

Capacity Building in the Non-Profit Sector

The scarcity of philanthropic and other resources in New Mexico contributes to a challenging environment for the state's non-profit sector. The McCune Foundation supports initiatives that build operational capacities for non-profits, making expertise in communications, finance, leadership, organizational development and other areas more broadly available in the sector.

New Mexico non-profits face tough choices when it comes to staffing. While programmatic elements are frequently prioritized, capabilities in operations and administration are often relegated to the backburner. Consequently, many organizations lack key operational and administrative expertise, leaving staff members to struggle with professional functions such as accounting, communications, strategic planning, and evaluation and data collection. A strong base of expertise in these areas that is easily accessible to many high-performing organizations will help drive effectiveness and increase the impact these groups have in the broader sector. The Foundation's efforts in Capacity Building will be centered on addressing this need through the development of systems and platforms that can be leveraged by multiple organizations. In support of this priority, the Foundation has identified the following leverage points.

Key Leverage Points

Expertise and professional services. Because the skills, expertise and experience needed in the areas of operational and administrative execution are in great demand all across New Mexico, they are often expensive, and subsequently out-of-reach for many non-profit organizations. Yet, the highest-performing organizations — in the public and non-profit sectors — often demonstrate the highest levels of operational and administrative execution. Unfortunately, the best, most innovative programming available will be curtailed in its effectiveness if not supported by excellence in these other areas. While it is helpful to build competency within organizations in these areas, "expertise" offers the most positive impact on the programming those skill levels support. The Foundation is seeking innovative approaches that increase access to expert professional services and then integrates them within the non-profit organizations it supports around the state. In order to maximize impact of its funding, the Foundation is most interested in approaches that enable multiple organizations, as opposed to proposals that seek to build capacity within a single organization.

Shared services and infrastructure. Projects and programs that drive operational-efficiency in the sector by creating opportunities for multiple organizations to share infrastructure or staff will fall within the scope of this priority.

Leadership development. Leadership and management skills are crucial to building and delivering effective programs in the non-profit sector. The Foundation is interested in programs and approaches that seek to identify people with leadership potential and develops those individuals to be more effective employees and organizational leaders across the sector. In particular, the Foundation prioritizes efforts that focus on under-represented populations and emerging leaders from vulnerable communities.

Workshops and training. The Foundation values the building of skills through workshops and other training opportunities. However, a number of partner organizations in the state already provide well-developed and professionally delivered programs of this nature, so the McCune Foundation will not seek to replicate such services.

Fundraising and development capacity. While fundraising and development are critical aspects of non-profit work, the Foundation is moving away from funding development positions within individual organizations at this time.