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Strategies African American Women Leaders Use to Promote Charitable Giving to Nonprofit Organizations

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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
2025

Abstract

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MBA, DeVry University, 2016

BS, Florida A&M University, 2005

Consulting Capstone Research Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

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Abstract

Nonprofit organizations led by African American women face persistent challenges in achieving operational success and financial sustainability. When nonprofit leaders fail to implement effective strategies to engage and motivate diverse donors to make significant charitable donations, they could limit their organization's capacity to fulfill its mission, which in turn affects the community. The purpose of this qualitative single-case study was to explore the strategies that some African American women leaders used to increase donor engagement and improve fundraising effectiveness. The study was grounded in the conceptual frameworks of the Baldrige Excellence Framework, McKinsey 7-S, and servant leadership theories. Data were collected by conducting semistructured interviews with five nonprofit leaders based in a nonprofit organization in the south Atlantic region of the United States. Interpretation of the findings involved thematic analysis, methodological triangulation, and member checking. The five key themes that were identified were (a) trust-building to demonstrate authenticity, (b) strategic engagement to employ cultural messaging to improve donor outreach, (c) visionary leadership to align practices with community needs, (d) community-centered engagement to prioritize engagement and partnerships, and (e) data-driven decision making to track progress and promote sustainability. A key recommendation is to use strategic dashboards to track revenue, enhance donor retention, and manage data. Implications for positive social change include the potential for African American women leaders to engage communities more effectively, advance equity, and strengthen trust, thereby fostering equitable resource distribution through inclusive and sustainable nonprofit practices.

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Dedication

I dedicate this study to the cherished souls who have illuminated my path and fueled my aspirations. To my three daughters, Meredith Sey, Christal Sey, and Lois Sey: Your unwavering love, patience, and understanding have guided and shaped the labyrinth of academia. Your presence has been my constant joy and motivation, propelling me forward with each step.

To my beloved wife, Dr. Judith Sey: Your boundless wisdom, encouragement, and unwavering belief in my abilities have been the cornerstone of my success. Your steadfast support has been my anchor in moments of doubt, and your love has fueled my determination to persevere. In the loving memory of my late father, Matthew Kwesi Sey, and my godmother, Nana Yaa Nkrumah Densua, your legacies of resilience, perseverance, and unwavering faith inspire and drive me every day. Though you are no longer with us, your spirit remains a guiding force, pushing me to strive for greater heights.

Moreover, to the Almighty God: Your infinite grace, mercy, and strength have sustained me through every challenge and triumph. Your divine presence has been my refuge and strength, guiding me through the darkest nights and illuminating the path to victory.

Acknowledgments

I express my heartfelt gratitude to all those who supported me throughout this journey and profoundly appreciate their enduring support, encouragement, and love. I thank my mother, Florence Asare, whose selfless care of my youngest daughter allowed me to focus on my studies. Your unwavering support has been my rock throughout this process.

I am immensely grateful to my children, family, and friends, who formed an integral part of my motivation team and listened whenever needed. I owe a profound debt of gratitude to my chair, Dr. Rocky J. Dwyer, whose tireless review, encouragement, and guidance as the leader of my committee were valuable. Your dedication to excellence were a source of inspiration.

Equally, I thank Dr. Meridith Wentz, my second committee member, for her insightful advice and valuable suggestions, which have greatly enriched this study by providing a different perspective and enhancing the research.

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Section 1: Foundation of the Project

Background of the Problem

Nonprofit organizational leaders play a pivotal role in addressing societal issues, relying heavily on effective fundraising strategies for sustainability and social impact (Branche & Ford, 2022). The literature indicates the importance of gender equality and women's empowerment, with women leaders in business reinforcing commitment to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and contributing uniquely to philanthropic efforts (Beloskar et al., 2024; Saeed et al., 2023). African American women have shaped their approaches to philanthropy based on their cultural and social identities, enriching fundraising practices and enhancing the impact of social change (Branche & Ford, 2022). Affluent households also played a significant role in charitable activities, with financial contributions and volunteerism shaping issue-based philanthropy (Osili et al., 2021, 2023).

However, despite these contributions, nonprofit organizations (NPOs) have faced challenges in volunteer engagement, resource constraints, and adaptive fundraising strategies amid external disruptions like the COVID-19 pandemic (Faulk et al., 2021; Van Steenburg et al., 2022). These challenges highlight the need for adaptive leadership and tailored financial strategies to sustain NPOs (Ilyas et al., 2020; Lu et al., 2022). I explored African American women nonprofit leaders' strategies to increase and drive charitable donations from diverse stakeholders, resulting in inequitable and/or insufficient funding for their mission. The background has outlined the issue, and now I will focus on the problem statement.

Business Problem Consulting Focus and Project Purpose

The specific business problem is that some African American women leaders of NPOs lack effective strategies to engage and motivate diverse donors to contribute significant charitable donations. Therefore, the purpose of this qualitative single-case study was to explore what effective strategies did African American women leaders in NPOs use to effectively engage and motivate diverse donors to contribute significant charitable donations. I adopted a qualitative method using a single-case study design.

In this capstone research project, I focused on African American women leaders in NPOs seeking to improve diverse donor engagement strategies. The target population for this study comprised African American women actively involved in fundraising and philanthropy within NPOs in the South Atlantic region of the United States. I used a purposive sampling method to choose participants, considering their involvement in particular NPOs and their fundraising experience. Saunders et al. (2019) highlighted the practicality of this method, intending to collect varied insights and ensure structured data saturation within a sample size of at least five African American women leaders from different NPOs and facilitating access to participants involved leveraging established networks within the nonprofit sector. The primary method for data collection entailed conducting in-depth semistructured interviews with the chosen participants. Additionally, reviewing relevant organizational documents related to fundraising strategies will complement the interview data. The selected participants directly align with the specific business problem, possessing firsthand experience in donor engagement strategies within the nonprofit sector. There are three theoretical frameworks used in this study, the

Baldrige Excellence Framework (BEF), the McKinsey 7S framework, and servant leadership.

BEF is recognized for enhancing organizational performance and quality management (Haktanır, 2020; Wan & Purba, 2021). The McKinsey 7S framework was initially introduced by Peters and Waterman in 1982, focusing on criteria that included simplicity, quality, customer focus, employee treatment, and persistence, which contribute to high-performance organizations. I used this framework to provide insights related to organizational alignment and strategy, which Parmer et al. (2023) previously noted is a best practice for researchers. Masfi and Sukartini (2022) described how the McKinsey 7S framework enables leaders to assess, develop, and evaluate their organizations and enhances their performance to achieve sustainable effectiveness by meeting physical, financial, and social targets. In addition, servant leadership theory (Greenleaf, 1977) has remained integral to the approach to client leaders in this study exhibit, since Greenleaf emphasized the importance of people, customer care, innovation, and leadership. This theory is aligned with the broader scope of the McKinsey 7S framework and contributed to organizational excellence models like the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) business excellence model (BEM) and the Malcolm Baldridge excellence model (Ghafoor et al., 2020).

Research Question

What effective strategies did African American women leaders in NPOs use to effectively engage and motivate diverse donors to contribute significant charitable donations?

Assumptions and Limitations

Assumptions

Assumptions are fundamental beliefs that represent what the researcher believes as accurate without concrete proof (Leedy & Ormrod, 2023). The first assumption in this study was a misconception that African American women leaders in NPOs are actively engaged in fundraising efforts. The second assumption was that evaluating strategy effectiveness considered donor retention rates, long-term engagement, and qualitative assessments. The third assumption was that the cultural backgrounds of African American women leaders significantly influenced their choice of engagement strategies. The fourth assumption was that donors acted out of altruistic motivation. The fifth assumption was that online fundraising platforms effectively reached a broad audience.

Limitations

Limitations refers to potential weaknesses that researchers cannot control, often associated with the chosen research design, constraints of statistical models, funding limitations, or other factors (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2019). The first limitation is that the study is focused on successful NPO leaders, excluding unsuccessful or struggling NPO leaders. The second limitation is that I collected data from a limited number of participants who resided in the South Atlantic region of the United States.

The third limitation was obtaining informed consent and protecting sensitive information, which were critical ethical considerations. The fourth limitation was that developing appropriate research protocols for interviews to identify and explore the strategies used by African American women in driving charitable donations is critical.

The fifth limitation was that ensuring the validity and transferability of the protocols is challenging, as well as adapting them to the participants' specific cultural context and experiences. The sixth limitation was conducting a comprehensive study on the strategies employed by African American women in driving charitable donations may require a significant amount of time for data collection, analysis, and interpretation. The last limitation was managing time constraints while ensuring the rigor and depth of the study can present a challenge.

Transition

In Section 1, I introduced the study's importance, background, and problem statement. I also provided an overview of African American women executives' effective fundraising strategies to increase and drive charitable donations from diverse stakeholders for their mission. I discussed improved performance management and long-term sustainability. I discussed the study's components, including the purpose, research questions, assumptions, and limitations. I discussed the pivotal role of NPO leaders in addressing social issues, as they can emphasize the significance of effective fundraising strategies for sustainability and impact, with a particular focus on the unique perspectives and approaches of African American women leaders. I also discussed the challenges within the nonprofit sector, such as engaging volunteers and devising robust fundraising strategies amid competition and economic shifts.

In Section 2, I will introduce the foundational aspects of the study. I will delve into relevant literature related to the topic, including an overview of nonprofit fundraising by African American Women leaders. I will provide an overview and rationale for the

BEF, which will serve as the conceptual framework for this study. Furthermore, I will highlight the fundraising strategies used by drawing insights from recent scholarly works. Additionally, I will discuss the challenges associated with fundraising by African American women leaders and strategies to overcome them.

In Section 3, I will provide a detailed and comprehensive description of my qualitative method, addressing project ethics, the research design, the defined population, the data collection process, and the sampling method. In this section, I will discuss data collection techniques, data analysis process, reliability, and validity for addressing study creditability and transferability. Finally, in Section 4, I will include a comprehensive analysis of the client organization's history, processes, and operations following the 2023-2024 BEF. This section will also provide an overview of the project research findings, the application to professional practice and social change, as well as recommendations.

Section 2: Literature Review of Business Consulting Topic

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

NPOs in the U.S. economy offer various social goods and services, making them a growing area of interest for management and strategy scholars (Luo & Kaul, 2019; Nonprofit Quarterly, 2020). NPOs significantly impact society, fostering community involvement, addressing social well-being gaps, and providing opportunities for marginalized minority interests (Shier et al., 2022). Nonprofit leaders are also engaged in social innovation and entrepreneurship, developing new programs and addressing societal needs through political advocacy. In this study, I explored what effective strategies did African American women leaders in NPOs use to effectively engage and motivate diverse donors to contribute significant charitable donations. Nonprofit leaders enhance civic capital, increasing social cohesion, reducing inequality, and improving outcomes for vulnerable populations. Nonprofit leaders engage with community members in three primary areas: bringing them together, creating awareness of relevant issues, and involving them in organizational processes (Shier et al., 2022).

Developing strategies to engage a diverse pool of donors is crucial for NPO leaders, particularly those led by African American women, to secure meaningful charitable contributions (Brown & Harris, 2022; Parker et al., 2024; Rose et al., 2020). Understanding and exploring these strategies within the context of leadership and fundraising methodologies are crucial for organizational success (Elumba, 2023). According to a Gartner survey, 90% of human resources executives acknowledged the

pivotal role of prioritizing human-centric aspects in leadership for success in contemporary workplaces (Baker & Zuech, 2022).

In contrast, leadership encompasses guiding and influencing individuals toward shared objectives through inspiration, motivation, fostering collaboration, and sound decision making (Pandey, 2023). A leader, therefore, serves as the embodiment of the organization (Costa et al., 2022), often conceptualized as the face of its brand, and actively contributes to the strategic actions and performance of the firm (Brown & Harris, 2022). Managers and leaders play distinct but complementary roles within organizations. While both are essential for an organization's success, their focus, approach, and impact differ. Managers are primarily concerned with overseeing the execution of strategic plans and ensuring that systems and structures are in place to achieve organizational objectives (Kotter et al., 2021). Managers concentrate on tasks, processes, and efficiency, functioning within established frameworks to accomplish specific goals (Kotter et al., 2021). They usually obtain authority through their title or position within the organizational hierarchy, and their effectiveness is frequently evaluated based on their capacity to achieve predefined targets and deadlines (Kotter et al., 2021).

Conversely, leaders are more concerned with influence, inspiration, and fostering a shared vision (Northouse, 2021). A leader focused on aligning people with the organization's mission and values, motivating them to achieve common goals. Leaders inspire trust and commitment through their charisma, vision, and ability to empower others (Northouse, 2021). As well, leaders often serve as mentors, coaches, and catalysts for change, driving innovation and adaptation in response to evolving circumstances.

While managers tend to operate within existing frameworks and maintain stability, leaders are more inclined to challenge the status quo and drive transformational change (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Managers focused on short-term results and operational efficiency, while leaders emphasized long-term strategic direction and organizational culture.

Business Problem Evidence Review

Nonprofit leaders face significant challenges in sustaining donor engagement and securing equitable funding, particularly in organizations led by African American women. Scholars highlight that nonprofits remain vulnerable to shifts in donor behavior, public policy changes, and the lingering effects of COVID-19, which increases the demand for more strategic and data-driven fundraising approaches (Van Steenburg, 2022). Research indicates that African American women leaders frequently operate under resource constraints and structural inequities that limit their capacity to establish long-term donor relationships (Davis, 2024). Reports document rising leadership burnout and underinvestment in organizations led by Black women. These findings underscore the urgency of developing effective donor engagement strategies (Nonprofit Quarterly, 2023). Studies on resilience demonstrate that nonprofits with diverse leadership structures, including those led by African American women, often “do more with less,” relying on adaptive capacity to survive funding inequities and economic instability (Mumford, 2025). Collectively, these findings demonstrate the existence and significance of the business problem this study addresses.

Business Topic Integrative Review and Analysis

Scholars have explored the strategies that nonprofit leaders employ to enhance donor engagement, demonstrating that effective communication, inclusivity, and innovation are essential. A comprehensive review of nonprofit marketing research suggests that digital engagement, targeted storytelling, and data-driven approaches are essential for attracting diverse donors and improving retention (Werke, 2024). Recent experimental studies have shown that the framing of appeals significantly influences donor behavior, with moral frames, such as fairness, care, and loyalty, increasing both contributions and engagement (Kim & Hemphill, 2025). Studies of digital platforms have highlighted the impact of social proof and momentum cues on shaping donor behavior during online fundraising campaigns (Dambanemuya & Horvát, 2021).

Integrating generative artificial intelligence (AI) into nonprofit fundraising can enhance operational efficiency, stimulate innovation, and provide competitive advantages. Generative AI tools empower organizations to automate content creation, personalize donor communications, and analyze donor behavior to refine and optimize fundraising strategies. Organizations that fail to adopt these technologies risk inefficiency, reduced funding, and missed opportunities to engage donors effectively. Balancing AI autonomy with human oversight is essential to maintaining ethical standards and preserving the personal donor experience, ensuring that technology supports rather than replaces meaningful human interaction (DonorSearch, 2024).

Together, these findings suggest that successful fundraising strategies integrate inclusive leadership approaches, evidence-based marketing practices, and emerging

technological tools. These insights provide valuable guidance for African American women leaders seeking to motivate diverse donors, sustain nonprofit growth, and leverage innovative approaches to remain competitive in the evolving philanthropic landscape.

Introduction

In the literature review, I explored nonprofit management, mainly focusing on African American women leaders and their strategies for engaging diverse donors and fostering charitable contributions. This review is organized to comprehensively explore the different aspects of nonprofit leadership, and the challenges African American women leaders face in the sector. It begins with an overview of NPOs in the U.S. economy and their impact on society, followed by a discussion of various theoretical frameworks that ground this study. For instance, Malcolm Baldrige's excellence framework and McKinsey's 7-S framework were applied as the primary and secondary frameworks. The third framework is the servant leadership theory (Greenleaf, 1977), which has remained integral to the approach of client leaders in this study.

In this review, I addressed the adaptive capabilities and challenges of nonprofit organizational leaders, particularly those led by African American women, and their strategies for driving charitable donations. In this literature review, I highlighted the unique fundraising approaches of organizations led by African American women, providing insights into servant leadership and the role of African American women leaders in community engagement and fundraising efforts.

Additionally, in this review, I explored the attributes, characteristics, and qualities of these organizations and their leaders, including their distinctive fundraising approaches and ability to navigate resource acquisition barriers. Key topics in the literature review included organizational resilience, the importance of leadership styles, and the effects of cultural, economic, and social dynamics on nonprofit management and sustainability. In this review, I also considered the role of fundraising, philanthropy, and governance in nonprofit success and sustainability. Through a thorough analysis of scholarly sources and peer-reviewed references, the review provided a comprehensive understanding of the experiences and strategies of African American women leaders in NPOs.

In the literature review, I ensured the quality of scholarship by focusing on peer-reviewed sources, which comprised approximately 85% of the references. These sources were identified using reputable academic databases such as EBSCOhost, which includes SAGE Journals, Public Policy and Administration, Business Source Premier, Political Science Complete, Business and Management, and Thoreau MultiDatabase Search.

Additional sources were found in databases such as ABI.INFORM Collection, Business Source Complete, SAGE Journals, American Economic Journal, financial management journal, National Center for Charitable Statistics, U.S Bureau of Labor Statistics, IRS.gov, National Institute of Standards and Technology, and other scholarly journals. In addition to using databases and academic sources, the literature review incorporated seminal works in the field and explored theories and frameworks relevant to the study. These include the BEF as primary, McKinsey's 7-S framework as secondary, and servant leadership theory. By drawing on diverse, high-quality sources, the review

provided a robust foundation for the study and ensured that the research was grounded in reputable scholarship. I searched the databases using a set of keywords carefully selected for their relevance to the research topic. These included *African American NPOs*, *Black women executives of NPOs*, *NPO innovations*, *African American NPO fundraising*, *nonprofit donors*, *fundraising strategies*, *NPO partnerships*, *NPO boards*, *NPO stakeholders*, *volunteering in NPOs*, *human resources in NPOs*, *inequities in Black NPOs*, *minority NPO challenges*, *government regulations*, *accountability and transparency*, *trust in NPOs and culture*, and *NPOs.*

Table 1 presents the statistics for the literature review, including (a) the total number of sources, (b) the number of peer-reviewed sources, (c) the number of sources published within 5 years of my graduation date of 2025, and (d) the percentage of sources published within 5 years of my graduation date relative to the total number of sources.

Table 1

Literature Review Sources

Source category	No.	%
Total	124	100
Peer-reviewed	105	85
Published between 2020 and 2025	96	77

Fundraising Strategies in Nonprofit Organizations

Nonprofit organizational leaders play a pivotal role in addressing societal issues, with effective fundraising strategies serving as the cornerstone of their sustainability and societal impact (Branche & Ford, 2022). A critical aspect of nonprofit leadership, particularly for African American women leaders, lies in engaging diverse donors,

fostering community relationships, and driving meaningful charitable contributions. These leaders uniquely shape their approaches to philanthropy based on their cultural and social identities, contributing significantly to developing tailored fundraising practices that support social change (Branche & Ford, 2022).

Fundraising and Gender Equality in Leadership

The literature on SDG 5 highlights the importance of gender equality and women's empowerment in leadership roles (Beloskar et al., 2024; Saeed et al., 2023). The presence of women in top management positions strengthens organizations' commitment to these goals, underscoring the role of women leaders in reinforcing such initiatives. African American women leaders have made notable contributions to philanthropy, reflecting their leadership and offering insights into how cultural and gender dynamics influence fundraising strategies (Beloskar et al., 2024).

Affluent Households and Philanthropy

Researchers have shown that affluent households contribute significantly to charitable activities, with their involvement shaping trends in nonprofit donations (Osili et al., 2021). In 2020, affluent households contributed 88.1% to philanthropic causes, with 30.4% actively volunteering. These households demonstrated a rising interest in issue-based philanthropy, with 43.6% indicating that specific issues influenced their donation decisions. Moreover, 8.7% of affluent householders focused on supporting social and racial justice causes. Notably, affluent volunteers tended to donate more, with average donations exceeding those of nonvolunteers, highlighting the intersection between volunteerism and philanthropy (Osili et al., 2021). The evolving landscape of

affluent donations emphasizes the importance of issue-based philanthropy and diverse donor engagement strategies (Osili et al., 2023).

Challenges in Fundraising

Despite these contributions, NPOs face significant challenges in sustaining financial stability. Leaders, particularly in organizations led by women and people of color, must navigate an evolving philanthropic landscape influenced by external disruptions, such as the global pandemic, which altered donor behavior (Faulk et al., 2021; Piana, 2020). The impact of COVID-19 caused shifts in donation trends, with 37% of organizations reporting a decrease in donations (Faulk et al., 2021). Additionally, policies such as the Tax Cut and Jobs Act of 2017 restricted charitable deductions, further complicating the fundraising environment for nonprofits (Rooney et al., 2020; Van Steenburg et al., 2022).

Hung (2020) explored how restricted revenues limited nonprofit leaders' ability to diversify funding sources, ultimately constraining their service delivery capacity. This limitation proved particularly significant in U.S. arts and culture nonprofits, especially among donative and performing arts organizations. Hung's findings indicated that restricted revenues did not reduce administrative costs or enhance service outcomes. These results suggested that financial discretion was crucial in how restricted revenues impacted service capacity, challenging the belief that such revenues primarily redirected spending away from administration (Hung, 2020).

Understanding these complex dynamics is essential for nonprofit leaders seeking to implement adaptive and innovative fundraising strategies. Diversification of revenue

sources, as suggested by Lu et al. (2022) and Qu (2020), is crucial for enhancing financial performance and stability. Moreover, building trust with diverse donors and leveraging digital tools such as crowdfunding has become increasingly important in the current fundraising landscape (Osili et al., 2023).

Enterprise Risk Management and Organizational Resilience

Enterprise risk management (ERM) is a way to reduce unexpected performance variance by providing frameworks that addressed potential disruptions and aligned with organizational resilience. For organizations, minimizing performance variance implies implementing strategies that anticipate, prepare for, respond to, and recover from natural disasters, cyberattacks, or financial crises. Organizational resilience emphasizes sustaining operations and achieving strategic objectives through adaptive, proactive, and reactive risk management approaches (Lucht, 2023). ERM and organizational resilience share core principles, creating opportunities for organizations to integrate ERM to reinforce resilience (Lucht, 2023).

ERM involves identifying, assessing, and managing risks in multinational enterprises. The first step in developing an ERM strategy is to define the mission, vision, and core values. Identifying performance measures and core values is crucial. The plan involves achieving business objectives, establishing associated controls, and implementing them in operations. This ensures a well-defined and practical risk management approach. ERM reporting is a crucial tool for organizations to manage risks in line with their risk appetite (Stoel et al., 2017). By embedding ERM and resilience principles into organizational processes, leaders can strengthen strategic performance

management, ensuring that risk-informed decisions support long-term objectives and operational excellence.

In conclusion, nonprofit organizational leaders, particularly African American women, must develop and employ effective, culturally informed strategies to engage diverse donors. Integrating gender equality initiatives, coupled with an understanding of affluent household giving behaviors and the evolving nature of philanthropy, provides a foundation for nonprofit sustainability. Leaders must also remain agile, addressing the challenges posed by external disruptions while ensuring their organizations' financial health through strategic fundraising and donor engagement efforts.

