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Funding Strategies for Nonprofit Animal Shelter Leaders

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This is to certify that the doctoral study by

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has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
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Walden University
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Abstract

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MBA, Walden University, 2017

BS, Towson University, 2013

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

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Abstract

Nonprofit animal shelters provide vital services to the community and improve the overall well-being of animals. Many animal shelters, however, face the challenge of insufficient funding. Some nonprofit animal shelter leaders are burdened with financial uncertainty because of a lack of funding strategies for operational stability and survival. Grounded in the resource dependency theory, the purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies that nonprofit animal shelter leaders use to obtain funding. The participants comprised three nonprofit animal shelter leaders in Maryland. Data were collected from semistructured telephone interviews and public financial reports. Data analysis was conducted using Braun and Clarke's six-step thematic analysis approach to code the data and identify emerging themes. The three major themes that emerged from the analysis were: time management, funding diversification, and relationship cultivation, as the strategies used to acquire adequate animal shelter funding. A key recommendation is to actively engage in transparent communication to establish a long-term relationship with donors and use time effectively by implementing strategic planning. The implications for positive social change include the potential for nonprofit animal shelter leaders to procure adequate funding to deliver services to the community, fulfill the shelter's mission, and improve animal welfare.

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Dedication

This study is dedicated to my mother, grandmother, and the love of my life. Together you were the support system needed to endure this academic journey- I could not have done it without you! Madre, thank you for your endless support, encouragement, and instilling in me that I could do anything I set my mind to. Grams, I am thankful for your prayers, kind words, and warm hugs when I needed them the most. To my love, thank you for being my rock and my best friend. You remained by my side throughout the ups and downs and believed in me when I did not believe in myself. Je t'aime.

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Section 1: Foundation of the Study

The goal of nonprofit animal shelters is to remain financially viable and achieve the organization's mission (Litrico & Besharov, 2019). Animal shelter leaders are responsible for making financial decisions to acquire operational stability, fulfill the mission of housing stray animals, provide care, and find animals a permanent loving home. The lack of funding has often prevented attainment of this goal and furthered the rapidly declining health of nonprofit animal shelters; therefore, additional funding strategies must be developed for survival (Widmar et al., 2015).

Background of the Problem

Animal overpopulation has been an issue in the United States for over half of the past century (Weiss et al., 2013). Each year more than 89 million dogs and nearly 94 million cats are in American households in the United States (Southland et al., 2019). Unfortunately, some household pets are often abandoned or surrendered to an animal shelter, overpopulating the shelter pet community. Nonprofit animal shelters play a vital role in the community. It has been estimated that six to eight million domestic animals are taken to animal shelters yearly, but only a small percentage are adopted (Turner et al., 2012). Many animal shelters have struggled to keep pace with the demand for housing stray and surrendered animals (Goselin et al., 2011). For nonprofit animal shelter leaders, operating a shelter and helping animals is an expensive task. Various expenses of an animal shelter include operation costs, maintenance costs, medication costs, veterinarian expenses, cost of supplies, staffing expenses, volunteer expenses, and the cost of advertisements to promote awareness of adoptable animals and gain additional supporters

(Goselin et al., 2011; Widmar et al., 2015). Some nonprofit animal shelter leaders have to resort to euthanasia or turning away animals to avoid closure. Sinski and Gagné (2016) noted that 18 million cats and dogs are euthanized in the United States yearly. A reason why animal shelter leaders euthanize animals, whether healthy or unhealthy, is because they often do not have adequate funding to house animals and provide them with proper care. Funding strategies could improve animal shelters' operational efficiency and enable leaders to contribute to promoting animal welfare.

There is a critical need for new research in the area of pet shelters. There is perhaps an insignificant amount of research on funding strategies in nonprofit animal shelters. To contribute to filling the perceived gap in literature, further research on nonprofit organizations' funding strategies is recommended as the ensuing knowledge may provide strategies and options in aiding financial sustainability (Chikoto & Neely, 2014). The findings of this study could provide nonprofit animal shelter leaders with supplemental funding strategies to alleviate financial burdens and thereby contribute to positive social change.

Problem Statement

Funding is a major challenge for nonprofit animal shelters in the United States because of the high intake levels and budgetary constraints (Kim, 2018). With 3,500 brick and mortar animal shelters in the United States that take in six to eight million cats and dogs each year, the level of funding needed is substantial, and funding support is insufficient (Humane Society of the United States, 2018). The general business problem was that nonprofit animal shelters with insufficient funding are negatively affected, resulting in minimal care supplies, forced closure from lack of operational costs, and resorting to euthanasia. The specific business problem was that some nonprofit animal shelter leaders lack strategies to obtain funding for shelters.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies that nonprofit animal shelter leaders use to obtain funding for shelters. The targeted population for this study consisted of three animal shelter leaders in Maryland who successfully obtained funding for 5 years or more. The implications for positive social change include the potential for other leaders of nonprofit animal shelters to diversify strategies to procure adequate funding to meet demands, which could decrease closures, enhance community services, improve animal welfare, and fulfill the shelter missions.

Nature of the Study

The qualitative and quantitative methods involve distinctive ways of gathering and analyzing data; it is up to the researcher to determine which approach is appropriate depending on which data collection methods will be used (Eyisi, 2016). Data collection methods that researchers use in qualitative research include interviews, observations, open-ended questions, and field notes (Eyisi, 2016). In quantitative research, data collection methods rely on gathering numerical data to test hypotheses (Rahman, 2017). The quantitative research approach was not appropriate for this study because a hypothesis did not drive it and numerical data was not used; I conducted semistructured interviews in this study to acquire detailed descriptive information to understand the participants' viewpoints. I used qualitative research to observe and interview nonprofit animal shelter leaders to explore funding strategies that have been successful for 5 years or more. Researchers wanting to integrate qualitative and quantitative research methods into a study undertake a mixed methods approach (Baškarada & Koronios, 2018). This doctoral study did not involve incorporating quantitative components; therefore, the mixed methods approach was also not appropriate for this doctoral study.

I used a qualitative case study design for this study. The case study design is particularly effective in exploring and obtaining an in-depth understanding of a phenomenon in a real-life setting using direct data collection methods such as semistructured interviews (Runfola et al., 2017). A case study design can be either single or multiple. A single case study design limits research to a single analysis unit; in contrast, a multiple case study design can contain different analysis levels, which helps a researcher analyze data within each real-world environment across different situations to understand similarities and differences (Singh, 2014). A single and multiple case study design can also involve analysis units, which are holistic or embedded variants (Yin, 2018). The difference between the two variants is that within an embedded design, subunits of the organizations are identified, and it can be highly quantitative due to the involvement of statistical tests; in contrast, the holistic design does not include subunits and the nature of the organization is explored (Yin, 2018). There were no subunits examined in this study; therefore, the holistic multiple case design was chosen for this qualitative study to conduct a comparative analysis to explore the nature of funding strategies used by three successful nonprofit animal shelter leaders.

I also considered the phenomenological and grounded theory designs for this study. Creswell and Poth (2018) explained that an in-depth description of the phenomenon is provided using the case study, phenomenological, and grounded theory approaches; however, the three approaches differ in the primary objective. The phenomenological approach's primary objective is to discover the “essence” of the personal meanings of the participant’s experiences, and the primary objective of the grounded theory is to interview participants who have undergone a life transition or change (Padgett, 2017). The grounded theory and phenomenological approach did not align with the purpose of this study because I did not intend to interview animal shelter leaders who had undergone a life change or explore the essence of personal experiences and life stories. However, I intended to draw on the multiple experiences and perspectives of animal shelter leaders from multiple data sources to produce a rich interpretation of successful funding strategies that align with the case study design's primary objective.

Research Question

RQ: What strategies do nonprofit animal shelter leaders use to obtain funding for shelters?

Interview Questions

1. What strategies have you found effective for obtaining funding for your nonprofit animal shelter?
2. How do you measure the effectiveness of each funding strategy that is used?

3. What key challenges have you faced when implementing successful funding strategies?
4. How did you overcome these key challenges?
5. What key skills in finance, business processes, and strategic planning are required for your organization to successfully obtain funding?
6. What additional information would you like to provide about your organizations' strategies to obtain funding for nonprofit animal shelters?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of this qualitative multiple case study was grounded in the resource dependency theory (RDT), which was originated and introduced by Pfeffer and Salancik in the 1970s (1978). RDT is most known for reflecting that nonprofit organizations experience funding instability, face environmental demands, and rely on external stakeholders (AbouAssi & Tschirhart, 2018). A leader can use the RDT to connect the nonprofit organization to substantial resources necessary for success and survival (Aulgur, 2015). The RDT was appropriate for this study because leaders can identify approaches for decreasing uncertainty in a hostile environment, such as a nonprofit animal shelter lacking sufficient funding. The donor base and external funding relationships are maximized for nonprofit organizations with the RDT (Aulgur, 2015). Therefore, the RDT was an appropriate choice for this study to understand the strategies that nonprofit animal shelter leaders use to obtain funding for shelters, which correlated with the overarching research question.

Operational Definitions

Animal shelter leaders: Individuals responsible for making financial decisions for operational success and ensuring that the animal shelter fulfills its mission (Widmar et al., 2015).

Animal welfare: An animal being healthy, safe, well-nourished, and having the ability to cope with its current living situation (Maguire, 2016).

Efficiency: In the nonprofit sector, fulfilling the nonprofit organization's mission at the lowest cost possible (Ecer et al., 2017).

Euthanasia: Intentionally ending an animal's life to alleviate suffering due to untreatable illnesses or injuries; the act is also resorted to when an underfunded animal shelter has insufficient space and the inability to secure adoption (Kalof, 2017; Southland et al., 2019).

Funding: Money provided to a nonprofit organization primarily through donations, grants, fundraising events, and philanthropic giving from the public (Reese, 2018).

Nonprofit organization: A possible tax-exempt business that produces goods or services for the community (Bowman, 2011; Karl, 2015).

Nonprofit animal shelter: A type of business with the purpose of providing service to the public for good to save animal lives (Widmar et al., 2015).

Sustainability: In a nonprofit organization, the ability to survive, endure, and retain donors and volunteers (Iwu et al., 2015).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Assumptions

An assumption is defined as the researcher's standpoint, which is provable as neither true nor false; however, it is important to identify all assumptions because they influence the research question anchoring the study (Olson, 2016). A researcher's assumptions can shape the research, and to appropriately interpret research findings, a researcher must acknowledge all underlying assumptions (Kirkwood & Price, 2013). I identified five assumptions that would influence this study. The first assumption was that each nonprofit animal shelter leader would be knowledgeable in funding strategies and would be able to thoroughly discuss the strategies aligned with the animal shelter's mission. Second, I assumed the study participants would be open and fully honest, even with confidential information such as finances. The third assumption was that as the researcher, I would be able to minimize any personal biases. The fourth assumption was that interviews and observations would be sufficient to achieve data saturation. The last assumption was that the multiple case study would be the optimally suited approach and design for this study.

Limitations

Limitations refer to potential areas of weakness throughout the study that are usually out of the researcher's control but must be identified because they can ultimately affect the study results (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2018). One limitation of this study was conducting interviews with only animal shelter leaders. Volunteers and support staff were not interviewed. Excluding volunteers and support staff from the interviews could have been a potential missed opportunity to learn additional perspectives because they are often included in executing funding strategies for animal shelters. Additional limitations included limiting the sample population to three nonprofit leaders from multiple animal shelters in Maryland who were successful in using funding and limiting the time frame of nonprofit animal shelter leaders implementing successful funding strategies to 5 years; more funding strategies could have possibly been gained if the years of financial sustainability window was more extensive. The final limitation was personal involvement as the researcher. A researcher must be cautious of personal biases (Baker, 2016). Biases were a potential limitation because I am an avid animal lover. The researcher's interaction with the data and as a potential voice in the study could result in biases when using the qualitative research method. I limited personal biases with in-depth probing interview questions, member checking, and bracketing.

Delimitations

Theofanidis and Fountouki (2018) determined that delimitations are the boundaries of a study set in place to achieve the objective of the study. I identified three delimitations for this study. The first delimitation was that the participating nonprofit animal shelter leaders must meet the eligibility criterion, which was obtaining funding for animal shelters successfully for 5 years. The second delimitation was choosing Maryland as the geographic region. The third and final delimitation was conducting face-to-face interviews, virtual interviews over Skype, and telephonic interviews, asking open-ended questions.

Significance of the Study

Contribution to Business Practice

The findings of this study could be valuable to business practitioners contributing to leadership funding strategies to increase animal shelter funding stability. The knowledge and findings from this study may also be useful for nonprofit animal shelter leaders to avoid forced closure and insufficient resources. Inadequate funding resources is one of the greatest challenges for nonprofit animal shelter leaders (Rottkamp & Bahazhevska, 2016). As a result of overpopulation and increased animal intake rates, many nonprofit animal shelter leaders are challenged with accumulating funding to support animal shelters (Spencer et al., 2017). Nonprofit animal shelter leaders who struggle with economic circumstances may benefit from the findings of this study to develop better operational practices and funding strategies to increase contributions from donors for external funding.

Implications for Social Change

The implications for positive social change may lie in the knowledge and strategies that the findings of this study could contribute to nonprofit animal shelter leaders in adequate funding. Strategies to increase funding potentially could benefit the communal environment's improvement, reduce free-roaming domestic animals, and increase animal welfare. By identifying effective funding strategies, nonprofit animal shelter leaders may be able to maintain goals and fulfill the organizational mission to effect social change for the community through providing services. Successful nonprofit animal shelter leaders may also create quality volunteering opportunities for the self-fulfillment of citizens (López-Arceiz et al., 2017).

