



CONNECTIONs

A publication of CONNECT—Partnership for Nonprofit Solutions

January 2008

Letter from the Director

Margarita McCullough

Greetings Friends,

As most of us often do in December, I find myself concluding the month reflecting on this past year. There have been many great partnerships and clients we've worked with both old and new. I look forward to the next year with enthusiasm as I launch into my new role with CONNECT as Director.

My philosophy regarding capacity building and technical assistance for Orange County's nonprofit community can be summarized quite simply in a quote by Anthony J. D'Angelo...

"When solving problems, dig at the roots instead of just hacking at the leaves."

CONNECT's programs and services have been designed to approach the mission of strengthening our community of nonprofits. We do this by providing support and resources to help organizations and leaders understand and utilize the best strategies for developing and sustaining their programs.

As a technical assistance provider we are in the unique role of playing a small part in your mission by helping you strengthen your agency's practices and supporting your efforts to build capacity with the ultimate goal being to better serve your clients. This goal can only be reached through the support and partnership of many. I am appreciative of the opportunity to be part of Orange County's nonprofit community and to partner with service providers, grantmakers, and other individuals that believe in your work and want to help achieve a stronger community overall.

2008 will bring more exciting opportunities to dig at your roots and develop strategies that will impact your organization. For example, you may choose to join us for interactive trainings on a wide range of topics: Program Evaluation, Marketing, Succession Planning, Work-Life Balance and Board Development to name a few. Additionally, we offer more in-depth support through our organizational assessments as well as training and consultation in relation to business planning—the root of all solid planning efforts.

I welcome you to contact me to learn more about CONNECT's services that can help your organization and to share your ideas on how to improve technical assistance and support to the community overall.

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*CONNECT is a project
of the Orangewood
Children's Foundation
and is funded in part
by the Children and
Families Commission
of Orange County
and Families and
Communities Together
(FaCT)*



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Special Event
Announcement
for all Ameri-
Corps & VISTA
members and
partners

*In recognition of all
you do!*

Thursday,
January 10, 2008

5:30 p.m.

at The Hacienda

For more information
and to RSVP, email
Kristi Piatkowski
at:

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Strategic Planning: Your Nonprofit's Journey to Success

Geri Lopker, CPT, CPLP, MHROD

Most commercial businesses con-
duct strategic planning sessions
on a periodic basis in order to
look to the future. Many nonprofit orga-
nizations recognize the value of these pe-
riodic planning sessions and also produce
strategic plans. Think of your strategic
plan as the highway leading to your de-
sired destination (or outcome).

Strategic planning starts with strategic visioning

Without a clear idea of what you want
your organization to be, how can you de-
termine the best way to get there? You
need to specify what constitutes resound-
ing success for the service you provide to
your target population. Then you must
become the standard-bearer who commu-
nicates the vision clearly to all who par-
ticipate in conducting the business of the
agency.

Figure out how you're going to fulfill that vision

Listed below are the typical steps to fol-
low in developing and implementing your
strategic plan.

1. Create your mission statement.
This can be an abbreviated statement of
your vision and can be used in your infor-
mational, promotional, and outreach ma-
terials.

2. Do an assessment of the relevant
nonprofit field and your organization's po-
tential funding opportunities within it.

Some questions to ask:

- Is there a limited or substantial source of funding?
- Where would you like to position your organization?
- Is there an unfilled niche you might pursue?

Begin to envision your organization
within the wider nonprofit world.

3. Consider the strengths and weaknesses of your nonprofit. You'll want to build on your strengths and work around your weaknesses.



Some questions to ask:

- Do you have a lack of funding?
- What is unique about your organiza-
tion?
- What are the features and benefits
that you offer?
- Who needs your service or product?

Give consideration to these in developing
your goals.

4. Generate specific long-term goals (3–5 years). If you are in a nonprofit
niche that is changing rapidly you might
want to use three years instead of five.
These should be reassessed at least once
a year. Next, develop annual goals that
lead successively to your long-term goals.
Commit this to writing and you're well on
your way to creating your strategic plan.

5. Brainstorm with staff, coach, Ad-
visory Board and others on ways to reach
your goals.

Some questions to ask:

- What is the best way to reach your au-
dience?
- What pitfalls might you encounter?
- What are some techniques that have
proven successful in the past?

Gather the information necessary to create
the actual steps for achieving your goals.

