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Succession Planning Strategies for Nonprofit Organizations

Chandler Campbell
Walden University

Walden University

College of Management and Technology

This is to certify that the doctoral study by

Chandler Campbell

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
and that any and all revisions required by
the review committee have been made.

Review Committee
Dr. Peter Anthony, Committee Chairperson, Doctor of Business Administration Faculty

Dr. Rocky Dwyer, Committee Member, Doctor of Business Administration Faculty

Dr. Denise Land, University Reviewer, Doctor of Business Administration Faculty

Chief Academic Officer and Provost
Sue Subocz, Ph.D.

Walden University
2023

Abstract

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Chandler Campbell

MS, Webster University, 2016

BS, The University of Oklahoma, 2015

AA, Oklahoma City Community College, 2015

Consulting Capstone Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

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Abstract

Nonprofit organizations are cornerstones in the community that contribute to improving environments, communities, persons, and life overall. However, some nonprofit organization senior leaders lack the succession planning strategies, resources, and funding to continue serving as positive social change agents in the community. Grounded in the general systems theory, the purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore business strategies nonprofit leaders use for succession planning. The participants included three senior leaders in a nonprofit located in the northeastern region of the United States who have indirectly or directly implemented succession planning strategies. Data were collected through semistructured interviews, the client organizational documents, the organization's website, an assessment of the client organization using the Baldrige Excellence Framework, and public information. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis, which yielded the following themes: community involvement and customer-focused programming. A key recommendation is that nonprofit leaders partner with local community colleges, universities, and student learners to receive manpower and knowledge in areas requiring program and service performance improvement. Implications for positive social change could include possibly increasing nonprofit sustainability through implementing formal succession planning to serve the community and improve the education of nonprofit leaders.

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Dedication

My doctoral study is dedicated to my past self, present self, and future self. There is nothing that you cannot accomplish in this world. It is not a matter of commitment or motivation but a matter of discipline. You are your only competition. Keep striving. I am proud of you.

Acknowledgments

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Section 1: Foundation of the Study

According to the National Council of Nonprofits (2019), the United States' 1.3 million charitable nonprofits feed, heal, shelter, educate, inspire, enlighten, and nurture people of every age, gender, race, and socioeconomic status, from coast-to-coast, border-to-border, and beyond. Nonprofit organizations that desire to remain of service to the community and that desire to leave a legacy or be a positive social change agent should be willing to invest the efforts and resources needed to plan for succession (Nanton, 2011). A nonprofit leader, who can be referred to as a systems designer, must coordinate systems within the nonprofit to work parallel to one another and with one another, but to do so, the nonprofit leader must be an expert on the community or recipients of the nonprofit services (Kasianiuk, 2016).

Background of the Problem

Many highly educated, culturally diverse experts of various fields are leading what was once, and possibly still is, viewed as the voluntary sector, but is now a multibillion-dollar nonprofit sector of professionals (Stewart & Kuenzi, 2018). There is a need for well-rounded leaders to forge nonprofit organizations towards success because nonprofit organizations are filling the gap between human services and the lack of government funded programs (Olinske & Hellman, 2016). These challenges consist of retaining key personnel and gaining funding for programs and services (Bozer et al., 2015). Nonprofit competition for resources is climbing to new heights and demanding accountability, innovation, performance, and results (Laforest & Smith, 2017). Nonprofit organizations can resolve some challenges by implementing formal succession planning strategies, but, according to the 2021 National Index of Nonprofit Board Practices, only 29% of 820 nonprofit organizations surveyed have a written succession plan (BoardSource, 2021). This is only a 2% increase from the 2017 National Index of Nonprofit Board Practices survey respondents (BoardSource, 2021). Therefore, there is a community need for nonprofits, yet nonprofits are not putting the procedures in place to sustain the organization.

Problem Statement

The bottom line in technology drives the demand for accurate data that produces results. Therefore, business excellence assessments such as the Baldrige Excellence Framework is a renowned and respected instrument to assess and improve organizations (Ruben & Gigliotti, 2019). According to research conducted in 2021, only 29% of nonprofit organizations confessed to having a written succession plan established (BoardSource, 2021). The general business problem is that some organizational leaders lack successful business strategies. The specific business problem is that some nonprofit leaders lack business strategies for succession planning.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore business strategies nonprofit leaders use for succession planning. The target population was three senior leaders from one nonprofit organization located in the northeastern region of the United States who have successfully implemented succession planning strategies. The implications for positive social change include the potential for nonprofit organizations to plan for the future with formal succession planning so that nonprofit leaders are able to sustain and continue to serve as social change agents in the communities.

Nature of the Study

According to Yin (2018), there are three research methods: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed. Researchers have argued that the qualitative research method is only useful for learning and developing research theories and that quantitative research method is most useful for testing research theories (Park & Park, 2016). Thus, a quantitative research method was not chosen because the relationship between business strategies that some organizational leaders use for succession planning were not quantified and measured. Another research method referred to as mixed-method research combines both quantitative and qualitative research (Saunders et al., 2015). However, the intent of this study was not to examine variables' relationships by testing hypotheses; therefore, neither the quantitative nor mixed methods were applicable. I used the qualitative methodology because I researched strategies nonprofit leaders use for succession planning. Qualitative research is essential to building or developing theory, but researchers must be able to create trust with participants to gain a first-hand view of the phenomenon (Saunders et al., 2015). To implement a study, after choosing the appropriate method, the researcher must select an appropriate design.

There are four principal qualitative research designs: phenomenology, ethnography, narrative, and case study (Korstjens & Moser, 2017). Researchers use phenomenology to focus on the meanings of personal experiences of participants (Saunders et al., 2015). A phenomenological design was not chosen because it is used when the researcher is studying the meanings of participants' personal experiences. Ethnographic design can be used to explore the culture or social aspect of a group (Saunders et al., 2015). Researchers use an ethnography design to study the social aspect of target populations. A narrative research design is used when the researcher is seeking to identify and explore participants' personal stories of an event or sequence of events (Saunders et al., 2015). Because I did not seek to describe a story of an event or a sequence of events in this study, the narrative design did not fit the purpose of the study.

By using case studies, researchers can explore phenomenon and gain an understanding from participants' knowledge and experiences (Range, 2016). The purpose of this study was to explore the business strategies organizational leaders use for succession planning. A multiple case study can provide a detailed comparative analysis; and a single case study can provide in-depth analysis of a single organization or group (Yin, 2018). Hence, I chose a single case study because the focus of this study was one nonprofit leader located in the northeastern region of the United States.

Research Question

The research question for this study was as follows: What business strategies do nonprofit leaders use for succession planning?

Interview Questions

The interview questions were intended to explore the business used by nonprofit leaders to implement formal succession planning.

1. What steps have you taken to implement a succession plan for your small business?

2. What formal succession planning strategies are currently implemented in the company’s policy?
3. What, if any, accountability measures are in place to ensure current employees are given proper training to prepare for future available positions?
4. To what extent are employees cross-trained on future responsibilities?
5. What strategies are used to ensure that succession planning is a priority?
6. What is the current succession plan for ownership of the business?
7. How do you measure the efficacy of your succession planning strategies?
8. What additional information can you share about business strategies for succession planning that may not have been covered in previous interview questions?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study was systems thinking theory, once known as general systems theory (GST), to potentially explain succession planning strategies and processes within organizations as a complex system. Von Bertalanffy (1972) developed GST in the late 1920s as a theory to evaluate the vital phenomena of all parts and processes involved in a system. GST can be found as the cornerstone for many other frameworks and social sciences although new contributions to the theory are sparse (De Boer & Andersen, 2016). Implementing a systems-thinking theory mindset into the organizational culture can enable the stakeholders to understand and navigate multiple components that are subject to change due to internal and external factors (Dominici, 2017). Systems thinking theory serves as a potentially relevant cornerstone for nonprofit leaders because humans have the ability to view organizations as complex systems (Patel & Mehta, 2016). Nonprofit leaders can use succession planning through systems thinking theory to understand, develop, and compare succession planning strategies for their organizations' continuing performance.

Operational Definitions

Baldrige performance excellence framework: A systematic approach and tool that assists organizations of all sizes within all industries to improve self-awareness, organizational performance, and community impact by focusing on the following criteria: leadership, strategy, customers, measurement, analysis, and knowledge management, workforce, operations, and results (Baldrige Performance Excellence Program, 2019).

Nonprofit leaders: Persons who govern, lead, and manage organizations that must be organized and operated exclusively for exempt purposed set forth in section 501(c)(3), and none of its financials may benefit any private shareholder or individual (Internal Revenue Service, 2022).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Assumptions

Assumptions are considered to be aspects of a situation based on theory in connection to the solution or findings (Farrugia, 2019). I assumed that participants of the study would be transparent and honest responding to the interview questions and the Baldrige Organizational Profile Questionnaire, as well as provide detailed responses and access to all necessary documents and data. I also assumed that participants were fully understanding of the time and effort needed to fully commit to participating in this study.

Limitations

Limitations are defined as potential deficiencies that could limit the researcher's study by possibly limiting the results of the study (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2018). The limitations of this study consisted of the richness of data received. The data received from participants were subject to the organization's review first (Stewart & Diebold, 2017); therefore, the data received were secondary data. The organizational information provided by the participants only consisted of data that the organization agreed to provide and nothing more. Another limitation was the use of empirical studies and resources. Such resources are derived and utilized in multiple industries and may result or add to the field of literature with varying knowledge (Muskat & Zehrer, 2017).

A further limitation of this research was that the research only included experience from the selected nonprofit organization in Baltimore, Maryland. This research did not include experiences from other nonprofit leaders in other geographical locations of the United States. The decision to focus on only one nonprofit organization located in the northeastern region of the United States limited the experience and data of this research study. The scope only consisted of a nonprofit client leader; therefore, the responses of other nonprofit leaders were not included. In addition, other members within the same organization of the nonprofit leader were not interviewed for responses. This study did not address anything or anyone outside of the scope.

Delimitations

The scope of a qualitative study is defined by a research question that outlines what is to be gained by the study design and research methods (Ramani & Mann, 2016).

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore business strategies nonprofit leaders use for succession planning; therefore, the research population included three nonprofit leaders who has successfully implemented succession planning strategies. The findings of this study may not be applicable to other organizations outside of this scope.

Significance of the Study

The positive cause and effect relationship between quality management and organizational effectiveness has exponentially increased research on the value of quality management. The development of succession planning strategies is key to nonprofit leaders. The study focused on the well-respected and sought-after Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award and framework (see Miller & Parast, 2018).

Contribution to Business Practice

This study is of potential value to the practice of business because I explored business strategies nonprofit leaders' use for succession planning. The contributions of this study provided to professional practitioners and organizational leaders could influence organizational leaders to use business strategies to ensure that formal and effective succession planning strategies are in place so that the challenges associated with departing employees may decrease and that the legacy of the organization may prevail. The benefit of formal succession planning results in the organization having a developed workforce that is prepared to assume positions that may become vacant to enable the organization to effectively and efficiently continue to operate. A developed workforce is essential to the nonprofit, also referred to as a system, because systems are ever-changing

(Kasianiuk, 2016). The communities that nonprofits serve are ever-changing, and the need is ever-changing (Davis-Floyd, 2018).

Implications for Social Change

The implications for positive social change include increasing nonprofit sustainability through implementing formal succession planning so that the community can continue to be serviced. In addition, the use of business strategies for succession planning may increase the education of nonprofit leaders. The more nonprofit leaders are educated and informed on effective business practices, the more likely it is that the nonprofit organization will be equipped to efficiently and effectively support intended beneficiaries with programs and services.

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

The purpose of this literature review is to dissect scholarly resources that support the research topic of the doctoral study. A review of the literature is the cornerstone of research conducted and an indication that the researcher has a breadth, and most importantly depth, of understanding and knowledge of the research topic (Walden University, 2016). Approaching a literature review systematically reduces possible biases; therefore, a researcher can apply the search, appraisal, synthesis, and analysis systemic approach to write a literature review (Booth et al., 2016). In this literature review, the search, appraisal, synthesis, and analysis plan was applied to ensure that the intended audience is able to follow along as I explored succession planning as it related to leadership, strategy, customers, measurement, analysis, knowledge management, workforce, and process improvement.

I used the research question and interview questions (Appendix A) to help guide my research approach to determine the succession planning strategies that nonprofit leaders use within an organization. Succession planning strategies and studies are applicable to many organizations other than nonprofit organizations (Farah et al., 2019). To gain an understanding of succession planning strategies, I not only researched strategies within the nonprofit sector, I also researched strategies within publicly-traded organizations, privately-owned (mostly family businesses), and political organizations. Although the study of these organizations evolved separately, the strategies may be common or parallel and applicable to each other. My guided research included a desire to understand the current state of succession planning strategies and to understand the knowledge gap in succession planning strategies (see Korstjens & Moser, 2017). A literature review process is an opportunity for the researcher to research a specific topic based on previous research and the current state of the chosen topic (Saunders et al., 2015).

In conducting my review of literature, I accessed and used the Walden University Library and with the following research databases: ABI/INFORM, Business Source Premier, Business Source Complete, EBSCO, ECONLit, Emerald, Google Scholar, ProQuest, ScienceDirect, and ScholarWorks. Some of the keywords I used for this research study were *succession planning*, *leadership succession*, *systems thinking theory*, *general systems theory*, *nonprofit organizations*, *presuccession and postsuccession,* and *leadership development.* My research included 84.3% peer-reviewed articles and 15.7%

nonpeer-reviewed resources, and 52.40% of those peer-reviewed sources were within 5 years of my anticipated completion of the study.

GST

GST, interchangeably referred to as systems theory or systems thinking theory, has not been the forefront in research discussion recently, but systems theory remains of interest to researchers due to the versatility that the theory offers (Hiscock, 2019). GST is used in various disciplines to support similar concepts about systems (Malecic, 2017) and has been proposed to be a theory that unifies science – the multifaceted concept applies to many systems, models, and principles (Kast & Rosenzweig, 1981; von Bertalanffy, 1972). Von Bertalanffy's contribution created a theory that can be used by all disciplines of science, which inspired an effort of scientific truth amongst researchers (Cadenas, 2019; Skyttner, 2006). GST is similar to the theory of evolution in that the theory is broad and applicable to many phenomena, quantitative and qualitative (von Bertalanffy, 1972). GST is viewed as a source for the integration of science (Kast & Rosenzweig, 1981; von Bertalanffy, 1972).

GST History

GST theory is most accredited to the contributions of Ludwig von Bertalanffy in 1968, but the development of the theory over time has been accredited to researchers of multiple disciplines and industries (Katrakazas et al., 2020). The conception of GST dates back to European philosophy (von Bertalanffy, 1972) and has been influenced by Greeks, Christian mystics, Medieval mysticism, Germans, and many more (Kast & Rosenzweig, 1981). In the late 1920s and early 1930s, von Bertalanffy introduced GST in a Catholic context, but it is largely limited to its technical and mathematical context although there are numerous theories that cannot be mathematically solved (von Bertalanffy, 1972). Aristotle stated, “The whole is more than the sum of its parts,” which is the answer to a basic system problem and is still valid, but Western science debated that the basic system was not complete because in a living system, an order and parts can be bypassed and not solved (von Bertalanffy, 1972). Many researchers have attempted to apply GST to organizational problems and leadership complexities but the attempted application has left many questions for the reader to relate to the systems model (Kast & Rosenzweig, 1981).

Von Bertalanffy accredited the following intellects, respective to their own eras and timely worldview (Skyttner, 1996), to contributing to the GST as it is known today: Dionysius the Aeropagite (Christian mystic), Nicholas of Cusa (Medieval mysticism), Leibniz’s hierarchy of monads, Hegel and Marx, Gustav Fechner (known as the author of the psychophysical law), Descartes’ Discours de la Methode, Galileo, Chester Bernard, Alexander Bogdanov (von Bertalanffy, 1972). However, although influenced, discussed, and researched, GST was not orally formulated until the 1930s by von Bertalanffy (1972). Researchers have argued that von Bertalanffy’s untimeliness to contribute further and brief remarks led to his lack of influence on GST and numerous system models (Cadenas, 2019; Katrakazas et al., 2020; Vanderstraeten, 2019).

GST - Systems

GST provides data and interpretation of relationships, trends, and interactions to understand a system and all of its subcomponents in environments that may not have been known beforehand (Katrakazas et al., 2020). Von Bertalanffy believed that GST was not a concept that could be calculated, but a concept that could only be communicated verbally (as cited in Cadenas, 2019). A systems approach is best evaluated by understanding the history of ideas that have formed GST (von Bertalanffy, 1972). Focusing on the complex reality of an organization or enterprise is the approach of systems thinking (Cabrera et al., 2018). Each science discipline (philosophy, sociology, physics, and biology) has its own perspective of studying the social and human interactions, and each discipline has its own preference to communicate the findings (Skyttner, 1996). GST is the analysis of how one can study, learn, and understand the patterns and relational behaviors of individual components within a system or organization and the effects on all stakeholders, inputs, and outputs (Tadros, 2020).

