting assistance to coaching to board training making it hard to have a narrow definition and therefore challenging to measure. Ideally, "both the foundations that require evaluation and the nonprofits that are the capacity-building program's beneficiaries would be able to specify the concrete improvements that are the intended outcomes of the work" (p. 155). Second, if capacity building enables the nonprofit to fulfill their mission, then being able to measure a nonprofit's mission is part of the evaluation. This is based on the organization having a clear mission and measuring it themselves as well as so they organization knows if it is being effective or not. Because nonprofits also have very different missions, foundations should likely spend time thinking through how these nonprofits could measure their performance (mission). Third, the nonprofit needs to have explicit improvement goals that they are focused on, such as in their strategic plan, and these goals are shared with the foundation providing the capacity building so that goals are stated and commonly accepted. In essence, what does success look like at the organizational level if capacity building actually takes place? Capacity building takes time, the fourth challenge, therefore evaluation of organizational outcomes should also be focused on the long term rather than the short term, which funding tends to focus on. Evaluation needs to continue past the intervention to measure improvement over a longer period of time. Fifth, organizational capacity includes investing in people leading capacity building efforts (but people come and go) and investing in organizational systems (to make sure they are institutionalized). Evaluation of capacity building should include both the changes in individual behaviors, knowledge and actions, as well as the change in systems to ensure longevity. Sixth, evaluation should include both the perceptions of individuals about their learning, as well as their behavior change, so internal and external aspects of change. Finally, evaluating capacity building moves beyond what is easy to evaluate but takes into consideration the complexity of organizations, and consider these as limitations to any evaluation.

DCNP Current Evaluation of Outputs and Outcomes

DCNP administers program evaluations after every program and summarizes those annually in a Program Evaluation report. They also administer a membership survey and summarize membership engagement over the year. These reports serve as the basis for this analysis.

Using administrative (registration) data, DCNP has reliable output data (number of participants, number of organizations that participate etc.). The membership survey provides additional output information and asks questions that relate to outcomes, the perception of value of the trainings for example. The membership surveys had low response rates, but the best measure of perceived value actually does not come from the surveys but from the membership renewal rates. If members retain their DCNP membership, this also confirms value perception.

Program evaluations gather data about the program delivery (time, location, instructor) and the content (quality, relevance). The instrument also seeks to measure short-term outcomes, asking participants if they perceive an increase of knowledge or skills because of the program.

Overwhelmingly, participants responded that they do. From the program evaluation summary, participants are very satisfied or satisfied with the trainings.

However, participants' responses to outcome and satisfaction ratings have a great deal to do with price (free), time investment (short), location (local) as well as the quality of the program itself. It is hard to control for the other very appealing variables. The evaluation survey could try to do this by asking participants what they would pay for this training if they had to, how far they would be willing to travel for this program and how much time they would be willing to give to achieve the same benefits. The survey could also ask about the participant's expectations that relate to the program's objectives and then ask if those expectations were met through the training.

There are other methodologies that could improve collection of outcome data such as pre and post tests or random controlled trials. The pre and post test would be cumbersome for short trainings in particular. It's possible, as part of a larger research study, to compare organizational measures of stability and financial health between DCNP participants/members and comparable DeKalb County nonprofits that are not participants/members. It is still hard to control for other factors such as membership and trainings in other capacity-building programs besides DCNP.

Given the length and type of DCNP trainings, the program evaluation surveys are satisfactory to gather output and perceptions of outcomes from participants. More intensive capacity-building efforts, such as capacity building grants, would use a program logic model based on identified outputs and outcomes. This would require learning objectives for each activity/intervention with specific intended measurable outcomes over time. As discussed in the literature review earlier, Faulk and Stewart (2016) researched the results of one capacity building grant program at one foundation over 15 years measuring a nonprofit's financial growth. We have few examples of such an intensive research study because of the challenges in doing so.

