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Strategies for Financial Stability of Nonprofit Organizations' Supplemental Education Programs in Rural Tennessee

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This is to certify that the doctoral study by

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has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
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Walden University
2024

Abstract

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MAT, Grand Canyon University, 2013

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Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Public Administration

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Abstract

Scholars have shown increased interest in nonprofit organizations' funding challenges. The purpose of this case study was to examine the overreliance of one nonprofit organization on government funding and to analyze the feasibility of creating a strategic resource development plan for diversified financing to aid the organization in achieving financial stability. The practice-focused research question focused on how the organization could best structure a resource development plan for expanding supplemental educational programs. A conceptual framework including strategic planning aided in identifying challenges and deficiencies of the organization's current funding strategy to compile ideas for effective strategies. Data were collected from a survey of employees, semistructured interviews with organizational leaders, and document reviews of strategic objectives and resource development efforts. The findings revealed four significant themes: the identification of organizational strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats; the identification of new financial sources and resources to help local partners achieve self-sufficiency; the need for expansion of community partnerships and volunteer recruitment efforts; and the urgent necessity of building relationships with local and state legislators to provide influence on education-related policies. Achieving financial autonomy may allow the organization to achieve positive social change by maintaining and expanding current programming, thereby increasing access to supplemental educational programs for families with children from birth to fifth grade living in rural Tennessee.

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Dedication

This is dedicated to my great-grandmother, Mattie Mae White Dotstry. Thank you for loving me as your own and for always believing in me. I hope that I have made you proud. This is also dedicated to my grandfather, Dave Dan Dotstry Graham, for his love and encouragement over the years. You are both deeply missed.

Acknowledgments

Thank you to my four children, Aliyah Easley, Alaina Gibson, Andrew Gibson, and Alyssa Gibson. Your love and support through the years have been my motivation. I appreciate your patience as I strive to achieve my goals in my career and in life.

I would also like to thank my mom, Rita Dotstry Crosby; you have always been my biggest cheerleader and supported my goals and dreams. To my dad, Johnny "Boss Hogg" Watson, thank you for always being there for me when I needed you. Tabitha Vann, my sister and travel buddy, kept me sane throughout this process and celebrated every milestone with me. I truly appreciate you. To all my family and friends who have prayed for and encouraged me, thank you for standing in the gap.

Finally, to my love, Dr. A.D. L., I appreciate your patience and all your guidance as I've completed this journey.

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Section 1: Introduction

Introduction

The most significant organizational problem for most nonprofits is sustainable funding. For organizations that rely primarily on government funding and corporate sponsorships, operating income can fluctuate significantly from year to year. In 1987, a Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development: Our Common Future defined *sustainability* as meeting present needs without compromising the ability to meet future needs (United Nations, 2015). According to Ye and Gong (2021), self-sustainability is required for organizations to participate in crucial sustainability discourse, and financial sustainability is critical for nonprofits’ survival.

Nonprofits exist to accomplish social goals and to manage their performance (Lee & Nowell, 2014). Many donors and institutions have decreased their contributions in recent years, making it more difficult for nonprofit organizations (NPOs) to secure the resources necessary for their survival (Huang & Hooper, 2011; Meyer & Simsa, 2014; Mort et al., 2015; Renz, 2001; as cited by Alam et al., 2020). The findings of the current study have the potential to bring about positive social change by providing NPOs with ideas for potential funders and community partners to assist in their efforts to gain reliable funding.

The goal of this qualitative study was to evaluate tactics that one nonprofit has used to achieve financial stability and to gather data that aids in formulating a strategic resource development plan that includes sources such as government funding, fundraising, community partnerships, and corporate sponsorships. There was limited research on the drivers of nonprofit financial stability and how government funding influences the composition of the nonprofit sector (see Ashley, 2014). The current findings were presented to the organization in the form of a recommendation memo.

In this section, I discuss the context of the study and the issues influencing the sustainability of funding NPOs. In addition, the study's purpose is explained in detail. Also, the data sources and analyses used for this study are described. There is an explanation of the terms presented in this study and a discussion of the study's significance and potential implications for societal transformation.

Organization Background and Problem Statement

Children to Save (a fictitious name for the focus organization that is referred to as CTS throughout the remainder of this study) is a nonprofit organization that has aided families in rural communities in Tennessee since 1933. In 2004, the organization began implementing its current research-based education initiatives, and it now has partnerships with schools in 11 counties across the state of Tennessee. Currently, CTS relies on state and federal funding to implement its supplemental education programs. State government funding for the organization was cut by approximately 33% in the spring of 2023, resulting in programming cuts across the state, job loss, and the loss of resources for the impacted communities (State Director, personal communication, March 2023). The unforeseen cutbacks highlighted the organization's need for reliable and diverse funding sources.

The absence of a reliable funding source is one of the organization's most significant challenges. The organization's capacity to extend organizational programs for needy families within the state is hampered by the lack of stable, diverse funding. The organization could benefit from investigating alternative funding sources to reduce its reliance on government funding. The state team plans to prioritize diversifying the organization's revenue sources as a strategic goal essential to achieving its purpose. The growth of the nonprofit sector over the past few decades has increased competition for resources. Government financing has decreased due to shifting political priorities, and economic uncertainties have impacted private contributions post-Covid.

The Nonprofit Finance Fund (2023) reported in its 2018 State of the NFP Sector Survey that 62% of nonprofit leaders polled cited financial stability as their top problem. In 2022, donations to education and public society benefit from individuals, foundations, bequests, and companies fell by 3.6% and 8.4%, respectively (Indiana University, 2023). Although CTS saw a tremendous increase in donations during the height of the pandemic, these resources were short-term. The organization was forced to reduce supplementary program offerings for the 2023–2024 school year due to decreased state funding. These cuts significantly impacted the number of programs offered and resulted in the loss of jobs in multiple communities throughout the state.

A resource development plan would help the organization identify potential sources and would provide a blueprint for securing funding, training needs, and other relevant plans to promote private-sector funding and increase revenue diversification. A nonprofit's capacity to achieve its goals and secure financial sustainability may be enhanced by enlisting new partners and supporters and engaging existing corporate sponsors to retain those relationships (Ye and Gong, 2021). Ye and Gong noted that an organization's capacity to self-sustain is crucial for the survival of the organization, and diversifying revenue streams is an effective strategy for achieving financial sustainability.

Purpose

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to create a resource development plan for diversified funding to assist CTS in achieving financial stability. Doing so would help the organization expand access to supplementary educational programs for families with children from birth to fifth grade in Tennessee's rural communities. Results were presented to the client organization's leadership team as a recommendation memo that included strategies to aid the organization in acquiring funding with greater autonomy and dependability. I also offered to give a formal presentation to the organization's board of directors.

Research Question

The following research question framed the study: From the perspective of the organization's state team, how can the organization best structure a resource development plan for expanding supplemental education programs? Upon completing this study, I presented the recommendation memo, supported by the data, to CTS and provided insightful information to assist the organization in determining the most effective strategies to implement their pursuit of financial stability. The perspectives of the current team members served as a guide toward achieving the organization's objective of securing sustainable funding. With this contribution, CTS and similar NPOs could better plan their diverse financing strategies to develop sustainable revenue streams.

Summary of Data Sources and Analysis

In this qualitative study, I used the case study design to address how and why inquiries. This method can provide greater insight into what gaps exist in its execution or why one implementation strategy may be selected over another (Yin, 2009). The case study approach was employed in the current study to collect data via interviews with key organizational stakeholders via the internet-based platform Zoom. I complied with the communication preferences of the participants. Additionally, data collection included document evaluations of current and historical budget plans and published annual reports. Document review is one approach to acquiring information from an original primary source of written, printed, or recorded materials to provide answers to questions in case studies (Creswell, 2009).

The interview is an adaptable strategy for collecting qualitative data because it allows the use of multiple sensory channels: verbal, nonverbal, visual, audible, and, in the case of online interviews, written (Cohen et al., 2018). In the current study, interviews were conducted with state directors, advisors, and lead associates who work directly with supplemental education programming. These stakeholders are responsible for budgetary decisions and statewide implementation of early childhood and school-age programs. The written accounts of the state team's thoughts, ideas, and perspectives were used to develop a list of strategies included in the recommendation memo that the organization can use to identify ways to maintain sustainable and diversified funding.

Definitions

The following terminology is defined and explained to establish proper context and aid the reader's comprehension:

Nonprofit development plan: A tool that must be incorporated into an organization's strategic plan and consists of overarching goals, generalized strategies for attaining these goals, precise objectives, and comprehensive action steps to achieve each target. Action steps must incorporate budgets, timelines, and the allocation of responsibilities (Lysakowski, 2007).

Supplemental education services: Free additional academic support offered to children through tutoring or other assistance programs in reading, language arts, and mathematics; this additional assistance is available before or after school, on weekends, or during school holidays (U.S. Department of Education, 2012).