Complex Adaptive Systems Theory

Researchers use complex adaptive systems (CAS) theory to focus on multiple components that operate independently of one another but comprise an entire system (Stroink, 2020). There are three fields that CAS can be applicable to: (a) engineering, (b) ecology, and (c) psychology. The resilience factor of CAS is displayed in (a) engineering by a system’s sustainability when experiencing disturbance, (b) ecological systems that are able to adapt to an ever-changing environment, and (c) psychology when individuals are able to adapt to an ever-changing environment (Stroink, 2020). Complex systems are dependent upon the management of resources and behaviors that have reoccurring interactions with the entire organization. Kazakov et al. (2020) defined CAS as systems that require successful management techniques to balance the competition between resources and agents and behaviors.

CAS theory is used by organizations to assess the opportunity for quality improvement of programs (Ellis & Herbert, 2011). I considered the CAS theory as a possible conceptual framework to study and understand successful business strategies that some organizational leaders use to implement succession planning. I found the understanding of resilience that organizations and individuals use to adapt to a changing workforce, sudden loss of employees or leadership, and internal and external factors interesting. However, because I did not explore resilience strategies in-depth, CAS theory was not the appropriate lens to conduct this research study.

Transformational Leadership Theory

Transformational leadership was defined by the classic works of political sociologist James MacGregor Burns (Northouse, 2016). Transformational leadership (TL) is attributed to a leader exercising charismatic and visionary leadership and influencing followers to engage and participate within the workforce (Northouse, 2016). Burns identified transformational leadership constructs as (a) idealized influence, (b) inspirational motivation, (c) intellectual stimulation, and (d) individualized consideration. I considered TL as a conceptual framework for this study, but did not find the constructs of TL applicable to exploring and understanding successful business strategies that organizational leaders use to implement succession planning.

To Lead Succession Planning

Since the early 1970s, business leaders and scholars have researched the benefits and consequences of succession planning, especially implementation and execution from executive leaders (Berns & Klarner, 2017). Patidar et al. (2016) defined succession planning as the process in which formal strategies are implemented for successors to the identified essential positions within the organization. Organizations that fail to implement formal succession planning strategies allow workload to increase and small concerns to accelerate into major challenges that are an expense to the organization’s resources. Because baby boomers have reached retirement eligibility, it is imperative that organizations strategize and plan for employee attritions, recruitment, training, and development (Charbonneau & Freeman, 2016), which are all aspects of a formal succession plan. In addition to retirement, formal succession plans consist of contingency plans in the event of early departures, emergencies, and unexpected incidents (McKee & Froelich, 2016).

Nonprofits can be found in all aspects of society where there are people in need or injustices. Nonprofits are social change agents in the community to eradicate gaps in social and economic classes. Most people do not understand the nonprofit sector, but all have been involved with the nonprofit sector at some point in time due to the importance of the nonprofit sector in the world (Salamon, 2015). The Civil Rights Act of 1964 demanded that organizations create a diverse and inclusive community (U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 1964). Nonprofit leadership is vital in all business decisions, big and small. The role leadership fulfills within an organization cannot be weakened or nonexistent at any point during the organization's lifecycle. Thus, the seamless transition of leadership is imperative to the continued success or improvement of any organization that is undergoing the implementation of new leadership or a simple change in leadership (Bills et al., 2017; Schepker et al., 2018).

Those who are leading the organization should work together to transition without major challenges so that the behavior of transition will serve as an example to the frontline employees who are interacting with the public and other stakeholders in daily operation. Stakeholders are members of the organization, directly and indirectly. Internal stakeholders have the ability to share internal information with external stakeholders, which can be positive or negative, but for organizations that are striving for excellence, this communication is not detrimental (Dovelac, 2015). External stakeholders provide funding and resources for nonprofit to continue community and service efforts and, therefore, should be included in the organizational efforts (Jameson, 2017).

The Leader

Most of the research pertaining to succession planning has focused on the leader and the characteristics that the leader must possess or is likely to possess to influence the organization, no matter if the characteristics are good or bad for the organization (Farah et al., 2019; Turner et al., 2019). These characteristics lead to the promotion or dismissal of the incumbent leader or the predecessor leader and are best evaluated by personality profiling (Miller, 2018). Many psychologists and researchers have developed various tools to understand human personality traits that exhibit trends in behaviors, social values, and, most applicable, leadership styles (Gunter, 2016).

Research has evolved over time to a constant battle between transformational leadership and transactional leadership, which can be attributed to the works of Bass (Bass, 1990; Bass & Avolio, 1994; Bass & Riggio, 2006), but in this study, I focused on the nonprofit leadership. Although the research is not as vast as transformational and transactional leaders, nonprofit leadership and management is of importance due to the impact that nonprofit leaders have on the community (English, 2019; McKee & Froelich, 2016; Pandey et al., 2017).

One aspect of leadership that may not be in the forefront of leadership discussion is destructive leadership, which is the cause of turnover rates within organizations. Schmidt et al. (2018) defined destructive leadership within three concepts: follow-directed destruct behaviors, organization-directed behaviors, and self-interested destructive leader behavior. Follow-directed destruct behaviors are intentional words or actions of destructive leadership. Organization-directed behaviors are behaviors that consist of stealing from the organization or embezzling money from the organization. Self-interested destructive leaders exploit others or denounce others to support their own benefit. In a more simplified definition, destructive leadership is defined as passive and active destructive leadership (Fors Brandebo et al., 2019).

Constructive leadership is an example of transformational leadership, which is the opposite of destructive leadership. Transformational leadership, although introduced by Burns (1978), is most attributed to the works of Bass and Stogdill (1981) and continues to be the conceptual framework or theoretical framework for many researchers in all industries (Wei et al., 2016). Leadership that has a positive impact on employees, has a positive impact on the organization, and improves processes. Researchers have argued that single point leadership is no longer effective and requires the input of everyone (Turner et al., 2019). The bottom line for businesses is return on investment or profit, but for nonprofit organizations, the bottom line is somewhat similar. Not-for-profit organizations strive to make an impact in the community but can only do so by the financial support for programming received by stakeholders who are vested in the impact of the nonprofit organization.

A leader who transforms an organization to increase profit or to increase impact is a leader who is normally effective. Effective leadership is the result of innovation, strategic planning, and inspiration to the organization so that the internal stakeholders are motivated and encouraged to also be innovative, adhere to the strategic plan, and promote the organization for success (Mardalena, 2018). Systemic leadership is comprehension and competency to view an organization as a dynamic system comprised of multiple units that are interconnected (Porvazník & Ljudvigová, 2016).

Collective leadership is described as leaders who are within a broad system of teams, communities, and societies, and the leadership belong to the system and not to the persons or the relationships (Ospina et al., 2020). A leader who is constantly connected to the system can have discernment between complex and less complex entities and is, therefore, able to predict future behaviors of the people and the system (Huang, 2016; Porvazník & Ljudvigová, 2016). The ability to predict behaviors is due to the professional development of the leader because an organization cannot predict behaviors; only the individual has the intuition to predict (Saadat & Saadat, 2016). Nonprofit organizations and organizations that strive to serve as a social change agent through the mission and daily operations, referred to as social-mission organizations, depend on employees, volunteers, community partners, and supporters who share the same values as the organization’s mission and efforts (Chen et al., 2020). Selecting personnel who best suit the organization, the mission, and the targeted community audience allows the leader to predict behaviors and ensure organizational effectiveness and efficiency.

Leaders and personnel contribute the efforts required for organizational change, and it begins with communicating. The daily language within the organization affects the behavior of the organization. Organizational language constructs the social environment and positive change mindset, which is known as dialogic organization development (Bushe & Marshak, 2015).

Communication

It is the responsibility of leadership to communicate effectively by maintaining open communication channels and reducing any external noise that may interrupt the message between the sender and receiver (Parker et al., 2017). Leadership is one of the most important relationships in the workplace and the way leaders give direction, assign tasks, and handle conflict has a strong influence on followers (Kasianiuk, 2016; Yukl, 2012). The leader of the message sent to the employee determines how the employee will send messages to the customer. The employee is the first point of contact and most likely first representation of the organization that the customer comes in contact with (Jha & Kumar, 2016). Communication is key in all things related to business, especially in relation to effective succession planning.

Leaders that are mindful of communication result in high follower (internal and external stakeholders) satisfaction and builds the relationship between leader and follower (Arendt et al., 2019; Cole-Kelly, 2018). Mindfulness communication was first introduced by South Asian Buddhist in 1853 (Hardy, 2008) and most recently known by Jon Kabat-Zinn (2003) as being cognizant of the experience in the present moment on purpose (Stofleth & Manusov, 2019) or being fully focused on internal and external stimuli in the present moment (Arendt et al., 2019).

When the follower observes the leader practicing mindfulness communication, there is an increase in follower satisfaction (Cole-Kelly, 2018). The need for mindful communication has increased throughout the years alongside the development of technology (Zhang et al., 2018). Technology has changed when, where, and how organizations work and communicate with one another, and has developed internal and external communication into electronic based communication (Boswell et al., 2016). Communication is an ever-changing aspect of nonprofit leadership; therefore, it is a topic that should be learned and revisited. Nonprofit leaders' days are busy with tasks and pressures; therefore, teaching and learning mindful communication enables nonprofit leaders to remain present as they communication with others (Cole-Kelly, 2018).

Teaching effective, mindful communication can be a form of leadership development so that followers that aspire to develop within the organization are learning to communicate also. A nonprofit leader can ensure that communication is effective and mindful by executing the following: establishing clear policy, training leaders and employees, providing a communication handbook and guide, and conducting audits of electronic communication (Boswell et al., 2016). Communication within an organization defines the verbal and nonverbal behaviors between the sender and the receiver and is the basis of organizational communication (Phipps, 2019). Because systems are hard to change (Hallin, 2020) communicating organizational norms are imperative to systems operating as expected.

There are two forms of leadership tactics that can be communicated to the nonprofit organization in respect to systems theory: opened and closed systems, which has the ability to change the organization's culture or stabilize and destabilize the organization (Kasianiuk, 2016). Open and closed systems were first referenced by von Bertalanffy (1972). Closed systems can be understood as internal processes that eventually stabilize, in opposition, open systems are continuously adapting to external stakeholders and processes (De Boer & Andersen, 2016).

Intentional communication leads to building relationships with external stakeholders and maintaining or cultivating those relationships. Nonprofit organizations rely on interpersonal communication to network and build an efficient group of fiscal supporters and a workforce of committed volunteers and workers (Jensen, 2018). Organizations that lack interpersonal communication receive less support from stakeholders because stakeholders are less likely to trust the organization (Ding et al., 2019).

Nonprofits that are small in size benefit from fostering relationships and partnerships with members of the community and other nonprofit organizations for the knowledge and resources that may be included. Resources are organizational needs, tangible and intangible, which are acquired through exchange with others (Jensen, 2018). These relationships result in cooperative agreements, visitor support, and “friends of” groups, fundraising, which help support the mission of nonprofit organizations in addition to organizational revenue or despite organizational revenue (Yandle et al., 2016). Volunteers matter. About 25% of adults in the United States volunteered about 8.7 billion hours, totaling approximately $187.4 billion worth of manpower (National Center for Charitable Statistics, 2018).

Today, external communication has the ability to increase customer engagement, customer empowerment, and stakeholder commitment (Morrongiello et al., 2016). Nonprofit stakeholders exhibit engaged behavior when their daily operation is focused on the nonprofit’s mission and vision. Nonprofits’ websites provide the communication channel to begin and deepen stakeholder engagement (Hoefer & Twis, 2018).

Succession Strategy

Succession should be viewed as a process and not a single event (Korine, 2017). Embarking on succession plans as a process aids in preserving the continuity of the organization and the legacy, as it most pertains to family-owned businesses or first year nonprofit organizations. Research is scarce concerning nonprofit board of directors being fully prepared to overcome the changing professional environment and the mass retirement of baby boomers (Stewart & Kuenzi, 2018; Zhu et al., 2016). Board of directors are given responsibilities and/or possess qualities similar to for-profit organizations such as: ensure the organization adheres to local, state, and federal laws; fulfilling the organizational mission; oversee strategic planning; maintain ethical and financial standards; serve as representative to community; possess professional expertise; and community influence (Olinske & Hellman, 2016).

In order for leadership to assist its employees in obtaining the organization's goals, everyone from top to bottom must be balanced and moving towards progression. Knowing oneself assists in knowing others, which assists in working in integrative teams, which assists in innovation, which assists in transformation. Again, the characteristics of a nonprofit leader, especially the emotion-related characteristics of leaders, effect the followership and engagement of the nonprofit organization (Sillard, 2017). The lack of research in the field of "emotions" and "nonprofit leader" is truly a knowledge gap in the success of nonprofit and the succession planning strategies of nonprofit leaders. Succession planning is necessary at all levels of an organization; therefore, formal, and informal leadership development is an integral part of succession planning and developing the next generation (Sittler & Criswell, 2019).

Leadership Development

Like succession planning, leadership development is a cyclical process that is comprised of expanding boundaries, recognizing interdependences, and discerning purpose (Burke, 1991; Zheng & Muir, 2015). Training and development are not solely based on developing the business to be greater and faster. Training and development are a necessary component for creating a workforce that includes individuals that are confident and encouraged to be instrumental in the innovative advances within the organization (Levitt, 2015). Day and Dragoni (2015) defined leadership as efforts aimed at expanding individual and collective capacity to be effective in leadership roles and to empower effective leadership. Leadership efforts should not only focus on the CEO, as most research does, but also focus on the characteristics of all within the organization and the development of the various traits and identities as a representation of the well-rounded and inclusive leader (Sittler & Criswell, 2019; Turner et al., 2019). Most recent research has only studied the effects of leadership or different types of leaders and leadership styles, which results limited on the self-identity of a leader and how someone may interpret and analyze information (Zheng & Muir, 2015), the innate experiences that develop one into a leader (Luhrmann & Eberl, 2007).

Those that identify as a leader or possess the characteristics of a leader are validated by other peers within the organization that permit the identity of leader and in return possess the identity of a follower to that peer (Lauria et al., 2019). People allow society to determine who we think we are, what we do, and how we do it with constant exchange of perceived meanings (inputs), and social actions (outputs), and feedback (perceptions of self-meanings in the social setting) (Burke, 1991). The need to not only develop leadership skills, but to develop an individual's way of complex thinking is also important, which is also referred to as vertical development versus competency development (Patterson et al., 2017; Saadat & Saadat, 2016). Nonprofit organization's sole purpose and priority in the community is rapidly changing due to environmental challenges, cultural issues, and economic barriers. Developing leaders that have adaptable mindsets is of impact to the target audience.

Many organizational leaders have implemented formal personal development or professional development courses and training to aid in the development of the workforce. Organizations that offer many opportunities for formal and informal leadership development are classified as learning organizations. Education is a characteristic of learning organizations and has the power to transform and equip people within systems with the skills and knowledge needed for today and the skills and knowledge to keep the system operating efficiently and effectively (Laszlo et al., 2017). Forms of learning in an organization can be computer-based training, industry specific certificate programs, career broadening programs, job shadowing opportunities, and mentoring. The Baldrige performance excellence program evaluates an organization on leadership development opportunities because it is a contributing factor to a high-performing organization.

Mentoring

Mentoring is the cornerstone in developing, advising, and guiding teams, individuals, organizations, and scholars to develop the organization (DeMaria et al., 2019; Varghese & Finkelstein, 2020). Sittler and Criswell (2019) defined a mentor-mentee relationship as a dyad model between leader and associate. New employees and volunteers need assistance navigating the organization, processes, performance expectations, and general support as they transition into their new role (Parker et al., 2017). Implementing a formal succession plan aids in minimizing operational interruptions and sustains workload, which allow for more opportunities for the organization to continue strategic efforts (Ashley & Marsh, 2019).

There are numerous mentoring approaches, models, and theories such as: Mentor-the-Mentor (DeMaria et al., 2019), Dyad Model for Mentoring (Sittler & Criswell, 2019), protégé self-efficacy (Varghese & Finkelstein, 2020), and Mentoring Triad (Subrahmanyam, 2018) which all focus on developing individuals and the workforce. The desired result, and benefit to nonprofit organizations and the employee or volunteer, is internal mobility. Internal mobility is the upward and lateral development and promotion within the organization (Rupčič, 2018) and a useful human resource management tool (Janand & Notais, 2018). According to Ashley and Marsh (2019), novice employees that received genuine mentorship from leaders, demonstrated strong communication skills and accepted leadership opportunities with confidence. Mentorship can be a strategy used to implement succession planning to not only develop the workforce, but to transfer knowledge from senior leaders to developing leaders.

