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Improving Financial Resiliency to Provide Accessible Community Services During Emergency Conditions Through Strategic Planning

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This is to certify that the doctoral study by

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

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Walden University
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Abstract

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MSIB, Florida Atlantic University, 2005

MURP, Florida Atlantic University, 2002

BArch, Universidad Central de Venezuela, 1995

Professional Administrative Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Public Administration

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Abstract

The study site organization lacked financial resilience to ensure the provision of social services to populations reliant on these services, including before, during, and after emergency conditions. The purpose of this mixed-methods case study was to provide strategic planning recommendations to increase financial resilience and describe the unique partnership between the client agency and the nonprofit arm. The study addressed strategies to increase the financial resilience needed to sustain the organization's core mission, and strategies the agency can use to provide community services before, during, and after emergencies such as COVID-19, hurricanes, or severe storms. A strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats analysis using an analytical hierarchical process was the conceptual framework for the development of the strategic plan. The target population was stakeholders of the municipal department. Critical sources of data included archival data, interviews with executives, and surveys with agency consumers. Findings included increasing awareness of human and social services available to the community and informing the consumers of the array of services available. Strategies to increase financial resilience included revising the existing memorandum of understanding for the nonprofit arm to raise funds to cover additional needs to advance the agency's priorities and diversifying the portfolio of funds. Defining a governance structure for the nonprofit board to leverage strengths and match them to the organization's was a key recommendation. The study may promote positive social change by increasing financial resilience within the client agency, which may result in increasing the organization's capacity to provide services supporting a historically disadvantaged community.

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate my doctoral work to my grandparents, Louis and Cecilia Russo, both of whom, when alive, taught me how to be resilient, generous, hardworking, and loving, and to always have faith in God because all things are possible if we believe in His Promises. My grandparents loved each other unconditionally and taught me that love is all that matters. They blessed my mom, sister, and me, and I would not be who I am without their love and support.

I would also like to dedicate this study to all the nonprofit organizations out there who are working relentlessly and tirelessly to help their communities. Many people only need that one person who believes in them, who lends a helping hand, and who provides them with hope to make it in life. Your work matters every single day.

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I would like to thank my mom, Madeleine Russo, and my dad, Igor Colmenares. Their love and support throughout this very long process has made it possible to stay focused and has enabled me to pull through. I also want to thank my family, Diana and Simon Rozenberg, Miguel and Brunella Colmenares, Cynthia and Mauricio Eidelman, and Valentina Lopez: Your love keeps me strong and dedicated. To my spiritual family, Father Quinn, Renee Doyle, Bella Gross, Sara Tejeda, Jenny Belia, and Jackie Gnolfo: Your love and prayers have meant the world to me. To our family's next generation who already make a difference in our world: David, Miguel, Olindo, Galit, Eithan, and Dante. To my friends and family who supported my doctoral journey from the beginning, especially Dr. Prosperi and Dr. Mitsova-Boneva.

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Section 1: Introduction

Nonprofits provide services in a complex environment, which becomes increasingly difficult during human-made or natural emergencies such as extreme weather events (Chen, 2021). Reduced funding from governmental agencies, agency closures due to COVID-19, and increased competition from other funding sources have placed nonprofit organizations in a financially vulnerable position. This problem is particularly critical when community members rely on the services provided by the nonprofit, specifically older people, children, unemployed individuals, individuals with mental health issues, individuals who are homeless, and other vulnerable populations. During times of emergency such as a pandemic, hurricanes, and extreme weather conditions, the community needs to rely on resilient social services that can respond to these shocks in the system.

In South Florida, disasters such as the Surfside Champlain Towers South Collapse, which occurred approximately on June 24, 2021, have led to the displacement of residents in communities across Florida. The incident was the most significant non-hurricane emergency in the state where 98 lives were lost (Lu et al., 2021). This event has brought awareness of the integrity and vulnerability of structures, which accidental or abnormal loadings, poor maintenance of buildings, outdated building codes, and effects of sea level rise may trigger (this last one being the result of the construction of structures on barrier islands that suffer damages caused by saltwater intrusion (Associated Press, 2022; Lu et al., 2021; Tan et al., 2021). On June 17, 2022, the municipality where the client organization is hosted evacuated a building due to safety concerns and mechanical failures. Residents were relocated in an emergency operation led by city staff and the American Red Cross (director of human services, personal communication, 2022). It was uncertain how long the residents would receive shelter, therefore, the emergency operation center, which the client agency was leading for the municipality, collaborated with other internal and external partners to address the issue (director of human services, personal communication, 2022).

The client organization provides social services to residents in the city and operates a separate nonprofit arm. Conducting an administrative study to understand the client organization’s financial resilience to address emergency events was intended to advance the field of public administration and close a gap in practice. The study also addressed a gap in the literature by exploring how agencies can quickly bounce back after emergency conditions and be prepared to provide social services. The study may advance practice by better understanding the financial structure of social services between a municipal human services department and its nonprofit arm. Other organizations may benefit from the lessons learned from this unique governance arrangement to administer social services to the community before, during, and after emergency conditions. Section 1 introduces the client organization and describes the services provided by the agency. The section also describes the background of the problem, identifying the need for the organization to pursue the study. The section includes the problem statement, identifying the gap in literature and practice; purpose of the study; research questions; and summarized data sources and analysis. The section concludes by providing a significance of the study to the client organization and contributions to the literature, to practice and to the community.

Organization Background and Problem Statement

The client of this administrative study is a municipal department located in a small municipality in the state of Florida providing human and social services. The client organization is supported by the nonprofit organization that provides the fundraising arm to the center. The public administrative issue the client agency wished to address was to increase its financial resilience to ensure the provision of social services to populations that are most reliant on these services throughout the year and before, during, and after emergency conditions including hurricanes, pandemics, displacements, or other events that affect the community. Problems associated with the nonprofit arm were the focus of the study.

Background of Client Organization

The client organization administers human and social services to the city's residents and expands certain services to residents in the county. The municipal department resides in a one-stop multipurpose social services facility in the community. The agency centralizes multiple human services that are easily accessible to the community it serves, mostly those living in poverty and considered at risk. The agency provides an array of comprehensive services to meet the needs of the community, which include services in three main areas: youth services, older services, and general services with nine full-time employees, seven part-time employees, and multiple volunteers.

Based on the 2020 U.S. Census data, the municipality has over 41,000 residents. Approximately 75% of the city falls within the Community Redevelopment Agency jurisdiction, which includes two qualified opportunity zones, which are economically distressed areas. Overall population by age indicated that 52.2% of the population consisted of older adults (19,393). Women represented 56% of the older adult population, and men represented 44%. Moreover, 52% of the older population reported some disability, 22% reported household incomes below the federal poverty level, 21% did not have health insurance, and 49% were non-U.S. born (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020). The municipal department's mission statement is to provide social and human services and improve the quality of life through community partnerships that will maximize opportunities for everyone. The municipal department provided data regarding their portfolio of services to address the diverse needs of the community, which include three main program categories:

1. The After School Program (ASP) provides a supervised and structured program serving up to 175 students under normal operations and 90 students under COVID-19 operations in Grades voluntary prekindergarten through 8 living in low- to moderate-income families. The program aims to deter youths from activities associated with child abuse/neglect by providing year-round academic services. Support services include tutoring, remediation, homework assistance, academic enrichment, fitness activities, nutrition education, mental health counseling, foster care, and juvenile justice.

2. The Senior Services Program is open for enrollment to all adults 60 years of age or older who are not enrolled in any Medicaid long-term, capitated managed-care program. Services prioritize older adults with the most significant socioeconomic need with particular attention to racial minorities, which are races defined as a minority as compared to the larger populations. The services also are prioritized for individuals with low income, individuals with limited English proficiency, and those at risk for institutional placement. Services include transportation to residents who are within the boundaries of the municipality. If space is available, participants who are not residents are welcome to attend the program. The program provides reasonable accommodations for older adults with disabilities, health issues, or other barriers to program participation.
3. The Portfolio of General Services administered by the municipal department includes direct emergency assistance for mortgage/rental payments, utility bills, food, shelter, prescriptions, and assistance to populations who are homeless. Due to the United States's current economic condition, high unemployment, and rising cost of living, the increasing number of requests for assistance goes beyond available funding at the client organization to fund the programs and services during these emergency conditions.

The municipal department supports families and individuals experiencing homelessness due to a recent economic hardship, displacement (uninhabitable residence, foreclosures, change of ownership, and unaffordable high rent increases), and the

COVID-19 pandemic. These individuals need emergency housing, which in most cases requires local hotels. Many of the providers funded to address the homeless population cannot respond to the increased number of needy individuals and families. Individuals located in this area of the county have less concentration of support services for the population who are homeless; therefore, these individuals often seek assistance from the client organization.

The municipal department is a current provider of emergency services and maintains a limited emergency assistance budget to support city residents. Funding for this program allows the client organization to provide food, food vouchers, rent/mortgage assistance, utility assistance, hotel beds, medical assistance, and transportation vouchers. These services are critical during emergency conditions.

The nonprofit arm of the client agency operates as a 501(C)(3) organization. The municipal department and the nonprofit arm executed a memorandum of understanding (MOU), which is an agreement between the two entities to support matching funds for the small municipalities Community Development Block Grant (CDBG). The grant expands economic opportunity to benefit low- to moderate-income individuals (South Florida County, n.d.). The MOU focuses on prioritizing charitable support for the ASP, which has a primary objective of benefiting families categorized as Asset Limited Income Constrained Employed who depend on affordable and/or subsidized childcare for the ability to work.

In the past, the nonprofit provided emergency support and other services. However, the MOU does not include assistance to services other than the ASP. This instrument needs to be updated to reflect current conditions and needs. The organization has experienced leadership changes, providing diverse views on utilizing the nonprofit arm best. The fact that the MOU needs revisions to address the agency's current needs has proven that the nonprofit can only be modestly successful in supporting the municipal department. This relationship needs to be successfully defined to facilitate the administration of human services to the community, especially to allow the agency to adapt to extreme events and emergency conditions.

The client organization is easily accessible to students attending the elementary, middle, and high schools in the area. Data from the client organization reveals that each school has an estimated 89% or higher rate of students receiving free or reduced lunch. Historically, the cultural makeup of program participants is 47% Hispanic, 42% Black/African American, 6% White, and 5% other. Students come from families with limited English proficiency, history of homelessness, history of Department of Children and Families involvement, incarceration of a parent or older sibling, and other risk factors, with 27% from very low income and 25% from low-income families.

The nonprofit saw a decrease in its membership, which was affected by the lack of activity during COVID-19, and in the spring of 2023 recruited new membership but did not define their roles or governance structure. The nonprofit's MOU with the client organization's latest review was during the establishment of the partnership (director of human services, personal communication, 2022).

Background of the Problem

The geographical context of this professional administrative study was the South Florida region. The goal of the administrative study was to increase the agency's financial resilience to ensure the provision of social services to populations that are most reliant on these services throughout the year, including before, during, and after emergency conditions such as hurricanes, severe storms, pandemics, or other events that affect the community. There was a need to conduct an administrative study to address the issues at the client organization, which a strategic planning effort helped evaluate. The agency identified the need as critical due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the Surfside event. These events increased program needs and demand for services, increased cost of living, increased emergency conditions stemming from the displacement of individuals, and increased potential emergencies due to the agency's location in a hurricane-prone area.

A review of the economic context revealed that there had been a decrease in funding levels and increased competition for funds for nonprofit agencies. This condition, in addition to a lack of membership and decrease in activity during COVID-19 from the agency's nonprofit arm, did not favor the conditions to allow a funding stream to provide emergency support and provide revenue streams to fund services on an as-needed basis. The agency's MOU did not memorialize services other than the ASP, and this instrument had not been revised or updated. The strategic planning effort must address this administrative study and incorporate a revision of the MOU, which includes the agency's current needs to ensure the nonprofit's arm can successfully support the municipal department. The organization’s strategic planning effort needs to successfully define the relationship between the municipal department and the nonprofit arm to facilitate the administration of human services to the community, especially to allow the agency to adapt to extreme events and emergency conditions.

Literature has been written about municipal and nonprofit collaboration, including the provision of human services. A review of the literature suggested that government agencies may choose to contract the provision of human services to nonprofit agencies when the cost of the exchange is low. Government agencies may choose to provide human services in-house when the cost of the exchange is higher due to complex institutional and political systems and market structures (Carnochan et al., 2019; DeHoog, 1985; Feiock et al., 2007; Feiock & Jang, 2009). Findings also suggested that municipal agencies may have reservations about contracting services to nonprofits because of a lack of financial and human resources within both agencies (Feiock & Jang, 2009; Snavely & Desai, 2001). With the increased role in the provision of human services, researchers argued that these public services must be efficient, effective, accountable, transparent, and responsive to citizens’ needs, and should incorporate community engagement to address social challenges (Korosec & Berman, 2006; D. Osborne & Gaebler, 1993; Putnam, 2001; Smith, 2008).

Citizen engagement is critical for agencies to navigate the complex policy process and the complexity of delivering human services. Researchers have started questioning whether management-focused frameworks are sufficient to address these challenges and have started to emphasize that citizens coparticipate in the production of human services

(Engen et al., 2021; Eriksson, 2019; S. P. Osborne, 2018; S. P. Osborne et al., 2016; Smith, 2008). The Biden administration incorporated the provision of health services under the umbrella of human infrastructure, which includes investments in childcare, education, and home- and community-based services. Including the American Jobs Plan is a step in the right direction and creates an opportunity to address aging infrastructure to provide needed investments in human services that help remove local barriers to access and improve health in historically disadvantaged communities (Jain et al., 2022).

Data from the client organization revealed that there has been a decrease in funding levels in nonprofits and municipal organizations due to competition for limited funds, which were not limited to providing human and social services. Additional funding needs have resulted from increased cost of living after the COVID-19 pandemic, additional emergency conditions generated by displacement of individuals due to infrastructure failures and/or uninhabitable residences, and increased social problems after the pandemic, which have increased program needs and demand for services (Deitrick et al., 2020; A. F. Johnson et al., 2020). A preliminary review of the reduction in the adopted budget for the city revealed a decrease of 53% in general funds allocation to human services from $241,279 in fiscal year (FY) 2019–2020 to $112,195 in FY 2020–2021 and a decrease in grant funding from $207,381 in FY 2018–2019 to less than $46,000 in FY 2019–2020 and 2020–2021. This reduction is critical because there is an understanding that during emergency conditions, funding sources and human resources become more strained, and recovery for local agencies can be challenging if the proper resources and funding are not in place (Chen, 2021; A. F. Johnson et al., 2020).

In the client organization’s case, there is a unique arrangement in which the nonprofit operates as the fiduciary arm and does not have a monitoring or oversight role over the city governmental department. This is a challenge for providing oversight of resources for the agency and recommendations of how to improve the agency’s resilience by providing support for grants and services. The current study was intended to bridge the gap in terms of addressing financial challenges for the community, especially during emergency events.

Problem Statement

The problem that was addressed in this study was the organization’s lack of financial resilience to ensure the provision of social services to populations most reliant on these services, including before, during, and after emergency conditions such as hurricanes, severe storms, and pandemics. Problems were associated with the nonprofit arm and included a lack of a strategic plan to address the following organizational challenges: (a) a lack of membership for their board of directors; (b) a lack of a resilient plan that guarantees financial stability during, before and after emergency events; and (c) a lack of activity, which has not provided opportunities to raise funds to supplement the budget.

The COVID-19 pandemic challenged U.S. nonprofits’ financial stability (A. F. Johnson et al., 2020). Events such as hurricanes, severe storms, and pandemics impact an agency’s financial stability and ability to bounce back, especially during critical times when services are most needed (Chen, 2021; A. F. Johnson et al., 2020). These conditions affect residents who live in the municipality where the client organization is located, specifically those in the northwest and southwest neighborhoods. The development of a strategic plan may be significant for the client organization because it may advance their mission and vision to address the needs of a traditionally disadvantaged community.

Purpose

The purpose of this mixed-methods case study was to provide recommendations to assist in developing a strategic plan to increase financial resilience for the client agency and the nonprofit arm, and to better describe the unique partnership between the municipal government and the nonprofit arm. I sought to understand the organizational resilience of the agency, how community services are provided by the governmental agency, and the role of the nonprofit arm. This administrative study may provide a strategic plan specific to the municipal department with a focus on the nonprofit arm to diversify the agency’s financial portfolio and provide resilient options to ensure the community can obtain essential services, especially during emergencies. A study tailored to understand the organization’s governance structure and the financial structure of human and social services was necessary to develop an appropriate plan that benefits the organization. Improving financial resilience may benefit the community for any current or future expected or unexpected events by increasing financial resilience for the client agency and the nonprofit arm. I used qualitative and quantitative measures of financial resilience, defined responsibilities for the client organization, and evaluated current organizational functions and services the agency provides through a single case study analysis.

Strategic planning tools, including an assessment of the strength, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) facing the organization in the current and the short term, are necessary to assist the agency in formulating proper strategies that are in line with the agency's mission and vision. Although SWOT analysis has been widely used in strategic management and planning (Andrews, 1987; Ansoff, 1965; Helms & Nixon, 2010; Mintzberg & Quinn, 1998; Porter, 1991), it falls short in prioritizing recommendations and strategies. Agency prioritization is critical, especially when funding sources are limited or during emergencies (Kajanus et al., 2012; Osuna & Aranda, 2007). In this sense, analytical hierarchical processes (AHP) that inform how to appraise decision making and prioritize strategies and recommendations can benefit the strategic planning process (Kajanus et al., 2012; Osuna & Aranda, 2007).

There was a need to develop a SWOT analysis within an AHP process to provide prioritized strategic recommendations specific to the municipal department with a focus on the nonprofit arm. These strategies may diversify the agency's financial portfolio and provide resilient options to ensure the community can obtain essential services, especially during emergencies. The study was intended to understand the organization's governance structure and how financial, human, and social services are structured. The results may be used to develop an appropriate strategic plan that benefits the organization and increases the community's resilience to face any current or future expected or unexpected events.

Research Questions

The study included the following research questions to address recommendations and strategies specific to the municipal department with a focus on the nonprofit arm, including input from different stakeholders:

RQ1: What strategies can the agency use to increase the financial resilience needed to sustain the organization's core mission?

RQ2: What strategies can the agency use to provide community services before, during, and after emergencies such as COVID-19, hurricanes, or severe storms?

The strategic plan that was prepared for this administrative study may be significant for similar organizations because it may provide a conceptual framework for municipal and nonprofit collaboration to provide human services. The administrative study may also provide results that can address a gap in practice for similar organizations to increase capacity during emergency conditions by working collaboratively with the community through citizen engagement.

Summary of Data Sources and Analysis

The research design included an embedded mixed-methods approach in which qualitative and quantitative data were collected simultaneously. The qualitative method was the primary method of research, and the quantitative method served as a supplementary method (see Leedy et al., 2019). The data were analyzed utilizing a SWOT analysis with an AHP process as the conceptual framework for systemizing the study results and preparing the strategic plan, which was the deliverable for the client organization (see Kajanus et al., 2012; Osuna & Aranda, 2007). The sources of data for the study included the following:

- Published outcomes and research included information stemming from published peer-reviewed and professional journals. The results of the analysis provided a best practices memorandum to help vet recommendations that needed additional research.
- Archival data collected for the study included agency records such as financial documents, grant applications, budget documentation, and other data to understand the agency's portfolio of services, the prioritization of funding, and sources of funds. The data also helped me understand the agency's strengths and weaknesses. The archival data included an existing agency survey, which was collected as part of monitoring activities for an existing grant. The archival analysis allowed me to analyze the agency's data and records to understand how these align with the organization's mission and vision and the needs of the agency consumers.
- Evidence generated for the study included interviews and survey data collected by me. Interviews are a qualitative data collection method and were conducted with executive management, program supervisors, coordinators, and board members to inquire about the agency's SWOT.

