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The Impact of Economic Uncertainty on Nonprofit Leaders' Decision to Expand Services

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Walden University
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Abstract

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MS, Walden University, 2014

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Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

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Doctor of Psychology in Behavioral Health Leadership

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Abstract

Nonprofit organizations (NPOs) play a pivotal role in lower socioeconomic communities. Leaders of nonprofits are frequently faced with multiple, complex, and often-competing objectives. This qualitative case study was conducted to explore and understand how economic uncertainties impact an NPO and, specifically, how economic uncertainty has affected nonprofit executives' development of strategies and decision making regarding expanding services. Data were collected through interviews and review of secondary data and the organization's website from the executive director, president/chief executive officer, and funders. The Baldrige Framework of Excellence was used to support the foundations of this study. The collected data were analyzed, and strategic focus areas and action steps with a timeline were developed after summarizing the organization's strategy to solve the organizational problem of expanding services because of limited space and the inability to seek additional funding opportunities. Recommendations included implementing systems that would improve collaboration with other organizations, funders, and customers outside the NPO's geographic location; continuous planning, including improved communication, leadership, and policies; diversifying the board of directors; and implementing a behavioral health program to diversify and enhance existing programs. Findings may be used for positive social change through the services offered By the NPO to decrease inner-city crime, substance abuse, domestic violence, teen pregnancy, DJJ involvement, homelessness, and hunger in poverty-stricken neighborhoods.

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Section 1a: The Behavioral Health Organization

Introduction

Strategic planning is a process that focuses on strategic and operational goals, objectives, and strategies based on organizational policies, programs, and activities that are designed to achieve the institution's aims and desirable results (Hughes, 2003; Kabeyi, 2019). Strategic planning can help nonprofit organizations (NPOs) manage and respond to environmental changes affecting organizational growth and improving decision making. Strategic planning plays an integral role in helping with the organizational relationship because driving goals and improving performance are dependent on success. According to Brosan and Levin (2017), planning is necessary for an organization's continued health and prosperity. Strategic planning creates a long-term road map for that change and clarifies the organization's vision, purpose, and priorities and guides decisions, such as allocating resources and determining its future direction (Brosan & Levin, 2017). NPOs aim to promote community leadership and support, including improving education, financial success, lower rates of crime, and other services. They also pursue environmental excellence, being a role model for addressing socially essential issues, such as diversity, equity, and inclusion (National Institutes of Standards and Technology [NIST], 2021).

NPO X (a pseudonym) is located in the southern United States. Its mission statement is to help youth actively involved in the Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) and families from low-income communities. NPO X was established in 1993 as a faith-based organization and serves a local population of 183,445 with an overall poverty rate of 16.9%. Black or African Americans make up 32.20% of this population and have a poverty rate of 29.59%. NPO X predominantly but not exclusively serves African American families experiencing financial difficulties, unemployment, substance abuse issues, legal problems, homelessness, and physical and/or sexual abuse. NPO X's organizational makeup consists of a CEO, an executive director (ED), four directors, direct service staff, and volunteers. NPO X offers an array of client-centered services based on the needs of children and families located in a geographic area with high numbers of poverty, single-parent households, and crime. According to the NPO X website, the organization has focused on the needs of disadvantaged youth and families in the inner city, protecting youth who have run away, been truant, and/or are exhibiting ungovernable behavior from entering the juvenile justice system. The programs offered through NPO X are diversion, prevention, family/youth respite aftercare, and stop now and plan (SNAP).

Practice Problem

According to Kabeyi (2019) and Tapera (2016), a strategic plan is a tool for defining the organizational direction and, therefore, helps determines the objectives and goals of the organization that are as realistic as possible. Kabeyi and Tapera also stated that strategic planning is a process whose results should be innovative and creative ideas that lay the foundation for an organization's future. NPOs face challenges inherent to the idiosyncrasies of this type of institution, and one vital challenge for NPOs is capacity building (Stuhlinger et al., 2021). The NPO X ED stated that one problem they face is that limited space has affected opportunities for additional funding, which has delayed the organization from implementing new services in the community they serve.

Economic uncertainties put NPO X's future growth and expansion of services at risk. Nonprofits can fail when private donations are insufficient to meet the heterogeneous demands of society (Kim & Kim, 2018). Not meeting outcome measures puts NPO X at risk of future funding not being granted. The lack of funding also puts at-risk families at a higher risk of not receiving services. Economic uncertainty has constrained NPO executives' decision making because government support is a significant revenue source on which NPOs rely to maintain and expand their services (Kim & Kim, 2018). The specific organizational problem that was addressed through this study was the difficulties nonprofit executives experience with economic uncertainty and long-term revenue diversification to help improve and expand services.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:

Research Question 1: How does economic uncertainty limit an executive's decisions to develop long-term revenue strategies?

Research Question 2: How would revenue diversification help NPOs improve and expand their services?

Purpose

In this qualitative case study, I aimed to understand how economic uncertainty has affected nonprofit executives' development of strategies and decisions to expand services to families in the southern United States. I utilized multiple data sources for this study. Data were collected through interviews with the ED, the president/CEO, and the organization's funders. Interviews were used to gather information from the executives about their experience with funders and how their experiences have affected decisions to expand NPO X's services. I also reviewed NPO X's existing strategic plan, program evaluations, previous funding awarded to the organization, and the organization's website. Additionally, I reviewed past strategic plans to develop a sense of how the organization incorporated the critical areas of its mission, vision, and values to gain insight into its strengths and weaknesses.

I applied the Baldrige Excellence Framework (NIST, 2021) and its criteria for performance in this study to address economic uncertainties affect on nonprofits, leaders' ability to make decisions, and the expansion of services. The framework served as a guide to exploring organizational performance and improvement. The Baldrige framework also guided me in looking at NPO X's organizational characteristics. I focused on critical areas, such as the role of leadership and the organization's strategic goals. The framework provides indicators that can be used to measure strategic development and objectives, performance measurement, performance analysis, improvement, and organizational leadership (NIST, 2021). The Baldrige framework also provided me with questions beneficial to gathering information and understanding the organizational problem.

The potential value of this project to NPO X lies in the data collected on how leaders' decision making affects organizational development and growth. I investigated if internal and external pressures have affected the leaders' decision-making. Failure to develop strategies may harm the organization's performance and growth ability long term. Additionally, this study could help other NPO leaders identify successful strategies to help expand their services and increase revenue resources during uncertain times.

Issues of economic uncertainty appear to be a barrier to organizational growth. According to Hung and Hager (2019), revenue diversification holds value for nonprofits; however, it may also prove detrimental. Nonprofits should diversify revenue sources to hedge against uncertainty because "If a nonprofit relies exclusively on grants, it might wish it had pursued an additional earned income strategy when its funder priorities change. More revenue sources provide flexibility" (Hung & Hager, 2019, pp. 5-6). In the current study, I addressed issues of economic uncertainty identified by the president/CEO and ED. This study also addressed whether economic uncertainty has affected the executives' decision-making to expand services. According to Brown (2011), the overwhelming success of many great companies starts to work against them when "pride of position" begins to erode their base.

The findings of this study could contribute to positive social change (PSC) by providing the president/CEO and ED with a solution-focused plan for expanding services and increasing revenue. Additionally, a successful strategic plan could improve nonprofit leaders' decision making and increase the organization's performance. PSC implications could also include increasing positive interaction and services to the community, resulting in financial gain for NPO X. Stephan et al. (2016) wrote about deep-level PSC strategies. Stephan also expounded on his strategies was developmental, empowering, and often strengths-focused in their approach to working with targets. They found that

PSC projects employing deep-level strategies typically targeted more complex needs and several PSC domains simultaneously (e.g., health and social inclusion) and lasted longer. The PSC stimulated by these projects had a narrow reach initially and often unfolded slowly but steadily over time as an increasing number of targets experienced transformation. The social impact associated with deep-level strategies appeared to be pervasive and durable because the change was embedded in “deeper-level” transformations of both targets (i.e., their attitudes, beliefs, and capabilities) and their contexts (i.e., opportunity structures and social capital; Stephan et al., 2016).

Summary and Transition

NPOs are significant resources to lower socioeconomic urban communities with high poverty and crime and often provide financial resources, nutritional education, food banks, housing assistance, and mental health services. Strategic planning is vital to small NPOs’ sustainability. In this study, I took an in-depth look into NPO X to determine how the leaders make their decisions and what barriers have prevented the expansion of services. I will provide a more in-depth description of the organizational structure and the leaders’ roles, experiences with, and understanding of strategic planning, analysis, knowledge management, and operations in Section 1b.

Section 1b: Organizational Profile

Introduction

The specific organizational problem that was addressed through this study was the difficulties nonprofit executives experience with economic uncertainties and long-term revenue diversification. I conducted this qualitative case study to understand how economic uncertainties have affected nonprofit executives' decision making and strategic planning to expand services to families located in the southern United States. Two research questions guided this study:

Research Question 1: How does economic uncertainty limit an executive's decisions to develop long-term revenue strategies?

Research Question 2: How would revenue diversification help NPOs improve and expand their services?

Strategic planning is the process of defining an organization's direction and making decisions about allocating its resources to pursue this strategy (Kabeyi, 2019). Leader effectiveness ensures that organizational objectives are carried out in accordance with a vision and mission (Sonmez & Adiguzel, 2020). The ED at NPO X stated, "as a leader, I am limited in what I can apply for because of the space, the expansion, and the amount of space available." The leadership at NPO X has identified its organizational problem as not being able to expand the current space, which has affected opportunities for additional funding and has delayed the organization from implementing new services in the community they serve.

NPO X leaders want to expand and offer more services to the underserved and their community. They needed assistance in identifying alternatives to their funding issues as well as planning and carrying out a plan to expand services to the community. I conducted this study to help them address these needs.

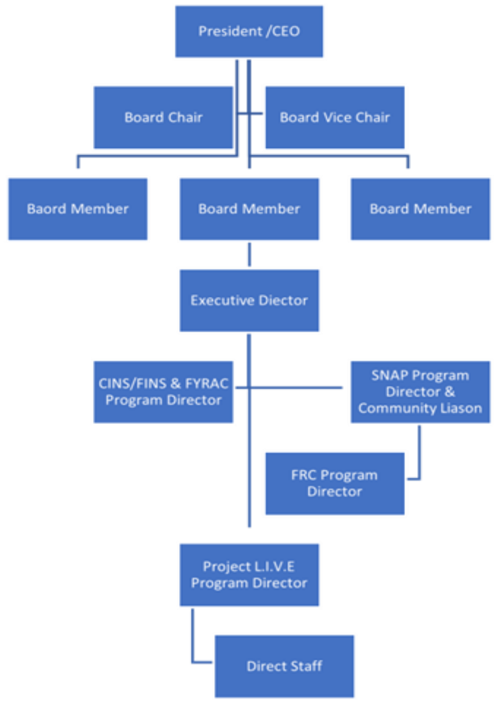
Organizational Profile and Key Factors

NPO X was established 29 years ago as a faith-based NPO. Two years ago, the organization decided to rebrand and change its name. The ED described the organization as being developed by the founder and CEO. According to their website, NPO X provides multiple services to the community related to education, training, nutrition, and family support.