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

A review of academic and professional literature in this qualitative multiple case study served to explore the funding strategies that some nonprofit animal shelter leaders use to obtain funding for animal shelters. The research findings of this study may provide nonprofit animal shelter leaders with sustainable funding strategies to acquire operational stability and fulfill the mission of animal care and welfare. This study was grounded in the RDT; therefore, the literature review was related to the RDT and current knowledge regarding the phenomenon. After reviewing the articles, journals, and books, I discovered a seeming paucity of literature relating directly to nonprofit animal shelter funding and operations.

In the available peer-reviewed articles and journals, researchers stressed the need for further research on the topic. I could not find significant literature related to nonprofit animal shelters or animal shelters; however, I did discover literature on nonprofit organizations. Insignificant literature was a representation of an apparent gap in the literature for this topic. Therefore, the results of this study may contribute to new knowledge and further exploration of the phenomena to contribute to positive social change.

A literature review is the foundation of a research study because the writer provides background and describes what is known about the phenomenon (Steinert & Thomas, 2016). For this literature review, I used peer-reviewed articles, scholarly journals, books, and government websites concerning nonprofit organizations and animal shelters. To source articles for review, the search involved perusal of the Walden University Library and Google Scholar. With access to the Walden University Library, it was possible to search multiple databases including, SAGE Journals, Academic Search Complete, Journal of Applied Animal Welfare Science, ProQuest Central, Business Source Complete, and ERIC. The selected literature was primarily published within the past 5 years to support relevancy. I recorded each search and peer-reviewed article to minimize duplication. Key search terms included *nonprofit funding, not for profit funding, sustainability, diversification, nonprofit organizations, nonprofit leadership, not for profit organizations, animal shelter funding, resource dependency theory, institutional theory, benefits theory, donors, government funding, nonprofit organization volunteers, fundraising, grants,* and *euthanasia.* The literature review consisted of 143 peer-reviewed articles. To ensure compliance with Walden's DBA 85% requirement, 123 peer-reviewed articles (86%) referenced in the literature review were published within 5 years of anticipated graduation in 2021, and 20 articles were published before 2016. Two books were also referenced in the literature review.

Nonprofit Animal Shelters

As of 2018, the Humane Society of the United States reported 3,500 brick and mortar animal shelters in the United States (Humane Society of the United States, 2018). Scholars Sinski and Gagné (2016) has found it challenging to determine the number of operating animal shelters throughout the United States due to the animal shelter industry not being required to report information. Few studies have been completed on animal shelters and animal shelter care, increasing the difficulty of collecting data (Sinski & Gagné, 2016).

Most animal shelters in the United States are nonprofit; nonprofits are classified as a group that serves the public for good (Widmar et al., 2015). All animal shelters' main goal is to save animal lives by providing shelter, care, rehabilitation, and rehoming animals (Murray & Thomas, 2019; Widmar et al., 2015). It has been estimated that nearly 6 to 8 million domestic animals are taken into animal shelters yearly (Turner et al., 2012). Animal shelters play a vital role in every community because they provide animals in need with a safe place to reside and help provide resources to limit pet overpopulation (Goselin et al., 2011).

Animal shelters promote positive change by reducing the number of free-roaming animals throughout the United States (Turner et al., 2012). In the United States, there are more than 89 million dogs and almost 94 million cats in American households yearly (Southland et al., 2019). Animal overpopulation has become a significant global crisis and has been a serious issue over the past half-century (Gillett, 2014; Weiss et al., 2013). Gillett (2014) noted that 80% of animal owners do not have pets spayed or neutered, and only 10% of animals housed in animal shelters are. In 2017, the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals reported that 6.5 million domestic animals are relinquished to shelters yearly, but only 50% of them are adopted, and the remaining animals are euthanized (Winslow et al., 2017). Many animal shelters with the inability to secure adoption decide to euthanize animals (Turner et al., 2012). Some animal shelters, such as no-kill shelters, do not euthanize animals, which often can lead to ordinary shelters becoming crowded (Turner et al., 2012). It was estimated that nearly 18 million cats and dogs are euthanized yearly in the United States (Sinski, & Gagné, 2016). There are multiple reasons that animal shelters resort to euthanasia including space, declining health, disease, old age, and paucity of funding (Winslow et al., 2017; Southland et al., 2019).

Insufficient funds and the ability to ensure sustainability are the most common challenges for animal shelter leaders (Murray & Thomas, 2019). Another challenge for some animal shelter leaders is volunteers. Staff and volunteers in animal shelters are often severely limited and not adequately trained because finances are insufficient (Turner et al., 2012). Volunteers are viewed as valuable contributors to animal shelters' success because they save the shelter money and help provide proper care to animals such as walking and feeding (Goselin et al., 2011). Animal shelter leaders are responsible for ensuring that the shelter fulfills the organization's mission, and they must make financial decisions operations success (Widmar et al., 2015). Some shelter leaders spend money on sanitation supplies to prevent the transfer of diseases and parasites that can spread throughout the shelter to humans and animals (Goselin et al., 2011). Costs of animal shelters also include food, labor, medications, veterinary expenses, and supplies (Widmar et al., 2015). To meet goals for the organization, the shelters must remain economically viable (Widmar et al., 2015). Animal shelters depend on charitable donations throughout the year as revenue and often rely on the donation of expired pet food and medicine (Turner et al., 2012). Other sources that animal shelters rely on for funding are private and public funding. Private funding is classified as funding from the government, such as grants, and public funding is revenue from donations and fundraising events (Goselin et al., 2011). It is a constant struggle for animal shelters to survive and obtain funding (Goselin et al., 2011).

Resource Dependency Theory

The key to organizational survival is acquiring and maintaining resources in an uncontrolled environment (Froelich, 1999; Nik Azman et al., 2015; Pfeffer, & Salancik, 1978; Powell & Rey, 2015). Pfeffer and Salancik are the founders of the RDT, which was first introduced in 1978 in the book, *The External Control of Organizations: A Resource Dependence Perspective* (Nienhüser, 2008). The book is considered a highly quoted seminal work and was republished unrevised in 2003 (Nienhüser, 2008). Pfeffer and Salancik argued that individual organizations do not have control of the resources required for survival; therefore, all organizations have some level of dependence and each organization relies on an open system perspective, which is considered an external environment to satisfy necessary resources (Froelich, 1999; Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978; Yeager et al., 2015). The theory often has been used to help organizations manage the environment by reducing uncertainty and high dependence (Klein & Pereira, 2016; Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). Organizations in the nonprofit sector are particularly susceptible to high environmental uncertainty attributed to inadequate resources and lack of stability (Froelich, 1999; Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978; Sacristán López de los Mozos et al., 2016). Scholars Nik Azman et al. (2015) asserted that RDT had been the platform for evaluating how nonprofit organizations strategize, perform, and survive depending on the available resources and external environment. The external environment is considered a network of different stakeholders (Ward & Forker, 2017). Sacristán López de los Mozos et al. (2016) stated that the main framework used to explain nonprofit organizations' fundraising efforts is the RDT. For this study, RDT was used as the conceptual framework to explore the funding strategies and efforts that nonprofit animal shelter leaders used to obtain funding and survive in the environment.

Nonprofits are significantly vulnerable in the environment because services are often provided to disadvantaged populations who may not be able to pay for services (Ruggiano & Taliaferro, 2012). With the lack of revenue, organizations experience uncertainty and increasing dependence on resources, including information, knowledge, materials, or access to markets (Klein & Pereira, 2016). The RDT suggests that an organization can be exposed to problems with the resource supply when an environment is unstable (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978; Yeager et al., 2015). Pfeffer and Salancik (1978) proposed that the primary challenge for nonprofit organizations is not that they depend on the environment for necessary resources but that the environment is not dependable (Gras & Mendoza-Abarca, 2014). The resource dependency theorists have posited three themes: (a) the effect of the environment on the organization, (b) the organization's efforts to effectively manage constraints from the environment, and (c) how the impact of environmental constraints that impact the organization. These themes are critical for organizational sustainability, survival, and strategic planning (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978; Powell & Rey, 2015). In their work, Pfeffer and Salancik explained the importance of building relationships when organizations have scarce resources; through relationships and alliances, organizations can gain control over critical resources that are related to finance, knowledge, and expertise necessary for survival (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978; Willem & Coopman, 2016). RDT suggests building bilateral relationships such as mergers, acquisitions, joint ventures, and internal organizational relationships can reduce uncertainties and secure necessary resources (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978; Sergei & Gøril, 2018). Shon et al. (2019) asserted the importance for nonprofit organizations to remain secure financially to pursue the mission; building internal and external relationships can help organizations meet that goal.

The RDT has indicated that a dependent organizations' goal is securing a steady flow of resources for survival, which can be managed with several strategies (Gras & Mendoza-Abarca, 2014; Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978; Park & Mosley, 2017). To manage an uncertain environment, organizations can determine primary revenue streams for stability and diversify revenue streams to decrease volatility (Webb & Waymire, 2016). Revenue diversification is a standard method because it equalizes reliance on the environment and stabilizes nonprofits (Schatteman & Bingle, 2017). Nonprofit organizations that do not diversify funding sources can become dependent on one funding source (Sacristán López de los Mozos et al., 2016). Birken et al. (2017) also emphasized organizations placing a member on the board of directors who can help position the organization to exert more control in the external environment (Jaskyte, 2017). By managing its environment, an organization will be able to effectively strategize, maintain resources, and survive (Yang & Wei, 2019).

Alternative Theories to Resource Dependency Theory

Institutional Theory

The institutional theory specifically addresses the survival and growth of nonprofit organizations in an operating environment (Euske & Euske, 1991; Kerlin & Pollak, 2011). Meyer and Rowans developed the theory in 1977 (as cited in Euske & Euske, 1991). Scholars Dolnicar, Irvine, and Lazarevski (2008) noted that the institutional theory connotes that powerful societal rules, norms, and expectations are critical for organizational success. Meyer and Rowans observed that some nonprofit organizations evolve in institutional environments with institutional rules and suggested that nonprofit organizations conform to cope with the uncertainty of resources in their environment (Euske & Euske, 1991; Kerlin & Pollak, 2011). Organizational success, according to the institutional perspective, is the nonprofit organization's ability to embody and conform to external societal expectations concerning rationality to receive funding (Euske & Euske, 1991).

The institutional theory was further developed by Meyer and Rowan's colleagues DiMaggio and Powell in 1983 (Krause et al., 2019). They introduced new institutionalism known as institutional isomorphism, which suggests that organizations in the same sector such as nonprofits that face similar challenges and issues mimic each other's routines and structures to adapt institutionally desirable practices (Dolnicar et al., 2008). When organizations mimic each other, an information connection is built, reducing uncertainty, increasing legitimacy, and promoting innovativeness (Krause et al., 2019). DiMaggio and Powell identified three pressures that nonprofit organizations in complex environments must comply with collectively for survival: coercive, mimetic, and normative isomorphism (Kerlin & Pollak, 2011; Krause et al., 2019). Krause et al., 2019 explained that coercive isomorphism is direct pressure from powerful entities or society; mimetic isomorphism and normative isomorphism occur when organizations resemble similar organizations through the spread of best practices to reduce uncertainty in their environment. Nonprofit leaders use the institutional framework for legitimacy and fostering alliances, whereas the RDT is used for efficiency and to gain control over required resources for survival and growth (Euske & Euske, 1991; Krause et al., 2019).

Benefits Theory

The principles and postulations of the RDT have been significant and, where applied, may have served nonprofit organizational survival and growth, but some scholars have argued that the theory does not address an organization's full financial health dimension (von Schnurbein & Fritz, 2017). Aschari-Lincoln and Jäger (2016) noted that researchers on RDT focus on the priority of nonprofits obtaining necessary resource materials based on financial sustainability to deliver services instead of prioritizing financial resource relationships. The invocation of the benefits theory may help determine an organization’s revenue portfolio by who receives the services and whether the organization’s benefits are public or private (Bowman, 2017). Stakeholders of nonprofit organizations that use the benefit theory can accrue four types of benefits: public, private, trade, and group (M. Kim et al., 2018). The relationship between nonprofit services and the revenue streams these services generate can be explored using the benefits theory (M. Kim et al., 2018). Nonprofit leaders are encouraged to capitalize on the benefits available by each revenue source to maintain the organization’s mission and survival (Bowman, 2017). Revenue diversification is not the result of a managerial decision making but the mission, goods, and services offered by the nonprofit organization (von Schnurbein & Fritz, 2017). Leaders who have used the benefits theory can possibly explain why certain nonprofit organizations attract specific revenue streams. Nonprofit organization leaders can attract revenue streams including charitable donations, government funding, grants, fundraising, and earned income (Kearns et al., 2014; Lu, 2015; Maguire, 2016). Leaders who rely on a limited amount of revenue sources are more likely to succumb to demands resulting in decreased financial flexibility and increased risk of losing sight of the organization's mission (Aschari-Lincoln & Jäger, 2016). The benefits theory was not chosen for this study because the goal was not to illuminate the relationship between the services that nonprofit organizations provided and the sources from which they obtained revenue.

