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ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF AN IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS
FOR GRANT-FUNDED PROJECTS/PROGRAMS
IN NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS

by

Margaret M. Bernhard

A Dissertation
Submitted to the
Faculty of The Graduate College
In partial fulfillment of the
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School of Public Affairs and Administration

Western Michigan University
Kalamazoo, Michigan
June 2003

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF AN IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS
FOR GRANT-FUNDED PROJECTS/PROGRAMS
IN NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS

Margaret M. Bernhard, D.P.A.

Western Michigan University, 2003

Grant seeking is a source of funding for many nonprofit organizations. If a proposal is funded, the organization must contend with the responsibility of project implementation and the expectations of successful project outcomes. A project implementation process with strategic and tactical steps that clearly define the path that leads to positive grant outcomes would assist the grant administrator. Using the Delphi Method as a methodological tool for facilitating dialog among anonymous experts, 12 foundation program officers identified, ranked, and rated the essential elements and barriers of grant implementation. The process revealed 13 essential elements of implementation and 11 barriers to implementation. These results formed the design of a model for the implementation of grant funded projects which sorted the elements into strategic and tactical steps.

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INTRODUCTION

Introduction

It is likely that the average American interacts, on a regular basis, with some part of the diverse organizations that make up the nonprofit sector. That interaction could take place at a healthcare facility, school, museum, religious organization, theatre, social service organization, symphony, neighborhood association, or boys and girls club to name just a few. Salamon (2002) writes that “nonprofit organizations embody, and therefore help to nurture and sustain, a crucial national value emphasizing individual initiative in the public good” (p. 11).

Nonprofit organizations strive to maintain this national value with their long-standing commitment to provide a myriad of valued services to individuals and communities regardless of limited resources. The leaders of these organizations are faced with complex administrative tasks requiring a balancing routine of leading the organization, overseeing day-to-day operations, and maintaining a healthy fiscal balance for the organization. These activities require an administrative proficiency in human management, budgetary efficiencies, and technical competencies. These proficiencies are taxed when additional funding is need. Seeking funding complicates an already full organizational agenda but for many has become critical for organizational solvency and survival.

Grant seeking is one source of additional funding; however, the awarding of a grant is only the beginning with implementing what was promised in the proposal becoming an additional action item for the leadership and staff of the organization. Anecdotal reporting from board members, nonprofit directors, staff members, and foundation officers have validated discussions regarding the intensity of the grantseeking process, the additional responsibility of administering a funded grant, and the desire to find better ways to accomplish the necessary tasks of grant administration. A project implementation process with strategic and tactical steps that clearly define the path that leads to positive grant outcomes would assist the nonprofit administrator in addressing the complexity of funded projects and reach the expected deliverables.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this exploratory study is to identify the necessary components of a grant project/program implementation process. This study uses a Delphi Method to facilitate a dialogue amongst expert grant funders resulting in the identification of a set of essential elements for an implementation process for grant funded nonprofit projects/programs.

Research Question

The exploratory study seeks to answer a primary question: What are the essential elements of an implementation process for grant-funded nonprofit

projects/programs? A second question is also included as a subset of the first: What are the barriers to implementation?

Background of the Problem

While services provided by nonprofit organizations are in greater demand than ever, available funding for today's nonprofit organizations in the United States has shifted and in some cases declined over the past decade (Independent Sector, 2002). Traditionally, funding for nonprofit organizations originates from three main sources: private payments received from dues and fees for program services and charges, government support, and private charitable contributions. The Independent Sector (2002) estimates that 38 percent of funding comes from private payments, 31 percent from government contracts and grants, 20 percent from private contributions, and 11 percent from other sources such as investments.

Salamon (1999) notes that several trends have created a fiscal challenge and economic crisis for the nonprofit arena. Funds once available from the federal government have diminished as a result of cutbacks from the 1980s through the 1990s. In addition, Salamon (2002) writes that not only has government funding diminished but the type of funding has been altered where, "70 percent of federal support took the form of consumer-side subsidies – forcing nonprofits to compete for the market" (p. 2). Salamon defines consumer-side subsidies as channeling aid directly to the consumer, such as vouchers, rather than producers. The Independent Sector (2002) echoes these sentiments estimating that funds for dues and services

have decreased in the last few years. It is suggested that a major factor is increased competition from for-profits for services traditionally provided by nonprofits. A prime example is the rise and continued expansion of managed care in both social services and the health care systems. Salamon (2002) indicates that although private giving has grown over the last few years by one and a half percent, it has not grown as fast as the rate of inflation. He writes, "The recent stock market sell-off and recession of 2000-2002 have reversed the growth spurt that was evident in the boom period of the late 1990s despite the outpouring of support in response to September 11" (p. 2).

The events surrounding September 11, 2001 have added a most unexpected alteration to the funding future of the nonprofit sector. America's nonprofit sector was able to respond to the crisis and assist with disaster and recovery relief. Seven out of ten Americans contributed money, blood, or time in response to the crisis (Independent Sector, 2001b). By December 2001, over \$1.5 billion dollars had been donated to help victims in New York and Washington (Light, 2002). Many have wondered how the generous response of the American people combined with the economic downturn will impact the support for the services by nonprofits in the following years. Sara Melendez, President and CEO of the Independent Sector wrote the following:

Many have expressed concern about how this extraordinary outpouring of private philanthropic support would affect the ability of nonprofit organizations to raise sufficient funds to carry on other vital community services. While recognizing the enormous need for support as a result of the

terrorist attacks, there is widespread recognition that other demands are also expanding with the recent economic decline --- demand for other human services, for medical research and treatment, for creative outlets and spiritual healing. Prior to September 11, a number of philanthropic foundations had announced that the value of their assets has dropped significantly due to the declining stock market and they would therefore be forced to reduce their grantmaking activities. Corporations, another key source of support for many nonprofit organizations, were experiencing similar economic challenges and were reducing the dollars they could devote to supporting charitable nonprofits. (Independent Sector, October 2001, p. 1)

Donations to September 11 funds may well have diverted funds from other nonprofits. Light (2002) notes that many small nonprofits were affected, “whether because they delayed annual fund-raising appeals, cancelled performances, or curtailed services in anticipation of cutbacks” (p. 3).

The overall economic downturn during 1995-2002 has resulted in a changed economic environment for the entire nonprofit sector. The asset base of most foundations is weaker, and this limits the amount of available resources for grantmaking. In a recent study reported by the Center for Effective Philanthropy (2002) in an article entitled, *Indicators of Effectiveness: Understanding and Improving Foundation Performance*, one-third of foundation leaders indicated a

decline in funding, more than one-third indicated it would stay the same, and a little less than one-third estimated an increase. The author of the report writes,

While total overall foundation dollars available to nonprofits may not, in fact, decrease due to the creation of new foundations, the leveling or contraction in grantmaking among many of the country's largest, established foundations represents a substantial shift from recent years and is already creating pressures within foundations and among grantees. (p. 5)

In the shadow of all of the budgetary shifts, the leadership within nonprofit organizations has had to make strategic choices. Strategic suggestions include eliminating or reducing services, examining operations and making them more efficient, and/or finding alternative funding resources. Many nonprofit organizations have addressed the budgetary shift by pursuing other sources of support such as fees for service, private individual and corporate giving, and grant activity via foundations.

Grant seeking is one source of additional funding. However, the grant seeking process can become a labor-intensive activity that can tax an organization's already strained resources. The process is most often deadline-driven and requires dedicated energy simultaneous to maintaining customary operating activities. In many cases, to address this time-demanding need and lack of expertise, grant writers external to the organization are contracted to create the proposal for submission. These external resources are helpful in the short-term but may become counter-productive in the long run. For example, in many cases, the grant writer is not part of the comprehensive

organizational planning process or the long-term implementation, which results in the organizational leadership or staff adding grant management duties to the current responsibilities. Limited human resources for the day-to-day management of the organization as well as grant implementation are compounded by the difficulty of recruiting and retaining frontline and managerial staff as well as burnout at the executive level (Salamon, 2002).

If a proposal is funded, the organization must then contend with the added responsibility of project implementation and the expectation of successful project outcomes. If the organization is not prepared to implement the program/project or the expected services do not reach the target audience, perceptions of mismanagement, fraud, or indifference may pervade. A recent example of these perceptions was illustrated with the nonprofit organizations created for the September 11, 2001 victims. A national conversation regarding the delay in distribution of funds and perceived mismanagement clouded the entire process and minimized the strength and purpose of the special funds. Large national organizations, such as the American Red Cross, suffered from the perceived mismanagement and lack of articulation on the implementation process to move the funds from the organizational coffers to the terror victims (Williamson, 2001).

The perception or misperception of organizational capacity adds an additional layer of complexity to seeking alternative funding, especially grant funding. The “crisis of legitimacy” as authored by Salamon (1997) and the “climate of reform” as written by Light (2000) point to the “nearly unanimous consensus that nonprofit

organizations have to improve their performance” (p. 13). According to Light (2000), management reform in the nonprofit sector is accelerating, and the pressure to improve is well recognized in most nonprofits in the country. State and local governments and private givers are asking harder questions about performance. Light (2002) continues to draw attention to the demand for accountability: “The nonprofit sector can expect intense scrutiny far into the future...oversight groups have moved quickly to link the Red Cross and United Way controversies to their long-standing calls for greater accountability, while the mainstream media have been on the issue” (p. 12).

Although literature on nonprofit reform is abundant, no specific literature, report, or documented trend currently exists indicating a specific need to inquire into the quandary of grant implementation processes. However, anecdotal reporting confirms the acknowledgement of similar situations within a variety of nonprofit organizations, especially those organizations with little or no staff. Board members, nonprofit directors, staff members, and foundation officers have validated discussions regarding the intensity of the grantseeking process, the additional responsibility of administering a funded grant, and the desire to find better ways to accomplish the necessary tasks of grant administration.

A project implementation process with strategic and tactical steps that clearly define the path that leads to positive grant outcomes would assist the nonprofit administrator in addressing the complexity of funded projects and reach the expected outcomes.

Theoretical Framework

Funders and seekers agree that not all programs survive; even those programs perceived to be the most innovative, outstanding, and needed sometimes struggle. Projects/programs thrive when supported by a strong organization, one demonstrating organizational capacity. Two constructs provide the basis to approach this study. The first is organizational capacity and cross-sector approaches, the improvement of functions to impact organizational performance. The second is project management, systematic approaches to getting the work done on time, within budget, and according to specifications.

Organizational Capacity and Cross-Sector Approaches

In his essay on nonprofit reform, Light (2000) recommends reformers focus on the capacity-building model of accountability. Letts, Ryan, and Grossman (1999), authors of *High Performance Nonprofit Organizations*, offer guidelines to increase effectiveness for nonprofit organizations, missions, and programs that shape the organizational capacity. They write that effective nonprofit organizations rely on three types of organizational capacity. The first, Program Delivery Capacity, occurs when the organization and programs are almost synonymous. Most attention is on the knowledge needed to address a specific social problem. Performance is measured through program efficacy and outcomes. Next, Program Expansion Capacity focuses on the growth of an organization and requires more attention to organizational capacities. Performance is measured through organization and management as well

as programmatic expertise. Finally, Adaptive Capacity ensures the advancement of the organization's mission and the organization's need to continuously and systemically assess and improve its performance. Performance is measured through program outcomes, organizational efficiency, organizational effectiveness, and mission impact (Letts, Ryan, and Grossman, 1999). Letts et al. propose that Adaptive Capacity makes an organization more efficient but, more importantly, more effective. The goals of Adaptive Capacity include:

1. Learning—identifying problems and possibilities for improvement;
2. Responsiveness—identifying client service and ways to improve the quality of service;
3. Innovativeness—utilizing organizational resources to create new programs; and
4. Motivation—providing vehicles so staff and other stakeholders see the fruition of their efforts (Letts, Ryan, & Grossman, 1999).

Organizational capacity paves the way for a nonprofit organization to seek resources, ideas, and innovation beyond what is currently known.

One way for nonprofit organizations to build capacity is to borrow best practices from the business and public sectors, better known as cross-sector approaches. Honing theory and practice from other sectors could amplify the capacity of a nonprofit organization and enhance its ability to serve its constituency.

The results of a cross-sector approach, comparing nonprofits and for-profits, provides the potential to extract ideas, lessons, and best practices from one

environment for experimenting and validation in another. These results have been called bisociation; compelling new insights emerge when dissimilar things are compared (Letts et al., 1999). Project Management, the second construct, which serves as a basis for this study is drawn from business and industry and has the potential to amplify all three types of capacity Letts et al. propose.

Project Management

Implementation lies at heart of a project, as it is the execution of the project design that must be accomplished to produce the desired and expected outcomes. For the purpose of this study, project management theories provide a basis for an implementation process. As described above, project management is the ability to get the work done on time, within budget, and according to specifications.

The importance of project management in the nonprofit sector is a compelling management approach for the following reasons. First, project management is comfortable in flattened organizations, which characterize many small nonprofits, as it is based on cross-functional teams. Teams expand the competence of individuals to problem solve beyond themselves. In essence, it enhances the capacity of the organization, adding depth and breadth (Frame, 1999). Effective project leadership does not demand the existence of authority based on chains of command; rather it recognizes that the best way to get the job done is through the effective use of influence (Frame, 1999). In many ways the basic strengths of project management

match the basic strengths of the nonprofit sector, and if institutionalized would build organizational capacity.

A key consideration is whether a project management implementation process will work for the nonprofit sector. A review of the nonprofit literature suggests a gap in project management models specifically tailored to serve the nonprofit sector. The project management body of knowledge has grown over the past fifty years. Morris (2001) writes of the evolution, "Project management has grown from the early initiatives in the U.S. defense/aerospace sectors in the late 1950s and 1960s into a core competency that is widely recognized across most sectors" (p. 21). These theories and models are practiced in many industries but not in the nonprofit arena. Drawing upon the best practices and expertise in these fields will sharpen the current capacities in the nonprofit sector.

Adapting project management theories from business arenas to the nonprofit sector may provide the necessary insight to enhance the capacity of the sector and serve as an example of cross-sector approaches. When cross-sector approaches are used, the following potential results could occur. First, new insights are developed or new approaches are created when divergent practices are compared. Next, cross-sector approaches might uncover techniques, methods, or perspectives such as financial management techniques or strategic planning that have demonstrated success in at least these other fields (Letts et al., 1999).

Limitations

As with any exploratory study weaknesses are to be expected. In this study potential weaknesses are evident. The first limitation is the question of whether the overall concept of one implementation process is adaptable to fit any type of nonprofit organization. Since the nonprofit arena is diverse and vast in its scope of services and products, it is realistic to question if a single implementation process and one lexicon will meet the project needs of all types of projects in the nonprofit arena.

The next limitation is built into the method and concerns the size and diversity of the panel. The Delphi Method requires a small group (five to ten) and careful attention to managing the nomination process so that a balance of the appropriate number of panelists and the diversity of organizations is represented. The balance requires different types of foundations, sizes of staff and budget, various geographic locations and fields of interest. The Delphi Method does not require or produce a sample that is statistically representative of the study population.

Another potential limitation involves the requirements for experts participating in the actual Delphi exercise. The experts are not only required to have a comprehensive level of expertise in the grantmaking arena but also a commitment to a concept of a grant implementation process and its potential for change. It was critical to maintain the experts' level of motivation, as the study required a time commitment over several months. More importantly, the Delphi participants needed to feel a 'tension for change.' Those involved needed to be dissatisfied with the

current state of affairs for grant implementation and believe that the change would make a difference (Rotondi and Gustafson, 1996).

The final perceived limitation is an overall bias in the literature regarding the rigor of the Delphi Method. Ziglio (1996) summarizes the criticism: "The Delphi Method has been criticized (often unfairly) for not using 'scientific' procedures in terms of sampling and testing of results through conventional experimental control" (p.13). This attitude might minimize the results of the exploration.

Significance of the Study

The study of the essential elements of an implementation process for grant-funded projects or programs has potential in assisting two specific groups. The first group is executive directors, program managers and members of the board of any nonprofit organization that has been funded by a grant. The results of the study could support nonprofit administrators in three ways: (1) by developing a system that could provide administrators with a process to meet the proposed goals and objectives of the grant; (2) by enhancing the ability of nonprofit organizations to become good stewards of foundation or federal dollars through effective and efficient management; and (3) by providing grant seekers with a process to include in the planning, writing, and implementing of program proposals. Grant seekers using the proposed implementation process will demonstrate a level of organization that is sought by most funders.

The second target population for the implementation process is funders.

Funders award grants to nonprofit organizations that demonstrate an ability to be responsible stewards of the funded dollars. The implementation process would provide overall efficiencies, enhance project outcomes, and serve the organization and the eventual ultimate mission of the foundation. This could result in a grant program that has a greater impact on the specified target population. Finally, the study could glean a set of criteria to be used by both seekers and funders to estimate the capacity of the organization to implement the grant.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

In the following examination of pertinent literature, the components to understanding an implementation process for a grant-funded program or project are explored. Since there are limited writings available in the nonprofit literature, the majority of the review is drawn from fields of research that complement the nonprofit grant implementation process such as project management. After a brief introduction, the basic structure of the nonprofit sector and the literature describing the current environment of change are outlined. Reviewed next is grantmaking literature is reviewed that describes grantmaking processes and relationships to funding sources, specifically foundations. Finally, issues related to the general concepts of implementation and some historic and current principles of project management are described.

Introduction

It has often been said that the “devil is in the detail” when it comes to the implementation of public policy, human service programs, or any program for that matter. The study of implementation in public policy and social services program administration literature is plentiful. However, writings about implementation for

grant-funded projects/programs are limited and almost non-existent when singled out for the nonprofit arena. Quick and New (2000) offer one of the few practitioners' guides to grant seeking and grant management. Their book, *Grant Winner's Toolkit: Project Management and Evaluation*, is based on professional experiences and provides advice on the aspect of daily management of a grant-funded program. In addition to the wisdom of their many years of grant writing, the authors provide templates of forms and checklists to better manage the project. This practitioner's guide is one of the few books suggesting any assistance with tool and techniques to direct a grant-funded program.

The opposite is true for grantseeking. Details abound on how to write and prepare a proposal, how to work with a funding source, and the steps to grant submission and successful awards. The literature articulates the politics and the application process, but the literature on the actual implementation process has gaps.

A review of the research databases and journals published in the field of nonprofit administration support a lack of research in this specific area of grant implementation. This review included the online searchable databases "Literature of the Nonprofit Sector" (Foundation Center) and "Nonprofit Pathfinder" (Independent Sector). The publications from the Association for Research on Nonprofits Organizations and Voluntary Action (ARNOVA), Aspen Institute, the International Society for Third Sector Research (ISTR), and the periodical *Nonprofit Management & Leadership*, have not published research discussing any part of grant

implementation/management for nonprofit organizations, their programs, or for specific grants in a nonprofit setting.

A current research project in progress funded by the Aspen Institute Nonprofit Sector Research Fund might provide some complementary insight in the future. The sponsored research begun in 2002 and conducted by FitzRandolph and Miller is entitled, *Case Studies of Entrepreneurial Ventures in Nonprofit Organizations: Determining Their Probability for Success*. The qualitative study plans to analyze ten nonprofit organizations from across Canada involved in entrepreneurial venturing. The ten case studies will be analyzed to ascertain if the organizations have key indicators of success in common. The key indicators of success might be helpful in the designing of a proposed implementation process.

More research is needed to assist with the development of a better understanding of grant implementation in the nonprofit arena. It is this author's hope to decrease, in some small part, the gap in the current literature.

The Nonprofit Sector

The nonprofit sector is an integral part of the American way of life providing crucial programs other sectors do not. This sector is best described in the introduction of Salamon's (2002) seminal text, *The State of the Nonprofit America*:

Encompassing multi-million dollar health complexes and far larger numbers of small operations with annual budgets of less than \$25,000, nonprofit organizations deliver much of the hospital care, higher education, social

services, cultural entertainment, employment and training, low-income housing, community development, social welfare and emergency aid services available in this country. They also perform a crucial advocacy role, identifying unattended problems and bringing them to public attention. Most of the social movements that have animated American life over the past century or more operated in and through this set of institutions. Nonprofit organizations also give expression to a wide variety of artistic, religious, cultural, ethnic, social and recreational impulses that add richness to community life. And they help foster “social capital,” the bonds of trust and reciprocity that seem to be crucial for a democratic polity and a market economy to function. (p. 1)

Nonprofit organizations in the U.S. now generate an estimated \$1 trillion dollars each year and account for ten percent of the gross domestic product (Smith, 2000). It is also estimated that there are over 1.2 million nonprofit organizations in the United States (Nonprofit Sector, 2001). Eleven million people are employed in the nonprofit sector, which is approximately seven percent of all paid employees in the U.S. An estimated 5.7 million volunteers offer their time and talent extending the services of nonprofit organizations. The combination of paid labor and volunteer labor workforces total approximately 16.6 million people (Salamon, 2002). The state of the nonprofit sector is advancing forward and ever expanding. The sector is multi-

faceted, complex, and interconnected with government and business. Relationships with these sectors are plentiful and ever changing.

The current literature addresses a climate of change, a need for reform and improvement, and strategies to grow stronger. At the 2001 annual meeting of the National Council of Nonprofit Associations, a presentation on the preliminary findings of the Aspen Institute's project *State of America's Nonprofit Sector* was presented. Two pertinent trends prevailed. The first is a growing concern for accountability of all nonprofit organizations. Developments in nonprofit accountability are broadening from the traditional forms of fiscal honesty and good governance to focusing on adherence to mission and effectiveness (Aspen Institute, 2001). The second is an evolution of nonprofit infrastructure organizations. Nonprofit infrastructure organizations are being called upon to pay more attention to improving the quality of their services, strengthening their public policy voice, and better articulating their vision for the role of the nonprofit sector in society (Aspen Institute, 2001). Strengthening the umbrella infrastructure organizations provides an opportunity to assist all nonprofits with new skills for organizational capacity.

Scholars such as Salamon, Light, Halpern, and Letts have published books and articles over the past seven years (1995-2002) with concern about recognizing the need for change and shaping the nonprofit sector for the future. In the introduction to *Vision and Values: Rethinking the Nonprofit Sector in America*, Charles Halpern writes,

We must recognize that although there have been huge changes in the world in the past quarter-century, nonprofit practitioners have not done the work of self-renewal that needs to be done. What is needed now is a concerted effort both to champion the nonprofit sector against attacks and to reconfigure it to make it more effective and accountable in relation to the new economic, political, and social realities we face. (Nathan Cummings Foundation, 1998, p. 5)

Beyond traditional concerns for a fiscal and economic crisis, Salamon (1997, 2002) writes of a crisis of effectiveness and a crisis of legitimacy as well as additional challenges in competition, technology and human resources. A considerable level of doubt regarding the efficacy of problem solving in the nonprofit sector has increased. As social problems increase with limited solutions, government is criticized, and so too is the nonprofit's ability to address those problems. A national perception prevails that perhaps nonprofits make the situation worse with added layers of bureaucratic administration. Salamon notes that many individuals express a lack of confidence in the sector's overall ability to produce measurable results and question the return on investment.

Unfortunately, there is limited information to change the perception of ineffectiveness. Nonprofits tend to rely on the old reputation that not-for-profit equals integrity and efficiency. Salamon (1997) reports, "Nonprofit organizations generally lack meaningful bases for demonstrating the value of what they do" (p. 39). These

public perceptions and the inability to change them have created a crisis of legitimacy.

The Independent Sector Series of Surveys support Salamon's discussions. In an article entitled, *Taking the Pulse of American's Attitudes Toward Charities* (2002), key findings include the following,

In 1999, 62 percent of Americans agreed that charities are more effective now in providing services than five years ago. On the other hand Americans were less likely in 1999 than in earlier years to believe that charities are honest and ethical in their handling of donated funds. (p. 1)

Although the public expressed higher levels of confidence than in the past, the Independent Sector (2002) cautions, "The public sector also holds some negative views about the nonprofit sector, and it remains indifferent to key parts of the sector" (p.1).

Salamon believes that this crisis is reinforced by mismanagement scandals and a disconnect between the general public expectations of the nonprofits and how the organizations really function in today's world. This has resulted in questions on the sector's credibility and privileges.

Light (2000) opened his essay *Making Nonprofits Work* with the following. "The nonprofit sector has never been under greater pressure to improve. Despite two decades of phenomenal growth, the sector suffers from a general impression that it is less efficient and more wasteful than its government and private competitors" (p. 1). Quoting Salamon in his essay, Light echoes the same concerns of the increased

expectations of the constituency, increased pressure from the government and funders, and increased competition from providers. Light makes it clear that a national reform movement is here to stay.

The expectation cycle continues; as social problems increase, so do the goals of the sector to meet the problems. As the size of the sector increases to meet the needs, so does the challenge of effectively managing it all. Letts, Ryan, and Grossman (1999) write of the contractual demands for efficient, cost-effective services with consistent quality. Nonprofits that lack the capacity to adapt to the call for change, reform, and improvement will greatly suffer in the current environment (Letts et al., 1999).

The literature demonstrates a clear agreement that the sector recognizes the need for improvement. There are myriad of ways to change and improve but no unified discussion on the best path to take. Much can be done across the entire sector; renewal and reform are taking place in many ways and forms. Some solutions will fit all and some may occur bit by bit in each small nonprofit organization.

Four familiar tides of reform are currently present in the sector. The first, scientific management, features change through best practices. Next, liberation management utilizes outcome measurement. Third, war on waste seeks increased performance through shared resources such as mergers and administrative services. Finally, watchful eye focuses on public scrutiny and discipline (Light, 2000). The nonprofit infrastructure has not been able to develop a base to help individual organizations determine the best reform approach for them. Light suggests nonprofits

find the best ideas in each style of reform and eliminate the bad ones. He offers three recommendations. First, the sector should pay attention to only the practices that will improve organizational performance, although without testing it is unclear what will work. Second, prioritize what reform should take place. Third, focus on the capacity-building model of accountability. Light (1997) believes, "The first step is simply to recognize that not much is known about what makes organizations more effective, especially if they happen to exist in the nonprofit sector" (p. 100).

Testing theory and practice may be a key to determining what are the best ideas and what ideas need to be eliminated. Letts et al. (1999) have begun that process, "to see whether and how business methods could be adapted or already have been adapted to support nonprofit goals" (p. 5).

Grantmaking

Foundations also face a climate of growth and change and a pressure to improve. As nonprofits seek additional funding, the demand for grants increases. At the same time the federal government seeks more accountability in the wake of foundation scandals. In addition, founders and board members are demanding better management and return on investment (McIlroy, 1998).

Grantmakers are moving to enhance performance in the arena. The following are three examples that highlight enhancement of performance. First, in the July/August, 2001 issue of *Snapshots*, highlighting research from the Nonprofit Sector Research Fund, the Aspen Institute outlined an agenda to advance the research

on foundations' operations, policy making, and overall impact. This agenda is an invitation to participate in proactive improvement of all foundations. Next, The Center for Effective Philanthropy published a study entitled *Indicators of Effectiveness: Understanding and Improving Foundation Performance* focusing on indicators that will provide direction to concerned foundation leaders in improving performance. Finally, organizations such as Grantmakers for Effective Organizations (GEO) have emerged to address the capacity of all organizations. These are just a few of the examples of the ways in which the foundations are demonstrating the ability to change and improve.

In the midst of the evolution of change in foundations, grantmaking remains a central function of many foundations. "Grant making is based on the assumptions that judicious funding decisions are possible and that foundations strive to make purposeful, not arbitrary choices" (McIlroy, 1998, p. 27). Although, grantmaking foundations represent approximately 20 percent of the nonprofit sector's overall income, foundation grantmaking is on the rise. Funding has risen from less than ten billion dollars at the beginning of the 1990s to \$22.8 billion by the middle of the 1990s. This increase in funding has more significance when the private foundations also play a role in establishing funding priorities in the sector (Diaz, 2001). As indicated earlier, the overall economic downturn over the past seven years has resulted in a changed economic environment for the entire nonprofit sector. The asset base of most foundations is weaker, and this limits the amount of available resources

for grantmaking. Finding methods of granting that will lead to greater effectiveness and provide a more profound social impact remain an overall goal of the funders.

Grantmaking decisions are made in a financial, social, historical and institutional context. However, the most influential is the institutional context, as every foundation has a base ideology. The ideology shapes the foundation's perspectives on the type and style of social intervention or theory of change (Orosz, 2000). Orosz (2000) describes four main theories of change that influence the way a foundation makes decisions and operates:

1. Passive. This foundation is more open to a variety of ideas and greater breadth of interests. It does not seek proposals but responds to those submitted. Grant decisions are not based on a specific theme or direction. None of the grants are interconnected.
2. Proactive. This foundation still has breadth of interests but communicates well-defined priorities to those interested. It will make a collection of grants based on a theme or single idea.
3. Prescriptive. This foundation is more strategic and tends to have selected interests that are clearly defined in a request for proposal. It will make grants that those who have responded to a specific initiative and meets their objectives.
4. Peremptory. This foundation is the most strategic with its own agenda for intervention. It chooses the grantseekers, most often without any public notice.

The theory of change described above establishes the type of interaction and relationships foundations have with nonprofit organizations in both grantmaking and grant management. Orosz describes the relationship:

Grantmaking is inescapably a relational experience, which means that what passes between grantmaker and grantseeker is more than mere socializing; their relationship is the strategic bridge over which money, lessons learned, and ultimately social change must pass. It works only if it is a mutually respectful relationship of peers, not a patron-suppliant system. (p. 53)

The most challenging part of the relationship is management of the grant once it is awarded. Most foundation program officers are unable to maintain a level of engagement with the grantee. Management strategy tends to fall into four categories. The first, “fire and forget,” leaves the grantee completely alone after receiving the award. The second, “full immersion,” is the complete opposite of the first and may be worse for the successful outcomes of the grant with too much foundation involvement. Third, “ignoring the good kid” minimizes the time spent with a project that is moving along without a hitch as opposed to the problem program which gets all the attention. The final category, “avoiding the average,” offers little support to the project that is neither outstanding nor problematic (Orosz, 2000). Technical assistance becomes a critical factor between the two parties. However, the grantee does not want to admit a shortcoming. So many grantees bluff their way through and may fall short on implementation, which could endanger the grant project.

Orosz (2000) summarizes the foundation perspective on grant management and actually the grantees' perspective on grant implementation with the following.

What separates exemplary management of funded projects from merely adequate management? In a word, anticipation. If you anticipate needs, head off troubles, and foresee opportunities, you will succeed in converting more of the project's potential into actual outcomes. Your anticipating in this way is the ultimate in adding value, for doing so costs the foundation nothing that it would not be spending anyway. If some time is devoted to anticipatory management then the impact of the grant dollars can be maximized, perhaps even multiplied. (p. 182)

A project management model for grant implementation that could provide a mechanism for anticipatory management would serve the nonprofit organization, the foundation, and the intended constituency.

Implementation and Project Management

Implementation literature for public policy demonstrates the need for a precise process of action when moving public policy from a written document to a functioning program. As defined in the literature, implementation is a process directed toward putting a program into effect involving three significant activities: organization, interpretation, and application. The first, organization establishes resources for putting a program into effect. Next, interpretation translates the intent

into acceptable and realistic plans. Third, application determines daily fiscal and service functions of the program (Jones, 1984). In the book, *The Implementation Game*, Bardach (1977) summarizes the implementation process for turning legislation into a program as a process of assembling the elements required to produce a particular programmatic outcome.

Although the implementation literature provides guidelines and general concepts for executing a program, it does not address a detailed process to meet the need to establish an effective and efficient implementation process for nonprofit grant programs/projects. Project management used in business and industry and practiced around the world by professionals provides a systems approach to program implementation that can be adapted to the nonprofit area and provide a process to bring a program from conceptualization to termination.

