

Walden University

College of Management and Human Potential

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Abstract

A Nonprofit Organization's Strategies to Align Its Systems Services with the Needs of

Families

by

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MS, Southern New Hampshire University, 2019

BS, Ambrose Alli University, 2008

Consulting Capstone Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

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Abstract

In the nonprofit sector, leaders are swiftly recognizing the necessity of aligning community food systems with the dynamic needs of families. This alignment is not only crucial for addressing immediate nutritional needs but also plays a pivotal role in bolstering long-term community resilience and well-being. Grounded in the balanced scorecard and Baldrige Excellence frameworks, the purpose of this qualitative single-case study was to explore strategies some leaders in nonprofit organizations deploy to align community food systems with the food service needs of families. The participants were three leaders with over five years of experience at a nonprofit organization in the southern United States. Data were gathered through interviews and a review of organizational documents. Through thematic analysis, five themes were identified: leadership, governance, strategic planning, customer engagement, and societal responsibility. A key recommendation is for nonprofit leaders to evaluate and adapt services to meet changing family needs routinely. The implications for positive social change include the potential to reinforce community values and enhance citizen safety through personalized services and increased confidence in community support systems.

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Dedication

To my children, Zara and Joshua: You are my unwavering source of inspiration, constantly reminding me of why I embarked on this journey. This doctoral study is a testament to your influence in my life. To their father: Your steadfast support has been invaluable, and I am profoundly grateful for it. To my father: Your lifelong commitment to continuous learning has been an inspiration and model for me. And to my mother: You are the wellspring from which I draw my resilience and strength. This work is dedicated to each one of you.

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I thank the leaders of the client organization for their participation and valuable feedback. To all my friends and loved ones, your support has been invaluable. Completing this doctoral study would not have been possible without you. I am genuinely grateful to all who have played a role in my journey. Your support and guidance have shaped my academic success.

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Section 1: Foundation of the Study

The alignment of food systems with the food service needs of families residing in nonprofit-served communities is an urgent concern with significant repercussions for families and communities. Despite the endeavors of many nonprofit organizations to provide access to healthy food options and support families in need, the challenge of creating a food system that effectively caters to families' requirements persists (Newell et al., 2022). Poor health outcomes, restricted access to healthy food, and escalated food waste are among the several negative consequences that can arise from food systems that do not meet families' needs (Thorndike et al., 2022).

The challenge of devising strategies to attune nonprofit systems services with the diverse needs of families is pivotal. To address this, leaders in the nonprofit sector are called upon to conceptualize and execute effective measures that bridge the gap between community food systems and the specific needs of families. It's a multifaceted task, requiring an all-encompassing approach that integrates the distinct needs of families and the resource capacities of nonprofits. Harnessing collaborative synergies among nonprofits can be instrumental in sculpting a food system that is resonant with the needs of families, a shift that is cardinal for ensuring access to nutritious food and promoting holistic well-being (Newell et al., 2022).

Background of the Problem

The alignment of food systems with the needs of families is a complex problem for nonprofits, as Livingston (2022) reported. One significant factor is strategic management, the systematic process of aligning resources and actions to address this issue. It involves setting clear goals, analyzing existing gaps, formulating, and implementing targeted strategies, and evaluating outcomes for continuous improvement. In essence, the adaptability and efficiency of nonprofits in this alignment are anchored in effective strategic management.

The balanced scorecard (BSC) has been widely used to align an organization's strategies and objectives with performance metrics. It evaluates organizational performance from four perspectives: financial, customer, internal business processes, and learning and growth, offering a comprehensive view of organizational health. Özkan and Ozgen (2021) found that the BSC approach positively affected organizational performance, particularly regarding financial and customer-related metrics. This tool facilitates a balanced view, not only focusing on financial outcomes but also considering customer satisfaction, operational efficiency, and the organization's capacity for innovation and improvement. Moreover, Mohamed et al. (2021) highlighted that the BSC is an effective performance management tool for small- and medium-sized enterprises because it considers financial and nonfinancial metrics such as customer satisfaction and employee engagement.

Compared to theories such as the economics of the firm, which are anchored in financial outcomes, BSC stands out with its multifaceted approach. Ordoobadi et al.

(2021) emphasized that BSC fosters a balanced interplay between financial and nonfinancial performance facets, enhancing overall organizational output. The integration with Total Quality Management (TQM), as noted by Quesado et al. (2022), underscores BSC's role in magnifying the impact of process improvements by aligning them with strategic aims.

Addressing the stakeholder theory, BSC's inclusivity emerges as a strength. Hu et al. (2022) illustrated that BSC aids organizations in adeptly managing diverse stakeholder needs, enhancing satisfaction and overall performance. It's a bridge between recognizing, prioritizing, and strategically aligning to meet the multifarious needs of stakeholders, offering a roadmap to harmonized organizational and stakeholder objectives.

Problem Statement

"Research shows that from 2019, one in three people globally suffers from one or more forms of malnutrition, and around 2 billion people do not have access to a healthy diet (Fongar et al., 2019, pp. 1–2). Financial restrictions, preparation, storage, and food distribution are examples of potential barriers to accessing a healthy diet (Wolfson et al., 2019, pp. 298–305). In 2019, 10.5% of U.S. households (13.7 million) reported having a limited or insufficient food supply (Wolfson et al., 2019). The general business problem was that some leaders lack strategies to align food systems to the food service needs of their communities' families. The specific business problem was that leaders of nonprofit organizations lack strategies to align community food systems with the food service needs of families.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative single-case study was to explore strategies some leaders in nonprofit organizations deploy to align community food systems with the food service needs of families. The targeted population consisted of three business leaders from a nonprofit organization located in the southern United States who were food justice advocates and had developed and implemented strategies to align community food systems with the food service needs of families in their organization's community. Supported by evidence from Domínguez and Montolio (2021), such alignment has far-reaching positive social impacts. It leads to decreased crime rates, improved community safety, increased demand for local produce, and enhanced nutrition in low-income communities. The study's findings may have implications for positive social change that include lowered crime rates and a heightened feeling of safety in the nonprofits serve, increased consumer demand for locally grown produce, improved nutritional status among low-income community gardeners, and new skills in sustainable farming and direct marketing learned by locals. These improvements may offer farmers an opportunity to reclaim a significant portion of the food dollar through innovative direct marketing, local processing, and other value-added activities. In addition, consumers may have opportunities to reconnect with their food supply, and communities can potentially strengthen their social and economic health by creating meaningful jobs and recirculating social and financial capital locally.

Nature of the Study

I considered using the quantitative research method for this study. This method, which involves the collection and analysis of numerical data, can be used to find patterns and averages, make predictions, test causal relationships, and generalize results to broader populations (McDermott, 2023). In quantitative research, the researcher collects numerical data, such as frequencies or scores, to examine correlations or cause-and-effect relationships among variables (Yin, 2018). I decided not to use the quantitative research method because I deemed the qualitative method more suitable for the study purpose. Researchers use the qualitative method to attain detailed insights into a problem or generate new research ideas. Using qualitative case study methodology enables researchers to conduct in-depth explorations of complex phenomena occurring within a particular context (Rashid et al., 2019). These aspects made qualitative research the best approach for exploring the strategies that nonprofit leaders who are food justice advocates use to align their system services with the needs of families.

A mixed-method approach was considered but ultimately not selected for this study. As noted by Horwood et al. (2022), mixed methods involve collecting and analyzing both quantitative and qualitative data, potentially leading to richer and more nuanced insights. Such an approach is particularly beneficial for reconciling contradictions between quantitative and qualitative results. However, given that the focus of this study was to delve into concepts, opinions, and experiences rather than exploring correlations, causes, and effects, a qualitative research method proved to be more fitting and was solely employed to align with the study's objectives.

Qualitative researchers should use a design approach that is suitable to their study (Horwood et al., 2022). A researcher can use an ethnographic, phenomenological, narrative, or case study design. I opted against using the ethnographic design because it focuses on understanding cultural expectations, beliefs, and responsibilities associated with participants' recollections (Beckett & Kobayashi, 2020); this contrasted with my study's objective to explore a phenomenon within a specific context, rather than explore the holistic view of a culture. Phenomenology is a design for exploring the meaning and essence of experiences, rather than simply describing the experiences (Finazzi et al., 2023). It applies to the subjective experiences of individuals. Phenomenology is predicated on the notion that the same experience can be interpreted in several ways, whereas ethnographers are more concerned with unearthing knowledge about the culture (Neubauer et al., 2019). Phenomenology is not a practical design when an in-depth and detailed exploration of the development of a single event, situation, or person is expected (Burns et al., 2022); therefore, I did not use the phenomenological design.

Researchers use the narrative design to elicit innovative ideas from personal narratives to characterize a phenomenon or undertake content analysis to examine human communication (Qureshi, 2018). The narrative design did not align with this study because I did not focus on studying an individual person or collecting and telling stories in detail. The purpose was to explore strategies some leaders in nonprofit organizations deploy to align their systems services with the needs of families. I decided to conduct a qualitative case study because doing so would enable me to explore the study

phenomenon within a specific context using various data types and sources (see Rashid et al., 2019).

The use of a qualitative case study design was efficient and effective in addressing the research question for the study, which was the following: What strategies do some leaders in nonprofit organizations deploy to align community food systems with the food service needs of families? This approach allowed me to gain extensive and factual knowledge about a specific real-world subject. In this study, my focus was on exploring how nonprofit leaders deploy strategies to align their systems services with the needs of families. To achieve this, I conducted a single-case study, which involves a thorough examination of a singular research topic using qualitative techniques such as interviews, think-aloud exercises, and the analysis of historical and archival records (McDermott, 2023). The decision to employ a single-case study approach was driven by my choice of qualitative methods and the specific organizational focus of my research topic. It provided me with a more comprehensive understanding of the nonprofit sector and how they align their systems and services with the needs of families. However, it is important to note that a multiple-case study approach would be necessary if the study involved multiple cases. Overall, this approach proved crucial for my consulting capstone as it enabled me to delve deeper into the subject matter and gain valuable insights into the strategies employed by nonprofit leaders in aligning community food systems with the food service needs of families.

Research Question

What strategies do some leaders in nonprofit organizations deploy to align community food systems with the food service needs of families?

Interview Questions

1. What strategies do you deploy to align your system services with the needs of families?
2. How did you measure the effectiveness of the implemented strategies?
3. Which of the strategies have been the most effective to align the system services with the needs of families?
4. What key challenges did you encounter during implementation of strategies to align the system services with the needs of families?
5. How did you address the key challenges you encountered during implementation of strategies to align your system services with the needs of families?
6. What else can you share about your organization's strategies for justice-oriented strategies that were developed and deployed to align system services with the needs of families?

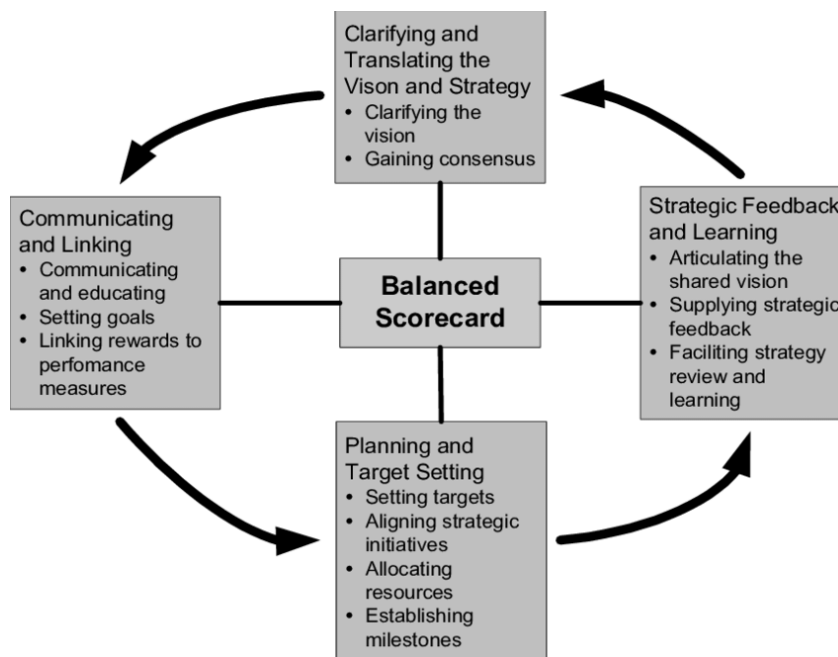
Conceptual Framework

I used the BSC as the conceptual framework for the study. Kaplan and Norton (1992) developed the BSC as a business model for developing strategies and processes for measuring and managing performance and effectiveness. Financial, internal processes, customer, and organizational capacity are the primary components of the scorecard model (Ningrum et al., 2020). By using the BSC, leaders can monitor, track,

and measure all their companies' systems, improving performance and capacity (Mio et al., 2021). The BSC framework can help organizational leaders to determine which infrastructure elements they should improve. Also, using the BSC framework enables organizational leaders to develop growth and expansion strategies. Figure 1 shows the BSC strategic model (Tsai et al., 2020).

Figure 1

Strategic Model of the Balanced Scorecard Framework



Note. Adapted from "Figure 1-2 *The Balanced Scorecard as a Strategic Framework for Action*," by Kaplan, R. S., KAPLAN, R. S., & Norton, D. P. (1996). *The balanced scorecard: Translating strategy into action* (2nd ed.). Harvard Business Press. Reprinted with permission.

Operational Definitions

Balanced scorecard (BSC): Defined by Kaplan & Norton (2002), the BSC is a strategic performance management tool that provides a balanced view of an organization's performance. It incorporates key performance indicators that are essential to shareholders and customers, as well as metrics related to internal processes, learning, and growth. In this study, I utilized the BSC to ensure the target organization's system services are effectively aligned with the diverse needs of families."

Local food systems: A collaborative network that integrates sustainable food production, processing, distribution, consumption, and waste management to improve a specific community's environmental, economic, and social health (Issac et al., 2022). In this study, the local food system encompasses most of the strategies used by various groups to meet the needs of families. Community agriculture, farmers' markets, farm food outlets, box schemes, and farm-to-school programs were all included in this study.

Resilience thinking: A conceptual framework that encapsulates a multifaceted approach to describing and analyzing change in social-ecological systems as integrated social and environment subsystems (Shi & Ling, 2022). Resilience thinking in this study encompassed stimulating adaptation to change, enhancing local resilience, and strengthening the food initiatives of the study organization, ABZ (pseudonym).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Assumptions

Research assumptions refer to critical subjects, concepts, or points of view that are assumed and commonly accepted throughout the design and execution of the study

(Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2019). In responding to the interview questions, the participants could potentially have brought bias into the study, as they were cognizant of the study's objective and might have provided information that they assumed I as the researcher wanted to hear. I assumed that the participants selected for this study were honest, dependable, sincere, helpful, and knowledgeable enough to contribute to the study's success.

Limitations

Research limitations can affect the outcomes and conclusions of a study, representing weaknesses and restrictions in the research design that may influence its results (Ross & Bibler Zaidi, 2019). Hence, researchers have a responsibility to sincerely and concisely disclose all limitations to the academic community. I limited the scope of this study to a single nonprofit organization in the U.S. Southwest region, which means the findings are specific to that organization. As a researcher, I am aware of the potential impact of limitations on my study's outcomes and conclusions, and I acknowledge that they need to be addressed and disclosed.

In a single-case study with participants from a single organization, there is an increased risk of bias, which necessitates strategies to prevent researcher bias (Priya, 2020). To address this potential risk, I employed methodological triangulation, utilizing multiple data collection methods, and member checking with participant feedback to ensure credibility and validity. These strategies reduced the risk of researcher bias in my study, ensuring that its findings accurately reflect the participants' experiences and perspectives (Priya, 2020).

Delimitations

According to Theofanidis and Fountouki (2019), research delimitations refer to the boundaries that researchers set for their study. These boundaries are essential to ensure that the study's objectives remain achievable (Ross & Bibler Zaidi, 2019). In my research, I formulated a question to investigate the strategies employed by business leaders in nonprofit organizations in the southwest region of the United States to align their community food services with the food service needs of families. The research question, conceptual framework, geographic location, and target population are all factors that limit the scope of the study. Additionally, the focus of the single-case study was on three nonprofit organization leaders from one state, which further restricts its generalizability.

Significance of the Study

Nonprofit organizations have emerged as crucial entities in addressing social challenges faced by families (Lloyd & Janus, 2021). Strategic alignment of their systems and services with the needs of the families they serve is essential for effective service delivery by nonprofits (Lee et al., 2020). Community engagement and research play a vital role in helping nonprofit leaders gain insights into the needs of families and design programs and services that are responsive to those needs (Brett et al., 2022). Adoption of such strategies not only improves the effectiveness of nonprofits but also contributes to positive social change.

Business leaders can draw valuable lessons from the strategies deployed by nonprofit organization leaders in serving families and apply them to their operations. By

conducting market research and adopting a customer-centric approach, business leaders can identify the needs of their target audiences and develop products and services that meet those needs (Girard & Worchel, 2023). Collaborating with nonprofit organizations can also help business leaders to leverage their expertise and resources to serve communities, enhancing their company's reputation and fostering customer loyalty (Park et al., 2021). Hence, examining the strategies deployed by nonprofit leaders to align their systems and services with the needs of families can provide business leaders with valuable insights to potentially improve their practices and have a positive social impact.

Contribution to Business Practice

Recent researchers have highlighted the importance of exploring how nonprofit leaders can design and implement methods to align their food system's delivery operations with family food service demands which is critical for ensuring family food security and improved nutrition while lowering delivery costs (Schneider, 2021). According to the World Food Program's 2022 research, leaders of charitable organizations can more efficiently discover and deliver fresh and healthy food to homes using such strategies (Aloysius & Ananda, 2023). Nonprofit leaders can improve client satisfaction and engagement by providing services that meet clients' needs leading to improved operational efficiency by streamlining services and reducing waste, which is critical for nonprofit organizations' long-term viability (Rodriguez, 2022). Further, improving service quality may attract and retain customers, establish a stellar reputation, and boost brand recognition (H. Chen, 2021).

A customer-centric strategy can also help to strengthen relationships with stakeholders and business partners (Begeny et al., 2023). As a result, nonprofit leaders can improve service delivery, increase customer satisfaction and engagement, and eventually improve business processes by focusing on family needs. Similarly, by aligning food system services with family food service needs, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) can improve family food security and nutrition while lowering delivery costs and enhancing business practices. Implementing a customer-centric strategy and improving service quality and operational efficiency can increase customer satisfaction, stakeholder involvement, and overall business success.

Implications for Social Change

Local food systems play a critical role in promoting a healthy lifestyle and building community wealth for several key reasons: Growing, processing, and distributing food locally creates and sustains community-based jobs (Banks et al., 2019). Farmers' markets, community supported agriculture programs, and other food cooperatives not only help ensure money remains in communities but also create more vibrant communities (Halliday & Foster, 2020). These localized food systems foster stronger community bonds, promote sustainable practices, and enhance access to fresh, nutritious food options, contributing to overall public health and economic stability.

Positive social changes resulting from the study's findings might include lowered crime rates and citizens heightened feeling of safety. Preserving communities' values around food is essential and keeping the history of how food moves from producer to consumer via the processes of production, processing, distribution, retailing, and

consumption; the community requires innovative efforts in a fast-paced society (Quaranta et al., 2019). By eating locally grown food, CO2 emissions are reduced by decreasing food miles - the distance food travels from producers to consumers (Stanton, 2018). These combined effects not only foster a sustainable environment but also contribute to a resilient and health-conscious community.

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

I conducted a literature review to provide a summary and critical evaluation of previous research on my chosen topic. The literature review was an opportunity to assess and contrast various arguments and theories rather than summarize them, as Leite et al. (2019) stated. I found conducting a literature review to be relevant as syntheses of existing literature improve evidence-based decision-making, identify gaps in knowledge, and narrow the gap between knowledge and lore in the field, as noted by Flemming and Noyes (2021).

Literature Search Strategy

I undertook a systematic literature review by exploring various databases such as EBSCOhost, Elsevier, Google Scholar, ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global, SAGE, Education Research Complete, Business Source Complete, GuideStar, and JSTOR. I utilized the following keywords: *strategy, balanced scorecard, nonprofit, alignment, local food system, childhood hunger, leadership, qualitative, strategies, dignified, delivery, service, and collaboration*. I conducted various searches in each database. To combine subject headings when appropriate, I used the Boolean operators AND or OR. The computer searches yielded more relevant articles than necessary. Following the

American Psychological Association (2002) guidelines on the content domain, I conducted a footnote-chasing process to locate additional related articles or primary sources cited in the articles from the literature search. During the review of academic literature, I utilized the BSC as the lens to explore the strategies that leaders in nonprofit organizations deploy to align systems and services with the needs of families. Specifically, I reviewed relevant literature to understand existing nonprofit environments and how their leaders successfully aligned systems services to meet the needs of their clients.

The success of my rigorous literature review depended on the relevance of the questions, the audience, and my expertise as the author. In my doctoral study, I reviewed 112 peer-reviewed articles and journals published within the last 5 years and seven government and corporate reports related to my research question. Of the references used, 91.67% were published within 5 years of the approval of my study. To explore strategies for my study, I utilized the BSC conceptual framework and reviewed current literature and other studies on its implementation in for-profit and nonprofit organizations.

Overall, my literature review provided a foundation for my research by contextualizing the topic and identifying gaps in knowledge. It also allowed for the synthesis of existing literature and the exploration of various arguments and theories in a critical manner. I organized the literature review into six sections: (a) Food Insecurity, (b) Balanced Scorecard Framework, (c) the Four Dimensions of the Balanced Scorecard, (d) Balanced Scorecard Strengths and Benefits, (e) Balanced Scorecard Implementation, and (f) Balanced Scorecard Implementation Barriers.

The BSC was the conceptual framework for this study's academic literature review. Kaplan and Norton (2002) developed the BSC as a business model for the development of strategies and processes for measuring and managing performance and effectiveness. Financial, internal processes, customer, and organizational capacity are the primary components of the scorecard model (Ningrum et al., 2020). Nonprofit organizational leaders can use the scorecard to monitor, track, and measure all their companies' systems, thereby improving performance and capacity (Lin et al., 2023). The BSC framework can help organizational leaders to determine which infrastructure elements they should improve; leaders can also use the framework to align an organization behind a shared vision of success, get people to work on the right things, and focus on results (Kaplan & McMillan, 2020). The BSC is a performance management tool that provides a balanced view of an organization's performance by considering multiple perspectives, including financial, customer, internal process, and learning and growth.

Supporting Theories for the Balanced Scorecard

Supporting theories for the BSC include strategic management, performance management, and the resource-based view of the firm.

Strategic Management

The BSC has been widely used in strategic management to align an organization's strategies and objectives with specific performance metrics. Özkan and Ozgen (2021) found that use of the BSC positively affects organizational performance, particularly

regarding financial and customer-related metrics. In addition, the BSC effectively translates strategic objectives into actionable measures (Özkan & Ozgen, 2021).

Performance Management

The BSC provides a comprehensive view of an organization's performance, including financial and nonfinancial metrics. In a recent study by Mohamed et al. (2021), the BSC was found to be an effective performance management tool for small- and medium-sized enterprises. In this study, I highlighted the importance of nonfinancial metrics, such as customer satisfaction and employee engagement, in improving overall organizational performance.

Resource-Based View of the Firm

The BSC considers an organization's internal capabilities and resources as drivers of performance. According to a study by Iqbal et al. (2021), the BSC is an effective tool for assessing and leveraging an organization's internal resources to achieve strategic objectives. Iqbal et al. found that use of the BSC helps organizational leaders to identify and prioritize key resources and capabilities, leading to improved performance outcomes.

