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# Funding Allocations Strategies for Improving Nonprofit Organizations' Effectiveness and Sustainability

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*Walden University*

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# Walden University

College of Management and Technology

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Jaime Friedel

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Walden University  
2018

Abstract

Funding Allocations Strategies for Improving Nonprofit Organizations' Effectiveness and

Sustainability

by

Jaime Lynn Friedel

MS, University of Mary Washington, 2010

BS, University of Mary Washington, 2007

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

July 2018

## Abstract

Nonprofit organizational leaders (NOLs) face laws that require increased transparency and more oversight on funding allocations. Grounded by a conceptual framework of Hersey and Blanchard's situational leadership theory, Burns's transformational leadership theory, and Greenleaf's servant leadership theory, this multiple case study was developed to explore the leadership strategies of NOLs who implemented requirements of New York's Non-Profit Revitalization Act to increase funding allocations to support fulfillment of the organizational mission and achieve sustainability. The study population comprised NOLs from the Northeastern United States, who implemented requirements of the Non-Profit Revitalization Act requirements. Face-to-face semistructured interviews with 5 NOLs, a review of organizational documents, and member-checking were used to collect data for the study. Data were analyzed using a framework method to determine themes, visualization to code the data, and methodological triangulation to validate themes. Three main themes emerged from the data analysis: strategies for building and maintaining relationships increased funding allocations and sustainability, trust and accountability strategies improved organizational mission achievement and funding allocations, and strategies for higher standards and expectations improved sustainability. The findings from this study may contribute to positive social change by providing insight to NOLs about the need to create leadership strategies to build relationships and trust with stakeholders while operating a more responsible nonprofit organization, thereby creating a better connection between organizational systems and increasing service effectiveness.

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## Dedication

I dedicate this doctoral study to my children. Deanna, Lilly, Kyle, and Kayleigh. Always dream the impossible and strive to make it happen. You will be surprised at where you land if you don't let others limit your dreams. To my husband Rob, thank you for your support and love.

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## Section 1: Foundation of the Study

In 2013, nonprofits accounted for more than 5.4% of the U.S. gross domestic product with more than \$3.22 trillion in assets (McKeever, 2015), up from \$2.9 trillion in 2011 (Vogelsang et al., 2015). Given nonprofits' significant presence in the workforce and economy, having a way to assess efficiency and effectiveness of nonprofit organizational leaders (NOLs) is imperative (Medina-Borja & Triantis, 2014). Willems, Jegers, and Faulk (2016) determined that trust is essential in establishing the reputation and effectiveness of a nonprofit organization. Child, Witesman, and Braudt (2015) found that the reputation of a nonprofit organization could create value for its for-profit business partners. NOLs can create value by improving accountability in the sectors in which nonprofits operate (Child, 2016; Witesman, 2016). NOLs need to understand how to create value for their nonprofit organization. In this study, I focused on the effective leadership strategies NOLs used to increase funding allocations to achieve their organizations' missions while maintaining sustainability.

### **Background of the Problem**

In many countries, governments focus on how NOLs use the funding given to their organizations. Several national governments, such as Belgium (Reheul, Caneghem, & Verbruggen, 2015), have implemented legislation to oversee and audit the nonprofit industry. In the United States the state governments of California (Dhole, Khumawala, Mishra, & Ranasinghe, 2015) and New York (Kahn, 2015) have implemented laws to require stringent auditing and oversight of nonprofits. The impact of the laws on nonprofit organizational performance varied. Several nonprofit organizations no longer

exist or were forced to divert funding from the core mission to address law requirements (Kahn, 2015). Displaced workers, volunteers, and clients from impacted nonprofit organizations can become a burden on other resources. That is, other nonprofit organizations or government entities must use additional resources from their limited budgets to service a larger number of individuals (Vogelsang et al., 2015). NOLs who understand the law, how to implement the regulations, and the leadership strategies necessary to continue to create value for their nonprofit organization will have a better opportunity not just to survive but to thrive as they implement changes in response to the new laws.

The Non-Profit Revitalization Act was passed in December of 2013 to govern how nonprofits operated in New York State (New York, 2016). The act went into effect on July 1, 2014, and was amended in 2016. The act was designed to ensure the funds provided to a nonprofit organization help the populations the nonprofit organization intended to support while reducing the burden of outdated laws and regulations (Schneiderman, 2015). By exploring how the Non-Profit Revitalization Act impacted nonprofit organizations after implementation, I developed this study to provide other NOLs with insight on how to make decisions when implementing policies to adapt to similar laws. By understanding how other NOLs successfully navigated implementation of the new laws, NOLs can move to avoid pitfalls and embrace best practices for their nonprofit organizations.

### **Problem Statement**

Over 1 million NOLs in the United States compete for limited resources to meet increased needs for funding and services to fulfill their organization's mission and create organizational sustainability (Beaton, & Hwang, 2017; Hatzfeld, 2014; Lee, Wong, & Pfeiffer, 2017; Mataira, Morelli, Matsuoka, & Uehara-McDonald, 2014; Osula & Ng, 2014). In the Non-Profit Revitalization Act, New York state legislators set funding allocation requirements for increasing programmatic spending percentages from 65% in 2014 to 85% by 2015, to improve financial transparency (New York, 2016). The general business problem is the requirement for NOLs to increase funding allocations to fulfill organizational mission, create organizational sustainability, and increase transparency. The specific business problem is some NOLs who implemented requirements of New York's Non-Profit Revitalization Act lack leadership strategies to increase funding allocations to support fulfillment of the organizational mission and achieve sustainability.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the leadership strategies NOLs used to increase funding allocations to achieve organizational mission while maintaining sustainability after implementing requirements of the Non-Profit Revitalization Act. The target population consisted of NOLs from three organization in the Northeastern United States who successfully implemented requirements of the Non-Profit Revitalization Act in their organizations while maintaining, or increasing, the overall effectiveness in achieving their missions. The implication for positive social

change may include the potential for increased service to stakeholder populations while effectively operating more responsible nonprofit organizations.

### **Nature of the Study**

A qualitative research method met my needs in this study. Using a qualitative method enables researchers to explore a specific business situation and collect data through semistructured interviews (Barnham, 2015; Jamshed, 2014). Quantitative researchers analyze numerical data to make inferences about a larger population (Barnham, 2015). Researchers who use the mixed method employ both quantitative and qualitative research methods. However, some mixed methods researchers will use multiple studies of the same type (qualitative or quantitative) but use different approaches (Bazeley, 2015). Direct insight regarding the NOLs' thought processes is necessary to explore the leadership strategies NOLs used to increase funding allocations to achieve organizational mission while maintaining sustainability subsequent to implementation of requirements of the Non-Profit Revitalization Act; therefore, a qualitative approach was required for this study.

I considered using the following three qualitative research designs: (a) case study, (b) phenomenological study, and (c) ethnography. Researchers use a case study to explore an event bound by time (Yin, 2014). Phenomenological researchers try to understand a singular event from the viewpoint of those with experience (Suorsa & Huotari, 2014). The phenomenological design did not meet my needs for this study because not just one organization experienced the event. Ethnographic researchers become part of a group to experience the nuances of the culture from a member

perspective, exploring the microdynamics of the unit (Anteby & Bechky, 2016). For this study, I did not need to become part of the group to understand the microdynamics of the situation; therefore, ethnographic research was not suitable. A case study was an appropriate choice to complete the research study. The research focused on an event in time, increasing funding allocations to achieve their organizations' missions while maintaining sustainability. Using open-ended questions in a semistructured interview process and review of organizational documents to collect participant data information was gathered regarding a specific event in time.

### **Research Question**

What leadership strategies did NOLs who implemented requirements of New York's Non-Profit Revitalization Act use to increase funding allocations to support fulfillment of the organizational mission and achieve sustainability?

### **Interview Questions**

1. What leadership strategies are you using to increase funding allocations in your organization?
2. What leadership strategies are you using to increase sustainability in your organization?
3. What methods do you use to overcome challenges in the implementation of leadership strategies?
4. What leadership strategies did you use to implement requirements of the Non-Profit Revitalization Act?



5. What barriers did you face in implementing requirements of the Non-Profit Revitalization Act?
6. What were the results of the strategies you used to implement requirements of the Non-Profit Revitalization Act?
7. How did you assess the effectiveness of your leadership strategies used in implementing requirements of the Non-Profit Revitalization Act?
8. What additional information would you like to share about leadership strategies used to increase funding allocations to support your organization's mission while maintaining sustainability?

### **Conceptual Framework**

Servant leadership, situational leadership, and transformational theories comprised the composite conceptual framework for this study. Greenleaf (1977) developed the servant leadership theory after listening to a lecture regarding how large businesses and organizations stopped serving the population. Greenleaf stated that the basis of servant leadership was the leader's skill of listening first and understanding a problem or need before reacting. Servant leaders accept individuals as they are, but push the follower to do better (Greenleaf, 1977).

Hersey and Blanchard are the founders of situational leadership theory (Hersey, Blanchard, & Natemeyer, 1979). Situational leadership theory was born from Blanchard's (1967) life cycle theory of leadership and Fiedler's (1964) contingency model of leadership effectiveness. Hersey and Blanchard further developed their theory of situational leadership by exploring management through task behavior and relationship

behavior (Gates, Blanchard, & Hersey, 1976). The premise behind the situational leadership theory is that the maturity level of followers dictates the style leaders should use with them (Gates et al., 1976). According to Blanchard and Hersey, use of their four-quadrant model guides leaders' choices on the type of power base to use with followers (Gates et al., 1976).

Burns (1978) explored the difference between transformational and transactional leadership. Most types of leadership theories, Burns noted, are transactional due to the cause and effect relationship leaders develop with followers. Burns postulated that leaders need to mobilize their followers to make transformational change, which meets the needs of the stakeholders.

Nonprofit organizations function in unique environments, which differ from those of for-profit industries (Hoefler & Sliva, 2014). Most nonprofit organizations employ volunteer workers who have different motivations for spending their time and resources supporting the nonprofit organization (Harrison & Murray, 2012). To implement change, NOLs need transformational leadership skills (see Burns, 1978). The diverse needs of the volunteers and stakeholders require NOLs to be flexible and to meet each stakeholder's need via situational leadership skills (see Hersey et al., 1979). Last, leaders of nonprofit organizations need to put the needs of their volunteers and stakeholders first, thus requiring servant leadership skills (see Greenleaf, 1977). Thus, servant leadership, situational leadership, and transformational leadership theories supported my exploration the leadership strategies of NOLs who implemented requirements of New York's Non-

Profit Revitalization Act to increase funding allocations to support fulfillment of the organizational mission and achieve sustainability.

### **Operational Definitions**

*For-profit organizations:* For-profit organizations make a profit by providing services or goods to individuals who directly derive the benefits of those services or goods (Witesman, 2016).

*Leadership:* Leadership is the influencing of individuals by inspiring them to perform at their highest level of effort to make assessable value for the organization (Pierro, Raven, Amato, & Belanger, 2013).

*Nonprofit leaders:* Nonprofit leaders comprises those individuals in charge of organizations such as registered charities, community groups, and social enterprises that do not function for profit and are independent of the government (Witesman, 2016).

*Nonprofit organizations:* Nonprofit organizations are U.S. federally tax-exempt organizations that are privately owned and provide a diverse set of services including information and advocacy to the public. They function with the help of volunteers, are overseen by an independent board (Hoefler & Sliva, 2014), and do not provide any payments to those who control the organization (Manetti & Toccafondi, 2014).

*Sector blurring (sector bending):* Sector blurring is when organizations take on the traits of other sectors by intermingling pieces of one sector with another (Green & Dalton, 2016), such as nonprofit organizations selling products to make a profit to flow back in support of the organization's cause (Witesman, 2016).

*Social entrepreneurship*: Social entrepreneurship is a business model that supports social programs with private business practices (Mataira et al., 2014).

*Sustainability*: Sustainability is the ability of a generation to provide basic needs, such as education, income, and health through the creation of a social system, which balances economics and environmental needs without limiting future generations (Eriksson & Svensson, 2015).

### **Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations**

#### **Assumptions**

Assumptions are unproven beliefs individuals have regarding a topic (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). My first assumption was that participants provided honest and accurate responses. The second assumption was that semistructured interviews and organizational documents were sufficient to capture the perceptions, experiences, and opinions of the NOLs regarding leadership ideologies.

#### **Limitations**

Limitations are the known characteristics of a study that could interfere with the study results, that are out of the control of the researcher (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). The findings of this qualitative case study were limited to a select few of the NOLs in New York who implemented requirements of the Non-Profit Revitalization Act to increase funding allocations to support fulfillment of the organizational mission and achieve sustainability. The findings were also limited to the information participants were willing to share during the interview process.

### **Delimitations**

Delimitations are conscious boundaries the researcher places on a study (Yin, 2014). This study was limited to the experiences of five NOLs. The NOLs were limited to those working in nonprofit organizations that implemented requirements of the Non-Profit Revitalization Act and maintained or increased services during the implementation period. This study was also limited to exploring effective leadership strategies in nonprofit organizations.

### **Significance of the Study**

#### **Contribution to Business Practice**

The purpose of this research was to explore nonprofit organizational leadership strategies to increase funding allocations to achieve their organizations' missions while maintaining sustainability to help NOLs effectively meet government compliance requirements such as those outlined in the Non-Profit Revitalization Act. The research findings may be of value to businesses by providing NOLs successful change management strategies they could use to effectively implement policies and procedures required by government regulations. The data from this exploration of how NOLs implemented requirements of the Non-Profit Revitalization Act showed how multiple leadership theories could generate success in nonprofit organizations. The knowledge gained from this study may contribute to effective business practice by providing insights into nonprofit organizational leadership strategies to increase funding allocations to support their organizations' mission while maintaining sustainability.

### **Implications for Social Change**

This study's implications for positive social change could include improving the reliability of leadership in nonprofit organizations by increasing leaders' effectiveness in serving their target populations. If NOLs can position the nonprofit organization to make a better connection between the different systems in the organization, then service providers of a nonprofit organization could increase service effectiveness. With this social change, NOLs could potentially reach more individuals in need, lessening the burden on society and government organizations.

### **A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature**

With an increase in demands for services provided by nonprofit organizations (Dobrai & Farkas, 2016; Kahnweiler, 2013) and these organizations' role in providing support for the common good of society (Boezeman & Ellemers, 2014), both researchers and NOLs must better understand the leadership skills required to sustain these organizations. Sankaran et al. (2014) defined leadership as involving traits that eclipse general management strategies and incorporate innovation, confidence in the organization, and strategic vision. The influence of NOLs in nonprofit organizations is substantial (Gilstrap, White, & Spardlin, 2015; Mason, 2015; McMurray, Islam, Sarros, & Pirola-Merlo, 2013). McMurray et al. (2013) determined that leadership support in nonprofit organizations develops a supportive organizational climate that increases innovation. In this section, I review previous research on leadership in nonprofit organizations.

While developing this study, I reviewed literature about nonprofit organizational leadership to gain an understanding of trends and theories in the nonprofit organizational sector. The principal research question for this study was: What leadership strategies did NOLs who implemented requirements of the Non-Profit Revitalization Act use to increase funding allocations to support fulfillment of the organizational mission and achieve sustainability? In the first section of this literature review, I explore various leadership strategies, including servant leadership, situational leadership, and transformational leadership. Following this section, I present two rival theories: transactional leadership and leader-member exchange (LMX). The themes explored include funding allocations, organizational mission achievement, and organizational sustainability.

I gathered materials for this extensive literature review by searching multiple databases on business practices and psychological theory. Using business and management databases available via the Walden University Library, I used Boolean operator to search for the following keywords: *nonprofit*, *leadership*, *nonprofit funding*, *funding strategies*, and *situational leadership*. I limited searches to peer-reviewed articles published between 2014 and 2018. There were 2,084 results for *nonprofit* and *leadership*, and 16 results for *nonprofit* and *situational*, five results for *nonprofit funding* and *funding strategies*. Additional searches with the same publication limitations in the psychology database combined search (PsycARTICLES, PsycBOOKS, PsycCRITIQUES, PsycEXTRA, and PsycINFO) for the keywords *nonprofit* and *leadership* returned 115 results. Further searches for *servant leadership*, *transformational leadership*, and *LMX*

*exchange* yielded additional results. In all of the databases, I also searched for the authors Blanchard and Hersey. Of the 231 references in this document, 86% were published less than 5 years before 2018.

### **Applied Business Problem**

NOLs determine which organizational components lead to an effective nonprofit organization. Nonprofit organizations continue to grow in number, yet many leaders do not have adequate skill sets to be successful NOLs (Hoefler & Sliva, 2014). The purpose of this multiple case study was to explore the leadership strategies that NOLs who implemented requirements of the Non-Profit Revitalization Act used to increase funding allocations to support fulfillment of the organizational mission and achieve sustainability. The target population included the leaders of three nonprofit organizations in New York State who successfully implemented requirements of the Non-Profit Revitalization Act in their organizations while maintaining, or increasing, the overall mission impact.

### **Leadership Strategies from Conceptual Framework**

All NOLs face challenges in their organizations. NOLs need to balance the expectations of multiple stakeholders, which are not always aligned with each other (Johansen & Nielsen, 2016). Leaders can better position nonprofit organizations to handle expectations of multiple stakeholders by using specific leadership traits (Valero, Jung, & Andrew, 2015). Understanding the varied demands of stakeholders requires leaders to develop tools in themselves to manage different stakeholders (Dobrai & Farkas, 2016; Freeman, 1984). Thus, NOLs need to understand the various stakeholders in their organizations. With this understanding, NOLs need to make the decisions that



will be best for their organizations. To better handle stakeholders' expectations and make decisions for nonprofit organizations, NOLs should have a toolbox of leadership traits.