Philanthropy, Fundraising Strategies, and Gender Dynamics

Nonprofit organizational leaders play a pivotal role in addressing societal issues, heavily relying on effective fundraising strategies for sustainability and societal impact (Branche & Ford, 2022). Gender dynamics within leadership, particularly in the context of SDGs, have also garnered attention. Researchers have continued to study SDG 5, focusing on gender equality and women's empowerment (Beloskar et al., 2024; Saeed et al., 2023). Women leaders in business and nonprofit sectors significantly reinforce the commitment to SDGs. Their presence in top management positions has strengthened these commitments, ensuring that gender equality remains a central tenet in organizational practices (Beloskar et al., 2024).

Furthermore, African American women have contributed distinctively to philanthropic efforts. Cultural and social identities often shape their approaches to driving charitable donations, providing unique perspectives that enrich the landscape of

fundraising practices (Branche & Ford, 2022). Understanding these methods can bolster nonprofit efforts toward social change, particularly when tapping into diverse donor pools.

The Role of Affluence in Philanthropy

Affluent households continue to have a significant impact on philanthropy. The researchers noted that issue-based philanthropy has become a driving factor in donation decisions, with 43.6% of affluent families emphasizing its importance. Many of these households supported social and racial justice causes (Osili et al., 2021). The financial contributions of affluent individuals who also volunteered were notably higher, with average donations exceeding $20,000 compared to approximately $9,000 from nonvolunteers (Osili et al., 2021).

In 2022, affluent Americans continued to give generously, although donation rates slightly declined from 2020. However, the average donation amount has increased by 19% since the pandemic, reflecting a continued dedication to philanthropy (Osili et al., 2023). Affluent donors increasingly used digital tools, including crowdfunding and payment apps, to manage donations, and eight in 10 practiced conscious consumerism (Osili et al., 2023).

Challenges Facing Nonprofit Leadership

Despite significant financial contributions, nonprofit leaders need help engaging volunteers effectively and devising robust fundraising strategies (Ilyas et al., 2020; Van Steenburg et al., 2022). The COVID-19 pandemic drastically affected donor behavior, with many NPOs experiencing a significant decrease in donations (Piana, 2020).

Leadership demographics and organizational size also influenced donation trends, emphasizing the need for adaptive strategies (Faulk et al., 2021).

African American leaders in the nonprofit sector have encountered specific challenges related to securing financial resources. Faulk et al. (2021) found that organizations led by people of color experienced more frequent declines in donations from 2015 to 2019 than white-led organizations. Public policies like the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017 have further complicated fundraising efforts by restricting tax deductibility (Rooney et al., 2020). Although subsequent legislation reversed some of these limitations, the nonprofit sector grapples with financial instability and evolving donor behavior (Van Steenburg et al., 2022).

Fundraising Strategies and Sustainability

NPO leaders have adopted various strategies to ensure financial sustainability. For instance, they focused on diversifying revenue sources, maintaining liquidity, and developing local fundraising programs (Ilyas et al., 2020). Lu et al. (2022) underscored the importance of revenue diversification for improving financial performance, highlighting the need for tailored strategies based on the organization's funding structure. Gunnerson (2019) also identified that NPO leaders must assess diverse revenue streams to ensure long-term sustainability amidst fluctuating economic conditions. By implementing trust-building measures and diversifying funds, nonprofit leaders have sustained operations despite limited resources (Ilyas et al., 2020). These efforts have proven critical in addressing the sector's persistent financial challenges, including resource acquisition and volunteer retention.

In this literature review, I synthesized existing knowledge, explored the theoretical foundations and challenges faced, and identified the practical approaches African American women leaders in nonprofits use to drive charitable donations from diverse sources. I explored how involvement in organizations has been a natural extension of their community work. In searching the literature, I considered African American women who work (paid or unpaid) in the nonprofit sector and generally support a charity, focusing on how they serve, give money, and raise funds for their organization. I analyzed the factors that motivate them to provide their services. I chose a qualitative study involving interviews, observations, and documents. In this study, I used the qualitative method based on the need to gain insight and understanding of the various experiences of African American women without seeking statistical generalizations. Given the private nature of giving and the varied lifestyles of African American women, qualitative methods provide the best means to capture this phenomenon.

The history of African Americans is a history of resistance and resilience (Aniefuna et al., 2020). As wives and mothers, women are the backbone of support for the family through their men's struggles for survival and sanity in a racist society (Aniefuna et al., 2020). Intersectionality, a concept introduced by Professor Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989, explored the simultaneous impact of race and gender discrimination on African American women. They emphasized their challenges in acknowledging and addressing the compounded effects of these intersecting inequalities (Crenshaw, 1989; Kagal & Latchford, 2020). From activism and participation in organizations like the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People to political clubs and

volunteer organizations, African American women have worked continuously to change the quality of life for black people in America (Perkins et al., 2020). Therefore, they have seen the growth of NPOs as an opportunity to make a difference. A systematic literature review is a method that offers two benefits. First, it ensures transparency through a documented, rules-driven approach, crucial for policymakers and a large amount of publicly supported scholarships in voluntary sector studies (Beugelsdijk et al., 2020).

Second, I used a broader and more comprehensive collection of articles about a particular subject, using an approach that aligns with a process that Gazley and Guo (2020) identified when investigating nonprofit collaboration; using such an approach has the potential to yield a data set of published articles three times larger than any previous explicit attempt to consolidate knowledge in such domains (Gazley, 2022). Systematic literature reviews involve establishing a research question, conducting a literature search, analyzing the content, synthesizing the findings, and reporting the results. In the literature review, I discuss why established nonprofit organizational leaders, compelled by rising operational costs, increasingly adopt businesslike strategies such as marketing and fundraising to sustain their missions (see Scharf et al., 2022).

However, concerns arise about potential mission diversion due to heightened resource competition (Seo, 2020). Despite the significance of fundraising, there is an argument about more direct evidence linking it to mission drift, partly due to vague IRS guidelines (Grimes et al., 2019). Crucial to society, nonprofits rely heavily on fundraising to compensate for limited government funding and bureaucratic hurdles (Yu et al., 2021).

However, challenges persist, including a disparity in donor participation between income groups, potentially affecting revenue attainment (Jiao et al., 2024).

Understanding these differences and their effects on donors and recipients is essential for nonprofit success (Patel, 2020). While the literature lacks extensive coverage of equitable donation and ethical fundraising across cultures, this study is determined to shed light on these complexities, as suggested in earlier research. (Aniefuna et al., 2020; Azevedo et al., 2021). By clarifying expectations, impacts, and strategies related to fundraising, nonprofit leaders seek to empower decision makers and foster a socially conscious donation environment, as depicted by previous research (Kim & Li, 2022).

Institutional isomorphism is when organizations, including nonprofits, adopt similar cultural and structural changes due to external pressures (Choi & Woo, 2022). This convergence often results in the homogenization of NPOs across various sectors when driven by coercive, mimetic, and normative mechanisms (Hersberger-Langloh et al., 2021). In the scholarly discourse on institutional isomorphism, several noteworthy issues emerged from the literature review (Hersberger-Langloh et al., 2021). First, researchers adopt either a positive stance, emphasizing increased organizational performance, or a negative perspective, highlighting concerns about potential mission drift, with minimal consideration for intermediary positions (Sanders, 2015). Second, examinations of managerialism frequently emphasized singular causative factors, such as isomorphic pressures stemming from professional influences or regulatory requirements (Posadas et al., 2023). Third, extending upon this observation, most researchers who explored institutional isomorphism tended to concentrate on individual types of

isomorphic pressure, with limited attention given to their interactions with one another (Posadas et al., 2023).

Conceptual Framework

Integration of Frameworks and Leadership Principles

The study integrated the Baldrige Excellence Framework (BEF), the McKinsey 7S model, and servant leadership principles to analyze the performance of nonprofit organizations.

Application of the Baldrige Excellence Framework

The study employed BEF as the primary lens for assessing nonprofit effectiveness. It provided a systematic structure for evaluating leadership, strategy, customer focus, knowledge management, workforce, operations, and results, which were critical for nonprofit sustainability (Scott, 2019; National Institute of Standards and Technology [NIST], 2019b). African American women leaders used this framework to identify gaps in donor engagement and align organizational performance with community impact goals (Rangsungnoen et al., 2024; Ghafoor et al., 2020). The framework's versatility and efficacy made it a valuable tool for research and practical implementation in various organizational settings, including nonprofit revenue growth and performance measurement.

Core Values and Concepts of the BEF

One component of the conceptual framework is the BEF, a nonprescriptive tool recognized by the National Institute of Standards and Technology for its effectiveness in fostering continuous improvement and performance excellence (Scott, 2019). It

comprises seven criteria: leadership, strategy, customer, knowledge management, workforce, and operations. The framework's versatility and efficacy made it a valuable tool for research and practical implementation in various organizational settings, including nonprofit revenue growth and performance measurement.

Evolution of the BEF Core Values. Over time, core values and concepts within the BEF and EFQM excellence model have evolved (Ghafoor et al., 2020). In 1988, the core values and concepts of the BEF, then referred to as a total quality management model, were not explicitly defined. The management standard reflected by the Baldrige framework, core values, and criteria requirements expanded, increasingly emphasizing social inclusivity (Ford, 2021). By 1992, foundational principles—customer-driven quality, leadership, continuous improvement, full participation, fast response, design quality and prevention, long-range outlook, and management by fact—became integral parts of the original BEF (NIST, 2019b). The evolution continued, and in 2019, the core values and concepts of the BEF expanded to include a broader spectrum of principles: systems perspective, visionary leadership, customer focus, excellence, valuing people, organizational learning, agility, focus on success, managing for innovation, management by fact, societal contributions, ethics, and transparency, and delivering value and results (NIST, 2019b).

Extension to Community-Based Social Enterprises. Rangsungnoen et al. (2024) extended the model to community-based social enterprises, identifying core values that drive performance excellence.

Servant Leadership and People-First Approaches

The study incorporated servant leadership to highlight the value of people-first practices in nonprofit management (Greenleaf, 1977; Parmer et al., 2023). Leaders prioritized empathy, trust, and empowerment, which fostered deeper donor relationships and motivated volunteers (Allen et al., 2018; Blanchard, 2019; Northouse, 2021; Spears, 1998). Servant leaders strengthened the mission-driven focus of nonprofits by promoting collaboration, fostering inclusivity, and practicing ethical stewardship of resources (Mejheirkouni, 2020; Pleasant, 2021; Greenleaf, 2012).

Greenleaf (1977) highlighted service as the foundation of servant leadership, which prioritizes the needs of others and boosts efficiency, productivity, morale, and job satisfaction (Allen et al., 2018). As role models, servant leaders effectively managed challenges and led through difficult times, showing that leadership involved nurturing and support (Blanchard, 2019; Greenleaf, 1977; Northouse, 2021; Spears, 1998). This support made leaders wiser, more accessible, and more capable, enhancing followers' motivation and commitment across organizations.

Allen et al. (2018) explored the link between servant leadership and organizational commitment in nonprofits, finding that structural empowerment mediated this relationship. Meaningful work was essential for organizational commitment, indicating that servant leadership, through structural empowerment, significantly influenced the commitment of nonprofit employees.

Servant leadership starts with a natural desire to serve first. Then, leaders consciously try to lead (Greenleaf, 1977). The primary distinction between servant

leadership and other leadership theories lies in the care of servants, which prioritizes the needs of others (Pleasant, 2021). Greenleaf (2012) suggested that leaders achieve more by prioritizing their followers, empowering them, and being attentive, empathetic, and compassionate. Mejheirkouni (2020) revealed that the effectiveness of servant leadership in volunteer-driven environments, especially in war zones, depends on creating hope through personal ethics, flexible policies, and key attributes like honesty, social awareness, and patience. Parmer et al. showed that adopting a more robust entrepreneurial approach involves prioritizing people first rather than solely concentrating on strategy and complex numbers (Parmer et al., 2023). Yang (2023) explored the nurturing aspect of servant leadership and its impact on job satisfaction in law enforcement.

Greenleaf (1977) highlighted service as the foundation of servant leadership, which prioritizes the needs of others and boosts efficiency, productivity, morale, and job satisfaction (Allen et al., 2018). As role models, servant leaders effectively managed challenges and led through difficult times, showing that leadership involves nurturing and support (Blanchard, 2019; Greenleaf, 1977; Northouse, 2021; Spears, 1998). This support made leaders wiser, more accessible, and more capable, enhancing followers' motivation and commitment across organizations.

Linking Frameworks to Nonprofit Resilience. Allen et al. (2018) explored the link between servant leadership and organizational commitment in nonprofits, finding that structural empowerment mediated this relationship. Meaningful work was essential for organizational commitment, indicating that servant leadership, through Rangsungnoen

et al. (2024) extended the model to community-based social enterprises, identifying core values that drive performance excellence. Theoretical frameworks, such as the BEF, McKinsey 7S framework, and servant leadership theory, form the backbone of this review. Parmer et al. explored the similarities between the McKinsey 7S framework (Peters & Waterman, 2004) and servant leadership (Greenleaf, 1977). The authors showed that adopting a more entrepreneurial approach involved prioritizing people over focusing solely on strategy and complex data. The selected frameworks aligned with strategies for engaging diverse donors in nonprofits and emphasized the importance of putting the people first (Greenleaf; Peters & Waterman).

The integration of BEF and servant leadership demonstrated how leadership practices strengthened organizational resilience (Dyer et al., 2020; Ford, 2021). Nonprofit leaders adopted adaptive strategies to address systemic inequities and unpredictable donor trends (Singh et al., 2022; Herrero & Kraemer, 2022; Burnard & Bhamra, 2019). These combined frameworks reinforced innovation, equity, and sustainability, which were vital for African American women leaders seeking to expand donor diversity and impact (Parmer et al., 2023; Yang, 2023).

Yang (2023) explored the nurturing aspect of servant leadership and its impact on job satisfaction among law enforcement personnel. Various authors also drew connections to the componential theory of creativity, illustrating the significance of creative skills and motivation within an external context, which was essential in devising effective donor engagement strategies (Amabile, 1996; Kaufman & Glăveanu, 2023).

The McKinsey 7S Framework and Organizational Alignment

Peters and Waterman introduced the McKinsey 7-S framework in 1982. This framework focuses on core foundational elements that foster organizational excellence and integrate tangible and intangible aspects. For this reason, it underscored qualities such as simplicity, excellence, customer-centricity, employee welfare, and enduring commitment. Peters and Austin (1985) later grouped McKinsey's 7-S framework into four pivotal factors: individuals, customer service, ingenuity, and guidance. Effective implementation depends on three key processes: the ability to forge alignment among the various elements of the organization, the ability to lead strategic change over time, and the ability to create measures of assessment and performance. This methodology is associated with developing high-performing organizations, as evidenced by models such as the EFQM model and the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award (Alsabhan et al., 2024).

Strategy and Structure in Nonprofit Leadership. The McKinsey 7S model supported analysis of nonprofit structures and strategic alignment (Peters & Waterman, 2004; Dyer et al., 2020). African American women leaders designed strategies that balanced fundraising goals with mission-driven objectives (Parmer et al., 2023). They aligned structural processes with donor outreach to ensure transparency, accountability, and long-term sustainability (Nothhaft et al., 2020; Salih & Dolah, 2022).

There are difficulties in executing strategies and designing activities that provide a competitive advantage (Dyer et al., 2020). Dyer et al. (2020) suggested four steps to consider when executing a strategy or design activity: create a clear set of goals for

employees to track, accurately measure performance, hold employees accountable, and find ways to reward high performers. Achieving this depended on three key processes: creating alignment between various elements of an organization, guiding strategic change over time, and developing measurement and performance metrics (Dyer et al., 2020).

Leadership and Shared Values

Leaders fostered shared values to strengthen cultural cohesion within their organizations (Peters & Austin, 1985; Greenleaf, 1977). Shared values encouraged staff and volunteers to remain committed to equity, inclusivity, and innovation. This alignment between values and leadership actions enhanced trust with diverse donor groups (Parmer et al., 2023; Allen et al., 2018).

Systems, Skills, and Staff Development.

The framework emphasized the development of systems and skills as drivers of success (Dyer et al., 2020). Nonprofit leaders invested in training staff to manage digital campaigns, analyze donor data, and foster community partnerships (Englert et al., 2020; Smoyer et al., 2021). These efforts enhanced organizational learning while addressing staff shortages and resource constraints (Kurniati et al., 2023; Herrero & Kraemer, 2022).

Nonprofit Business Models and Human Resource Considerations

Resource Constraints and Donor Relationships. The study revealed that African American women leaders navigated significant resource constraints (Kim & Li, 2022, 2023; Alanazi, 2021; Fan & Chang, 2021; Haktanır, 2020). They employed innovative donor engagement strategies, such as peer-to-peer campaigns and community-based events, to strengthen donor loyalty despite funding inequities (Scharf et al., 2022; Kessler et al., 2020; Samek & Longfield, 2023).

Transparency and Accountability. Leaders prioritized transparency and accountability to gain donor trust (Di Lauro et al., 2019; Wang et al., 2020; Waerder et al., 2021). They adopted governance practices that clearly reported outcomes, used donor funds responsibly, and demonstrated measurable community impact (Mason & Kim, 2020; Ma, 2023).

Human Capital and Staff Availability. Human resource challenges, including staff shortages and volunteer turnover, affected nonprofit capacity (Fahrul Nurkolis et al., 2024; Kurniati et al., 2023). Leaders addressed these challenges by cultivating volunteer pipelines and leveraging community partnerships to expand human capital (Mejheirkouni, 2020; Smoyer et al., 2021).

Organizational Resilience in Nonprofits

Adaptive Capacity and Change Management. The study highlighted how nonprofits developed adaptive capacity to withstand crises such as COVID-19 and economic downturns (Herrero & Kraemer, 2022; Singh et al., 2022; Burnard & Bhamra, 2019). Leaders adopted flexible fundraising models, diversified revenue streams, and restructured programs to respond to changing donor behavior (Dicke & Ott, 2023; Pryce, 2021). These strategies enabled organizations to navigate systemic inequities while expanding donor diversity and community impact (Yang, 2023; Parmer et al., 2023).

Measurement and Performance Evaluation. Leaders employed performance metrics and continuous improvement processes to monitor organizational resilience (Dyer et al., 2020; NIST, 2019b). They systematically tracked outcomes against strategic objectives and evaluated donor engagement initiatives, enabling timely interventions and iterative improvements (Scott, 2019; Ghafoor et al., 2020).

Culture and Leadership in Resilience

Organizational culture played a critical role in resilience (Burnard & Bhamra, 2019; Herrero & Kraemer, 2022; Singh et al., 2022). African American women leaders cultivated inclusive cultures that empowered staff, volunteers, and donors to work collaboratively toward shared goals (Pryce, 2021; Parmer et al., 2023).

Tactical and Strategic Planning. Leaders relied on both tactical and strategic planning to strengthen long-term survival (Dyer et al., 2020; Singh et al., 2022). Tactical planning addressed short-term funding gaps, while strategic planning emphasized sustainable donor engagement and innovation (Jiao et al., 2024; Perić et al., 2020).

Technological Advancements, Governance, and Crisis Management

Adoption of AI and Automation. The study revealed that nonprofits are exploring generative AI and automation to enhance fundraising efficiency (Rottkamp & Khan, 2023). Leaders balanced AI-driven insights with human oversight to preserve donor personalization (Rottkamp & Khan, 2023; Zakiryanova & Redkina, 2020).

Leveraging Digital Platforms. Nonprofit leaders integrated digital tools for fundraising, communication, and stakeholder engagement (Englert et al., 2020; Smoyer et al., 2021). These tools enhanced operational efficiency, facilitated data-driven decision-making, and enabled the collection of real-time feedback, allowing leaders to adapt campaigns according to donor behavior and community needs (Fan & Chang, 2021; Scharf et al., 2022).

Cloud-Based Systems in Nonprofits. Cloud-based platforms enhanced collaboration, data storage, and donor relationship management (Rottkamp & Khan, 2023; Smoyer et al., 2021). Leaders used these systems to streamline reporting, expand outreach, and maintain transparency with stakeholders (Kumar & Chakrabarti, 2021).

Crisis Communication and Governance Structures

Nonprofits strengthened governance structures to respond effectively during crises (Ma, 2023; Mason & Kim, 2020). Leaders emphasized the importance of open communication, rapid decision-making, and stakeholder inclusion in navigating uncertainty and safeguarding donor trust (Zerfass et al., 2018). Effective governance underpinned organizational credibility. Leaders ensured compliance with reporting

standards, implemented internal controls, and provided transparent financial disclosures (Di Lauro et al., 2019; Wang et al., 2020; Waerder et al., 2021). Transparent practices reinforced donor trust and supported equitable allocation of resources (Mason & Kim, 2020; Ma, 2023).

Risk Mitigation and Sustainability. Leaders proactively managed risk through scenario planning and resource diversification (Haktanır, 2020; Kim & Li, 2022, 2023). These practices mitigated vulnerability to funding fluctuations and strengthened long-term sustainability (Scharf et al., 2022; Samek & Longfield, 2023).

Donor Behavior, Ethnocultural Identity, and Volunteer Engagement

Socioeconomic and Cultural Factors in Giving. The study underscored the influence of socioeconomic and cultural identities on giving behavior (Osei & Alagidede, 2022; Zakiryanova & Redkina, 2020; Alanazi, 2021; Fan & Chang, 2021; Haktanır, 2020). African American women leaders recognized that donors were motivated by values such as fairness, loyalty, and community uplift (Kim & Li, 2022, 2023). African American women leaders leveraged community connections and cultural competence to design fundraising initiatives aligned with local needs and values (Fan & Chang, 2021; Kurniati et al., 2023). This culturally responsive approach enhanced both donor satisfaction and community outcomes.

Understanding Donor Motivation. Leaders studied ethnocultural identities and community priorities to tailor donor engagement strategies (Parmer et al., 2023; Kessler et al., 2020). Recognizing the unique motivations of diverse donors enabled targeted

campaigns that fostered loyalty, increased giving, and strengthened volunteer participation (Samek & Longfield, 2023; Rangsungnoen et al., 2024).

Volunteer Development and Engagement. Volunteers remained vital to nonprofit success (Englert et al., 2020; Fahrul Nurkolis et al., 2024). Leaders developed mentorship, recognition, and training programs to enhance volunteer commitment, thereby expanding organizational capacity and sustaining mission-driven initiatives (Allen et al., 2018; Parmer et al., 2023).

Digital and Social Media Fundraising. Nonprofits adopted digital platforms and social media campaigns to expand donor outreach (Kumar & Chakrabarti, 2021; Scharf et al., 2022; Samek & Longfield, 2023). Leaders used segmented storytelling and targeted messaging to connect with diverse audiences and improve donor retention (Waerder et al., 2021).

Community-Centric Fundraising Approaches.

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Leadership Diversity and Organizational Innovation

African American Women in Nonprofit Leadership. The study highlighted the significant contributions of African American women leaders in promoting equity and representation within nonprofits (Branche & Ford, 2022; Brown & Harris, 2022). Their lived experiences informed strategies that addressed donor inequities and fostered inclusive fundraising practices (Alanazi, 2021; Fan & Chang, 2021; Haktanır, 2020).

Inclusive Leadership and Innovation Capacity

Leaders demonstrated inclusive practices that encouraged innovation (Klassen et al., 2020; Adro & Fernandes, 2021; Oliveira et al., 2021). They leveraged cultural competencies to design campaigns that resonated with diverse donors, enhancing organizational adaptability (Dong et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2023). Diversity in leadership roles fostered organizational innovation and resilience (Greenleaf, 1977; Northouse, 2021). Leaders intentionally created inclusive environments, valuing multiple perspectives and facilitating cross-cultural collaboration (Spears, 1998; Parmer et al., 2023).