A second quantitative survey was generated to supplement the study analysis. The survey was designed to obtain the opinions of consumers (community) served by the agency. Questions were crafted by me to elicit consumers' responses regarding the agency's programming strengths and weaknesses. Opportunities were identified by inquiring about future areas of expansion, agency improvements, and consumer needs.

Definitions

I prepared a strategic plan by developing a SWOT analysis that integrated external and internal organizational factors, combined with an AHP to prioritize recommendations within the plan.

Strategic Planning

Strategic planning is a purposeful effort to analyze an organization to help it make decisions, craft strategies, and implement actions that guide its mission and vision (Bryson et al., 2018). Strategic planning started as a practice in the private sector but has been used for decades in the public sector and nonprofit organizations. Strategic planning can combine approaches, concepts, and tools to address internal and external factors that need to be considered to address the diversity of stakeholders involved in the process. Strategic planning helps establish a process to reach consensus on the goals and needs being considered and prioritized by the agency (Bryson et al., 2018).

SWOT Analysis

SWOT is a strategic planning tool and a conceptual framework used to evaluate and link strategies by considering the internal organizational structure and the external political forces that impact the implementation of these strategies (Ansoff, 1965). SWOT is the first step in strategy formulation because it helps identify an organization's opportunities and threats within the environment in which it operates (Andrews, 1987). SWOT analyses help develop strategies and recommendations to increase an organization’s performance and provides a blueprint to guide an action plan (Bryson, 2018).

AHP

AHP is a multiple decision support method used in conjunction with SWOT analysis. AHP provides a framework to prioritize strategies and recommendations by establishing criteria to help make decisions about a program, which include the organization’s goals and strategic areas in the development of the program (Görener et al., 2012; Jain et al., 2021; Saaty, 1990).

Significance

The study may be significant because the findings of the research address several gaps in practice and the literature in public administration, including the following:

- Studying how agencies bounce back after a crisis due to external or internal factors. A study tailored to understand how human and social services are structured financially may help to develop an appropriate plan that benefits the organization and the community to improve their financial resilience.
- Understanding how to prioritize recommendations and strategies depending on the agency’s mission and vision, shared goals, and governance structure. This prioritization is critical when funding sources are limited or during emergencies.

Significance to the Organization and the Community

This administrative study addressed these gaps in practice to solve an existing problem at the municipal department. The study may promote positive social change by increasing financial resilience within the client agency, which may result in the organization’s increased capacity to provide human and social services to those in need. Improving the financial resilience of the client organization may better support a historically disadvantaged community, especially during emergencies. Positive social change may also be achieved by working with the community to equip its members with a strategic plan that can be replicated by other human services and nonprofit organizations dealing with similar issues.

Significance to the Public and Nonprofit Sector

The strategic plan provided a conceptual framework that could be used as an analytical tool to improve financial resilience within other organizations. The study’s results addressed a practice gap in understanding governance arrangements for fiduciary support for municipal and nonprofit collaboratives. This research problem and the conceptual framework may be relevant to public organizations and nonprofit agencies because they may help advance the field of public administration by closing a gap in practice and the literature regarding understanding the client organization’s financial resilience to address emergency events. The recent literature on financial resilience for nonprofit agencies was in development, and there was a gap in practice to understand how nonprofit organizations can be prepared to provide social services in response to emergencies. Advancing this field is critical to address the provision of human services to populations most reliant on these services, including before, during, and after emergency conditions such as hurricanes, severe storms, and pandemics. The study may also advance practice by understanding the financial structure of social services between a municipal human services department and its nonprofit arm.

Significance to Social Change

The community and the client organization may experience positive social change through a strategic plan that may be replicated by other human services and nonprofit organizations dealing with similar issues. Administrative studies may effect social change by exploring the application of a conceptual framework tailored to the community via citizen engagement throughout the strategic planning process. The strategic plan may provide a conceptual framework that could be used as an analytical tool to improve financial resilience in other organizations.

Summary

Understanding the unique partnership between the city government and the nonprofit arm was necessary to develop a strategic plan that would increase sustainability for the client agency. The primary goal of this administrative study was to understand the agency's organizational resilience, how governmental agencies provide community services, and the nonprofit arm's role. I measured financial resilience, defined responsibilities, and evaluated the agency's current organizational functions and services through a single case study analysis. The study results may have significant implications for practice and promoting social change in public administration. Section 2 provides evidence regarding the importance of developing a SWOT analysis to prepare a meaningful strategic plan. Section 2 also addresses AHP processes to develop and prioritize strategies and recommendations for the agency's strategic plan.

Section 2: Conceptual Framework and Relevant Literature

This administrative study provided a strategic plan specific to a municipal department providing human and social services in South Florida by examining the role of its supporting nonprofit arm. A strategic planning process was critical to address the client organization's lack of financial resilience to ensure the provision of social services to populations most reliant on these services, including before, during, and after emergency conditions such as hurricanes, severe storms, and pandemics. The purpose of this mixed-methods case study was to provide recommendations that assist in developing a strategic plan to increase financial resilience for the client agency and its nonprofit arm, and to better describe the unique partnership between the municipal department and its nonprofit arm. I used a SWOT strategic planning tool that integrated external and internal organizational factors, combined with an AHP) to prioritize recommendations.

The research questions in the study were the following: What strategies can the agency use to increase the financial resilience needed to sustain the organization's core mission? What strategies can the agency use to provide community services before, during, and after emergencies such as COVID-19, hurricanes, or severe storms?

This chapter includes the theoretical background of strategic planning processes in organizations and the conceptual framework used in the study. This chapter also summarizes the organizational context and background, provides a section on the study's relevance to public organizations, and explains my role as the researcher and the role of the client organization.

Literature Search Strategy

The literature search was based on the conceptual model, which supported the preparation of a strategic plan by developing a SWOT strategic planning tool. The literature for the study was from the field of management and public administration. The literature review strategy focused on literature related to the practice-focused questions and included searches in the areas of financial resilience and human and social services.

I used Walden Library databases and Google Scholar to search for academic peer-reviewed literature. The literature search included trade/governmental articles and municipal information relevant to the client organization. For the scope of this review, articles published in the past 5–10 years were prioritized. Exceptions included literature to support historical development of concepts. Abstracts were reviewed and articles skimmed to ensure they were relevant to the conceptual framework and the research questions.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework that supported this study was preparing a strategic plan by developing a SWOT strategic planning tool. An AHP helped me systemize the results of the study by providing a hierarchical framework to prioritize recommendations and strategies to prepare the strategic plan, which was the deliverable for the client organization (see Jain, et al., 2021; Kajanus et al., 2012; Osuna & Aranda, 2007). SWOT analysis was critical in developing a strategic plan and formulating proper strategies that align with the agency's mission and vision (see Andrews, 1987; Ansoff, 1965; Bryson, 2018; Helms & Nixon, 2010; Porter, 1991).

Ansoff (1965) discussed the importance of strategic planning and providing a conceptual framework to evaluate and link strategies, considering the internal organizational structure and the internal and external political forces that can impact the implementation of these strategies. Andrews (1987) expanded this framework and expressed that the first step in strategy formulation is identifying the organization's opportunities and threats within the environment in which it operates. Andrews recommended that this activity be followed by listing the organization's strengths and weaknesses and the available resources, which assist in setting the agency's economic strategy. Porter (1991) closed the loop on competition and strategy and discussed how organizations can highlight their strengths and weaknesses to help implement strategic changes that yield better opportunities and to alert the agency of industry trends that may indicate the most significant threats. Understanding the competitive forces and elements of the industry aids in providing long-range strategies that position the organization in a less vulnerable place to external forces.

SWOT analyses are critical planning tools to provide an external and internal assessment of the organization and to recommend strategic actions. SWOT analysis describes the agency's strengths and weaknesses concerning the opportunities and threats that can be faced externally, which assist in developing strategies and recommendations to increase organizational performance and provide a blueprint that guides a plan of action (Bryson, 2018). Strengths and weaknesses are internal to the organization; strengths represent the internal capabilities relevant for firms to provide services to their customers, and weaknesses are detriments or impediments that constrain the organization.

Opportunities are external to the agency and correspond to conditions that favor the organization, and threats, which are also external, are conditions that can hinder the organization (Namugenyi et al., 2019). SWOT analysis is standard in business, management, and public administration. Other fields use SWOT because of its ability to analyze organizations and assist in recommending actions (Helms & Nixon, 2010). This strategic planning tool is limited because it cannot prioritize recommendations and may require additional strategic analysis for theory building (Helms & Nixon, 2010; Kajanus et al., 2012). To overcome this limitation, multiple decision support methods integrated with SWOT analysis provide a conceptual framework for organizations to outline prioritized implementation strategies based on the agency's mission, vision, and values (Kajanus et al., 2012).

Saaty (1990) introduced AHP to provide a hierarchical framework to prioritize problems. AHP is a multiple decision support method used in conjunction with SWOT analysis, which was used in the current administrative study to develop recommendations for the agency's strategic plan. AHP improves decision making by providing a framework to prioritize strategies and recommendations by establishing criteria to make decisions about a program, which includes the organization's goals and strategic areas in the development of the program (Görener et al., 2012; Jain et al., 2021; Saaty, 1990). SWOT analysis enhanced with the AHP tool offered prioritized strategic recommendations that addressed the needs of the municipal department (see Kajanus et al., 2012; Osuna & Aranda, 2007).

Besides considering an internal and external assessment of the organization through the SWOT analysis and providing prioritized recommendations through the AHP tool, I also obtained citizen input because of the importance of tailoring recommendations to the customers' and/or consumers' needs. The study was also grounded in new public management (NPM) approach. NPM concepts are not necessarily based on well-defined theories but are practical solutions to address operational problems confronted by public agencies (Bryson, 2018; Denhardt et al., 2018; Dunn & Miller, 2007; D. Osborne & Gaebler, 1993).

Figure 1 provides a graphic representation of the conceptual framework of the study. Figure 2 illustrates the AHP process within SWOT used for the administrative study.

Figure 1

Conceptual Framework

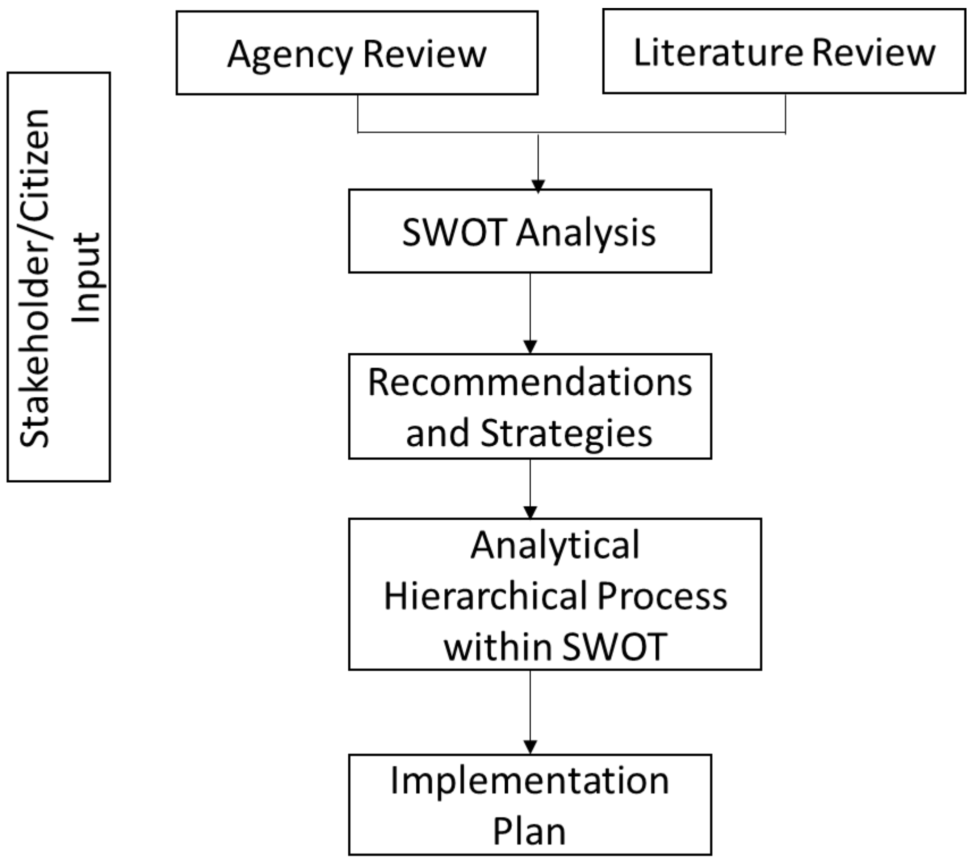
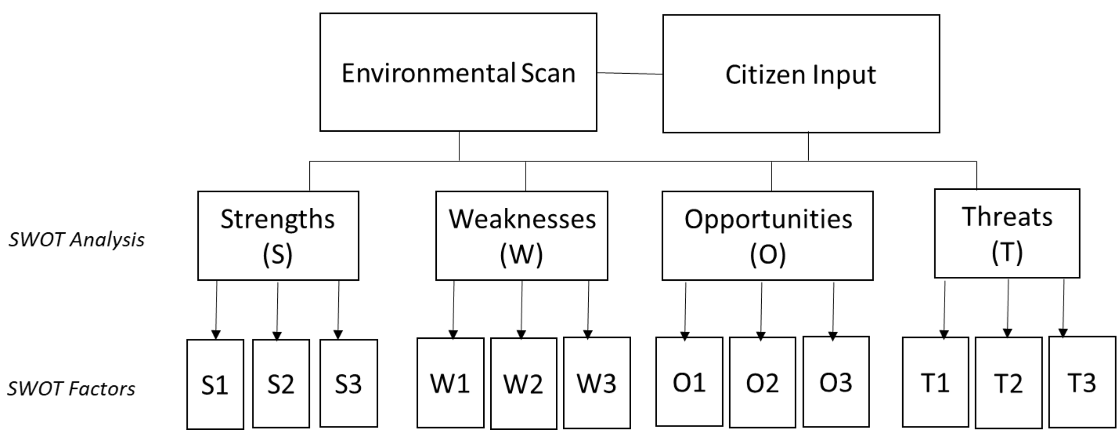


Figure 2

Analytical Hierarchical Process Within SWOT



Literature Review for the Study

The literature for the study included a review of strategic planning, SWOT analysis, and AHP, including the role of governance and public engagement to improve the provision of human and social services in nonprofit agencies. The literature review identified the current state of the practice, strategies and standard practices that had been used previously, and the gaps in practice and in theory that this study investigated. The results of the research were summarized in a strategic plan, which is a tool widely used by agency leaders and managers to ensure resilience and stability within an organization while evaluating the challenges faced within the environment in which it operates (Bryson, 2018; Mintzberg et al., 2009). Evidence suggested that small nonprofits can improve their services and build their capacity to expand their services and programs to adapt to uncertainty (Allison & Kaye, 2005; Hu et al., 2014). The strategic planning process is meant to be comprehensive and establish the "organization's mission, goals, strategies, actions and other interventions" (Bryson, 2018, p. 38), considering the external and internal environment. The current strategic planning framework provided a blueprint to develop the plan from the early stages through the implementation and assessment.

Strategic Planning and SWOT Analysis

Hu et al. (2014) conducted a study analyzing strategic planning needs for small nonprofit agencies. Hu et al. concluded that the following elements were the highest ranked for organizations: "identification of stakeholders' needs and concerns, review of organizational mission, SWOT analysis, development of a vision for the future, development of strategies and recommendations, implementation plan with actions, resources, and timelines” (p. 91). The deliverable to the client organization in the current study was a strategic plan through the development of a SWOT analysis that helped identify the needs of the stakeholders of the municipal department, with a particular emphasis on the nonprofit arm. I reviewed the organization’s mission and provided a draft vision based on findings from the study. AHP helped me develop recommendations for the agency’s strategic plan. The study included a recommendations memorandum with specific actions accompanied by a proposed time frame for implementation (see Appendix F).

The SWOT strategic planning tool is invaluable in understanding an organization’s internal and external environment and determining its competitive position (Jain et al., 2021; Namugenyi et al., 2019). SWOT analysis has helped organizations obtain a comprehensive view of their internal strengths and weaknesses and has been used to develop a framework that captures the opportunities and threats within the organization’s political, social, and economic environment (Helms & Nixon, 2010; Namugenyi et al., 2019). SWOT analysis has been carried out by organizations for decades as a vital component of a strategic plan to respond to external and internal changes in the organization and to help develop strategic actions that meet the need of the agency and its customers (Bryson, 2018; Helms & Nixon, 2010).

Mintzberg and Quin (1998) noted that SWOT analysis is part of an organization’s plan as a necessary tool in strategic planning. Mintzberg and Quin argued that the analysis is limited because strategy also relies on the organization’s culture, and patterns of change emerge as organizations deal with customers’ needs or changes in the environment. Waiganjo et al. (2021) argued that strategic planning, diversification, and sustainable innovation are necessary for small and medium organizations to mitigate risks during significant disasters and uncertainty, such as the COVID-19 pandemic. I collected information regarding the organization's ability to deal with risks and how these have affected the financial resilience of the client organization and its nonprofit arm. Capturing customer needs during times of uncertainty and change was essential to set a baseline of current conditions and evaluate the organization's financial resilience.

Multiple disciplines have used SWOT analysis because it is simple to use and can capture input from multiple stakeholders to develop future strategies for the organization. Some of the drawbacks identified in the literature were that recommendations and strategies produced by strategic planning processes and SWOT analysis can be challenging to prioritize, limiting the plan's implementation and strategic direction (Helms & Nixon, 2010). I used an AHP tool to assist with developing and prioritizing recommendations. The AHP tool was applied within the SWOT framework to provide overall priority to SWOT factors, which may enable the prioritization of recommendations and strategies in line with input received from the analysis. AHP helped me prioritize the most critical factors and include these results in the implementation plan (see Görener et al., 2012; Hu et al., 2014).

Citizen Engagement

NPM has been applied in public administration to empower citizens by limiting bureaucracy and increasing freedom of choice and quality of services (Hood, 1991; S. P. Osborne, 2018; D. Osborne & Gaebler, 1993). Strategic management concepts of efficiency and improved decision making, first used by private businesses, are the basis for NPM. NPM applies its concepts to public organizations to improve efficiencies tailored to fit the organization, the environment, and the stakeholders it serves (Bryson, 2018; Mintzberg et al., 2009; Ongaro & Ferlie, 2019).

Moreover, Public Service Logic, an offshoot of NPM, argues that public service organizations must interact with citizens and service users to add value to creating public services (Osborne, 2018; Voorberg et al., 2017). The administrative study requests public input on services received, where citizens' perceptions and evaluations seek to tailor the agency's services to be more responsive to citizens' needs. NPM has been criticized in the literature because citizen participation is limited by decision making left to experts and/or managers. On many occasions, implementations and recommendations have not considered the organization's social context (Eriksson, 2019; Strokosch & Osborne, 2020). Citizen participation has remained a gap in the literature as it relates to collecting input from consumers to assess programs and utilize the results to ensure government is more accountable, responsive, and transparent. Evidence from the literature suggests that feedback from citizens should be included in different stages of plan development to impact the organization and formulate strategies that are consistent with the agency's mission and vision (Johnson, 2019; Eriksson, 2019). Moreover, citizen input has also remained a gap in strategic planning efforts, where the focus has traditionally been on the organization's needs rather than the constituents (Haney, 2020). The conceptual framework includes citizen input throughout study's development, including during the assessment of programs, and to develop and prioritize agency strategies.