NPO X employs 10 full-time employees, an ED, four program directors, and five direct-level staff. Figure displays the organizational chart of NPO X. The board of directors consists of a chair, vice chair, and three board members. According to the ED, she restructured and diversified the board of directors when she came on board almost 2 years ago.

Figure 1

Organizational Chart



NPO X offers an array of services to an underserved population. As stated, NPO X's focus is on the needs of disadvantaged youth and families in the inner city. They protect youth that run away, are truant, and/or are exhibiting ungovernable behavior from entering the juvenile justice system. The programs offered through NPO X are diversion, prevention, family/youth respite aftercare, SNAP, and a food pantry. NPO X's mission statement is to help youth actively involved in the DJJ and families from low-income communities. According to the NPO X ED, the organization is passionate about making a difference in the lives of the children and families they serve. The organization has not developed a formal vision; however, the ED envisions NPO X expanding its services through additional funding.

Organizational Background and Context

The ED indicated that NPO X depends on funding from grant programs, donations, and partnerships with the community. After reviewing the organization's finances from the last 2 years, it was evident that most of its funding is received from grants awarded. The following programs receive funding: children in need of services (CINS)/families in need (FINS), family resource center (FSC), family/youth respite aftercare services (FYRAC), learning interventions vital to existence (LIVE), and SNAP. Despite funding received for these programs, NPO X has also paid civil penalties of $125,232 for failing to file taxes properly for the last 2 years.

According to NPO X's strategic plan policy, its planning process framework has multiple components:

- Critical assumptions about the future
- A 4-year, written, board-approved strategic plan that includes
    - Long-term vision statement (with a time horizon of 5–20 years)
    - Major initiatives and goals (with a time horizon of 2–3 years)
    - Annual plan and goals (with a time horizon of 1 year)
- Strategic performance measure reports
- Active engagement in the process at all levels of the organization

Strategic planning is defined as the process of guiding the organizational stakeholders in realizing the organization has envisioned the future and creating necessary developmental procedures, actions, and operations that enhance the organization's performance (Tarifif, 2021; Wells & Doherty, 1994). The mission and vision are critical elements in strategic planning that bring out the expected performance standards concerning the organizational goals (Tarifif, 2021). Tarifif (2021) and Wells and Doherty (1994) argued that strategic planning creates an organization's future and a framework for improvement efforts. Therefore, strategic planning activities are critical in determining the growth and development of an organization that translates into the organization's success (Tarifif, 2021).

Summary and Transition

NPO X's mission statement is to help youth actively involved in the DJJ and families from low-income communities and to help at-risk families make better choices by providing them with the necessary tools to live better lives. NPO X is an established organization that has been in existence since 1993 with the goal of improving the lives of the underprivileged through their various programs. NPO X depends on funding from its city and the state and federal government. The organization developed a comprehensive strategic plan, including staff involvement on all levels. NPO X's board of directors seem to play an integral role in decision making involving the strategic plan, funding opportunities, and implementation of new programs.

According to the ED, the board of BOD influences the financial decision-making at NPO X. The ED continued to say that NPO X is organizing a nominating committee to recruit additional board members. However, NPO X's financial uncertainties have influenced executives' decisions and stopped them from developing long-term revenue diversification to expand services. According to NPO X 990 reports from the last 2 years, the organization has received civil penalties from the government.

In Section 2, I reviewed the leadership structure of NPO X by applying elements of the Baldrige framework to discuss leaders' decision making regarding economic uncertainties and long-term diversification. Other supporting literature focused on leadership strategy, assessment, and leadership style will also be presented. In Section 2, I will discuss key strategic challenges, organizational trustworthiness, the clients and population served, workforce and operations, and analytics as well.

Section 2: Background and Approach–Leadership Strategy and Assessment

Introduction

The specific organizational problem addressed through this study was the difficulties nonprofit executives experience with economic uncertainties and long-term revenue diversification. I conducted this qualitative case study to understand how economic uncertainties have affected nonprofit executives' development of strategies and decisions to expand services to families located in the southern United States. Two research questions guided this study:

Research Question 1: How does economic uncertainty limit an executive's decisions to develop long-term revenue strategies?

Research Question 2: How would revenue diversification help NPOs improve and expand their services?

NPO X leaders want to expand and offer more services to the underserved and their community. They needed assistance in identifying alternatives to their funding issues as well as planning and carrying out a plan to expand services to the community. I conducted this study to help them address these needs.

Supporting Literature

I conducted an extensive search of scholarly literature using the following databases accessible through the Walden University Library: Academic Search Complete, APA PsycInfo (formerly PsycInfo), EBSCO, and SAGE Journals. Google Scholar was also searched. I limited all my searches to sources that were published between 2016 and 2021. The keyword search terms used were *economic uncertainty, leader's decision-*

making, leadership, long-term diversification, expansion, services, decision-making, and *nonprofit.*

Leadership Decision Making

Park and Mosley (2017) discussed the difficulties human service organizations have experienced with the privatization and the pressure of showing profits, uneven funding, and how this has affected managerial decision making. The institutional logic perspective discussed by Park and Mosely and Scott (2011) highlighted the social and cultural aspects of environments that shape managers' beliefs about appropriate courses of action. The Baldrige Excellence Framework contains relevant information about leadership performance and how senior leadership deploys the organization's vision and mission and creates an environment for success.

The roots of most human service organizations are in a mission-focused logic, with reliance on private donations being the dominant funding norm; this logic emphasizes close community connections, local funders, and responsiveness to a clear service population (Hasenfeld & Garrow, 2012; Park & Mosley, 2017; Spitzmueller, 2016). NPO X is mission-focused as evidenced by its close community connections and responsiveness to a clear service population.

According to Park and Mosley (2017), organizations that have partnered with the government by providing services through contracts grew rapidly, and the field grew in response to these new opportunities. NPO X's ED reported that their organization had obtained multiple contracts with the government, mainly with the DJJ; however, they are missing funding opportunities and opportunities for organizational growth because of limited space to provide additional services. For organizations with limited capacity, initiating new or managing multiple funding relationships might not seem possible during economically uncertain times, especially considering the multifold accountability demands from funders and the associated investments in external affairs (Lin & Wang, 2016; Park & Mosley, 2017)

Economic Uncertainty

Financial uncertainty became a reality for many NPOs during the COVID-19 pandemic. Small NPOs face challenges due to insufficient funds, often preventing organization growth and expansion of other services. Without sufficient and consistent funding streams, nonprofits may be forced to limit programs or even close their doors (Kim, 2017). The underlying assumption is that financially healthy organizations would perform better because they can cope with unexpected fiscal challenges while continuously supporting program improvement (Kim, 2017).

NPO revenue streams are sometimes limited to donations or grant funding, which puts the organization in a financially vulnerable state affecting the ability to expand services. Financial vulnerability is defined as an organization cutting back services in response to the loss of revenue (Despard et al., 2017; Tuckman & Chang, 1991).

Despard et al. (2017) and Mitchell (2014) identified three broad categories of strategic responses by nongovernmental organizations to resource dependence: adaptation, avoidance, and shaping. Adaptation relates to modifying efforts in response to funding opportunities, such as adjusting goals to pursue a grant opportunity. Avoidance refers to efforts to evade resource dependence, the most common of which is revenue diversification. Shaping relates to efforts by organizations to influence funders, such as negotiating funding terms.

NPOs have traditionally depended on donations from private and government as a means of financial gain, but because the economy is heading into a recession, traditional NPOs must look at other practices to attract new revenue sources and financial gain. Ko and Liu (2021) researched the different types of commercial revenue streams and how NPOs would benefit if they took this approach to raise funds. They defined NPOs that are more entrepreneurial, market-oriented, and business-like as a new social enterprise (SE). From the perspective of organizational goals, SEs focus on creating social value, which aligns with the interpretation of NPOs as social, mission-driven organizations (Bull & Ridley-Duff, 2019; Ko & Liu, 2021; Weerawardena & Mort, 2012). However, unlike NPOs that traditionally rely on private donations and government funding, SEs focus on generating income from commercial activities (Defourny & Nyssens, 2017; Litrico & Besharov, 2019; Ko & Liu, 2021).

Going from a traditional NPO to SE may be challenging for organizations that have operated one way. Ko and Liu (2021) conducted and analyzed 64 field interviews with institutional entrepreneurs who have participated in the process of transforming traditional NPOs into SEs. They found that the first transformation processes begin with traditional NPOs engaging in the commercial revenue strategy. Through building commercial revenue-generating mechanisms and establishing business partnerships with for-profit organizations, traditional NPOs can exploit commercial opportunities and develop commercial revenue streams. The Baldrige framework references how senior leaders communicate and engage with key partners. The second transformation processes lead to creating a professionalized organizational form to respond to the changing environment. The Baldrige framework references how senior leaders create an environment for success now and in the future. In particular, institutional entrepreneurs focus on constructing business-like working processes, supporting structures within traditional NPOs, and developing the capacity for managing business-like operations. The third transformation processes emphasize legitimating the socio-commercial business model by advocating a business-oriented strategic direction and maintaining social organization status to address stakeholders’ concerns about the newly emerged SEs. In the Baldrige framework, strategic planning and development and how leaders identify and decide on strategic opportunities are discussed.

Long-Term Diversification

Diversification is defined as the entry of a firm or a business unit into new lines of activity, either by internal business development or acquisition processes, indicating the organization’s existence prior to the diversification behavior (Mendoza-Abarca & Gras, 2019; Ramanujam & Varadarajan, 1989). According to Mitchell and Calabrese (2022), diversifying revenues consists of six nonprofit revenue sources: private contributions, membership dues, government grants, program service revenues, total investment income, and other revenues.