Contrasting Theories for the Balanced Scorecard

Theories vary in their focus on performance drivers, with some emphasizing financial performance while others consider multiple perspectives. Nonprofit organizations require a distinct analytical approach, and the BSC can help align system services with family needs by measuring performance across multiple dimensions. Tirole (2021) noted that the economics of the firm theory prioritizes profit maximization and cost minimization, which may not be suitable for exploring nonprofit leaders' strategies to

align system services with family needs. Conversely, the BSC is a management framework for considering multiple performance dimensions, including financial and nonfinancial drivers, such as customer satisfaction, internal processes, and learning and growth (Kaplan & McMillan, 2020). Ordoobadi et al. (2021) found that the BSC approach can help organizational leaders balance their performance drivers, improving overall performance. Nonprofit organizations have unique goals and motivations, requiring a distinct analytical approach (Anheier & Toepler, 2022). The BSC can help nonprofit leaders align their system services with family needs by measuring performance across multiple dimensions and making informed decisions supporting their mission and objectives.

Total Quality Management

TQM is a management framework that business leaders use to continuously improve processes and products through customer satisfaction. However, it was not the best fit for exploring nonprofit leaders' strategies to align their system services with family needs. I concluded that the BSC was a more appropriate tool for investigating nonprofit leaders' strategies because it enabled the measurement and tracking of performance across multiple dimensions.

Jahangirian et al. (2021) defined TQM as a management framework that emphasizes continuous improvement of processes and products through customer satisfaction. Conversely, Kaplan and Norton (2020) explained that the BSC is a management framework that considers multiple performance dimensions, including customer satisfaction, internal processes, learning, and growth, making it a more

appropriate tool for investigating nonprofit leaders' strategies to align their system services with family needs. Anheier and Toepler (2022) argued that the BSC benefits nonprofit organizations by providing a framework for measuring financial and nonfinancial performance, which is crucial for organizations seeking to maximize social impact while minimizing costs.

While TQM has proven helpful in improving service delivery and outcomes in various industries, it was not the best fit for exploring nonprofit leaders' strategies to align their system services with family needs because it focuses more on product and process improvement than overall organizational strategy (Tawse & Tabesh, 2022). In contrast, the BSC provides a more comprehensive approach, allowing nonprofit leaders to align their system services with family needs while measuring and tracking performance across multiple dimensions, making informed decisions that support their mission and objectives. Moreover, although TQM prioritizes customer satisfaction, it may only partially consider the needs and interests of some stakeholders, including employees, suppliers, and the community. Therefore, the BSC's stakeholder approach provides a more comprehensive framework for measuring and evaluating an organization's overall performance, including the impact on various stakeholders.

Stakeholder Theory

Hu et al. (2022) noted that use of the BSC can help organizational leaders to balance the needs of different stakeholder groups, leading to improved stakeholder satisfaction and overall organizational performance. Hu et al. highlighted the benefits of using the BSC approach to achieve a more balanced view of performance and enhance

stakeholder satisfaction. Stakeholder theory and the BSC are two essential concepts in organizational management that complement each other, as stakeholder theory emphasizes the importance of meeting the needs of stakeholders (Bridoux & Stoelhorst, 2022). In contrast, the BSC provides a framework for measuring performance across various perspectives, including those of stakeholders (Tawse & Tabesh, 2022).

Food Insecurity

Food insecurity presents significant challenges for nonprofit organizations in multiple ways. One of the significant challenges is the shortage of workforce, which limits their capacity to address food insecurity adequately. To tackle the issue of staffing shortages and high turnover rates, nonprofit leaders need support to attract and retain qualified employees who are dedicated to the organization's mission (Modi & Sahi, 2021). Moreover, addressing food insecurity is a complex issue that requires significant resources and expertise, and nonprofit leaders may need help securing adequate funding to support their programs and operations, which can further strain their workforce and limit their capacity to provide services (Anheier & Toepler, 2022). The lack of resources can decrease efficiency and effectiveness in addressing food insecurity.

In addition, nonprofit leaders may face difficulties retaining donors, leading to decreased funding and support, making it even more challenging for them to address food insecurity effectively (Hu et al., 2022). To overcome these challenges, the leaders of nonprofit organizations must engage in strategic planning and management. By aligning their operations with their mission and objectives, nonprofit leaders can more effectively

manage their resources, develop targeted programs, and significantly impact their communities (Paramita et al., 2020).

Hu et al. (2022) suggested that organizational leaders focus on a balanced view of performance across various stakeholder perspectives to enhance their satisfaction and overall performance. In the case of nonprofit organizations, strategic planning is critical to align their operations with their mission and objectives and tackle challenges related to food insecurity. Nonprofit organizations in the United States face various challenges such as increased competition, the use of technology, and human resource management. Paramita et al. (2020) identified several significant challenges such as small workforce, employee transfers, donor cultivation, acquisition, retention, and communications. These systemic problems can be addressed through strategic planning.

According to Siam and Hussein (2022), the strategic management process has three stages: conceptualization, implementation, and evaluation. This process is essential for nonprofit leaders to connect their operational systems, procedures, and services to their vision, purpose, and objectives. By designing and implementing an integrated strategy, local nonprofit organizational leaders can help address critical issues such as childhood malnutrition and other health disparities among socioeconomic groups, such as African Americans and other minorities (Coleman-Jensen et al., 2019).

To promote a more equitable food system that promotes public health while reducing disparities in food security and nutrition, Nisbett et al. (2022) identified research, policy, and practice priorities. Sustainable food systems require a shift in policy and research priorities to eliminate racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic disparities in access

to adequate nutrition. Digital solutions can improve the efficiency, sustainability, and transparency of food industry operators and food waste reduction programs (Raheem et al., 2019).

The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine in the United States have released two reports that offer evidence-based solutions to address disparities in food security among vulnerable populations (Farid, 2022). Encouraging innovative approaches among nonprofit players in the food system and food banks can improve the efficiency, sustainability, and transparency of the food industry operators. The leaders of nonprofit organizations and food banks use multilevel strategies to increase access to nutritious foods for consumers in the charitable food system. Akhmedova et al. (2022) found that aligning mission content and stakeholder motivation is associated with the success of social missions. Cross-sector collaboration, supply chains, and the bridging of service shortages for disadvantaged communities are essential components of successful food programs. In conclusion, understanding the impacts of food insecurity, food supply chain restructuring, and cross-sector collaborations can help address these critical issues. By engaging in strategic planning and management, nonprofit leaders can tackle these challenges effectively and promote a more equitable and sustainable food system.

Balanced Scorecard Framework

The BSC is a tool utilized by leaders to measure and manage their organization's activities through performance metrics. These metrics are balanced across four critical perspectives: financial, customer, internal business processes, and learning and growth (Quesado et al., 2022). As a strategic management instrument, the BSC enables leaders to

define and communicate their organization's mission and strategy, facilitating communication, strategic alignment, and organizational learning (Quesado et al., 2022). By implementing strategic performance measurements, nonprofit organizational leaders can bring focus and discipline to their goals while providing much-needed information to donors and supporters (Abu Jaber & Nashwan, 2022). Ultimately, the BSC promotes efficiency in the market by rewarding effectiveness, resulting in significant societal benefits.

Kaplan and Norton (2019) created a nonprofit scorecard to compensate for an overreliance on financial measures. According to Quesado et al. (2022), the BSC is more than a measurement instrument; it is a measuring system, a strategic management system, and a communication tool. It is an ongoing process of allocating resources and establishing intermediate goals. Use of the scorecard can aid in illuminating and clarifying an organization's vision. Managers must fully support the framework for the scorecard to be successfully implemented (Lin et al., 2023). For the leaders of an organization to successfully implement BSC, they must make significant changes to the four key metrics directly relevant to the nature of nonprofit organizations.

The BSC is a framework for integrating strategy-derived measures. The BSC introduces the drivers of future financial performance while retaining financial measures of past performance (Ievdokymov & Zavalii, 2020). The drivers are derived from an explicit and rigorous translation of the organization's strategy into tangible objectives and measures and include customer, internal business process, and learning and growth perspectives (Abu Jaber & Nashwan, 2022). The BSC corrects the flaws of the traditional

performance measurement system (Kaplan & Norton, 2002). The BSC is a performance management tool that enables business leaders to implement their vision and strategy (Lin et al., 2023).

Organizational performance was traditionally measured primarily through financial metrics such as profit, return on investment, and budgets (Novikova, 2022). Traditional financial measures, likewise, may fall short of the requirements of an effective performance measurement system. According to Kaplan and Norton (2019), strict financial measures are limited by their inherent backward-looking nature and tendency to focus on the short term. One of the most widely used management innovations is the BSC. The BSC has evolved from its inception as a performance measurement tool to a strategic management tool that assists organizational leaders in implementing their organizational strategy (Kaplan & Norton, 2002). The primary responsibility of the BSC is to align organizational strategy with performance by translating strategy into action (Kaplan & Norton, 2002). The BSC's ability to integrate financial measures such as return on investment and earnings per share with nonfinancial measures of a company is one of its greatest strengths. The BSC prioritizes the execution of a long-term strategy through short-term actions.

According to Ramakrishnan et al. (2020), organizations' increased use of a BSC resulted in higher overall performance. The BSC has piqued the interest of executives, consultants, and academics (Helmold, 2022). According to Kaplan and Norton (2002), for organizational leaders to understand performance, there must be a balance of financial and nonfinancial measures. The BSC was born from this framework. Designed initially as

a multidimensional performance measurement system, the BSC collects financial and nonfinancial measures. Although widely accepted by businesses, the BSC's original concept had flaws. For example, researchers Tawse and Tabesh (2022) asserted that the empirical evidence about the BSC impact on firm performance has been inconsistent and difficult to interpret.

Similarly, Abdullah et al. (2022) stated that the BSC could be an overwhelming framework. Tawse and Tabesh (2022) posited that BSC requires strong leadership to be successfully implemented and will fail without it. Kaplan and Norton (2019) introduced the concept of strategic objectives to address the shortcomings of the first-generation scorecard. The scorecard's emphasis shifted to aligning the metrics with the strategy. According to Kaplan and Norton, a direct "mapping" between each strategic objective was placed in four perspectives, and one or more performance measures were required. This strategy mapping inserts various organizational BSC items into a cause-and-effect chain that connects the desired outcome with different results (Kaplan & Norton, 2019). Kaplan and Norton (2002) expanded on their seminal work with a case study analysis that went into greater detail about how three organizations implemented and used the BSC. Kaplan and Norton stated that the organization's measurement items should fall under one of the four perspectives and tie directly to its strategy. According to Kaplan and Norton, the BSC includes measures that enable managers to view the company comprehensively. The BSC is a tool for applying a company's strategy from theory to practice.

Further, the BSC management system enables organizations to clarify and translate their vision and strategy into action (G. Chen et al., 2021). The BSC has progressed from its initial use as a simple performance measurement framework to a strategic management system (Pejić Bach et al., 2023). This new BSC has the potential to transform an organization's strategic plan and enable business leaders to put it into action, translate an organization's strategy into a comprehensive performance measure that serves as a strategic management system framework, and align a business's management processes and emphasize implementing a long-term strategy (Kaplan & Norton, 2019).

Business leaders use the BSC to focus on critical business issues such as measuring performance and evaluating strategy implementation (Mio et al., 2021). As a widely used management tool, the BSC aims to provide organizations with a clear direction for what they should measure while translating vision and strategy into action (Quesado et al., 2022). The BSC defines strategic connection as integrating performance across the organization while aligning strategic initiatives of the organization as a strategic management system (Quesado et al., 2022). Kaplan and Norton proposed that a balance of financial and nonfinancial measures be used to understand an organization's performance fully, they posited that aligning the organization to the strategy is one of the best practices for a strategy-focused organization using the BSC framework (Kaplan & Norton, 2019). This best practice entails establishing appropriate synergies between business units. As a result, organizations require the right people and infrastructure to support their strategy. Another best practice is to create strategy for everyone's job, which

entails raising strategy awareness throughout the organization and connecting scorecards to employee pay (Kaplan & Norton, 2019).

Organizational leaders are always looking for ways to improve key performance indicators like cost, quality, customer satisfaction, employee turnover, and satisfaction. Organizational leaders frequently link compensation systems to performance improvements in these areas (Ghani et al., 2022). The BSC method is a precise tool for linking compensation programs to performance. The BSC method communicates the expectations of organizational units without losing sight of their specific roles in the overall company strategy. It is critical for the BSC's success to link performance measures to compensation (Kaplan & Norton, 2019). Linking the BSC to employee performance pay communicates the organization's objectives to business units and is an evaluation criterion for top managers (Rafiq et al., 2020). Involving all employees in the development of BSC and linking BSC performance measures to compensation motivates employees, which can be used to develop creative solutions to meet BSC targets (Abu Jaber & Nashwan, 2022). As a result, if the organization exceeds the BSC targets, performance rewards will be distributed to all employees who contributed critically to the organization's success.

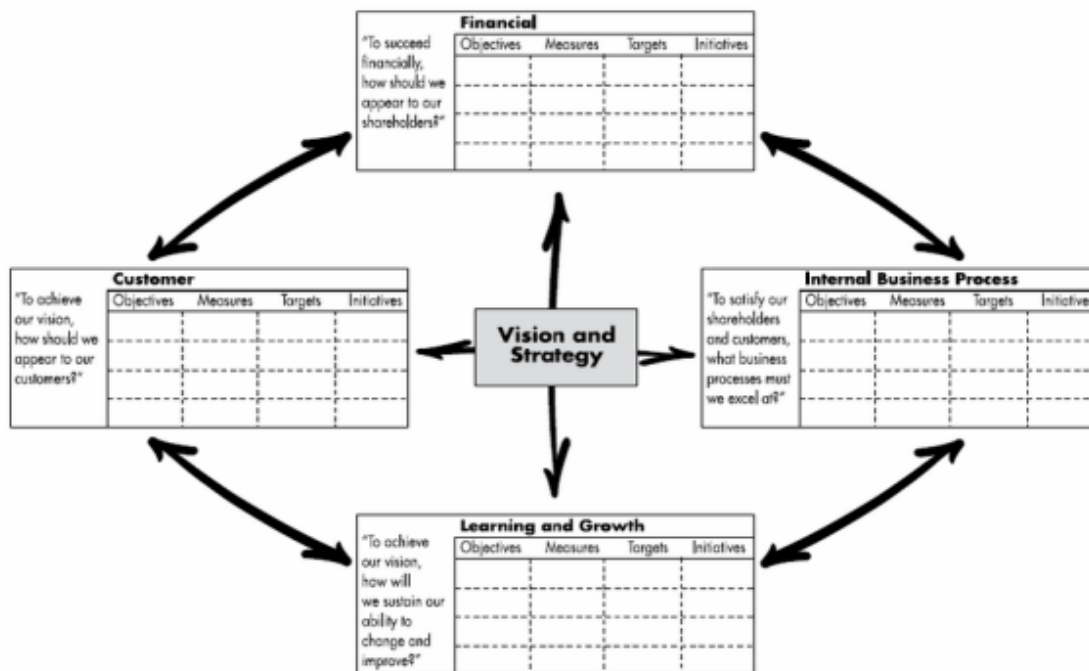
The Four Dimensions of the Balanced Scorecard

To have a successful strategy, a company must set clear strategic goals. For example, desired financial performance, customer portrayal, internal company processes, and employee competencies (Siam & Hussein, 2022). Business leaders who use the BSC prioritize strategy and vision over control of financial indicators (Kaplan & Norton,

2019). Similarly, business leaders require a balanced picture of financial and nonfinancial measures to view the organization's performance from various angles (Abdullah et al., 2022). The BSC focuses on financial and nonfinancial indicators and establishes measurable goals to propel the organization forward (Kaplan & Norton, 2019).

The BSC, as a strategic approach to a performance management tool, assists managers in translating their strategies into an organizational vision by assessing key performance measures from four perspectives of performance (Siam & Hussein, 2022). The BSC's four perspectives are customer, internal business process, financial, and learning and growth (Mio et al., 2021). The four perspectives of the BSC serve as the framework for organizations to begin using the BSC. According to Kaplan and McMillan (2020), business leaders use the four BSC perspectives to achieve high performance.

Kaplan and Norton (2002) proposed measuring organizational performance from these four perspectives to provide business leaders with a comprehensive view of performance measurement (see also Mio et al., 2021). As a result, the four perspectives provide business leaders with a framework for implementing the BSC by balancing financial and nonfinancial measures. The four perspectives are explained further in Figure 2.

Figure 2*The Four Perspectives of the Balanced Scorecard*

Note. Adapted from "Linking the balanced scorecard to strategy:" by Kaplan, R. S., & Norton, D. P. (2002). Linking the balanced scorecard to strategy. *California Management Review*, 39(1), 53–55. <https://doi.org/10.2307/41165876>. Reprinted with permission.

Customer View

How do customers see us? From its customers' perspective, a company's performance has been a priority for business leaders (Kaplan & Norton, 2002). The customer perspective focuses on the customer's opinion of the company and how the company wants to be viewed by its customers (Kaplan & Norton, 2002). Performance measurements for this perspective include customer satisfaction and the processes for which an organization provides a product or service to its customers. According to

Quesado et al. (2022) the customer perspective identifies essential factors in the customer's design, such as customer service, responding quickly and confidently to customer requests, and quality and performance. From this perspective, BSC aims to increase value for the customer. Therefore, organizations are required to understand the needs of their customers, produce quality service, and satisfy their customers.

Internal Business Process

What must we excel at? The internal business process perspective is the most critical for the success of any organization (Mio et al., 2021). The internal business process perspective focuses on how well the business is running and the activities an organization undertakes to satisfy its customers and shareholders. Performance measures based on this perspective allow managers to know whether the products and services satisfy customers' expectations. According to Kaplan and Norton (2002), it may include short-term and long-term objectives. Therefore, in this perspective, the BSC allows business leaders to know how well the organization is doing and whether their services have good products according to the expectations of their customers.

Financial

How do we look at shareholders? The financial perspective deals with those factors for an organization that can create growth and sustainability and evaluates the strategy's profitability (Quesado et al., 2022). This perspective refers to the financial view of a company as presented to its shareholders and whether the company's strategy, implementation, and execution are contributing to the bottom-line improvement of the firm (Kaplan & Norton, 2019). The financial performance measure provides information

based on company results of past activities that deal with growth, profitability, and shareholder value. According to Kaplan and Norton, the financial perspective must tell the story of the strategy. Additionally, the financial perspective evaluates the cost-effectiveness of the strategy that will allow an organization to evaluate and measure its results (Quesado et al., 2022).

Learning and Growth

Can we continue to improve and create value? The learning and growth perspective comprises employee training and cultural attitudes about individual and organizational self-improvement (Kaplan & Norton, 2019). It focuses on the capabilities and skills that the company must excel in to achieve internal business processes that create value for its customers and shareholders. The performance measures used for this perspective include employee education and skill level, employee satisfaction, and retention. The focus of this perspective is on investing for the future, such as new equipment and product research and development (Kaplan & Norton, 2019).

According to Siam and Hussein (2022), the learning and growth perspective can include such issues as employee satisfaction, hours of employee training, and alignment of employee skills with jobs, thus making this perspective crucial to the success of the BSC as it involves employee skills. The four perspectives of the BSC serve as the structure and framework for an organization wanting to begin using the BSC. The four perspectives also allow management to identify strong and weak points in their organization's performance and areas of opportunity for improvement in each of the perspectives. Additionally, the four perspectives are linked to the organization's strategy

and create a holistic model that allows all employees to see how they can contribute to the organization's success (Siam & Hussein, 2022).

According to Kang et al. (2022), it is necessary to continuously adjust the strategy and change it when necessary to answer the four questions of the perspectives. The BSC is a set of quantifiable measures that aim to monitor and manage a company's strategic performance (Rafiq et al., 2020). The BSC supplemented financial measures, which display the actions already taken, with operational measures such as customer satisfaction, internal processes, and innovations (Siam & Hussein, 2022). To improve the results of the financial perspective of a company, an improvement in the internal business perspective is needed, which consequently improves the customer's perspective and significantly improves the innovation and learning perspective. Additionally, the main objective of the customer, internal business, and innovation and learning perspectives is to focus on financial targets and objectives that deal with growth, profitability, and shareholder value.

Balanced Scorecard Strengths and Benefits

According to research undertaken by several writers, the BSC has been successfully used to manage long-term strategy (Quesado et al., 2022). Kaplan and Norton (2019) stated adopting the BSC in designing strategic organizational initiatives helps leaders and managers focus on issues that enhance organizational growth. According to Kaplan and Norton, the BSC highlights the relevance of the company's strategy as a framework for future action to focus all the organization's resources on attaining the organization's goals. At the organizational strategy level, the entire

organization must work together to achieve the company's strategic goals. Kang et al. (2022) posited that BSC can assist a company in translating its purpose and strategy into actual activities and facilitate internal communication of the strategy, vision, and strategic objectives. These tangible actions enable all organization members to focus on the organization's strategic aims. According to Rafiq et al. (2020), when implemented appropriately, the BSC enables the organization to communicate each employee's specific contribution.

The BSC is a valuable tool for managers and an ideal strategic management model for linking an organization's mission and strategy to performance measurements. According to Quesado et al. (2022), the BSC can boost employee morale by connecting the mission and organizational strategy. Furthermore, because BSC implementation should engage all levels of the business in achieving similar goals, it can foster a cooperative spirit among employees (Quesado et al., 2022). Siam and Hussein (2022) found that the introduction of the BSC could improve communication and understanding of the company's strategy by keeping employees more informed about organizational decisions. Finally, the BSC aids in the improvement of communication between top management and lower-level personnel. As a result, the BSC can aid a business in developing a high-performance culture (Quesado et al., 2022). To put the BSC to work, businesses must first establish clear goals for time, quality, performance, and employee service, which must then be translated into concrete metrics (Kaplan & Norton, 2019). Customer-based measures, for example, are critical, but they must be translated into measures of what the company must do internally to meet its consumers' expectations.

Managers must set clear target metrics that impact employees' activities at lower levels of the company to attain organizational goals. As a result, target measurements connect management decisions to employee actions that affect overall company objectives and performance (Kaplan & Norton, 2019).

Additionally, because all employees are aware of the standards, this fosters responsibility and openness throughout the firm. When completely implemented, the BSC brings everyone in the organization together so that everyone understands how and what they can do to support the strategy. According to Kang et al. (2022), the BSC can also be used as a basis for remuneration or incentives, and it provides management with feedback on whether the strategy is functioning or needs to be changed. Many businesses have begun implementing the BSC after demonstrating that it allows them to improve their performance (Weiser et al., 2020). According to a thorough literature assessment, numerous works speak to the BSC's advantages, strengths, and contributions to an organization (Rafiq et al., 2020).

In addition, the BSC is a valuable tool for articulating an organization's strategic vision and turning its mission and strategic objectives into action (Quesado et al., 2022). Despite the numerous advantages of using the BSC, several studies have highlighted obstacles that can hamper or restrict its implementation (Quesado et al., 2022). The BSC heightens organizational awareness and focuses on critical success factors (Ali et al., 2022). Kaplan and Norton invented the term “strategy-focused organization.” The benefit of focusing is that everyone in the organization knows a small set of success-influencing factors. People benefit from the BSC mindset because it provides clarity and assurance;

when employees comprehend why their efforts are required to execute the plan, their motivation increases (Quesado et al., 2022).