As described earlier, the importance of project management in the nonprofit sector is a compelling management approach for the following reasons. First, project management is comfortable in flattened organizations, which characterize many small nonprofits, as it is based on cross-functional teams. Teams expand the competence of individuals to problem solve beyond themselves. In essence, it enhances the capacity of the organization, adding depth and breadth (Frame, 1999). Effective project leadership does not demand the existence of authority based on chains of command; rather it recognizes that the best way to get the job done is through the effective use of influence (Frame, 1999). In many ways the basic strengths of project management

match the basic strengths of the nonprofit sector and, if institutionalized, would build organizational capacity.

Project management incorporates the project life cycle with four distinct stages – conceptualizing, planning, executing, and terminating – as based on the work by Adams and Barndt (1983) and King and Clelend (1983). Understanding the life cycle facilitates the overall organization and effort of the project. The demand on time builds from the first stage, conceptualization through the execution stage and dissipates in the final termination stage.

Pinto and Slevin (1988) developed a ten-factor model of project management and applied it to the manufacturing engineering setting. The model presented key factors found to be critical to project success. To create the model they developed a diagnostic tool to measure and monitor factors and their interrelationship. Pinto and Slevin determined that over 61 percent of a project's success could be determined by the ten key factors. After defining the key behaviors, Pinto and Slevin subdimensionalized the factors into strategic and tactical behaviors. They operationalized *strategy* as the process of deciding overall organizational objectives and *tactics* as the deployment of resources. Both are vital to the success of the project but require different applications in the project life cycle. In the early stages of the cycle, conceptualization and planning, strategy carries significantly greater importance to project success than tactics. As the project continues, strategy and tactics are of equal importance. This seminal work is a demonstration of best

practices that can serve as a potential model for cross-sector adaptation from a business focus to the nonprofit arena.

In recent years, recommendations toward greater project success involve the transition from a single universal theory of project management being applied to all projects to project classification and adaptation (Dvir, Lipovetsky, Shenhar, and Tishler, 1998). In their article entitled, *In Search of Project Classification: A Non-universal Approach to Project Success Factors*, they conclude,

Project Management has a wide range of variations and projects have less characteristics in common than previously considered. In addition, the analysis in this paper emphasizes that the list of project success factors is dependent upon the project type. (p. 931)

Project-specific approaches allow an organization to adapt the skills and tools necessary to successfully complete the distinct outcomes of their unique project no matter what the sector.

Another emerging concept is project partnering and integrative teams. These project-specific approaches are further enhanced with project partnering and integrative teams. Partnering refers to collaborations that transfigure contractual relationships, which could be adversarial, into a project team with a common set of objectives, language, and methods for resolving conflict (Larson and Drexler, 1997). Larson and Drexler recommend, "Successful partnering depends upon customizing activities to the needs and requirements of the project and participants" (p. 47).

Integrative project teams, specifically TIGER teams, address the customized activities necessary for successful partnering and project completion. TIGER is an acronym for Totally Integrated Groups of Expert Resources (Martin, Weeks, and Davis, 1998). Martin et al. have suggested that sequential project management theories of the past cannot keep pace with today's fast-paced environment.

Organizations that neglect to manage projects in an integrative approach will be left behind in "the dynamic, interdependent service environments of the future" (p. 53).

A TIGER approach for the service sector is defined by the authors of the article as, "a systematic approach to the implementation of a service and its related process – from marketing through closeout—that emphasizes response to customer expectations and embodies team values of cooperation, trust and sharing" (p. 50).

Martin et al. adapted their TIGER approach from a concurrent engineering strategy. The team consists of subject matter experts (SMEs) to support the different aspects of the project and most often includes a customer. The TIGER concept has been successful in industry and could adapt to service sectors if an organization was willing to do so.

Drawing on the honed concepts of project life cycle, project strategy and tactics, adapting universal theories to project-specific and integrative teams could assist in the development of an innovative implementation process for nonprofit organizations. As Letts (1999) writes, "Most innovations are not radical breakthroughs but creative recombination of existing ideas" (p. 79).

METHODS

Research Design and Procedures

The Delphi Method was used as the methodology for this exploratory study as it fulfilled the need for a structured group communication process to examine the broad issue of grant implementation. Procter and Hunt (1994) summarized the Delphi's power in the following: "The Delphi's strength is its ability to provide a systematic and structured approach to collecting data for research questions when the only available alternative would be an anecdotal or entirely subjective approach" (p. 1004).

The Delphi Method was used to generate responses from a panel of experts regarding their professional perspectives on the following research question: *What are the key elements of an implementation process for grant-funded nonprofit projects/programs?* The Delphi Method facilitated a systematic collection and analysis of judgments by these experts. This was accomplished through a series of structured questionnaires, which were accompanied by summarized opinions and feedback distributed to all members of the panel (Delbecq, Van de Ven, & Gustafson, 1975; Linstone & Turoff, 1975; and Ziglio, 1996).

The evolution of the Delphi Method began in the 1950s. Helmer and Dalkey, scientists at the Rand Corporation, created the original process. The intent was to

“obtain the most reliable consensus of opinion of a group of experts...by a series of intensive questionnaires interspersed with controlled feedback” (Linstone and Turoff, 1975, p. 10). Over the past 50 years, the Delphi Method has been used in business and industry, public policy, public health, health care, human services, and education. It has been used for forecasting technological advances, economic and social policy impact, and planning, as well as setting healthcare scenarios, and developing new curriculum (Adler & Ziglio, 1996). Preeble (1983) reports that the Delphi Method has gained extensive use as a multipurpose tool by government planners and policy makers. He conducted an extensive bibliographic computer search that resulted in over one hundred studies conducted in the public sector for the purpose of forecasting, communication, budgeting, and goal setting.

According to Lindstone and Turoff (1975), there are three types of Delphi: conventional, real-time, and policy. In conventional, a questionnaire is designed, distributed, answered and returned, summarized, redistributed, and responded to until consensus is achieved or when sufficient information has been exchanged. The experts participate anonymously, which can reduce any negative social-emotional behavior found in other group interactions. This allows participants to focus on the task at hand. Examples of social-emotional behavior include verbal dominance of a group member, influence of group members in positions of authority, or pressure to conform (Clayton, 1997). Another prominent advantage is the ability to access experts at a distance without asking them to travel. In addition, they are able to respond at their own pace.

Real-time differs from conventional as it occurs in a gathering of one meeting with the aid of a computer laboratory and facilitative software. The advantage in this type is the elimination of the delay in summarization and results. The aim of the policy Delphi is much different. The panelists are not experts but rather informed advocates. The goal is not to reach consensus but rather an opportunity to collect the strongest supporting and opposing views possible.

A conventional Delphi was used for this study as it allowed the experts to contribute without imposing travel and meeting time. The following summation of the Conventional Delphi Method literature describes the basic process in which a panel of experts is recruited to participate in the study.

The first questionnaire is developed, pre-tested, and then distributed to each member. The distribution is usually by U.S. mail; however, e-mail has also been used as a mechanism for delivery (Saint-Germain, Ostrowski, & Dede, 2000). The answers from the first questionnaire are summarized, placed in categories, and analyzed. Feedback on the material collected is provided to each panel member. A second questionnaire is prepared, pre-tested, and distributed. The second questionnaire reflects a recapitulation of the responses of the first questionnaire summarized into categories and supporting comments. The responses are reviewed by each panel member, revised, ranked, and returned. Although the participants' identities are unknown to each other, each has opportunities to react in writing to others' opinions and priorities. The questionnaire process is continued until group consensus is reached or sufficient information has been exchanged. Most often a minimum of

three iterations is recommended. The process may vary from three to five iterations, depending on the degree of agreement needed and the amount of additional information being sought or obtained. Once the questionnaire process has been completed, a report is finalized and published (Delbecq, Van de Ven, & Gustafson, 1975; Preble, 1983; Proctor & Hunt, 1994; Riggs, 1983; Saint-Germain, Ostrowski, & Dede, 2000; Linstone & Turoff, 1975; and Ziglio, 1996). See Figure 1 for a flowchart of the conventional Delphi Method.

Every methodology, including the Delphi Method, has strengths and weaknesses. Ziglio (1996) has summarized the concerns and explanations. He begins the summary by saying, "The Delphi Method has been criticized (often unfairly) for not using 'scientific' procedures in terms of sampling and testing of results through conventional experimental control" (Ziglio, 1996 p.13). The most acclaimed criticism came from Sackman in 1974 suggesting that the Delphi Method was close to "fortune telling." Goldschmidt (1975) offered a rebuttal a year later, suggesting that the actual method was strong but the application may not always be. Goldschmidt cautioned that questions might be weak and poorly constructed, misleading, or ambiguous. Linstone and Turoff (1975) affirm that the Delphi Method should be no less robust than other qualitative methods such as interviews, case studies, or observations. An additional concern is in regard to the potential large and

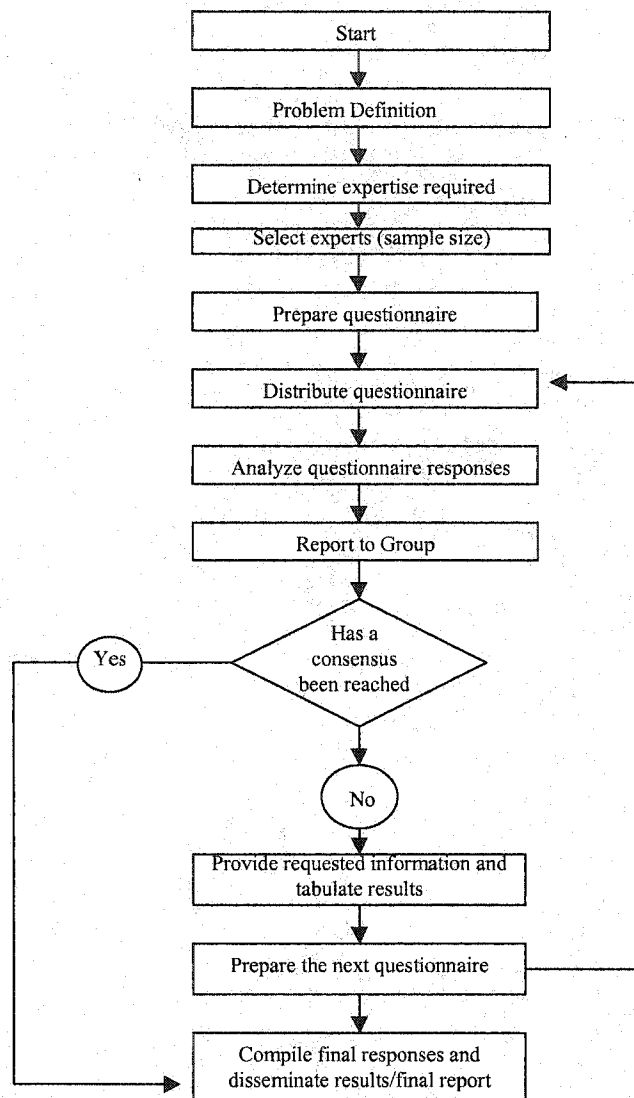


Figure 1. Conventional Delphi Method

unmanageable amount of information produced in the responses from the panel members. For the purpose of this study, the massive amount of potential information was managed through the computer program Ethnograph 5.0 (1998), a text-based qualitative data analysis software package.

Participant Selection

The Delphi Method requires a panel of experts. Once the general characteristics of the experts are determined, a nomination process is recommended to select the specific panel members to participate in the study.

The panel size may vary depending on the complexity of the study. General rules regarding group size indicate 15-30 people for homogeneous populations, such as all experts coming from the same discipline. Smaller groups of 5-10 people work for a heterogeneous population, people with expertise on a particular area but from different disciplines (Delbecq et al., 1975).

Ziglio (1996) recommends three criteria for the panel. Experts do not require academic degrees but must possess experience, skill, and knowledge. The selection process was guided by the following recommended criteria:

1. Knowledge and practical experience regarding the issue.
2. Capacity and willingness of selected experts to contribute time and thought.
3. Skill in written communication and in expressing priorities.

For this study, 26 nationally known leaders in the nonprofit arena were identified to nominate Delphi Method panel members. These nationally known leaders nominated accomplished foundation program officers from a wide range of grantmaking foundations of various sizes (staff and budget) and geographic locations. To be able to nominate an accomplished professional, a nominator required a national view of the nonprofit arena. See Figure 2 for an illustration of the study nomination process.

The nationally known nominating group was divided into two subgroups. The first subgroup of the nominating group represents scholars or practitioners in the nonprofit arena who have published works over the past five years (1997-2002) in nonprofit management and grantmaking. The following is a list of the authors and their publications that are cited in this study.

Charles Halpern	<i>Vision and values: rethinking the nonprofit sector</i>
Christine Letts	<i>High performance nonprofit organizations: Managing upstream for greater impact</i>
Paul Light	<i>Sustaining innovation: Creating nonprofit and government organizations that innovate naturally.</i> <i>Making nonprofits work: A report on the tides of nonprofit management reform.</i> <i>Pathways to nonprofit excellence</i>
Dennis McIlroy	<i>How foundations work: What grantseekers need to know about the many faces of foundations</i>

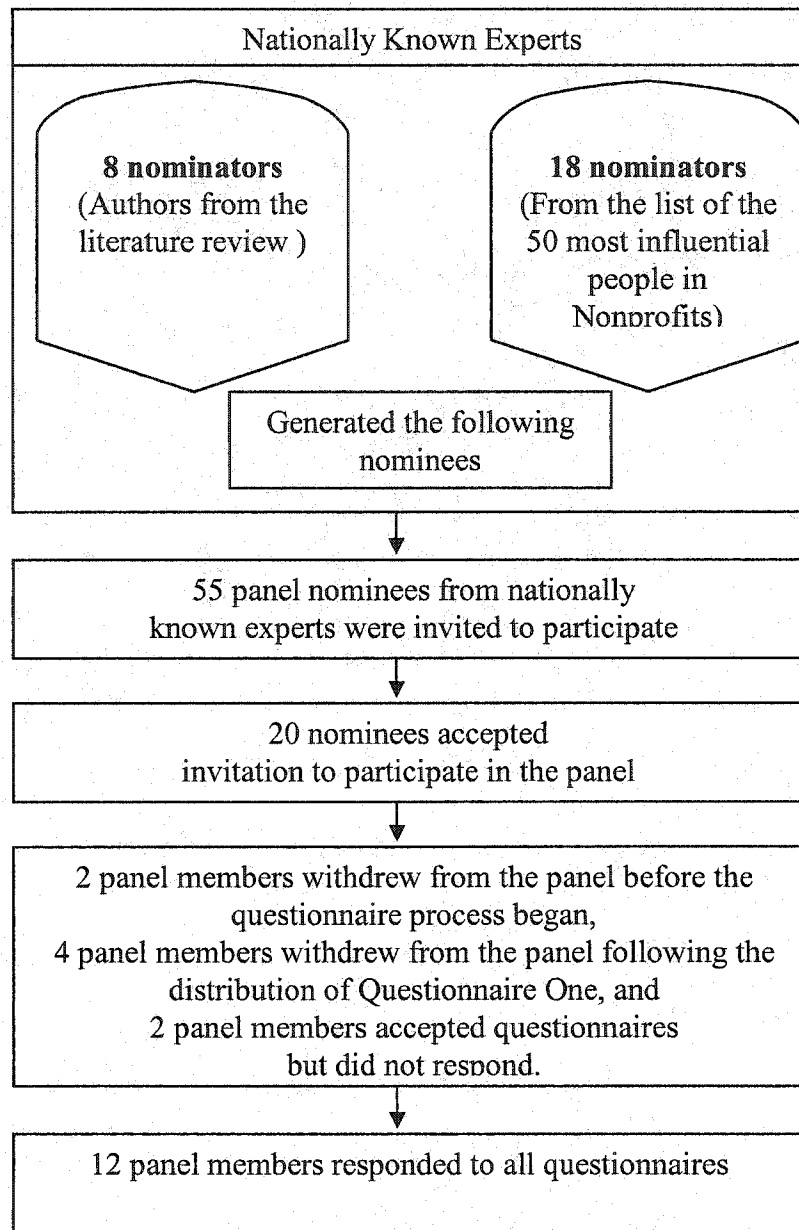


Figure 2. Nomination Process

Cheryl New and James Quick	<i>Grant winner's toolkit: Project management and evaluation</i>
Joel Orosz	<i>The inside's guide to grantmaking: How foundations find, fund, and manage effective programs</i> <i>For the benefit of all: A history of philanthropy in Michigan</i>
Lester Salamon	<i>Partners in public service</i> <i>The crisis of the nonprofit sector and the challenge of renewal</i> <i>Holding the center: America's nonprofit sector at a crossroads</i> <i>The nonprofit sector and the challenge of renewal: U.S. and global perspectives</i> <i>The resilient sector: The state of nonprofit America.</i>

The second subgroup of the nominating group was drawn from the *NonProfit Times* (NPT) (2000 and 2001) lists of the 50 most influential and powerful people in the nonprofit sector, Class of 2000 and Class of 2001. The list is constructed and published at the end of August each year. The *Nonprofit Times* (2001) provided the following written explanation regarding their selection process.

A group of panelists from the *Nonprofit Times* (2000 and 2001) and a few handpicked members of the nonprofit community narrowed a field of over 200 nominations through private conversations and a conference call. The panelists were not permitted to be part of the list, although several very well could have been included in the selection process. The *Nonprofit Times* editor in chief was the last bastion of scrutiny in the selection and held veto power over the finalists. (p. 1)

Eighteen names were selected out of the 50, as they had known experience working directly with foundation officers. Representatives of the *NPT Power and Influence Top 50 'Class of 2000 and 2001'* include the following:

Alan Abramson	Director, Nonprofit Sector and Philanthropy Program, Aspen Institute
Peter V. Berns	Executive Director, Maryland Association of Nonprofit Organizations
Susan V. Berresford	President, The Ford Foundation
Elizabeth Boris	Director, Center for Non-Profits and Philanthropy, The Urban Institute
Emmett D. Carson	President and CEO, The Minneapolis Foundation
Sara Englehardt	President, The Foundation Center
Florence Green	Executive Director, California Association of Nonprofits
Fred Kramer	President, Catholic Charities
Barbara Kibbee,	Director of Organizational Effectiveness, David and Lucille Packard Foundation
Robert F. Long	Vice President for Programs, W.K. Kellogg Foundation
Sara E. Melendez	President, Independent Sector
Doug Nelson	President, Annie E. Casey Foundation
Jon Pratt	Founder and Executive Director, Minnesota Council of Nonprofits
Patricia Read	Executive Director, Colorado Association of Nonprofit Organizations
Dorothy S. Ridings	President and CEO, Council of Foundations

Rebecca W. Rimel	President and CEO, The Pew Charitable Trusts
Stephen Solender	President and CEO, United Jewish Communities
Gene R. Tempel	Executive Director, Indiana University Center of Philanthropy

Following the guidelines of the recommended selection process for a Delphi Method Panel, the 26 nationally known nominators listed in the previous lists were asked to nominate panel members from foundations based in the United States. Each nationally known nominator was initially contacted by e-mail when an e-mail address was available or by United States mail if an email address was not available with a letter describing the purpose of the study and requesting permission to talk by phone. Some nominators recommended candidates without further discussion. Others welcomed a phone call to discuss the research in detail before making a nomination. The nomination process from the 26 nationally known nominators produced a pool of 55 potential panel members representing foundations or nonprofit management service organizations.

Each potential panel member was contacted by e-mail when an email address was available or by United States mail if an email address was not available with a letter of invitation identifying the nominator, describing the study, and requesting permission for a follow-up phone call to discuss his or her nomination and participation. Many potential panel members welcomed a follow-up phone call to discuss the Delphi Method, timeline, and research expectations. Twenty potential panel members out of 55 accepted the invitation to participate as an expert panel

member. Two panel members withdrew from the panel before the questionnaire process began, four panel members withdrew from the panel following the distribution of Questionnaire One and two panel members accepted questionnaires but did not respond. A final total of 12 members participated in the entire expert panel responding to all three questionnaires.

As described in the Delphi Method, panel members participate anonymously. All panel members and their organizations were guaranteed in the consent form that their identification would remain anonymous in the Delphi Method and the report on the findings.

Instrumentation

Three questionnaires were constructed for the study. The questionnaires were created using the guidelines and examples outlined by Delbecq et al. (1975) and Ziglio (1996).

Questionnaire One

The first questionnaire was established to allow panel members to respond to broad questions. The following broad questions were used on the first questionnaire to commence the Delphi Method process. *Based on all of your professional experience as either a grant manager or as a foundation program officer with oversight of a grant project(s), consider grant-funded projects you have been involved with from origination to termination. What are the essential elements that were used*

which contributed to the management and successful completion of the project? And what essential elements were missing that caused barriers to implementation? The questionnaire was pre-tested with a sample of three respondents from within Michigan who were not part of the formal panel. The first questionnaire was then distributed via e-mail with instructions to respond and return via e-mail attachment within two weeks. See Appendix C for a sample of the first questionnaire and instructions.

Questionnaire Two

Questionnaire Two was designed to accurately recapitulate the ideas communicated in response to the first questionnaire. The Delphi Method has a built-in mechanism for an analysis of the responses to the preceding questionnaire to provide the foundation and structure for the next questionnaire. Before framing Questionnaire Two, an analysis, as described in the data analysis section of the chapter, was conducted. This initial analysis of Questionnaire One produced a summary list of 13 essential items and twelve barriers based on comments offered by the panel members in the first round.

For Questionnaire Two, the panel reviewed the essential elements and barriers identified in Questionnaire One, accepted or rejected each item, commenting (expressing agreement, disagreement or clarification) on inclusion of the item on the list, amended the descriptor, if necessary, and rank ordered each item in terms of importance.

Specifically, for round two, a chart summarizing the anonymous comments about each element or barrier was provided to each panel member. Also distributed was the second questionnaire with the following instructions: (1) Review the description of items 1-13 on Questionnaire Two Part-A (Essential Elements) and item 1-12 on Questionnaire Two Part B (Barriers); (2) Accept or reject the items listed, commenting (expressing agreement, disagreement or clarification) on inclusion of the item on the list; (3) Amend the description of the item if necessary; (4) Rank order each item with 1 being most important and the last number being least important.

The second questionnaire was distributed via e-mail with instructions to respond and return via e-mail attachment within two weeks. See Appendix D for a sample of Questionnaire Two – Part A (Essential Elements) and instructions and Appendix E for the summary chart for Part A. See Appendix F for a sample of Questionnaire Two – Part B (Barriers) and Appendix G for the summary chart for Part B.

Questionnaire Three

The third and final questionnaire permitted the panel members to review previous responses and rankings and provide individual input and judgment as to the importance to each item using a five-point Likert Scale. The third questionnaire was distributed with the following instructions: (1) Review the information on each element (listed on a separate page) for Questionnaire Three Part-A (Essential Elements) and Part-B (Barriers); (2) Indicate the level of importance for each essential

element or barrier by using the Likert Scale provided for each element; (3) Comment on any item that you wish, providing reactions, final thoughts or implications for future research. The third questionnaire was distributed via e-mail with instructions to respond and return via e-mail attachment within two weeks. See Appendix H for a sample of Questionnaire Three – Part A (Essential Elements) and instructions and Appendix I for a sample of Questionnaire Three – Part B (Barriers).

Data Analysis

As described in *Designing Qualitative Research* authored by Marshall and Rossman (1995), "Data analysis is the process of bringing order, structure, and meaning to the mass of collected data" (p. 111). Although structure for analysis of the collected data for this study was based on separate analysis for each questionnaire, the analyses were interdependent, as is inherent to the design of the Delphi Method. In the Delphi Method, the analysis of the preceding questionnaire provides the foundation and structure of the next questionnaire. The data collected in the questionnaires were analyzed in the following manner.

Questionnaire One

As in most qualitative research the search for relationships in the data began by generating categories from the collected data. The article *Designing Qualitative Research* describes the development of categories as the following, "The categories should be internally consistent but distinct from each other" (Marshall and Rossman,

1995, p. 112). A text-based qualitative data analysis software package, Ethnograph 5.0 (1998), was used to analyze the responses. The text-based information from Questionnaire One was imported into Ethnograph 5.0 (1998) and explored the data for recurring ideas and common language that linked the ideas of various panel members. Comments were first sorted by code words based on project management and grant management literature as a preliminary device. However, additional code words emerged from the lexicon provided by panel members. This allowed for some organizational structure for the data without precluding the unusual or serendipitous comment. All panel comments and eventual categories shared equal value at this point in the analysis. This initial analysis of Questionnaire One produced a summary list of 13 essential items and twelve barriers based on comments offered by the panel members.

Questionnaire Two

Panel members were asked to accept or reject the elements and barriers produced by the analysis in Questionnaire One and rank them from most to least important. Acceptance indicated agreement with the item being listed as an essential element and rejection indication indicated the disagreement with the item being listed as an essential element. In addition, panel members were asked to edit the descriptors of each element. A spreadsheet was developed to track the acceptance or rejection of each item by panel member and the rank order of each item. As there were 13 items in the essential elements, a rejected item was given a rank of 14; and as there were 11

barriers, a rejected item was given a rank of 12. Each item ranking was analyzed for measures of central tendency, both medians and modes. Histograms were developed to display the central tendency of each essential element and barrier. Ethnograph 5.0 (1998) was used to analyze comments accepting or rejecting essential elements or barriers. The analysis of Questionnaire Two produced a multi-tiered chart of essential elements and barriers demonstrating the panels perceived importance of each item.

Questionnaire Three

Panel members were asked to indicate the level of importance for each essential element or barrier by using the Likert Scale provided for each element or barrier and to comment on any item, providing reactions, final thoughts, or implications for future research. A spreadsheet was developed to track each panel member's responses from one, most important, to five, least important, and six as a rejected item. Each response was analyzed for measures of central tendency, both medians and modes. Histograms were developed to display the central tendency of each essential element and barrier. Ethnograph 5.0 (1998) was used to analyze final comments accepting or rejecting any essential elements or barriers. The analysis of Questionnaire Three produced a final multi-tiered chart of essential elements and barriers as perceived by the expert panel.

FINDINGS

The research data provides answers to the questions: *What are the essential elements of an implementation process for grant-funded nonprofit projects/programs? What are the barriers to implementation?* As this study used a Conventional Delphi Method with three iterations to collect the data, the findings will be presented in the three sections reporting the responses to Questionnaire One, Questionnaire Two, and Questionnaire Three.

Panel Variables

The final panel was comprised of 12 members representing 12 distinct nonprofit organizations; ten came from foundations and two came from management service organizations (MSO). Panel variables included: geographic locations, assets, annual grant spending, geographic focus, field of interests, and size of staff. The information was based on 2001 fiscal year data and was retrieved from the *Foundation Directory Online* (2002) published by Foundation Center (2002) and *Guidestar* published by Philanthropic Research (2001), the national database of nonprofit organizations.

The panel represented diverse organizations from the East Coast, Midwest and West Coast. The predominant area of the panel is the East Coast and parallels a national concentration of nonprofits on the East Coast. In addition, the geographical focus of the organizations represented on the panel ranged from an international scope of influence to local community focus. The majority of the organizations, eight out of twelve, have a national scope. See Table 1 for frequency distribution regarding nonprofit locations and Table 2 for frequency distributions related to the geographical focus.

Table 1

Geographical Locations

<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Range of locations</u>
8	East Coast
3	Midwest
1	West Coast

Table 2

Geographical Focus

<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Geographical focus</u>
2	International/National
6	National
1	Statewide
3	Local/Community

The assets and annual giving of the nonprofits represented on the panel have a wide range. The two MSO do not provide an annual giving program and are reflected as \$0 in the table. See Table 3 for frequency distribution of range of assets and Table 4 for frequency and distribution of the annual giving programs. In addition, the size of staff from the organizations represented indicates the assorted sizes of the

organizations on the panel. The staffs range from very few to hundreds. See Table 5 for frequency and distribution of staff.

Table 3

Assets

<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Range of assets</u>
2	\$2.8 – \$1.7 Billion
4	\$620 – \$195 Million
3	\$102 – \$1 Million
3	\$875 – \$300 Thousand

Table 4

Annual Giving

<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Annual giving</u>
2	\$139 – \$69 Billion
5	\$35 – \$11 Million
3	\$400 – \$100 Thousand
2	\$0

Table 5

Staff Size

<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Size of staff</u>
2	500 – 100
4	90 – 25
3	17 – 10
3	5 – 2

The fields of interest of the organization represented are also diverse. While some fields of interest are more general and are easy to disclose, others must be referred to as varied interests or global interests. The disclosure of the field of interest could provide information about the organization and remove its anonymity. See Table 6 for frequency distribution regarding fields of interest.

Table 6

Fields of Interest

<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Fields of interest</u>
2	Healthcare
2	Human services
1	Education
1	Economic development,
1	Community (assorted interests)
2	MSO (capacity building)
2	Large foundations with global interests

Questionnaire One

Panelists were asked to respond to the following questions. *Based on all of your professional experience as either a grant manager or as a foundation program officer with oversight of a grant project(s), consider grant-funded projects you have been involved with from origination to termination. What are the essential elements that were used which contributed to the management and successful completion of the project? And what essential elements were missing that caused barriers to implementation?*

Panel members responded to the questions with their individual perceptions regarding essential elements and barriers. Each response had the same value at this point in the analysis, as the panel members deemed it essential. The comments were aggregated into one pool of data so that all comments remained anonymous. The evolution of the categories began with the literature. Pinto and Slevin (1988) had

categories such as project mission, top management support, personnel, technical tasks, and client acceptance. Quick and New (2002) listed areas of focus: resources, budget, and timeline. New categories emerged from the comments, such as funder relationship, communication, and sustainability.

The major finding arising from the initial analysis of Questionnaire One was the identification of 13 emerging categories for essential elements and 11 emerging categories for barriers to implementation. The categories evolved from the language in the literature and the language of the panel. The final headings and descriptors emerged from the language in the panelists' comments.

Essential Elements

The categories characterized 13 essential elements, listed in alphabetical order with their descriptors in Table 7.

As the panelists' comments are the data for the first round of the study, a summary chart for Questionnaire One-Part A found in Appendix E provides a comprehensive summary of all of the panelists' comments. The following are selected comments that illustrate the essence of each category and the language that contributed to the development of the essential elements and their descriptors.

Board Support. “Without strong leadership, the best-conceived project can falter when it runs up against a problem, as all projects inevitably do at some point. The board leads by providing a strong framework (in terms of policy, programs, finances) that supports and guides the staff in their work.”

“Board of Directors should be aware of and formally support the intent and objectives of the grant.”

Collaboration. “Multiple funding partners [are essential]. In general, when we co-fund, the projects have been more successful. It is wise to share the funding responsibility and, if there’s a good result, to share the pleasure of having helped. This is not to say that when we fund alone there cannot also be big success.”

“Collaboration with mission-compatible organizations prior to the grant submission [is essential]. Collaborations are based on existing relationships and commitment to shared vision/mission versus driven by funding.”

Communication. “Excellent communication with the Foundation [is essential]. Our business is first and foremost about relationships. By this, I don’t mean excessive communication.”

“Open Communication must be established early and maintained on a constant (preferably monthly basis) throughout the life of the grant between an identified Grantee Staff Representative, preferably an Executive Level Staff Member serving as the ‘Project Director’ and an identified Grantor Staff Representative. This communication must initially identify and regularly monitor mutual expectations regarding grant purpose/impact, timeframes and financial requirements.”

Constituency Involvement. “Third party validation of project plan and goals [is essential]. This can include active participation and support in the planning process from those being served.”

Evaluation. “Evaluation – I think this is a big missing piece for a lot of organizations. There needs to be a recasting of what is evaluation. It’s a learning tool and a guide for program improvement. I have found that organizations that develop their programs and simultaneously think about and plan an evaluation are much more successful. It requires the staff to be purposeful about their work and to pay attention to process as well as to the outcomes of the service delivery.”

“Clarity on how the outcome of the grant is to be evaluated and by whom [is essential].”