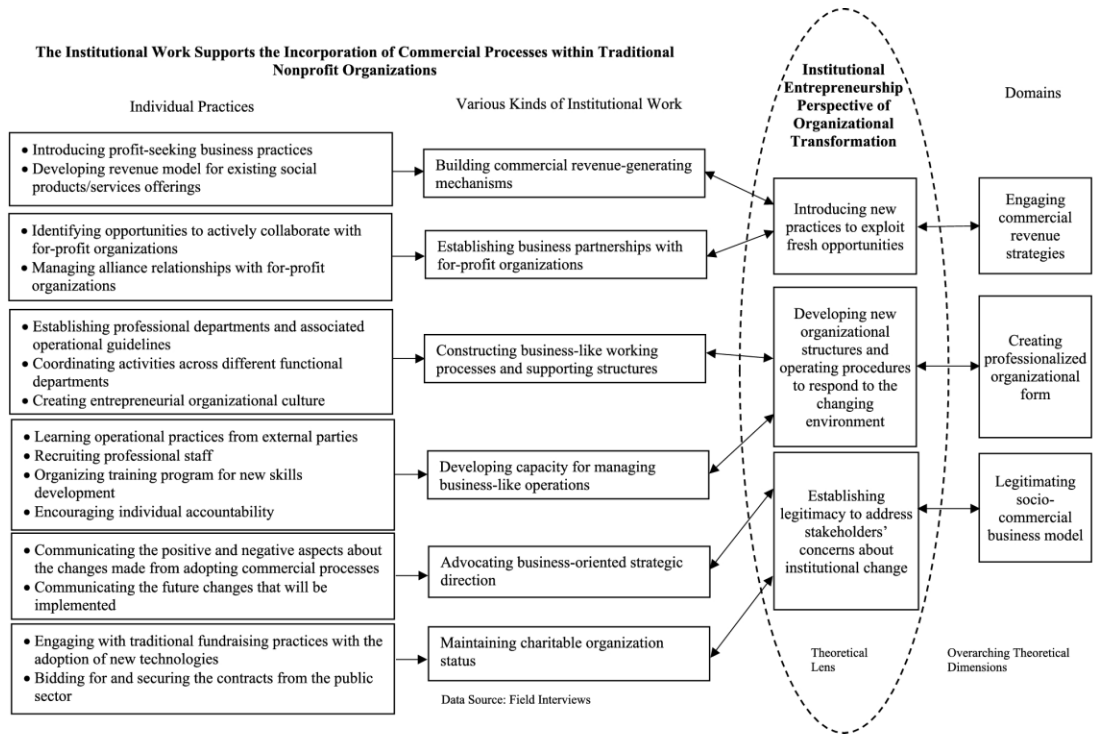
Hung and Hager (2019) wrote that nonprofits should diversify revenue sources to hedge against uncertainty. If an NPO relies exclusively on grants, it might wish it had pursued an additional earned income strategy when its funder priorities change. More revenue sources provide flexibility, and reliance on a limited number of sources leaves them vulnerable (Hung & Hager, 2019). However, according to Chang and Tuckman (1991) and Mitchell and Calabrese (2022), revenue diversification is frequently advocated under the belief that adding more revenue streams improves the fiscal health of a nonprofit, increasing its survivability and, thus, its ability to provide charitable services further into the future. Mendoza-Abarca and Gras (2019) discussed new nonprofit diversification as being beneficial for survival yet detrimental to efficiency and that an additional type of diversity, revenue source diversity, significantly alters this relationship.

NPOs' efficient resource allocation consists of reducing administrative and fundraising expenses in favor of program-related expenses. Most NPOs' programs consist of services or a combination of products and services, so these organizations are likely to possess mostly nonscale-free resources, which cannot be used for one task without diverting them from another task (Hashai, 2015). NPOs with fewer programs to manage, coordinate, and fund should incur fewer nonprogrammatic expenses.

Using semistructured interviews, Ko and Liu (2021) asked participants four issues based on their experiences. Figure 2 displays the outcomes of the incorporation of commercial processes within traditional NPOs from Ko and Liu's study. Based on their findings, if NPOs adopted a SE practice, their chances of survival would be increased.

Figure 2

Commercial Processes Within Traditional Nonprofit Organizations



Note. From "The Transformation From Traditional Nonprofit Organizations to Social Enterprises: An Institutional Entrepreneurship Perspective," by W. W. Ko and G. Liu, 2021, *J Bus Ethics*, *171*, 15–32. (https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-020-04446-z)

Organizational Trustworthiness

Trust is essential for the existence and success of charity organizations (Katz, 2018). The public image of NPOs is an essential factor affecting their ability to solicit donations, and this is at the heart of the discourse on nonprofit brands (Katz, 2018). Although the inability of nonprofit managers, leaders, and board members to personally profit may lead to increased trust in NPOs, it also introduces an efficiency problem because nonprofit practitioners no longer have strong financial incentives for maximizing performance (Mitchell & Calabrese, 2022).

Because nonprofit outputs are thought to be too difficult, costly, or impossible to observe, nonprofits attract support not necessarily by providing credible information about mission performance but by maintaining trustworthiness through fiscal probity signaling (Mitchell & Calabrese, 2022). Donating money to a charity organization requires trust because information asymmetries make it impossible for donors to estimate the quality of the service provided (Greiling, 2007; Katz, 2018). Because donors lack performance information, they cannot induce efficiency by rewarding performance or systematically preferring higher-performing organizations (Mitchell & Calabrese, 2022).

Katz (2018) found that trustworthiness does not predict donations; however, the author promoted organizational transparency as a strong signal for trustworthiness and effectiveness. Because the nonprofit sector has changed over time, many stakeholders have become more data driven, and outcome-oriented philanthropy, contracting arrangements, and pay-for-performance schemes have become more commonplace (Mitchell & Calabrese, 2022).

Sources of Evidence

I gathered multiple sources of evidence for this qualitative study through interviews with the ED, CEO, and two board members as well as reviews of NPO X’s financial documentation, geographic data about the population served, , strategic plan, and their website. A collection and analysis of the evidence provided me with an understanding of NPO X’s issues with not being able to expand services in the community they serve.

Leadership Strategy and Assessment

NPO X's organizational chart depicts an outline of the leadership at the organization (see Figure 1). NPO X is led and governed by the president/CEO. The BOD reports to the president/CEO, and the ED reports to the CEO and BOD. The directors of the CINS/FINS, FSC, FYRAC, LIVE, and SNAP programs report to the ED.

The NPO X ED stated, "In order for the leaders to effectively govern and lead, it is vital that they understand the organization's mission, strengths, and weaknesses. Assisting in creating the strategic plan and ensuring that it aligns with the mission is also essential." She further stated, "I have found that leaders within the organization encompass the following skills, which assists tremendously with their efforts to govern and lead.":

- Ability to implement goals and hold leaders, directors, and staff accountable for accomplishing goals within an established timeline and aligning with the strategic plan.
- Ability to foresee possible challenges.
- Innovation and partnerships to meet challenges.
- Ability to effectively pivot as circumstances change (i.e. change in leadership, COVID and etc.).
- Ability to communicate effectively.
- Ability to inspire individuals to do their best and achieve a unified purpose.
- Addressing concerns of internal stakeholders and the community at large.
- Most importantly, operating with integrity and authenticity.

Leadership Style

The ED described her leadership style as metamodern, stating,

> I enjoy being on the innovative edge, pushing leadership and the organization forward. Paradox and complexity invigorate me. I may be that rare person who balances pragmatism and idealism with sincerity. With a strong imagination and a willingness to take calculated risks, I enjoy envisioning a bright future. While I know that the role of a leader requires some artifice, I also understand how authenticity can deeply connect me to myself, my work, and the people around me. Empowering others to share the leadership role helps me co-create a better world.

> "A metamodern leader focuses on creating a positive environment that emphasizes psychological safety. By balancing evidence-based organizational behavior insights, creativity, and spontaneity, leaders gain the benefits of engagement, inclusiveness, and innovation. The Baldrige Program references workforce engagement under the section of senior leadership, creating an environment for success. Empowered workers take on leadership roles in specific contexts in a symbiotic relationship" *Leadership Styles: Identifying your Style*. (n.d.).

Key Strategic Challenges

NPO X strategic policy plan is outlined over a four-year and approved by the BOD. A key goal identified on page 10 of this study is that major initiatives and goals (time horizon 2-3 years) have proven challenging for the organization. However, the ED has expressed, "Unfortunately, I have found that in my tenure, one key strategic challenge has been the Board of Directors (BOD) lack of engagement beyond monthly meetings and does not apply to all but the majority."

Employees in a leadership role and direct staff play an integral role in implementing the plan. The ED has also identified the difficulties with expanding services due to challenges with financing preventing the organization from locating a larger property where clients could be served. The ED reported that because of this issue, she is being prevented from applying for new requests for proposals. NPO X receives funding from federal and state funds. They receive a small portion of their finances from donations from fundraising. NPO is not an accredited organization. However, they are audited yearly and must keep to strict federal and state guidelines for grants awarded.

Clients/Population Served

NPO X serves children, adolescents, adults, and the elderly through its many programs. The population served comes from single-family households, has current or past histories with DJJ, poor academic progress, behavioral problems at home or school, and low-income communities. The following programs available to the community are children in need of services (CINS)/families in need (FINS), family resource center (FSC), family/youth respite aftercare services (FYRAC), learning interventions vital to existence (L.I.V.E.), and stop now and plan (SNAP), and food pantry.

Client Engagement

NPO X engages with its clients through groups typically 13 weeks long, home visits, respite care, volunteer opportunities, SNAP family nights, community events, and ongoing support. Clients are consistently engaged through NPO X FRC, which presents numerous opportunities for services, relationship building, career enhancement/preparation, and overall growth and development.

Individuals receiving services from NPO X are referred by schools, DJJ, community programs, and faith-based organizations. Information is initially received at the time the referral is made. Individuals can also seek services through the NPO X website or walk into the organization NPO X obtains information from individuals seeking services through an interview process. Information is also obtained from the following:

- Satisfaction surveys
- Partnership feedback surveys
- Exit surveys
- 30/60/90 day reviews

Workforce and Operations

Operations

NPO X employs 10 full-time employees, an ED, four program directors, and five direct-level staff. The BOD consists of a chair, vice-chair, and three board members. The current leaders and the BOD formed the strategic plan and policy and meet quarterly to discuss organizational growth. The ED oversees all programs and management. She is responsible for implementing the strategic plan and grants awarded to the organization. NPO X has not historically experienced problems maintaining staff within its organization. However, according to the ED, the weakness the organization is experiencing is limited staff to implement their strategic plan, which has stretched the staff considerably. Additionally, limited cooperation from the BOD. NPO X ED's focus is on the expansion of services.

Nathan (2017) wrote economically, these are the worst of times for nonprofit leaders. The pool of highly skilled professionals is shrinking relative to an increasing demand, at the same time their budgets are being stretched and, in some cases, broken. Under this pressure, it is "normal" to project onto others what is important to one's own self. For executives and managers, this means implementing extrinsic incentives and intrinsic inducements that drive their performance at work (Nathan, 2017).

