

# BOOST

Building Organizational  
Operating Strength  
Together

Rose Community Foundation's  
Three-Year Capacity-Building Initiative



**ROSE**  
COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

**About Rose Community Foundation:** Rose Community Foundation works to enhance the quality of life of the Greater Denver community through its leadership, resources, traditions and values. We value our Jewish heritage and our roots in Jewish traditions including charity, philanthropy and nondiscrimination. We value excellence and uphold the highest standards in the pursuit of our mission. We value the trust and respect of the community and continually strive to earn and sustain that trust by consistent and disciplined adherence to our mission.

Rose Community Foundation's support for the Greater Denver community is focused on five program areas: Aging, Child and Family Development, Education, Health and Jewish Life. In addition to grantmaking, Rose Philanthropic Services assists individuals and families in their philanthropic endeavors.

**About BOOST:** BOOST stands for Building Organizational Operating Strength Together. It is a three-year program offered by Rose Community Foundation to provide a comprehensive package of capacity-building tools to strategically selected grantees of the Foundation. Structured on the Nonprofit Lifecycles Model of organizational assessment and training developed by Dr. Susan Kenny Stevens, BOOST offers assessment, training, consultation and grants to plan and implement significant changes in the nonprofit organizations' business operations in order to better support their mission and programs.

**About Dr. Susan Kenny Stevens:** The lead consultant for BOOST, Dr. Stevens is a nationally recognized consultant, author and lecturer on financial, management and organizational issues pertaining to philanthropy and the nonprofit sector. Her books and case studies are used throughout the country by nonprofit managers, foundations, evaluators and academics to strengthen their understanding of nonprofit dynamics. In addition to *Nonprofit Lifecycles: Stage-based Wisdom for Nonprofit Capacity*, she is also the author of *All the Way to the Bank*, *Investing In Capacity*, and *Budgeting Your Way to Financial Stability*.

**About this report:** This report is a summary of Rose Community Foundation's first three-year BOOST Initiative based primarily on the BOOST action learning assessment produced by Corona Research, Inc. of Denver, Colorado, July 2007.

Both this highlights report and the full BOOST action learning assessment are available online: [http://www.rcfdenver.org/initiatives\\_BOOST.htm](http://www.rcfdenver.org/initiatives_BOOST.htm)

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## Foreword

January 2008

Over the past 15 years, national and local foundations have adopted a variety of philanthropic practices designed to strengthen and sustain grantee partners. Known as capacity grantmaking, these programs reinforce the hand-in-glove relationship between the sustainability of a nonprofit's mission and its financial and operational well-being – its “capacity.”

In 2003, the staff of Rose Community Foundation, while studying different foundations' approaches to capacity-building, learned about the Ford Foundation's Working Capital Fund, a multiyear initiative to assist minority arts groups to build more durable organizations. My staff at LarsonAllen and I developed this program for Ford in the mid-1990s, which engaged 16 organizations in a four-year process of self-assessment, business planning and grant investments. These activities were supplemented with technical assistance and coaching from a cadre of national consultants. The program was based on the seven-stage capacity model outlined in my book *Nonprofit Lifecycles: Stage-based Wisdom for Nonprofit Capacity* (2001), which defines organizational capacity as a developmental process and presents distinct capacity expectations for each of the seven stages.

In late 2003, Rose Community Foundation launched its first capacity-building initiative, BOOST (Building Organizational Operating Support Together), a \$2 million program with eight growth-stage grantees. Rose's primary impetus was to “boost” the financial and operating competency of a key set of grantees in whom the Foundation had a mission-related stake, and

who were ready, willing and able to meet the intensive work of a three-year program.

Now in its second round, BOOST has captured the best of the many capacity programs I have designed and managed through the years. And although it shares many common elements with other successful models, BOOST also reflects Rose Community Foundation's own values and grantmaking style.

BOOST was designed with five underlying precepts:

### **A lifecycles approach to capacity.**

The “lifecycle” capacity approach presumes that, to be effective, capacity-building programs must meet each nonprofit participant at its own unique entry point and then develop solutions consistent with the reality of its individual needs and lifecycle placement.