Governance and Financial Resilience

The decrease in funds and challenges to providing human services during emergency conditions is not unique to the municipality. There is evidence in the past decade in the public administration literature that addresses how relationships between staff and board of directors are affected during a crisis. The challenges include financial impacts on agencies during economic crises and emergency conditions, difficulties in collaborating with partners, and uncertainty to determine the financial sustainability of agencies (Hu & Kapucu; 2017; McMullin & Raggo, 2020; Reid & Turbide, 2012). Agency and contingency theories have studied the board of directors' responsibilities and arrangements during crises and their relationship with management and staff. This relationship is not equal in the case of non-profits, where members are volunteers (McMullin & Raggo, 2020; Reid & Turbide, 2012). In the case of the client organization, the arrangement between the municipal department is unique since the non-profit operates as the fiduciary arm and does not have a monitoring or oversight role over the city governmental department.

What authors do not define clearly in the literature is the governance structure between municipal agencies and non-profits that are not a providers or contractors of human services and that do not have monitoring or oversight roles but are part of the organization with limited roles. An analysis of the governance arrangement and relationship between the government department and the non-profit arm can benefit from addressing this gap in practice. Studying the role of the non-profit arm of the governmental agency is essential because the non-profit arm can provide support for grants, services, and programs and bridge the gap in terms of financial challenges for the community, especially during emergency events. The other gap identified in the literature and practice is how non-profit agencies bounce back financially during and after emergency conditions to be able to provide much-needed human services to the community and the best way to engage the different stakeholders, including the community (Chen, 2021; Johnson, et al., 2020).

Previous studies have analyzed strategic plans and their roles to increase the agency's performance, including customer feedback and effective governance, as positively impacting the agency's effectiveness (George et al., 2019; LeRoux & Wright, 2010). Studies have also found that collaborative partnerships between municipal agencies and non-profits are understood in the literature and characterized as informal partnerships and staffed by volunteers. Little research exists to discuss strategic studies that address municipal and non-profit collaboration to provide fiduciary support to human services with arrangements where the non-profit operates merely as a fiduciary entity. Selected research has focused on providing strategic planning to human services agencies to respond to emergency conditions, such as extreme weather events, pandemics, or the displacement of individuals (Galzey, 2010; McMullin & Raggo, 2020; Reid & Turbide, 2012). The agency's performance can benefit from shared goals and investments in the organization that can be framed through the development of a strategic plan.

The current literature has identified elements within strategic governance arrangements to assist agencies with increasing financial resilience during times of environmental uncertainty and crisis, which include resilient and adaptable governance arrangements between the board of directors and staff, external funding relationships, and revenue diversification (Chen, 2021, Hu & Kapucu, 2017; Lin & Wang, 2016; McMullin and Rago, 2020). The results of these studies suggest that financial resilience has been studied in a fragmented manner in the literature and practice (Lin and Wang, 2016). Addressing recommendations specific to these governance arrangements and how they comport themselves within the agencies' strategic plans is relevant to public organizations and non-profit agencies. Other organizations can later replicate the lessons from this unique governance arrangement to administer social services to the community before, during, and after emergency conditions.

Chen (2021) identifies a gap in literature and in practice in studying how agencies bounce back after a crisis due to external or internal factors. Chen (2021) provided a discussion on non-profit resilience, discussing the impacts of hurricanes or severe storms, particularly Hurricane Katrina's impact, and how organizations could recover after such events, describing what organizational capacities are needed for the agencies to bounce back. This administrative study identifies a gap in practice and in the research to analyze financial vulnerability in the non-profit literature because these agencies rely on donations and grants and are accountable to the public. An administrative study tailored to understanding how human services are structured financially and incorporating recommendations and strategies that consider stakeholder input help develop an appropriate plan that benefits the organization and the community to improve their resilience (Chen, 2021).

The conceptual framework utilized in the study, which is the AHP process within SWOT to provide prioritized strategic recommendations, has been applied previously in strategic management, engineering, education, watershed management, and forest management studies (Kangas et al., 2001; Kurttila et al., 2000; Stefan et al., 2021; Yavuz & Baycan, 2013). The study advances the current practice in that the proposed framework incorporates citizen input, which assisted with the analysis and development of recommendations.

Summary

Nonprofit organizations can use strategic planning efforts to provide strategies and recommendations to increase their financial resilience. Strategic planning is vital to ensure the provision of social services to populations most reliant on these services throughout the year, including before, during, and after emergency conditions, such as hurricanes, severe storms, pandemics, or any other events affect the community. Using SWOT analysis and the input from the citizens assesses the agency's programs and services. The AHP process helps develop and prioritize recommendations.

Section 3 provides details of the data collection process, including sources of evidence and ethical procedures within the study. The section also includes details on the process of analyzing the information.

Section 3: Data Collection Process and Analysis

The client organization was the municipal department of a small city in eastern Florida, located in a multipurpose building. The client has a nonprofit fiduciary arm. The research problem the client agency wished to address was to increase their financial resilience to provide social services to populations most reliant on these services. The client wished to be financially stable throughout the year, including before, during, and after emergency conditions including extreme weather events such as hurricanes, pandemics, displacement, or other events that affect the community. Problems associated with the nonprofit arm were the focus of the study.

The administrative study was designed to provide a strategic plan specific to the client organization by examining the role of the nonprofit arm. Through this mixed-methods case study, I aimed to understand and describe the unique partnership between the municipal government and the nonfiduciary arm. I also sought to provide recommendations to assist in developing a strategic plan to increase financial resilience for the client agency and the nonprofit arm. Through developing an AHP model within a SWOT framework, the study was intended to provide a prioritized set of recommendations considering limited resources within the organization. The conceptual framework also incorporated citizen participation to assess current agency programs and prioritize recommendations. It was crucial to provide a plan the agency could implement and tailor to meet the community’s needs. Section 3 provides detailed reasoning for the selection of the research design. The chapter also provides information on the data collection and data analysis procedures, data integrity, and issues of trustworthiness for the administrative study.

Practice-Focused Research Questions and Research Design

The organizational problem addressed in the administrative study was the lack of a strategic plan to increase the agency's financial resilience to ensure the provision of social services to populations most reliant on these services. The agency wished to be financially stable throughout the year, including before, during, and after emergency conditions such as hurricanes, pandemics, displacement, or other events that affect the community. The study included the following considerations to meet the client's goals:

1. Provide an assessment of the agency's programs identifying the current issues faced by the community, staff, and management.
2. Provide an analysis of the agency's financial resources before, during, and after emergencies.
3. Identify the current governance structure and arrangements between the municipal department, the nonprofit arm, and the community.

The analysis included an assessment of the MOU and current grant agreements between the municipal department and other stakeholders. My primary goal was to collect data through interviews and surveys and organize archival data collected from the client agency's records to develop a strategic plan for the agency. The goal was to provide the client organization with a strategic planning process that considered the agency's internal and external factors, the community's needs, and the existing governance arrangements to increase its financial resilience. By addressing the client's organizational considerations, I intended to establish a foundation to identify current gaps and needs within the organization and the community it serves. I used the AHP within the SWOT framework to answer the research questions. The questions addressed recommendations and strategies specific to the client organization and its nonprofit arm, including input from different stakeholders:

RQ1: What strategies can the agency use to increase the financial resilience needed to sustain the organization's core mission?

RQ2: What strategies can the agency use to provide community services before, during, and after emergencies such as COVID-19, hurricanes, or severe storms?

The scope of the research and applications of the methodology framework was limited to the municipal department, its nonprofit arm, and the consumers of the programs it serves. This administrative study was a mixed-methods case study in which qualitative and quantitative data were collected simultaneously, and the qualitative method is the predominant research method. A mixed-methods approach can provide a more comprehensive understanding of the research problem by analyzing the issues from a qualitative and quantitative point of view (J. D. Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

The research design included a mixed-methods case study analysis of the municipal department focusing on the nonprofit arm and the community they serve. The case study was the most appropriate research method for this study to provide an in-depth look at the client agency's set of programs. I aimed to understand the agency's financial resilience and the provision of human and social services before, during, and after emergency events. The analysis identified the characteristics of the agency's programs and financial diagnosis. Case studies are conducted to analyze a particular program or a set of programs in-depth for a defined period and within a bounded system or context (J. W. Creswell; 2013; Leedy et al., 2019). Case studies are an analytical tool that allows a researcher to analyze data that can reveal multiple factors within a study to reveal themes and topics that are relevant for the analysis (J. W. Creswell, 2013; Yin, 2018). The case study method is complex because it provides a description and contextual analysis. The results are theoretical and descriptive and explain why certain instances occurred as they did and why they are essential to explore in similar situations.

Role of the Researcher and the Client Organization

My professional role with the organization began as a volunteer of the municipal department where I started as a board member and eventually became the chair of the board. The volunteer role was allowed because I was a resident of the municipality, appointed by a city commission member. I served on the board from 2014 to 2017 and resigned due to not being eligible after relocating outside of city limits. The board had sunset in the past 4 years. While serving the board, I was also an adjunct faculty at a local university. During my tenure in my former roles as adjunct faculty and chair, my students would typically assist the client agency with research and volunteer opportunities. At the time of the study, I did not serve the agency in any capacity except for performing this administrative study.

I contacted the director of human services (formerly assistant director during my time on the board) to discuss potential partnering and volunteer opportunities when seeking potential doctoral administrative studies. The director of human services advised me of the organization’s current needs and requested a strategic planning effort to address the issues. The director advised that with the sunset of the human services board, the lack of activity, and the decrease in membership of the nonprofit, it had been challenging to supplement services and provide needed resources that had arisen because of the COVID-19 pandemic and other emergency conditions.

As a prior board member and resident of the municipality, I was familiar with the organization’s needs and was motivated to support the organization’s efforts. Because the client organization is located in an area vulnerable to extreme weather and hurricanes, this provided me with additional motivation to help the community. My motivation informed my personal bias because I was familiar with the organization, the community, and the issues. The agency serves vulnerable communities, including children, older people, and others, which required appropriate protocols to be in place prior to conducting the study. The following activities were supported by the client organization: (a) access to existing agency records; (b) space to conduct interviews with staff; (c) space to conduct surveys with agency consumers; and (d) assistance with survey distribution via the client agency’s database, which is Salesforce.

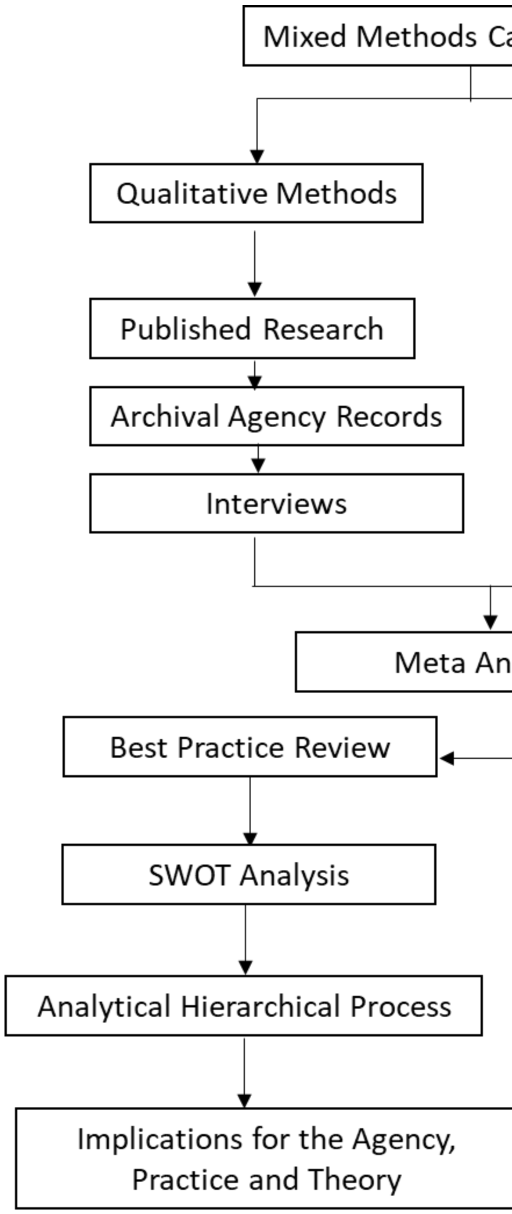
Methodology

The target population for the mixed-methods case study was stakeholders of the municipal department, which included their consumers, staff, management, board members of the nonprofit arm, and city officials. The data collected for the study were from three primary sources:

- Published research from peer-reviewed journals and professional journals provided a best practices memorandum, which also assisted in verifying the data collection.
- Archival data included agency records such as financial documents, grant applications, budget documentation, and other relevant data to understand the agency's portfolio of services, the prioritization of funding, and sources of funds. The data also helped me understand the agency's strengths and weaknesses.
- Evidence generated for the study included qualitative data through interviews administered to high-level managers and executive-level respondents for the client organization. The interviews were semi structured and intended to help the respondents reflect on the agency's strengths and weaknesses and describe potential and perceived opportunities and threats. The interviews also solicited input from respondents on the agency's financial resilience. Quantitative surveys were used to supplement the qualitative data. The surveys addressed the opinions of consumers (community) served by the agency to identify potential service trends and potential recommendations to address the agency issues. Questions were crafted to help consumers respond to the agency's programming strengths and weaknesses. Opportunities were identified by inquiring about future areas of expansion, agency improvements, and consumer needs. Figure 3 illustrates the research design for the administrative study. The research design was chosen to align with the research questions.

Figure 3

Research Design



Published Outcomes and Research

Published outcomes for this study were captured through the preparation of a best practice review to identify published research in financial resilience for human services. Systematic research of existing literature was completed via the internet using peer-reviewed and professional publications. Public administration, community practice, social and human services, and nonprofit journals were consulted and searched via the internet. Human and social services agencies' websites and their documentation were recorded in the analysis. The scope of the review was limited to publications published in the past 5 years.

Best practices were collected focusing on human and social services for agencies that were similar in size and with a similar governance structure to the client organization. Examples include human services coalitions, human and social services councils, community action and human services agencies, and similar agencies. A memorandum summarizing best practice recommendations was prepared, identifying unique characters, themes, and issues and how other similar agencies approach specific issues.

Archival and Operational Data

The data collection for archival documents included a review of existing agency documents and existing agency survey data. The review of existing documents included the review of current meeting minutes and agendas of the nonprofit arm, staff meetings, city commission meetings, and agency documents including grant applications, budget documents, financial records, existing agreements (with local, regional, and state agencies), transcripts from meetings (agendas, minutes of meeting), existing project blogs, local stakeholder sites, existing reports, supporting documentation for meeting discussions, policy proposals, technical documentation, drafts, and final reports. These qualitative data helped me determine the characteristics of the existing programs and agency resources, including funding and staff, and other relevant information.

The results of an existing agency survey completed for the existing CDBG were consulted to determine information regarding consumer demographics and questions pertinent to the provision of human services. This survey was labeled Survey No. 1/CDBG for the purposes of the current study. The archival data produced by the municipal department in connection with operational and administrative documents used by the client were accessed and directed through the director of human services and other staff.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

The mixed-methods case study was conducted by consulting with stakeholders within the organization. The consultation generated data for the study including a quantitative survey and qualitative interviews.

Quantitative Surveys: Survey No. 2

A second survey was generated for the study with quantitative data to garner consumer opinions, with a design to evaluate the municipal department's programs' strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. It also assessed any gaps in the service portfolio and gathered customer satisfaction, enabling the researcher to examine the agency's services. The survey's goal was to assess any gaps in the portfolio of services and garner customer satisfaction that enables the researcher to examine the agency’s services.

The survey obtained information that helped identify gaps in the services provided to consumers and help draft recommendations to address the organization’s weaknesses and potential threats. The survey also collected information about the strengths the consumers perceive in the organization and identify opportunities based on feedback received. The survey was the preferred method of data collection to engage the community because it can rapidly and effectively engage many respondents. The survey was designed to be distributed in a hybrid manner, both on paper and electronically, which also facilitates data analysis with existing programs such as Survey Monkey (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

The survey was administered electronically to the registered community program consumers in the municipal department database and in person at the client organization. Surveys included legal guardians from the youth program, consumers from the senior program and from the agency’s general services. Surveys assessed the communities’ challenges and needs through an electronic survey method such as survey Monkey for general services consumers, legal guardians of the ASP, and Senior Program consumers. For all users, surveys were also handed out on site to the participants and were returned to the client organization’s main desk and collected at a later date by me in a sealed envelope. This method yielded higher response rates than the e-mail survey and was conducted because the response rate goal had not been reached (Sinclair, et al., 2012).

Qualitative Interviews

Interviews collected input from high-level executives and program coordinators of the municipal department, and board members of the nonprofit arm to inquire about the agency's SWOT. The interviews are open-ended to allow the participants to provide input into the strategic planning process.

The results of the initial archival analysis assisted the researcher with crafting and finalizing the interview questions based on the initial data collection results. The interview questions were aimed at understanding the current problems the organization has been facing, which fall within financial resilience while experiencing shocks and stresses in the system, such as hurricanes, severe storms, or pandemics. The goal was to understand the agency during these events, how it adapts, and what strategies can be employed to increase its financial resilience. The interviews were administered to program supervisors and coordinators, executives, and board members for the client organization. The interviews were open-ended and intended to help the respondents reflect on the agency's strengths and weaknesses. The interviews provided an opportunity to describe potential and perceived opportunities and threats. The interviews also seek to collect input from respondents on the agency's financial resilience.

Participants

This section describes the individuals that contributed evidence to the study to address the research questions. The participants include a variety of agency stakeholders, and their selection and participation are described below.

Quantitative Surveys. Survey No. 2. The survey size has been calculated based on the total population of consumers of the client organization which serves over 250 youth in the ASP and over 300 seniors. The agency has provided data that documents over 900 general services provided to individuals, including a food pantry, emergency financial assistance, social/housing assistance, ancillary health services, and ancillary legal aid in the year 2019, which are pre-COVID-19 figures. The survey size has been calculated based on the total population of consumers and estimating a 90% confidence level and a 5% margin of error, which yields a sample size of 65 participants (Sinclair, et al., 2012; Sue & Ritter, 2012).

The client agency's database, which is Salesforce, helped leverage registered consumers to administer the survey. The survey was administered to registered community program consumers in the municipal department via Everbridge, which sends an invitation to participate in the survey and a link to the survey via text message and phone calls to consumers in both, English and Spanish. I translated the survey in Spanish. The following describes the distribution to consumers receiving services from agency program as follows:

- ASP: To assess the program, legal guardians of the client youths were surveyed. Staff at the client agency initially distributed the surveys through the agency's database, Everbridge. An invitation was sent via phone and text message to participate via Survey Monkey. The message was broadcast in English and in Spanish and included a link to the survey. I had reserved the right to hand surveys on site to the participants, which were then returned to the client organization in a sealed envelope. This method yielded higher response rates than the e-mail survey and was used since the response rate goal had not been reached (Sinclair, et al., 2012).

- Senior program & General services: I leveraged the existing database of the organization, and followed the same process as described in the above section.

Qualitative Interviews. The research participants included in the interviews are program supervisors and coordinators, executive management, and the non-profit arm board members. Interviews inquired about the agency's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats and the organization's status and collected input of leadership's recommendations to improve the agency's financial resilience. The client organization's director of human services provided access to key staff and the non-profit arm's board of directors for interviews.

Procedures

The surveys and interviews include a rigorous data collection plan. Before conducting the surveys and interviews, proper permissions were obtained from the research committee members and the Institutional Review Board (IRB) to ensure the content meets ethical and academic requirements. The next step was to obtain concurrence from the client organization on the content of the survey, and interviews captured the organization's expectations for the research. Below is a description of how access to participants was obtained at the agency for the surveys and interviews.