Analytical Strategy

As a researcher, qualitative research design enables the ability to obtain insight and understanding of a phenomenon. I choose a qualitative case-study research design because it involves asking participants about their experiences. Several interviews were conducted with NPO X's ED. Additional interviews were conducted with the CEO and two board members. Participants provided knowledge about their experiences with NPO X strategic processes and any barriers leaders may have experienced with making decisions to expand services. A variety of organizational documents were retrieved and reviewed. Secondary sources collected included financial documents from the past 5 years, board minutes, strategic plans and policy, and the NPO X website.

This research required specific processes were necessary for this project. I had to submit my professional credentials and documentation about Walden's research processes and the program. After NPO X funders and the BOD reviewed these documents, I was granted permission and access to the organization's financial reports, strategic plan, and policies. The data collected is relevant to the practice problem as it related to organizational leadership, expansion, and economic diversity concerns. NPO X’s organizational problem focused on barriers preventing growth due to finances.

Qualitative Research

Qualitative research gathers participants’ experiences, perceptions, and behavior. It answers the how’s and whys instead of how many or how much. It could be structured as a stand-alone study, purely relying on qualitative data, or it could be part of mixed-methods research that combines qualitative and quantitative data (Tenny et al., 2021). Aspero and Corte (2019) defined qualitative research as an iterative process in which an improved understanding of the scientific community is achieved by making new significant distinctions resulting from getting closer to the phenomenon studied. According to (Aspero and Corte, 2019), this formulation is developed as a tool to help improve research designs while stressing that a qualitative dimension is also present in quantitative work. Additionally, it can facilitate teaching, and communication between researchers, diminish the gap between qualitative and quantitative researchers, help to address critiques of qualitative methods, and be used as a standard of evaluation of qualitative research.

Qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. Qualitative research also involves using and collecting data about an individual’s personal experiences, interviews, and observational, historical, interactional, and visual texts that describe routine and problematic moments and meanings in an individual's life. (Aspero & Corte, 2019; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

Qualitative research at its core, ask open-ended questions whose answers are not easily put into numbers, such as "how" and "why" (Cleland, 2017; Tenny et al., 2021). Due to the open-ended nature of the research questions, the qualitative research design is often not linear in the same way quantitative design is (Cleland, 2017; Tenny et al., 2021). One of the strengths of qualitative research is its ability to explain processes and patterns of human behavior that can be difficult to quantify (Foley & Timonen, 2015; Tenny et al., 2021).

Case Study Design

Sibbald et al. (2021) wrote that a case study design consists of components of the study, collecting data, data collection techniques, data analysis, and validating data. There are different types of case study approaches. Sibbald et al. and Yin (2017) proposed three types of case study approach descriptive, explanatory, and exploratory. Sibbald et al. as cited by (Yin, 2017) wrote that each approach could be designed around single or multiple cases, creating six primary case study methodologies. Descriptive studies provide a detailed description of the phenomenon within its context, which can help develop theories. For this case study I utilized a cross-analysis approach, which will allow the use of a flexible design and theoretical framework.

Role of the Researcher

The role of the researcher in qualitative research is to attempt to access the thoughts and feelings of study participants (Sutton & Austin, 2015). In qualitative research, the researcher is the research instrument. Therefore, a qualitative researcher who is also a clinician must consider how their dual position informs participant consent, data collection, and analysis. This reflexivity is essential in research design to effectively respond to ethical questions around role, authenticity, trust, and transparency around disclosing their clinician status to participants (Geddis-Regan et al., 2022).

Data Collection

Qualitative research uses several techniques, including interviews, focus groups, and observation (Cleland, 2017; Floely & Timonen, 2015; Moser & Korstjens, 2017; Tenney et al., 2021). Interviews may be unstructured, with open-ended questions on a topic, and the interviewer adapts to the responses. Structured interviews have a predetermined number of questions that every Participant is asked. It is usually one-on-one and appropriate for sensitive topics or topics needing an in-depth exploration (Tenny et al., 2021). Focus groups are often held with 8 to12 target participants and are used when group dynamics and collective views on a topic are desired. Researchers can be participant-observers to share the subject's experiences or a nonparticipant or detached observer (Tenney et al., 2021). While quantitative research design prescribes a controlled environment for data collection, qualitative data collection may be in a central location or in the participants' environment, depending on the study goals and design (Tenney et al., 2021).

Coding

Coding in its most basic form is the simple operation of identifying segments of meaning in your data and labeling them with a code, which can be defined as "a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data" (Linneberg & Korsgaard, 2019; Saldaña, 2015, p .6).

There is a strong tradition in qualitative research of developing codes "directly" from the data. Researchers develop codes from the data by using phrases or terms used by the participants themselves rather than using the researcher's, often theoretical, vocabulary. Linneberg and Korsgaard (2019) wrote that when researchers develop codes using phrases from the participants, it helps the researcher to code data that mirrors rather than the ideas and prior understandings of the researcher, who is working vigorously to remain open-minded.

Methodological Triangulation

Denzin's four types of triangulation (as cited in Campbell et al., 2020) defined methodological triangulation (MT) as the use of multiple methods to study the phenomenon of interest, working either within method (e.g., multiple variations of a survey) or between methods (e.g., a survey and observational data collection). Denzin (cited by Campbell et al., 2020) further writes that Denzin did not distinguish between methodology and methods. However, it seems reasonable to infer that this type of triangulation could include multiple methodologies (e.g., quantitative and qualitative methodologies) or multiple data collection methods (interviews, surveys, observations, archival, each of which could be quantitative or qualitative).

Ethical Research

The ethical principles that guide scientific research are based on the assurance of human freedom and dignity. They are expressed in ethical codes and guidelines used by Research Ethics Committees (RECs), which are the instances that regulate research conducted with human beings. The purpose of these regulations is to protect participants and ensure research ethicality throughout its entire development (Kottow, 2008; Taquette et al., 2022)

Qualitative research is a thorough and complex activity because the researcher is a subject inserted in the society under study; he/she performs the research and simultaneously suffers its influence, being thus confronted with ethical issues (Taquette et al., 2022). Because studies are conducted with human beings and not on human beings there is an influence from the context, often requiring the researcher to adapt ethical rules and norms to the situation being experienced, sometimes leading to a dilemma (Taquette et al., 2022).

Informed Consent

Qualitative researchers attend to and discuss informed consent, emphasizing the recruitment phase before the fieldwork or data collection (Gallagher et al., 2010; Klykken, 2021). In this phase, researchers obtain formal access by sharing information and soliciting individuals' consent to participate in the research project (Klykken, 2021).

Informed consent represents an ideal for research conduct in which the people taking part in a study have a clear understanding of the research project and its risks, including what the researcher is doing in the field. The principle thus indicates that researchers should share relevant knowledge with participants when inviting them to participate in the research (Klykken, 2021).

Participants

For this study, four individuals were interviewed about leadership and strategy. The participants were selected because of their hands-on involvement with the day-to-day operations and decisions made about the organization. The individuals selected for the interview include the CEO, ED, and two board members. The Baldrige Program references the importance of organizational leadership and how it employs the organization's values and vision through communication and ethical behavior.

Data were collected over 6 weeks. All participants agreed in writing to be interviewed. Before each interview, the participants agreed and understood that their interviews would be recorded and used for the research. The organization also provided permission in writing before agreeing to participate in research about its problem with the expansion of programs and economic uncertainty.

Leadership/Strategy Questions

The following questions were presented to the four participants, which include 11 core questions:

- What do you think are the most important issues or goals to address in your organization?
- What values are most important to you as a leader?,
- What are your expectations regarding customer care, and how does that align with the organization's mission, vision, and goals?

- How have you collaborated with other leaders about diversifying streams of revenue sources to expand services?

Business Operations Questions

- How have the organization's limited resources influenced your decision-making processes?
- How do you make strategic decisions to pursue opportunities to expand services?
- What strategies have been implemented to secure additional funding for the organization?
- How do you track data and information on daily performance and overall organizational performance?
- How do you ensure that your performance measurement system can respond to unexpected changes with funding?
- How has organizational performance affected funding?
- What feedback have you received from stakeholders about program performance?

Data Storage and Protecting Privacy

Confidentiality in a clinical-research context refers to the researchers' corresponding duty to protect study-subjects' right to privacy (Hodge & Gostin, 2008; Nurmi, 2019). This duty comprises those legal and ethical obligations that arise through specific relationships between researchers and human subjects (Nurmi, 2019; Stiles & Petrila, 2011). Confidentiality is directly related to the collection, use, and storage of personal data (Elliot et al., 2016; Nurmi, 2019). According to Emanuel and Wendler (2008), Nurmi (2019) protecting confidentiality in clinical research is an ongoing process that includes securing databases, locking filing cabinets, coding specimens and data forms, and interviewing participants in private spaces where they cannot be overheard.

Minimizing Harm

The Belmont Report (1978) defined three principles that should guide the discourse surrounding any ethical concerns related to research in human subjects: respect for persons, beneficence, and justice. The principle of respect for persons requires that "individuals should be treated as autonomous agents," and those with "diminished autonomy are entitled to protection." These concepts inform "two separate moral requirements: the requirement to acknowledge autonomy and the requirement to protect those with diminished autonomy." The National Commission defined the elements necessary to qualify as an autonomous individual. It explores circumstances that define those who should be considered to be of diminished autonomy and thus deserving of protection (White, 2020).

Respecting Shared Experiences

An ethical attitude should be present from the beginning of the research project even before deciding whom to interview (DeJonckheere, 2019; Josselson, 2013). This ethical attitude should incorporate respect, sensitivity, and tact towards participants throughout the research process. Because semistructured interviewing often requires the participant to reveal sensitive and personal information directly to the interviewer, it is important to consider the power imbalance between the researcher and the Participant (DeJonckheere, 2013).

The researchers should ensure the interviewee that their participation and answers would not influence the care they receive or their relationship with their providers. Other issues to consider include: reducing the risk of harm, protecting the interviewee's information, adequately informing interviewees about the study purpose and format, and reducing the risk of exploitation (DeJonckheere, 2019; DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006).

Summary and Transition

Section two of this case study took a closer look at NPO X leaders' decision-making and how economic uncertainty affects the organization's financial resources and growth. NPOs traditionally depend on donations and look at other practices to attract new revenue resources. The literature discusses SE and how it focuses on generating income from attending social activities. SE also discusses how if NPOs partnered with nontraditional organizations and for-profit organizations, it could diversify income. NPO X has experienced strategic challenges with its BOD and long-term diversification.

Section 2 also focused on case study design and the role of the researcher. Data collection and the techniques used were identified. An emphasis on ethical behavior was discussed, including informed consent, proper storage of participant interviews, and protecting participants' privacy. More importantly, minimizing participant harm as well as respecting shared experiences.