Understanding the organization's aims and the roles of its members in accomplishing these goals can help the organization run more efficiently (Tawse & Tabesh, 2022). The BSC must bridge the gap between a strategic concept and its implementation (Ali et al., 2022) The four perspectives are essential in this regard. Implementing the BSC will allow a company to attain "strategic action planning" (Siam & Hussein, 2022). BSC illustrates how concrete activities translate into strategy and results. Its declared strategy increases tangible and intangible asset production (Quesado et al., 2022). The BSC demonstrates how mobilizing human capital and expanding knowledge resources increase the value-creation capabilities of contemporary firms while also providing an opportunity to reconsider the BSC considering the evolution of corporate capital (Tsai et al., 2020).

BSC is a component of organizations' strategic learning processes that provides a holistic view of performance (Mendoza, 2020). It improves the efficiency of the organizational information system by streamlining the utilization of indicators and strategic objectives. The contributions of everyone are communicated, fostering synergies and the expansion of organizational cooperation. It has a significant and positive effect on the intensive use of measurements with a twofold purpose: facilitating decision-making and directing all organization members toward achieving goals. They provide the necessary knowledge and motivation for value-based management; facilitate the most effective decision-making and problem-solving. Align budgets with long-term,

intermediate-term, and short-term strategic goals. Clarify the performance compensation scheme and individual and departmental evaluation standards.

Balanced Scorecard Implementation

The literature on BSC implementation provides guidance for managers on how to implement the BSC in various ways, although there is no one-size-fits-all approach. Kaplan and Norton (2019) developed a six-step guide to BSC implementation, which includes developing and planning the strategy, aligning the organization, planning operations, monitoring and learning, and testing and adapting. However, much of the literature focuses on the physical implementation process or the processes and procedures required to successfully implement a project. Consequently, there is a need for more research on the implementation of the BSC, an area that has not yet been extensively explored (Ali et al., 2022).

Critical success factors are essential elements required at the most fundamental level for a project to succeed, and they frequently incorporate implementation processes and procedures. Research has identified various critical success factors, including circumstances, conditions, events, or inputs, which lead to the successful implementation of a project (Rafiq et al., 2020). Jitpaiboon et al. (2019) identified 10 critical success factors as a framework for successful project implementation, including top management support, communication, technical tasks, and personnel recruitment, selection, and training.

Several studies have been conducted to identify the critical success factors required for successful BSC implementation, with staff and organizational factors, as

well as top management support, being identified as key factors influencing implementation success or failure in the railway sector (Jitpaiboon et al., 2019). Additionally, Jitpaiboon et al. (2019) found that the length of development, communication, and introduction of the BSC played a significant role in successful implementation. These findings are consistent with Kaplan and Norton's (2002) research, which also identified top management support as a critical success factor. Aryani and Setiawan (2020) discovered that how the organization changed its strategy was a significant reason for implementation failure. According to the researchers, a changing strategy frequently caused the BSC to be unable to change the four perspectives quickly enough to keep them current with the strategy, rendering the BSC ineffective. Weiser et al. (2020) also identified top management support, training, project management, and a balanced team as critical success factors required for successful implementation.

Balanced Scorecard Implementation Barriers

Despite widespread acceptance and recognition as a powerful management tool by businesses, CEOs, and managers worldwide, the BSC has a low success rate. Although many organizations have embraced the BSC, many have struggled to implement it (Benková et al., 2020). When implementing the BSC, organizations may face various challenges, ranging from technological to social to conceptual (Rafiq et al., 2020). Organizational leaders may face various challenges during the BSC implementation process (Benková et al., 2020). According to Kaplan and Norton (2019), visionary barriers, such as the workforce's lack of understanding of the approach, cause BSC implementations to fail. The primary cause of implementation failure is a lack of

staff training and comprehension of BSC implementation. Rafiq et al. (2020) noted that setting strategic objectives and indicators that are either too high or too low can deter individuals from adhering to the rules. Additionally, Kaplan & Norton (2019) highlighted that barriers in management, such as leaders not dedicating sufficient time to discuss strategies with employees, can hinder the effective implementation of the Balanced Scorecard (BSC). A BSC implementation failure could also be caused by resource constraints, such as the organization's failure to link budget to strategy, or by personnel constraints, such as a shortage of managers with strategy-related incentives (Rafiq et al., 2020).

A balance of financial, nonfinancial, tangible, and intangible metrics must be achieved through viewpoints, leading to organizational management imbalance (Vladimir et al., 2020). Employee incentives are required to create the structure, productivity culture, and information sharing necessary for implementing practical change initiatives like the BSC (Vladimir et al., 2020). It is critical to work on accountability, identify those accountable, and enlist assistance in meeting goals and carrying out action plans. Another critical component of the BSC's implementation and operation is the availability of communication and information distribution. All director decisions must be communicated to the workforce during the management tool's implementation for them to provide feedback on the strategy and its outcomes. The final component, transformation, necessitates the internalization of processes by directors and the entire workforce structure.

Recent studies have continued to emphasize the importance of corporate culture for improving organizational performance. For example, a study by Li et al. (2021) found that a robust corporate culture was positively related to financial performance in Chinese firms. Similarly, Sanz-Valle et al. (2022) found that a robust corporate culture was positively related to innovation and customer satisfaction in Spanish firms. Top management is still crucial in initiating and supporting cultural change initiatives. Bilichenko et al. (2022) found that top management support was essential in implementing corporate culture change in Polish firms.

The BSC continues to be a popular tool for measuring organizational performance and aligning it with strategy. In recent years, however, a focus has been on refining the BSC to better align it with changing business environments. For example, a study by Karami et al. (2021) proposed a new framework for the BSC that considers environmental and social factors and financial and customer perspectives. Education and training are still critical for successfully implementing the BSC, especially in the nonprofit sector. Begeny et al. (2023) found that training and coaching effectively improved the implementation of evidence-based practices in nonprofit organizations.

Niven's (2006) view that the BSC should align with an organization's strategy is still widely accepted. Recent research by Schaltegger and Lüdeke-Freund (2022) suggested that the BSC could be used to integrate sustainability into an organization's strategy. They proposed a new framework that includes sustainability as a fourth perspective in the BSC, along with the financial, customer, and internal perspectives. According to Ali et al. (2022) one of the causes of confusion and contention in

developing KPIs is the lack or poor development of a strategy map. Many initiatives have failed because organizations fail to recognize the importance of implementing the BSC at all points where business logic, goals, and achieved performance are discussed (Rafiq et al., 2020).

According to Niven (2006), successful strategy implementation necessitates understanding and implementation at all organizational levels. The organization's alignment should be transparent using the strategy map, performance measures, targets, and activities. Scorecards should increase responsibility through employee ownership of objectives and performance measures, and desired employee behaviors should be rewarded. Cascading strategy focuses the entire organization on strategy and creates a clear line of sight between the job that individuals perform and the desired outcomes at the highest level.

One of the most challenging aspects of the initiative is deciding which metrics to include in the BSC. A communication strategy will increase the likelihood of the tool being used by employees, making it easier for the BSC to become a real-world business decision-making tool. The criteria and variables used to measure a nonprofit organization are complex, and each differs from the others due to the organization's nature. An imbalance in organizational management can occur if a balance is not achieved between the indicators, financial and nonfinancial metrics, and tangible and intangible ones (Rafiq et al., 2020).

The definition of strategic objectives and indicators of unusually high or low demand can be discouraging in terms of achieving compliance. Failure to align each

employee and area of the organization with the organizational strategy daily can result in a lack of synergy and the dispersion of efforts and resources. Organizational decision-making does not always follow the guidelines or measures determining competitive success. It is possible that the information they can provide is irrelevant to the critical aspects of the strategic process and thus adds no value to management. One of the significant barriers to the implementation of the BSC is the lack of leadership support. According to Kabeyi (2019), an effective implementation of the BSC necessitates top management support. Lack of leadership commitment can lead to a lack of leadership in the design or implementation of the project, which can prevent the development of a comprehensive, globally aligned measurement system.

Further, inadequate education and training, poor communication, and misaligned organizational strategy can also hinder successful BSC implementation. Therefore, in this response, we will explore the four significant barriers to implementing a BSC: lack of leadership support, education/training, communication, and organizational strategy.

Lack of Leadership Support

Managers' lack of commitment can lead to a lack of leadership in the design or implementation of the project. Distancing from stakeholder expectations and crossing the corporate contour under a global vision prevents the development of a comprehensive, globally aligned measurement system. Hristov et al. (2019) posited that objectives and definitions of the measurements exclude essential stakeholders, but this relies on how the BSC is put into practice. Any organizational initiative requires the support of top management.

Kabeyi (2019) asserted that an effective BSC implementation necessitates top management support. Further, Benková et al. (2020) emphasize top management's significance in the BSC initiative's success. Paramita et al. (2020) buttresses that the lack of top management support will harm any BSC initiative. Lack of leadership participation, buy-in, and commitment to the BSC and building a strategy-focused organization is almost certain to result in the BSC Benková et al. (2020). Leadership engaged in the discovery process, communication via two-way dialogue, and planning and managing change are crucial first steps (Kaplan & McMillan, 2020). Because the BSC is a tool for executing an organizational strategy, management should support and stand behind it (Kaplan & McMillan, 2020).

Top management should also explain why the BSC is critical to the business and communicate with other organizational members. Leaders must believe that the BSC initiatives will improve the organization to increase credibility. Hristov et al. (2019)

confirmed that if management does not provide adequate support and attention to the BSC implementation process, employees will quickly believe it is a waste of time.

Leadership must help employees recognize how a BSC is a valuable tool for improving organizational performance to meet strategic objectives.

Education/Training

The BSC is a popular performance management framework initially developed in the early 1990s, emphasizing financial and nonfinancial performance measures (Kaplan & Norton, 2002). As time passed, the BSC evolved into a strategy implementation tool to align measures with organizational strategy (Marr & Adams, 2021).

Despite its widespread use, successful implementation of the BSC requires significant organizational learning. Insufficient education of top management and team members responsible for developing and implementing the BSC can fail (S. C. Chen & Chen, 2021). According to Niven (2006), a common misconception is that the BSC can only be implemented with a significant learning process. However, empirical evidence suggests proper education and training are essential for successful implementation (Bergenwall, 2020).

Hence, organizations must invest in education and training to enhance their understanding of the BSC and its implementation. By doing so, organizations can achieve their strategic objectives and realize improved performance outcomes (Marr & Adams, 2021). Further, Lin et al. (2023) stated that due to the simplicity of the BSC, some managers and those charged with designing and implementing the BSC frequently believe that education and training are not required. On the other hand, Niven believes

such a conclusion will harm the BSC initiative and lead to its failure. Workshops, for example, are another essential factor in successfully implementing the BSC (Helmold, 2022). Rafiq et al. (2020) compared BSC implementation in various companies. According to their findings, companies that provided employee training were more likely to implement the BSC successfully.

Communication

According to Kaplan and McMillan (2020), a well-designed BSC integrates departmental and individual goals with long-term strategic objectives and communicates strategy to the entire business. Effective BSC design and presentation will ensure that individual performance aligns with company objectives (Kaplan & Norton, 2019). Helmold (2022) suggested that all companies need a predetermined blueprint or template that exemplifies how to build a BSC. To provide regular updates on the team's implementation status and to present the concepts of the BSC to the key stakeholders sponsoring and providing input for the implementation.

Organizational Strategy

Kabeyi (2019) asserted that organizational strategy plays a crucial role in directing all personnel and actions towards achieving organizational objectives. The primary objective of organizational strategy is to increase shareholder value, generate a profit, and increase external and internal investment to persuade customers to do business with the organization (Kaplan & Norton, 2019). Kaplan and Norton emphasized the significance of aligning the four major performance indicators of the BSC with the organization's strategy. They stated that the BSC will be impractical if the performance

indicators are not related to the strategy. Despite the importance of strategy change, it has not been thoroughly studied in conjunction with the BSC. However, a case study on an electronics business that implemented the BSC and tied it to its strategy showed that successful implementation of the plan was crucial to the company's success.

Further, the authors suggest that the BSC should be a team-based, continuous improvement process, and it is a performance system that firms introduce to execute their strategies successfully. Kaplan and Norton (2019) emphasized the connection between the BSC viewpoints and the overall organizational strategy, highlighting that linking strategy to the BSC is essential in providing a holistic perspective of the strategy on a scorecard. This perspective allows employees to assess the organization's performance in delivering on the strategy and management to identify areas for improvement.

Hence, when implementing a strategic performance management system like the BSC, most firms desire successful implementation of the plan. To achieve this, leaders must participate in the discovery process, communicate through two-way dialogue, and plan and manage change. The organization must have a well-defined mission, a shared vision, and organizational values based on strong personal values to achieve alignment. Effective strategy development also involves incorporating the perspectives of customers and stakeholders and understanding customer needs and product and service characteristics.

Conducting a climate survey of the organization will identify internal and external pain points and enablers that will drive strategy development and the approach to achieving future goals. Finally, performance measures should be linked to objectives,

allowing the organization to track progress toward desired strategic outcomes while measuring what is important.

Transition

In Section 1 of this study, I discussed the lack of strategies to align food systems with the food service needs of families in nonprofit-served communities is a pressing issue that leads to poor health, reduced food access, and increased food waste. I also highlighted the rationale for using a qualitative case study because it enables exploring a phenomenon within a specific context using various data types and sources. Further, I described how I would mitigate bias and avoid viewing data through a personal lens and the rationale for my interview protocol. In Section 2, I discussed the methodology and design, population and sample, data gathering instruments, and data analysis methodologies. Methods of data collection, organization, analysis, and validity are also discussed in Section 2. In Section 3, I describe my DBA Consulting Capstone project, for which I utilized the Baldrige Performance Excellence Framework (National Institute of Standards and Technology, 2018) and its Criteria for Performance Excellence to undertake in-depth research for and on my client firm. My consulting capstone project's goal is to help my client company's leaders improve essential work practices, solve strategic problems, and improve overall performance. Section 3 includes a study on various essential aspects of management and leadership, including but not limited to leadership, strategy, customers, measurement, analysis, knowledge management, workforce, operations, and results.

Section 2: The Project

There is an abundance of literature on how nonprofit managers aim to tailor services to meet the needs of families (Issac et al., 2022). However, a gap exists in the research. Studies that have explored strategies for aligning nonprofit system services with family needs have often yielded data that are insufficient for nonprofit executives striving to enhance operational success and efficiency (Halliday & Foster, 2020). According to my literature review, NGO managers must develop and implement strategies for aligning system services with family needs. According to my literature review, nonprofit organizational leaders may need more knowledge and resources to implement comprehensive food system initiatives to successfully align system services with the needs of the families they serve. By collaborating, raising funds, or passing legislation, the leaders of organizations and government agencies may make it easier for people to obtain healthy food. Section 2 includes a complete description of the research methodology and design, population, sample, data collection instruments, and methodologies utilized in the study. This section also includes an in-depth explanation of the data collection, organization, and analysis methodologies and the study's validity and dependability.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative single-case study was to explore justice-oriented strategies some leaders in nonprofit organizations deploy to align community food systems with the food service needs of families. The targeted population consisted of three business leaders from a nonprofit organization located in the southern United States

who were food justice advocates and had developed and implemented strategies to align community food systems with the food service needs of families in their organizations' communities. The study's potential implications for positive social change are considerable and multifaceted. Lowered crime rates and a heightened feeling of safety in the communities nonprofits serve could be directly correlated with increased engagement and investment in community well-being. The increased consumer demand for locally grown produce not only supports local agriculture but also promotes health and wellness among community members. Improved nutritional status among low-income community gardeners could emanate from increased access to affordable, fresh produce, fostering both physical health and community vitality. Furthermore, as locals acquire new skills in sustainable farming and direct marketing, economic opportunities can expand, leading to increased income and improved quality of life. These outcomes of the study may offer invaluable insights for stakeholders. Armed with this knowledge, they could devise and implement targeted interventions and policies that harness these benefits, catalyzing extensive positive social change that permeates various aspects of community life. These efforts might offer farmers an opportunity to reclaim a larger portion of the food dollar through innovative direct marketing, local processing, and other value-added activities; consumers opportunities to reconnect with their food supply; and communities the possibility of strengthening their social and economic health by creating meaningful jobs and recirculating social and financial capital locally.

Role of the Researcher

The role of a researcher is to maintain integrity during data collection and apply qualitative standards of credibility, dependability, and transferability throughout the process. Researchers should communicate their findings; collaborate with others when appropriate; and transfer and exploit knowledge to benefit their employer, the economy, and society (Neubauer et al., 2019). Researchers are responsible for conducting their research honestly and ethically throughout the data collection. Hays and McKibben (2021) argued that research integrity includes using simple and verifiable methods in proposing, performing, and evaluating research; reporting research results with particular attention to adherence to rules, regulations, and guidelines; and following the accepted professional codes or norms.

My role in this single-case study was to (a) collect information on strategies nonprofit organizational leaders use for aligning their system services with the needs of families, (b) comprehend those strategies, (c) categorize the themes from the reflected strategies, and (d) record the strategies in writing. I served as the primary instrument of data collection for this study, playing a pivotal role in coding, evaluating, and presenting the data. Transitioning into the role of an analyst, I was mindful of the potential influence of bias. As Yin (2018) notes, researchers' bias can significantly alter the outcome or direction of a case study.

Subjectivity biases a research study, and researchers risk producing a defective or biased study if they are motivated by their objectives (Honeycutt & Jussim, 2020). According to Neubauer et al. (2019), bracketing is a qualitative instrument of inquiry that

demands researchers to consciously set aside their preconceived conceptions or prior knowledge of the examined issue prior to and throughout the investigation (Neubauer et al., 2019). To conduct good qualitative research, researchers must understand how their values and expectations may influence the study's conduct and outcomes (Roulston, 2019). I maintained neutrality, impartiality, and a nonjudgmental approach throughout the research. As the sole researcher, I used a reflective journal to focus solely on the unresolved business research question of what strategies nonprofit leaders use to align community food systems with the food service needs of families, I found it helpful to regularly document my thoughts, observations, and insights throughout the research process.

Case study researchers should adhere to a fundamental code of conduct (Yin, 2018). Bias is any disposition that prevents objective topic examination; research bias occurs when sampling or testing is conducted to favor or encourage one outcome or answer over others (White, 2020). I strove to objectively analyze all the collected data to avoid confirmation bias, a research bias in which a researcher interprets the facts to support their hypothesis (Honeycutt & Jussim, 2020). I constantly reevaluated the perceptions and replies and ensured that any preconceived notions were addressed.

In addition, I asked generic questions before moving on to particular or delicate topics to reduce the possibility of question-order bias. Bias can occur at any stage of the research process, including study planning, data collection, data analysis, and findings publication (White, 2020). I am unrelated to the participants. I also read literature reviews and scholarly resources to better understand the nonprofit sector. To ensure that ethical

principles and rules were followed during the study, I informed participants in the consent letter that they could withdraw from the interview without penalty or consequence. Participants were also informed that they had the right to skip any questions they did not want to answer or end the interview if they felt uncomfortable. Allowing participants to exercise their autonomy and privacy rights in this way is crucial in research studies, as it ensures their safety and well-being are protected (American Psychological Association, 2002)

I ensured that the level of transparency and basic principles of (a) respect for persons, (b) beneficence, and (c) justice was in line with the guidelines set forth by the *Belmont Report*, which emphasizes the importance of protecting the welfare and autonomy of research participants (Eckstein, 2003). The purpose of the interview protocol was to assist me in drafting and organizing the initial interview questions. The interview protocol (see Appendix A) aided me in formulating questions to access participants' in-depth experiences.

Participants

I used purposive sampling to select three leaders from a nonprofit organization in the southern United States who shared similar qualities, such as years of experience. This was done to gain a comprehensive grasp of how nonprofit organization managers align their system services with the needs of the families they serve. Purposive sampling enables a researcher to select participants based on the researcher's assessment of people who are most informed about the phenomenon being studied (Farrugia, 2019). The use of purposive sampling lowers variation (Alam, 2020). I reduced variation by selecting three

participants from the client organization's target division with quality, compliance, operations, and corporate governance responsibilities. Using purposive sampling to select participants from one organization allows a researcher to explore the phenomenon under study with a small sample set.

Researchers use purposive sampling to control selection bias by eliminating the random selection of substitute participants (Alam, 2020). One executive director, one managerial leader, and one program supervisor from the study organization participated in semistructured phone interviews. The organization's executive director selected and granted access to participants by providing phone numbers and email addresses. Purposive participant selection enables researchers to invite people with firsthand experience of the phenomenon being studied (Ames et al., 2019).

The participants in this study had worked for the organization for at least 3 years and had more than 5 years of experience leading in the food sector of the nonprofit market. As required by the terms of my Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, access to participants was offered through virtual means of contact, such as individual telephone calls and teleconferences. Coaching and supporting leaders in implementing the systems-based framework and the Baldrige performance excellence criteria was part of my strategy for creating a working relationship with leaders in my client organization.

Research Method and Design

Research Method

Conducting a study involves considering the research question and selecting an appropriate methodology to ensure the expected results. Qualitative research is suitable for exploring participants' experiences, while phenomenology is suitable for exploring phenomena (Farquhar et al., 2020). The quantitative method is suitable for measuring relationships and variances between variables and generalizing findings to a population (McDermott, 2023).

Rashid et al. (2019) suggested that selecting an appropriate methodology is crucial for obtaining viable results. Qualitative research is suitable for investigating participants' experiences and perceptions, while phenomenology is more appropriate for exploring phenomena. Qureshi (2018) noted that the quantitative method is suitable for measuring relationships and variances between variables and generalizing findings to a population. Choosing a suitable research method to effectively answer the research question is essential. By selecting the appropriate methodology, researchers can ensure that they obtain valid and reliable results that can contribute to existing knowledge in the field. Ultimately, the choice of research method should depend on the research question, the research design, and the available resources (McDermott, 2023).

Researchers use mixed-methods research to combine qualitative and quantitative methods to capitalize on the strengths of both types of research and compensate for the weaknesses of each method (Yin, 2018). I conducted a qualitative single-case study to explore strategies some leaders in nonprofit organizations deploy to align their systems

services with the needs of families. I did not evaluate a theory; rather, I explored strategies some leaders in nonprofit organizations deploy to align community food systems with the food service needs of families. The qualitative method was appropriate for this study.

Research Design

Conducting a single-case study was suitable for my research because it enabled me to explore in-depth strategies some leaders in nonprofit organizations deploy to align their systems services with the needs of families. Researchers use phenomenological design when exploring participants' subjective lived experiences and perspectives (Beckett & Kobayashi, 2020). Researchers use an ethnographic design when exploring participants' beliefs, norms, and cultural patterns in their natural settings (Beckett & Kobayashi, 2020). Researchers use narrative design to focus on individuals' experiences (Qureshi, 2018). Because I sought to explore in depth complex phenomena within a specific context, I concluded that the phenomenological, ethnographic, and narrative designs were unsuitable for this study. I opted for a single-case study design for this research, as it focused on exploring a specific phenomenon within a singular context, in contrast to a multiple-case study design which involves analyzing several cases (Yin, 2018).

Researchers achieve data saturation in a qualitative study when no new information or themes emerge (Braun & Clarke, 2021). I interviewed participants and reviewed organizational documents until I received the same information from the

interview responses and documents analysis. After three interviews, I determined I reached data saturation.

Population and Sampling

Case studies are used as an empirical method to assess a contemporary phenomenon (the case) in depth and within its real-world context, mainly when the line between phenomenon and setting is not obvious. I used purposive sampling in this study. I selected individuals who have experience in aligning the nonprofit organization's systems services with the needs of families. The three participants for this study were leaders with over 5 years of experience in a nonprofit organization in the southern United States. Because I was chosen as a researcher for the consulting capstone program, Walden University assigned me to a validated client organization per the DBA Consulting Capstone process, and the client organization's director was introduced to the 40-week capstone process and expectations. Following the process introduction, the client organization's director signed the DBA Research Agreement that serves as the master service agreement for Walden University's consulting partnership with the client organization.