Significance

In this study, I endeavored to assist CTS in identifying potential obstacles to attaining financial stability and developing strategies and recommendations for overcoming these impediments. The goal of this research was to contribute to the currently limited corpus of knowledge regarding strategies to identify and maintain diverse and sustainable funding for NPOs. Through collaboration with CTS, I evaluated current and historical organizational data to compile an overview of the organization's fiscal conditions. Additionally, I worked with the organization's administrators to connect with eligible interview participants to acquire insight into the various financing alternatives.

The results of this research were used to develop a recommendation memo that provided CTS with viable strategies to address its financial challenges and approaches for discovering potential future partnerships and investors. This would provide the organization with ideas to generate revenue from various sources and reduce its reliance on government funding. If these tactics are successfully implemented, CTS may maintain or expand existing programming in rural communities in Tennessee. This may create the potential to widen the reach of CTS programming and positively influence the work of CTS in rural communities. To accomplish its mission, contribute to the betterment of society, and promote positive social change, CTS required the financial stability that sustained support would provide them.

Summary

This section provided background information on the difficulties that CTS was experiencing with maintaining sustainable financing. The problem, purpose, and research question that guided this study were discussed, along with definitions to assist readers in comprehending CTS programming. In addition, I described how data were gathered for this investigation. The findings of this research may assist CTS in determining the next measures necessary to achieve financial stability. Section 2 provides a description of the conceptual framework and a review of relevant literature for this study.

Section 2: Conceptual Framework and Literature Review

The problem this study addressed was the absence of sustainable, diverse financing, which hindered the organization’s capacity to maintain and expand educational initiatives throughout the state of Tennessee. Diversification of revenue is essential for the long-term financial stability of CTS. Financial stability will enable the organization to continue delivering high-quality supplemental education programs to families in rural communities with children from birth through fifth grade.

This study’s objective was to compile strategies for the creation of a strategic resources development plan for diversified funding to aid the organization in achieving financial stability. Using the findings, I compiled and provided a list of strategies to identify potential funders and community partners to CTS to assist them in developing a sustainable funding model. Possible funding options included government funding, fundraising, and corporate sponsorships. The use of these strategies could provide the organization with needed autonomy regarding financial control and reliable income sources.

Section 2 includes a review of literature search strategies used to find resources and ideas for identifying funding sources and develop a resource development plan. In addition, this section provides comprehensive information about the conceptual framework that was employed in this study and the rationale for using it to address the problems faced by CTS. This section also provides a summary of the methods and best practices implemented by other agencies to address funding issues based on the literature.

Literature Search Strategy

The Walden University Library was used to search for current, peer-reviewed literature published from 2018 through 2023. Education Source, SocIndex with full text, Complementary Index, Business Source Complete, Academic Search Complete, Directory of Open Access Journals, Political Science Complete, and Public Administration Abstracts were among the databases used. Open-access publications were also found using Google Scholar, although the use of this search engine was mostly avoided. Any information retrieved from Google Scholar was validated and verified as a scholarly peer-reviewed source before being used in this study.

The following search phrases were used to find papers relevant to this research: *nonprofit organizations*, *government aid*, *financial stability*, *sustainability*, *diversified funding*, and *strategic planning*. To provide comprehensive search results, I employed variations of these phrases. Historical records and web-based sources such as The Nonprofit Finance Fund and Indiana University were used to compile statistical data. Through scientific investigations, these sources supplied quantitative information.

I analyzed current research to determine funding patterns and themes. The Walden University Library's material and previously published professional administrative studies were also assessed. Although some of the sources in this research extended back as long as 20 years, I generally confined the literature to studies published in the last 5 years to keep it current and relevant. The sources employed in conjunction with the literature benefitted this research and its positive social change implications. This evaluation and analysis aimed to determine whether further research was needed.

One aspect indicated by the review and analysis was that further research on the issue was necessary.

Conceptual Framework

The frameworks supporting this study were strategic planning and resource dependence theory. Both frameworks contributed to formulating strategies to create a resource development plan to address the organization's weaknesses and the risks posed by its overdependence on government funding. The components of the strategic planning model were used to guide the identification of viable alternatives to the strategic issue of reliable funding sources.

This study focused on two steps of the strategic planning process: "Step 5: Identify the strategic issues facing the organization and Step 6: Formulate strategies to manage the issues" (Bryson, 2018, p. 37). A strategic planning approach responds to conditions perceived as requiring a deliberate, collective, and frequently unique response (Bryson, 2018). The strategic framework model is one way organizations can adapt to changing conditions and generate public value by accomplishing their mandates and missions (Bryson, 2018).

Clarifying organizational goals, as well as the variables and most probable course of action for achievement, demands reasonable, deliberate, and systematic effort in strategic planning (Bryson, 2010). Strategic planning has many advantages, including promoting strategic thinking, acting, and learning; improved decision making; increased organizational effectiveness, responsiveness, and resilience; increased efficiency of more diverse societal systems; increased organizational credibility; and tangible benefits for the individuals involved (Bryson, 2010).

The resource dependence theory provided aid in analyzing how external resources influence the actions of CTS (see Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). Acquiring external resources is critical to every company’s strategic management (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). To gain resources, an organization must connect with other organizations (Campbell, 2023). These interactions have the potential to foster the organization’s dependence on the partners, and the organization must identify strategies to avoid being hindered by the imbalance of power (Campbell, 2023). These strategies should include cultivating relationships with multiple partners and diversifying the organization’s funding sources (Campbell, 2023).

These frameworks provided guidance in solving the study problem by identifying the organization’s strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and risks to suggest practical strategies to shape and steer the organization’s decisions and initiatives (see Bryson, 2018). Strategic planning allowed the organization to focus on stability, strategic partnerships, and a fundraising plan (see Jean Francois, 2014). Resource dependence theory aided the organization in identifying strategies to prevent dependency. Data gathered via face-to-face interviews and document reviews revealed aspects such as existing successful partnerships, current challenges impeding the organization’s capacity to achieve financial stability, and prospective future funding sources and sponsors.

Literature Review

Sustainable funding is the most significant organizational challenge for most nonprofits. These organizations rely on government funding and corporate sponsorships, which can vary significantly from year to year. There needs to be more research on the factors that influence the financial stability of NPOs and how government funding affects the composition of the nonprofit sector (Ashley, 2014). The current study aimed to determine how NPOs can develop and implement a sustainable financing model that includes government funding, fundraising, and corporate sponsorships (see Besel et al., 2004). The key objective of the current study was to determine how nonprofits can establish and strengthen partnerships to obtain and maintain long-term funding.

Funding

The top three challenges faced by nonprofits in 2018 were funding and financial stability, communication, and leadership (West & Ries, 2018). West and Ries stated that the recent instability in funding makes budgeting and strategic planning more challenging. In contrast to the previous pattern of giving for the sake of giving, the recent shift in donor expectations has led to a greater emphasis on programmatic outcomes as the primary criterion for determining an organization's success (West & Ries, 2018).

The prevalence of restricted funding with stringent reporting requirements is rising (West & Ries, 2018). In addition to demonstrating programmatic results, nonprofits must also demonstrate financial stability (West & Ries, 2018). According to West and Ries, this transition reflects the realization that an organization's financial health is crucial to its capacity to fulfill its mission.

Contracts and grants from government agencies finance many NPOs to satisfy public needs sharing service delivery responsibilities (Lu & Zhao, 2019). Government support accounts for a large portion of nonprofit income (Lu & Zhao, 2019). Nonprofits' heavy dependence on government financing may change operations and have unintended repercussions (Lu & Zhao, 2019). With limited resources since the pandemic, organizations have been compelled to revise their business strategies and pursue alternative funding sources to fulfill their mandates (DeYoung, 2020).

According to Aschari-Lincoln and Scheck (2022), organizations must contend with the rising complexity of funding arrangements and a diversity of sponsors, financial sources, and financing tools. Nonprofits prioritize social benefit over financial gain, but financing concerns significantly affect how these groups run (Aschari-Lincoln & Scheck, 2022). The insights and decision-making skills of NPOs in terms of funding and focus are constrained by the inability to emphasize the interdependence of organizational, programmatic, impact, and finance strategies (Aschari-Lincoln & Schenck, 2022).

Potluka and Svecova (2019) argued that to improve the efficiency of service delivery, the public sector and NPOs must interact and augment one another. NPOs are essential to the execution of aid initiatives, and financial support helps NPOs carry out their missions and meet donor objectives (Potluka & Svecova, 2019). Potluka and Svecova concluded that although relying heavily on a single core funding source is sometimes good, it might be problematic if that source is unstable or if another subsidy cannot quickly compensate for the loss of that funding. This research reiterated the nonprofit's need for diverse finance.

In recent years, the competition among NPOs for funding has increased. Although the number of NPOs increases annually, the number of voluntary donors remains fixed (Hommerová & Severová, 2018). This makes it difficult for organizations like CTS to acquire the funds necessary for long-term survival and mission fulfillment (Hommerová & Severová, 2018). To identify and secure funding, organizations must analyze their issues and barriers to sustainability and gather data to present to potential benefactors (Hommerová & Severová, 2018). Hommerová and Severová (2018) concluded that a nonprofit's fundraising efforts should not be the goal but a means to an end. Fundraising is only beneficial if the organization's mission contributes to the enhancement of the community and promotes sustainable societal growth (Hommerová & Severová, 2018). To attract and retain the broadest range of prospective supporters, an organization must diversify its financing sources to appeal to the greatest possible audience. Diversifying implies that the organization receives money from multiple sources in varying amounts and is not dependent on any one individual, organization, or method.