**Holistic approach.** BOOST also takes a comprehensive, holistic approach to capacity-building quite different from episodic technical assistance. BOOST uses a facilitated self-assessment to establish each participant's capacity starting point, and then a business plan to strategize a more capable future. Under a trained consultant's guidance, grantees look first at their mission, market, external environment, and programming, and then design a set of management, governance, financial and administrative strategies necessary to support these mission-related activities. The Foundation's capacity grant investment is then made in support of the business plan strategies.

**Operational improvements.** As a capacity-building program, BOOST is

about improving operating performance. Any process improvement, by definition, will require changes to previous actions and thought patterns. While taking root, such changes, particularly to long-standing beliefs or activities, are likely to create a sense of unrest, especially for management and staff. Successful capacity-building programs anticipate

partners came into BOOST with both trust and respect for the Foundation, and were receptive from the start that Rose had their best interest at heart.

**Realistic and flexible.** A lot can happen over a three-year program, and Foundation staff and program consultants must be ready to adapt to the changing needs of their grantee partners as required. Likewise, good as they may be, capacity-building programs are not magic. Sustainable change will not happen over night, nor will it be accomplished in just three short years. Yet, in all cases, as the first round evaluation revealed, the capacity-strengthening practices introduced through BOOST have formed the basis for improved and sustainable habit development in each grantee partner.

These five principles, common to many successful capacity-building programs, formed the foundation of BOOST. But Rose's staff put its own unique stamp on BOOST's program design, too, by incorporating three distinguishing elements that have both contributed greatly to the program's success, and are likely to make a lasting imprint on the Denver-Boulder community.

**Community-wide leveragability.** As a program of a community foundation, BOOST serves nonprofits in the Denver-Boulder area. In addition to building the organizational capacity of these designated grantees, more than 75 nonprofit executives, staff and board members have participated in BOOST over the past four years. These individuals now share a common belief in the importance of nonprofit capacity, as well as a common vocabulary and experience to discuss lifestyle-related capacity



Rose Community Foundation file photo

Lead BOOST consultant Dr. Susan Kenny Stevens (third from right) with BOOST Consultants at a celebration of the initiative's success. Left to right: Karla Raines, Patricia Sterner, Sharon McClew, Gurudev Khalsa, Bourge Hathaway, Dr. Susan Kenny Stevens, Gail Hoyt and Janine Vanderburg.

these changes as normal growing pains and help grantees skillfully manage their way through.

**Participant buy-in.** The real measure of any capacity-building program is the extent to which grantee partners "internalize" newly learned operating practices; that is, they take what they have learned to heart and turn new practices into sustainable habits. This is very tricky business that requires grantees to believe that the capacity-building initiative is truly something of benefit to them, rather than "imposed" by the funder. In the case of BOOST, Rose Community Foundation's reputation for caring about its grantees clearly worked to the initiative's advantage. Grantee



expectations. In addition, 14 consultants have adopted the lifecycles capacity approach in their work with BOOST—and with other clients as well. In years ahead, BOOST’s leverage is likely to spread further as participating executives and board members move on to other nonprofit jobs or board positions.

**Consultant cohort.** Equally distinguishing is the role Denver/Boulder area consultants played in the BOOST process. The consultants, apart from their work with grantees, gathered two or three times a year in consultant networking sessions to share techniques and learnings with each other. In this way, this group of skilled consultants formed a Community of Practice and developed meaningful collegial relationships that, in the summative BOOST evaluation, emerged as one of the unforeseen and lasting strengths of the program.

**In-house management and hands-on commitment.** Unlike many capacity-building programs that use outside intermediaries to manage the program, Rose staffed and managed BOOST internally. This hands-on project management approach provided increased buy-in from Foundation staff, and kept BOOST an active and ongoing part of the Foundation’s activities. Indeed, the

Foundation’s initial decision to launch BOOST, in addition to helping a set of grantee partners build capacity, was based on a desire to create a foundation-wide shared activity for its five program areas. Through BOOST, Rose program officers became their own Community of Practice as they shared individual learnings that enhanced the Foundation’s overall grantmaking knowledge and capacity.

Rose Community Foundation and I are most excited to share the specifics of the BOOST program and experience with you and know you will find the pages that follow informative and inspirational.