Nonprofit Organizations

The National Center for Charitable Statistics reported that as of 2016 the United States had more than 1.5 million nonprofit organizations operating (Ki & Oh, 2018). Nonprofit organizations are identified as a group that supports and provides services to the public (Liao & Huang, 2016). The sector of nonprofits emerged to fill the gaps in government services, supplies, and social needs (Arik et al., 2016; Liao & Huang, 2016). Nonprofit organizations vary in size and do not have the same number of resources, but they all have the same purpose: to make a positive difference (Arik et al., 2016). Nonprofits' short-term objective is resilience, and the long-term objective is maintaining services (Bowman, 2017). Types of nonprofit organizations include charitable, religious, literary, scientific, and educational organizations (Arik et al., 2016; Ki & Oh, 2018).

Nonprofits have been operating for thousands of years. Historically, religious groups and the government were responsible for helping the poor (Smith, 2018). The need and demands for services grew immensely, requiring more support (Hopkins et al., 2014). In the past decade, the nonprofit sector has been the fastest-growing organizational segment in the United States (Hopkins et al., 2014). Nonprofit organizations that were registered with the Internal Revenue Service in the United States increased from 1.33 million to 1.44 million, from 2002 to 2012 (Schatteman & Waymire, 2017). About 67% of most common nonprofit organizations, including private foundations and public charities in the United States, are categorized under the Internal Revenue Service as 501(c)3 (Ki & Oh, 2018). Nonprofits that are less than 3 years old and gross under $50,000 a year are not required to file taxes (Karl, 2015). Organizations that are 501(c)3 are exempt from federal income taxes; therefore, the primary funding comes from private contributions, including monetary donations and property such as supplies and household items (Ki & Oh, 2018). Nonprofits are permitted to and often earn a profit, but the earned profits must be reinvested in the organization (Garven, 2015). The term “nonprofit organization” reflects that the organization’s sole purpose is not to make a profit but to apply the revenue to further the mission (Gazzola et al., 2017). Nonprofit organizations have become more in demand, but most do not receive enough funding to meet organization goals (Hopkins et al., 2014).

A decrease in government funding support has caused nonprofits to rely on a mix of funding options for relief, including donations, fees, government grants, and commercial activities (Ki & Oh, 2018; Seo, 2016; Smith, 2018). To maintain the mission and operations, many nonprofit leaders have become dependent on charitable donations, which make up more than 70% of nonprofit organizations' revenue (Ki & Oh, 2018). Charitable donations from individuals and businesses totaled more than $335 billion in 2013 (Garven, 2015).

Thousands of nonprofit organizations must close yearly because of financial distress (Searing, 2018). Being reliant on donations and membership dues makes it difficult for nonprofit leaders to plan for the organization's financial future (Cashwell et al., 2019). For the success and survival of nonprofit organizations, the ability to acquire financial resources is critical (Seo, 2016). Hu and Kapucu (2015) noted that nonprofit organizations could generate revenues with commercial activities such as fundraisers and events to be less dependent on external resource providers.

Nonprofit Leadership

Nonprofit leaders are faced with many challenges, including insignificant financial revenue, financial resources, obtaining adequate staff to operate efficiently, lack of technical resources, government cutbacks, higher accountability expectations, and peer competition (Hopkins et al., 2014; Liao & Huang, 2016). Challenges often force nonprofit leaders to make difficult decisions regarding staff and the available services (Hopkins et al., 2014). To combat challenges, nonprofit leaders diversify revenue sources, expand partnerships, and increase innovation to handle uncertainties (Arik et al., 2016). A resource that nonprofit organizations are utilizing increasingly is the board of directors. An experienced board of directors can help nonprofit organizations oppose challenges and external uncertainties (Arik et al., 2016). Board members can play a pivotal role in nonprofit organizations to build strong connections with the external environment and influence a positive financial experience (Hu & Kapucu, 2017).

Sustainability represents the survival and endurance of an organization (Iwu et al., 2015). In the nonprofit sector, financial sustainability is a constant challenge. Inadequate financial sustainability can jeopardize and have a negative effect on the nonprofit organization achieving goals and mission fulfillment (Castillo, 2016). A sustainable nonprofit is an organization that can continue to fulfill society's needs, mission and satisfy stakeholders' requirements, despite arising difficulties (Ceptureanu et al., 2017). Stecker (2014) found a potential reason why some nonprofit leaders are unable to make an organization sustainable is the concept of thinking outside the box for new ideas is too risky. The first step for sustainability in a nonprofit organization is to remain committed to the values by emphasizing connections personally and throughout the community (Jensen, 2018). Financial management strategies can also help managers create financial sustainability for a nonprofit organization. A management strategy that nonprofit leaders have used to address the challenge is capacity building. Capacity building is a strategy to enhance effectiveness, sustainability, increase resources, and measure an organization's activities (Castillo, 2016). Nonprofit leadership must maintain enough capacity to pay bills and meet the organization's needs (Bowman, 2011). Behaviors and skills that constitute capacity building are the skill to assess community needs, maximize engagement, and improve fundraising (Castillo, 2016). When facing funding uncertainty, many nonprofit leaders have adopted strategic planning into management practices to increase funding opportunities, advance the social performance, and satisfy donor expectations (Hu & Kapucu, 2017). A nonprofit leader must develop strategic plans, metrics, and set the direction of the organization's mission, which is vital for engagement, goodwill, and positive value (Thompson & Blazey, 2017). To implement successful funding strategies, nonprofit organization leaders must meet various competency demands, which can often depend on experience level in the field (Denison & Kim, 2019). Knowledge has been a valuable resource for nonprofits to achieve sustainability and gain a competitive advantage (Mikovic et al., 2019). In a study that evaluated essential competency skills critical in the nonprofit sector, most experienced nonprofit leaders determined that internal controls, the ability to build relationships, budget, and read audited financial statements are critical (Denison & Kim, 2019).

Sustainability can be maintained by managers monitoring budgets, revenue sources, and the use of resources (Cashwell et al., 2019). Nonprofit organizations that implement diversification in financial sustainability strategies to maintain organization goals are potentially less vulnerable to economic shocks. Revenue diversification is often an essential factor for sustainability (Ismail et al., 2019; Lu, 2015).

Nonprofit leaders face the challenge of not creating a stable financial plan with reliance on donors, high competition, and lack of predictability (Cashwell et al., 2019). A strategy that is increasingly being considered in the nonprofit sector to reduce unpredictability is revenue diversification. Revenue diversification is a critical factor for nonprofit organizations to include in funding strategy; however, most nonprofit organizations rely on primary funding sources, lacking diversification (West & Ries, 2018). Diversification is defined as an approach to generate revenue from multiple financial types and sources (Sacristán López de los Mozos et al., 2016). Diversification strategies have helped preserve and promote financial health, reduce net asset loss and the probability of closure (Hu & Kapucu, 2015; Mitchell & Calabrese, 2019). It has also benefited nonprofits by reducing funding uncertainty and vulnerability (Berrett & Holliday, 2018; Froelich, 1999). A diversified mix of funding can help reduce revenue volatility by decreasing an organization's dependence on an individual source, solving cash flow problems, and lowering the possibility of cutting programs (Hearld et al., 2018; Sacristán López de los Mozos et al., 2016). Funding diversification has many benefits; however, it is not a fix because nonprofits still face budget cuts and receive decreased donations (Waters, 2014). A concern is that some nonprofits move away from the organizational mission when focusing on diversifying funding sources (Mishra, 2016).

The top challenge for nonprofit leadership has been obtaining funding and achieving financial stability (West & Ries, 2018). Some funding sources include grants, events, and donations. Nonprofit leaders use the funding for the benefit of serving the needs of communities and the general public (Greitemeyer & Sagioglou, 2018). Nonprofit organizations rely on resources and funding for stability (Kearns et al., 2014; Lu et al., 2019). Recommendations for nonprofit organizations to acquire funding included developing cost-effective strategies, promoting leadership, increasing community engagement, completing affordable audits, fundraising, and record-keeping (Maguire, 2016). Funding strategies should include unrestricted funding, diversification and policies should be developed when accepting new funding opportunities; the nonprofit organization must know when to say no to some funding sources that may not benefit the organization in the future (West & Ries, 2018). The following diverse nonprofit funding sources are explored in the subsequent sections: government funding, charitable donations, volunteers, and innovative fundraising.

Nonprofit Funding

Government Funding

Government funding's are grants and contracts at the federal, state, and local level (Corbett et al., 2017; Murphy & Robichau, 2016). The amount of government funding for nonprofit organizations vary. For some nonprofits with a fee-for-service payment model, 80% of the funding comes from the government (Clear et al., 2017). In contrast, a financial estimate survey completed by nonprofit leaders who do not have a fee for service payment model showed that 7% of nonprofit revenue sources are from government contract and grants (Kim & Daniel, 2020). Governments paid nonprofit organizations $137 billion in 2012 to support the delivery of services (Schatteman & Bingle, 2017). Burde et al (2017) determined that nonprofit organizations established for a more extended period were more susceptible to receiving government funding. Some nonprofits rely entirely on government funding, whereas others use it with other funding sources (Murphy & Robichau, 2016). Many consequences are attached to relying on government funding. Government funding for nonprofit organizations can be inconsistent and known as funding instability, a timed risk (Burde et al., 2017). The more government funding that a nonprofit organization receives, the more it becomes less motivated to seek additional funding sources such as donations (Hladká, & Hyánek, 2017). Nonprofit organizations that are dependent on government funding often lose the ability to negotiate the external environment; therefore, nonprofits often must decide if they want the organization to be mission-driven or profit-driven (Henderson & Lambert 2018).

The literature contains negative and positive associations between nonprofits and the government, which creates an adversarial relationship (Lu, 2016a). Government contracts are primarily performance-based, requiring the nonprofit organization to meet the contract requirements (Herman, 2010). A negative association with government funding is that nonprofits must meet all regulations that may impact nonprofit operations. Research shows that government funding has significant disadvantages, including late and low payment rates, economic instability, and administrative burdens (Park & Mosley, 2017). Government-funded nonprofits are required to devote efforts towards grant proposal writing, financial auditing, and reporting. Nonprofit leaders must submit extensive reports, which can shift the organization from being mission-driven to focus on performance management (Murphy & Robichau, 2016). Nonprofits have expressed the extreme burden of complicated applications and reporting requirements but are hesitant to vocalize frustrations in fear of losing the critical source of funding (Pettijohn, & Boris, 2018). Nonprofits are identified as the weaker element in the relationship because of disadvantages, including funding cutbacks, increasing rules, and a high competition level among nonprofits for government funding (Fyall, 2016). Nonprofit organizations securing government funding such as grants and contracts can cause additional overhead costs making it challenging to manage (Lu & Zhao, 2019). Leaders use high overhead costs as an indicator of inefficiency (Lu et al., 2020). Overhead costs represent the output of resources dedicated to administration and fundraising efforts to support the organization; however, it can also be indirect costs that are found in government contracts and grants (Berlin et al., 2017; Lu et al., 2020). Many nonprofits keep a line of credit as security when donations and resources become scarce; a credit line could accrue and then result in debt, increasing financial strain for organizations (Charles, 2018). When the government delays funding to nonprofit organizations, nonprofits leaders have been forced to take out loans and use credit cards to fulfill services and meet goals (Marwell & Calabrese, 2015; Pettijohn & Boris, 2018). Funding from the government has an overall negative impact on nonprofit organizations (Fyall, 2016; Lu, 2015).

Many scholars have viewed the relationship between nonprofits and the government as problematic when there is a deprivation of independence, inefficiencies, and nonprofits becoming profit-driven (Fyall, 2016; ; Lu, 2015; Marwell & Calabrese; 2015). Jing and Hu (2017) found that there are challenges in the government-nonprofit partnership. Government funding sources often have many spending restrictions that negatively impact nonprofit organization operations (Murphy & Robichau, 2016). Bergman (2015) stated that more transparency is required by the government. Receiving government funding can be cautionary because it creates an obligation back to the government; the government gains some control over the organization (Lu, 2015). For-profit organizations rarely experience contract constraints because they can leverage the organization's size to bargain power and acquire higher rates in comparison to small, community-based nonprofits (Herman, 2010). Park and Mosley (2017) noted that nonprofit leaders need to strategically examine both the cost and benefits of being reliant on government grants.

Lu (2016a) found that despite the government injecting regulations and incentives to participate in policy issues, nonprofit leaders should not consider government funding a dangerous obstacle. Government funding also creates many positive opportunities for nonprofit organizations. When the government increases involvement with nonprofits, the effect can impact donor contributions. The crowding-out theory shows that donors reduce contributions to the organizations based on the assumption that the nonprofit needs are met (Lu, 2016b). Some citizens also believe that since government funding comes from tax money, they do not have to provide additional donations and support (Wasif & Prakash, 2017; Willems et al., 2019). In contrast, the crowding-in theory stimulates donations. Donors contribute more when the government provides funding because they view the government as an endorsement of reliability when little is known about the nonprofit, and it draws attention to social needs (Lu, 2016b).

Concerning government funding, there are four types of donors: supplementary, complementary, competing, and autonomous (Hladká & Hyánek, 2017). Autonomous donors make donations to organizations that reflect personal values and whose mission they believe in (Hladká & Hyánek, 2017). Complementary donors use donations to address government failures by filling in gaps and working with the government to provide services (Pettijohn & Boris, 2018). Competing donors challenge the government with donation amounts and ultimately help change the public sector for the better (Hladká & Hyánek, 2017). Supplementary donors donate to the same nonprofits that the government does with the belief that the government funding amount is insufficient

(Hladká & Hyánek, 2017). Pettijohn and Boris (2018) tested nonprofits' culture in the United States and determined that Maryland has a complementary state culture.