Quantitative Surveys. Survey No. 2. Communication is critical to properly informing the community of the purpose of the survey. A one-page fact sheet of the study's purpose was prepared before the survey kick-off to inform the community of the strategic planning effort, including information on how to provide input, which included details on when the survey was programmed to be conducted. The fact sheet was provided to the client organization to be distributed at their discretion.

The survey protocol and informed consent were the first items included before taking the survey to ensure that all participants understood that participation in the surveys is voluntary. Participants were also notified that they must complete an informed consent before taking the survey. Surveys were confidential and anonymous.

The survey is a quantitative data collection tool, which included a series of questions or statements, with responses on a Likert scale, which helped evaluate the current services and programs of the client organization. The survey also helped to craft strategies and recommendations to address current gaps in the organization. Participants ended their participation once the survey was completed.

Qualitative Interviews. An introductory letter was sent to interviewees to describe the purpose of the study and notify them that participation is voluntary and requires completing an informed consent prior to conducting the interview. I collected the data by contacting the participants via e-mail and providing a background of the study, the purpose, protections, and protocols.

The interviews were semi-structured, with a protocol in place to ask questions and record the answers, including making hand-written notes of the answers with questions prepared in advance of the interview. I was recording, listening, and taking notes as part of the interview protocol to ensure that the transcripts are accurate. The purpose was to collect high-quality data, utilize the protocol, and prepare ahead of time. The participants were debriefed at the end of the interview to ensure accuracy in capturing their input.

Appendix C includes the interview protocol. The protocol was followed to ensure the validity and reliability of the study.

Instrumentation

The below section describes the measurement instruments included in the analysis. Information relating to the development of the instruments used in the research is included below.

Quantitative Survey. The quantitative survey's design evaluates the client organization's programs' strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, which are the variables of interest. The survey seeks the opinion of the community program consumers, and the purpose is to assess any gaps in the service portfolio and gather customer satisfaction that enables the researcher to examine the agency's services. The survey instrument was crafted by me for this administrative study, based on the literature review and the purpose of the study, with input from the director of the client organization.

Staff from the municipal department helped pilot test the survey before it was administered to the community, and they provided feedback, and asked me questions. This pilot test helped provide initial internal validity and consistency of the survey items. The input helped improve questions, content, and survey instructions to ensure the community understood all items.

Once the pilot was complete, the survey was administered electronically through SurveyMonkey to the registered community program consumers in Salesforce, the municipal department database. The survey was also available electronically at the municipal department for consumers that do not have access to computers at home or who require assistance. The survey instrument can be found in Appendix B.

The survey was available for four weeks which allowed consumers sufficient time to respond. We had anticipated a response rate of 10% and a 5% minimum for each type of service: ASP, Senior Program, or General Services.

Qualitative Interviews. The interviews were semi-structured and tailored to high-level managers and board members. The interviews followed a non-probabilistic purposive sampling to include specialized participants with decision making roles in the agency. Interviews were conducted face-to-face, one-on-one, in person, or virtually on zoom with participants. The interview has been developed and tailored specifically for this study and can be found in Appendix A. The interview is a qualitative method of data collection and included an introductory section with the purpose of the study and the informed consent form. The interviews included an opening question followed by the content questions and closing instructions (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The interview protocol was a template found in other Walden University Administrative Studies and was adapted to the needs of the client organization.

Strategy for Data Analysis

The use of mixed-methods research provides strength in the research by combining the benefits of qualitative and quantitative research methods, providing a clear understanding of the research problem, and providing a research framework that collects and analyzes both types of data (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The study proposes to collect qualitative and quantitative data simultaneously. In this sense, the research design needs to consider integrating qualitative and quantitative data into the analysis framework through a meta-analysis. The meta-analysis helped the researcher identify critical variables, issues, and trends in the data. The archival data and the interviews are qualitative data collection methods. The surveys are quantitative data collection methods.

The archival data were collected, analyzed, and summarized utilizing matrices and reports generated in Microsoft Excel Tool Pak. The reports helped create statistical analysis and create graphs and charts to summarize data trends for the agency's different programs and services. The interviews were analyzed and summarized using NVivo software, a qualitative analysis tool. Survey Monkey data analysis tools helped summarize the results of the survey through graphs, tables, and crosstabulation of data.

Analysis Systems and Procedures

The archival data is limited to existing agency documentation and records. The research reviewed communication documents between the municipal department and other city departments and state, federal, and regional agencies. These documents may have gone through several iterations as participants worked through the details and comments during their preparation. The scope of this study was limited to final products or reports submitted in connection to grants, budgets, and operational and administrative documents. The data helped identify the strengths and weaknesses of current services and programs provided to agency consumers.

The survey instrument provides quantitative or numeric descriptions of agency consumers' trends, attitudes, and opinions. The survey analysis seeks to provide quantitative measures of programs and services, particular strengths, and weaknesses, and identify opportunities and threats for the organization by identifying gaps in service delivery. The survey has been structured to cross-tabulate the results and help analyze the data quickly. The results were transcribed from the survey results into Excel and summarized in the SWOT Thematic Analysis. The Excel spreadsheet helped sort by content and by theme to provide a summary matrix. The results were also summarized from the Excel spreadsheet to include graphs and charts produced by Survey Monkey and/or Excel to include highlights of the results (Ose, 2016).

The interview data was transcribed from field notes and audio recordings were transferred into Word through NVivo Transcribe function. NVivo was then used to sort the analysis by using a word frequency analysis which sorted the most common 20 words in a tree map and a word cloud. The text was summarized and sorted in the SWOT Thematic Analysis (Ose, 2016).

The data analysis procedure for interviews and surveys helped categorize the results into thematic analysis, identified a priori, and categorized into the following categories: a) program and services strengths; b) program and services weaknesses, c) organizational threats; d) organizational opportunities; and e) strategies and recommendations. The results of the analysis are included in Section 4.

The data analysis process, which helped validate the accuracy of the information, include the following steps, which are akin to the framework established in Creswell & Creswell (2018):

1. Data organization: Archival data records, interview transcripts, and survey results were reviewed and scanned, cataloged, and sorted into different categories.
2. Scan the data and look for themes. Verify the data sources, credibility, and reliability of the data, and include general notes on the analysis.
3. Data coding: Organize and label the data by categories. Data was coded consistent with findings in the conceptual framework. Organize and label the data by categories. Data was coded consistent with findings in the conceptual framework. A two-step coding process was completed including a first order coding with NVivo, which helped summarize large chunks of data collected from the interviews. Pattern coding was the second cycle coding which then helped categorize the data into themes, based on the data collected in the first-cycle coding (Saldaña, 2016).

The data collected from the thematic analyses was coded to help develop the SWOT tool. Themes allowed the researcher to organize and code the data found in the analysis. Themes helped build patterns and relationships among themes and illustrate the information through a thematic analysis. Themes per SWOT category were coded in the analysis, which has been documented as an analysis procedure (Bull, et al., 2016; Thomas, et al., 2014).

Deliverables

Upon completing the analysis, the deliverable to the client is a strategic plan, which includes the following deliverables:

- SWOT Analysis that identifies the needs of the stakeholders of the municipal department, with a particular emphasis on the non-profit arm.
- Review of the organization’s mission and vision: Based on the analysis results, the strategic plan also reviewed the organization’s mission and vision.
- Prioritized recommendations and strategies: An AHP process helped develop strategies and recommendations and provided an action plan for implementation. The recommendations and strategies were prioritized in collaboration and consultation with agency staff during a staff meeting, where preliminary results of the data collection were discussed with the director. An action plan with prioritized recommendations, responsible party, and the next steps are included in this section of the report.

Issues of Trustworthiness

It is essential to ensure the integrity of the evidence generated through the study via the analysis of the data generated through surveys and interviews. I excluded incomplete or partially completed records. Only surveys and interviews which have been completed, and have included all required documentation, such as consent forms, are included in the study.

Outliers were identified by looking at data tables and graphics of the survey results and scanning the data for possible errors. I removed any discrepant information which results from a typo or errors of input. I evaluated the need for an outlier’s analysis, including where extreme cases result from the analysis, to uncover any patterns in the sample.

Codes were assigned to interview participants, such as P1, P2, P3, and P4, to protect the privacy of participants and any confidential information shared during the interview process (Yin, 2018). This data will be stored in a password-protected file for five years. Data will be removed from the files after five years.

Four tests can be used to establish quality in case studies and were used in this study: credibility (internal validity), transferability (external validity), dependability (reliability), and confirmability (objectivity) (Yin, 2018).

Credibility

I disclosed information about my previous experience with the client organization to address bias and researcher reflexivity. I used to be a volunteer board member in the capacity of Chairperson for the currently sunset Human Services Board. Previous knowledge of the agency's operations and programs was disclosed to the consumers. The research includes triangulation between perspectives of stakeholders and methods to address potential biases.

Transferability

Transferability refers to enabling the research results to be replicable in similar settings. Yin (2018) describes a variety of participant selections as a strategy for the transferability of the study. This study seeks the opinions of multiple stakeholders, including agency consumers, through surveys, management, and board members through interviews. Recording diverse points of view allows the case study to be replicated for similar agencies. Transferability is also confirmed using thick descriptions of the case study, which was obtained vis a vis detailed information of the research process.

Dependability

The analysis includes three data collection methods to triangulate the study's results. The triangulation helped ensure that the results of the study are robust. In addition, the analysis results were shared with the municipal department members to create a member check. Data was reviewed for potential errors and clarifications. The debriefing also served to ensure participants of the study were clear about the study and its results (Tesch, 1997).

Confirmability

Confirmability is established when the results of a study can be interpreted by another researcher who can follow the research methodology provided by the researcher. The research must clearly describe the context so that the participants of the study and the results of the research can be interpreted.

Ethical Procedures

An Oversight and Data Use Agreement was executed between the client organization and the researcher to ensure that the study meets the IRB ethical procedures and that all human subjects are protected. Any participant was able to withdraw from the surveys or interviews at any time, which was included in a statement in both data collection instruments.

Quantitative Surveys

The client organization provides year-round academic and support services to very low to moderate-income youth/students in the ASP. The survey included participants over 18; for participants not meeting this requirement, the survey included their legal guardians.

The surveys were confidential, with no names or personal data recorded. I sent the survey to the client agency, who then distributed directly to participants via their database, where links from participants were not revealed to me. Therefore, the results do not include identifiers such as names or addresses. The results from the survey are safely stored, saved, and protected under a password that I only know.

The surveys were 100% voluntary and sent to all agency's registered consumers. The scope of the research is limited to consumers receiving services at the municipal department. Excluded populations include participants under the age of 18 years. Surveys were sent to parents or legal guardians of consumers of the ASP to capture this program. All volunteers in the survey and interviews were required to complete a consent form prior to participating in the research. The forms stated clearly that research is limited to those aged 18+ and that the study is voluntary. The consent form would protect any individual, who by chance, has a vulnerable status without the researcher's awareness. The benefits of including vulnerable individuals outweigh the risks given they would be protected by the informed consent process and the voluntary nature of the study. The agencies serve these volunteers, and their input is critical to this process.

Qualitative Interviews

Following the procedures established in the Human Subjects Research for the IRB, interview candidates previously identified were contacted via e-mail and were provided with the purpose of the research, interest in interviewing them, and the nature of the interview information. Each e-mail was followed up with a phone call to schedule a time for the interview. The participants are the nonprofit arm board members and management members of the municipal department, and other relevant management city officials. The names of individuals participating in the interviews were masked in the study. The anticipated duration of the interviews is 45 to 60 minutes. Additional questions about the methodology or purpose of the study that any interviewee has before the scheduled time were answered before the regular interview date. Appendix D includes the Request for Participation in the Interviews.

Consent and Privacy

Ethical protection of participants includes data retention plans that protect the privacy of participants and consent processes for studies. The research included measures to permit participants to withdraw their participation at any time during the study. These aspects are described in the sections below.

Quantitative Surveys

Consent to participate in the surveys was obtained via Survey Monkey prior to participating in the survey on the online survey tool. An informed consent tool was used and was required to be signed and filled out by all participants before participating in the survey. Information for the survey was collected through the administered survey via the internet and in person at the municipal department if the participant needs assistance. The data was submitted to a secure server using a secure, encrypted website. Only the researchers working on the study can see the collected data. All data is kept confidential, unless required by law.

Qualitative Interviews

All participants were informed and voluntarily participated in the study. Consent to participate in the interviewees was obtained when scheduling the interviews. An informed consent tool was used and signed and filled out by all participants before participating in the interview. Information from the interview was collected following the semi-structured interview tool. Only the researchers working on the study can see the collected information.

Client Organization Approval

The municipal department and municipal applications were filled in by the researcher, providing information on the scope of the study. The researcher is considered a volunteer and must complete an application and must follow a screening process to work with the organization. In addition, I completed the scope of services for the strategic plan, which is the deliverable to the client organization.

Walden IRB Approval

Once the research proposal is in the University Research Review (URR) phase, Form A pertaining to the Description of Data Sources and Partner Sites, was completed to obtain guidance on the forms that were completed to obtain ethics approval for the study.

Summary

This administrative study uses qualitative and quantitative data collection methods. The qualitative methods include published outcomes and research, archival data, and interviews. The quantitative method is a survey administered to agency consumers of services and programs. The results of the analysis include a SWOT analysis and strategies and recommendations utilizing an AHP process as the conceptual framework for systemizing the results of the study and preparing the strategic plan, which is the deliverable for the client organization.

Section 4: Results and Recommendations

The purpose of this mixed-methods case study was to provide strategic planning recommendations to increase financial resilience for the client agency and the nonprofit arm. I sought to understand the organizational resilience of the agency and how community services are provided by the governmental agency by examining the role of the nonprofit arm. This mixed-methods case study was conducted to answer the following research questions: What strategies can the agency use to increase the financial resilience needed to sustain the organization's core mission? What strategies can the agency use to provide community services before, during, and after emergencies such as COVID-19, hurricanes, or severe storms? I qualitatively and quantitatively measured financial resilience through a single case study analysis. I analyzed the data by developing a SWOT analysis. AHP helped me develop recommendations for the agency's strategic plan.

Section 4 includes the results of the research and the steps taken to achieve data collection and analysis. This section also presents participant demographics and sources of evidence that resulted in a SWOT analysis. The results helped me develop recommendations for the organization and the nonprofit arm to improve their service programs and increase their financial resilience.

Data Collection

The mixed-methods case study was conducted by consulting with stakeholders within the organization and collecting archival data to understand agency financial information and existing agreements that described the portfolio of funding partners. The consultation generated data for the administrative study, including quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews. Data from a previous agency survey (Survey No. 1) was also collected to explore consumers' preferences. To collect data from participants, I partnered with the client organization through the director of human services to solicit participation for surveys and interviews and to collect archival documents.

Archival Documents

The data collection for archival documents included a review of existing agency documents and existing agency survey data.

Review of Agency Documents

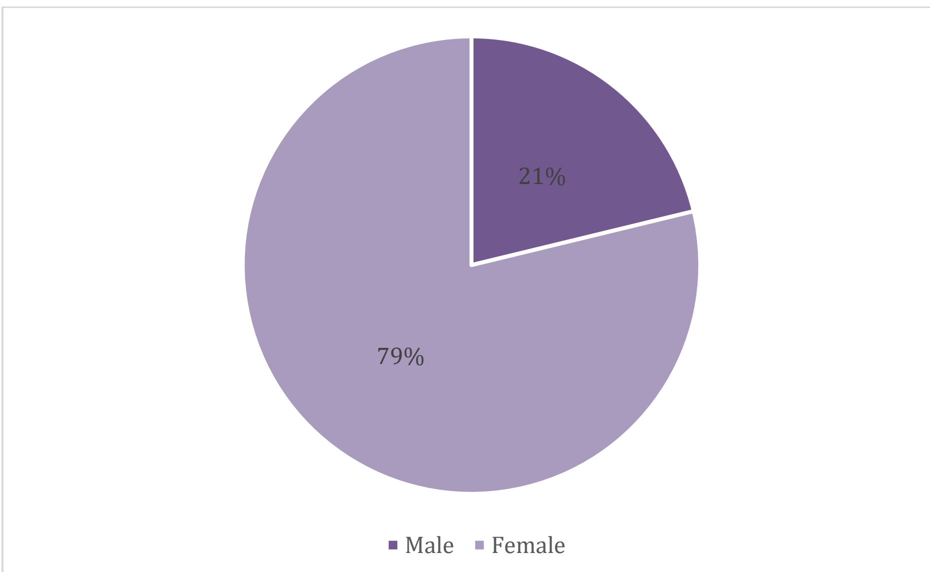
The analysis included the review of current meeting minutes and agendas of the nonprofit arm, city commission meetings, and agency documents including grant applications, budget documents, financial records, existing agreements, existing project blogs, local stakeholder sites, existing reports, and supporting documentation for meeting discussions. The data included the review of the past 5 years of adopted budget documents for the municipality and the current budget in process, and the past 2 years of grant applications including the following: CDBG, American Association of Retired Persons (AARP), Florida Department of Elder Affairs, and Children's Council.

Survey No. 1: CDBG

To collect data regarding consumer demographics and questions pertinent to the provision of human services, I extracted information from an existing survey previously conducted by the client agency, which was prepared as part of the CDBG. The CDBG grant survey yielded 72 responses from agency consumers, and for the purposes of the current study was labeled Survey 1/CDBG. Existing consumer surveys prepared as part of the CDBG were used to collect data related to consumer demographics and questions pertinent to the provision of human services. A total of 72 consumers responded to the CDBG survey; 55% had one or more children attending the ASP, 24% were consumers of general services, and 21% were consumers of the senior program. Demographic information regarding participants is presented in Figures 4 to 7.

Figure 4

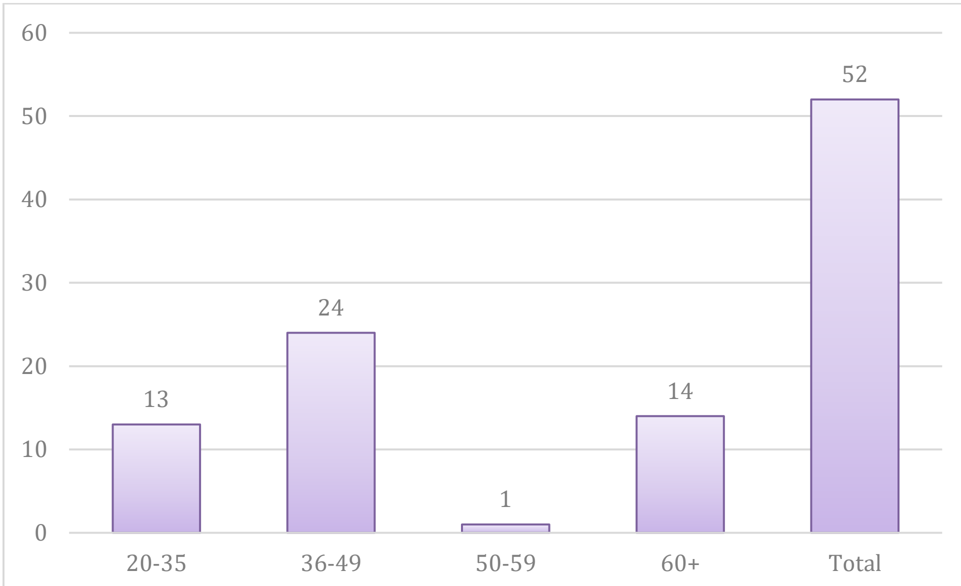
Population Sex: CDBG Survey Respondents



Note. *N* = 72.