Of the dozens of capacity-building programs I have developed for numerous national and local foundations, I can truly say that BOOST, and the opportunity to work with the talented grantees, consultants and Foundation staff involved in this program, has been a most satisfying and rewarding experience.

Susan Kenny Stevens, Ph.D.  
BOOST Lead Consultant

**“The BOOST Initiative was a shot of confidence. It made us feel like we could get things done. It took us out of the mindset of ‘How do we stay afloat?’ and gave us the ability to imagine what we could become.”**

## Table of Contents

The Idea .....	5
The Process .....	6
Phase I – Selecting Grantees (2003) .....	6
Phase II – Self-Assessment and Business Plans (2004) .....	6
Phase III – Implementation of Business Plans (2005-06) .....	8
BOOST Evaluation .....	9
The Results .....	9
In a Nutshell – How Organizations Changed During BOOST .....	10
Key Success Factors Promoting Organizational Strength .....	11
Key Resources Promoting Organizational Strength .....	12
Lessons Learned from BOOST ..	14
From Survival to Success – Building Organizational Capacity Effectively .....	15
BOOST Participants .....	16



## The Idea

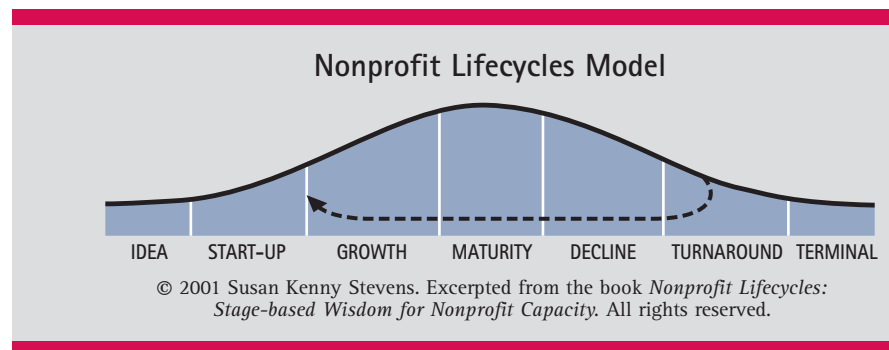
In its first seven years of grantmaking (1995-2002), Rose Community Foundation made several thousand grants in support of organizations across the Greater Denver community. While many of the grants met or exceeded expectations, the Foundation's senior program staff also recognized a common challenge: some project funding and support for organizations' new ideas did not achieve the desired impact—not necessarily because the programs were flawed, but sometimes because the organization lacked the infrastructure to adequately implement and sustain them. Realizing that the Foundation's goals could best be achieved through strong grantees aligned with its strategic objectives, Rose's program staff began looking for ways to strengthen selected grantees systemically. They sought a model that could promote nonprofits' organizational development and encourage sound financial practices.

In addition, Rose's five senior program officers were seeking a way to work together across their fields to develop a common understanding and approach to building nonprofit capacity. They pooled just over \$2 million from their respective program areas' grantmaking budgets to fund a cross-program initiative.

Early in 2003, Rose's program staff became aware of the work of Dr. Susan Kenny Stevens and her Nonprofit Lifecycles Model. Dr. Stevens' approach offered a new way of working closely and intensively with selected grantees to build their financial health and improve their capacity and effectiveness.

In Dr. Stevens' book, *Nonprofit Lifecycles: Stage-based Wisdom for Nonprofit Capacity*, she describes how

organizations go through a seven-stage cycle of development. They begin at the **idea** stage, progress to **start-up**, continue through **growth**, reach **maturity**, then can slip into **decline**, at which point they can **turn around** or, when there is no longer energy or market need, **terminate**. She considers each stage in the lifecycle to present predictable leadership and management



challenges requiring stage-appropriate strategies and investments.

The Foundation invited Dr. Stevens to help it design an initiative to strengthen the leadership and organizational capacity of eight growth-stage grantees, and to serve as the initiative's master trainer and lead facilitator. Having consulted on successful initiatives to strengthen organizations across the country, Dr. Stevens stressed the

**“We had identified growth/capacity issues, but were uncertain how to deal with them. BOOST and Rose Community Foundation gave us the resources and structure to do it.”**

essential components of: 1) the Nonprofit Lifecycles Model; 2) grantee leadership teams; 3) multiyear grants; and 4) consulting expertise to create and implement a business plan. As a result, the BOOST Initiative employed a holistic approach, fueled with coaching, peer learning and value-added grants to enable the grantees to develop into more stable organizations.