Innovation Through Leadership Practices.

Servant leadership, combined with strategic frameworks such as the BEF and McKinsey 7S, has promoted innovation in service delivery and fundraising (Allen et al., 2018; Dyer et al., 2020; Scott, 2019). Leaders encouraged creative problem-solving, experimentation, and the adoption of new technologies, which improved organizational performance and donor engagement (Amabile, 1996; Kaufman & Glăveanu, 2023; Yang, 2023).

Governance Expertise and Fundraising Impact

Strong governance expertise contributed to effective fundraising outcomes (Jiao et al., 2024; Von Schnurbein & Fritz, 2017; Mason & Kim, 2020). Leaders who combined governance skills with community knowledge achieved greater donor trust, financial resilience, and organizational sustainability (Dicke & Ott, 2023; Perić et al., 2020).

Integrating Multiple Frameworks for Impact. The conceptual framework demonstrated the synergistic effect of combining BEF, McKinsey 7S, servant leadership, and business model strategies. African American women leaders aligned leadership, strategy, systems, and values to optimize outcomes, build donor trust, and strengthen organizational sustainability (Rangsungnoen et al., 2024; Parmer et al., 2023; Ghafoor et al., 2020).

Critical Success Factors, Barriers, and Human Resource Availability in BEM Implementation

Salih and Dolah (2022) explored the realm of NPOs in Saudi Arabia, focusing on the implementation of BEMs. Salih and Dolah (2022) identified critical success factors and barriers influencing the adoption of BEMs in Saudi NPOs while assessing the impact of human resource availability on this implementation process. The authors pinpointed five pivotal success factors for BEM implementation in Saudi NPOs: robust data analysis and reporting capabilities, effective organizational communication, a strategic and systematic implementation approach, utilization of benchmarking practices, and adherence to a clear governance framework. Conversely, Salih and Dolah (2022) identified five primary barriers hindering BEM implementation: the absence of a culture

fostering continuous improvement, inadequate organizational strategy, deficient in qualified personnel, lack of customer orientation, and ambiguity regarding organizational roles and responsibilities.

Contrary to common assumptions, Salih and Dolah (2022) suggested that the number of full-time employees within Saudi NPOs is insignificant in the success or failure of BEM implementation. However, they highlighted the critical role of financial resources, emphasizing that micro NPOs face more significant hurdles due to limited financial availability than their larger counterparts. Additionally, I explored servant leadership, empowerment, and organizational commitment in this study, examining their interplay with BEM implementation strategies. By investigating the impact of human resources availability on BEM implementation, the authors illuminated the pivotal role of human resources in driving successful processes within NPOs.

Strategy Execution Challenges and the 7-S and BEF Integration Framework

There are difficulties in executing strategies and designing activities that provide a competitive advantage (Dyer et al., 2020). There are four steps to consider when considering a strategy or design activity for execution (Dyer et al., 2020). First, create a clear set of goals for employees to track, accurately measure performance, hold employees accountable, and find ways to reward high performers. Achieving this depends on three key processes: creating alignment between the various elements of an organization, guiding strategic change over time, and developing measurement and performance metrics (Dyer et al., 2020).

Dyer et al. (2020) emphasized that the 7 S model provides a robust framework for understanding how organizations can collaborate and achieve success. Over time, core values and concepts have evolved in the BEF and EFQM excellence model (Ghafoor et al., 2020). The evolution has continued, and in 2019, the core values and concepts of the BEF expanded to include a broader spectrum of principles: systems perspective, visionary leadership, customer focus, excellence, valuing people, organizational learning, and agility, focus on success, managing for innovation, management by fact, societal contributions, ethics, and transparency, and delivering value and results (National Institute of Standards and Technology, 2019b).

Foundations and Impact of Servant Leadership in Crisis Volunteering

Servant leadership begins with a natural desire to serve first. Then, consciously try to lead (Greenleaf, 1977). The primary difference between servant leadership and other leadership theories lies in the care of servants, prioritizing the needs of others with the highest importance (Pleasant, 2021). Greenleaf (2012) suggested that leaders achieve more by putting followers first, empowering them, and being attentive, empathetic, and compassionate. Mejheirkouni (2020) explored the influence of servant leadership on volunteers' commitment within the voluntary sector, particularly in war zones. Mejheirkouni revealed that the effectiveness of servant leadership in such environments lies in creating hope, facilitated by personal ethics, flexible policies, and specific attributes such as honesty, social awareness, and patience.

In this study, I highlighted the importance of servant leadership behavior in fostering commitment and resilience, especially during challenging contexts such as

postwar and reconstruction periods. Various authors have also drawn connections to the componential theory of creativity, illustrating the significance of creative skills and motivation within an external context, which is essential in devising effective donor engagement strategies (Amabile, 1996; Kaufman & Glăveanu, 2023). In addition, Perić et al. (2020) explored NPOs' business models. They evaluated how well they communicate their value proposition, what distinguishes them from other nonprofits, and what they do to develop successful and sustainable organizations. I explored the literature indicating that NPOs have unique business models compared to for-profit businesses. Perić et al. identified the landscape of stakeholders, the relationship with donors as customers and partners, and the importance of human and social capital as critical components of NPO business models. The authors further highlighted the importance of transparency and the diversity of attitudes toward incorporating commercial activities.

I provided insights into the specific characteristics of business models in the nonprofit sector. In this study, I emphasized the need to understand and analyze NPOs' business models to assess their performance and develop clear policies and programs for their development. In this study, I explored the literature that supported the current study's importance of considering NPOs' unique context and goals when examining the relationship between servant leadership, empowerment, and organizational commitment. By understanding the business models of NPOs, the study can better explore how servant leadership influences organizational dynamics and outcomes in the nonprofit sector (Perić et al., 2020)

Barriers Faced by Nonprofits Led by Women and People of Color

Nonprofits led by African American women grappled with systemic obstacles in cultivating substantial donor relationships (Alanazi, 2021; Fan & Chang, 2021; Haktanır, 2020). The fundraising environment proved rife with complexity and inequity, which made one-size-fits-all models ineffective. Instead, leaders needed fundraising strategies that were responsive to the cultural, socioeconomic, and social identity factors of both nonprofits and donors (Alanazi, 2021; Fan & Chang, 2021; Haktanır, 2020).

Kim and Li's (2022, 2023) research revealed that nonprofits serving communities of color faced more severe financial constraints compared to mainstream organizations. These constraints became more pronounced when women or minority leaders led the organization. Limited funding streams, restricted social capital, and structural exclusion from mainstream philanthropic networks constrained these nonprofits in securing sustainable support (Kim & Li, 2022). This dynamic represented a specific barrier for women of color in nonprofit leadership.

Governance, Leadership, and Resilience in Culturally Diverse NPOs

Dicke and Ott (2023) addressed the complex issues and challenges faced by nonprofits. They explored governance, leadership, and management of nonprofit organizations. They provided insights into the distinctive nature of nonprofit organizations and explored the factors that influence nonprofit leadership and management. Dicke and Ott (2023) work may not directly address the specific focus of the research project, it provides foundational knowledge that could inform their approach.

Pryce (2021) proposed a holistic approach to organizational culture that built resilience by incorporating underlying values and principles. Leaders used authentic and transformational leadership to initiate organizational changes. Organizational resilience has proven to be a critical concept in management, particularly within the nonprofit sector, where organizations often face numerous challenges in maintaining stability and achieving their missions (Pryce, 2021).

Organizational Resilience in Nonprofit Organizations

Burnard and Bhamra (2019) contributed to the understanding of organizational resilience by exploring the challenges organizations face in achieving resilience. They identified various obstacles encountered on the path to resilience. Herrero and Kraemer (2022) emphasized the importance of understanding both active and passive resilience features in organizations, highlighting key considerations for developing organizational resilience. Their research highlighted the complexities of building resilience within nonprofit organizations, shedding light on factors that hinder their ability to adapt and thrive in dynamic environments.

Active and Passive Resilience Features. Burnard and Bhamra (2019) emphasized that the 7S model provides a robust framework for understanding how organizations can collaborate and achieve success. Over time, core values and concepts have evolved in the BEF and EFQM excellence model (Ghafoor et al., 2020).

Fundraising Resilience during Crises

Herrero and Kraemer (2022) focused on organizational resilience within the context of nonprofit fundraising, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. They

examined how nonprofit fundraisers responded to the sudden drop in financial revenue by devising alternative fundraising approaches. They found that fundraisers employed cross-capability building, combining emotion-related and behavioral capabilities to achieve practical and strategic fundraising outcomes. Herrero and Kraemer highlighted the adaptive capacity of nonprofit organizations during crises and emphasized the importance of leveraging diverse capabilities to navigate challenges effectively.

Integrating Resilience Perspectives

Singh et al. (2022) contributed to understanding nonprofit organizational resilience by proposing a comprehensive conceptual framework focused on adaptive capacities. They highlighted the crucial role of culture, leadership, people, tactical administration, and tactical planning and restructuring in fostering resilience within nonprofit organizations. The researchers emphasized the importance of addressing existential concerns and promoting sustainability within the nonprofit sector, particularly in regions such as South Africa, where organizations face unique challenges. In synthesizing the literature, the research findings of Burnard and Bhamra (2019) and Herrero and Kraemer (2022) suggest that building resilience within nonprofit organizations requires a multifaceted approach, encompassing both internal capacities and external strategies, such as fundraising. Singh et al. presented a comprehensive approach to enhancing organizational resilience, which facilitates strategies for addressing challenges and driving effectiveness in achieving mission objectives, particularly in underrepresented communities or regions facing socioeconomic disparities.

Implications for Nonprofit Leadership and Future Research

Leaders of nonprofit organizations can apply these insights to develop holistic approaches to building resilience within their organizations, considering both overarching challenges and specific strategies related to fundraising. By integrating active and passive resilience features and leveraging diverse capabilities, nonprofit leaders can enhance their organizations' ability to adapt, survive, and thrive in uncertain times. Future researchers in this area could explore the intersection of organizational resilience and fundraising, examining how different resilience strategies impact fundraising effectiveness and long-term organizational sustainability.

Effective Fundraising Strategies in Nonprofit Organizations

Many academic researchers investigated effective fundraising strategies and the role of leadership styles, organizational culture, and relationship-building in successful donor engagement (Alanazi, 2021; Fan & Chang, 2021; Greenleaf, 1977). Most researchers provided insights into diverse fundraising techniques and the impact of organizational practices on donor motivation and engagement, especially in nonprofit sectors led by African American women (Alanazi, 2021; Fan & Chang, 2021; Haktanır, 2020).

Theoretical Frameworks and Donor Engagement. Ford (2021) and Kumar and Chakrabarti (2021) provided a coherent understanding of donor engagement strategies, beginning with theoretical frameworks and progressing to specific research studies.

Synthesis of Literature on Donor Engagement. This integrated literature review synthesized recent scholarly research to provide insights into the theoretical foundations

of effective donor engagement strategies in nonprofit organizations. It specifically concentrated on African American women leaders. In this literature, I provided a critical analysis and synthesis to establish a foundational understanding for the subsequent qualitative single-case study, significantly contributing to the advancement of knowledge in nonprofit leadership and fundraising strategies.

Socio-Demographic Factors Influencing Donor Behavior. Osei and Alagidede (2022) revealed that marital status, education, and ethnicity influenced formal cash, in-kind giving, and volunteering in Ghana, suggesting a holistic approach to nonprofit strategies. These socio-demographic factors were determinants for influencing formal cash giving, in-kind donations, and volunteering behaviors within nonprofit organizations in Ghana.

Strategic Volunteer Engagement. Nonprofit leaders needed to engage volunteers strategically to achieve organizational goals that aligned with volunteers' motivations (Fahrul Nurkolis et al., 2024).

Cultural and Socio-Economic Influences on Philanthropy. Socio-economic factors and voluntary actors, often from community initiatives, shaped the Indonesian philanthropic landscape. These factors aimed to improve welfare and establish fundraising mechanisms, relying on volunteers (Kurniati et al., 2023).

Impact of Fundraising Interventions on Charitable Giving

Kurniati et al. (2023) explored the impact of donor behavior, fundraising interventions, and strategies on charitable contributions within the context of nonprofit fundraising and donations. Scharf et al. (2022) explored the effect of fundraising interventions on charitable giving patterns. They focused on forecasting gift reallocation

across charitable space and time in response to fundraising appeals such as disasters and telethons. Scharf et al. found that increased donations to appeal charities did not result in decreased contributions to non-appeal nonprofits.

Motivational Factors Influencing Donor Generosity

In this study, I sought to gain a deeper understanding of donor behavior dynamics and the effectiveness of various fundraising appeals. Kessler et al. (2020) conducted a field experiment to investigate the factors that drive wealthy individuals to be generous. The study involved collecting donations from alumni of the Ivy League. Kessler et al. (2020) found that conveying a sense of urgency regarding the use of their contributions significantly influenced the giving behavior of wealthy and influential donors. The authors highlighted the potential of agentic appeals as a motivational tool for soliciting donations from affluent donors.

Effectiveness of Donor Stewardship Practices

Samek and Longfield (2023) reported on field experiments examining the impact of thank-you calls on charitable giving. The authors partnered with public television stations and national nonprofits and randomized new donors to receive personal thank-you calls or not. Contrary to expectations, they found that thank-you calls did not influence subsequent donation behavior. The researchers underscored the importance of effective communication and resource strategies for driving nonprofit donations, offering valuable insights for nonprofits seeking to optimize their donor stewardship efforts.

Volunteer Perceptions of Organizational Fit

Englert et al. (2020) found that volunteers perceived a sense of fitness when they accessed service-relevant resources or infrastructure. They also experienced a sense of fitness when professional development training was advantageous and necessary for service provision. Additionally, volunteers appreciated the development of skills and competence, as well as the personal sense of well-being and security that resulted from the organization's safeguarding mechanisms. Organizational development opportunities were personally enriching, positively affecting work performance and benefiting daily lives.

Funding Challenges and Strategic Responses

Despite not pursuing profit, nonprofit organization (NPO) leaders faced challenges in securing funding, which remained crucial for their operations and the delivery of societal benefits (Choudhury et al., 2014). They encountered intense competition for public funding, compelling them to strategize fundraising through professionalization and partnerships (Sanzo-Pérez & Álvarez-González, 2022).

Donor Behavior and Marketing Strategies

Kumar and Chakrabarti (2021) conducted a systematic literature review on charity donor behavior to identify factors and variables influencing donations and fundraising strategies. They emphasized the importance of developing marketing strategies that co-create value, establishing partnerships with for-profit organizations, and engaging stakeholders and customers through digital technologies to enhance nonprofit competitive advantage and increase revenue. The donor behavior and competition highlighted the

significance of effective marketing and strategic alliances in enhancing nonprofit competitive advantage and revenue.

Cultural Identity and Organizational Communication

Zakiryanova and Redkina (2020) discussed the importance of ethnocultural identity from the perspective of social identity theory and self-categorization theory. They emphasized the formation of ethnocultural identity through categorization, social comparison, and the maintenance of a positive identity. They highlighted the significance of a positive identity in perceiving the environment as balanced and the potential impact of social transformations on group membership and identity. Zerfass et al. (2018) emphasized that organizations managed communication strategically through one-way information sharing, two-way engagement, brand development, and trust-building to navigate societal values, enhance reputation, and gain a competitive advantage in complex environments.

Marketing Strategies for Nonprofit Organizations

NPO leaders employed various marketing strategies, including social media, network marketing, and influencer marketing, to promote their business objectives, vision, and methods. These marketing strategies fostered a positive organizational image, increased potential donors, and ensured transparency and accountability (Di Lauro et al., 2019; Wang et al., 2020).

Nonprofit Partnerships for Resource Acquisition

NPOs formed nonprofit partnerships (NPCs) to acquire resources, knowledge, and expertise (Waerder et al., 2021). These partnerships took various forms, including

charitable donations and resource exchanges. The benefits of NPCs ranged from financial resources to strategic alliances, but their relationships needed to be clear and aligned to prevent mission drift (Waerder et al., 2021).

Leadership and Volunteer Commitment. Mejheirkouni (2020) highlighted the role of servant leadership in fostering volunteer commitment, especially in war zones, through personal ethics, flexible policies, honesty, social awareness, and patience.

Technological Trends in Nonprofit Organizations

Rottkamp and Khan (2023) explored the evolving landscape of nonprofit technology trends, emphasizing the role of certified public accountants in guiding organizations to understand and adopt relevant technologies. Rottkamp and Khan (2023) explored technological trends for nonprofits, emphasizing the importance of certified public accountants in guiding organizations toward cost-saving technologies such as managed cloud services and AI, which can enhance operations and stakeholder engagement.

They forecasted an increase in managed cloud services, managed service providers, and a shift towards sustainability. Additionally, they highlighted opportunities presented by automation, artificial intelligence, analytics, and cloud computing, as well as the potential of the Metaverse to reimagine engagement with stakeholders.

Enhancing Nonprofit Governance

Mason and Kim (2020) proposed a board coaching framework to enhance nonprofit governance, with a focus on the role of the executive director's role in

stewardship and agency theory. They advocated for a more central role for the executive director in governance, emphasizing regular communication with the board and opportunities for board members to gain insights into organizational operations. This advocacy in communication supported organizational initiatives by facilitating effective leadership and governance structures.

Crisis Communication and Social Identity

Ma (2023) explored the intersection of crisis communication and social identity theory within social-cause-related NPOs. She explored how different crises impacted stakeholders' identification, attribution of responsibility, attitudes, and intentions of negative word-of-mouth. Her findings suggested that crises compromising an organization's identity had a more damaging effect on stakeholders' perceptions, particularly among highly involved stakeholders. Ma highlighted the importance of managing crises within NPOs while considering stakeholders' social identities and levels of involvement. She offered valuable insights into nonprofit management, leadership, and organizational dynamics through the study's findings.

Organizational Resilience and Technological Trends

Researchers have identified a complex interplay between individual identities, leadership styles, technological advancements, governance mechanisms, and crisis management strategies within nonprofit contexts. Integrating these perspectives could inform more comprehensive approaches to addressing challenges and fostering resilience within NPOs, particularly in diverse and dynamic environments (Doherty et al., 2021). In this study, I contributed insights into the multifaceted nature of nonprofit management. I

offered avenues for future research to explore further and refine strategies for enhancing organizational effectiveness, resilience, and impact within the sector. The reviewed literature offered valuable insights into multiple dimensions of nonprofit management, with a particular emphasis on organizational resilience, emerging technological trends, workforce capability development, and fundraising management strategies in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and its aftermath.

Synthesis of Key Insights

In the literature review, I highlighted the complex interplay between individual identities, leadership styles, technological advancements, governance mechanisms, and crisis management strategies within nonprofit contexts. Integrating these perspectives could inform more effective nonprofit management practices. I also emphasized the importance of understanding ethnocultural identity formation, the impact of servant leadership in challenging contexts, the evolving landscape of nonprofit technology, effective governance structures, and crisis communication strategies within NPOs.

Organizational Resilience in Arts and Culture Fundraising

Herrero and Kraemer (2022) investigated organizational resilience in nonprofit arts and culture fundraising during the pandemic, highlighting the use of cross-capability building to adapt and respond effectively to financial challenges.

Workforce Capability Building

Smoyer et al. (2021) studied effective leadership strategies for building workforce capability in nonprofits, identifying employee development, technology expansion,

autonomy, trust, and process implementation as crucial for meeting escalating service demands and aligning with the organizational mission.

Fundraising Management Strategies

Dougherty (2021) focused on leading and lagging indicators in fundraising management, providing insights into enhancing long-term financial performance through managerial techniques, meaningful disaggregation, and alignment with organizational strategy.

Enhancing Nonprofit Performance

Smoyer et al. (2021) provided insights into navigating challenges and enhancing performance within the nonprofit sector. They addressed resilience, technology adoption, leadership, and financial management to increase fundraising efforts.

Research Focus on African American Women Leaders

With its unique focus on African American women in the South Atlantic region and using the qualitative single-case research design, I sought to illuminate a crucial gap in the literature. I explored the fundraising strategies employed by African American women leaders in nonprofit organizations (NPOs), a topic that has received limited scholarly attention. This research question explores the effective strategies employed by African American women leaders to engage diverse donors, addressing a perspective that has been largely overlooked in previous studies.

Underrepresentation of African American Women in Nonprofit Leadership

Branche and Ford (2022) addressed the underrepresentation of African American women in nonprofit leadership roles and advocated revising leadership paradigms to be more inclusive and empowering for this demographic. They emphasized the importance of understanding the unique challenges and strengths of African American women leaders in navigating the nonprofit sector. In contrast, Brown and Harris (2022) explored the association between female leaders and donations in NPOs, suggesting that female leadership may positively influence fundraising efforts and operating margins. In reviewing the literature, I gained valuable insights into how gender diversity in management influences organizational outcomes.

Organizational Resilience and Adaptability

Burnard and Bhamra (2019) discussed challenges related to organizational resilience, which may be relevant to understanding the management strategies employed by African American women leaders in fundraising. While their focus is broader than the specific demographic targeted in my research, their insights into resilience and adaptability could inform the discussions on effective fundraising strategies.

Ethical Research Conduct

Cumyn et al. (2019) explored the role of researchers in ensuring ethical conduct in research, highlighting the importance of considering diverse stakeholder perspectives. This perspective is crucial in studying African American women leaders, underscoring the need for ethical and culturally sensitive research practices.

Organizational Culture and Revenue Strategies

Jiao et al. (2024) explored the relationships between organizational culture and nonprofit revenue-raising strategies. Respect for people and stable cultures positively influenced diversification, while outcome-oriented culture positively influenced concentration. Innovation culture showed no association with either strategy. Board business expertise positively influences revenue concentration, and legal expertise influences diversification. The findings emphasized the impact of organizational culture on NFPs' financial strategies, building on the work of Von Schnurbein and Fritz (2017) by considering board expertise and illustrating the crucial role of governance mechanisms. Juao et al. (2024) provided insights for NFPs to optimize revenue strategies through cultural and governance adjustments.

Organizational Innovation and Nonprofit Effectiveness

Many researchers (Dong et al., 2020; Klassen et al., 2020; Shin et al., 2020) have found that organizational innovation significantly enhances NPOs by boosting resource efficiency, beneficiary satisfaction, fundraising, peer reputation, adaptability, stakeholder responsiveness, and overall effectiveness. For example, Dong et al. (2020), Klassen et al. (2020), and Shin et al. (2020) each emphasized this positive relationship. These inspiring researchers provided hope for the future of NPOs, showing that with the right strategies, NPOs can thrive and make a significant impact. Other researchers such as Adro and Fernandes (2021) and Oliveira et al. (2021) have consistently shown that leveraging organizational innovation for effective NPO management required strategies distinct

from those used in the business sector, such as a focus on social impact rather than profit and reliance on volunteer and donor engagement rather than consumer demand.

Performance Appraisal in Nonprofit Organizations

Despite varying perspectives, scholars strongly agree that evaluating multiple criteria, including processes and organizational functions, is essential for NPO performance appraisal (Bernal-Torres et al., 2021). Researchers have found that program and service innovations, improved resource attraction, and optimized resource use can significantly enhance beneficiary satisfaction. Additionally, implementing innovations can positively enhance the reputation of NPO leaders (Klassen et al., 2020). Effective, efficient, sustainable, and fair processes are crucial for social organizations, emphasizing the urgent need for innovations that yield the highest social impact (Klassen et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2023). This process underscores the crucial role of NPO managers, governmental officials, and donors in supporting and promoting such innovations.

