

Starting a New Program Roundtable Notes

Group 1:

Leslie Reynolds
Christine Bellosa
Jennifer Georgis
Kathleen Wissmiller
Jim Haptonstahl
Ted Whitmer
Andrea Finnegan
Nathaniel Eckman

JH - Start with strategic plan/SWOT analysis; must have a vision/end-goal that meets the need

Seguin – car/auto program – entrepreneurial partnerships/alliances
Funding from Chicago Community Trust
Got a federal feasibility study grant
Advice: be organized/methodical/”line up ducks”; need good people and supportive board
(echoed by KW)

Passion is essential. Be willing to pool resources or farm out tasks (i.e., grantwriting)

CB - Her agency’s summer voc program at mechanic/car wash got off to a great start. Forward-looking now; future looks bright
Local partnerships really work

NE - How do you know when a new program is really needed? (not just growing or teaming up with another one)

KW - When the needs/people/issues change

JH - At Seguin, constantly adapting to changing needs

NE – Funders like them because increased bang for the buck

JH – Focus on outcomes

TW – Philanthropy world is really pushing for collaboration and collaboration can be a great occasion to start something new

JH – Yes, but must get people together

TW – But what drives new starts in lieu of funders?

CB – Sometimes things just arise/opportunities. Board support/ED ideas/ helpful/influential people. A lot of it is luck

JH – Seguin’s UCP partnership heavily involved top program staff and agency management. Took 6 months to get it off the ground. Communication is a challenge/opportunity

TW – At CARC, didn’t want to reinvent wheel, collaboration/outside investment best defenses against going so.

KW – Mergers/additions to existing programs look good to funders too.

AF – People talk – doesn’t matter from which point of an organization. Just speak, listen and learn. Look for opportunities

KW – Often goes (regularly) to after-work events to meet and talk to others. It’s what the agency needs. It’s right. Wears her work badge often in public.

JH – Many things sort of happen by accident. Be open to it.

JG – How do you move past “treading water” – i.e., staying afloat and discussing foundation?

JH & LR – Strong leadership! Advocacy and passion.

KW – Remember that everyone can/should help; we’re all staff

CB – Her agency fundraises 85% of its programs. Hard work. Piggy banks are passed out to local businesses to get donations. Easy to get stuck in fundraising

NE – What communication/networking strategies work?

JH – Sincerity, interest, commitment

JG – Learned at a recent meeting that it is best to be a connection, not talk about yourself/needs

TW – Should we (agencies) set up separately a meeting like this one to share best practices and ideas?

AF – Speed-networking event over drinks?

Group 2:

Eve Gutmann
Jane Gallery
Dan Dahlke
Jeff Fenick
Patty Herbst
Nathaniel Eckman

DD – Lisle-based organization for D/O/Autism, 5-22
Monthly planning going on last 4-5 months
Funding is biggest challenge
Partnerships/friends

EG – Too much time goes in new-start planning relative to getting a program off the ground. (It may not!)

NE – So what next?

PH – NPO's sometimes move outside of their original focus by chasing the funds. Stay true/come back to your vision

JF – Collaboration is valuable; bring your best to the bigger picture, but still (as an agency) be yourself

JG – Is it “grow or die”?

NE/JF/PH – You don't have to grow/keep growing. Do what you do better with higher output. Make it work better.

EG – I was once a program developer for an agency. Few places can afford to have one of these now!

NE – Anixter Center had one, but probably won't get another.

JF/EG – Process is often vague/messy at NPO's.

PH – Have to flexible and creative. We all do too much!

DD – Once was grant writer but sought to develop programs. Need an organizational shift to re-welcome this function to the workplace

NE – Typically “disorganized” NPO's. Agreed?

Group – Yes! Making it up as we go along!

DD – Negative appearance to/effect on funders/agency appearance

JF – How do you make the “product” saleable/pitchable to public stakeholders given such constraints?

PH – Team of people/pooling of effort/sharing of consultants/contractors/outside services. Matrix of efforts/providers/beneficiaries. Keep the labor hours down. Be efficient.

EG – Connect the clients. Link them to e.o. and to the constellation of services

PH – We do that by bringing people in and cross-pollinating.

JH/JF/EG – Discussion of Esperanza’s art program/growth/merging/extension efforts

NE – What makes for effective communication?

JF – Highlight your successes to be encouraging and compelling

EG – Yes, people remember you that way. Paper trail matters/very helpful for you and your successors.

JF – Talk about opportunity, not need.

EG – That point is borne out in grants work. Many people forget the importance of the elevator pitch. It really helps but needs to be consistent.

NE – Agreed!

EG – Internal and external parties need to hear the same message. A puzzle/challenge.

NE – Effective networking tactics?

DD – Take genuine interest in them. Ask questions.

JF – Yes; this forms a real connection. Never fake an interest.

NE – Don’t be insincere.