In section 3, I used the Baldrige Excellence Framework of Excellence (NIST, 2021) as a guide to discuss the workforce and operation in more detail. An analysis of how

- NPO X builds an effective, supportive workforce environment.
- Evaluate how NPO X engages its staff to achieve a high-performance work environment.
- Describe how the organization designs, manages and improves its critical services and work processes.
- Provide an analysis of how NPO X ensures effective management of operations.
- Synthesize information regarding NPO X measures, analyzes, and then improves organizational performance.
- Evaluate NPO X manages its organizational knowledge assets, information, and information technology infrastructure.

Section 3: Measurement, Analysis, and Knowledge Management Components of the Organization

Introduction

Economic uncertainty has been a topic that most NPOs discuss. In this case study, I examined the difficulties NPO leaders have with making decisions regarding economic uncertainties and long-term revenue diversification. The specific organizational problem addressed through this study was the difficulties nonprofit executives experience with developing strategies on economic uncertainties and long-term revenue diversification to help improve and expand services in the southern United States.

Two research questions guided this study:

Research Question 1: How does economic uncertainty limit an executive's decisions to develop long-term revenue strategies?

Research Question 2: How would revenue diversification help NPOs improve and expand their services?

Data collection involved the review of scholarly, peer-reviewed journals; interviews of NPO X's CEO), ED, and two board members; and a review of organizational documentation. My review of literature on the topic provided information on barriers surrounding NPO's limited revenue streams, financial vulnerability, leadership and decision making, strategic planning, and economic uncertainty.

Analysis of the Organization

Workforce Environment

NPO X strives for excellence as described by the CEO. NPO X has built an organization that has an open-door policy for its staff and the population that they serve. The organization's team consists of an ED, four directors, and four direct-care staff and values the commitment of its employees. NPO X has built an effective and supportive work environment by prioritizing training for its staff, providing a comfortable work environment, encouraging team collaboration, and encouraging trust and respect between the leaders and staff to promote a positive workforce.

NPO X demonstrated how the organization built a supportive workforce for its staff by its actions over the last 2 years during the COVID-19 pandemic. During the COVID-19 pandemic, NPO X supported its staff by allowing their staff to work fully remote. Bayot et al. (2021) discussed the importance of positive work culture, stating that a positive work culture brings about a significant positive change in an organization, and good leadership behavior is essential in maintaining the team's relationship.

The Baldrige framework references the importance of leadership in creating an environment for success. Leaders who can scan the situation and the needs of the individual staff are necessary to identify and bridge possible gaps in work implementation. Aligning the members to the organization's direction sets the tone of work for every member. When each staff member at every level of the organization becomes fully aware of the situation, it will become more natural for the leaders to mobilize the whole team and delegate appropriate tasks in carrying out individual functions (Bayot et al., 2021).

The ED has described her leadership style as metamodern. Metamodern leaders focus on creating a positive environment that emphasizes psychological safety. Leaders benefit from engagement, inclusiveness, and innovation by balancing evidence-based organizational behavior insights, creativity, and spontaneity. Empowered workers take on leadership roles in specific contexts in a symbiotic relationship. NPO X has continued to engage its staff to achieve higher performance by supporting ongoing professional development for its staff.

Workforce Change

The Baldrige framework empowers organizations to balance the workforce's needs by preparing for and managing growth and changes in the organizational structure. NPO X experienced a change in leadership, with the current ED taking on this position in the last 2 years. Before leadership changes, NPO X's Participant 2 stated during an interview that the previous ED did not possess the zeal that the current ED has. Participant 2 reported that one of the organization's strategies was to foster open communication and form a collaborative relationship that would support the mission and vision of the organization. The organization also rebranded its name to increase donations. An issue the organization experienced was the donor's reluctance to donate to a religious organization because NPO X's former name was the same as the religious organization with which they were affiliated.

Strategy

NPO X improved essential services by forming and developing relationships with other NPOs. An example of how they demonstrated improvement was after a deadline to support funding for their feeding program was missed by the previous ED and resulted in losing funding, NPO X collaborated with another community organization, allowing the organization to sustain this program. The Baldrige frameworks allows organizations and teaches strategy implementation. Developing an action plan would allow the organization to achieve organizational goals. Remaining a resource to the community, it serves NPO X strategized and collaborated.

Errida and Lotfi (2021) discussed the three-stage management change model and eight steps to ensure a successful change in management. The three-stage model consists of unfreezing, transition, and refreezing:

- Unfreezing consists of destabilizing the status quo by creating the need and buy-in for change and preparing for the upcoming change.
- Transition involves moving to the desired future state.
- Refreezing occurs after implementing the change, resulting in a new culture, behaviors, and practices.

The eight steps to ensure a successful change consist of the following:

1. Establishing a sense of urgency about the need to achieve change.
2. Creating a guiding coalition.
3. Developing a vision and strategy.
4. Communication of the change vision.

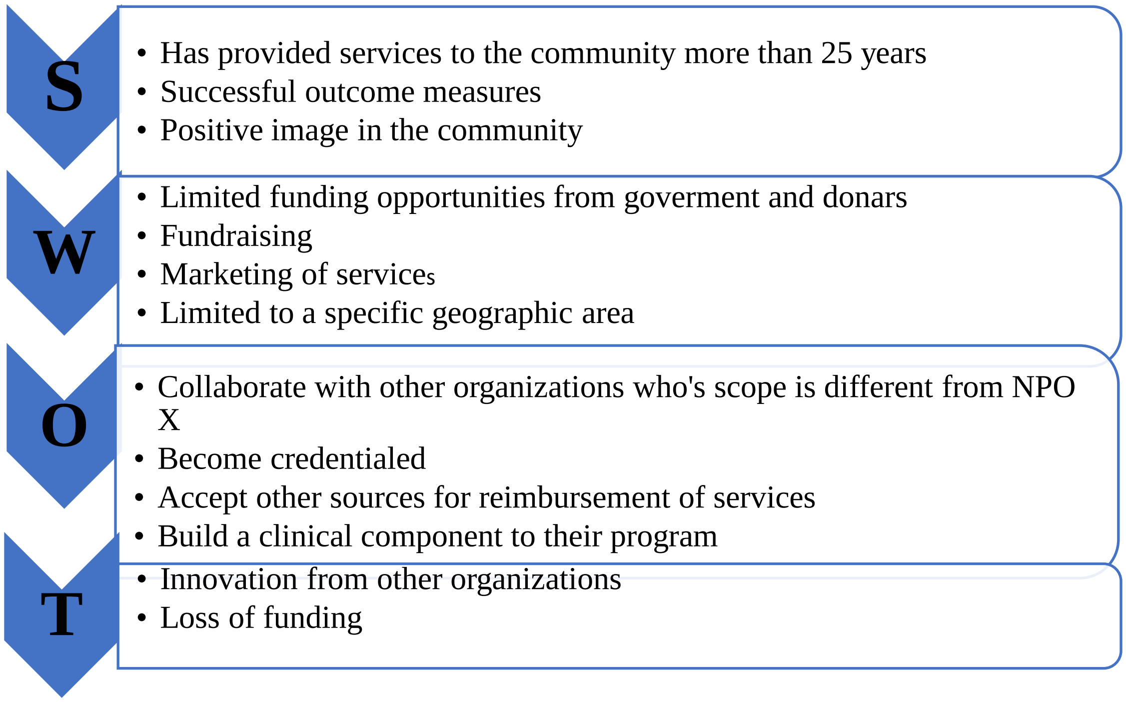
5. Empowering broad-based action.
6. Generating short-term wins.
7. Consolidating gains and producing more change.
8. Anchoring new approaches in the corporate culture (Errida & Lotfi, 2021).

Performance Analysis

Changes in leadership and concerns from the BOD helped NPO X focus on its area of strengths and provide services within the scope of its expertise. NPO X eliminated a service that did not align with its mission, vision, and values. The new ED has formed new relationships and increased donations since being with the organization; however, funding remains uncertain because it can be cut at any time. NPO X experienced this several years ago when the governor moved funding for prevention to programs that were not in favor of assisting children and families, according to Participant 2. The Baldrige framework references how organizations review performance and capabilities. Figure 3 is a depiction of how NPO X evaluates its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.

Figure 3

NPO X's Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT)



The analysis revealed that NPO X has strengths and weaknesses that can be improved over time; however, the analysis also showed that the opportunities available to NPO X can help secure funding, allowing the organization to not have a gap in services and expand. NPO X is threatened by new organizations developing in their community and providing the same services. New organizations with funding sources other than grants or donations put NPO X at risk of losing clients because of the less restrictive funding. Becoming credentialed by entities, such as the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation or Counsel on Accreditation, is more attractive for fundraising, applying for additional grant dollars, and becoming an insurance provider.

Knowledge Management

According to Participant 3, strategically, NPO X has strived to improve by making internal changes with the leadership. During the interview process, participants communicated that an issue preventing the organization from diversifying its revenue streams was the lack of transparency from the previous ED. The leaders at NPO X revealed that the organization did not always have best practices or was not as disciplined as it should have been, resulting in losses. Since there have been leadership changes, NPO X’s strategy has focused primarily on ways to focus on other geographic areas, serving other ethnicities located in cities outside of where they currently serve, and seeking donations from Fortune 500 organizations.

NPO X did not have an assessment strategy to determine if it was meeting the goals outlined in its strategic plan. Participant 3 revealed that since the leadership change, an evaluation process had been implemented, resulting in the organization building new relationships and seeking funding outside the scope that limited services to a particular geographic area.

Participant 3 expressed that NPO X has not limited the process of implementing any processes; however, the previous leader presented multiple issues that limited organizational diversity. According to Participant 3, there is more opportunity to make sure that the BOD is diverse and not all African Americans by recruiting board members who reside in different geographic areas or counties and board members with different professions. Therefore, when implementing processes and procedures to enhance the organization, this diversity in the BOD will allow the organization to expand its services and increase its revenue.

Summary and Transition

NPO X has evaluated its workforce capability by assessing its leaders' skills and competencies, hiring and onboarding new workforce members, and evaluating the organization's needs to ensure continuity of services. Workforce capability affects employee engagement and organizational performance. Workforce capability is an individual's physical and intellectual ability to perform tasks (Smoyer et al., 2021; Wang & Zeng, 2017). The services provided through the nonprofit sector are vital to addressing increasing social service needs, requiring NPO leaders to improve their capabilities (Sanzo et al., 2015; Smoyer et al., 2021). Building capability at all organizational levels encourages an environment where individuals can proactively adapt to changing and competitive environments (Guinot et al., 2016; Smoyer et al., 2021). Hiring and retaining skilled individuals who can perform their functions are central to organizational success. Workforce capabilities are essential at all organizational levels, while strategic capabilities are crucial for leadership (Fu, 2015; Megheirkouni, 2016; Smoyer et al., 2021). Building workforce capabilities throughout the organization are imperative for the workforce and organizational performance.

