



Suggested Steps in Forming a Local Nonprofit Partnership or Network

1. **Assess the need**, and current programs in your community (if any) that support nonprofit staff and volunteer leaders. Gather stories that illustrate the need (changing names to protect the innocent, and not-so-innocent alike).
2. **Articulate the idea**, and develop a vision - what would the nonprofit community be like with increased support, training, and networking?
3. **Assess what other kinds of organizations** might see this work as overlapping with their missions, and enlist their support early in the process. Examples include colleges or universities, United Ways, community foundations, private foundations, or consulting/training firms.
4. **Gather advisors** from various sectors to vet the idea and gather support. Don't limit the group to the "choir" (executive directors); for credibility and broader perspective, consider including business leaders, chambers of commerce, economic development organizations, government agencies, educational institutions, and respected community volunteers. You may need to meet a few times to refine and grow the idea, and build support.
5. **Refine the idea** and vision based on the feedback from the advisors, and begin to think about the programmatic offerings you could manage (Brown bags? Longer seminars? Networking events?)
6. **Start identifying the "essential building blocks"** in your community (see the other side of this page). Seek a fiscal sponsor and administrative/finance provider first, as that will drive much of the rest of the process.
7. **Form a governance group** (we call ours the Steering Committee) to plan and manage the effort. Remember to broaden the group beyond executive directors, to have broad representation and varied perspectives. A suggested recruitment message: the entire community benefits from a strong, effective nonprofit sector!
8. **Build a "case statement"** document that summarizes the vision, program design, and supporters of the concept to date.
9. **Seek funding and in-kind resources** from local private foundations, community foundations, major donors, and other potential supporters. This approach may need to be outside a normal application process, as many funders may be new to the idea.
10. **Be patient, persistent, methodical, and hopeful...** NpDP did not happen overnight! It took about two years from developing the initial concept until we were offering regular, consistent programming.