Different leadership traits lead to different results. NOLs are stakeholders in their organizations, and their beliefs and actions have a direct impact on organizational effectiveness (Gilstrap et al., 2015; Mason, 2015). Challenges require different attributes of leadership (Rowold, Borgmann, & Bormann, 2014). NOLs need to learn how to move among the various leadership styles to maximize their impact on organizational effectiveness (Taylor, Cornelius, & Colvin, 2014). Boezeman and Ellemers (2014) encouraged NOLs to display specific leadership traits known to motivate volunteers. NOLs need to understand the different stakeholders who affect their success in order to identify the correct leadership style to use with each. Leadership strategies are available to help NOLs successfully navigate the challenges they face in their organizations. NOLs who understand which attributes lead to which results will affect their organizations' efficiency and resilience.

There are numerous theories describing which attributes leaders should use. Chelliah, Boersma, and Klettner (2015) hypothesized it is not possible to determine the right type of leadership for nonprofit organizations. However, Palumbo (2016) stated that servant leadership aligns with the overall idea of nonprofit organizations. Gotsis and Grimani's (2016) position on servant leadership pairs with Hersey and Blanchard's (1974) situational leadership theory in that leaders should adjust their leadership styles throughout their relationships with followers based on the latter's maturity and knowledge. Dwyer, Bono, Snyder, Nov, and Berson (2013) determined that NOLs who

use transformational leadership styles have a positive effect on volunteers' satisfaction. McMurray et al. (2013) researched leadership interaction and showed that transformational and transactional leadership traits should be used to maximize innovation in nonprofit organizations. Nonetheless, researchers have no consensus on one ideal leadership style for NOLs. Understanding the different leadership styles of NOLs and how they affect nonprofit organizations is necessary to determine the right type of leadership to use. To better understand whether servant, situational, transformational, and transactional leadership, as well as LMX traits, are right for nonprofit leaders, in-depth review of each theory was necessary.

**Servant leadership.** Servant leadership is a leadership style suitable for NOLs because of its focus on the least privileged. Greenleaf (1977) developed servant leadership theory after listening to a lecture regarding how large businesses and organizations stopped serving the population. Greenleaf stated that the basis of servant leadership is the leader's skill in listening first and understanding a problem or need before reacting. Barbuto, Gottfredson, and Searle (2014), Beck (2014), and Flynn, Smither, and Walker (2016) have described servant leadership as a form of leadership that is altruistic, in which leader focuses on the development and needs of followers. Beck and Lacroix and Verdorfer (2017) stressed the need for servant leaders to work toward providing support so that followers can grow more like servant leaders themselves. NOLs work for organizations that are outward focused. The missions of most nonprofit organizations and their leaders are to focus on the needs of others and help

achieve a better state for those causes. Servant leadership thus aligns well with the goals of nonprofit organizations.

There are many definitions of servant leadership. The first conceptual model of servant leadership began with 10 servant leadership traits. Flynn et al. (2016) delineated the following traits of servant leaders: being a servant, creating a difference, being empowering, maintaining an ethical base, having conceptual skills, demonstrating humility and courage, and engaging in listening and relationship building. Sousa and van Dierendonck (2015) suggested a new four-dimensional measure of servant leadership that includes humility, stewardship, empowerment, and accountability. All of the traits described for servant leadership support Northouse's (2016) observation that servant leadership focuses on leaders and their actions. Understanding how a servant leader thinks and how that impacts the leader's actions toward followers is necessary to understand servant leadership.

Understanding followers is not always easy. Servant leaders must know their followers well enough to identify their feelings, interests, beliefs, ambitions, and inner desires (Barbuto et al., 2014). Servant leaders accept individuals, but they push followers to do better when needed (Greenleaf, 1977). The defining of leaders as servants is paradoxical (Northouse, 2016). Gilstrap et al. (2015) described the need for NOLs to move beyond the common and look for authenticity in their communications of self to those in the organization. NOLs should understand their role as servant leaders and how their leadership strategies affect their authentic communications as a paradox of self and organization (Gilstrap et al., 2015). Servant leaders should be aware that they are role

models for their followers and have significant power in influencing them (Zhao, Lui, & Gao, 2016). NOLs who can serve stakeholders in the organization while pushing those stakeholders to do better can achieve a more authentic relationship with them. The more authentic the relationship, the more impactful those interactions can be in creating a strong organization.

NOLs have a responsibility to both internal and external stakeholders. Leaders need to be able to adapt to a multitude of situations and environments (Gotsis & Grimani, 2016; Lou & Lui, 2014). To create an environment of inclusiveness, leaders need to be adaptable and people focused (Gotsis & Grimani, 2016). Servant leaders are people focused (Barbuto et al., 2014; Beck, 2014; Chiniara & Bentein, 2015; Hogue, 2016; Linuesa-Langreo, Ruiz-Palomino, & Elche-Hortelano, 2017; Tang, Kwan, Zhang, & Zhu, 2016; Zhao et al., 2016). Harwiki (2016) showed that leaders with servant leadership styles had a positive effect on organizational culture and employee performance. NOLs looking to affect their followers positively and to bring about an increase in employee performance could use servant leadership to that end.

NOLs using servant leadership styles need to understand how to motivate their followers. Greenleaf (1977) found servant leadership to be an effective leadership style for empowering followers. According to Hitka and Balazova (2015), employee motivation lasts for the short-term; once employees' needs are met, their motivation changes. According to Gotsis and Grimani (2016), employees tend to show a positive effect from servant leadership when provided in short stints. Gotsis and Grimani suggested that leaders should use servant leadership only on a short-term basis. Hitka and

Balazova contended that the types of motivators that leaders use with employees should change as followers mature and gain more knowledge. Lacroix and Verdorfer (2017) found that servant leadership has a longer lasting effect by changing the core of the follower to understand the importance of service. Beck (2014) stated that servant leaders use trust-building in relationships to influence followers. Servant leadership involves a core trait of providing support to followers that eventually creates a change in followers such that they become inclined to serve others. The needs and followers' motivation may change, but the servant leader's need to support does not, and a servant leader adjusts to meet the new needs and motivations of followers.

Understanding stakeholders and their motivations lead NOLs to choose appropriate leadership styles for the situations and stakeholders involved. Scholars associated servant leadership with transformational leadership (Beck, 2014). The difference between transformational leadership and servant leadership, according to Bass (2000), is that servant leaders intentionally focus on improving followers' experience (Beck, 2014; Greenleaf, 1977). Servant leadership focuses on the needs of followers and giving followers tools to develop their capabilities and find a more stable sense of self (Yoshida, Sendjaya, Hirst, & Cooper, 2014). The focus of servant leaders on followers requires NOLs to understand their followers and their needs.

Not all followers or their needs are the same. Beck (2014) stressed the need for servant leaders to actively listen to their followers to understand their needs better. Zhao et al. (2016) suggested that leaders are not the only individuals necessary to create a successful leadership interaction. Followers and how they identify with the leader and

organization affect how successful leaders are in leveraging servant leadership traits to engender stronger organizational commitment. Beck noticed that servant leaders provide a vision to followers that include a larger span of possibilities of the followers' growth and future. Yoshida et al. (2014) determined that servant leaders embody the most desired traits in a team and are therefore able to improve followers' creativity. With a clear understanding of their followers, NOLs can use servant leadership traits to increase followers' experience in addition to bringing value to the organization.

NOLs should use leadership traits that provide value to the organization. Yoshida et al. (2014) showed that team innovation increased with the use of servant leadership. Sousa and van Dierendonck (2015) found that servant leadership not only affects individuals but adds value in affecting team performance. Sousa and van Dierendonck reported that servant leadership helps to increase integration and improve information exchange in teams. Tuan (2017) connected servant leadership with successful knowledge sharing in organizations. Sousa and van Dierendonck went further in their research by presenting servant leadership to provide connections in teams while also affording autonomy to followers. A nonprofit organization is a team of individuals who work toward a common mission. Understanding the effects of servant leadership traits on teams will allow NOLs to adjust their interactions with nonprofit organizational members to bring the best value to the member and, in the end, to the nonprofit organization.

**Situational leadership.** Situational leadership is the second leadership style explored. Hersey and Blanchard (1974) were the founders of situational leadership theory. Situational leadership theory was born from Blanchard's (1967) life cycle theory

of leadership and Fiedler's (1964) contingency model of leadership effectiveness. Hersey and Blanchard further developed their theory of situational leadership in exploring management by objectives and realizing that a level of development was missing. Adding in another dimension of situational awareness and understanding of the maturity level of the follower helped to lead to the first level of situational leadership theory (Hersey & Blanchard, 1974). Bosse, Duell, Memon, Treur, and van der Wal (2017) defined situational leadership as a focus on the interaction between leaders and followers. Leaders who use situational leadership approaches are in tune with the needs of their followers. The leaders adjust how much interaction and direction they provide to the follower based on the needs of the follower.

Situational leadership has several components. Hersey et al. (1979) studied French and Raven's bases of power as a mean to align leadership power and leadership styles together. To understand Hersey et al., one first must understand the bases of power. There were six bases of power that include: (a) reward, (b) coercion, (c) legitimate, (d) expert, (e) referent, and (d) informational (Raven, 1993). Hersey et al. added connection power to their study. Utilizing rewards require the ability to give rewards or approval for a job done well (Raven, 1993). Leaders who invoke coercive power require the ability to give disapproval or a negative consequence to a follower, and leaders have legitimate power based on the formal power given by a position or title. Leaders who have knowledge and experience have expert power. Followers of leaders, who have earned respect or prestige, give the leader reverent power. Raven (1993) identified that leaders could use two types of informational power, direct or indirect. Each type of power could

have a positive or negative effect depending on utilization by leadership. Hersey et al. embedded the types of power onto their level on the maturity spectrum. Hersey et al. showed the level of power changes as the level of the follower's maturity increase with coercive being the first at low maturity, then connection, reward, legitimate, referent, information, and expert being at the top with high maturity. Therefore, leaders should have different types of power with a variety of followers. Based on the level of maturity and knowledge of the follower; leaders determine which leadership style, to include motivation (Hitka & Balazova, 2015), will influence the follower to reach the desired result (Hersey et al., 1979; Raven, 1993). Situational leadership focuses on the interaction between the leader and the follower. Each task can create a different interaction between leader and follower. Situational leadership requires the leader to be aware of the needs of their followers to ensure that they can respond to those needs accordingly.

Leadership is not stagnant. There is no one way to implement leadership to get the desired result from followers (Hersey, Angelini, & Carakushansky, 1982). To help leaders understand how to adjust their leadership styles to get the desired results from followers, Hersey and Blanchard (1974) developed four components. These components, or styles, are for leaders to utilize with employees based on the follower's maturity level, relationship behavior performed by the leader, and task behavior directed by the leader. The four styles are telling, selling, participating, and delegating. Hersey et al. (1979) believed the goal of leadership was to help followers mature and to move through the different quadrants. To help followers' mature, leaders need to be able to correctly determine the maturity level of the follower and apply the correct style of leadership



necessary for the situation. Hersey et al. cautioned the maturity level of followers is not constant and can shift depending on the situation; therefore, leaders need to be able to adjust as needed.

Leaders also include responsibility for pushing followers to grow by utilizing encouraging behavior that is followed by positive reinforcement of the desired grow actions (Hersey et al., 1982). If a follower perceived they are receiving the correct type of leadership they are more likely to be successful and support their leader and organization than if the follower feels the wrong type of leadership support (Zigarmi & Roberts, 2017). Depending on how competent and mature a follower is with performing a task determines how much support and which leadership style a leader should utilize with the follower. Choosing and implementing the correct level of leadership can create success in the organization.

Followers and their reactions can affect how successful situational leadership is. According to Hersey et al. (1979), some power is automatic; however, most leaders earn their power. Hersey et al. stated that the level of power a follower gives a leader depends on the follower's perceptions of the leader. Northouse (2016) stated that situational leadership was dependent on a directive and support role of the leader to the follower. Leaders want to create a more productive organization will strive to achieve more than coercive or reward power bases (Hersey et al., 1979). Zigarmi and Roberts (2017) found that leaders use three of the four leadership styles more frequently, but that all four are necessary to create success. The goal of the leader should be to create an environment where their influence motivates over their demand for compliance.

**Transformational leadership.** Transformational leadership continues to gain traction as a successful leadership style. Encouraging stakeholders to look at organizational issues through a new lens to find a new approach is essential to the transformational leadership theory (McMurray et al., 2013). Stahl, Covrig, and Newman (2014) supported the theory that transformational leadership provided the best predictor of leadership effectiveness in nonprofit organizations. Pierro et al. (2013) found that transformational leadership had a positive effect on supporting organizational commitment among employees. Dwyer et al. (2013) found that transformational leadership can create satisfaction in volunteers of nonprofit organizations but does not increase volunteer contributions. Exploring transformational leadership as a viable means for NOLs to create success in their nonprofit organizations is supported by interpretations of nonprofit leadership research.

Understanding what transformational leadership is and the value of implementing transformational leadership could bring to a nonprofit organization is essential to determining if it is the right leadership style for NOLs. Transformational leadership introduced by Burns in 1978 was expounded on by Bass (1985) who developed a behavioral framework. The framework for transformational leadership consists of four dimensions: inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, idealized influence, and individual consideration (Yaslioglu & SelenayErden, 2018). Transformational leaders are focused on organizational success (Beck, 2014; Prasad & Junni, 2016; Yoshida et al., 2014), but do address the needs of followers as a means to create organizational success (Prasad & Junni, 2016), by providing mentorship (Huang, Weng, & Chen, 2016; Laukhuf

& Malone, 2015). Transformational leaders embrace idealized influence by self-sacrifice (Barbuto et al., 2014) and are role models for followers (Holstad, Korek, Rigotti, & Mohr, 2014; Prasad & Junni, 2016). Transformational leaders focus on the needs of followers to create success in the organization, but the success of the followers is secondary to the success of the organization.

Innovation is a core component of transformational leadership. Using transformational leadership traits, leaders create an environment that increases innovation in the organization (Prasad & Junni, 2016). Executive leadership can influence innovation by providing and supporting a transformational environment of experimentation and new idea development (Trung, Nghi, Soldier, Hoi, & Kim, 2014). Nguyen, Lokman, Winata, and Chong (2016) found a significant positive influence on performance as a direct result of transformational leaders motivating and inspiring followers. McMurray et al. (2013) found that individual leadership support in line with transformational leadership had a direct effect on nonprofit organizational workers' innovation. Subsequently, NOLs who understand transformational leadership traits, and the need to allow discovery in their organization, can create value for the organization and increase innovation.

Innovation can come from more than just employees. Through a smaller leadership team, NOLs influence the behaviors of their volunteers (Dwyer et al., 2013; Fazzi & Zamaro, 2016). According to Dwyer et al. (2013), transformational leadership influences volunteer satisfaction, but volunteers' satisfaction levels do not influence willingness to contribute more to the organization. Dwyer et al.'s findings deviate from

Pierro et al.'s (2013) findings that leaders in government, utilizing transformation leader style, increase commitment from their followers. NOLs need to be aware of the different stakeholders in their organizations. NOLs who understand their stakeholders and how different leadership traits influence those stakeholders will create a more stable organization.

Transformational leadership has several dimensions. Wang, Demerouti, and Le Blanc (2017) suggested that the value of transformational leadership is the ability to create an environment where employees can job craft. The effect of transformational leadership can be tempered by how employees identify with their work and its environment (Jensen, 2017). Wang et al. showed results that supported transformational leaders being more successful in allowing employees to job craft and develop their positions instead of leaders trying to force employees to adapt to their current working conditions. Transformational leaders who provide more recourses and challenges are more successful in creating value for the organization than leaders who do not provide challenges and additional resources (Wang et al., 2017). Leaders should understand the limitations of their organization in creating positive employee work identity and allowing for job crafting. Leaders of organizations limited on the level of flexibility in the challenges and resources provided to employees would need to be creative and open in their willingness to give employees the freedom to develop their positions.

### **Rival Theories of the Conceptual Framework**

There are many different leadership styles and traits. Different work settings provide different opportunities for leaders to utilize different leadership styles (Fazzi &

Zamaro, 2016; Harrison & Baird, 2015). Transformational and transactional leadership were part of the same leadership style at one time (Fazzi & Zamaro, 2016; Prasad & Junni, 2016). Stahl et al. (2014) found that transformational and transactional leadership traits overlap, and both are value added to nonprofit organizations. Leaders who exhibit transformational leadership traits are charismatic and work to motivate followers by tapping into their intrinsic motivation (Fazzi & Zamaro, 2016). Transactional leaders utilize an exchange relationship with followers who define what is expected (Prasad & Junni, 2016). Similar to situational leadership theory, leaders need to understand their followers to determine the need for either transformational or transactional leadership styles (Fazzi & Zamaro, 2016). NOLs should focus on the dissidence between their stakeholders' identities and needs (Johansen & Nielsen, 2016). Fazzi and Zamaro (2016) discovered that research-based followers who do not interact with clients do not respond favorably to transformational leadership. Prasad and Junni (2016) indicated that transformational leadership is suited to dynamic environments. Consequently, the conclusion to draw is the existence of many different factors for leaders to address to determine the right leadership style to implement.

**Transactional leadership.** Another type of leadership for NOLs to consider is transactional leadership. Fazzi and Zamaro (2016) stated that transformational leadership is contingent on transactional leaders in the organization completing their mission. McMurray et al. (2013) found that the use of contingent punishment, a component of transactional leadership, is a key factor in increasing workplace innovation in nonprofit organizations. Transactional leaders follow the rules and regulations of the organization

(Lutz Allen, Smith, & Da Silva, 2013). Three factors affect transactional leadership: (a) active or passive management when followers do not achieve goals, (b) the absence of leadership's willingness to make decisions, and (c) the ability of leadership to set goals and reward those followers who achieve those goals (Fazzi & Zamaro, 2016; Lutz Allen et al., 2013). Transactional leaders focus on logic when making decisions and solving problems (Riaz & Khaliki, 2014). The managerial focus of transactional leadership has worked to create innovation in nonprofit organizations. Understanding the need to move the organization forward or to keep the organization on a steady path could help NOLs to determine if transactional leadership is the correct leadership style for the organization.