DCNP could gather information from nonprofit organizations to determine what areas the organization needs to improve, what is not working or where they want to make change (a needs assessment). Then re-survey those same organizations over time to determine if there have been any changes in those areas based on the organization participating in capacity-building programs in addition to publicly available data (the IRS 990 financial information return).

Method

The Center for Nonprofit and NGO Studies at Northern Illinois University (NIU) received a grant from the DeKalb County Community Foundation (DCCF) to evaluate the DeKalb County Nonprofit Partnership's (DCNP) programs for their effectiveness in building overall capacity in the nonprofit sector.

The population for this study are those individuals and organizations that have participated in the specific DCNP initiatives included in this study. DCNP provided a contact list for all DCNP members from a cross section of nonprofit types, geographic location, and size. All were sent an email inviting them to participate and to sign up using the Sign-up-Genius website. In total, a representative from 15 organizations participated in one of four focus groups held during March, April and May 2019 or they were interviewed one-on-one due to scheduling conflicts.

Participants in the focus group sessions and structured interviews were asked the same set of questions as determined by DCNP in advance, and then the facilitator asked follow up questions. All sessions were audio recorded only for verification of comments.

For the former DCNP interns, DCNP provided a list of all former DCNP interns and the Center for Nonprofit and NGO Studies gave their current contact information if available. An email invitation was sent asking interns to participate in a face-to-face focus group or an online focus group and inviting them to sign up using the Sign-Up-Genius website. One focus group was held in person in DeKalb and two were held online during April and May 2019. In total, nine former interns participated in one of the focus groups or were interviewed one-on-one due to scheduling conflicts. The interns were all asked the same set of questions as determined by DCNP in advance, and the facilitator followed up with questions. The face-to-face session was audio recorded and the online sessions were recorded via Blackboard Collaborate web platform only for verification of comments.

Once all focus group sessions and interviews were complete, the researcher then reviewed notes from those sessions and audio recordings to analyze the results. Those results are presented under each initiative and all names of individuals and organizations have been removed to maintain confidentiality of the participants.

Results and Analysis

The following analysis is broken down by each program area.

1. Give DeKalb County:

Why did you decide to participate the first time and why continue?

Nearly everyone stated	<p>It's so easy to participate. Wanted to reach new donors. Minimal cost and staff time.</p> <p>Liked the idea of a matching opportunity.</p> <p>It's an easier "ask" than selling tickets to an event. It's fun!</p> <p>Like participating in a county-wide effort, builds a sense of comradery among the nonprofits, all working towards a bigger goal together.</p> <p>The nonprofit boards are behind it, because it's about sharing the opportunity to give, provides incentives and it doesn't feel like you're asking people for money.</p>
Many stated	Ties in with the DCNP internship because the spring interns focus their efforts on Give DeKalb County.
Very few stated	The giving day replaced a special event.

How important is the giving day to your organization's overall fundraising goals?

Nearly everyone stated	<p>We like we can customize our giving day page, create a goal, talk about our priorities, makes raising money very transparent to the public, especially those that don't know our organization very well.</p> <p>On our own, we couldn't build this infrastructure to raise money online so well and so efficiently.</p> <p>The giving day energizes staff and donors, overall such a positive thing for the community, brings out the best in us.</p> <p>It is important that Give DeKalb County continue to offer ways to give in person so everyone feels they can participate online and in person, to feel part of this effort.</p>
Many stated	<p>We build Give DeKalb County into our annual budget.</p> <p>It supplements the other ways we raise funds.</p>
Very few stated	Give DeKalb County has replaced our annual giving campaign; we drive donations to the giving day instead.

Have you changed your fundraising efforts as a result of participating in giving day? Doing more or less fundraising events for example, doing more soliciting online in general, changed the timing of your other fundraising events?