**6. Create your annual operating
plan and budget.** For the current year's
plan, attach a dollar amount to everything
so you can see what it's going to cost you
to implement it. A month-by-month list of

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MBA At Your Service **COMMUNITY CONNECTION**

Sharon M. Holland, MAP

A few years ago we shared this great resource with our readers. We revisit it once again for your consideration.

The Masters in Business Administration (MBA) Program at University of California, Irvine's (UCI) Paul Merage School of Business, which is ranked among the top 50 business schools by such respected sources as Forbes Magazine and US News and World Report, has quite an offer for you.

Here is your chance to receive pro bono consulting for your nonprofit from MBAs in the making. A program coordinated by UCI's Center for Leadership Development called the Social Responsibility Initiative (SRI) brings together graduate students and nonprofits to the benefit of both.

Many nonprofits cannot easily afford to hire a business consultant to develop a marketing program or to create a strategic plan. As a participant in SRI, your organization has access to a team of 3 to 6 full-time graduate students working on your project. The students share not only the skills they've gained from their education but they also typically have five years of business experience under their belts. In addition, teams have access to the knowledge and skillsets of their professors in carrying out projects.

What do you need to know?

1. Your organization must be a 501(c)(3) and be within driving distance of the school (to facilitate meetings).
2. You must have one staff member who will head up the project, has time to meet with the team, and can supply the information they need to succeed.
3. Your project must be a short-term (6 to 8 week) consulting assignment resulting in a deliverable. For example, the team could produce a marketing plan for your service or program.

4. Students select among projects based on relevance to coursework and personal interest. Keep this in mind when developing your idea.

5. New developments in the program make it possible to work with an MBA even if you don't think you have a project that fits the SRI protocols. You can allow students to suggest ideas, or you can enlist an MBA student as a volunteer.

What does the team commit to?

The Team agrees to:

1. Communicate with the organization on a weekly basis.
2. Meet face-to-face with the organization at least twice.
3. Discuss and agree upon deliverables with organization's designated representative.
4. Meet with the organization during regular business hours.

Who has participated?

Boy Scouts of America, Habitat for Humanity and the Long Beach Museum of Art are just a few of the organizations that have taken advantage of these consulting services. Maybe it's time to think about how your organization can benefit, too!



Ideas for Projects:

*Market Research
Management
Staff Motivation
Leadership
Information Systems
Marketing*

Project ideas must be submitted by March 21, 2008 to meet the deadline for the Spring 2008 Quarter.

For More Information visit: <http://www.merage.uci.edu/ResearchAndCenters/CLD/SocialResponsibilityInitiative.aspx>

or

Contact David Soleil, Assistant Director of the Center for Leadership Development of the Paul Merage School of Business

dsoleil@uci.edu

Obstacle or Opportunity: It's Your Choice FIRST 5 SERVICE CORPS UPDATE

Beatriz Cordoba & Ashley Authement

Obstacles: an inevitable part of life and something we each handle differently. Each time we run into a new obstacle we have the choice to let it stop us in our tracks or to view it as a learning experience and an opportunity for growth. Sandra DeAnda, an AmeriCorps member, is a determined young woman who walks the latter path.

Born in Orange, California, Sandra's early childhood was spent in a low-income neighborhood in Santa Ana witnessing her parents' struggle to meet day-to-day needs. Eventually, her parents moved the family back to their native Mexico. After Sandra finished high school, this family of seven moved once again to Santa Ana only to find the same challenges existed that they had experienced in the past.

Hearing about the AmeriCorps program from a co-worker, Sandra jumped at the opportunity to help people in her community who were struggling with the same obstacles she and her family faced on a daily basis. She is currently a Health Advocate for the Delhi Center where she assists families with health education and insurance enrollment.

Beatriz Cordoba interviewed Sandra to discover what inspired her to overcome her own obstacles while helping others in need to succeed.

BC: Tell me about the community where you live.

SD: I live in Minnie Street—a low-income community in Santa Ana that has been impacted by gang activity for the past 20 years.

BC: What kinds of problems do you see in your community?

SD: Most of the parents in my community have not received a formal education and have no idea how to access the services that are available to them.

BC: What motivated you to do something to help your community?

SD: I wanted to help my community for personal reasons. I come from an immigrant family and I remember my parents struggling to get to services. Also, I knew that most people were unaware of the kind of resources that our community offers and I wanted to be the "educator" to these families.