**Leader-member exchange.** LMX is a newer style of leadership for NOLs to consider. Dansereau, Graen, and Haga (1975) presented LMX as a derivative from the dyadic linkage approach (as cited in Tsai et al., 2016) and role theory. The premise of LMX theory is the way followers perform at work is directly related to their relationship with their leaders (Buch, Thompson, & Kuvass, 2016). Leaders and followers who have a high-quality of LMX have a relationship based on mutual trust, like each other, and respect that leads to a balanced sense of obligation (Tsai et al., 2016). By contrast, those leaders and followers with low-quality LMX have a very formal relationship built on contracts and a quid pro quo process (Tsai et al., 2016). LMX theory encompasses two types of relationships between leaders and followers. Those relationships better developed and built on trust produce more than those built on the contract of the job.

Many factors influence how an individual performs in an organization. One factor is the interaction between the leader and the follower (Breevaart, Bakker, Demerouti, &

van den Heuvel, 2015; Casimir, Ngee Keith Ng, Yuan Wang, & Ooi, 2014; Choy, McCormack, & Djurkovic, 2016). As leaders and followers build trust in their interactions, leaders create an environment, which increased autonomy and social support of the follower (Breevaart et al., 2015). As followers find more opportunities from leaders, their willingness to move beyond a contractual relationship and to give more social support to others increases (Breevaart et al., 2015; Casimir et al., 2014). The mechanics of these interactions influence the job performance of the followers (Breevaart et al., 2015; Casimir et al., 2014; Choy et al., 2016). NOLs create trust in their organizations by meeting the needs of their followers. Through those trust relationships, a leader can create more successful interaction with followers and increase value to the organization.

### **Themes**

Nonprofit organizations have many dynamic parts. NOLs are responsible for pulling multiple different areas of the organization together to create organization sustainability. For NOLs, fostering sustainability includes creating an environment in which nonprofit organizational boards, volunteers, and stakeholders add value to the nonprofit organization. NOLs are also responsible for finding ways to fund their nonprofit organizations while adhering to all regulations regarding funding.

Understanding governing regulations and ways to properly track the success of a nonprofit organization will help an NOL strive to create sustainability. This section will provide a few areas that affect how successful an NOL is in moving their nonprofit organization forward in the completion of the mission.

**Funding allocations.** NOLs secure funding for their organizations through multiple funding streams. To many NOLs, finding the funds necessary to survive can be daunting (Mataira et al., 2014), especially as funding for nonprofit organizations continues to diminish (Kahnweiler, 2013). One way NOLs try to increase funding is by using donor agencies (Mataira et al., 2014). Another form of funding is in efficiencies of the organizational structure of the nonprofit (Park & Kim, 2016) and by government grants (Green & Dalton, 2016). Without funding to support nonprofit organizations, NOLs might not achieve their organizational mission. Thinking outside the box and coming up with a diverse portfolio of funding methods can help alleviate the stress of finding necessary funds.

Other options available to NOLs to find funding are in the relationships construct of the organization and outside support. Use of collaborative leadership between NOLs, volunteers, employees, and nonprofit organizational boards (NOBs) can provide an avenue to smaller funding and service gaps (Paarlberg, Nesbit, Clerkin, & Christensen, 2014). Kahnweiler (2013) cautioned using organizational development consultants to improve nonprofit organizations. The effect of outsiders who do not understand the NOLs vision, or the mission of the nonprofit organization, can lead to significant delay in the process. An organization does not usually become successful enough to recoup the time and costs associated with utilizing an organizational development consultant (Kahnweiler, 2013). Government entities continue to find value in nonprofit enterprises (Park & Kim, 2016). Nonprofit enterprises provide tax revenue to struggling local government entities while providing necessary social welfare services to disadvantaged



groups. Park and Kim (2016) found that NOLs discovered unique ways to create funding streams to support the social mission of their nonprofit organizations by the generation of revenue by commercial means. These revenues are subject to local taxes; however, the nonprofit maintains tax exemption in other areas (Park & Kim, 2016). NOLs can utilize their supporters, the government, and commercial means to meet funding needs. NOLs should be aware of the unintended consequences of the route they take to fill funding holes, as they could create additional concerns.

*New York's Non-Profit Revitalization Act.* NOLs throughout the country must implement new local and federal regulations. Leadership strategies necessary to achieve success in implementing the guidelines under regulatory changes are lacking (Harrison & Murray, 2012; Vogelsang et al., 2015). The focus of this study was on the implementation of requirements of the Non-Profit Revitalization Act. One concern with the regulations of the Non-Profit Revitalization Act is where will the funding to implement the new requirements come from (Kahn, 2015). The reality is smaller service organizations will shut down without proper funding (Mataira et al., 2014). Therefore, NOLs need to be able to find innovative ways to generate funding and implement new government regulations (Mataira et al., 2014). NOLs must find ways to implement regulations while sustaining the support of the current mission.

*Auditing.* New regulations of nonprofit organizations require a financial audit. NOLs of nonprofit organizations, which receive funding internationally, can determine the audit style to be conducted per International Standard of Auditing 800 (Ahrens, Fabel, & Khalifa, 2016). Multitudes of NOLs utilize subcontractors to complete their missions

(Ahrens et al., 2016). As of the date of this research study, the average agreement from NOLs in reporting financial information does not require the submission of subcontractor's financial information (Ahrens et al., 2016). The changes of conducting an audit, to include the who, when, and how are significant. NOLs need to be aware of the effects of the changes and respond accordingly.

Regulations changes are not limited to the U.S. In 2008, Belgium's government implemented new regulations, which required NOLs to perform audits to create better transparency in the nonprofit industry (Reheul et al., 2015). The use of the audits can help add a higher level of trust of a nonprofit organization (Ahrens et al., 2016; Reheul et al., 2015). However, use of the correct audit and the integrity of the audit are important (Ahrens et al., 2016). Therefore, it is important for NOLs to be aware of who is conducting the audit and NOLs should move toward seeking sector experts to conduct their audits (Reheul et al., 2015). NOLs should also focus on performance audits over solely financial audits to look at management practices, effectiveness to mission and efficiency in utilizing resources (Ahrens et al., 2016). Understanding the effects of audits and the information produced by the audit about the nonprofit organizations is important. NOLs need to be able to fully share the story of their organization including information not seen in a financial audit.

**Organizational mission achievement.** NOLs face a shifting environment. There were multiple shifts currently taking place in the environment of nonprofit organizations throughout the U.S. (Norris-Tirrell, 2014). One prominent area of change was in the understanding of governance and if governance should be unitary versus pluralistic

(Green & Dalton, 2016; Taylor, 2015). Norris-Tirrell (2014) stated that the only way to understand the way forward was to explore the past to understand the political environment, in which NOLs developed throughout the U.S. Greller (2015) explored the past governance environment of nonprofit organizations and discovered that leasehold governance positioned NOLs to utilize the organization's strengths fully. This finding supports Taylor's (2015) observation of the need for NOLs to move away from unitary governance for more pluralistic forms of governance, which utilize all the resources, to include stakeholders. However, Green and Dalton (2016) did not find the support of the move to a pluralistic form of governance in not-for-profit organizations. By understanding the resources of their nonprofit organizations, NOLs can create value by utilizing those resources to their maximum potential.

NOLs interact with their stakeholders. Johansen and Nielsen (2016) explored the effects of slight deviations from nonprofit organizational missions and the effects on buy-in from stakeholders. Glinkowska and Kaczmarek (2015) demonstrated the level of interaction between leaders and oversight boards influences the efficiency of the organization regarding social, economic, and organizational means. Glinkowska and Kaczmarek's found data to support the research of Oetzel et al. (2014) who showed the more engaged the advisory board is, the stronger stewardship in the nonprofit organization. Oetzel et al. also discovered that the more engaged the advisory board is the more control leadership has over the allocation of funding. NOLs should keep the advisory board engaged to create value for the nonprofit organization.

NOLs need to interact with other stakeholders beyond the advisory board.

Johansen and Nielsen (2016) cautioned NOLs to be aware of the interaction between different stakeholders and the discourse from deviating from perceived mission-focused activities and the effects on funding. Paarlberg et al. (2014) noticed nonprofits during times of economic crisis can drift from their intended mission. Mission drift increases the challenges of meeting the organizational mission. Leaders of nonprofit organizations can also increase stewardship in their nonprofit organizations through their framing and the messaging of their cause online (Patel & McKeever, 2014); however, maintaining the integrity of the mission can be instrumental to maintaining stakeholder support (Johansen & Nielsen, 2016). Another way to influence mission is through sector blurring (Witesman, 2016), also known as sector bending (Green & Dalton, 2016). As NOLs seek ways to become more sustainable, they make decisions, which push their nonprofit organization into the realm of not-for-profits (Green & Dalton, 2016). These shifts to include components of other sectors has made an environment where the NOLs move away from core mission goals to achieve new goals associated with sustainability and creating income (Green & Dalton, 2016). Changes in activities and focus can bring about mission drift in nonprofit organizations. NOLs need to be aware of potential mission drift and what taking on new stakeholder can have to the overall mission of the nonprofit organization. Negative effects on funding can create an environment where the mission of the nonprofit organization is no longer achievable.

***Social return on investment (SROI).*** NOLs must validate their organization's value. SROI is a means to determine the value of a third sector organization's services

over alternatives (Arvidson, Battye, & Salisbury, 2014). Millar and Hall (2013) and Moody, Littlepage, and Paydar (2015) agreed that implementation of SROI measures is costly and resource intensive. However, use of SROI by NOLs can lead to a competitive advantage by making NOLs better informed about the strengths and weaknesses of their nonprofit organizations (Moody et al., 2015). NOLs can use SROI to engage stakeholders in different ways, which aligns with a learning organization (Moody et al., 2015). Millar and Hall (2013) explained SROI requires the involvement of stakeholders at all stages of the process. Millar and Hall, and Moody et al. agreed an organization could implement SROI as whole or in sections in the organization. SROI could use actual data or as a forecast (Millar & Hall, 2013; Moody et al., 2015). According to Arvidson et al. (2014), the leadership of organizations who choose to use SROI needs to make assumptions about their organization's social value. Arvidson et al. stressed the need for leadership to use transparency in the SROI process. Millar and Hall, and Moody et al. echoed the need for transparency in the SROI process. They stress organizational leaders who utilize SROI realized the differences between organizations and chose the correct one for their organization.

***Nonprofit boards.*** Nonprofit organizations have different board compositions than for-profit organizations. A few differences are for-profit boards have few if any organizational leadership as voting members, for-profit boards have major financial stakeholders holding key positions, and the for-profit board is known for being self-perpetuating (Dhole et al., 2015). Because of no shareholders, NOBs have responsibility for oversight of NOLs, which creates a complex interrelationship between NOB members

and NOLs (Garner & Harrison, 2013). Blanchard (1967) examined the dynamic between NOBs and NOLs and showed that NOBs have many talents they utilize for the benefit of the nonprofit organization and that NOLs need to be aware of these talents to utilize for the benefit of the nonprofit organization. Garner and Harrison (2013) noticed NOBs monitor operations and made financial decisions for the nonprofit organization, as well as monitoring donor and fundraising efforts. NOLs and NOBs should understand the dynamics in which they operate and the benefits to all individuals in the leadership team. Understanding the differences between for-profit and nonprofit organizations is important to determining the correct leadership styles to utilize in the organization.

NOLs work with NOBs to help govern the nonprofit organization. NOBs are important to the success of meeting the nonprofit organizational mission (Buse & Bernstein, 2016; Harris, 2014). Jaskyte (2013) stated that the two critical components of nonprofit governance are the executive director and the board of directors. Garner and Harrison (2013) proposed the need for multiple executive officers in a nonprofit because the effect of one powerful chief executive officer (CEO), who does not have the best interest of the nonprofit stakeholder as their focus, can have negative impacts on the organization. Having multiple executive officers allow the sharing of power creating a balance in purpose (Garner & Harrison, 2013). Larger boards provide the potential for a more diverse perspective on governance, service avenues, and administration (Jaskyte, 2013). NOLs and NOBs need to understand the effect their leadership has on the nonprofit organizations. NOLs and NOBs need to create the right size and diversity in leadership to balance potential weaknesses while providing optimal leadership resources

by creating the right balance through which NOLs and NOBs increase the effectiveness of the nonprofit organization and support the organizational mission.

Leadership in nonprofit organizations differs then leadership in for-profit organizations. Garner and Harrison (2013) showed that nonprofit CEOs who are powerful receive less oversight from the NOBs. This lack of oversight can harm the nonprofit organization regarding performance. The power of the CEO shifts depending on how well the organization is performing; therefore, CEOs cannot solely depend on positional power (Blanchard, 1967). NOBs provide not only oversight but also can affect strategic change (Jaskyte, 2013). Members of the NOB who understand the implications of their positions can create an environment of innovation and change in their organizations. NOB members need to be aware of the influence of NOLs and the amount of oversight necessary to avoid harming the nonprofit organization and its organizational mission.

Sharing of power is one avenue NOBs and NOLs can explore to avoid one individual harming the nonprofit organization. A way to share power is through a larger NOB (Garner & Harrison, 2013). Nonprofit organizations tend to be smaller than for-profit businesses (Fazzi & Zamaro, 2016). Jaskyte (2013) researched the effect of size on innovation in nonprofit organizations. The size of the board and the age of the nonprofit organization are most important in determining technological innovation and overall administrative innovation in nonprofit organizations. Jaskyte concluded that a larger board is better for creating a dynamic that produces innovation in nonprofit organizations. Blanchard (1967) found NOBs are more than tools to find funding sources which helps to support Jaskyte's conclusion of value NOBs can bring to nonprofit

organizations. NOLs and NOBs can create an environment of innovation for their organization by sharing of power and by having a larger NOB.

How NOLs create the NOB is important. NOLs need to be aware of the need to develop a board of individuals that are diverse and include representation of the focused population (Buse & Bernstein, 2016). The focused populations include multiple different stakeholders who view the nonprofit organization's mission and the execution of that mission through different lenses (Johansen & Nielsen, 2016). NOBs comprised of expert individuals and diverse in composition show higher financial performance (Harris, 2014). The composition of the NOB can create value added to a nonprofit organization. There is a need for diversity in the NOB that supports different dynamics for success beyond financial success.

The dynamic between the NOB and NOL is important to the success of the nonprofit organization. For nonprofit organizational board chairpersons to affect their nonprofit organizations, they need to find a balance between too much and too little influence (Harrison & Murray, 2012). NOBs chairpersons can use situational leadership to create the necessary balance through the amount of influence they apply (Rubin, 2013). Blanchard (1967) cited the role of oversight that NOBs had for NOLs and NOLs' concern over possible removal from the organization has creating a negative situation in nonprofit organizations. NOB members need to be aware of the influence of the CEO of the nonprofit organization and adjust their leadership style accordingly. Garner and Harrison (2013) found NOB members lean on the CEO for financial input even during times of financial crisis. The formation of a larger NOB to share responsibilities and



having a separation of power between executives could help increase transparency with nonprofit organizations and create additional value for stakeholders (Garner & Harrison, 2013). There are many dynamics at play between NOBs and NOLs. The control of the NOB to remove the NOL is one dynamic needing addressing. NOBs need to understand the effect NOLs have on the nonprofits organization mission success and make decisions to support organizational mission.

There is more to NOBs than oversight. Demands on NOBs are the results of challenges of changing environments shifting operational structures of nonprofits (Mataira et al., 2014). NOB leaders are in a unique position to develop other leaders in the organization (Hoefer & Sliva, 2014) without having legitimate power as defined by Raven (1993). Part of the power generated by the board is through intellectual capital (Veltri & Bronzetti, 2015). Another form of power comes from having the essential leadership skills of leading a nonprofit organization (Hoefer & Sliva, 2014). NOB leaders who possess leadership skills that increase relationships and goodwill can create positive value for their nonprofit organization (Harrison, Murray, & Cornforth, 2013). NOBs are very diverse and show leadership styles across multiple different theories to include stewardship, agency, and resource dependency (Chelliah et al., 2015). Harrison et al. (2013) found effective NOB leaders utilize more than one type of leadership theory. With this influence, NOBs can create a more stable environment that will combat the shifting operational structures (Harrison et al., 2013; Mataira et al., 2014). The right individuals as NOB members are important to the organizational mission of the nonprofit organizations. The different leadership skills and influence provided by the board can

create an environment that increases innovation and improves the quality of the nonprofit organization.

**Organizational sustainability.** Sustainability is important during times of change. The nonprofit environment is experiencing significant changes regarding government and private funding (Green & Dalton, 2016; Mataira et al., 2014; Osula & Ng, 2014). NOLs need to be aware of these current and future changes when making decisions about the future of their organizations (Osula & Ng, 2014). To ensure the longevity of the organization dated philosophies of building the organizational structure around founders without planning should be adjusted (Mataira et al., 2014). To be successful in creating the new organizational structure necessary for success (Mataira et al., 2014), NOLs need to embrace the culture of their organizations while providing the necessary leadership support to transform the organization (Osula & Ng, 2014). Mason (2015) found that the preferences of NOLs in California were more impactful on the organization than other internal or external factors. Not only do NOLs need to be aware of their effect on the nonprofit organization, but NOLs should be capable of presenting the needs and vision on of the nonprofit organization to a diverse audience (Kearns, Livingston, Scherer, & McShane, 2015). Understanding themselves and those around them is important to the success of an NOL. Consequently, as the environment of nonprofit organizations continues to change, NOLs should be aware of how they affect the nonprofit organization and adjust as needed to create value in the nonprofit organization.

NOLs have responsibility for creating an environment in which their nonprofit organization can be successful. What makes an effective nonprofit organization is difficult to determine without the right model for assessment (Hatzfeld, 2014). The most current forms of assessment are the impact, outcome, and performance (Hatzfeld, 2014). Employee motivations change as their needs are met (Hitka & Balazova, 2015). Understanding employee needs and creating an environment for meeting those needs is part of creating a successful nonprofit organization (Hitka & Balazova, 2015). Rubin (2013) indicated that understanding ones' leadership style is critical to creating a positive influence on an organization. Another key component needed by NOLs is the ability to create genuine relationships built on trust with all stakeholders (Kearns et al., 2015). NOLs influence every area of their nonprofit organizations. Understanding how to interact with employees, volunteers, and the board is imperative to an NOL's success. Knowing which assessment tool to utilize will allow NOLs to get a turn understanding of their influence and the direction needed to move toward success.

