



Princeton Area

COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

**Path to Impact Project
Final Report
July 1, 2014**



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Path to Impact Project

Executive Summary

In 2013, the Community Foundation engaged Quidoo Consulting and the TCC Group to help us understand greater Mercer County's nonprofit capacity which we define as the governance, business, and mission-focused functioning of nonprofits, and their ability to achieve their missions efficiently and effectively. Building capacity has long been important to the Community Foundation as we see a high-functioning sector as critical to our support of the people of the region. We have long been committed to helping nonprofits do their best work. Our earlier research project conducted by Angelworks in 2011 showed that our grantees value the education, networking, and non-financial resource access we provide and they want us to do more. In order to allocate resources for capacity building, it is important to begin with a baseline assessment of the strengths and challenges of the sector.

John Brothers of Quidoo Consulting helped us design an assessment based on work being done in several other communities around the world. We have learned from others, but our work was the first designed to give an overview understanding of the sector's needs, not to look into individual organizations. Participation was open to any nonprofit that serves Mercer County residents. Participating organizations' budgets range in size from under \$100,000 to over \$12 million, and they represent the arts, social services, environmental, economic and community development, education, health care and more. Many, but not all are Greater Mercer Grants recipients, as our interest is in the sector as a whole, not just Community Foundation grantees.

In late 2013 and early 2014, 48 organizations, including the Community Foundation, took the TCC Group's Core Competency Assessment Tool (CCAT), an in-depth, online, board and staff self-assessment. Each organization received help completing the assessment and interpreting its results. The Community Foundation received aggregated scores for the entire cohort (not individual organizations), in order to pinpoint common strengths and challenges.



Data in the tables below show the highest and lowest scores across all participants.

- 250 and above are “best practice” indicators
- 230 to 250 are considered to be “Strong”
- 190 to 229 are “Satisfactory”
- 175 to 190 are viewed as indicative of “Moderate challenges”
- Under 175 identify “Critical challenges”

Areas of greatest strength: see definitions below

Competency	Average score	% between 230 & 250 (Strong)	% over 250 (Best practice)
Leader Vision	255	30%	70%
Environmental Learning	237.7	43%	27%
Internal Leadership	238.4	43%	26%
Managing Program Staff	240.4	36%	43%
Mgr-Staff Communications	237.3	53%	16%
Empowering	235.8	47%	49%

Competency definitions:

1. **Leader Vision** = the capacity of organizational leaders to formulate a clear vision and to motivate others to pursue it.
2. **Environmental Learning** = The capacity to learn about what's going on in the community and stay current with what is going on in the field by collaborating and networking with community leaders and funders.
3. **Internal Leadership** = The ability of organizational leaders to apply a mission-centered, focused, and inclusive approach to making decisions, and to motivate people to act on those decisions.
4. **Managing Program Staff** = The capability to ensure that program staff have the knowledge, skills, and cultural sensitivity to effectively deliver programs and services.
5. **Manager-to-Staff Communications** = The capacity to establish and maintain open channels of communication between managers and staff, including managers' willingness to receive constructive feedback.
6. **Empowering** = This indicator assesses a group's ability to promote proactivity, learning, and the belief in the value and ability of staff and clients.



Areas of greatest challenge: see definitions below

Competency	Average score	% under 175	% between 175 & 190
Fundraising skills	153.2	70%	12%
Leadership sustainability	158.5	89%	11%
Marketing skills	168.2	75%	16%
Program resource adaptability	168.4	56%	25%
Outreach skills	171.2	68%	19%
Technology skills	182.9	17%	64%
Program evaluation skills	184.4	17%	55%
Technical capacity	188.6	27%	51%
Facilities	189	21%	47%

Competency definitions:

1. **Fundraising Skills** = The ability to procure the financial and in-kind resources necessary for efficient operations.
2. **Leadership Sustainability** = The organization's ability to cultivate organizational leaders, avoid over-relying on one leader, and plan for leadership transition.
3. **Marketing Skills** = The capacity to communicate effectively with both internal and external stakeholders.
4. **Program Resource Adaptability** = The capability to readily adapt to changes in program resources, including funding and staff.
5. **Outreach Skills** = The ability to conduct outreach, organizing, and advocacy.
6. **Technology Skills** = The ability to run efficient operations, as opposed to having the equipment and resources necessary.
7. **Program Evaluation Skills** = The capability to design and implement an effective evaluation.
8. **Technical Capacity** = Having the necessary resources (equipment, systems, software, etc.) to efficiently operate the organization.
9. **Facilities** = Having proper facilities (space, equipment, amenities, etc.) to efficiently operate the organization.



Analysis

Strengths:

The data show us that organizations here collaborate well, and are often led by people with passion for the mission and the ability to bring others along. They learn well, and are generally run well.

Challenges:

The research also shows us that regardless of size, nonprofits in greater Mercer County face challenges in raising money, and in doing the marketing and outreach that are integral to fundraising. Our organizations report that they are under-capacity in their facilities, equipment, and systems; and that they need help with program evaluation.

A corollary of high leader vision is the fear expressed about leadership transition, and building the next level of potential leadership within the sector.

Next steps:

Quidoo has given us a list of potential interventions to address the areas of greatest need for the cohort as a whole. Options to be considered are:

- Small or large group trainings and learning opportunities
- Facilitated peer learning groups
- Grants to individual organizations to support building capacity
- Hiring consultants to help individual organizations address their challenges
- Support for deep collaborations and mergers