Nearly everyone stated	<p>We see potential donors beyond our immediate area, a way to engage people no matter where they live, such as former donors who have moved away (even internationally).</p> <p>We look at our potential to raise dollars differently, much bigger than we thought because of this platform.</p> <p>We only see the potential for online giving growing with younger generations so it's important that we are doing this now and figuring it out.</p>
Many stated	<p>Our organization has moved away from holding so many smaller fundraising events throughout the year although we still have our major/signature event.</p>
Very few stated	<p>We are trying the peer-to-peer fundraising option with this platform. Not huge dollars yet but reaching donors that would not otherwise.</p> <p>We have completely given up one or more smaller fundraising events (and sometimes not created new ones) or replaced our annual campaign with this giving day so we can focus our energies on Give DeKalb County.</p> <p>Where the community gives (to which organizations) has given us a sense of what the community is investing in, what their priorities are year-to-year. Where our organization falls in terms of total donations and total donors gives us a sense of how the community views our organization.</p> <p>As a result of promoting Give DeKalb County on our website, we were able to reach new donors who have had no previous connection to us, live internationally, and they are becoming a major donor to our organization. We are expanding our ideas of who our potential donors are.</p> <p>We have had to work harder to get corporate support for our major event since the corporations that used to support us every spring are now giving to the bonus pool and have told us they cannot support both.</p>

How have you used the dollars raised from the giving day, general operations, specific programs etc.?

Nearly everyone stated	We use these unrestricted dollars for our overall operations, which are critical. Then we can use the dollars wherever they are needed. Gives us the most flexibility.
Many stated	
Very few stated	We have tried to raise endowments funds with limited success.

What do you think is the future of this local giving day for your organization, do you plan to change anything in 2019?

Nearly everyone stated	We do not see any major changes for 2019.
Many stated	We are focusing efforts to reach lapsed donors, sending reminders. It's getting easier to explain the bonus pool but still challenging.
Very few stated	We are trying the peer-to-peer fundraising for the first time.

If there wasn't a local online giving day, how would your organization adjust or could you?

Nearly everyone stated	It would be very challenging to replace the infrastructure and overall coordination of Give DeKalb County that the community foundation provides plus we would lose the bonus pool incentive which many donors like.
Many stated	We would attempt to do it on our own, looking at participating in other online giving days such as Giving Tuesday, but this takes time to research the right platforms and address the data security issues. We rely on DCNP to do that now.
Very few stated	We would have to give up raising money online and go back to more traditional methods like mail solicitations or special events.

Overall, our respondents were overwhelmingly in support of Give DeKalb County. The positive benefits include obviously raising needed funds for their organization in a very efficient way that they could not easily recreate themselves. But interestingly, they also noted the sense of pride this day has given them, by working together as part of the nonprofit sector in DeKalb County. The event has really brought them together around a common goal to lift up all organizations, to increase the awareness of the great working being done.

2. DCNP Internship Program:

Responses from Nonprofit Representatives:

How long has your organization participated in the DCNP internship program?

Nearly everyone stated	We have participated every year from the beginning of the DCNP internship program.
Many stated	
Very few stated	We have participated since the beginning but not every year.

Why does your organization primarily participate in the internship program?

Nearly everyone stated	Interns make it possible to get to things that have sat or just have not moved forward due to limited staff time particularly fundraising and marketing support. Really extends what the organization is able to do in these two areas.
Many stated	Depends on the interests of the interns. We think about what our needs are at the time if we think an intern could step in to help.
Very few stated	Feel like it's something we should take advantage of because it's available to us. We have only one staff member so the DCNP internship is critical to us.

Has your staffing plans changed as a result of having an intern? And if so, what?

Nearly everyone stated	Overall, staffing has not really changed but it did show management and the board what just one additional person even at limited hours was capable of so we could see how additional staff could really add to the organization.
Many stated	Interns breathe fresh ideas into the organization and so has caused our organization to think about how we want to grow and change.
Very few stated	We were ready to hire our intern or create a new position once the organization could see the difference the DCNP intern could make.

What has the internship program allowed your organization to do?