NOLs have responsibility for the sustainability of their nonprofit organization. NOLs should be looking at strategic planning to create sustainability in their organizations (Santora & Gozer, 2015; Stecker, 2014). Intindola, Weisinger, and Gomez (2016) stated that NOLs must look at alternatives, do an analysis of those alternatives, and create goals that they can justify. Many smaller NOLs see strategic planning as a luxury versus a tool to create sustainability in their organizations (Santora & Gozer, 2015). Though research supports a nonprofit organization's success tying back to the NOL's strategic planning (Intindola et al., 2016), NOLs' lack of planning can damage the

social benefits of the organization when inadequate planning leads to weak financial protocols (Manetti & Toccafondi, 2014). Stecker (2014) demonstrated how even a small nonprofit organization based on a child's lemonade stand could develop into a sustainable business model with leadership that is innovative and forward thinking. However, NOLs need to be aware of the conflicting priorities that can arise from taking on government grants that have restrictive requirements, which limit NOLs ability to direct funding as needed by the nonprofit organizational mission (Green & Dalton, 2016). Creating sustainability is not an easy task. NOLs need to be aware of the potential negative effects to different avenues of creating sustainability. NOLs who have a fuller understanding of their nonprofit organization will be able to create a plan for sustainability that will support the mission of the nonprofit organization. In an environment that is changing daily an NOL who understands the importance of strategic planning can create value in their nonprofit organization.

NOLs look for ways to be more streamlined and successful in serving their nonprofit organizational mission. The need to utilize all resources effectively has nonprofit organizational leadership looking to improve deficient areas (McCleskey, 2014). Just as motivation can change as needs are met (Hitka & Balazova, 2015), so can the areas of deficiencies in the organization. These challenges highlight the need for a new direction of leadership in nonprofit organizations (Osula & Ng, 2014). The shift from output to outcome supports NOLs moving away from unitary control to a more pluralistic structure (Taylor, 2015). In this shift, NOLs need to be aware of how they identify success in their organization (Manetti, 2014). There are several different options

NOLs can use to evaluate the effectiveness of their nonprofit organization. According to Manetti (2014), blended value accounting complements SROI to show a fuller picture of effectiveness in nonprofit organizations. Hall (2014) cautioned about utilizing multiple methods to determine effectiveness. Different types of evaluation tools do not utilize the same information, in the same way, creating the potential for different interpretations. Manetti suggested NOLs should develop unique management instruments to control misinterpretation of social impact evaluation tools. However, an NOL decides to assess their nonprofit organizational success and to create sustainability; they need to be aware of the potential risks.

***Employees.*** Employees and volunteers comprise the workforce of nonprofit organizations. Volunteer workers have diverse motivations for working with nonprofit organizations (Boezeman & Ellemers, 2014). Employees have diverse reasons for their attachment including the organizational mission or cause the organization supports (Ohana & Meyer, 2016). Volunteers can bring discontent and conflict to nonprofit organizations by noncooperation and create agitation with NOLs (Boezeman & Ellemers, 2014). The effects of distributive justice on nonprofit organizational employees are different than for-profit organizational employees (Ohana & Meyer, 2016). Volunteers seek respect from NOLs to connect with the nonprofit organization and the nonprofit organizational mission (Boezeman & Ellemers, 2014). Nonprofit organizational employees compare themselves to other nonprofit organizational employees, and not to for-profit organizational employees (Ohana & Meyer, 2016). Understanding why helps

NOLs to understand the motivations of those who work at their organizations (Ohana & Meyer, 2016).

***Change management.*** Change management is critical for the success nonprofit organizations (Lutz Allen et al., 2013). Change can create a scenario where the NOLs want to maintain the status quo, even if the change is necessary for the survival of the organization (Greer-Frazier, 2014). Emotional intelligence is a tool leaders can use to understand how to address change (Chowthi-Williams, 2018; Dhingra & Punia, 2016; Ugoani, 2017). Employees with higher emotional intelligence can more easily adapt to change (Asnawi, Yunus, & Razak, 2014). NOLs also need to understand the implications for change adjustments with employees who advance from different positions into leadership positions (Regan, 2016). Changes in rank, both contextual and social, can create an imbalance for both the employee and the nonprofit organization's stakeholders as they adjust to the new dynamics of the nonprofit organization (Regan, 2016). NOLs need to be aware of business principles that can lead to strengthening the organization during times of change (Mataira et al., 2014), to find ways to support the adjustment of employees who advance in the organization (Regan, 2016).

Marudas and Petherbridge (2015) researched the methods NOLs used to determine planned changes in nonprofit organizations. Marudas and Petherbridge created doubt with their research that the most advanced methods of forecasting impacts to donations did not produce any better results than using a naïve model that maintained the donations as a constant each year. Zecheru (2015) stated that managers and leaders should have shared beliefs with which to create the organizational culture. Miles and

Snow (1986) categorized organizational culture into four areas: defenders, prospectors, analyzers, and reactors. Meerman and Huyser (2014) discovered that nonprofit organizations in each of the Miles and Snow categories reacted similarly to a planned change in the community.

The health of the nonprofit organization at the time of the change initiative will determine how innovative the leadership response will be to the change (McKinley, Latham, & Braun, 2014). How innovative leadership of the nonprofit organization is will affect the success of the change (Choi, 2016; Jaskyte, 2015). A nonprofit organization that has low performance will be less likely to complete the change (McKinley et al., 2014). Senior leaders who are more innovative and inclusive in involving the whole organization in helping to develop the new way forward will create synergy in the organization leading to a better result (Dhingra & Punia, 2016).

***Social entrepreneurship.*** NOLs do not just need to motivate employees, but to find ways to increase the value of their organizations. One way for NOLs to create value is by creating stable funding sources for their nonprofit organizations (Mataira et al., 2014). Another way NOLs can create value is by improving organizational citizen behavior to increase the entrepreneurial orientation of the organizations (Tuan, 2017). According to Mataira et al. (2014), social entrepreneurship is a means by which NOLs can create efficacies in their organizations. NOLs can utilize the efficacies generated by social entrepreneurship to generate economic recovery for the poor and socially excluded (Mataira et al., 2014). Employees who have leaders focused on a commitment to the organizational mission are likely to emulate that leader and create value for the

organization (Tuan, 2017). Pairing positive influence of employees and volunteers with a strong funding source develops an environment for success. NOLs who look beyond motivation to other ways of influence create a stronger organization.

NOLs face dynamic environments requiring a specific skill set to be effective in increasing funding allocations. Understanding the different leadership theories available to navigate these environments and to support organizational mission while maintaining sustainability provides NOLs with tools to be effective in implementing new regulations. Conducting a qualitative multiple case study allows NOLs who implemented change to provide insight how they implemented the change the leadership strategies they utilized. The questions asked during the semistructured interviews will provide opportunities for leaders who lived the experience to share their leadership style. The literature review provided a basis for exploring the different leadership styles and concerns highlighting three different theories that could be utilized by NOLS. The use of servant, situational, and transformational leadership provide a starting point to understand the topic better. The literature review also provided other topics to consider such as ways it influences funding, employee and volunteer morale, and ways to track success like SROI.

### **Transition**

The literature review included insight into different factors that influence the leadership strategies NOLs use to increase funding allocations to support organization mission while maintaining sustainability. The review provided details on the Non-Profit Revitalization Act, and how NOLs whose nonprofit organizations were affected by the Act had to adjust. The literature review included details around different leadership styles



with a focus on situational, transformation and servant leadership. Contrast with transactional and LMX was provided.

In Section 2, I will focus on the details of the project to include information on the researcher, the participants, the design, and method used for the research along with how participants sampled. There will be information provided detailing the ethical issues addressed in the process, and that research is of the highest ethical standards. I will also address collection, analysis, organizations, reliability, validity, and transferability of the data. Section 3 will include a presentation of findings, an application to professional practices, an implication for social change, a recommendation for action, recommendations for further research, reflections on the research process, and a conclusion of the current research.

## Section 2: The Project

I conducted a multiple case study focused on a particular event in time, increasing funding allocations to support organization mission while maintaining sustainability in nonprofit organizations. Using a qualitative study enables researchers to explore a specific business situation and collect data through semistructured interviews (Barnham, 2015; Jamshed, 2014). Direct insight into the NOLs' thought processes is needed to understand the *how* and *why* their nonprofit organizations were able to implement requirements of the Non-Profit Revitalization Act successfully. Section 2 includes information on the role of the researcher, the participants, and the research method and design. I explain the sample population and how this research adhered to ethical standards. I present information on how the data were collected, organized, and analyzed to support reliability and validity.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore leadership strategies NOLs who implemented requirements of the Non-Profit Revitalization Act used to increase funding allocations to support fulfillment of the organizational mission and achieve sustainability. The target population consisted of NOLs from three New York state organizations who successfully implemented requirements of the Non-Profit Revitalization Act in their organizations while maintaining, or increasing, overall effectiveness in achieving their missions. The implications for positive social change may include the potential for increased service to stakeholder populations while effectively operating more responsible nonprofit organizations.

### **Role of the Researcher**

In this qualitative multiple case study, I was the primary data collection instrument. Patton (2015) and Yin (2014) noted that the researcher is the main data collection instrument in a qualitative study. To create an environment for a successful case study, the researcher needs to possess a certain level of skill and adhere to a core value set (Yin, 2014). Gringeri, Barusch, and Cambron (2013) stressed the importance of researchers understanding their role and purpose, and the need for the researcher to create moments where the participants have power and control over their stories. I served as the primary data collection instrument, utilizing semistructured interviews and organizational documents to explore the specific business situation. With over 10 years of experience as a professional recruiter and interview expert, I had the skills necessary to limit interviewer bias during the interview process. The data collected was used to explore leadership strategies NOLs who implemented requirements of the Non-Profit Revitalization Act used to increase funding allocations to support fulfillment of the organizational mission and achieve sustainability.

I have interacted with multiple nonprofit organizations over the past 15 years and have held positions including human resource specialist, mentor, assistant director, change agent, and founder. I founded a nonprofit organization, and through the initial implementation case for this nonprofit, I identified a need for a better understanding of leadership strategies NOLs use to increase funding allocations to support organization mission while maintaining sustainability. I implemented a new supply chain initiative, and strategically planned future initiatives to transform one of the largest nonprofit

medical network's supply chain. Through this change initiative, I discovered a need within my organization for leadership strategies to support organization mission while maintaining sustainability in nonprofit organizations.

Researchers should understand the difference between research and practice. The Belmont Report listed three principles for research ethics: (a) respect and protection of the autonomy of research participants, (b) protection of participants' well-being (beneficence), and (c) justice (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 1979). Halse and Honey (2014) promoted incorporating ethical protocols into research studies to help researchers maintain high ethical standards. Bromley, Mikesell, Jones, and Khodyakov (2015) showed that researchers used the Belmont Report to help guide them in reaching these key principles. Morse and Coulehan (2015) reminded researchers to be cognizant of the level of data reported and how that data traces to a participant. As the researcher, my responsibility included the need to respect participants and protect their well-being and autonomy in a just way. A plan to address ethical issues provided me a way to create an ethical research study.

This study included several techniques to offset bias. There are multiple ways to offset bias and check validity in the qualitative research process, but one technique does not provide complete validity (Koelsch, 2013). Triangulation of the data helps determine if the nuances of the data repeat, adding validity to the process (Gringeri et al., 2013; Yin, 2014). Hadi and Closs (2016) suggested researchers should have a plan to combat bias and bring credibility and validity to their studies. I recorded the interviews with the

approval of the participants and transcribed them to make sense of the data. Synopsis of interview question answers and the themes found in the interviews were shared with participants to member-check the findings. I used financial data to validate the initial effects implementation of requirements of the Non-Profit Revitalization Act had on the organizations to create validation of interview themes.

Appendix A includes the study's interview protocol. Alby and Fatigante (2014) stressed the need for the interviewer not to overshadow the participant's viewpoint during the interview process. The use of an interview protocol helps researchers remember their role during the process and keeping the interview focused (Jamshed, 2014). Yin (2014) defined an interview protocol as more than a set of questions; it is a set of rules focused the researcher uses while collecting data. Malone, Nicholl, and Tracey (2014) stated that a poorly defined interview protocol could create measurement bias in the process. My rationale for using an interview protocol was to create consistency in how I approached the interview process. The goal was to help mitigate bias by being consistent in interactions with case study participants.

## **Participants**

### **Eligibility Criteria**

To be eligible for inclusion in the study, participants must have been NOLs from New York state nonprofit organizations who successfully implemented requirements the Non-Profit Revitalization Act in their organizations while maintaining or increasing the overall effectiveness in achieving their missions. Yin (2014) suggested participants must be selected to align with the research question and research design. Participants in the

research study needed to provide contributions that addressed the research question (see Singh, 2014). The research question and research design are the foundations for designing a research study, and all design decisions should align (Dasgupta, 2015). The focus of the research question for this study was the leadership strategies of NOLs who implemented requirements of the Non-Profit Revitalization Act. Therefore, the participant criteria edibility criteria included NOLs who have been in a leadership role in the nonprofit during the implementation of requirements of the Non-Profit Revitalization Act and increased funding allocations to support fulfillment of the organizational mission and achieve sustainability.

### **Access to Participants**

I worked with individuals who were active in the nonprofit community in New York State to identify potential candidates to participate. Use of organizations in an industry, media outlets, and recommendations are some ways to increase access to willing participants (Singh, 2014). Yin (2014) stated that sources to identify viable research study participants are national associations, agencies at the local or state level, and databases that hold statistical data. Windsong (2018) increased access to potential participants by using different types of sampling, meeting with individuals face-to-face, and building trust in the community. I screened the NOLs nonprofit organization's tax filings from 2014 and 2015 to see if an increase existed in funding allocations. This study included information provided on GuideStar and by the New York Council of Nonprofits to determine the success of the nonprofit organization in the implementation of requirements of the Non-Profit Revitalization Act.

## **Strategies for Establishing Relationships**

Getting individuals to participate was vital to the success of this research study. Researchers need to develop a working relationship with potential participants (Patton, 2015). I contacted potential participants from nonprofit organizations in New York who I identified as having implemented requirements of the Non-Profit Revitalization Act and increased funding allocations to support fulfillment of the organizational mission and achieve sustainability. Potential participants received a letter explaining the purpose of the case study and requesting a response regarding their willingness to participate. Follow up included a phone call to address any questions and build rapport. Creating rapport allows for the participant and researcher to be comfortable (Irvine, Drew, & Sainsbury, 2013; Seitz, 2016). Researchers are responsible for receiving informed consent, providing participants with details of the research study, and formally inviting them to volunteer for the study (Yin, 2014). Upon establishing each NOL's willingness to participate, I sent the NOL an invitation to participate with a formal letter detailing the expectations for participation and requesting his or her informed consent.

## **Research Method and Design**

### **Research Method**

Researchers need to understand the different research methods and which ones will best support the needs of the study. There are three types of research methods: (a) quantitative, (b) qualitative, and (c) mixed (Barnham, 2015; Bazeley, 2015; Yin, 2014). According to Dasgupta (2015), a researcher needs to understand his or her bias and the potential influence of the selected research method. Malone et al. (2014) described two

types of bias: random bias and systematic bias. Researchers can find systematic bias in the choices the researcher uses to design the study (Malone et al., 2014). Therefore, it was important for me to understand personal bias when determining which research method was best for exploring leadership strategies that NOLs who implemented requirements of the Non-Profit Revitalization Act used to increase funding allocations to support fulfillment of the organizational mission and achieve sustainability.

I used a qualitative research method to explore the study topic. Researchers use qualitative case studies to explore a specific business situation (Barnham, 2015; Singh, 2014). Qualitative researchers focus their studies on understanding how those who live through an experience interpret that experience. (Barnham, 2015; Kahlke, 2014). Kahlke (2014) described qualitative researchers as people focused on trying to understand individuals' experiences, how those experiences affect those individuals' worlds, and the meaning those individuals place on that experience. Compiling multiple perspectives on the individual events provided direct insight from the NOLs regarding how to increase funding allocations to support organizational mission while maintaining sustainability during implementing requirements of the Non-Profit Revitalization Act.

Understanding the alternative types of research was as important as understanding the chosen research method. Researchers use quantitative research as a means of collecting data driven by numbers that apply to the larger population (Barnham, 2015). Quantitative researchers focus on theory testing (Dasgupta, 2015) by exploring the phenomenon and the experiences of the individuals experiencing the phenomenon (Barnham, 2015; Kahlke, 2014). Quantitative research requires defined instruments to



collect data to help develop or test theory based on the interaction of specific variables (Dasgupta, 2015; Groeneveld, Tummers, Bronkhorst, Ashikali, & van Thiel, 2015). The purpose of this study was to explore individual perspectives of participants involved in a specific situation, not to explore the interaction of variables in the larger population. Therefore, the quantitative research method was not the best research method for this study.

A third option is mixed methods research. Mixed methods researchers try to understand a phenomenon by combining quantitative and qualitative research (Guetterman, 2017; Patton, 2015). According to Spillman (2014), researchers who used mixed methods achieve a higher level of support for their data, creating both thick description and strong sociological explanation. This study might have included a mixed method; however, mixed method studies require more time and resources than quantitative or qualitative studies (Guetterman, 2017). The time constraints and resources available for completion of this study did not allow for a mixed methods approach.

I explored strategies of NOLs who implemented requirements of the Non-Profit Revitalization Act to better understand their thought processes when making decisions during implementation. Dasgupta (2015) described qualitative research as a means of exploring an environment without expectations while embracing the natural tendencies of the process. I determined that using a quantitative research method could yield information about the results of implementing requirements of the Non-Profit Revitalization Act; however, a quantitative research method could not provide insight into the thoughts and decisions made by NOLs. As a researcher, I did not have a defined

theory, but needed more information to define a theory. Therefore, I was not able to utilize mixed methods to test the theory and the actions that shaped that theory.