In addition, I contacted the study's participants by giving them the consent form provided by Walden and requested their involvement; they were asked to declare their readiness to engage in the interview process by replying "I consent" to the form sent to them in the body of an email. According to the IRB approval procedures for this project, I conducted each interview over the phone. I conducted semistructured interviews to elicit participants' thoughts and opinions on the phenomenon. I used probing inquiries to

collect specific information on the subject, avoiding imposing meanings and encouraging a casual and comfortable dialogue. As a researcher, I ensured that study data were probed to attain saturation. I ensured that all data were treated similarly during the analytic coding process.

In the case of study research, researchers can fully comprehend a phenomenon by collecting data until no new significant information is collected (Campbell et al., 2020). This is saturation when no new information is discovered in the data and information gained through document analyses. I cross referenced transcripts of participant interviews to undertake data comparisons. I analyzed the data for instances of word repetition, keywords, phrases, or concepts. In an excel file, I manually coded data related to similar themes. Interviews with participants continued until the degree of variety in the data was so low that it no longer generated new viewpoints and stories. I used the Baldrige Performance Excellence Framework and Criteria (National Institute of Standards and Technology, 2018) to ensure a holistic, systems-based picture of the organization, its essential work processes, and organizational performance results. I conducted an organizational assessment to gather data that provided accurate information about the organization's performance and the elements that influence performance.

Ethical Research

Before contacting participants in my study for data collection as a scholar-consultant for the DBA consulting capstone, I obtained approval from Walden University's IRB (approval no. 06-01-21-1023324). An essential component of every educational or service-oriented organization that researches as part of its goal or function

is the IRB. Pearson (2020) defines an IRB as a body whose primary function is to protect the rights and welfare of research subjects, as well as to function as a sort of ethics commission, focusing on what is right or wrong, desirable, or undesirable.

To adhere to Walden University's ethical standards, the executive director of my client organization and two functional leaders of the client organization consented by replying "I consent" to the consent form sent via the body of an email. Informed consent is a widely accepted legal, ethical, and regulatory necessity and vital for human subjects' research (Falb et al., 2019). Informed consent is a legal prerequisite for ethical activity and serves as the bedrock of ethical research (Tolich & Tumilty, 2021). The consent form educates participants about the interview process, the voluntary nature of the study, the risks and advantages of participation, and the study's privacy rules (Falb et al., 2019). Also, the consent form contains the IRB approval number 06-01-21-1023324 and expiration date for Walden University, as well as the contact information for a Walden representative who may address questions about interviewees rights.

This study was conducted with civility and respect to establish confidence and facilitate the researcher-participant working relationship. To foster trust, copies of my summary of responses were sent to each respective participant so they could review the document, as part of member checking, to ensure I interpreted correctly (Falb et al., 2019). Researchers do member checking in a qualitative study to ensure that participants' responses are accurate, reliable, and legitimate (Heeb Desai et al., 2023). Member verification may comprise presenting all findings to participants and allowing them to assess and comment on them prior to the study's conclusion (Heeb Desai et al., 2023).

The study's participants verified the accuracy of their interview responses to ensure they appropriately reflect the participants' intended meaning. Researchers must tell participants about their rights as human subjects, the scientific question under investigation, the study technique, and potential risks or advantages (Daniel, 2019).

Participants in the study were not compensated or rewarded financially.

Participants were advised of the voluntary nature of the study and could change their mind later by telling me of their intention to withdraw from the study. Then, if anyone decided to withdraw, I would have destroyed any responses or information pertaining to that participant. Also, the phone number of a Walden University representative who can talk privately about participants rights was provided. I coded participants and interview data manually. I categorized the data according to Participants A, B, or C and inserted it into an Excel spreadsheet. This study did not contain study participants names or corporate connections to protect participants' confidentiality.

A framework for investigating influential vulnerability mediating factors included judgments about the service provider's motivation; trust, suspicion, and the consumer's need to evaluate; and the moderating role of power, control focus, and interaction duration in determining consumer compliance with informed consent (Daniel, 2019). Service employees must attend training before getting informed permission from study participants (Tolich & Tumilty, 2021). Informed consent safeguards personal information and privacy rights. A researcher's responsibility is to collect reliable, pertinent information and evaluate whether legal intervention is necessary. I safeguarded the confidentiality of study participants by redacting all personally identifiable information

from gathered data and interview transcripts. Before destroying them, I will retain all organizational paperwork, electronic data, and the encrypted Excel spreadsheet for 5 years. My findings may assist organizations in understanding the critical nature of informed consent while researching governmental and nongovernmental organizations.

Data Collection Instruments

To ensure the reliability and validity of my study, I collected data through semistructured interviews and reviewed various organizational documents. I meticulously scrutinized various essential organizational documents, including mission statements, internal survey data, financial statements, strategic plans, grant applications, customer satisfaction surveys, and performance outcome data sourced from GuideStar, a reputable database of nonprofit organizations. I obtained comprehensive background information and data by meticulously reviewing these organizational documents during the data collection process. This approach contributed significantly to the robustness of the findings of my study.

The interview is a common and essential source of case study evidence (Yin, 2018). I adhered to the line of inquiry established in my case study protocol (see Appendix A) and asked conversational questions in a neutral manner consistent with the needs of my line of inquiry. I posed open-ended questions (see Appendix B) to participants. Semistructured interviews were conducted to corroborate findings and ascertain interviewees' perceptions of reality. The semistructured interview process was appropriate for this study because participants can provide detailed responses. Participants and researchers converse in real time (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019).

Semistructured interviews allow researchers to address and pursue unexpected issues and broaden their investigation with questions (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019).

Quickly inscribed notes may be incomplete or partial because it is difficult to ask questions and write answers simultaneously. The interviewer may face difficulties due to the participants' unexpected behavior. Interviews have a high return rate, fewer incomplete responses, the possibility of reality, controlled response order, and relative flexibility (Yin, 2018). In contrast, interviews have some drawbacks, such as taking much time and making it more likely for bias and inconsistency to happen (Yin, 2018).

Documents are an inexpensive and excellent source of background information; their application is typically specific, steady, and unobtrusive, as the documents were not generated specifically for the case study (Yin, 2018). The downsides of document use include the likelihood of inapplicable, disorganized, inaccessible, out-of-date, incomplete, erroneous, or biased information resulting from selective information representation (Yin, 2018).

To improve the reliability and validity of the data-gathering process in this study, I employed member checking, which meant checking in with the participants on a biweekly basis throughout the data collection and analysis process and verifying specific themes and interpretations based on the data analysis. I will also use methodological triangulation to check my collected data and analyze data from interviews, organizational papers, and GuideStar to ensure the data and information match up and fit together.

Data Collection Technique

I employed semistructured interviews and document review to acquire qualitative information for the research study. I initiated data collection after receiving approval from Walden University's IRB (see Fusch et al., 2018). As a researcher collecting data, I recognized the importance of managing bias. Qualitative studies involve techniques such as interviews, questionnaires, observations, and focus groups for data collection (Yin, 2018). I collected data for this study through semistructured interviews conducted via telephone and video, publicly available information, and a review of organizational documents such as articles of incorporation and operational manuals provided by the ABZ nonprofit organization. Throughout the data collection process, I collected additional relevant information from sources such as the GuideStar website, which specializes in reporting on nonprofit organizations in the United States. In addition to interviews, I analyzed data from annual reports, financial statements, and client/customer surveys that were electronically transmitted and securely stored in an electronic filing system. I conducted interviews relevant to the overarching research question and embedded them within the Baldrige framework and criteria to explore the research question within an organization's holistic systems-based evaluation.

The qualitative study protocol included a step-by-step guide for data collection and a list of field questions addressed by the researcher, indicating the researcher's mental agenda (Yin, 2018). To prepare, I drafted a case study protocol that included background information, substantive issues to be explored, data collection procedures, and interview questions. To ensure consistency and standardization in the data collection process, I used

a structured approach to data collection. However, I acknowledged that the protocol might limit participants' responses, leading to a narrow scope of research. I used phone and video interviews to reach participants in their locations. Phone and video interviews offer advantages such as cost-effectiveness, flexibility, and convenience. However, I recognized that these interviews might not provide a conducive environment for participants to express themselves freely. Technical issues such as poor network connectivity might affect the data quality collected.

To improve the reliability and validity of the data collected, I conducted member checking. Member checking allowed participants to review content and ensure that the data accurately reflected their thoughts and experiences (Hays & McKibben, 2021). However, I acknowledged that participants might provide limited feedback or may not provide feedback at all, leading to a prolonged data collection process. I used methodological triangulation to enhance the study's validity, which combined data from various sources to validate the findings (Daniel, 2019).

However, I recognized that combining data from various sources may be time-consuming and require additional resources. The interpretation of the data may be challenging due to differences in the data collection procedures. During the data collection process, I ensured accuracy by summarizing and restating the information obtained during the interview and using member checking to validate the collected data. Additionally, I used methodological triangulation to align and integrate data from sources such as GuideStar, client organizational documents, and interview transcripts, thus enhancing the study's validity.

Data Organization Techniques

To keep track of the research data, I followed a 6-step process. First, I gathered peer-reviewed papers from various sources, primarily the Walden Library, EBSCO, and ProQuest, and then emailed the citations and articles to myself to make them easier to locate. Following that, I utilized an excel spreadsheet with a Gmail task reminder to track what I have accomplished and what worked. Additionally, I utilized the doctoral degree coach program provided by Walden University and the Walden University DBA consulting capstone doctoral study checklist to ensure that I adhered to the study's requirements. Following that, I used Microsoft OneNote to take notes on things I read and keep track of my searches via a search log. Finally, I used Citefast to manage my citations because it allows me to email them to myself—I then stored the citations, references, and project drafts to Microsoft One Drive and Google Drive to guarantee I have a backup of my data. This study data will be kept safe and secure for 5 years and then erased from Gmail and Microsoft Drive.

Data Analysis

The purpose of this qualitative single-case study was to explore strategies used by a nonprofit organization to align its system services with the needs of families. Case study designs help identify problems and guide further data collection and analysis (Rashid et al., 2019). Researchers must conduct an in-depth review of each interview before proceeding with detailed data analysis to ensure data credibility (Daniel, 2019). Data analysis involves working with research data to discover meaningful themes, patterns, and descriptions that answer the central research question (Yin, 2018). I

analyzed responses from study participants to explore strategies that align their system services with the needs of families. A comprehensive review of the strategies that align the organization's system services with the needs of families will allow for the assessment of data accuracy and analysis that will lead to the creation of new knowledge.

Triangulation in research refers to the use of multiple data sets, methods, theories, or investigators to answer a research question (Hays & McKibben, 2021).

Researchers use triangulation for a more holistic perspective on a specific research question, and it is a research strategy that helps enhance the validity and credibility of the research findings. According to Yin (2018), triangulating measures from various sources strengthens the validity of a study by countering bias that may arise from single measures and contributes to establishing facts. I used methodological triangulation because it allows multiple techniques within a given methodology. In contrast, the between-method triangulation that combines sources from different methodologies is usually qualitative and quantitative (Farquhar et al., 2020). Applying methodological triangulation in the case study can increase the internal validity of the findings (Fusch et al., 2018) and contribute to criteria such as trustworthiness (Hays & McKibben, 2021), confirmability, dependability, transferability, and credibility.

I analyzed data by including participants in the interpretation process. I used thematic analysis to analyze the data collected and asked follow-up questions for clarity. I described the data in a formal report to participants. The five-step approach to data analysis enables researchers to analyze textual data (Yin, 2018).

Yin (2018) proposed a five-step approach to data analysis, which includes the following steps: (a) data compilation, (b) data disassembly, (c) data reassembly, (d) interpretation of data meaning, and (e) data conclusion (Yin, 2018).

Data compilation allows for identification and development of themes.

Disassembling data reduced and eliminated consistent themes related to the phenomenon.

Reassembling the data determined core themes applicable to the research question. I interpreted the meaning of the data by comparing the interview transcripts, reflexive journals, and reviewed documents. With this five-step approach I concluded by summarizing the data into an individual structural description of experiences.

Managing and summarizing data is an essential component of the qualitative data analysis process (Hays & McKibben, 2021). I used an Excel spreadsheet to generate a matrix and chart the data. I summarized the data by category from each transcript while retaining the original meanings of the interviewees' words or responses.

As a researcher, I focused on compiling strategies used by nonprofit managers to align their system services with the needs of families. Qualitative data analysis is an effective method to uncover and gain insight into themes, patterns, concepts, insights, and understanding of the phenomenon (Yin, 2018). The key themes of leadership, governance, strategic planning, customer engagement, and societal responsibility can be correlated with the literature and the BSC framework in the following ways:

Food insecurity presents significant challenges for nonprofit organizations, including workforce shortages, limited funding, and difficulties retaining donors. To effectively address these challenges, nonprofit organizations must actively engage in

strategic planning and management. Key themes of leadership, governance, strategic planning, customer engagement, and societal responsibility align with the existing literature on addressing food insecurity and the principles of a BSC framework.

Leadership and governance are crucial in effectively guiding nonprofit organizations to address food insecurity. By fostering a culture of high performance, customer focus, and ethical behavior, nonprofit leaders can ensure the overall success of their organizations. Strategic planning serves as a vital tool for aligning the operations of nonprofits with their mission and objectives, allowing them to efficiently manage resources and develop targeted programs to combat food insecurity. The strategic planning process involves soliciting input from various stakeholders and conducting ongoing evaluations to ensure the effectiveness of implemented strategies.

Customer engagement is a critical theme in the context of addressing food insecurity. Nonprofit organizations must actively engage with their diverse customer base through multiple communication channels, integrating their valuable feedback to adapt and improve services accordingly. By measuring customer satisfaction and engagement, nonprofits can continuously enhance their efforts to serve better the needs of the communities they support.

Societal responsibility represents another essential theme in addressing food insecurity. Nonprofits collaborate with suppliers, partners, and local farmers to minimize negative impacts and promote ethical behavior within the food system. They aim to establish a more equitable and sustainable food system that effectively addresses disparities in access to adequate nutrition.

The BSC framework provides a comprehensive approach to performance measurement and management. Nonprofit organizations can align their activities with their strategic goals by adopting four financial, customer, and internal business processes and learning and growth perspectives. A BSC enables nonprofits to effectively track and communicate their mission and strategy, promoting strategic alignment and fostering organizational learning.

Existing literature suggests that implementing a BSC framework is highly beneficial for nonprofit organizations in measuring performance and evaluating the effectiveness of their strategic implementation. By linking performance measures to compensation and involving all employees in developing a BSC, nonprofits can motivate and engage their workforce, fostering a collaborative environment that generates creative solutions to achieve set targets.

Overall, the key themes of leadership, governance, strategic planning, customer engagement, and societal responsibility align with the literature on addressing food insecurity and the principles of the BSC framework. By embracing these themes and utilizing a BSC approach, nonprofit organizations can enhance their capacity to effectively address food insecurity, promote equitable food systems, and support communities in need. By using triangulation and qualitative data analysis methods, I was able to uncover and gain insight into themes, patterns, concepts, insights, and understanding of the phenomenon. To analyze textual data, manage and summarize data, and generate a matrix and chart the data, I used the 5-step approach to data analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2021).

Reliability and Validity

Reliability in qualitative research pertains to the trustworthiness of the research, particularly regarding the appropriate methods selected and how those methods were applied and implemented (Rose & Johnson, 2020). According to Daniel (2019), a qualitative study's credibility, reliability, confirmability, and transferability all contribute to its trustworthiness. Dependability is necessary for a qualitative study to be credible, while transferability requires that it be both dependable and credible. Researchers consider selection criteria for study participants to address research validity (Daniel, 2019).

Consistency in the methodological process over time and across researchers or approaches is what reliability tests (Rose & Johnson, 2020). The sense of reliability can be enhanced by justifying the methods used and by clarifying analytical procedures. In my study, I selected participants who were best suited to respond to the research questions and to provide a better understanding of the phenomenon under study. My research logbook was valuable in evaluating the collected data and contributed to the reliability and validity of the study. I conducted member verification to allow participants to validate the integrity of the data. Member checking was also used with study participants to validate data analysis categories, interpretations, and conclusions (Candela, 2019). Additionally, respondents from the single-case study organization, who are leaders in decision-making and strategy implementation, were included in this research.

Reliability

In a qualitative research study, reliability refers to the soundness of the research, particularly to the suitable methodologies employed and their application (FitzPatrick, 2019). Reliability addresses the consistency and clarity associated with the actual conduct of the research, thereby increasing the likelihood that other researchers could not only discern but also undertake many of the research methods described (Roberts et al., 2019). To improve the rigor of this study, I employed members checking to establish trustworthiness. The findings' dependability is crucial to the success of high-quality qualitative research. Member checking, also known as participant or respondent validation, is a technique used to evaluate the trustworthiness of results (Candela, 2019). I returned the interview data to participants to confirm correctness and consistency with their experiences.

Validity

In a qualitative study, validity is the appropriateness" of the tools, processes, and data (Rose & Johnson, 2020). Validity shows that the selected research design for the study is appropriate to the research questions, the application of data collection methods and analysis, and the reporting of the outcome. Researchers should consider confirmability, credibility, dependability, and transferability to demonstrate and assure that the research measures what the researcher intends to measure or that the research findings are accurate. (Abdalla et al., 2018).

Credibility

The credibility criterion entails demonstrating that the findings of qualitative research are credible or believable from the standpoint of the study's participants (Heeb Desai et al., 2023). Because the objective of qualitative research is to describe or understand the phenomena of interest through the participant's eyes, only the participants can rate the results' trustworthiness properly. To establish credibility, I employed the approach of member checking and sharing the data, interpretations, and conclusions with study participants, allowing participants to explain their intents, fix errors and give more information, as necessary.

Dependability

In research methodology, qualitative and quantitative research are associated with distinct concepts of rigor. While qualitative research emphasizes the credibility and trustworthiness of data, quantitative research prioritizes validity and rigor (Daniel, 2019). In this study, I employed the Baldrige Criteria for Performance Excellence (National Institute of Standards and Technology, 2018) as a framework to structure my data-gathering interviews and document explorations. By adopting this holistic, systems-based approach to evaluate my client organization, I sought to enhance the dependability and reliability of my study. To ensure the validity of data interpretation, I engaged in member-checking after collecting data from interviews. The study aimed to investigate strategies for aligning nonprofit organizations' system services with the needs of families, to help nonprofit leaders improve their ability to use system services to meet the needs of the families they serve.

Confirmability

Confirmability is an essential consideration in qualitative research, as it addresses the potential for researcher bias to affect the methods and findings of the study. Buus and Perron (2020) note that this involves recognizing the impact of the researcher's position, experiences, and perspectives on the research process. Aspers and Corte (2019) further emphasize that confirmability encompasses several key aspects, including truth, consistency, and applicability.

In this research study, confirmability was implemented through several strategies. For instance, using participants' interview questions helped ensure that the data collected was directly relevant to their experiences and perspectives. Member checking was also employed to validate the accuracy of the information captured during data collection. This process allowed participants to review the findings and identify any inaccuracies or misrepresentations.

Methodological triangulation was used as a means of further enhancing confirmability. This involved comparing the information gathered through the interviews with data retrieved from secondary sources to identify any similarities or differences in the findings. By using multiple methods to collect and analyze data, the study increased the likelihood that the findings accurately represented the experiences and perspectives of the participants.

Overall, the implementation of confirmability in this research study helped ensure that the methods and findings were valid, consistent, and applicable to the research question. By taking steps to minimize the potential for researcher bias, the study provided

a rigorous and trustworthy account of the experiences and perspectives of the participants.

Transferability

According to Heeb Desai et al. (2023), comparing the characteristics of the participants or informants to the demographic information of the researched group is a helpful strategy for confirming transferability. In other words, a qualitative study is transferable if the findings are relevant to individuals not involved in the study or if the findings may be applied to the readers' own experiences (Daniel, 2019). Transferability is achieved by qualitative researchers providing extensive descriptions of real-world circumstances and participant understandings of the world. They also aid in communicating with practitioners and researchers (Daniel, 2019).

Transition and Summary

Section 2 of this study included a review of several aspects of the research, starting with a reminder of the study's purpose statement, which was an essential component of the research. Finally, I discussed my role as a researcher, the involvement of the participants, and the research method and design used in this study. In addition, I described the population and sampling, ethical considerations, and other aspects of data, such as data collection instruments, technique, analysis, reliability, validity, and other aspects of data analysis. Section 3 of this study begins with an overview, a presentation of the findings, applications to professional practice, implications for social change, recommendations for action and further research, reflections on the study's findings, and a conclusion.

Section 3: Organizational Profile

The purpose of this qualitative single-case study was to explore strategies some leaders in nonprofit organizations deploy to align community food systems with the food service needs of families. By using the organizational profile and Baldrige performance system, I was able to develop a framework for leaders to develop synergistic and effective strategies. This comprehensive framework is designed to facilitate informed decision-making, enabling leaders to implement initiatives that are not only responsive to the evolving needs of families but also contribute to the sustainable growth and impact of their organizations.

Initiated in 2006, the ABZ organization started with a humble gesture by its founder, quickly cultivating community involvement and filling a significant gap in the child-focused food assistance programs in the region. Officially founded in late 2007 with the help of student volunteers, ABZ has become a refuge for local families, offering educational programs on nutrition and wellness among other services. Expanding through generous community and campus support, it now promotes health equity and societal dignity, adhering to principles of leadership and strategic planning. Now, ABZ symbolizes community transformation, having supported 1,500 children, and distributed extensive meal bags and snacks in North Carolina, demonstrating resilient community collaboration.

Key Factors Worksheet

Organizational Description

ABZ is a 501(c)(3) nongovernmental and nonprofit organization. The leaders of ABZ provide hunger relief and nutrition education programs to children and adolescents in a North Carolina county who are at risk for hunger when they do not have access to meals while at school. ABZ seeks to meet the nutritional needs of local children, increase children's knowledge of nutrition and the benefits to their long-term health, foster positive attitudes toward long-term eating habits, and improve children's overall health.

Organizational Environment

During my discussion with the director of the client organization, we covered several important topics, including product offerings; the mission, vision, and values (MVV); workforce profile; assets; and regulatory requirements. ABZ is a nonprofit organization that, at the time of the study, offered its services through three programs: ABZ's at Home, Marketplace, and Nutrition Ed Program. These programs are essential to the success of the organization as they align with ABZ's mission and vision. The primary goal of ABZ is to provide healthy, emergency food aid every week to hungry preschool, elementary, and middle school children living in their targeted communities. ABZ envisions a community where all children have equal access to nutritious food and the knowledge to promote optimal health, well-being, and dignity.

To achieve its vision, ABZ leaders have created several programs, including ABZ's at Home, where volunteers deliver food bags containing 10 meals and snacks of nutritious nonperishables, fresh produce, and monthly interactive nutritional education

lessons. This program has been critical to the organization, and volunteers have delivered over 200,000 bags of food directly to children's homes. ABZ's Market Place program allows families to customize the type of food they receive weekly, promoting optimal health and well-being to children and their families.

ABZ's team operates under the influence of their central skill set and ethos, collectively termed as MVV, detailed in Table 1. These principles serve as the foundation upon which ABZ's leaders base the structure and operation of the organization's systems and services. For nonprofit entities like ABZ, mission statements are pivotal; they act as navigational aids in their operational journey. Having a well-defined vision and values is instrumental in concentrating the organization's efforts towards goal attainment.