BC: How did you learn about the AmeriCorps program and what made you want to join?

SD: An old friend and coworker told me about the program. I wanted to join because of the need in my community and also because of my children. I want them to be proud of me and I want to show them that everyone can make a difference within our community.

BC: What are you doing as an AmeriCorps member and how is this helping you address the community's problems?

SD: I am a Health Advocate. I do home visitations with parents in my community and help them with insurance enrollment for their children. I also give parents information and referrals for different resources offered in the community. For example, during a home visit I can give parents resources on medical insurance, doctors, school-readiness programs, food banks, WIC [Women, Infants, and Children—a nationwide nutrition program], and educational classes. Being an AmeriCorps member has helped me address the problems in my community tremendously. I am now able to educate parents on services they didn't know existed. I have the access and the knowledge of great resources that families can benefit from. Also, with all of the training that I have obtained as an AmeriCorps member, I feel more confident and eager to help. I have already presented a class on breastfeeding education and another one in nutrition.



*"Stand up
to your
obstacles and
do something
about them.
You will find
that they
haven't half
the strength
you think they
have."*

Norman
Vincent Peale

Working with Outside Consultants

EDUCATION CORNER



Oftentimes nonprofits find themselves needing to access the services of an outside consultant. To help you spend your dollars wisely, increase your chances of success and manage your expectations, the Grand Victoria Foundation, an Illinois nonprofit dedicated to economic, educational, and environmental improvement, offers a free, online “toolkit” called, “The Insider’s Guide to Outside Advice.” Short on words and long on practical advice, the guide walks you through the necessary steps for successfully working with consultants from start to finish.

Throughout the guide, icons in blue direct you to documents in the back to be used to help you implement the information you’ve just read. We recommend this informative resource and thank the Grand Victoria Foundation for making its toolkit available to the nonprofit community!

The Insider’s Guide to Outside Advice

(Click link above to access guide)

www.grandvictoriafdn.org

Strategic Planning

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Obstacle or Opportunity

(cont. from p. 4)

interim targets or benchmarks gives you an easy-to-use reference to keep you on target.

Some questions to ask:

- What’s your projected funding?
- How will you produce that funding?
- What relationships need to be built to open the funders’ doors?
- Who is responsible for reaching funders?

Communicate your monthly targets to staff.

7. Create an action plan that you believe will lead you to your benchmarks and achievement of your first year’s goals. It’s better not to plan these too far in advance. A three-month, six-month, nine-month plan of action works well and allows you to make adjustments quarterly.

One of the frustrations often heard from nonprofit leaders is that they’re so caught up in daily activities and putting out fires they don’t have time to step back and envision *where* the organization is going. By putting in the time to make a plan in advance your organization will run more effectively overall and, potentially, fewer fires will ignite in the first place. With your strategic plan as your roadmap, smooth the way for your nonprofit’s journey to success!

Plus, I am able to apply the knowledge that I get from trainings on topics like child development when I’m helping families.

BC: What keeps you motivated to help your community?

SD: My children and parents keep me motivated, as well as the rich potential I see among all of the children growing up in my community. I know that our children are the ones we need to help today in order to better our community of tomorrow, so I dedicate myself to educating their parents. Knowing that I can help makes me want to go the extra mile.

BC: What are your future goals?

SD: After I complete my AmeriCorps service, I want to keep working with my community and become a family counselor or a child therapist. [As a volunteer in good standing, the AmeriCorp program’s educational award will help Sandra pay for the training she’ll need in order to pursue these dreams. -Ed.]

Upcoming CONNECT Trainings

Keeping It All Together: Developing A Plan To Manage Your Work-Life Balance

Presented by: Moty Koppes Friday, January 11, 2008

Using Data for Grant Writing

Presented by: Vivian Linderman Thursday, January 31, 2008

Succession Planning

Presented by: Geri Lopker Thursday, February 14, 2008

[See article on page 2]

Financial Management

Presented by: Tuesday, March 4, 2008

California Association of Nonprofits

Social Enterprise

Presented by: Dave McDonough Thursday, March 27, 2008

*Visit the CONNECT website for more information and registration



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Fighting Poverty with Passion ...

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A Project of the Children and Families Commission of Orange County

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To get involved: www.connectoc.net

Comments/Suggestions/Contributions?

We'd love to hear from YOU!

Contact the CONNECTIONS Editor at sholland@connectoc.net