Strategic Planning

NPOs employ strategic planning as a holistic approach to manage a multitude of demands, manage resources, and formulate an actionable plan to carry out their mission (Morrison & Misener, 2021). An organization's concerns and objectives and the essential actions to achieve those goals are articulated in strategic plans. Strategic planning encompasses many approaches for obtaining the necessary resources to accomplish an organization's purpose and vision (Gratton, 2018). The primary advantage of strategic planning for NPOs is their ability to foster active participation from the organizations' members, stakeholders, and volunteers, providing them a platform to contribute to organizational transformation (Gratton, 2018). According to Gratton, NPOs often find themselves engrossed in their daily activities, leaving them unprepared to handle the strategic and systemic transformations necessary for their future prosperity. Gratton suggested that NPOs should use strategic planning to facilitate their pursuit of enhanced success.

According to Bryan et al. (2020), strategic planning is the deliberate process that staff and board members engage in to develop a strategy that aligns their internal capabilities with the dynamics of their external environment. This procedure can encourage the use of evaluation data to guide organizational decision making and signal legitimacy to stakeholders (Bryan et al., 2020). Organizations such as CTS have the option to engage in an informal strategic process that enables them to employ change-making components.

The analysis of cost behavior has significant importance in enhancing the efficiency of program operations and facilitating long-term strategic planning, forecasting, and program design (Persaud, 2021). Prior to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, programs were confronted with the formidable task of vying for limited donor funding and striving to achieve long-term financial viability (Persaud, 2021). Persaud stated that the constraints faced by organizations have been intensified in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, underscoring the significance of allocating limited financial resources to maximize their social impact.

Mallon (2019) described *strategic planning* as the systematic procedure used by an organization to distinguish itself from its immediate or prospective competitors to fulfill its objective. Mallon contended that the articulation of strategic planning has a pivotal role in shaping organizational culture. Strategic planning has significance due to the ideals that it communicates, the traditions it encompasses, and its ability to steer organizations toward novel trajectories (Mallon, 2019). Survival within this environment is characterized by a multifaceted nature, necessitating proficient administration, meticulous strategic planning, and accurate forecasting (Persaud, 2021). Persaud (2021) concluded that to effectively address these difficulties, it is essential to evaluate cost data using methodologies that enable decision makers to have a comprehensive understanding of the financial aspects involved.

Panda (2021) asserted that strategic planning and execution are key components in the field of strategic management. Strategic planning involves the comprehensive analysis of the industry, environment, and organization, enabling an extensive comprehension of these factors (Panda, 2021). According to Panda, the correlation between strategic planning and culture is contingent upon effective leadership. Leaders establish a connection between organizational culture and strategic objectives by managing the relationship between human characteristics and the process of strategic planning (Panda, 2021). Panda surmised that the cultivation of a collective culture enhances the production and conceptualization of strategic plans.

CTS used components of the strategic planning process for the purposes of this study to identify strengths and limitations, define desired outcomes, and identify strategies to achieve these objectives. NPOs compete for government funding and private donations while also making substantial efforts toward maintaining their dominant position within the industry in which they operate. Strategic planning offers a valuable opportunity to analyze competitors and formulate an effective competitive strategy.

Partnerships

NPOs rely on productive partnerships. These partnerships expand the scope of organizations such as CTS by providing access to resources that increase their community value, enhance their credibility, and enable them to have a more significant impact. These partnerships create brand awareness and provide exposure to new audiences, which may result in a new donor pool.

NPOs participate in inclusive partnerships with many stakeholders to enable social change processes that promote sustainability (Kassem et al., 2021). According to Kassem et al., a partnership may be seen as a dynamic association of several entities characterized by reciprocal influence stemming from a shared interest. This shared interest catalyzes NPOs' dedication to leveraging their respective resources and fostering value production via complementary efforts (Kassem et al., 2021).

The literature has identified various motives for partnerships between NPOs and other actors (Kassem et al., 2021). These motives include access to financial resources, integration to solve multifaceted societal issues, effective and efficient program delivery, strengthening NPO credibility and political power, potential to appeal to a broader demographic, benefitting from expertise and viewpoints not otherwise accessible within the organization, collaboration, combining assets, creating organizational value, and assisting in the achievement of a long-term vision are all examples. (Kassem et al., 2021).

Kassem et al. (2021) stated that establishing effective collaborations across firms is widely recognized as a fundamental aspect of sound corporate governance. Good governance's key attributes in sustainable-oriented partnerships are efficiency, effectiveness, participation, and transparency (Kassem et al., 2021). According to Atouba (2019), nonprofit partnerships allow for more comprehensive approaches to societal needs that provide high-quality, cost-effective services that can have a profound and lasting effect on the community (Atouba, 2019).

CTS has relied heavily on funding via partnerships with local, state, and federal government agencies. Multiple studies over the past twenty years have addressed the prominence of the growing interconnectedness between public and NPOs in the realms of the provision of services and enacting policy (Peng et al., 2020). Peng et al. indicated that NPOs surveyed responded that they would commit to sustaining their relationships with government entities.

The level of reliance on government financing contributes significantly to NPOs' heightened economic interest in maintaining these partnerships (Peng et al., 2020). Research findings showed that 87% of the organizations surveyed possessed formal agreements with their governmental counterparts, and 64% had a higher tendency to collaborate with local government agencies (Peng et al., 2020). The mean duration of these partnerships was four years (Peng et al., 2020).

According to Peng et al., NPOs may exhibit diminished incentives to seek outside funding due to concrete advantages associated with partnering with receiving government funding. Consequently, the reliance on financial support from the government lessens the autonomy of the organization while also increasing the potential of obscuring the distinguishing qualities of the nonprofit and eroding its unique role in democratic governance (Peng et al., 2020). While seeking alternative funding may initially seem intimidating to NPOs, it will be essential to their survival as the reliability of government funding diminishes as political interests shift.

Financial Management

NPOs are established with the primary objective of fulfilling a specific goal. To effectively carry out their purpose, it is crucial for these organizations to establish and maintain a robust financial management system. Research conducted by Park et al. (2021) concluded that organizational longevity directly correlates to underlying fundamental financial management practices. The results indicated the need for nonprofits to implement effective financial management techniques to ensure the continuity of operations and the successful pursuit of organizational goals (Park et al., 2021).

According to Stühlinger (2022), the diverse financing systems and a vast array of income sources used by NPOs have ramifications not only for their finances but also for other facets of financial management, including financial planning and controlling. Stühlinger’s research examined abilities in seven distinct areas of financial management, including strategic financial planning, budgeting, liquid asset management, accounting, financial ratios, management of reserves, and financing. The findings revealed that strategic financial planning has the most significant impact on the financial and organizational success of NPOs (Stühlinger, 2022).

Mitchell and Calabrese (2022) stated that nonprofits have traditionally been required to conform to specified financial management standards to cultivate a perception of reliability and credibility in the eyes of funders and other stakeholders. Their research posited that strict adherence to conventional financial management practices in the nonprofit sector may, paradoxically, diminish the strategic capacity of NPOs to optimize their mission impact (Mitchell & Calabrese, 2022). Berkovich and Searing (2020) affirmed that the nonprofit sector in the United States plays a significant role in the country's economy and substantially contributes to the maintenance of social services, arts, culture, education, healthcare, and several other domains. Berkovich and Searing's research highlighted the significance of studying and comprehending the financial management of NPOs, as it significantly contributes to the development of organizations and the general welfare of the public.

NPOs need effective financial management to provide optimal services to their stakeholders. Lack of financial expertise or resources may hinder the success and effectiveness of NPOs.

Sustainability

Nonprofits receive funding from numerous sources. Grants from state, county, and municipal budgets are the most accessible yet unpredictable source of revenue for NPOs. Diversifying funding sources may help nonprofits minimize their dependence on governmental donations. Caramidaru and Ionica (2021, p.10) defined nonprofit sustainability as “aiming for continuous improvement.” According to Ilyas et al. (2020), NPOs’ selection of financial sustainability solutions has significant relevance in ensuring effective operations. The results of their study aligned with existing scholarly research, indicating that NPOs should establish trust with donors via the cultivation of relationships and a commitment to openness, an approach crucial for ensuring a consistent and enduring stream of gifts from donors (Ilyas, 2020).

Research by Rooney & Burlingame (2020) found that in addition to diversified income sources, consistently successful organizations also possessed endowment funding, contributing significantly to their survival and stability. Ye and Gong (2021) stated that organizations with more assets, income diversification, greater administrative expense allocation, and more prosperous locations are more likely to show instantaneous resilience amid unexpected economic setbacks and sustained success in maintaining or increasing their services.