Transition

In Section 2, I introduced the study's foundational aspects, delved into relevant literature related to the topic, and provided an overview of nonprofit fundraising by African American Women leaders. I also provided an overview and rationale for the BEF, which will serve as the conceptual framework for this study. Furthermore, I highlighted the strategies used for fundraising by drawing insights from recent scholarly works. Additionally, I discussed the challenges faced by African American women leaders and strategies to overcome them. Section 3 will provide a detailed and comprehensive description of my qualitative method, addressing project ethics, the research design, the defined population, the data collection process, and the sampling method. This section will discuss data collection techniques, data analysis process, reliability, and validity for addressing study creditability and transferability. Finally, Section 4 will include a comprehensive analysis of the client organization's history, processes, and operations following the 2023-2024 BEF. This section will also portray an overview of project research findings, application to professional practice and social change, and recommendations.

Section 3: Research Project Methodology

Capstone Research Project Ethics

In this research project, I employed a qualitative method and a case study design, including interviews, to explore effective strategies that African American women leaders in NPOs use to effectively engage and motivate diverse donors to contribute significant charitable donations. This research contributes to the existing literature regarding the management strategies employed by this demographic in nonprofit fundraising efforts. The researcher's role in data collection is necessary and essential for ensuring the quality and integrity of the research process (Agba & Rijami, 2022). The project practitioner's involvement in data collection is crucial for generating accurate interpretations of findings and ensuring unbiased presentation of results (Agba & Rijami, 2022). Researchers collect data to understand issues and provide accurate interpretations and present results objectively, without bias, to disseminate findings to various audiences (Agba & Rijami, 2022).

In qualitative research, the researcher must disclose prior relationships with the topic, participants, or research area, which can influence data interpretation and credibility. Saunders et al. (2019) indicated that acknowledging these relationships was essential for reflexivity, enabling readers to assess any biases and understand their potential effects on the research findings. This practice, aligned with the principle of transparency, was not just a formality, but a crucial step in establishing trustworthiness and reinforcing the credibility of the research, thereby reassuring the audience of the integrity of the research. Similarly, Bougie and Sekaran (2020) emphasized that

disclosing relationships with participants or the research area ensures objectivity and rigor in research. The authors argued that understanding the researcher's background provided context to the interpretations and mitigated biases (Bougie & Sekaran, 2020). By doing so, the researcher clarifies their perspective, which is crucial for readers to evaluate the validity and reliability of the study.

Yin (2018) also addressed the importance of researcher transparency, especially in case study research. Yin explained that researchers should be mindful of their position relative to the case to avoid unintentional influence on data collection and analysis. Acknowledging prior knowledge or relationships with the topic or participants can help readers understand the researcher's potential influence on the case study's design, data collection, and interpretation (Yin, 2018).

In this study, I selected five African American women with experience in nonprofit fundraising, considering convenience and diversity in the South Atlantic region of the United States. This region was chosen due to its significant African American population and diverse nonprofit landscape. To align with Agba and Rijami's (2022) recommendations for research related to understanding fundraising, I explored effective fundraising strategies and their interconnections with NPOs through interviews.

I interviewed five nonprofit leaders individually using the criteria in the BEF. I had no personal or professional relationship with the topics or participants that could have influenced the research. My role was strictly as a researcher, using the objective criteria of the BEF to guide the interviews and data collection. This robust framework

instilled confidence in the study's methodology, ensuring that the research findings were impartial and focused on gathering relevant information to address the study's objectives.

Ethical considerations are paramount throughout the research process to safeguard my and the participants' interests. The documented foundational framework for ethical research in the *Belmont Report* emphasized respect for persons, beneficence, and justice. Adherence to ethical guidelines is crucial and guarantees participant confidentiality, informed consent, and equitable treatment (Head, 2020). Participants could withdraw from the study at any time without penalty (Fernandez Lynch, 2020). If a participant chooses to withdraw, all their data related to the individual is immediately removed from the study. When a participant chooses to withdraw from a study at Walden University, the researcher immediately removes all their data from the study and revises or removes any findings or interpretations based on the individual data. Walden University clearly outlines withdrawal procedures, including a confidential process for notifying the researcher. This protocol safeguards the participants' privacy and preferences, ensuring responsible and ethical handling of their rights and data throughout the research process. This process is designed to maintain participant confidentiality and trust.

Head (2020) noted that a researcher's engagement with participants and understanding of the topic fosters a rich understanding of the research area, while ethical guidelines ensure the integrity and validity of the research process. In the qualitative case study, the participants received several incentives to enhance their organizations' strategic capabilities. I offered complimentary business consulting tailored to each participant's unique needs, enabling nonprofit leaders to identify actionable steps for growth and

sustainability in their fundraising. Additionally, the participants benefited from a detailed Baldrige framework assessment, which provided a structured evaluation of their organizational performance across critical areas, including leadership, strategy, customer focus, and operational efficiency. This assessment fostered a deeper understanding of areas needing improvement and equipped participants with data-driven insights to make informed decisions.

According to Bougie and Sekaran (2020), incentives like personalized consulting and framework-based assessments can increase engagement by offering immediate, applicable value to participants. Yin (2018) also suggested that participants gain knowledge and tools to improve organizational outcomes when researchers provide tangible benefits, such as consulting or strategic assessments. This underscores the active role of the researcher in the study, not just as an observer but as a provider of value. Further, Saunders et al. (2019) emphasized the importance of creating value for participants in qualitative research, as these benefits enhance participant motivation and contribute to the study's validity by encouraging active, meaningful involvement.

I offered participants incentives for their involvement. These included free business consulting services and an assessment based on the BEF. Acceptance of these incentives was not mandatory, ensuring that the study's ethical standards were upheld. The specific business problem in this study is that some African American women leaders in NPOs lack strategies to effectively engage and motivate diverse donors to contribute significant charitable donations.

The fundraising strategy among African American female nonprofit leaders is not just a contribution but a significant addition to the broader discourse on nonprofit management and ethics. The project practitioner is vital and instrumental in generating valuable insights and fostering ethical awareness in fundraising practices by employing qualitative methods and adhering to ethical guidelines (Velardo & Elliot, 2021). While confirming the literature's critical arguments, ethical approval processes also enhance researchers' critical thinking about their research conduct (Velardo & Elliot, 2021). Institutional review boards make ethical decisions in research based on understanding ethical theories (Velardo & Elliot, 2021).

Two main ethical theories are utilitarianism and deontology (Brooks & Dunn, 2020). These theories offer distinct perspectives on moral decision making and ethical behavior. Utilitarian ethics prioritize good outcomes, which, in the context of my study, could mean focusing on fundraising strategies that have the potential to generate the most donations for NPOs. On the other hand, deontology theory considers potential benefits against negative consequences. In my study, this could mean weighing the potential benefits of a fundraising strategy against the negative consequences it might have on the nonprofit's reputation. Understanding these theories helps researchers and institutional review boards make informed decisions throughout the research process relevant to nonprofit studies (Head, 2020). Qualitative methods in education research involve ethical considerations beyond personal aspects, including interpersonal and intersubjective aspects (Henderson & Esposito, 2017).

Research with human subjects has a tumultuous history globally, notably marked by unethical practices like Nazi experiments on concentration camp prisoners and the Tuskegee Study in the U.S. (Hicks, 2020). The post-World War II Nuremberg Trials led to the Nuremberg Code, outlining ethical research conduct (History of Research Ethics | Research Services | University of Missouri - Kansas City, n.d.). Subsequently, the World Medical Association established the Declaration of Helsinki. In the U.S., the Tuskegee Study prompted the National Commission, which issued the *Belmont Report*, defining three ethical principles: Respect for persons, Beneficence, and Justice.

Officials at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services integrated these principles into agency regulations. The Respect for Persons principle emphasized autonomy, informed consent, and voluntary participation. Beneficence emphasized minimizing harm and maximizing benefits, which is crucial in studies causing psychological distress. Justice requires fair distribution of research benefits and burdens, avoiding exploitation or targeting specific populations for convenience (Hicks, 2020).

Researchers use these ethical principles to guide their research involving human subjects, exemplified by past studies like Humphreys' Tearoom Trade and contemporary concerns such as the Tastes, Ties, and Time Facebook study. The *Belmont Report* principles echoed in regulatory frameworks, aim to balance ethical considerations in research endeavors (Hicks, 2020). Science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) is a field that focuses on ethical considerations in the designed world. Ethics in STEM is a research area that focuses on the critical ethical dimensions of our designed

and engineered world. It challenges cultural assumptions and promotes critical ethical reflection in STEM education and research, aiming for reorientation and development.

Laas et al. (2021) conducted a university-wide survey on ethical issues within research labs to identify prevalent ethical concerns in STEM fields. Laas et al. further explored the importance of various ethical behaviors, the frequency of discussions around these issues in research groups, and the actual occurrences of these ethical concerns in daily research practices among students and faculty. In their research, Laas et al. (2021) highlighted a consensus among students and faculty regarding the significance of avoiding research misconduct and issues related to data management in STEM research. The authors emphasized maintaining integrity in research practices. However, they also determined that a gap existed in the discussion and awareness of other crucial ethical aspects, particularly communication, collaboration, fairness, and respect within research environments.

Understanding the ethical culture within research environments is vital for effective fundraising strategies, which is important for adhering to traditional research ethics and emphasizing communication, collaboration, and interpersonal dynamics within NPOs. Building strong relationships, ensuring fairness, and fostering an environment of respect are vital components that can enhance the integrity and effectiveness of nonprofit initiatives involving African American women. Incorporating these ethical considerations aligns with the broader goal of promoting ethical conduct, which is fundamental in garnering public trust, fostering quality research outcomes, and supporting the well-being of individuals within nonprofit settings.

Cumyn et al. (2019) focused on understanding the perceptions of researchers, REB members, and influential parties within a Canadian tertiary health care and research institution regarding the roles of researchers in the ethical conduct of research. Cumyn et al. conducted a discourse analysis that explored these various perspectives and identified three main discourses regarding the role of researchers in ethical research conduct: Researchers are reflective practitioners who emphasized holistic ethical practice and ongoing commitment to ethical principles. In doing this, researchers accord the participants with the respect they deserve.

Researchers must protect participants. This protection is achieved through getting informed consent and continuous communication throughout the research period. The informed consent process for this study ensures transparency, confidentiality, and voluntary participation. The informed consent and organizational research agreement processes are of utmost importance in the proposal, as they ensure ethical standards and participant understanding. I provided an informed consent form that detailed the study's purpose, procedures, potential risks, and participant rights. The organizational research agreement specified the research scope, responsibilities of the organization and researcher, and data confidentiality measures. I provide both documents in the capstone document (see Appendix) to enhance transparency and accessibility for reviewers.

The informed consent continuous communication approach aligns with ethical research practices as recommended by Bougie and Sekaran (2020), Saunders et al. (2019), and Yin (2018), who emphasized the importance of clear, documented agreements in fostering trustworthiness and accountability in research. I sent each

potential participant the Invitation/Consent Form for Senior Leader Interview, outlining the study's purpose, procedures, risks, and benefits. The document informs participants about their rights and the privacy measures in place, ensuring they understand that their involvement is voluntary and that they can withdraw at any point without repercussions. It also emphasizes protecting participants' privacy and data integrity, including redacting identifiers in transcripts shared with the university, site leadership, or peer advisors.

Additionally, the Organization Research Agreement played a crucial role in formalizing the collaboration with the organization. It specified that only data deemed appropriate by the leadership will be shared for the case study, thereby reassuring the organization about the confidentiality of their proprietary information. The organization's leaders agreed to the scope of the research and the confidentiality terms, ensuring that data collection and analysis align with ethical guidelines.

Both the invitation/consent form and organization research agreement emphasize ethical research practices, respect for participants, and organizational boundaries. All participants were required to provide written consent before participating in the study. Participants were invited to audio-recorded interviews about their organization's operations. The purpose of these interviews was to gain a deeper understanding of how different organizations function and to identify best practices. Participants had the opportunity to clarify their statements through member checking. I analyzed the interview transcripts and archival data to conclude. Participants can request copies of their recordings or transcripts for their own records.

The participants' privacy was of utmost importance. Participation is voluntary, and a participant could withdraw at any time. The study poses no risks beyond daily life and aims to support organizational success. I ensured strict confidentiality by sharing redacted transcripts with faculty, peer advisors, and site leadership. Reports or publications will exclude any identifiable information. I will retain transcripts for at least 5 years, as the university requires. My client leader has signed the consent form with Walden University. The researcher is expected to give the participants respect. In fulfilling ethical requirements, the researcher also serves as a technician who adheres to procedural steps and is technical with ethical norms.

Understanding diverse ethical perspectives on research roles is crucial for effective fundraising strategies for African American women in nonprofits. This includes participant protection, informed consent, and broader ethical responsibilities. Implementing ethical practices involves engaging stakeholders and maintaining transparency. A comprehensive ethical framework is essential for ethical research practices and community trust, aligning with study standards.

Immanuel Kant's categorical imperative influences deontological reasoning, asserting that rational decision making should benefit all members of society (Brooks & Dunn, 2020). As Brooks and Dunn (2020) outlined, it leads to universal laws and actions based on duty, rights, and justice. I conducted my research in a manner that safeguards participant information in a lock. Participants were free to withdraw at any time. Participants wishing to withdraw from the study should inform the researcher, and providing a reason for withdrawal is optional (Fernandez Lynch, 2020). I securely stored

the study data and will keep it for 5 years before deleting it and then destroying it. I removed names and identifying information to protect participants' privacy (Dulhanty, 2021). By following these guidelines, I ensured compliance with integrity and ethical standards (Yip et al., 2016). The Walden University Institutional Review Board approval number for this study is 07-03-23-1170909.

Nature of the Project

The qualitative methodology was suitable for this study because I sought to explore the strategies some African American women leaders in NPOs use to effectively engage and motivate diverse donors to contribute significant charitable donations. Researchers use qualitative research to explore social phenomena, providing rich and detailed insights into the individual participants' experiences, perspectives, and motivations (Saunders et al., 2019). By employing qualitative methods such as interviews and document review, I can capture the nuanced strategies used by African American women, their cultural perspectives, and their community engagement practices.

Additionally, qualitative research enables the exploration of context-specific factors that influence fundraising efforts, highlighting the unique challenges and opportunities faced by African American women in NPOs (Hussein, 2023). The qualitative approach aligns with the study's goal of exploring the intricacies of fundraising strategies used by African American women and gaining a comprehensive understanding of their philanthropic fundraising endeavors.

Researchers use a case study design to explore and gain an in-depth identification and exploration of a specific context, organization, or phenomenon, which provides a

holistic understanding of the strategies and the factors influencing events explored (Yin, 2018). The inductive reasoning approach is crucial in qualitative research for exploring complex problems and developing theories (Yin, 2018). It involves collecting detailed data through interviews and focus groups and moving from specific observations to broader generalizations. Researchers use an inductive approach to help identify patterns, themes, and categories within the data, leading to the development of a comprehensive understanding that explains the problem's dynamics.

The inductive approach encourages generating new ideas and perspectives, enabling researchers to propose innovative solutions. In my study, I may identify the complexities and intricacies of African American women's fundraising strategies in a specific NPO by focusing on a single case of particular interest. In a single-case study, researchers gather rich qualitative data from multiple sources, such as interviews, observations, and document analysis, facilitating a comprehensive exploration of the strategies employed (Yin, 2018).

Population, Sampling, and Participants

The target population for this study consisted of board members from a nonprofit organization actively engaged in fundraising and philanthropy within an NPO located in the South Atlantic region of the United States. I conducted initial outreach through Walden's professional networks and associations relevant to nonprofit management, aligning with Saunders et al.'s (2019) suggestions on leveraging professional affiliations to enhance access. I initially connected with the NPO through the Walden Consulting Alliance to access participants and build a productive working relationship. To gain

access to participants for this research, I identified and reached out to key executives in a NPO led by an African American women. I also utilized recommendations from mutual contacts within these networks, which facilitated introductions and helped build rapport.

To establish a working relationship with each participant, I scheduled preliminary meetings to discuss the study's purpose, procedures, and benefits in detail, ensuring transparency and fostering trust (Bougie & Sekaran, 2020). These discussions allowed me to address any concerns, clarify expectations, and emphasize the supportive role of the Baldrige framework assessment as part of the study. This emphasis on the Baldrige framework assessment made the participants feel valued and integral to the research, fostering a sense of importance and contribution. Using purposive criterion sampling, I selected participants based on specific criteria aligned with the study's goals. Purposive sampling, a deliberate selection method, allows researchers to focus on individuals likely to contribute valuable insights, as Saunders et al. (2019) suggested.

I established the selection criteria to focus on executives who were pivotal to the nonprofit's mission of providing essential resources to needy children. These participants, including the chief executive as the primary leader, followed by four top executive board members supporting the organization daily or voluntarily, of which one is a technology executive handling digital and media strategies crucial to the organization's objectives, who focused on strategy creation and implementation as well as the organization's success stories. Of these participants, three are female and two are male.

I built rapport by fostering mutual respect and establishing trust, which facilitated open communication. I used a combination of standardized, open-ended questions and a

general BEF interview guide (see Appendix) to ensure consistency in the topics covered while allowing flexibility in responses. The open-ended format facilitated quicker, comparable interviews, while the guide ensured a focused approach. Data saturation, a key milestone in the research process, was achieved when responses from executives started to converge, yielding no new themes, codes, or categories. This thoroughness in the data collection process captured all possible insights. Interviews were conducted via Zoom, Microsoft Teams, email, and telephone, with each participant choosing the setting based on convenience.

The sampling method for this study was purposive sampling, where participants were selected based on their involvement in a specific NPO and have used effective strategies in NPOs to effectively engage and motivate diverse donors to contribute significant charitable donations. As Saunders et al. (2019) noted, the purposive sampling approaches are effective. The sample size is structured to ensure data saturation by ensuring participants can provide rich and diverse insights. The secondary data sources for this study primarily consisted of existing literature research, social media platforms, and reviews of business documents.

Data Collection Activities

For data collection in qualitative research, researchers serve as the primary instrument, exposing the process to biases and errors. Maintaining data quality requires essential rigor, encompassing adherence to systematic processes, support for a well-documented audit trail, and assurance of transparent, unbiased research design, methods, and conclusions (Johnson et al., 2020). Data collection and management are crucial

aspects of research integrity (Agba & Rijami, 2022). Data collection involves assembling, gathering, and measuring information on variables of interest in a systematic and well-defined pattern. The quality of data collected significantly determines the credibility of the research outcome and the mode of statistical technique used. Different forms of data are collected using other instruments or tools, such as questionnaires, observations, interviews, rating scales, attitude scales, and interest inventories (Agba & Rijami, 2022).

In this study, I explored the fundraising strategies of NPOs leaders, focusing on their abilities to engage and motivate donors to contribute significant charitable donations. I will collect data through semistructured interviews and secondary data from the organization's website and learn if COVID-19 affected any part of fundraising. I will explore the perceptions of fundraising strategies and collaborations with private-sector firms, highlighting the importance of financial stability for the long-term mission of NPOs, as suggested by Waerder et al. (2021).

Data collection and management are crucial aspects of research integrity (Agba & Rijami, 2022). Data collection involves assembling, gathering, and measuring information on variables of interest in a systematic and well-defined pattern. The quality of the collected data significantly determines the credibility of the research outcome. Different forms of data are collected using other instruments or tools, such as questionnaires, observations, interviews, rating scales, attitude scales, and interest inventories (Agba & Rijami, 2022). The BEF was the primary method of data collection.

Data management is the administrative process that ensures the needed data is acquired, scrutinized, stored, guided, processed, and presented to meet data users'

expectations regarding reliability, accessibility, and timeliness. It covers almost all stages of research, from conceptualization to completion of research work and the disposal of research materials (Agba & Rijami, 2022). Responsible and effective data management helps improve research integrity, preventing gaps, errors, and inaccuracies.

There are six areas or stages of data management: data selection, data gathering, data processing, data analysis, data presentation or reporting and publishing, and data storage and ownership (Agba & Rijami, 2022). The primary rationale for data integrity in research is to support research credibility, legitimacy, and validity (Agba & Rijami, 2022). Responsible data collection and management are the rudimentary principles that can compel a genuine pursuit of a study of interest and create an atmosphere of trust and reliability in a research outcome (Agba & Rijami, 2022).

In conclusion, data integrity in research is essential for supporting credibility, legitimacy, and validity. By carefully selecting, gathering, processing, analyzing, presenting, and storing data, researchers can create an atmosphere of trust and reliability in their research outcomes (Agba & Rijami, 2022). Data integrity is a fundamental requirement for research credibility, as it addresses issues of data validity, ensures raw, undistorted, verified, and complete data, provides opportunities for comprehensive documentation and data preservation, and ensures the use of correct parameters for a particular study (Agba & Rijami, 2022). It also serves as a source for reproducibility, data analysis, data security, and informs researchers to be more diligent, meticulous, detailed, zealous, enthusiastic, and passionate about their study.

Credibility in research means inspiring belief or trust, a criterion for trustworthiness (Agba & Rijami, 2022). The confidence and trust in study findings, as well as questioning the authenticity of information or data sources used in an investigation, create credibility. Data integrity is the anchor of credibility in research. The researcher must demonstrate and establish that their study adhered to the rules, protocols, and procedures, ensuring honesty, transparency, and consistency in collecting, managing, and reporting data in compliance with the highest standards expected of scientific research (Agba & Rijami, 2022).

I employed member checking to enhance the credibility and reliability of findings by engaging participants in reviewing their responses. During the semistructured interviews, as the primary data collection tool, I actively listened to and observed nonverbal cues, body language, and intonation. After the initial data analysis, I shared summaries or themes derived from participants' responses, inviting them to validate or clarify the findings to confirm accurate representation, as Urry et al. (2023) suggested. This validation process ensures that participants' intended meanings are accurately understood and that any potential misinterpretations are addressed, which is crucial to internal validity, as Hayashi et al. (2021) suggest. Additionally, member checking may foster participants' deeper engagement, creating a coconstructed narrative that enhances data authenticity, as Iivari (2023) notes. Triangulating this approach with reflective notes further enriched the study, establishing a comprehensive and reliable foundation for analyzing nonprofit fundraising dynamics in an African American women-led NPO.

Data Organization and Analysis Techniques

Qualitative case study analysis focuses on reliability and validity, requiring methods like member checking and triangulation to establish criteria like dependability, credibility, transferability, and confirmability. These criteria are not measurable and require detailed information on qualitative validity (Marshall et al., 2021). Yadav (2021) reviewed the criteria for good qualitative research, emphasizing strategies that enhance trustworthiness. These strategies encompass credibility achieved through triangulation, respondent validation, and data collection until saturation.

I used methodological triangulation to enhance the study's credibility and provide a comprehensive understanding of the research topic. Methodological triangulation involves gathering data through multiple methods, including interviews, document analysis, and observations. By combining these data sources, I strengthened the findings and minimized potential biases. Yin (2018) highlighted that methodological triangulation helps researchers validate their findings by examining the consistency across various data sources. Similarly, Bougie and Sekaran (2020) and Saunders et al. (2019) emphasized that methodological triangulation contributes to the rigor and depth of qualitative research, ultimately increasing trustworthiness. Additionally, engaging in critical self-assessment to recognize biases and preconceptions establishes reflexivity.