Figure 5

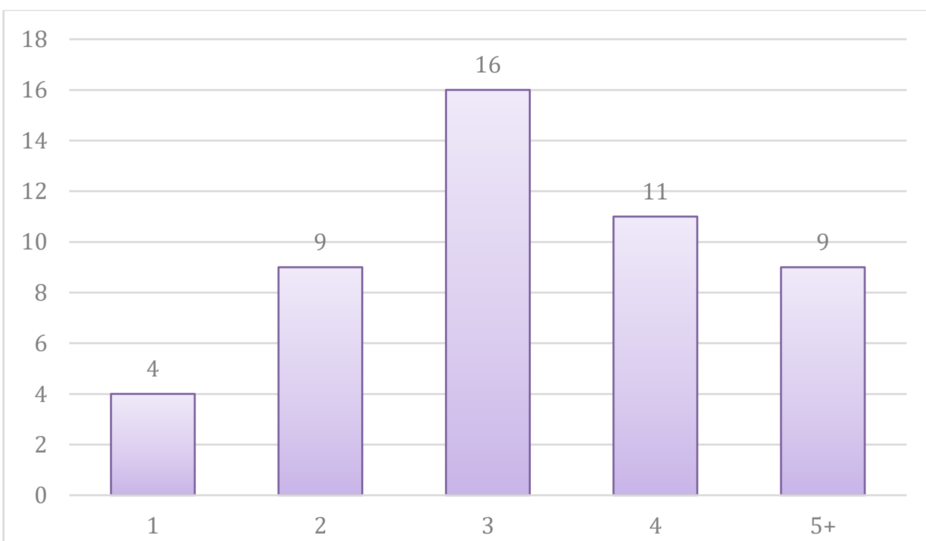
Population Age: CDBG Survey Respondents



Note. *N* = 72.

Figure 6

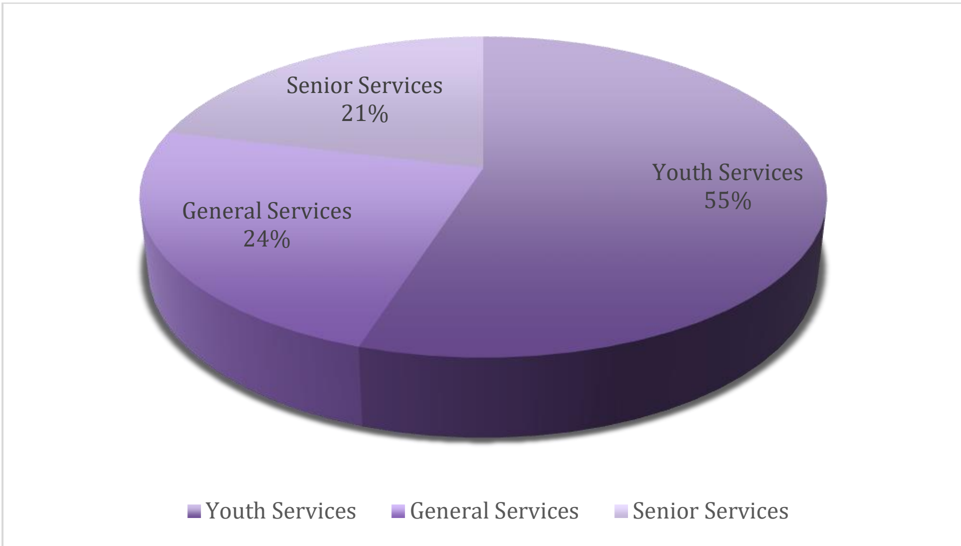
Household Size: CDBG Survey Respondents



Note. *N* = 72.

Figure 7

Human/Social Services the Community Is Currently Participating: CDBG Survey Respondents



Note. *N* = 72.

Quantitative Surveys: Survey No. 2

A second survey was conducted by me to understand consumer opinions regarding the agency's human services SWOT. The participants for the second survey were drawn from consumers of the client organization's human and social services. Approximately 87% of the client agency's consumers reside in the municipality where it is hosted. Therefore, the scope of the study was focused on the municipality's residents. Participants of the second survey included 83 respondents. For purposes of the analysis, the instrument was labeled Survey 2. The director of human services helped me distribute the survey using Everbridge, which is a common agency database to disperse mass messages to consumers for events, notices, and other important information. The researcher did not access the agency's database, but instead provided the information to the main point of contact, the director, and the agency distributed the information leveraging their database, which is Salesforce.

The survey distributed by the agency was available in Survey Monkey. Invitations to participate in the survey, a link to the survey via text message, and phone calls to consumers were sent to registered community program consumers. In addition, the director of human services invited me to collect in-person surveys at the agency on two occasions, which were June 7 and June 28, 2023. A paper survey on a writing tablet was provided to volunteer participants along with a pen, and participants were able to return the survey that same day or to drop it off later at the agency in a sealed envelope. I was available to answer questions to participants regarding the survey on site. The survey was available in English and Spanish on Survey Monkey and in person. I input in-person survey data manually on Survey Monkey. A total of 24 surveys were collected online and 59 surveys were collected in person. The average time to complete the survey was 8 minutes, per Survey Monkey. A total of 11 questions were included in the survey (see Appendix B).

Interviews

In addition to the two surveys, I also conducted interviews with executive leadership at the client agency. Data collected from participants for the interviews were collected from high-level management, program coordinators of the municipal department, and board members of the nonprofit arm. Seven participants volunteered for the interviews, and their demographic characteristics are included in Table 1. The criteria used to determine that the sample would be representative were staff leadership, program coordinators who were current staff members, and board members. Interviews included members from the three groups who represented different ages, races/ethnicities, and roles/years with the agency. Participant interviews for staff were conducted on June 16, 2023, and were held in person at the client agency. Participant interviews for board members were held virtually on May 26, June 16, and June 25, 2023. Based on the participant demographics, most identified as Black, with an average age of 45 years, and participants had been with the agency for an average of 10 years.

Table 1

Participant Demographics: Interviews

Participant	Age range	Identified gender	Identified race/ethnicity	Number of years with agency	Academic degree	Staff/board member
P1	50–59	Female	Black	20+	Yes	Staff
P2	30–40	Female	Black	5–10	Yes	Staff
P3	30–40	Male	White/Hispanic	Less than 1 year	Yes	Staff
P4	50–59	Female	Black	20+	Yes	Staff
P5	60+	Female	Black	20+	Yes	Board member
P6	50–59	Male	White	2–5 years	Yes	Board member
P7	40–49	Female	White/Hispanic	Less than 1 year	Yes	Board member

Note. $N = 7$.

The director of human services invited me to the nonprofit arm board meeting on May 12, 2023. During this meeting, new board members were nominated and voted on. The director introduced my study, which I followed with a short presentation. At the board meeting, all members provided their consent to be contacted via email by me to schedule the interviews. A request to participate in the interview with the consent to participate was emailed to each of the members. Members interested in participating were encouraged during the board meeting and through email to contact me directly to consent to being part of the study.

Board members and staff were provided with a copy of the interview questions for initial review and preparation (see Appendix A). One-on-one interviews with volunteer staff members were scheduled at the client agency in a conference room. Interviews were scheduled on Zoom with volunteer board members and were recorded to capture the data through recorded audio to disguise the participants' identity. At the start of each interview, participants were reminded that interviews were confidential and identifying information would not be included in the documentation. The duration of each interview was on average 30 minutes. Interview recordings were transcribed using NVivo and were exported into Word and labeled P1 through P7 for each participant.

Data Analysis

Archival Documents Analysis

A review of agency documents, including existing grants and budget documentation, was conducted to analyze the condition of the existing partnerships and grants and the financials trends of the client agency. In addition, data from an existing Survey No. 1/CDBG were analyzed to provide information regarding strengths and weaknesses of the human services programs provided by the client organization.

Review of Agency Documents

Strengths of Existing Partnerships: The municipal department has multiple and recurring partnerships and understands the importance of collaborating with partners to benefit the community. A review of the grant applications and during interviews with staff, it was revealed that the agency leverages resources to provide the best and most cost-effective services. The array of existing partnerships as documented by the municipality is described below. The municipal department's role is to serve as the city's social services agency by collaborating with agencies to connect consumers with the services needed to achieve self-sufficiency. The client agency has existing memorandums of understanding, agreements and/or working or referral relationships with partner agencies such that provide local, state, and federal assistance and their agreements and include over 30 partner agencies; plus, their numerous other communities and faith based organization partnerships.

The client agency has existing agreements with South Florida County for funding for the Emergency Assistance Program administered by the municipal department to provide Food Pantry (non-perishable food items) and Food Vouchers (meat, diapers, etc.) services to all South Florida County residents in need. General services are administered by the municipal department to address the needs of persons who are living in poverty and are considered "at risk".

The client agency also has existing agreements with South Florida County to receive Community Development Block Grant funds that assist with the ASP which allows for families categorized as Asset Limited Income Constrained Employed (ALICE) who depend on affordable and/or subsidized childcare the ability to work. The ASP serves 175 students under normal operations and ninety (90) students under COVID-19 operations in Grades VPK-8, living in low to moderate income families.

Budget and Funding: Table 2 includes the budget for the municipal department from FY 2018 to FY 2023. A review of the budget reveals a 215.92% increase in FY 2022, as a result of the increase in claims, which occurred during the pandemic. Table 3 includes the budget for the ASP for 2022.

Table 2

Municipal Department Budget

Category	2017–2018	2018–2019	2019–2020	2020–2021	2021–2022	2022–2023 (adopted)
Salaries and wages	$608,321	$639,485	$645,088	$723,958	$710,535	$808,128
Employee benefits	$363,635	$368,854	$348,486	$372,246	$442,313	$479,651
Operational expenses	$2,084,745	$2,639,380	$2,220,750	$2,438,125	$7,702,421	$2,861,486
Total	$3,056,701	$3,647,718	$3,214,324	$ 3,534,329	$8,855,269	$4,149,265
% change		+26.6%	-15.86%	+9.79%	+215.92%	-169.18%

Table 3

2022 Budget: ASP

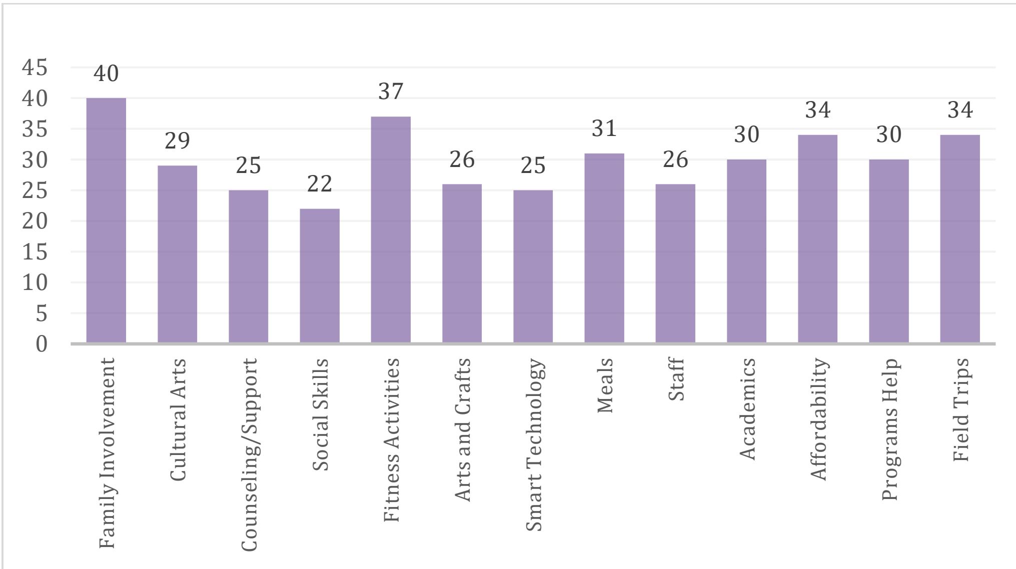
Category	CDBG	NonProfit/in-kind	City/county (children services)	Total all funds
Personnel	$91,430	$49,732	$483,482	$624,644
Benefits	$7,909	$4,189	$40,312	$52,410
Travel		$15,132	$82,858	$97,990
Training				
Equipment			$39,120	$39,120
Supplies	$661	$5,000	$67,820	$73,481
Contractual (outside vendors)		$13,831	$24,096	$37,927
Others		$33,600	$75,000	$108,600
Total	$100,000	$121,484	$812,688	$1,034,172

Survey No. 1/CDBG

Human and social services strengths is included in the summary of the analysis of input received from agency consumers that resulted from the existing CDBG survey (survey No. 1) conducted by the client agency. Figure 8 provides a summary of strengths identified by consumers of human and social services at the client agency. As per the results of the analysis, family involvement and fitness activities were the top strengths identified by the community, followed by affordability and available field trips for seniors. Figure 9 provides opportunities for the client agency as public services that the community would like to improve are identified, which include Child Care, Senior Services and Transportation, which was mentioned to and from the client agency for Seniors.

Figure 8

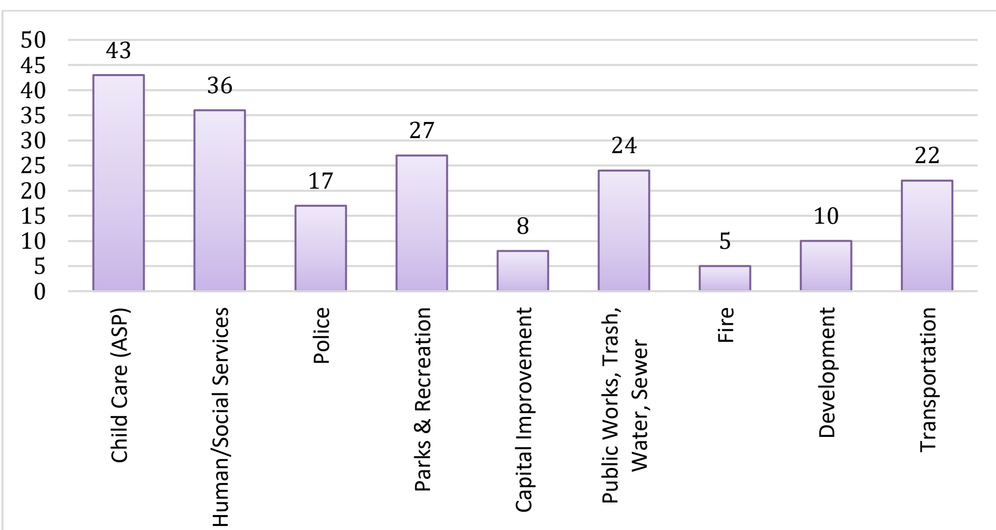
Program Strengths at the Client Organization: Survey No. 1/CDBG



Note. *N* = 72.

Figure 9

Public Services the Community Would Like to Improve: Survey No. 1/CDBG



Note. $N = 72$.

Evidence Generated for the Study

Quantitative Surveys: Survey No. 2

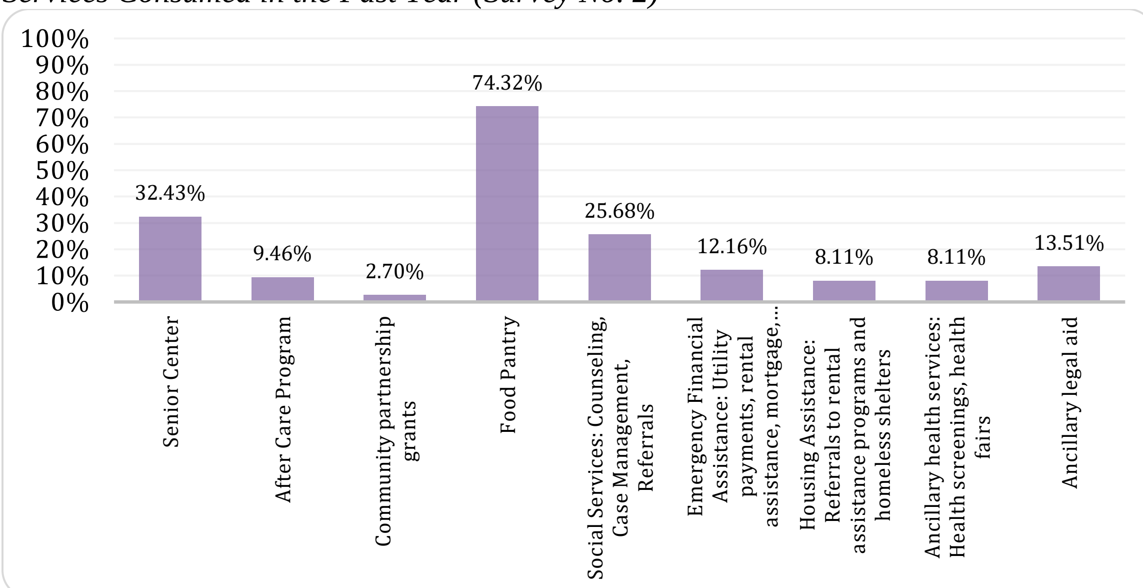
The quantitative surveys generated for the study were designed to supplement the study. The surveys seek to obtain input and understand the opinions of consumers served by the agency. The survey evaluates the municipal department's programs' strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. The surveys helped identify any gaps in the service portfolio and gather customer satisfaction. Questions were crafted to help consumers respond to the agency's programming strengths and weaknesses. Opportunities were identified by inquiring about future areas of expansion, agency improvements and consumer needs.

The results yielded by the survey revealed that over 74% of consumers used the food pantry, which is used by consumers that also utilize other services. The second service for respondents was the senior center with over 32% followed by social services which includes counseling, both services are well established, and the community uses them on a regular recurring basis. In terms of opportunities for engaging consumers to improve services, they would prefer to drop ideas in a drop box (40%) or engage in an in-person discussion (32.7%). Most consumers prefer e-mail (32.8%) or phone notifications (52.7%) which is akin to the success of the Everbridge notification system already existing to notify consumers, via e-mail and phone, which is one of the agency's strengths. Opportunities for events that the community would like to see include health events and cultural events (both over 50%), followed by educational events (over 48%).

When asked if consumers thought the client agency met their needs, 79.68% strongly agreed or agreed, which is in line with the average rating of 82 over 100 for the agency. Figures 10 through 15 illustrate the results of the consumer services survey.

Figure 10

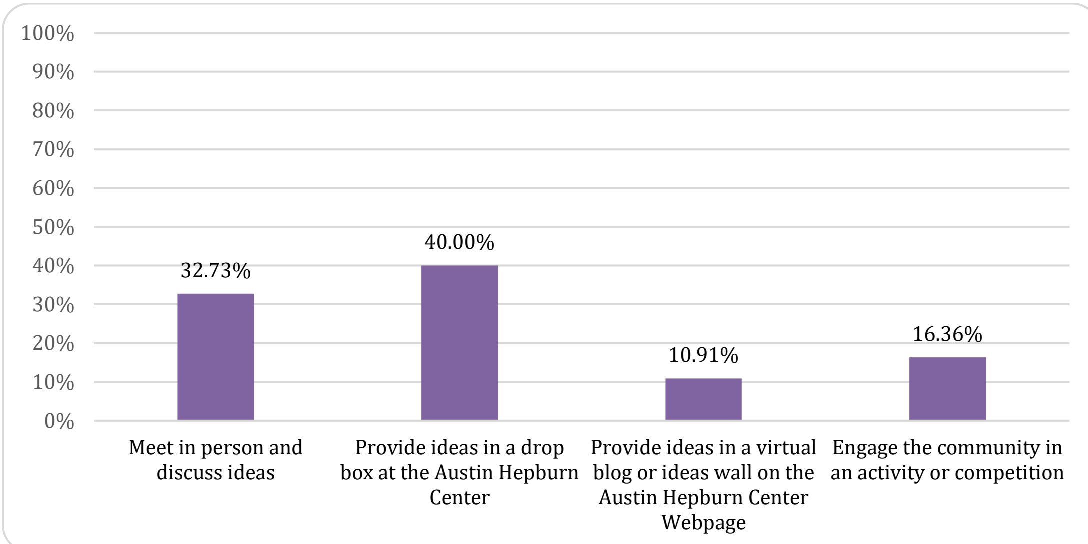
Services Consumed in the Past Year (Survey No. 2)



Note. *N* = 83.