### **Research Design**

Once a researcher has determined the research method, he or she should develop the research design. Researchers base their studies on underlying theories discovered through literature review and others' research (Gringeri et al., 2013). Gringeri et al. (2013) stated that theories are essential to the research process in understanding the perspective of the researcher toward those participants of a research study. Dasgupta (2015) defined research design as a plan based on knowledge regarding the theory of truth sought by the researcher. Researchers use a case study to explore an event bound by time with the real-world context of the situation (Dasgupta, 2015; Patton, 2015; Yin, 2014). The focus of this research was exploring strategies NOLs used during an event in time, the implementing requirements of the Non-Profit Revitalization Act. Each organization experienced the event differently. To capture those differences, this study included a multiple case study research design.

There are several different designs in the qualitative method; the three researched were phenomenological, ethnography, and case study. Suorsa and Huotari (2014) stated that researchers should use a phenomenological study when they want to understand a singular event. The event includes limits to one group and the way the group experienced it (Suorsa & Huotari, 2014). Ethnographic researchers become part of the group to understand the dynamics of the group (Anteby & Bechky, 2016). A researcher looking for a better understanding of an event could use case study research (Yin, 2014). Looking

at the audience that would utilize the data supported a qualitative case study approach. When looking at different levels of analysis with more than one case, a multiple case study should be used (Dasgupta, 2015; Singh, 2014; Yin, 2014). NOLs faced with implementing new regulations have multiple decision points during the implementation process that I wanted to understand as a researcher. The interpretive framework of the qualitative case study allowed the participating NOLs to provide insight into their experience with successful strategies along with enabling them to share their beliefs. There were multiple nonprofit organizations facing implementing requirements of the Non-Profit Revitalization Act; therefore, this study used a multiple case study design.

Researchers strive to achieve a point in the process where no new themes or new information emerges, and the researchers can duplicate results defined as data saturation. There are no historical numbers of interviews or interactions in the data collection process that guarantee data saturation (Fusch & Ness, 2015; Morse, Lowery, & Steury, 2014; Tran, Porcher, Tran, & Ravaud, 2017). The level of assurance and power of a study increases with the selection of the correct sample size (Anderson, Kelley, & Maxwell, 2017). Researchers agreed that at data saturation, there must be a level of generalized and repeatable finding, with no new themes or information (Boddy, 2016; Fusch & Ness, 2015). Researchers can utilize historical data on what sample sizes others have used as a guide to determine their correct sample size for data saturation (Anderson et al., 2017; Fusch & Ness, 2015). Van Rijnsoever (2017) showed that data starts to repeat in case studies at different levels depending on the sampling methodology and that theoretical

codes are more the indicator of saturation. I conducted five interviews with NOLs from three different nonprofit organizations.

To validate the data collected, I utilized follow-up member-checking interviews. Follow-up member-checking interviews are one of the means by which validity of data can start to be determined (Koelsch, 2013). Validity is found in those who participated in the interviews reviewing a synthesis of the data collected and providing more insight to the researcher (Gringeri et al., 2013). Kornbluh (2015) discussed that member-checking as one way to support authenticity in the interview process. To better understand the nuances of the collected data, researchers can utilize triangulation (Gringeri et al., 2013; Yin, 2014). The use of triangulation mitigates bias in data and can help to validate repetition in the data (Malone et al., 2014). This study used the data collected from the interviews and organizational documents in determining triangulation. I utilized follow-up member-checking interviews to validate the data collected in the initial interview and alignment with the themes. Participants' received a succinct synthesis of their answers provided during the interview, allowing the ability to give concurrence and to add additional information. Validating the repetitive nature of the data and showing no new themes or information and that the data were repeatable, supports having achieved data saturation.

### **Population and Sampling**

Who and how many are key questions when determining the parameters of a research study. One of the main goals of qualitative researchers is to acquire rich data over thick data (Fusch & Ness, 2015; Marshall & Rossman; Patton, 2015; Yin, 2014).

Purposeful sampling allows for selection of information-rich cases that reduces instances of variations in the sample (Palinkas et al., 2015), by allowing researchers to seek out participants most knowledgeable in the area of study (Patton, 2015). Palinkas et al. (2015) discussed the need for participants to be willing to participate and able to articulate effectively on the topic. The intent of this multiple case study was to focus on leadership strategies NOLs who implemented requirements of the Non-Profit Revitalization Act used to increase funding allocations to support fulfillment of the organizational mission and achieve sustainability. A multiple case study is well suited for purposeful sampling. Use of a random purposeful sample allowed for increased credibility with this study while controlling the variation in the sample.

Researchers need to determine how many participants to include in their study. Defining the sample size and the method used to determine sample size was important to lay the foundations for credible research (Anderson et al., 2017; van Rijnsouwer, 2017). Patton (2015) stated that determining the sample size depends on what the researcher is trying to achieve. According to van Rijnsouwer (2017), several factors affect sample size: interview quality, the experience of the researcher, procedures for determining sample size, and the nature of the research. Not only do researchers need to find the right sample size to create data saturation, but researchers also need to be aware of the consequences of too much data (Anderson et al., 2017). Researchers need to try to avoid measurement bias when determining sample size (Malone et al., 2014). Fusch and Ness (2015) and Anderson et al. (2017) shared that the use of historical data or precedent generated by the size used by other researchers could be utilized to determine sample size. The sample size

for this qualitative multiple case study was five NOLs from three nonprofit organizations. In the nonprofit organizations for this study, senior NOLs were interviewed to understand the leadership strategies used to increase funding allocations to support organization mission while maintaining sustainability. The NOLs included experience in a leadership position in the nonprofit organization during implementing requirements of the Non-Profit Revitalization Act. I sourced participants through GuideStar and the New York Council of Nonprofits.

Understanding data saturation will help determine if the researcher chose the right sample size. Data saturation occurs when information repeats itself (Boddy, 2016; Fusch & Ness, 2015). I utilized a few different techniques to achieve data saturation. First, due diligence included selecting viable nonprofit organizations that implemented requirements of the Non-Profit Revitalization Act and increased funding allocation at the same time by researching New York nonprofit organizations tax returns using GuideStar. Second, I conducted interviews at two different times, the first time to collect the initial data and the second time to ask questions utilizing member-checking. This study included three nonprofit organizations whose NOLs who implemented requirements of the Non-Profit Revitalization Act. Interviews included the senior NOLs in each nonprofit for a total of five interviews of NOLs. Interviews and member-checking continued until the data started to repeat.

The researcher should develop the criteria for selecting participants once determining sample size. Criteria for selecting participants must align with the research questions (Yin, 2014) and provide value-added data (Singh, 2014). To align with the

research question, I selected participants whose nonprofit organizations were involved in the implementing requirements of the Non-Profit Revitalization Act. I evaluated the tax returns of New York nonprofits through GuideStar to determine if an increase existed in funding allocations after implementing requirements of the Non-Profit Revitalization Act. I validated these findings with the New York Council of Nonprofits. Utilizing a qualitative approach allowed the NOLs to provide their leadership strategies used to increase funding allocation to support organization mission while maintaining sustainability.

Where to conduct data is as important as who will participate. There were several options for interview settings: (a) the participant's work site, (b) a neutral site where participant and interviewer can meet face-to-face, (c) an online meeting with has a visual component, and (d) a telephone interview (Irvine et al., 2013). Only face-to-face interviews allow for the researcher to complete observations while interviewing including body language (Irvine et al., 2013). Not having the correct type of interview can lead to systematic errors in the case study (Malone et al., 2014). Other types of bias that can affect data collection are participant reporting bias, observation bias, and recall bias (Malone et al., 2014). Researchers need to be aware of the difference in power between the researcher and the participant (Gringeri et al., 2013). Giving participants a choice in interview location can support relationship building between the interviewer and participants (Brayda & Boyce, 2014). Understanding the need to share power and that face-to-face interviews provide more opportunities for observation, this study included face-to-face interviews with the NOLs of the three nonprofit organizations that

implemented requirements of the Non-Profit Revitalization Act. I determined the locations of the interviews after receiving input from the NOLs. The locations consisted of an area that was quiet, with few distractions creating an environment that participants could be at ease in. The second set of interviews, to conduct member-checking, was conducted by a phone call because of time and financial constraints associated with traveling to New York in the same month.

### **Ethical Research**

There are ethical considerations in all phases of the doctoral study process. Incorporating protocols to create adherence to an ethical policy focused on ethically responsible helps researchers develop strong ethical research and create transparency in the process (Halse & Honey, 2014). Having a certificate from the National Institutes of Health of having completed training on how to protect human research participant is an important protocol for conducting ethical research (see Appendix B). Utilizing an Institutional Review Board (IRB) is another way that produced an ethical environment for this study. The Walden University IRB approval number is 01-26-18-0559748. This study included no monetary incentives or gifts given for participation. I provided the participants a copy of the research findings.

There are several required components to creating an ethical research study. One required component is informed consent (Yin, 2014). Allen et al. (2017) stated that informed consent is a component of the research study process because of protecting participants and their autonomy in the study. Aaltonen (2017) explored the need for more than just informed consent to protect participants. Informed consent needed to be pair



with the ability for participants to withdrawal from the study without adverse repercussions. Another component of informed consent is to provide participants with the protocols to protect their privacy (Morse & Coulehan, 2015). Study participants received a written informed consent form after IRB approval. Participants could withdraw from this study at any time before the publication of this study with a verbal notification or written request to the researcher. I will store the data collected during this research process in a safe place for at least 5 years.

Part of my research included interviews. Interviewers should understand the ethical implications of their intent when conducting an interview (Alby & Fatigante, 2014). Halse and Honey (2014) described semistructured interviews as unpredictable and avenues to discover unintended emergent areas of data. Morse and Coulehan (2015) explained how researchers need to be aware of the presentation of data, and that providing too much data can create links back to participants' identities. Therefore, I provided each participant with background information on the purpose of the study, including details on the level of participant needed from the participants of the study. To protect research participants' confidentiality, this study included a coding system to represent participants known only to me. This study did not include names, organizational identifiers (outside of group population), or unnecessary demographics in the reporting process.

### **Data Collection Instruments**

Conducting a qualitative research study, experiences of the research and participants molded the data (Gringeri et al., 2013). One way to collect the experiences of

participants is through qualitative research interviews (Rossetto, 2014). Using face-to-face interviews allows for the researcher to observe the non-verbal cues provided by the participant and to utilize visual cues to convey an interest in the participant (Irvine et al., 2013). I, the researcher, was the primary data collection instrument in this research study. This study used interviews and organizational documents to collect the data for this research study. The interview protocol is attached (see Appendix A); included in the interview protocol are the interview questions. I used the interview protocol as a guide for the interview process to create consistency and reduce the effect of my bias as the interviewer. The interview protocol provided a script to interact with the participants and provided a guide to include all the questions. Using the script ensured saying the same thing to each participant to limit undue influence through words. Asking questions in the same order provided each participant a similar experience.

As the researcher, my responsibility was to increase the validity and reliability of the data collection process. Hadi and Closs (2016) and Kornbluh (2015) presented member-checking to increase reliability and validity of the interview process when done correctly. By giving participants the opportunity to review the answers provided and to include new information to the researcher, this strategy may increase the validity of the research (Gringeri et al., 2013). Consequently, I conducted follow-up member-checking interviews to allow participants to review a synthesis of the first interviews and provide feedback on the accuracy of the synthesis and themes. Member-checking was utilized to help capture the most accurate participant experience.

### **Data Collection Technique**

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore leadership strategies NOLs who implemented requirements of the Non-Profit Revitalization Act used to increase funding allocations to support fulfillment of the organizational mission and achieve sustainability. The central research question was: What leadership strategies did NOLs who implemented requirements of the Non-Profit Revitalization Act use to increase funding allocations to support fulfillment of the organizational mission and achieve sustainability? Semistructured interviews and review of organizational documents were utilized to collect data during the study.

Before reaching out to potential participants, an evaluation was done of the tax records of nonprofit organizations through GuideStar and the New York Council of Nonprofit to identify potential participants. A letter was sent to the CEOs to request permission to include identified NOLs in this study. With the CEO's approval, NOLs were invited by letter to participate in this study. Once the NOLs agreed, a time and place were identified to conduct the interview using the approved interview questions. Before conducting the interview, I went over the informed consent process and interview protocol with the participants. With permission from the participants, a recording device recorded the interviews. Each participant was given the opportunity to member-check in a second interview.

Several advantages exist to conducting semistructured interviews. The first advantage is the ability of the researcher and the participants to exchange data that is mutually beneficial (Kallio, Pietila, Johnson, & Kangasniemi, 2016). Using

semistructured interviews helps researchers to understand the phenomenon from the participant's view (Alby & Fatigante, 2014). The use of semistructured face-to-face interviews allows for the researcher to capture meaning given through visual cues (Irvine et al., 2013). One of the disadvantages when utilizing qualitative research interviews is the interviewer becomes part of the story. The influence of the interviewer (researcher) can be mitigated by the reflective process (Gringeri et al., 2013). Koelsch (2013) suggested researchers not become passionately involved in the interview but utilize probing questions to get more data from the participant regarding the participant's thoughts and feelings. Yii, Powell, and Guadagno (2014) proposed the use of open-ended questions, which are non-leading and useful in gathering accurate and relevant data from participants. Rossetto (2014) warned researchers about the influence of the interviewer in the qualitative research interview process, and how the interviewer is instrumental in crafting the story told by the research. I conducted semistructured interviews during this qualitative research study using open-ended interview questions to participants as part of a face-to-face interview. The intent for asking the questions was to encourage participants to respond with the data gathered through their experiences.

The use of member-checking helped to capture reliable and valid data. Member-checking is one way for researchers to give some of the power to the participant allowing the participant to be more open to answering questions (Koelsch, 2013). When conducting member-checking, researchers should be aware of the level of comprehension from the participant of the synthesis because of the potential confusion for the participant (Hadi & Closs, 2016; Kornbluh, 2015). Member-checking provides participants the

ability to validate the information and to correct any misinterpretations from the researcher. Gringeri et al. (2013) suggested that after reviewing the data, participants discuss with the researcher to clarify the interpretation. A second interview was utilized to conduct the member-checking; thus, allowing participants to provide any more information they might have left off and to correct any misinterpretation. Upon completion of the study, the participants received a copy of the study.

The second means of data collection was a review of organizational documents to include but not limited to by-laws, financial statements, and meeting notes. Participating nonprofit organizations must have shown an increase in funding allocations since implementing requirements of the Non-Profit Revitalization Act. Use of organization data confirmed increases in funding allocations. A disadvantage of using the organizational data is the change of a confounding variable data (Malone et al., 2014), or a correlation between the organizational data and the leadership skills identified in semistructured interviews. Another disadvantage can be gaining access to the data because of privacy concerns (Yin, 2014). Having precise data allows the researcher to review it multiple times which is an advantage (Yin, 2014). The advantage of having precise data makes taking the time to address privacy concerns worthwhile.

### **Data Organization Technique**

This study included archival data to determine which nonprofit organizations met the requirements of the study. Using a generalized method of data grouping helped to keep the decisions aligned with the participation criteria (Yin, 2014). When looking at the interview responses, an analytic generalization should be utilized (Yin, 2014). The

researcher conducts direct observations after interviews to try and confirm interview findings (Jerolmack & Khan, 2014). I collected different types of data and used different types of data organization techniques during this qualitative research study.

There are several ways to organize qualitative research data. Yin (2014) described the need to keep a complete record of each data collection point separate from the other data collection points. Carter, Bryant-Lukosius, DiCenso, Blythe, and Neville (2014) and Noyes et al. (2017) support keeping data separated for analyzing before synthesis. Dasgupta (2015) and Jamshed (2014) suggested recording interviews allowing researchers to transcribe the data later. Yakut Cayir and Saritas (2017) suggested using computer software to help with qualitative data analysis. Rush (2014) explored the use of Transana as a tool to record interviews and to create an audio and written transcript at one time. Davidson, Thompson, and Harris (2017) and Maher (2017) utilized NVivo as a tool to track the trail of the decisions made during the research process. Yin stated to build the database with field notes collected during the interview and observation process. Carter et al. and Hadi and Closs (2016) suggested using a reflective journal to increase data credibility. I recorded the interviews, with the consent of participants. Transcription of the data included storage of the data in an NVivo database program to allow for ease of cross-referencing. I utilized a reflective journal to track the research process.

There is more to qualitative data organization than just recording the data. A coding system for tracking the data is needed (Dasgupta, 2015; Yin, 2014). Use of a coding system allows for easy retrieval of data for further analysis (Dasgupta, 2015). Starting with codes determined by the conceptual framework, the associated theories, and

research questions is a starting point, but additional codes should be allowed to emerge throughout the process (Gale, Health, Cameron, Rashid, & Redwood, 2013).

Transparency in the process of coding interviewer interactions is important to ensure reliability in the process (Pokorny et al., 2018). I electronically recorded interviews allowing for transcription later. I started coding using the conceptual framework as a guide, allowing additional themes to emerge. I will securely store the data electronically for 5 years on a flash drive locked in a filing cabinet to which only I have access.

### **Data Analysis**

Researchers need to be aware of where and how they obtained data and the validity of that data. In seeking validity, researchers use multiple validation techniques (Hadi & Closs, 2016). Triangulation is a way for researchers to better understand the nuances of the data using multiple avenues of data collection (Gringeri et al., 2013; Yin, 2014). Patton (2015) provided four different types of triangulation: (a) data, (b) investigator, (c) theory, and (d) methodological. Methodological triangulation is the process of collaborating findings regarding the same phenomenon collected from the use of multiple methods (Carter et al., 2014; Yin, 2014). Yin (2014) identified credibility, confirmability, transferability, and dependability as the criteria for determining a rigorous research study. For the researcher to reach the goals of reliability and validity, a plan should be in place to guide the researcher (Hadi & Closs, 2016). Patton (2015) described methodological triangulation as using more than one method to explore a phenomenon to create comprehensive findings. During this qualitative multiple case study, I collected data using multiple methods to include semistructured interviews, review of

organizational documents, and member-checking. This study included methodological triangulation to collect comprehensive data from NOLs in three different nonprofit organizations in New York who implemented requirements of the Non-Profit Revitalization Act. Duplications in the data from different sources collected via different methods supported triangulation.