In Section 3, I utilized the Baldrige Excellence Framework (NIST, 2021) as a guide to analyze NPO X's practice problem and summarize the sources of evidence and how the evidence was obtained. Based on the evidence collected, I provided an evaluation of NPO X client program services and new initiatives as well as leadership.

The section also included an analysis of NPO X workforce focus results and a discussion of NPO X's strengths and limitations.

Section 4: Results—Analysis, Implications, and Preparation of Findings

Introduction

I conducted this qualitative case study to understand how economic uncertainties have affected nonprofit executives' decision making and strategic planning to expand services to families located in the southern United States. The purpose of the study was to gain an understanding of NPOs leaders' ability to make decisions. The specific organizational problem that was addressed was the difficulties nonprofit executives experience with economic uncertainties and long-term revenue diversification. The following two research questions guided this study:

Research Question 1: How does economic uncertainty limit an executive's decisions to develop long-term revenue strategies?

Research Question 2: How would revenue diversification help NPOs improve and expand their services?

I completed a literature review of scholarly sources to contextualize the practice problem and identify why and how economic uncertainties may have impacted executive decision-making strategies. Multiple sources of data were collected through interviews with executives and review of NPO X's financial records, funding awarded, strategic plans and policy, and website.

Analysis, Results, and Implications

Data

Once data collection was completed, I manually organized the data by creating a Microsoft Word document. The audio-recorded interviews were transcribed using the

Otteri.ai software program to convert the participants' responses into text in a Word document. After transcribing the audio interviews into a Word document, they were reviewed for accuracy. Using NVivo, I created categories by identifying keywords and phrases from participants' responses to create codes. I used the Baldrige Excellence Framework (NIST, 2021) to group data related to leadership, strategy, measurement analysis, and knowledge management workforce into categories. Then thematic content analysis and data triangulation were employed to test the data sources further and ensure validity. In qualitative research, early conceptualizations of triangulation highlight how multiple methods could reveal shared perspectives and realities without making epistemological claims regarding the "truth" of the findings (Campbell et al., 2020).

I used the NVivo coding software to create a word cloud based on the 100 most frequent words and themes from the participants' responses. In Figure 4, the larger-sized words represented more frequently used words. The word cloud identified two levels of results, which are identified by orange and black words. More frequently used words identified in orange included director, leader, integrity, and coming things. The second level identified implementing, processes, performance, resources, limited, grants, performed, opportunities, organizational first values, and need. Other words used less frequently during the interview were important, transparency, intervention, communication, and funding.

Figure 4

NVivo Word Cloud

The participants expressed concerns about decision making, diversifying funding, transparency, and organizational performance; therefore, these four themes emerged from data analysis. In the following subsections, I discuss these themes in more detail. They are also reflected in the Recommendations section of this study.

Emerging Theme 1

Decision making was the first theme to emerge. The data indicated the participants' concerns with former leadership, decisions to not expand services, lack of willingness to collaborate with other organizations, and limited organizational growth and resources. The participants frequently used the terms limited resources, sustainability, and implementing processes and procedures during the interviews, and these terms are related to the first theme. Participant 3 believed the previous leader was constantly afraid of someone coming in from the outside and taking over. Participant 3 stated,

> I think the previous person in place was nervous. There is a saying in the Black community that if you start letting certain folks come in, they will take over. So

> there was that fear, where you want to protect what you have, but also understand that when you look up the makeup and an entire county, you have to meet that entire makeup in order to get funding from everybody.

Participant 3 felt that the previous leader's decision making hindered the organization from growing and expanding services outside of its geographic area.

Emerging Theme 2

Diversifying revenue streams was the second theme to emerge. The ED believed that the organization was limited in what grants they could apply for because of geographic limits and physical space. Data showed that there are minimal barriers preventing the organization from other sources of income and expansion. Terms used by participants that are related to this theme were collaboration, geographic location, partnership, and community relations. Participant 3 elaborated on the concerns that the ED had expressed, by stating,

> I think a lot of our services are diverse, even though our population is predominantly Black. I think we've focus on one geographic area because that's where a lot of the funding comes in, and that's the reason why the agency started. But I think if we expand beyond that, and even though we service the entire county, we still specialize in that one zip code, which makes my diversity funding very limited, meaning we're going to get those agencies that partner with us because of that zip code.

Emerging Theme 3

Transparency was the third theme to emerge. The terms related to this theme were communication, trust, clarity, and honesty. Data indicated that there were problems with open communication between leadership, which often created problems that affected how the organization was perceived by potential donors and sometimes funding. Participants 1 and 3 both spoke about how communication has improved since there has been a change in leadership and what characteristics of a leader. Participant 3 stated, “I feel we are better now that there is a new director; we have much more openness and communication. I am more about being transparent, so I am not being caught off guard.” Participant 1 stated,

> I think what I value most as a leader is having integrity. I think integrity is essential; that being said, it goes beyond. I believe that a leader possesses integrity and ought to have his or her values in the right place.

Emerging Theme 4

Organizational performance was the fourth theme to emerge. The terms relevant to this theme were best practices, growth, performance, evaluation, and scores. Data showed that despite funding issues, the organization always performed well on external audits. The CEO believed that the organization always performs well because of their ethical practices. The ED believed their performance is at a peak because she communicates well with staff. Participant 2 stated,

> I have received so much praise regarding the organization’s direction. I can definitely say I have seen progress, and our partners recognize our performance.

> And just to say with one of our partners, it just feels good to know that we first come in at the beginning of a fiscal year.

Effective leadership within NPOs is crucial to substantial long-term success. Managing increasing service demands through building workforce capability depends on strong, influential leaders who can strategically lead a NPO (Smoyer et al. 2021). Leaders are responsible for developing the skills and expertise to perform their job functions and positively affect organizational outcomes. Influential leaders are required to achieve NPO goals collectively. The satisfactory performance of the leader is essential for organizational success (Smoyer et al. 2021).

The findings of this study indicate that economic growth uncertainty has limited an executive's decision making. Based on the data collected, the decision making NPO X's previous ED directly affected the organization. The organization could not diversify its funding due to poor leadership. The data also showed that the organization is limited to a specific geographic area because of the restrictions outlined in awards funding. These restrictions have been barriers to extending services throughout the county, limiting diversification and collaboration with other organizations and potential new funders.

However, data revealed that leadership at NPO X recognized the existing problems with the former leadership. Strategically, the BOD and CEO hired a new ED who has addressed the issues of not being able to expand services due to limited space, preventing the organization from seeking additional funding. Under this new leadership, NPO X has provided transparency, improved communication with the BOD and investors, expanded its current location, and worked collaboratively with other community organizations. The organization has been praised for its innovation, which has landed them discretionary funding and the opportunity to solidify and extend existing contracts from a 3- to a 4-year agreement. The organization has gone from experiencing a deficit to developing a healthy financial status.

Client Results

NPO X is a community-based program serving children and families in a particular geographical area located in the southern United States. NPO X serves predominantly African Americans and Blacks but is not limited to this race and ethnicity. NPO X’s primary reason for providing services is to serve youth actively involved with the DJJ. Participant 1 stated,

> The Juvenile Justice Department contracted this organization to establish offices in different churches throughout the county to do work with going into homes and work with these kids and their families. Over the years, the organization has also developed additional programs centered around children and their families.

However, NPO X is limited to the client that they serve as well as being able to diversify the need for services. NPO X’s services are not beneficial to individuals living outside of their geographic area, limiting the organization’s economic diversity and the ability to expand services. Participant 2 stated,

> So I think many of our services are diverse, even though our population is more, you know, predominantly Black. If we focus on one area, we are limited to funding. We focus on a particular zip code because that is where much of the funding comes from. However, I think if we expand beyond that, and even though

> we service the entire county, we still specialize in that one zip code, which makes diversity funding very limited, meaning we will get those agencies that partner with us because of that zip code.

This organization has five programs funded through awarded funding, donations, and fundraising. NPO X offers multiple programs to children ages 6 years old through 17 years old. They also serve the adult population through their feeding program, support services, and referral program.

In this subsection, I describe NPO's programs and provide details about the services.

The gender-sensitive SNAP program is designed for children ages 6–17 who are engaging in aggressive, antisocial behavior and/or have come into contact with authority figures at school or in the community. Trained staff work with each family to develop goals that focus on preventing and reducing the chances of conflict with family, peers, and authority figures.

The second program, Project LIVE provides services to County youth by implementing effective diversion and intervention programs and activities to prevent juvenile delinquency. Services are provided to youth who are identified as at risk of becoming involved in the juvenile justice system and are between the ages of 5 to 17).

The third program is the FRC (i.e., diversion and prevention programs), which helps families develop and maintain the stable environment necessary to produce self-sufficient, productive citizens. The FRC strives to preserve families' structural and operational integrity. The FRC works directly with families in the community and establishes support networks. As a link between support networks and troubled families, the FRC offers several services and educational opportunities to help promote and maintain a safe home and community environment for children and families.

The final program is CINS/FINS, which is a prevention program for at-risk youth between the ages of 6 and 17 and their families. This program is designed to strengthen families and equip young people with coping skills to face various challenges and avoid serious trouble. The CINS/FINS program links families with counseling, mentoring, tutoring, and/or therapeutic services as needed.

The NPO X promotes a servant attitude when embracing children and families and strives to treat the client, not the community. The organization does not serve its client as a number; instead, they try to understand every individual and family walking through the doors. Participant 2 stated, “It is important because, with our mission and understanding, we are here to build families and change lives; we are here to provide help, hope, and healing to those that need it the most.”

Workforce

NPO X does not have an issue with high turnover. The previous ED was with the organization for 25 years before retiring. The directors have also been in their roles for a significant amount of time. It appears that direct-care workers may be reasonably new to the organization. NPO X’s former ED being in their role for a significant number of years was not beneficial to the organizations. Participant 3 expressed concerns about the previous ED and their lack of willingness and creativity to diversify the locations of the NPO X programs:

> I think the previous leadership in place was nervous. There is a saying in the Black community that if you start letting certain folks come in, they will take over. So, there is the fear of protecting what you have, but also understand that when you look up the makeup and an entire county, you have to meet that entire makeup to get funding from everybody.

New Workforce Members

There is a strong relationship between employee experience and profitability ratios. Research shows that companies with positive new employee experience have double to triple higher efficiency ratios than those with negative new employee experience (Koleda et al., 2022). NPO X and its BOD onboarded new leadership with the current director. The organization also worked collectively to hire new staff based on appropriate qualifications. One issue that the organization experienced was staff being employed in leadership positions simply because it was someone to fill the position. This method of recruiting and hiring individuals has not always benefitted the organization. Participant 3 expressed feeling more confident in the current ED as this person comes with transparency and ongoing communication.

> I feel we are better now that a new executive director is in place; we have much more openness and communication. I am more about being transparent, so I am not being caught off guard. For the last 6 or 7 years, I was caught off guard by the previous director every time something was brought to my attention. With this new director, I am constantly being made aware of things before an issue becomes problematic.