According to Ye and Gong (2021), NPOs have a challenging situation regarding their sustainability since it is dependent upon the actions and philanthropy of several stakeholders. The research findings indicated that achieving sustainability in NPOs involves more than just financial stability and a commitment to a social mission (Ye & Gong, 2021). Ye and Gong determined that financial stability is a multifaceted and intricate undertaking influenced by various factors. These factors include the organization’s human resource capacity, credibility, partnerships, competitive positioning among other NPOs, effective management of funding, resilience in adhering to its social mission despite political influences, and the ability to convince the communities it serves of its authenticity and dedication (Ye & Gong, 2021). Ye and Gong's study concluded that these aspects are crucial in determining whether a nonprofit organization attains sustainability.

According to the 2018 State of the NFP Sector Survey (Nonprofit Finance Fund, 2018), 62% of CEOs cited financial sustainability as a major problem. Rottkamp (2020) stated that a nonprofit's financial health is measured by its ability to impact the well-being of the people and communities it serves with high-quality, mission-driven programs while using available financial and economic resources to sustain an innovative and resilient organization. Financial health is linked to sustainability, yet many NPOs struggle to attain it (Rottkamp, 2020). Managing investing, monetizing assets, and utilizing credit wisely may help organizations succeed financially. Achieving financial stability for organizations necessitates significant adjustments to changing conditions to preserve a certain level of stability and resilience.

Summary

In the second section, the conceptual framework that was used in this research was introduced. The framework for this study was strategic planning and resource dependence theory. In this research, the strategic planning process was used to ascertain the strengths and constraints, establish desired results, and devise strategies to accomplish these goals effectively. The use of resource dependence theory assisted the organization in the identification of initiatives aimed at mitigating reliance.

This section further provided a comprehensive review of the literature about the diversification of financing sources and its impact on financial stability. The literature documented a relationship between the survival of nonprofits and the types of funding sources they rely on for operating income. Section 3 of this paper delineates the research strategy and methodology used to assess the strategies that CTS might adopt to achieve diverse funding and financial stability.

Section 3: Data Collection Process and Analysis

I investigated the issue of limited sustainable and diverse financing that posed a constraint on CTS's capacity to expand educational programs. The objective of this qualitative research was to formulate a list of strategies for the creation of a resource development plan to include more diversified funding with the aim of assisting the organization in attaining financial stability and expanding the availability of supplemental education programs for families residing in rural areas of Tennessee. I compiled a comprehensive list of tactics to identify possible benefactors and community collaborators, which was furnished to the organization to support its endeavors in securing revenue that offers enhanced self-governance and dependability.

In this section, I restate the practice-focused research question and describe the strategy used to assess the practicality of developing a resource development plan for CTS. I explain the study's implementation, including the identification of the approaches and methodologies used and the justification for their use in answering the research question. In addition, Section 3 details my responsibilities as the researcher and those of the client organization while also delineating the chosen methodology, data analysis approach, considerations of trustworthiness, and ethical protocols that were used in the study. This section outlines the study approach and methodology to evaluate the potential strategies that CTS might use to attain varied financing sources and ensure financial stability.

Practice-Focused Research Question and Research Design

The present investigation was framed by the following research question: From the perspective of the organization's state team, how can the organization best structure a resource development plan for expanding supplemental education programs? Following the completion of this research, I prepared a recommendation memorandum, which was substantiated by the data. This memorandum was submitted to CTS and offered valuable insights to aid the organization in choosing the optimal methods to achieve financial stability. The viewpoints of the present team members functioned as a guiding principle in pursuing the organization's goal of attaining long-term financial support. This contribution may enable CTS and other NPOs to enhance their capacity for strategic financial planning, facilitating sustainable income development.

To conduct this qualitative study, I chose the case study design. The case study design facilitated exploring and elucidating inquiries about the mechanisms and rationales behind phenomena (Yin, 2009). This methodology has the capacity to provide a more holistic understanding of the deficiencies in its implementation or the rationale for selecting one implementation technique over another (Yin, 2009). The primary goal of qualitative research is to extract and interpret the underlying meanings conveyed by words while also identifying patterns and connections among these words. This approach allows for the generation of comprehensive and meaningful insights without disregarding any crucial components of the material being analyzed (Leung, 2015).

The data-collecting process included interviews with organizational leaders. It also included analysis and document evaluations focusing on current and previous budget plans and published yearly reports. The participant face-to-face interview is a versatile method for collecting qualitative data because it permits the use of several sensory modalities including verbal, nonverbal, visual, auditory, and, in the context of online interviews, written communication (Cohen et al., 2018). To address inquiries posed in case studies, researchers conduct document review to acquire information from an authentic primary source consisting of written, printed, or recorded materials (Creswell, 2009). I interviewed individuals holding positions as state directors, advisors, and lead associates who were actively involved in programming activities. These individuals were responsible for making financial choices and overseeing the execution of early childhood and school-age programs at the state level. There are several advantages to using the exploratory case study method, including the capacity to investigate and explain a topic in detail, provide insight through qualitative data, identify avenues for future research, and aid in comprehending detailed concepts (Deakin University, 2023).

Roles of the Researcher and Client Organization

I spent 18 years in education before transitioning to the nonprofit sector. Since April 2022, I have been employed by CTS, where my responsibilities include implementing early childhood programs in the state's western region. My role does not involve supervising any of the participants in this investigation. The impetus for conducting this research stemmed from my observation of the constant adjustments made to programming because of the struggle to obtain and maintain financial resources post-COVID. My primary motivation for conducting this research was to examine various strategies for CTS to obtain a diversified income stream that could assist them in delivering programming that has the potential to promote social change. By conducting this research, I aided CTS in identifying avenues for achieving financial stability, thereby facilitating its mission and vision.

A frequently raised inquiry at state-wide team meetings was how resource development professionals identify new revenue streams. I discussed the notion of conducting a study aimed at exploring viable avenues for securing sustainable financing options with the state director and state advisor, my direct supervisor. The state director and state advisor supported my academic research. I believed a resource development plan was a viable strategy for CTS to ascertain new revenue sources.

I did not possess any predetermined biases regarding the feasibility of this strategy at CTS; nevertheless, I am inclined to believe this approach may help maintain and expand initiatives. I formulated open-ended survey questions for team members without any predisposition to a specific response to lessen researcher bias. Although I am a CTS Tennessee state team member, I did not participate in selecting interviewees, and I did not discuss this study with my coworkers. I was able to impartially investigate and propose a resource development plan for identifying future funding sources for all programming and outreach services at CTS. The Tennessee state director granted access to research participants and provided state budget and grant documentation for the purpose of document review.

Methodology

According to the Walden University Research Center (2021), a case study gains more validity, insight, and comprehensive support when it incorporates data from several sources. Robust data-collecting methods and study protocol documentation are essential for qualitative research (Bowen, 2009). Case study research focuses on examining cases characterized by higher levels of complexity, such as the exploration of ways to tackle social concerns, the evaluation of a program's efficacy, or the analysis of policy implications (Mabry, 2008). According to Mabry, the use of direct observation and semistructured interviews aids in the cultivation of in-depth comprehension of the occurrences and underlying reasons inside a given scenario.

The process of data collection in a survey involves the use of standardized questionnaires, which enables researchers to gather a substantial amount of data within a reasonable time frame and at a reasonable cost (Nishishiba et al., 2014). Qualitative surveys use open-ended questions to elicit detailed written responses with the objective of uncovering individuals' experiences (Deakin University, 2023). Team members were surveyed online to determine their perceptions of CTS programs' strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.

Semistructured interviews were also used to gather team members' ideas for potential partnerships and funding sources. I used semistructured interviews to gather team members' suggestions for possible partnerships and funding sources. Through the online platform Zoom, I was able to speak with the respondents directly and record their responses as qualitative data (see Nishishiba et al., 2014). The study was carefully developed to ensure that the problem, purpose, and research question aligned with the study's design and methods for data collection.

Archival and Operational Data

Information from textual sources, including grants and budgets for the years 2020–2023, was gathered via document analysis. The monitoring and evaluation team for CTS publishes yearly program data for stakeholders using quantitative and qualitative data analysis. According to Bowen (2009), document analysis is a methodical process for going through and assessing multiple documents, both electronic and printed. At the end of the research, CTS was provided with a list of strategies to guide them in the creation of a resource development plan that was made using the data gathered from the questionnaires, interviews, and document analysis. Stakeholders had the opportunity to provide input on their concerns regarding the organization's financial challenges via the use of questionnaires and semistructured interviews. Through a resource development strategy, the gathered data provided valuable insights that may help CTS find possible funders so that it may investigate a variety of income streams. The information gleaned from the document analysis was used to evaluate patterns in CTS funding and grant opportunities between 2020 and 2023. I asked the state director for access to the budget and grant information.

Participants

The state director of CTS provided contact information for all 18 team members working in food security, school-age, community involvement, and early childhood programs. I contacted those people who were identified, described my position as a student researcher, and sought participation in the study. The determination of eligible persons was at the discretion of CTS.