Knowledge Management

Complex systemic information is challenging to learn and analyze, especially if it is not in writing for one to read and comprehend, but information that is newly developed can be transferred in various formats (Malecic, 2017). Researchers and experts widely agree that knowledge transfer is vital to influencing policy and standardize operations, but systems have demonstrated that this necessity is not implemented in daily operations (Haynes et al., 2020). Leaders are responsible for communicating transparently and utilizing all communication channels available for continuity and knowledge transfer (Parker et al., 2017). An environment that is leadership created that encourages knowledge sharing and organizational learning from all levels leads to efficient processes and a cohesive workforce. Proficient knowledge management increases the organization's skillset, but also develops a flexible system that is more competitive within the community (Saadat & Saadat, 2016). Knowledge management requires flexibility in communicating in small to large settings. Small organizations use less formal communication and training channels versus larger organizations that utilize formal documentation and technological channels to communicate and transfer knowledge (Parker et al., 2017).

Knowledge management is an effort amongst internal and external stakeholders and the ability to transfer knowledge smoothly determines the sustainability of an organization (Rupčič, 2018). Knowledge transfer, also referred to as knowledge management is the use of science and technology to generalize concepts and create knowledge (Hibbi et al., 2020). The transfer of knowledge and knowledge management is an indispensable action for succession planning due to the present influx of retiring baby boomers (Burmeister & Deller, 2016). The transfer of knowledge is best received by employees and volunteers that are new to the industry because they do not have previous values and mannerisms to unlearn like their counterparts that are more experienced. Swedish Medical Center pursued an untraditional route to hire nurses that were recent graduates so that the newly employed nurses would be influenced with the values of the center and professional mannerisms (Jones et al., 2017). Effective mentorship may increase the acclimation of new employees and volunteers. A medical center in the Northwest region of the United States used simulation training programs to acclimate, which can be considered an interorganizational network. Hibbi et al. (2020) proposed the competitive learning algorithm as a simulation or e-learning technique to transfer tacit knowledge into explicit knowledge. The competitive learning algorithm consists of four steps: define the tacit knowledge source, define the method to obtain tacit knowledge, organize and classify tacit knowledge, and provide the explicit knowledge through a learner module.

Knowledge transfer is a key factor in knowledge sharing and may encourage innovation and efficiency in the organization (Marchiori & Franco, 2020; Marchiori & Mendes, 2018). Innovation is the creation of new ideas with new meaning and knowledge (Grisold & Peschl, 2017). There is minimal research regarding the transfer of tacit and explicit knowledge (Kuyken et al., 2018), which together construct new knowledge and add to old knowledge (Kuyken et al., 2018; Maravilhas & Martins, 2019). Organizational knowledge is created through an employee taking personal knowledge, implied knowledge, and transforming that knowledge into knowledge that is used in the organization with clear understanding, explicit knowledge (Marchiori & Franco, 2020). Tacit knowledge is difficult to share with others because it is implied knowledge in one's own mind (Millar, 2019). Succession planning prevents the organization from losing knowledge once an employee resigns, retires, or experiences a sudden emergency (Parker et al., 2017). Defined communication that is properly documented increases continuity and the preservation of organizational knowledge (Parker et al., 2017; Philipson, 2020). Through visual and verbal behavior, tacit knowledge can be converted into explicit knowledge, which is defined as externalization (Philipson, 2020). Individual knowledge increases through conversation and interaction with others and their current knowledge combining.

Kimmerle et al. (2015) proposed a systems-thinking approach to learning and collaborative knowledge creation because it is a process of creating new knowledge by combining insights with new insights from the knowledge of others. Systems thinking is valuable to knowledge transfer because it helps mobilize knowledge in throughout a system (Haynes et al., 2020). The creation, collection, and transfer of knowledge involves an individual or multiple people collaborating. Individual and collaborative learning and knowledge growth can take place simultaneously, therefore, can be perceived from a systems perspective (Grisold & Peschl, 2017). Knowledge can be acquired, but one can only build upon knowledge by thinking more in-depth upon current knowledge (Cabrera et al., 2018). New knowledge assists in creating new tools and improving current processes to increase organizational effectiveness and efficiency.

Organizational Effectiveness and Efficiency

Organizational development is a long-term process that consists of implementing new processes and various tools or methods to improve an organization's effectiveness and efficiency (French & Bell, 1971) and is perceived as a planned effort by organizational development researchers and practitioners (Bushe & Marshak, 2015). It is significant to routinely evaluate where one is and where one desires to be so that one is aware of what efforts are needed to towards progression (Drucker, 2005; Sull & Houlder, 2005). Evaluations consist of self-awareness assessments of the organization, tracking progress of goals or mission, and conducting a strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats analysis. The organizational succession processes are important to succession planning, but there is little research how organizational leadership face decision-making

(Schepker et al., 2018) for effectiveness and efficiency. Nonprofit organizations may find it difficult to evaluate the organization using defined metrics because the organization is mission-driven and the desire to excel in operations has led to various theories and frameworks attempting to navigate and facilitate discussion to provide a solution or method to use metrics to evaluate the organization (Lena, 2018). Research practitioners argue which management and operational methods are most valuable and have somewhat overshadowed the root of performance metrics (Carnerud, 2018). Any management or operational method can be of value because systems thinking is the defining cornerstone between social and cognitive approaches (Kimmerle et al., 2015). Each component of business success contributes to the system and overall business practice.

The Malcolm Baldrige Award has set the standard for business excellence, which evaluates leadership, strategy, customers, measurement, analysis, knowledge management, workforce, operations, and results. Malcolm Baldrige implemented these standards for business excellence while serving America on the United States President's administration in 1981 (Baldrige Performance Excellence Program, 2019). This award aided in the United States competing with other countries in multiple industries and still does. Over time, the number of organizations competing for the Malcolm Baldrige Award has increased (Crum-Allen & Palmer, 2016).

In the past, businesses have attempted to accomplish business with a linear mindset of isolated events, but approaching business operations as a complex system that is dependent on multiple departments working in synchronized union is more efficient (Dominici, 2017). The challenges and disadvantages in one department may affect the operations of another department within the organization. Succession planning within the nonprofit sector is a cyclical process that is a constant and ongoing process (Smith, 2015) because on average 90% of the executive level workforce plan to switch organizations within 5 years (McKee & Froelich, 2016). The need for succession planning in the nonprofit sector dates back to the late 1990s when the nonprofit sector was encouraged to strategically conduct operations and processes in a business-like manner (Horvath et al., 2018).

Nonprofit organizational effectiveness and efficiency does not only depend on inconsistent funding, volunteers, social responsibility and more, but also heavily rely on the internal commitment of the nonprofit leadership. Nonprofit leaders, especially leaders that have founded the nonprofit for which they are currently leading, are at risk for organizational failure once they depart from the organization or their successor does not have the same personal commitment to the organization (Lena, 2018). The success of an organization is a focal point in management research but is also the question for nonprofit leaders (Josefy et al., 2017). Succession planning and GST are tools that can be useful to nonprofit organizations.

Another succession planning tool used to increase organizational performance is lean thinking. Lean thinking is a systems-thinking process that continues to learn organizational challenges and improve upon those challenges (Holmemo et al., 2016). By implementing lean thinking, organizational leaders strive to minimize waste within an organization and in processes (Rathore et al., 2018). Similar to Malcolm Baldrige theory, researchers have advocated for total quality management (TQM), Six Sigma and lean thinking as tools to improve competitive advantage (Shafiq et al., 2019). Lean thinking is the accumulation of improving multiple areas within the organization for efficiency and effectives. Best practices lead to quality, which increases the sustainability of an organization (Jyoti et al., 2017). The quality of a small organization is just as important and challenging, if not more, than large companies, because the vulnerability of market changes is higher for small organizations (Jyoti et al., 2017). TQM is an effort to improve process, product, and service, from beginning to end and even after the customer has received the product or service (Shafiq et al., 2019). Due to technology, customers are able to communicate their feedback directly and indirectly through social media.

Organizations have learned to rely on the feedback from customers to find innovative processes to improve the product or service. Customers are able to co-create or express product and service ideas through communication channels such as social networks, mobile apps, websites, email, and video reviews (Berraies & Hamouda, 2018; Morrongiello et al., 2016). Social media is a platform to collaborate with customers and build relationships (Kimmerle et al., 2015). Involving the customer creates a brand of customer empowerment and customer participation, ultimately it increases organizational products and services (Auh et al., 2019). As products and services increase, an organization is able to keep the customer engaged improving organization sustainability.

Sustainability

Through competition, best practices, and education, organizations strive to prepare for sustainability and growth. Organizations that overcome challenges and roadblocks during an organization’s life cycle is the act of performance excellence and sustaining. Nonprofit organizations that set a standard for business excellence and sustainability are recognized as model organizations within their respective communities (Crum-Allen & Palmer, 2016). Continuous innovation to the business model, product-service system, and technological, during the organization's life cycle (manufacture, use, and end-of-life), effects the ecological, social, and economic sustainability (Varadarajan, 2015). Economic, social, and organizational factors that continuously change contribute to the complexity of the methodologies used in conducting business in all industries and particularly in the nonprofit arena (Dominici, 2017). The continuous change in business practice requires leaders to remain flexible in business thinking.

An increasing concern is that leaders are focused on the complex systems of yesterday and not the ever-changing complexity of the system of tomorrow (Laszlo et al., 2017). Organizational sustainability consists of various activities that an organization must accomplish to keep internal and external stakeholders pleased and keep the business performing; although these activities, at times, are not a requirement from the internal and external stakeholders (Griffin et al., 2015). Service and product delivery to stakeholders is an ever-improving focal point of nonprofit organizations and one of the criteria of the Malcolm Baldrige excellence program to build repeat business and customer relations (Hertz, 2015). Repeat business contributes to the sustainability of an organization.

The board of directors are responsible for maintaining the organization's sustainability efforts (Metz et al., 2016) by fundraising, branding, and marketing, and creating a culture that encourages the community to become more involved in the mission of the nonprofit organization (Olinske & Hellman, 2016). There are differences in organizations that have a board of directors that are involved versus a board of directors that are removed from the daily operations. Leaders that have a desire to lead (Boykins, 2019) and are well-developed yield performance excellence and results. There are seven steps that leaders should strive for in order for an organization to sustain: realism and context, growth and differentiation, value and performance, technology and innovation, partnerships and collaboration, engagement and dialogue, and advocacy and leadership (Pilot, 2015). Organizational effort to adhere to Baldrige criteria has many improvements with customer relations, financials, brand loyalty, quality, and product (Dubey, 2015). The responsibility of a leader is to understand how the people within the system perceive the context of the organization and how each aspect of the system relate to other components within the system and outside the system (Kasianiuk, 2016). For some leaders, the ability to understand others and operate with the future in mind requires training and development.

Training and development are a continuous effort in organizations. Leadership development beyond obtaining a leadership role is important to continue so that the nonprofit leader is able to continuously nurture and relate to others (Porvazník & Ljudvigová, 2016). Allowing innovative thinking is important. The lack of innovation thinking is groupthink. Groupthink is the subconscious act, or intentional act, inviting similar or the same answers while ignoring the evidence (Day & Schoemaker, 2016) or making decisions and not considering other information (Chen & Adamson, 2015). This phenomenon occurs when all members of the organization have similar constructs or experiences (Levitt, 2015). Groupthink can be decreased through training and development activities that encourage individuals to be creative while researching new processes. Innovative employees are engaged employees. Company benefits and incentives increase employee engagement (Tetteh, 2017). In 2015, companies that lacked an involved workforce resulted in 70 million Americans not engaged (Vigeland, 2015). Clear dialogue from leadership keeps employees focused on sustainable efforts (Metz et al., 2016). Internal and external stakeholders have demanded organizations, nonprofit included, to become more sustainable in services, products, and efforts, which has resulted in employees finding innovative ways to provide products organically (Hashmi et al., 2015). These efforts also extend to researching products or processes that improve work efficiency and quality to become the norm, not just the standard (Dovelac, 2015).

Corporate social responsibility is another effort of nonprofit organizations to maintain corporate advantage and sustainability but is a responsibility that can be difficult to balance. Corporate social responsibility is a developing research topic; therefore, is has multiple definitions that range in scope of what corporate social responsibility should or should not concern (Grosser et al., 2017). Corporate social responsibility is most related and interchanging with business ethics, which identifies the right and wrong thing to do in business (Grosser et al., 2017). Ethical behavior is not only the responsibility of leadership, but all individuals that are process owners and persons that influence the decision-making within the organization (Endenich & Trapp, 2018). An organization should develop an ethical standard, if not, stakeholders are less likely to engage (Wilburn & Wilburn, 2016). As the customers knowledge increases of health and wellness, for people, animals, and earth, the demand for socially responsible products and services increase (De Bakker et al., 2019). Stakeholders are derived from various backgrounds, values, norms, and interests; therefore, what may be a social interest to one customer may not be of the same interest to another customer (Abdulrazak et al., 2016). Each stakeholder has a different interest and expectation for the organization to invest in or adhere to.

There is an expectation for organizations to be aware of sustainability efforts and behaviors. A survey focused on Fortune 500 executive board members, found that energy-efficient process, products, and services are the most reported sustainability efforts by organizations (Hashmi et al., 2015). In 2018, there are approximately 86% of organizations that published a corporate responsibility report, which is about 60% increase since 2011 (Governance & Accountability Institute, Inc, 2019). There is no excuse to not strive for sustainable processes that benefit the entire system from grassroot to supplier to organization to community (Dominici, 2017). Metz et al. (2016) conducted a six-case study that resulted in three factors that lead to sustainability: focus, accountability, and commitment. These three factors reinforce the necessity of GST in succession planning. GST can be embedded in the culture of nonprofit organizations to reach a level of sustainability. Nonprofit organizational leaders that are not committed, nor held accountable, to best practices and continuously improving processes will cease to provide products and services to their targeted audience due to the inability to adapt and sustain. It is difficult to disregard social responsibility due to the accessibility of cognitive computing; therefore, the organization values a leaders' decision for the leader's knowledge at the time the decision was made (Wilburn & Wilburn, 2016). Internal and external stakeholders depend on leaders to make the most appropriate decision with the social pressures in mind.

Society, the environment, and the economy is constantly changing, adapting to those changes, and preparing for possible changes that may occur as a result to previous changes. In the year 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic serves as a prime example of how society must change to adapt to the current environment, which has ultimately affected the economy. Over one million COVID-19 pandemic reported cases and eighty-three thousand deaths have resulted in an almost nonexistent workforce, unless considered essential, and millions applying for unemployment financial assistance (Nicola et al., 2020). Although organizations have review end of year finances to measure performance, sustainability requires a holistic effort (Dubey, 2015). The financial status and available resources are essential components to nonprofit organizations executing the mission and invoking a positive impact on the community.

Fiscal

In 2015, the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) reported that there were over 1.4 million nonprofit organizations registered in the United States (McKeever, 2015). Nonprofit organizations have been considered to have a dual identity because not-for-profit organizations are to operate, provide services and support in an economy that is for-profit (Salamon, 2015). Nonprofit organizations solicit funding through donations from private donors, government grants, and various fundraising activities (Seo, 2016; Yandle et al., 2016) because governments and communities still rely on nonprofit organizations to provide services that communities can receive elsewhere or afford to ask for the services (Clément, 2019). Charitable giving or private funding from nongovernmental agencies totaled $390.05 billion in the year 2017 (National Center for Charitable Statistics, 2018). The need to fill the gap in the community where the government does not provide necessary services and a lack of funding create not only a demand for support, but stressors for nonprofit organizations since the early 1900s (Cheng & Yang, 2018; Salamon, 2015). Nonprofits cannot solely depend upon government agencies for funding and resources. Volunteers are heavily relied upon to fill the fiscal gap. In 2018, 77.3 million volunteers donated an estimated $167 billion dollars in manpower value (AmeriCorps, 2018).

The relationship between nonprofit organizations and the government is a two-sided relationship. Nonprofit organizations and government agencies strive to serve the community but have conflicting ways of serving the community as it pertains to funding (Boris & Steuerle, 2006). The fiscal dominance or power is a competition to acquire dominance over one another or to become interdependent of another (Seo, 2016). The nonprofit organizations and the government relationships are a major contributor to discussing the sustainability of customer relationships—in the private sector, donors should receive the same service as customers (Khodakarami et al., 2015). Donor retention is a sustainability concern of nonprofits of all industries such as: hospitals, universities, orchestras, environmental and civil rights organizations, family and children services, neighborhood and antipoverty associations, labor unions, and health agencies need volunteers and donor participation to sustain (Salamon, 2015). Retaining donors increases the amount of funding that nonprofits have access to continue community services and support.