Researchers need to understand the process of data collection and data analysis to create value through their research studies. Data analysis limits the researcher's subjectivity and bias (Derobertmeasure & Robertson, 2014). Pierre and Jackson (2014) cautioned about getting lost in data coding and themes and researchers not looking at theory and understanding the effects on research. Odena (2013) described the five steps in qualitative data analysis as (a) immersion (data creation), (b) categorization, (c) reduction (creating themes), (d) triangulation, and (e) interpretation. Marshall and Rossman (2016) described data analysis to evaluated data to find patterns, themes, and common descriptions. The consistency of the coding and data interpretation is important to valid research (Bak, Murray, Gutierrez, Ross, & Warde, 2014). Variability in a sample provides the opportunity to explore multiple perspectives (Brennan & Cotgrave, 2014). I explored the theories of data collection and analysis and used this information to analyze the data from my qualitative multiple case research study. Data collected from multiple sources allowed the ability to explore multiple perspectives. Data analysis was used to limit bias throughout the process.

The goal of this study was to understand the relationships between the multiple sources of data. There are two ways to analyze the raw data from qualitative research



studies, coding (James, Harville, & Efunbumi, 2017) and qualitative content analysis (Dotevall, Winberg, & Rosengren, 2018). Qualitative content analysis uses indexing and extracting of data to reduce the data analyzed by removing noise from the data (Dotevall et al., 2018). Framework Method Analysis focuses on the content of the data not the nuances of the human interaction in the conversation (Gale et al., 2013). Use of the thematic analysis allows for similarities and differences to be identified in the data (Brennan & Cotgrave, 2014; Leedy & Ormrod, 2015; Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Gale et al. (2013) stated that researchers should look at the relationship between the data before concluding themes. Data for qualitative research starts as textual data from but not limited to transcripts of interviews or company documents. Themes emerged as categories from the data by comparison with other data in a case study. Thematic analysis is the review of qualitative data to determine similarities and differences in the data. Framework method of qualitative data analysis is used with semistructured interview data collection (Gale et al., 2013). This study included a framework method to determine themes in the data. The data analysis included all data collected from the semistructured interviews and organizational documents. The next step was inputting data into NVivo then indexing data into themes.

The collected data required themes. There are two ways to determine themes, deductive approach and the inductive approach (Gale et al., 2013; Odena, 2013). The deductive approach has predetermined themes. Themes develop from the data in the inductive approach, refined throughout the process (Gale et al., 2013; Leedy & Ormrod, 2015; Marshall & Rossman, 2016). According to Hadi and Closs (2016), researchers

should keep research journals to include their reflective notes. After becoming acquainted with the transcripts from the interviews, I started the process of finding codes in one of the interview transcripts. Utilizing both a deductive approach, with themes from the literature and an inductive approach, by allowing themes to emerge from the process, I coded the data.

The goal of this study was to understand how the data, the literature, and the themes interconnect. Visualization is a way to interact with data to discover relationships in the data (Luther, 2017). I used visualization of the coded data to find inductive themes. Once a researcher is familiar with one transcript they should go through the transcript thoroughly to add in codes of what they understand the transcript to mean (Derobertmeasure & Robertson, 2014; Gale et al., 2013). I transcribed all data into a Microsoft Word document to allow for in-depth review and familiarization with the content of each transcript. After coding the one transcript and determining the analytical framework for the coding that framework should be applied to the other transcripts (Gale et al., 2013). Use of data analysis software can help apply the codes to the other transcripts. It is a tool to *organize* the data, not to *analyze* the data (Derobertmeasure & Robertson, 2014; Gale et al., 2013; Odena, 2013). NVivo can create framework matrices that are essential to summarizing the data and finding illustrative quotations (Derobertmeasure & Robertson, 2014; Gale et al., 2013). Upon developing the codes, I inputted the semistructured interview data into the NVivo program along with the codes developed in the review of the semistructured interview transcript. This study used NVivo to store the data and to filter for the first set of codes.

The last step in the process is the interpretation of the data which per Gale et al. (2013) usually takes longer than expected. Understanding the different types of data analysis and nuances in each type a researcher can determine how they will collect and analyze their data. NVivo was utilized to map the data back to the determined themes. Upon finding the themes, this study included methodological triangulation to validate the themes. The participants received a synthesis of the interviews for review. I conducted member-checking to receive feedback on the synthesis and themes, and any additional information participants added. Exploration of the literature continued to determine if recently published research had been released that related to the current case study and incorporated the information into the literature review. Section 3 provides interpretation of the data.

### **Reliability and Validity**

#### **Reliability**

Rigor and reliability are important to the dependability of a qualitative case study. Use of external reviews, such as IRB or University Research Review provides rigor to the process (Gringeri et al., 2013). Researcher being aware of potential bias and having a plan in place to mitigate bias leads to a more reliable study (Keeble, Law, Barber, & Baxter, 2015; Malone et al., 2014). Member-checking is one way to validate data received from participants to ensure dependable, adequate, and trustworthy data (Hadi & Closs, 2016; Kornbluh, 2015). Reliability is only one form of validity, but it is critical in producing usable research (Hess, McNab, & Basoglu, 2014). Before completing the data analysis, I conducted follow-up member-checking to validate the data collected during

the interview process was reliable. Participants received a synthesis of their first interview to allow for input and correction of any perceived interview bias.

### **Validity**

Several types of validity exist important to the research process. Hadi and Closs (2016) discussed multiple different avenues that could be used to determine rigor in qualitative research stating validity and reliability as one method. According to Koelsch (2013), validity is one way to measure research quality. There are several types of bias that can affect the validity of a study: (a) random error, (b) information bias, (c) participant selection bias, and (d) variable bias (Malone et al., 2014). To create validity in the study, I addressed credibility, transferability, confirmability, and data saturation.

Reilly (2013) defined credibility as the researcher's ability to capture the reality of the participants to a level sufficient to show the participants truth. Hays, Wood, Dahl, and Kirk-Jenkins (2016) described credibility as the accuracy of the research. Cope (2014) described credibility as the research enhancing the data by confirming of the researcher's interpretation with the participants. Koelsch (2013) wrote that interviewers bring their bias to the process, and these bias needs to be mitigated and disclosed in the research process. Singh (2014) described the use of multiple case studies to lessen observer bias and increase the validity of a study. Malone et al. (2014) suggested using triangulation to lower the effect of information bias. To mitigate interviewer bias, participants received a synthesis of the coding of the interview through the member-checking process. Participants had the opportunity to adjust any answer given to provide new information and address any concerns regarding the synthesis of the interview. Using member-

checking provides power to the participant by making them part of the research team and allowing the participant to have a level of control over the representation of their interviews (Kornbluh, 2015). To mitigate informational bias, this study included multiple data collection techniques. The data collection techniques used were semistructured interviews with different nonprofit organizations, member-checking, and a review of organizational documents. I analyzed the comprehensive data collected from multiple methods to present a better understanding the phenomena helping to increase validity.

Data must be useful to others. Gringeri et al. (2013) stated that presenting thick data with sufficient details allows readers to determine how the research can be transferable to their situations and future research. Hadi and Closs (2016) used thick description and adequate data to describe research that is transferable. Kotus and Rzeszewski (2015) and Hober, Weitlaner, and Pergler (2016) described methodological triangulation as a technique to acquire rich and thick data. Hadi and Closs stated that triangulation does not validate results of a study but shows data from multiple sources interact. Noyes et al. (2017) suggested researchers should leave a trail of how the results were determined to allow others to determine if the results could be useful. The data from this study provided insight into a small population of NOLs who had to implement new government regulations regarding transparency and auditing in a nonprofit organization. The results lack universal transferability, but they are a good starting point for future research.

Tong and Dew (2016) and Hays et al. (2016) describe confirmability as data that is not tainted by researchers and provides the views of participants. Reilly (2013)

described confirmability to create objectivity and data driving the theoretical implications of the research. The research needs to present the data void of bias and with the participants' perspectives at the forefront (Cope, 2014). Ways to create confirmability are member-checking, tying research to raw data, and utilizing multiple researchers (Tong & Dew, 2016). Another way to show confirmability is to validate and present that the results were data driven to explain how the researcher derived their conclusions (Cope, 2014). I utilized member-checking to support confirmability of the research, linking the data to other current research. The use of rich quotes for the interview process was used to support conclusions. A reflective journal tracked researcher bias and utilized in the write-up for Section 3 to show how bias was mitigated and that the data presented is from the participants' perspective.

Data should be repeatable. Cleary, Horsfall, and Hayter (2014) defined data saturation as the means of getting two repetitive data results in the sample size. Patton (2015) stated that no equations exist that can be used to determine data saturation and that the sample size needed to reach data saturation depends on time, resources, and the goals of the research. Tran et al. (2017) cautioned of instances when researchers need to collect more data because new information arising from the research process and state the researcher needs to decide how much data to collect. Understanding the limits of determining data saturation this research study began with NOLs in three nonprofit organizations in New York State that implemented requirements of the Non-Profit Revitalization Act. There were five NOLs to participate in the interviews.

### **Transition**

Having a plan and understanding the key components of the data collection process led to a better qualitative research study. The process followed was detailed to achieve a reliable qualitative multiple case study exploring leadership strategies NOLs who implemented requirements of the Non-Profit Revitalization Act used to increase funding allocations to support fulfillment of the organizational mission and achieve sustainability. Included in this section was the purpose statement, as well as explanation of the role of the researcher and participants. I discussed the research method and design, population and sampling, data collection instruments to include collection techniques, data analysis, reliability, and validity while stating how the research would be ethical. NOLs who implemented requirements of the Non-Profit Revitalization Act and increased the funding allocations to support fulfillment of the organizational mission and achieve sustainability while maintaining sustainability were engaged. Conducting semistructured face-to-face interviews and reviewing organizational documents to collect data was next. Member-checking was conducted by providing participants a synopsis of their answers and a list of the themes with an opportunity to provide further input. Section 3 included the findings of how the data correlates to the developed themes predicated on the conceptual framework and provides a recommendation for further research and a reflection on the doctoral study process.

### Section 3: Application to Professional Practices and Implication for Change

#### **Introduction**

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies that NOLs who implemented requirements of the Non-Profit Revitalization Act used to increase funding allocations to support fulfillment of the organizational mission and achieve sustainability. The data came from interviews with five NOLs and company documents from three nonprofit organizations in the Northeastern United States. The participants were in leadership positions in the nonprofit organization during implementing requirements of the Non-Profit Revitalization Act. The five NOLs had increased funding allocations to support organization mission while maintaining sustainability subsequent to the passage of the Non-Profit Revitalization Act. The three themes that emerged from the analyzed data were (a) strategies for building and maintaining relationships increased funding allocations and sustainability, (b) trust and accountability strategies improved organizational mission achievement and funding allocations, and (c) strategies for higher standards and expectations improved sustainability. All participants stated that having strategies for higher standards and expectations for their organizations lead to trust and accountability, which allowed for foundational relationships to develop, thereby leading to organizational sustainability. Section 3 includes the presentation of findings along with applications for professional practice, implications for social change, recommendations for action and future research, reflections, and a conclusion.



### **Presentation of the Findings**

The main research question supporting this study was: What leadership strategies did NOLs who implemented requirements of the Non-Profit Revitalization Act use to increase funding allocations to support fulfillment of the organizational mission and achieve sustainability? The primary source of data collection was in-depth semistructured interviews with five NOLs from the Northeastern United States. I also reviewed mission statements, vision statements, and organizational by-laws as presented on the organizations' websites, and compared them with interview findings to capture leadership strategies of NOLs. I utilized a coding system of P1 through P5 (participants) and S1 through S3 (nonprofit organization) to preserve the confidentiality of participants and for identification purposes. Three major themes emerged from the coding process as displayed in Table 1.

Table 1

*Major Themes*

Themes	Frequency	Saturation
Strategies for building and maintaining relationships increased funding allocations and sustainability	115	All 8 documents
Trust and accountability strategies improved organizational mission achievement and funding allocations	56	7 of 8 documents
Strategies for high standards and expectations improved sustainability	46	6 of 8 documents

## **Theme 1: Strategies for Building and Maintaining Relationships Increased Funding Allocations and Sustainability**

The first major theme that emerged from the data analysis was strategies for building and maintaining relationships increased funding allocations and sustainability. The data analysis indicated strategies for building and maintaining relationships with stakeholders are the foundations for organizational sustainability and increasing funding allocations in nonprofit organizations. All participants addressed the need to build and maintain relationships, with P1 providing an example of a long-term relationship with a business associate of over 10 years that resulted in a recent call. P1 shared an experience stating, “[They] call me 2 weeks ago, ‘I need a community-based organization to be the partner in [name of town] to bring [business name] through a cohort of 7 months, and you would derive \$30,000.’ And by helping [them] through [their] career, now, [their] presenting this opportunity to me.” P2 described a long-term relationship with a family that produced an opportunity for the nonprofit organization. P2 explained the first donation from the family was \$1,000, then after going personally to thank the couple, they donated \$5,000 the following year. Recently, the couple reached out to have dinner with P2, who reported that “As we're leaving, [the donor] hands me an envelope, and goes, ‘Here's something for your year-end project.’ I got home and opened it up, and it was a check for \$35,000. It was like all because of relationships.”

Participants’ reports of their experiences are in alignment with Alvarez-Gonzalez, Garcia-Rodriquez, Rey-Garcia, and Sanzo-Perez’s (2017) findings that NOLs need to create relationships to fulfill their missions and secure long-term survival. Use of active

engagement with donors has shown an increasing influence over the donor's behavior (Cho & Auger, 2017; Drollinger, 2018; Tremblay-Boire & Prakash, 2017). Alvarez-Gonzalez et al. and Drollinger (2018) stressed the relationship must move beyond the donation and create a link between the donor and that organization. Therefore, understanding the pressure from creating a more involved donor relationship is important to managing the influence that the donor has over the nonprofit's mission (Kim, Pandey, & Pandey, 2017).

Each relationship example described by P1 and P2 needed time to grow and mature. P2 discussed how the relationship evolved and how the response was different at each level of development. P2 explained that the first time the organization received a donation from the couple that P2 told the public relations lead to "Go visit those folks and say a personal thank you." The second time the couple provided a donation, P2 and their spouse, "Went out to eat, and we have developed an incredible relationship." P2 received a donation after a phone call saying the couple would like to have dinner and P2 "thought I need to scratch everything on my calendar" so they could meet for dinner.

Each escalation in response shows a maturity in the relationship and a different response based on that maturity. The escalation of involvement with the donor and the relationship that followed aligns with Gates et al.'s (1976) discussion that situational leadership is premised on the maturity of the follower, which impacts the response from the leader. Though this relationship is with a donor, there is a different response from the NOL as the relationship grows. The further involvement of the NOL with the donor formed a relationship that increased funding for the nonprofit organization. This finding

aligned with Cho and Auger's (2017) findings that active involvement can lead to a higher perception of trust in the organization (Auger, 2014) and strengthen donor relationships.

Relationships are not one-sided transactions; they are about meeting the needs of all stakeholders. Prasad and Junni (2016) explained that leaders must understand the needs and motivations of followers to help followers achieve their goals.

Transformational leadership moves beyond transactional relationships to relationships that look for new approaches to meet stakeholder needs (McMurray et al., 2013).

Through self-sacrifice, transformational leaders idealized influence (Barbuto et al., 2014) and become role models for followers (Holstad et al., 2014; Prasad & Junni, 2016).

Analysis of the data from this research study supports these earlier findings. P5 shared a solution that occurred when the organization looked to expand their facilities. Unable to raise funds for the new wing, the NOLs paired with another leadership team of another organization losing their working space. P5 stated,

So, when they heard that we were considering additions on the [organization], somebody approached the board. And the two boards got together, the [second organization] board and my board got together and decided to put that wing on, that north wing. And it became a funding source for the [organization] because they became our tenant and they started paying rent.

The new space did not just help the second organization. P5 shared that they "Have over 50 organizations and groups that use this space." The solution met the needs of the followers and the needs of the organization.

Building and maintaining relationships included two themes: relationships and people focus. Table 2 provides a breakdown of the frequency of these two themes, which are higher than the frequency for any other themes in the data. Alvarez-Gonzalez et al. (2017), Drollinger (2018), Paarlberg et al. (2014), and Wellens and Jegers (2014) discussed the need for NOLs to create relationships to close gaps in funding. This finding is supported by Harrison et al. (2013), who found that NOLs who can create goodwill and develop relationships bring value to their nonprofit organizations, and by Cho and Auger (2017) as well as Hume and Hume (2015) who showed these relationships were valuable in generating donations.

Table 2

*Building and Maintaining Relationships Subthemes*

Theme	Source frequency
Relationships	60
People focus	55

Kearns et al. (2015) noted that the ability to develop genuine relationships is an essential skill set for NOLs. The findings that showed strategies for building and maintaining relationships increased funding allocations and sustainability were similar to research findings from Alvarez-Gonzalez et al. (2017), Cho and Auger (2017), Drollinger (2018), Harrison et al. (2013), Hume and Hume (2015), Kearns et al., Paarlberg et al. (2014), and Wellens and Jegers (2014). P2 stated, “We have found that the personal connection with people is the most effective way of them wanting to get involved in supporting the [organization].” Likewise, P3 explained,

It's all about building relationships. We've found that if we travel, and we go with every event that we can get into every area, if we meet as many people as possible, and they share stories about what God is doing and how he's using [organization] to touch their lives, how it's affecting families, how it's changing their hearts, we found that that has a direct correlation to how things are funded here.

