Chapter 2

Develop Community Image

"At many foundations, program officers as well as trustees have on-the-ground relationships with nonprofits. They often make funding decisions by hearing of nonprofits through word of mouth, and by networking with other foundations to share their knowledge of the nonprofit sector. If I as a program officer am funding an organization, it is because I believe in what it is doing; therefore I will tell others about it and spread the word on its behalf. That's the best PR a nonprofit can get."

Kerrie Blevins, Foundation Director
The Patrick and Aimee Butler Family Foundation

No matter how unfair it may seem, public perception is often a big factor playing into the success or failure of an organization. The media holds a powerful role in educating the public—whether correctly or incorrectly—about the internal workings of both corporate and nonprofit entities. In recent times, oversight and governance have become big issues for nonprofits to conquer; the communities and governments they serve have begun to ask serious questions about accountability and social responsibility. Although the general opinion in the nonprofit community is that marketing is a business tool and that money spent on it could be better utilized for programs, wise nonprofit leaders understand that public relations are fundamental to fundraising and friend-raising. Such leaders therefore aim to make strategic decisions about their public relations efforts and involve not just the marketing staff but also programs and development.

Got Mission?

Mission statements are a big part of any nonprofit organization, and grant professionals in particular use them almost every day as they craft proposals and other written pieces that reach out to the public. Workshops and courses on every aspect of nonprofit management deal with crafting the mission statement in a way that explains succinctly the true reason why the organization exists. But in many cases, mission statements become mere statements over the years, no longer real indicators of the values and purpose of the organization. In other situations, missions are so ambiguous and full of legalese that they boggle the mind of the reader and explain nothing. If the staff or volunteers of an organization are asked what their mission is, they use words and explanations very different from the actual statement.

Before embarking upon a public relations effort that attempts to attract the community, it is important to not only be aware internally of what an organization's mission is, but to embody it externally as well. When a nonprofit is born, its founders and other involved persons have a certain idea of its purpose and intentions, but as time passes, that purpose may change based on the realities of working in the field or due to a better understanding of the issues faced by the community being served. In many cases, a reassessment of the mission and vision of each organization becomes necessary after some years and may need to occur fairly regularly. This re-evaluation could easily be implemented in strategic planning sessions if an organization conducts those on a consistent basis—after all, it is the fundamental from which other strategies such as program goals, action plans, and even fundraising plans should be derived. If strategic planning is not an option, then some other type of methodology must be adopted—perhaps in the form of interviews, surveys, or smaller departmental meetings that pose a series of questions and brainstorm ideas. The mission's revision may also become necessary for an organization that undergoes major changes in structure or leadership—such as the founder retiring from the helm after 20 years or an entirely new service being offered for the first time—or only because a need is felt for renewed drive and enthusiasm among staff and volunteers. Certainly our recommendations in Chapter 1 for engaging current board members and introducing fresh faces will serve an organization well as it re-examines its mission.

For several reasons, grant professionals should remain at the forefront of this reassessment: oftentimes they are the only ones within the organization using the mission statement on a consistent basis. In their conversations with funders, they are typically asked questions related to their organization's purpose and vision for the future, and they are aware of the organization's programs and administration from a holistic viewpoint rather than from the narrower perspective that department heads may possess. Grant professionals can also benefit from discussions about mission and can improve their writing and funder interactions by understanding the relationship between mission and programs. As an example, potential funders of faith-based organizations—discussed in more detail in Chapter 7—often have questions about faith and secularism that may be difficult to answer in grant applications or during site visits. The YMCA of Greater Cincinnati explains this very well on their website by asking "where is the C in YMCA?" For grant professionals as well as others who may not find it easy to connect a Christian mission to the physical and emotional programming offered by the Y, it explains the connection from a programming aspect; for example: "confessing that we are our brother's keepers as we contribute to programs for under privileged youth." By similarly explaining the programs in relation to the overall mission or vision, an organization can educate not only funders but also insiders who may not know or have simply forgotten.