Peer review and debriefing were conducted to mitigate researcher bias, while prolonged engagement and persistent observation facilitated a more profound understanding. Transferability is improved through maximum variation and typical sampling, while thick description aids contextual comprehension. I conducted an audit

trail to ensure dependability by documenting procedures and decisions. Triangulation, which involves methodological, data, investigator, theoretical, and environmental perspectives, further strengthens credibility (Natow, 2020). These strategies find support in the works of Amin et al. (2020).

I used the thematic analysis suggested by Yin (2018) and Saunders et al. (2019, 602) as a guiding principle to identify common themes and patterns in organizational data collected using Yin's five-step process and cross-validate client data using methodological triangulation. NVivo will assist in data analysis. Braun and Clarke (2019) urged researchers in sport, exercise, and other fields to actively engage with the uncertainty inherent in reflexive thematic analysis. The authors urged researchers to interpret meaning as something constructed through analysis rather than an objective discovery awaiting revelation. Researchers argued that we should make subjective and context-specific decisions about sample size and when to conclude data collection. These determinations, they insisted, should develop organically through the analysis process rather than being set in advance (p. 201). I will store the data collected from participants securely for 5 years.

Braun and Clarke (2019) offered a detailed and accessible framework for thematic analysis in qualitative research. The authors emphasize a structured, flexible, and reflexive approach to thematic reflexive, guiding researchers through a six-phase process, from data familiarization to report writing. The authors also encourage reflexivity, urging researchers to critically engage with their biases and assumptions throughout the analytic process. My structured process for data analysis using Braun and Clarke's thematic

analysis framework, incorporating Yin's case study methodology principles where applicable, and including a plan for NVivo usage are as follows:

Familiarization With the Data

The data underwent thorough exploration. All transcripts, notes, and documents received careful review to gain a comprehensive understanding of the content, which proved crucial for identifying initial patterns and ideas.

Generation of Initial Codes

Using NVivo, I will start coding data based on emerging patterns. For Braun and Clarke (2019), codes are the most minor units of meaning. I will assign codes to specific data segments that are significant to my research questions. NVivo's auto-coding features can help identify common words or phrases as a starting point, but manual coding ensures relevance to my analysis framework.

Search for Themes

Next, I reviewed the codes to identify potential themes. I grouped related codes to form broader categories that reveal deeper patterns in the data. This grouping aligns with Yin's emphasis on recognizing recurring concepts across cases. I use NVivo to visualize these themes through nodes or primary themes that represent central ideas in the analysis.

Review of Themes

I defined each theme in a way that accurately captured the data. This refining involves checking themes against the original data set to confirm that they are relevant, coherent, and distinct. NVivo's functionality for matrix queries can helped, enabling me to verify that the themes are well-supported by the data.

Definition and Naming of Themes

I defined each theme in a way that captured its essence and accurately reflected the data. I selected theme names that were clear and informative, providing readers with an immediate understanding of each theme's significance.

Report Writing

I synthesized the findings into a coherent narrative by describing each theme and using direct quotes from my data to support my interpretations. NVivo enables the quick retrieval of coded sections and illustrative quotes, streamlining the reporting process.

Data Storage and Security

I assure readers that all raw data will be securely stored for a period of 5 years, per data protection and confidentiality requirements. NVivo facilitates safe file storage and management, providing controlled access to project data. The logical process provides transparency and rigor in the qualitative analysis of the challenges faced by African American women leaders in fundraising and strategies for overcoming them.

Reliability and Validity

Reliability

Maintaining a transparent chain of evidence is fundamental for establishing the credibility and reliability of collected data throughout the research process (Yin, 2018). The significance of multiple evidence sources, systematic data organization, maintaining a logical chain of evidence, and cautious handling of social media data offer valuable sources of evidence for in-depth study for comprehensive data in qualitative research (Yin, 2018). Researchers can employ various tactics during case studies to address the

tests pertinent for assessing research design quality. However, the design phase does not implement all tactics; instead, most during data collection, data analysis, or the compositional phase of the research (Yin, 2018).

Jones and Donmoyer (2021) used the formative influences timeline (FIT) to improve the reliability of qualitative research in the nonprofit sector. The authors addressed the bias problem in qualitative research, particularly in ethnographic studies, sociology, and applied fields like nonprofit and philanthropic studies. FIT is used since it allows participants to outline formative influences without researcher interference, minimizing potential bias. FIT is beneficial in nonprofit strategies like fundraising and inequitable donation, where bias is critical. By minimizing bias in data collection, nonprofit leaders can gain more accurate insights into philanthropic actions and program impact, ensuring a more informed and equitable approach to fundraising and donation strategies. I conducted my research to ensure credibility, confirmability, and data saturation.

To ensure reliability in researching nonprofits for African American women leaders and their fundraising strategies, I employed a rigorous, structured approach in line with established case study methodologies, as Yin (2018) recommended. First, I will develop a clear protocol tailored to specific nonprofit cases, defining each case's scope and boundaries to facilitate the collection of relevant, contextualized data. Yin's six recommended sources of information (documents, archival records, interviews, participant observations, and physical artifacts) will form the basis of data triangulation, reinforcing data reliability.

I engaged with the faculty to provide feedback, enhancing the study's coherence and ensuring that findings are free of personal biases. Additionally, I followed Yin's (2018) analytic techniques, such as pattern matching and explanation building, to systematically interpret the data. I will thoroughly describe the data to enhance transparency, providing readers with a clear and nuanced understanding of the findings.

Validity

Hayashi et al. (2021) emphasized the importance of processual validity in qualitative research, particularly in health care, as it ensures transparency, reliability, and credibility. The authors used case studies to illustrate the role of processual validity in bridging gaps in medical education and improving hospital health care services. This approach is also crucial in nonprofit fundraising strategies, as it enhances transparency and reliability in studies addressing inequitable donation practices. I interviewed five senior African American leaders from a U.S. NPO who have successfully developed and implemented effective strategies, leading to increased donations. Data were obtained using semistructured interviews, related public data, organizational website and internal archival data, and literature. Using the consulting capstone format will enable me to focus on senior leaders' experiences from the client leader and their effective fundraising strategies.

Guba and Lincoln (1986) offered four criteria—credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability—as substitutes for internal and external validity, reliability, and objectivity in qualitative research (Trochim, 2020). Sugiyono (2020) delineated the validity testing methods in qualitative research, which encompass

credibility (internal validity), transferability (external validity), dependability (reliability), and confirmability (objectivity). Ensuring the reliability, trustworthiness, and validity of conclusions drawn is imperative in qualitative research (Sekaran & Bougie, 2019). The credibility criterion focuses on participants' perspectives, emphasizing the importance of their judgment in determining research credibility.

Transferability addresses the generalizability of qualitative research, primarily the responsibility of extending the research findings to different contexts (Sugiyono, 2020). Dependability emphasizes the need to account for contextual changes during research, contrasting with the traditional concept of reliability in quantitative studies (Sugiyono, 2020). Confirmability emphasizes the importance of corroborating results through strategies such as data rechecking and documenting procedures in qualitative research (Sugiyono, 2020).

Debates persist regarding the legitimacy of these alternative criteria. While some argue that traditional quantitative criteria can be applied universally, others contend that these standards may not effectively translate into qualitative research due to differing methodologies and assumptions (Trochim, 2020). In my study, I will ensure credibility by adopting methods such as triangulation—using multiple sources, theories, or researchers to cross-check findings—and member checking, where I seek feedback from participants on the interpretations of their responses. Confirmability could be supported by maintaining a detailed audit trail that documents the decision-making process throughout data collection and analysis and using reflective journaling to capture personal biases and influences on the research process (Carcary, 2020).

As Tight (2024) argues, moving beyond the traditional idea of data saturation may be advantageous. Instead, focusing on theoretical sufficiency or conceptual depth could be more beneficial. My approach will allow for a more flexible and adaptive data collection process, continuing until the study reaches a point where no new concepts or theories emerge. I ensured the data reveals recurring solid themes to provide depth and validity in exploring nonprofit fundraising patterns without rigid saturation constraints.

Transition and Summary

In Section 3, I elaborated on aspects related to ethical research practices, the project's characteristics, the target population, and sampling strategies, the tools utilized for data collection, and the methodologies and procedures for gathering and analyzing data, all of which aimed at bolstering the study's integrity. Finally, I analyzed strategies to guarantee the reliability and validity of the qualitative research study, thereby increasing its trustworthiness, which is crucial for validating the research outcomes.

Section 4 presents the findings from the completed research study, including an analysis of the organizational profile. It will delve into the relevance of these findings for professional practices. The section will also include a detailed examination of the results, highlighting the impact on programs, services, and outcomes centered on clients and employees. I will discuss how the organization's focus areas and performance outcomes relate to the derived implications and discuss possible strategies that African American nonprofit organizational leaders used to successfully raise funds for their mission to improve performance management and long-term sustainability. Finally, the section will offer recommendations and discuss implications for social change.

Section 4: Research Project Findings and Professional Conclusions

Organization Profile

The client leader expressed that servant leadership can change a community, one family at a time. Since its founding in 2008, the NPO has dedicated itself to serving the region's children, families, and teachers. It provides free school and teacher supplies, ensuring every child and educator starts the school year prepared. NPO's mission has always centered on eliminating barriers faced by children in poverty, offering wrap-around services to support academic success and family well-being. NPOs' commitment to servant leadership is part of their philosophy and way of life. Despite the challenges, the organization has continued to support families through school supplies, virtual learning resources, and other essential items. They have organized donation drives and community events, adapting their strategies to the new normal so families receive the necessary support. This resilience and resourcefulness in the face of adversity reinforce their belief in the power of community and collective action.

The interview revealed five central themes that illustrate how nonprofit leaders translate their vision into effective practice. The five key themes identified were: (a) trust-building to demonstrate authenticity; (b) strategic engagement to employ cultural messaging to improve donor outreach; (c) visionary leadership to align practices with community needs; (d) community-centered engagement to prioritize engagement and partnerships; and (e) data-driven decision making to track progress and promoting sustainability. These findings demonstrate how the organization’s servant leadership

model has fostered resilience, sustained donor relationships, and deepened its impact throughout the community.

Organizational Description

XYZ (pseudonym) is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization that enhances the lives of children and families by addressing the educational and social needs of underserved communities. Established in May 2008, the organization emerged from a collaboration between its founder and their late father, a reverend minister, to provide essential resources to families facing financial hardship. Rooted in servant, ethical, and transformational leadership, as well as faith principles, XYZ remains dedicated to community empowerment through targeted support services, educational initiatives, and outreach programs.

The organization's vision ensures that every student and educator have the necessary tools for success, while its mission focuses on service accessibility and fostering community engagement. Operating without a payroll, XYZ relies on committed volunteer board members who drive its strategic efforts. Through data-driven approaches such as ticket distribution and geographic analysis, the organization continuously monitors and refines its objectives to allocate resources effectively.

XYZ actively engages with the community through large-scale annual events in August and December while maintaining year-round partnerships with practitioners, foster care agencies, local churches, and school districts. These collaborations deliver comprehensive support tailored to the diverse needs of families and educators. Additionally, partnerships with dental clinics, mental health agencies, and domestic

violence practitioners expand XYZ's reach, ensuring holistic support services beyond traditional charitable activities.

Since its inception, XYZ leadership has worked to ensure that every student and teacher receives essential school supplies at no cost before the academic year begins. Drawing from personal experiences with inequity, the founder has spent over 3 decades championing educational equity, emphasizing that financial hardships should never prevent children from accessing necessary resources. Through citywide back-to-school events, targeted food distribution programs, and strategic collaborations with local agencies and faith-based organizations, XYZ leadership provides critical assistance to thousands of families across the South Atlantic region of the United States.

Despite financial inequities, XYZ leadership remains committed to maximizing its impact through community partnerships, direct outreach, and data-informed decision making. The organization's leadership emphasizes inclusivity, equity, and social responsibility, fostering a collaborative and supportive environment among volunteers and board members. Through its dedication to service and community-driven initiatives, XYZ continues to expand its reach, ensuring that students and educators receive the support they need to thrive.

Organizational Environment

The organizational environment in the BEF provides a structured analysis of an organization's operational landscape.

Product Offerings. XZY nonprofit provides comprehensive programs and services designed to support families, educators, and students. These offerings include

distributing free school supplies, backpacks, food, cloth, and shoes through the annual Back-to-School event and holiday celebrations. The organization facilitates year-round community engagement by partnering with other organizations to provide essential resources, including food and clothing, and connecting families with services addressing broader needs, such as domestic violence support and mental health services. A strategic focus ensures these programs contribute directly to the organization's mission of empowering students, teachers, and educational staff by eliminating barriers to educational success.

Mission, Vision, and Values. XYZ's mission, vision, and values are critical to leaders' daily work and long-term planning.

***Mission*.** The mission defines the organization's purpose and concrete actions to fulfill its vision. The mission of the client's nonprofit is "to provide free school supplies to any student, teacher, or educational staff member, maintaining a strong focus on service, accessibility, and community support." This mission outlines the organization's activities and operations to achieve the vision. It emphasizes accessibility, service, and consistency in delivering educational resources.

***Vision*.** The vision describes the long-term aspiration and ultimate impact the organization seeks to achieve. The vision of the client nonprofit is "to ensure that we reach families most in need by providing free school supplies to students, teachers, and educational staff—regardless of where they live or work." This vision underscores the organization's dedication to serving those in need and providing access to essential school supplies at no cost.

***Values*.** The XYZ organizational leadership upholds the following core values that guide leadership decisions, program design, and community engagement:

- servant leadership: Leading with a commitment to first serving the needs of students, teachers, and families.
- inclusiveness: Ensuring that all individuals have equitable access to resources regardless of background.
- equity: Addressing disparities in educational resources by prioritizing those most in need.
- commitment to social justice: Advocating fair and just access to education-related resources, fostering a supportive community environment.
- core competency: Compared to larger organizations with expansive funding networks, XYZ differentiates itself through a personalized, relationship-driven approach that prioritizes direct community engagement over financial scale. By aligning its strategic planning with the BEF, XYZ strengthens its ability to navigate competitive challenges, enhance operational effectiveness, and drive measurable community impact. Through data-informed leadership, servant leadership principles, and adaptive strategic planning, XYZ continues to advance its mission while addressing the evolving needs of its community.

These principles ensure that every initiative aligns with the organization's mission and vision while addressing the community's evolving needs.

XYZ leadership embraces and upholds the values of educational equity, community empowerment, social justice, and servant leadership. These values drive its

efforts to support the educational needs of children, families, and educators in the South Atlantic region of the United States. Founded on servant leadership and equity principles, the NPO aims to change its community for one family at a time. The organization's vision began with a simple yet profound goal: to provide every child in their community public schools with the necessary supplies for their education. Inspired by the founder's experience with educational inequity, this mission aims to ensure no child feels inadequate due to a lack of resources.

The NPO's success over the past 16 years is a testament to the community's support and unwavering dedication to its mission. By focusing on the needs of students, teachers, and families, the NPO leaders embody the spirit of servant leadership and continue to impact the region significantly. Their community events and fundraising efforts reflect the success of NPO leaders' management strategies in engaging diverse donors to make significant donations. Together, as a community and a team, XYZ believes in making a difference in the lives of those they serve.

Workforce Profile. XYZ leadership is led by a team of dedicated professionals who oversee community service, educational initiatives, and advocacy efforts. Also, XYZ leadership operates without payroll, relying entirely on a dedicated team of volunteers, including board members who exemplify servant leadership. Volunteers play a central role in supporting the nonprofit's mission and operations. Beyond the leadership team and board, who serve as unpaid volunteers, a growing base of community members, comprising approximately 20 men and 30 women, contributes to planning, logistics, and service delivery. Volunteers set up tables, staff vendor stations, manage music, offer free

haircuts, and assist with cleaning and distributing supplies. Many also fundraise independently and donate personal resources.

Volunteer engagement remains strong year after year, driven by a shared commitment to the organization's vision and a culture of servant leadership. During the COVID-19 pandemic, volunteers continued to serve with resilience, helping transition events to outdoor and drive-through formats. The organization models equity and empowerment by valuing consistency, commitment, and community voice in all volunteer efforts.

Volunteers represented diverse backgrounds. They included individuals who identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, plus (others) (LGBTQ+) and who had various ethnic, racial, religious, and educational experiences. This inclusiveness fosters a supportive and equitable environment where individuals contribute meaningfully to the organization's mission. The organization selects board members based on their commitment to its vision and values. Volunteers undergo biannual training to ensure they are well-equipped to support major events. This structure fosters a collaborative environment where individuals from diverse backgrounds work together to serve students, teachers, and educational staff.

***Leadership Team*.** The nonprofit's leadership provides strategic, operational, and communications oversight to ensure alignment with the mission and organizational effectiveness. The founder and executive director lead with vision and dedication, ensuring that the organization remains grounded in its mission and values. The chief of staff and communications manages both internal and external messaging to ensure

consistent and impactful outreach. The chief operating officer and financial secretary oversee daily operations and financial sustainability, promoting the smooth execution of services and responsible stewardship of resources. The president offers strategic direction and guides the team toward organizational goals. Supporting this role, the first vice president contributes to development initiatives and strategic planning, while the second vice president aids in implementing programs and supporting leadership functions. Together, this core leadership team fosters collaboration, consistency, and long-term impact.

The board members include an honorary member who offers invaluable wisdom and support, contributing to the organization's long-term vision. The dedicated board members bring diverse perspectives and expertise, ensuring the organization remains accountable and effective in our efforts. The webmaster continues to guide and manage the organization's online presence, keeping the community informed and engaged. Together, this dynamic team works tirelessly to fulfill the mission, ensuring that NPOs make a tangible difference in the lives of those they serve.

Assets. The key organizational assets include long-standing partnerships with community organizations, schools, and local agencies. These collaborations enhance the coalition's capacity for efficient resource distribution and targeted outreach to high-need communities. The organization's robust data collection methods further strengthen its ability to assess impact and refine program strategies. XYZ relies heavily on fundraising through social media campaigns, outreach to local churches, HBCUs, and community leaders, and drafting donation requests to secure support from organizations and

individuals. Faith is a cornerstone of XYZ's operations, guiding its efforts to persist in facing challenges, including systemic inequities in nonprofit funding for organizations led by African American women.

Regulatory Requirements. XYZ leadership adheres to strict IRS regulations governing tax-exempt nonprofits as a 501(c)(3) organization. The client adheres to regulatory requirements governing its operations, funding, and governance as an NPO. Leadership maintains transparency in financial practices and upholds legal and ethical standards for NPOs. Funding sources align with the organization's equity, inclusiveness, and social justice values, ensuring donations support the mission without compromising ethical principles.

Compliance with these regulatory and ethical considerations reinforces the organization's credibility, sustainability, and commitment to serving the community effectively. It operates exclusively for charitable and educational purposes, ensuring compliance with the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act and maintaining strong ethical standards. XYZ leadership strategically partners with entities aligning with its mission and values, avoiding funding sources that conflict with its equity and diversity principles.

Organizational Relationships

Organizational Structure. XYZ operates as a fully volunteer-driven NPO. It has no payroll and relies on a dedicated team of volunteers, including board members, to execute its mission. The organization selects board members who embody servant leadership and demonstrate a strong commitment to its vision and values.

Customers and Stakeholders. The organization primarily serves students, teachers, and educational staff by providing free supplies and essential resources. Families facing economic hardship benefit directly from their services, while educators receive support to enhance classroom success. Additionally, the organization engages with community partners, local agencies, and advocacy groups that share their commitment to educational equity and social justice. Stakeholders include donors, volunteers, and community members who contribute to the sustainability and growth of the organization's initiatives.

Suppliers and Partners. XYZ collaborates with various community organizations, schools, and local agencies to secure and distribute essential resources. It leverages long-standing partnerships to ensure efficient resource allocation and targeted outreach. Suppliers provide school supplies, food, clothing, and other essential necessities, while strategic partners help connect families to additional services, including mental health support and resources for domestic violence. The organization carefully aligns its funding sources and partnerships with its core values, ensuring that all collaborators uphold the principles of equity, inclusivity, and social justice.

Organizational Situation

XYZ, an NPO that addresses educational resource disparities, operates within a dynamic competitive environment that shapes its strategic objectives and service delivery. The purpose of this qualitative single-case study was to explore what effective strategies did African American women leaders in NPOs use to effectively engage and motivate diverse donors to contribute significant charitable donations through the lens of

the BEF, focusing on its competitive position, competitiveness changes, and use of comparative data.

Competitive Environment

Competitive Position. XYZ leadership serves as a leading NPO within its regional landscape, focusing on providing essential school supplies, educational support, and community resources to underprivileged students, educators, and families. Unlike larger nonprofits with extensive financial backing, the client organization operates through a volunteer-driven model, demonstrating strong leadership rooted in servant leadership principles. By maintaining an unwavering commitment to community service, XYZ has established itself as a trusted partner among schools, educators, and community stakeholders. Its ability to mobilize resources, sustain long-term volunteer engagement, and foster meaningful partnerships underscores its competitive advantage. However, financial constraints and disparities in funding access pose challenges in competing with well-funded organizations.

Competitiveness Changes. The nonprofit sector is undergoing significant shifts, particularly in funding availability, donor expectations, and community needs. XYZ has adapted to these changes by leveraging strategic partnerships and data-driven decision making to enhance its outreach. The organization continuously refines its approach to service delivery by tracking assistance trends through its ticketing system, allowing for precise resource allocation. Additionally, the nonprofit remains selective in its funding sources, ensuring alignment with its inclusiveness, equity, and social justice mission. Unlike competitors prioritizing large-scale financial contributions over grassroots

engagement, the client organization sustains its impact by fostering direct relationships with businesses, churches, and policymakers. This adaptability positions the organization as a resilient nonprofit committed to sustainable growth and mission-driven leadership.

Comparative Data. XYZ leaders employ data collection methodologies to assess their effectiveness and maintain service excellence, identifying high-need areas and tracking service impact. By analyzing the geographic distribution patterns of families seeking assistance, XYZ leadership ensures equitable allocation of resources to communities that are most in need. The organization benchmarks its impact against local and national nonprofit standards by examining service reach, program effectiveness, and donor engagement.

Strategic Context

XYZ is an NPO committed to addressing educational resource disparities among underserved families and educators. Guided by a mission to provide free school supplies and essential support, XYZ functions without a payroll, relying entirely on dedicated volunteers and board members who exemplify servant leadership. The organization's strategic direction aligns with its long-term vision: ensuring equitable access to educational tools, fostering academic success, and strengthening community engagement.

Strategic Challenges and Advantages. XYZ faces unique strategic challenges, particularly in securing sustainable funding sources. As a Black women-led nonprofit, the organization's leadership must navigate systemic disparities in financial resources, often encountering barriers to accessing major funding streams. Unlike larger, more established organizations with extensive financial networks, XYZ relies heavily on community

partnerships and grassroots fundraising efforts. Moreover, the organization's commitment to aligning with socially responsible donor's limits funding opportunities but preserves the integrity of its mission and values. Despite these financial constraints, XYZ maintains a strategic advantage through its strong community engagement model and data-driven approach. The organization systematically tracks service impact using a ticketing system that categorizes assistance by food distribution, school supplies, and teacher resources. This performance measurement framework enables leadership to allocate resources efficiently, identify areas of high need, and strengthen funding proposals through evidence-based storytelling.

Strategic Opportunities. XYZ continually refines its strategic approach in response to evolving community needs, thereby enhancing its impact. By leveraging both qualitative and quantitative data, the organization tailors its outreach efforts to reach underrepresented populations effectively. Additionally, XYZ fosters collaborative partnerships with educational institutions, social service organizations, and local businesses, thereby expanding its resource network and broadening its reach. The organization's leadership exemplifies a proactive strategic mindset by participating in civic engagement initiatives, networking with elected officials, and advocating for policy changes that support underserved communities. This strategic positioning allows XYZ to elevate its mission while securing long-term sustainability. In alignment with the BEF, XYZ's strategic planning process integrates competitive awareness, adaptability, and data-driven decision making to drive continuous improvement and maximize its impact

on the communities it serves. Most of the board members of XYZ also serve on the district's school board.