“Ability to declare lack of success/failure [is essential].”

Financial Management. “Sound financial management [is essential].” The implementing agency has to be on top of the numbers.”

“In the preparation of the grant significant care and consideration must be given to the overall financial requirements necessary to fulfill the objectives of the project along with clearly identified allocation time-frames.”

Funder Relationship. “Trust is also part of this work and it is linked to communication. When we give a grant, to a great extent we’re also saying that we trust the leadership, governance and staff to use the money and get on with the planned work. They really need to communicate with us: a) when there’s a problem

Table 7

*Essential Elements and Descriptors – Questionnaire One**
 (*sorted in alphabetical order)

<u>Essential item</u>	<u>Number of comments</u>	<u>Descriptor</u>
Board Support	6	Willingness of the board of the nonprofit organizations to provide the resources and authority for project success
Collaboration	6	Alliances with "mission-compatible" organizations to share information, responsibility, workload, expertise, and skills
Communication	8	Ability to converse and stay connected with funders and constituents
Constituency Involvement	3	Active listening, participation, and support with all impacted parties
Evaluation	7	Appropriate data collection and reporting system, ongoing assessment for program improvement, and ability to report success or lack of success
Financial Management	7	Development of project budget, strategic planning for flexibility, contingency, and alternative funding, and demonstration of good stewardship
Funder Relationship	9	Ongoing link with funder to apprise of progress, share information, address obstacles, and seek overall advise and counsel
Goals	7	Clearly defined direction and measurement of project activity
Leadership	5	Provide guidance and direction to the project and involved staff and constituents, strategic political sense, stewardship and continuity over the life of the project
Project Plan/Schedule	6	Detailed description, strategy and timelines of the individual action steps necessary to complete the project
Staffing	5	Recruitment, selection and training of the appropriate personnel to participate and contribute to the project
Sustainability	1	Ability of the project to maintain impact over the life cycle of the project and beyond
Technical Support	2	Accessibility to required expertise (consultant, funder, technology) to address concerns and overcome obstacle to complete the project.

at a high level that they'd like our advice, b) when they want our opinion, advice or counsel, or c) when a report is due or they want something simple like a grant period extension or grant increase."

"Spirit of true cooperation between funder and grantee that starts with the initial discussions about the possibility of funding and continues throughout the course of the grant. Both parties need to function together to ensure the achievement of objectives."

Goals. "Clearly stated goals and outcomes for the project [are essential]." Otherwise, neither the funder nor the nonprofit know when a project is done and whether or not it was successful."

"Without clear goals, it is difficult for the organization to focus or measure its efforts."

Leadership. "Continuity of leadership [is essential]." I have seen good projects ruined when there is a leadership transition, at the level of key project staff, the CEO or even when there's a big change in the board. Continuity is essential."

"Without strong leadership, the best-conceived project can falter when it runs up against a problem, as all projects inevitably do at some point."

"Sound political sense, with a small 'p' [is essential]. This goes back to leadership – projects are more successful when a leader knows how to bring others to the table to enhance a project, knows how to deal wisely with competitors or critics, and, as needed, knows how to navigate the halls of government too."

Project Plan/Schedule. “Work plan that is consistent with the nature of the grant [is essential]. A detailed work plan with timelines and firm benchmarks is appropriate for a project where the grantee has significant control over when specific activities are to occur. When this control is lacking (as when the grant is in support of community organizing or public policy analysis and advocacy) the work plan needs to be more flexible to allow the grantee to respond in a timely fashion to opportunities and threats as they arise as well as to a changing external environment.”

“Flexibility to make more than minor alterations in the work plan when experience indicates that a different approach will more significantly impact the grant's objectives. This is particularly important when the grant supports creative new approaches. ‘Tinkering’ needs to be supported by both parties as the work progresses.”

Staffing. “Staffing (expertise and time) [is essential]. I think it is important to note how organizations are proposing to staff a project. Sometime programs try to ‘save’ on staffing costs by using part-time staff or by stretching a staff person's time across many projects. This results in the project being compromised (program implementation lags, goals are not met, timelines are not adhered to). Organizations should staff projects appropriately and be able to justify the roles and responsibilities of each staff person assigned to a project.”

“Appropriate staffing means time commitment to the program as well as assigning staff that have the content knowledge and expertise to implement the program.”

“All staff (including consultants) in place before project began. If not in place, the project was generally significantly delayed while staff or consultants selected, leading to loss of momentum among project participants and renegotiations with funders on terms of financial support.”

Sustainability. “Sustainability plan including incremental implementation throughout the grant [is essential].”

Technical Support. “Have a strong knowledge base supporting the project. In other words, use best practice information, research, and other knowledge to ensure that the underlying assumptions of the project are accurate, the outcomes are manageable, and the delivery of the project is best in class.”

“Connected with supportive professional networks where program best practice information is readily available.”

Barriers to Implementation

The categories characterized 11 barriers to implementation, listed in alphabetical order with their descriptors in Table 8. As the panelist comments are the data for the first round of the study, a summary chart for Questionnaire One-Part B found in Appendix G provides a comprehensive summary of all of the panelists’ comments. The following are selected comments that illustrate the essence of each category and the language that contributed to the development of the barriers to implementation and their descriptors.

Table 8

Barriers to Implementation and Descriptors – Questionnaire One

<u>Barriers to implementation</u>	<u>Number of comments</u>	<u>Descriptor</u>
Lack of board support	2	The board did not support the proposal or outcomes of the project
Lack of constituency involvement	1	Lack of involvement of all impacted parties
Poor evaluation planning	2	Omission of evaluation planning or funding
Poor financial management	3	Poor fiscal management, unrealistic budgets, or inadequate funding
Poor or non-existent funder relationship	4	Lack of ongoing link with funder or over dependence on program officer
Lack of goals	1	No clear goals, making progress (or the lack thereof) impossible to measure
Lack of/or change in leadership	8	Poor management or administrative skills, inability to maneuver political arena, change in project leadership during the course of funding, stewardship and continuity over the life of the project
Project impact naiveté	1	An unrealistic understanding of what it takes to make the grant program work for those individuals directly impacted by the projected outcomes
Unclear organizational commitment/capacity	4	Project is not aligned with agency priorities and inability to implement (no space or staffing.)
Poor project planning/scheduling	6	An over ambitious work plan, unfeasible timeline, unrealistic strategies
Staffing Problems	2	Poor or no training of staff, lack of staff or volunteers, no organizational expertise

Lack of Board Support. “The project was not seen as a top priority by the organization.”

“Problems on the board or on the advisory committee, or problems between the CEO and the board or advisory committee [are a barrier]. I once attended a project advisory committee meeting & then sat in the airport departure lounge with committee members but not the CEO. I heard an earful and thought: this effort is headed to disaster, and it was. We stopped funding.”

Lack of Constituency Involvement “Lack of understanding of and/or access to the client base that the project was designed to reach [was a barrier].”

Poor Evaluation Planning “Evaluation is seen as an added burden to staff (more paper to fill out, intrusive, a means for funders to find out if I am doing what I said I would do). It is a challenge to cast evaluation as a learning tool to organizations that don’t have a lot of experience with evaluation.”

Poor Financial Management. “Inadequate funding: Agency grantees try to do ‘to much’ and overextend in their commitment to perform and reach objectives.”

“Excessive dependence on foundation support and cluelessness about earned income, particularly in the current funding environment [are barriers]. Nonprofits that can have earned income also need solid business sense.”

Poor or Non-Existent Funder Relationship. “Lack of identified contact with grantor: Unless regular communication is established AND maintained between grantee and grantor, the ability to assess grant project status is left solely to the reporting scheduling initially established within the grant. As situations occur that

demand discussion with the Grantor, as will happen sometime throughout the life of the grant, previous contact with a given staff member will allow for a much smoother process towards resolution.”

Lack of Goals. “The particular project has no clear goals, making progress (or the lack thereof) impossible to measure.”

Lack of/or Change in Leadership. “When foundations have to form a corral around an organization to provide special oversight in addition to the existing board, this is a sure sign that something is terribly wrong. Leadership and governance have not done their jobs well!”

“Change in CEO (or executive director) leadership, or big changes on the board [are barriers].”

Project impact/Naiveté. “An unrealistic understanding of what it takes to make policy [is a barrier] particularly related to thorny issues (i.e., how to get campaign finance reform on a national scale – it won’t happen in a two-year grant period; it can take decades). It is important to convey that social change can take years (even decades).”

Unclear Organizational Commitment/Capacity. “Lack of organizational support for the grant project [is a barrier]: Without a commitment of support from the Executive Director and Board, agency priorities will be regularly questioned often leading to a lack of adequate time and resources being given to the grant project”

Poor Project Planning/Scheduling. “Timeframe for implementation of project is often unfeasible – many managers seem to think a ‘wash-in’ or ‘pilot’ phase

is undesirable to outside stakeholders, but do not ask for the possibility or make the case for one. The importance of testing a project, and adjusting implementation based on real-world experience, by the team/staff who will do the work, cannot be overstated.”

“The particular project has unrealistic strategies, leading to huge wastes of time and effort on the part of nonprofit staff and volunteers.”

Staffing Problems. “Staff unawareness of the overall purpose of the project creates motivation problems, turnover.”

Questionnaire Two

According to Linstone and Turoff (1975) the second questionnaire in a Delphi study is intended to produce consensus by asking the panelists to rank and prioritize the results of the previous round. Panel members in this study were asked to accept or reject the essential elements and barriers identified in Questionnaire One, refine the descriptor if necessary and rank them from most to least important. Panelists agreed that all elements were important, some more essential than other, but still important. In fact, there was a considerable amount of frustration articulated by panelists regarding the ranking of items. Comments from more than half the panel confirmed the frustration that the items were equally important to the process. The following quote is an example of the comments, “To be honest, I had great difficulty with

ranking the indicators. Relative merit/strength of each is difficult to rank, given that most/all options are essential.” However, panel members did rank each element. The rankings were analyzed for measures of range and central tendencies, specifically, medians and modes.

Essential Elements

Panelists ranked the elements from 1 being the most important to 13 being the least. If the panelist rejected an item, it was ranked at 14. Histograms were developed for each category illustrating the central tendencies. See Figures 3 - 15 for the individual histograms for each element.

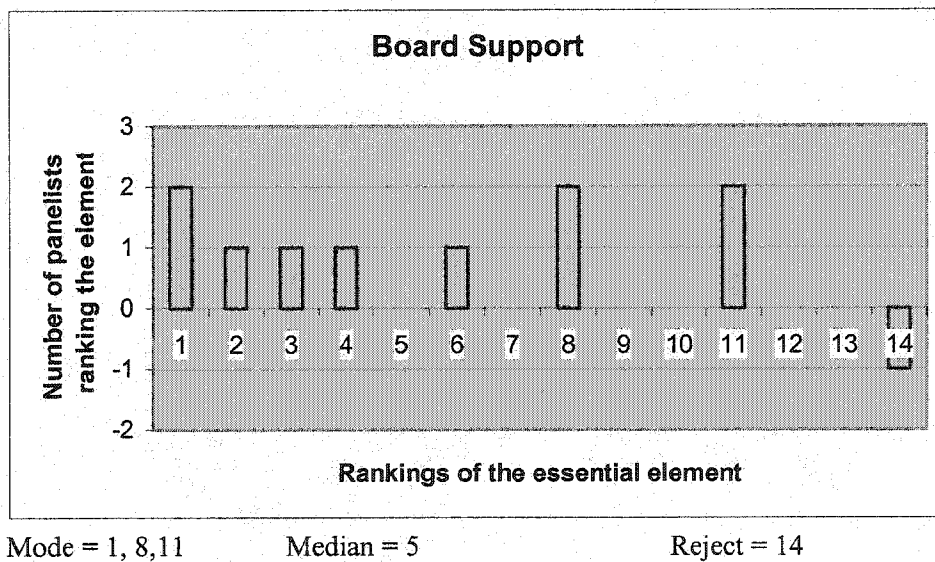
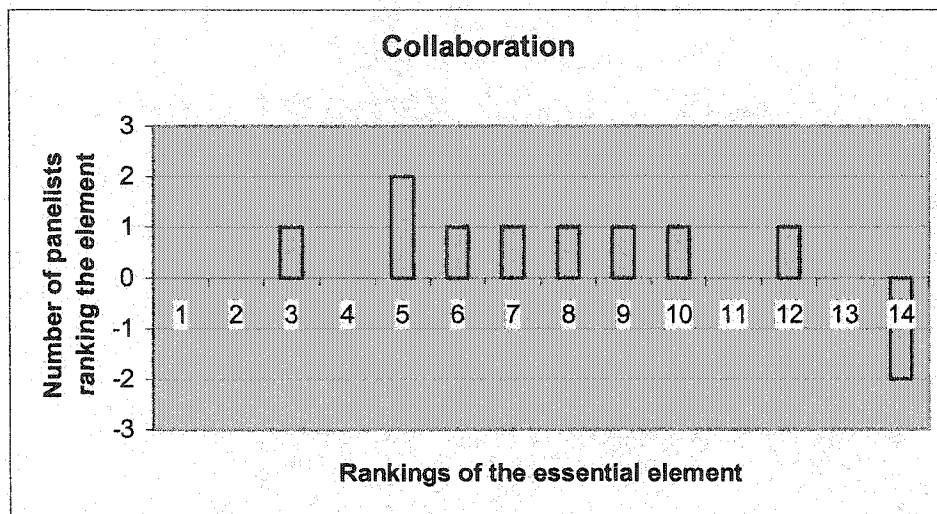


Figure 3. Board Support

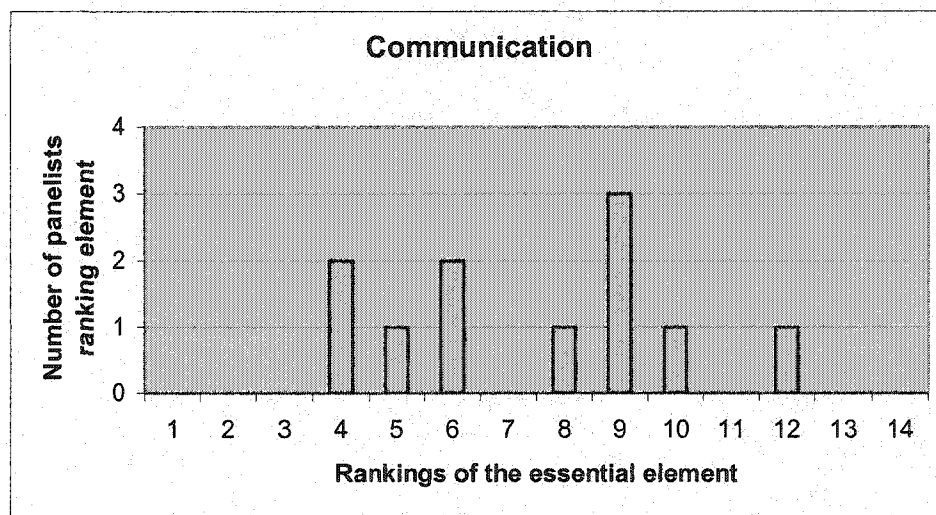


Mode = 5

Median = 8

Reject = 14

Figure 4. Collaboration



Mode = 9

Median = 8

Reject = 14

Figure 5. Communication

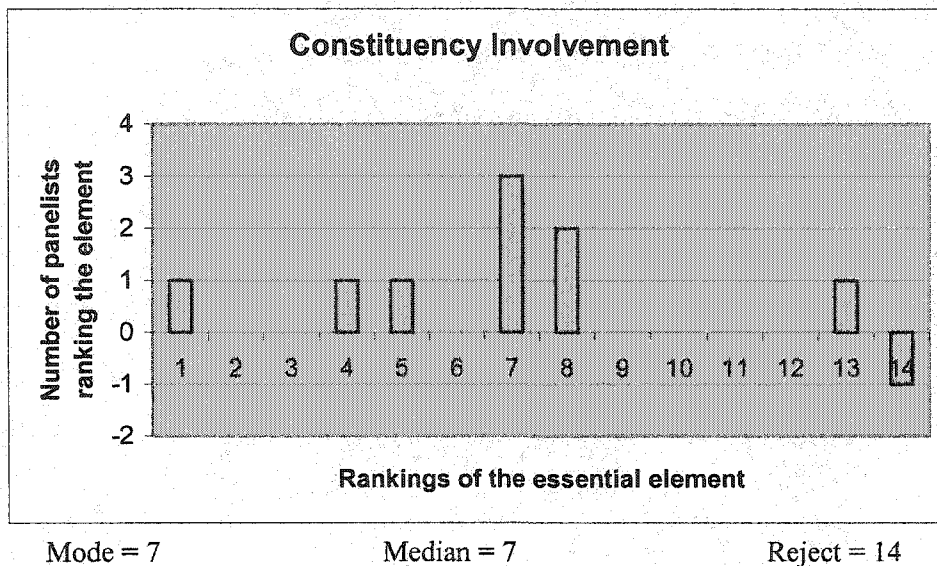


Figure 6. Constituency Involvement

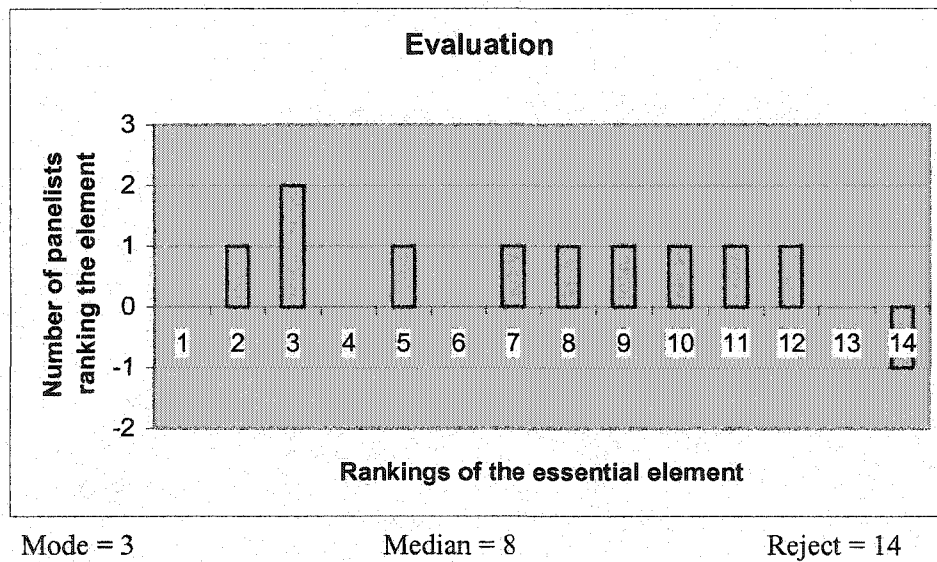


Figure 7. Evaluation

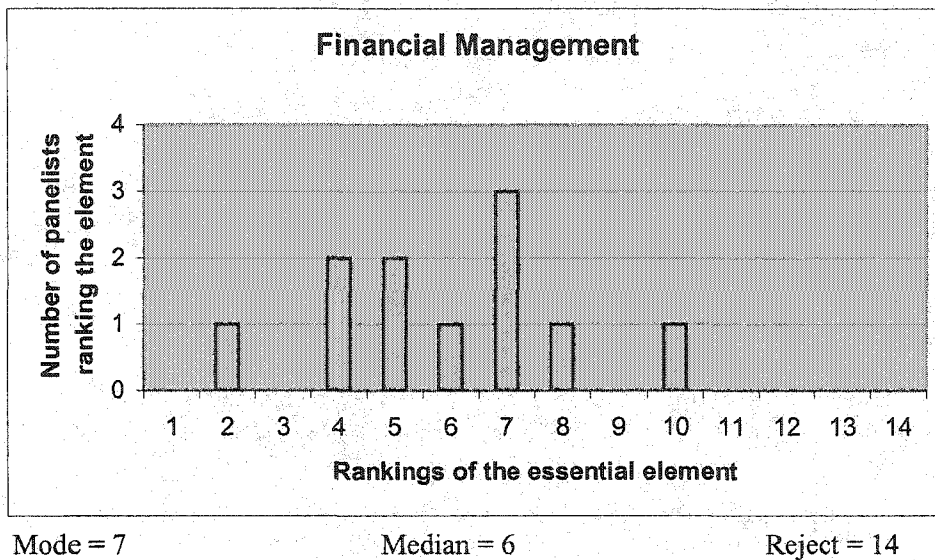


Figure 8. Financial Management

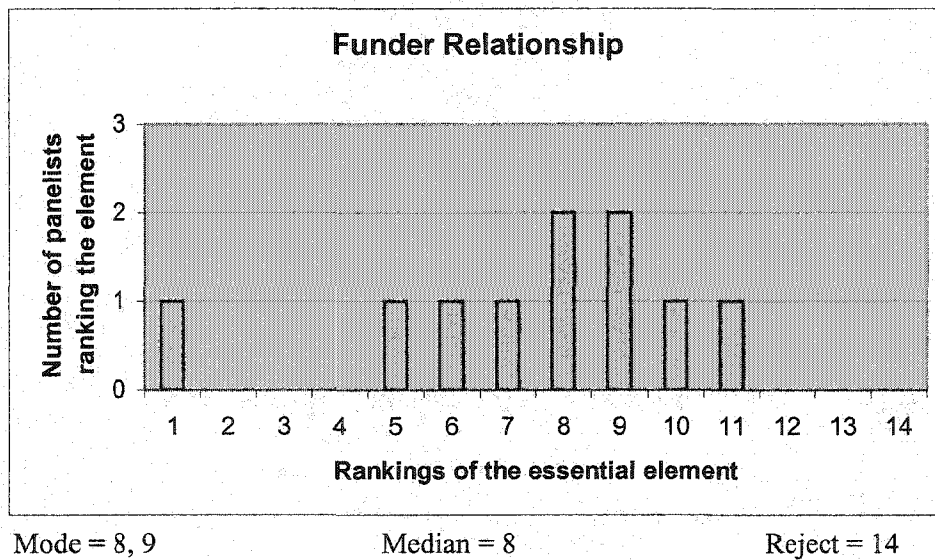
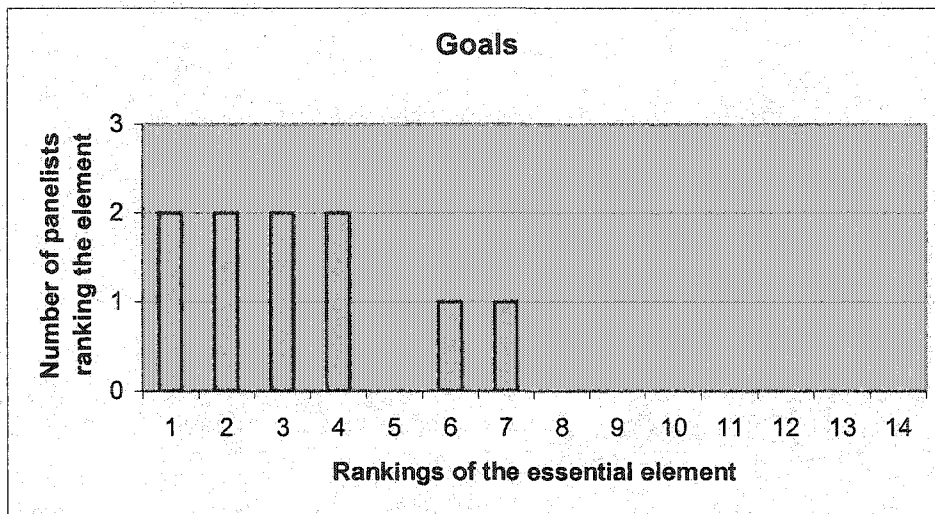


Figure 9. Funder Relationship

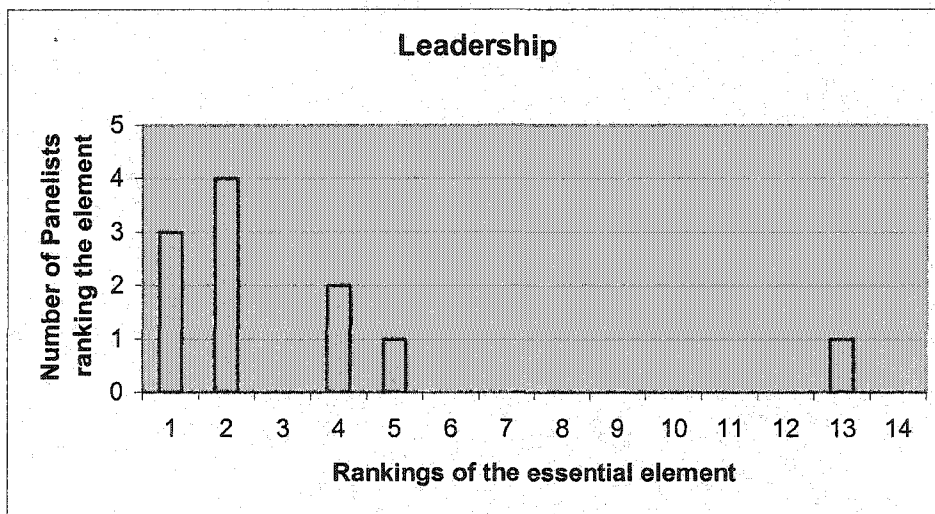


Mode = 1, 2, 3, 4

Median = 3

Reject = 14

Figure 10. Goals



Mode = 2

Median = 2

Reject = 14

Figure 11. Leadership

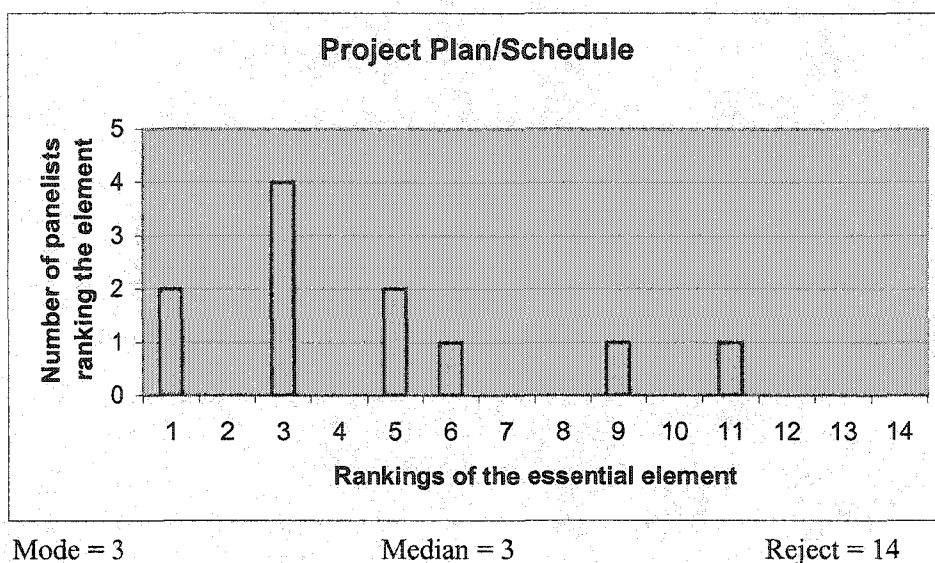


Figure 12. Project Plan/Schedule

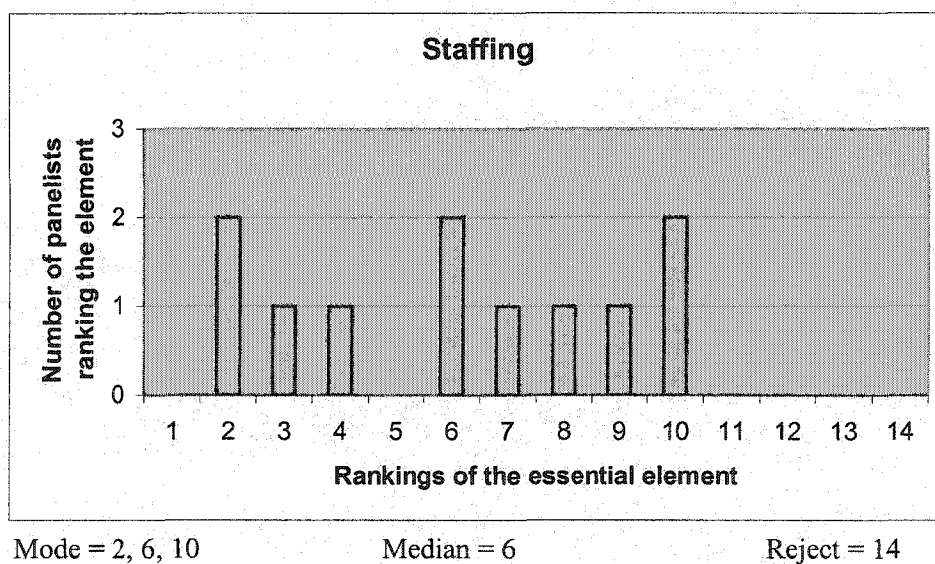
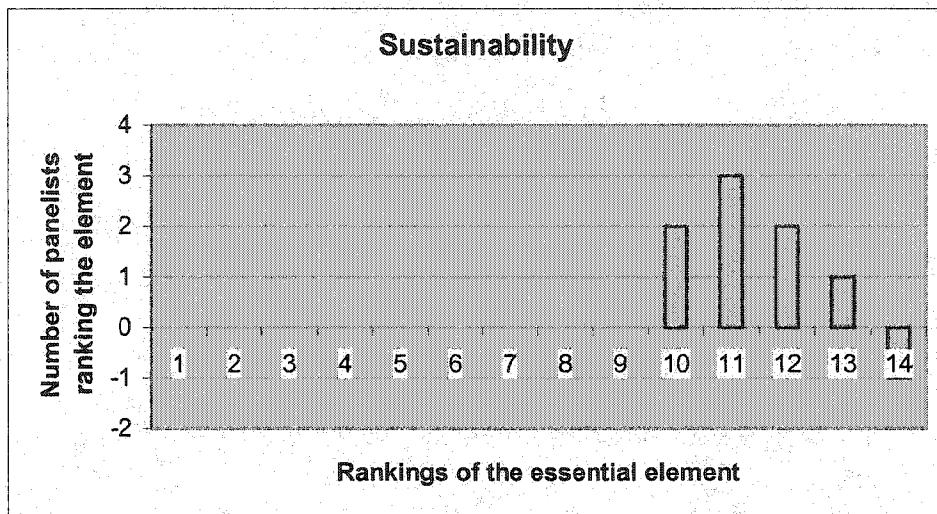


Figure 13. Staffing

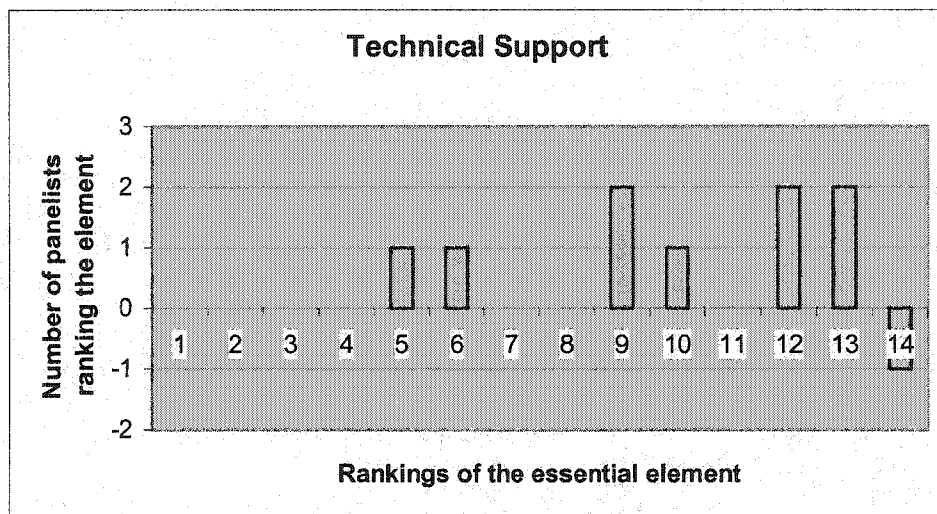


Mode = 11

Median = 11

Reject = 14

Figure 14. Sustainability



Mode = 9, 12, 13

Median = 11

Reject = 14

Figure 15. Technical Support

Based on the central tendencies, the essential elements fell into four groupings. The first group of elements (Leadership, Goals, and Project

Plans/Schedules) received a median ranking of 2 or 3. The second group (Board Support, Financial Management, Staffing, and Constituency Involvement) received a median ranking of 6 or 7. The next group (Collaboration, Communication, Evaluation, and Funder Relationship) received a median ranking of 8. The last group (Sustainability and Technical Support) received a median ranking of 11. See Table 9 for the groupings and results.