Table 1

ABZ Mission, Vision, and Values

Component	Statement
Core competency	Adaptability, dedicated volunteers, and workforce committed to creating a healthier community for local children
Mission and vision	ABZ's mission is to provide healthy, emergency food aid weekly to hungry preschool, elementary, and middle school children living in their community. ABZ is. [ABZ is] committed to creating communities where all children have equitable access to nutritious food and the knowledge to promote optimal health, well-being, and dignity.
Values: guiding principles	Trust in one another to act and speak with transparency, integrity, and respect is vital to ABZ. At ABZ, everyone works hard to achieve shared goals and assume the best intentions. Teamwork is essential to achieve the ABZ mission; collaborative work promotes an environment that fosters friendship and loyalty, cooperates, compromises, supports one another, and utilizes diverse strengths at ABZ. Commitment and dedication to ensuring the well-being of kids in the community ABZ serve through arduous work, adapting to meet the needs of the kids they serve, engaging and involving the families they serve, and conducting ABZ's mission for years to come. People are the primary priority at ABZ. ABZ values those who serve and are served by ABZ; they treat people with kindness, dignity, and respect.

Note. ABZ is the pseudonym of the study organization.

The core competency of ABZ's leadership and employees is to create a healthier community for local children in alignment with the organization's MVV. This is the organization's primary strength that enables it to achieve its goals and objectives. ABZ's leaders are dedicated to ensuring that children in their communities have access to nutritious food, good health and well-being, and education, and are not living in poverty.

In any organization, individuals work together to achieve their goals. While organizational charts provide a basic structure for management, there is more to an organization than just the charts. Poorly structured organizations can suffer from slow decision-making, lack of coordination between activities, unclear job responsibilities, conflicts that hurt the team, inconsistent work schedules, and slow adaptation to changes in technology and the environment (Kjellström et al., 2020). In contrast, well-structured organizations can improve their administration, encourage growth and diversity, and simplify operations. A well-managed organization can only achieve its planned objectives and strategies.

The organizational structure of ABZ at the time of this study included a board of directors (BOD) consisting of 12 members; two senior staff members; team/staff members; and contract members with assigned titles, educational backgrounds, and work experience. This well-designed system allows employees to work together towards common goals and objectives. Table 2 offers ABZ's workforce profile.

Table 2*Organizational Structure – Workforce Profile*

Executive Leadership: 12 Board of Directors	
Title	Educational/Experiences
Board co-chair	NA
Board co-chair	NA
Board Director	NA
Board Director	NA
Board Director	NA
Board Director	NA
Board Director	NA
Board Director	NA
Board Director	NA
Board Director	NA
Board Director	NA
Board Director	NA
EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP: 2 SENIOR STAFF MEMBERS	
Title	Educational/Experiences
Executive Director	NA
Program Director	NA
Team/Staff Members	
Title	Educational/Experiences
Family Engagement & Program Director	NA
Volunteer & Program Director	NA
PT Senior Administrative Specialist	NA

PT Director of Community Relations	NA
PT Spanish Family Engagement Coordinator	NA
Contract Members	
Translator	NA
Seasonal	NA
Seasonal	NA
Bookkeeping	NA
Volunteers	NA
Volunteers	NA

ABZ's entire workforce is dedicated to achieving the organization's MVV. While individuals with a college degree are preferred, ABZ also considers applicants with a high school diploma and relevant work experience. Senior leaders require all employees to undergo an annual performance evaluation and submit to a criminal background check, as well as maintain a department of public safety fingerprint clearance card, to ensure they uphold ABZ's MVV (see Table 1).

Assets. ABZ's assets include laptop computers, desks, tables, and six basic freezers. The company's operations are currently being conducted from leased space, but its leadership is securing a permanent home for its operations. ABZ does not have a vehicle, so volunteers use their own cars or trucks to transport food bags to children in need.

Regulatory Requirements. ABZ adheres to all relevant state and federal laws and is a tax-exempt nonprofit organization under the Internal Revenue Services' Section 501(c)(3), licensed in a southern state. The leaders of ABZ follow the guidelines and

regulations set forth by the agency, and they file an annual Form 990 for financial reporting. ABZ also conducts audits of financial records, participant records, and employee records to ensure compliance with federal, state, and local laws. An independent certified public accountant conducts annual financial and operational audits of ABZ from the North Carolina central and eastern solicitors. The organization leaders follow all necessary health and safety regulations to prevent COVID-19 transmission, requiring families to wear masks and wash their hands.

ABZ conducts background checks on its delivery workers and pairs them together when delivering food to customers' houses. Volunteers must attend a pre-onboarding orientation before starting, and the organization requires them to be at least 14 years old. However, the minimum age requirement for volunteers may change in the future.

Organizational Relationships

Organizational Structure. ABZ is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization with a structure and governance system that allows executive leadership to balance strategic alignment and decentralized operational responsibilities. The BOD governs overall policy, serves as the fiduciary, and is accountable for activities conducted in the agency's name, while the director oversees daily operations per the bylaws. ABZ's leaders provide direct services to clients using all organizational resources and funding from grants, contributions, donations, and program service fee revenue.

Customers and Stakeholders. ABZ's clients include children in preschool, elementary, middle school, youths, adults, parents, teachers, staff, volunteers, and the community. Although the organization does not have a specified age for the children they

serve, their target audience is children (see Table 3 for key client/customer and stakeholder requirements).

Table 3*Key Clients/Customers and Stakeholders' Requirements*

Key client/customer	Key requirement	Alignment
Children (0–18)	ABZ serves all children and does not have a specific age range. However, ABZ primarily serves kids from 0 – 18 years old.	Client requirements are assessed quarterly as part of ABZ's strategy process. Annual survey data are examined and incorporated into safety and strategic planning.
Board of directors	Accountability in a fiduciary capacity, planning strategically, continuity with the mission and guiding ideals, governance of a policy's general direction, and adherence to established policies and procedures.	Key stakeholder requirements are examined and incorporated into annual strategy planning as part of ABZ's strategic approach.
Workforce	The team consists members of diverse backgrounds, educational levels, perspectives, races, experiences, and interests. The entire workforce is committed to ABZ's vision of ensuring that all children have access to equitable access to nutritious food and the knowledge to promote optimal health, well-being, and dignity.	Key stakeholder requirements are examined and incorporated into annual strategy planning as part of ABZ's strategic approach.
Community	Volunteer, contribute, or participate in some way.	
Supplier, partner, and collaborator	Provision input to improve ABZ's services, volunteer work or cash that benefits ABZ's programs. Adhere to ABZ's ethical standards, and maintain trust, integrity, and transparency in financial reports.	
School	ABZ serves schools in the county in which it is located.	

Note. ABZ is the pseudonym of the study organization.

Suppliers, Partners, and Collaborators. The capability of ABZ organization to develop new and innovative programs, facilities, and resources to serve its clients is made possible by the significant role of its key suppliers, partners, and collaborators. ABZ's key suppliers, partners, and collaborators and their role in the organization's innovativeness and competitiveness are shown in Table 4.

Table 4

ABZ's Key Suppliers, Partners, and Collaborators

Key partner	Influence on organizational systems	Influence on innovation and competitiveness
Suppliers (farmers, wholesale vendors, other food vendors, co-operative grocery store, and food bank)	Make our programming possible, increase efficiency through delivery, dependable supply allows us to focus our efforts on other things.	Farm partnerships influence our innovation and ability to strengthen our impact.
Partners (financial support)	Makes ABZ programming possible, improves procedures and systems through IT investment, consistent income allows the organization to focus on other system services, and strengthens ABZ's sustainability, growth, and improvement.	Grantor requirements may challenge ABZ's innovation
Collaborators (other nonprofits)	Collaboration with local nongovernmental organizations prompts ABZ to consider current projects and how they may best collaborate.	Brainstorming fosters innovation and may lead to future grant opportunities.

Note. ABZ is the name of the study organization.

Communication Methods. The executive director conducts regular meetings with partners, collaborators, and suppliers to maintain business relationships and effective communication (see Table 5). Such business relationships and effective communication by ABZ leadership occur in in-person meetings, conference calls, e-mails, and newsletters.

Table 5*ABZ's Communication Methods*

Key partner	Communication method		
	In-person meeting	Conference call	Email/text
Supplier	Yes	Yes	Yes
Partner	Yes	Yes	Yes
Collaborator	Yes	Yes	Yes

Note. ABZ is the pseudonym of the study organization.

Organizational Situation

ABZ organization has cemented its position as a forerunner among nonprofits, chiefly due to its adaptability and strong community engagement. The organization's competitive milieu is defined by its partnerships with suppliers, which allows it to swiftly address client demands, introduce novel services, and tackle pivotal community concerns. Collaborative initiatives, such as the alliance with three other nonprofits, have not only maximized stakeholder value but also fostered a more integrated approach to problem-solving. Its strategic downtown location acts as a magnet for volunteers and donors, amplifying the impact on its primary target demographic: children from low-income families in a North Carolina county facing food insecurity. These strategic decisions, underpinned by an unwavering commitment to community betterment and addressing childhood hunger, have enabled ABZ to outpace its competitors.

Competitive Environment

ABZ organization's local competitors are nonprofit organizations. The relationship with its partners and suppliers gives leaders of ABZ organization the ability to meet client's needs, develop innovative programs and services, and address social issues that plague the community. ABZ's leaders achieved an early partnership with three other nonprofits to better serve the stakeholders and communities; the partnership with local farmers, for instance, allows ABZ to provide the best products to the children and adolescents it serves. Its location in the community's downtown area gives the organization excellent visibility and allows ABZ to secure more volunteers and donors. The target population is children with food insecurity, parents who may have children who need additional food, and low-income families in a county in North Carolina.

Competitive Position and Competitiveness Changes. The key determinants to ABZ success in comparison to other nonprofit organizations include a commitment and dedication to the community: a commitment to nurturing families, transforming lives, and a dedication to ending childhood hunger. Also, food delivery to the homes of families instead of school and afterschool may be a positive or negative competitive change. Partnerships with local nonprofits will allow serving the community better. Partnership with local farmers supplying high-quality local food has increased the impact of ABZ. The improvement and increase of employee benefits from 2020 as increased employee retention.

Comparative Data. ABZ uses the data gathered from Orange County children participating in free and reduced lunches as a guide to determine how many children they

are serving in comparison to the need. To ensure that employees are compensated, ABZ employs a third-party survey. ABZ uses articles about the impact of childhood hunger. ABZ intends to launch the universal registration form in collaboration with two other nonprofits to increase community engagement, promote dignified food service and delivery to families, and strengthen partnerships with other community nonprofits. ABZ does not presently use comparative data from outside the industry.

Strategic Context

ABZ leaders' strategic plan is a living document and may be revised as circumstances dictate. ABZ leaders' strategic goals are not mutually exclusive, and because they overlap, effective strategies applied to one goal may often benefit another. Furthermore, because of their interdependence, strategies are built on each other in support of the plan. ABZ strategic plan is not a comprehensive evaluation of all organizational aspects. Rather, its intent is to focus on current vital issues through collaboration with its partners. Strategic challenges are related to organizational culture and structure, finances, operations, market trends, and customer retention. ABZ strategic advantages include programs designed around the families ABZ serves, facility locations, partnerships, services, and reputation. Table 6 shows ABZ's strategic context areas and its key strategic challenges.

Table 6

Strategic Context

Area	Key strategic challenge	Key strategic advantage
Programs and services	Meeting the individual food needs and preferences of families, ABZ serves. Developing meaningful relationships	Getting fresh food from farms and other donors and being able to deliver quickly to families.

	and involving them in the overall organization. Assessing the right strategy to implement justice-oriented strategies in addition to the services offered to families.	Connecting directly to families instead of connecting through schools and social workers.
Operations	ABZ presently has access to limited technological pieces of equipment for operation. ABZ now operates in a recently acquired spacious facility to accommodate its operations.	Operational for 14 years with effective processes to pack and deliver food efficiently. Committed volunteers who show up 3–4 times a week and committed staff who multitask. ABZ is a result-focused organization that allows for employee schedule flexibility.
Social responsibilities	Logistics from two delivery drivers delivering food to the same route are not environmentally friendly, it leaves more carbon footprint. Using plastic bags even if it is a recycled bag is harmful to the community and the environment.	Partnership and support of local farms, recyclable products, compost, reuse plastic bags, donated plastic bags, source misprinted plastic bags. Trying to be aware and mindful of compensation of employees to be consistent with ABZ's values.
Workforce	Not being able to identify and hire people with variety of backgrounds.	Committed staff, flexibility in schedule for employees, being able to get fresh food to families weekly.

Note. ABZ is the pseudonym of the study organization.

Performance Improvement System

To perpetuate its success and address emerging challenges, ABZ has instituted a comprehensive performance improvement system. This system is rooted in continuous feedback, relying heavily on historical prompt results and data-driven insights. Each organizational project undergoes a rigorous evaluation phase, where its effectiveness, outreach, and overall impact are assessed against predetermined benchmarks. This not only identifies areas of improvement but also showcases best practices that can be replicated across other projects. Feedback loops are integrated into every project phase, ensuring real-time corrections and enhancements. Additionally, regular training sessions

are held for the staff, equipping them with the latest tools and methodologies to refine processes. By embracing a culture of perpetual learning and improvement, ABZ aims to fortify its organizational processes, ensuring they remain aligned with its overarching mission and objectives.

Leadership Triad: Leadership, Strategy, and Customers

Leadership

ABZ's senior leaders include the BOD, executive director, program director, and interim director, who work together to guide initiatives to improve food nutrition and education programs (see Figure 3). During strategic planning, ABZ's leaders review and affirm their MVV, which are communicated to team members, suppliers, and collaborators through various means (see Table 7). Senior leaders model expected behaviors, demonstrate their commitment to values, and set a tone of expectations through open communication and accountability for legal and ethical behavior.

ABZ's senior leaders actively participate in national trainings to uphold best practices for service delivery and meticulously monitor agency outcomes on a monthly, quarterly, and annual basis to guarantee sustained effectiveness. To foster transparency, they encourage open communication across all organizational tiers, utilizing methods such as staff and leadership meetings, phone calls, and email correspondence, where everyone is urged to align with the MVV.

The leadership not only circulates company news and accolades through online platforms but also nurtures a dynamic culture through well-strategized staff training and

satisfaction surveys. This approach ensures a consistent feedback loop and higher engagement levels within the organization.

Moreover, ABZ sustains a dynamic dialogue with the community and stakeholders through robust communication on its website and social media platforms, ensuring everyone remains informed and engaged. This collaborative spirit is further enriched by the active involvement of former clients, some of whom hold positions on the BOD. In conclusion, ABZ's leadership forges a clear pathway, setting firm expectations and fostering a high-performance, customer-centric culture. This is cultivated through transparent communication, rigorous accountability measures, and vibrant recognition programs.

Figure 3

ABZ's Leadership System



Note. ABZ is the pseudonym of the study organization.

Table 7

Senior Leadership Communication Mechanisms

Communication Method	Stakeholders							Purpose					
	Families	Workforce	Donors	Community	BO D	Suppliers	Partners	Strategic Planning	Key Decisions	Engagement	2-way Communication	Motivation	Frequency: D=daily, W=weekly, M=monthly, A=annually, O=ongoing, Q=quarterly, N=as needed, not applicable =NA

Phone Calls	N	N	N	O	Q	N	N	N	A	O	N	O
One-on-One Discussion	O	O	M	O	O	O	O	Q	O	O	N	O
Email	N	O	M	N A	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	O
Communicate MVV	A	N	O	N A	O	N A	N	N	N	W	NA	W
Staff Meetings	N A	W	N A	N A	N A	N A	N A	N	N	O	O	O
BOD Meeting Minutes	N A	NA	N A	N A	Q	N A	N A	N	N	O	NA	N A
Leadership Meetings	Q	W	N A	N A	Q	N A	Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	N A
Strategic Planning	N A	O	N A	N A	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	N
Staff Training	N A	Q	N A	N A	N A	N A	N A	N	N	O	O	N A
Satisfaction Survey	Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	Q
Focus Groups	A	NA	N A	N A	N A	N A	N A	NA	N A	N A	NA	N A
Social Media	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Website	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O

Note: Frequency: D=daily, W=weekly, M=monthly, A=annually, O=ongoing, Q=quarterly, N=as needed, not applicable =NA

ABZ's senior leadership team, reporting to a community-represented BOD, steers the organization with utmost efficiency and effectiveness. The Board comprises individuals chosen for their expertise, aligned with ABZ's requirements. Accountability for leadership is emphasized through periodic performance reviews. Furthermore, the Board operates through specialized committees—like Finance, Development, and Continuous Quality Improvement—which convene monthly to enhance decision-making. Both internal and independent external audits scrutinize organizational practices, with findings reviewed at the highest levels. Annual evaluations of senior staff and leadership ensure alignment with organizational goals, utilizing a mix of formal assessments and

informal feedback. Ethical behavior stands paramount, with leadership championing values of integrity, trust, respect, and transparency. This ethos is reinforced through regular training, weekly reviews, and collaborations with community entities like the local police. Moreover, the senior leaders proactively engage with community stakeholders, including local farmers, to ensure that ABZ's services have positive societal impacts, thus strengthening their commendable reputation in the community.

Governance and Societal Responsibilities

ABZ's senior leaders are responsible for overseeing the organization's effective and efficient operation. They report to the BOD and oversee organizational governance. The BOD is made up of members from the local community who are selected based on their expertise and the organization's specific needs. Accountability for the senior leaders' actions is clearly communicated throughout the performance review cycle. Monthly board meetings are held to review, analyze, and manage the senior leaders' critical results reporting.

The ABZ BOD has several committees, such as the Finance Committee, Development Committee, Continuous Quality Improvement Committee, and Board Governance Committee. Each committee meets once a month, and members report back to the BOD for decision-making. Internal audits are conducted, and the results are reviewed by the senior leaders and the BOD. An external accounting firm also performs an independent audit, and the findings are reviewed with the senior leaders and the BOD.

The senior leaders and staff members are evaluated annually, and the BOD evaluates the director's performance based on the achievement of organizational goals.

The senior leaders assess each other's performance based on the organization's, departments', and individual goals, using evaluation results, team member survey results, and informal inputs to improve leadership effectiveness.

ABZ's senior leadership team collaborates with suppliers, partners, and collaborators to avoid any negative societal impacts from its services. They also work closely with the community to anticipate concerns and monitor national and local trends to anticipate public concerns as the demand for food grows. ABZ's senior leaders have a good reputation in the community and collaborate with local farmers to provide fresh food to families, buying from them if more fresh food is required.

ABZ's senior executives expect ethical behavior, starting with the values of integrity, trust, respect, and transparency. The senior leader's model ethical behavior and supports a culture that promotes and ensures ethical behavior in all interactions. ABZ's direct services staff are trained in the American Counselling Association Code of Ethics and the organization's policies and procedures. Ethical behavior is reviewed during weekly team meetings with supervisors and staff members. ABZ staff attends quarterly meetings with the local police department to ensure societal well-being as part of the organization's strategy and daily operations.

Strategy

Strategy Development

ABZ's BOD, committee chairs, and staff all play a crucial role in the organization's annual strategic planning process. To gather feedback on the process, ABZ leadership sends surveys to stakeholders including staff, board members, volunteers,

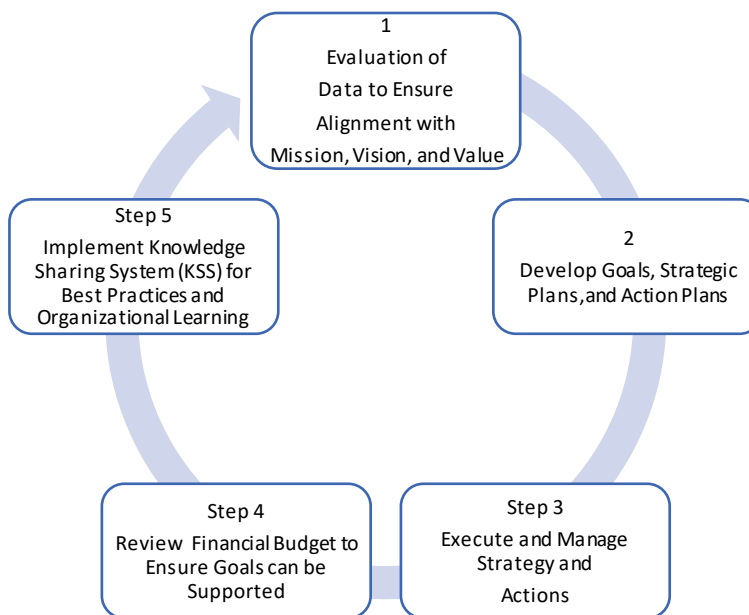
families, the parent advisory board, and donors. The BOD defines the annual goals for ABZ, and the organization is currently working on a project to involve the parent advisory board in the strategic planning process.

The process starts with leadership brainstorming about the organization's needs, followed by a strategic planning development workshop for leaders. ABZ then gathers feedback from stakeholders through surveys, individual and group conversations, and staff meetings. The board is consulted on the goals, reviews the strategy, and approves it before the fiscal year (FY) begins. The strategic objectives of ABZ are coordinated, so effective strategies for one goal often benefit another.

ABZ's strategic plan, a dynamic and adaptable document, undergoes regular revisions either annually or in response to shifting circumstances. Spearheading this evolving strategy, the senior leaders harness the strategic planning process not only to fulfill the organization's mission, vision, and core competencies, but also to catalyze innovation and encourage intelligent risk-taking. This proactive approach to leadership is reflected in their annual evaluations, where they meticulously assess the organization's performance and achievements, continually realigning actions and objectives to meet or exceed set goals.

The strategic plan is developed with input from the BOD, senior leaders, and staff members through one-on-one or group interviews and data gathering. The strategic planning process has five steps (see also Figure 4):

1. Analyzing and evaluating data from the previous FY to determine alignment with the Mission, Vision, and Values and Capital Committee. If the strategic plan is not aligned with ABZ's MVV and CC, a revision is performed.
2. Identifying short- and long-term strategic initiatives to develop goals, strategic plans, and action plans.
3. Executing and managing strategy and actions based on short- and long-term strategic initiatives.
4. Reviewing the financial budget to ensure that resources are aligned with the strategic plan and strategic initiatives.
5. Monitoring the progress of strategic initiatives and systematically encouraging organizational learning through a knowledge sharing system while communicating individual strategic initiatives to staff members.

Figure 4*ABZ Leadership's Strategic Planning Process*

Note. ABZ is the pseudonym of the study organization. The strategic planning process demonstrates steps implemented by ABZ's leaders to develop organizational goals aligned with the organization's MVV. MVV = mission, vision, and values.

Through the following strategic objectives, ABZ organization aims to create a nurturing environment where children and families not only have access to nutritious food but are also educated and engaged in fostering long-term healthy habits:

- Promote holistic child health by enhancing children's overall health through comprehensive programs and by developing initiatives to increase children's knowledge of nutrition and foster positive attitudes towards healthy eating.
- Foster family engagement and dignity by creating platforms where children, adolescents, and families can actively engage and participate in community

programs and by developing strategies to ensure that families feel dignified and respected in their involvement with the organization.

- Guarantee access to nutritious food by implementing programs to ensure children have consistent access to nutritious food and by encouraging long-term healthy eating habits among children by offering educational resources and support.

Strategy Implementation

ABZ's annual strategic planning process involves significant participation from its BOD, committee chairs, and staff. To collect feedback, ABZ's leadership sends surveys to stakeholders such as staff, board members, volunteers, families, the parent advisory board, and donors. ABZ's BOD defines the annual goals, and the organization is presently exploring ways to include the parent advisory board in the strategic planning process.