When discussing sustainability, P4 said that a “big part” of it is “also [about] maintaining good relationships . . . with vendors, with donors, with management, and everyone in those ends.” P5 asserted that “in the beginning that we [must] have a good relationship with the public because they're gonna vote our budget.”

These are several examples that align with Greenleaf's (1977) servant leadership theory in which the leader puts the needs of the follower first and creates a benefit for the organization. P1 explained, “I guess the methodology that I would use is to try to be well-rounded and to understand . . . Because most of the time it's dealing with personalities. So, you have to really understand what the person's interest [is].” P2 emphasized, “Being faithful to the call, being a person of integrity, and letting people know that you care about them, that's a winning combination for people to continue to want to invest in the ministry or the organization here.” P3 displayed a servant leadership style and shared,

I want people to feel that they can come here with any issue, any problem, whether they have a personal issue, whether it's something not working right at [organizational name], whether it's they don't have what they need to do it. They feel comfortable enough to come in here and say, ‘This is what's going on.’ And,

they know that they're going to get an answer from me, and if I don't have the answer, I'm going to figure it out and get back to them so that that situation's better.

P5 expounded,

I do caution my staff that anybody can walk through our doors, and they do, but everybody that walks through our doors needs to be treated with dignity and respect. I don't care where they're coming from. They need to know that they are a valued member of this community.

Analysis of the mission statements, vision statements, and organizational by-laws as present on the nonprofit organizations' websites corroborated the finding that relationships were important factors to the NOLs leadership styles providing repeatable themes in multiple sources adding validity to the analysis of the study's findings. S2 provided insight into recent hiring stating, "A number of our significant applicants came as a result of personal contact over the past few years and through [organization's name] own website." S2 shared information on the website about providing access to the organization through school visits, shadowing opportunities for high school and college students, and providing further access to the community throughout reach events with the clarification that, "When the opportunity presented itself, [organization's name] would make known the needs of personnel to fill positions." Understand the need to reach out to the community and to provide access and opportunities is important for this organization because the nonprofit organization is "a listener supported outreach with about 95% of its operating revenue coming directly from listeners, participants, and supporting

[organizations].” S3 provided nonprofit organizational bylaws guidelines that require “link services through [the] use of the facility by other organizations” [which] “provide resources to support students of all ages in programs of formal learning” [and] “encourage student art displays and musical performances in the [organization].” S3’s NOLs provided support for relationship building and community support by writing in the time for staff to plan and implement those services into the nonprofit organizational by laws. S1 nonprofit organization’s mission statement points to relationships to the purpose for the organization to “build assets and improve their lives and those of their families” [through relationships with] “local businesses to retain and build industry and commerce, create jobs and improve economic opportunities for residents and neighborhood enterprises.”

The study results align with all three conceptual framework leadership strategies (a) Greenleaf’s (1977) servant leadership theory, (b) Hersey and Blanchard’s (1974) situational leadership theory, and (c) Burns’ (1978) transformational leadership theory. Results of this study support NOLs who build relationships in their nonprofit organizations, with other external organizations, and with the community and individuals they support can improve effectiveness and sustainability by increased funding allocations. P2 expressed that, “I want them to know how much we appreciate them now, and so when that appreciation is felt then at some point they might feel like, ‘Okay, I can trust this organization, we can go forward’.” P3 described their philosophy on building relationship by stating,



We have found building those relationships and making [organizational name] a personal one-on-one. That might be the announcer. It might be one of us traveling. It might be an event that we have. That has correlated to people wanting to fund what's touched their lives. And, so, that's our number one push is to build a relationship with every person that we can and share the love that we share in this building.

Greenleaf focused servant leadership theory on the least privileged and the ability of the leader to listen and understand before acting. These responses show a focus on serving the population and the leader listening and understanding before moving forward, which aligns with Greenleaf's servant leadership theory. The interviews and external websites provided insight into how the NOLs think. Northouse (2016) expressed servant leadership revolved around the leader's action, and one must understand how that leader thinks to understand the leader's actions and impact on followers. The notion presented by P1, P2, P3, and P5 about being outward focused on stakeholders and the needs of the community ties in firmly with Lacroix and Verdorfer's (2017) and Flynn et al.'s (2016) emphases on servant leadership being altruistic and dependent on support for leadership for followers.

The focus of situational leadership is on the interaction between the leader and follower (Bosse et al., 2017). Each NOL works to establish relationships in their community, which has led to increased funding allocations and in turn further sustainability for their nonprofit organization. P1, P2, and P3 expressed the need for long-term relationships built on mutual trust, respect, and integrity. P1 supported this idea by

sharing, "We've already had that connection and that mutual respect where there can be possible agreement down the line, because of the mutual respect that we have for each other."

Strategies for building and maintaining relationships increased funding allocations and sustainability are the foundations for organizational sustainability and increasing funding allocations in nonprofit organizations. Three strategies the NOLs could use to build and maintain relationships are utilizing (a) situational leadership theory, (b) servant leadership theory, and (c) transformational leadership theory. Regardless of the strategy utilized NOLs who purposely foster long-term relationships with stakeholder could increase funding allocation and sustainability in their nonprofit organization.

### **Theme 2: Trust and Accountability Strategies Improved Organizational Mission Achievement and Funding Allocations**

The second major theme that emerged from the data analysis was developing trust and having accountability strategies improved organizational mission achievement and funding allocations as shown in Table 3. The data analysis indicated the use of secondary validation of accountability leads to higher trust in the nonprofit organization. Websites for S1 and S2 showcase the NOLs use of secondary validation tools. S1 provides a letter received from Charity Navigator that shows the four-star rating received by the nonprofit organization. Charity Navigator (2018) rates on two overarching criteria: (a) financial health, and (b) accountability and transparency. P2 asserted,

We have their seal that's on our every receipt and every one of our publications, the bigger ones that we send out. That lets them know that we're not only audited, but we have to meet some pretty stringent guidelines.

Table 3

*Second Major Theme*

Theme	Frequency	Saturations
Trust and accountability strategies improved organizational mission achievement and funding allocations	56	7 of 8 documents

P2 followed up with sharing,

There was a letter I got in the mail at the end of last year from an organization called Most Trusted Nonprofits, and it talked about how many nonprofits are in the country and only 93 of them met their criteria, [organization's name] was one of them, so we let people know that.

This letter can be found on S2 website and provides details of why a stakeholder should value this achievement. The Most Trusted Nonprofits is specific to the cause S2 operates in and focuses on nonprofit oversight and nonprofit consultant agencies reviewing financial documents, vision statements, and effectiveness of the nonprofit (MinistryVoice, 2018). In alignment with P2's comments, P3's mentioned, "We have an amazing auditing firm out of [town's name] that helps keep us in check on that," [and] "There's 16 different, strict guidelines. If you don't meet one of those, you won't become a member." P5 is in alignment with P2 and P3, stating, "[We are] going to be audited at some point, we just haven't been one of their targeted [sites] yet. But we wanna make

sure that when we are, that we're doing the right thing" [and] "relying on our CPA to make sure that we're doing the things that we're supposed to be doing." P2 revealed, "Our board also takes a look at other auditing firms every year and determines which one, we've stuck with the same one because they know us, but we want to make sure that we're meeting all of the guidelines." S3 organizational documents detail the process for use of a CPA in the trust building process. These findings remain consistent with study finding of Tacon, Walters, and Cornforth (2017), stating accountability is critical to nonprofit organization success.

Krawczyk, Wooddell, and Dias (2017) found that the reputation of the nonprofit organization positively impacts funding allocations nonprofit organizations receive. S1, S2, and S3 public facing websites provide details about each sites' reputation in their nonprofit segment. AbouAssi and Tschirhart's (2017) explored the impact strong donor ties had on nonprofit accountability and determined that strong donor ties lead to higher levels of accountability in nonprofit organizations. However, Coule (2015), McDonnell and Rutherford (2018), and Tremblay-Boire and Prakash (2017) cautioned that strong ties to donors could lead to accountability only to those donors, which can lead the NOLs to move away for the nonprofit organizational mission to meet donors' regulations. The results regarding the use of secondary validation tools to increase trust do not align directly with the three leadership strategies of the conceptual framework; however, transactional leadership theory (Burns, 1978) does address the transactional nature of the accountability reporting. The exchange of information with stakeholders defines expectations of the NOLs (Prasad & Junni, 2016) in financial and ratio reporting (Kim,

2017; Moxham, 2014; Tacon et al., 2017). NOLs for S1, S2, and S3 provide access to financial reporting via the nonprofit organizational website and other nonprofit database sites such as GuideStar and CharitiesNYS.com.

NOLs need to understand their donors to determine if a transactional or transformational leadership style is needed to address their donors' needs (Fazzi & Zamaro, 2016; Johansen & Nielsen, 2016). The conclusion derived from analysis of the data of this research study could align with LMX theory. A relationship built on mutual trust and respect leads to a balanced sense of obligation versus a relationship that has low trust and is governed by transactional terms (Tsai et al., 2016). Tacon et al. (2017) and Sanzo-Perez, Alvarez, Rey, and Garcia (2015) demonstrated a need for accountability in nonprofit organizations to go beyond numbers to a more multilevel form of accountability. Coule (2015) suggested a social process that was dynamic would be best to capture nonprofit accountability. Cordery, Sim, and van Zijl (2017) supported a differentiated methodology to nonprofit organizational accountability. Aligning with these findings the analysis of this study supports NOLs utilizing LMX strategies to improve organizational mission achievement.

P2 supported the NOLs commitment to building accountability stating, "It's like when we joined the [Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability] ECFA . . . we felt it was very important to be audited. We felt it was important to have that kind of reputation." P1 expressed the need for accountability in the nonprofit arena sharing background on P1's nonprofit's history and changes that come long before federal and state laws mandated change. P1 stated,

From, you know, the poverty pimps that existed in the '60s and '70s, where work really wasn't getting done, and there was graft and corruption, and people would just have checks and not do the work, and accountability wasn't there, I think it makes it more difficult.

P1's statements aligned with P2 who stated, "For the most part, we have a great sense of the need of accountability. The people in our business department are always bringing up things, 'We need to do this, do that'." P2 expounded,

We put into practice things that would ensure that there's more than one person that handles any kind of money. That kind of accountability to make sure that dollars received are not going into somebody's pocket. That was a very, very important thing for us.

The participants' perspectives aligned with Berlin, Schumann, and Masaoka's (2017) research findings that though NOLs want their nonprofit organization to be accountable; however, NOLs rely on staff to execute regulations correctly. Research findings from Yang and Northcott (2018) supported the perspective that staff is best suited to determine accountability standards. All but one participant discussed the team that supported the NOL in achieving adherence to accountability standards. The one participant who did not discuss this, P4 was the leader of the business team with the nonprofit organization that handles implementation of accountability regulations.

Results of this study indicated higher levels of accountability lead to higher levels of trust, which lead to an ability to increase mission sustainability. Table 4 provides a breakdown of the frequency of trust and accountability. P2 explained that when a

professional fundraiser said an organization should ask for funds it was not always the right time to ask. P2 further clarified,

Oh, this is your perfect time to ask. Well, in the back of my mind, the ask is gonna come later. When we get to the point where we start our big capital campaign. I want them to know how much we appreciate them now, and so when that appreciation is felt then at some point, they might feel like, 'Okay, I can trust this organization, we can go forward.'

In alignment with P2's comments, P3 mentioned,

Grandmas are calling and giving their \$10, and they shouldn't be giving their \$10, but they do, so we take seriously about using all those dollars to the very best of the ability going towards the ministry. Salaries are kept lower than what the secular world would pay. People come here knowing that, even when they're interviewing, knowing that [organizational name] can't pay because we want as many of those dollars going towards ministry as possible. And, they buy into that, because they believe it as well as we do.

P4 added,

That's a big part of the business office is makes sure when we pay all the bills, and payroll, and everything that we're not spending money that we don't need to be spending and make sure we're in compliance with a lot of the regulations.

P5 extend the conversation by asserting,

One thing that my board has been committed to . . . they've been working very hard to make sure that the budget that they present to the taxpayers every year is a

fair budget and based on good knowledge of our financial needs here at the [organization] . . . and I know the board has been very conscientious about not going to the taxpayers for more than they actually need.

P2, P3, and P4's nonprofit organizational website tied it together stating, "But with so many options, you want to be certain that you're supporting an organization you can actually trust" [and] "We looked for the cream of the crop: nonprofits focused on the mission that God has given them first and the trust of their donors second." Last, the S2 website stated, "This exceptional designation sets [organization] apart from its peers and demonstrates to the public its trustworthiness." However, there is much debate on how effective adherence to accountability standards is in creating trust for NOLs (Berlin et al., 2017; Coule, 2015; de Andres-Alonso, Garcia-Rodriguez, & Romero-Merino, 2015; Garven, Beck, & Parsons, 2018; Garven, Hofmann, & McSwain, 2016; McDonnell & Rutherford, 2018). Berlin et al. (2017), Cordery et al. (2017), and Kral and Cuskelly (2018) conducted research, which study results supported a more diversified metric to determine accountability in nonprofit organizations.

Creating trust and accountability with donors and other stakeholders can help NOLs increase funding allocations as well as meet mission achievement. Understanding the needs of stakeholders and how stakeholders view accountability will help NOLs to create opportunities to meet those needs. NOLs can utilize organizational documents and websites to message how the nonprofit organization is meeting accountability standards as a means to build trust with stakeholders. As that trust builds stakeholders funding allocation can increase, and mission achievement can increase, which can help increase



trust with stakeholders when evaluated, confirmed, and documented by a third-party source.

Table 4

*Trust and Accountability Subthemes*

Theme	Source frequency
Accountability	46
Trust	10

**Theme 3: Strategies for High Standards and Expectations Improved Sustainability**

The three nonprofit organizations chosen for this study had tax returns after implementing requirements of the Non-Profit Revitalization Act showing the nonprofit organization had an increase in funding allocations (charitiesNYS, 2018). P5's nonprofit organization is one of only five similar nonprofits held to a higher standard in their educational requirements for their NOL. Per S1's website nonprofit organization received the Center of Excellence Award from the Small Business Administration (SBA) in 2014 for both local and state-wide chapters. S2's nonprofit organization earned a four-star rating from Charity Navigator; a standard less than one-fourth of all American nonprofits achieves. Defining four-star rating as exceeding and outperforming other nonprofit organizations of the same cause regarding industry standards (Charity Navigator, 2018). The analysis of this study data showed a third major theme, strategies for high standards and expectations improved sustainability, as displayed in Table 5.

Per S2's website Charity Navigator utilizes key metrics to determine the rating of nonprofit's success: financial performance, policies, accountability, and transparency. Charity Navigator (2018) has six ratings: (a) exceptional, (b) good, (c) needs

improvement, (d) poor, (e) exceptionally poor, and (f) no rating (serious concerns). To be eligible to be rated by Charity Navigator the nonprofit organization must (a) have two consecutive years of \$1 million in revenue, (b) the nonprofit organization has been in operation more than 7 years, (c) nonprofit organization, (d) over \$500,000 is provided through public support, (e) a portion of funding is utilized toward fundraising and administration, (f) is based in U.S., and (g) 5 years of tax documentation must be provided (Charity Navigator, 2018). The ECFA (2018) utilizes seven standards to determine accreditation of a nonprofit organization: (a) a written statement of commitment, (b) standard governance standards, (c) approved financial oversight, (d) compliance with financial laws, (e) transparency, (f) compensation-setting limits, and (g) stewardship of donation. The SBA (2018) gives a Center of Excellence award, at a national level, to an organization that provides worth to small businesses that are from diverse backgrounds utilizing innovation. These three-third party organizations utilize high standards to evaluate nonprofit organizations from different causes to provide stakeholders insight into the value added from the mission achievement of each nonprofit organization.

Table 5

*Third Major Theme*

Theme	Frequency	Saturations
Strategies for high standards and expectations improved sustainability	46	6 of 8 documents

P1 articulated, “The way the system is designed now, in the nonprofit world, we have metrics. We have deliverables.” Further explaining, P1 stated,

So, if you’re not fulfilling them, then when you go for renewal, for your contract, you’re not going to get a multiyear contract. It’ll be one year. Probation. One year. And then, if you don’t meet those targets for two or three years, then the contract’s taken away. Well, if you lose a contract, especially on the state level, on the federal level, you’re dead. I might lose it with [company name], but then I couldn’t get a contract with [company name].

Further discussing the Non-Profit Revitalization Act, P2 stated, “When we joined them [ECFA] we didn’t really have to do anything more than what we were already doing.” P1 asserted,

I don’t care what the state mandate is. If you have audited financials, and you receive the recommendations from your auditor, that’ll tell you if you’re compliant as far as accounting rules. Which really exceed the government rules, because it’s going to show you areas that you’re deficient, and you’re not going to be perfect, but if you then embrace those recommendations from year to year to year, you can meet any state or federal requirements.

Similarly, P3 shared,

I think we were already set up with the ECFA. We already had great auditors and accountants that will help us watch those things. We already had a mindset of that sort. So, I don’t think that there were any barriers [to implementing requirements of the Non-Profit Revitalization Act] really.

P3 explained,

Every nonprofit that goes to try to be a member of the ECFA has to meet; I think there's 16 different, strict guidelines. If you don't meet one of those, you won't become a member of the ECFA. It's just they are very strict, and... when they became members of the ECFA, they had to show very clearly that they were meeting all of those guidelines.

P4 added, "It's just trying to keep an eye on some of the expenditures more so, and make sure those are all in line, compliance with federal and state, and all those regulations that we need to deal with." P4 continued sharing, "I work with the auditors. We publish the 990 and the financial statements online. I don't know other than that, specific strategies that we've used, other than trying to make sure everything got published." P5 provided additional insight explaining the audit rules relaxed for their nonprofit organization, and the NOL relies on the certified public account to keep the NOLs apprised of changes and requirements in the regulations. P5 did state,

There were things that we weren't budgeting for that we realized we should be and things that we did budget for that we didn't need to. So, making sure that we had a good balance in our budget of reliable information to build it is then really important, and this board president that I'm working with has been very committed to it.

