

Improving Core Capacity Through Agency Transformation: A Case study: Maternal and Child Health Consortium of Chester County, PA (MCHC)

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Kathleen Enright notes in the monograph of, 'General Operating Support' by Grantmakers for Effective Organizations, that "the result of a steady diet of restricted project based funding is nonprofits hobbled in their ability to strengthen their infrastructures, have flexibility to respond to new or changing conditions, plan for the long term, invest in staff and technology---all the things that any business...needs to be successful over the long haul."

The nonprofit and social sector is a rapidly changing environment. It demands that organizations adapt to increase community needs and limited revenues by identifying ways to provide services and core operations more effectively and efficiently. Developing a Business Continuity and Leadership Development Plan will help

organizations identify, retain and develop emerging talent to face these current and future needs.

Through the implementation of key human resources practices and operational enhancements, the Maternal and Child Health Consortium of Chester County (MCHC) has improved short term organizational effectiveness that contributes to its' ability to respond to ongoing internal and external changes. Improving an organization's ability to be nimble and responsive to continuous change in our sector will promote greater long-term organizational sustainability.

Through dedicated capacity building and general operating support, MCHC has engaged in a unique, results-driven improvement initiative to build its' core capacity. Innovations in management methods and business processes include:

- Development of the organization's Core Values that serve as a foundation for all decisions, shape the organization's culture, and position MCHC to keep pace with the accelerated pace of change.
- Enhanced decision making through the identification and monitoring of metrics that enable us to better measure both employee and program performance, as well as improve our ability to allocate limited resources effectively and efficiently.
- Improved Transactional functions were achieved by enhancing internal systems and introducing

workplace design processes that resulted in more successful business operations.

- Leadership Development/Talent Management to support the retention and growth of our next generation of leaders through the development of performance competencies, as well as the implementation of self assessment and training programs designed to foster an environment of continuous learning.

Components:

(1). Development of Core Values:

Connors and Smith assert in *Change the Culture: Change the Game*, "Creating an organizational culture where people embrace their accountability toward one another and toward the organization should occupy center stage in any effort to create successful organizational change...." Essential to creating this culture was MCHC's identification of a clear list of values to guide all decisions and influence interactions with every organization stakeholder. These values underscore the importance of cultural competence and inclusion. Ultimately all employees were involved in the development of MCHC's Core Values. To ensure the consistent application of the Core Values, staff ideas served as a basis for the creation of MCHC's Employee Manual. Those ideas were translated into measurable behaviors that could be

incorporated into the performance appraisal system.

(2). Enhanced Metrics:

- Metrics were developed for all programs in order to focus on core outcomes and competencies. Metrics also provided an objective strategy to decide which programs to grow, suspend or continue;
- Identified job specific competencies and performance measures to align MCHC's talent with the organization's strategy, goals, and Core Values. These competencies and performance metrics, along with goal identification and tracking, were incorporated into a performance management system; moving from a single universal form paper based system (rarely completed on time or accurately) to ReviewSnap—a web-based, position-specific review system. ReviewSnap reinforces the importance of accountability, as well as communicates and measures employees' achievement of competencies, goals and adherence to MCHC Core Values;
- Development of a Program Planning and Evaluation organizational department that provides ongoing metrics to enhance decision making and reporting of program results;

(3). Improved Technical Functions:

Operational Improvements/Capacity enhancements:

MCHC launched a three year effort that resulted in:

- A receipt of certification from the Pennsylvania Association of Nonprofit Organizations through the Standards for Excellence program in 2009. This intensive review and revision of organizational processes positioned MCHC to successfully reference many of these in the revised Form 990;
- Restructuring physical outlays of several program sites and co-location of programs to improve work flow and processes;
- Cross training staff in key organizational areas such as payroll, accounting functions and program report preparation for governmental funders to ensure business continuity functions;
- A new payroll company vendor allows for electronic timecard completion, leave requests and benefits accrual tracking for 35 employees;
- Changed 401K vendor and administrator to provide staff with access to financial advice and 24/7 on-line account access;
- Spitfire Strategies, a marketing and communications firm in Washington DC, is developing our marketing and communications plan to better communicate our mission and community needs to specific potential donor groups---with the goal of increasing program operating revenues.