Available funding is essential to nonprofit organizations operating at full capacity. In the United States policy that governs the fiscal arena of nonprofits have changed throughout the years, which has resulted in nonprofits receiving less funding from government and other contributions or donations (Laforest & Smith, 2017). Organizations that continue to rely on government for majority of program funding are experiencing inefficient processes due to the number of administrative efforts needed to secure government funding and grants (Cheng & Yang, 2018; Coupet, 2018; Lu & Zhao, 2019; Salamon, 2015). The requirements to maintain government funding often changes or adds to the mission and program goals of an organization, often leading to increasing staff or not increasing efficiencies in previously established efforts (Coupet, 2018; Seo, 2016). Fiscal health is a defining contribution to the sustainability of a nonprofit organization (Jensen, 2018). Establishing a holistic and systematic mindset, fiscal partnerships include external stakeholders demanding services and internal stakeholders seeking avenues to provide the services despite lack of funding (Yandle et al., 2016).

The primary purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore business strategies nonprofit leaders use for succession planning. The review of literature indicated that nonprofits rely on the engagement of the community within all programs and services, which includes customers, volunteers, and internal and external stakeholders. Although the literature on strategies senior leaders use to implement formal succession planning was minimum as it pertains to general system theory, research shows that it is imperative for nonprofit organizations strive for excellence in all aspects of the organization to retain community involvement. The use of GST did support utilizing business strategies to implement formal succession planning strategies.

Transition

In Section 1, I determined that the purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore business strategies, nonprofit leaders use for succession planning northeastern region of the United States. The conceptual framework used was GST. An extensive review of the academic and professional literature developed a targeted base of scholarly materials supporting this study's primary foundations and establishing its reliability and credibility. I researched and considered many theories as a possible conceptual framework, which informed my decision to select GST. I reviewed complex adaptive system theory, but, ultimately, GST was most applicable to this study.

In Section 2, I define my role as the researcher and discuss that I am the primary instrument for data collection. In addition, the participants, research method and design, population and sampling are presented. I outline the guidelines that I followed to adhere to conducting ethical research. Also, the data collection instruments, data collection technique, and data organization techniques, and reliability and validity are presented. In Section 3, I use the Baldrige performance excellence framework to assess the client organization. I focus on the following topics: (a) organizational profile; (b) leadership; (c) customer relationships; and (d) measurement, analysis, and knowledge management, workforce, operations, and results.

Section 2: The Project

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore business strategies nonprofit leaders use for succession planning. The target population was from one nonprofit organization located in the northeastern region of the United States who have successfully implemented succession planning strategies. The implications for positive social change include the potential for nonprofit organizations to plan for the future with formal succession planning so that nonprofit leaders are able to sustain and continue to serve as social change agents in the communities.

Role of the Researcher

The role of a qualitative researcher is to understand the meaning derived from words and data collected from the experiences of the targeted audience (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I served as the primary instrument for data collection in the research process in this single case study. I conducted semistructured interviews via telephone and virtual communication. In addition, I collected organizational documents for review from the client organization, publicly available data, the organization’s website, and government documents. My research role developed as the study developed. My direct relationship with a nonprofit organization that lacked succession planning strategies served as motivation to understand this particular phenomenon thoroughly, in order to interpret how or why some organizations, specifically nonprofit organizations, operate without succession planning strategies. Researchers conduct research to learn more about specific interests or to add depth to extant literature, contribute to the field of such interests, and implement process-improvement strategies (Dahlberg & Dahlberg, 2019; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Controversies revolve around the level of ethical standards in qualitative research (Karagiozis, 2018). According to National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research (1979), basic application of ethical research consists of respect for persons, beneficence, justice, informed consent, assessment of risks and benefits, and selection of subjects. I received the institutional review board (IRB) approval # 07-06-18-0748091, and the participants provided consent to participate in the study before any collection of data. I conducted research in an ethical manner and adhered to Walden University’s IRB requirements.

Before interacting with participants in the study, a researcher must understand their own cultural experiences so that personal biases will not interfere with the analysis of data during this process (Karagiozis, 2018). A researcher’s personality and integrity have a greater responsibility and impression in qualitative research versus quantitative research because qualitative research is not completely objective (McCusker & Gunaydin, 2015). The amount of concern continues to grow for qualitative research due to the lack of measurements for the quality and integrity of the researcher (Dahlberg & Dahlberg, 2019; Leung, 2015). In an effort to avert bias, I ensured that I did not have a dual relationship with the participants of this study. There were not any relations between the participants and me, besides my role as the researcher. There is constant debate if an understanding of the research topic is sufficient to develop interview questions; therefore, an interview protocol (see Appendix B) was fundamental to conducting systematic, ethical, and comprehensive interviews (see Yeong et al., 2018).

Participants

For this qualitative study, I interviewed three senior leaders. The participants were chosen from a target audience within a small nonprofit organization in the Baltimore, Maryland area. The eligibility criteria for participants included (a) experience implementing or sustaining succession planning strategies, (b) having served within a nonprofit organization, and (c) at least 3 years of experience in a leadership role. One of the executive leaders was the founder and chief executive office of the organization. The intent of qualitative research is to seek access to specific participants that aid in reaching rich themes and meanings to obtain saturation (Knechel, 2019). All leaders who were not currently serving in an executive role were excluded because they may not have had the opportunity to implement or directly assist in executing succession planning strategies.

Gaining access to potential research participants remains a challenge for researchers, which may demand researchers to utilize multiple strategies to obtain access to participants (Amundsen et al., 2017). To combat possible challenges to gaining access to participants, researchers rely on building rapport, using purposeful sampling or predetermined participants, and compensating participants or providing some form of incentive (Vuban & Eta, 2018). In this study, potential participants were initially contacted via email, informing them of my background as a consulting student researcher, interview procedures, voluntary nature of the study, risks and benefits of being in the study, privacy of the interview, and seeking their consent to participate. The participants met the criteria and agreed to participate. Once consent was received, I introduced myself to participants, informed participants of what the research would involve, and scheduled a day and time to interview. To establish a working relationship, I made myself readily available via various communications channels to answer any questions or concerns.

Research Method and Design

Research Method

Quantitative, qualitative research, and mixed methods are methods that strive to answer the following questions: who, what, when, where, and why; however, quantitative research depends on numerical data whereas qualitative data organize words into common themes to develop a trend to find meaning (Leung, 2015). It is most common to separate qualitative and quantitative methods based on meanings and numbers, but it is not the effective difference. Qualitative and quantitative research methods are best distinguished by (a) an induction and deduction approach to theories; (b) subjectivity and objectivity, understanding through meaning or through numbers; and (c) context and generality, localized results, or broad results (Morgan, 2014). The research method is chosen based on the nature of the research question and the objectives, which are intended to increase knowledge of the research topic (Basias & Pollalis, 2018). Defining the research question is an important task when conducting a research study (Yin, 2018). The choice to combine quantitative and qualitative research is referred to as mixed methods. Qualitative research can result in variables that are better understood through quantitative methods (Corbin & Strauss, 2014). Conducting mixed-method research can be overwhelming, especially to novice researchers, and researchers should consider how best to combine the methods with respect to the foundational assumptions of each research method (Taylor et al., 2015).

Quantitative research uses a deductive approach to test theory through observations, remains objective by emphasizing data collected that can be measured, and analyzes a large number of cases to promote replication of results (Taylor et al., 2015) whereas qualitative research uses an inductive approach to combine data collection and analysis to explore meanings through detailed interpretation of a small number of subjects or participants (Leavy, 2017; Morgan, 2014). I chose to use qualitative research methods because the purpose of this study was to explore business strategies nonprofit leaders use for succession planning by conducting participant interviews to collect data from senior leaders within a small nonprofit organization. Qualitative research methods are methods that lead to rich data and data saturation (FitzPatrick, 2019). I used qualitative research methods to explore reoccurring themes from participant interviews and organizational documents until I reached data saturation. I did not choose quantitative and mixed-methods research because the research question could not be answered through quantitative understanding nor required understanding through statistical data (see Lenger, 2019).

Research Design

After selecting a research method, the researcher selects a research design that outlines a procedure to collect and analyze data (Abutabenjeh & Jaradat, 2018; Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Developing the research design to collect data should be thoughtfully considered because the selected design poses a threat to the validity of the research study (Almalki, 2016; Matthews & Kostelis, 2019). The research design determines the quality of the research study and is easier to identify as a researcher gains more experience (Spiers et al., 2018). The research question guides the appropriate research design (Hamilton & Finley, 2020).

For this qualitative study, multiple research designs were considered, including phenomenology, ethnography, narrative, and case study (see Yin, 2018). Phenomenology seeks to describe the experiences of participants related to a phenomenon or a meaning, also known as a descriptive approach (Dahlberg & Dahlberg, 2019) and was not selected for this study because I did not explore participant experiences. Ethnography narratives is the process of finding meanings in culture or a process of storytelling (Celikoglu et al., 2020). I did not choose ethnography, nor narrative, because I did not seek to analyze cultures through storytelling. A case study is the study of description to understand and interpret that may lead to describing more than the initial question (Abutabenjeh & Jaradat, 2018). A multiple case study is most effective when the study can be replicated, but a single case study is most used for a purposeful or unique case study. A multiple case study design was not applicable to this study because I did not seek to include multiple organizations.

A single case study was selected for this research study because I explored business strategies nonprofit leaders use for succession planning from one specific organization. I used multiple data sources to reach data saturation. The use of participant semistructured interviews and client organizational documents to reach data saturation is referred to as triangulation (Saunders et al., 2015). Data saturation is achieved when new information no longer adds to the research (Saunders et al., 2015).

Population and Sampling

The population consisted of a nonprofit client organization that was partnered with me, a Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) Consulting Capstone student scholar. Walden University partners nonprofit organizations and small businesses with student consultants to gain real-world experience following the Malcolm Baldrige Excellence Framework to assist organizations in achieving performance excellence. The study population consisted of three senior leaders at a nonprofit organization located in the northeastern region of the United States.

It is important to select the most appropriate sampling method for the research study because selection bias can diminish the validity of the research results (Matthews & Kostelis, 2019). The study participants were purposefully sampled to ensure that they agreed to serve as a DBA Consulting Capstone client organization. Qualitative researchers have an opportunity to use various sampling methods to justify the number of participants in a study, such as homogenous sampling, maximum variation sampling, and purposeful sampling (Knechel, 2019).

Homogenous sampling consists of a focus group of individuals who have similar characteristics but who are still different from each other (Saunders et al., 2015). Random sampling decreases research bias, and participants have equal opportunity to participate in the research study (Matthews & Kostelis, 2019). Random sampling was not appropriate for this study because organizations may or may not have agreed to be a client organization. Maximum variation selects participants who are different to collect data that can explain all themes (Saunders et al., 2015). Maximum variation was not selected because data collection may be contradicting, which is considered an asset of maximum variation. Purposeful sampling, also referred to as criterion sampling, is best used when participants are able to meet the requirements of the research study (Lin & Paez, 2020). The study participants in this study were purposely selected because they had the experience related to the research topic.

The participants considered in the sample are most often referred to as key stakeholders, who can be indirectly or directly involved in the implementation of the research study (Hamilton & Finley, 2020). In this single case study, the stakeholders were three senior leaders who have indirectly or directly implemented succession planning strategies. I investigated the strategies that senior leaders use to implement succession planning through triangulation. Triangulation is a method used to seek information about a research topic through various methods of data collection until new information is no longer presented (Abdalla et al., 2018). I used multiple data collection techniques.

I conducted semistructured interviews, according to the interview protocol (Appendix B), with the three senior leaders to research strategies the leaders use to implement succession planning. The semistructured interviews consisted of eight open-ended questions that aligned with the research questions. All emails were collected and will be properly stored for 5 years from the completion of this research study. After conducting semistructured interviews, I analyzed and interpreted data, which were organized according to themes. All data were provided to participants for member checking. Member checking verifies that the interpreted information is valid, and the research study is credible (FitzPatrick, 2019). I collected data and information from organizational documents provided by the client organization, from interview responses, and responses from the Baldrige Excellence Framework application.

Ethical Research

The informed consent process provides potential candidates with information about the study so that potential study participants are able to make an informed decision and consent to participating in the study (Greenblum & Hubbard, 2019; Kaewkungwal & Adams, 2019). I used the consent form for the senior leader interview to inform potential participants of the purpose for this study and the interview procedures and to explain the voluntary nature of study, potential risks and benefits to participating, and efforts to maintain privacy with documented signature as outlined in the Walden's IRB requirements. Participants were allowed to withdraw from the study at any time. Walden University's IRB approval number is 07-06-18-0748091. The IRB is a required ethical review, nationally and internationally, to protect human subjects (Grady, 2019). To protect confidentiality, I will store the data securely for a period of 5 years after completion of the study.

Data Collection Instruments

I served as the primary data collection instrument. The researcher serves as the primary data collection instrument no matter the data collection technique that is used to collect data (Cypress, 2017). The data collection for this qualitative research included semistructured interviews and client organizational documents. I conducted semistructured interviews to explore business strategies nonprofit leaders use for succession planning. I used an interview protocol (see Appendix B) as a guideline to ensure that I adhered to IRB and that each interview followed the same steps. An interview protocol should consist of questions that are inviting, accessible, and analyzable to the targeted to the population (Hamilton & Finley, 2020). Each participant received a consent form requesting participation.

Organizational documents provided by the client organization gave insight to current strategies and processes used to implement succession planning and strive for performance excellence. This allowed me to collect rich data to find reoccurring themes and meaning to analyze. Fusch and Ness (2015) defined rich data as layered and detailed data versus thick data that can be plentiful and still lack quality like rich data. I used journaling to interpret collected data to reduce researcher bias and to confirm with each research participant that the interpreted data were valid. Journaling assisted me in conducting member checking throughout collection of data. A research assumption is that data saturation is reached when data collection resources are exhausted, but data saturation is reached when new themes or data are not presented (Fusch & Ness, 2015).

Data Collection Technique

Yin (2018) identified six data collection techniques: (a) documentation, (b) archival records, (c) interviews, (d) direct observations, (e) participant-observation, and (f) physical artifacts. For this qualitative study, I used documentation and archival records provided by the client leader and semistructured interviews for triangulation. Using various methods to collect data assists in the researcher to collect, analyze, and interpret data to verify results (Abutabenjeh & Jaradat, 2018).

Heath et al. (2018) found four themes that determine participant participation: (a) convenience, (b) open communication, (c) rapport with the research, and (d) depth of the response. Each participant was provided an option of communication channels to conduct interviews. Ultimately, the participants chose telephone interviews and email interviews. An advantage of semistructured interviews is the focus on the research topic, but a disadvantage is interviews may lack depth in responses or include researcher bias in response interpretation. Advantages of email and telephone interviews are low-cost channels, and both permit the researcher to document data collected for review at a later date and time for member checking, validation, and triangulation (Heath et al., 2018; Yin, 2018). A disadvantage of email and telephone interviews is the lack of personal face-to-face contact. Each participant received the interview protocol to ensure that each participant received the interview questions in the same format.

I used member checking to enhance the reliability and validity of the data collected. I transcribed the data collected and organized the data by themes. I provided the participants documentation for themes to evaluate for accuracy. Member checking provides research participants the opportunity to review provided responses and data as a reflective measure to ensure the data provided is accurate (Naidu & Prose, 2018). Member checking requires willingness and time from research participants to be effective (Caretta & Pérez, 2019). Each research participant received adequate time to respond to the research questions (Appendix A) and verify the interpretation of responses.

Data Organization Techniques

Improperly stored data cannot be analyzed (Rao & Nene, 2019). Researchers can use numerous methods to collect and organize data. I organized data according to the method in which the data was collected such as electronic, paper, and interview responses. Once complied by method, I organized, by color-coding, the data according to themes. Organizing data create a chain of evidence that assists the researcher in connecting links between data collected and the research question (Yin, 2018). The electronic data I obtained from organizational documents and participant interviews were stored in electronic format on a password protected folder. All paper documents consisting of printed organization documents and handwritten notes were stored in a locked file cabinet, which only I have access, located in my home office. After 5 years from the completion of this research study, the electronic data will be properly deleted, and the paper data will be properly shredded.