### Seven Goals of the BOOST Initiative

1. **Develop organizational capacity** in governance, management, programs and administration beyond the capacity starting points outlined in the organizations' self-assessments
2. Understand individual program economics and the financial levers or benchmarks needed to **attain financial success**, and use this knowledge to aid future financial planning, budgeting and decision-making
3. Value financial health and **adhere to sound financial practices** as evidenced by annual revenues that exceed expenses
4. **Develop a network of peers** to serve as an ongoing support and resource, and thus break the sense of isolation
5. **Develop a common vocabulary** based on the Nonprofit Lifecycles Model for use among peers and within organizations
6. **Use business plans** as a holistic "master plan" within which all programmatic, operational and financial decisions are made
7. Effectively learn to use a **leadership team** to champion business planning strategies and implement organizational changes necessitated by the plan

The screening process for grantees considered three main criteria: close alignment and proven track record in addressing one or more of Rose's grantmaking priorities; experiencing or poised for rapid growth; and readiness to participate in the comprehensive three-year initiative.

As the initiative eventually involved dozens of people, multiple contracts and numerous training sessions, it required a project manager. Rose assumed the responsibility internally, assigning a program officer to the role. And, wishing to further build local consulting expertise in nonprofit management issues, the Foundation contracted with consultants from the Denver area to work with the growth-stage grantees. Each consultant was trained in Dr. Stevens' approach and was matched with a grantee to work with throughout BOOST.

Dr. Stevens conducted a site visit with grantee organizations to assess organizational challenges and determine whether each was poised to benefit from the initiative. Her assessments also gauged each organization's commitment to and capacity for an intense and long-term change process.

### Phase II – Self-Assessment and Business Plans (2004)

Once Dr. Stevens and the Foundation finalized the group of participating grantees, each organization assigned up to two board and two staff members, including the executive director, to serve on leadership teams. The leadership teams were responsible for driving BOOST forward in their own organizations. The initiative's structure supported grantees through coaching provided by the consultants, a potential

## The Process

### Phase 1 – Selecting Grantees (2003)

The Phase 1 planning stage for BOOST took place in 2003 as program officers from each of the Foundation's funding areas—Aging, Child and Family Development, Education, Health and Jewish Life—selected key grantees to participate.





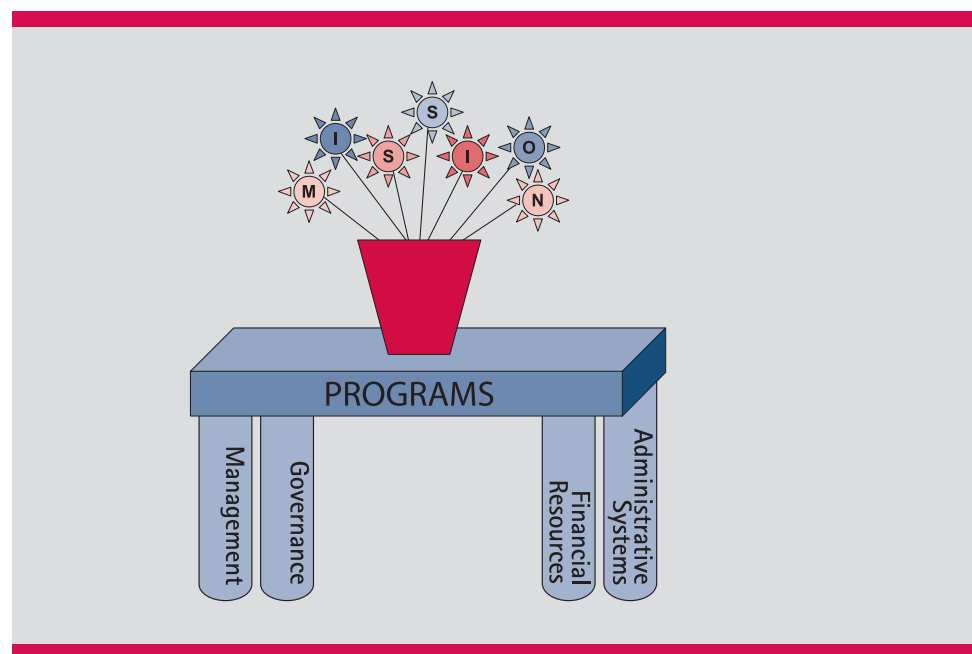
infusion of up to \$120,000 over the three years in strategic operating support, and a learning cohort with which to learn and troubleshoot.