The partnership between government and nonprofits can create a mutual dependence. Nonprofit organizations serve the community, which helps the government achieve policy goals and nonprofits provide the government with the advantage of better understanding the community's needs for policymaking (Coris, 2017; Lu, 2016a). The government can access residents through government-funded nonprofits to share information and provide conflict resolution (Jing & Hu, 2017). In return, government funding provides nonprofit organizations with stability and flexibility to mobilize extra resources for the organization (Lu, 2016a). Available government funding also provides nonprofit organizations with new products and resources to achieve organizational goals (Murphy & Robichau, 2016).

There is a limit to the amount of funding that the government can distribute; therefore, all grant applications are not accepted, which leads to higher levels of completion as the nonprofit sector expands (Faulk et al., 2017). An issue with the increase in demand for services is that the government is declining financial support requests (Shapiro & Oystrick, 2018). All levels of the government experience budget reductions and financial distress (Cheng, 2019). With the limit of government funding capacity, public goods, and services, many nonprofit's needs are unsatisfied (Kim, Pandey & Pandey, 2018). Government funding support has decreased; thus, nonprofits rely heavily on a mix of funding options for relief, including fees, commercial activities, and charitable donations (Ki & Oh, 2018; Seo, 2016; Smith, 2018).

Charitable Donations

Donor funding is a critical source of funding for nonprofits (AbouAssi, 2015; Panic et al., 2016). To maintain the mission and operations, nonprofit leaders have been dependent on charitable donations, which make up more than 70% of nonprofit organization's revenue (Ki & Oh, 2018). Charitable donations from individuals and businesses totaled more than $335 billion in 2013 (Garven, 2015). Other terms for donation are philanthropy, charity, and charitable giving (Hladká & Hyánek, 2017). Philanthropy is the act of giving money to a nonprofit or charity to express they are humanitarian (Hladká & Hyánek, 2017). The nonprofit sector is also referred to as the philanthropic sector, a combination of public and private funding (Lemos & Charles, 2018). Nonprofits rely on donors for funding, and donors rely on nonprofits for legitimacy and delivering program services, which create interdependence (AbouAssi, 2015; Ecer et al., 2017). Critical determinants of potential donors are education, income, gender, and religion (Reissová et al., 2019). Agyemang et al. (2019) added that older people are more likely than younger people to donate, and women are more likely than men to donate. Donors have become more sophisticated; they are no longer just donating money but evaluating the organization's outcome and success (West & Ries, 2018). If a nonprofit organization is not meeting its mission and goals, many donors are no longer donating.

Donor activity is unpredictable, unreliable, and commitment can be inconsistent (Ranucci & Lee, 2019). Many donors are hesitant to donate in the wake of scandals of some nonprofit organizations that seek to maximize self-gain instead of being devoted to achieving the organization’s mission (Adena, 2016). Nonprofit organizations have started putting the terms mission and financial health in the same sentence to let donors know that the organization's financial health is a part of the mission, so donations are crucial (West & Ries, 2018). Feiler et al. (2014) conducted a study to explore the factors that influence donations. Feiler et al. determined that donors are confident in contributing donations when used towards the organization's mission. Feiler et al. showed that a negative influencer for donations was commercialization because donors fear that the organization’s mission is not the primary focus. Donor involvement usually depends on the relationship to the organization's trustworthiness and perception (Shehu et al., 2016). Additional reasons for lapsed donors are often attributed to a lack of communication, marketing efforts, donor relationship length, and financial status (Feng, 2014). If nonprofits build a strong relationship with donors, they may have annual donations (West & Ries, 2018). One method to maintain donors is marketing efforts; however, that method is not always successful (Feng, 2014). A limitation of relying on donations is that donors can limit funding availability; therefore, nonprofits must have multiple donors and a vast pool of funding resources to reduce resource dependency (AbouAssi, 2015). Nonprofit organizations that can generate revenues with commercial activities such as fundraisers and events are less dependent on external resource providers (Hodge & Piccolo, 2005)

Volunteers

One of the most significant internal resource providers for revenue in a nonprofit organization are volunteers (Slyke & Johnson, 2006). Volunteers have been valuable for nonprofits for multiple reasons, including launching fundraisers, providing administrative services, time contribution to support an organization's mission for free, and the relationship with the organization makes them a gateway for monetary donations (Senses-Ozyurt & Villicana-Reyna, 2016; Yeomans & Al-Ubaydli, 2018). Most volunteers are unpaid; however, a nonprofit organization often spends money on training, maintenance fees, and recognition of volunteers (Brayko et al., 2016).

Volunteer involvement is critical for all nonprofits; however, small organizations with a limited budget and staff support rely more heavily on volunteers to serve as support staff (Nesbit et al., 2018; Shehu et al., 2016). Senses-Ozyurt et al. (2016) reported that more than 80% of nonprofit organizations rely on volunteers to accomplish nearly one-third of operational tasks. Americans perform work each year without monetary compensation for a rewarding experience of helping organizations meet the community's needs (Senses-Ozyurt & Villicana-Reyna, 2016). In 2014, more than 62.8 million people volunteered time and donated to nonprofit organizations in the U.S. (Brayko et al., 2016).

Volunteers can often provide skill sets that nonprofit employees lack, perform specific tasks at a higher level than some full-time staff, and increase the confidence for an organization within the community (Nesbit et al., 2018). Volunteering is a major contributor to the workforce; the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics reported in 2013 that the nonprofit organization volunteer workforce in the U.S. was approximately $163 billion, which was a contribution of 8.1 billion hours (Brayko et al., 2016; Garven, 2015). Larger organizations typically have trained staff that is paid, whereas smaller organizations may only have volunteers (Counts & Jones, 2019).

Volunteers ultimately save nonprofit organizations millions of dollars each year (Brayko et al., 2016). Without volunteers, the nonprofit sector and society as a whole would face a crisis (Senses-Ozyurt & Villicana-Reyna, 2016). The effects of volunteering have been proven as a beneficial contributor to the community's health; examples included satisfaction within the community, decreased mortality rates, and an increase in mental and physical health (Brayko et al., 2016).

A challenge that nonprofit leaders face is retaining volunteer support in an environment with uncertainty and keeping them engaged (Brayko et al., 2016; Modi & Sahi, 2018). The impact of uncertainty for nonprofits can require change and adaptation, resulting in volunteer resistance, particularly from volunteers who have volunteered at the same organization for a long time (Warburton et al., 2018). An organization's mission can determine volunteer involvement; volunteers often choose an organization that is similar to their values; therefore, the mission of an organization can either attract or repel volunteers (Nesbit et al., 2018). Warburton et al. (2018) noted that often volunteers leave when they are concerned that the organization has detoured from its mission. The trustworthiness and perception of a nonprofit organization for volunteers and donors greatly determine involvement (Shehu et al., 2016). Another reason that volunteers cease efforts is attributed to difficult working conditions within the community (Modi & Sahi, 2018). Research has shown that one-third of volunteers stop volunteering at a nonprofit after one year (Senses-Ozyurt & Villicana-Reyna, 2016). A solution for nonprofit leaders is to listen to volunteer concerns and show them that they are appreciated and valuable to the organization (Modi & Sahi, 2018). Even if they decide to leave, showing volunteers that they are appreciated is a positive way of fostering a healthy relationship that could flourish in the future. It has been proven that individuals who volunteered in the nonprofit sector tend to donate more (Slyke & Johnson, 2006). Past volunteers are seen as an abundant source for donations and fundraising because they are easier to contact, a relationship is already built, and they know the organization's impact, which reduces additional costs (Yeomans & Al-Ubaydli, 2018). A nonprofit organization's ability to attract and retain donors and volunteers is a clear indication of effectiveness and sustainability within an organization (Iwu et al., 2015). An effective way to connect with the community to attract more volunteers is through fundraising events (Peet, 2016). Fundraising is mission-driven and volunteer centered (Herman, 2010).

Innovative Fundraising

The goal of most nonprofit organization fundraiser events is to raise awareness, raise money, and increase participation (Davis et al., 2016). The highest component of fundraising comes from donations (Maguire, 2016). In 2011, fundraisers accumulated $218 billion for the nonprofit sector in the United States (Yeomans & Al-Ubaydli, 2018). Kim and Daniel (2020) reported that 45% of nonprofit revenue sources are from fundraising contributions.

Two types of fundraisers are traditional and market-oriented. The traditional fundraising approach includes passive short-term actions with organization administrators passing out flyers, pamphlets, sending letters, emails to attract donors, and on-site contribution requests (Kasri & Putri, 2018). During traditional fundraisers, a nonprofit organization can relate to donors who share a common goal and interest (Hommerová &

Severová, 2019). Traditional fundraising creates an excellent avenue for linking the community socially and increasing visibility. In contrast, the purpose of the fundraising market-oriented approach is to target a more extensive network of potential and loyal donors for continuous long-term donations (Kasri & Putri, 2018). Fundraising is not just about raising money; it is essential to manage a donor base. Fundraisers are considered the gatekeepers of the donor relationship (Alborough, 2017). Fundraising research shows that nonprofit organizations that implement proactive market-oriented approaches to engage with donors are proved to obtain better fundraising performance, achieve more loyal donors, and are more successful in fundraising (Kasri & Putri, 2018). Traditional fundraisers are a well-known funding strategy for most nonprofits; however, they are not the most effective strategy to raise money (Hommerová & Severová, 2019; Peet, 2016). Traditional fundraising can be very time consuming and not very useful (Hommerová & Severová, 2019). The success of a fundraiser is highly susceptible to current economic conditions (Lee & Shon, 2018). Scholars recommended a strategic market-oriented approach to prevent financial-resource dependence, including a collection strategy, establishing a payment model, and a communication approach to maintaining donor relationships (Kasri & Putri, 2018).

Reductions of charitable donations, the impact of government cutbacks, and increased completion in the nonprofit sector have challenged many nonprofit leaders to search for innovative ways to survive (Langer & LeRoux, 2017). Most nonprofit leaders embrace social media innovation to encourage dialogue with donors, engage in fundraising, fulfill the organization's mission and adapt to its changing environment

(Armstrong et al., 2016; Berzin et al., 2016; Young, 2016). Sustainability-oriented organizations often implement innovative approaches to increase economic value (Watson et al., 2018). Social media is a rising strategy for organizations to fundraise and accept donations online (Waddingham, 2013).

The Pew Research Center reported that 80% of Americans currently have access to the Internet (Young, 2016). An innovative organizational culture is suggested for nonprofits to help foster organizational effectiveness and increase the ability to respond more effectively to changes within the environment (Langer & LeRoux, 2017). Several platforms are designed for communication and networking, including Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube (Young, 2016). Social media platforms are global, which provides nonprofits with a larger donor pool. Facebook has over 800 million daily active users, YouTube has over 100 hours of video shared a minute daily, and each day Twitter has 500 million tweets (Young, 2016). Another innovative social media channel that has become a primary financial resource tool for nonprofit organizations is Crowdfunding.

Crowdfunding has been referred to by scholars as an open call over the internet to raise funding through a collective engagement to support an organization's efforts (Marchegiani, 2018; T. Kim et al., 2017). Five types of crowdfunding campaigns are donation, reward, equity, budget, and lending; charities and nonprofit organizations primarily use donation-based (Li et al., 2020; Shen et al., 2020). Donors who contribute funding through donation-based crowdfunding campaigns do not require an incentive and do not expect anything in return, such as a reward (Li et al., 2020). It has been reported that since 2011, a total of 1.5 billion dollars has been collected worldwide from over 500 crowdfunding platforms (T. Kim et al., 2017). Crowdfunding is not a new strategy; for charities seeking donations, the idea of crowdfunding has been in existence for centuries (Gleasure & Feller, 2016). Crowdfunding was originated in the 1990s with websites dedicated to charities for expanding traditional fundraising campaigns (Marchegiani, 2018). As a fundraising campaign, crowdfunding has become increasingly well-known in the twenty-first century with the rise of social media as a primary entertainment source. The core of crowdfunding is based on the foundation of social media, which is the connection and participation of users sharing information and interests (Marchegiani, 2018). There are also several challenges and benefits that crowdfunding poses. A challenge of crowdfunding is that face-to-face communication with the external environment, including donors, has been replaced with computer-centered communication (Marchegiani, 2018). Nonprofit leaders often rely on key predictors and standard explanations of donor philanthropic giving. Gleasure and Feller (2016) explained that crowdfunding limits the opportunity for leaders to predict donation behaviors because donors typically contribute funding anonymously to social groups and organizations that they lack social connectivity to, whereas, with traditional fundraising campaigns, leaders can explain donor giving factors as detour of guilt and enjoyment. The benefits of crowdfunding are that it does not require a contact list to acquire donations and permits the organization to expand its supporting donor network (Marchegiani, 2018; T. Kim et al., 2017).

Nonprofits that use social media platforms can enhance engagement and the opportunity to create a relationship with stakeholders (Avidar, 2017). Nonprofits can also maximize public opinion and increase the nonprofit organization's social capital (Waters, 2014). Indicators of social capital include social trust and social media use (Bae & Sohn, 2018). Fundraising on social media can help promote social change for social causes, including animal welfare, freedom rights, and protection of the environment (Avidar, 2017). Fundraising is essential for the survival and success of nonprofit organizations (Counts & Jones, 2019).