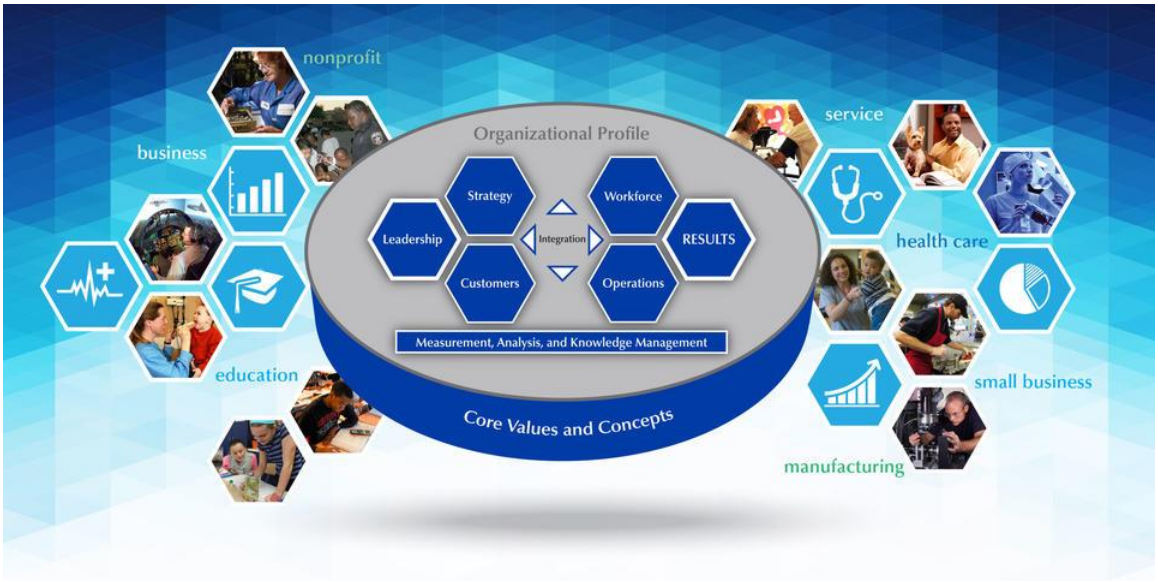
Performance Improvement System

The organization's strategic objectives have evolved to better align with community needs and its mission. Monthly reviews and post-event evaluations ensure continuous improvement, while strategic planning allows for better volunteer coordination and budget management. Despite challenges like fluctuating donations and policy changes, the organization adapts quickly, relying on strong community partnerships to sustain its work. The XYZ organization consistently improves its operations and impact.

In the BEF, the leadership triad serves as a foundational model that demonstrates how leadership, strategy, and customer focus drive organizational performance and guide key processes. The triad highlights the fundamental principle that effective leadership establishes the organizational vision and values, which in turn inform strategic planning. Strategy development must align with the voice of the customer to ensure that the organization's objectives are both relevant and responsive. As illustrated in Figure 1, leadership serves as the central enabler, integrating strategic intent with customer needs to ensure that decisions are informed by data and driven by the mission (Baldrige Performance Excellence Program, 2023, pp. 31–33).

Figure 1

Leadership Triad



Note. Leadership Triad: Leadership, Strategy, and Customer Processes (National Institute of Standards and Technology [NIST], 2023, pp. 31–33).

Leadership Triad: Leadership, Strategy, and Customers

Leadership

The organization's leadership approach aligns closely with the BEF. Leaders intentionally developed a community-centered vision based on direct feedback from staff, educators, and families. They deployed strategic initiatives by integrating holistic support services beyond traditional school supply drives. Leadership consistently applied a learning-oriented mindset by evaluating annual events, expanding partnerships, and enhancing donor engagement efforts to meet growing community needs.

Senior Leadership

Senior leaders integrated the mission values into daily operations, ensuring that every strategic decision reinforced the organization's commitment to affirming and uplifting children, families, and educators. This mature leadership approach reflects the Baldrige evaluation dimensions of approach, deployment, learning, and integration. Senior leaders at XYZ embody the principles of servant leadership by fostering an organizational culture that prioritizes community engagement, equity, and sustainability. With a volunteer-driven structure, the organization relies on the dedication of board members who align their efforts with the coalition's mission. By leveraging each member's unique strengths and abilities, XYZ leadership ensures that leadership is inclusive and effective. This approach aligns with best practices in leadership by setting a clear direction, empowering individuals, and maintaining a focus on action.

The organization's senior leaders demonstrate a forward-thinking mindset by expanding their services beyond its current location to the broader area in the South Atlantic region. This expansion highlights their ability to adapt to community needs and create value for all stakeholders. Their commitment to innovation and intelligent risk-taking is evident in their willingness to support underserved communities, reinforcing the coalition's mission.

Role-Model Senior Leaders. Senior leaders within XYZ serve as role models by exemplifying personal engagement and dedication to their mission. Their hands-on approach, whether through logistical support, event coordination, or direct service to families, demonstrates a deep commitment to fostering a culture of inclusion and service.

Leadership at XYZ entails action, as board members engage in events like back-to-school.

Furthermore, senior leaders cultivate the next generation of community leaders by mentoring and guiding volunteers. Their leadership style embodies authenticity, accountability, and a commitment to continuous improvement. They acknowledge challenges, embrace learning opportunities, and adapt to meet the evolving needs of their community. This commitment to ethical leadership fosters trust and long-term engagement among stakeholders.

Legal and Ethical Behavior

The XYZ executive leaders uphold the highest standards of integrity by striking a balance between short-term operational demands and a long-term commitment to ethical conduct. Their servant leadership model ensures that decisions prioritize the well-being of the families and educators they serve. Maintaining transparency in their decision making and consistently aligning actions with core values reinforces an ethical climate within the organization.

At XYZ, visionary leadership emerges through a culture of empowerment, service, and consistency. The client leader explained that, although the organization operates without paid staff, leaders empower board members—who serve as volunteers—by modeling the leadership they expect them to exhibit. "We empower each other... it starts with commitment," The leader noted, emphasizing that they rely on consistency and shared belief in the mission to guide their service to families and educators.

Senior leaders at XYZ communicate with and engage volunteers, partners, and community members through regular in-person involvement, selective communication, and mutual trust. While formal communication processes are limited, engagement occurs through data-informed planning and deep community presence. "We meet when it is necessary... because people have lives," The client leader explained, noting the emphasis on purposeful, not performative, meetings.

The XYZ nonprofit organizational leaders also rely on consistent feedback from community partners and beneficiaries to refine their programming. Through listening sessions, events such as the Back-to-School and Christmas distributions, and partnerships with schools, behavioral health authorities, and social services, leadership ensures that strategic decisions remain grounded in the real-time needs of the community. The model of communication reflects a direct alignment between leadership values and customer-centered strategy, as framed by the leadership triad.

Creation of an Environment for Success, Action and Innovation. Senior leaders at XYZ cultivate an environment of success and innovation by exemplifying a servant leadership approach that prioritizes commitment, equity, and impact. Although the organization operates without a paid staff, the executive leader empowers board members who serve as volunteers through their example. She models the consistency and commitment she expects, cultivating a team culture where empowerment begins with a shared belief in the mission. "We empower each other... it starts with commitment," Dr. Shanda stated, underscoring how each board member embraces service and takes initiative to fulfill the organization's vision.

Senior leadership at XYZ aligns decision making with organizational values through a deep commitment to the mission of providing equitable access to school supplies and resources for underserved families. As the executive leader noted, "If someone does not have a servant's heart… they are not going to serve others." This value-centered decision making ensures that leadership actions align with the organization's founding principles and foster trust among volunteers and the broader community. Leadership consistency and values alignment have enabled the organization to sustain its mission for over a decade despite changes in the external environment.

Leaders communicate the organization's goals through intentional, relationship-based engagement rather than formal meetings. Board members meet only when necessary to respect the time and mental well-being of members. This streamlined communication approach reflects the recognition that team members are professionals with whole lives and careers outside their volunteer work. "We do not meet just to say we have met," An executive leader explained. Instead, meaningful communication occurs in the context of program planning, data sharing, and preparation for major events such as the annual Back-to-School event and Christmas morning distribution.

Senior leaders also maintain an ongoing dialogue with key community partners, customers, and volunteers. They stay attuned to the needs of the community through consistent presence at outreach events. This grassroots communication enables the organization to adapt its service delivery and remain responsive to its audience. When XYZ lacks a particular resource, the leader leverages a network of trusted partners to

ensure families still receive appropriate referrals. “The organization listens to families and educators and then connects them to appropriate partners," she shared.

Inclusivity and equity are central to how senior leadership builds and sustains the volunteer workforce. The executive leader actively promotes an inclusive environment by welcoming volunteers from diverse backgrounds, including those from the LGBTQ+ community and various faith traditions. The organization selects volunteers based not on credentials or connections, but on their heart for service and their commitment to the mission. "This is work… and it is hard work," The executive leader emphasized, noting that board members must contribute more than their names—they must show up and serve with purpose.

Mental health and well-being also shape the leadership culture. Recognizing the emotional demands of service work, senior leaders avoid overburdening volunteers and instead focus on providing a healthy and respectful environment. Leadership encourages self-care, limits unnecessary meetings, and offers supportive touchpoints before major events. These actions foster a sustainable and human-centered culture of care within the organization.

By integrating vision, values, and strategic partnerships into every aspect of their leadership, XYZ's senior leaders create an environment where intelligent risk-taking, community collaboration, and innovation thrive. Their commitment to relationship-based engagement and value-driven decision making exemplifies the responsive and visionary leadership of the BEF champions. In an era that demands agility, inclusion, and impact,

XYZ's leadership stands as a model for cultivating success and sustaining community trust.

Governance and Societal Responsibilities. XYZ operates with a governance model rooted in servant leadership, transparency, and accountability, with a focus on making a positive impact in the community. The organization's board of directors, composed entirely of dedicated volunteers, plays an active role in guiding the strategic direction and upholding the organization's ethical standards. Rather than relying on formal performance appraisals, the board evaluates senior leadership effectiveness by assessing alignment with the organization's mission, responsiveness to community needs, and consistent engagement. Leaders demonstrate effectiveness through hands-on involvement, integrity, and a commitment to service. By focusing on values-driven behavior and measurable impact rather than traditional metrics, the board ensures that leadership remains mission-focused and community-centered. This practice reflects a deliberate choice to lead through service and shared responsibility. This governance structure promotes trust, accountability, and alignment between leadership actions and the organization's values, ensuring ethical and strategic coherence throughout the organization.

XYZ's governance system continually monitors organizational performance to support mission-driven decision-making. Leaders analyzed service participation data gathered from ticket-based systems at outreach events—such as food distributions, school supply giveaways, and teacher support initiatives—to assess program reach and effectiveness. The board used this data to identify underserved areas, adapt outreach

strategies, and prioritize regions of greatest need. This real-time performance evaluation system allowed the organizational leadership to remain responsive and targeted in its service delivery. Informal feedback loops complement data analytics by providing qualitative insights that enrich strategic planning. This dynamic and data-informed review process aligns with the BEF's emphasis on organizational learning and agility, reinforcing continuous improvement.

XYZ's governance model ensures transparency, ethical integrity, and community trust through principled decision making. The leaders carefully evaluated donor relationships and funding sources, accepting contributions only from entities that align with the organization's values of equity, inclusion, and social justice. They intentionally declined offers from external organizations that conflict with these principles, prioritizing long-term mission integrity over short-term financial gains. This selective and principled approach to donor engagement safeguarded the organization's reputation and reinforced public trust. It also reflects a commitment to ethical governance that transcends financial pressures. By embedding ethical standards into operational processes, leadership ensures the organization maintains credibility while fulfilling its societal mission.

XYZ's leaders integrate societal responsibility directly into governance and operations to achieve sustainable community impact. The organization designs inclusive programs that serve underserved students, educators, and families while maintaining ongoing partnerships with schools, health care agencies, and social service organizations. Board members and senior leaders actively participate in program delivery and strategic planning, emphasizing outreach, inclusion, and feedback-based adaptation to ensure

continuous improvement. This direct governance approach transforms leadership into stewardship. By embedding societal contribution into daily operations, leaders build an inclusive culture of service that fosters trust, resilience, and community relevance. This governance framework supports continuous learning and impact measurement, which strengthens donor confidence, volunteer engagement, and the organization's long-term sustainability.

XYZ's board members ensure the governance system reflects not just oversight but active participation in the stewardship of resources and services. The board prioritizes stakeholder interests by making inclusive, equity-driven decisions and allocating resources where they are most needed. Leaders promote societal well-being by expanding services beyond geographic boundaries and partnering with community-based organizations. This proactive governance style reflects both strategic vision and moral leadership. Board engagement ensures policies and practices stay aligned with community values and evolving social needs. As a result, the organization maintains a cycle of ethical leadership, operational excellence, and mission alignment that reflects the core principles of the BEF.

Legal Compliance, Ethics, and Risk Management. XYZ's governance framework integrates legal compliance and ethical behavior into its operational strategy. The organization ensures adherence to all legal and regulatory requirements while proactively addressing potential risks. Leadership decisions prioritize transparency and ethical conduct, reinforcing the coalition's reputation as a responsible nonprofit. Risk management efforts extend beyond legal obligations, including financial stewardship and

community trust. The organization's board continuously evaluates potential challenges, including resource allocation, sustainability, and program reach. The board's ability to navigate these risks while maintaining high ethical standards reflects its commitment to long-term community impact.

Public Concerns and Conservation of Natural Resources. As a community-focused nonprofit, XYZ remains attuned to public concerns, particularly in providing equitable access to essential resources. The nonprofit leadership designs programs to address educational disparities and promote workforce development by distributing school supplies and supporting teachers. The organization also ensures cost-effective operations, maximizing donor contributions for direct community benefits. Although XYZ primarily focuses on education and community support, it remains open to implementing environmentally conscious practices where feasible. Opportunities for sustainability may include optimizing logistics for resource distribution and minimizing waste at significant community events.

Societal Contributions and Community Support. XYZ exemplifies corporate social responsibility by going beyond compliance and contributing to societal well-being. The organization's expansion to serve families across its city demonstrates a proactive approach to inclusivity, ensuring that socioeconomic barriers do not hinder access to critical educational resources. XYZ's back-to-school event is a prime example of its societal contributions. The organization has a direct impact on the education system, empowering educators by providing school supplies and teacher resources. This initiative

demonstrates XYZs dedication to ensuring all families have access, regardless of location or financial status.

In alignment with the principles of community support, XYZ partners with schools, educators, and local volunteers to enhance educational opportunities. By engaging in servant leadership and fostering a culture of compassion, the organization strengthens community ties and amplifies its impact on future generations. XYZ stands as a role model for nonprofit excellence through its transparent governance, ethical leadership, and dedication to societal contributions.

Strategy

Strategy Development

The organization's leaders developed strategic objectives by responding directly to evolving community needs. They began by distributing school supplies to just ten children, using grocery bags to meet immediate need. As the organization's mission and visibility expanded, leadership adapted its strategy to improve the quality and presentation of support. Leaders transitioned from grocery bags to standard backpacks, responding quickly to district-wide policy changes, such a clear backpack mandate. Within 45 days of the policy announcement, leadership secured appropriate backpacks, demonstrating an agile, mission-driven strategic development process. Leaders continually refined the strategic focus by prioritizing community feedback, expanding partnerships, and increasing operational scale to support thousands of students and teachers annually.

The XYZ leadership strategically develops programs to address educational disparities and promote workforce development. By leveraging insights from community needs and external factors, the organization ensures its efforts align with its mission to provide students, teachers, and educational staff with free school supplies and essential resources. The strategic planning process integrates data analysis, stakeholder feedback, and external environmental factors to refine objectives and adapt to emerging challenges.

Strategic Planning Approach

XYZ employs a structured approach to strategic planning. The organization analyzes community needs through direct engagement and data collection. It identifies key challenges and opportunities in educational support, allocates resources efficiently to maximize impact, and ensures that all strategies align with the nonprofit's mission and long-term goals. Table 2 summarizes XYZ's structured approach to strategic planning.

Table 2

Client Organization's Strategic Planning Approach

Step	Description
1. Community needs assessment	Analyze needs through direct engagement and data collection.
2. Challenge and opportunity Identification	Identify key challenges and opportunities in educational support.
3. Resource allocation	Allocate resources efficiently to maximize impact.
4. Strategic alignment	Ensure alignment with the nonprofit's mission and long-term goals.

Adaptation to Changing Community Needs

XYZ's strategic objectives have evolved in response to shifting community needs. For instance, during the recent pandemic, the organization adapted its back-to-school

event into a drive-thru event, ensuring health and safety while maintaining its commitment to educational support. Volunteers distributed pre-packaged snack bags and school supplies tailored to different educational levels—the event's setup in a roundabout driveway streamlined distribution while minimizing health risks. According to XYZ leadership, adaptability has been key to sustaining community engagement. One executive shared, "The drive-thru model not only maintained safety but also allowed us to increase our efficiency in reaching more families." Volunteers played an essential role, with one stating, "The ability to pivot quickly based on feedback helped us continue serving those in need despite unforeseen challenges."

Risk Management and Strategic Adjustments

To mitigate potential risks, XYZ leadership follows key principles such as controlling manageable factors while adapting to external changes. The organization incorporates flexibility into its strategic planning by

- Adjusting logistics for unpredictable weather conditions (e.g., using tents for event shelter).
- Coordinating transportation resources effectively (e.g., utilizing SUVs or pickup trucks for supply transport).
- Collaborating with community partners to address resource gaps.

A XYZ leader emphasized, "Our ability to plan for contingencies—weather or supply chain issues—ensures our events run smoothly." A volunteer noted, "We always have backup plans, such as alternative distribution locations, to keep things moving."

Data-Driven Decision Making

XYZ leaders integrate various data sources into its strategic planning, including

- tracking the number of families served annually.
- analyzing school districts and regions most frequently utilizing coalition resources; and
- monitoring ticket distribution for food, school supplies, and teacher support to assess impact and optimize future initiatives.

These data-driven insights inform funding applications and help refine program effectiveness. A data analyst within the coalition shared, "Collecting detailed data allows us to measure impact and make informed adjustments year over year." An executive added, "We use these insights to strengthen our grant applications and demonstrate our effectiveness to stakeholders."

Strategy Implementation

Strategic implementation involves aligning resources, optimizing workflows, and continuously assessing performance against defined goals. Leaders implemented strategic objectives through continuous monitoring, flexibility, and inclusive feedback. The board and executive team meet regularly immediately after events and monthly—to assess outcomes, capture insights, and plan adjustments. Leadership encouraged open communication, allowing members to propose changes even after reflection. Leaders showed agility by adapting plans during events when circumstances shifted. By proactively separating elementary and secondary school students at events, based on past observations, leadership enhanced safety and attendee experience. The organization also

strategically managed surplus supplies, donating them to schools and community partners, strengthening societal contributions. Leaders consistently aligned their strategic implementation efforts with the mission to uplift children and families through efficient resource management, responsive event planning, and dynamic donor engagement. XYZ leadership translates its strategic objectives into actionable plans by implementing well-defined programs that ensure effective resource distribution and sustain community impact.

Action Plan Deployment

To achieve its mission, the coalition develops and executes focused action plans that include

- Organizing large-scale back-to-school events to distribute essential supplies.
- Establishing precise logistics for event execution, including transportation, volunteer coordination, and supply distribution.
- Adapting operational methods to meet changing conditions, such as shifting to drive-thru models when necessary.
- Scheduling planning meetings with school liaisons and church leaders ahead of time to assess needs and coordinate efforts.
- Creating and distributing post-event surveys and conducting follow-up calls with families to gather feedback and improve future events.
- Using data collected from community feedback to refine operational strategies and reallocate resources effectively.

- Documenting lessons learned after each event to improve planning efficiency and community impact.
- Encouraging volunteer feedback and sharing success stories to motivate continuous improvement in service delivery.
- A board member and logistics coordinator explained, "Our team ensures every detail is covered—from mapping out supply routes to assigning volunteer roles."
- A long-time volunteer shared, "Seeing the direct impact of our planning on families motivates us to refine our processes yearly."
- The client executive leader emphasized, “We created post-event surveys and follow-up calls with families to understand better how we can improve our support.”

Monitoring and Adjustment of Objectives

The XYZ nonprofit leaders actively monitors and adjusts its objectives using

- quantitative data: tracking ticket distributions for food, school supplies, and teacher resources.
- qualitative feedback: gathering insights from educators, families, and volunteers.
- environmental scanning: assessing emerging trends and the community needs to refine programs accordingly.

A program director stated, "We rely on numbers and personal stories to understand what is working and what needs improvement." A XYZ board member, "The feedback we provide helps ensure supplies meet the actual classroom needs."

Workforce and Resource Planning

To sustain its initiatives, the coalition engages in workforce planning by

- Empowering volunteers with structured roles and responsibilities.
- Partnering with educational institutions to enhance outreach.
- Investing in training programs to optimize service delivery.
- An excerpt from the interview:
- A volunteer coordinator shared, "Providing training and clear roles ensures our team operates efficiently and effectively."
- A board member emphasized, "XYZ's support bridges gaps that traditional funding sources cannot cover."

Continuous Improvement and Future Projections

XYZ remains forward-thinking by

- Projecting service demand and adjusting supply chains accordingly.
- Evaluating new opportunities for expansion and collaboration.
- Implementing scenario planning to anticipate potential challenges and ensure resilience.

A senior executive noted, "By staying proactive, we ensure our programs remain sustainable and impactful." A volunteer leader added, "We are always looking ahead, identifying new ways to strengthen community engagement and support." Through these

strategic approaches, the coalition ensures sustained impact, continuous adaptation, and enhanced service to the community.

Customers

Customer Expectations

The organization consistently identifies and responds to community expectations by maintaining a deep neighborhood presence. Leaders design events with accessibility in mind, intentionally locating them where families can easily walk or take public transportation, recognizing transportation barriers as a significant factor for participation. By hosting events directly within the communities, leadership ensures that families feel seen, valued, and accommodated. Throughout each event, volunteers and staff engage participants in real-time conversations, gathering feedback about what works and needs improvement. This immediate input influences future planning. For example, after hearing concerns about summer heat during outdoor events, leaders began considering ways to improve comfort and logistics. Leadership treats community feedback not as an afterthought but as a core component of the event experience, using it to refine offerings and strengthen trust with families.

The organizational leadership and its staff engage directly with families, educators, and students through structured outreach programs to actively listen to the community's needs and expectations. These efforts align services with customer expectations by offering relevant resources, including school supplies, food, and health care referrals. By leveraging multiple listening channels, such as in-person interactions at

community events, surveys, and social media feedback, the organization gathers actionable insights to enhance program effectiveness.

The organizational leadership and its staff employ wraparound services, connecting families with essential resources before providing direct assistance. This approach exceeds customer expectations by offering holistic support beyond immediate needs. The organization adapts its programs through ongoing partnerships with service providers to reflect evolving community needs. By incorporating direct feedback, the organization continuously improves and enhances customer satisfaction.