BOOST's theory of change was that the growth-stage organizations would be better able to accomplish their missions and increase programs and services by taking time to look strategically at where they were going, creating a business and financial plan to support their direction, and focusing on strengthening internal structures that would enable them to be sustainable.

Dr. Stevens brought a key diagnostic tool to BOOST: comparing an organization's structure to a table. Organizations must balance mission and programs (the table top) on the legs of four internal operations—governance, management, financial resource development and administrative systems. Often, growth-stage nonprofits are “a marble top on twig legs.” To reach maturity, an organization's structural components of the table—its underlying business components—must be strengthened. Until a balance is achieved, the weak leg, or vulnerable internal area, will continually hold the organization back.

**“Knowing that different lifecycles bring predictable challenges made the process easier. When I began to see our organization in the framework of start-up/growth, it depersonalized any of the problems we were experiencing.”**

Applying Dr. Stevens' model, grantees first undertook an organizational self-assessment facilitated by the consultants. The assessments revealed that the financial “leg” of all the BOOST grantees was less developed than the other legs of their tables. Each grantee lacked internal financial expertise and a comprehensive business plan to guide its future. Rose provided



Dr. Susan Kenny Stevens uses the analogy of a table's structure to depict the important elements of organizational strength.

BOOST participants with a financial seminar designed to establish an understanding of program-based budgeting within their economic model, and establish financial goals.

The Foundation also provided grantees with \$20,000 to invest in operational upgrades and systems development to jump-start their work. The grantees, with help from their consultants, then created comprehensive three-year business plans to chart their financial and programmatic destinies. These strategic “master plans” articulated all program operations and financial decisions needed to attain sustainability.

### Phase III – Implementation of Business Plans (2005–06)

For Rose, a viable business plan from the grantees ensured that subsequent operating support would result in necessary impacts and outcomes. Once the Foundation approved each grantee’s plan, it provided the first of two strategic operating grants of up to

plans and providing feedback regarding what was working or not, and how to revise strategies as needed.

By the end of 2005, the grantees had completed a full year of business plan implementation. Each was asked to record and reflect on changes and progress toward their business plan goals and to submit an annual audit or financial statement.

In early 2006, once the Foundation determined that the grantees were making notable progress toward their business plan goals, the organizations received an additional \$50,000 grant for strategic operating support.

Throughout the three-year initiative, grantees, consultants and Rose program staff continued to meet semi-annually in large-group meetings for specific training, sharing and trouble-shooting. The consultants also met together to exchange information and shape the initiative. The eight executive directors, in particular, coalesced and realized considerable benefits from sharing strategies. They began to meet together on a regular basis. This Communities of Practice model was one of BOOST’s distinguishing features, encouraging exchange networks among peers.



Photo by Chris Takagi

It’s cupcake time at the Boulder Jewish Community Center Preschool. Through BOOST, the Boulder JCC realized that it needed to separate (amicably) from its parent organization, the Boulder Jewish Community Foundation.

\$50,000 to carry out the business plan’s implementation.

The most common use of BOOST grants was to hire additional specialists on staff—particularly in the areas of development, marketing and finance or accounting. Some also upgraded technology and databases.

The organizations further progressed toward their business plan goals by addressing their programs and systems. Consultants aided the grantees in evaluating the implementation of their

**“By defining our focus more strategically, we have set in motion a more accountable organization that does not make promises it cannot keep. Our customer service has improved significantly.”**



## BOOST Evaluation

Initially, an external evaluation of BOOST was designed to gauge whether the process was working and grantee organizations were becoming more sustainable. However, as the initiative evolved, Dr. Stevens and the Foundation staff discovered that the evaluation wasn't capturing the learning taking place within and among cohorts, and how changes were occurring. In 2005, they decided a change of direction was necessary.