Figure 11

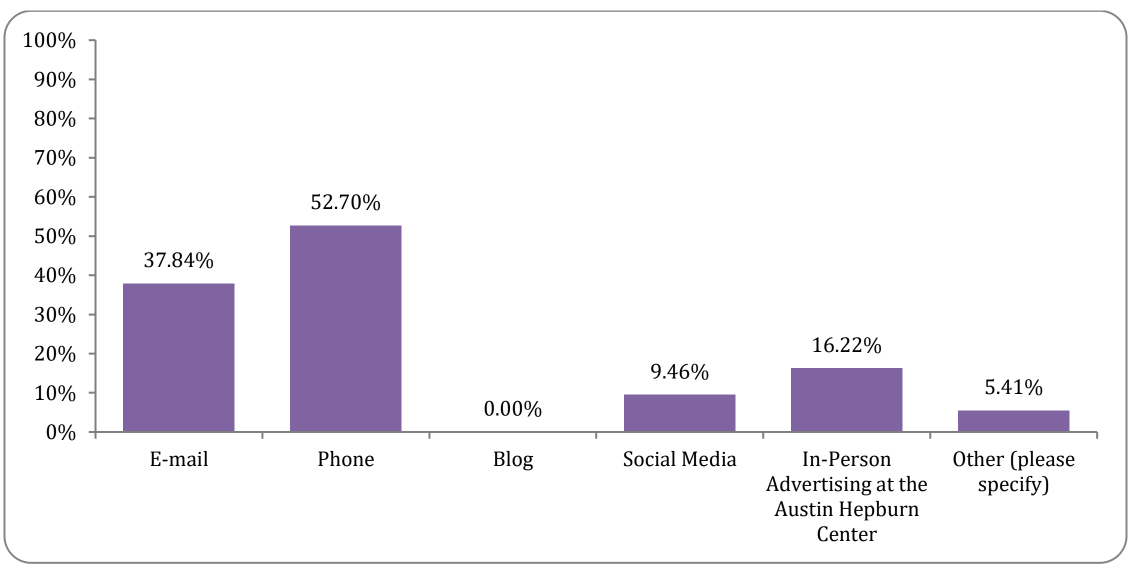
Engagement to Improve Programming Preferences: Survey No. 2



Note. *N* = 83.

Figure 12

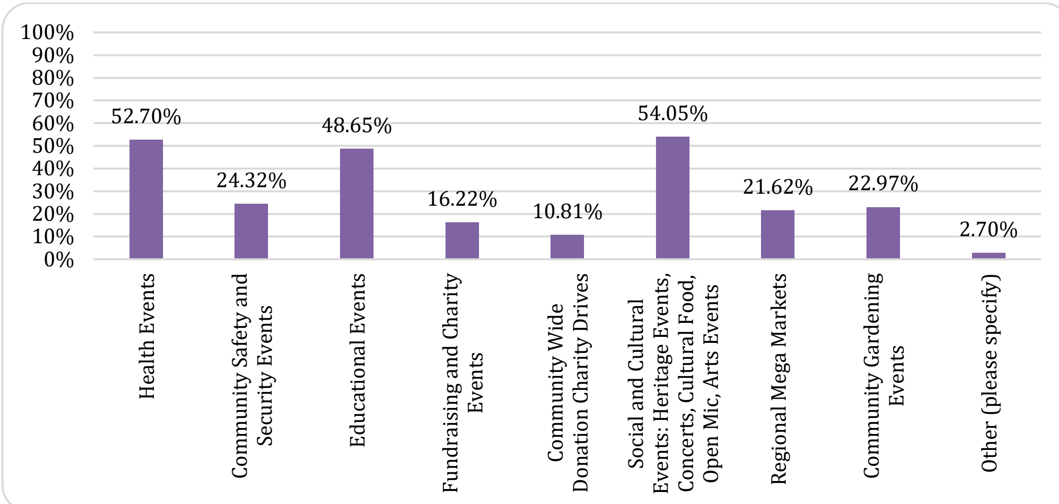
Community Notification Preferences for Special Events: Survey No. 2



Note. *N* = 83.

Figure 13

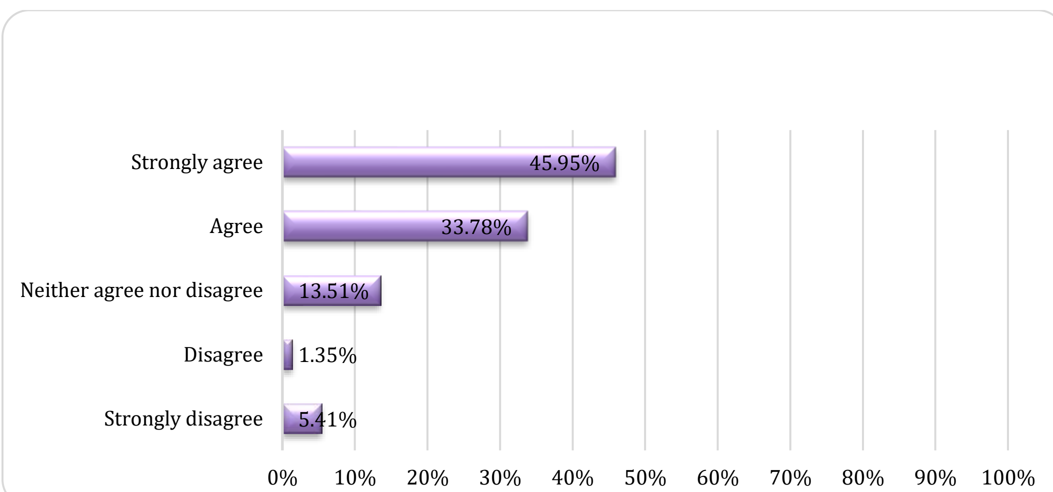
Special Events Preferences for the Community – Survey No. 2



Note. *N* = 83.

Figure 14

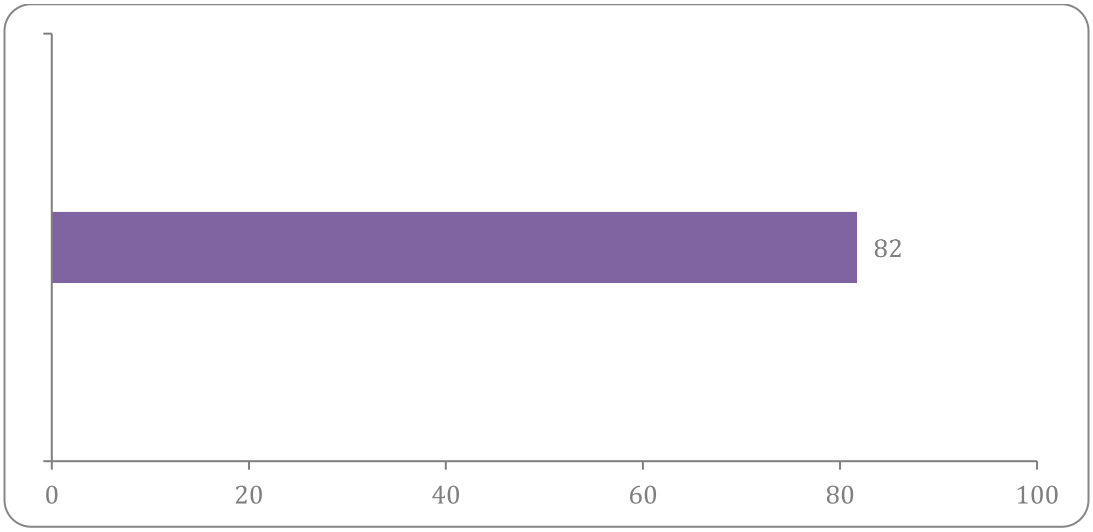
The Client Organization Meets My Family Needs – Survey No. 2



Note. *N* = 83.

Figure 15

Rate the Agency's Services: Survey No. 2



Note. *N* = 83.

Interviews

This qualitative research study includes a three-phase approach of assembling and analyzing the data to interpret the results, to help validate the accuracy of the information as follows: data organization, thematic analysis, and data coding (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). A The interviews were completed, and transcribed utilizing NVivo. The researcher's notes were then revised, and the data were sorted utilizing a query to develop themes and codes. Codes and documented emerging themes based on the thematic analysis, and consistent with the research questions were included in the analysis, using a first cycle using NVivo based on the results of the information provided by the participants. A second cycle coding helped group the summaries into themes (Saldaña, 2016). Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats per theme category were extracted from the analysis, which were then utilized to draw conclusions and for the development of recommendations. Figure 16 provides a graphic representation of the word cloud from the NVivo analysis and Table 4 provides the resulting emerging themes.

Figure 16

Word Cloud: NVivo Analysis

Table 4

Emerging Themes

Theme	Description	Quote
Limited funding sources	Members described the need to secure funds and generate revenues to mitigate risks Staff described the budget process as complex because of the need to seek grants to diversify the portfolio	“Make sure there is sustainability within the entity, especially with potential funding sources that may be cut.” “The board has not conducted fundraising but has discussed adding this role to their duties.” “The board acknowledges there are time when additional funds will be needed, such as emergencies.” “There is a need to add a grant writer to help with seeking and securing additional funding.” “Grants have helped defray the city from spending additional funds where we had our own resources to pull from. However, it is a risk when we don’t receive certain earmarks or grants that are based on attendance”.
Staffing levels and qualified staff	Difficulties finding qualified staff Need to add positions tailored to address current gaps	“Staffing levels are currently critical as the agency is understaffed. Volunteers, public information officers and a grant position are all necessary.”
Partnership development		“As board members out there in the community help partner with local churches and key stakeholders.” “I recommend partnering with universities to obtain volunteers who can help with grant writing, research and community outreach.”
Governance: board members	Need to assign roles to key members to take ownership of assignments	“I think the board that we have now is much better than at any time that I get involved because it’s people who really want to be there. It’s people who have a connection to the community. And I’m really, I’m very optimistic that we’re going to get good things done over the next few years.”
Streamline MOU & Market Services in the Community	Update MOU to implement current needs and develop marketing plan	“As board members we need to support the agency with marketing to let the community know what services are available.” “Perhaps we should ask the community: What would you do if the client agency were not here?”
Agency adaptability	The agency was able to adapt its services during COVID-19	“For our grant, we had to find new ways of how to touch the seniors and new ways to partner with them… we came in and provided ways where we could go online and hooking them up to still reach that community so they wouldn’t feel left out.”

Theme 1: Limited Funding Sources

The nonprofit arm was set up to help with the ASP funding. The board of directors works to support the client agency through fundraising. During the interview, when asking questions related to revenue diversification and increasing financial resilience (see questions in Appendix A), the chairman of the board responded that they had not been fundraising in the past few years but were looking to add this role to help fund the ASP with any needs they may have. Some activities they have implemented are a payroll deduction for municipal employees to dedicate a portion of their pay towards the ASP. They are working on a tool to solicit funds online, and plan to hold fundraising activities such as a large gala or smaller functions throughout the year.

The human services director and assistant director are responsible for the budget. The process was described as complex because of the diversity of grants and programming, and the need to meet the required criteria. Grant applications require a lot of research and administrative work, but it has greatly provided the additional money to fund the programming and staff, up to 75% of the costs. The staff's goal is that the grants are reoccurring to maintain their resilience and stability and not depend on the city's budget for most of the costs.

The municipal department relies on the city's general fund budget to support the three main programs areas, but the agency has been diversifying their funding sources through grants. Th city's Grants Department monitors and sends them any available grants that present themselves. The city has hired a grant writer to secure additional funding and to ensure that there's a long-term plan of additional funds to help offset the general funds. There is a need for the nonprofit arm to assist in fundraising, to mitigate risks. Strategies include kicking off more fundraising, getting donors, setting up a website to collect donations through Venmo and social media (Facebook) donation pages.

There are funds that are vulnerable, as this year the Governor vetoed the $111,000 allocated for the senior program for Fiscal Year 2024. This is identified as a threat, since it represents a strain on the client agency because it decreases the annual funding received to operate the program. The client agency was previously considered a reoccurring funding agency, and approximately six years ago the state revisited that structure. This means that every year the agency must apply through a legislative request for funding.

Theme 2: Staffing Levels and Qualified Staff

Staffing levels have decreased during and post COVID-19 pandemic. There are limited staff which means that it is difficult to work on the day-to-day tasks. Additionally, the hiring process is complex and centralized in the city and doesn’t give authority to the director, shall the need arise to quickly hire a qualified candidate in a pool of applicants, if another applicant with a contingent offer doesn’t accept the offer or decides to not take the job. Also, the staff includes volunteer positions, which needs to streamline the hiring process to enable student volunteers to maximize their time with the agency. A memorandum of understanding with the higher education organizations and the municipal department outlining the scope of services would be ideal to allow a constant flow of volunteers to the agency throughout the year.

There are current gaps in needs that have been preliminarily identified by the staff and board members, which include a public information officer for the client agency or help from the municipal officer.

Theme 3: Governance: Nonprofit Arm

The nonprofit arm was started because the organization could not directly apply for grant funding as a municipal organization, it had to go through a nonprofit. At some point, the municipality was able to apply directly without going through the nonprofit, but there is money in a trust account accumulated and set in the municipal account but segregated for use of the ASP. There is a need to establish proper governance because the role of the nonprofit has evolved and to adapt to the current needs of the community and the organization. Additionally, the board has welcomed a new class of board members, where there is a need to elect officers, and create committees and/or task forces with responsibilities to make the roles more manageable.

Subtheme 1: Partnership Development. For senior services, it is critical for the client agency to partner with private health care providers who receive funding and allocate funds to social services. These organizations seek to provide either funding or sponsorship in either food or other goods for this group of the population. The organization holds an annual cancer event, which requires the sponsorship of its partners who contribute annually with donations that help not to dip into a limited budget.

Board members mentioned partnership development with other organizations in the community, including the churches, to let the community know more about what the organization is doing. As board members, they can leverage their presence in the community to facilitate the state of sustainability and facilitate the community taking advantage of the services.

Subtheme 2: Marketing Services in the Community. The board members agree, and all expressed in the interview for the need to develop a presence in the community and educate on the array of social and human services available. The board has already been working on developing an online presence but understands that work needs to be expanded into further development of a website and additional social media.

The organization has partnered with United Way and with local hospitals in the area to provide services to the community including a health van out in the community. However, communication is important, and the municipality must help promote the client organization's department and their programs. The marketing strategy can include interviews on the radio to increase the exposure of what the agency is doing.

Subtheme 3: Revising and Streamlining the MOU. A Memorandum of Understanding was executed between the client organization and the nonprofit arm in September of 1999. The MOU established the role of the nonprofit to apply for Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds from South Florida County to support the administration and operations of the ASP. The nonprofit still has control over the funding and vote on the disbursement of funds. Because the role of the nonprofit has evolved, and they are no longer required nor needed to apply for CDBG funding, the board has set fundraising as the focus. A revision of the MOU is needed to match the current needs of the agency. Therefore, a strategic plan for the agency could benefit from recommendations in this area, including revisiting the MOU to provide for greater flexibility.

Theme 4: Agency Adaptability During Emergencies

Staff members all discussed the adaptable operations of the agency, especially during COVID-19. One of the aspects discussed was that it was necessary to adapt because funding for the agency is received through sources such as the Early Learning Coalition which afforded the client agency additional funding because they were one of the only sites in the region that was open providing human and social services. The agency didn't close but instead ensured they followed the Center for Disease Control guidelines. The agency looked for new ways to adapt during the pandemic, and even when an outbreak took effect, the agency took immediate action in following the protocols, informed the parents in ensuring there wasn't a mass outbreak to keep the consumers safe, and continued providing human and social services. The agency was constantly monitoring national and local pandemic trends, and consulting with other partners in the region to benchmark best practices and lessons learned to adapt, as best possible to provide needed services.

The director, during her interview, mentioned that services were critical to the community because most seniors do not have anyone else to help them out, especially during a crisis. The client agency also understood that seniors were very vulnerable, and it would be challenging to bring them into the center. Therefore, seniors were not brought in person to the agency, but instead, the agency increased home support during the pandemic and established virtual rooms for them to meet their units of service. Meals were delivered through ‘Meals on Wheels’ because the agency was still maintaining this program. There was a need to deliver meals to the seniors. Staff implemented a service window to provide services to the community. It was critical to adapt and to find inventive ways where people weren’t isolated because it was COVID, and the community still had a need to receive services.

The agency learned many lessons in adapting their services to maintain their level of programming. The agency was also able to meet the monitoring criteria and provide data to funding partners to maintain and meet their financial needs.

Findings

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats Analysis

Based on the results of the data included in the previous sections, the following is the Strengths, Weaknesses and Opportunities analysis, summarized in the table below:

Table 5

Strengths, Weaknesses, and Opportunities Analysis

Strength	Weakness	Opportunity	Threat
Empathetic staff to the community needs	Obsolete MOU with nonprofit	New & diverse board members	Lack of funding diversification: need to increase large and small revenue streams
	Complex hiring process	Existing community and church organizations available to partner	Increased grant & earmark competition
	Understaffing and decrease in volunteers		
Partnerships which have been established	Lack of visibility and knowledge of available services in the community	Social media and other means available to market services	Location of site in hurricane prone and storm surge area with weak drainage systems (access pre, during and after events)
Updated list of vulnerable population to oversee pre, during and post emergencies	Lack of transportation options for consumers	Opportunities to provide additional events to the community: social, health and educational	Competitive employment market
Family involvement in services	Lack of access to federal and state systems (one-stop shop) for referrals	Opportunities to fundraise through small and large events	Highly fragmented market of human and social services
Robust portfolio of affordable services	Difficult in identifying funding for short- and long-term housing		

The findings of this study indicate the need for a strategic plan for the nonprofit arm to build on present strengths that help provide direction and guidance to the new board. Strategies in the plan will assist the nonprofit with helping the municipal department to increase engagement with the community, implement marketing strategies, help diversify funding for the agency, provide a governance structure to the board members, and assist with recruitment strategies. These recommendations focus on addressing the agency's weaknesses and utilizing the opportunities identified in the analysis.

Implications Resulting From Findings

For the Client Organization

The strategic plan provides a conceptual framework that could be used as an analytical tool to improve financial resilience in other organizations. The study's results discuss diversifying the portfolio of funds to minimize financial risks and ensure continuity in the provision of human and social services. The strategic plan addresses a practice gap in understanding governance arrangements for fiduciary support for municipal and nonprofit collaboratives because it helps understand how the Nonprofit arm can help the Human Service Department increase financial diversification of funding. The strategic plan helps identify how the arrangement can adapt to address current and future needs.

The strategic plan lays our recommendations and strategies to increase the use of social media to expand on awareness of the available human and social services available to the community, through communication and engagement efforts with available stakeholders. Increased engagement and partnership can foster additional funding opportunities to increase financial resilience and community partnerships that can help provide services in time of need.

For Positive Social Change

The community and the client organization can achieve positive social change by equipping them with a strategic plan that can be later replicated by other Human Services and nonprofit organizations dealing with similar issues. The strategic plan provides a conceptual framework that can be used as an analytical tool to improve financial resilience in other organizations. The framework can be used to improve organizational practices that can help human and social service agencies focus on their core mission and meet the needs of the community.