Workforce Change

The onboarding of the ED has been beneficial to the organization. Hiring the new ED NPO X has improved its relationship with board members and staff. The ED has implemented positive changes and created a system to gather feedback from staff and other organizations about the performance of the organizations. Participant 1 said that new leadership was a good change and looked for the organizations. Participant 3 agreed with the new leadership.

> I'll say this was the first year I did an entire evaluation of our director. Like literally created the entire evaluation, score, questions, and comments, and then I gave it out to all our Board of Directors, had them all complete and fill it out, and gave us a score based on how the director was doing. Moreover, I think that is what makes it easy. I think because the director is not being stagnant, she wants growth, and that person wants to see certain things. There is a request from her that we never got with the other director. So we are implementing things now that have never been implemented before.

Workforce Accomplishments

NPO X has strengthened its presence in the community by attending more events and collaborating with other faith-based and for-profit organizations. More importantly, NPO X rebranded its organization in order to maintain independence from its faith-based partnership, which shared the same name. The ED said the following while being interviewed.

> We have several churches we have partnered with; we have some individuals that fund our organization that we have collaborated with to see who their partners are. We are getting out there and meeting these individuals. So actually attending those events. Furthermore, what is more, important than serving those organizations? I found that by getting out to serve and giving back to the community with these partners, the organization is on how to allow us to expand our particular network so that we can offer the services we are predestined to do.

Leadership and Governance

The leadership of NPO X consists of the CEO, BOD, ED, directors, and direct care staff. The ED has worked effortlessly to build new community relationships and employee morale. The evidence collected and based on interviews of the organizations is at an all-time high. The ED has been able to hire an executive assistant to step in her role and help with administrative duties while in the community, developing relationships, and seeking additional funding to expand services. The organization acquired additional funds to help remodel and expand its current offices, making it possible to apply for additional grants and implement other services.

Financial and Marketplace Results

Financial reports for the past years were provided. The report from 2020 indicated a payback to the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) for improper funds reporting. Per interviews with the ED and CEO, the organization has had its struggles but is financially in a good position. NPO X did not provide a formal strategy for marketing. However, an organization's strategic performance measurement plan was provided. The organization has a website monitored by a contracted IT company that helps grow its online presence and achieve success online.

Individuals, Organizations, and Community Input

Communication from the CEO and ED indicates that the organization is reflected positively in the community. Outcomes measures are being met according to the ED based on the last three audits. Client satisfaction has increased within the last year.

NPO X has aimed to satisfy their clients by looking at helping them in need rather than looking at ways to minimize its client's loss. Through their multiple programs, NPO X is making a difference in helping those most in need. NPO X is audited multiple times throughout the year, and based on the results of these audits and outcome measures, they have proven to have a positive client focus. Positive client-focused results tie into positive social change in neighborhoods with socioeconomic disadvantages. NPO X's ED spoke about the positive feedback from auditors since being employed in this position. Based on one of their more extensive funded programs with the DJJ, NPO X has seen a decrease in recidivism of its population served.

NPO X identified its organizational problem as limited space is a barrier to obtaining additional funds to expand services. However, data collected indicated that limited space was not the only barrier. The data collected reflected that decision-making from leadership also contributed to the organization's inability to expand services. The lack of transparency and communication between board members and past leadership held the organization at a standstill. More importantly, contracts obtained limited NPO X to a particular geographic location. All these contributing issues indeed prevented NPO X from diversifying its funding and expanding services within its current geographic area and outside of its geographic area.

Positive Social Change

I believe NPO X, over the last 29 years, has made a conscious effort to implement positive social change in their clients by transforming patterns of thought and behavior and improving social relationships. Prevention and intervention programs are good programs that have the potential to make a difference in the lives of the individuals they serve. However, prevention and intervention programs tend to have high return rates for the same or additional services after completion, or many children and families do not engage in or complete these programs.

Strengths and Limitations of the Study

Strengths

This study had multiple strengths, which were discovered during the data analysis. The strengths of this qualitative study were that the structured interviews allowed meaningful feedback from the leaders on their beliefs about the organization's problem. The study indicated a pattern of behaviors from the previous leader, which affected the organization. The data collection also provided meaningful information about the organization's problem.

This study focused on assuring the credibility and dependability of participants, which was accomplished by using triangulation when analyzing and comparing interview transcriptions. Ethical practices and standards were used when interviewing participants and obtaining their points of view. The strength of this study falls within the guidelines of Walden University.

The Baldrige Excellence Framework (NIST, 2021) also has supported this study. The criteria were designed to help improve organizational processes, capabilities, and results. The Baldrige Framework and its criteria help facilitate the communication and sharing of best practices. The Baldrige Program has seven key management and leadership categories: leadership, strategy, customers, measurement, analysis, knowledge management, workforce, operations, and results. This study was built on the concepts outlined using the seven key management and leadership categories.

Limitations

Before the study, the funders of NPO X expressed concerns about their clients being interviewed and reviewing certain financial documents. I was granted permission to conduct a qualitative study on the organization and its problem; however, I was limited to some financial information. The limitation of this study was having limited access to data. The sample size was small, which limited the number of different perspectives about the organization’s problem. Lastly, this study had time constraints for the participants due to their busy schedules; therefore, given more time with the participants and more participants to interview, I would have received more views on the identified organizational problem.

Section 5: Recommendations and Conclusions

According to the data analyzed in this study, NPO X had an existing problem with leadership regarding a lack of transparency and communication. Another issue identified was the limited diversity in the organization. During the interviews, participants also identified concerns with BOD members not being diverse and not having the experience needed to advise the direction of NPO X. The organization also lacks diversity by being limited to a particular geographic location, limiting collaboration with businesses outside their geographic location. The final issue identified was that NPO X's fundraising halted because donors were wary about donating to an organization with the same name as a religious organization. The leadership at NPO X recognized that change was needed; therefore, a new ED was hired, and a search to replace board members was initiated. NPO X rebranded its name, opening the organization to increased donations. Since making leadership changes, NPO X has achieved a healthier financial status.

Recommended Solutions

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to understand how economic uncertainties had affected nonprofit executives' development of strategies and decisions to expand services to families in the southern United States. In this study, I discovered a correlation between the lack of diversity among board members, the population served, and geographic location, influencing how decisions were made for the organization. Based on the participants' responses to the 10 interview questions, four themes emerged: decision making, diversified revenue stream, transparency, and organizational performance. These themes were influenced by decisions, communication between leadership, lack of diversity throughout the organization, and organizational performance.

I present my recommendations with support from the findings of this study. The findings are aligned with the research questions that guided this study.

Research Question 1

Research Question 1 was: How does economic uncertainty limit an executive's decisions to develop long-term revenue strategies? Based on responses from participants, decision making, transparency, and organizational performance have impeded the expansion of services to families to geographic areas outside of where NPO X provides services. Participants 2 and 3 spoke about having more openness and communication from leadership and the importance of transparency. Participants also emphasized that being limited to their geographic area and not expanding services beyond their zip code was a limitation. These limitations limited diversity, collaboration, and partnerships. I also elicited participants' ideas about the role of the BOD and their experience.

Collaboration Across the Organization

NPO X is limited to a particular geographic area as stipulated in its existing contracts. This organization has become a pillar in their community; however, because NPO X serves one geographic location their collaboration with other organizations and services provided to other communities is limited. Collaboration with other organizations that offer other services would benefit the population NPO X serves. Expanding outside their geographic location would open opportunities for additional funding and investment from potentially new donors. According to Brown (2011), all kinds of boundaries exist within organizations, and besides geographical boundaries, other types of boundaries exist because of departments, professional affiliations, and organizational levels.

Continuous Planning

NPO X meets with its board members yearly to develop a strategic policy plan. The plan is reviewed quarterly. However, there are no indicators of how the organization communicates the strategic plan. Brown (2011) wrote that instead of a few executives formulating fixed plans, the learning organization creates flexible plans that are fully known and accepted by the entire organization (p. 378). Brown also discussed Likert's system-wide intervention called system 4 management, whichemploys open communication between subordinates and leadership through use of the following questions:

The questions regarding communication are:

1. How is downward communication accepted?
2. What is the direction of communication?

The leadership are:

1. Are ideas of subordinates sought and used?
2. To what extent are the rewards and encouragements given to subordinates?

The question about policies is:

Are policies clearly understood?

System 4 management is participative and based on methods of decision making and supervision, emphasizing employee involvement and participation.

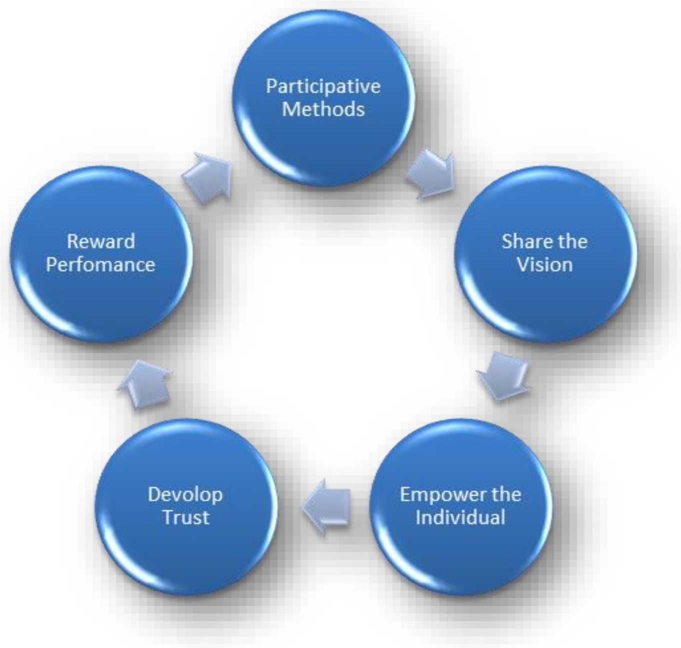
In the participative system, the management has complete confidence in their subordinates and encourages them to participate actively in decision making. The subordinate feels free to discuss any issue related to a job with their superior. The subordinates get motivated through rewards for their participation in the decision-making process.

In Figure 5, sharing the vision involves multiple steps:

1. By sharing the vision, individuals buy into the organization’s vision. The organization communicates its vision clearly and future goals for change.
2. Empowering the individual during this stage, individuals need to feel that they have a stake in the outcome and have participated in defining the organization’s vision. Empowering subordinates also involves listening to and involving them in the organization’s vision.
3. Developing trust involves setting goals for performance and allows individuals to buy into the vision and provide feedback on performance.
4. The stage of reward performance includes encouraging decision-making information downward to lower levels and recognizing high performers.