Data Analysis

Methodological triangulation can be directed by a conceptual framework to assist in organizing data, the qualitative researcher must maintain an open mind to analyzing emerging findings while collecting and analyzing data (Hamilton & Finley, 2020). Methodological triangulation consists of a process: collecting data, organizing data based on conceptual similarities, analyzing data to organize based on themes, and finding further in-depth themes to reach data saturation (Corbin & Strauss, 2014). There are four types of triangulation: (a) data triangulation, (b) investigator triangulation, (c) theory triangulation, and (d) methodological triangulation (Yin, 2018). For this qualitative research study, I used methodological triangulation to analyze data collected from semistructured interviews and documents provided by the client organization. It is important to determine a method of data analysis that best answers the research question (Snyder, 2019). Triangulation is a method of collecting data to confirm that the data collected, data analysis, and researcher interpretation confirm that the findings present reliable and valid research (Saunders et al., 2015). I used multiple data collection resources such as semistructured interviews, the analysis of client organizational documents, an assessment of the organization's website, an assessment of the client organization using the Baldrige Excellence Framework, and public information to triangulate the data collected.

In this case study, GST is the conceptual framework, which provided a theory to interpret data in alignment with strategies that senior leaders use to implement succession planning. I used Microsoft Word and Microsoft Excel as systematic tools to arrange collected data according to themes and patterns. All interpreted data was verified through member checking. According to Caretta and Pérez (2019), member checking is the mutual understanding between the researcher and participant that the interpreted data is reliable and valid.

Reliability and Validity

Spiers et al. (2018) concluded that both reliability and validity were to be equally applied to qualitative research. Reliability and validity are used as measurements to determine the quality of a research study. Reliability is the replication and consistency of qualitative research; whereas, validity is the accuracy of research analysis (Saunders et al., 2015).

Reliability

Researchers strive to create research that is reliable because it reduces errors and establishes trust (Cypress, 2017). Reliability is the defined application of procedures to ensure consistency and repeatability to yield the same results and findings of a research study (Yin, 2018). Replicating research studies strengthens the original research study and findings. Research findings that deviate from replicated studies challenge the original study, which enhances the knowledge of the research topic. Bias and errors from the participant or researcher are considered threats to the reliability of a research study (Saunders et al., 2015). Research that does not contain bias increase the dependability of the research.

To ensure reliability and dependability, I used an interview protocol that was used for each participant, member checking to verify accuracy, and the Baldrige Excellence Framework to collect and analyze data. The intent of member checking and review of data was to establish trustworthiness (FitzPatrick, 2019). I used triangulation to analyze multiple data resources to ensure that the research findings were consistent and accurate. Triangulation is a data collecting method used to consistently understand the meanings of a research topic and produce rich data (Collingridge & Gantt, 2019). Triangulation increases the reliability and validity of research.

Validity

Validity in qualitative research is defined as the justifiable foundation that provides logical and relevant accuracy to support the researcher's findings (Cypress, 2017). Threats to validity can be considered both internally and externally. Internal validity evaluates that the results relate to the selected research design and external validity evaluate that the results can be applied to a larger population or a specific field (Hamilton & Finley, 2020; Matthews & Kostelis, 2019). Establishing validity in qualitative research includes credibility, transferability, confirmability, and saturation (FitzPatrick, 2019). Caretta and Pérez (2019) noted that researchers use triangulation to achieve validity. I used triangulation to ensure data saturation when establishing credibility, transferability, and confirmability.

Credibility

Credibility is an essential to qualitative research and should be established by the research through each phase of conducting research and collecting data (Liao & Hitchcock, 2018). Triangulation is a method to evaluate the reliability and validity of research. There are four types of triangulation: data, investigator, theory, and methodological. I used methodological triangulation by collecting data from organizational documents, participant interviews, and conducting research. Each research participant was able to verify that responses were recorded correctly through member checking.

Transferability

Maxwell (2021) referred to transferability as the concept that research results can be transferred to other research studies, directly or indirectly related to the original research context. Transferability determines how useful research results can be of use in various contexts and research studies. To ensure transferability, I provided rich descriptions of the research method and design, selection of participants, and the process to collect data so that the reader will be able to determine the transferability of the research findings. Research that extends to a broader group audience or a different industry improves the ability for researchers to add knowledge and research findings to the phenomenon (Collingridge & Gantt, 2019).

Confirmability

A concern in qualitative research is the subjectivity of the researcher or the data that is analyzed (Collingridge & Gantt, 2019). Qualitative research and analysis can contain bias from a subjective researcher. Abdalla et al. (2018) suggest triangulation as a method to promote confirmability. I used note taking to document my interpretation of the data collected from semistructured interviews, the analysis of client organizational documents, an assessment of the organization's website, an assessment of the client organization using the Baldrige Excellence Framework, and public information to triangulate the data collected.

Transition and Summary

In Section 2, I discussed the purpose of this qualitative single case study. The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore business strategies, nonprofit leaders use for succession planning. I discussed the research method, research design, my role as the researcher, and data collection and organization techniques. There were two research participants from one nonprofit organization located in the northeastern region of the United States who have successfully implemented succession planning strategies. Using a single-case study permitted me to reach data saturation by conducting semistructured interviews and reviewing organizational documents. I served as the primary data collection instrument. All collected data was returned to participants for member checking to ensure validity of the data and organized according to themes and colors.

In Section 3, I used the 2019-2020 Baldrige Excellence Framework (Baldrige Performance Excellence Program, 2019) for nonprofit organizations to explore seven categories within the client organization: (a) leadership; (b) strategy, (c) customers; (d) measurement, analysis, and knowledge management; (e) workforce; (f) operations, and (g) results. The data collected and analyzed from the Baldrige Excellence Framework was used to provide the client organization with a project summary to improve performance excellence, contributions and recommendations, and application to professional practice, implications for social change, and recommendations for action and future research.

Section 3: Organizational Profile

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore business strategies nonprofit leaders use for succession planning. The organizational profile is an initial self-assessment that provides a cornerstone in merging the gaps of vital information based on responses to the seven categories of the Baldrige criteria (Baldrige Performance Excellence Program, 2019). The seven categories consist of the following: (a) leadership; (b) strategy; (c) customers; (d) measurement, analysis, and knowledge management; (e) workforce; (f) operations; and (g) results. The organizational profile provides an overview of an organization’s strategic environment and a roadmap to identify criteria that has conflicting, minimal, or lack of information (Baldrige Performance Excellence Program, 2019).

The upcoming components will consist of my assessment of XYZ organization (pseudonym) using the leadership triad, outcomes triad, and Baldrige’s key factors worksheet criteria. I established a profile of XYZ by using the information gathered from the organization’s leadership, procedures, effectiveness, and performance. The organization profile presented the study context and indicated key facts about the organization, along with its challenges and strategic system (Baldrige Performance Excellence Program, 2019). I gathered and analyzed data and identified key themes and recommendations for improvement using GST as the conceptual framework. I then validated these themes and recommendations using methodological triangulation and presented them in this context for XYZ leaders to use in creating and implementing future strategic plans. Community involvement and customer-focused programming were revealed by thematic analysis of the data as being necessary for nonprofit leaders to implement succession planning strategies.

Key Factors Worksheet

XYZ organization is a community-based organization that is passionate about donating time and resources in an effort to improve the lives of homeless children. The founders initiated the organization in 2015 after volunteering at a local family emergency shelter. Volunteering planted a seed to provide a safe haven for homeless children and resources needed to uplift each child's body, mind, and spirit. XYZ strives to help each child grow strong through love, hope, and opportunity. The organization's board of directors consists of 11 members. Each member of the board of directors, organizational leaders, and operations team members serves as a volunteer and embodies the core values that consist of enthusiasm, compassion, patience, wisdom, honesty, generosity, respect, responsibility, integrity, and courage.

The XYZ senior volunteer leaders continuously work to share the organization's vision in an effort to grow the organization's number of volunteers to support the mission. The organization is predominantly operated by volunteers and seeks volunteers who can uphold the organization's values and assist at local homeless shelters, transporting food and beverage donations to shelters, cleaning and organizing donated clothing and materials, and planning resource drives for donations, event planning and fundraising, and an annual summer camp. Volunteers enable XYZ to expand its programs and encourage homeless children to broaden their horizons.

Organizational Description

XYZ is a 501(c)3 organization based in Baltimore, Maryland. The purpose of XYZ is to serve and empower Baltimore homeless youth through programs that teach them how to get and stay happy and healthy. The organization has received awards and recognition for its service in the Baltimore community for 4 consecutive years. XYZ is 100% comprised of volunteers from the board members to the operations team and the program and camp instructors. Numerous amounts of time and resources are donated throughout the year to ensure that homeless children receive behavioral and emotional treatment, nourishing and healthy foods, and space to nurture their body, mind, and spirit.

Organizational Environment

This subsection identifies the organization's characteristics. The organizational environment includes the following for XYZ organization: product offerings, mission, vision, and values, workforce profile, assets, and regulatory requirements.

Product Offerings. Product offerings are the goods and services, often interchanged with programs or projects, that an organization offers its targeted audience and market (Baldrige Performance Excellence Program, 2019). XYZ's product offerings include three ongoing programs: (a) wellness education, (b) basic necessities, and (c) fitness classes. The programs are ongoing to serve as pillars that XYZ provides to invest in children living in local homeless shelters and enable a self-sufficient future for each child.

Health for Hope includes lessons focused on (a) effective communication, (b) managing emotions, (c) building self-esteem, (d) appropriate conflict resolution techniques, (e) ethical behavior and social etiquette, (f) decision making about drugs, and (g) alcohol and tobacco. Health for Hope is centered on empowering children with techniques and tools to make balanced decisions in environments that may endanger their well-being, self-reliance, and self-respect. These lessons prepare each homeless child to maintain stable wellness mentally, emotionally, socially, and spiritually.

Resources for Rejuvenation is a program that enables XYZ to provide necessary resources to children living in local homeless shelters. This product offering is a community-based effort and relies on XYZ collaborating with local charities, public service organizations, government agencies, and others that are committed to serving as a social change agent for children at-risk. Donated resources consist of (a) fresh and healthy food, (b) clothing and seasonal supplies, (c) personal care products and toiletries, (d) school supplies, and (e) many other items that support the well-being of the targeted audience.

The efficiency, effectiveness, and quality of this pillar is vital to the success of XYZ because the well-being of homeless children is the founding cornerstone of the organization; therefore, certified and caring volunteers are critical to the delivery of this product. This ongoing program’s process is operated primarily on Mondays of each week. Nutritious food is donated and transported every Monday night to a local family shelter. In addition, volunteers receive other various donations that require cleaning and organizing so that homeless families are able to shop for items needed for daily living.

Fitness for the Future is age-appropriate physical activities that promote a life-long habit of maintaining a healthy weight, building strong muscles, joints, and bones, relieving stressors in an effort to be attentive in school, and receiving more restful sleep. XYZ partners with local fitness professionals to provide fitness activities such as (a) yoga, (b) Zumba, (c) calisthenics, (d) sports, (e) active games, and (f) other physical fun movement and exercises. Local homeless shelters have limited space available for kids to be active; therefore, 60 minutes a day allows children to exercise to improve their overall health, enjoy the outdoors (if the activity and weather permits), and learn something new to maintain a positive sense of self-esteem. In addition to three ongoing programs, XYZ hosts an annual back to school project and a 5-week summer camp. XYZ programming is shown in Table 1.

Table 1

XYZ Programming

Programs	Volunteers	Frequency	Target audience
Health for Hope	100%	Ongoing	Homeless youth
Resources for Rejuvenation	100%	Ongoing	Homeless youth
Fitness for the Future	100%	Ongoing	Homeless youth
Annual Back to School Project	100%	Annual	Homeless youth
Five-Week Summer Camp	100%	Annual	Homeless youth

XYZ Back to School Project ensures that homeless children have the supplies and necessities to thrive in a learning environment. Due to COVID-19, the challenges for children currently living in homeless shelters has increased the need for school supplies that are conducive to virtual learning. Physically attending school allows children to depart their current living situation in a homeless shelter, which can be overcrowded and stressful, for a few hours a day. There is an expectation for homeless children to reach academic successes in virtual learning platforms within insecure and hazardous homeless shelters. XYZ seeks volunteers who are able to sponsor a child's school supplies, donate various school supplies, donate gift cards, or sort, pack, and deliver donations.

XYZ's Camp Quest is provided daily for 5 weeks within the local homeless shelters to explore oneself and their place in the world one adventure at a time. Care Kits are filled with Amazon wish list items, puzzles, books, games, and other activities, which encourage homeless children to go outdoors and expand their brains with knowledge and skills. Camp Quest is a summer continuation of the efforts from XYZ's ongoing programs during the school year to keep the children engaged, physically active, and learning.

Mission, Vision, and Values. An organization's mission is at times interchanged with the organization's purpose, and the vision and values set the expectation to deliver the needs to the targeted audience (Baldrige Performance Excellence Program, 2019). XYZ organization is a community-based organization that is committed to helping homeless children grow strong. The mission is to empower the body, mind, and spirit of at-risk homeless youth so that they may understand the value of having only one chance at life and making it count. The senior leaders continuously review the mission, vision, and values of the organization to ensure that all are in alignment with the programs and founding inspiration. XYZ leaders, organizational members, and volunteers donate time and resources and embody practices that defend that each child deserves love, hope, and opportunity. Volunteerism and community engagement are additional founding principles that XYZ operate under.

Workforce Profile. The workforce profile is comprised of all individuals who are (a) contracted employees, (b) teleworking employees, (c) permanent employees, (d) temporary employees, or (e) other (Baldrige Performance Excellence Program, 2019). XYZ organization was founded on the value of volunteerism and community engagement; therefore, the organization is comprised of volunteers and the support of the local community. Members of the workforce, including the board of directors, do not receive any compensation for their efforts and continuous engagement and leadership. Senior leaders of the organization desire to increase fundraising so that volunteers are given a stipend for the continued development of XYZ that requires time and resources.

The workforce consists of a core team (executive director, business operations manager, compliance manager, and education and volunteer manager), who also serve on the board of directors, totaling 11 members, three instructional team leads, two volunteer and donation coordinators, and volunteers who have broad experience in education, fitness, self-love or who want to support the mission to empower the body, mind, and spirit of at-risk homeless youth.

Assets. Assets consist of an organization's equipment, technologies, facilities, data, intellectual property, and knowledge (Baldrige Performance Excellence Program, 2019). XYZ organization operates primarily from an office building. The office building includes computers, projectors, and a sound system, and serves as a storage space. In addition, volunteers gather to meet, plan, and provide product and service offerings at local schools, community buildings, and family shelters within the northeastern region of the United States.

Regulatory Requirements. Each organization operates within an industry, sometimes divided into subsectors or regions, which has a code of conduct, regulations, laws, and policy that each organization must adhere to (Baldrige Performance Excellence Program, 2019). XYZ organization addresses all regulatory requirements and adverse societal impacts, if any, by anticipating public concerns and reviewing necessary requirements for each product and service. All volunteers receive a personal background check, if required for the product or service. XYZ maintains participant confidentiality and records, volunteer records, and financial records according to local, state, and federal laws.

Organizational Relationships

Organizational Structure. Organizational relationships can consist of (a) foundations, (b) funding sources, (c) advisory boards, (d) councils, (3) local/regional leaders, and (f) governing agencies (Baldrige Performance Excellence Program, 2019). The organizational relationships associated with XYZ included certified educators, local community organizations, partnering shelters and staff, stakeholders, and homeless children. An integral component of XYZ is building strong relationship with family shelters, which provide access to facilities used for XYZ programs. The relationships are maintained through volunteer commitment and building trust with organizational partners and the children who are being provided the services. The governing of XYZ is exercised by the board of directors and subcommittees, such as executive director, vice president, organizational leads, support staff, and organizational guests.

Since being founded in 2015, XYZ operates as a 100% volunteer organization; therefore, there is no compensation expense for any board or operational position within the organization. Volunteers are essential to executing the mission and upholding the vision and values of the organization. XYZ uses volunteers to fulfill all roles within the organization and entrusts the volunteers to operate educational programs, wellness, and physical activities, and serve as the frontline within partnering shelters. The volunteer coordinator is responsible for ensuring each volunteer is properly vetted to engage with children, partnering shelters, and other stakeholders.

Homeless Youth and Stakeholders. The primary customer of XYZ organization is homeless youth in the northeastern region of the United States. Other customers include certified educators, the local community, and homeless shelter residents and staff. The customers and stakeholders have an expectation of XYZ to provide transparent, consistent communication regarding the ongoing program offerings and resource availability. The expectation among various market segments does not waver as it is embedded in the mission, vision, and values. XYZ organization expectation is that leaders, organizational members, and volunteers donate time and resources and embody practices that defend that each child deserves love, hope, and opportunity.

Suppliers and Partners. XYZ organization has many community partners and collaborators who help to provide a positive impact on many homeless youths who are in vulnerable circumstances. Although there are many organizations (churches, community groups, and nonprofit organizations) that work with the homeless community, there are no organizations of this size with 100% donated resources that work first-hand in providing programs and resources to the targeted population in this capacity. The suppliers and partners provide an extended community platform to grow awareness of XYZ and its contribution to the community.