The findings of this study data remain consistent with study findings from Tacon et al. (2017) where the NOL and NOB work to create higher standards of accountability beyond accountability to the funder. One reason NOLs might work to create higher

standards is due to the negative impact potential misconduct could bring to the nonprofit organization (Archambeault, Webber, & Greenlee, 2015; Bradley, 2015). Krawczyk et al. (2017) studied the impacts of a diminished reputation and found that there was a smaller than anticipated impact on donor funding. The smaller impact might be because of the nonprofit organization aligning the nonprofit organization's mission with the interests of the donor (AbouAssi & Tschirhart, 2017; Zhan & Tang, 2016). Table 6 provides a breakdown of the individual themes that comprise high standards and expectations.

Table 6

*High Standards and Expectations Subthemes*

Theme	Source Frequency
High standards	9
Metrics	33
Responsibility	4

A review of the results further demonstrated a tie to transformational leadership theory.

P2 asserted,

I take that responsibility very seriously. If the staff can see in me a desire to do things right, a desire to give that extra effort, a desire to say, 'Okay, we're just trusting the Lord no matter what,' that's gonna pass down to the rest of the staff.

That integrity that has to be part of leadership, whether it be me or the management team. That integrity has to be that example that gets passed down to the whole team.

P2's views align with transformational leadership theory by the NOL being a role model for followers (Holstad et al., 2014; Prasad & Junni, 2016). P1 extended the conversation by explaining,

That's why it's so easy for me to excel here, because of values instilled in the home, followed with working at [company name], at the top law firm in the country. Working in banking, and Fortune 100, the level of professionalism exceeds what the status quo is in a nonprofit environment. It becomes easy.

Transformational leadership can create higher performance than expected (Alatawi, 2017; Hall, Johnson, Wysocki, & Kepner, 2015; Hamstra, Van Yperen, Wisse, & Sassenberg, 2014), in this case, a higher level of integrity. The findings of potential higher integrity align with transformational leadership theory of idealized influence and inspirational motivation (Alatawi, 2017).

The data analysis shows NOLs with strategies for high standards and expectations improved nonprofit organizational sustainability. Understanding what stakeholders are looking for and aligning expectation and standards to meet those needs create accountability and trust. By increasing accountability and trust, NOLs can increase funding allocation and support for their nonprofit organization; therefore, leading to improved nonprofit organizational sustainability.

### **Application to Professional Practice**

NOLs and nonprofit organizations face a changing environment of new regulations that required more oversight of funding allocations and increased transparency. The exploration of leadership strategies NOLs used to increase funding

allocations to support organizational mission while maintaining sustainability reveal three distinct themes. The results of this study revealed: (a) strategies for building and maintaining relationships are the foundations for organizational sustainability and increasing funding allocations in nonprofit organizations, (b) strategies for creating higher levels of accountability lead to higher levels of trust that lead to an ability to increase mission sustainability, and (c) strategies including high standards and expectations improved nonprofit organizational sustainability. The findings apply to the professional practice of business because nonprofit organizations account for 10% of the workforce in the U.S. and donors contribute \$330 billion to nonprofit organizations (Garven et al., 2018; McKeever, 2015). Failure of NOLs to adjust to new regulations and to increase funding allocations can lead to nonprofit organizations ceasing to exist requiring other entities to absorb the needs of stakeholders (Kahn, 2015; Vogelsang et al., 2015). Therefore, the findings remain relevant to increasing funding allocations to support organizational mission while maintaining sustainability by providing NOLs insight to donor relationships and internal accountability of nonprofit organizations that have successfully implemented requirements of the Non-Profit Revitalization Act.

The participants in this study indicated that strategies for building and maintaining relationships are the foundations for organizational sustainability and increasing funding allocations in nonprofit organizations. The findings of this study support NOLs who build relationships in their nonprofit organizations, with other external organizations, and with the community and individuals they support can improve effectiveness and sustainability with increased funding allocations. This finding aligns

with the findings from Alvarez-Gonzalez et al. (2017), Cho and Auger (2017), and Drollinger (2018) that showed better relationships with donors generated more donations that help to close the gaps in funding allocations.

All participants discussed different types of relationships that lead to future returns for the nonprofit organization regarding increased funding allocations and sustainability. Relationships to get a return were not the goal of the participants. P1 and P2 stressed the need to develop the stakeholder relationship without thought of future returns. Developing relationships to provide value to the other individual was the focus of each participant (P1, P2, P3, P4, and P5). The identified theme of strategies for building and maintaining relationships increased funding allocations and sustainability relies on true relationships that are two-way. Therefore, NOLs could start to develop relationships with individuals who NOLs could support and lend value to with the realization that potential for increasing funding allocation and sustainability could develop years later.

The participants in this study also discussed that higher levels of accountability lead to higher levels of trust that lead to an ability to increase mission sustainability. Accountability and governance of the nonprofit sector are more dynamic than simple fund reporting (Berlin et al., 2017; Cordery et al., 2017; Kral & Cuskelly, 2018; Tacon et al., 2017). Each participant described a higher level of accountability beyond that required by the Non-Profit Revitalization Act, utilizing outside organizations and reviews to determine compliance and accountability. The participants messaged this higher level of accountability on their site's web pages providing the public with the message that their nonprofit organizations can be trusted. The results of this study indicated that the



trust perceived by donors and other funding sources, produced an increase in funding (P2, P3), funding became more stable (P1), and justification for funding increases was easier to support (P5). Therefore, NOLs should find ways to increase trust with donors and potential funding sources, to create an increase in funding allocations that are easier to support and stable leading to increased mission sustainability.

Finally, the participants suggested high standards and expectations improved nonprofit organizational sustainability. Each participant acknowledged the existence of metrics and standards their nonprofit organization had to meet. Only S2 participants discussed in-depth the need for higher expectations with internal employees and how the actions for NOLs impacted the actions of employees. S1 and S3 participants did express expectations for internal employees, but did not tie those expectations back to an impact on organizational sustainability; however, S1 and S3 participants did explain how they held themselves to high standards and how those standards improved organizational sustainability. All participants shared that their nonprofit organization was already in compliance with the regulations for the Non-Profit Revitalization Act long before the Non-Profit Revitalization Act became law.

P1 and P2 discussed the internal push to have accountability and transparency in their nonprofit organizations from the beginning of the nonprofit organization (P2) or the beginning of their interactions with the nonprofit organization (P1). Therefore, NOLs should understand the value in having strategies for higher standards for their nonprofit organizations and create a foundation that supports achieving the highest levels of expectations before those expectations become regulations.

### **Implications for Social Change**

This study might contribute to positive social change by providing insight to NOLs into the need for relationship building to help to increase funding allocation. NOLs can use the findings of this study to assess their leadership strategies and determine where adjustments might be needed to improve relationships and accountability expectations. An improvement in leadership strategies with stakeholders could lead to increased funding allocations from donors, government sources, or other funding avenues, which could create more opportunities for mission achievement (Alvarez-Gonzalez et al., 2017). Conversely, NOLs who can increase funding allocation for mission achievement should be able to create organizational sustainability by trust building and meeting the needs of stakeholders.

Additionally, the implications for positive social change also include the potential to create a better understanding of the accountability standards in the nonprofit sector. Current nonprofit sector accountability standards focus on accountability to the funder (Strang, 2018; Yang & Northcott, 2018; Yang, Northcott, & Sinclair, 2017). NOLs able to plan beyond the current regulations and understand the nuances of dynamic accountability with funder, mission and vision statements of the nonprofit organization, and internal and external stakeholders (Coule, 2015; McDonnell & Rutherford, 2018; Tremblay-Boire & Prakash, 2017), might be able to create a nonprofit organization that achieve organizational sustainability without compromising on mission achievement. NOLs without a requirement to compromise on mission achievement might be able to

continue to service the population the nonprofit organization services and might even be able to increase those services to that population alleviating burdens on other resources.

Furthermore, another implication for positive social change could include the potential for intentional internal stakeholder communications. NOLs might have the potential to create a better working environment for volunteers and employees if a concerted effort existed to understand NOL leadership strategies and the potential impact of those strategies. Two potential leadership strategies from the research finding that might improve trust and empower nonprofit employees and volunteers are transformational leadership theory (Burns, 1978) and LMX theory (Dansereau et al., 1975). The potential for positive social change in the awareness of NOLs of their leadership strategies could increase mission and achieve sustainability.

### **Recommendations for Action**

Nonprofit organizations can receive funding from multiple different avenues. Without the proper amount of funding, however, NOLs must make trade-offs on how they support stakeholders (Yang & Northcott, 2018). NOLs who face the implementation of new regulations or who do not have accountability standards currently in place can use insights shared by participants. NOLs can use the results of this study to implement strategies to help increase funding allocation and lessening the need to make trade-offs that negatively impact nonprofit organizational stakeholders. Because of this research, this study includes the following three specific recommendations. Each recommendation is a specific action that NOLs can use to determine leadership strategies that could lead to increased funding allocation to increase mission and achieve sustainability.

The first recommendation for action based on the research findings is for NOLs to create a clear organizational plan for developing and maintaining relationships. Analysis of the participants' feedback showed that relationships were the most impactful way to increase funding allocations. These responses aligned with the findings of Alvarez-Gonzalez et al. (2017), Cho and Auger (2017), Drollinger (2018), and Tremblay-Boire, and Prakash (2017), indicating that developing a relationship with the donor has a positive impact on that donors' likelihood to contribute further funds to the nonprofit organization. Though understanding the pressure from creating a more involved donor relationship is important to managing the influence that donor has over the nonprofit organizational mission (Kim et al., 2017), NOLs who have a clear expectation of relationship building and understand the potential pitfalls of donor relationship in their nonprofit organization could increase their funding allocations and organizational sustainability.

The second recommendation for action is that NOLs need to become more aware of their internal interactions. A lack of acknowledgment from most participants on the impact of the NOLs leadership strategies on staff was surprising. Though NOLs understand their actions affect internal stakeholders, the data did not show this concept as part of their external dialog on how their nonprofit organization increases funding allocations to support organizational mission while maintaining sustainability. The findings of this study most strongly aligned with accountability for nonprofit organizations needing to move beyond the transactional relationship to a more dynamic relationship (Cordery et al., 2017; Kral & Cuskelly, 2018). The use of LMX theory

(Dansereau et al., 1975) or transformational leadership theory (Burns, 1978) could help NOLs develop a better understanding of their relationship with internal stakeholder. NOL's understanding how their actions impact internal stakeholders could lead to a more directed approach to create accountability and sustainability in the nonprofit organization allowing an environment for increased mission achievement.

The third recommendation for action is that NOLs should not wait to be pushed to high accountability standards but should craft those standards into the fabric of their nonprofit organization. NOLs not able to adjust to new regulations risk diminishing their nonprofit organization's ability to effectively meet their organizational mission and vision (Drollinger, 2018; Kahn, 2015; Vogelsang et al., 2015). Participants (P1, P2, and P5) discussed the implementation of metrics and accountability standards described a time of adjustment necessary to embrace the change in the organization's culture and structure. Understanding this need for change management, NOLs who shift to higher standards before the pressure of regulations and laws allow their nonprofit organizations latitude to misstep and make corrections without the threat of losing funding or donor support. Therefore, NOLs could improve the chances of nonprofit organizational sustainability in nonprofit organizations by adapting to higher accountability standards before regulations mandate those standards.

The results of this study could be used as a starting point by NOLs in the United States to affect an increase in funding allocations to support organization mission and achieve sustainability. I will provide a written summary of the findings to NOL participants. This study will be available through ProQuest/UMI dissertation database.

Small group sessions through The Resource Alliance would provide an outlet to present the study finds and advance additional research topics. Consultation with NOLs in New York and other states implementing new audit regulations, like Maryland, is a more one-on-one area for presenting the study findings.

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

The purpose of this study was to explore leadership strategies NOLs who implemented requirements of the Non-Profit Revitalization Act used to increase funding allocations to support fulfillment of the organizational mission and achieve sustainability. An assumption made was that the semistructured interviews and organizational documents were sufficient to capture the perceptions, experiences, and opinions of the NOLs regarding leadership ideologies. The findings of the research study showed this was not an accurate assumption. The research questions did not account for the potential that the NOLs would have already implemented all the requirements of the Non-Profit Revitalization Act; therefore, the NOLs did not utilize a directed strategy for implementation of the requirements. The recommendation for future research would be to conduct a study with NOLs who did not increase funding allocations during implementing requirements of the Non-Profit Revitalization Act.

Furthermore, the interview questions did not lead the NOLs to discuss internal leadership strategies. Each participant started with strategies utilized with donors or funding sources. Only one participant discussed internal leadership strategies without further clarification. One participant stated that it was not clear that internal leadership strategies were the focus of the research question. The potential for further research could

include research focused on internal leadership strategies of NOLs whose nonprofit organizations meet the rubric for being successful. Questions deliberate at addressing internal leadership strategies would better align with determining which leadership strategy is best for NOLs.

The research study was limited to three nonprofit organizations in the Northeastern United States. Utilizing the results of this study to create a quantitative evaluation of a larger section of NOLs in New York State might help determine validity in the results. There is much debate on how effective adherence to accountability standards is in creating trust for NOLs (Berlin et al., 2017; Coule, 2015; de Andres-Alonso et al., 2015; Garven et al., 2018; Garven et al., 2016; McDonnell & Rutherford, 2018). Berlin et al. (2017), Cordery et al. (2017), and Kral and Cuskelly (2018) conducted research, which study results supported a more diversified metric to determine accountability in nonprofit organizations; however, Krawczyk et al. (2017) studied the impacts of a diminished reputation and found that there was a smaller than anticipated impact on donor funding. The smaller impact might be because NOLs align the nonprofit organization's mission with the interests of the donor (AbouAssi & Tschirhart, 2017; Zhan & Tang, 2016). A better understanding of the benefits of strategies for building and maintaining relationships through trust and accountability standards and the impact on increased funding allocations could be useful.

### **Reflections**

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore leadership strategies NOLs who implemented requirements of the Non-Profit Revitalization Act

used to increase funding allocations to support fulfillment of the organizational mission and achieve sustainability. I had the preconceived idea that NOLs would be interested in sharing their experiences with implementing requirements of the Non-Profit Revitalization Act as a means to help other NOLs. I was disabused of this conception when finding participants took months. NOLs in the New York City limits were not open to discussing their leadership strategies. I finally found three NOLs in the Northeastern United States that were much more open to the idea of participating in my research study.

I was under the preconceived idea that there would be a significantly larger number of NOLs who successfully implemented requirements of the Non-Profit Revitalization Act without decreased funding allocations or a turnover in leadership. Reviewing over 1000 nonprofit organizational profiles for alignment with the research criteria; less than 300 meet the requirements of which only three agreed to participate in the research study. I no longer believe finding a participant is an easy task, and recommend approaching potential participants extremely early in the process.

After completing the study, changes in thinking included that researchers do not always know the right questions to ask to understand better what the focus of their research. I adhered to an interview protocol asking each participant the same questions with follow-up questions to the participant's responses, but it became clear that the emphasis of when the implementation occurred created an outlook reevaluation. The main research question was: What leadership strategies did NOLs who implemented requirements of the Non-Profit Revitalization Act use to increase funding allocations to support fulfillment of the organizational mission and achieve sustainability? All three



participant sites embraced higher accountability standards prior to implementing requirements of the Non-Profit Revitalization Act and did not need the regulation to achieve high accountability standards in the NOL's organization.

### **Conclusions**

In this qualitative multiple case study, the purpose was to explore the leadership strategies NOLs who implemented requirements of the Non-Profit Revitalization Act used to increase funding allocations to support fulfillment of the organizational mission and achieve sustainability. The data came from semistructured interviews with NOLs from three New York State nonprofit organizations and a review of those nonprofit organization's websites and financial documents. The data analysis revealed three main themes: (a) strategies for building and maintaining relationships are the foundations for organizational sustainability and increasing funding allocations in nonprofit organizations, (b) trust and accountability strategies improved organizational mission achievement and funding allocations, and (c) strategies for higher standards and expectations improved sustainability. NOLs could use these findings to be more purposeful in their interactions with stakeholders to improve funding allocations to support organization mission and achieve sustainability. NOLs need to develop deeper relationships with donors and internal stakeholders. By building stronger relationships, NOLs may increase trust, improve accountability, and increase funding allocations, creating a stronger nonprofit organization for all stakeholders.

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## Appendix A: Interview Protocol

What you will do	What you will say—script
Introduce interview and set the stage	Script
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Watch for non-verbal queues</li> <li>• Paraphrase as needed</li> <li>• Ask follow-up probing questions to get more in depth</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What leadership strategies are you using to increase funding allocations within your organization?</li> <li>2. What leadership strategies are you using to increase sustainability within your organization?</li> <li>3. What methods do you use to overcome challenges in the implementation of leadership strategies?</li> <li>4. What leadership strategies did you use to implement requirements of the Non-Profit Revitalization Act?</li> <li>5. What barriers did you face in implementing requirements of the Non-Profit Revitalization Act?</li> <li>6. What were the results of the strategies you used to implement requirements of the Non-Profit Revitalization Act?</li> </ol>

- 
7. How did you assess the effectiveness of your leadership strategies used in implementing requirements of the Non-Profit Revitalization Act?
  8. What additional information would you like to share about leadership strategies used to increase funding allocations to support organization mission achievement and organization sustainability?

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Wrap up interview thanking participant	Script XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
Schedule follow-up member checking interview	Script XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
Follow-up Member Checking Interview	
Introduce follow-up interview and set the stage	Script XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
Share a copy of the transcript for each individual question	Script XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

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## Appendix B: Certification of Completion NIH

## Protecting Human Subject Research Participants Page 1 of 1

## Certificate of Completion

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) Office of Extramural Research certifies that Jaime Friedel successfully completed the NIH Web-based training course “Protecting Human Research Participants”.

Date of completion: 11/02/2015 Certification Number: 1909096