“BOOST for us was truly transformational. It forced us to focus on issues that needed to be addressed.”

The new action-learning assessment design set out to capture the dynamic processes by which grantees made changes to governance, management, financial resource development and administrative systems. The new evaluation also assessed the Foundation staff's and consultants' learning and their observations about the grantees' progress.

## The Results

Over the three years of BOOST, grantees identified and then implemented significant and necessary changes. Given the complex nature of organizational change and the valiant effort needed to bring it about, the Foundation and the participating grantees considered the grantees' accomplishments impressive, and the initiative a success.

Grantees were overwhelmingly pleased with the results their organizations

realized from their participation in BOOST. Some observed that BOOST's timing was critical to its success in their organizations. They expressed the importance of beginning the program with organizations that are poised to move forward in their lifecycle stage.

All grantees made notable progress along the Nonprofit Lifecycles Model.



Photo by Chris Dasegi

While not all organizational changes were sequential, grantees discovered the strategies needed to build capacity and sustainability. The lifecycles approach validated the experiences and challenges of the grantees, and assisted the consultants in working with the organizations where they were in their development. The model was a critical component for organizational self-assessment and provided a framework for thinking about stage-appropriate capacity, while helping to depersonalize barriers and problems.

Metro Volunteers puts on a downtown volunteer fair to match people to service opportunities. A BOOST grant allowed Metro Volunteers to hire branding and marketing consultants, with one result being a new motto and call to action: Change Yourself. Change the World.

**BOOST** has served as a galvanizing force in our organization and continues to act as a beacon in charting the course for our future programmatic and infrastructural stability and growth.

## In a Nutshell – How Organizations Changed During BOOST

BOOST grantees compiled a long list of organizational “firsts” and other strategic and tactical changes. Here are changes initiated by one or more BOOST participants.

### Mission and Programs

- Clarified mission, vision and values
- Shifted from making decisions based on intuition to making decisions grounded in mission, values, business plan and financial analysis
- Eliminated programs that did not fit mission or were not financially viable
- Improved and added programs to better align with mission, financial needs and strategic direction
- Implemented program evaluation
- Expanded partnerships and collaborations
- Increased program-specific funding

### Management

- Implemented new organizational chart
- Added new positions and hired people that were the right fit for the growth stage
- Freed up the executive director’s time to focus on strategic issues
- Created new branding and marketing materials
- Implemented new succession plans, job descriptions, employee evaluation and management teams
- Paid more attention to financial management on a regular basis; shared financial information with managers

### Governance

- Implemented new job descriptions, committee structures and officers
- Improved board recruiting processes
- Added new board members

- Conducted board self-assessments
- Implemented new policies
- Increased board engagement in fundraising and financial management

### Financial Resources

- Used financial management tools (such as program-based budgets) to better understand financial reality of each program
- Recognized that sustainable funding is a necessity
- Changed attitude from “survive” to “succeed”
- Implemented more accurate, responsive and timely financial management systems
- Engaged board and management staff in financial management thinking and planning
- Established strong finance committee
- Used financial data to guide program decisions and expansion plans
- Shared a “dashboard” of key financial information regularly with the board
- Pursued new funding opportunities
- Hired development director for the first time
- Hired in-house financial staff for the first time
- Used multiyear planning and budgeting
- Upgraded accounting software
- Performed cash flow analysis
- Used accrual accounting
- Reported “budget to actual” financial performance

### Administrative Systems

- Implemented new policies and procedures for human resources, financial management and other areas
- Strengthened technology—website, computers and database upgrades
- Purchased accounting and fundraising software
- Moved to new office space



## Key Success Factors Promoting Organizational Strength

BOOST participants stated that four factors were pivotal to building capacity and sustainability:

**Readiness.** Readiness meant that grantees were psychologically ready for change. Strong buy-in was also seen as critical. The commitment of time and energy required from BOOST necessitated involvement from all levels of the organization, especially the executive director and the board of directors. Without strong buy-in, organizational growth and change would not have been sustained.