The panelists had higher levels of consensus on the relative importance of elements involving leadership, goal setting, and project planning and moderate levels of consensus involving board support, financial management, staffing, constituency involvement, collaboration, communication, and funder relationship. Elements with great diversity in ranking focused around evaluation, sustainability and technical support.

Examples of the diversity of comments regarding evaluation include the following. First, a comment validating essential importance, "Evaluation is a critical element that's needed in order to capture the effectiveness of a project. The evaluation strategy should be structured early and capture both qualitative and quantitative data. The evaluation should help identify the project's impact, not simply outcomes." Second, the opposite: "If you have goals and measures set up, that is generally sufficient information for many nonprofits to monitor and report success, as well as identify areas for improvement. Formal evaluation is only needed for large efforts or periodically in an organization's history."

Table 9

Rankings for Essential Elements – Questionnaire Two

<u>Tier</u>	<u>Element</u>	<u>Ranking</u>	<u>Median</u>	<u>Mode</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>Reject</u>	<u>No Rank</u>
1	Leadership	1-1-1-2-2-2-2-4-4-5-13	2	2	11	0	0
	Goals	1-1-2-2-3-3-4-4-6-7	3	1,2,3,4	10	0	1
	Project plan/schedule	1-1-3-3-3-3-5-5-6-9-11	3	3	11	0	0
	Board support	1-1-2-3-4-6-8-8-11-11-14	6	1, 8, 11	10	1	0
	Staffing	2-2-3-4-6-6-7-8-9-10-10	6	2,6,10	11	0	0
2	Financial management	2-4-4-5-5-6-7-7-7-8-10	6	7	11	0	0
	Constituency involvement	1-4-5-7-7-7-8-8-13-14	7	7	9	1	1
	Funder relationship	1-5-6-7-8-8-9-9-10-11	8	8,9	10	0	1
	Evaluation	2-3-3-5-7-8-9-10-11-12-14	8	3	10	1	0
3	Collaboration	3-5-5-6-7-8-9-10-12-14-14	8	5	9	2	0
	Communication	4-4-5-6-6-8-9-9-9-10-12	8	9	11	0	0
	Technical support	5-6-9-9-10-12-12-13-13-14	11	9,12,13	9	1	1
4	Sustainability	10-10-11-11-11-12-12-13-14	11	11	8	1	2
1 = most essential 13 = least essential 14 = numeric value issued to rejected items							

The most unexpected comments focused on the issues of sustainability. The range of discussion was varied and provided an understanding of the variability of definition and interpretation. The following three examples highlight the interaction.

First, “What does sustainability really mean? If the organization has a plan, access to funding, and the ability to articulate its success, then it will be sustainable until the need changes (which it will know because of its close relationship with constituents).”

Next, “Depends largely on focus of grant, however, most projects have long-term objectives and will require continuation funding/revenues. Many funders require a plan of sustainability independent of their support.” Finally, “It is usually very important to consider how a project will be continued after foundation support has ended, but is overrated in the foundation world. The fact is that many programs will live hand to mouth, especially in working with particularly distressed populations, and therefore the leadership of the program will be the key to its sustainability.” Each comment supports a different perception and may be dependent upon the type of project/program but may also reflect a difference of perception among funders regardless of type of project.

As indicated by the panelists, the shift in type of program may vary from implementation of service programs versus implementation of policy programs. Types of program may require more specific information and additional research to hone specific elements to fit types of programs.

Barriers to Implementation

Panelists ranked the barriers of implementation from 1 being the most important to 11 being the least. If the panelist rejected an item, it was ranked at 12.

Histograms were developed for each category illustrating the central tendencies. See Figures 16 - 26 for the individual histograms for each element.

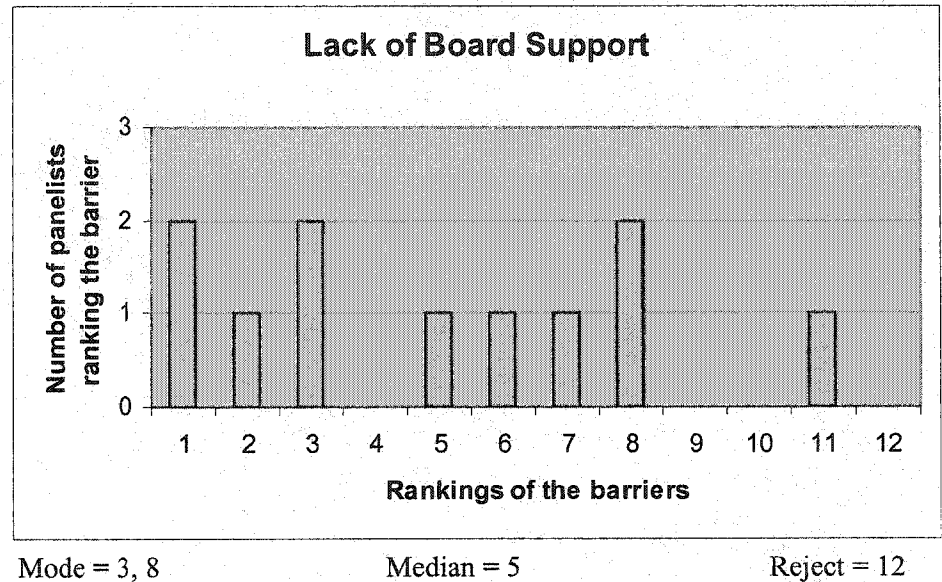


Figure 16. Lack of Board Support

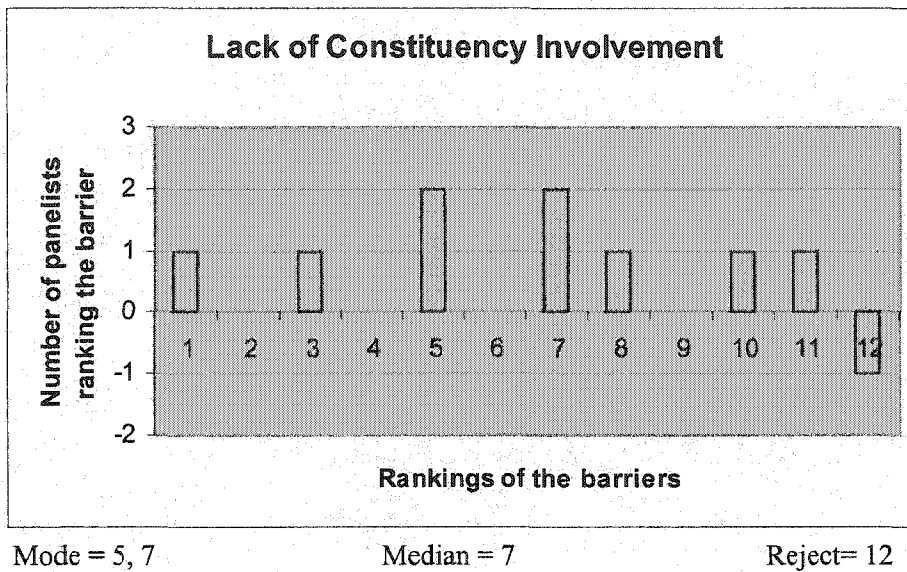


Figure 17. Lack of Constituency Involvement

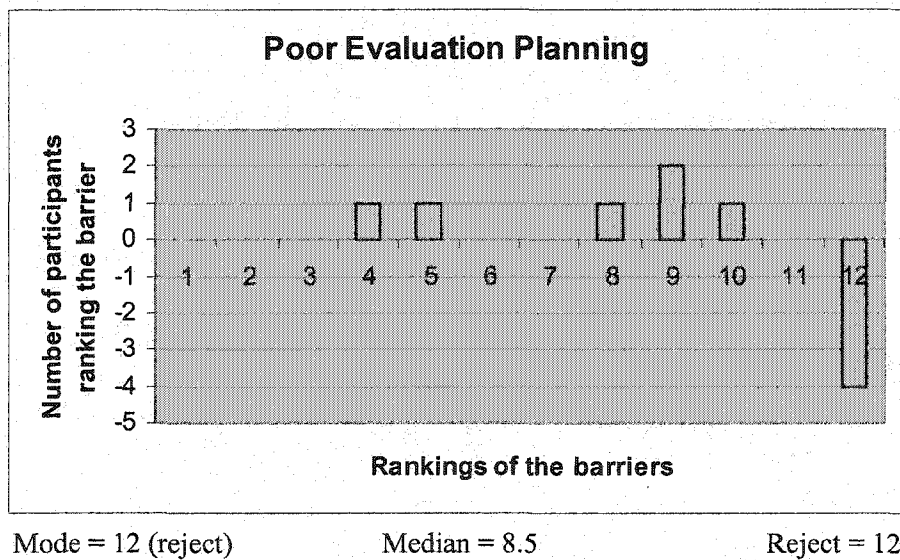


Figure 18. Poor Evaluation Planning

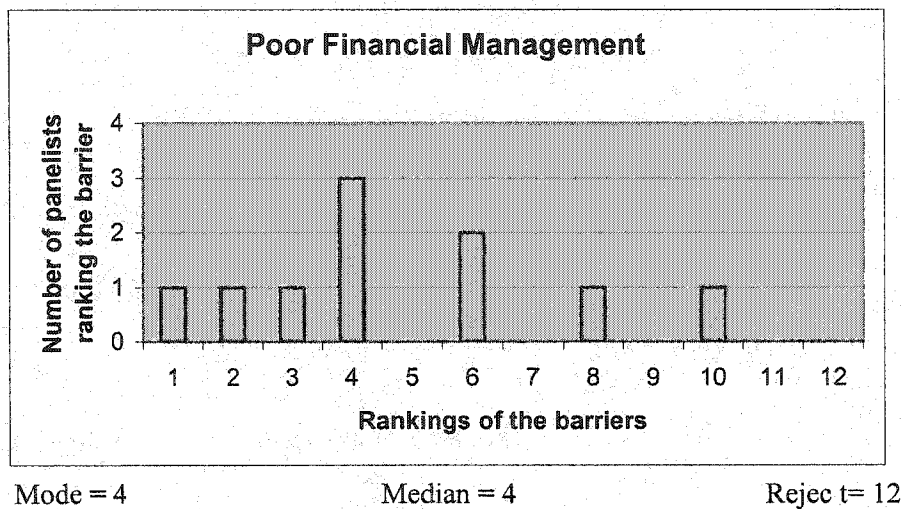


Figure 19. Poor Financial Management

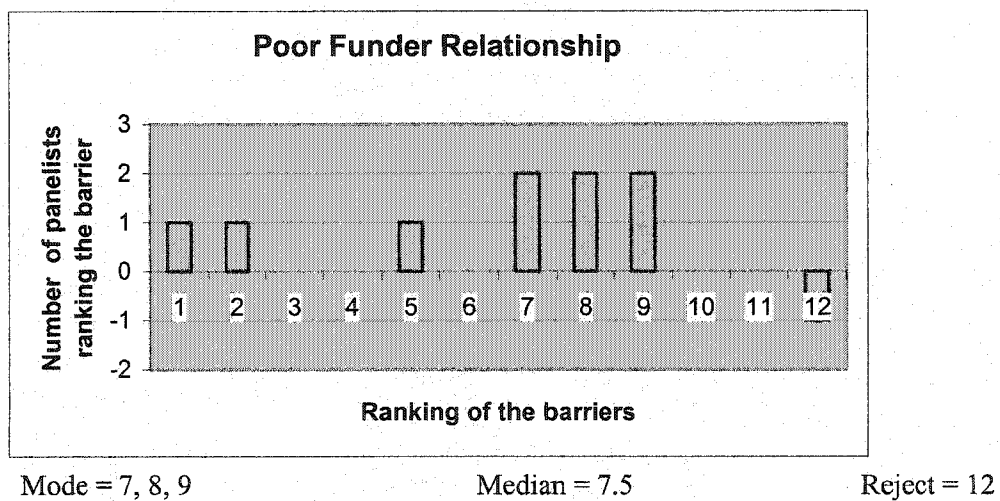


Figure 20. Poor Funder Relationship

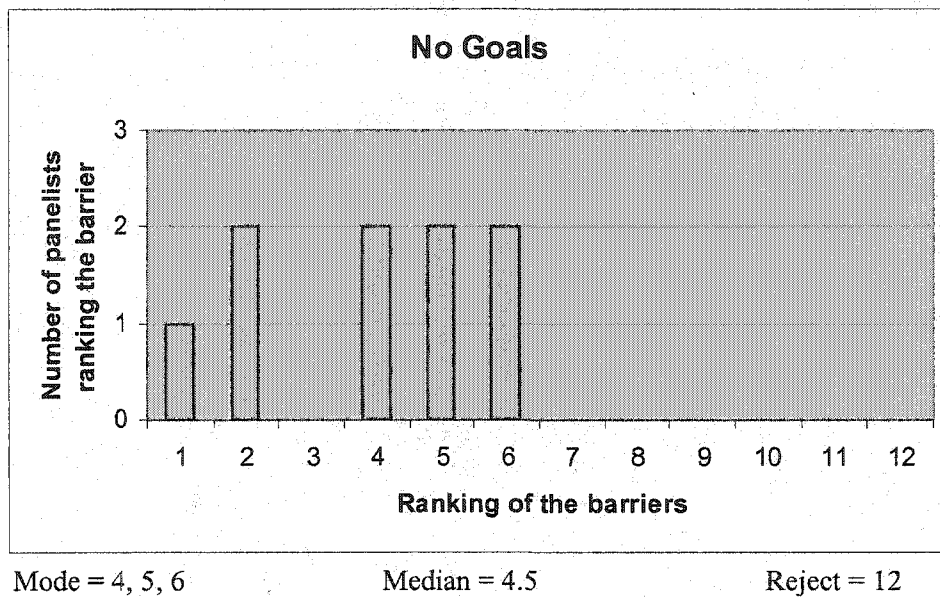


Figure 21. No Goals

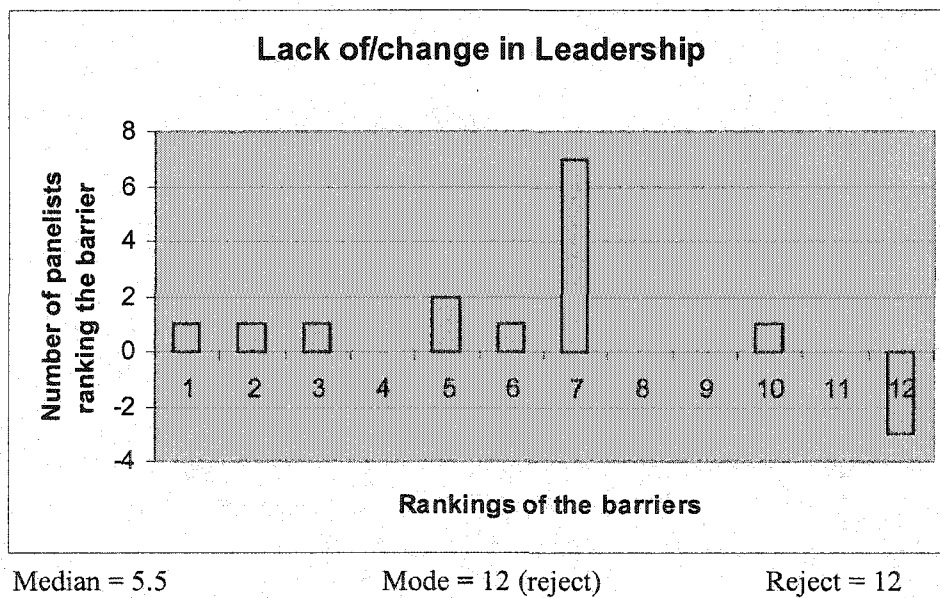
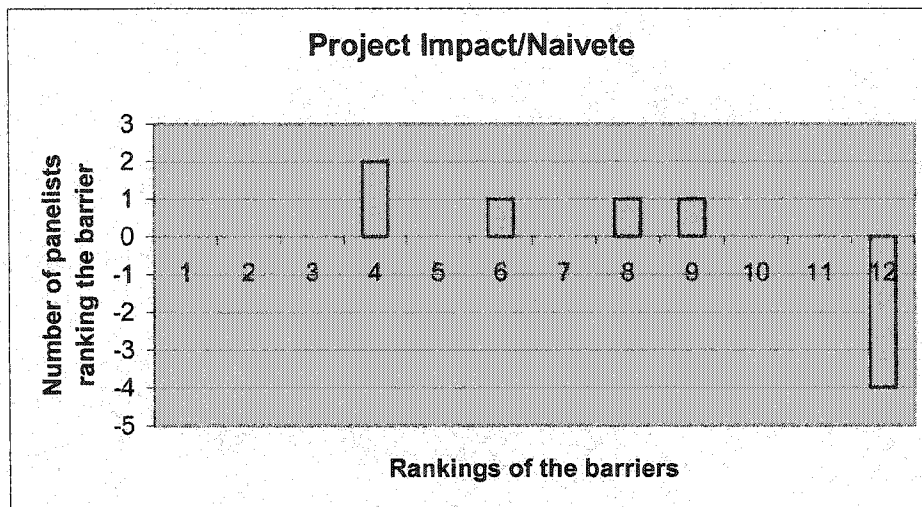


Figure 22. Lack of /change in Leadership

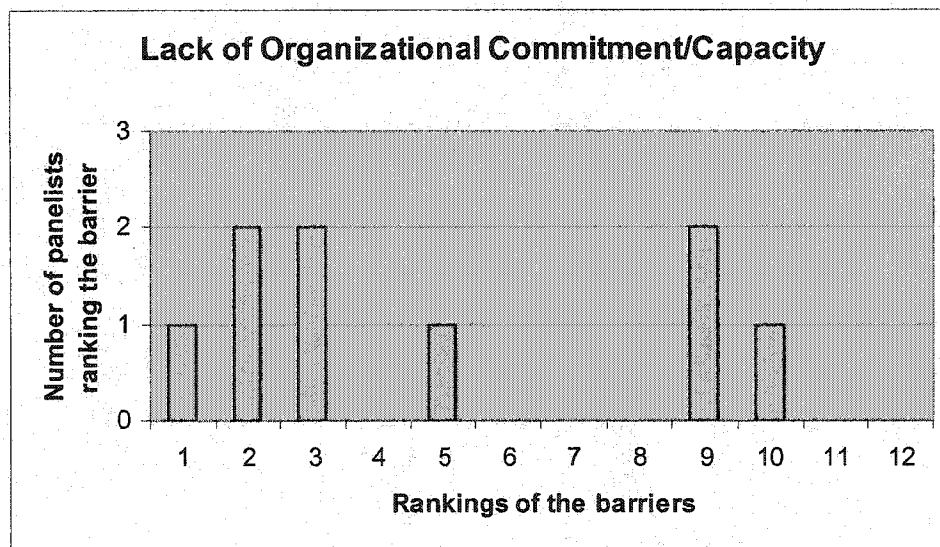


Mode = 12 (reject)

Median = 10.5

Reject = 12

Figure 23. Project Impact/Naiveté

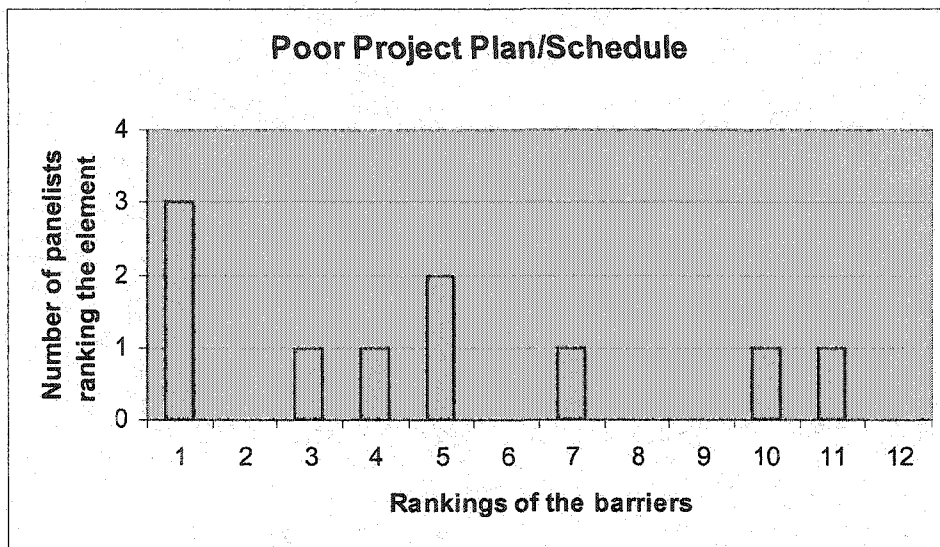


Mode = 2, 3, 9

Median = 3

Reject = 12

Figure 24. Lack of Organizational Commitment/Capacity

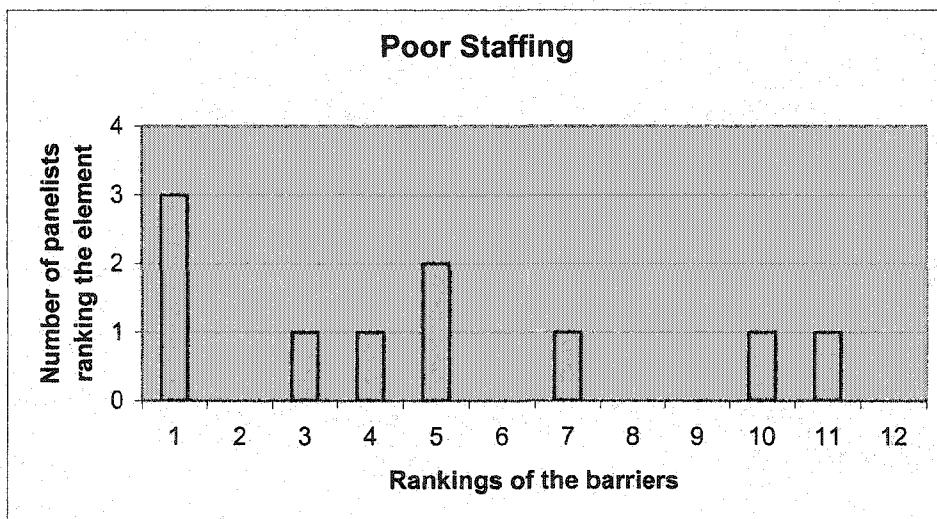


Mode = 1

Median = 4.5

Reject = 12

Figure 25. Poor Project Plan/Schedule



Mode = 6, 7

Median = 6.5

Reject = 12

Figure 26. Poor Staffing

Based on the central tendencies, the barriers to implementation also fell into four groupings. The first group of barriers (Lack of Organizational Commitment/Capacity, Poor Financial Management, Poor Project Plan/Schedule, and No Goals) received a median ranking of 3 through 4.5. The second group (Lack of Board Support, Lack of/change in Leadership, and Poor Staffing) received a median ranking of 5.5 or 6.5. The next group (Lack of Constituency Involvement, Poor Evaluation Planning, and Poor Funder Relationship) received a median ranking of 7 or 7.5. The last group (Project Impact/Naiveté) received a median ranking of 10. See Table 10 for the groupings and results.

Panel members either reached a high consensus on barriers or placed them on the opposite end of the spectrum. Panelists ranked organizational capacity, leadership, goal setting, and program planning as essential elements critical to the process and confirmed that the absence of the elements would be difficult to assure a positive implementation. On the other hand, the panelists said barriers such as lack of constituency involvement, poor evaluation, and poor funder relationship or project impact/naiveté may not always hinder a project's implementation.

One panelist contributed an overarching observation regarding program fit to the organization's mission. The panelist suggests,

Table 10

Ranking for Barriers to Implementation – Questionnaire Two

<u>Tier</u>	<u>Element</u>	<u>Ranking</u>	<u>Median</u>	<u>Mode</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>Reject</u>	<u>No rank</u>
1	Lack of organizational commitment/capacity	1-2-2-3-3-5-9-9-10	3	2,3,9	9	0	2
	Poor financial management	1-2-3-4-4-4-6-6-8-10	4	4	10	0	1
	Poor project plan/schedule	1-1-1-3-4-5-5-7-10-11	4.5	1	10	0	1
	No goals	1-2-2-4-4-5-5-6-6-12	4.5	4,5,6	9	1	1
2	Lack of board support	1-2-3-3-5-6-7-8-8-11	5.5	3,8	10	0	1
	Lack of /change in leadership	1-2-3-5-5-6-7-12-12-12	5.5	12 (Reject)	7	3	1
	Poor staffing	2-3-4-6-6-7-7-9-10-11	6.5	6,7	10	0	1
3	Lack of constituency involvement	1-3-5-5-7-7-8-10-11-12	7	5,7	9	1	1
	Poor funder relationship	1-2-5-7-7-8-8-9-9-12	7.5	7,8,9	9	1	1
	Poor evaluation planning	4-5-8-9-9-10-12-12-12-12	7.5	12 (Reject)	6	4	1
4	Project impact/naiveté	4-4-6-8-9-12-12-12-12	9	12 (Reject)	5	4	2

1 = most significant barrier 11 = least significant barrier 14 = numeric value issued to rejected items

One barrier to implementation in projects is the 'fit' with the Organization's existing mission and constituents of the program. A bad fit is most easily visible when a program is chasing dollars, i.e., applying for grants because of their availability and tacking on the new program to the organization's core work. In doing so, the new program will, over time, lack board support, be seen by agency constituencies as in conflict with their own programs, may or may not have appropriate financial controls, and is likely to have staffing problems as the best employees of the agency work elsewhere. An organization seeking to implement a new program, say a church seeking to add a Head Start program to the roster of social services it provides in response to a new budget line at the local government, needs to make a case internally and externally for the expansion. Everything from prosaic concerns (is there room for the program?) to mission-related issues (will this detract from the food kitchen and senior citizen programs already operating at the church?) to collaboration issues (will the new program be in conflict with the local school's Head Start program?) needs to be addressed as part of the planning process, so that implementation can focus on the nuts and bolts of setting up a rigorous school program. Finally, as part of the 'fit' issue, organizational finances need to be considered. Almost no social program grants cover the true costs of a program, so can the organization support the grant? None of this is to say that new programs should not be added, but the implementation of the project often falls short because the many issues around

stakeholder buy-in and organizational capacity are not comprehensively considered at the beginning.

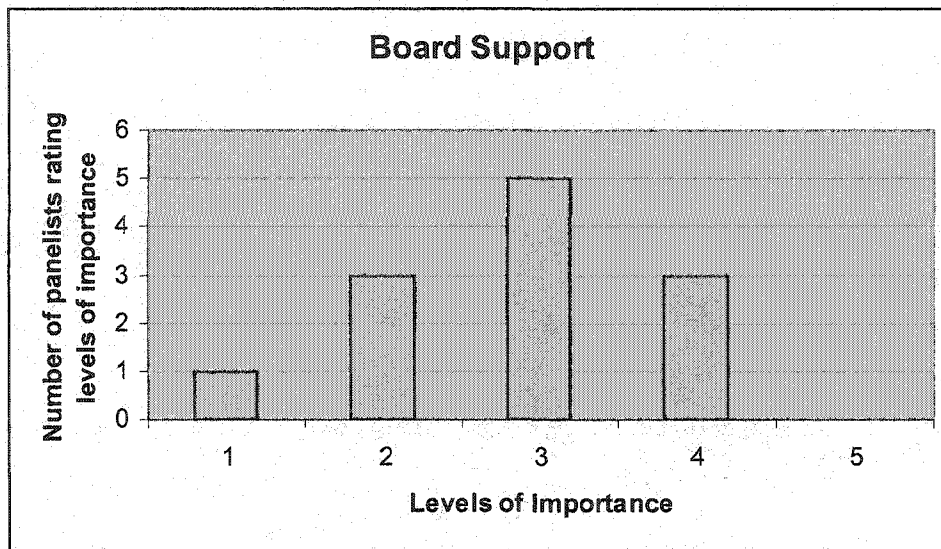
The benefits of the second questionnaire in a conventional Delphi Study, as outlined by Delbecq et al. (1975) are (1) areas of disagreement are identified; (2) areas of agreement are identified; (3) items requiring clarification are identified and discussed; and (4) early understandings of priorities emerge. Each of these benefits came to fruition in Questionnaire Two of the study and provided for further interaction in the last round.

Questionnaire Three

The third questionnaire provided a final opportunity for panelists to determine the level of importance of each element and barrier. Addressing the issue that all elements were important to the implementation process, the third round used a Likert Scale to measure importance. The Likert Scale confirmed the level of importance each element plays in an implementation process or as a barrier to implementation.

Essential Elements

Panelists ranked the essential elements from 1 being the most important to 5 being the least. If the panelist rejected an item, it was ranked at a 6. Stem Charts were developed for each category illustrating the central tendencies. See Figures 27 - 39 for the individual Histograms for each element.