The process starts with leadership brainstorming about the organization's needs, followed by a strategic planning development workshop for leaders. ABZ then solicits feedback from stakeholders through surveys, individual and group conversations, and staff meetings. The board is consulted on the goals, reviews the strategy, and approves it before the FY begins. The strategic objectives of ABZ are coordinated, so effective strategies for one goal often benefit another.

ABZ is launching strategic initiatives to enhance community impact and organizational efficiency. These efforts include improving sustainability, initiating educational programs, deepening family connections through advisory boards, fostering

valuable partnerships through stakeholder feedback, consolidating brand messaging across community sectors, and strengthening infrastructure for smoother operations and engagement. Table 8 delineates the comprehensive action plans and goals to realize these initiatives.

Table 8

Goals, Strategic Initiatives, Action Plans

Goal	Action plans	Responsible	Performance Measure
Strengthen sustainability of ABZ@ home, including piloting, improving, & scaling custom/semi-custom bags to 10% of participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve the volunteer shift experience every shift learns the impact of their work. Clear instructions for beginning and end of shift to TLs. Script & clean up. • Volunteer appreciation plan/protocol • Re-registration for ABZ@ home • The background checks all delivery drivers. • Support the expansion of ABZ Marketplace by increasing communication with families through flyers, phone calls, emails, and conversations. • Launch pilot of semi-custom bag program with plan for pre-post evaluation, communication, goals to determine if/how to scale 	SL's	Meets Deadline and accomplish set goals.
Nutrition education program piloted & evaluated for impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pilot nutrition kits integrated into ABZ@ home and evaluate for impact. • Review current website for content & look/feel; work w/staff to create actionable plans for updating program content including determining a need for a family resource page. • Nutrition Ed Committee IDs goals • Nutrition Ambassador Program: 1) Develop timeline & benchmarks. 2) Develop evaluation. 3) Develop agenda & meeting frequency with students. 4) Execute pre-evaluation. 5) Launch a nutrition ed pilot program or revamp based on learning sessions. 6) Execute post-evaluation. 7) If successful, Nutrition Ambassador Program institutionalized. • Nutrition Kits: 1) Develop timeline & benchmarks. 2) Develop evaluation. 3) Develop a curriculum template to be at home, educational, sensitive, age-appropriate, culturally relevant. 4) Adapt 6-9 lessons. 5) 	SLs	Meets Deadline and accomplish set goals.

	Determine what will be included in the kits & order. 6) Execute pre-evaluation. 7) Launch kits. 8)Execute post-evaluation & analyze.		
Goal	Action plans	Responsible	Performance Measure
Establish 2 parent advisory boards to strengthen connections with families to achieve peer involvement & influence over ABZ's direction.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build relationships between families and volunteers. • ID 1–3 ways to include families in operations – volunteering, focus groups, parent advisory group, events, design feedback process, parent-led focus group, contribute to monthly newsletter. • Every weekly bag includes ABZ's logo and contact info (should be tied to family engagement or nutrition education) – notes to include: bugs in produce, wash, feedback, other? • Determine purpose & direction of Family Farm Day. Permanent program, or end pilot? Possibly move to as needed, Meet & Greet format. • Support the integration of the advisory board into the life of ABZ's to help identify goals of the advisory board and how they will be aligned with ABZ's mission and values. • Partner and collaborate with the Director of Operations to create a procedure /process for ABZ's staff interacting with the Parent Advisory Board to honor both the teams' and parents' decisions. 	SL's	Meets Deadline and accomplish set goals.
Design partnership development process based on feedback from families and partners.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ID 3 key partnerships to strengthen based on operational needs and/or family benefits and set goals for each: 1) IFC/PORCH & 2) Local Farmers & 3) Space and 4) Salesforce (Pro Bono support requested) • Host a farmer focus group to understand farmer, ABZ, and family needs, ABZ needs. Create partnership guidelines based on what we learn. • Host a farmer focus group to understand farmer, ABZ's, and family needs, ABZ's needs. Create partnership guidelines based on what we learn. • Pilot universal registration form with PORCH & IFC. Evaluate benefits. ID next steps for partnership. • Prioritize/highlight farms as volunteer opportunities. • Expand farm partnerships from 1 to 2 farms and evaluate benefits. 	SLs	Meets Deadline and accomplish set goals.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determine how to track partnerships in Salesforce. • NEW! Determine if an ongoing partnership can be achieved with Salesforce consultants for pro bono work. Develop relationships with individuals? 		
Goal	Action plans	Responsible	Performance Measure
Develop a cohesive brand and messaging that unifies our communities (volunteer, donor, families, farmers, & staff).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the execution of donor and volunteer focus groups. • Support the analysis of focus group feedback to inform messaging & make improvements. • Develop relationships with PTAs at key elementary schools to increase awareness for ABZ's and help increase donor and volunteer participation. Raise \$25,000 through PTA and school efforts. • During website review/audit, identify areas where content can be updated to better support our relationships with key stakeholders (donors, volunteers, families, partners – local businesses & farmers) • Update messaging for key stakeholders and apply it to all external communications as appropriate (website content, e-newsletter content, appeals, etc.) • Update messaging for key stakeholders and apply to all external communications as appropriate (website content, e-newsletter content, and appeals) • Share survey and focus group outcomes with all stakeholders. • Create strategic donor outreach plan & timeline. • ID & launch 3 campaigns to raise awareness for & support of ABZ's work: Community Sustainers, Matching Gift, & ABZ's Setter. • Create regular newsletter communications with key donors (ABZ's Setters, General Contacts, & Community Sustainers) • Complete 50% of 100 donor profiles (Contact info, employer, important notes, email, address, any other relevant info). 	SLs	Meets Deadline and accomplish set goals.
Strengthen infrastructure to support efficiency & improvement in food & financial tracking & family engagement.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manage the development and pilot of an app to increase effectiveness of ABZ's work (highly dependent on BCBSNC volunteer team) • 1–3 full staff trainings in in SF, as needed • Create evaluation plan for what we want to learn (benchmarks, trends, mediums, goals, timeline, etc. & what software is needed to store/analyze) • Streamline food & financial processes after moving to SF, eliminating unnecessary administrative work and paper) • The volunteer process migrated to SF. 	SLs	Meets Deadline and accomplish set goals.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use campaigns in Salesforce 		
Goal	Action plans	Responsible	Performance Measure
Develop policies and procedures that promote a diverse, committed, supported staff.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hire new staff that bring unique perspectives, experience, and needed language skills to ABZ's. • Finalize succession plan; update all written policies & procedures; cross-train staff. • Develop methodology to professional development opportunities (what to learn? and why are those needed?) • Ensure core values & equity indicators are included in Strategic Plan • Review employee benefits 	SLs	Meets Deadline and accomplish set goals.
Improve key board & organizational processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review insurance coverages and costs • Establish Operating Reserve • Review banking relationships • Scheduled reviews of audit firms • Update Governance Process • Recruit board members & develop a board member succession plan. • Work with ED to ensure board materials are easily accessible by board members. • Ensure current priorities and action items strengthen the 6 areas of opportunity (and/or strengths?) from board member evaluations. 	SLs	Meets Deadline and accomplish set goals.
<i>Stakeholders: S=Students; P=Parents, W=Workforce, BOD, C=Community, SPC=Suppliers, Partners, & Collaborators, PS=Partner Schools, A=All</i>			

Customers

Customer Expectations

ABZ actively engages with its customers through diverse channels, including social media, community events, surveys, and direct interactions. This engagement allows for direct feedback on their product quality, support, and related transactions. To cater to non-English speaking customers, ABZ employs a specialized family engagement team, ensuring feedback from all segments of the community. Feedback is meticulously analyzed, with critical insights shaping program strategy and service offerings. Product and service adaptations are guided by alignment with ABZ's MVV, and by tangible outcomes from pilot programs. For a holistic understanding of customer satisfaction, ABZ compares its metrics with peer organizations, continuously adapting to best meet customer needs and expectations.

Current Customers and Potential Customers. ABZ maintains an active engagement with its diverse customer base, employing various channels like social media platforms, websites, community events, phone calls, quarterly surveys, and emails. These platforms allow ABZ to gather essential feedback, reviews, and queries from both existing and potential customers regarding the quality of products, customer support, and transaction processes. Recognizing the importance of family engagement, ABZ has initiated a specialized family engagement team, inclusive of Spanish-speaking coordinators and contract translators, focusing on fostering relationships and collecting feedback, especially from non-English speaking customers. The feedback obtained plays

a critical role, as it is analyzed and integrated into the program's strategy, ensuring alignment with its mission, values, and vision.

Customer Segmentation. ABZ's customer segmentation strategy is inherently tied to their interaction with the organization. Families are categorized based on program participation, volunteers by the type of work they undertake, and donors by the size of their donations and the programs they back. Such segmentation allows ABZ to accurately target market segments based on feedback and the impact of individual programs. This dynamic strategy adapts depending on program success; if a program witnesses a positive impact, investments in technology, space, staff, and volunteers increase. However, when faced with budgetary or donation constraints, ABZ strategizes outreach initiatives to bolster funding. The segmentation extends to board members, who are selected based on skill sets aligned with ABZ's strategic aspirations.

Product Offerings. ABZ adopts a meticulous approach to determine their product and service offerings. The organization evaluates alignment with its MVV as a starting point. Furthermore, feedback from diverse stakeholders, including employees, volunteers, donors, and families, provides invaluable insights. Surveys play an essential role in understanding customer needs, capturing their expectations, and gauging budgetary constraints. This feedback guides ABZ in fine-tuning their service offerings. Before fully implementing new programs, ABZ launches pilot initiatives to test, observe, and gather feedback. This data-driven strategy, paired with extensive brainstorming sessions, ensures that ABZ's service offerings remain agile, adapting to meet ever-evolving requirements.

Customer Engagement

ABZ determines customer satisfaction and engagement through various methods including customer retention and churning numbers, as well as surveys such as annual surveys, exit surveys, and referrals. Feedback from staff, families, volunteers, and donors on ABZ's satisfaction, determination, and engagement (SDE) methods is also collected. Staff SDE is obtained through in-person feedback, while participating families provide written letters or online forms, and volunteers and donors share their SDE through phone or email. All this information is manually entered into ABZ's computer by an employee or volunteer.

ABZ also compares its customer satisfaction information with other organizations within the same market domain through monthly meetings and surveys with volunteers and donors. In some cases, families may leave ABZ because they prefer another nonprofit organization's service delivery. To benchmark its SDE processes against others in the industry, ABZ collaborated on a survey with other nonprofit organizations in the county. Presently, a universal registration form is being used by nonprofit organizations in the same industry to jointly obtain information on customer SDE and foster a more collaborative relationship.

Voice of Customer. To ensure the voice of the customer is heard, documented, and acted upon, ABZ interacts with its customers in various ways such as in-person meetings, phone calls, text messages, emails, and surveys. Following the COVID-19 pandemic, ABZ increased engagement through surveys, phone calls, text messages, and house-to-house calls. ABZ plans to increase engagement with families through a new

initiative called "The Parent Advisory Board." Exit surveys are also conducted to elicit feedback about the program's quality and services rendered to families. ABZ leaders also contact former participants to determine whether their expectations were met and how satisfied they are.

ABZ senior leaders use media reports to obtain the needs of customers and how it was met by other nonprofit organizations in the same industry. The leaders benchmark best practices to successfully obtain the voice of the customer and react accordingly by incorporating feedback into their annual strategic planning. Table 9 shows the various listening methods ABZ leaders use to manage communication with its stakeholders and keep them informed and engaged.

Table 9

Voice of Customer

Listening Methods	Stakeholder	Frequency
Surveys	S, P, C	A
Parent Meetings	All	N
Focus Groups	V, D	N
Phone calls	All	N
Emails	All	N
Web– Based Forms	All	N
Community events/forums	F, W, SPC	N
BOD Meetings	W	Q

Staff Meetings	W	W
<i>Stakeholders: F=Families; D=Donors, V=Volunteers W=Workforces, BOD, C=Community, SPC=Suppliers, Partners, & Collaborators, PS=Partner Schools, A=All</i>		
<i>Frequency: A=Annual, Q=Quarterly, M=Monthly, W=Weekly, D=Daily, N=As needed</i>		

Results Triad: Workforce, Operations, and Results

Workforce

Workforce Environment

ABZ is an organization that prioritizes its workforce, organizational culture, and performance management to meet its strategic goals. The senior leaders at ABZ foster an environment of flexibility and creativity that meets the needs of its employees. They assess capacity against benchmarks and forecast needs to determine whether the organization has the capabilities to achieve action plans and strategic goals. ABZ leaders actively seek candidates from diverse backgrounds and lifestyles, and job applicants go through a rigorous selection process that includes competency interviews and technical skills assessments. Once selected, new employees receive an employee handbook during onboarding, and senior leaders reinforce a customer/client and business focus that drives the team to meet and exceed performance expectations. Senior leaders prioritize transparency, planning, and disciplined execution of action plans, and during quarterly all-team meetings, they share financial and business planning information.

Workforce Capability and Capacity

The outcomes of ABZ's focus on workforce capability and capacity are significant. They have successfully instituted a robust mechanism to gauge and forecast

the necessary capabilities required to fulfill strategic goals and action plans. The selection process ensures the recruitment of individuals with diverse backgrounds, possessing the appropriate skill sets and technical prowess. They maintain a diversity-aware approach in staffing and capacity planning, which has demonstrated positive impacts across different workforce groups and segments.

Workplace Climate

ABZ boasts a conducive workplace atmosphere characterized by open communication, equitable treatment of stakeholders, and initiatives promoting inclusivity and equity. These measures ensure a healthy, secure, and accessible work environment, fostering a sense of satisfaction and well-being among employees. The differentiated approach by ABZ caters to the diverse needs and preferences of its workforce, continually enhancing services and benefits to maintain a harmonious workplace climate.

Workforce Engagement

ABZ's organizational culture is based on clear and open communication, fair treatment of stakeholders, and the promotion of equity and inclusion. Families served by ABZ are engaged in decision-making, and their feedback is considered in the development of new or existing programs. Employees at ABZ are empowered through high-level decision-making, input on program initiatives, resource requirements, and professional development opportunities. ABZ leadership uses the yearly team member survey to establish and evaluate factors that impact employee engagement.

Organizational Culture

ABZ prides itself on a strong and positive organizational culture that prioritizes clear and open communication, fair treatment of all stakeholders, and a focus on setting clear and achievable expectations. This culture is supported by the organization's vision and values, which are reinforced through its actions and decisions. For example, ABZ sources fresh food from local farmers and involves families in decision-making processes, allowing them to freely express their preferences and provide feedback on programs. The organization is committed to promoting equity and inclusion by actively recruiting diverse candidates and providing professional development opportunities for its employees. Through high-level decision-making and ongoing initiatives like the Parent Advisory Board, ABZ ensures that families are not just customers but partners in the organization's success. The senior leaders at ABZ understand that unexpected events can arise, and goals may not always be met, but they prioritize customers and business focus, and work to achieve their objectives in a transparent and disciplined manner.

Performance Management

ABZ's approach to performance management centers around providing ongoing support, resources, and training to employees to help them achieve their goals. The organization facilitates formal and informal meetings with employees to review action plans and goals as a group, while also creating a system for recognizing and celebrating employees' achievements. In addition, ABZ utilizes a Parent Advisory Board initiative to actively involve families served in the organization's strategic planning and decision-making processes, ensuring that the customer and business focus remains a top priority.

The ABZ leadership recognizes that unexpected events may occur, which can impact personal or organizational goals for programs and initiatives. To address this, goals are categorized according to their priority level and timeline, with a focus on what needs to be accomplished immediately versus what can be addressed later. Overall, ABZ's performance management system reinforces the importance of customer and business focus, ongoing feedback and support, and the involvement of all stakeholders in the organization's decision-making processes.

ABZ leaders witnessed substantial results in workforce engagement, reflected through high levels of satisfaction and active participation in organizational initiatives. The structured feedback and involvement process have been instrumental in achieving favorable engagement outcomes across diverse workforce groups and segments. The leadership at ABZ demonstrates commendable outcomes in workforce and leader development. The emphasis on diverse recruitment and provision of growth opportunities showcases positive results in fostering a competent and inclusive workforce. Different workforce groups and segments witness a tailored approach in their development, accounting for the diversity of the workforce and ensuring balanced growth and development.

Operations

Work Processes

ABZ places accountability on its leaders to develop effective work processes by gathering feedback from various stakeholders, improving processes based on that feedback, and documenting lessons learned. To ensure smooth operations, ABZ's senior

leaders maintain records of volunteer shifts, submit lunch requests to ensure sufficient food for the children, handle all internal and external communication, and manage the addition and removal of children from the roster.

ABZ leaders are accessible and collaborate with community organizations, businesses, and benefactors to raise awareness about the program. Additionally, they distribute a nutrition education packet to families monthly, discussing it with them weekly to collect orders for the marketplace. ABZ's top executives create budgets, action plans, and strategies for the upcoming FY, discussing progress and planning during formal and informal meetings. The organization also utilizes social media accounts to provide weekly updates on activities and communications.

Effective work processes require the necessary information, skills, and resources to achieve desired outcomes. ABZ leaders take responsibility for creating and implementing efficient work processes to ensure smooth operations, provide quality service, and achieve organizational goals.

Operational Effectiveness

ABZ's strategic plan is a comprehensive tool that facilitates the management of its daily operations, enabling the organization to optimize cost, efficiency, and effectiveness. To further enhance its cost management, ABZ's leadership engages in brainstorming sessions and meetings with employees to identify ways to source wholesale non-perishable foods in a cost-effective manner. The strategic plan and the assessment of program impact provide the foundation for ABZ's cost and efficiency management. The organization's 7-day cycle time, from nonperishable food deliveries to families, affects its

ability to deliver more food to families, hire additional staff, invest in technological capability, and launch new initiatives or scale down existing programs. To minimize errors in operational processes, ABZ assigns experienced employees to oversee critical projects and pairs them with new or junior employees.

Clear communication of goals in meetings, emails, or person, reduces service errors and rework. To manage food waste, ABZ leaders maintain clear and consistent communication with staff about inventory levels and the frequency of requested items. Tracking the popularity of food items allows the organization to make informed decisions about ordering, thereby reducing food waste. A streamlined food ordering process and clear, consistent communication across the team help to reduce customer wait times. To ensure compliance with financial regulations, ABZ undergoes annual financial audits. The organization balances the needs of cost control with those of its customers by aligning both with its MVV. ABZ also measures the impact of each of its programs on its customers.

To ensure the security of sensitive information, ABZ's staff members are assigned unique usernames and passwords required to access documents. Files are stored in the Google Drive cloud and shared only with appropriate staff members. Physical files are kept in a secure cabinet and shredded once they are no longer needed. ABZ's leaders stay informed about emerging security and cybersecurity issues and use Salesforce non-profit edition to track access to records. Access to sensitive information is restricted to authorized personnel only.

ABZ's ongoing migration of records to a password management system further enhances data security. To ensure employee safety, ABZ provides clear guidelines on safe lifting and training in proper food-handling procedures. Additionally, supervisors and managers are trained to recognize and respond to hazards. ABZ's strategic plan remains agile, allowing for quick response to natural disasters or other unexpected events. The organization intends to purchase a generator, electric car charger, and provide reimbursement for volunteers' gas expenses to ensure uninterrupted service to families. By investing in these initiatives, ABZ positions itself to adapt to emerging trends and reduce its reliance on gasoline.

As a result of the leadership's efforts in fostering an engaged workforce and promoting a customer and business focus, ABZ has achieved positive outcomes. The organization has been able to recruit a diverse team, which has helped to bring different perspectives and experiences to the table, contributing to innovation and creativity. ABZ has also been able to retain employees by empowering them through opportunities for professional development and high-level decision-making. This has resulted in a workforce that is invested in the success of the organization and motivated to exceed performance expectations.

ABZ's clear and open communication culture, fair treatment of stakeholders, and focus on customer and business needs have also contributed to positive results. The organization has been able to source fresh food from local farmers, engage families in decision-making, and incorporate feedback from families into its programs and initiatives. ABZ's performance management system has helped to reinforce its customer

and business focus, and the organization is continuously improving its work processes through feedback and review. Overall, ABZ has been able to achieve its strategic goals and maintain transparency and disciplined execution of its action plans, ensuring long-term success.

Measurement, Analysis, and Knowledge Management

ABZ utilizes its strategic plan and action plan to track daily operations. Weekly tracking is done for the number of children served and the weight of food donated, purchased, and delivered to families. ABZ aligns its program priorities with its MVV, and the type of data tracked is influenced by this alignment. The strategic objectives and action plans are tracked quarterly through reviews of staff members, action plans, and strategic plan goals, ensuring that they are completed within the specified time frame. These trackers serve as metrics for accountability, indicating what has been accomplished, what has not been accomplished, and what remains to be accomplished, with the information gathered and sent to the BOD.

Senior leaders at ABZ prioritize consistent gathering and dissemination of information and knowledge throughout the organization to manage knowledge. Improvement opportunities are identified and shared with all workforce members and stakeholders through a review of performance metrics, along with information on current performance and best practices. For example, at ABZ, the senior leaders have instituted a systematic approach to foster continuous improvement and knowledge sharing across the organization. This includes weekly performance reviews where team leaders share vital

metrics and best practices with their teams, highlighting both achievements and areas requiring enhancement.

Further, quarterly strategic meetings are convened to disseminate insights on organizational performance trends, fostering a collaborative environment where workforce members can identify and discuss opportunities for improvement. On an annual basis, ABZ organizes knowledge-sharing workshops, promoting cross-training and mentorship opportunities that align with the organization's mission and vision. These platforms encourage the exchange of knowledge and expertise, fostering a culture of continuous learning and adaptation. Moreover, ABZ maintains open channels of communication, such as emails and the organization's website, where employees and stakeholders can actively share insights and suggestions, thereby promoting a culture of open dialogue and collaborative problem-solving.

Additionally, customer engagement is a priority, with leaders actively seeking feedback through various platforms, including electronic and physical catalogs. This feedback is instrumental in identifying areas for improvement and integrating best practices into the organization's operations. Similarly, regular interactions with suppliers and collaborators, facilitated through various communication tools, help in pinpointing opportunities for improvement and implementing best practices to enhance organizational efficiency.

ABZ has developed a repository of training materials, policies, and procedures that encapsulate accumulated organizational knowledge, serving as a reference point for ongoing improvement initiatives. Through coaching and mentorship programs,

experienced employees guide newer members, fostering a nurturing environment where knowledge is shared freely, and opportunities for growth are identified and nurtured proactively. Agendas for ABZ's weekly, quarterly, and yearly meetings are developed by senior leaders per the organization's mission, vision, guiding values, and strategic initiatives. Senior leaders at ABZ share and manage knowledge through e-mails, in-person meetings, conference calls, and the organization's website.

Senior leaders at ABZ disseminate information through various channels, including coaching, communication methods, team interactions, and mentorship opportunities. They also organize cross-training for team members and employees who transfer to other departments or leave the company. Daily, monthly, and quarterly operational performance trends are reported. Policies, procedures, and training materials accumulate and disseminate ABZ workforce knowledge. Organizational leaders communicate knowledge to and from customers/clients via electronic forms, including e-catalogs and physical catalogs, customer/client inquiries, and ABZ's website. ABZ leaders also use communication tools to share information with and from suppliers and collaborators.

Information and Knowledge Management

At ABZ, safeguarding the security and confidentiality of client details, including addresses and billing information, holds paramount importance in the operation of information system services. This delicate balance is maintained through the innovative application of technology, ensuring data security and safeguarding information sensitivity, whilst catering to the multifaceted needs of various stakeholders.