The administration of online surveys was facilitated using the platform Typeform. The surveys were administered once at the beginning of the research process. I conducted interviews via the online platform Zoom. The interviews were administered once during the study for a duration of 15 minutes to 1 hour over a period of 4–6 weeks. The study's goal was to have eight to 10 participants; some of the 18 identified team members refused to participate. The desired number of participants was achieved; therefore, it was unnecessary to broaden my survey pool to include other employees who work directly with CTS programming, such as coordinators.

Subedi (2021) asserted that using a small sample size enables qualitative researchers to concentrate on acquiring a comprehensive understanding within a certain social and cultural milieu, a task that is often unattainable when examining more extensive samples. Different qualitative methods dictate the number of participants; for instance, a case study may include samples ranging from one to 20 cases (Subedi, 2021). In the current study, no personal characteristics were used, such as age, sex, or locality. Interviews were conducted through Zoom.

Overview of Data Collection

Online questionnaires, virtual interviews, and document analysis were employed to collect qualitative data. The data obtained from this study were transcribed and used in the formulation of a resource development plan for CTS. This plan aimed to provide the organization with a comprehensive understanding of how to identify and secure supplementary sources of revenue. Using viewpoints from questionnaire respondents and document analysis facilitated the identification of the organization's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. The questionnaire responses and document analysis aided in identifying the organization's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats that can help or hinder CTS's efforts to secure sustainable funding sources. The insights provided by the interview data provided CTS with ideas for potential donors and partnerships and aided in determining the practicality of a resource development strategy.

With participant consent, each interview was recorded through Zoom and transcribed using NVivo software, which was selected before data collection. To verify the accuracy of the information, the transcripts underwent a thorough examination and were shared with the interviewees to determine whether the information was accurately transcribed. Once accuracy was determined, the transcripts were again analyzed to uncover trends that aided the coding process. Qualitative data analysis software was used to guarantee that outcomes were interpreted impartially and to simplify the identification of themes. After the categorization process, the obtained findings underwent a thorough evaluation to establish the existence or nonexistence of linkages between different themes.

These findings strengthened my recommendations to CTS regarding the viability of implementing a resource development plan that aligns with the organization's needs. Survey data were evaluated using analysis tools available within the Typeform platform to find patterns in the responses to aid in detecting recurring themes pertaining to perceived strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.

Data acquired via Zoom interviews and surveys disclosed issues such as existing effective relationships, present obstacles hindering the organization's ability to attain financial stability, and potential future funding sources and sponsors. Data gathering also included document analyses of current and previous budget plans and published yearly reports.

Survey Questions

Prior to conducting the interviews, I administered a survey to the team to collect data about the organization's perceived strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. This modified strategic planning analysis aimed to provide me with valuable insights into the team members' perspectives on the current state of the Tennessee team. Nine questions were used in the survey (see Appendix A: Survey Questions).

Interview Questions

The primary instrument for data collection in this study was the qualitative interview. To gather comprehensive information, I conducted semi-structured interviews that refrained from using yes or no questions. The study questions were designed to provide participants with the opportunity to provide detailed explanations and expand upon the many aspects of each issue. The objective was to provide a certain level of autonomy and flexibility in obtaining information from the individuals being interviewed. According to Yin (2009), during in-depth interviews, researchers use a questioning technique to elicit factual information and get the interviewee's thoughts pertaining to certain occurrences. Ten questions were posed to interview participants for this qualitative study (see Appendix B: Interview Questions).

Strategy for Data Analysis

Following the acquisition of consent from the Institutional Review Board (IRB), 18 members from the CTS team were targeted for participation in the online questionnaire and interview procedures. The researcher conducted the recruitment of potential research participants. The survey was included with the consent to participate in the research study by the researcher. The pool of possible participants consisted of team members whose positions are directly associated with the program's budget and execution, including leads, advisors, and directors. The facilitation of online survey administration was achieved using the platform Typeform. The interviews were conducted via the online platform Zoom. The surveys were conducted once at the beginning of the research. The interviews were conducted once over the course of the study, with each session lasting between 15 minutes to 1 hour. This data collection process took place over a span of four to six weeks.

The first stage of the data analysis procedure was an analysis of the survey results using Typeform's analysis software. The next stage was the transcription of the interviews. The transcripts were analyzed to identify relevant themes. These concepts were coded, and additional analysis involved identifying themes based on grouping these coded concepts.

The process of qualitative data analysis involved the examination and interpretation of qualitative data to gain an understanding of its meaning and significance. This analysis focused on the processes of classification, tagging, and theme analysis in relation to qualitative data. The intent was to engage in a comprehensive examination of the data sets in an effort to discern patterns in the underlying significance of the data by systematically classifying or “coding” words, themes, and ideas included within the transcripts. Subsequently, the findings were analyzed to derive a coherent and well-founded set of suggestions. The approach involved using content analysis as a method to enable the researcher to analyze and understand the intricacies associated with company conduct, stakeholder views, and social dynamics in relation to the formation of sustainable partnerships and relationships to achieve stability. To address the research inquiries, I relied on insights from the state team. All data was electronically coded using software designed for qualitative data analysis that was selected prior to data collection.

Software programs such as Atlas.ti or NVivo primarily aim to organize and facilitate qualitative data analysis effectively. According to Maxwell (2012), qualitative coding differs from quantitative coding in that qualitative coding consists of assigning pre-established categories to data. Maxwell explained that qualitative coding is a method used to break down the data into smaller components. The methodology entailed the examination of transcripts, the identification of recurring patterns within the collected data, and the comparison of instances of these patterns across interviews.

According to Maxwell (2012), the presence of discrepant cases is probable. Given this information, Maxwell proposed that researchers should thoroughly examine both supportive and discrepant cases with high rigor. Furthermore, it is important for a researcher to acknowledge and consider evidence that contradicts their results (Maxwell, 2012). In conclusion, it is important for a researcher to actively seek the input and guidance of others and then provide any conflicting facts, enabling the reader to independently assess and form their own interpretations (Maxwell, 2012). Taking into consideration this guidance, any inconsistencies were addressed by following a series of prescribed actions.

After completing the coding process, the obtained findings were thoroughly examined in order to determine the presence or lack of linkages among different themes. The findings of this investigation are presented in Section 4. The study uncovered various trends that can guide CTS's attempts to seek sustainable financing sources to accomplish its objectives.

Issues of Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness refers to the extent to which data may be considered legitimate and reliable, hence instilling confidence in the study's findings and methodology (Polit & Beck, 2015). To maintain the authenticity of data in qualitative analysis, establishing credibility with research is of extreme significance as a factor of trustworthiness (Patton, 2015). Consequently, the research used semi-structured interviews, using open-ended interview questions. This approach ensured consistency in data collection and facilitated a comprehensive exploration of the topic under investigation. Ensuring data integrity was of utmost importance, necessitating the implementation of comprehensive measures to safeguard the accuracy and reliability of the data.

For the research to effectively fulfill its objectives, it is crucial to ensure the precise and correct analysis of the data. According to Creswell (2007), the attainment of accuracy may be attained by using confirming procedures and triangulation. Yin (2009) stated that four criteria may be used to assess the quality of case studies. The primary emphasis of these endeavors concentrated on credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability, as outlined by Burkholder et al. (2016).

Credibility

The most significant element in determining trustworthiness in a research study is credibility. The fundamental idea behind this motion is to establish a clear connection between the conclusions of the research study and the real world, therefore substantiating the validity of the research findings. Member checking and triangulation are often the most employed qualitative case study research strategies to establish credibility. To enhance the comprehensiveness, depth, and reliability of my results from the semi-structured interviews, surveys, and literature reviews, I triangulated data from several sources.

According to Creswell (2013), credibility is the attribute of being trusted to determine the validity and veracity of research results in order to carry out data and participant verification. Ensuring trustworthiness is vital in research, and it is critical to demonstrate that the conclusions drawn in the research derive from multiple sources. It is also crucial to appropriately acknowledge and provide detailed descriptions of the relationship between the research queries, the approach taken for data acquisition, and the method used to derive conclusions. The absence of credibility renders research meaningless (Leung, 2015).

First and foremost, it was of utmost importance to obtain the participants' agreement to participate in the research. Triangulation, which employs multiple methodologies to establish a full comprehension of the subject matter, was also considered (Patton, 2015). Peer-reviewed literature was used in the study. Member checking is a method used to investigate the validity and reliability of findings. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), the use of the member check approach is recommended to ensure an accurate representation of the obtained data. Member checking, often referred to as participant or respondent validation, is the process of returning the data or findings to the participants in order to verify their correctness. Hence, I used this approach to assess the accuracy of the data gathered, as well as to determine if conclusions that arise among stakeholders are related to one another or accurately represent mutual perspectives.

In addition, I examined the transcripts of each participant to verify the authenticity and consistency of the previously provided material. It is important to ensure that research methodologies adhere to ethical principles, and it is crucial to include ethical concerns to mitigate possible prejudice (Teddlie & Yu, 2007). Furthermore, it is essential to note that all findings derived from the study were effectively communicated to the client organization at each phase, fostering a sense of transparency throughout the research process.