**Board engagement.** This was considered crucial in driving the growth-stage organizations forward. Grantees that struggled overall seemed to have difficulty in getting their boards to take true ownership of their organizations.

“We believe one of the most important factors in our success with the BOOST process was the fact that we were ready for BOOST when the opportunity came to us—and that’s huge.”

Without an engaged board everything fell on the executive director’s shoulders. Engaged board members took more ownership of decision-making overall, and in their governance role specifically.

**Financial management.** Strong financial management, another element of

healthy nonprofits, was considered especially challenging at the growth stage; it required a fundamental shift in thinking, practices and systems in order for organizations to achieve long-term sustainability. While many grantees made significant improvements in their financial resources, the most successful organizations experienced a fundamental shift in thinking and began to



Photo by Chris Takagi

take a long-term perspective on both financial management and resource development. Grantees used a combination of strategic financial decision-making, more sophisticated systems, increased expertise on board and staff (including finance staff and development directors) and more diversified funding. They used a variety of tools to understand their program economics, made use of financial information in planning and decision-

During the three years that the Center for African American Health took part in BOOST, the organization rewrote its mission, changed its name and doubled the size of its staff.

making, valued financial health and adhered to sound financial practices.

**Organizational balance.** BOOST organizations that made progress across all of the structural components were, generally, more successful overall. These organizations consistently focused on understanding the progress they had made and the steps that must be taken

## Key Resources Promoting Organizational Strength

Tools and resources provided to BOOST participants varied in their importance for moving the initiative forward and promoting organizational strength. Those considered most valuable to grantees, in order of importance, included:

**Consultants and coaching.** The three-year relationship between consultants and organizations' leadership teams was valuable and fulfilling to both parties.

“The most rewarding thing about working with my client was looking back and seeing how much they accomplished since becoming a part of BOOST. Their entire mindset is now different. The executive director said, ‘We now look at all our actions with reference to the business plan.’ That was great to hear.”

BOOST Consultant



Photo by Chris Takagi

BOOST helped the Women's Bean Project learn that less is more. By concentrating on their strongest line of business and shutting down the other, they became more focused without losing revenue.

for them to continue to move forward. Their success confirmed the concept presented by Dr. Stevens that nonprofit capacity demands an equally balanced support system of management, governance, financial resources and administrative systems.

The consultants often acted as mentors, and their ongoing coaching made facing new challenges less daunting for leadership team members. Consultants appreciated the opportunity to work with an organization intensively over a period of time and to be able to see the changes play out.

**Strategic investment grants.** The incremental and strategic grants from Rose allowed for deliberate investments



by the grantees' board of directors and management teams in their operations. These investments led to systemic organizational change.

**Business plans.** Grantees benefited significantly from developing their business plans. The plans caused them to prioritize, kept them on track and became their guiding document. For

**Leadership teams.** The ability of the leadership teams to move the change process forward in their organizations accounted for much of BOOST's success. Having multiple internal champions from an organization leading their change efforts reinforced the need for board and staff to work together in promoting organizational strength.



Photo by Chris Takagi



Photo by Chris Takagi

many, for the first time, the plans served to foster agreement across the organization on shared goals.

**Initial self-assessment.** Many considered the initial self-assessment helpful in getting them started and giving them a better understanding of where they were in their own development. The assessments forced them to take a hard look at their operations.

Important synergies occurred between these BOOST resources and, ultimately, each was interdependent on the others.

Although all the BOOST tools and resources were perceived to have value to at least some participants, the larger cohort meetings were considered the least important resource provided.

Right Photo: BOOST helped The Senior Hub to add a new development and community relations position, and to diversify its revenue by offering for-pay services to clients who could afford them.

Left Photo: Hillel of Colorado credits BOOST with enabling the organization to make a transition from its former 800-square-foot facility to a new 8,000-square-foot building.

## Lessons Learned from BOOST

The experiences of the growth-stage nonprofits, the consultants and the Foundation staff over three years of BOOST revealed several important conclusions about nonprofit capacity building using Dr. Stevens' framework:



Photo by Chris Takagi

The Colorado Agency for Jewish Education (CAJE) saw staffing changes and increased board involvement as a result of BOOST.

