

**Assessment outline**  
**How to Create a Resilient Development Plan**

**The story**

Tell the founding story of the organization and why it was founded.

State the mission, values and vision of the organization as provided to you by the organization or as it is listed on their website. Look at the information they gave you. Based on your experience in looking at their materials, and through your interviews, do they capture it well? In your opinion is there a clear case for support? Do they have a written case for support?

**Evaluate the income sources**

Looking at their financial information layout what percentage they receive from each source. (You can group fundraising activities into one if you don't have the financial information broken down)

Sample sources:

Fee for service

Government sources

Fundraising activities- e.g. yearend appeal, events, face-to-face asks, third party events, other

Campaign strategies- when asking for support do they ask for general operating or do they ask for support for something more specific? Example: Their yearend appeal letter asked their donors to support the new early childhood education classes versus nothing specific.

What is their fiscal year? How are they doing so far this year? Are they on target? Ahead or behind? Why?

**Grants/ Foundations**

What percentage of their income comes from grants? Are any of them through a government source? Who does the grant writing? Do they have a tracking system to monitor their progress? Do they meet with or have contact with Foundation employees/contacts? Do they send thank you notes after they receive gifts- this is not a receipt letter.

**Cultivation-Stewardship activities**

*What are their methods?*

Examples:

Thank you notes, calls (by staff or board)

Gatherings for their donors

Impact reports

One on one visits

Who is responsible for cultivation and stewardship of the organizations donors? Staff, board, volunteers or a combination?

**The Thank-you Letter**

Paraphrased, Penelope Burk says the thank you letter is one of the most important ways to cultivate a donor and increase the likelihood of a second gift. After looking at Burk's handout on

Donor-Centered Thank you letters, what would you change to make the letter better? Burk said “Great letter-writing is an art, and creating art requires original thinking and constant practice.” This is an opportunity to practice writing a thank you letter

What is their turnaround time for responding to donations? Who sends the letters? Does anyone make a thank you call? Is there a procedure for handling first-time donors?

### **Financials**

Describe their 990s from the last two years. Is there a big difference in income from one year to the next?

Look at their balance sheet, year-to-date statements. Is the organization running ahead of budget, behind? Ask them why if they are ahead or behind.

### **Measuring their success**

How does the organization know they are raising funds? Are they only looking at how much they have raised at the end of their year or are they breaking activities down individually?

### **Evaluate the Expenses for Fundraising/Development**

Are their fundraising activities producing a positive income? Are they tracking employee time? Are they looking at the ROI?

### **Chart it out- take one fundraising activity and deep dive the numbers**

Track the last three years of income and expenses for the organization in general and/or for a fundraising activity in particular- example: see event example

Are they tracking staff time?

Do they have something like this already created?

Are their fundraising campaigns more relationship oriented (giving for to support the mission) or transactional (they get something in return)?

### **Systems for tracking their work**

Donor Database -What system are they using? How many donors do they have in their database? How many donors do they have that have given in the last two years? How often do they run reports to analyze their data?

Tracking forms- e.g. sponsorships/tables for an event, grants,

Storing historical data- folders with a record of last year’s materials e.g. newsletters, invites, appeal letters

Development plans/plans for a campaign e.g. annual appeal, events, walks, etc.

Are they methodically entering data to track donors? Is one person responsible or are there several? Do they have a document that outlines the guidelines for entering data?

Do they have documents they refer to annually as they carry out their fundraising activities or are they making it up each year as they go?

### **The 80-20 Rule**

After evaluating their fundraising, cultivation and stewardship activities, are they subscribing to the 80-20 rule of development/fundraising? What would you say the percentage is if they are not?

Who is leading the fundraising/cultivation-stewardship efforts?

**Communicating with donors**

Website- is it donor friendly? How easy is it to make a donation? Where is the donation button? Is the case for support clear? Do they have an impact report, an annual report or newsletter? Who handles their graphic design? Other observations about their communications tools?

**Board**

How many people are currently on the board? How often do they bring on new board members? Do they have a succession plan for new members/leadership? What is the board's role in fundraising/cultivation-stewardship? What stage would you say the board is in their development? Founding/Governing/Fundraising?

**Who gives?**

Can they describe who their typical donor is? Do their activities/marketing, etc. do a good job of "speaking" to this donor?

**In conclusion**, Summarize your findings. What would you say are the strengths and the areas that are in need of improvement in your nonprofit's philanthropy program?

**What is the activity you recommend that could improve their philanthropy?**

Could they improve the efficiency of an event they are doing? Do they need to do more cultivation/stewardship? If so, what do you recommend that they do? Remember this needs to be a reasonable activity that fits within the capacity of the organization. Be as specific as possible.