Transferability

The concept of transferability asserts that the various forms of data gathered have a substantial impact on the dependability and replicability of research (Peräkylä, 1997). Leung (2015) defined transferability as the extent to which one provides evidence that the findings of a qualitative research study can be applied to other contexts, situations, periods, and populations. These aspects contributed to the improvement of the transferability of the study's results and the potential for duplicating the research in a comparable environment or context. Throughout the duration of this investigation, a comprehensive methodological description was used to effectively outline the research setting and procedure to facilitate the transferability of this study. This information provided guidance for those who are interested in adapting the study's research results in different contexts.

Dependability

Babbie (2017) asserted that dependability has significant relevance as a criterion in qualitative research. Consequently, it will be crucial to ensure the use of the previously referenced analytics methods as intended. All data collection and analysis were subjected to review. Dependability pertains to the enduring consistency and dependability of study results, as well as the methodology used in conducting the research (Ravitch & Carl, 2021). The methodology and results of this study can serve as a foundation for performing a comparable investigation, perhaps leading to enhanced results in other studies.

Confirmability

Confirmability is a crucial aspect of trustworthiness that is necessary, especially for qualitative student researchers. Burkholder et al. (2016) stated that although research subjectivity is acknowledged in qualitative research, its methodologies must be grounded in verifiable processes, analyses, and conclusions. Confirmability is a crucial aspect in establishing the credibility and trustworthiness of a study's results. This criterion relates to the level of trust that may be placed in a researcher's results, which originate from the narratives and opinions provided by the participants. It focuses on minimizing the influence of the researcher's possible biases.

To ensure confirmability and to minimize the influence of personal biases, the conclusions of my study were derived mainly from the narratives and information provided by the participants. I provided a comprehensive overview of the data collecting and analytic methodologies used in this study and a clarification of the method used for interpreting the collected data. I also provided justification for the coding approach that I used in analyzing the concepts obtained from the conducted interviews.

Ethical Procedures

In this section, I described the processes that were followed to guarantee the ethical protection of the study's participants regarding recruitment, consent, privacy, client authorization, and Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval. As part of the requirements and guidelines of the IRB for authorization to conduct the study, all participants were given consent papers that educated them on the confidentiality of the study's research. Upon obtaining permission, I started the process of data gathering. In addition, for both virtual and Zoom interviews, participants were provided with assurance of privacy and confidentiality.

The study protocol and informed consent included detailed information on privacy and confidentiality. Participants were permitted to disengage from the study at any time if they did not desire to continue. To protect the research participants, safeguards were put in place. The information acquired is securely stored on my personal computer, which is password-protected, and only I have access to it.

Participants were adults employed by CTS. The research does not include any minors. No identifying information, such as name, age, address, or gender, was collected. Only pertinent data that aided in the exploration of participants' viewpoints on the topic of the research was gathered. Participants were given pseudonyms, and individually identifying information was excluded throughout the coding process.

Summary

In Section 3, I described the research methodology that was used to identify possibilities for securing long-term financing for CTS. The criteria for selecting participants, methods, tools for analysis, and safeguards were all provided in the methodology. The approach was defined to identify the data sources that were utilized to answer the practice-focused research question. The methods that were used, along with other pertinent information about the data-gathering process, were described. In addressing the research technique that was employed for this study, the developing practices that informed the conceptual framework were considered.

I used a qualitative semi-structured interview protocol to investigate CTS team members' perspectives on identifying potential partners and donors. I also used NVivo software for qualitative data analysis to facilitate the analysis process. This section detailed the trustworthiness strategies and ethical procedures that were implemented in this study. The dataset included archival and operational data, as well as data obtained from the participants during interviews. The researcher's and client organization's roles were also addressed, as were proposed strategies to mitigate any biases.

Section 4 includes the study's results, implications, and recommendations for CTS based on the data obtained. I also highlight any limitations that influenced the study and provide suggestions for future relevant research. In the following section, I not only describe and evaluate the obtained data but also provide a conclusion and recommendations based on this analysis.

Section 4: Results and Recommendations

The primary objective of this case study was to analyze the methods employed by NPOs to attain financial stability and to collect data for the formulation of a strategic resource development plan encompassing funding avenues such as government grants, fundraising, community partnerships, and corporate sponsorships. The research emphasized the need for diversifying sources of finance. Scholarly literature showed a correlation between the viability of NPOS and the funding sources they depend on for their operational revenue (Hung & Hager, 2018). I addressed the gap in knowledge between the financial soundness of NPOs and the impact of government support. The research highlighted the need to make substantial adaptations to evolving circumstances to maintain a certain degree of stability and resilience that is crucial for organizations to achieve financial stability. The research results may be beneficial for other NPOs because the suggestions may provide insights on how to attract and maintain possible donors and community partners to aid in their endeavors to obtain dependable support. I found that adopting a varied financing method was both practical and appealing to the participants. In this section. I discuss the data collection process, the data analysis technique, the findings, the deliverables and recommendations, evidence of trustworthiness, and the study's strengths and weaknesses.

Data Collection

Qualitative data were gathered from 10 individual interviews with research participants and by administering nine anonymous surveys. Every interviewee was asked a series of 10 questions. As a result of geographical and scheduling constraints, each participant consented to engage in an audio-recorded interview via the web-based platform Zoom. The recorded interviews varied in duration, with an average time of 30 minutes to address the 10 interview questions (see Appendix B). Online survey data were collected using the online survey platform Typeform. The survey contained nine questions, including a combination of open-ended inquiries and binary yes or no questions (see Appendix A).

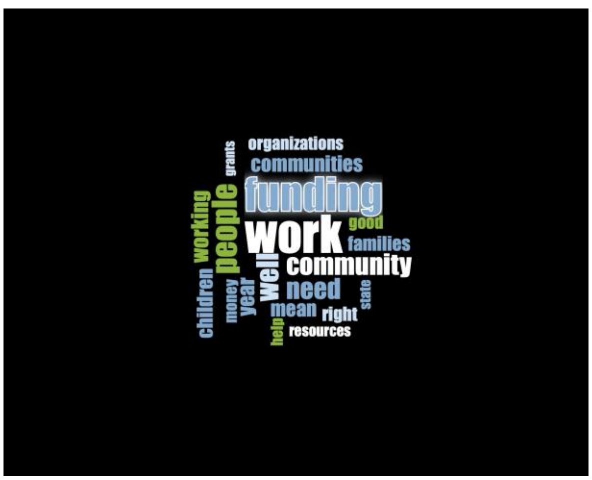
Data Analysis

The interview results were transcribed and coded for thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns and gather empirical evidence that captured the viewpoints of the team members who support and implement the supplemental educational programs for CTS. The participants' perspectives may assist CTS leaders in comprehending the effects of the unpredictability of financing on programming. An initial examination of transcriptions from the interviews was conducted, and transcripts were distributed to interviewees within 48 hours of the interview. The process of inductive coding was used to generate codes derived from the responses provided by respondents. The use of inductive coding enabled me to discern patterns in the data. With inductive coding, a user can code a written unit that is close to the data without relying on any theory, design, or idea (Chandra & Shang, 2019). Participants approved the transcripts, and they were carefully examined to find recurring themes. The common themes discovered were the need for long-term funding sources, the expansion of partnerships, and the establishment of relationships with political figures who make education-related policy decisions.

Transcripts were imported to NVivo software to facilitate comprehensive coding and analysis. Within NVivo, every transcript underwent evaluation, and color coding was conducted to facilitate the visual detection of patterns. For categorization and analysis, each transcript underwent multiple readings to guarantee that no details were overlooked. The categories used for coding were funding, grants, partnerships, and collaboration (see Figure 1). Then, analysis of trends, repetition of themes, and the evaluation of keywords, such as funding, that emerged between participant responses and study questions was conducted using NVivo.

Figure 1

Most Frequently Used Words in the Interview Transcripts



The survey findings were transcribed and evaluated using the analytical tools offered by the platform. Every transcript underwent a thorough review consisting of multiple evaluations to ensure no significant themes or patterns were overlooked. I checked for discrepancies in data by searching for outliers and looking for patterns; no discrepant cases were found.

Findings

The research yielded four key findings related to the research question:

- Identification of organizational strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.
- Identification of additional funding sources and resources for local partners to establish self-sufficiency.
- A need for expansion of partnerships and volunteer recruitment within the community.
- The necessity for building relationships with local and state politicians to influence policy decisions relating to education.

Survey results and archival data were used to identify the organizational strengths, weaknesses, threats, and opportunities, which fell under the framework of strategic planning. The data collected from Survey Questions 1, 2, and 9 offered valuable insights into the strengths of the organization. Survey Question 1 asked "What programs and activities do community members find appealing about your organization? What is your perspective, as a decision maker for this organization, on working collaboratively with the other organizations and communities involved, from planning through implementation? This question identified three main themes. All survey participants responded that community engagement events were one of the activities that community members found appealing about CTS. The second most common response was educational programs, with a large percentage of participants including this in their responses. Many agreed that the resources provided by CTS were the most appealing activity. Most respondents shared the same sentiments on how successfully CTS engages with the community. One survey respondent expressed that one of the things that makes CTS appealing is its whole-child focus and how the organization provides access to things not typically available in rural communities.