Organizations can solicit small amounts of donations from a global network of donors (Bhati & McDonnell, 2020). One of the most important aspects of raising more money for fundraisers is solicitation, which requires asking an individual for money and support (Peet, 2016). It has been reported that many leaders of nonprofit organizations do not feel comfortable with asking individuals for money (Bell & Cornelius, 2013). Fundraising requires a high-level skill; however, the nonprofit sector lacks highly skilled fundraising professionals (Counts & Jones, 2019). Most leaders lack fundraising skills and are not appropriately trained (Bell & Cornelius, 2013). Innovative online fundraisers often minimize initial entry barriers; however, the experience is still critical for leaders to solicit funding (Li et al., 2020). Having a strong understanding of fundraisers, grant writing skills, and conveying the mission to donors is critical (Counts & Jones, 2019). Fundraising is vital for nonprofit leadership because it serves as a measure of success to determine if the organization’s purpose and mission are affirmed (Herman, 2010). Social media platforms permit nonprofits to create a fundraising network allowing donors to be solicited by someone they trust (Bhati & McDonnell, 2020). Many donors are influenced to donate when they can view that someone in their network contributed donations to an organization. People will also be motivated to donate more when they view the donor activity on the page (Waddingham, 2013). Fundraising is an activity designed to motivate others to help and do good by donating to a cause (Hommerová & Severová, 2019).

Utilizing technology has opened a new avenue for the nonprofit sector, providing them with the advantage of attracting donors, dispensing knowledge, and building awareness quickly (Young, 2016). A negative aspect of social media presence for nonprofits is the constant exchanges between customers and organizations; this is not always possible (Pop et al., 2015). A nonprofit organization's success is meeting financial needs and establishing its mission effectiveness, which requires time throughout the day (West, 2019). However, nonprofit organizations are recommended to have an internet presence to convey information about the organization's vision, mission, accomplishments, and graphics to increase external visibility and transparency (Gazzola et al., 2017; Li & McDougle, 2017). There is a lack of transparency in the nonprofit sector regarding financial disclosure and donations (Blouin et al., 2018). It is important to learn how to communicate with donors (Jones & Daniel, 2018). Insufficient information regarding a nonprofit organization's effectiveness and efficiency often makes donors hesitant to donate (Devalkar et al., 2017). Donors want to see how donations are being spent. Financial transparency can lead to more donations and increase donor confidence. Trust and satisfaction have been identified in the literature as key indicators for customer cognitive intentions (Feng et al., 2017). Conducting fundraising efforts on social media is not purposed for nonprofits to disregard previous successful funding options, but leaders should use it as a next step for engaging with the community in an innovative way to promote transparency (Young, 2016). Fundraising should not be the only way a nonprofit organization receives funding to survive; it is suggested that nonprofit organizations implement diversification to generate funding from multiple sources. (Park & Cho, 2015; Reissová et al., 2019).

Transition

The focus of Section 1 was to provide the foundation of the study. The background of the problem, problem statement, purpose statement, research question, interview questions, and operational definitions were provided. I discussed the significance of the study, possible contributions for positive social change from the findings, and assumptions, limitations, and delimitations. Section 1 also included a literature review, including an in-depth exploration of the conceptual framework, RDT. For section 2, an analysis of the project is presented. Section 2 includes the following components, the purpose statement, the researcher's role, participants, sampling method, selected population, an overview of the data analysis strategy, data collection methods, and techniques. I have provided ethical considerations, including informed consent and strategies to protect the participant. I have also discussed the research method, design, reliability, and validity. Lastly, in section 3, I reviewed the findings of the study, implications for social change, recommendations and provided a concluding summary.

Section 2: The Project

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies that nonprofit animal shelter leaders use to obtain funding for shelters. The target population for this study consisted of three animal shelter leaders in Maryland who successfully obtained funding for 5 years or more. The implications for positive social change include the potential for other leaders of nonprofit animal shelters to diversify strategies, procure adequate funding to meet demands, decrease closures, enhance community services, improve animal welfare, and fulfill the shelter missions.

Role of the Researcher

The qualitative researcher is often the primary data collection instrument and analyst (Clark & Vealé, 2018). In this qualitative multiple-case study, I served as the researcher in the research process. I collected data by conducting semistructured interviews with participants. The research questions were opened-ended to provide the participants with the freedom to provide their perspective and respond in their own words (see Kearns et al., 2014). Nkaragiozis (2018) stated that to learn how the participants interpret their lives and experiences, the researcher must be focused on the *hows* during an interview instead of the *whats*. Demonstrating certain qualities such as active listening, awareness, respect for each person, building trustful relationships, and being sensitive to ethical issues is essential in the role of the researcher (Nkaragiozis, 2018). The researcher's role also includes reviewing the data and verifying an accurate representation of the participant responses to understand the phenomenon (Clark & Vealé, 2018).

To acquire an accurate representation of the phenomenon, the researcher must minimize biases. When using the qualitative method, researchers are more likely to be biased because they interact with the data and have a voice in the research; therefore, a researcher must be aware of potential biases (Baker, 2016; Park & Park, 2016). Biased research has been found to alter the results of a study, and it is considered a threat to the research being reliable (Saunders et al., 2015). I used in-depth probing interview questions, member checking of interview interpretation summaries, and data triangulation in this study to minimize biases. Member checking is used to validate the research findings (Hagens et al., 2010). Fusch and Ness (2015) defined triangulation as using multiple methods to collect and analyze data. Data triangulation is essential to achieve data quality. The use of various data collection methods promotes accurate, consistent results that can increase a researcher's confidence (Jick, 1979). An additional strategy to reduce biases is a systematic review. A systematic review includes conducting rigorous research to collect more supporting data to minimize potential biases (Baker, 2016).

Participants

Nkaragiozis (2018) asserted that participants are treated as coresearchers rather than as subjects in qualitative research. Participants in this study met the eligibility requirements; the eligibility criteria of this research study were nonprofit animal shelter leaders who have an animal shelter in Maryland and have successfully obtained funding for shelters for a minimum of 5 years. Less experienced leaders often do not acquire the skills and knowledge to successfully lead a nonprofit organization (Hopkins et al., 2014). A nonprofit animal shelter leader who did not meet the minimum 5 years eligibility criteria may have had insufficient knowledge to provide a strategic perspective on the strategies for success in obtaining funding. The eligibility criteria aligned with the primary research question for this study:

RQ: What strategies do nonprofit animal shelter leaders use to obtain funding for shelters?

The plan used for gaining access to participants included emailing and calling the animal shelters. A working relationship with participants was an essential element for the research process. Trust, intimacy, and rapport are required to create a warm working environment needed for a participant and researcher to freely exchange information and for the researcher to collect rich data (Elmir et al., 2011; Morse, 2015). To establish a working relationship with participants, I first completed an introductory telephone call or email to explain the purpose of the study and the interview process and to answer questions. I also frequently visited the animal shelter websites to understand the shelter's mission and observe the operations. During the interview process, the working relationship was fostered with open-ended questions. Open-ended questions allow a researcher to ask follow-up questions based on the participant's answer, leading to more discovery, mutual exchange, and better rapport (Chenail, 2011). Member checking is defined as the process of sharing a synthesized analysis of the interview and interpretations of the collected data from the interview and asking the participant to review material to confirm that the information is accurate (Simpson & Quigley, 2016). If the participant felt that the material was not accurate, they could add information, provide clarification, or make corrections. Member checking is a beneficial strategy because researchers can achieve reliability and enhance validity in the doctoral research process (Morse, 2015).

Research Method and Design

Research Method

The three research methods are the qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods; researchers must determine the appropriate research method (Hammarberg et al., 2016). I used the qualitative research method for this study to explore the funding strategies that nonprofit animal shelter leaders use to obtain funding for shelters. I chose the qualitative method for this study to discover the perceptions of the participants through semistructured interviews. Park and Park (2016) determined that the qualitative research method involves discovery of the participant’s viewpoint and existing knowledge through interviews and observations. In contrast, the quantitative research method is a numerical and statistical analysis in which the researcher relies on data to test a theory, form predictions, and test a hypothesis (Park & Park, 2016). Hammarberg et al. (2016) noted that it is appropriate to use the quantitative research method when factual data is required to answer the primary research question of a study and when variables can be linked to form a hypothesis before collecting data. My intent in this study was not to test a hypothesis but to understand the nonprofit animal shelter leaders' viewpoint. Some research studies include both research methods, which is known as the mixed methods approach (Park & Park, 2016). The mixed methods is employed by researchers who use both qualitative and quantitative methods to record data in numbers and data that includes in-depth opinions and feelings of participants (Clark & Vealé, 2018). This study was not driven by numbers or testing a hypothesis; therefore, the qualitative approach was the appropriate research method.

Research Design

The research design is essential for providing a framework when collecting and analyzing data (Ngozwana, 2018). Under the qualitative method, research designs include case study, grounded theory research, and phenomenological research (Singh, 2014). A qualitative research design enables a researcher to understand the social phenomena from the participant's perspectives (Ngozwana, 2018). The grounded theory and phenomenological research designs were considered; however, I used the case study design for this study to explore the funding strategies that nonprofit animal shelter leaders use to obtain funding successfully. The application of a case study research design is conducive to an in-depth investigation within a setting to understand a topic (Saunders et al., 2015). Researchers who use a case study design can obtain rich data. The case study design involves collecting data in a real-life setting using interviews to study a situation where little is known about the phenomenon (Runfola et al., 2017). I conducted in-depth telephone interviews with the nonprofit animal shelter leaders to discover viable funding strategies. Saunders et al. (2015) determined that the case study is more manageable and beneficial to a researcher with limited data regarding a phenomenon.

Single and multiple case studies are used the most by qualitative researchers (Starman, 2013). Researchers who use single case studies can focus on a single entity throughout the entire research process (Yazan, 2015). Single case studies can be limiting and more prone to researcher bias (Singh, 2014). I used the multiple case study to interview three nonprofit animal shelter leaders responsible for obtaining funding for animal shelters. A multiple case study is considered more robust than a single case study; however, to investigate a phenomenon, a researcher must study each case individually and then compare the data (Amerson, 2011; Starman, 2013). A multiple case study helped facilitate reviewing the data in different ways.

The phenomenological research design is primarily known as a philosophy rather than a research design; many individuals find it challenging to adopt it as a framework (Norlyk & Harder, 2010). The phenomenological research design refers to the study of direct experience and a person's consciousness (Groenewald, 2004). A similarity between the case study and phenomenological research design is that an interview can be conducted to collect data. The data collection method for the phenomenological research design is limited to only conducting interviews to learn of an individual's experience; therefore, the interviews can be extensive. However, for a case study research design, data is collected from multiple sources that can reduce the time commitment because there is no data source limitation (Boblin et al., 2013). The phenomenological research design was not used for this study because the data was not based on the participant's consciousness. It was collected from multiple sources to achieve rigor, credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of the research study.

The grounded theory is another prevalent qualitative research design that I considered for this study because it is appropriate when little is known about a phenomenon (Chun Tie et al., 2019). The grounded theory can explain a phenomenon, develop a concept, or generate a theory from the data analysis (Chun Tie et al., 2019;

Cope, 2015). Cope (2015) stated that the grounded theory is useful when a researcher views a real-life event or a problem in an individual's life. My intent with this study was not to explain a phenomenon or generate a theory with the data collected from exploring the nonprofit animal shelter leader's funding strategies. Another reason why the grounded theory was not suitable is that it did not align with the purpose of this study, which was to explore funding strategies, not a life event or a problem that occurred in the participant's life.

Population and Sampling

The population for this qualitative research study was three nonprofit animal shelter leaders in Maryland who successfully implemented funding strategies to secure funding for animal shelters. The purpose of selecting an animal shelter leader from three different animal shelters in Maryland for this multiple case study was to explore diverse funding strategies and understandings to obtain funding successfully. The sampling method that was used for this study was purposeful. Purposeful sampling is beneficial for researchers who do not seek a single correct answer but rather different conceptualizations (Benoot et al., 2016). Exploring different conceptualizations aligned with this study since the multiple case study was the research design. The purposeful sampling method enables the researcher to gain an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon (Benoot et al., 2016). The researcher first determines what needs to be known and then deliberately chooses the participants who possess the eligibility qualities (Etikan et al., 2016). In qualitative research, purposive sampling does not require a set number of participants and ensures that individuals are exceptionally knowledgeable or typical to the phenomenon explored (Etikan et al., 2016; Palinkas et al., 2015; Rushton & Lindsay, 2010). I purposively recruited study participants who met the participant eligibility criteria, including individuals who have a nonprofit animal shelter in Maryland and have successfully implemented funding strategies for at least five years.

Albert and O'Connor (2012) defined data saturation as when the researcher does not have to obtain any further new information. The purposeful sampling framework can be used for researchers to reach data saturation because it places primary emphasis on saturation, such as obtaining an extensive understanding of the phenomena until all research questions are answered thoroughly and no new data is acquired (Etikan et al., 2016). In addition to using purposeful sampling to achieve data saturation, multiple data collection methods were used in this case study. Data collection methods included audio-recorded telephone semi-structured interviews since the participants could not meet face-to-face because of the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions and review of public financial reports that were available to analyze the performance outcomes against the strategies described by participants during the interviews. After completing the third interview, data saturation was achieved. A systematic review was used; all audio-recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim to ensure reliability and validity. An interpretation of the responses was created from the analysis of transcribed interview data to present to the participants for member checking. As the primary data collection instrument for this study, I reviewed the interview data within a week after interviewing to complete an interpretation summary and scheduled a 30-minute follow-up interview with each participant for member checking. During the follow-up interview, participants were asked to review the interpretation of the interview for any thoughts, additions, errors, and clarification. Upon receiving the participant responses, I completed extensive data analysis until no additional themes or possible coding emerged.