Organizational Situation

The following subsection reviews the organizational strategic situation, competitive environment, and strategic context to further describe the organization's performance system and competitive arena.

Competitive Environment

The following review of the competitive environment includes an overview of the competitive position, competitive changes, and comparative data. Nonprofit organizations compete with other nonprofit organization, similar in mission and not relative in mission, for funding, volunteers, members, and many other resources such as media coverage and community involvement (Baldrige Performance Excellence Program, 2019). The competitive environment identifies an organization's (a) contribution to the industry and market, (b) types of competitors, (c) advantages and disadvantages, and (d) processes for improvement.

Competitive Position. XYZ is currently operating in a noncompetitive arena because this organization does not have any competitors in its area. There are no other nonprofit or governmental agencies that provide the same services and or products in the same environment nor to the same capacity. Other nonprofit organizations and governmental agencies collect donated back-to-school items and seasonal items for school aged children, but the other organizations and agencies do not provide these items in conjunction with the programs and services that XYZ offers to its customers. All programs and services provided by XYZ are critical to the success to the organization and are evaluated by the feedback from its customers. This unique approach provides children with direct access to educational health and fitness activities within homeless shelters.

Competitive Changes. The vision or objectives of XYZ are (a) empower the mind and spirit – age-appropriate holistic wellness education, (b) empower the body – age-appropriate fitness activities, and (c) engage the environment – specific projects and collections to provide programs and promote healthy lives. When there are changes to the environment, if any, then those changes are internal only. XYZ leadership focuses on changes to funding and donations as these are the only sources of funding for operations. The competition is within the organization to not only raise funds and donations that exceed the need to provide to the current customers, but to raise additional funds. Additional funding permits the organization to implement any innovative products, programs, or services; therefore, the organization leaders strive each year to increase funding and donations. XYZ is driven by the mission and the vision and values that are upheld by volunteers are the keys to success and combatting any challenges that prevent successful programming.

Competitive Changes. XYZ organization does not have any system for adequately collecting data. Senior leaders of the organization have not researched key sources of comparative data outside of the organization or within the industry. Since there is not any competition for the organization, there is no competitive data to be collected. The lack of comparative data can hinder the organization from innovating new programs, products, or services to maintain its competitive position in the event there were competitors in the market.

Strategic Context

Senior leaders and board of directors within XYZ organization routinely evaluate the strategic challenges and advantages of the organization. This routine evaluation reviews the business operations, societal responsibilities, and the current workforce of volunteers. The strategic advantages are low expenses and no current competing organizations or governmental agencies. The strategic disadvantages are 100% fundraising and donation-based operations and services, and abundant quality support.

Performance Improvement System

A performance improvement system, such as the Baldrige Excellence Framework criteria, is a tool or approach that organizations should utilize to assess the key evaluation processes that are directly related to the organization’s needs (Baldrige Performance Excellence Program, 2019). XYZ organization does not utilize a performance improvement system for process and program evaluation. The organization does value the feedback of its targeted audience and stakeholders when provided. All feedback is taken into consideration by the senior leaders and discussed further with the board of directors. This review of feedback from homeless youth, local family shelters, shelter staff, and other stakeholders is used to improve the performance of programs, products, and services that are offered to the customer.

Leadership Triad: Leadership, Strategy, and Customers

In the Leadership Triad, I will provide information on strategy and customers and highlight how leadership is a consistent focus.

Leadership

The following subsection is a review of how senior leaders guide the mission and organizational performance through the mission, vision, values, and communication while ensuring the governance and societal responsibilities are upheld.

Senior Leadership

Senior leadership includes a review of how senior leaders set the vision and values of the organization promote legal and ethical behavior, engage in communication, create an environment for success for today and tomorrow, and strive to implement actions that will achieve the mission of the organization. Senior leadership consists of 11 members: Founder/President, Office Manager, Compliance Officer and Board Member, Volunteer Coordinator and Instructional Lead, two additional Instructional Leads and Board Members, In-Kind Donations Coordinator, and six additional Board Members.

Setting Vision and Values. An organization's vision defines strategic objectives. The strategic objectives for XYZ are: (a) strong relationships with metropolitan shelters, (b) a developed educational curriculum with consistent messaging, and (c) volunteer educators who are committed and qualified to work with children in vulnerable circumstances. XYZ senior leaders must have buy-in and serve as active participants, which requires learning the current environments, struggles, and necessities of the homeless children being served. The vision and values of the organization are set by the knowledge and understanding of the targeted audience that senior leaders gain by being an active member of the organization and the founding principles, community engagement, and volunteerism.

Promoting Legal and Ethical Behavior. Senior leaders are responsible for addressing any adverse societal impacts of products or services provided by XYZ in the event that there were any presented. The societal impacts and public concerns of present and future products and services have been limited to one concern: the confidentiality and management of client records. XYZ promotes and ensures ethical behavior in all interactions by using a common-sense approach. Leadership ensures that the organization complies with insurance, legal commitments, and any other industry or area regulations, policies, and laws. XYZ provides programming that focuses on ethical behavior and social etiquette; therefore, the organization and volunteers are able to lead by example, but also encourage the targeted audience to do the same in their daily lives. This programming provides an opportunity and encourages volunteers and participating children to address any legal or ethical concerns.

Communication. XYZ promotes and maintains an open-door policy within the organization and within the homeless shelters. Senior leaders encourage two-way communication with volunteers. Volunteers encourage and ask for feedback to improve programming and services to establish more efficient programs and processes. Senior leaders communicate key decisions with the workforce and address the needs for organizational change, which are defined through routine evaluations or stakeholder feedback. A direct approach to motivating the workforce is recruiting volunteers that are experienced in areas that the organization may not have adequate knowledge or experience. For example, recruiting qualified and motivated board members to evaluation processes and a performance improvement system or tools. XYZ implements reward and recognition programs to communicate its appreciation for a hardworking 100% volunteer force, high performing volunteers, and successful programs.

Mission, Organizational Performance, and Creating an Environment for Success. Senior leadership must be able to address the current environment, which consist of risks, operations, strategy, and the future, while creating an environment for success today and in the future (Baldrige Performance Excellence Program, 2019). XYZ creates an environment for achievement and mission execution. Senior leaders maintain tracking data of participating children, programs implemented, and negative and positive feedback from its stakeholders. XYZ senior leaders strive to establish a learning organization focused on teamwork and knowledge vulnerability. XYZ has identified that acting toward implementing succession planning strategies and developing volunteers and the organization is an area that needs improvement.

Creating a Focus on Action. Senior leaders have created a focus on action that will improve the organization's performance by ensuring that the mission, vision, and values are the forefront of all decisions, programs, and services. XYZ relies on the feedback of stakeholders to inform the organization of necessary actions, programs, and services. Senior leaders have outlined clear expectations for organizational performance, behavior, the value of customer service, and demonstrating personal accountability for each volunteer.

Governance and Societal Responsibilities

Governance System. XYZ does not have a governing board that is solely responsible for the governing of XYZ or evaluating the performance of senior leaders. The senior leaders of XYZ organization are responsible for governing the organization and fulfilling the societal responsibilities, but there is not an accountability system for the executive board. The performance of the senior leaders is not documented nor evaluated. There are no metrics to evaluate XYZ senior leaders or to determine their own effectiveness.

Performance Evaluation. XYZ does not evaluate the performance of senior leaders nor the governance board. Senior leaders have acknowledged that this is an area that is not currently addressed. This is a need within the organization.

Legal and Ethical Behavior

Legal and Regulatory Compliance. XYZ has not had the opportunity to address any adverse societal impacts of the provided programs and services. An adverse societal impact has not presented itself since the founding of the organization. Senior leaders have addressed the ongoing concern for participant confidentiality by ensuring each member is aware of confidential policy and how to properly store documents.

Ethical Behavior. XYZ has not developed a key process or measure for promoting and ensuring ethical behavior throughout the organization. Senior leaders do encourage all volunteers and stakeholders to maintain ethical behavior and exemplify this through their leadership. The organization has not experienced a breach of ethical behavior according to their knowledge. XYZ senior leaders engage with each member of the organization to ensure everyone feels valued and appreciated to ensure they remain compliant. Organizational documents provided do not have any financial safeguards in place.

Societal Contributions

Societal Well-Being and Community Support. XYZ members adhere to the mission, vision, and values of the organization. It is the responsibility of XYZ members to contribute to a healthier, happier, and more productive society. The members spread love, kindness, and genuine care and effort through local homeless shelters. Community relationships are strengthened by XYZ communicating through various social media channels and addressing all feedback and comments regardless of the feedback significance. Key communities are donors, volunteers, shelter staff, and homeless children that the organization provide products and services to, which are identified through consistent engagement in the mission and programs of the organization.

Strategy

The Baldrige strategy criteria is comprised of overall approach to strategy development and strategic objectives (Baldrige Performance Excellence Program, 2019), XYZ senior leaders are responsible for the development of the organization's strategy, which is in conjunction with the board of directors and after evaluation of the fiscal year budget. There is not a defined strategic planning team for short-term and long-term goals. The senior leaders and board of directors meet to strategically plan an upcoming program or event; therefore, XYZ strategic planning is conducted on a case-by-case basis. The strategic plan is developed based on the intent to create an opportunity for children to experience structured, strength-based programming while residing in an otherwise turbulent environment.

Strategy Development

Strategy development is the organization's method to prepare for the future and the consideration of (a) strategic planning processes, (b) innovation, (c) strategy considerations, (d) work systems and core competencies, and (e) strategic objectives (Baldrige Performance Excellence Program, 2019). XYZ senior leaders seek organization and community leaders, and like-minded individuals with various levels of expertise, which are interested in the mission of the organization to partner on community programs. Community partnerships provide opportunities to expand the current programs, products, and services that are offered by XYZ. Experts from various backgrounds provide a different perspective on how to best serve such a vulnerable target audience. Strategic efforts are not properly documented due to data collection and analyzation being an area of weakness. There is not a metric system used to adequately quantify programs, events, targeted audience for each program and event, or the impact of each program and event.

XYZ determines which processes are accomplished by internal and external stakeholders by understanding what can first be accomplished by internal stakeholders. All workload accomplished by volunteers and donations. All external stakeholders are interviewed, vetted, and must complete orientation with XYZ. Some programs require licensed professionals or an expert skillset such as fitness classes, music classes and so forth. The skillset that is not within XYZ is contracted to licensed professionals to reduce any possible insurance, liability, and integrity concerns. The integrity of the programs and services helps senior leaders define a balance between the strategic objectives and the competing organizational needs. Programs can only continue if the necessary resources are donated to XYZ.

Strategy Implementation

Strategic development and deployment are linked to other Baldrige Excellence Framework criteria, such as (a) customers, (b) measurements, analysis, and knowledge management, (c) workforce, and (d) operations (Baldrige Performance Excellence Program, 2019), which are all items that are addressed in this subsection. This subsection details XYZ's action plans and implementation, resource allocation, workforce plans, performance measures and projections, and action plan modification. XYZ senior leaders do not have a concrete strategy implementation plan. However, the senior leaders discuss possible events and programs with its internal and external stakeholders and partnerships to determine short-term and long-term goals. The short-term action plan for XYZ is to implement a summer camp and ensure that all current programs are operating with fidelity. The long-term action plan for XYZ is to host a fundraiser gala with hopes for the event to occur each year in the fall season. A fundraiser gala will provide an opportunity for XYZ leaders to expand its network of stakeholders and raise funds to continue to provide its current and future programs, products, and services. XYZ assigns a committee for each action plan that is responsible for the execution of each short-term and long-term goal. This committee coordinates the meetings, planning, and necessary stakeholders to accomplish the plan. A budget is created for each goal and strictly adhered to as all resources and funding is donated to XYZ. The key to implementing all short-term and long-term goals is funding; therefore, the implementation of a fundraiser gala is essential to the continuous programming of XYZ. There is not a standardized performance tool to measure the effective and efficiency of any short-term and long-term goals that are implemented. XYZ senior leaders rely on the assigned committee of each action plan to measure achievement, which requires knowledge sharing to modify if circumstances require changes to any action plan. XYZ does not establish or implement modified action plans since there is not a defined strategic plan, but programs and services are modified on a case-by-case need.

Customers

Customer Expectations

The voice of the customer is comprised of current and potential customers, customer segmentation, and product offerings (Baldrige Performance Excellence

Program, 2019). XYZ values the voice of its targeted audience as it provides feedback on implemented action plans. Information and feedback are collected from the target audience by using short surveys about their experience with XYZ and their opinion from each program and event. The data from the short surveys is challenging to receive and evaluate at times due to manpower is based on 100% volunteers. Stakeholders are also able to provide information and feedback through social media channels and email correspondence. Most actionable information is received from in-person communication, interaction, and observation; therefore, the sharing of knowledge is important to the strategic development of XYZ.

There are no potential customers to obtain actionable information from because there are not any homeless shelters within the area that are not partners with XYZ. There are potential customers available, if XYZ were to expand its targeted audience beyond homeless children to include adults. The information that is received through continuous listening and observing the customer is used to determine the customer’s satisfaction and dissatisfaction. The engagement of the customer is best observed by XYZ due to the lack of documentation of short surveys. XYZ senior leaders do not consider the organization to have competitors to obtain relative customer satisfaction since no other organization of this size operates with 100% donated resources work first-hand in providing programs and resources to the targeted audience in this capacity.

Customer Engagement

XYZ partners and relies on a student service in the local area that recommends and refers students to the organization to receive programming and services. XYZ has implemented plans to spread awareness of its services and programming to recruit additional customers. Because the customer is children that live within a homeless shelter, XYZ is unable to determine who and who is not a member of the targeted audience. XYZ determines its targeted audience by engaging those who are living within a homeless shelter, which may change based on the economic status of the child's family. The programs, products, and services provided by XYZ are determined by observing the life inside homeless shelters.

XYZ was founded on the observation that (a) there are children within the Baltimore area that are homeless, (b) environmental influences can prevent children from engaging in school, (c) building a relationship with homeless children is key to their success, and (d) research supports the theory that children cannot learn from those that they do not trust nor feel safe interacting with. XYZ senior leaders strive to raise awareness of the organization's services and programming, as well as engage the community through events and volunteerism, in order to attract customers who are (a) homeless, but do not live in a homeless shelter, (b) homeless and without housing, and (c) children who receive shelter from other community members or services. Senior leaders ensure that social media and organizational members advertise and support the mission of the organization, which provides the targeted audience to seek information and support from the programs, products, and services offered. Customer relationships are managed by utilizing an excel spreadsheet to document all engaged members of the targeted audience, volunteers, internal and external stakeholders, and partners of the organization. Customer complaints are managed the same as obtained information and feedback. It is valuable and respected by XYZ and best received by in-person interaction and shared within the organization as an action.

Results Triad: Workforce, Operations, and Results

In the Results Triad, I provide data and information on the workforce, operations, processes and knowledge management, and organizational performance.

Workforce

The workforce section provides an overview of how senior leaders build an effective and supportive working environment for the organization by addressing (a) capability and capacity needs, (b) new workforce members, (c) workforce change management, (d) work accomplishment, and (e) workplace climate (Baldrige Performance Excellence Program, 2019). Also, senior leaders focus on engaging the workforce for retention and high performance.

Workforce Environment

A recent survey found that a positive workforce environment consists of team engagement, effective leadership, and safe processes (Edmonson et al., 2021). XYZ organization created an effective and supportive workforce environment by striving to showcase the mission, vision, and values of the organization in all programs and services. The organization staffs the organization with individuals who not only have the skills and competencies to fulfill vacancies, but strongly align the organization with individuals that are engaged in similar, if not the same, values. Social media is utilized to recruit and hire new workforce members. XYZ’s social media is routinely updated to show the community current efforts, programs, and events.

XYZ is a small, close-knit organization and approach workforce change as a team. Teammates are aware of all needs of the organization and workload is divided amongst the team to accomplish. Each individual has their own role within the organization and are willing to assist each other in their role. Senior leaders strive to minimize workforce reductions or member burnout through maintaining a positive climate and recognizing each member. The organization does not offer services, benefits, or policies to team members since all members are volunteers. Members are recognized and provided appreciation through social media highlights, gift cards, flowers, and thank you cards. XYZ senior leaders lead by example and showcase each member that steps up to the plate publicly.

Workforce Engagement

XYZ senior leaders take a modeling approach to foster a culture that has open communication, high performance, and an engaged workforce. The leaders of the organization believe that they cannot ask anything of the workforce that the senior leaders themselves are not willing to do or commit to. The measure of workforce satisfaction and workforce engagement is assessed through consistent and routine meetings with the workforce volunteers and each member individually. Open communication is vital to the execution of programs and services; therefore, XYZ senior leaders maintain an open-door environment that is positive and supportive.