Survey question 2 asked “What distinctive expertise, talent, or resources does the team possess?” All participants agreed that the team’s extensive experience, education, and skill sets were the top three in the categories of expertise, talent, and resources present. Several respondents expressed that the team’s diversity contributes to the team’s ability to access local and statewide networks and connections. Survey Question 9 asked “What aspects of your organization make you the proudest? What do you like to boast about when you speak about your team?” All respondents expressed that their greatest pride in their work is empowering families. In addition, 78% of those surveyed agreed that the most gratifying aspect of their work is witnessing its impact, while 56% attributed their pride to the commitment and dedication of the entire team.

The information garnered from Survey Questions 3 and 4 provided significant information regarding the organization’s vulnerabilities. Survey Question 3 addressed this: “What are the factors impeding the team’s ability to achieve desired goals and fulfill necessary tasks in programming?” According to 67% of the respondents, the team’s inability to complete essential programming tasks and reach intended targets is caused by the unpredictability of present financing resources and a lack of funding. A large percentage of respondents also cited capacity and workload as the second issue affecting the team’s ability to do necessary activities and reach desired objectives in programming.

One respondent stated that working remotely in rural areas isolates the team and impedes their ability to network at a greater level with others in the community. Survey Question 4 sought the following information: “Do you believe your organization effectively engages a sufficient number of individuals with its current resources?” A significant percentage of respondents thought that the organization failed to engage an adequate number of people with its existing resources.

The data obtained from Survey Questions 5 and 6 yielded additional details into the susceptibilities of the organization. Survey Question 5 asked “How can the team turn their strengths into opportunities?” Most team members felt that leveraging partnerships and capitalizing on funding opportunities through networking and communication is a strength that can be transformed into an opportunity. Survey Question 6 focused on the following: “What strategies may be used to effectively communicate the narrative of the organization to the community while also distinguishing it from other entities in order to attract new partners and donors?” A majority of participants suggested that increased brand awareness and collaboration could promote the organization’s message in the community and distinguish it from other institutions.

Survey Questions 7 and 8 provided information about threats to the organization. Survey Question 7 requested insights on threats to the organization: “What factors contributed to the vulnerability of your organization?” In line with previous responses, 78% of those completing the survey answered that the lack of stable funding was the greatest threat to the organization. These findings are consistent with Cheng and Yang’s (2018) research, which found that nonprofits adopt alternative funding strategies when public spending cuts are gradual, and these tactics may temporarily provide resources for the continuation of services. Although these reallocation methods address the gap in government funding, they do so at the cost of long-term organizational viability and effectiveness (Cheng & Yang, 2018).

Some respondents indicated that conflicts within the organization are also a threat to the sustainability of the organization. Survey Question 8 asked "Who or what might trigger future issues? Are any standards, policies, or legislation changing that could negatively impact us?" Most of those surveyed asserted that recent state policies and laws could adversely impact the organization. The perceived attack on public education has already significantly impacted previous funding and could influence future state grants. About half of those surveyed expressed concern that the potential loss of funds might provide challenges in sustaining programs in the future. All survey respondents agreed that planning is critical to long-term success and that forecasting for the future is impossible when financing is unpredictable.

Archival data reviews indicated that although the organization experienced a significant increase in funding during the COVID-19 crisis, funding decreased by 11% in the program year 2023, resulting in cuts to early childhood and school-age programs (State Director, Personal Communication, March 2023). The interview data yielded three further discoveries using the resource dependence theory. Identifying supplementary funding sources and resources to assist local stakeholders in attaining self-sufficiency was deemed the primary objective of formulating a resource development plan by eight survey respondents. Consistently expressed themes by the interviewees were apprehensions regarding the organization's future and an urgent need for long-term, stable financial support. Many stated that they are worried about the current financial state of the organization and feel as if they are in limbo regarding the status of future programs. The second focus suggested by interviewees for the resource development plan was to devise ways to enhance collaboration within the community. This would foster community engagement and provide access to supplementary resources within the community.

The third suggestion based on the interview data was to cultivate relationships with local and state legislators with the aim of helping shape and influence educational policy decisions. The results align with a study conducted by Wilson (2023), which indicated that the implementation of a resource development plan based on a strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats analysis is vital in securing funding and that NPOs can contribute to the promotion of social change and community equity by proactively strategizing, allocating resources, and managing finances. The findings of the current study also demonstrated the potential generalizability of the approach to resource development plans beyond the scope of this particular NPO. In pursuit of their missions, other NPOs might find it possible to implement resource development plans, thereby fostering social change across nonprofit groups. This strategy may generate ideas that create a boost in revenue that enhances the abilities and funding assets of the NPO and, by so doing, bolster its capacity to fulfill its mission and effectively influence positive social change.

Deliverables and Recommendations

There are several recommendations that the organization should consider to survive and thrive. Results indicated that the CTS team had recognized the need for additional strategies for the potential creation of a resource development plan in the future. The findings also highlighted the organization's need for financial and human resources dedicated to fundraising activities. The recommendations memo will be provided to CTS (see Appendix F). The following suggestions are provided to assist CTS in analyzing internal and external factors to enhance the probability of expanding programming and achieving sustainable financing sources. The financial stability solutions used by NPOs are critical for achieving effective outcomes (Ilyas et al., 2020)

Recommendation 1

The organization should contemplate establishing a collaborative task force that incorporates educational partners to ascertain supplementary financial avenues and resources within the community. The data collected from this workgroup would be valuable in supporting school partners in achieving self-sufficiency and devising a strategy to maximize the funds provided by CTS by leveraging additional community resources. The goal would be to identify local businesses and organizations that could provide noncash and in-kind donations that could be used in programs. After identifying these resources, CTS should compile a resource database for partners.

Recommendation 2

CTS should expand its community partnerships by employing various social media channels to boost exposure in the community for marketing and communication, ultimately increasing brand awareness. The capacity to quickly share with individuals, companies, and other stakeholders may elevate the organization's image as engaging and inclusive. Strategic social media campaigns may effectively enhance brand awareness and grant the organization the opportunity to interact with existing and potential partners effectively. A study done in 2021 revealed that social media has a substantial and beneficial impact on awareness and community engagement (Albanna et al., 2022). Increasing community partnerships would enhance accessibility to potential volunteers and resources.

Recommendation 3

CTS should investigate and identify the best strategy to connect with those who make education-related policy decisions. CTS might benefit from establishing regular communication with local and state elected officials on program accomplishments and reach. Through the engagement of elected officials and the establishment of a comprehensive strategy to include them in events such as stakeholder meetings, CTS will successfully showcase transparency and address politicians' concerns over maintaining funding for programs. Cultivating enduring, constructive connections with legislators would provide CTS the chance to offer valuable insights and viewpoints on policies that have a significant influence on public education.

Further study on strategic and resource development planning in NPOs could be beneficial and enhance our understanding of the need for financial stability in nonprofits. Subsequent investigations might explore the feasibility of adopting a resource development plan to address or preempt economic challenges, consequently fostering positive social change by safeguarding the sustainability of nonprofits and enabling them to continue providing services to society.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

I obtained authorization from Walden University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) and my committee members to advance to the data collection and analysis phase of my Professional Administrative Study (PAS). I collaborated with my committee throughout this phase of the process. I relied on Walden's support and library resources to find relevant and appropriate information for my research. The required consensus and approval will be obtained through each stage of the capstone process. Prior to data collection, all documents, surveys, and questionnaires were vetted and approved by the committee members and IRB. The IRB process ensured that no harm would result from the study and that Walden's professional and ethical research standards would be upheld. No individuals were harmed in the completion of this study, and there was no disclosure of confidential or personal data. The research did not include any individuals considered at-risk or vulnerable or minors. The response rate of participants was within the approved range of the study.

The study results are subject to the analysis and interpretation of the researcher. Using a well-known risk management methodology effectively reduced the influence of subjective judgment and biases. Memberchecking was used to ensure the accuracy of the interview responses. There were no preconceived ideas, themes, opinions, or assumptions. Archival data and evidence notes are encrypted and securely stored. All requested information was acquired via an explicit consent procedure involving the relevant parties. The data and information used in this study were acquired from reputable sources and have undergone peer review. A wide variety of information sources were used during this study, and careful attention was given to providing accurate citations for each.

Strengths and Limitations of the Study

The research methods selected for this study facilitate the potential for straightforward replication. Rigorous analysis and meticulous data acquisition methods guaranteed the comprehension of data and discoveries. Every piece of data that has been compiled and shared is above reproach. Every source utilized in the data analysis was authenticated and verified for accuracy. The findings provided to the client organization are instrumental in shaping CTS' prospective strategies for securing long-term funding. There were minimal costs associated with the study. The level of involvement and engagement from the client organization and participants were favorable. Credibility has been added to the study based on the factors mentioned above. The research question was addressed affirmatively, and the recommendations will be presented.