4).Leadership Development/Talent

Management:

In 2009 MCHC began, with private foundation support through the Nonprofit Finance Fund and continued in 2011 through the William Penn Foundation, implemented a talent management program designed to retain, engage, and strengthen the organization's intellectual capital and support its' continuity and succession planning efforts:

- Utilizing the Myers Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) to enhance organizational communication and individual self knowledge, high-potential staff completed the MBTI and created Development Plans to support their learning to "flex their Type." A series of team building sessions followed to strengthen the application of the insight provided by the MBTI;
- MCHC embraces Tom Adams' assertion that "talent refers to all staff...everyone has the capacity to contribute and lead" and Marla Cornelius and Tom Wolfred's belief that "next generation" organizations share the traits of "Shared Leadership" and "Continuous Learning." To fully grow the abilities of all staff, and support their achievement of targeted competencies, a subscription to BLR's Employee Training Center is now accessible. This web based system provides a convenient and cost effective method to provide training at all of the organization's six locations. The system's ability to integrate relevant MCHC policies into the training content

makes it a vehicle for reinforcing MCHC's Core Values. The many courses employees can complete include: Effective Communication, Diversity in the Workplace, Time Management, Team Building, Defensive Driving, Conflict Resolution and Consensus, Ethics, and Stress Management. In addition, the system incorporates an extensive range of leadership training, from How to Conduct Effective Performance Appraisals to Encouraging Employee Input.

- In the preface to their seminal work, *The Leadership Challenge*, Kouzes and Posner assert that "... leadership creates a climate in which people turn challenging opportunities into remarkable successes." Using the author's "Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership" as a departure point, MCHC defined the competencies essential for current and emerging leaders in the organization. Managers were provided 360° feedback regarding their leadership behaviors via Kouzes and Posner's Leadership Practice Inventory (LPI) . This assessment, along with the MBTI, provided a framework for the formulation of individualized Development Plans. Created in consultation with Dr. Judith Katz, an Organizational Psychologist and Coach, these Plans were designed to identify and address "competency gaps" and blind spots and support the self-knowledge essential to enhancing leadership ability. As part of their Development Plans several key staff have

participated in the emerging and seasoned leaders programs at Bryn Mawr College's Nonprofit Executive Leadership Institute (NELI). Others have embarked on special assignments and all are meeting regularly with their managers to monitor their progress in achieving their developmental goals. This initiative has provided an essential data point in the creation of MCHC's Succession Plan for key positions in the organization.

Summary:

The often stormy seas of financial uncertainty and organizational changes mandates that we learn new skills to better navigate these waters. Funders are important as they need to be willing to invest in the needed infrastructure to help build a seaworthy boat, develop strong mariners and keep our eyes on a horizon of hope.

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Ms. Pamela Bryer is the Executive Director of Maternal and Child Health Consortium of Chester County, West Chester, PA. She has over 30 years of public health management experience in hospitals, MCOs, and community based non profit organizations. She has led the strategic direction and operations of this women's and children's prenatal home visiting and early education organization for 18 years and has grown the staff to a team of 35 through a public/private funding partnership of over 2.5 million dollars. Ms. Bryer has successfully led the organization through the Pennsylvania Association of Nonprofit Organization certification process "Standards for Excellence", Under Ms. Bryer's direction, MCHC received the Glaxo SmithKline IMPACT award three times since the award's inception (the only organization to ever do so). This award recognizes outstanding nonprofits that increase access to care for vulnerable families. She also

received the March of Dimes Woman of Achievement Award for Health and was a founding trustee and current board member of the Chester County Fund for Women and Girls.

Ms. Bryer has a BA, cum laude, from the University of Texas at Austin and a Master of Public Health degree from the University of Texas, School of Public Health in Houston. She holds a credential as a Certified Fundraising Executive (CFRE), a certificate from Bryn Mawr College from the Nonprofit Executive Leadership Institute and a certificate in Leading Organizational Change from the Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania.

Ms. Fitzgerald-Turner has over 25 years of experience as a HR Executive and Consultant. Her HR career has been devoted to assisting both non-profit and for profit organizations compete in an environment where they strive to maximize the return on their HR investments. She earned an MA in Human Resource Development from George Washington University and is certified to administer a variety of personality assessment tools to aid in career coaching, succession planning and leadership development programs including the MBTI, FIRO-B and CPI 260. Ms. Fitzgerald-Turner has also earned certification as a Senior Professional in Human Resources (SPHR) and a Global Professional in Human Resources (GPHR)

from the Human Resource Certification Institute.

Ms. Fitzgerald Turner has given numerous presentations to business and community leader groups. She has designed and facilitated leadership development programs, which have been credited with dramatically enhancing the effectiveness of managers. She has published articles in HR Magazine, Workforce, and HR Advisor Journal and written about her experience as an expatriate in France and Germany for expatvillage.com and relojournal.com.