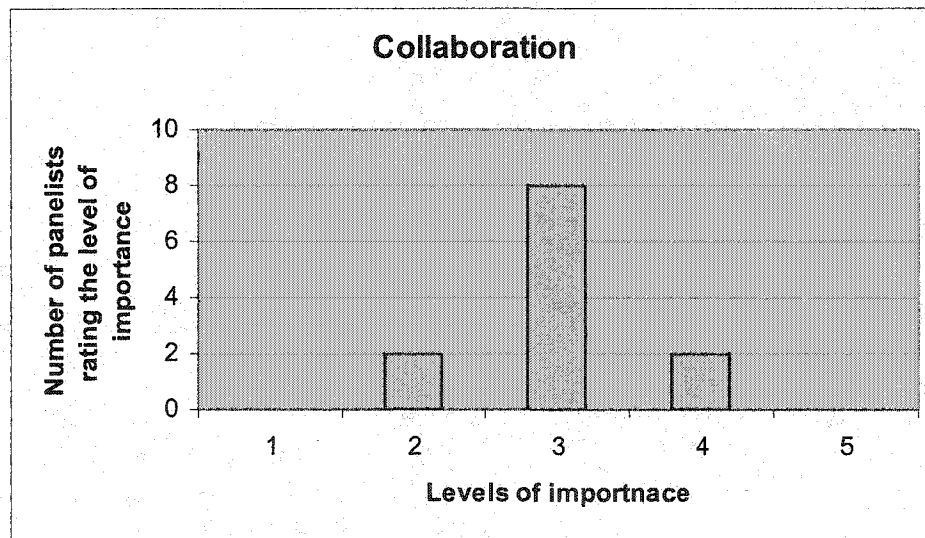


Mode = 3

Median = 3

Reject = 6

Figure 27. Board Support



Mode = 3

Median = 3

Reject = 6

Figure 28. Collaboration

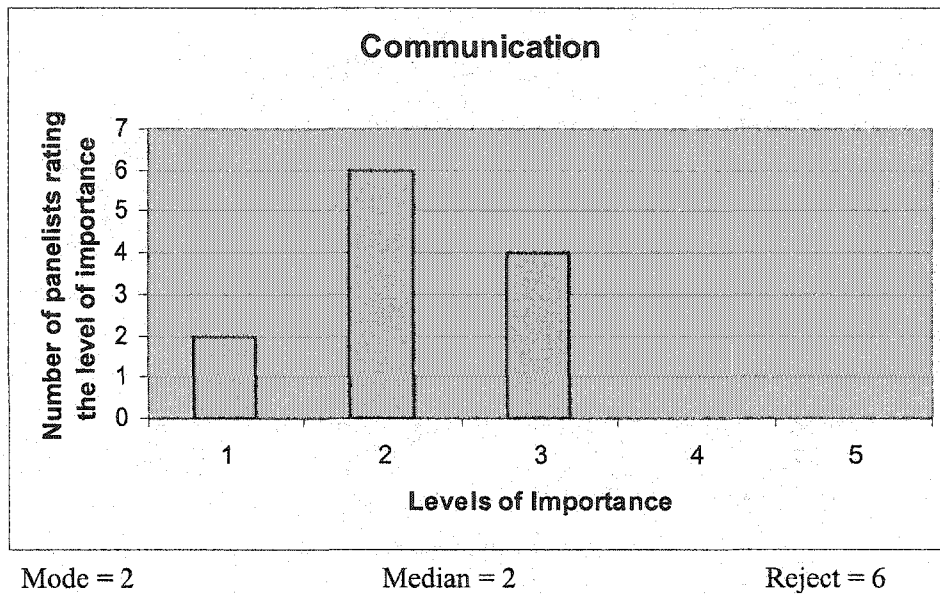


Figure 29. Communication

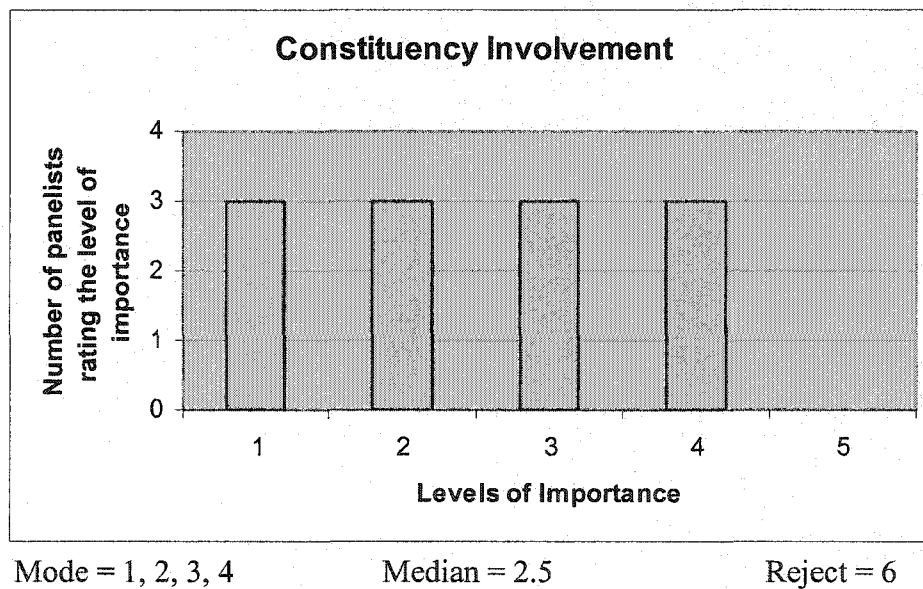


Figure 30. Constituency Involvement

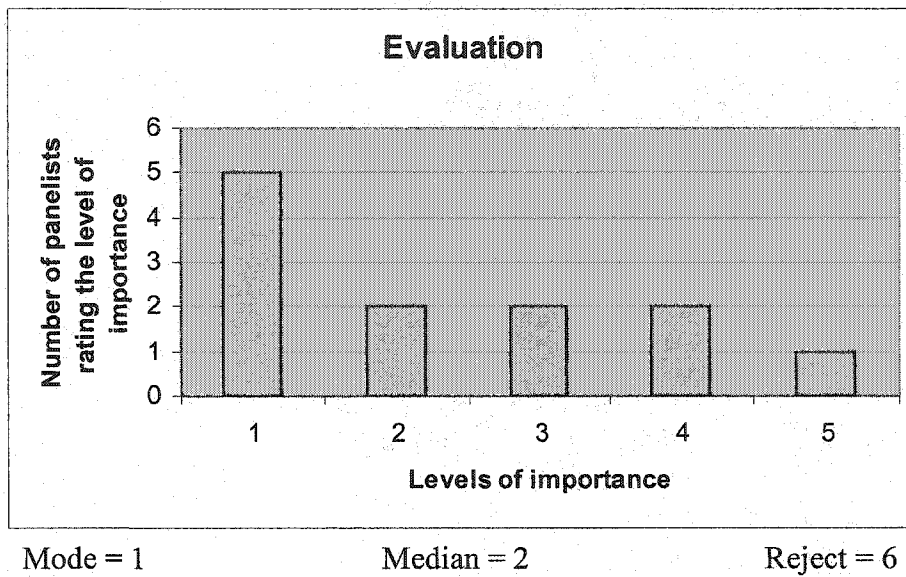


Figure 31. Evaluation

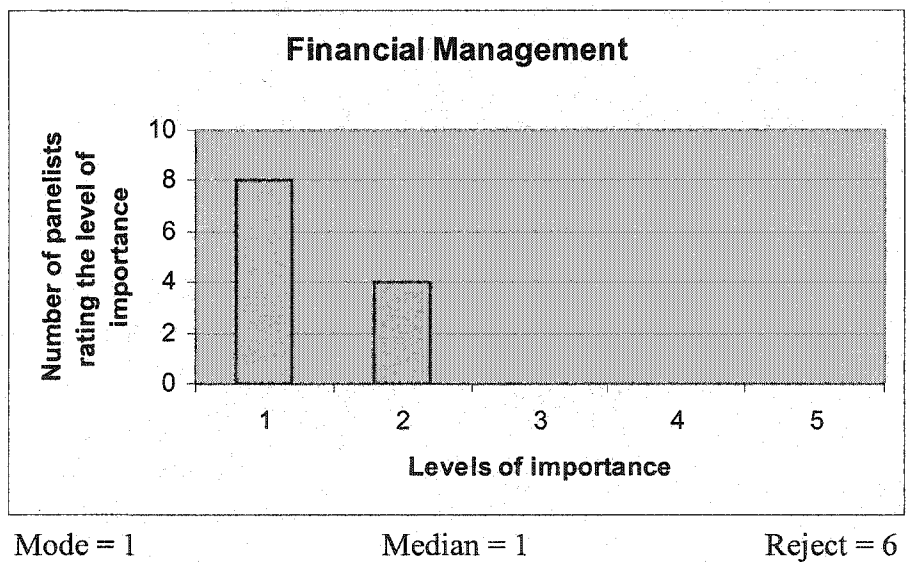


Figure 32. Financial Management

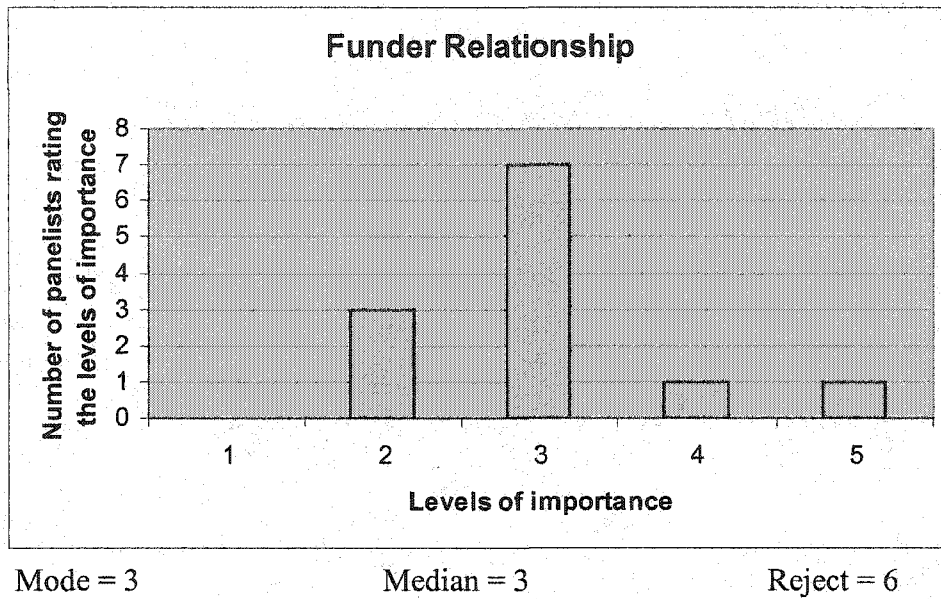


Figure 33. Funder Relationship

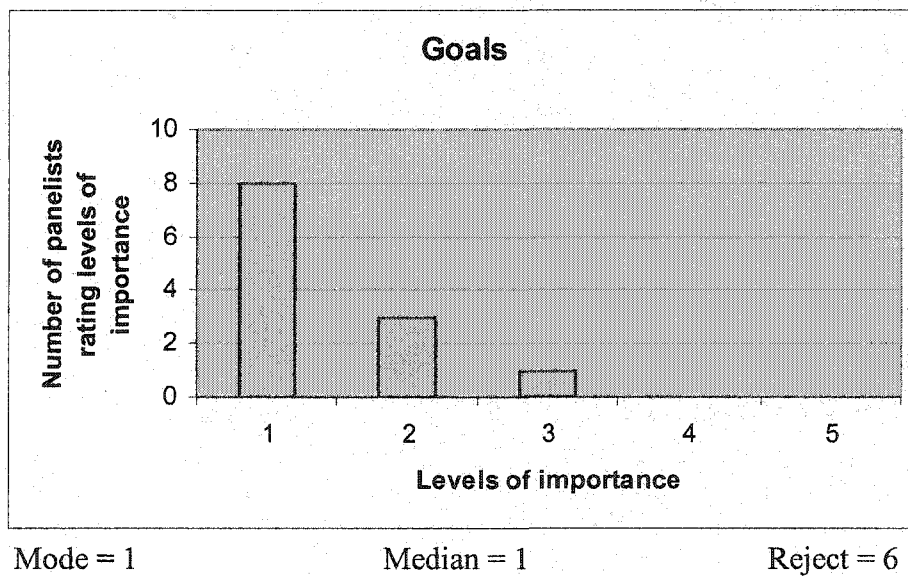


Figure 34. Goals

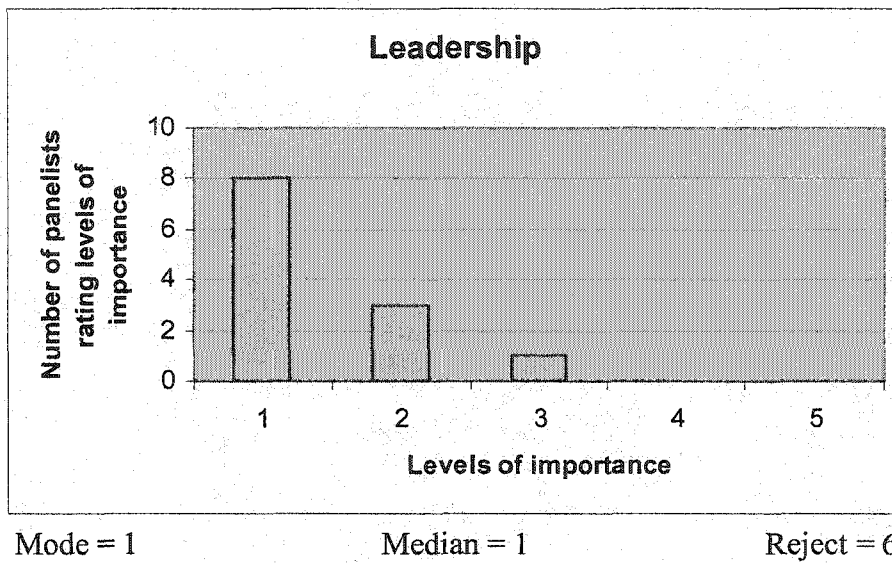


Figure 35. Leadership

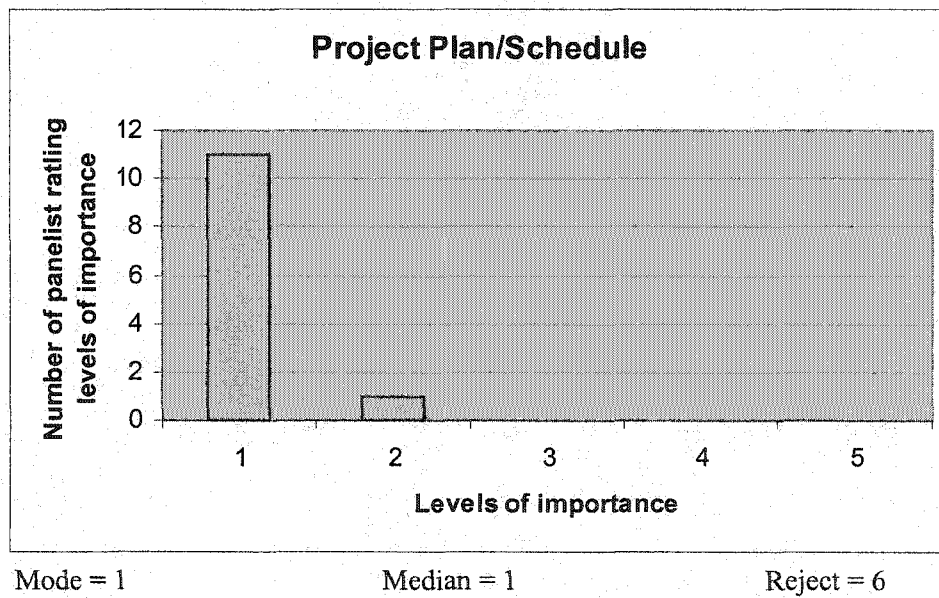


Figure 36. Project Plan/Schedule

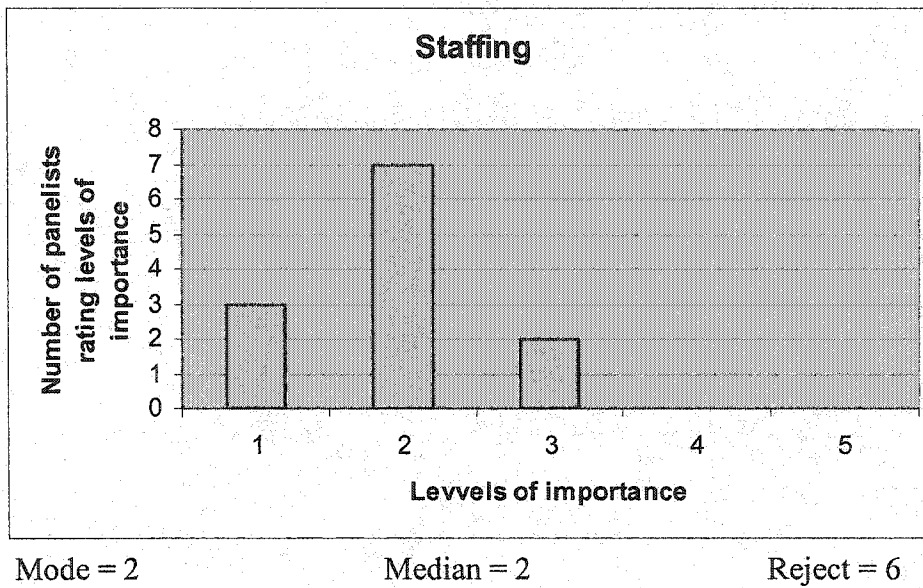


Figure 37. Staffing

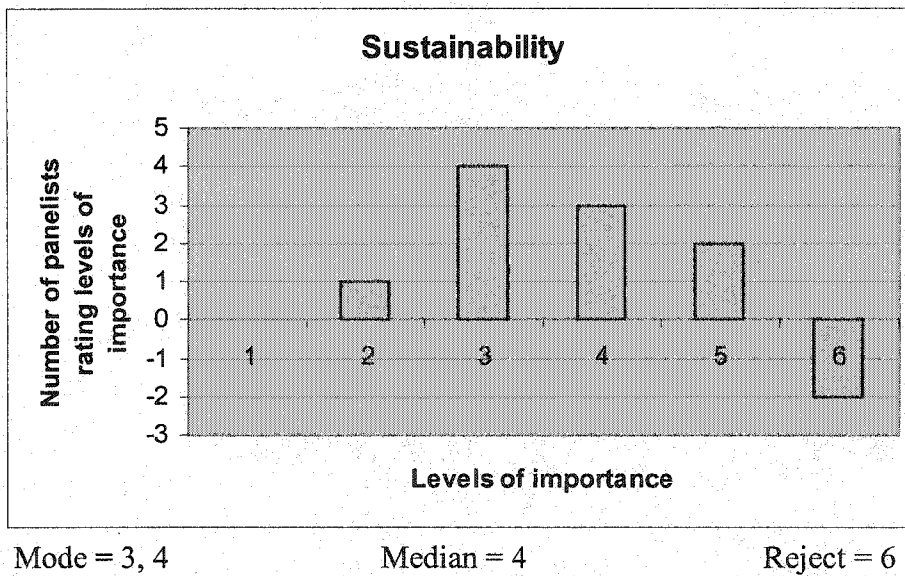


Figure 38. Sustainability

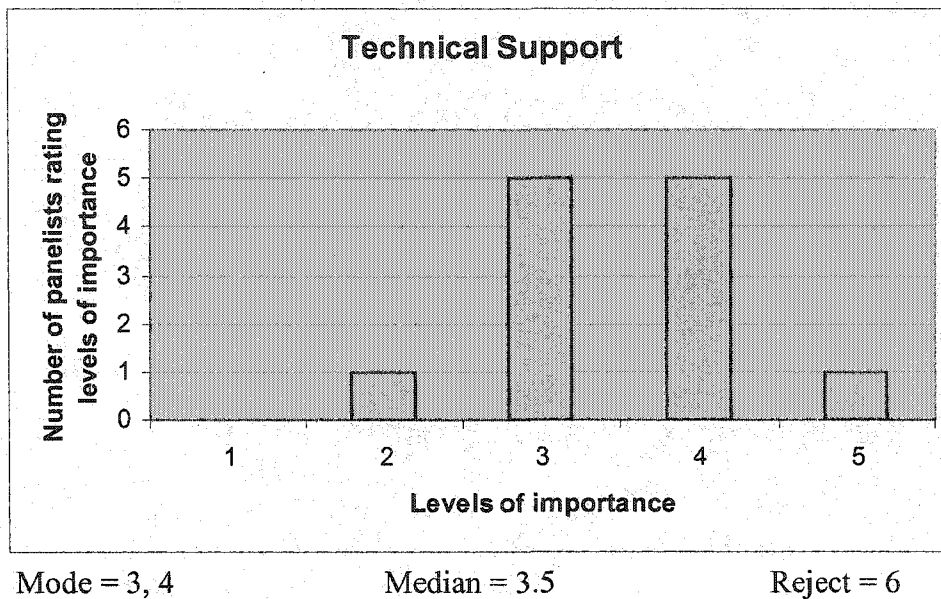


Figure 39. Technical Support

Based on the central tendencies, four of the 13 essential elements fell into the first level, most important. Those elements in the first category focused on project planning, financial management, goals, and leadership. In addition, the second group focused on staffing, communication, evaluation and interaction with target populations and ranked second highest. More than one half of the elements ranked two or above in level of importance. The remainder continued to be the issues that could be type-specific depending on the program, such as board and funder involvement, external collaboration, technical support. The final and most controversial issue of sustainability may be type-specific or reflect an ongoing debate with the funding arena. See Table 11 for the groupings and results.

Table 11

Rankings for Essential Elements – Questionnaire Three

<u>Tier</u>	<u>Element</u>	<u>Rating</u>	<u>Median</u>	<u>Mode</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>Reject</u>
1	Project plan/schedule	1-1-1-1-1-1-1-1-1-2	1	1	12	0
	Financial management	1-1-1-1-1-1-1-2-2-2	1	1	12	0
	Goals	1-1-1-1-1-1-1-2-2-3	1	1	12	0
	Leadership	1-1-1-1-1-1-1-2-2-3	1	1	12	0
2	Staffing	1-1-1-2-2-2-2-2-2-3-3	2	2	12	0
	Communication	1-1-2-2-2-2-2-2-3-3-3	2	2	12	0
	Evaluation	1-1-1-1-2-2-3-3-4-4-5	2	1	12	0
3	Constituency involvement	1-1-1-2-2-2-3-3-3-4-4-4	2.5	1,2,3,4	12	0
	Board support	1-2-2-2-3-3-3-3-3-4-4-4	3	3	12	0
	Collaboration	2-2-3-3-3-3-3-3-3-4-4	3	3	12	0
	Funder relationship	2-2-2-3-3-3-3-3-3-4-5	3	3	12	0
4	Technical support	2-3-3-3-3-3-4-4-4-4-4-5	3.5	3,4	12	0
	Sustainability	2-3-3-3-3-4-4-4-5-5-6-6	4	3,4	11	1

1 = most important 5 = least important 6 = numeric value issued to rejected items

Barriers to Implementation

Panelists ranked the barriers of implementation from 1 being the most important to 5 being the least. If the panelist rejected an item, it was ranked at a 6.

Histograms were developed for each category illustrating the central tendencies. See Figures 40 - 50 for the individual Histograms for each element.

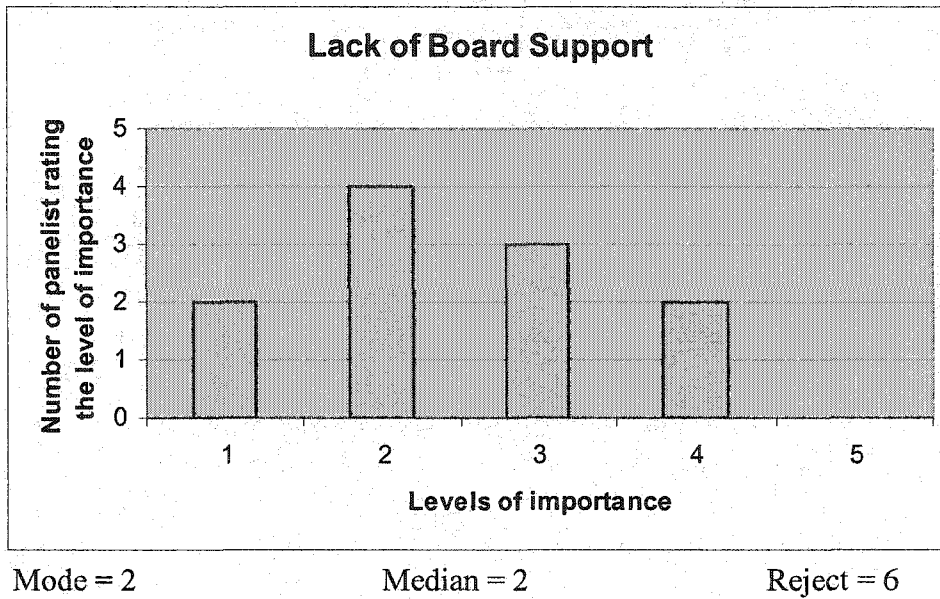


Figure 40. Lack of Board Support

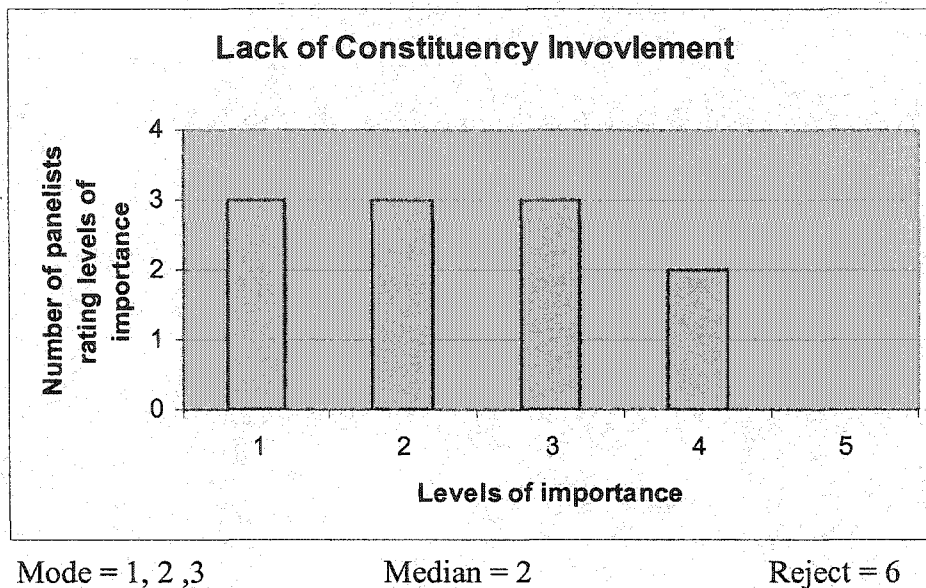


Figure 41. Lack of Constituency Involvement

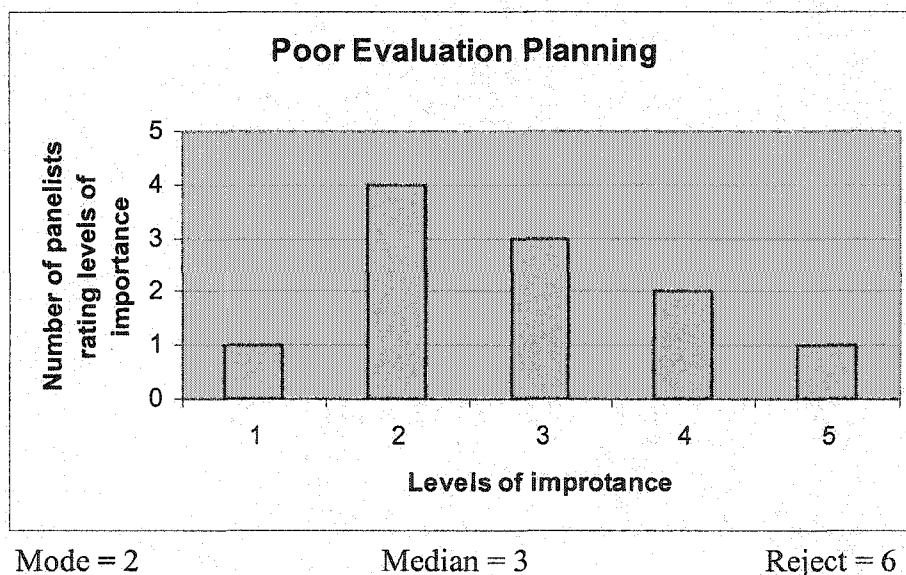


Figure 42. Poor Evaluation Planning

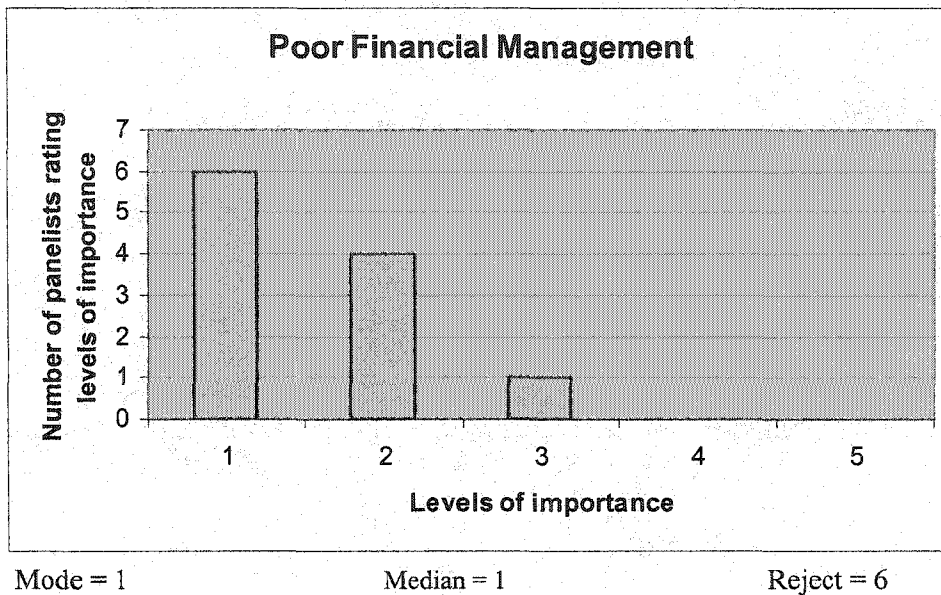


Figure 43. Poor Financial Management

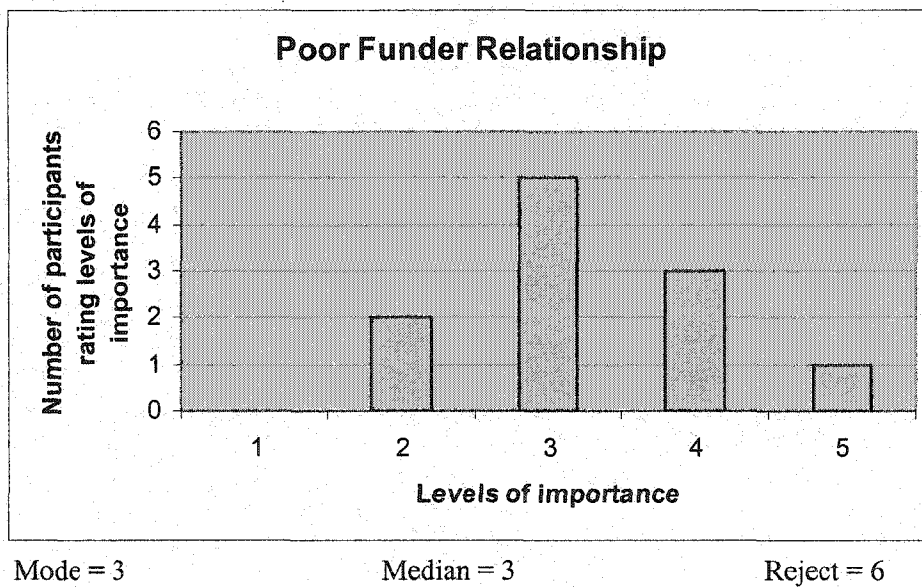


Figure 44. Poor Funder Relationship

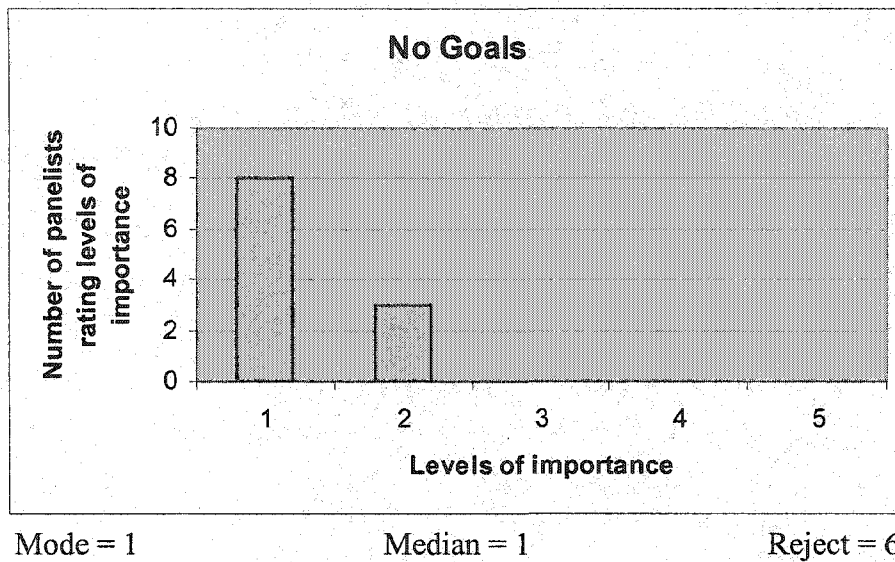


Figure 45. No Goals

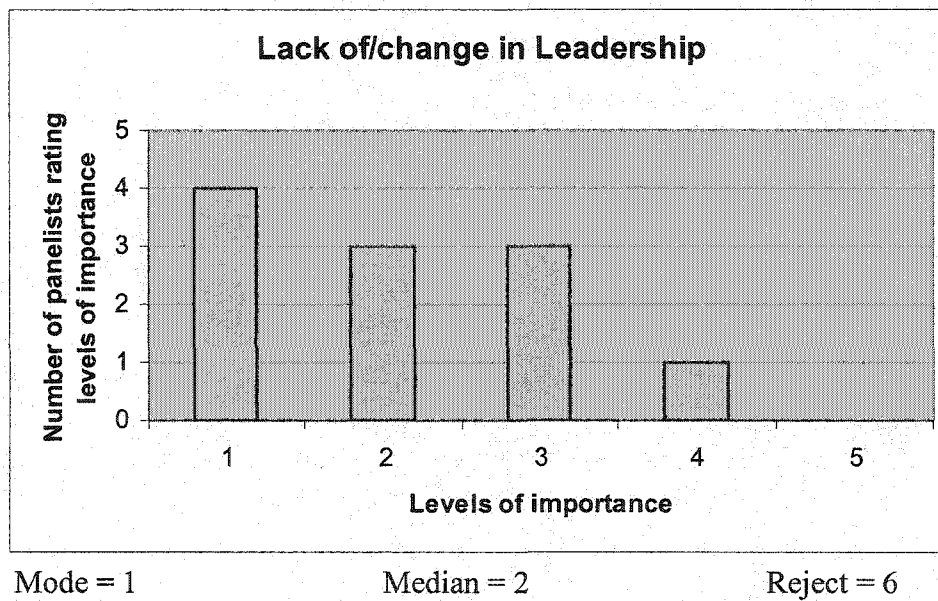
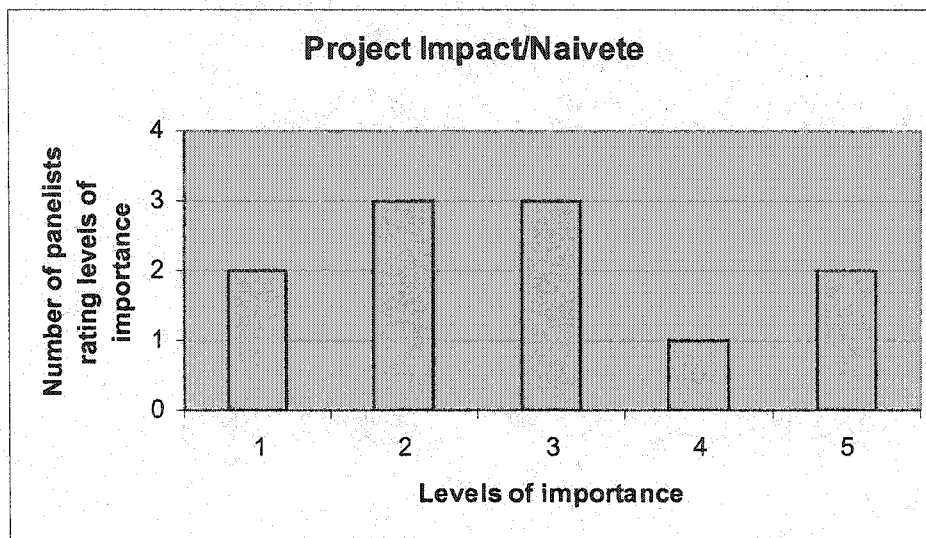