Nearly everyone stated	It has allowed us to get extra help in areas that we really need it in such as fundraising, marketing (particularly social media), website updates, and database management.
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Many stated	Interns have worked out very well when there is a defined project and it matches the interests and skills of the intern.
Very few stated	Intern projects have not gone well if it wasn't the right match or the timing wasn't right for our organization.

How has the increased human resource capacity benefitted or challenged the organization?

Nearly everyone stated	We have really relied on our DCNP interns, particularly in the spring for Give DeKalb County, especially building up our social media in advance of the giving day.
Many stated	10 hours was appropriate to be of benefit to the organization. It is important that interns have a sense how nonprofit organizations work so we like if they are NNGO students otherwise we have to include this as part of their internship. NNGO students are also invested in getting the nonprofit experience, put it on their resume and ask for letters of recommendation.
Very few stated	We would either like more hours or possibly extended over more than one semester. We purposely do not take the same intern more than once so they constantly get fresh ideas and new perspectives.

What are the barriers or challenges to continued participation in the internship program?

Nearly everyone stated	There are more nonprofits than students so the competition for the DCNP internship program is very real and often the system closes before we are able to apply.
Many stated	We are generally able to get interns because we know how the system works to apply immediately. We need to make sure we have clear job descriptions or project descriptions for the interns to work on, but can't plan too far ahead because we don't know if we'll get a DCNP intern or not.
Very few stated	Having the staff time to supervise the interns to work on specific projects is a challenge.

If the internship program wasn't offered, how would your organization adapt?

Nearly everyone stated	<p>We do participate in other intern programs even at other universities and colleges so we could turn to those programs again. However, DCNP interns were more prepared for work in the nonprofit sector which was a clear advantage over other programs and then interns understood the context of DeKalb County which interns from other regions may not. Other colleges/universities may not have students willing to come to DeKalb area however.</p> <p>We don't know because other internship programs do not have the same level of support from the NIU and DCNP partnership. The process is professional, clear and well executed and that is not always the case with other internship programs.</p>
Many stated	<p>Our staff could adjust to not having an intern (and some had since they missed the application deadlines) but that it made the work harder for everyone without the extra support and certain projects would have to sit.</p>
Very few stated	<p>We could afford to replace the intern with paid staff.</p>

Responses from Interns:

Interns were asked to talk about their internship experience, including where they interned, when and how many times they participated; as well as their overall experiences, the internship class, and what they took away from that experience including the inclusion of the internship on their resume, how they talked about the internship in job interviews and if they still kept in touch with their internship organization. The following summarizes our conversations.

Nearly everyone stated	<p>The internship is included on my resume and will remain there until I have other full-time employment to replace it with.</p> <p>I talk about the internship in job interviews because it had such an impact on what I wanted to do with my career or what I learned while a DCNP intern.</p> <p>My DCNP internship gave me very specific skills and projects to talk about, different from my class work, which I believe separated me from other job candidates.</p> <p>The DCNP internship exposed me to the whole management and governance of the organization from board meetings to marketing to fundraising.</p> <p>I really got a sense of the incredible work that nonprofits do with such small or no budget. Work really does get done by being creative and partnerships.</p>
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	<p>I learned so much and it only strengthened my resolve to work in the nonprofit sector.</p> <p>Great that DCNP interns receive the stipend, really important for me to participate since we have to pay for the course and provide our own transportation.</p> <p>I didn't realize how much collaboration exists between nonprofits and this has really helped in future jobs.</p> <p>The DCNP internship was the first job I ever had where I could work independently on a project from start to finish and really feel a sense of accomplishment for doing that.</p>
Many stated	<p>The DCNP internship prepared me to work with other nonprofits but also government partners and I did not make that connection before.</p> <p>Being able to connect with previous DCNP interns was invaluable.</p> <p>I have someone from my DCNP internship organization as one of my references.</p> <p>I was surprised how much I learned about just how professional organizations work, from office policies to conflict resolution.</p>
Very few stated	<p>I was able to have a DCNP internship more than once and loved it!</p> <p>After the DCNP internship, I decided to pursue graduate school and learn more about nonprofits.</p> <p>After the internship, I knew what area of the nonprofit sector I wanted to work in.</p> <p>I was hired, first part-time and then full-time by my internship site and I have this incredible career now.</p> <p>Don't know if the internship class itself was as valuable since much of the content of the class was covered in other NNGO classes, particularly capstone, such as resume review. This was particularly challenging for non-traditional students who already had learned how to act professionally etc.</p> <p>I continued volunteering with my DCNP internship organization and I still feel connected to them.</p> <p>I have reached out to my former DCNP internship supervisor for help with a work-related issue and I was grateful for that support in my network.</p>