Customer Engagement

Customer engagement fosters trust and loyalty within the community. Leaders foster strong, lasting relationships with the community through continuous, responsive engagement well beyond the annual back-to-school event and holiday giveaways. During the pandemic, the organization demonstrated commitment by distributing toys, backpacks, scarves, gloves, and other winter accessories to children living in housing communities on Christmas Day. Leaders view community service as a year-round mission, continually seeking opportunities to remain visible and supportive. Volunteers, many of whom return year after year, play a critical role in deepening community ties. Leadership builds engagement by partnering with local schools, inviting teachers and principals to events to meet families and ease school transitions.

Leaders make engagement personal and meaningful by creating welcoming, one-stop-shop environments where families can connect with educational and social resources. They actively listen to families during events, adjusting strategies annually

based on community needs and feedback. Even during the challenges of COVID-19, leadership adapted to outdoor, drive-up formats without losing volunteer support, demonstrating resilience and reinforcing their family-centered approach. Through these efforts, the organization strengthens its reputation as a trusted, integral part of the community.

These initiatives provide material support and create opportunities for families to engage with critical service providers, strengthening their connection with the organization. The organization cultivates a customer-focused culture by integrating relationship-building strategies at multiple touchpoints. For example, requiring families to visit resource vendors before receiving supplies encourages direct engagement with services that might go unnoticed. This structured approach strengthens community ties and reinforces the organization's commitment to long-term support. Complaint management and feedback mechanisms play a key role in customer engagement. The organization actively listens to concerns raised at events, through social media, and in direct conversations. It uses this feedback to refine service delivery and remains responsive to customer needs.

Equity and fairness guide engagement efforts. The organization prioritizes inclusive practices, ensuring all families have equal access to resources regardless of background. Through transparency, accessibility, and responsiveness, the organization builds trust and fosters a sense of belonging within the community. Maintaining a customer-centric approach strengthens the organization's brand recognition and

community loyalty, positioning it as a reliable and responsive resource for families in need.

Measurement, Analysis, and Knowledge Management

The foundation of the Baldrige systems perspective is measurement, analysis, and knowledge management. These practices enable effective leadership, strategic decision making, and agile adaptation to community needs. The organization systematically collects and analyzes both quantitative and qualitative data to guide continuous improvement and evaluate success across key operational areas. By describing measurement, analysis, and knowledge management processes, I support the leadership triad and the results triad.

Measurement, Analysis, and Improvement of Organizational Performance

The organizational leadership and staff systematically collect and analyze data to gauge success and identify areas for improvement. At each event, staff distribute tickets to attendees upon arrival, allowing for the accurate tracking of the number of families and individuals served. For example, attendance increased from 950 to over 1,200 families during the most recent back-to-school event—a 28% increase in demand. This data-informed decision led to an increase in supply inventory and a reconfiguration of event logistics to accommodate larger crowds. As a result, the organization reduced waiting times by 35%, as documented in internal time-tracking logs.

Leaders also track attendance by location across multiple years to assess the accessibility and effectiveness of event venues. The organization reported 15% higher attendance at centrally located school sites compared to remote venues, which will

influence future venue selection. Leaders use this attendance data to evaluate year-over-year growth trends and to make decisions about resource planning, such as adjusting the number of backpacks and supplies needed for future events. Additionally, the organization assesses the effectiveness of event locations by comparing attendance numbers across different sites over multiple years. This analysis guides strategic decisions about venue selection, ensuring maximum accessibility and impact.

Beyond internal tracking, the organizational leadership gathered qualitative feedback from vendors interacting directly with families throughout events. This external input provided valuable insights into community needs and satisfaction levels that complement the organization's internal observations and assessment. Leadership used quantitative data and qualitative feedback to make targeted improvements, such as adjusting vendor partnerships, reallocating resources, and refining event logistics. This fact-based approach ensures that the organization remains agile, community-responsive, and committed to continuous growth.

Knowledge Use and Reporting

Leaders compile collected data into internal reports and dashboards and share them with the board and funders. These outcome reports track progress on four key annual action plans related to outreach, partnerships, fundraising, and event delivery. In 2023–2024, the organization completed 100% of its strategic goals, including securing clear backpacks in response to updated school policies with less than 3 weeks' notice. In the area of fundraising, internal donor reports showed a 25% increase in recurring donations following the implementation of quarterly updates and personalized thank-you

messaging. This metric directly supports resource planning and reflects effective donor relationship management.

The organization’s leaders use this information to refine event logistics, adjust partner engagement strategies, and plan future initiatives. By linking measurements to decision making, leaders foster a responsive, data-informed culture that aligns with the leadership triad and results triad of the BEF.

Specific metrics and practices include

- event attendance tracking: Staff distribute tickets to attendees upon arrival to accurately track the number of families and individuals served at each event.
- year-over-year growth analysis: Leaders analyze attendance data to evaluate trends and determine if demand is increasing, stable, or declining over time.
- resource planning metrics: Attendance figures inform decisions on the number of backpacks, school supplies, or hygiene kits to procure for future events.
- volunteer engagement logs: The organization records volunteer attendance and roles to measure involvement levels and identify training needs or opportunities for recognition.
- distribution efficiency rates: Staff evaluate the speed and accuracy of supply distribution to families to identify opportunities for logistical improvement.
- community feedback scores: Post-event surveys and family follow-up calls gather ratings and open-ended feedback on satisfaction and the event's impact.

- partnership contribution tracking: Leadership tracks donations and participation from partner schools, churches, and local businesses to assess engagement and outcome.
- outcome reporting: The coalition compiles data into visual reports (e.g., dashboards, year-end summaries) to inform the board and funders about program effectiveness.

The client executive leader and CEO shared, “We monitor not just how many people show up, but how efficiently we serve them and how supported they feel. That is the real measure of success for us.”

Information and Knowledge Management

Leaders foster a culture of open communication to ensure that knowledge is shared organization-wide and support continuous improvement. Team members regularly meet annually to discuss event planning, operational updates, and community feedback. After each major event, leadership convenes a postmortem meeting to review performance indicators, share attendance and supply data, and reflect on successes and improvement opportunities. Every team member has the opportunity to contribute insights, ensuring a diverse set of perspectives informs future planning.

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Leaders actively encourage ideas for innovation by valuing feedback from all levels of the organization. This open environment promotes adaptability to changing community needs and supports the organization's mission to remain current and effective. The organization ensures that knowledge management directly drives performance excellence and community impact through consistent dialogue, shared access to event metrics, and an inclusive decision-making process

Data and Information on Workforce-Focused Processes

Workforce-focused processes are vital for maintaining a committed and effective team. The organization collects data on workforce performance, including volunteer feedback, attendance, and retention, at each event. Volunteers provide insights through debriefing sessions and post-event evaluations, offering valuable feedback on potential improvements in volunteer management. Tracking volunteer engagement helps the organizational leadership ensure sufficient staffing for each event while fostering a

positive and inclusive work culture. Volunteer data plays a key role in planning and resource allocation. Over the past 2 years, volunteer registration increased by 40%, with more than 300 volunteers participating in the most recent event cycle. This upward trend supports workforce engagement and program capacity. Volunteer logs enable the team to evaluate who serves, in what roles, and how often, allowing for more targeted recognition and training efforts.

Additionally, leadership collects community feedback scores using post-event surveys. Ninety-one percent of families rated their experience as “excellent” or “very good,” citing efficient service and respectful treatment. Leaders combine these insights with qualitative vendor feedback gathered on-site during events to assess how effectively the organization meets community expectations. The team tracks volunteers’ skill sets and identifies training needs based on feedback and performance during events. This information helps build a more capable workforce for future events and ensures that volunteers feel valued and empowered.

Key Operational Processes

The organizational leadership measures key operational processes through both quantitative and qualitative data. Leaders tracked operational metrics at each event, such as the number of backpacks distributed, families served, and vendor participation. These metrics provide clear insight into the scope of each event and the resources required for future events. The organization continually evaluates its operational performance against key objectives, including maximizing community reach and minimizing waste.

The organizational leadership also gathers operational knowledge through feedback from community members and partners. During events, participants share opinions on location accessibility, supply availability, and overall event satisfaction. The organization incorporates this knowledge into planning for future events, improving operational efficiency and community responsiveness.

Performance Results

The organization tracks performance results across three focus areas: community impact, volunteer engagement, and operational efficiency. Staff monitor year-over-year attendance, the number of families served, and the volume of supplies distributed to evaluate the effectiveness of event planning and outreach. They assess volunteer retention, satisfaction, and feedback to strengthen and sustain a reliable volunteer base. Operational teams measure distribution accuracy, resource utilization, and goal achievement to enhance logistics and effectively manage relationships with vendors and donors. By analyzing these results, leadership refines strategies, enhances alignment with the mission, and responds effectively to community needs.

As shown in Figure 2, the nonprofit centers its performance improvement system on the BEF, which guides strategic objectives, addresses adaptation challenges, and measures growth and impact. Organizational leaders conduct regular post-event evaluations, track performance trends, and adapt to policy shifts, such as changes in school board requirements for backpacks and fluctuations in donations. These efforts support strategic planning and decision-making processes that enhance operational

outcomes and mission alignment. The organization uses data to monitor its impact, refine logistics, and strengthen volunteer engagement.

Figure 2

XYZ Performance Improvement

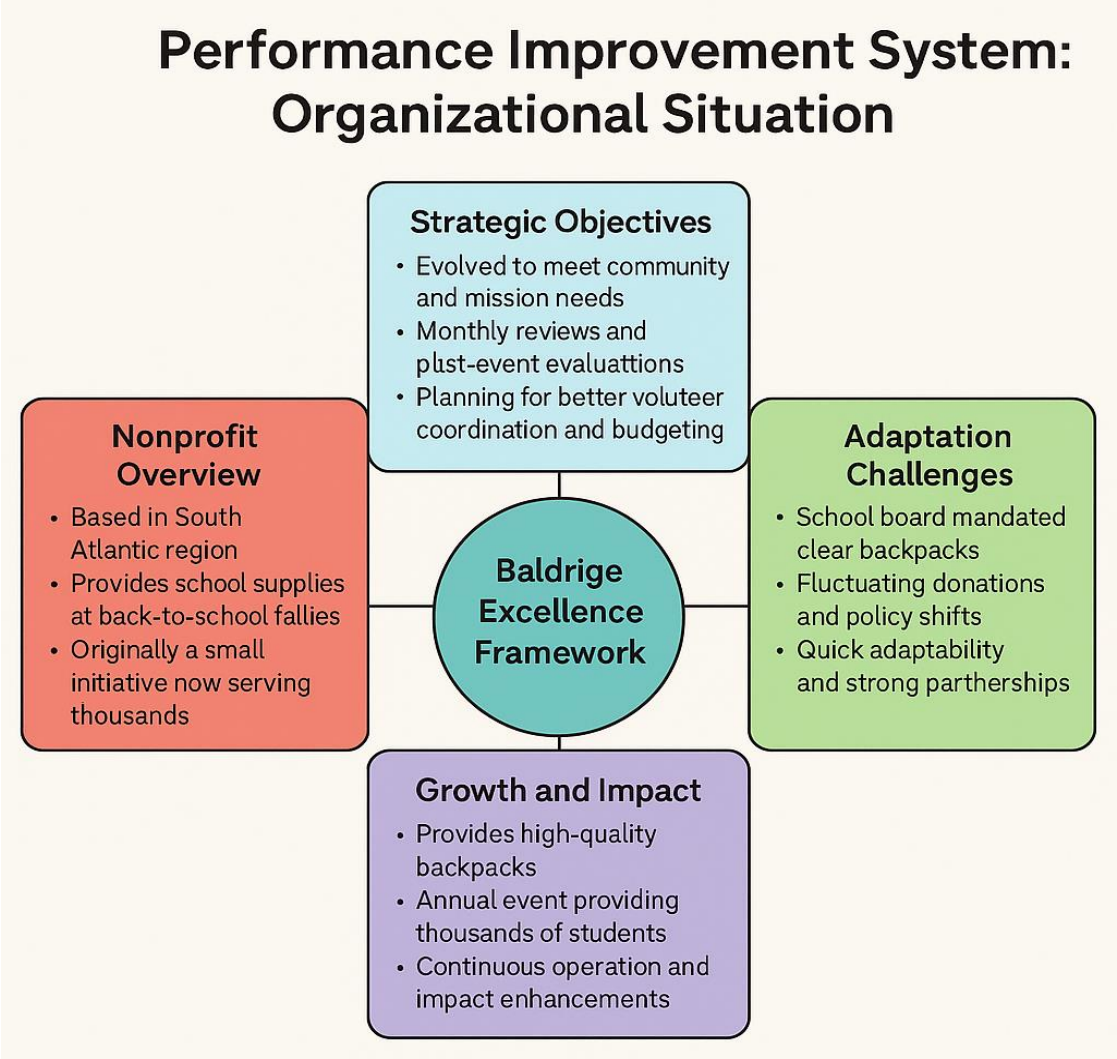

Figure 2 shows how the nonprofit applies the BEF to guide strategic objectives, respond to adaptation challenges, and achieve growth and impact. It reflects how leaders

use continuous improvement processes to align operations with mission goals and community needs. Table 3 summarizes key performance results in the areas of community impact, volunteer engagement, and operational efficiency.

Table 3

Client's Organizational Performance and Results

Focus area	Performance metric	Use of results
Community impact	Year-over-year growth in event attendance Number of families served Volume of supplies distributed	Evaluate the effectiveness of event planning and identify strategies to expand the community's reach.
Volunteer engagement	Volunteer retention rates Satisfaction levels Qualitative feedback	Maintain a reliable volunteer base and improve engagement and recognition strategies.
Operational efficiency	Supply distribution success rate Resource utilization (donations, vendors) Goal attainment tracking	Optimize logistics, refine resource management, and align operations with organizational mission.

Note. The organization's leaders track and analyze results to refine strategies, remain agile, and improve alignment with community needs.

Workforce

Workforce Environment

The organization fosters an inclusive and supportive environment for its volunteers, welcoming individuals from all backgrounds to contribute their time and talents. Volunteers include high school students, educators, church members, school board members, and concerned citizens who share a commitment to the organization's mission. As a volunteer-based nonprofit, the organization does not offer compensation or

employee benefits. Instead, it relies on a strong culture of service, gratitude, and community impact to attract and retain volunteers.

The organization actively recruits volunteers through multiple outreach strategies, including social media, local news segments, word-of-mouth, and platforms such as Greater Richmond. Staff and leaders intentionally reach out to diverse groups to ensure events benefit from a broad range of perspectives and skills. This inclusive approach often leads to intergenerational participation, with families, parents, and children volunteering together. To sustain engagement, the organization provides meaningful opportunities for volunteers to return year after year. Many individuals continue to serve despite challenges such as the COVID-19 pandemic, which reflects the organization's ability to prevent volunteer fatigue and build a loyal base. The growing range of returning volunteers highlights the effectiveness of its environment, outreach, and mission alignment.

Workforce Engagement

The organization supports the professional development and well-being of its volunteers by creating an environment that values open communication, collaboration, and recognition. Leaders encouraged volunteers to share their feedback during post-event debriefs and evaluations, which helps identify areas for improvement. This feedback loop enhances volunteer engagement and informs the organization's approach to planning future events.

The organization invests in volunteer well-being by providing meals, such as breakfast and lunch, for volunteers during events. By offering these refreshments, the

organization expresses gratitude for volunteers' time and effort, reinforcing the importance of their contributions. Additionally, the team maintains a positive and enjoyable atmosphere, even during long or physically demanding days. Volunteers often report feeling satisfied and fulfilled at the end of the day, knowing they have contributed to the community and met new people. The organization's culture of inclusivity and engagement ensures that volunteers feel valued and supported, helping to maintain a motivated, committed team that continuously strives to improve community impact.

Operations

Work Processes

The organizational leadership's commitment to operational excellence is evident in its continuous evaluation and adaptation of work processes. The team conducts thorough post-event reviews to identify areas for improvement, ensuring smooth operations for future events. The team’s adaptability, as demonstrated by its ability to reorganize in response to large crowds quickly, has enabled the organization to serve more people effectively in high-demand situations.

Additionally, the organizational leadership maintains clear communication across all team members. Every leader, volunteer, and board member stays aligned, with detailed instructions provided at the start of each event. This ensures consistency, as volunteers often work in short breaks and need clear directions to stay on track. The organizational leader ensures that no one is left behind, emphasizing that every team member remains well-informed and prepared, regardless of their role.

Operational Effectiveness

The organizational leader continually strives to improve the organization's operational effectiveness by addressing challenges and adapting strategies. A primary challenge is managing donations and maintaining an accurate inventory. To plan inventory levels, the team proactively secures donations early in the year, particularly backpacks and school supplies. This proactive approach to inventory management ensures that the organization stays well-prepared, even when it faces discrepancies in the types of donations it receives. For example, while the team regularly receives excess supplies such as crayons, it struggles to obtain sufficient parent index cards. To overcome this, the team adapts by purchasing additional items to ensure every backpack is as complete as possible.

The organization's adaptability is a key factor in its operational effectiveness. When the community's needs changed due to updated school policies, the team quickly pivoted to accommodate the use of clear backpacks. Despite the ongoing challenge of securing sufficient clear backpacks, this adaptability ensures that the organization continues to meet the community's demands while maintaining high operational effectiveness.

Despite challenges in securing specific donations, the organization's operations remain highly effective. The team's unwavering commitment to delivering key items to students for a successful school year proves its operational effectiveness. A dedicated team further supports this commitment by continuously seeking ways to improve and adapt to changing circumstances. To improve and adapt to changing circumstances, the

organization consistently analyzes leadership behaviors, planning strategies, and community engagement practices.

Through thematic analysis of participant interviews, four core themes emerged: visionary leadership, strategic planning, community engagement, and performance measurement. Each theme includes specific sub-themes that reflect how nonprofit leaders prioritize family-centered service, adapt their goals, manage resources, and rely on community-driven input to inform their decisions. These findings offer insight into the organization's ability to remain agile and responsive while pursuing long-term impact. Table 4 is a thematic codebook matrix containing the identified themes, their corresponding subthemes, and descriptions.

Table 4

Thematic Codebook Matrix for Nonprofit Leadership Study

Theme	Subtheme	Description
Visionary leadership	Community need-driven initiatives	Leadership vision shaped by direct awareness of community challenges.
	Inclusive decision making	Leadership engages staff, families, and volunteers in program design.
	Family-centered programs	Prioritizing programs that support and uplift families within the community.
Strategic planning	Adaptive goal setting	Goals are regularly revised in response to internal and external conditions.
	Financial resourcefulness	Leaders creatively manage limited funding and pursue diverse revenue streams.
	Operational efficiency	Process optimization to ensure program effectiveness with lean resources.
Community engagement	Volunteer involvement	Heavy reliance on and active recruitment of community volunteers.
	Continuous community feedback	Regular feedback loops from program participants and partners.
	Outreach beyond core events	Extending organizational reach through supplemental programs and collaborations.
Performance measurement	Quantitative participation data	Tracking event and program participation numbers as a key performance metric.
	Vendor and Community Feedback	Collecting qualitative insights from vendors and attendees post-events.
	Postevent evaluations	Formal evaluations and reflections after key community events.

Note. Themes and subthemes were derived from participant interview responses using thematic analysis methodology.

Project Results

Product and Process Results

The organizational leader's approach to product and process results emphasizes continuous improvement and operational planning. The team evaluates each event to identify process gaps and implements adjustments to increase efficiency. For example, following a 28% rise in attendance at the most recent back-to-school event (from 950 to over 1,200 families served), staff restructured the registration and distribution flow to minimize wait times by 35%, according to internal time-tracking logs. The team actively evaluates past events to identify opportunities for enhancement and implements necessary adjustments to improve the flow and efficiency of future activities. For instance, during high-demand events, the team quickly reorganizes to manage large crowds and ensure smooth operations. The ability to adapt in real-time enhances the organization’s capacity to serve a greater number of people and maintain efficient operations.

This finding aligns with the concept of organizational resilience, as described in the literature, where NPOs exhibit flexibility and rapid adaptation in response to external changes (Azevedo et al., 2021). Studies have highlighted that effective nonprofit leaders must be able to pivot quickly to meet changing needs and demands (Shier et al., 2022). This finding extends knowledge in the field by illustrating how a specific organization's process changes led to improved operational performance, consistent with the principles of process optimization (Baldrige Performance Excellence Program, 2023). The BEF emphasizes continual process improvement and operational agility.

Customer Results

The organization prioritizes customer satisfaction by ensuring that every event delivers value and meets community expectations. Volunteers and staff consistently receive clear instructions, ensuring that all participants are aligned regarding their roles and responsibilities. The organization prioritizes customer satisfaction by delivering value and meeting expectations through consistent communication and coordination. Post-event surveys from the past 2 years indicate that 91% of families rated their event experience as "excellent" or "very good," with particular emphasis on the organization and helpfulness of volunteers.

Donor satisfaction remains high as well. The organization maintained quarterly donor updates and personal thank-you notes, contributing to a 25% increase in recurring donations and improved donor retention rates. These efforts align with research emphasizing the importance of relationship-building for long-term nonprofit sustainability (Brown & Harris, 2022; Parker et al., 2024). By fostering transparent communication and reinforcing trust, the organization increases community loyalty and funding stability.

The organization’s commitment to communication, particularly among volunteers who work in short bursts, fosters consistency and effective service delivery. The key theme was customer engagement through clear and regular communication with donors. For instance, the organization maintained consistent contact with donors, offering updates on how their contributions were utilized and ensuring donors felt valued and connected to the mission. This result reflects the literature on relationship-building in NPOs, where

maintaining strong ties with donors is crucial for long-term success (Brown & Harris, 2022). Researchers emphasize that nonprofit leaders must strategically engage with stakeholders to foster loyalty and trust, boosting donation rates and community support (Parker et al., 2024). This theme aligns with the servant leadership theory, which stresses the importance of nurturing relationships and fostering community trust (Greenleaf, 1977).

Workforce Results

The organizational leader fosters a culture of collaboration and communication within the workforce. Staff and volunteers receive clear instructions before each event, which enhances alignment across all roles. Volunteer participation data indicates a 40% increase in registered volunteers over the past 2 years, with more than 300 volunteers engaged in the most recent event cycle.

Volunteer feedback collected through post-event surveys indicated that 89% of volunteers found their experience to be meaningful, and many expressed a willingness to return. This high engagement level confirms research that identifies volunteer management and inclusion as critical factors for nonprofit success (Allen et al., 2018; Brown & Harris, 2022). The organization's collaborative culture supports Baldrige's focus on workforce engagement and capacity building. This commitment to shared understanding ensures that everyone, regardless of their role, is well-prepared and effective in contributing to the organization’s goals. The team’s collaborative spirit leads to greater success in achieving its operational objectives.

Volunteer engagement was a central finding, with many respondents indicating that volunteer participation was critical for program success. Volunteers were recruited and engaged through community outreach efforts, and their feedback was consistently incorporated into program development. This result confirms the importance of volunteer engagement highlighted in the literature, where volunteer management is identified as a critical factor for nonprofit sustainability (Allen et al., 2018). The concept of inclusive decision making, where volunteers and staff are actively involved in shaping programs, is consistent with findings from Brown and Harris (2022), emphasizing the need for leaders to empower their teams. The BEF focuses on workforce engagement, particularly in how organizations cultivate a committed and motivated workforce.

Leadership and Governance Results

Leadership and governance within the organization play a crucial role in driving its success. The leadership team actively engages with volunteers and staff, ensuring clarity and consistency throughout every stage of an event. Leaders regularly adopt strategies to meet evolving community needs, such as pivoting to secure clear backpacks in response to updated school policies. The ability to adapt quickly and make strategic decisions reflects strong leadership and governance.