Figure 46. Lack of /change in Leadership

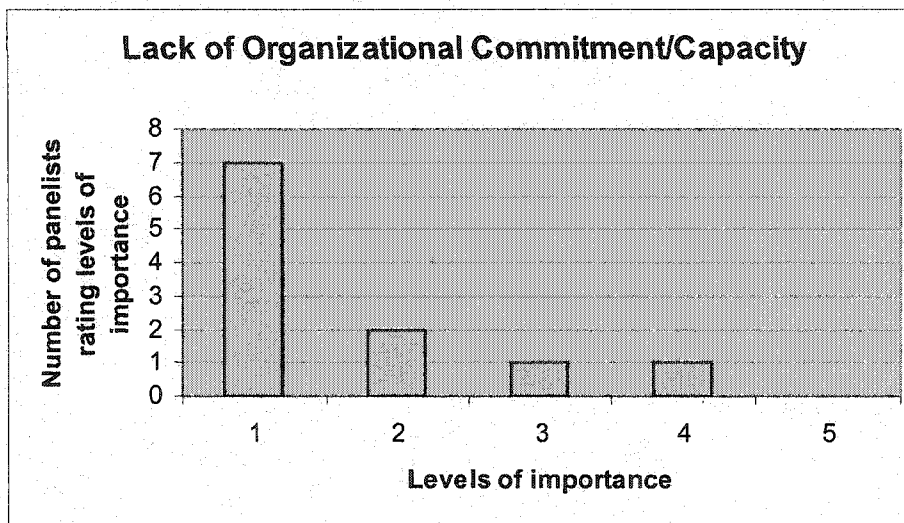


Mode = 2

Median = 3

Reject = 6

Figure 47. Project Impact/Naiveté



Mode = 1

Median = 1

Reject = 6

Figure 48. Lack of Organizational Commitment/Capacity

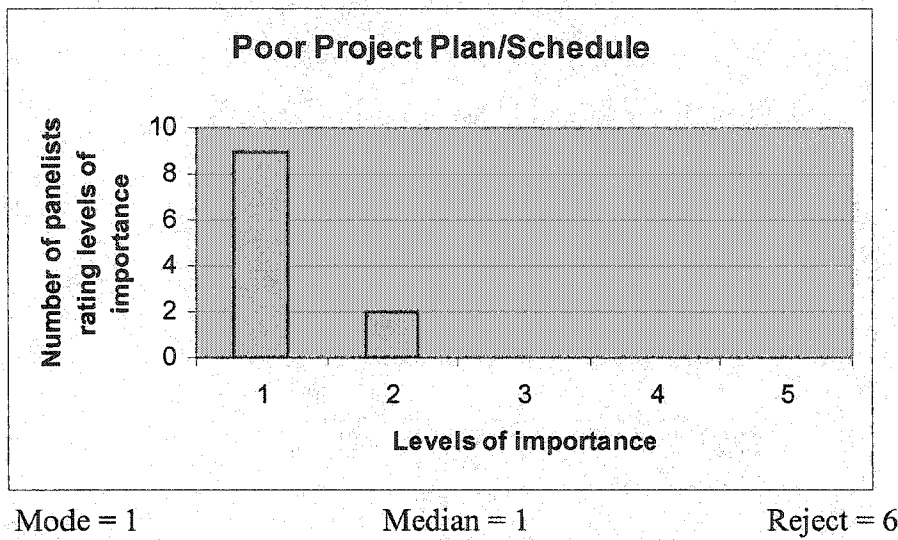


Figure 49. Poor Project Plan/Schedule

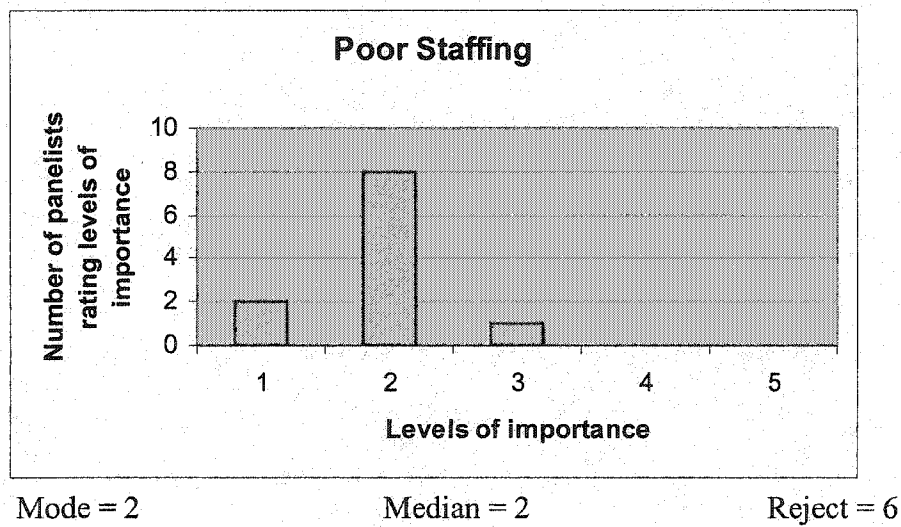


Figure 50. Poor Staffing

Based on the central tendencies, eight of the eleven barriers to implementation fell into a range of 1 or 2, with 1 being most important. This confirms the importance of the essential elements by implying their absence from the implementation process would truly become a barrier to implementation process. The first group focuses on administration, including poor project plans/schedule, no goals, poor financial management, and lack of organizational commitment/capacity. The second group involves relationships such as leadership, constituency, staffing, and board involvement. The later barriers—project impact/ naiveté, poor evaluation, and poor funder relationship—are important but may not be as critical as the first eight barriers. See Table 12 for the groupings and results.

Table 12

Ranking for Barriers to Implementation – Questionnaire Three

<u>Tier</u>	<u>Element</u>	<u>Ranking</u>	<u>Median</u>	<u>Mode</u>	<u>N</u>
1	Poor project plan/schedule	1-1-1-1-1-1-1-1-2-2	1	1	11
	No goals	1-1-1-1-1-1-1-2-2-2	1	1	11
	Poor financial management	1-1-1-1-1-2-2-2-2-3	1	1	11
	Lack of organizational commitment/capacity	1-1-1-1-1-1-2-2-3-4	1	1	11
2	Lack of /change in leadership	1-1-1-1-2-2-2-3-3-3-4	2	1	11
	Lack of constituency involvement	1-1-1-2-2-2-3-3-3-4-4	2	1,2,3	11
	Poor staffing	1-1-2-2-2-2-2-2-2-3	2	2	11
	Lack of board support	1-1-2-2-2-2-3-3-3-4-4	2	2	11
3	Project impact/naiveté	1-1-2-2-2-3-3-3-4-5-5	3	2	11
	Poor evaluation planning	1-2-2-2-2-3-3-3-4-4-5	3	2	11
	Poor funder relationship	2-2-3-3-3-3-3-4-4-4-5	3	3	11

1 = serious barrier 5 = not a barrier 6 = numeric value issued to rejected items

The benefits of the third questionnaire in a conventional Delphi study, as outlined by Delbecq et al. (1975) are that it (1) provides closure to the study; (2) suggests areas where diversity of judgment exists, but allows for the aggregation of judgments; and (3) provides guidelines for future research and planning. The results of Questionnaire Three in this study indicate that panelists were able to confirm a final assessment of levels of importance on each item.

DISCUSSION

Summary of Findings

The purpose of this exploratory study was to identify the necessary components of a grant project/program implementation process for nonprofit organizations. The following primary research question guided the study, “What are the essential elements of an implementation process for grant-funded nonprofit projects/programs?” The second question, “What are the barriers to implementation?” generated many responses that were the mirror opposites of the primary research question.

Essential Elements

Through the dedicated and detailed attention of the expert panel and three rounds of the Delphi Method, a set of essential elements emerged. In the first round, Questionnaire One began the exploration with the identification of 13 categories that arose out of the panel discussion regarding essential elements. As the Delphi Method intended, the themes provided the critical foundation for the second and third rounds of the study.

In the second round, on Questionnaire Two, the panelists began to frame the level of importance of the essential elements. Although most of the panelists expressed difficulties in rank ordering the elements, they did so, and patterns began to evolve by observing the central tendencies of the rankings. Four distinct tiers of essential elements began to take shape and would hold in that pattern for the remainder of the study.

In the third round, with the use of a Likert Scale on Questionnaire Three, panelists finalized the decisions on importance of each item and for the most part kept the elements in the same tiers. Rather than ranking in order of importance, the respondents rated every item, with 1 being the most important and 5 being the least important.

While clear patterns emerged in each round, the essential elements in the first tier (project plan/schedule, financial management, goals and leadership) were tightly clustered around a median and mode of 1, representing the most important essential elements. Supporting comments for the first tier include responses such as, “Obvious!” when discussing goals setting and, “This item [financial management] deserves maximum attention.”

The range of ratings was much broader on the middle tiers. Panelists determined that the elements in the second tier (staffing, communication, and evaluation) held the next level of importance. While the median rating is 2, the range was 1 - 3 on Staffing and Communication and 1 - 5 for Evaluation. Comments in the discussion on this tier include the following, “Effective communication assures clarity

of intent and mutual understanding at the onset of any project and allows for continued clarity among all parties as the project continues, important!” and, “I think it is important to determine the staffing patterns and individuals presented to carry out the project are appropriate. If not the funder should take appropriate action to ensure that appropriate staff will be placed on the project.”

Constituency involvement, board support, collaboration and funder relationship comprise the third tier. Constituency involvement displays the broadest range, with modes of 1, 2, 3 and 4. Board Support, Collaboration and Funder Relationship have comparable ranges, 1-4 through 2 - 5, and the same median and mode, 3. Comments for the third tier include, “Important [constituency involvement] but not as important as other criterion” to “I don’t think it [collaboration] should be ignored as an option within any project...however, it is not as essential as other items.”

The fourth and last tier involves only two elements, technical support and sustainability. Both elements have the greatest variability and broad range, 2 – 6. Six represents the one panel member who rejected the item. The items are not least important so much as these two items are relative, dependent upon the project. Comments to support the rankings for the last tier include, “Clearly the importance of this item [sustainability] will be relative to the project” and “The importance of technical support depends on the individual project.”

Barriers to Implementation

Nine of the eleven themes—poor project plan/schedule, no goals, poor financial management, lack of leadership, lack of constituency involvement, poor staffing, lack of board support, poor evaluation planning, poor funder relationship—identified in round one of barriers to implementation were identified as mirror opposites to essential elements. Many panelists considered the barrier questionnaire redundant. The mirror image of the barriers may indicate that the absence of the elements confirms their *essential* quality.

The two barriers that were not opposite reflections of essential elements may represent broader organizational issues. The first, lack of organizational capacity, had a median and mode of 1. The range was 1 – 4 with a strong cluster toward 1. More than half the panel indicated this element could be considered a strong barrier not only to implementation but also to the organization as a whole. One panelist reflected on organizational capacity with the following comment, “Being able to do the project remains a big problem for many organizations that receive grant money.” A second comment on capacity echoes the same sentiment and confirms the concern of most of the panel, “This element [organizational capacity] signals the ‘chasing of funds.’ It would represent a serious barrier to implementation, but may also be difficult for a funder to identify prior to the awarding stage.” These comments on organizational capacity represent a common discussion amongst the panelists. A comment from a panelist summarizes the overall concern: “What I suggest is other management and

capacity-building support for the nonprofit should be provided to strengthen its overall work.”

The second barrier to address broader issues within the organization is project impact naiveté. Project impact naiveté questions the organization’s ability to comprehend the potential impact of the project or the necessary time frame for the project to reach full potential. Although it appears to be an issue, the panel has indicated it is not as important as organizational capacity. Both of these barriers may also be affected by the context or type of grant. Dependent on the nature of the grant program, the inability of the organization to understand the impact may truly create a barrier to implementation. Similarly, one panelist warned, “If the project is overly ambitious or naive about time to take to attain success, this is a red flag.”

The movement of some elements in the level of importance and supporting comments suggest that the exchange of comments in each round did influence later judgments. In essence, the process worked to draw upon the wisdom and knowledge of each panelist and the group as a whole.

Findings and the Literature

The literature on the status of the nonprofit sector and grantmaking indicate that the sector has and continues to face and overcome challenges, all the while seeking opportunities to make the best of the current times to expand and grow. These opportunities are explored while embracing the overall mission of the sector: to reach and serve individuals and impact the public good.

Expansion and growth are adaptable to the best practice of all sectors. This study attempts to draw and build on the expertise of leaders in the nonprofit sector and the field of project management to develop a model to enhance the management of grant activity. The intended result is to create a model that can assist nonprofit organizations in the implementation of their funded grant that will meet the promises made to a funder and ultimately a constituency.

Although the nonprofit literature does not abound with grant management suggestions, one book does provide some insight. *Grant Winner's Toolkit: Project Management and Evaluation*, authored by Quick and New (2000), offers practical advice to practitioners defining the following first steps:

Once the Project Director has the basics (the mission, the goals and objectives, the time line, and the budget), it is time to read carefully the project narrative or project description or project plan; it can be called many things. Here the Project Director picks up detail and nuance. The interaction of components becomes clear. (p.114)

These first steps, outlined by Quick and New, receive empirical confirmation from this study's first tier—project plan/schedule, financial management, goals and leadership.

In addition, the current study brings to light an approach that draws from the private sector and enhances the nonprofit sector. Parallels can be drawn from the results of this study and project management literature. For example, the literature

suggests grant/project practice in the nonprofit sector, formalized or not, is drawn on the life cycle of a project: conceptualizing, planning, executing and eventually terminating the project. The comments shared back and forth through the process of the Delphi Method were able to confirm a process involving the cultivation of an idea, planning, financing, involving staff and stakeholders, and measuring the outcomes.

Several of the findings from the study compare to those in Pinto and Slevin's (1988) *Critical Success Factors in Effective Project Implementation*. As indicated in the literature review, Pinto and Slevin developed a ten-factor model of project management and applied it to the manufacturing engineering setting. Their model presented key factors found to be critical to project success. They determined that over 61 percent of a project's success could be determined by the ten key factors. After defining the key behaviors, Pinto and Slevin subdimensionalized the factors into strategic and tactical behaviors. The authors operationalized strategy as the process of deciding overall organizational objectives and tactics as the deployment of resources. Both are vital to the success of the project but require different applications in the project life cycle. The first three factors (mission, top management support, and schedule) are related to early planning of the implementation, and the remaining seven (client consultation, personnel, technical task, client acceptance, monitoring and feedback, communication, and troubleshooting) are related to action or actual process of the implementation. The factors involved in early planning are considered strategic and the action factors are labeled tactical behaviors.

The 13 essential elements identified by the Delphi Method do parallel some of the critical factors in the Pinto and Slevin study. The first tier (leadership, financial management, goals, and project plan/schedule) parallels the early planning /strategic phase as listed above. Each of these essential elements reached the highest consensus, as both the median and modes ranked as 1, the most important.

In addition, the second tier (staffing, communication and evaluation) and third tier (constituency involvement, board support, collaboration and funder relationship) are similar to the tactical component of the Pinto and Slevin study, as each element focuses on the *action* of implementation or deployment of resources.

The final tier (technical support and sustainability) does not necessarily appear to parallel the model developed by Pinto and Slevin in the area of manufacturing. The elements may be specific to project management in the grant-funding and nonprofit arenas. For example, sustainability is not an issue in manufacturing projects, as the ultimate goal is to develop and implement the product line and then move on to the next product. In the nonprofit arena, the concept of continuation is not uncommon and it may or may not be an essential element for a specific type of grant (policy grants vs. program grants).

Finally, current trends in project management literature involve the transition from a single universal theory of project management being applied to all projects to project classification and adaptation (Dvir et al., 1998). In their article entitled, *In Search of Project Classification: A Non-universal Approach to Project Success Factors*, Dvir et al. conclude the list of project success factors is dependent upon the

project type. Project-specific approaches such as the elements in the final tier allow an organization to adapt the skills and tools necessary to successfully complete the distinct outcomes of their unique project no matter what the context of the project. The following panelists' comments confirm the variability of project specific activity; "Clearly the importance of this item [sustainability] will be relative to the project" and "The importance of technical support depends on the individual project."

A comparison of the two previously cited models illustrates the evolution of an articulated model that may better define and guide the grant implementation process from the beginning of the project to the end. See Table 13 for the illustration.

Implications for Practitioners

Changing the context of how funders think and interact with their grantees may be the first implication of these findings. One fourth of the panelists expressed appreciation for participation in the study, as it has already changed their way of thinking and how they look at projects and communicate with grantseekers. One panelist commented, "Funny thing is, I've already reworked my standard spiel about grant projects as a result of doing the survey, so this thinking has been very good for me, too."

Table 13

Study Comparisons

<i>Grant Winner's Toolkit: Project Management and Evaluation Quick and New</i>	<i>Critical Success Factors in Effective Project Implementation Pinto and Slevin</i>	<u>Study Results</u>
Basics	Strategy	Tier 1
▪ Mission	▪ Mission	▪ Goals
▪ Goals and Objectives		▪ Financial management
▪ Budget		▪ Project plan/schedule
▪ Timeline	▪ Schedule	▪ Leadership
	▪ Top Administrative Support	
	Tactics	Tier 2
	▪ Personnel	▪ Staffing
	▪ Communication	▪ Communication
	▪ Monitoring and feedback	▪ Evaluation
	▪ Client consultation	Tier 3
	▪ Client acceptance	▪ Constituency Involvement
		▪ Board Support
		▪ Collaboration
		▪ Funder Relationship
	▪ Troubleshooting	Tier 4
	▪ Technical task	▪ Technical Support
		▪ Sustainability

As highlighted in the grantmaking section of the literature review, the most challenging part of the relationship between the funder and seeker is management of the grant once it is awarded. Orosz (2002) writes that management strategy tends to fall into four categories. The first, “fire and forget,” leaves the grantee completely alone after receiving the award. The second, “full immersion,” is the complete opposite of the first and may be worse for the successful outcomes of the grant with too much foundation involvement. The third, “ignoring the good kid,” minimizes the time spent with a project that is moving along without a hitch as opposed to the problem program which gets all the attention. The final category, “avoiding the average,” offers little support to the project that is neither outstanding nor problematic. Perhaps a fifth category “implementers” could be added—incorporating a model management plan.

Building upon the results of the study, the collective wisdom of the expert panel and the models presented in the Pinto and Slevin’s (1988) research, this new model might be helpful for current practitioners. Based on the division of a planning phase (strategic elements) and an implementation/action phase (tactical elements), a guide to thinking toward implementation is demonstrated in Figure 51.

The development of a model may be helpful by bringing to life the concepts of strategic and tactical components of a project. First, an organization must be sure to have a plan and timeline, assemble the financial management, set the goals and make sure that the appropriate leadership is in place to initiate the grant project and move it

forward. Each of these strategies will build the foundation for a thought-filled approach to implementation.

Next, the organization should simultaneously address the tactical steps to keep the initiated project moving forward. Questions leaders should ask themselves include: Is there enough staff to respond to the articulated goals? Does the staff have the correct skills, and knowledge for the project? At the same time, is there a communication system in place? Is information reaching all the impacted parties? Is there a mechanism to monitor daily activities as well as impact on the project deliverables? Is the constituency the grant is aimed to receive, involved in the outcomes of the project? Is the board participating, observing, supporting and knowledgeable of the grant activity? Are other partners participating and knowledgeable of the activity? Does the organization need the assistance of the organizations collaborators? Is the organization in communication with the funder? Is the funder knowledgeable about the challenges and positive outcomes from the grant? Does the organization need assistance from the funder?

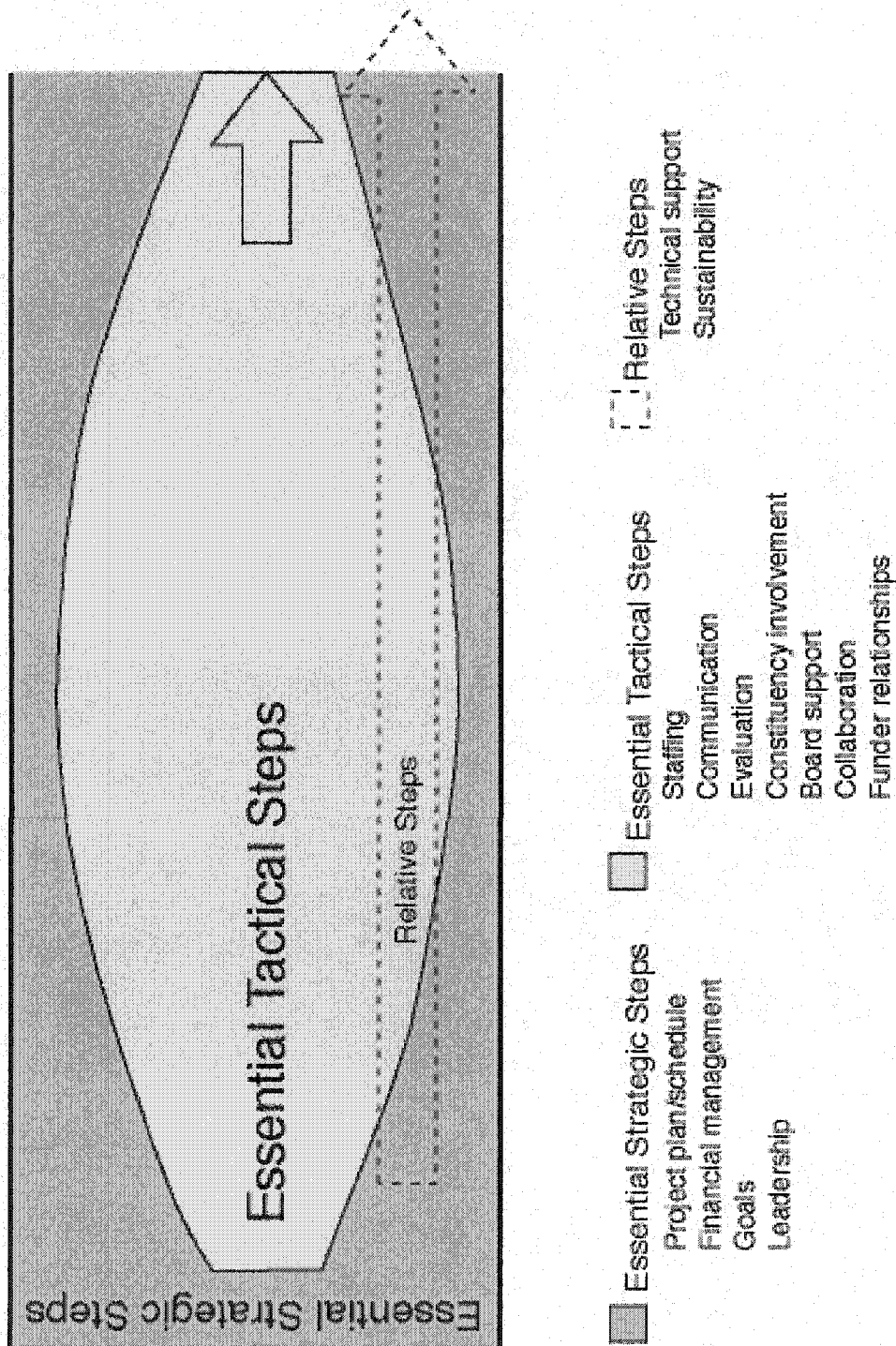


Figure 51. Implementation Model

Some grant projects may need to seek specific technical assistance from others outside the scope of the organization. Leaders may ask themselves, is the necessary assistance available for the specific project? Finally, some grant projects may require continued support to sustain the life of the project. Leaders should ask, what will the organization require to extend the life of the activity?

A model may be helpful to nonprofit administrators in the following three ways:

(1) nonprofit administrators may be able to adopt more efficient grant management methods to meet the proposed goals and objectives by understanding identified essential elements and how they would apply to their specific grant-funded program; (2) nonprofit organizations may become better stewards of foundation or federal funds by effective and efficient management of the grant activity; and (3) nonprofits may demonstrate a stronger level of organization in the development and writing of future grants.

A model could also assist funders in communicating in a common language between funders and seekers. A shared lexicon toward implementation may provide overall efficiencies, enhance project outcomes, and serve the organization and ultimate mission of the foundation. This could result in a grant program that has a greater impact on the specified target population. Eventually, a fine-tuned, empirically based model may glean a set of criteria to be used by both seekers and funders to estimate and develop the capacity of the organization to implement the grant-funded project.

In addition to implications for current nonprofit practitioners, there are implications for education and training for future practitioners. The findings of the study could be generalized to enhance curriculum in nonprofit educational programs. In particular, the concepts of strategic and tactical elements may be distinguished to provide a more comprehensive framework toward capacity building. There is some sense that nonprofit education curricula may focus on tactical components, yet panelists emphasized the importance of having strategic components in place first. For example, the elements from the strategic tier (project planning/schedule, goals, leadership, and financial management) infused in the curriculum may assist future nonprofit leaders with different approaches to leading an organization and its projects.

Suggestions for Future Research

Several research questions emerged from this study, which, if researched further, would address the study's limitations and continue to expand the body of knowledge in this area. First, the lexicon of the implementation process for grant-funded projects developed in this study could be confirmed and/or expanded so all impacted parties (foundations, nonprofit administrators, and government agencies) share a common language. Initial studies could explore the similarities and differences in the language used by different groups, and lead to the development of a common set of definitions.

With a common lexicon, the next research study would be to confirm the essential elements, identified by this study of grantmakers, with practitioners. Do

grant administrators perceive the same elements essential to an implementation process? What differences of interpretations exist between the two main groups? What are the similarities? A replication of the Delphi Method could be conducted and the results of the studies could be compared. The comparison could be used to confirm the similarities and differences between the two groups' perceptions and enhance the earlier model to better define and hone a process.

Once the model is refined based on the two different populations, grantseekers and grantmakers, it should be tested to see if it actually predicts effective implementation. The replication of the Pinto and Slevin (1988) study, *Critical Success Factors in Effective Project Implementation*, would assist the exploration. Pinto and Slevin developed a 100-item instrument to measure the relative level of each of their identified critical success factors. The critical success factors were then assessed in terms of their overall contribution to project success, verifying the importance of each factor using a multiple regression. The replication of the Pinto and Slevin study could provide the empirical basis for a sound model developed specifically for the nonprofit world.

Conclusion

This purpose of this study was to identify the necessary components of a grant project/program implementation process. Two research questions were addressed. The primary question was: What are the essential elements of an implementation

process for grant-funded nonprofit projects/programs. A second supporting question was: What are the barriers to implementation?

The expert panel comprised 12 members representing 12 distinct nonprofit organizations: ten came from foundations and two came from management service organizations (MSO). The diversity of the panel range included geographic locations, assets, annual grant spending, geographic focus, field of interests, and size of staff.

This diverse panel shared its expert opinions by responding to three distinct rounds of a conventional Delphi Method. In the first round the panelists identified both the essential elements and barriers to implementation. The second round resulted in the ranking of the elements and barriers, and the final round concluded with a specific rating. The three rounds of activity produced 13 essential elements and 11 barriers to implementation. The thirteen essential elements include the following: Board Support, Collaboration Communication, Constituency Involvement, Evaluation, Financial Management, Funder Relationship, Goals, Leadership, Project Plan/Schedule, Staffing, Sustainability and Technical Support. In addition, the same three rounds created the following 11 barriers to implementation: Lack of board support, Lack of constituency involvement, Poor evaluation planning, Poor financial management, Poor or non-existent funder relationship, Lack of goals, Lack of/or change in leadership, Project impact naiveté, Unclear organizational commitment/Capacity, Poor project planning/scheduling, Staffing Problems. Nine of the eleven barriers identified in round one of barriers to implementation were

identified as mirror opposites to essential elements. The mirror image of the barriers may indicate that the absence of the elements confirms their *essential* quality.

The results of the study in combination with strategic and tactical concepts of project management resulted in the design of a model for implementing grant-funded projects in nonprofit organizations. First, an organization must be sure to have a plan and timeline, assemble the financial management, set the goals and make sure that the appropriate leadership is in place to initiate the grant project and move it forward. Each of these strategies will build the foundation for a thought-filled approach to implementation. Next, the organization should simultaneously address the tactical steps to keep the initiated project moving forward. These action steps include staffing, communication internally and externally, evaluation of the ongoing project and outcomes, involvement of the constituency(ies) involved, board involvement and support, collaboration with other organizations, and continued attention to the relationship with the funder.