Support and accolades are given to each member to ensure that workforce performance management is rewarded. XYZ senior leaders provide awards, event tickets, plaques, and social media within the operation building to ensure that members are not only recognized directly for their high performance but are also recognized publicly. Members are encouraged to explore various roles within the organization as a way to learn and develop new skillsets. XYZ organization is not evaluating the current learning and development system for effectiveness and efficiency, but each member who requests to learn a new role or assist with a new project are supported in their request. Senior leaders are working towards implementing career development and succession planning strategies alongside the marketing team to attract future leaders and new workforce volunteers.

Operations

Operations criteria focuses on how senior leaders (a) design, (b) manage, (c) improve, and (d) innovate organizational products and processes to improve the effectiveness and efficiency for organizational success (Baldrige Performance Excellence Program, 2019). It is the responsibility of senior leaders to ensure that the organization, workforce, and stakeholders are operating in an efficient and effective manner to deliver services and products to customers of value. Efficient and effective operations is essential to deliver value to customers and maintaining success within the organization.

Work Processes

Work processes XYZ organization senior leaders use customer survey feedback as a tool to determine key programs and the processes that are pertinent to efficient operations. Organizational processes are transitioning from reacting to problems to early systematic approaches. Senior leaders were not able to document a systematic approach for current programs and products, but the organization is able to repeat programs with improvements. XYZ senior leaders and volunteers meet throughout the fiscal year to determine the requirements for all programs and events that are scheduled for the year. There are no other formal efforts or preventative measures in place to ensure work processes are documented and adhered to by volunteers.

Operational Effectiveness

The client organization, XYZ, provided minimal responses to the Baldrige performance excellence program (2019), but the provided organizational documents demonstrate how senior leaders ensure the operational effectiveness through managing cost and efficiency of operations. Organizational documents do highlight an operations plan, which focuses on strategies to implement outlined programs. XYZ ensures effective management of operations by providing age-appropriate programming and teaching skills that can be used throughout life beyond childhood. As the organization consistently focuses on creating a trusting environment for the children and for volunteers to build long-lasting relationships with participants.

XYZ considers the foundation to achieving efficient and effective operations within the organization are building committed relationships within the local operating area. This foundational commitment to building relationships is how the organization implements succession planning in conjunction with the board of directors planning to accommodate the needs of the organization. It is through this planning that the succession plan is ever evolving; therefore, there is only an informal succession plan in place to ensure operational effectiveness.

Measurement, Analysis, and Knowledge Management

Measurement, Analysis, and Improvement of Organizational Performance

XYZ organization utilizes 360-degree feedback to measure, analyze, and improve organizational performance. The data collected from program and service surveys are evaluated to determine the success of a program or service. XYZ collects feedback surveys from the targeted audience, partners, and volunteers, but the surveys are not required; therefore, the current method to measure, analyze, and improve organizational performance is not effective and efficient. XYZ senior leaders of the organization are working to establish a process to collect and analyze data for daily operations and overall performance that is structured and captures all data. The leadership of XYZ have put in place a performance system to evaluate all financial data quarterly. The financial information is evaluated and by the senior leaders of the organization.

The comparative data and information to support fact-based decision making is selected from and limited to the data collected from previous programs of XYZ. XYZ does not have competitors in the local area; therefore, the information and data collected is limited to the organization’s own performance. If there is a new program or service implemented by XYZ, then there is no comparative data or information available to make fact-based decisions. This same method of data collection is used to track voice-of-the-customer and market data and information. If the target audience, partners, or volunteer provides feedback that a particular program is not beneficial or suggest improvements, then XYZ evaluates the data from the customer to adapt the program to engage the customer.

XYZ senior leaders create and lead an environment that is comprised of professional and flexible volunteers. Each member of the organization is not only selected as a member of the organization, but also trained and encouraged to respond to unexpected organizational or external changes. XYZ is a nonprofit organization; therefore, resources are not consistently abundant or available. XYZ ensures that its performance measurement system can respond to rapid changes and expects to respond to unexpected changes. XYZ creates subcommittees for programs, services, and events when needed to review performance and capabilities. The subcommittees assist in thoroughly evaluating capabilities and performance. The senior leaders routinely remind organizational members that assistance is available whenever needed. The organization is capable of any task as a team.

An evaluation of feedback surveys and review of organizational performance and capabilities assists senior leaders in determining future performance. XYZ is always open to internal and external change and encourage any recommendations. The feedback, evaluation, and recommendations determine the increase of programs and services, if not requested by the targeted audience, partners, or volunteers—budget permitting. All data collected is organized by an office manager. The office manager is responsible for managing the information and organizational knowledge.

The organization is collecting minimal information of participants and collecting feedback from surveys. There is no other data collected or maintained in a structured format. There is not a structured system in place to collect or ensure the quality of organizational data and information. The organization should collect detailed data on all organization’s items to ensure that the management of records can be audited by a third party. This is an area of improvement for the organization.

Information and Knowledge Management

The Baldrige performance excellence program (2019) evaluates how an organization manages its information and knowledge assets. Zhang et al. (2021) defined knowledge assets as intangible items used to create new knowledge such as patents, licenses, and other innovations or documents. XYZ senior leaders have assigned an office manager who is responsible for managing all organizational information and knowledge assets. The organization has identified that ensuring the quality of the organizational data and information is an area of growth. It is the duty of the office manager to ensure that the information is organized and properly stored in safe storage for quick availability. The leaders ensure that the information is accessible for audit and donor requests. XYZ builds the organizational knowledge by collecting feedback from the targeted audience and sharing results in staff meetings for further learning and collaboration. The staff meetings also provide the organization an opportunity to share best practices and for senior leaders to advise how to continue effective and efficient programming.

Collection, Analysis, and Preparation of Results

Thematic Findings

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore business strategies, nonprofit leaders use for succession planning. The research question was as follows: What business strategies do nonprofit leaders use for succession planning? Among the data collected for this study were semistructured interviews, the analysis of client organizational documents, an assessment of the organization’s website, an assessment of the client organization using the Baldrige Excellence Framework, and public information. Thematic analysis of the data identified the following themes: community-involvement and customer-focused programming. A key recommendation is for nonprofit leaders to explore succession planning strategies for improving product, programming, and service performance measures.

The scoring system used to evaluate the Baldrige criteria responses are based on two components: processes and results. The (a) organizational profile, (b) the types of and execution of approaches, (c) deployment breadth, (d) strength of improvement processes, (e) and how performance results compare to relative benchmarks (Baldrige Performance Excellence Program, 2019) are used to evaluate processes and determine results.

Process is defined as the procedures an organization uses to improve (Baldrige Performance Excellence Program, 2019). A holistic assessment tool, ADLI, is used to evaluate processes, which consists of the approach, deployment, learning, and integration factors to evaluate processes (Baldrige Performance Excellence Program, 2019). Approach comprises (a) the method to complete processes, (b) the use of appropriate methods, (c) effectiveness of the appropriate method, and (d) the repeatability of the approach (Baldrige Performance Excellence Program, 2019). Deployment is the extent of (a) approaches that are relevant to the organization, (b) how consistent the approaches are applied, and (c) the appropriate use of approaches (Baldrige Performance Excellence Program, 2019). Learning consists of (a) the refinement of approaches after evaluation,

(b) the encouragement for innovation of approaches, and (c) the knowledge management and transparency of improvements and innovations throughout the organization (Baldrige Performance Excellence Program, 2019). Integration is comprised of (a) the approach is aligned with the organization needs, (b) all systems are complementary of processes, and (c) the approach, deployment, and learning are synchronized (Baldrige Performance Excellence Program, 2019).

Thematic Finding 1: Community-Involvement

Community-involvement is the cornerstone of nonprofit organizations. Although there is not a consistent term for community-involvement and it is sometimes referred to as engagement or participation, there is still a shared meaning of partnerships with the community (Tembo et al., 2021). There are minimal peer-reviewed sources about how community-involvement affects the customer and customer-focused programming (Elers et al., 2021).

Thematic Finding 2: Customer-Focused Programming

Nonprofit organizations are established to affect change, fill a gap, or provide a benefit to the community in the form of products, services, or programming that serve a purpose (Brewster, 2020). Through data analysis, a common theme gathered from participants were the focus of customer programming and how the programming was focused on the customer. In reviewing XYZ’s programming, all programs, short-term and long-term, focused on the targeted audience, which was in alignment with the mission, vision, and values. Elers et al. (2021) found that some nonprofit organizations deliver programming that is not customer-focused resulting in services, products, and programming that do not meet the need of customers or provide a safe environment to receive services, products, or programming. It is in the instance that succession planning is a key component to customer-focused programming. Programming can impact the customer in 3 ways: instrumental (quantifiable or tangible), semi-instrumental (environmentally or civically), and intrinsic (experiences) (Moldavanova & Wright, 2020). Customer-focused programming that involves all 3 instrumental benefits is an organization and system that is ensuring all facets are working together.

Product and Process Results

XYZ is leading the effort in serving and empowering Baltimore, Maryland homeless youth to get happy and healthy and to stay happy and healthy through child-friendly programs focused on the body, the mind, and the spirit. XYZ is the only 501(c)3 organization in its region that has implemented such programs and services targeted at homeless youth. There are numerous nonprofit organizations in the world that are working to better the environment, provide education, and teach life skills to youth, but none, according to XYZ’s market analysis, which are working in direct partnership with homeless shelters to implement hands-on activities.

XYZ would not be able to produce results nor programs without the commitment of its volunteers. The organization is 100% volunteer based. There are not any employees who are compensated within the organization. XYZ is consistently accepting new volunteers, contractors, and partners to assist in the mission, support the vision, and uphold the values that were set by the founders of the organization. XYZ leaders remain focused on the legacy of the organization by planning for the future. Senior leaders have established some work processes to promote pivotal events, sustain educational platforms, and empower new volunteers to engage and grow programs and services. Based on the responses to questions provided by the participants, the organization's process score for product and process results is 30% to 45%. There is an effective, systematic approach to basic questions, the approach is deployed with some areas and there are early stages of deployment in other areas, there are beginnings to evaluation of approaches, and the approach is within alignment of organizational needs.

Customer Results

Customer results are the outcomes of evaluating customer satisfaction or dissatisfaction, and engagement of the identified customer group (Baldrige Performance Excellence Program, 2019). XYZ has established a solid foundation that is customer driven. According to organizational documents, the identified customer group is the sole purpose of XYZ's mission and vision, homeless youth in the northeastern region of the United States. XYZ has created and implemented a process to measure customer satisfaction by consistently seeking survey feedback from all customers after each program or event. The survey addresses aspects regarding the particular program that has most recently concluded. Participants responded that senior leaders utilize returned customer feedback to improve the current program, develop volunteers for future events, improve processes, and innovate additional program components.

The current process to engage customers and maintain customer relationship are still developing. XYZ encourages customers to utilize the organization's website to seek information and support, but the targeted audience are homeless youth; therefore, the accessibility of internet, social media, and computer mediated channels are limited. Starting anew, the organization will improve customer relation management by deploying a customer relationship manager software as opposed to its current Microsoft Excel spreadsheet management system.

According to participants responses to the Baldrige organizational application, the approach, deployment, and learning factors of customer processes is well integrated by staying in constant contact with stakeholders and observing daily life within the shelters. The organization is utilizing repeatable processes that are routinely evaluated and coordinating the shared learnings. XYZ has recognized that this is an area that can be improved and has taken steps to begin improvement. The organization scores with the 50% to 65%, referred to as Aligned Approaches (Baldrige Performance Excellence Program, 2019).

Workforce Results

Workforce results are the outcomes based on an organization's workforce capability and capacity (Baldrige Performance Excellence Program, 2019). At this time, XYZ is 100% volunteer based. XYZ desires to compensate volunteers in the future with stable funding and resources. XYZ has built an effective and supportive workforce by modeling an environment that is positive, consistently checking-in with volunteers to assess volunteer and program needs, and rewarding volunteers at each opportunity. Senior leaders were unable to identify clear processes in place used to evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of its learning and development, but do encourage cross-training and opportunities for volunteers to try new roles.

Senior leaders work closely with the marketing team to recruit, hire, place, and retain new volunteers. According to participant 1, the organization utilizes Microsoft Excel to track all volunteers, donors, business partners, and all other workforce data with hopes to learn, transition to, and maintain workforce data using a new customer relationship management (CRM) software. The organization strives to maintain detailed data on volunteers and track the number of hours volunteered with the new CRM software, but this is a work in-progress. XYZ has identified the workforce category has room for improvement. XYZ scores within the 0% to 25% range, Reacting to Problems. Organizations that are reacting to problems have implemented activities instead of processes, goals are poorly defined (Baldrige Performance Excellence Program, 2019).

Leadership and Governance Results

Leadership and governance results are comprised of Baldrige Category 1.1, Communication, and Category 1.2, Governance, Legal, and Ethics (Baldrige Performance Excellence Program, 2019). Senior leaders have established a communicative environment by being active participants in programs, learning of homeless youth and family shelter environments, and ensuring that each senior leader, board member, volunteer, and partner are engaged, aware of the open-door policy, and have the opportunity to voice any concerns and feedback. XYZ creates an environment for current and future success by tracking data of customers, cultivating a learning organization, and inviting the community to participate in programs.

When asked how the client organization evaluates the performance of senior leaders and governance board, the client leader responded, “We don’t and we should!”

However, senior leaders govern the organization with the same expectation it has of society, which is to provide countless opportunities for homeless youth in order to fill the gaps in the mind and spirit, the body, and the environment. Based on additional responses to Baldrige Excellence Framework Category 1.2 (Leadership and Governance), the educated guess is that the organization is in a reacting stage. XYZ has not experienced any legal, regulatory, and community concerns with its products and operations; therefore, XYZ has not developed any processes within this area. Based on the lack of systematic approach and deployment, XYZ's scoring is within the 0% to 5% range, reacting to problems.

Financial and Market Results

The financial and market results are comprised of category 4.1a, performance management, and financial management approaches from category 2.2, strategy implementation (Baldrige Performance Excellence Program, 2019). The client leader was (a) unable to answer how the organization measures, analyzes, and improves organizational performance, (b) is working on a process to track data and information properly, and (c) unsure of how the organization selects comparative data and information to support fact-based decision making. XYZ does create organizational committees to evaluate activity feedback in an effort to improve programs.

XYZ was unable to explain the process to implement new strategies, but did define the key short-term and long-term action plans. Again, committees are created to deploy action plans and all volunteers are encouraged to assist each other. Based on the responses received for financial and market results, the organization scores within the 0% to 25% range, reacting to problems.

Key Themes

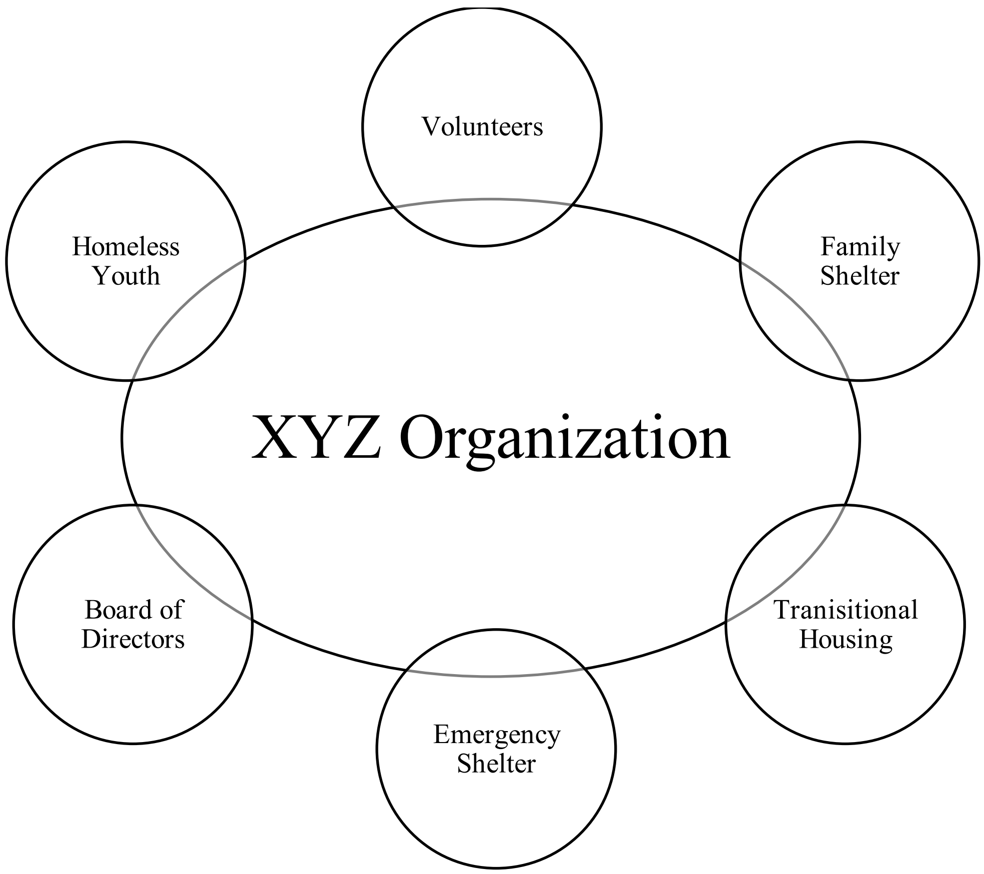
The vital component of this study is determining the efficiency and effectiveness of the processes of XYZ organization, senior leaders, and formal succession planning strategies. Themes that emerged during the examination of XYZ organization's senior leadership and formal succession strategies consist of process strengths, process opportunities, results strengths, and results opportunities. These themes utilized for process improvement were gathered from the 2019-2020 Baldrige Excellence Framework and criteria. The major themes from the results, which include integration, comparisons, trends, and levels, arise from the use of four assessment factors. The key themes of this study are community involvement and customer-focused programming.