Overall, the participants in this study spoke very favorably of the whole experience and the significant impact it had on them personally and professionally. They were grateful for the opportunity and for the financial support. They learned a great deal but they also made connections in the sector which set them on a career path.

3. DCNP Training Programs/Nonprofit Day:

Who mainly participates – board or staff? Why or why not?

Nearly everyone stated	<p>We love Nonprofit Day and try to attend every year, or send staff, to at least parts of the day.</p> <p>We share the trainings and events with our Board especially about issues affecting nonprofits overall.</p>
Many stated	<p>Attendance by executive directors at regular trainings has mostly shifted; more likely, that other staff participate in the trainings since they have attended many of the trainings already.</p> <p>Some board members will attend but very challenging if they held during the day unless the board member is retired. They are volunteers so their time is more limited.</p>
Very few stated	<p>Many programs repeat so not as valuable.</p>

How have the trainings most benefited your organization?

Nearly everyone stated	<p>We have very limited professional development funds in our organization (if any) so these have been critical to keep up with current trends, get new ideas, hear from experts, learn from other nonprofit organizations that we don't normally interact with because of our different missions. We simply couldn't afford the same high quality programs without DCNP.</p> <p>We don't feel like we are in competition with each other even though we are all individually fundraising for our organizations. We see the greater good of cooperation and growing the resources within our county.</p> <p>Even if we can't attend every training or event, we feel more connected to each other and things affecting the nonprofit sector that pulls out of our own specific area of concentration.</p> <p>We feel it is so important that these trainings are close to home, convenient and high quality.</p>
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Many stated	<p>We feel like the whole sector is learning together and the trainings have brought us together around common issues and challenges. This didn't happen before DCNP. We were more siloed.</p> <p>We were able to make connections through trainings that sparked new ideas and collaborations between nonprofits simply by building that ongoing relationship through DCNP.</p> <p>We are professionalizing our operations, creating policies, formalizing committees.</p>
Very few stated	<p>It has caused us to plan our fundraising efforts and create a fundraising plan. Never did this before.</p>

As a result of these trainings, have they affected your strategic plans, staffing plans, marketing efforts, fundraising?

Nearly everyone stated	<p>We always get new ideas to think about and information that causes us to look at what we do differently such as changing demographics and the impact this is having on our outreach efforts.</p> <p>We certainly feel like we are better connected to other nonprofits in the region, more potential partnerships and professional networks.</p>
Many stated	<p>We have better aligned our staff time to concentrate on some things that we should have looked at before but didn't such as building up our fundraising infrastructure or undertaking long term planning.</p> <p>We feel more informed about best practices and knowledge about the nonprofit sector.</p>
Very few stated	<p>It has been frustrating at times to go to the trainings and events and know all the great things we should be/could be doing but such limited staff or time to do them.</p> <p>We have thought about what we could do if we had graduate student internships as well and some have pursued that.</p> <p>Some of our interns became volunteers and even board members which expands our reach to younger generations.</p>

What are the challenges in participating in these trainings?