Figure 5

Sharing the Vision



Diversity of BOD

A diverse BOD is essential because each person brings their own experience and professional contacts. When searching for qualified board members, organizations should focus on the person’s decision-making skills, connections, networking abilities, how they can support the CEO, and level of insight. According to Ali et al. (2022) and Kagzi and Guha (2018), educational level is believed to shape how board members analyze things, while board members with long tenure are more informed about managerial behaviors, firm resources, organizational culture, and systems. The current study findings indicated that the BOD was not diversified and posed a problem for the organization.

Decision Making. When an organization has to make a critical decision, having diverse board members who are qualified is beneficial to the organization. These individuals can identify opportunities and risks.

Connections. A board member connected to the community can access resources and collaborate with partners, policymakers, and potential donors.

Networks. Boards that are not diverse risk becoming stagnant. If all the board members travel in the same social circle, cultivating board members who bring new perspectives and strengths will be a constant challenge.

Support for the CEO. Organizations where the CEO or ED is a person of color, can benefit from a diverse board because it is crucial and reflects that the board feels trusted. Having a diverse BOD brings a different perspective from individuals whose ethnicity is different and have the ability to understand the experiences of the community the organization serves.

Research Question 2

Research Question 2 was: How would revenue diversification help NPOs improve and expand their services? The participants identified causal relationships among the variables of decision making, revenue diversification, and expansion of services. Based on participants’ responses, expanding services would help diversify NPO X’s revenue streams; therefore, implementing clinical services to support the existing services would increase revenue and diversify services. As the conversation continued, participants freely expressed their understanding of relationships among the variables and suggested new operational variables.

I recommend that a behavioral program for at-risk youth be strategically developed and implemented. Implementation should be done in phases to help ensure efficiency and effectiveness to allow the organization to develop, learn, understand, and deliver services. The Baldrige framework emphasizes action plan development and deployment during the implementation process. Continuous improvement and innovation ensure organizational alignment with partners and collaborators. Table 1 lists the phases and timelines needed for implementation. There are nine phases during this stage that have been discussed in detail.

Table 1

Phases and Timeline of Implementation

Phase	Description	Timeline
Phase 1	Develop a strategic plan	Month 1
Phase 2	Program design	Month 2
Phase 3	Create policies and procedures	Month 3
Phase 4	Recruit leadership and workforce responsible for services	Month 4
Phase 5	Educate and train leadership	Month 5
Phase 6	Partner with community to promote program services	Month 6
Phase 7	Care coordination/service timelines	Month 7
Phase 8	Quality assurance	Month 8
Phase 9	Continuous improvement plan: 3, 6, 9, and 12 months	Months 9, 10, and 11

Phase 1: Develop a Strategic Plan

Use of the Baldridge Framework will help the CEO of NPO X to develop and implement a strategic plan that focuses on quality improvement. Changes in customer engagement and product offerings would occur during the strategy development process. Table 2 shows the strategic plan needed to promote new service delivery.

Table 2

Strategic Plan

Strategy	Strategy is designed to close this gap	Description	Possible tactics	Team action items	Individuals responsible
Advertising/marketing	Recruit qualified and experienced staff	Advertising will recruit qualified staff with experience in mental health.	Facebook Twitter LinkedIn	Daily online activity	Human resources recruitment specialist
Community events	Improve overall community activities	Advertising behavioral health services at community outreach events can be a very effective method for attracting	NPO X representative provides an opportunity to connect with the community.	Participate in one activity per month	Community resources specialist and coordinator
School partnerships	Achieve outcome measures for school-based programs	Developing a variety of recruitment strategies with local schools	Collaborate with guidance Counselors/PT O/PTA and SAC presidents	Attend monthly meetings	Community resources specialist

Phase 2: Program Design

NPO X will use a biopsychosocial model of assessment that draws from a wide variety of theoretical approaches, including behavioral, social learning, psychodynamic, and family systems theories. During this phase, NPO X will use a semistructured clinical interview and the Global Assessment of Functioning. This simple scale considers the person’s general level of psychological, social, and occupational functioning on a hypothetical continuum of mental health illness. The goals of the first meeting are to determine and document treatment goals. These goals will ultimately be incorporated into the permanent clinical record, and all other information gathered to begin to formulate the behavioral and other interventions that most closely meet the immediate and longer-term needs of the individual.

Phase 3: Create Policies and Procedures

During this phase, NPO X will create policies and procedures that will support the implementation of a clinical program. This is also a necessary stage for successfully implementing a new program. Research has indicated several stages to developing policies; however, this process does not have to be complex. The four stages that can used are: (a) identifying the proposed policy, this first stage involves creating roadmaps for day-to-day operations; (b) formulation of the policy and agreeing to a team to the proposed policies and procedure; (b) implementing the policy, which involves moving forward and taking action; and (d) evaluation of the policy, which involves examining the efficacy of the policy.

Phase 4: Recruit Leadership and Workforce Responsible for Service

In this phase, the human resources staff will recruit qualified staff. The minimum qualifications for the position of clinician and supervisor will be a master's degree in mental health counseling, social work, marriage and family therapy, or a related human services field. Those clinicians without a license should have at least 5 years of experience working directly with children and families and a minimum of 2 years of experience in training relevant to child and family treatment issues.

Phase 5: Educate and Train Staff

In many cases, organizations often implement new services because of the opportunity to increase their revenue. However, a missing component, such as training, is often overlooked. When employees are not trained, it decreases an organization from meeting its goals. Armstrong (2020) wrote that training is the most basic human resources management function and is the systematic application of formal processes to help people acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to perform their jobs satisfactorily. Because the implementation of a clinical program is an area in which NPO X does not have experience, all staff (i.e., the clinical supervisor and staff) must be adequately trained on systems and treatment modalities. Mathis et al. (2016) reported that once the training needs assessment is identified, it is required to develop the training design that includes learning concepts and a wide range of different approaches to training.

Phase 6: Partner With the Community to Promote Program Services

Often, new programs fail because organizations do not partner with the community or other organizations. Participants expressed concerns about not partnering with other organizations. They felt that leadership feared change and, therefore, was unwilling to collaborate with organizations outside of their geographic location.

Phase 7: Service Timelines

During this phase, establishing the goal of timelines is essential and ensures multidisciplinary input regarding clinical decisions. Implementation steps also give staff a guideline for day-to-day practice. Table 3 displays timelines that are intended to help keep team members on track and ensure the services are implemented timely from the time of the referral to discharge.

Table 3

Service Timelines

Timeline	Service
24 hours	Referral; acceptance of referral
48 hours	Contact the client; assign the case to a therapist; set up a meeting with the client; begin the assessment
72 hours	Complete assessment and determine individual needs
2 weeks	From referrals, develop an initial treatment plan; begin services
45 days	Completion of the formal treatment plan
3 months	Treatment plan review every quarter
30–60 days	Postdischarge aftercare and tracking

Phase 8: Quality Assurance

Performance Outcome Measures

NPO X will provide services to meet the clinical and practical daily living needs of at-risk youth and seniors experiencing instability. NPO X's program model employs a strengths-based, solution-focused approach to service delivery that is aimed at preserving at-risk youth for recidivism going through a phase in life that may alter their mental status.

Evaluation

Formative Evaluation. NPO X will assess client progress quarterly and obtain client feedback by surveying satisfaction and staff performance. HCBHC upper management will monitor and help staff recognize areas that they are struggling in. Ongoing supervision of staff and accountability motivate staff to meet outcome measures.

Summative Evaluation. Overall, NPO X will evaluate its strategic plan with staff through monthly meetings to assess if goals are being met.

Phase 9: Continuous Improvement Plan

A continuous improvement plan creates a culture of quality throughout the agency and the community. The performance plan promotes using data to identify areas that need improvement and improvement plans to achieve performance and program goals, client satisfaction, and positive outcomes. The performance plan identifies program-specific issues and implements solutions that improve efficiencies.

Quality Objectives

Performance and Quality Improvement

- Coordination of continuous quality improvement activities
- Review the progress of all services provided by Family Unity
- Progress toward achieving long-term and short-term goals
- Assessment of any barriers to and supports for implementation as needed

Functional Analysis

The Baldrige Framework of Excellence will support the foundations of NPO X Performance and quality assurance (QA) Plan. The Baldrige framework and criteria help facilitate the communication and sharing of best practices in organizations and help organizations understand and manage performance. The Baldrige framework has seven key management and leadership categories: leadership, strategy, customers, measurement, analysis, knowledge management, workforce, operations, and results.

Recommendations for Future Study

A literature review indicated extensive data regarding the impact of economic uncertainty on NPOs and how it affects the expansion of services. Extensive research also indicates that NPOs aim to support communities, including improving education, and financial success, lower rates of crime, and other services. NPOs also pursue environmental excellence, being role models for addressing social and economic issues. There is also a common theme, whereas these organizations typically depend on one funding source (government) and provide services in lower-socio-economic geographic areas.

As I researched economic uncertainties in NPOs and decisions to expand services, decisions often were based on lack of funding. An area that I find limited is studies on minority small businesses being undercapitalized and the difficulties with fundraising opportunities. This is an opportunity for further research to address the gap between nonprofit executives, racial leadership, and the gap of fundraising opportunities.

Dissemination

My plan for disseminating this work to the organization is to create a presentation that involves communicating a summary of the research, discovery, and detailed recommendations made to NPO X. Question-and-answer time will be allotted at the end for further clarification.

Summary

Leadership and economic uncertainty affect strategic decision-making to address financial sustainability and operational challenges. This study’s goals were to understand how executives of nonprofit organizations made decisions to expand services. A structured interview with the CEO, ED, and a BOD member provided information about organizational strategies to secure additional funding, expand services, financial limitations and performance, performance measurement, and diversity. Assessment of the organization’s systems and approaches led to developing recommendations for collaboration with other organizations, funders, and customers outside NPO X's geographic location. Continuous planning that included improved communication, leadership, and policies—diversifying the BOD and implementing a behavioral health program to diversify and enhance existing programs. This case study demonstrates a generalizable method for nonprofit executive decision-making.

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Appendix: Interview Questions

The interview questions for this case study are:

1. What do you think are the most important issues or goals to address in your organization?
2. What values are most important to you as a leader?
3. What are your expectations regarding customer care, and how does that align with the organization's mission, vision, and goals?
4. How have you collaborated with other leaders about diversifying streams of revenue sources to expand services?
5. How have the organization's limited resources influenced your decision-making processes?
6. How do you make strategic decisions to pursue opportunities to expand services?
7. What strategies have been implemented to secure additional funding for the organization?
8. How do you track data and information on daily performance and overall organizational performance?
9. How do you ensure that your performance measurement system can respond to unexpected changes with funding?
10. How has organizational performance affected funding?
11. What feedback have you received from stakeholders about program performance?