Quality of Data and Information. ABZ rigorously monitors the quality of organizational data and information by implementing stringent verification protocols. These protocols not only guarantee the accuracy and validity of data but also affirm its integrity, reliability, and currency. Using advanced web processes, software, and hardware systems that are interconnected across various domains and platforms, ABZ assures that the gathered data stands as a reliable backbone for the organization's decision-making processes.

Availability. To facilitate the smooth flow of operations, ABZ has established secure portals, enabling team members and primary suppliers to access real-time data, track supply chains, and monitor order statuses seamlessly. This concerted effort guarantees that information is available in a user-friendly format and is disseminated timely to the workforce, suppliers, partners, collaborators, and customers. Regular annual audits of all information systems and web operations are conducted to ensure the reliability and user-friendliness of information technology systems, thus making pertinent data readily accessible, while maintaining utmost security through a structured assignment of permissions that govern the access to customer data and financial accounting systems.

Organizational Knowledge

Knowledge Management. At ABZ, building and managing organizational knowledge is a cultivated practice. This involves the collection and transfer of workforce knowledge through collaborative platforms and forums that facilitate open communication. By blending and correlating data from diverse sources, ABZ fosters the

creation of new knowledge, which is then disseminated to customers, suppliers, partners, and collaborators. This seamless transfer of relevant knowledge plays a pivotal role in innovation and strategic planning processes, nurturing a culture of continuous learning and development.

Best Practices. The sharing of best practices is a hallmark of ABZ's approach to knowledge management. Through a systematic process, high-performing internal and external organizational units or operations are identified, fostering a culture of excellence. The identified best practices are then shared and implemented across the organization, promoting consistency in performance, and encouraging the adoption of proven strategies and methodologies.

Organizational Learning. ABZ takes pride in utilizing its extensive knowledge and resources to embed learning within its operational fabric. This entails a proactive approach to learning, where insights and knowledge are continuously harnessed to enhance the organization's processes and services. By fostering a learning environment, ABZ ensures that the organization remains adaptive, innovative, and aligned with its strategic goals, contributing to a sustainable and prosperous future. Through these concerted efforts, ABZ continues to prioritize the integrity, security, validity, and confidentiality of all client and organizational data, embedding layers of security to protect sensitive or privileged information, and ensuring that ABZ remains a trusted, reliable, and innovative leader in the industry.

Collection, Analysis, and Preparation of Results

Thematic Findings

This single-case qualitative study aimed to uncover strategies that certain leaders in nonprofit organizations use to ensure their services meet the needs of the families they serve. A pivotal research question underpinning this study was: "What strategies do some leaders in nonprofit organizations deploy to align community food systems with the food service needs of families?"

The analysis identified five primary themes: leadership, governance, strategic planning, customer engagement, and societal responsibility. These themes, derived from the research question and data gathered from interviews and organizational data, form the backbone of my findings.

Thematic Finding 1: Leadership

Leadership emerged as the foremost theme from the data analysis, resonating with Participant A's insight: "At ABZ, leaders are visionary, skillfully orchestrating strategies to fulfill that vision, particularly noticeable during the recent pandemic." This action aligns with the BSC approach, vividly reflected in ABZ's proactive initiatives. As highlighted in their action plan document, the leadership spearheaded initiatives to nourish children from low-income backgrounds and actively monitored their progress through various channels. Their strategy plan during the COVID-19 pandemic epitomized adaptability and resilience, ensuring a continuous flow of food distribution. Participant B accentuated this, remarking, "The leadership's remarkable agility during the pandemic showcased their steadfast dedication to their mission." This behavior aligns

seamlessly with To's (2023) emphasis on dynamic, empathetic leadership being central to a nonprofit organization's success.

Thematic Finding 2: Governance

The data prominently brought governance to the fore, echoed in Participant C's acknowledgment: "ABZ's governance is robust, characterized by a diverse board that makes data-driven informed decisions." The organization embodies solid governance, with its diverse BOD who meticulously analyze audit results, documented in ABZ's financial audit report, to steer decisive actions fostering smooth operations. This approach is in harmony with studies such as De Quevedo-Puente and Pérez-Cornejo (2020), affirming the critical role of vibrant and active governing bodies in the success of nonprofit organizations.

Thematic Finding 3: Strategic Planning

Strategic planning featured significantly in the data, with Participant A noting, "ABZ showcases remarkable foresight, aligning their endeavors with current and future objectives, a trait evident in their ambitious capital campaign strategies." Drawing insights from resources like ABZ's GuideStar profile, ABZ's leaders adeptly secured substantial capital campaign funds, crafted comprehensive budgets, and defined explicit fundraising objectives. As noted in ABZ's year-over-year survey results document, the leaders anticipate expanding partnerships with local farmers, underscoring Landreth Grau's (2021) findings on the pivotal role of strategic planning in nurturing sustainability and growth in nonprofit organizations.

Thematic Finding 4: Customer Engagement

The participants highlighted customer engagement as a vital strategy, aligning with Participant B's reflection that "ABZ maintains a profound connection with their community, relentlessly seeking feedback and fostering dialogues." This sentiment mirrors the customer focus of the BSC. According to the strategy plan document, ABZ has cultivated strategies to understand customer needs through consistent surveys and deep personal dialogues. Additionally, they utilize newsletters to keep customers informed and engaged, a tactic corroborated by studies, including Abdelhadi and Khamis (2023), emphasizing the importance of understanding and satisfying customer needs in the nonprofit sector.

Thematic Finding 5: Societal Responsibility

Societal responsibility emerged prominently as the final theme, reflecting Participant C's observation: "ABZ integrates societal responsibility at its core, fostering community wellness through strategic partnerships." Various documents, including ABZ's financial audit, highlight the organization's collaboration with local farmers to avail fresh produce, bolstering the local economy and addressing food insecurity. This strategy harmonizes with Azevedo's (2022) research that underscores societal responsibility as a crucial factor in nonprofit organizations' success.

Service and Process Results

The ABZ nonprofit organization has been serving children and their families since 2008. It began in 2008 with one school and 12 children per week and has since grown to serve 750 children per week, 425 homes, and deliver 2,450,000 meals. ABZ

leaders feed 750 children and adolescents per week through its food access programs; 65% of the children and adolescents ABZ serves have improved daily access to nutritious food, and 15% have improved food security. Furthermore, 40% of the children and adolescents served by ABZ leaders consume four or more fruits and vegetables daily. Most (90%) of the children served by ABZ senior leaders are from racial and ethnic minority groups; 36% are Hispanic, 26% are Black, 17% are multicultural, 13% are Asian, 6% are White, and 2% are Middle Eastern. Table 4 through 11 depict the organization's goals and objectives for FY 2021–2022. To assess the family's progress toward its goals, ABZ's senior executives use various measures such as one-on-one conversation, phone calls, and surveys. Senior executives at ABZ use surveys to learn what customers think about their services and how well they work. For the 2020–2021 and 2021–2022 FYs, the survey was used to assess the impact of ABZ's efforts on food insecurity, access to food, nutrition education, eating habits, engagement, health (physical, mental, and emotional), financial stability, preferences, and delivery. The customers polled had the following characteristics:

- an average of 4.2 people per household
- an average of 2.3 children per household
- an average monthly grocery expense of \$595
- an average monthly gross household income of \$1,962

Customer Results

ABZ leaders have seen improved results in their backpack, nutrition education, and marketplace initiatives. Families and other stakeholders provided constructive

criticism and enthusiastic support for these initiatives. ABZ conducts surveys to determine which families need the most assistance with food and nutrition. This is part of the company's ongoing effort to develop relationships with the families with whom it works. ABZ's leadership regularly polls customers to determine whether the ABZ community adequately caters to the needs of the families it serves. This does not only assist leaders in prioritizing their action plans and goals, but it also ensures that the needs of families are at the center of current and upcoming initiatives. Because of increased interaction with families via surveys, one-on-one conversation, phone calls, and ongoing relationship cultivation, it was determined that most families prefer fresh food, snacks, and recipes. ABZ leader's engagement effort with families also resulted in the discovery that families prefer more quantities of nourishing food and snacks over a fancy package or bag. Executives at ABZ have found several different ways that the company could improve its effectiveness and efficiency in a significant way through technology, establishing connections with local farmers and family participation. ABZ's senior leaders' commitment to providing superior service to families is also one of the company's most critical competitive advantages. The people who work at ABZ are flexible and adaptable to situations like the recent COVID pandemic. They also have a good plan for how to get food, put it in bags, and deal with volunteers at their homes.

ABZ senior leaders measured the results of the impact made in the 2020–2021 FY and the senior impact made in the 2021–2022 FY; they categorized this metric into eight segments. Senior leaders administered surveys to 427 households in 2021–2022 to elicit information about food insecurity, access, nutrition education, and eating habits;

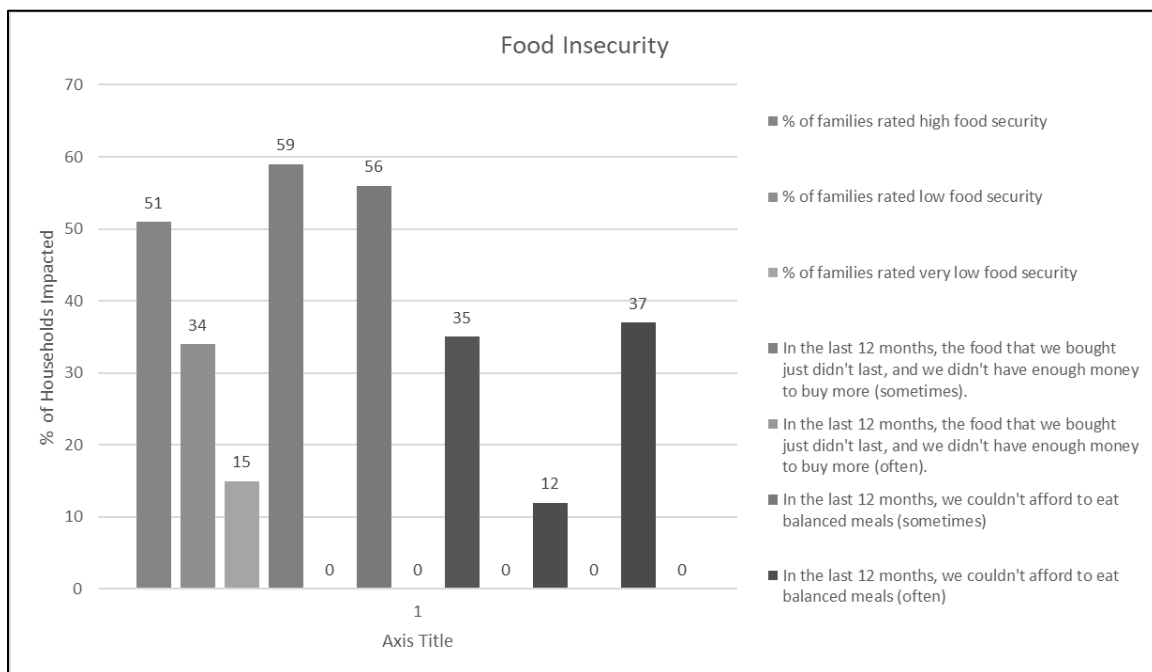
engagement; health (physical, mental, and emotional); financial stability; preferences; and deliverability.

Food Insecurity

The survey conducted by leaders of ABZ shows that 59% of the households it served reported experiencing food insecurity due to not having enough money to buy more food often or sometimes (see Figure 5). Of the households, 51% of families were rated as having high food security versus 31% of families that were rated as having low food security.

Figure 5

Food Insecurity Findings From ABZ's 2021–2022 Household Survey



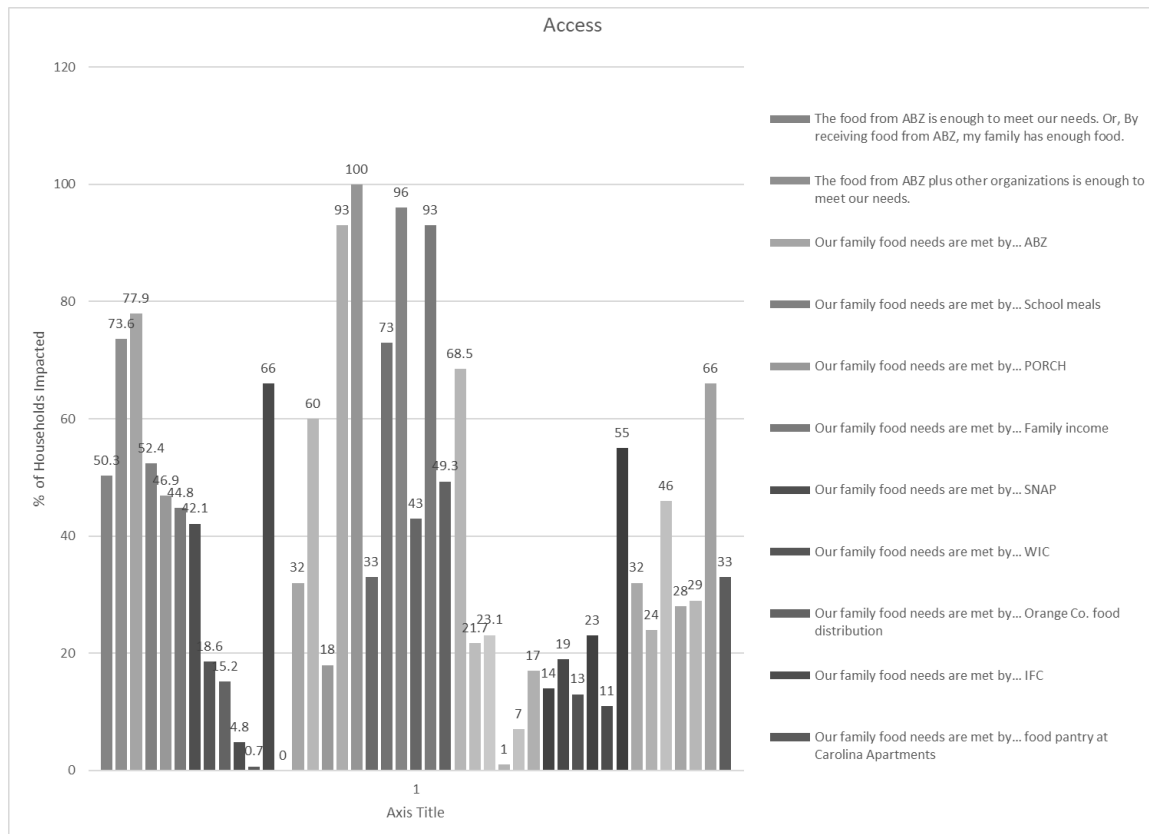
Note. ABZ is the pseudonym of the study organization.

Access

In 2021, 41.9% of the families in the area served by ABZ leaders said they had enough food because of the food that ABZ employees gave them (see Figure 6). When ABZ leaders did another survey in 2022 to see how their systems and services were working, they found that 50.9% of families said they had enough food because of the food they got; This was an increase of 8.1% from the previous survey. In 2021 and 2022, 66% of families said they had access to nutritious food every day, and 49% said their children tried new foods because they could choose what they ate. ABZ leaders set a goal to feed 650 children and adolescents weekly in 2022, but they surpassed their goal by feeding 808 individuals.

Figure 6

Access Findings From ABZ's 2021–2022 Household Survey



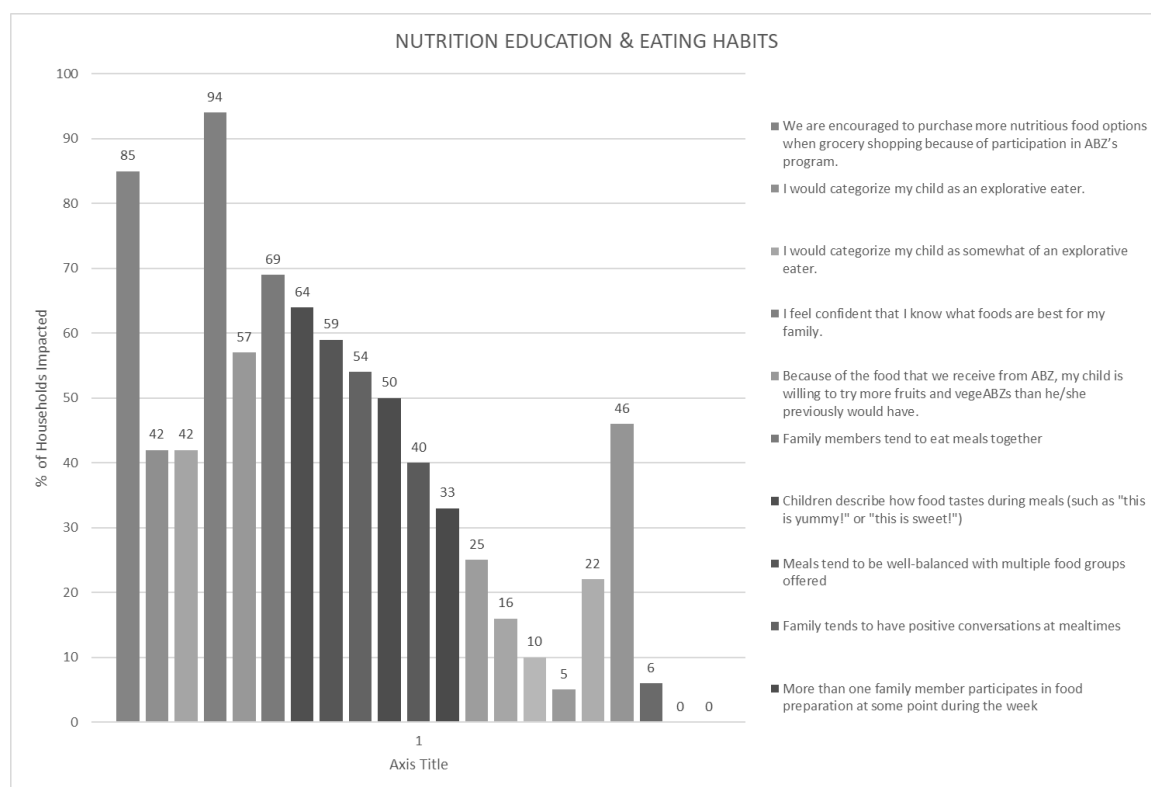
Note. ABZ is the pseudonym of the study organization.

Nutrition Education and Eating Habits

ABZ leaders set out to strengthen children's knowledge of nutrition, mindful eating, and long-term healthy eating habits for 2021–2022. They conducted a survey to measure service results, which showed that 40% of children ate four or more fruits or vegetables daily, and 20% of parents said that their children were adventurous because ABZ employees offered many healthy foods (see Figure 7).

Figure 7

Nutrition Education and Eating Habits Findings From ABZ's 2021–2022 Household Survey



Note. ABZ is the pseudonym of the study organization.

The survey revealed that respondents have a high demand for customized food deliveries, with more than half preferring weekly or monthly custom options. There was also significant demand for specific items like eggs, flour, and expensive produce. Respondents expressed a desire for more kitchen tools and cooking equipment, as well as recipe boxes and meal kits, indicating a need for nutrition education and support for healthy eating habits. Nonprofit organizations could leverage these findings to develop

programs that address the specific needs of their communities, such as customized food deliveries or nutrition education programs providing guidance on healthy eating habits.

Engagement

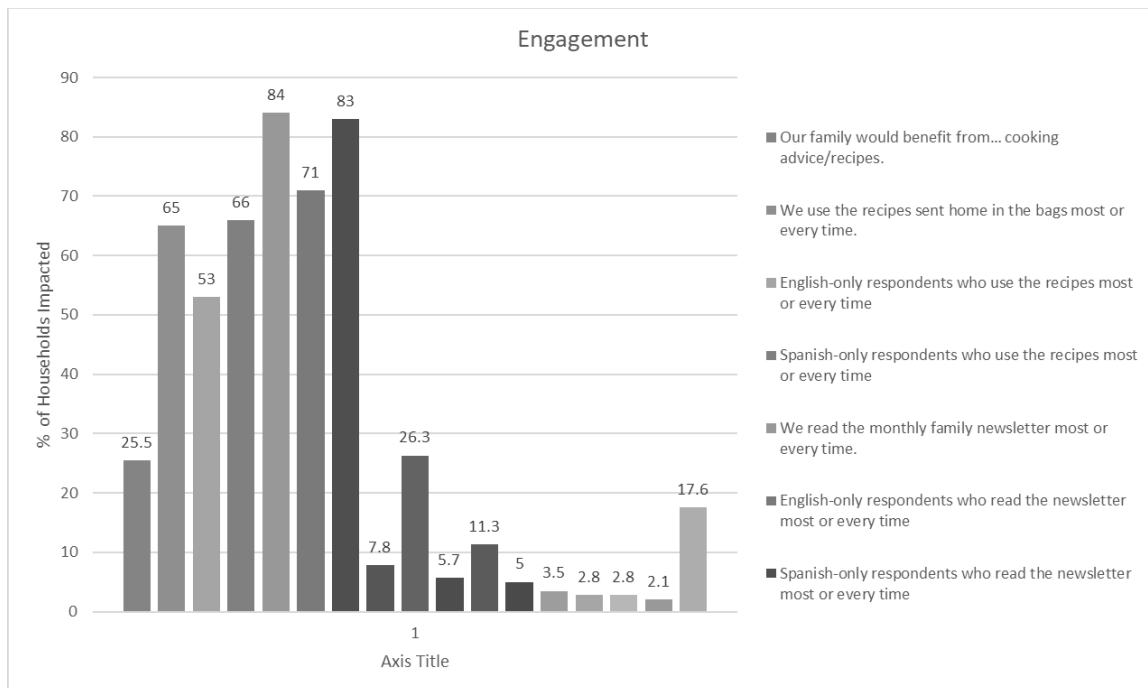
ABZ leaders used various methods such as monthly newsletter sent to English and Spanish speaking customers to increase engagement. Among household respondents, 71% of English speakers and 83% Spanish speakers reported reading the newsletter monthly (see Figure 8). While a minority (11.3%) of families expressed interest in having in-person fun/educative events, ABZ leaders took note and incorporated this feedback into their engagement strategy. As a result, for the 2021–2022 fiscal year, the following engagement goals were established and successfully achieved by ABZ leaders:

- Create regular newsletter communications with key donors (ABZ Setters, general contacts, and Community Sustainers)
- Share survey and focus group results with all stakeholders.
- Identify three primary partnerships to enhance, chosen for their potential to meet operational needs and provide benefits to families: collaborate with local food service nonprofits for enhanced service delivery, partner with local farmers to ensure fresh produce supply, and seek pro bono support from Salesforce for improved operational efficiency and family engagement strategies. Organize a farmer focus group to better understand farmers, ABZ systems and services, and family needs, and develop partnership guidelines based on the results.
- Kick off (pilot) universal registration with local food service nonprofits.

- Increase farm partnerships from one to two farms, assess the benefits, and prioritize farms as volunteer opportunities.

Figure 8

Engagement Findings From ABZ's 2021–2022 Household Survey



Note. ABZ is the pseudonym of the study organization.

Health (Physical, Mental, and Emotional)

One of the primary objectives of ABZ leaders is to improve children's health and wellness in the communities they serve. To ensure that their objectives are met, a survey was conducted to assess the impact of their efforts. Parents reported the following improvements in their children: 45% physical health, 15% emotional health, and 33% ability to concentrate/learn.

Financial Stability

In 2022, the leaders of ABZ surveyed the families they assisted and compared the results to those of the same study conducted in 2021. In 2021, 88.8% of families said that getting a weekly bag of food from ABZ helped alleviate financial hardship, compared to 89.7% in 2022. The survey results also showed that families used the money they would have spent on food if they had not received nutritious food from ABZ leaders to pay for housing, transportation, medical expenses, and education; survey results showed that families saved \$23 weekly on food, which is also the highest food option and cost of a week's worth of food that families receive from ABZ nonprofit organization.