Process Strengths

After assessing the client organization according to the Baldrige Excellence Framework, it was evident that the process strengths are programming and the customers. XYZ organization's programming is 100% focused on the target audience, the customers. The intent of programming is to empower homeless youth to become happy and healthy. The mission, vision, and values support programming efforts. XYZ senior leaders, workforce volunteers, and stakeholders are all committed to the programs. The processes in place keep the organization focused not only on programming, but also on the community. XYZ would not be able to implement and sustain programming without first engaging the support of the community. Volunteers for XYZ are obtained through word-of-mouth, partnerships with local homeless shelters, partnerships with local schools, and partnership with local vendors that supply XYZ's programming. Through XYZ community involvement, a network has been built and continues to grow to support the mission, empowering homeless youth. Figure 1 is an outline of the organization stakeholders.

Figure 1

XYZ Organization Stakeholders



Process Opportunities

Processes are an outlined plan or path to aid in the routine to produce a product or provide a service. After extensive review of the organization's documents and participant responses, it was determined that there is a need for standard operating guides for each program and service provided. At this business location, a volunteer or committee of volunteers is given a task, project, or program to complete. Whoever is leading that particular effort is able to determine the action plan, timeline, and resources necessary to complete the task, project, or program. The lack of formal processes in place hinders the organization from properly evaluating the use of resources, manpower, and efforts. By implementing standard operating guides, the organization will be able to evaluate processes and streamline efforts and resources.

In addition, process opportunity exists in the need to establish a knowledge management tool to transfer knowledge between organizational members. Succession planning permits an organization to strategically plan for long-term successes and creates an environment for training and development. This organization is encouraging for each volunteer to job shadow or assist on any product, program, or service as an opportunity to learn, but there are no printed or electronic training documents. The organization has not identified nor implemented a formal succession plan for business operations or any board of director positions. The opportunity is available to implement a formal succession plan that outlines succession strategies for all business operations and board of director positions, which will posture the organization for seamless transition through turnover.

Results Strengths

XYZ organization and senior leadership strengths are (a) customer-focused excellence, (b) valuing the workforce and people, and (c) customer-focused programming. The organization has received numerous community awards that support these strengths such as: (a) heart of gold award, (b) corporate culture, (c) outstanding service, and (d) champion for children and youth. XYZ defines itself as a community and strives to exemplify a passionate community-based organization dedicated to giving every child love, hope, and opportunity.

The desire to uplift and empower every child is displayed in all things within XYZ. Senior leaders recruit volunteers that are passionate in supporting the mission, vision, and values of XYZ through the programming and services provided to every child. Senior leaders support each volunteer with the resources, knowledge, and community partners to execute each program and service.

Results Opportunities

In the previous section, valuing the workforce and people is listed as a strength, however the collection of workforce feedback is an area for improvement. One suggestion is for the senior leaders to utilize an electronic anonymous survey to (a) collect and measure participant survey responses, (b) analyze the responses, and then (c) improve organization's workforce based on the analyzed data that is collected. Senior leaders within this organization have an open-door policy and welcome the feedback from the workforce at all times. An anonymous stakeholder feedback survey may aid the organization in establishing formal programming and services process to alleviate workforce stressors. In addition, a recommendation is to recruit volunteers, student interns, or marketing partners that are able to increase the organization's social media engagement and community awareness. XYZ is a 100% volunteer-based organization; therefore, it is imperative to increase resources necessary to continue programming and services. This effort may also increase leadership and governance and financial and market results.

Project Summary

Nonprofit organizations significantly impact society, communities, individuals, animals, and the overall progression of life. Nonprofit contributions have continued to increase as the need for assistance and hope exponentially to grow with each economic downturn, pandemic such as COVID-19, and with each phase of life or business. Approximately, 1.3 million American nonprofit organizations in the United States (Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, 2021) have a mission to feed, heal, shelter, educate, inspire, enlighten, and nurture a person, group, or business no matter their demographic. This study consists of a qualitative single case study, in which senior leaders explain the strategies they use to implement formal succession planning strategies. This study includes a conceptual framework containing systems thinking theory, once known as GST. The organization’s leaders use their resources (customer-focused excellence, valuing the workforce and people, and customer-focused programming) to sustain its competitive advantage in the nonprofit industry. Leaders of the organization continue to build a foundation of resources to embody the mission: to empower the body, mind, and spirit of at-risk homeless youth so that they may understand the value of having only one chance at life and making it count. Feedback gathered from stakeholders reassures the organization that the mission is prevalent in all organizational programming. The key themes that emerged from analysis of the study findings include community involvement and customer-focused programming. To develop these themes, I integrated the Baldrige Excellence Framework, organization documentation, and responses gathered from participant interviews. XYZ organization has multiple planned strategies and goals for the future of the organization, but the intent of this doctoral study was to focus on strategies senior leaders use to implement formal succession planning and these themes were most applicable to this study. Furthermore, the key themes presented were frequent in the participant responses to the interview questions.

Contributions and Recommendations

Nonprofit senior leaders have numerous concerns in obtaining necessary resources to operate a nonprofit organization effectively and efficiently to achieve its mission with excellent performance. Seo and Bryson (2022) noted that resource collaboration is essential to fulfilling social gaps and issues, but may require more challenges than it solves the need for resource requirements, resulting in a “resource dilemma.” Nonprofit research has studied sector benefits that attract employees and volunteers, but there is minimal research that has explored why nonprofit organizations depend on the community for operation (AbouAssi et al., 2022).

To address these concerns, implementing formal succession strategies tailored for senior leaders can assist in identifying solutions to organizational concerns. Succession planning develops the workforce, resulting in improved performance and greater community relationships (Mehreen & Ali, 2022). XYZ senior leaders are committed to utilizing strategies that will aid in providing additional resources to improve organizational operations, programs, and services to serve the targeted audience, homeless youth. Collaborating and combining resources to serve the community will assist in managing and benefitting from the nonprofit sector developing and growing overtime (Singh et al., 2022).

Organizational capacity is the ability for an organization to obtain necessary resources to implement and execute its mission (Hall et al., 2003, as cited in De Clerck et al., 2021). To implement and execute a succession plan is dependent on many factors such as capacity, access to resources, environment and culture as mentioned by Singh et al. (2022), which are all scarce or inconsistent items within the nonprofit industry. Lack of organizaitonal capacity is an adversarial challenge that nonprofit organizations, small and large, must overcome because resources are required to execute the mission, support the vision, and to obtain additional resources. It is a cyclical process, a system.

Application to Professional Practice

The findings in this doctoral study are applicable to professional business practice by implementing formal succession planning strategies to attain or sustain an organization's success. The results and recommendations in this study provide nonprofit leaders in the northeastern region of the United States and elsewhere who are looking for approaches to implement formal succession planning strategies. Succession planning creates an environment for success by developing future organizational leaders for management, leadership, and other key positions (Baldrige Performance Excellence Program, 2019). The findings of this study may contribute to the understanding of nonprofit succession planning. The study is relevant to nonprofit leaders that are seeking to improve business practices.

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore business strategies nonprofit leaders use for succession planning. Leaders of XYZ and other nonprofit leaders that seek strategies can use the findings from this study to enhance daily operations to achieve operational sustainability. Through the thematic findings and recommendations, nonprofit leaders can leverage community involvement and customer-focused programming to continue to develop the workforce and organizational processes for succession planning efforts. For example, XYZ leaders assess the needs of homeless children (customer-focused programming) to provide resources and tools (donations and support from community involvement) to cope with their environments.

Success is achievable when leaders foster a culture that is focused on the same goals, the same mission, the same vision, and the members share the same values. Leader implemented processes, practices, and programs that are customer-focused are effective and well-received from the targeted audience (Hoch et al., 2022). When leaders utilize tools such as the Baldrige Performance Excellence Program (2019), the targeted audience benefits from not only the services and programs that the organization provides, but they also benefit from the consistent effort to improve the organization, the programs, the services, the communal relationships with internal and external stakeholders, and ultimately the customer. Organizations can become greater positive social change agents within the community after improving operations to become more efficient and effective.

Implications for Social Change

Nonprofit organizations support communities by providing vital services that government authorities and corporate leaders are unable to provide for a variety of reasons. March-November 2020, small businesses had a 30-50% reduction in operating capacity (SBA, 2020). According to a national survey from 2020, recessions such as COVID-19 Pandemic, nonprofits have been more essential to the well-being of society than government and corporate agencies (Kim & Mason, 2020b). Nonprofits exist to ensure the survival of (a) individuals, (b) groups, (c) communities, and (d) society have seen an increase in need unlike nonprofits that do not provide human necessities (Kim & Mason, 2020a). The implications for social change in this doctoral study include leaders implementing succession planning strategies to ensure the needs of the organization are being met.

As a result of the needs of an organization being met, senior leaders will have a significant impact on combatting youth homelessness because all resources will be directed towards ensuring children receive the necessary empowerment to thrive. The succession planning strategies highlighted in this study were minimal. Participants identified that there is not a formal succession plan in place and that this is detrimental to the longevity of the organization. Operations issues and challenges that arrive will be addressed as needed by the 11 board members. The participants stated that all organizational issues are addressed in a timely manner; therefore, implementing a formal succession plan is an item to be completed soon. Formal succession planning could support nonprofit leaders in implementing workforce, operation, and resource capacity resulting in positive societal change.

Recommendations for Action

The recommendations for action are intended for the leaders of XYZ organization and other small nonprofit organization leaders. I recommend the following actions: (1) continue to create awareness of organizational missions inside and outside the geographic location; (2) partner with local community colleges, universities, and student learners to receive manpower and knowledge on areas requiring improvement; (3) explore the strategies nonprofit leaders use to increase fiscal resources; (4) explore strategies nonprofit leaders use to improve program and services performance measures; and (5) utilize the data collected from Baldrige Performance Excellence Program (2019). The findings resulting from this study revealed a lack of research for other nonprofits that could share a similar mission or have programs and services targeting the same audience.

Branding and marketing are essential to creating community awareness for nonprofit organizations and small businesses in order to receive continued support (Wymer & Akbar, 2019). Numerous organizations are providing services and programs that are desired and necessary for the betterment of the community, families, and individuals. More importantly, there are members of society who are seeking organizations that share and promote similar values, visions, and missions to support community growth. Effective branding and marketing create community partnerships between positive social change agents, organizations, and individuals that are determined to support targeted audiences and combat social and economic shortcomings. Implementing a branding and marketing plan is started by assessing (a) consumers, (b) company, (c) competitors, (d) context, and (e) collaborators, which is referred to as the 5

Cs model (Terech, 2018). The responses from the Baldrige Performance Excellence Program (2019) can be used to address the 5Cs model. A clear and distinctive branding and marketing strategy can align the organization with the intended audience directly, which will reduce potential budget costs for this effort (Terech, 2018).

To support shared missions, visions, and values, it is recommended to seek and utilize resources and partnerships that are recompensing. XYZ organization and various other nonprofit organizations and small businesses are solely operated by volunteers or operating with a lack of funding resources to attract expertise necessary to execute missions. Nonprofit leaders that seek to fulfill a gap in society do so because of desire, but may not have the technical education of operating a nonprofit organization (Thomas & Van Slyke, 2019). There are numerous education programs, trade schools, community colleges, and universities seeking real-time and real-world opportunities for students to experience such as the Walden University Consulting Capstone. A partnership as such provides both parties desired resources and technical or real-time knowledge, an opportunity to serve another community member, and an opportunity to reduce costs or save excess budgeted funds for operational disruptions such as COVID-19 (Kim & Mason, 2020b).

The recommendations to explore strategies nonprofit leaders use to increase financial resources and improve performance measures are parallel. The increase of stakeholder funding will require clear, concise quantifiable performance data. To improve programs and services provided organizations must be able to effectively measure organizational performance. Exploring both recommended strategies will aid XYZ and other nonprofit organizations in sustainment and performance excellence.

The dissemination of the findings from this study may be useful to nonprofit leaders and senior leaders within organizations of all industries that are seeking to implement formal succession plans in order to improve organizational performance. This study will be published and shared with the client organization and its participants. I will disseminate the findings of this study by sharing the findings with peers, the nonprofit industry, and through journal publication.

Recommendations for Further Research

Recommendations for further research provide insight for other researchers to further the research beyond the scope of this doctoral study and field of study. There were two limitations that this doctoral study identified. The first limitation is the richness of data provided for this research study. The data provided was subject to the organization's review first: therefore, the data cannot be considered raw data. The results and findings may be limited to the data presented by the organization and not the data collected by the organization. The second limitation is that the sample size of this doctoral study only includes the experience of senior leaders from the client organization. This study does not include the perspective of other senior leaders. I would recommend conducting further research to understand the strategic approach to implementing formal succession plans by including additional senior leaders and obtaining access to raw data collected by participants. By implementing these recommendations, it would be beneficial to implementing succession planning in nonprofit organizations.

Reflections

I began this Doctor of Business Administration journey as a desire to satisfy my passion to be a self-proclaimed life-long learner with a working knowledge of process improvement and minimal knowledge of succession planning. This journey has been challenging, self-explorative, and fuel to continuous learning. This journey has provided me self-awareness and valuable perspective that can be applied in all aspects of life, until the end of time. The DBA Consulting Capstone gifted me an exceptional opportunity to serve as a student-consultant with real-world experience to work with a nonprofit organization to apply the Baldrige Excellence Framework. I learned how to apply the Baldrige Excellence Framework and many components to evaluating and assessing an organization.

During this research process, I learned about the importance of not only self-discipline, but also grace, perseverance, and taking time to invest in self to empower others. Grace, patience, and taking time to invest in self can be applied to my doctoral journey and life, but also applied to organizations that have a mission to achieve and support the community. Moving forward, I will continue to share that message with others that find themselves pursuing a doctoral degree or their journey to be a positive social change agent.

Conclusion

There are numerous strategies senior leaders use within nonprofits to serve the community. These strategies are utilized to achieve various milestones throughout the life of an organization and to target a specific audience to fulfill a specific need for an individual, family, or group. This study intends to advance the knowledge of strategies to implement succession planning within nonprofit organizations. Succession planning is essential to nonprofit organizations especially with the current state of society due to COVID-19. Global pandemics, aside from the daily challenges that many endure mentally, physically, socially, or financially, feed into many second and third-order effects. There have been many persons removed from their homes or closing their businesses due to the COVID-19 pandemic. While there are many aspects and components to nonprofit operations, the findings from this study have shown that the application of the Baldrige performance excellence framework to implement formal succession planning strategies is beneficial to the (a) organization, (b) programming and processes, (c) customers, (d) volunteers, (e) leadership and governance, and (f) finances and market presence.

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Appendix A: Interview Questions

The interview questions are intended to explore the business used by nonprofit leaders to implement formal succession planning.

1. What steps have you taken to implement a succession plan for your small business?
2. What formal succession planning strategies are currently implemented in the company's policy?
3. What, if any, accountability measures are in place to ensure current employees are given proper training to prepare for future available positions?
4. To what extent are employees cross-trained on future responsibilities?
5. What strategies are used to ensure that succession planning is a priority?
6. What is the current succession plan for ownership of the business?
7. How do you measure the efficacy of your succession planning strategies?
8. What additional information can you share about business strategies for succession planning that may not have been covered in previous interview questions?

Appendix B: Interview Protocol

1. Introduce self to participant.
2. Ask for and answer any questions that participant may have.
3. Verify receipt and/or response to Consent Form for Senior Leader Review.
4. Remind participant of voluntary nature of the study.
5. Thank participant for their time and contribution.