Ethical Research

Researchers need to implement ethical considerations throughout all stages of the research process and study. Ethics is defined as the incorporation of morally correct practices to avoid the harm that may emerge during the study (Ngozwana, 2018). To manage ethical challenges, researchers have a wide array of available approaches. For example, a researcher can use informed consent, discuss the steps of withdrawing from a study, and protect the participant's confidentiality (Ngozwana, 2018). Researchers can use a consent form to avoid coercion by providing a detailed explanation of the participant's cooperation in the study to ensure a full understanding, which is under the Belmont Report (Haines, 2017).

As the researcher, the first step was to receive approval from Walden University's Institutional Review Board (IRB); the Walden IRB approval number was #08-27-20-0661372. Once approval was granted, each participant was contacted to request participation in this study and sign a written consent form. The consent form was presented to the participant twice for consent, once within a week of the interview via email and the second before commencing the telephone interview. The participants consented via email with a reply. The consent form outlined the procedure for the participant to withdraw from the study. Participants could withdraw from the study at any time without penalty by providing any form of notification, such as a phone call or written communication.

To share a summary of the findings with the study participants, an interpretation of the participant responses was provided for member checking to enhance the reliability and validity of the data. Each participant had the opportunity to make changes and provide clarification. A copy of the completed study will also be provided to all participants. There were no applicable incentives to participate in the study. To adhere to the Belmont Report, there were measures to ensure the protection of participant confidentiality. The measures that were implemented included removing all participant descriptors and identifiers such as name, email, animal shelter names, and location. All data collected for this study will be maintained securely for a maximum of 5 years from the completion date of the study and then destroyed by shredding hard copy files and permanently deleting electronic files to protect the rights and privacy of the participants.

Data Collection Instruments

As the researcher for this qualitative research study, I served as the primary data collection instrument. In qualitative research, it is common for the researcher to be the primary data collection instrument because they actively participate throughout the entire research process (Clark & Vealé, 2018). Data collection methods included conducting semi-structured phone interviews and viewing public animal shelter documentation such as financial statements, quarterly reports, and monthly statistics. The supporting financial documents served as performance outcome data for analysis and data triangulation to strengthen the research and confirm the success of funding strategies presented in the participants' interviews. Semi-structured interviews enable structure yet flexible, in-depth, rich data that can lead to a deeper exploration of a phenomenon (Peesker et al., 2019). After gathering informed consent, each semi-structured interview was audio-recorded, transcribed, and then presented to participants as an interpretation summary for member checking. Member checking was implemented to validate descriptors, data gathered, analysis, and interpretations to verify interpretation accuracy and ask if any additional information can be provided. Participants were given the opportunity to approve the interpretation of the data. Carlson (2010) recommended that participants not just be given a transcript of the interview; however, interpretations presented as summarizations, emerging themes, and patterns. Member checking is a method used to verify the accuracy of the data after collecting and completing an analysis of the data (Naidu & Prose, 2018).

Data Collection Technique

The quality of the data collected in an interview is shaped and affected by the researcher's skills and the interactive relationship built with the participant (Nkaragiozis, 2018). For a participant and researcher to freely exchange information, trust and rapport are required to create a warm environment for the interview (Elmir et al., 2011). To build a good rapport with the participant, all questions were opened-ended, and I used follow-up questions to aid further discovery. Types of data collection methods examples are semi-structured interviews, informal interviews, documentary analysis, and nonparticipant observation (Sampson et al., 2019). The most common data collection methods used are face-to-face interviews, observations, and focus group discussions

(Moser & Korstjens, 2018). For this study, the data was collected primarily by conducting in-depth semi-structured interviews. Telephone interviews were most beneficial because participants were unable to meet in person as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The strengths of conducting qualitative interviews by telephone include increased interviewer-participant safety, scheduling flexibility, fewer distractions, greater participant anonymity, and a level of privacy (Drabble et al., 2016). All interviews were recorded, interpreted, and member checked by participants for additional feedback. I also reviewed related public financial reports and records for the nonprofit animal shelters.

The *Four Principles of Data Collection* from Yin (2018) is beneficial for scholar-practitioners when addressing a doctoral research question; therefore, the four principles were also used in this study to validate and develop the data collection process. The first principle is collecting research from multiple sources of evidence (Yin, 2018). Researchers who use multiple sources are better able to collect rich data and achieve data saturation (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Multiple sources are also essential for reliability. The second principle is utilizing a case study database (Yin, 2018). Yazan (2015) stated that a case study database is an assembly of evidence that helps the researcher manage data. The third principle is the chain of evidence (Yin, 2018). A chain of evidence is beneficial for a researcher establishing a conclusion for a doctoral study. In a chain of evidence collected, data and research questions are linked (Yazan, 2015). The fourth principle pertains to collecting data when using social media sources. The four principle data collection techniques were viable for this study.

Data Organization Technique

After the data collection process, it must be organized and managed to prepare the data for analysis (Lune & Berg, 2017). The primary function of data organization for the researcher is to preserve the collected data in a retrievable form (Yin, 2018). Computer technology and software are suggested for managing qualitative data efficiently (Johnson et al., 2010). For this study, I followed that suggestion by primarily using computer technology to organize the data. Audio-recorded interviews with participants were transcribed into a Microsoft Word document and then interpreted in a separate document to present to the participant for member checking. An Excel spreadsheet was also used to manage participant information, informed consent indication, and coding the qualitative research. There are many qualitative data analysis software available for organizing qualitative research; I chose Microsoft Word and Excel because of the accessibility and cost savings. All interview notes were recorded on paper within a spiral notebook to facilitate retrieval and data analysis.

The notes written in the spiral notebook is stored in a personal home office within a locked cabinet that requires a key for access. All files on my personal computer on this study, including Microsoft Word documents, Excel spreadsheets, and research information, have been saved on a USB flash drive, which has also been secured safely within the locked cabinet in my home office. Electronically recorded interviews have been password protected. All recordings, files, raw data, and documentation will be destroyed after five years after the official completion date of the study.

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis and methodological triangulation were used for the data analysis process to compare raw data and convey detailed themes. The data were collected using semi-structured interviews with participants. Public documentation, including relevant vital records of animal shelters and notes compiled during the interview, was used for data analysis processing. Braun and Clarke's (2013) thematic analysis framework approach to data analysis was used to serve as a guide. The process included the following 6-steps: (1) familiarization with the data; (2) systematically coding; (3) generating themes; (4) reviewing and revising themes; (5) defining and naming themes; and (6) producing the research report. First, to familiarize myself, I immersed myself in the data by transcribing the interviews and continuously rereading the interview transcripts and notes. Then I created an interpreted summary of the interview data for member checking. Next, I coded the data by creating labels to capture the data content. The codes were then clustered based on similarity and reviewed to identify meanings and themes through an inductive approach. An inductive approach is data-driven; excluding all researcher analytic preconceptions is beneficial to focus on the participant's voice and reduce potential biases (Hastings & Pennington, 2019). Next, revisions were conducted if the themes were not rich and did not have significant supportive data. I then provided labels and descriptions for each theme. Lastly, I concluded by finalizing the structure of the themes, providing supportive examples from the data for each theme, and connecting the analysis to the overarching research question of the study.

Before data analysis began, all interviews and notes were transcribed verbatim into a Microsoft Word document and double-checked to ensure accuracy. Then the transcription was interpreted into a summary to provide to participants for member checking. For member checking, participants were requested to review and provide feedback. Once participant validation was completed, each participant was assigned an identifying numerical value and color code to keep track of all participant responses. Available public financial statements that could depict emerging themes of successful funding strategies to help answer the research question were also reviewed. Methodological triangulation uses multiple sources and methods to collect data (Carter et al., 2014). When conducting analysis, triangulation can increase the credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of the research and findings (Dadich & Jarrett, 2019). For this study, methodological triangulation was used to confirm the collected data from multiple sources. I organized the data per question to perform data analysis and used a color-coding system to code the interpreted interview summary data systematically. Vaugn and Turner (2016) mentioned that organizing the data question by question can help analyze large amounts of qualitative data, and coding can help focus on the analyzing process. Once each data item was coded, I used the coding to generate themes to reveal similarities and differences across the data set. Microsoft Word and Excel were used to critically analyze the data and determine meaningful emerging patterns to develop an in-depth exploration of the phenomenon. Computer software is recognized as a good starting point when searching for patterns, insights, and analyzing data (Yin, 2018). As mentioned earlier, the purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the successful strategies animal shelter leaders use to acquire adequate funding needed for operational stability. Before the conclusion of this study, a correlation of key themes from the collected data was analyzed to connect how the themes, such as funding strategies and the conceptual framework of this study, correlated with newly published studies.

Reliability and Validity

Researchers completing a qualitative research study must ensure content validity and reliability for research quality. The concept of research quality refers to the researcher's thorough content, trustworthiness, and reliability. Validity and reliability are instrumental for a researcher to achieve rigor. The term rigor refers to the extent the researcher has completed to further improve the quality of the study (Heale & Twycross, 2015). The critical components parallel to reliability and validity for a qualitative study are dependability, credibility, conformability, and transferability (Morse et al., 2002). Researchers must consider reliability and validity when designing a research study, analyzing data, and concluding the quality of a study to ensure rigor (Cypress, 2017).

Reliability

Consistency is an essential element for ensuring the reliability of the data in a qualitative research study (Leung, 2015). Reliability signifies the researcher's ability to replicate the data and consistent analytical procedures, including acknowledging personal biases that may impact the findings (Cypress, 2017; Noble & Smith, 2015). A researcher's biases can alter the results of a study. Biased research is considered a threat to the research being reliable (Saunders et al., 2015). To minimize personal biases and enhance reliability, reflexivity and bracketing was used for self-awareness. Through reflexivity and bracketing, researchers can suspend personal assumptions and remain mindful of biases that may interfere with the quality of a study (Cypress, 2017; Priya, 2017). To establish reliability, consistent practices for stable results were also demonstrated to maximize dependability. All participants were asked the same interview questions for consistency. Extensive journaling to record all thoughts, decisions, and changes were conducted, as well as notes to record thick descriptors and analysis to ensure reliability. A researcher can use the method of member checking to enhance trustworthiness by providing analyzed interview data and interpretations to participants for validation (Birt et al., 2016; Carlson, 2010). Member checking and recording field and observational notes served to ensure reliability and dependability in this study as essential elements to increase the truthfulness of the data and the reader's confidence.

Validity

Cypress (2017) summarized validity as the researcher's ability to make collection data decisions, transcribe interviews verbatim, and have prolonged engagement with participants to achieve trustworthiness. To accomplish validity in a study, a researcher should consider the essential quality criteria terms, credibility, conformability, dependability, and transferability (Hadi & José Closs, 2016). Transferability involves in-depth engagement and persistent observation (Morse, 2015). Prolonged observation is essential to gain rich data. To ensure transferability, I conducted in-depth semi-structured interviews with follow up questions to gain rich data on the phenomena. The sampling method that was used for this study was purposeful; therefore, transferability was enhanced. Purposive sampling enhances transferability through robust data and detailed, accurate descriptors (Cypress, 2017). Confirmability is determined by truth-value, accuracy, and consistency of participant's accounts, which can also be achieved with prolonged engagement and field notes or journaling (Noble & Smith, 2015). During the engagement with participants, detailed interview notes were taken and maintained in a personal journal following the interview to document a self-analysis that was beneficial for minimizing biases. It is the researcher's responsibility to depict accurate information of a participant's experience; this is referred to as credibility (Cypress, 2017). To achieve credibility in this qualitative research study, data triangulation and member checking were conducted. Member checking was used to confirm that the interview interpretation summaries' representation was accurate to participant views and feelings. Participants were provided with an interpretation summary of their responses within one week of completing their interview and requested to provide feedback on any changes, additions, errors, and clarifications during a member check follow-up interview. Multiple sources of data were used for this study, including conducting interviews and analyzing financial reports; therefore, data triangulation was also used to enhance the credibility of the study. After member checking, data triangulation was used for this multiple case study to crosscheck and confirm the data presented in the interviews against applicable public financial statements and reports for each animal shelter.

Transition and Summary

In Section 2, detailed information on how the project was conducted, presented, and personal involvement in this study as the primary instrument in the data collection process and data analysis. The participants, population, sampling, research method, and design were further explored. Additionally, I discussed the strategy for following the ethical guidelines and how reliability and validity were ensured to achieve research quality rigor. Section 3 includes a presentation of findings, key themes, application to professional practice, implications for social change, and recommendations for action and further research.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies that nonprofit animal shelter leaders use to obtain funding for shelters. To answer the research question, I collected data from interviews and supplemental sources, triangulating the results against available documentation such as public disclosure forms, financial statements, quarterly reports, and monthly statistics, which served as supporting documentation of the nonprofit animal shelter leader successfully using funding strategies to obtain funding. I conducted interviews with three animal shelter leaders in Maryland who successfully obtained funding for 5 years or more. Participation in this study was voluntary, and all participants provided consent to participate via email. Each phone interview was semistructured with open-ended questions to lead to further discovery and a better understanding of the phenomenon.

Using Braun and Clarke's (2013) thematic analysis framework approach, I manually analyzed the interview data. First, I emailed an interpreted summary of the interview responses to participants within one week of their interview for member checking to enhance reliability, credibility, and trustworthiness. During the member check follow-up interview, participants were permitted to make corrections and changes and to provide additional information or clarification. Next, I coded the member checked interpreted data using Microsoft Word and Excel by creating labels and grouping the labels based on similarity to identify meanings and themes. I then conducted revisions if the themes did not have significant supportive data, followed by assigning labels and descriptions for each theme. Lastly, once no new themes emerged, I finalized the analysis by providing supportive examples from the data and connecting the emerged themes to the overarching research question for this study. I applied data triangulation by comparing the member checked interpreted summaries against derived performance outcome data from each animal shelter's public financial statements and records. The performance outcome data served as supporting evidence and validation of animal shelter leaders who described successful strategies to acquire adequate funding. The findings showed strategies that animal shelter leaders use to procure adequate funding to meet demands and fulfill the shelter missions.