Visionary leadership was identified as a crucial theme. Leaders provided a clear vision and direction, aligning organizational goals with community needs. This vision was often communicated effectively to stakeholders and motivated staff and donors. This finding extends the literature on transformational leadership, where leaders inspire change by articulating a compelling vision and fostering commitment (Bass & Riggio,

2006). The findings also align with the servant leadership model, which emphasize leaders serving their teams and communities to enhance performance and achieve long-term goals (Greenleaf, 1977). The conceptual framework ties to the servant leadership theory, which underpins much of the organization's approach. Visionary leadership practices can be illustrated through a model emphasizing vision, empowerment, adaptability, and ethical stewardship (Sey, 2025, Figure 3). This theory emphasizes the leader's role in serving others and aligning their leadership practices with community needs, as illustrated in Figure 3.

Figure 3

Visionary Leadership Practices

Visionary leadership practices and outcomes. Adapted from the author’s own conceptual framework.

Financial Resourcefulness

Financial stability is crucial to the organization's operational success. The organization actively manages its finances by securing early donations and adjusting strategies based on available resources. This proactive financial approach ensures that the organization remains well-prepared for future events, even when facing discrepancies in donated supplies. The ability to adapt to financial challenges enables the organization to continue supporting students with essential school supplies, maintaining its mission. The organization is highly sensitive regarding its financial information; therefore, I was unable to obtain the 5-year trend financial data that I would have required.

Financial resourcefulness was a key theme, with leaders employing creative methods to secure funding, such as diversifying revenue streams and securing in-kind donations to offset costs. These efforts helped maintain operational effectiveness despite financial constraints. This result is consistent with the findings of Azevedo et al. (2021), which emphasized the need for nonprofit leaders to be resourceful and strategic in fundraising efforts. The literature also notes that financial resilience in nonprofits is crucial for long-term sustainability, particularly in organizations led by African American women who may face additional fundraising barriers (Parker et al., 2024). This theme connects to the strategic planning and financial management components of the BEF, which focuses on ensuring organizations' financial stability through effective resource management and strategic foresight.

Key Themes Findings

Process Strengths

The organization demonstrates strong process management through its ability to adapt and respond to unexpected challenges. Whether it is adjusting for a high turnout at an event or managing supply shortages, the team quickly assesses the situation and reorganizes to maintain operational flow. The organization demonstrated a strong capacity for operational efficiency, particularly in areas such as inventory management, where it optimized processes to minimize costs and maximize the impact of donations. This finding is consistent with the literature on nonprofit process improvement (Baldrige Performance Excellence Program, 2023), which emphasizes that efficiency is a critical success factor in resource-constrained environments.

Process Opportunities

While the organization performs well in many areas, opportunities exist to further enhance the efficiency of its operations. For example, securing more specific donations, like parent index cards, remains a challenge. Developing stronger relationships with donors and improving communication about specific needs could help mitigate such challenges in the future. Organizational leaders could strengthen fundraising effectiveness by implementing targeted strategies and diversifying donor outreach. One opportunity identified was to improve the data collection and analysis process. While the organization collected substantial data, there was room to improve how data were used to drive decision making and evaluate program success. Researchers showed that NPOs often struggle with data integrity and evidence-based decision making (Amin et al.,

2020), highlighting the importance of improving data management systems (Persaud, 2023).

Results Strengths

The organization's strengths lie in its adaptability and commitment to delivering quality outcomes. Its ability to manage donations, adjust inventory, and maintain clear communication ensures that students receive the essential supplies they need for a successful school year. The organization demonstrated strong results by using data-informed operations to enhance credibility and accountability. Quantitative data from recent events demonstrate this strength: the organization served over 1,200 families in the most recent back-to-school event—an increase of 35% compared to the previous year. Through its ticketing and registration system, staff tracked real-time participation, enabling better forecasting and inventory management for future events, prompting leaders to adjust logistics and inventory to maintain service quality.

Volunteer engagement also continues to rise, with the organization reporting a 40% increase in volunteer sign-ups over 2 years. Many volunteers return annually, with post-event surveys showing that 89% of volunteers rated their experience as "very rewarding" or "excellent." Donor engagement also improved, with a 25% increase in recurring individual donors and the expansion of partnerships with local vendors and faith-based organizations.

These data points reinforce the organization's capacity to mobilize support and respond effectively to community needs. This strength aligns with the findings of Shier et al. (2022), who argue that community involvement is a key determinant of nonprofit

success. African American women leaders, in particular, leverage their community ties to engage supporters effectively (Brown & Harris, 2022), and the leadership approach observed in this study demonstrates this trend. These key metrics are shown in Table 5.

Table 5

Key Metrics Supporting Organizational Results Strengths

Focus area	Metric	Result	Implication
Event participation	Families served at most recent back-to-school event	1,200 families (↑35% from prior year)	Demonstrates growth and expanded community reach
Volunteer engagement	Change in volunteer sign-ups over 2 years	↑40% increase	Indicates improved outreach and volunteer satisfaction
	Volunteer satisfaction (postevent survey)	89% rated experience as "very rewarding"	Reflects successful volunteer engagement and retention
Donor engagement	Increase in recurring donors	↑25%	Shows stronger donor loyalty and financial stability
	Growth in organizational partnerships (schools, churches, vendors)	Expanded partnership network	Supports mission delivery and strengthens community collaboration

Note. Metrics are based on internal ticketing, volunteer registration, and donor tracking systems used during the most recent event cycle.

Results Opportunities

Organizational leaders could strengthen fundraising effectiveness. Although the organization has maintained a committed donor base, it does not consistently collect or

analyze donor contribution data to assess trends, giving frequency, or campaign performance. Introducing systematic donor tracking and segmentation tools would enable the team to evaluate the success of outreach strategies and adjust efforts accordingly. Additionally, the leaders could leverage their established partnerships with local sororities and faith-based institutions to launch social media campaigns and crowdfunding initiatives. Encouraging past benefactors to reinvest in the community could also help expand revenue streams. Leveraging partnerships with sororities and faith-based institutions can strengthen donor engagement and increase community support. Wang and Shumate (2023) demonstrated that strategically communicating nonprofit partnerships boosts individuals' intentions to donate and volunteer.

Implementing social media campaigns and crowdfunding initiatives with frequent updates can expand donor acquisition and improve fundraising success. Chen (2023) confirmed that organizations that provide consistent updates and leverage strong partnerships raise funds more effectively through crowdfunding. Encouraging past benefactors to reinvest in the community through recognition and engagement sustains financial resilience. Martin and Schlereth (2024) found that peer-to-peer fundraising campaigns rooted in personal networks sustain donor support during crises, thereby reinforcing the stability of revenue streams. Collectively, these strategies illustrate how process opportunities directly contribute to measurable results in fundraising performance.

One specific opportunity involves improving donor retention strategies through more personalized communication with high-value and recurring donors. Currently, there

is limited data available on donor retention rates or giving lifecycles, making it difficult to evaluate the effectiveness of engagement efforts. Establishing consistent tracking of donor touchpoints and creating feedback loops would offer valuable insights for retention. The consistent monitoring and feedback from donors align with research by Parker et al. (2024), who emphasized that retaining donors is more cost-effective than acquiring new ones and contributes significantly to the sustainability of nonprofits. By focusing not only on new fundraising approaches but also on data collection and evaluation, the organization can enhance its ability to make informed decisions, increase long-term funding stability, and better assess the impact of its fundraising initiatives as shown in Table 6.

Table 6

Results Opportunities for Improving Fundraising Effectiveness

Focus area	Opportunity	Potential impact
Donor data tracking	Establish consistent tracking of donor contributions, retention, and giving patterns.	Enables assessment of fundraising effectiveness and informed strategic adjustments.
Targeted fundraising strategies	Implement segmented donor outreach and personalized communication, especially for high-value donors.	Improves donor retention and engagement; increases donation frequency and donor loyalty.
Digital campaign expansion	Leverage social media and crowdfunding platforms, especially in partnership with sororities and churches.	Expands donor base and increases visibility and participation from existing community networks.
Postcampaign evaluation	Collect and analyze data after campaigns to evaluate outcomes and refine approaches.	Enhances the organization’s ability to replicate successful

		campaigns and phase out ineffective ones.
Benefactor reengagement	Encourage past donors to contribute again through updates, gratitude messages, and follow-ups.	Reactivates lapsed donors and strengthens long-term community investment.

Theme 1: Trust-Building to Demonstrate Authenticity

Leaders build trust by investing time in personal relationships with donors. They demonstrated reliability and consistency through personalized communication, regular follow-ups, and authentic expressions of gratitude. These trust-based actions cultivated donor loyalty and deepened engagement. They consistently followed up, listened attentively, and demonstrated transparency in their communications. As one executive noted, “It’s not just about asking for money. It’s about relationships that grow over time.” These findings support the servant leadership model, where trust and empathy are key pillars of influence (Greenleaf, 1977). Brown and Harris (2022) also identified trust-building as essential to donor retention, especially in organizations led by African American women, who often rely on grassroots relationship-building to overcome funding inequities.

Theme 2: Strategic Donor Engagement

Participants emphasized the need for culturally responsive and targeted engagement. Leaders tailored outreach strategies to align with donors’ values and interests. They used storytelling, data transparency, and mission-driven messaging to strengthen donor alignment with the organization’s goals. Leaders consistently connected organizational decisions to a community-driven mission, ensuring every initiative

reinforced the value of children and families. They used storytelling to engage donors emotionally and illustrate tangible impact. One leader shared, "We always ask if what we do shows children they matter and will remember this day," reflecting how storytelling served as both an engagement tool and a values-check system. This theme aligns with transformational leadership theory, which emphasizes the role of vision and emotional connection in inspiring commitment (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Northouse (2021) also affirmed that visionary leadership strengthens mission alignment, particularly when anchored in authentic community needs.

Theme 3: Visionary and Adaptive Leadership

Leaders anchored their strategies in a compelling vision informed by direct community needs. They adapted goals in response to shifting funding landscapes, economic uncertainty, and societal change. This flexibility allowed organizations to maintain relevance and responsiveness during crises like the COVID-19 pandemic. Leaders consistently connected organizational decisions to a community-driven mission, ensuring every initiative reinforced the value of children and families.

They used storytelling to engage donors emotionally and illustrate tangible impact. One leader shared, "We always ask if what we do shows children they matter and will remember this day," reflecting how storytelling served as both an engagement tool and a values-check system. This theme aligns with transformational leadership theory, which emphasizes the role of vision and emotional connection in inspiring commitment (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Northouse (2021) also affirmed that visionary leadership

strengthens mission alignment, particularly when anchored in authentic community needs.

Theme 4: Community-Centered Programming and Engagement

Leaders strengthened community trust by involving local voices in program design and delivery. They mobilized volunteers, created feedback loops, and formed partnerships that extended organizational reach. These efforts fostered a sense of ownership and inclusivity among stakeholders. Leaders expanded their reach by embedding year-round community engagement into their operations. They collaborated with churches, schools, and local businesses to cohost programs and maintain credibility. Leaders used continuous feedback loops from volunteers, educators, and families to refine services. "We listen to volunteers, schools, and vendors; it is how we improve each year," one participant shared. These efforts align with the BEF's emphasis on stakeholder-driven planning and with the research of Englert et al. (2020), who found that deep community integration supports volunteer resilience and organizational sustainability.

Theme 5: Data-Driven Performance and Financial Sustainability

Leaders used performance metrics to assess program impact, donor trends, and organizational health. They tracked both leading and lagging indicators to make strategic decisions. To enhance financial resilience, they diversified funding sources by combining grants, corporate partnerships, and grassroots giving. Leaders in this study demonstrated a strong commitment to data-driven decision making as a foundation for organizational sustainability. They systematically collected and analyzed data, including attendance

records, ticket distribution, and volunteer feedback, to assess the effectiveness of community events and inform future planning. For example, one leader noted, "We do postmortem meetings to improve and track what worked and what did not," reflecting the organizational leaders' use of quantitative and qualitative metrics for continuous improvement.

These practices align with the BEF, which emphasizes measurement, analysis, and knowledge management as key components of performance excellence. Through tracking participation trends and leveraging feedback loops from vendors and community partners, leaders ensured that the nonprofit remained responsive, agile, and strategically aligned with community needs. Supporting this theme, the literature confirms that effective data use is critical to nonprofit sustainability. For instance, Ilyas et al. (2020) and Lu et al. (2022) emphasized the importance of tracking donor trends, maintaining liquidity, and using performance metrics to inform funding strategies. The organization's ability to use data for performance evaluation and storytelling in funding proposals further affirmed Gunnerson's (2019) position that strategic data use strengthens resilience amid financial constraints.

Moreover, this study echoed Dougherty's (2021) recommended that nonprofit leaders integrate leading and lagging indicators into their decision-making processes to achieve measurable impact and donor trust. Ultimately, by embedding a culture of data-informed planning and adaptive performance review, the African American women leaders in this study advanced their organizations' ability to sustain operations, deepen

community trust, and compete for limited philanthropic resources in a dynamic funding environment.

As illustrated in Figure 4, the thematic network diagram visually maps the interconnected themes derived from the data, highlighting how trust-building, cultural alignment and adaptive leadership reinforce one another. To provide further context, Table 7 presents the detailed codebook of themes, along with descriptions and representative participant quotes that demonstrate the leaders' approaches to donor engagement, community partnership, and sustainable practices.

Figure 4

Thematic Network Diagram of Emerging Themes

Table 7

Codebook of Themes From Interviews

Theme	Description	Example quote
Trust-building through relationship management	Leaders consistently build trust with donors by being authentic, following up, and expressing gratitude. This trust formed the foundation for long-term donor engagement.	"When people see you follow through and genuinely care, they keep coming back. It's not just about the money—it's about trust." (Participant A)
Strategic donor engagement	Leaders crafted culturally informed messages and outreach that resonated with diverse donors' motivations and values.	"We speak to donors in a way that connects with their heart—stories from the community they're helping." (Participant D)
Visionary and adaptive leadership	Leaders anchored decisions in a clear, community-based vision and adjusted strategies in response to environmental changes.	"We had to pivot fast when COVID hit, but because we knew our mission and community, we adapted quickly." (Participant B)
Community-centered programming and engagement	Leaders empowered communities through participatory programming, volunteer engagement, and partnerships to increase organizational credibility and impact.	"We bring the community into our decision making. That's how we stay rooted and respected." (Participant E)
Data-driven performance and financial sustainability	Leaders tracked impact and donor trends to inform decisions and pursued diversified funding strategies to sustain operations.	"You can't just guess. We track engagement, giving, and feedback to keep improving and to show funders our impact." (Participant C)

Business Recommendations for Professional Practice

Nonprofit leaders, particularly African American women executives, can strengthen professional business practice by prioritizing visionary leadership, adaptive strategic planning, proactive community engagement, and rigorous performance measurement. The study results confirmed the importance of these practices and extended current knowledge in nonprofit management, providing actionable recommendations for enhancing organizational effectiveness.

Visionary Leadership

Nonprofit leaders should consistently align their vision with the direct needs of their community to maintain relevance and impact. The study's theme of community need-driven initiatives demonstrated that leaders who based their strategic vision on firsthand community challenges were successful in fostering trust and support. This finding aligns with Northouse's (2021) leadership theory, emphasizing authentic, mission-driven engagement. Additionally, Dyer et al. (2020) highlighted the role of visionary leadership in crafting strategic advantages in dynamic environments. Nonprofit executives should regularly gather community insights to refine their mission and ensure that organizational strategies reflect the evolving needs of their community.

Adaptive Strategic Planning

Adaptive goal setting emerged as critical for navigating resource constraints and environmental changes. Leaders demonstrated operational efficiency by managing limited funding creatively, thereby confirming Dougherty's (2021) findings on the importance of leading indicators in fundraising strategy. Organization leaders should

adopt a flexible strategic planning model, regularly revisiting goals based on both internal feedback and external trends. For example, nonprofit leaders could implement quarterly strategic reviews, allowing rapid responses to donor shifts or policy changes. This practice is supported by Dyer et al. (2020) and Faulk et al. (2021), who observed that agile planning improved long-term organizational sustainability in nonprofits.

Community Engagement

Building deep community relationships through volunteer involvement and continuous feedback significantly enhanced organizational capacity. The findings corroborated with Englert et al. (2020), who asserted that volunteers' sense of personal fit with the organization's mission directly affected retention and engagement. Leaders should establish systematic processes for collecting, acknowledging, and engaging volunteers beyond core events. As documented in the study, extending outreach into supplemental programs and partnerships can also mitigate volunteer burnout and broaden the organization's base of support, aligning with Fan and Chang's (2021) research on donor engagement diversity strategies.

Performance Measurement

NPOs must enhance their use of performance metrics. The study's finding of quantitative participation tracking and post-event evaluations showed a strong link between structured evaluation processes and continuous improvement. Dougherty (2021) emphasized the necessity of integrating both leading (predictive) and lagging (outcome) indicators in nonprofit management. Thus, nonprofit leaders should design integrated dashboards that monitor engagement metrics, financial health, volunteer satisfaction, and

community impact in real time. This data-driven approach will better inform decision making and attract funders who increasingly expect evidence-based performance reporting (Faulk et al., 2021).

Financial Resourcefulness

The findings suggest that financial resourcefulness remains a cornerstone for nonprofits' strategic sustainability. Leaders who diversified revenue streams, including corporate partnerships, grants, and grassroots donations, outperformed peers relying on a narrow donor base. This outcome supports Fahrul Nurkolis et al. (2024), who emphasized the critical role of philanthropy foundations in driving sustainable sector growth. Nonprofit executives should develop targeted donor diversification strategies that balance large institutional gifts with broad community support to mitigate financial risks. Leaders can also explore social enterprise initiatives aligned with mission goals to create new, unrestricted funding sources.

Contribution to the Research-Scholar Community

This study extends nonprofit leadership scholarship by centering African American women executives' lived experiences and strategic practices, a historically underrepresented perspective. Existing nonprofit management literature has increasingly focused on the need for diversity and inclusion in leadership approaches (Shier et al., 2022; Brown & Harris, 2022). This project offers new insights into leadership theories in diverse contexts by documenting how these leaders effectively balance community engagement, visionary leadership, and financial resourcefulness. Future researchers should explore longitudinal studies of African American women-led NPOs to understand

the evolution of strategic practices across different funding climates and social movements.

Implications for Social Change

The findings of this study offer tangible pathways for advancing social change by empowering African American women leaders in NPOs to achieve greater donor engagement and sustainable funding. By identifying leadership strategies centered on community-driven initiatives, inclusive decision-making, and financial resourcefulness, the study provides a blueprint for nonprofits to strengthen social cohesion, promote equity, and address systemic disparities in resource allocation (Shier et al., 2022; Faulk et al., 2021). Strengthening leadership capacity among underrepresented groups promotes greater civic engagement and ensures that diverse voices inform and shape community development initiatives.

Increased strategic flexibility and adaptive leadership models could significantly benefit NPOs navigating complex social environments. As Zhang, Yang, and Zhu (2023) emphasized, strategic flexibility enhances an organization's ability to innovate and adapt to changing institutional pressures, which is critical for nonprofits seeking to remain impactful amidst shifting societal needs. Furthermore, incorporating technological innovations into nonprofit fundraising and outreach, as advocated by Zhang, Khan, Lee, and Salik (2019), could enhance organizational performance, ensuring greater transparency, donor trust, and public accountability.

At the societal level, the leadership practices identified in this study may contribute to broader cultural shifts. They promote a vision of leadership that values

inclusivity, sustainability, and community empowerment over hierarchical control. This transformation aligns with the emerging field of strategic communication, emphasizing the active participation of organizations in shaping public discourse and facilitating positive societal change (Zerfass et al., 2018). As nonprofit leaders implement these practices, communities will likely experience enhanced access to resources, improved program delivery, and stronger networks of mutual support.

Ultimately, empowering African American women leaders in nonprofit sectors can catalyze transformational change in marginalized communities. Through strategic leadership, innovative fundraising approaches, and commitment to community engagement, NPOs have the potential to drive measurable improvements in social equity, resilience, and economic opportunity.

Conclusion

In this project, I explored the effectiveness of NPOs, particularly those led by African American women, through the BEF lens. The study focused on understanding how these organizations manage their operations, engage with stakeholders, and maintain financial sustainability in a dynamic environment. The data collection process involved in-depth interviews with nonprofit leaders and volunteers, providing a comprehensive view of the organization's practices and challenges. Thematic analysis of the data revealed key insights into the organization's strengths and opportunities for improvement in product and process results, customer engagement, workforce development, leadership and governance, and financial management.

Data analysis confirmed several key findings, notably the organization's adaptability in operations, strong emphasis on volunteer engagement, and proactive approach to financial resource management. These themes align with the BEF's focus on continuous improvement, effective leadership, and strategic planning. Specifically, the findings in leadership and governance, particularly the emphasis on visionary and servant leadership, reinforced the importance of aligning organizational goals with community needs. The study also highlighted the critical role of community engagement in maintaining donor relationships, ensuring long-term financial stability, and fostering organizational resilience.

The analysis showed that while the organization excels in several areas, there are opportunities for further process improvement, such as strengthening donor retention strategies and improving data management for more informed decision making. These opportunities align with the BEF's emphasis on systematic process management and results-driven decision making. NPO leaders can evaluate their innovative efforts, especially when seeking to differentiate their organizations in the fundraising space. Innovation can be crucial in developing fresh, effective donor engagement and resource mobilization approaches.

In conclusion, this project reinforces the significance of adaptive leadership, community-driven strategies, and financial ingenuity in NPOs. The findings offer valuable insights into the practices of African American women-led nonprofits and provide actionable recommendations for improving operational performance, increasing community engagement, and ensuring financial sustainability. By applying the principles

of the BEF, nonprofit leaders can enhance their organizations' ability to navigate challenges and achieve lasting impact. Ultimately, this study contributes to the broader field of nonprofit management by highlighting how leadership, governance, and community engagement intersect to create sustainable and impactful organizations. The key takeaway from this research is that NPOs, especially those led by African American women, can achieve greater success and resilience through visionary leadership, strategic planning, and a commitment to continuous improvement and innovation. These findings can guide future research and practical applications in nonprofit management, contributing to more effective and equitable community-driven initiatives.

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Appendix: Interview Sections and Sample Questions

1. Leadership

- Question: "How would you describe the organization's approach to visionary leadership, especially regarding empowering staff and community impact?"
- Follow-up: "How do leadership decisions align with organizational values?"

2. Strategic Planning

- Question: "Can you discuss how the organization's strategic objectives have evolved in response to community needs and mission goals?"
- Follow-up: "What processes are in place for monitoring and adjusting these objectives?"

3. Customer (Community) Focus

- Question: "In what ways does the organization engage with the community it serves?"
- Follow-up: "How do you ensure that the community's voice influences program design and delivery?"

4. Measurement, Analysis, and Knowledge Management

- Question: "What data or performance indicators do you rely on to gauge success and improvement areas?"
- Follow-up: "How is knowledge shared across the organization to ensure continuous improvement?"

5. Workforce Focus

- Question: "What practices or policies promote an inclusive and supportive environment for employees?"
- Follow-up: "How does the organization support the professional development and well-being of its team?"

6. Operations

- Question: "How do you ensure efficiency and effectiveness in your organization's operational processes?"
- Follow-up: "What challenges do you face, and how have you overcome them?"

7. Results

- Question: "What successes or measurable outcomes best demonstrate your organization's commitment to its mission?"
- Follow-up: "How does the organization celebrate and communicate these achievements?"