The final elements are relative to certain grant-funded projects. Some projects may require consideration of the final two elements and some may not. The two additional elements may take on a strategic and perhaps tactical role dependent on the nature of the project. If the project requires continuation, the element involving sustainability becomes essential and strategy to build sustainability should be included. In another cases, some projects may require special consultation such as technical support or subject matter experts. This element then becomes essential to the grant project.

Although the panelists never met in the same room to discuss their perceptions and opinions, the use of the Delphi Method allowed experts from different geographical locations to interact and together create an understanding of mutual concerns and the identification of a set of essential elements. The movement of some elements in the level of importance and supporting comments suggests that the exchange of ideas in each round did influence later judgments. For example, the comments surrounding the Funder Relationships essential element were predominant in the first round. However, by the end of the process through the exchange of opinions via the Delphi Method, Funder Relationships maintained the status as essential but declined in the level of importance. Some differences remained constant. For example, although all panelists thought evaluation to be important, the rankings persistently ranged from most important to least.

In essence, the process worked to draw upon the wisdom and knowledge of a distinguished and diverse group of experts to identify what is essential for grant implementation. The collective wisdom and knowledge of the panel of experts provided the foundation for a model to assist executive directors, program managers, and members of the board to meet the proposed goals and objectives of a grant, become better stewards of the foundation or federal dollar through effective and efficient management, and become better planners and seekers of grant funding. In addition, funders may find a process to encourage overall efficiencies and project outcomes. Both groups could glean a set of criteria to estimate the capacity of the organization to implement the grant, which could lead to more capable organizations

within the nonprofit sector. More capable organizations further the ideal that “nonprofit organizations embody, and therefore help to nurture and sustain, a crucial national value emphasizing individual initiative in the public good” (Salamon, 2002 p.11).

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A
Operational Definitions

Definition of Key Terms/Constructs

For the purpose of this study the following terms will be defined as follows:

Foundation – Approximately 50 thousand foundations in the country provide grants.

Foundations typically fall into five categories:

1. Community - are the fastest growing type of foundation. The purpose of the grants provided by the foundation is to focus on local needs.
2. National General Purpose - number less than 100 in the nation. Grants from these nationally known foundations focus on national needs with set priorities. The projects are unique, cost effective research models or demonstration projects.
3. Special Purpose - also sponsor research or demonstration projects but only in a specific subject area as described by the mission of the foundation.
4. Family - provide grants that represent values and interests of the family members memorialized by the creation of the foundation. and
5. Corporate - follow the same guidelines as all other type of foundations. They may often be restricted to geographic areas where the corporation has a home or regional offices. Corporate Foundations may also involve the volunteer services of the employees or matching funds of employee donations.

Funder – organization, foundation or government, that provides fiscal support for a project through a complex proposal system.

Grant-funded -a program or project receiving fiscal support from a foundation through an application process for a program or project.

Implementation Process - the goals of the project are set into motion. The necessary materials, human resources, and other necessary resources are organized to carry out the required objectives to meet the goals.

Nonprofit Organization - even though there are a variety of different types, all of them have a basic set of attributes. Each nonprofit is formally constituted, private, self-governing, not dedicated to producing profits, voluntary, and providing public service (Salamon, 1992). There are four general categories of nonprofit organizations:

1. Religious organization;
2. Fund raising agencies - these organizations collect funds and channel financial resources to other nonprofit organizations such as the United Way;
3. Member-serving organizations - these organizations service their immediate members rather than the community at large such as professional associations, labor unions, cooperatives; and
4. Public-benefit organizations -these organizations exist to serve others, provide goods and services, information or advocacy such as, education and cultural institutions, hospitals, nursing homes, day care centers, and social welfare agencies.

Project – a project is an organization of people dedicated to a specific purpose or objective. Many projects generally involve large, expensive, unique, or high risk undertakings which have to be completed by a certain date, for a certain amount of money, within some expected level of performance. The project is usually targeted for use by a client or constituency, either internal or external to the organization and its project team.

Project Management – the process of facilitating a project to get the work done on time, within budget and according to the prescribed specifications.

Seeker - a nonprofit organization accessing alternative funding for the organization through a proscribed grant process.

APPENDIX B

Protocol Clearance from the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board

WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY



Centennial
1903-2003 Celebration

Human Subjects Institutional Review Board

Date: May 23, 2002

To: Barbara Liggett, Principal Investigator
Margaret Bernhard, Student Investigator for dissertation

From: Mary Lagerwey, Chair

Mary Lagerwey

Re: HSIRB Project Number 02-05-04

This letter will serve as confirmation that your research project entitled "The Study of the Essential Elements of an Implementation Process for Grant-Funded Programs in Nonprofit Organizations" has been **approved** under the **exempt** category of review by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board. The conditions and duration of this approval are specified in the Policies of Western Michigan University. You may now begin to implement the research as described in the application.

Please note that you may **only** conduct this research exactly in the form it was approved. You must seek specific board approval for any changes in this project. You must also seek reapproval if the project extends beyond the termination date noted below. In addition if there are any unanticipated adverse reactions or unanticipated events associated with the conduct of this research, you should immediately suspend the project and contact the Chair of the HSIRB for consultation.

The Board wishes you success in the pursuit of your research goals.

Approval Termination: May 23, 2003

Walwood Hall, Kalamazoo MI 49008-5456
PHONE: (616) 387-8293 FAX: (616) 387-8276

APPENDIX C

Questionnaire One

Hello

Thank you for agreeing to participate in the Delphi process to identify the essential elements of an implementation process for Grant Funded Projects/Programs in Nonprofit Organizations. Your insight and expertise will be most helpful in establishing the key components of grant implementation leading to a comprehensive implementation process.

Specifically, I am asking you as a program officer to identify essential elements you use that contributed to the management and successful completion of the project you were involved in. Any examples you would like to offer would also be helpful.

Your input and results of this process will contribute to the development of an implementation model for nonprofit administrators and program officers to use to more efficiently and effectively implement grants.

Attached is an email questionnaire designed to seek your assistance with this question. I am asking you to respond to the email and return by email attachment on or before **September 25** for the first analysis. In addition, please keep a copy of your electronic transmission in case the material is lost in transmission.

A summation of all panel members input will be provided on or around October 1 for your next level of participation.

If you need clarification on the questionnaire or other issues related to the study, I can be reached at the following numbers

Email: margaret.bernhard@wmich.edu
Office Phone: (616) 387-4202
Home Phone: (616) 327-6921
Cell Phone: (616) 352-6493

Thank you for your generous offer to participate. I look forward to working with you and sharing the results.

Questionnaire #1

Based on all of your professional experience as either as a program officer with oversight of a grant project(s); consider grant-funded projects you have been involved with from origination to termination;

- A. What essential elements were used that contributed to the management and successful completion of the project?

Please number your elements and list any examples you may have after the element.

Please use as many pages as necessary to list your responses.

Essential Elements and Examples

B. What essential elements were missing that caused barriers to implementation?

Missing Essential Elements and Examples

APPENDIX D

Questionnaire Two – Essential Elements

Hello

Attached is the second questionnaire in the Delphi Study entitled, the **Study of the Essential Elements of an Implementation Process for Grant-Funded Projects/Programs in Nonprofit Organizations.**

Attached are the following items:

- 1. Questionnaire Two - Parts A and B
- 2. Summaries from Questionnaire One - Parts A and B, both parts include a series of prominent themes which are the results of your input and can be used as a reference tool.

Please respond in the following ways:

1. Review items 1-13 on Questionnaire Two Part-A and items 1-12 on Questionnaire Two-Part B.
2. Accept or reject the items listed in the Questionnaire.
3. Please comment (expressing agreement, disagreement or clarification) on inclusion of the item on the list.
4. If you deem necessary, amend the description of the item.
5. Please rank order each item with 1 being most important and the last number being least important.

Note: If necessary use the Summaries of Comments from Questionnaire One-Part A and B as a reference to review comments contributing to the theme.

I am asking you to respond to the email and return by email attachment on or before **October 30, 2002**. In addition, please keep a copy of your electronic transmission in case the material is lost in transmission.

If you need clarification on the questionnaire or other issues related to the study, I can be reached at the following numbers

Email: margaret.bernhard@wmich.edu
Office Phone: (616) 387-4202
Home Phone: (616) 327-6921
Cell Phone: (616) 806-4843

Thank you for your generous offer to participate. I look forward to sharing the next set of results with you.

Questionnaire #2 - Part A

Essential Elements

Listed below are the 13 items that reflect common themes as a result of the panel input. These common themes are the potential essential elements for an implementation plan for grant funded nonprofit organization.

Please respond in the following ways.

1. Review items 1-13 on *Questionnaire Two Part-A*.
2. Accept or reject the items listed in the Questionnaire.
3. Please comment (expressing agreement, disagreement or clarification) on inclusion of the item on the list.
4. If you deem necessary, amend the description of the item.
5. Please rank order each item with 1 being most important and the last number being least important.

Note: For additional clarification, use the *Summaries of Comments from Questionnaire One - Part A* as a reference to review comments contributing to the theme.

1. BOARD SUPPORT

Description: Willingness of the board of the nonprofit organizations to provide the resources and authority for project success

_____ Accept **Board Support** as an essential element

_____ Reject **Board Support** as an essential element

Comment:

Ranking:

2. COLLABORATION

Description: Alliances with "mission-compatible" organizations to share information, responsibility, workload, expertise, and skills.

_____ **Accept** **Collaboration** as an essential element

_____ **Reject** **Collaboration** as an essential element

Comment:

Ranking:

3. COMMUNICATION

Description: Ability to converse and stay connected with funders and constituents.

_____ **Accept** **Communication** as an essential element

_____ **Reject** **Communication** as an essential element

Comment:

Ranking:

4. CONSTITUENCY INVOLVEMENT

Description: Active listening, participation, and support with all impacted parties.

_____ Accept **Consistency Involvement** as an essential element

_____ Reject **Consistency Involvement** as an essential element

Comment:

Ranking:

5. EVALUATION

Description: Appropriate data collection and reporting system, ongoing assessment for program improvement, and ability to report success or lack of success

_____ Accept **Evaluation** as an essential element

_____ Reject **Evaluation** as an essential element

Comment:

Ranking:

6. FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

Description: Development of project budget, strategic planning for flexibility, contingency, and alternative funding, and demonstration of good stewardship

_____Accept **Financial Management** as an essential element

_____Reject **Financial Management** as an essential element

Comment:

Ranking:

7. RELATIONSHIP WITH FUNDER

Description: Ongoing link with funder to apprise of progress, share information, address obstacles, and seek overall advise and counsel.

_____Accept **Relationship with Funder** as an essential element

_____Reject **Relationship with Funder** as an essential element

Comment:

Ranking:

8. GOALS

Description: Clearly defined direction and measurement of project activity.

_____Accept **Goals** as an essential element

_____Reject **Goals** as an essential element

Comment:

Ranking:

9. LEADERSHIP

Description: Provide guidance and direction to the project and involved staff and constituents, strategic political sense, stewardship and continuity over the life of the project.

_____Accept **Leadership** as an essential element

_____Reject **Leadership** as an essential element

Comment:

Ranking:

10. PROJECT PLAN/SCHEDULE

Description: Detailed description, strategy and timelines of the individual action steps necessary to complete the project.

_____ Accept **Project Plan/Schedule** as an essential element

_____ Reject **Project Plan/Schedule** as an essential element

Comment:

Ranking:

11. STAFFING

Description: Recruitment, selection and training of the appropriate personnel to participate and contribute to the project

_____ Accept **Staffing** as an essential element

_____ Reject **Staffing** as an essential element

Comment:

Ranking:

12. SUSTAINABILITY

Description: Ability of the project to maintain impact over the life cycle of the project and beyond

_____ Accept **Sustainability** as an essential element

_____ Reject **Sustainability** as an essential element

Comment:

Ranking:

13. TECHNICAL SUPPORT

Description: Accessibility to required expertise (consultant, funder, technology) to address concerns and overcome obstacle to complete the project.

_____ Accept **Technical Support** as an essential element

_____ Reject **Technical Support** as an essential element

Comment:

Ranking:

14. OTHER?

Suggestions of essential elements missed on the first questionnaire.

APPENDIX E

Summary Chart – Essential Elements

SUMMARY OF COMMENTS
QUESTIONNAIRE ONE-Part A
(for reference with Questionnaire Two)

Based on the responses from the panel to the question (*What essential elements were used that contributed to the management and successful completion of the project?*), the following 13 themes have emerged.

BOARD SUPPORT	COLLABORATION
<p>Good governance/stewardship. Engaged, committed boards have been essential. Alternatively, a project can really succeed when there's a competent, enthusiastic, tireless advisory committee that is well used by project leadership. I'm not a big fan of honorary advisory committees, though they can be of use politically.</p> <p>Board commitment and understanding</p> <p>Board of Directors should be aware of and formally support the intent and objectives of the grant.</p> <p>a Board of Directors that is solidly behind the project</p> <p>Without strong leadership, the best-conceived project can falter when it runs up against a problem, as all projects inevitably do at some point. The board leads by providing a strong framework (in terms of policy, programs, finances) that supports and guides the staff in their work.</p> <p>Strong support for project must exist within organization's own board and staff.</p>	<p>Partnering- the use of partner organizations or intermediary to help implement a project. This goes back to staffing. Sometimes it makes sense for an organization to build a collaborative partnership with an agency that has expertise in a certain area or has entire into a community or population that the lead agency wants to serve.</p> <p>Multiple funding partners. In general, when we co-fund, the projects have been more successful. It is wise to share the funding responsibility and, if there's a good result, to share the pleasure of having helped. This is not to say that when we fund alone there cannot also be big success.</p> <p>Great use of a network for the exchange of information, mutual skills building and sharing. My foundation is process oriented & interested in long-term field building. Time and again, we have seen the importance of networks to give participating professionals a strong sense of community, collegiality and family.</p> <p>Collaboration with mission-compatible organizations prior to the grant submission · Collaborations are based on existing relationships and commitment to shared vision/mission versus driven by funding</p> <p>Thorough knowledge of problem and best practices/programs · Connected with supportive professional networks where program best practice information is readily available</p> <p>The Project is not dependent solely on the initial OR continuation funding of any ONE funder. I believe grant projects that posses a variety of funding participants, although often more difficult to manage with reports, meetings, etc. lead to a more diverse funding platform and ultimately increase the opportunity for meeting start up objectives AND subsequent support funding. I also recommend both public and private sector involvement whenever possible.</p>

COMMUNICATION	CONSISTUENCY INVOLVEMENT
<p>Excellent communication with the Foundation. Our business is first and foremost about relationships. By this, I don't mean excessive communication .</p> <p>Great use of a network for the exchange of information, mutual skills building and sharing. My foundation is process oriented & interested in long-term field building. Time and again, we have seen the importance of networks to give participating professionals a strong sense of community, collegiality and family.</p> <p>Need a "check and adjust" process built into the program to periodically review whether the project is still relevant to the population served.</p> <p>A well-established channel to communicate</p> <p>Program Oversight - Required reports – generally once per year. Interim report for multi year due at end of 3rd quarter Periodic updates – either through brief conference calls or e-mailed informal reports. Frequency depends on grantee and nature of project.</p> <p>Open Communication must be established early and maintained on a constant (preferably monthly basis) throughout the life of the grant between an identified Grantee Staff Representative, preferably an Executive Level Staff Member serving as the "Project Director" and an identified Grantor Staff Representative. This communication must initially identify and regularly monitor mutual expectations regarding grant purpose/impact, timeframes and financial requirements. I would recommend a personal relationship be established leading to a minimum of monthly discussions followed by a minimum of written quarterly reports and face to face interaction as appropriate.</p> <p>regular written reports updating stakeholders on project developments</p> <p>Appropriate marketing to targeted customers, referral sources, donor sources</p>	<p>Third party validation of project plan and goals. This can include active participation and support in the planning process from those being served, help from other people who have successfully conducted similar projects, or even very active participation from a diverse board. This ensures that nothing "falls through the cracks" during the planning process.</p> <p>Manageable ways for potential applicants to ask questions about the grant program. · Example: We found that Bidder's Conferences-type sessions, for example, held in convenient locations with free parking, offered several times, perhaps in the morning, late afternoon or an early evening on different days, maximized participation at the sessions. These sessions helped to reduce the number of calls and daily interruptions for staff.</p> <p>Clear audiences for a dissemination plan</p>

EVALUATION	FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT
<p>Evaluation- I think this is a big missing piece for a lot of organizations. There needs to be a recasting of what is evaluation. It's a learning tool and a guide for program improvement. I have found that organizations that developed their programs and simultaneously think about and plan an evaluation are much more successful. It requires the staff to be purposeful about their work and to pay attention to process as well as to the outcomes of the service delivery.</p>	<p>Sound financial management. The implementing agency has to be on top of the numbers.</p>
<p>Evaluation and management information system design, collection of baseline data</p>	<p>A well thought out program budget that takes into consideration a broad range of possible eventualities or opportunities. A program plan and budget need to be focused and have their "eye on the prize" but also need to be flexible enough to take advantage of opportunities that may arise.</p>
<p>Evaluation criteria for judging successful/failure</p>	<p>Diversification of funding. If one (or the only funder) pulls out or reduces support, the entire project collapses.</p>
<p>Appropriate data collection/reporting system developed prior to project initiation, with clarity as to the purpose/use of each data element requested.</p>	<p>A plan for scaling back if all funding not received;</p>
<p>Clarity on how the outcome of the grant is to be evaluated and by whom</p>	<p>Financial Oversight</p>
<p>Clarity on how the outcome of the grant is to be evaluated and by whom</p>	<p>Adequate Grant Funding & Appropriate Distribution Schedule from Grantor to Grantee. In the preparation of the grant significant care and consideration must be given to the overall financial requirements necessary to fulfill the objectives of the project along with clearly identified allocation time-frames. Priority needs to be given in the preparation of the case to defend financial needs of the project. Financial negotiations with grantor must not compromise the success of the grant objectives.</p>
<p>Ability to declare lack of success/failure</p>	<p>Adequate internal detailed budget</p>

RELATIONSHIP WITH FUNDER	GOALS
<p>Trust is also part of this work & it is linked to communication. When we give a grant, to a great extent we're also saying that we trust the leadership, governance and staff to use the money and get on with the planned work. They really need to communicate with us: a) when there's a problem at a high level that they'd like our advice, b) when they want our opinion, advice or counsel, or c) when a report is due or they want something simple like a grant period extension or grant increase.</p> <p>Ongoing contact/relationship with funding sources to apprise of progress, needed revisions in original proposal.</p> <p>Spirit of true cooperation between funder and grantee that starts with the initial discussions about the possibility of funding and continues throughout the course of the grant. Both parties need to function together to ensure the achievement of objectives.</p> <p>Funder knowledge of the full scope of activities/projects of the grantee organization.</p> <p>Understanding and acknowledgment of the Grantor's Interest's in funding the project. Does the grantor seek public recognition, community influence, good will and/or a combination of the above.</p> <p>Open Communication must be established early and maintained on a constant (preferably monthly basis) throughout the life of the grant between an identified Grantee Staff Representative, preferably an Executive Level Staff Member serving as the "Project Director" and an identified Grantor Staff Representative.</p> <p>Regular follow-up from the funder, as well as the ability of the funder to offer suggestions to overcome the inevitable barriers that will arise before the project is implemented</p> <p>The foundation giving the grant is more likely to support a successful project if they: know enough about the project to offer cogent and constructive criticism of the proposal; support the organization, not just the project, and; help the grantee clarify its goals and strategies.</p> <p>Excellent communication with the Foundation. Our business is first and foremost about relationships. By this, I don't mean excessive communication. It need not be like Shirley McLean in "Terms of Endearment" climbing into her daughter's crib. The grantee has to have a sense of balance – when is it really critical or vital to contact the funder</p>	<p>Clearly stated goals and outcomes for the project. Otherwise, neither the funder nor the nonprofit know when a project is done and whether or not it was successful.</p> <p>Project goals need to be "chunked" to manageable pieces. If a project is organized in phases where each phase creates an outcome that meets the organization mission then if something happens in the future (e.g., funder stops supporting the project), all of the effort put into the project up to that point isn't wasted.</p> <p>Clearly defined philosophy and/or intent for providing grant funding.</p> <p>Clear objectives</p> <p>Specific outcomes and products expected at each phase of the project</p> <p>Purpose of the grant is consistent with the mission of the grantee and the work will benefit both parties. Objectives of the grant will impact positively on the grantee's mission. Clear objectives that are honestly discussed before the grant is made.</p> <p>Without clear goals, it is difficult for the organization to focus or measure its efforts.</p>

LEADERSHIP	PROJECT PLAN/SCHEDULE
<p>Continuity of leadership. I have seen good projects ruined when there is a leadership transition, at the level of key project staff, the CEO or even when there's a big change in the board. Continuity is essential.</p> <p>Sound political sense, with a small "p." This goes back to leadership – projects are more successful when a leader knows how to bring others to the table to enhance a project, knows how to deal wisely with competitors or critics, and, as needed, knows how to navigate the halls of government too.</p> <p>Organization uses best practices in the management of their organization · Due diligence</p> <p>The organization receiving the grant is more likely to succeed if it has strong leadership</p> <p>Without strong leadership, the best-conceived project can falter when it runs up against a problem, as all projects inevitably do at some point.</p>	<p>A well thought out program plan, which becomes the project proposal. "Proposal writing is program planning." Sometimes it's helpful for Foundation staff to be involved at this stage, sometimes not. I cannot say that our involvement is directly linked to program success. But have an excellent program plan is essential.</p> <p>Planning by the organization prior to submission of the grant: Gantt Chart or timeline · Program integration into agency: predict and plan how any new program affects other programs, how they integrate together, and plan accordingly</p> <p>Work plan that is consistent with the nature of the grant. A detailed work plan with timelines and firm benchmarks is appropriate for a project where the grantee has significant control over when specific activities are to occur. When this control is lacking (as when the grant is in support of community organizing or public policy analysis and advocacy) the work plan needs to be more flexible to allow the grantee to respond in a timely fashion to opportunities and threats as they arise as well as to a changing external environment.</p> <p>Flexibility to make more than minor alterations in the work plan when experience indicates that a different approach will more significantly impact the grant's objectives. This is particularly important when the grant supports creative new approaches. "Tinkering" needs to be supported by both parties as the work progresses.</p> <p>Without a feasible strategy, the nonprofit can know exactly what it wants to accomplish, but have no clear path for getting there. This sounds obvious but a nonprofit can get swept up by the urgency of what it is trying to achieve, and not think through the steps for getting there.</p> <p>Recognition that start-up time generally takes longer than anticipated, especially when the grantee must hire new staff for the grant's activities.</p>

STAFFING	SUSTAINABILITY
<p>Staffing (expertise and time) – I think it is important to note how organizations are proposing to staff a project. Sometime programs try to "save" on staffing costs by using part-time staff or by stretching a staff person's time across many projects. This results in the project being compromised (program implementation lags, goals are not met, timelines are not adhered to). Organizations should staff projects appropriately and be able to justify the roles and responsibilities of each staff person assigned to a project.</p> <p>Appropriate staffing means time commitment to the program as well as assigning staff that have the content knowledge and expertise to implement the program.</p> <p>All staff (including consultants) in place before project began. If not in place, the project was generally significantly delayed while staff or consultants selected, leading to loss of momentum among project participants and renegotiations with funders on terms of financial support.</p> <p>Hiring of qualified staff: appropriate credentials/experience · Adequate staffing</p> <p>Adequate staffing</p>	<p>Sustainability plan including incremental implementation throughout the grant</p>

TECHNICAL SUPPORT

Have a strong knowledge base supporting the project. In other words, use best practice information, research, and other knowledge to ensure that the underlying assumptions of the project are accurate, the outcomes are manageable, and the delivery of the project is "best in class."

Research: ensure the solution truly impacts the problem identified · Thorough knowledge of problem and best practices/programs · Connected with supportive professional networks where program best practice information is readily available

Regular follow-up from the funder, as well as the ability of the funder to offer suggestions to overcome the inevitable barriers that will arise before the project is implemented

APPENDIX F

Questionnaire Two – Barriers to Implementation

Questionnaire #2 - Part B

Essential Elements

Listed below are the 12 items that reflect common themes as a result of the panel input. These common themes are the potential essential elements for an implementation plan for grant funded nonprofit organization.

Please respond in the following ways.

1. Review items 1-12 on *Questionnaire Two-Part B*.
2. Accept or reject the items listed in the Questionnaire.
3. Please comment (expressing agreement, disagreement or clarification) on inclusion of the item on the list.
4. If you deem necessary, amend the description of the item.
5. Please rank order each item with 1 being most important and the last number being least important.

Note: For additional clarification, use the *Summaries of Comments from Questionnaire One - Part B* as a reference to review comments contributing to the theme.

1. LACK OF BOARD SUPPORT

Description: The board did not support the proposal or outcomes of the project

_____ Accept **Lack of Board Support** as a barrier to implementation

_____ Reject **Lack of Board Support** as a barrier to implementation

Comment:

Ranking:

2. LACK OF CONSTITUENCY INVOLVEMENT

Description: Lack of involvement of all impacted parties.

_____ Accept **Lack of Constituency Involvement** as a barrier to implementation

_____ Reject **Lack of Constituency Involvement** as a barrier to implementation

Comment:

Ranking:

3. POOR EVALUATION PLANNING

☐

Description: Omission of evaluation planning or funding.

_____ Accept **Poor Evaluation Planning** as a barrier to implementation

_____ Reject **Poor Evaluation Planning** as a barrier to implementation

Comment:

Ranking:

4. POOR FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

Description: Poor fiscal management, unrealistic budgets, or inadequate funding.

_____ Accept **Poor Financial Management** as a barrier to implementation

_____ Reject **Poor Financial Management** as a barrier to implementation

Comment:

Ranking:

5. POOR OR NON-EXISTENT RELATIONSHIP WITH FUNDERS

Description: Lack of ongoing link with funder or over dependence on program officer

_____ Accept **Poor or Non-existent relationship with funders** as a barrier to implementation

_____ Reject **Poor or Non-existent relationship with funders** as a barrier to implementation

Comment:

Ranking:

6. LACK OF GOALS

Description: No clear goals, making progress (or the lack thereof) impossible to measure.

_____ Accept **Lack of Goals** as a barrier to implementation

_____ Reject **Lack of Goals** as a barrier to implementation

Comment:

Ranking:

7. LACK OF/OR CHANGE IN LEADERSHIP

Description: Poor management or administrative skills, inability to maneuver political arena, change in project leadership during the course of funding.

_____ Accept **Lack of/or change in leadership** as a barrier to implementation

_____ Reject **Lack of/or change in leadership** as a barrier to implementation

Comment:

Ranking:

8. PROJECT IMPACT NAIVETE

Description:

_____ Accept **Project Impact Naiveté** as a barrier to implementation

_____ Reject **Project Impact Naiveté** as a barrier to implementation

Comment:

Ranking:

9. UNCLEAR ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT OR CAPACITY

Description: Project is not aligned with agency priorities and inability to implement (no space or staffing.)

_____ Accept **Unclear Organizational Commitment or Capacity** as a barrier to implementation

_____ Reject **Unclear Organizational Commitment or Capacity** as a barrier to implementation

Comment:

Ranking:

10. POOR PROJECT PLANNING/SCHEDULING

Description: An over ambitious work plan, unfeasible timeline, unrealistic stratifies

_____ Accept **Poor Project Planning/Scheduling** as a barrier to implementation

_____ Reject **Poor Project Planning/Scheduling** as a barrier to implementation

Comment:

Ranking:

11. STAFFING PROBLEMS

Description: Poor or no training of staff, lack of staff or volunteers, no organizational expertise.

_____ Accept **Staffing Problems** as a barrier to implementation

_____ Reject **Staffing Problems** as an essential element

Comment:

Ranking:

12. OTHER?

Suggestions of barriers to implementation missed on the first questionnaire.

APPENDIX G

Summary Chart – Barriers to Implementation

SUMMARY OF COMMENTS
QUESTIONNAIRE ONE-Part B
(for reference with Questionnaire Two)

Based on the responses from the panel to the question (*What essential elements were missing that caused barriers to implementation?*), the following 11 themes have emerged.

LACK OF BOARD SUPPORT	LACK OF CONSISTENCY INVOLVEMENT
<p>The project was not seen as a top priority by the organization</p> <p>Problems on the board or on the advisory committee or problems between the CEO and the board or advisory committee. I once attended a project advisory committee meeting & then sat in the airport departure lounge with committee members but not the CEO. I heard an earful & thought: this effort is headed to disaster, and it was. We stopped funding.</p>	<p>Lack of understanding of and/or access to the client base that the project was designed to reach</p>

POOR EVALUATION PLANNING	POOR FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT
<p>Insufficient funds for evaluation – Both funders and organizations underestimate the cost of evaluation.</p> <p>Evaluation is seen as an added burden to staff (more paper to fill out, intrusive, a means for funders to find out if I am doing what I said I would do). It is a challenge to cast evaluation as a learning tool to organizations that don't have a lot of experience with evaluation.</p>	<p>Poor fiscal management. A nonprofit cannot spend money that it doesn't have.</p> <p>Inadequate Funding: Agency Grantees try to do "to much" and overextend in their commitment to perform and reach objectives.</p> <p>Unrealistic budgets, usually too low, for the amount of work promised.</p> <p>Excessive dependence on foundation support & cluelessness about earned income, particularly in the current funding environment. Nonprofits that can have earned income also need solid business sense.</p>

POOR OR NON-EXISTENT RELATIONSHIP WITH FUNDER	LACK OF GOALS
<p>Lack of Identified Contact with Grantor: Unless regular communication is established AND maintained between grantee and grantor, the ability to assess grant project status is left solely to the reporting scheduling initially established within the grant. As situations occur that demand discussion with the Grantor, as will happen sometime throughout the life of the grant, previous contact with a given staff member will allow for a much smoother process towards resolution.</p> <p>Foundation staff don't take the time before making a grant to communicate with nonprofit staff about goals and strategies, thus risking miscommunication and frustration once the project gets rolling.</p> <p>Foundation staff know little about the project or the, and are willing to support a poorly designed project or poorly managed nonprofit</p>	<p>The particular project has no clear goals, making progress (or the lack thereof) impossible to measure;</p>

LACK OF /CHANGE IN LEADERSHIP	PROJECT IMPACT/NAIVTE
<p>Poor leadership, poor leadership, poor leadership</p> <p>Change in project leadership during the course of funding. For a young organization with small staff, this can be a big challenge</p> <p>Change in CEO (or executive director) leadership, or big changes on the board.</p> <p>Poor management, or poor admin skills, or poor people (managing staff) skills. David Rockefeller once commented, "More nonprofits die of indigestion than starvation." Or something to that effect, but you get the point.</p> <p>Leadership that is too aggressive, un-politic, or arrogant. That just causes field-grumbling, and a project or nonprofit can lock-up so there's no natural growth.</p> <p>When foundations have to form a corral around an organization to provide special oversight in addition to the existing board, this is a sure sign that something is terribly wrong. Leadership and governance have not done their jobs well!</p> <p>Unqualified Project Directors: Grant Project leadership is essential, without it the grant will not succeed and may result in fiscal and operational damage to the entire agency.</p> <p>The nonprofit has poor leadership (at either staff or board level, or both)</p>	<p>An unrealistic understanding of what it takes to make policy, particularly related to thorny issues (i.e., how to get campaign finance reform on a national scale--it won't happen in a two-year grant period; it can take decades). It is important to convey that social change can take years (even decades).</p>

LACK ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT OR CAPACITY	POOR PROJECT PLAN/SCHEDULE
<p>simple logistics problems – no space available, no manpower available, no transportation available to get clients to the site</p> <p>Role of organization's board, senior management is not described, utilized by project managers. This leads to uncertain level of commitment by the overall organization to the project</p> <p>Foundation staff are unwilling to support the nonprofit's operations, because they only want to support the project, thus increasing the risk of overburdened staff, poor technology, lack of strategic planning, etc</p> <p>Lack of Organizational support for the grant project: Without a commitment of support from the Executive Director and Board, agency priorities will be regularly questioned often leading to a lack of adequate time and resources being given to the grant project</p>	<p>the most important would be an over ambitious work plan to accomplish the goals of the proposal in the required grant period</p> <p>Establishing, ahead of time, systems (paper files and/or a grants management database such as GIFTS) to track the progress of activities involved in the grants process and to facilitate information retrieval</p> <p>Timeframe for implementation of project is often unfeasible– many managers seem to think a "wash-in" or "pilot" phase is undesirable to outside stakeholders, but do not ask for the possibility or make the case for one. The importance of testing a project, and adjusting implementation based on real-world experience, by the team/staff who will do the work, cannot be overstated.</p> <p>A logic model approach is often not used, thereby missing a clear articulation of the reasons why a program is needed and is geared towards the ultimate outcomes.</p> <p>Training and time for implementation of new technologies is often incomplete. Most programs assume software, for example, will work right out of the box, without adequate testing/startup time.</p> <p>The particular project has unrealistic strategies, leading to huge wastes of time and effort on the part of nonprofit staff and volunteers</p>

STAFFING PROBLEMS
<p>Staff unawareness of the overall purpose of the project creates motivation problems, turnover.</p> <p>Lack of staff or volunteers with time and expertise to actually implement the project</p>

APPENDIX H

Questionnaire Three – Essential Elements

Hello

We have reached the final phase of the Delphi Study. Thank you for your attention on each phase. Your insight, input, and participation are the foundation of the study and I truly thank you for all you have done.