Presentation of the Findings

For this qualitative multiple case study, the overarching research question was:

RQ: What strategies do nonprofit animal shelter leaders use to obtain funding for shelters?

The following three themes emerged as the key strategies that participants use to successfully obtain funding for their shelter. Traditional funding sources that provide animal shelters with funding include government grants, individual charitable donations, innovative fundraising, volunteers, and organizational grants. Although the importance of these traditional funding sources was expressed, all three participants agreed that these themes are critical for adequate funding: (a) time management; (b) funding diversification; (c) cultivating relationships. To protect the three individual participant identifications, the participants were coded as P1, P2, and P3.

Theme 1: Time Management

The first major theme to emerge was time management. Time management emerged as a major theme because it generated the most responses linked to all participants. Interviewees stressed the importance of valuing time. P1 explained that it is not just how much a funding strategy brings in or how much it costs financially, but there is a time cost as well. P3 stated, “we don’t have a lot of bodies, and we don’t have a lot of time, so we need to make sure that we’re not wasting funds or the time that people contribute.” P2 mentioned that “volunteers ultimately have their own lives, but they are able to give what little time they have to help make funding events happen.” Many nonprofit animal shelter leaders are faced with challenges of daily tasks and dealing with understaffing, and they often experience difficulty balancing responsibilities. Leaders must manage their own time and need to examine the organization's time-management needs, which will help maintain the limited organizational resource of time (Farrell, 2017). Time management is a critical component for nonprofit organizations because it improves the organization’s success and efficiency. Time and money are the most effective components for nonprofit organization success (Slyke & Johnson, 2006). P3 highlighted that “time is money.” Developing time management strategies will help nonprofit animal shelter leaders maximize productivity and achieve organizational goals.

A challenge is a shortage of time to raise funding. Fundraising can be very time consuming and not very effective (Hommerová & Severová, 2019). P2 stated that grants require time-consuming preparations from the staff and paperwork to be considered. P3 stated, “I’m not going to spend 8 hours on a grant when the max I can get is a thousand or

2 thousand dollars; if I'm spending time on an intensive grant, its gotta have payback potential." Park and Mosley (2017) noted that nonprofit leaders need to strategically examine both the cost and benefits of their reliance on government grants. Leaders who use strategic management can enhance performance, drive goal achievement, and improve the organization's decision-making (Miller, 2018). P1 recommended weighing the risk of your strategy against the long-term goal; for example, "if we invest in this, is it going to bring us our return?" Leaders must be willing to make difficult decisions, such as knowing when to say "no" to time-consuming funding options that reduce the productivity of the animal shelter. P3 stated:

> If a program would show that we weren't bringing the funds in for the cause, we have to make the difficult decision to end that program because the refund that you're getting for the time that you are putting in for an event or program must be worthy of it.

To manage projects, leaders should assess them depending on their importance and complete tasks that are less important later to be more efficient (Allan, 2015). Leaders need to focus and prioritize funding activities that advance the organization's goals and maximize volunteers' time (Farrell, 2017). P1 noted that "if seven hours are spent on a fundraiser, you have to be aware that someone else will have to take the work you're not doing." P1 further elaborated:

> We have to make sure that if we're going to spend a lot of time setting up a fundraiser, we need to determine if it is going to translate into other projects as well. So, if there is a long initial setup, we're glad to do it as long as we can reuse

> it. The time commitment is really important; we all have to wear a lot of hats, so we have to be aware of that.

Managing time effectively is in alignment with the view of Farrell (2017), who recognized time as an essential commodity in managing several funding projects and the importance of employee time management throughout the entire organization. It is important for leaders to respect the time of their volunteers and staff, which also builds a positive culture. Volunteers ultimately save nonprofit organizations millions of dollars each year (Brayko et al., 2016). Leaders need to maximize volunteer involvement as a valuable resource to reach the organization's mission capacity and reduce strains in funding efforts. Many small organizations rely heavily on volunteer support and their specialized skill sets that may not be possessed by the leader or staff (Nesbit et al., 2018). P2 commented:

> It's always good to have someone with a grant writing background, people with finance backgrounds to assist in seeing where the shelter's greatest needs are, people that work well with events, fundraising, visionaries that have good ideas, and having a dynamic leadership team that can look at the overall operation strategically; those skills are super important to making fundraisers a big success.

Fundraisers must be skilled in the nonprofit management realm as well. Having a firm understanding, grant writing skills, and conveying the missions to donors is important; volunteers and staff are assets when managing time (Counts & Jones, 2019). Thompson and Blazey (2017) stated that leaders need to engage followers who support the organization's mission by developing values and strategic plans. Farrell (2017) determined that there are multiple ways to organize time, but the most successfully linked process is planning. Planning for an organization’s financial future can be a complicated process for some nonprofit leaders because there is uncertainty due to being reliant on donations and contributions (Cashwell et al., 2019). In most small nonprofit organizations, a funding plan is not in place; for a nonprofit organization to be successful, there must be funding development and a fundraising plan (Bell & Cornelius, 2013). The literature supports P3’s opinion regarding the importance of planning. P3 stated:

> I think you need to have a plan for where you’re going, at least a blueprint of where we’re going, and I think that helps keep the entire team, including your volunteers and your board, focus on where you’re going because if you don’t, people can go in so many different directions and nothing gets accomplished. All that being said, I can switch a plan in a hot minute. You have to be prepared to modify, which I think most of us who survive shelter life is used to turning on a dime and playing pivot. Don’t just stick to that plan if you can’t do it properly, you have to be willing to modify or say this isn’t going to work.

Farrell (2017) concluded that leaders need to overcome last-minute changes by developing a time management strategy to manage day-to-day activities, prioritize, and remain flexible. West and Ries (2018) recommended that leaders manage challenges by remaining agile to change.

Adaptive leadership is critical for nonprofit leaders. When funds are low for organizations, adaptive leadership is essential for survival (Hopkins et al., 2014). In correlation to the conceptual framework, the RDT has been used to help organizations manage their environment by reducing reliance on external influences (Klein & Pereira, 2016). According to RDT, resources are continually shifting and declining; therefore, organizations need to develop proper strategies to manage the environment (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). In a recent study, Gresakova and Chlebikova (2020) explained that leaders need to set priorities, clear objectives, and use time efficiently because there is a chance of reduced funding for the nonprofit sector.

Theme 2: Funding Diversification

The second theme that emerged from the interviews that animal shelter leaders use to obtain funding was using multiple funding sources to meet the shelter's demands. The term diversification refers to generating funding from multiple sources (Sacristán López de los Mozos et al., 2016). All participants identified funding diversification as a strategy to achieve organizational goals and obtain funding for their animal shelters. P3 stated that providing an answer for which funding strategies they found most effective is not a simple but rather a complex process when over half a million dollars has to be raised a year to balance the shelter's budget; it is not just a "one-stop-shop." P3 further elaborated that the desired type of funding depends on "what we are funding or what we are looking to fund." P2 expressed the importance of pursuing different funding avenues because the animal shelter's good work can be costly. P1 noted some procedures and demands of the shelter, such as orthopedic surgery, which is out of the shelter's scope, can be a challenge without the proper funding sources. According to Bell and Cornelius (2013), the success of nonprofit organizations is threatened when faced with financial challenges. Funding diversification can positively affect an organization's performance by promoting sustainability; therefore, nonprofits are encouraged to diversify across multiple revenue sources (Amagoh, 2015; Zhao & Lu, 2019). Recent studies have shown that revenue diversification can provide extensive benefits to organizations and enhance overall financial health (Berrett & Holliday, 2018; Mendoza-Abarca & Gras, 2019).

All participants shared a diverse mix of funding sources that supports their missions and goals. A funding source that P2 and P3 discussed were contracts and grants. P2 stated:

> There is a little more leg work with grants just because they are so competitive, and typically, grants have a targeted initiative, and they expect you to abide by. Grants are really helpful in terms of getting a high dollar amount for a specific initiative, whether it be for a low-cost spade or neutering or microchipping; grants are great for those specifically targeted things you want to achieve and a higher dollar number you want to be assigned to you.

Contracts and grants are a great source of funding, but they have restrictions on an organization's program delivery, which may not align with the nonprofit's mission or goals. This restricted money is concentrated on targeted programs instead of having enough resources (Murphy & Robichau, 2016). P3 stated, "with grants, we just simply have to keep going for the ask - you just never know with grants until they give you an answer." Relying on grants can be difficult due to uncertainty. West and Ries (2018) recommend that nonprofit leaders incorporate strategies that include unrestricted funding and diversification.

P1, P2, and P3 agreed that fundraising is a key source in the funding diversification strategy to acquire adequate funding. Nonprofit organizations often use fundraising as a source of finance. Social media platforms have proven to be a successful innovative funding tool for the interviewees. P1 and P3 identified Facebook as a resourceful social media platform. P1 stated "we do a lot of virtual fundraising; Facebook is heavily used. We find if you try to tie it to a specific animal situation that it is more effective because it seems to connect and resonate with people a little bit more." P3 mentioned that "Facebook donations work well; there are other avenues you can use. We also use 'Network for Good' for our shelter's online fundraising which has an online component to do campaigning and events through it." P2 stated, "social media is such an easy way to attract the interest of donors you know because it's such a utilized tool." An internet presence is a valuable resource for nonprofit animal shelters. There are many uses for having a web presence for nonprofits, including improving financial survival, soliciting funds, building a brand, information disbursement, and networking (Arik et al., 2016). Nonprofit leaders need to implement online fundraising in their funding diversification strategy because social media platforms can maximize public opinion and provide an immediate funding source (Waters, 2014).

Another innovative fundraising strategy that the participants shared was fundraising events. P2 stated, "the avenues that we pursue for getting funding for the animal shelter are events such as community events, partnering with wineries or breweries as well as doing a lot of ventures like t-shirt and hoodie sales." Partnerships are a great funding option for nonprofit organizations, and the partnership leads to great exposure so more people will become aware of the mission and goals (Watson et al., 2018). The benefits of nonprofit organizations that implement an innovative organizational culture include fostering effectiveness, being more adaptive, and increasingly resilient in uncertain environments for long-term survival (Berzin et al., 2016; Langer & LeRoux, 2017). Innovative fundraising events that P3 provided were costume contests for Halloween and having a running team for events such as 5ks. P3 further stressed the importance of having an endowment fund as a funding strategy. P3 stated:

> You need to start growing money on the back end. A lot of organizations survive paycheck to paycheck, but if somebody gives you a little bit of extra money, you need to put that in a savings or an investment program because you need to grow that money. We all should have enough funds that if something horrible happens, we can keep running for 3 months without a donation or check to come in. Even the smallest organization should be looking at that rainy day fund.

Often nonprofit organizations rely on investing accumulated donations for operational sustainability (Webb & Waymire, 2016). Fundraising stems from the word fund, which means to reserve (Reissová et al., 2019). Reserving funds with an endowment is in alignment with achieving financial stability (Păceşilă, 2018). Nonprofit leaders must use investments that increase the organization's funding opportunities and reduces risks (Ferreira et al., 2019). Fundraising should not be the only way a nonprofit organization receives funding to survive. It is suggested that nonprofit organizations use a marketing mix to generate funding from multiple sources (Hommerová & Severová, 2019; Reissová et al.,2019).

Diversification has been commonly prescribed as a strategy for nonprofit organizations to reduce resource dependency and maintain autonomy within an organization (Froelich, 1999). Sacristán López de los Mozos et al. (2016) identified diversification as a viable strategy for leaders to better plan and be less vulnerable to economic shocks. Diversified funding sources reduces the risk of external influences on a nonprofit's overall strategy, mission, and goals (Aschari-Lincoln & Jäger,2016). AbouAssi (2015) further posited, that the nonprofit sector is highly competitive and uncertain, but nonprofits with a diversified mix of funding are better positioned to balance demands, which in return can alleviate cash flow problems. The idea of diversification has been supported by a wide range of literature showing it as a means for stabilizing funding sources, reducing unpredictability, and increasing survival (Sacristán López de los Mozos et al., 2016).

Theme 3: Relationship Cultivation

The third theme to emerge from the analysis of the interviews was cultivating relationships. Each participant unanimously emphasized the importance of fostering healthy relationships with open communication, transparency, and appreciation for donors, staff, and volunteers. Diversification is often a key point for nonprofits; however, they still face budget cuts and receive decreased donations. By developing strong communications with donors, the built relationship will last longer (Waters, 2014). P1 explained "as a nonprofit you need to be transparent because if you make a mistake your donors will know about it, and they may be less inclined to support you in the future." Feng (2014) noted that if nonprofits build a strong relationship with their donors, they may have future annual donations. P3 stated, "transparency is key. You have to get them to believe in who you are and what you are doing and that you can be trusted with their money before they are going to give you any." Krawczyk et al. (2017) posited that nonprofit organizations with a good reputation are more inclined to receive contributions and funding. One relationship cultivation strategy to improve an organization's reputation is accountability. P3 discussed the importance of being accountable with checks and balances, stating:

> I believe strongly about policy and procedures so that there are clear answers if something happens and a clear trace of who handles money, you know, checks and balances because the community believing, supporting, and trusting you is the first step in getting them to support you financially.