The scope of the research was limited to personnel inside a specific community and centered on a single program component. The diverse range of expertise and understanding could distort the analysis. Novice participants may possess little or insufficient knowledge of the study subject, whereas experienced staff members have a greater understanding of financing. Additional constraints included the possible partiality of the participants themselves. This study contributes to bridging the gap in the literature on the financial stability of NPOs. The findings demonstrate interest by staff members in identifying additional strategies to maximize current resources and sources of long-term funding. Although there was an overwhelming response regarding the prospect of generating ideas for additional revenue to support CTS's mission, it is important to note that the data collected was exclusively for academic study. Subsequent studies may contemplate the resource development plan's suitability to evaluate its effect on organizational framework and structure fully.

Summary

Section 4 outlined the research results and highlighted the commonalities that arose during the phase of compiling and analyzing data. The section also detailed the deliverables and recommendations, as well as the evidence of trustworthiness and the strengths and limitations of the study. Section 4 proposed subsequent actions to assist the organization in its aspirations towards identifying long-term funding streams. These recommendations were based on four key findings:

- Identification of organizational strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.
- Identification of additional funding sources and resources for local partners to establish self-sufficiency.
- A need for expansion of partnerships and volunteer recruitment within the community.
- The necessity for building relationships with local and state politicians to influence policy decisions relating to education.

The dissemination plan for the study's findings, the target audience for this research, and the study's conclusions are all detailed in Section 5.

Section 5: Dissemination Plan and Conclusion

Dissemination Plan

A recommendation memorandum (see Appendix F) detailing the findings of the study will be submitted to CTS once the study receives final approval from Walden University. The recommendation memo highlights significant findings and recommendations that the organization can consider to assist in achieving long-term sustainability. The study explored the viewpoints of team members concerning the optimal structure of a resource development plan that could aid CTS in its pursuit of reliable funding sources. Once the report is provided to the organization, I will be accessible to answer any questions pertaining to the recommendations or the research. In addition, a brief summary of the main findings will be distributed to interview participants once Walden University approves the final study.

The study's target audience consists of leaders and board members of NPOs who express an interest in investigating options for funding diversification. Nonprofit professionals and others engaged in supporting these organizations' missions may also find this study's findings of interest. The study's results could be beneficial in strategic planning, as well as in research in fields with an interest in the sustainability of NPOs. Several gaps in existing knowledge were identified in the current study, indicating the necessity for additional research. The research has significance in terms of its potential impact on positive social change. As a result of these findings, organizations may see the benefit of beginning the process of developing a resource development plan to discover reliable funding sources.

Conclusions

The objective of this qualitative study was to determine the ideal structure for a research development plan that would facilitate the identification and pursuit of long-term sustainability for supplemental education programs in a rural community. The findings were used to create a recommendation memo to CTS. The research question for this study was the following: From the perspective of the organization's state team, how can the organization best structure a resource development plan for expanding supplemental education programs?

This study provided evidence that there is a limited body of knowledge concerning the sustainability of NPOs. The findings also suggested that the organization should prioritize engaging with partners to establish ways to supplement the funding received from CTS to implement programming. This may enable partners to attain self-reliance and give them the ability to maximize the funding received from the organization. Evidence from the study indicated that CTS should contemplate broadening its partnerships and volunteer recruitment efforts within the community. The results highlighted the need for CTS to overhaul its approach to cultivating relationships with local and state legislators by redirecting its attention toward establishing enduring, positive relationships with the individuals responsible for shaping policy. These results may prompt the organization to pursue the creation of a resource development plan or similar financial planning strategy in its effort to identify dependable, long-term funding.

Summary

The primary objective of this study was to identify ways the organization could best approach creating a resource development plan. Funding instability has impeded the organization's efforts as change agents to reach its goal of sustainable programming. This study demonstrated that implementing a resource development plan may be a feasible alternative for NPOs to identify sustainable, long-term funding sources to support their missions. If an NPO chooses to embark on establishing such a plan by including input from community partners, it may discover funding sources that were previously unknown. Obtaining consistent and lasting funding could enable the organization to influence social change further.

Although there may be situations in which resource development planning is suitable, its implementation should be undertaken only with meticulous deliberation and planning. In the proper conditions, a resource development plan could offer an NPO strategies and guidance toward securing the desired funding streams, thereby assisting the organization in realizing its objective and attaining sustainability. The current study determined that the organization should prioritize strengthening community collaborations and partnerships with policymakers as initial steps in developing a resource development plan and securing long-term funding for program sustainability.

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Appendix A: Survey Questions

1. What programs and activities do community members find appealing about your organization? What is your perspective, as a decision-maker for this organization, on working collaboratively with the other organizations and communities involved, from planning through implementation?
2. What distinctive expertise, talent, or resources does the team possess?
3. What are the factors impeding the team's ability to achieve desired goals and fulfill necessary tasks in programming?
4. Do you believe your organization effectively engages a sufficient number of individuals with its current resources?
5. How can the team turn their strengths into opportunities?
6. What strategies may be used to effectively communicate the narrative of the organization to the community while also distinguishing it from other entities in order to attract new partners and donors?
7. What factors contribute to the vulnerability of your organization?
8. Who or what might trigger future issues? Are any standards, policies, or legislation changing that could negatively impact us?
9. What aspects of your organization make you the proudest? What do you like to boast about when you speak about your team?

Appendix B: Interview Questions

1. How do you feel about the current financial status of the organization?
2. What is your perspective, as a decision-maker for this organization, on working collaboratively with the other organizations and communities involved, from planning through implementation?
3. Do you believe that the Tennessee team is accomplishing its mission and vision sufficiently, and if so, why?
4. Do you believe the program receives the necessary funding to accomplish its mission and fulfill its functions?
5. Please describe the benefits and drawbacks of collaborating with other entities and communities engaged in providing resources and support to families.
6. What obstacles do you think stand in the way of working together and establishing enduring relationships with other community organizations?
7. How critical is it for the organization to secure long-term funding? Why?
8. What resources are required to keep existing programs going?
9. Do you have any suggestions for potential donors or partners?
10. Are you aware of any grant opportunities that the team would be interested in?

Appendix C: Invitation to Participate in a Research Study

Invitation to Participate in a Research Study

The most significant problem that most nonprofits face is securing sustainable funding to ensure the implementation of services and programs. You are invited to participate in important research aimed at creating a resource development plan for a non-profit organization seeking to achieve financial stability to sustain supplemental education programs in our community. For this study, you are invited to describe your experiences about implementing supplemental education programs in rural communities with unpredictable sources of funding. You will be asked about your experiences so that the organization is able to create an achievable plan to meet the programmatic needs of the community.

About the study:

- Complete a 30-minute online survey.
- Complete a 30–60-minute Zoom interview that will be audiorecorded (no videorecording)
- You can complete the online survey or be interviewed, or both.
- To protect your privacy, the published study will not share any names or details that identify you.

Volunteers must meet these requirements:

- employees of the organization
- responsible for implementing rural education programs.
- responsible for program budget decisions.

This study is part of the doctoral study for LaTia Watson, a doctoral student at Walden University. Surveys will take place at a time of your convenience through an online survey. It is suggested that the survey be completed in a private location to ensure the confidentiality of your responses.

Appendix D: Client Organization Recommendation Memo

RECOMMENDATION MEMORANDUM
TO: CTS
FROM: LATIA WATSON
RE: Research Study Findings and Recommendations
Date: February 14, 2024

I am excited to present the results of this research investigation, which aimed to assess the feasibility of creating a resource development plan to increase the revenue streams of CTS. I would like to express my gratitude to the organization and its staff for their collaboration and assistance in facilitating this research. I have gained further insights into the potential contributions of resource development planning to the area of nonprofit funding research. One of the organizations most significant issues is the lack of a consistent funding source. The organization’s ability to expand services to rural families is limited by these funding issues. The organization could benefit from looking into alternate strategies to find resources for programming and to continue fulfilling its mission.

This qualitative research used case study methods to answer this research question: From the perspective of the organization’s state team, how can the organization best structure a resource development plan for expanding supplemental education programs? The case study technique was used to gather data via surveys and interviews with key organizational stakeholders. This research was limited to personnel within a specific community and centered on a single program area, supplementary education programs. The varying levels of expertise and experience in nonprofits may have influenced the results of the analysis. Participants with fewer years of nonprofit work experience may possess less knowledge about nonprofit funding, while experienced staff have a greater understanding of the ebbs and flows of nonprofit funding. Additional limitations included participant bias.

The study produced significant results relevant to the research issue. Through the survey results, the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of the organization were identified. Creating a resource development plan might meet the organization’s aim of discovering additional funding sources to ensure sustainability. The results advise examining the organization’s current strategies. To improve outreach, recruitment, growth, and sustainability, the organization should examine and rethink its community approaches. This involves cultivating constructive relationships with policymakers.

80% of those interviewed articulated concerns pertaining to the future of the organization and a pressing need for enduring, reliable financial backing. Results indicated that assisting partners in identifying supplementary funding sources and resources locally may aid in partners achieving self-sufficiency and reduce the strain on the organization’s resources. The consideration of a resource development plan may generate ideas of how to capitalize on existing community resources and could improve their ability to attain diversified funding sources.

I am available to answer any questions you may have about the recommendations found here and to provide assistance with the next steps.