Nearly everyone stated	Time for staff to attend given the day to day pressures of running the organization. Really like the early morning sessions so you feel like you're not giving up too much of the day.
Many stated	Still hard to get board members to come.
Very few stated	We have already attended so many excellent trainings so needs to be something unique to get me to come now.

What improvements or changes would you suggest if any?

Nearly everyone stated	No major improvements or changes. Keep doing what you're doing. Can't beat the location and affordability.
Many stated	
Very few stated	

Follow Up Questions:***What long-term benefits has your organization experienced because of DCNP membership...if any?***

"We have been able to grow as a result of participating in Give DeKalb County and have made some staffing changes over the past several years."

What has been the return on investment of DCNP membership for your organization?

"It's such a small investment to make in order to have these opportunities. There is no other organization membership that we see this kind of return. The Board never questions including the DCNP membership in our budget because they know how valuable it is to our organization and staff."

"It's amazing that we pay the membership up front and then you're done rather than pay as you go to different trainings, which would be too challenging to budget for. The membership doesn't come out of professional development in our budget that we use for other specific conferences that are more unique to our mission so that helps."

"We were able to attend a specific conference for the first time because we received a micro-grant from DCNP."

Additional comments or anything else to add?

“We will be launching a capital campaign so challenged to raise funds for that but can’t raise funds for that as part of Give DeKalb County”.

“I haven’t made it to Nonprofit Day yet due to timing in the summer which is our busiest season but I hope to.”

“We are so grateful to the Community Foundation for supporting DCNP. It helps us tremendously and we just would not have this support without them.”

Many funders prefer to fund programs, short term needs, rather than on building capacity for effectiveness in the long term. The Community Foundation is one of the rare funders who will fund operating support and thereby supporting capacity-building in addition to funding of DCNP initiatives. All participants in this study appreciated and acknowledged this level of support.

Recommendations

1. Although it did not come up very often, but it did come up, there were still questions about the bonus pool for Give DeKalb County and the positive and potential downside to that. Organizations liked the opportunity for some portion of matching funds and it helped to attract donors to the overall campaign. The downside was that some of their donors or corporate sponsors are now donating to the bonus pool overall and not supporting individual organizations (or that is the perception). It may be worth thinking about that tension when soliciting for the bonus pool or talking to the donors of the bonus pool to see how their giving to individual organizations has changed, if it all, to substantiate this concern by nonprofits.
2. As part of the DeKalb County Nonprofit Study to be completed in 2020, the survey could include a capacity building needs assessment to identify gaps in core competencies of nonprofits and then determine the existing and potential interventions to address those gaps.
3. The notion of communities of practice did come up in the literature as being an important element to institutionalize change in nonprofit organizations. There are several communities of practice at DCCF and DCNP that could be included in future evaluation of outcomes (Digital Marketing Meetup, Board Excellence Program) and other groups that are brought together with a common goal or interest such as DeKalb County History Museums or Arts Organizations.

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Appendix:

15 organization representatives participated in a focus group or a structured interview:

- Gregory Beyer, Arcomusical
- Donna Langford, DeKalb Area Agricultural Heritage Association
- Susan Petersen, 4C
- Dan Kenney, DeKalb County Community Gardens
- Dawn Littlefield, Kishwaukee United Way
- Paul Lalonde, Voluntary Action Center
- Brian Reis, Elwood House and Museum
- Katie Mehne, We Care Pregnancy Clinic
- Jill Olson, CASA DeKalb County
- Diana Hulst, DeKalb County Youth Service Bureau
- Alex Nerad, Egyptian Theatre
- Ann Tucker, Kishwaukee Symphony
- Lynette Spencer, Adventure Works
- Michelle Donahoe, DeKalb County History Center
- Michelle Groeper, Tails Humane Society

9 former DCNP interns participated:

- Marc Hooks
- Jessica Sandlund
- Brandon Pugh
- Brian Joanis
- Jesse Moore
- Lizy Garcia
- Maalik Phipps
- Mikey Pastrana
- Sarah (Trygstad) Langenfeld