According to Gazzola et al. (2017), nonprofits should share their activities with transparency and accountability. Tacon, Walters, and Cornforth (2017) determined that accountable organizations are more likely to ensure success. Albu and Fylverbon (2019) also added that today donors are more sophisticated in giving and require that nonprofits exhibit a high accountability level. P2 stated:

> Often I see shelters being afraid to be transparent or are secretive about their weaknesses, non-positives, or their struggles. I found that by being honest and transparent with the community, they are more apt to give than if you're closed, guarded, and scared to share that information. The community does not only not

> know what's going on, but then they lack trust, and when people lack trust, they aren't as apt to give. So I think transparency and engaging your community is key.

Gazzola et al. (2017) noted, that nonprofit information should be accessible and readily available with financial records or a website. Gazzola further noted that nonprofit organizations display accountability and transparency with annual reports. For this study, an analysis of the participating leader's animal shelter public websites was reviewed. The websites included public disclosure forms, financial statements, quarterly reports, and monthly statistics. After reviewing public information for each participating leader's shelter, all participants successfully exhibit transparency on their shelter's website. Lopez-Arceiz, Perezgrueso, and Torres (2017) found that nonprofits that include accessibility accumulate more financial resources because donors' confidence is heightened.

West and Ries (2018) expressed the importance of nonprofits informing people of their missions and including them in the organization's story, which is beneficial for creating a meaningful connection. P1 shared, "we like bringing them through the whole story, you know once they've donated, it only seems fair that we bring them along with updates and stuff like that which they seem to like." Leaders are encouraged to use multiple ways to communicate with donors. Alvarez-Gonzalez et al. (2017) asserted that for nonprofit leaders to achieve funding sustainability and their mission, they must develop relationships with external actors such as donors. P2 highlighted communicating with the community through newsletters:

> We have an online newsletter that we send out every month. Being present in the community is important. If you are transparent with your community of exactly what the expectations of your shelter are and what you are trying to achieve, people are more active to support that and find out ways they can help.

P1 suggested sending a personalized, thoughtful message via email as a helpful way to cultivate relationships with donors. P1 found that:

> Making your appeals more personal is always nice. Marketing companies can help you create content to get a surge of donations, but if you want to maintain that donor database, you have to stay connected with them. We have a general unwritten rule that if someone donates, they will get a response from us within three days, and we try to make sure we remember little things about them. We want them to feel like we care and that we appreciate them. If you do a thousand little things, they'll repay you by supporting your mission in a thousand other ways. So just those little 'I'm thinking about you' specifically and not just the financial support because they are friends of the shelter. We need to treat them like a friend and not an ATM.

Drollinger (2018) found that promoting positive engagement with donors can positively impact donor behavior. Gazzola (2017) advised that leaders regularly share information and be open about their activities, vision, mission, and decision-making processes to promote positive engagement. By freely conveying information to donors, leaders will cultivate the donor-organization relationship and be cognizant of the value of their contributions (Smith & Phillips, 2016).

P1 stated, “I mean, they’re the ones that keep things going. If it weren’t for them, we’d fall apart within a week, so it’s really important to cultivate their relationships and just be honest and open with your intentions with them”. This aligns with the conceptual framework, the RDT, which indicates that organizations rely on the external environment for survival. Yang and Wei (2019) noted for an organization to survive, it must manage inter-organizational relationships in its environment to acquire and maintain critical resources. According to the RDT, organizations' driving force to manipulate the environment for survival lies in the exchange between the organization and donors (AbouAssi, 2015). Theorists Pfeffer and Salancik (1978) recognized the benefits of fostering strong connections with external stakeholders to provide resources, create a communication channel, and secure financial support and legitimacy in the external environment (Ward & Forker, 2017).

Cultivating relationships also provides nonprofit leaders with a foundation to be better positioned to ask for money. One of the essential aspects identified to raise more money for nonprofit organizations is solicitation, which is defined as asking individuals for money and support (Peet, 2016). Bell and Cornelius (2013) reported that many nonprofit leaders are uncomfortable with asking for funding; however, asking for money is a skill that is just as critical as other funding strategies, including grant writing and fundraising. P3 encouraged animal shelter leaders not to be afraid to ask because the worst that will happen is the possibility of someone saying ‘no’, and if that is the worst thing to happen in a day, then that is a pretty good day.

Applications to Professional Practice

Nonprofit animal shelter leaders often confront funding challenges and have struggled to keep pace with the demand for services (Kim, 2018; Goselin et al., 2011). Leaders who apply the findings of this study may be able to develop additional funding strategies to address challenges for survival, improve the shelter's health, and achieve goals. The goal of nonprofit animal shelters is to remain financially viable and achieve the organization's mission (Litrico & Besharov, 2019). Leaders depend on multiple sources for funding support and building internal and external relationships for financial security. The findings of this study revealed that time management, funding diversification, and relationship cultivation are successful funding strategies that animal shelter leaders can use to obtain shelter funding. Leaders of existing and new nonprofit animal shelters may be able to apply the findings to achieve organizational viability.

Nonprofit animal shelter leaders might use a time management strategy to improve organizational success and financial sustainability. Time management can be used to allocate staff and volunteer time to fundraising activities and most important projects. Lack of organizational efficiency can lead to wasting time and loss of potential funding opportunities. The nonprofit sector is susceptible to reduced funds at any time; leaders who employ time management as a strategy may maximize the finite time of their organization and decrease volatility by managing and effectively responding to external environment uncertainties.

Leaders may use the funding diversification strategy to prevent dependency on one funding source. The findings of this study indicated that leaders could implement diversification strategies that include grants, fundraising events, online donations, and cultivating relationships with the community, donors, volunteers, and partners. Funding diversification is critical for animal shelter leaders to preserve services and expand resources. Generating funding from multiple sources instead of relying on one single source for financial support can lower the risk of closure or financial crisis (Sacristán López de los Mozos, 2016). By diversifying funding strategies, nonprofit animal shelter leaders may be able to achieve financial stability, organizational longevity, and effectively develop fundraising activities.

Relationship cultivation might be used by nonprofit animal shelter leaders who want to form and maintain healthy relationships with stakeholders to increase individual giving and acquire a steady financial support source. Key components that stakeholders expect from nonprofit organizations are openness, honesty, and transparency; these key components can help leaders build trust, promote donor commitment and establish a long-lasting relationship (Pittman, 2020; Waters, 2009). Participants in this study considered the importance of focusing on relationship cultivation as a means for acknowledging donors for their contributions, personalizing outreach, and providing updates with frequent communication to develop stable economic support for fulfilling the organization's mission.

Implications for Social Change

The possible implications for positive social change include tangible strategies for animal shelter leaders to acquire adequate funding to achieve their organization's mission, improve the life for animals, and provide services to benefit the improvement of the communal environment. The contribution to positive social change may also include identifying funding strategies and new understanding for animal shelter leaders. By implementing the findings of this study, nonprofit animal shelter leaders may be able to communicate more effectively with the community to learn of their needs and better fulfill them. When the community's needs are met, an organization can drive positive social change (Stephan et al., 2016). Leaders may be able to enhance community services with the identified funding strategies presented in this study and improve animal welfare.

Recommendations for Action

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies that nonprofit animal shelter leaders use to obtain funding for shelters. Nonprofit animal shelter leaders who struggle with economic circumstances may benefit from the findings of this study to develop better operational practices and funding strategies to increase contributions from donors for external funding to alleviate financial burdens. Nonprofits' most significant challenges are constant competition for funding, volunteer time, and community engagement (Berrone et al., 2016).

From the extensive analysis undertaken in this study, I recommend that nonprofit animal shelter leaders develop time management strategies to plan effectively, set goals, and improve their organization’s efficiency. Gresakova and Chlebikova (2020) advised that nonprofit organization leaders prioritize projects by importance, determine the amount of time and resources available to be devoted and be willing to eliminate or save less important unnecessary tasks for a later time. Nonprofit animal shelter leaders should also leverage technology to save time on projects or fundraising efforts and maximize volunteer’s time. Volunteers contribute significantly to an organization’s success because they can possess immense skills, expertise, and experience to positively impact the mission (Nesbit et al., 2018). Animal shelter leaders must be willing to ask for help and capitalize on volunteer talent. Volunteer time is finite; therefore, implementing good time management strategies can avoid wasting critical time and achieve more.

I suggest that animal shelter leaders implement funding diversification as a strategy to obtain funding and attain viability. Scholars encourage funding diversification as an active strategy in nonprofit organizations to reduce the risk of closing, decrease the uncertainty, increase resource independence and, improve the overall financial health to achieve the organization’s mission (Berrett & Holliday, 2018; Sacristán López de los Mozos et al., 2016; Zhu et al., 2018). Diversifying funding avenues across various sources such as grants, fundraising events, online fundraising, and individual contributions will help keep the animal shelter financially stable.

The final recommendation is to cultivate relationships with donors, partners, staff, and volunteers. To cultivate relationships, nonprofit animal shelter leaders need to engage actively and demonstrate transparency with open communication to foster long-term relationships with supporters. Stay connected by providing frequent updates with monthly newsletters, direct personalized communication, and social media interaction. As competition for scarce funding in the nonprofit sector increases, donors often rely on the organization's reputation and transparency level; therefore, leaders must cultivate relationships (Woronkowicz, 2018).

Recommendations for Further Research

This study was focused on gaining in-depth perspective and insight into the experiences and opinions of three animal shelter leaders in Maryland. The study was limited geographically, and there may have been potentially some missed opportunity to learn additional perspectives and knowledge. Using a broader population can further enhance data collection accuracy with increased participant views from other regions. Researchers in the future can expand the study geography for a broader and richer set of data and increase the sample size. A suggested approach would be to conduct quantitative studies and administer surveys. An advantage of online surveys is being able to reach a larger radius and target at a faster rate (Ball, 2019). An additional limitation included limiting the time frame of nonprofit animal shelter leaders implementing successful funding strategies to 5 years; more funding strategies could potentially be gained if the experience level of the financial sustainability window is larger.

Reflections

My DBA journey has been a gratifying learning experience. I have effectively learned new processes and improved skill sets during my experience, including time management, project management, and analyzing data. There were many times where I felt exhausted mentally, physically, and emotionally. Thankfully, my loved ones' constant support and seeing my progress throughout the DBA program encouraged me to press forward. I am happy that I decided to challenge myself academically. I was able to choose a topic that I am passionate about and apply a scholarly approach. My preconceived belief assumed that the results would reveal that nonprofit organizations are heavily dependent on traditional funding such as fundraisers and government grants for survival; however, this study revealed a diverse mix of strategies that animal shelter leaders can use to obtain funding. There was a potential for personal biases because I am an avid animal lover; however, personal biases were limited with in-depth probing interview questions and member checking. I have always been passionate about animals' well-being, and by completing this academic study, I will be able to share my findings and contribute research on funding strategies in nonprofit animal shelters.

Conclusion

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies that nonprofit animal shelter leaders use to obtain funding for shelters. Data was collected from three nonprofit animal shelter leaders in Maryland who successfully obtained funding for shelters for a minimum of 5 years. The findings of this study indicated time management, funding diversification, and relationship cultivation as successful strategies animal shelter leaders can implement to obtain adequate funding for sustainability and survival. Lack of funding can cause financial uncertainty and an inability for nonprofit animal shelter leaders to achieve the organization’s mission. Therefore, leaders of nonprofit animal shelters must implement funding strategies for operational efficiency and viability. The RDT recommends that organizations reduce dependence on scarce resources that are constantly changing in an environment of uncertainty by managing their environment. The results of this study may indicate how nonprofit animal shelter leaders can manage their environment to receive sufficient funding by implementing strategies to diversify their revenue structure, leverage inter-organizational relationships, and efficiently organize time to remain agile to funding changes.

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Appendix: Interview Protocol

Interview Actions	**Interview Script**
Introduce the interview and set the stage	Thank you for taking the time to meet with me. Your participation in this education project on funding strategies for nonprofit animal shelters is very important as a study. It will help us understand what funding strategies support nonprofit animal shelters and ultimately help nonprofit leaders acquire sufficient funding. Interviews will be conducted with yourself and two other animal shelter leaders which will contribute information to the project. If there is a question that you don’t feel comfortable answering or if you would like to stop the interview at any time, please let me know as your participation in this interview is voluntary. During the interview, I will be taking notes and audio recording the interview. I want to make sure that your voice is captured completely so I will be sending you a copy of my notes and of the recording. Feel free to add or make any changes as appropriate. No names of the participants in this project will be used. Thank you for setting aside 30-60 minutes for this interview today- we will not exceed that time unless you would like to. Do you have any questions?

• Watch for non-verbal queues • Paraphrase as needed • Ask follow-up probing questions to get more in-depth	1. What strategies have you found effective for obtaining funding for your nonprofit animal shelter? 2. How do you measure the effectiveness of each funding strategy that is used? 3. What key challenges have you faced when implementing successful funding strategies? 4. How did you overcome these key challenges? 5. Based upon your experience, what key skills in finance, business processes, and strategic planning are required for your organization to successfully obtain funding? 6. What additional information would you like to provide about your organizations' strategies to obtain funding for nonprofit animal shelters?
Wrap up interview thanking participant	Thank you so much for your time and participation. If you have questions, feel free to contact me using the contact information provided in the consent form.
Schedule follow-up member checking interview	I will be sending my interpretations of the interview and provide you with a copy to verify interpretation accuracy and ask if any additional information can be provided. I would like to request the opportunity to conduct a brief follow-up interview with you. What day and time works best for you for a follow-up interview?