- Organizational change is not linear. Some grantees made significant strides towards maturity, others advanced within the growth stage and a few others found they needed to go backwards in order to move forward.
- Sustained change requires more time, energy and commitment than participants may expect. Extensive effort was required of the grantees' boards and staff members over the three-year initiative. For all involved, however, the return was considered worth the investment.

- Readiness and buy-in are critical when undertaking an initiative such as BOOST. Without them—and a commitment to sustained change—participation would have stalled out along the way.
- As a complex, multiyear initiative, BOOST required ongoing relationship management and course corrections. Issues emerged that were unexpected, such as addressing grantee-consultant mismatches, clarifying consultants' roles during business plan implementation and redesigning the evaluation process.
- Team members will change over the course of the three-year initiative as a result of personnel changes and board members rotating on and off their respective boards.

**“BOOST has been the single most important initiative we've undertaken in the past several years! The funding helped, but it truly was secondary to the effective business planning process and consultant-led facilitation that we received over the past three years.”**

- A Community of Practice succeeds only when the community members want to become part of one. The executive directors' Community of Practice was seen as valuable by most and a tool to overcoming isolation. By contrast, the larger cohort meetings





did not serve to build a large Community of Practice. This may be based in part on the structure of those sessions and the content presented.

- Both Foundation staff and consultants gained significant tools and knowledge alongside the grantees, enabling them to use these new practices in other areas of their work in the community.

**“There is NO WAY we would be where we are today without the investment made in us by Rose Community Foundation.... Our results have been far beyond what we expected.”**

## From Survival to Success—Building Organizational Capacity Effectively

BOOST provided a catapult to not only launch a change process, but to sustain it. Through strategic and unprecedented coaching and support, the initiative improved the sustainability of the eight grantees and led a cadre of funders, consultants and nonprofit organizations to become more effective.

The participating nonprofits changed their attitudes from “survive” to “succeed” and all became positioned to accomplish their programs and missions. The consultants learned a proven model for building organizational capacity that they have woven into their consulting practices. And Foundation staff

recognized the importance of lifecycle assessments, business plans, coaching and other components needed—rather than just the “\$5,000 strategic plan”—to strengthen organizations.

As BOOST 2003–2006 came to a close, Rose was already planning how to replicate the process with a second cohort of grantees in BOOST 2007–2010.

Dr. Stevens agreed to continue in her role as lead consultant using the Nonprofit Lifecycles Model. The second initiative targeted nonprofit organizations in a variety of developmental stages rather than only in the growth stage. Nevertheless, all were at critical junctures in their development and recognized that organizational capacity-building could make a significant difference.

Building on the results from the first three-year effort, the Foundation looks forward to continuing in its practice of strengthening grantees systemically while supporting nonprofit capacity builders to work more effectively.

**“Change and growth are the operative words for us....The benefits of BOOST will linger for years to come.”**



Photo by Chris Takagi

Focused on helping families give their children a good start in life, Colorado Bright Beginnings credits BOOST with helping the organization become proactive about the future by following a business plan.

## BOOST Participants



Rose Community Foundation file photo

At a final celebration of BOOST 2003–2006, participants received a gift representing the table graphic (page 7) with a tabletop holding the mission (vase of flowers) and four strong legs supporting it.

### Consultants

Bourge Hathaway, Ordinary Magic  
Gail Hoyt, Financial & Accounting Support Specialists  
Gurudev Khalsa, Trilight Development  
Richard Male, Richard Male & Associates  
Sharon McClew  
Karla Raines, Corona Research  
Patricia Sterner, JFB & Associates  
Susan Kenny Stevens, LarsonAllen  
Catherine Sunshine, The Sunshine Consultancy

### Nonprofit Organizations

Boulder Jewish Community Center  
Center for African American Health  
Colorado Agency for Jewish Education  
Colorado Bright Beginnings  
Hillel of Colorado  
Metro Volunteers  
The Senior Hub  
Women's Bean Project

### Funders

Rose Community Foundation

Sheila Bugdanowitz,  
President and CEO

Senior Program Officers:

Lisa Farber Miller  
(project manager)

Therese Ellery

Phillip Gonring

Elsa Holguín

Barbara Yondorf

The Jay and Rose Phillips Family Foundation funded the participation of Metro Volunteers