Why is mission evaluation so significant to the development of community image? While many explanations exist, the most important one is that an organization that no longer externally reflects its purpose and goals is in danger of being viewed negatively by the community it operates in. External reflection therefore does not only mean emblazoning the mission statement in grant proposals and letterhead or quoting it in speeches made by the executive director. Each and every contact with the community at large by any person associated by the organization should automatically reflect its mission. Bike Pittsburgh, for instance, has board members who show their passion everyday by hiking, cycling to work, racing mountain bikes, and even proudly riding the bus. They are avid advocates of the nonprofit not because they are on the board but because it comes naturally to them. Remaining true to an organization's mission may be as simple as a senior citizens center offering bigger font or audio capabilities on its website or a children's nonprofit providing day care for its employees on site. If the culture of the organization is such that its values and spirit are understood and agreed upon by all, the public will have no choice but to sit up and take notice because the everyday actions of its staff and volunteers will be a physical embodiment of its mission and values.

One method of implementing the above concept is to include organizational values and goals in employee and volunteer performance measurement, and grant professionals are in an excellent position to advocate this approach. Knowing that funders will appreciate the inclusion of such measurement, they can assist in the creation of specific goals and objectives that will help demonstrate a commitment to providing services of the highest quality. These goals could relate to safety, customer appreciation, prompt response, or any other indicator that is a part of the service being provided by the nonprofit. Service delivery models can be expanded to include these aspects: for example, case workers taking 24 hours or less to respond to inquiries, volunteers receiving an A+ in satisfaction surveys by clients, or organizations receiving consistent ratings in national, state, or local recognitions. It goes without saying that positive results of any such performance measurements should be broadcast not only in public relations activities but also in grant proposals to foundations.

When crafting a mission statement in itself or as part of more comprehensive strategic planning, it is essential to seek the input of all stakeholders; volunteers and clients, for example, can contribute valuable insight of how the organization is viewed by the public or what areas need improvement. Methods of doing so abound, from the inexpensive to the very costly. Typically, walk-in comment cards, online surveys, or focus groups are all cost-effective ways to collect a host of information with which to move forward. The Interfaith Council for Peace and Justice in Ann Arbor, MI, consulted its constituents through a listening project consisting of 130 surveys and 6 listening sessions in order to ask questions such as "what do you care about most?," "what do you see as the most important elements of our work?," and "how do you see us balancing multiple issues with the need to focus?" The result was a 51-page document full of data that prompted a shift in focus and policies related to their Middle East work and improvements in program design. Leaders of the organization report an increase in funding after the listening project and attribute it to mission clarity. Similarly, at Pitzer College in Claremont, CA, participation and social responsibility are core values. Rather than mere lip service or small social efforts on an individual level, the college has included broad community input from students, faculty, staff, and alumni for major building projects. Further, the community's voice has been incorporated in many aspects of decision-making, including the green planning process for sustainable building.

Within the organization, all such strategy sessions should involve grant professionals as well as other department workers for open discussions. Grant professionals can bring the opinions of funders to the table and can address any conflicting issues raised while writing grant proposals; for example, they are often in an ideal position to ask whether certain programs align themselves with the overall mission and purpose of the organization. Knowing how important board involvement is from a funder's perspective, grant professionals can lead the way in encouraging board members to identify with the mission and brainstorm ways to excite passion for their cause. When discussing improvements in programs or management, grant professionals armed with the appropriate prospect research tools can offer valuable advice on how to improve quality of service or create targeted public relations efforts that will positively affect institutional grants and donations. Working together with grant professionals, program staff can assess collaboration opportunities, create appropriate program goals and objectives, and discuss the expanded role of volunteers in programs.

Blow Your Own Horn

Once every staff member and volunteer within an organization is excited about what the organization does and plans to do in the future, the next step is to create a comprehensive public relations plan or to re-evaluate an existing one. Many books and online resources are available to help guide this process; however, some aspects of a public relations plan are conducive to interdepartmental input including that of grant professionals. Stephens College in Columbia, MO, celebrated its 175th anniversary in 2008 not just through marketing, but by conducting outreach on a national level with the hope of increasing awareness and community pride. As part of this celebration, they profiled several alumni as "amazing women" in local magazines and through their website. These alumni include actresses, scientists, and corporate and nonprofit leaders. They also produced an event called the "High Heeled Leader" where the college president opened up to audiences about her experiences, leadership style, and accomplishments.