Attached are the following items:

- 1. Questionnaire Three - Part A
- Questionnaire Three - Part B

Please respond in the following ways:

Review of Previous Work

1. Review the summary chart below.
2. Review the information on each element (listed on a separate page) for *Questionnaire Three Parts-A and B*

New Action

3. Indicate the level of importance for each essential element or barrier by using the Likert Scale provided for each element.
4. Comment on any item that you wish, providing any reactions, final thoughts or implications for future research.

I am asking you to respond to the email and return by email attachment on or before **November 22, 2002**. In addition, please keep a copy of your electronic transmission in case the material is lost in transmission.

If you need clarification on the questionnaire or other issues related to the study, I can be reached at the following numbers

Email: margaret.bernhard@wmich.edu
Office Phone: (616) 387-4202
Home Phone: (616) 327-6921
Cell Phone: (616) 806-4843

Thank you once again for all of your time and your contributions. I will forward an executive summary in April 2003 when I have permission to release the findings.

Questionnaire #3 - Part A

Essential Elements

Listed below is a summary chart of each essential element's ranking, by median and mode.

Each element is list on a separate sheet with rankings and summary of comments created by the members of the Delphi Panel.

To participate in the final round of the Delphi Study, please do the following.

Review of Previous Work

1. Review the summary chart below.
2. Review the information on each element (listed on a separate page) for *Questionnaire Three Part-A*

New Action

3. Indicate the level of importance for each essential element by using the Likert Scale provided for each element.
4. Comment on any item that you wish, providing any reactions, final thoughts or implications for future research.

SUMMARY OF RANKINGS FROM
Essential Elements of a Grant Funded Projects

Element	Rankings	Median	Mode
LEADERSHIP	1-1-1-2-2-2-2-4-4-5-13	2	2
GOALS	1-1-2-2-3-3-4-4-6-7	3	1,2,3,4
PROJECT PLAN/SCHEDULE	1-1-3-3-3-3-5-5-6-9-11	3	3
BOARD SUPPORT	1-1-2-3-4-6-8-8-11-11-14*	6	1, 8, 11
FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT	2-4-4-5-5-6-7-7-7-8-10	6	7
STAFFING	2-2-3-4-6-6-7-8-9-10-10	6	2,6,10
CONSISTUENCY INVOLVEMENT	1-4-5-7-7-7-8-8-13-14	7	7
COLLABORATION	3-5-5-6-7-8-9-10-12-14-14	8	5
COMMUNICATION	4-4-5-5-6-6-8-9-9-9-10-12	8	9
EVALUATION	2-3-3-5-7-8-9-10-11-12-14	8	3
FUNDER RELATIONSHIP	1-5-6-7-8-8-9-9-10-11	8	8,9
SUSTAINABILITY	10-10-11-11-11-12-12-13-14	11	11
TECHNICAL SUPPORT	5-6-9-9-10-12-12-13-13-14	11	9,12,13

*14 =numeric value issued to rejected items

1. BOARD SUPPORT

Description: Willingness of the board of the nonprofit organizations to provide the resources and authority for project success

Median Ranking: 6

Summary of your comments from Questionnaire Two:

Accept

- Board engagement is a must, including the financial contributions of all board members (even with modest contributions). Board members also need to know what is going on; to have some understanding of internal management issues; they should talk with staff members, with no CEO present, occasionally to understand what goes on inside the organization. They should pay attention to management issues.
- The important distinction for this element is board authority for an initiative.
- Without board support for an initiative or program thrust, that effort will come under on going extensive scrutiny and present itself as perpetual target for elimination.
- I would also add that an essential element is having the right people on the board.
- Everyone should add value to the organization whether it is subject matter expertise, political connections, fundraising connections, legal skills, or financial management skills.
- This IS their role
- This is a qualified acceptance because of the phrase "resources". If resources refers to non-monetary elements, it would be an unqualified acceptance. Sometimes the board is unable to provide additional financial resources, but is willing to support in other ways.

Reject

- I reject this item because although I think important, board support is not **essential** to project success

●→ *Level of Importance as an Essential Element:*

___1___ ___2___ ___3___ ___4___ ___5___

Very Important *Not Important*

●→ *Final Comments: Reactions and Implications:*

2. COLLABORATION

Description: Alliances with "mission-compatible" organizations to share information, responsibility, workload, expertise, and skills.

Median Ranking: 8

Summary of your comments from Questionnaire Two:

Accept

Collaboration is very important, given limited funds and difficult issues that need to be addressed. If collaboration is not possible, grant-seeker should indicate why honestly to funder; nonprofits should be aware of who in their field/city/region is working on similar issues.

- Alliances do not necessarily have to be between 'mission similar' organizations – most fruitful are often those that have varied interests, but use the project as a way to bring disparate resources to bear on a particular issue.
- By leveraging the resources and expertise of other groups, the nonprofit avoids duplication of efforts and is able to fundraise more successfully since it can articulate the unique niche it fills.
- Very important, but not as essential as other items....much more important if grant is a community based commitment vs. Single - market specific
- The issues that need to be addressed are too large for organizations to work alone. Funders and the community want to know that "mission-compatible" organizations are working together to maximize resources, etc. Most funders require it as a part of their criteria for funding.
- Collaboration with other agencies, even if just for program recruitment, is necessary for all but the very largest organizations. Even they, however, usually have something to learn from others.

Reject

- Collaboration with similar organizations is not critical to the success of a grant initiative. Sometimes the foundation must step out on its own, take the risk of a new initiative, and signal other foundations about the importance of a new issue area or focus.
- Some projects can be successfully carried out without collaboration

●→ ***Level of Importance as an Essential Element:***

____1 ____2 ____3 ____4 ____5

Very Important *Not Important*

●→ ***Final Comments: Reactions and Implications:***

3. COMMUNICATION

Description: Ability to converse and stay connected with funders and constituents.

Median Ranking: 8

Summary of your comments from Questionnaire Two:

Accept

- Communication is very important; with funders it is important to keep them up to date on both positive, but especially problems. The funders shouldn't hear from others about problems, changes in staffing, financial concerns, etc. The same for constituents. And, when it is a collaboration there should be a sharing of the credit and if necessary the blame.
- Without a constant flow of information the ability to build synergy and expand the circle of knowledge gets thwarted. Both the funder and grant recipients need to understand and communicate programmatic successes and challenges; otherwise, opportunities to implement improvements are lost.
- Need all other pieces in place in order to have something to effectively communicate.
- Critically important but largely determined by grantor guidelines
- Organizations need to maintain this contact in order to remain relevant; seen as being worthy of support.
- This category is actually too large to be helpful to persons charged with designing and implementing programs, in my opinion. It would be more helpful to encourage people to think of communicating "up," which is to say to funders and "down," to constituents. Communicating to funders is focused on outcomes and processes, while communication to constituents is about setting goals, checking program feasibility, and soliciting feedback for mid-course corrections/fine-tuning of implementation. This holds true for service provisions and advocacy/policy projects, although the constituents will differ by type of grant.

Reject

■

●→ ***Level of Importance as an Essential Element:***

___1___ 2 ___3___ 4 ___5

Very Important

Not Important

●→ ***Final Comments: Reactions and Implications:***

4. CONSTITUENCY INVOLVEMENT

Description: Active listening, participation, and support with all impacted parties.

Median Ranking: 8

Summary of your comments from Questionnaire Two:

Accept

- This is very important; don't speak for your base (constituents) unless you are sure of where they stand; this is especially important for national organizations who suggest they have state/local partners, etc. It always becomes clear when there is no active engagement. And, there should be efforts to speak as one voice, sharing the same messages, etc.
- This element is certainly critical when developing a new initiative. By involving targeted beneficiaries in identifying need areas and designing appropriate approaches, a foundation can generate community support, attract potential applicants, and encourage focused interventions.
- If an organization's products and services are not designed and delivered to best meet its customer's needs then the ultimate goal of providing those products and services will not be successful.
- Least important compared to other items; very helpful but not essential in many cases. These are key stakeholders; they relate to the organization's mission
- I think the idea of having a dissemination plan before the program actually starts makes a lot of sense; I have also held bidders conferences or pre-proposal workshops and they have proven to be very helpful to grant applicants.

Reject

- This category overlaps with 2. Collaboration too much to be significant.
- This is a qualified rejection. To me, the responses grouped under this heading could as easily be listed under Communication or Project Plans. There are some projects that absolutely require constituency involvement for success, but some do not. Certainly active listening and knowing who your audience is for dissemination is important, but these are not synonymous with constituency involvement to me.

➡ **Level of Importance as an Essential Element:**

____1 ____2 ____3 ____4 ____5

Very Important *Not Important*

➡ **Final Comments: Reactions and Implications:**

5. EVALUATION

Description: Appropriate data collection and reporting system, ongoing assessment for program improvement, and ability to report success or lack of success

Median Ranking: 8

Summary of your comments from Questionnaire Two:

Accept

- As long as evaluation doesn't overwhelm a project, it is very important to have mechanisms in place from which project staff learn, both negative and positive things. And, more importantly, puts in place things to change how the project is being undertaken.
- Emphasis on appropriate methods
- Evaluation is a critical element that's needed in order to capture the effectiveness of a project. The evaluation strategy should be structured early and capture both qualitative and quantitative data. The evaluation should help identify the project's impact, not simply outcomes.
- If you have goals and measures set up (see #8), that is generally sufficient information for many nonprofits to monitor and report success, as well as identify areas for improvement. Formal evaluation is only needed for large efforts or periodically in an organization's history.
- Offers validity to entire project...very important, without proper evaluation funding is suspect and continuation is doubtful
- Important to know the impact of services/activities provided, and to be able to assess improvements/enhancements, moving forward. Funders and financial supporters want results.

Reject

▪

●→ ***Level of Importance as an Essential Element:***

____1 ____2 ____3 ____4 ____5

Very Important *Not Important*

●→ ***Final Comments: Reactions and Implications:***

6. FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

Description: Development of project budget, strategic planning for flexibility, contingency, and alternative funding, and demonstration of good stewardship

Median Ranking: 6

Summary of your comments from Questionnaire Two:

Accept

- Absolutely, especially when things get tough. NPs need to be able to have a “rainy day” fund, and it is essential to have a diversity of funding sources (foundations, corporate sources, individuals, in-kind, etc.)
- This item is absolutely critical from the onset of the grant project through completion. Financial management represents the organizational integrity of the non-profit.
- An area in which too many non-profits are weak, both at the staff and board-levels I never thought about “a plan for scaling back” but that makes a lot of sense for the grantees and the grantor to consider upfront.

Reject

▪

●→ ***Level of Importance as an Essential Element:***

____1____2____3____4____5

Very Important *Not Important*

●→ ***Final Comments: Reactions and Implications:***

7. FUNDER RELATIONSHIP

Description: Ongoing link with funder to apprise of progress, share information, address obstacles, and seek overall advise and counsel.

Median Ranking: 8

Summary of your comments from Questionnaire Two:

Accept

- Shouldn't be an everyday thing, but quarterly or semi-annual reports, in person or in writing, is very helpful. I hate to only hear from grantees when it is time to ask for more money!
- The relationship will be successful if the organization has all of the other elements in place
- Very important
- Need to be kept in the loop and to feel a part of organization's success and future plans, where appropriate.

Reject

- This category overlaps with 3-Communication too much to be significant

➡ *Level of Importance as an Essential Element:*

____1 ____2 ____3 ____4 ____5

Very Important *Not Important*

➡ *Final Comments: Reactions and Implications:*

8. GOALS

Description: Clearly defined direction and measurement of project activity.

Median Ranking: 3

Summary of your comments from Questionnaire Two:

Accept

- Obvious
- Absolutely! Both the overall initiative and its funded grantees have to use clearly defined goals and objectives. Without these components, a well-structured and coherent initiative will fail to materialize. Developing these components at the beginning of the project impacts how program staff structure evaluation, technical assistance, and monitoring.
- Without setting and measuring progress, the organization will be unable to articulate its successes to funders and be unable to understand where the programs and services need to improve to serve its customers better.
- A “must” in order to provide both grantee and grantor a measurable reference, very important to eliminate subjective assessments by either party
- I link/collapse this item with evaluation. I don’t think of goals as being separate from evaluation

Reject

- This category overlaps with 10 - Project Plan/Schedule and 5 -Evaluation too much to be significant.

➡ ***Level of Importance as an Essential Element:***

____1 ____2 ____3 ____4 ____5
Very Important *Not Important*

➡ ***Final Comments: Reactions and Implications:***

9. LEADERSHIP

Description: Provide guidance and direction to the project and involved staff and constituents, strategic political sense, stewardship and continuity over the life of the project.

Median Ranking: 2

Summary of your comments from Questionnaire Two:

Accept

- Very important, but should not only be from executive director. The charismatic leader is a problem, especially if he/she doesn't share power. There should also be board engagement so that if there is a transition in leadership, either someone from the organization or the board can take charge.
- I grudgingly accept this as an essential element; it's important, but not vital. While leadership is important to the stability of the project, I think a strong and sound project can surmount ineffective leadership.
- This is an essential element of success, but I would also add that this needs to be building leadership throughout the entire organization, not concentrating it in one person who may leave the organization. I have seen many projects and organizations fail when the core leadership changes. Succession planning is key to the long-term sustainability of nonprofits.
- Leadership will determine the ultimate results of the grant project; without proper leadership to management progress, communicate issues, be fiscally responsible the project will fail.
- Visionary, compassionate leadership.

Reject

▪

●→ *Level of Importance as an Essential Element:*

____1 ____2 ____3 ____4 ____5

Very Important *Not Important*

●→ *Final Comments: Reactions and Implications:*

10. PROJECT PLAN/SCHEDULE

Description: Detailed description, strategy and timelines of the individual action steps necessary to complete the project.

Median Ranking: 3

Summary of your comments from Questionnaire Two:

Accepted

- Important, especially a workplan/timeline.
- Yes. A cogent timeline is essential and should complete the goals & objectives of the project. A well-defined timeline should identify the lead actors, the specific action steps needed to carry out the project, and the expected outcomes. It serves as a map for the overall project and can identify if the project begins to veer of course.
- Most important without a plan, a leader cannot lead, a funder cannot evaluate, results cannot be objective and a project cannot be realistically attempted.
- This is crucial as it gives the program the opportunity to create logic models, internal consistency between activities and goals, and benchmarks for progress and success.
- This is also a qualified acceptance. The level of detail and timelines depends upon the nature of the project. I do see the description of the strategy as essential for all projects, as well as a general timeline.

Reject

▪

●→ **Level of Importance as an Essential Element:**

____1 ____2 ____3 ____4 ____5

Very Important *Not Important*

●→ **Final Comments: Reactions and Implications:**

11. STAFFING

Description: Recruitment, selection and training of the appropriate personnel to participate and contribute to the project

Median Ranking: 6

Summary of your comments from Questionnaire Two:

Accepted

- Again, there should be seasoned, good staffing; staff turnover is a sure sign of problems in an organization. It shouldn't be an organization with a charismatic leader and lots of young people. There should be a good mixture of folks.
- ..and retention
- Recruiting and selecting the right personnel for a project can ensure a measure of success. Understaffing can result in slow implementation and reduced impact. Training, especially professional development, helps maintain a health retention rate and mitigates employee burn-out.
- I would include this with leadership piece. Need to have qualified leadership as well as people implementing the program
- Critical for staying on task, achieving objectives of specific grant.
- Hiring staff, having "the right fit", is challenging.

Reject

▪

●→ ***Level of Importance as an Essential Element:***

____1 ____2 ____3 ____4 ____5

Very Important *Not Important*

●→ ***Final Comments: Reactions and Implications:***

12. SUSTAINABILITY

Description: Ability of the project to maintain impact over the life cycle of the project and beyond

Median Ranking: 11

Summary of your comments from Questionnaire Two:

Accepted

- Important, especially for funders. But, if an organization has run its course, the funders should let an organization gracefully “expire.”
- (this only ranks this low if you are talking about successful implementation of a grant versus long term management and ability to obtain another grant
- Depends largely on focus of grant, however, most projects have long term objectives and will require continuation funding/revenues. Many funders require a plan of sustainability independent of their support.
- Although not many of us made comments relevant to this topic, planning for sustainability is important to successful project implementation. My ranking of this element is low, however, I think it carries more weight in the success of the future of a program.
- As described (ability to maintain impact over the life cycle and beyond), I see this as an essential element. Often, however, the term sustainability refers to the ability to continue the project after the funding period is completed. There are some projects where that is not an essential element for a successful project.

Reject

- the ability to articulate its success, then it will be sustainable until the need changes (which it will know because of its close relationship with constituents).
- This is a confusing category from which I abstained. The name of this item and its description do not match. Sustainability comes after the project funding has ended, and government program funds used to be considered the automatic answer to the continuance of a service program. The government assumption ended in the mid 1980s.
- It is usually very important to consider how a project will be continued after foundation support has ended, but is overrated in the foundation world. The fact is that many programs will live hand to mouth, especially in working with particularly distressed populations, and therefore the leadership of the program will be the key to its sustainability.

●→ ***Level of Importance as an Essential Element:***

___1___ ___2___ ___3___ ___4___ ___5___

Very Important *Not Important*

●→ ***Final Comments: Reactions and Implications:***

13. TECHNICAL SUPPORT

Description: Accessibility to required expertise (consultant, funder, technology) to address concerns and overcome obstacle to complete the project.

Median Ranking: 11

Summary of your comments from Questionnaire Two:

Accept

- Funders should be willing to support technical and other infrastructure support to strengthen the management capacity of an organization it supports.
- Depends on staffing and leadership strength
- Good project leaders will know how to find what they need.

Reject

- Not sure how this is different from collaboration or good relationship with funder

●→ **Level of Importance as an Essential Element:**

____1 ____2 ____3 ____4 ____5

Very Important Not Important

●→ **Final Comments: Reactions and Implications:**

APPENDIX I

Questionnaire Three – Barriers to Implementation

Questionnaire #3 - Part B

Barriers to Implementation

Listed below is a summary chart of each barrier's ranking, by median and mode.

Each barrier is list on a separate sheet with rankings and summary of comments created by the members of the Delphi Panel.

To participate in the final round of the Delphi Study, please do the following.

Review of Previous Work

1. Review the summary chart below.
2. Review the information on each barrier (listed on a separate page) for *Questionnaire Three Part-B*

New Action

3. Indicate the level of importance of each barrier by using the Likert Scale provided for each element.
4. Comment on any item that you wish, providing any reactions, final thoughts or implications for future research

SUMMARY OF RANKINGS FROM Barriers to Implementation of a Grant Funded Project

Element	Rankings	Median	Mode
Lack of ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT/CAPACITY	1-2-2-3-3-5-9-9-10	3	2,3,9
Poor FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT	1-2-3-4-4-4-6-6-8-10	4	4
No GOALS	1-2-2-4-4-5-5-6-6-12*	4.5	4,5,6
Poor PROJECT PLAN/SCHEDULE	1-1-1-3-4-5-5-7-10-11	4.5	1
Lack of BOARD SUPPORT	1-2-3-3-5-6-7-8-8-11	5.5	3,8
Lack of LEADERSHIP	1-2-3-5-5-6-7-12-12-12	5.5	12 (Reject)
Poor STAFFING	2-3-4-6-6-7-7-9-10-11	6.5	6,7
Lack of CONSISTUENCY INVOLVEMENT	1-3-5-5-7-7-8-10-11-12	7	5,7
Poor EVALUATION PLANNING	4-5-8-9-9-10-12-12-12-12	7.5	12 (Reject)
Poor FUNDER RELATIONSHIP	1-2-5-7-7-8-8-9-9-12	7.5	7,8,9
PROJECT IMACT/NAIVETE	4-4-6-8-9-12-12-12-12	9	12 (Reject)

*12 =numeric value issued to rejected items

1. LACK OF BOARD SUPPORT

Description: The board did not support the proposal or outcomes of the project

Median Ranking: 5.5

Summary of your comments from Questionnaire Two:

Accept

- Sure sign a project may be in trouble, especially if it's a large bloc of the board; if it's only a small dissent that may not be a problem.
- It would be very difficult to carry out a significant project without board support or assent.
- Organization should not have sought grant initially without Board support. Successful outcomes typically require Board support in order to allow for staff involvement with project.
- Board can sabotage project if it does not support effort.

Reject

▪

●→ **Level of Barrier to Implementation:**

_____1 _____2 _____3 _____4 _____5

Serious Barrier *Not a Barrier*

●→ **Final Comments: Reactions and Implications:**

2. LACK OF CONSTITUENCY INVOLVEMENT

Description: Lack of involvement of all impacted parties.

Median Ranking: 7

Summary of your comments from Questionnaire Two:

Accept

- It is a sign that the project may not be heading in the right direction
- Depends on grant structure
- They are a part of the mission, if they are not involved, the organization's efforts lack credibility
- Involvement from all stakeholders can be helpful in planning and implementation. Client or potential client feedback, in particular, can help programs avoid over promising results (a form of naiveté).
- My acceptance is based on the description contained in the Summary of Comments. Based on the comment, however, it seems that this could be combined with Poor Plan.

Reject

- The lack of involvement of impacted parties can certainly impact implementation, but I don't believe it's an insurmountable barrier. In some instances, not all impacted parties can participate in the development of an initiative.

●→ **Level of Barrier to Implementation:**

____1 ____2 ____3 ____4 ____5

Serious Barrier *Not a Barrier*

●→ **Final Comments: Reactions and Implications:**

3. POOR EVALUATION PLANNING

Description: Omission of evaluation planning or funding.

Median Ranking: 7.5

Summary of your comments from Questionnaire Two:

Accept

- We go back and ask for an evaluation plan, if it is missing.
- Very important....proper evaluation offers project continuing reference points for achievement and accurate funder assessment.
- Evaluation needs to be an integral part of the planning and implementation, not an add-on.

Reject

- Some projects (take conference support or support of specific peer-reviewed journals) do not require a significant evaluation. While evaluation should always be considered a vital element, in some instances its omission would not serve as a barrier to implementation.
- If goals, project plan, and measures in place. Formal evaluation is not always required
- Barrier to successful implementation
- The wording of this description diffuses responsibility and makes the category unclear. Evaluation planning is an omission of the agency, missing evaluation money is an omission of the funder

●→ **Level of Barrier to Implementation:**

____1 ____2 ____3 ____4 ____5
Serious Barrier Not a Barrier

●→ **Final Comments: Reactions and Implications:**

4. POOR FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

Description: Poor fiscal management, unrealistic budgets, or inadequate funding

Median Ranking: 4

Summary of your comments from Questionnaire Two:

Accept

- If it's a long-time grantee, we may give some technical assistance to help it fix the problem; if it's a new applicant, it won't get funded.
- Poor fiscal management can doom a project, especially if the funds are mishandled. Without adequate funding, for instance, a project may simply overreach in its intentions and then ultimately fail to achieve any success.
- Critical!! Poor budgets typically leads to under-funded projects unable to meet objectives....staffing disruptions, followed by funding termination of existing project and/or future funding.
- Funding agencies' trustees often use poor financial management reports as proxies for the effectiveness of an agency.
- The second and third comments seem to me to fit better under Poor Plan as they are not poor financial management (funds could be tracked, are spent appropriately, clean audit etc.), but rather poor planning.

Reject

▪

●→ *Level of Barrier to Implementation:*

_____1 _____2 _____3 _____4 _____5

Serious Barrier *Not a Barrier*

●→ *Final Comments: Reactions and Implications:*

5. POOR OR NON-EXISTENT RELATIONSHIP WITH FUNDERS

Description: Lack of ongoing link with funder or over dependence on program officer

Median Ranking: 7.5

Summary of your comments from Questionnaire Two:

Accept

- If this means communication, I would work with the organization to help them understand why it is important to have a good relationship; if this means it doesn't know how to fundraise, that's a big problem.
- Very important...poor communication or excessive communication creates a very incompatible situation. Funders need to know what they need to know! Information must be presented to them in an atmosphere and timeframe they are comfortable with. If reports are not submitted on time or the funder perceives deception, the organization is facing severe repercussions whether or NOT the grant is on track.
- Description contains two contradictory items: lack of connection or too much connection to funders, so it is hard to comment on this. In general, however, a good relationship with funders is necessary to preserve flexibility of the program management, meaning that bad news can be delivered without fear of having the grant revoked, and changes in the program necessitated by the experience of implementation can be considered.

Reject

- It entirely depends on the project. Some initiatives, such as fellowship support, do not require the ongoing involvement of a funder. Constant and intensive communication over the life of the project is desired, but in some cases may overburden the grantee with informal and formal reporting requirements. In the end, the grantee may most of the time fulfilling the communication mandates from one or more funders.

●→ **Level of Barrier to Implementation:**

_____1 _____2 _____3 _____4 _____5
 Serious Barrier Not a Barrier

●→ **Final Comments: Reactions and Implications:**

6. LACK OF GOALS

Description: No clear goals, making progress (or the lack thereof) impossible to measure.

Median Ranking: 4.5

Summary of your comments from Questionnaire Two:

Accept

- This is obvious
- Without a doubt, lack of clear goals and objectives will adversely impact implementation. If the project or the grantee do not have established goals and objectives, the effort will lack focus, direction, and urgency.
- Very Important for management of grant....evaluation must have clearly identified goals that are accepted by all parties.
- It is everyone's job to see that these are defined: program managers, agency management, and funders.

Reject

- If a program didn't have clear goals, it wouldn't get funding from me. Goals would be part of the project plan which is ranked highly.

●→ ***Level of Barrier to Implementation:***

____1 ____2 ____3 ____4 ____5

Serious Barrier *Not a Barrier*

●→ ***Final Comments: Reactions and Implications:***

7. LACK OF/OR CHANGE IN LEADERSHIP

Description: Poor management or administrative skills, inability to maneuver political arena, change in project leadership during the course of funding.

Median Ranking: 5.5

Summary of your comments from Questionnaire Two:

Accept

- Big problem, unless the organization has a successful plan in place to ensure continuity. The succession (bringing up other leaders) can be from the staff or board.
- Emphasis on lack of – change can be just fine, provided that there is a coherent , documented plan for project implementation.
- Leadership changes are often less critical than no leadership. New leaders can often effectively address shortcomings of past management and mend a relationship that has been previously tainted.
- I'm not sure that this should be a separate category. The logistics comment seems to fit better with Poor Project Plan/Schedule and the two other comments about the organization seem to fit under either Lack of Board Support or Poor Plan. The comment about the foundation staff should perhaps be another category.

Reject

- Change in leadership occurs often and poor management is (unfortunately) a common malady. I strongly believe that leadership issues can be addressed by development of a strong monitoring plan that incorporates detailed workplans and technical assistance.
- This is a confusing description, so I can't really accept it as is. Leadership change is presented here only as a negative. To my mind, changes have to be anticipated (especially in multi-year projects) because people move/get promoted/even die, all for reasons potentially unrelated to the project. In addition, if a leader is proving ineffective at implementation, a change in leadership is a good thing. (This is not necessarily to denigrate the outgoing leader, by the way. In many instances the skills needed to visualize and create a project are different from the ones needed to implement it.)

➡ *Level of Barrier to Implementation:*

_____1 _____2 _____3 _____4 _____5
Serious Barrier *Not a Barrier*

➡ *Final Comments: Reactions and Implications:*

8. PROJECT IMPACT NAIVETE

Description: An unrealistic understanding of what it takes to make the grant program work for those individuals directly impacted by the projected outcomes

Median Ranking: 6

Summary of your comments from Questionnaire Two:

Accept

- If the project is overly ambitious or naïve about time it will take to attain success, this is a “red flag.”
- I would also combine this under the Poor Plan category

Reject

- Not so much a barrier to implementation as a barrier to ongoing viability
- Not sure what this is
- I don’t view this as a barrier to implementation. It may impact the project planning or the time allotted to reach benchmarks, but I don’t see it as a barrier to getting the program up and running.

●➔ **Level of Barrier to Implementation:**

_____1 _____2 _____3 _____4 _____5
Serious Barrier *Not a Barrier*

●➔ **Final Comments: Reactions and Implications:**

9. UNCLEAR ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT OR CAPACITY

Description: Project is not aligned with agency priorities and inability to implement (no space or staffing.)

Median Ranking: 3

Summary of your comments from Questionnaire Two:

Accept

- Big problem; if a project is asking for funds for something way outside their mission, it's a sure sign they are chasing the money.
- Leadership changes are often less critical than no leadership. New leaders can often effectively address shortcomings of past management and mend a relationship that has been previously tainted.

Reject

- I would not put these 2 items in the same category. See my notes at the end. This category also seems redundant of Board support issue (item 1).

●→ **Level of Barrier to Implementation:**

_____1 _____2 _____3 _____4 _____5
 Serious Barrier Not a Barrier

●→ **Final Comments: Reactions and Implications:**

10. POOR PROJECT PLANNING/SCHEDULING

Description: An over ambitious work plan, unfeasible timeline, unrealistic stratifies

Median Ranking: 4.5

Summary of your comments from Questionnaire Two:

Accept

- Problem for obvious reasons
- Many organizations commonly overreach. Poor planning creates unrealistic expectations, which could diffuse the project's effectiveness.
- Critical!! Without proper planning all else fails
- The benefit of planning, with a focus on logic and logistical models, is that the issues of why, how, what activities, and who are answered as part of the program design. This makes evaluation and mid-course corrections feasible and keeps the program management from over promising to funders and other stakeholders. Poor project planning and scheduling of activities thereby harms the project's implementation.

Reject

■

●→ **Level of Barrier to Implementation:**

_____1 _____2 _____3 _____4 _____5
Serious Barrier Not a Barrier

●→ **Final Comments: Reactions and Implications:**

11. STAFFING PROBLEMS

Description: Poor or no training of staff, lack of staff or volunteers, no organizational expertise.

Median Ranking: 6.5

Summary of your comments from Questionnaire Two:

Accept

- Turnover a big signal there's a problem at an organization.
- Untrained and/or unmotivated staff can be disastrous, however, under proper leadership staff shortcoming should be identified in a reasonable amount of time and additional training or staffing corrections made available.

Reject

▪

●→ **Level of Barrier to Implementation:**

____1____2____3____4____5

Serious Barrier *Not a Barrier*

●→ **Final Comments: Reactions and Implications:**

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