Preferences and Delivery

The findings of a survey conducted by ABZ leaders suggest that most of the respondents are satisfied with the current variety and types of food being delivered, with 51.7% expressing happiness. However, there is still room for improvement as 20.6% of the respondents say that customized food deliveries would help their families. Additionally, 19.9% of the respondents prefer a wider variety of produce, and 14.2% suggest that food from ABZ should arrive in better condition. In terms of specific preferences, respondents desire eggs (63.6%), flour and oil (53.6%), and expensive and hard-to-find produce (52.3%) in a custom program. Respondents also express interest in recipe boxes (28.5%), meal kits (31.2%), and kits for growing food (24.1%). There is also a significant percentage (40.4%) of families who selected custom options to waste less and use more or all the food in the weekly bags. The findings suggest that while there is general satisfaction with the current program, there is still room for improvement in

providing customized options, a wider variety of produce, and better quality food (see Figure 9).

Figure 9

Preferences and Delivery Findings From ABZ's 2021–2022 Household Survey



Note. ABZ is the pseudonym of the study organization.

Workforce Results

In the pursuit of aligning their system services with the needs of families, ABZ has established itself as a forward-thinking organization that prioritizes workforce engagement, a positive organizational culture, and robust performance management. The leadership at ABZ encourages an environment of flexibility and creativity, fostering a workplace that meets the diverse needs of its employees and the communities they serve.

Workforce Engagement

ABZ's workforce is at the heart of its operations, actively involved in high-level decision-making and contributing to program initiatives. The organization maintains an open line of communication, promoting fairness, equity, and inclusion at every level.

Through annual surveys, the leadership gauges employee engagement, using the feedback to further enhance the working environment and the services provided.

Operations and Work Processes

ABZ emphasizes operational effectiveness, constantly seeking feedback from various stakeholders to refine work processes and enhance efficiency. The leadership is responsible for a range of operational tasks, from managing volunteer shifts to handling communications and maintaining a streamlined food ordering process. They also engage with community organizations and businesses to raise awareness about their programs, fostering a network of support and collaboration.

Operational Effectiveness

ABZ's strategic planning is a cornerstone of its operational success, focusing on optimizing cost, efficiency, and effectiveness. The leadership actively engages with employees to brainstorm cost-effective solutions, particularly in sourcing nonperishable foods. They maintain a 7-day cycle time for food deliveries, a strategy that influences their ability to expand and innovate their services. Moreover, ABZ is committed to data security and employee safety, implementing measures to protect sensitive information and ensure a safe working environment. By adopting these strategies, ABZ has created a resilient and agile framework that can adapt to emerging trends and unexpected events, positioning itself as a leader in aligning nonprofit food systems with family needs. This comprehensive approach ensures that ABZ remains aligned with its MVV, and values, ready to respond to the evolving needs of the communities it serves.

Leadership and Governance Results

ABZ's leadership has adeptly facilitated a transformative journey, aligning the organization's systems and services precisely with the familial needs, thereby fostering a resilient and forward-thinking approach that is deeply rooted in community engagement. Here is a refined depiction of the notable outcomes achieved:

Revamped Nutrition and Education Programs

ABZ's leadership has significantly improved the food nutrition and education programs, aligning them more closely with the needs and expectations of the families they serve. The leaders have also enhanced community engagement by promoting open conversations with the community and stakeholders. A notable achievement is including former clients in major roles on the Board of Directors, which has strengthened ABZ's reputation and contributed positively to society.

Elevated Engagement and Employee Empowerment

Through well-articulated staff training programs and satisfaction surveys, the leadership has cultivated a vibrant organizational culture. This strategy has led to heightened engagement levels, empowering employees by providing avenues for significant decision-making roles and avenues for professional growth, thereby nurturing a sense of pride and ownership in their contributions.

Financial and Market Results

ABZ has achieved notable financial and market results during the 2021-2022 period. In collaboration with stakeholders, the organization successfully asked for \$400K in capital campaign funding from their top 25(+) donors. They also created a

comprehensive budget for new space, including all associated costs such as purchase price, finance cost, closing cost, upfits, moving, and necessary equipment. The approval of the purchase from the Capital Committee, Finance, and the BOD further proves their progress.

To ensure a smooth transition, ABZ leaders developed a detailed checklist of tasks to be completed while under contract. This involved managing inspections and surveys, finding potential tenants, engaging with engineers and architects, and obtaining estimates for upfit costs. ABZ leaders also confirmed their final fundraising goal of \$3.25M, with a breakdown of \$1.6M as a bridge loan, \$1.09M in pledges, and an additional \$2M to be raised.

To support their fundraising efforts, ABZ leaders identified specific naming opportunities and successfully contracted/acquired a physical plan for the new space. Additionally, they presented their plans to the top 25 donors, aiming to raise \$400K before the closing. In terms of financial results, ABZ experienced significant growth in their total assets, which increased from \$1.5 million in 2020 to \$2.3 million in 2021. Their current assets, including cash and cash equivalents, also saw a substantial increase, reaching \$2.1 million in 2021 compared to \$1.4 million in the previous year. The organization's net assets without donor restrictions also grew from \$1.2 million to \$1.7 million.

Regarding revenue, ABZ received \$1.5 million in gifts and grants in 2021, along with \$111,622 from in-kind donations and investment income. Their expenses for the year amounted to \$770,478, primarily allocated to program-related grants and supporting

services. These financial results demonstrate ABZ's growth trajectory and overall financial stability. Through their successful fundraising efforts, meticulous financial planning, and diligent execution of strategies, ABZ has achieved commendable financial and market results, positioning them for continued success in their mission.

Key Themes

Process Strengths

ABZ demonstrates considerable strengths in its processes. The organization's recruitment and retention strategy bring a diverse workforce, promoting unique perspectives and fostering innovation and creativity. This diversity is further enhanced by the organization's commitment to professional development and decision-making empowerment, creating a motivated workforce that regularly surpasses performance expectations. Another area of strength is the clear and open communication culture upheld by ABZ's leadership team. This transparent environment, combined with a robust knowledge sharing system, ensures that strategic initiatives progress smoothly. Furthermore, ABZ's performance management system stands as a beacon of operational excellence. Designed to be customer-centric, this system ensures continuous feedback and review, helping the organization improve its work processes iteratively.

Process Opportunities

While ABZ exhibits numerous strengths in its processes, opportunities for further enhancement persist. One such opportunity lies in evaluating the effectiveness of orientation programs designed for new team members. This assessment could identify areas to better integrate new hires, ensuring their rapid assimilation into the organization's

culture and mission. Another opportunity resides in exploring diverse communication channels to engage more broadly with customers, ensuring every segment of their target audience is reached. Furthermore, the effectiveness of the performance management system, though commendable, could be revisited to identify areas for refinement and better alignment with ever-evolving organizational goals.

Results Strengths

ABZ's results manifest multiple strengths, reflecting the effectiveness of its operational processes. The sourcing of fresh food from local farmers, alongside the active engagement of families in decision-making, shows the tangible impact of their transparent communication culture. Feedback from families is routinely incorporated into programs and initiatives, signifying the organization's commitment to being customer-driven. Additionally, the empowerment strategy for employees, rooted in professional development and high-stake decision-making opportunities, has led to a workforce that is deeply motivated and consistently exceeds performance benchmark.

Results Opportunities

While ABZ has made notable strides in its efforts, it is evident that there are areas where the results might need to meet the desired expectations, indicating opportunities for further improvement. One primary focus could be tackling the persistent issue of food insecurity more effectively and promoting the intake of nutritious food among families. This step could involve initiating new measures or recalibrating existing programs to align more closely with nutritional objectives.

Further, the organization may consider broadening its strategies to minimize any adverse societal impacts further, which would help ABZ fulfill and surpass its commitments to societal responsibility. Another potential improvement area is enhancing their performance management system, ensuring a more potent emphasis on customer satisfaction and a broader awareness of the evolving business environment. Recognizing and addressing these opportunities would underline ABZ's ongoing commitment to excellence, paving the way for a more profound, lasting impact in their communities. This approach facilitates identifying data gaps or trends in an unfavorable direction, enabling more informed, targeted strategies.

Project Summary

In this single-case study, I explored the complex problem of aligning food systems with the needs of families served by nonprofit organizations. I delved into the strategies employed by nonprofit leaders to align their system services with the food service needs of families, drawing upon existing research on strategic management, precisely the BSC approach. Previous studies have demonstrated the positive impact of the BSC on organizational performance, particularly in terms of financial and customer-related metrics. It has also gained recognition as an effective performance management tool for small- and medium-sized enterprises. By adopting the BSC approach, organizations can balance their financial and nonfinancial performance drivers, align process enhancements with strategic objectives, and prioritize stakeholder needs.

The problem statement sheds light on the prevalence of malnutrition and limited access to healthy diets among a significant portion of the population. Nonprofit

organizations faced challenges in aligning their system services with the needs of families, resulting in inadequate food supply and security. The qualitative single-case study aimed to explore the strategies employed by nonprofit leaders in aligning their system services with the needs of families. I focused on a nonprofit organization located in the southern United States. As the researcher, I selected three business leaders who were food justice advocates and had developed and implemented strategies to align their system services with family needs as participants. I sought to understand the strategies deployed, evaluated their effectiveness, identified key challenges faced during implementation, and explored how the organization addressed them.

Given the nature of the study, I employed a qualitative research method, specifically a single-case study design, to delve into the strategies deployed by nonprofit leaders within a specific context. The data collection methods encompassed interviews, think-aloud exercises, and examining historical and archival records. I followed Yin's analysis technique for data analysis, employing thematic analysis and methodological triangulation to identify key themes and strategies for aligning nonprofit system services with family needs.

My findings carry implications for positive social change, such as reduced crime rates, enhanced safety perceptions in communities, increased consumer demand for locally grown produce, improved nutritional status among low-income community gardeners, and the acquisition of new skills in sustainable farming and direct marketing by local individuals. These improvements create farmer opportunities, bolster community social and economic well-being, and contribute to local job creation. I presented an

overview of the research problem, purpose, methodology, and anticipated outcomes of this study. The statement underscores the importance of addressing the challenges confronted by nonprofit organizations in aligning their food systems with the needs of households.

Contributions and Recommendations to Business Practice

Recent researchers highlighted the importance of exploring how nonprofit leaders can design and implement methods to align their food system's delivery operations with family food service demands which is critical for ensuring family food security and improved nutrition while lowering delivery costs (Schneider, 2021). According to the World Food Program's 2022 research, charitable organizations can discover and deliver fresh and healthy food to homes more efficiently using such strategies (Aloysius & Ananda, 2023).

Nonprofits can improve client satisfaction and engagement by providing services that meet their needs leading to improved operational efficiency by streamlining services and reducing waste, which is critical for nonprofit organizations' long-term viability (Rodriguez, 2022). Further, improving service quality may attract and retain customers, establish a stellar reputation, and boost brand recognition (H. Chen, 2021).

A customer-centric strategy can also help to strengthen relationships with stakeholders and business partners (Begeny et al., 2023). As a result, nonprofit leaders can improve service delivery, increase customer satisfaction and engagement, and eventually improve business processes by focusing on family needs. Similarly, by aligning food system services with family food service needs, NGOs can improve family

food security and nutrition while lowering delivery costs and enhancing business practices. Implementing a customer-centric strategy and improving service quality and operational efficiency can increase customer satisfaction, stakeholder involvement, and overall business success.

Application to Professional Practice

The findings of this study have implications for professionals working in nonprofit organizations, specifically those involved in food service and community outreach. The identified strategies can serve as valuable guidance for professionals to effectively align food systems with the needs of families. Here are essential applications to professional practice:

Strategic Planning

Professionals can use the BSC approach to develop comprehensive strategic plans integrating financial and nonfinancial performance metrics. Aligning objectives and strategies with the BSC perspectives (customer, internal processes, financial, and learning/growth) enables organizations to enhance overall performance and better cater to the needs of families.

Performance Management

Implementing the BSC as a performance management tool allows nonprofits to monitor and measure progress in achieving strategic objectives. By assessing financial and nonfinancial metrics, organizations can evaluate their effectiveness in aligning food systems with family needs and make data-driven decisions for improvement.

Customer-Centric Approach

Adopting a customer-centric approach helps nonprofit organizations prioritize the preferences and needs of the families they serve. Actively involving families in decision-making processes, soliciting feedback, and integrating their perspectives into program development and service delivery ensure that services are better tailored to the community's specific requirements.

Collaboration and Partnerships

Establishing partnerships with local farmers, suppliers, and community stakeholders strengthens nonprofits' capacity to align their food systems with family needs. Collaborative efforts enhance access to nutritious food, support local agriculture, and promote sustainable practices. By collaborating with external partners, nonprofits can leverage collective resources and expertise to address food insecurity more effectively.

Capacity Building and Skill Development

Nonprofit leaders can focus on capacity-building initiatives for staff and volunteers, providing training and resources to enhance skills in sustainable farming, direct marketing, nutrition education, and community engagement. Investing in professional development equips the workforce with the necessary knowledge and tools to implement effective strategies and deliver high-quality services to families.

The study findings can inform advocacy efforts and policy discussions on food access, nutrition, and community well-being. Nonprofits can utilize the evidence gathered to support calls for policy changes, funding allocation, and resource distribution that align with improving food systems and addressing family needs. By applying these strategies

and integrating the research findings into their professional practice, nonprofit professionals can work towards better-aligning food systems with the needs of the families they serve. Food security, community well-being, and positive social change can all be improved.

Implications for Social Change

Local food systems play a critical role in promoting a healthy lifestyle and building community wealth for several key reasons: growing, processing, and distributing food locally creates and sustains community-based jobs (Banks et al., 2019). Farmers' markets, community supported agriculture programs, and other food cooperatives not only help ensure money remains in communities but also create more vibrant communities (Halliday & Foster, 2020). Positive social changes resulting from the proposed study's findings might include lowered crime rates and citizens heightened feeling of safety (Potteiger, 2020). Preserving communities' values around food is essential and keeping the history of how food moves from producer to consumer via the processes of production, processing, distribution, retailing, and consumption; the community requires innovative efforts in a fast-paced society (Quaranta et al., 2019). By eating locally grown food, CO2 emissions are reduced by decreasing food miles-the distance food travels from producers to consumers (Stanton, 2018).

Recommendations for Action

Nonprofit organizations like ABZ are crucial in bridging the gap between food service needs and community food systems. However, the complex dynamics of food systems often challenge access to healthy food, particularly for families. Therefore,

action is needed to improve ABZ's processes and fill gaps to align their systems and services with the needs of families. Based on the study's findings, there are several recommendations for ABZ's leadership to consider.

First, ABZ's leadership should improve its orientation program. The study highlights an opportunity to evaluate the effectiveness of the orientation program for new team members. ABZ's leadership should conduct surveys or focus groups with new employees and seek supervisor feedback to understand areas where the orientation program can be improved. Nonprofits like the American Red Cross have successful onboarding programs, including a mentorship program, online training modules, and regular check-ins with supervisors.

Second, ABZ should enhance its communication channels to engage with diverse customers. They could consider using mobile applications or text messaging to communicate with customers who prefer those channels. They could also create online forums where customers can provide feedback and suggestions for improvement. Nonprofits like Feeding America and the United Way use social media platforms to engage customers and promote their services.

Third, ABZ's leadership should focus on reducing food insecurity while increasing nutritious food consumption among families. They could partner with other nonprofits, such as food banks or community organizations, to expand their reach and provide additional resources to families in need. ABZ could also implement nutrition education programs or cooking classes to help families make healthy choices. Nonprofits

like No Kid Hungry and the Food Research and Action Center have successful programs to reduce food insecurity among families.

Fourth, although ABZ's performance management system is a strength, there is an opportunity to assess its effectiveness and make improvements, as necessary. ABZ's leadership should conduct surveys or focus groups with employees and seek supervisor feedback to understand areas where the system can be improved. Nonprofits like Habitat for Humanity and Teach for America have successful performance management systems, including regular check-ins, goal setting, and ongoing feedback.

Finally, ABZ's leadership should evaluate the impact of their efforts to avoid negative societal impacts and make improvements as necessary to ensure that the organization is meeting its societal responsibility. They should conduct surveys or focus groups with stakeholders, suppliers, partners, and collaborators to understand their perceptions of the organization's impact. They should also seek feedback from community members to understand areas where the organization can improve. Nonprofits like the Environmental Defense Fund and Oxfam have successful programs that measure their impact on society and make improvements, as necessary.

By implementing these recommendations, ABZ leaders can further align its community food systems with the food service needs of families and contribute to positive social change. The recommended actions are based on successful practices employed by other nonprofits and aligned with the study's research question. By enhancing its orientation program, exploring additional communication channels, reducing food insecurity, assessing the effectiveness of its performance management

system, and evaluating its efforts to avoid negative societal impacts, ABZ's leadership can create a more effective and efficient organization that better serves its community.

Recommendations for Further Research

To further enhance our understanding of effective strategies for aligning nonprofit food systems with family needs, it's crucial to recognize and address the limitations present in isolated studies. My recent research, focused on a single nonprofit entity in the U.S. Southwest, highlights the need for wider analysis to reduce biases and strengthen the reliability of the results (Ross & Bibler Zaidi, 2019). Despite utilizing methodological triangulation and participant feedback to enhance this study's credibility, the conclusions are primarily applicable to the specific organization studied. To build a richer understanding and create adaptable strategies, future studies should expand to include comparative analyses of multiple nonprofit organizations. This would help identify best practices, customized to different organizational and community settings, and offer insights into the effectiveness of various approaches.

Further, it is advisable to conduct longitudinal studies to assess the enduring impacts and viability of these strategies, giving a detailed view of their progression over time. Collaborative efforts with government bodies and the private sector can reveal successful collaboration models, promoting better alignment in food systems. It's also essential to integrate the viewpoints of diverse stakeholders, including families and community members, to craft strategies that truly align with their needs and goals. This should also encompass research into the potential health and well-being benefits achieved through aligned food systems, identifying areas for further enhancement.

Additionally, considering the varied cultural backgrounds and the growing influence of technology in food system alignment, upcoming research should explore culturally attuned approaches and the application of innovative tools such as digital platforms and data analytics. These paths could revolutionize aspects like food access, distribution, and collaboration among stakeholders. Lastly, policy analysis is a fundamental aspect in developing effective strategies. Future initiatives should critically examine current policies, identifying avenues for interventions that support alignment initiatives, facilitating the creation of evidence-based policy suggestions. By adopting these research avenues, scholars can markedly advance knowledge and methodologies in the sector, paving the way for a future where nonprofit food systems harmoniously align with family needs.

Reflections

Firstly, delving into the complex problem of aligning food systems with the needs of families served by nonprofit organizations revealed the significance and urgency of this issue. The prevalence of malnutrition and limited access to healthy diets underscored the critical role that nonprofits play in addressing these challenges. Exploring the strategies employed by nonprofit leaders to align their system services with the food service needs of families shed light on the diverse approaches and innovative solutions implemented in the field. The BSC approach emerged as a valuable tool for organizations to balance financial and nonfinancial performance drivers, align process enhancements with strategic objectives, and prioritize stakeholder needs.

Throughout the project, the qualitative single-case study design proved effective in capturing rich insights and understanding the strategies deployed by nonprofit leaders within a specific context. The use of interviews think-aloud exercises, and examination of historical and archival records provided a comprehensive data collection approach that allowed for a deeper understanding of the research problem. The findings of the study highlighted the positive social change that can result from aligning food systems with family needs. Lowered crime rates, increased safety perception in communities, heightened consumer demand for locally grown produce, improved nutritional status among low-income community gardeners, and the acquisition of new skills in sustainable farming and direct marketing by locals all contribute to a more vibrant and resilient community.

Moreover, the research identified areas for further exploration and opportunities for future research. Comparative analyses of strategies, longitudinal studies, cross-sector collaboration, stakeholder perspectives, health and well-being outcomes, cultural and contextual factors, technology and innovation, and policy analysis all represent fruitful avenues for expanding knowledge and driving positive change in this field.

Overall, this project has deepened my understanding of the challenges faced by nonprofit organizations in aligning their food systems with the needs of families. It has also highlighted the importance of strategic management, stakeholder engagement, and innovative approaches in addressing these challenges. Moving forward, I am inspired to continue exploring this field and contribute to the development of effective strategies and

solutions that improve the well-being of families and communities through better food system alignment.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this research project has yielded valuable insights into the intricate issue of aligning food systems with the needs of families served by nonprofit organizations. By examining strategies employed by nonprofit leaders, the study has shed light on the pivotal role of the BSC approach in balancing financial and nonfinancial performance drivers, aligning processes with strategic objectives, and prioritizing stakeholder needs. The findings of this qualitative single-case study underscore the significance of addressing malnutrition and limited access to healthy diets, which pose considerable challenges for a significant portion of the population. Aligning food systems with family needs can lead to positive social change, including reduced crime rates, heightened safety perception, increased consumer demand for locally grown produce, improved nutritional status among low-income community gardeners, and the acquisition of new skills in sustainable farming and direct marketing.

There are several promising paths for research and exploration in the future. Comparative analyses, longitudinal studies, and cross-sector collaboration are potential forms of inquiry. Research on various topics—stakeholder perspectives, health and well-being outcomes, cultural and contextual factors, technology and innovation, and policy analysis—may provide opportunities for learning and making positive changes in food system alignment. Overall, this study has increased my understanding of the problems that nonprofit organization leaders encounter when seeking to aligning their food systems

with the needs of families, as well as the relevance of strategic management and stakeholder involvement in tackling these challenges. Stakeholders may be able to contribute to the well-being of families and communities by consistently exploring and creating effective policies and solutions, providing access to nutritious meals, and improving overall food security. By coordinating their efforts, they can potentially develop sustainable and equitable food systems.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol

Introduction Script: Thank you for your time. Per our conversation over the phone and the email I sent you, I am a Doctor of Business Administration student at Walden University. The purpose of this interview is to explore the strategies nonprofit leaders deploy to align their systems services with the needs of families. Your participation is essential in this study to help understand the various strategies nonprofit organizations have used to align nonprofit organizations in the food system sector. Your participation is voluntary, so if I ask a question, you do not want to answer. If you want to stop the interview at any time or want to withdraw from the study at any time, let me know. During the interview, I'll take notes and record the audio to ensure I capture everything you say. Once I have typed up the audiotape and notes, we'll set up a time for you to check that my interpretations are correct.

1. I will turn on the audio recording device and note the date and time.
2. I will introduce the participant to his or her pseudonym name (i.e., Participant 1, Participant 2, Participant 3, Participant 4, Participant 5).
3. I will begin the interview.
4. I will start with question number one and follow through to the final wrap up question.
5. I will continue with targeted follow-up questions if time permits.
6. I will end the interview process and thank the participant for his or her time.
7. I will reiterate the member-checking process and confirm the contact information for the participants.

8. I will convey my contact information for follow-up questions and any concerns from the participants.
9. The interview protocol ends.

Appendix B: Interview Questions

1. What strategies do you deploy to align your system services with the needs of families?
2. How did you measure the effectiveness of the implemented strategies?
3. Which of the strategies have been the most effective to align the system services with the needs of families?
4. What key challenges did you encounter during implementation of strategies to align the system services with the needs of families?
5. How did you address the key challenges you encountered during implementation of strategies to align your system services with the needs of families?
6. What else can you share about your organization's strategies for justice-oriented strategies that were developed and deployed to align system services with the needs of families?