Analytical hierarchical processes (AHP) that helped develop and prioritize recommendations can help organizations that deal with limited funding sources by having a tool that considers criteria that helps advance the mission of the agency while advancing priorities. Utilizing an approach that is clear to all members and where stakeholders have participated with decision making helps with buy-in and concurrence to implement the recommendations in the study.

Deliverables and Recommendations

Three main deliverables resulted from the analysis, which will be described below.

Recommendations Memorandum

The recommendations memorandum was developed based on the results of the SWOT analysis. AHP helped develop recommendations for the agency's strategic plan. The AHP focused on prioritizing strategies and recommendations to address the research questions and main themes that resulted from the data analysis which included:

1. Sustain the agency's core mission, which is to provide social and human services and improve the quality of life through community partnerships that will maximize opportunities for everyone.

2. Increase the client agency's financial resilience.
3. Prioritize strategies to provide community services before, during and after severe events.
4. Determine the governance and relationship between the nonprofit arm and the municipal department to assist with the community's needs.

A memorandum including details of the recommendations is included in Appendix F.

Strategic Plan

A strategic plan was prepared for the client organization including a review the mission and a proposed vision, the development of a SWOT analysis, and a list of prioritized recommendations and strategies to advance the implementation of the plan, organized by focus areas.

The strategic plan was prepared in a memorandum for the client agency, with a focus on the non-profit arm. The plan seeks to provide a set of recommendations based on the needs of the organization and is included in Appendix E.

Best Practices Memorandum

This memorandum includes a summary of the published outcomes and research, including information from published peer-reviewed and professional journals. The best practices memorandum is deliverable to the client agency and assists in verifying the data collection. The main findings document best practices in financial resilience and human and social services programming specifically targeted to strategic planning, based on the recommendations provided in the analysis. The deliverable can be found in Appendix G and is described in Section 5.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

As per the methodology established in Section 3, and to ensure the integrity of the evidence generated through the study via the analysis of the data generated through surveys and interviews, incomplete or partially completed records were not included in the analysis. The researcher also disclosed her previous experience with the client organization, as a volunteer in the Human Services Board, which has now sunset, to address bias and researcher reflexivity.

Unanticipated limitations occurred due to the participants expected for the interviews which included volunteer board members and executive level and managers of the human services programs at the client agency. While the human services director, assistant director participated and the Coordinator of the ASP participated in the interview, the Senior Services Coordinator did not volunteer, and the General Services Coordinator position is currently vacant and being covered by the assistant director. A social worker was added to the pool of volunteers.

The online survey only yielded 23 responses of the 65 required. Therefore, the researcher handed surveys on site to the participants which were returned to the client organization. This method yielded an additional 60 surveys, out of a total of 83. Data saturation was reached by combining both methods. Most in-person respondents included consumers of the food pantry, seniors program attendees and consumers receiving counseling/ancillary services who were at the center and were handed surveys.

This study seeks the opinions of multiple stakeholders, including agency consumers, through surveys, and of executive management and board members through interviews. Recording diverse points of view allows the case study to be replicated for similar agencies and for triangulation of the analysis of results of the archival data, surveys, and interviews.

Strengths and Limitations of the Study

This mixed method case study was limited to the nonprofit executive leadership and consumers of the organization. Research for other nonprofits and Human and Social Service Departments in the State of Florida may help generalize the findings of this Professional Administrative Study. The study was also limited to financial resilience. It is understood that the client agency is located within a hurricane and severe storm area. I recommend that future research delves into the relationship between climate resilience and financial resilience, and how it affects nonprofit organizations.

The results of the analysis helped develop the revised mission, vision, and recommendations for the strategic plan. The recommendations include strategies that will require collaboration with other municipal departments, including the Human Resources Department, Grants Department, and the City Manager's Office. Recommendations also include partnership with other external organizations such as volunteers from higher education institutions with expertise in grant writing, marketing and community engagement that can assist in advancing the prioritized recommendations.

Strengths of the strategic planning processes reveal that they are necessary to maximize the efficiency of limited resources for agencies that provide human and social services. Strategic planning and SWOT analysis can provide the following benefits to the agency: 1) revise the vision and mission to meet current needs; 2) focus on key areas of implementation based on feedback received from stakeholders during the strategic planning process; 3) prioritize recommendations based on the process to maximize limited resources.

Future projects suggest addressing refining the organization's current structure and strategies. To minimize risks, in a second phase the organization should revise its structure to allow for cross-training and succession planning, which was evident with the short staffing issues.

Summary

According to the results of the Professional Administrative Study it can be concluded that the executive leadership has limited resources to implement the recommendations and strategies included in the study. The current issues identified in the study, which include limited funding and staffing, do not allow the client agency to be in a proactive planning mode, but more in a reactive mode. The agency seeks assistance from the researcher to provide a strategic planning framework based on the participants responses as they restructure the board of directors of the nonprofit agency. The strategic plan and recommendations can help guide the conversations to revise their mission and prioritize the implementation of recommendations. The results also indicate that for the strategic plan implementation to be effective, collaboration with internal and external partners will be needed. Section 5 of the study details the dissemination plan and deliverable method.

Section 5: Dissemination Plan and Conclusion

The municipal department had been working with the nonprofit arm to address the needs of the organization. The strategic plan provides the client agency with a set of recommendations and strategies, and the executive leadership will decide how to manage the dissemination. The dissemination includes a strategic plan and a best practices memorandum. The deliverables include a set of recommendations that can be implemented in the short and long term to sustain the organization's core mission. The recommendations are also tailored to ensure the agency can provide community services before, during, and after emergencies such as COVID-19, hurricanes, or severe storms.

Dissemination of the Strategic Plan

The strategic plan will be presented to the client organization upon approval of Walden University, and the deliverables will be provided to the director of the client agency to work with the board of the nonprofit to implement the recommendations. A strategic plan technical report (see Appendix E) includes the deliverable provided to the client agency. The strategies and recommendations are outlined in Table 6 based on the key findings of the report.

Dissemination of the strategic plan and the research study analysis and recommendations will be based on the organization's preference. A presentation summarizing the results of the analysis and the recommendations was provided to the executive leadership, which included the director, assistant director, and the nonprofit arm board of directors. Further dissemination of the deliverables and access to the full study will be at the discretion of the executive leadership.

Table 6

Strategic Plan Implementation

Strategic plan action	Deliverables/ input	Responsible actor	Projected time frame	Status
Data gathering	Documents, records	Director, asst. director	N/A	Completed
SWOT analysis	Surveys, interviews, archival data, literature review	Board executive staff, consumers	N/A	Completed
Identify mission and targets	Develop mission and targets for board	Board	Immediate	In progress
Strategies and recommendations	Workplans and strategies	Board, director, asst. director, volunteers	Short term	In progress
Performance monitoring	Performance metrics and monitoring reports	Board, task forces, coalitions	Continuous	Phase 2

Note. Source: Julian and Lyons (1992).

The study advances the field of public administration by closing a gap in practice with an understanding of how nonprofit organizations can best respond to emergencies. The study also closes the gap in the literature in understanding how agencies can bounce back after crises. The study advances practice by understanding the financial structure of social services between a municipal department and its nonprofit arm. Other organizations may replicate the lessons from this unique governance arrangement to administer social services to the community before, during, and after emergency conditions.

Summary

The purpose of this mixed-methods case study was to understand better the unique partnership between the city government, the municipal department, and the nonprofit arm, and to develop a strategic plan to increase financial resilience for the client agency and the nonprofit arm. I qualitatively and quantitatively measured financial resilience through a single case study analysis. Data were analyzed through the development of a SWOT framework. AHP helped me develop recommendations for the agency’s strategic plan. The guiding research questions for the study were the following: What strategies can the agency use to increase the financial resilience needed to sustain the organization’s core mission? What strategies can the agency use to provide community services before, during, and after emergencies such as COVID-19, hurricanes, or severe storms?

Findings indicated that to maintain the agency’s core mission the agency would need to increase awareness in the community of the human and social services available to residents and increase awareness among existing consumers regarding the array of services available. The agency may also benefit from reviewing the performance-based framework and updating it to strengthen their mission. The agency also needs to expedite/streamline staff and volunteer recruiting, including specialized staff in grants and marketing.

To increase financial resilience, strategies include revising the MOU for the nonprofit arm to raise funds to cover additional needs to help advance the client agency’s priorities. The client agency also needs to diversify funding sources by partnering with large and small organizations and pulling from multiple sources of funding. Lastly, the nonprofit arm would benefit from defining a governance structure for the board by leveraging strengths and matching them to the organization's needs.

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Appendix A: Interview Questions

FINANCIAL RESILIENCE

1. Can you describe your role with the municipal department?
2. What strategies does the agency use to build revenue diversification?
3. What is your role in implementing strategies to increase financial resources for the agency?
4. How does the agency adapt financially to COVID-19 and extreme weather events?
5. Describe what strategies you use annually to secure sustainable funding for the organization from donor agencies?
6. Can you describe how operations fluctuate before, during and after emergency events?

STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

7. What would you consider your agency’s strongest asset?
8. What would you consider your agency’s strongest weakness and where would you recommend the agency needs to invest resources?
9. What were the biggest lessons learned from COVID-19 and other events where your agency has had to adapt to change?
10. How does your agency monitor the effectiveness of revenue diversification strategies to improve financial resilience? (e.g., generating revenue via special events, fundraisers, and other mechanisms?)

11. How does your agency partner with the community to provide strategies to improve the current programs and services?
12. What are your thoughts on the current programming process and are there any ideas you have to improve it, should you have additional resources available to implement your recommendations?

OPPORTUNITIES AND THREATS

13. What type of special events, fundraisers and other mechanisms has your agency utilized that have proven successful to raise funds for the agency?
14. What are your organization's key challenges to implement revenue diversification strategies to increase income sources?
15. What opportunities are available to the agency that can assist the community during, before and after emergency events?
16. What additional strategies would you like to implement in the agency and what resources would you need to implement them?
17. What strategies would you recommend engaging the community's input to improve the portfolio of programs and/or the social interaction between the community and the client organization?
18. What are the three biggest threats, in your opinion, that the agency faces?

Appendix B: Survey Instrument

PURPOSE OF THE SURVEY:

The following survey is designed to help the client organization analyze itself and pinpoint community improvement areas. I am working on analyzing the community needs and how human and social services can be improved before, during, and after emergency conditions. You have been chosen to take this survey because you are a consumer of human and social services at the municipal department. I hope you take this opportunity to provide information regarding human and social services received by you and/or your family. **Please take the time to read each question carefully and give us your honest opinion**.

The survey will take about 10-15 minutes to complete. Your participation is entirely voluntary, and all your answers will be kept confidential. If you have any questions, please contact Ms. Maria Elisa Colmenares, Doctoral Candidate in Public Administration (mariaelisa.colmenares@waldenu.edu).

Consent: *I have read the preceding information describing this study. All my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I am 18 years of age or older and freely consent to participate. I understand that I am free to withdraw from the study anytime. Please provide your official consent below by clicking the "Agree" button to begin the survey.

I consent I do not consent to participate in this research study

Note: any person who knows or has reasonable cause to suspect child abuse or neglect, is mandated by law to report as per Florida Statues Section 39.201.

GENERAL QUESTIONS

1. In the past year, I have been a consumer of the following human and social services at the client organization (select all that apply):
   - Senior Center
   - After School Program
   - Community partnership grants
   - Food pantry
   - Social services: Counseling, Case Management, Referrals
   - Emergency financial assistance: Utility payments, rental assistance, mortgage, food, transportation and/or medical assistance
   - Housing Assistance: Referrals to rental assistance programs and homeless shelters
   - Ancillary health services: Health screenings, health fairs
   - Ancillary legal aid

2. The frequency my family/household receives services from the client organization are as follows (select all that apply):

Program/Frequency	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Annually	Never
After School Program					
Senior Program					
Food Pantry					
Emergency Financial Assistance					
Housing Assistance					
Ancillary Health Services					
Legal Services					
Counseling					
Other Not Listed					

STRENGHTS AND WEAKNESSES

3. The client organization meets my family/household needs:
   - Strongly agree
   - Agree
   - Neutral
   - Disagree
   - Strongly disagree

4. If you had to rate the agency's services on a scale from 1 to 5, where 5 indicates best score, how would you score them?
   - 1
   - 2
   - 3
   - 4
   - 5

5. Services received by the client organization are necessary for the livelihood of my family:
   - Strongly agree
   - Agree
   - Neutral
   - Disagree
   - Strongly disagree

6. Services received by the client organization fulfill my needs for social interaction in the following way:
   - Strongly agree
   - Agree
   - Neutral
   - Disagree
   - Strongly disagree

OPPORTUNITIES AND THREATS

7. Would you like to be involved in developing ideas for improving programs for your community?
   - Yes (if yes, please respond to Question No. 8)
   - No

8. How would you like to engage with us in improving programming for the community?
   - Meet in person and discuss ideas
   - Provide ideas in a drop box at the client organization
   - Provide ideas in a virtual blog or ideas wall on the client organization Webpage
   - Engage the community in an activity or competition

9. How do you prefer to get notified of special events held at the client organization? (Check all the apply)
   - E-mail
   - Phone
   - Blog
   - Social Media

- In-Person Advertising at the client organization
- Other

10. What types of special events would you like to see in your community? (Select all that apply):
    - Health Events
    - Community Safety and Security Events
    - Educational Events
    - Fundraising and Charity Events
    - Community Wide Donation Charity Drives
    - Social and Cultural Events: Heritage Events, Concerts, Cultural Food, Open Mic, Arts Events
    - Regional Mega Markets
    - Community Gardening Events

11. Are there other social or human services you seek at other local, state, or federal organizations that you feel may be best provided by the client organization?
    - (Write In)

Appendix C: Interview Protocol

1. Read the consent form.
2. Follow-up with me if you have any questions.
3. Sign consent form once you are satisfied with the consent form and study.
4. Coordination between researcher and volunteer to schedule interviews face-to-face at the client organization or virtual via zoom (as requested by the volunteer).
5. Participate in the scheduled interviews which have been programmed for 45-60 minutes.
6. Arrive interview location (previously established with participant).
7. Begin interview process.
8. Introduce myself to the participant describing the study's purpose and interview process.
9. Answer any questions from the participants, address any concerns and collect a signed consent form.
10. Discuss how the data will be processed after the interview. The audio recording will be transcribed and sent to the participant via e-mail for review.
11. Turn on the recording device. The researcher will also collect comments and notes with pen and pencil.
12. Note the date and time of the interview on the top of the interview note page.
13. Provide Number/Code to the interviewee.
14. Start the interview beginning with question #1.

15. End the interview with the last questions. Discuss the format for a follow-up format with the participant (phone, e-mail, or in-person).
16. Turn off recording devices and complete notes.
17. Thank the participant for his/her time.
18. End survey process and protocol.

Appendix D: Request for Participation in Interview

Lisa Colmenares, AICP

Mariaelisa.colmenares@waldenu.edu

Date

Potential Participating Chair

Nonprofit Arm

Dear Chair:

My name is Lisa Colmenares, and I am a Doctoral Candidate in Public Administration at Walden University. This correspondence aims to invite you and the nonprofit arm to participate in a study that will help analyze human and social services in the Client Organization in municipality, Florida.

The following research questions have been established for the development of the study:

What strategies can the agency use to increase the financial resilience needed to sustain the organization's core mission?

What strategies can the agency use to provide community services before, during, and after emergencies, such as COVID-19, hurricanes, or severe storms?

To answer these questions, you have been chosen to participate in interviews because you are a decision maker at the client organization. The interviews will be conducted face-to-face, one-on-one, in person, or virtually on zoom with participants. Your input will help us draft recommendations and strategies to improve that will be included in the agency's strategic plan.

For convenience, the interviews will be scheduled to last approximately 45-60 minutes at the organization's offices. I would also like to conduct individual interviews with other leaders in your organization, other board members, and management in the Municipal department.

Walden University faculty members Dr. Karel Kurst-Swanger, Committee Chair, Dr. Christopher Atkinson, Committee member, and Dr. Lori Demeter, University Research Reviewer, will provide supervision of this research project. Your cooperation in sharing your insights through the interview process will be greatly appreciated. The research results will lead to the agency being better equipped to meet the community's needs. Please review the attached informed consent form for detailed information about participating in this study.

Appendix E: Strategic Plan

Introduction

The client agency administers social services to the city's residents and expands certain services to residents within the county where they reside. The municipal department resides in a one-stop multi-purpose social services facility in a small municipality in the state of Florida. The agency centralizes multiple human services that are easily accessible to the community it serves, mostly living in poverty and considered "at risk." The agency provided data regarding the comprehensive services provided to meet the needs of the community, which include services in three main areas: youth services, senior services, and general services with nine (9) full-time employees, seven (7) part-time employees, and multiple volunteers. The municipal organization is a municipal department supported by a non-profit arm.

A strategic plan was prepared for the client organization including a review the mission and vision, the development of a Strength, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) strategic planning tool, and a list of prioritized recommendations and strategies to advance the implementation of the plan, organized by focus areas.

The purpose of this memorandum is to facilitate the development of a strategic plan for the client agency, with a focus on the non-profit arm. The plan seeks to provide a set of recommendations based on the needs of the organization.

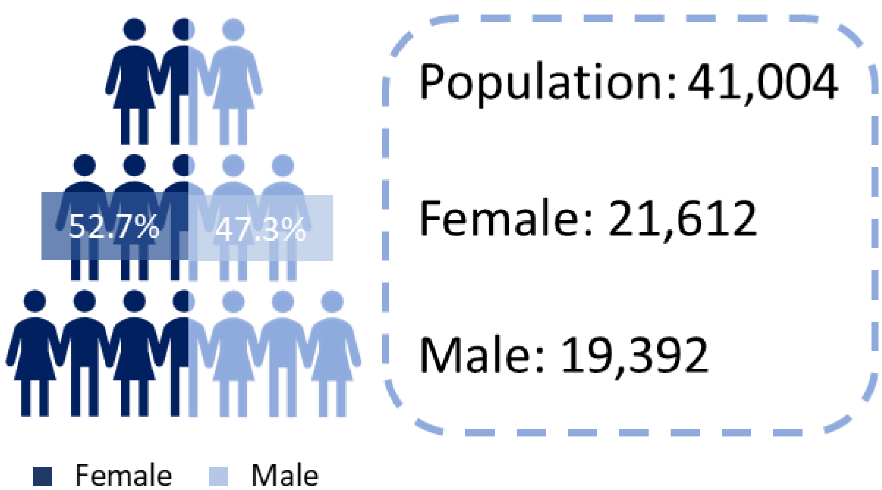
Background Information

- Mission and Vision

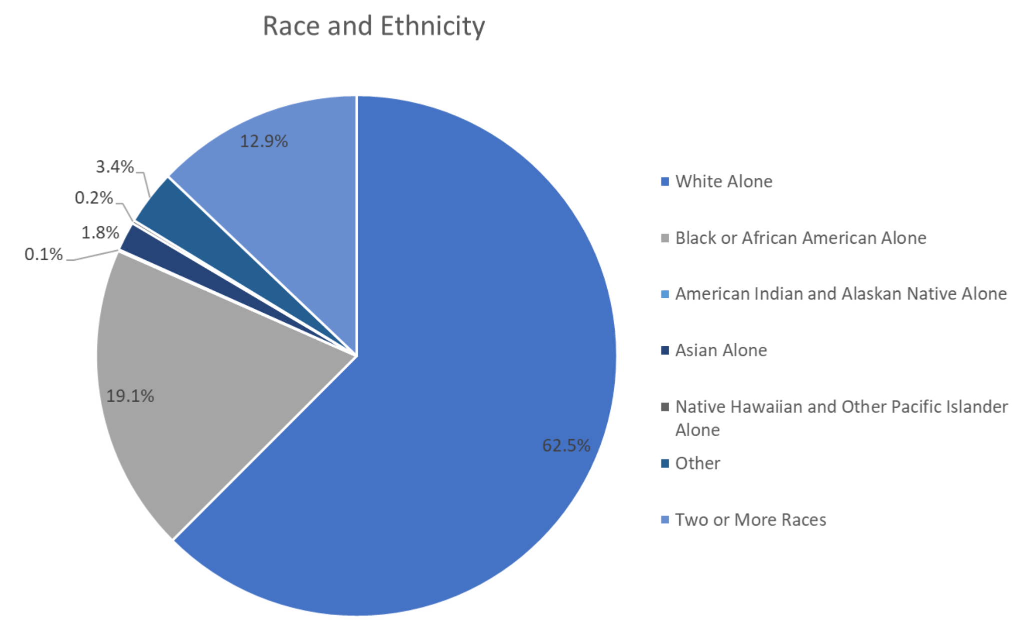
- ○ The municipal department's mission statement is to provide social and human services and improve the quality of life through community partnerships that will maximize opportunities for everyone.
- ○ Nonprofit's mission: "To raise philanthropic support to enhance and sustain the After School Program housed at the client agency in alignment with community priorities."
- ○ Proposed nonprofit's vision: **That the client organization is the best provider of Human and Social Services to the community where all people have the opportunities and resources needed to thrive.**

- Who We Serve

This section includes the community profile including socio-economic data, program information and financial information.



Source: ACS 2021



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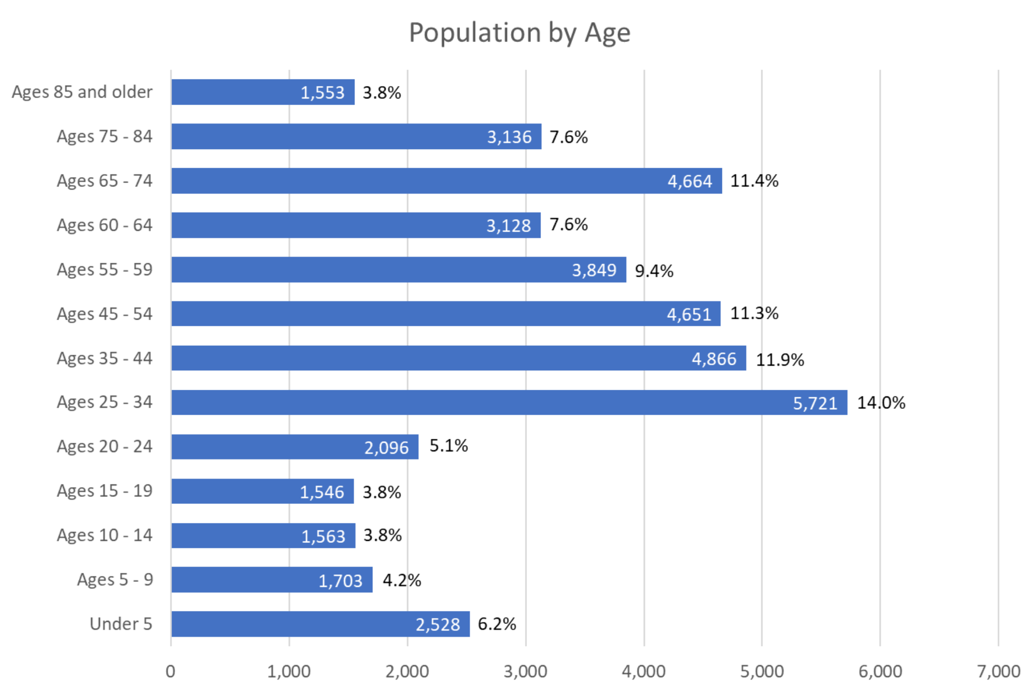

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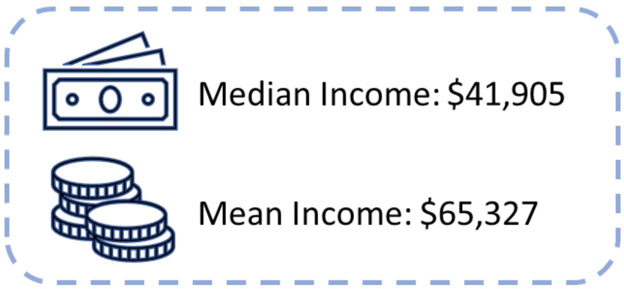

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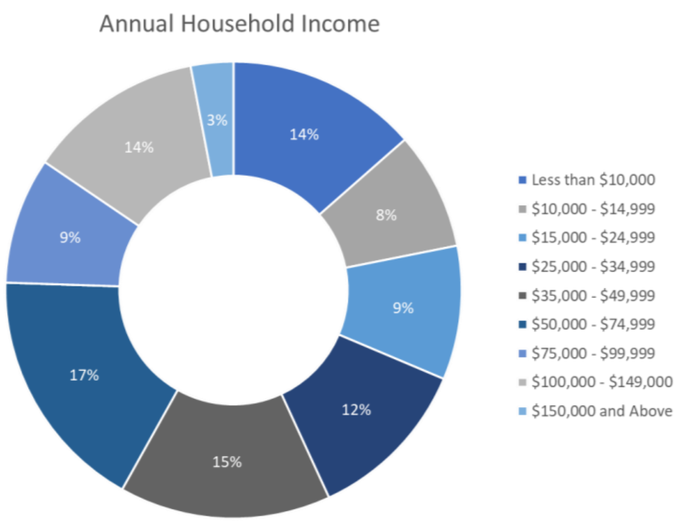
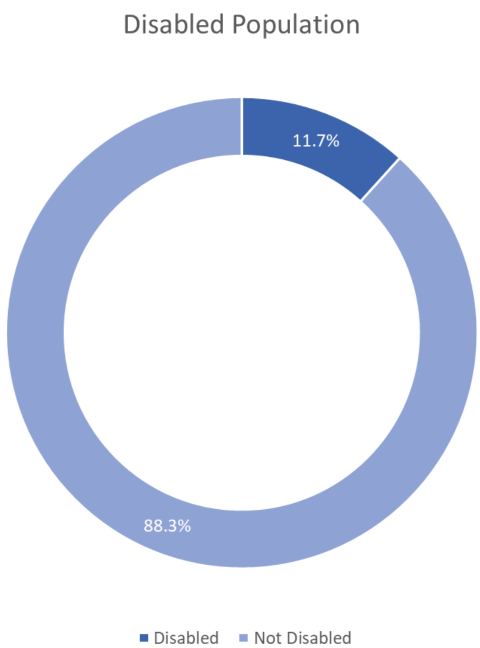


Source: ACS 2021

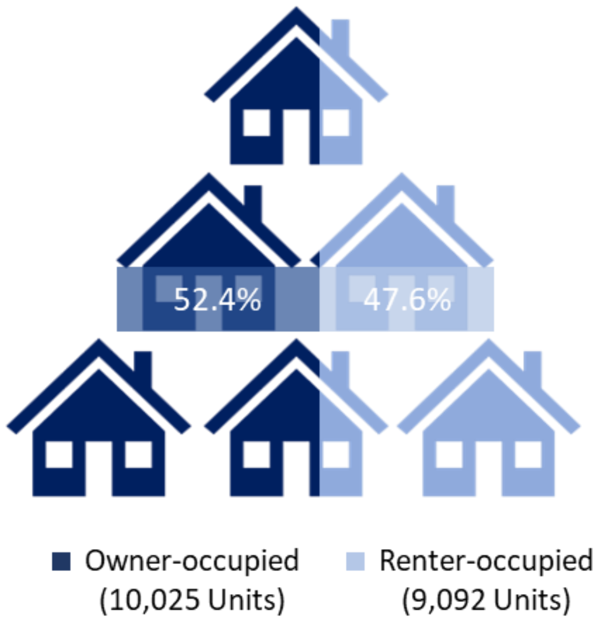
Households Below the Poverty Level: 4,180 (21.9%)

Households At or Above the Poverty Level: 14,937 (78.1%)

Source: ACS 2021



Source: ACS 2021



Source: ACS 2021

SWOT Analysis

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
Empathetic staff to the community needs	Obsolete MOU with nonprofit Complex hiring process Understaffing and decrease in volunteers	New & diverse board members Existing community and church organizations available to partner	Lack of funding diversification: need to increase large and small revenue streams Increased grant & earmark competition
Partnerships which have been established	Lack of visibility and knowledge of available services in the community	Social media and other means available to market services	Location of site in hurricane prone and storm surge area with weak drainage systems (access pre, during and after events)
Updated list of vulnerable population to oversee pre, during and post emergencies	Lack of transportation options for consumers	Opportunities to provide additional events to the community: social, health and educational	Competitive employment market
Family involvement in services	Lack of access to federal and state systems (one-stop shop) for referrals	Opportunities to fundraise through small and large events	
Robust portfolio of affordable services	Difficult in identifying funding for short- and long-term housing		

Focus Areas

Limited Resources	Governance	Resilience	Core Mission
Need for Fundraising	Governance Structure for FOHC	Help the community afford basic needs at all times	Marketing Services in the Community
Staffing Levels and Qualified Staff	Partnership Development	Helping address financial stability so people can recover from a crisis quickly and rebuild their lives	Agency's Performance-Based Framework
Diversify Funding Portfolio	Revising and Streamlining the MOU	Increase Community Impact	Streamline Recruiting Efforts

1. Action Plan

   a. An Action Plan with prioritized recommendations, responsible party, and the next steps is included below.

Strategic Plan Action	Deliverables/ Input	Responsible Actor	Projected Timeframe	Status
Data Gathering	Documents, Records	Director, Asst. Director	N/A	Completed
SWOT Analysis	Surveys, Interviews, Archival Data, Literature Review	FOHC, Executive Staff, Consumers	N/A	Completed
Identify Mission and Targets	Develop Mission and Targets for FOHC	FOHC	Immediate	In Progress
Strategies and Recommendations	Workplans and Strategies	FOHC, Director, Asst. Director, Volunteers	Short Term	In Progress
Performance Monitoring	Performance Metrics and Monitoring Reports	FOHC, Task Forces, Coalitions	Long Term	Future Board Project

Appendix F: Recommendations Memorandum

Recommendation No. 1 – Sustain the Agency's Core Mission

Through the data collection and analysis, it became apparent that the client agency has set up a very comprehensive program of human and social services to address the needs of the community, which may not be well known in the community. In addition, current consumers may be unaware of the array of services available to them. Strategies recommended to support this strategy include the following:

a) Provide marketing strategies to increase awareness in the community of the human and social services available to residents. There is also a need to increase awareness to consumers receiving general services of the array of services that are available.

b) Review the agency's performance-based framework, that allows for the results to measure the agency's performance against measurable metrics that allows the agency's strengths to meet its mission. The framework should be revised annually and/or on an as-needed basis to allow for changes in reporting or in services.

c) Expedite/streamline staff and volunteer recruiting. It is critical to work with the City's Human Resources Department to assist with streamlining processes, especially for non-managerial and volunteer positions, and provide the Human Services Director with authority to hire, for volunteers and positions that are remunerated below a certain threshold, that won't impact the adopted budget. Additional strategies to increase diversity is recommended, as the community has been changing in their socio-economic composition, with increased population from Eastern Europe and Latin American in the past 5 years.

d) In a second phase, prioritize revising the organization’s structure to address the current needs and advance priorities. The structure should also allow to invest in the people, through cross-training and succession planning.

Recommendation No. 2: Increase Agency’s Financial Resilience

According to the results of the interviews, concerns were raised relative to the risks of the different funding sources available to the client organization. The following recommendations are offered:

a) Revise the Memorandum of Understanding to current agency operations and provide flexibility for the nonprofit arm to raise funds to cover additional needs, to help advance the client organization’s priorities.

b) Diversify funding sources by partnering with large and small organizations and pull from multiple sources of funding. The agency needs to be careful to stay within the core mission and seek funds that align and advance the mission. Work with the board to set annual fundraising opportunities, including large annual gala and smaller events over the course of a year, which can include car washes, auctions, cultural events, and others to raise funds for the different programs. I recommend preparing a board matrix to monitor the agency’s goals and matching it to agency partners.

c) Prioritize the hiring of volunteer students/staff that are specialized in grant funding and grant writing to help establish a framework to prioritize a capital and operational work program, with unfunded needs and potential matching funds. These needs will be vetted and ready to request funding. In a second phase, identify the need to hire a dedicated consultant to identify fundraising opportunities.

Recommendation No. 3: Prioritize Strategies to Provide Community Services Before, During and After Severe Events

Input received during the interviews and surveys revealed that the client agency has strengths that can be of value when marketing the program of human and social services and include the following strategies:

a) Provide a portfolio of marketing strategies, which will target the desired key performance indicators, in communications and collaboration. Ideally, the board can work with management to identify the marketing goals, target consumers not being reached, and identify the message. Marketing channels need to be determined and may include social media, blog posts, press releases to the media, municipal websites, collaborative partnerships with donors and other community organizations.

b) Provide opportunities to meet executive level staff and board members. A meet and greet with board members can be planned and provide an opportunity to also market the portfolio of human and social services to the community.

Recommendation No. 4: Governance and Relationship between the Nonprofit Arm and the Municipal Department

The existing Memorandum of Understanding between the client agency and the nonprofit arm was executed in 1999. The nonprofit is a private 501(C)(3) organized under Florida's non-profit corporation statute for the express purpose of raising philanthropic support to enhance and sustain the Afterschool Tutorial Enrichment Program housed at a multipurpose center. The findings of the study recommend defining a governance structure for the board of the nonprofit which is comprised of a volunteer board who comes into the organization with enthusiasm, but limited time, limited knowledge, and limited resources. The goal is to get together to figure out everybody's strengths and match them to the organization's needs.

Appendix G: Best Practices Memorandum

This memorandum includes a summary of the published outcomes and research, including information from published peer-reviewed and professional journals. The results of the analysis provide a best practices memorandum which is deliverable to the client agency. The results also assist in verifying the data collection. The main findings document best practices in financial resilience and human and social services programming specifically targeted to strategic planning, based on the recommendations provided in the analysis. Providing human and social services is critical to the community, especially during emergency conditions, which has become even more evident during and after the 2008-2010 recession and the COVID-19 pandemic (Cronley and Kim, 2014).

Strategic planning is critical to agencies that seek to make efficient use of limited resources, and the results of the literature discuss that the mission and vision need to align with the plan (Bryson, 2018; Porter, 1991; Mintzberg & Quinn, 1998). Cronley & Kim (2014) discuss that it is critical that employees buy into the mission, vision, and goals of the strategic plan, which lead to improved service provision. The Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) Transit Office administers federal and state transit grants and monitors the performance of grants thar pass through the agency to nonprofit agencies, which include the Federal Transit Administration 5310 and 5311 Programs. The FTA 5310 Program provides funds for capital and operational projects to meet special needs of elderly and individuals with disabilities. The 5311 Program provides funds for capital and operational projects in rural areas (Florida Department of Transportation, 2022).

Agencies receiving awards from FDOT are ranked for project risks prior to being considered against peer agencies and scored based on metrics. The agencies receiving funds are also monitored on a quarterly basis to meet the requirements of the federal grant. Appendix G contains an analysis indicating past financial auditing performance of the nonprofit agencies.

A review of the nonprofit agencies in South Florida that provide human and social services that are similar in size and with a similar governance structure as the client organization and receive federal funding through the Florida Department of Transportation were selected from FDOT's list to compare best practices. The selected agencies and their scope of work included the following:

1. Agency 1: Private, nonprofit organization providing humanitarian and social services to the poor and homeless in South Florida for over 60 years.
2. Agency 2: Center for innovation, education, research, dialogue, and information sharing to end and prevent homelessness in the community and across the nation with a comprehensive array of services; serving approximately 1,400+ members.
3. Agency 3: Not for profit child welfare agency in South Florida that provides a continuum of care for children who have been abused, neglected, or abandoned by their parent(s), serving approximately 1,000 members.
4. Agency 4: Private, not-for-profit serving adults that experience mental illness and those that co-occurring mental health and substance abuse disorders. It also includes vocational, social, employment, case management, outpatient services and residential programs, serving approximately 700 members.

5. Agency 5: Serve legally blind clients ranging from babies to seniors. Early intervention, pre-kindergarten, Year-round Braille/technology literacy for school children, pre-employment training, high-school high-tech for teenagers, vocational rehabilitation, independent living training, music production, adult based education, GED, ESOL, senior group health and activities (SGA), low vision assistance and eye health services for underserved school children throughout Florida.
6. Agency 6: Provides services to assist families with children diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder and children aged birth to 22 years requiring early intervention for various developmental disabilities as well as older adults with Alzheimer's Disease, dementia, and other memory disorders. Many of the clients have limited financial resources. The agency is critical in improving the quality of life of the participants and their families/caregivers.

Table 7

Nonprofit Agencies Receiving FTA 5310 Funds: Best Practice in Financial Practices and Human/Social Services Provided

Agency	Mission	Program Objective	Consumer Served
Agency 1	Improve the quality of life of those who are vulnerable and homeless in South Florida through the provision of a continuum of housing and supportive services	Provide safe and consistent services for the poor, elderly and disabled homeless persons in its emergency, transitional and permanent housing programs, as well as those who are served though our day services and outreach	Staff
Agency 2	To nourish and uplift women/youth and children experiencing homelessness to improve quality of life and achieve self-sufficiency	Alleviate barriers for the guests of Lotus House so they can focus of achieving their goals and lead lives of greater opportunity	Staff
Agency 3	Prevention and treatment of child abuse through the strengthening of families	Coordinate all services needed for clients including finding safe and appropriate housing, scheduling, and transporting the children to medical, dental, and mental health care, providing after school tutoring, and any additional needs that they may have. Provides services to close to 1,000 children	Staff
Agency 4	Assisting adults with severe and persistent mental illness to achieve the maximum level of community integration and self-reliance	Provide a comprehensive program of long-term supportive opportunities for vocational and social rehabilitation as well as residential options, employment, and case management services	Staff
Agency 5	Through education, training, research, and vision enhancement Miami Lighthouse for the Blind and Visually Impaired provides hope, confidence, and independence to people of all ages	Provide rehabilitation and inclusion instead of seclusion, thereby directly increasing the quality of life for elders and other individuals who are blind and visually impaired, for babies, and early learners who attend our nationally recognized early learning program	Board Member
Agency 6	Provide exceptional services, education, and outreach for children ages Birth to 22 years old, head start, and early head start programs, adult daycare, and in home respite for older adults living with Alzheimer's and other memory disorders. Also provide services that address equity and inclusion disparities for individuals with disabilities by enhancing education, health and expanding employment and elevating community	Lead the way to 100% equity, inclusion, and access for people with disabilities in the greater community	Board Member

The CDBG survey provided a response where transportation was a need for seniors looking to transport to and from the client organization. The interviews also revealed that there was an issue with securing part-time drivers to transport the seniors, which now requires the staff to transport them. Securing innovative ways to transport the seniors is a recommendation to cover this need. Below is a table of the agencies reviewed and how they have applied for FTA Section 5310 funds.

Table 8

Nonprofit Agencies Receiving FTA 5310 Funds: Funding Requests Trends

Agency	FFY19	FFY20	FFY21	FFY22	FFY23
Agency 1	$137,681	$94,026	$200,000	$100,000	$200,000
Agency 2	$85,256	n/a	$45,000	$50,000	$52,499
Agency 3	$112,280	$202,638	$200,238	$150,000	$150,000
Agency 4	$114,896	$72,500	$75,000	$75,000	$75,000
Agency 5	$310,130	$155,908	n/a	$175,000	$336,319
Agency 6	n/a	n/a	n/a	$113,922	$7,200

Note. Source: Florida Department of Transportation.