Best Practice: Brighter Beginnings

As part of a strategic planning process, the Oakland, CA, nonprofit The Perinatal Council determined that they needed to build greater community awareness by adopting branding that more clearly reflected their broad range of services and evolving mission. Utilizing volunteer marketing experts, the management decided to conduct a marketing audit to better understand public perception of their services. Thirty people connected with the organization—clients, funders, and former board members—participated in interviews answering questions related to their understanding of services provided and effect in the community. As a result of the audit, the organization changed its name to Brighter Beginnings, created a more attractive logo, and a new visual identity including the look and content of newsletters, its website, and other published materials. A new vision statement was adopted and became part of the new tagline "every family matters." The name change was communicated to foundation funders through a letter explaining the strategic plan and the subsequent improvements. Brighter Beginnings has found that this transformation in image has resulted in greater donor loyalty and increased donations since 2007, as well as a nomination for the 2008 Excellence in Marketing Award (nonprofit category) from the San Francisco chapter of the American Marketing Association.

There are countless creative ways to build a positive community image using both traditional and innovative public relations activities. The key to their success is to provide easy access to information about the organization for the press, both current and potential donors, volunteers, and any other stakeholders who may need it. This means cleaning up the website, creating an online or print press kit, providing in-depth information about programs, and much more. It also includes creating consistent branding and messaging by using the same colors, logos, taglines, and content on both print stationery and online.

Some nonprofits receive substantial publicity for a variety of reasons. Our research found that 49.7% of survey respondents received five or more incidences of initiated publicity in the last fiscal year, such as public service announcements and press releases being picked up by the media. Only 5.8% of respondents received no initiated publicity at all. Of the respondent receiving five or more incidences of publicity, 24.4% were *large budget* organizations, while 60.3% were *very large budget* organizations (See Figure 2.1).

While this points to the greater resources that very large nonprofits may have in terms of marketing or public relations activities, it also may imply that they are well-known in the community as a result of mission alignment and a higher level of expertise in providing services. These respondents also conduct more active grant seeking efforts: a larger number have relationships with foundations at the board and senior staff level compared to the total and reach out more to foundation grantors during the year in nonsoliciting activities.

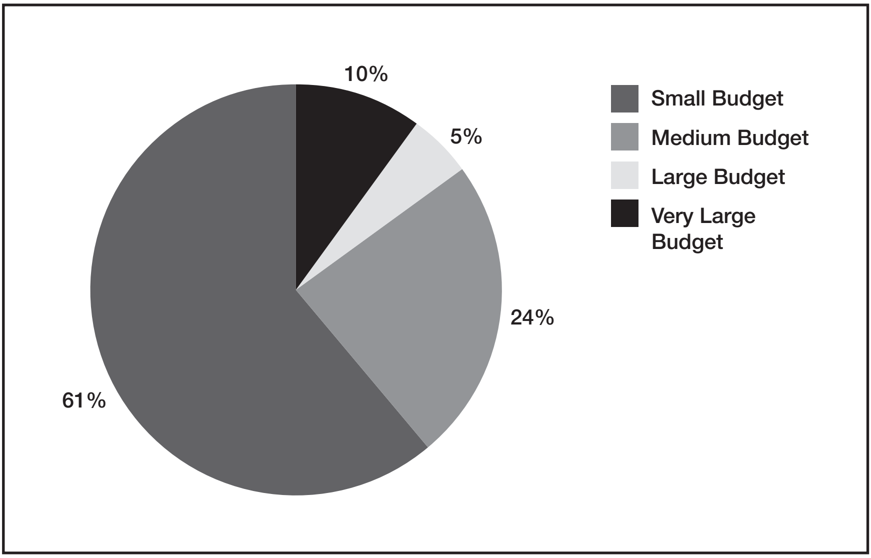

Figure 2.1 ***Respondents Receiving More Than 5 Incidences of Publicity by Size***

On the other hand, organizations receiving no publicity took fewer opportunities for overall communication and outreach to donors: 37.5% never contacted a foundation grantor for nonsoliciting purposes during the year, as opposed to 1.3% of those who received the greatest number of publicity incidences, and 8.2% of all respondents of the survey. This further points to fewer grant strategies at all budgetary levels, combined with less overall communication for the entire organization (See Figure 2.2).

Reaching out to foundation donors for public relations purposes is a very delicate road: nonprofits often inundate their funders with newsletters, invitations to events, and the like in the hopes of generating interest that may translate into funding. Unfortunately, program officers and trustees rarely have the time or motivation to read publications or give personal appearances unless there is a deeper relationship between the grantor and grantee. Later in this chapter, as well as in Chapters 9 and 10, we discuss how to engage and involve foundations and other stakeholders through targeted communications and outreach plans that involve programs and development. Grant professionals who are allowed access to activities traditionally earmarked for marketing can help improve the entire public relations effort by alerting them to key issues raised by funders. One of my clients was asked recently by a foundation reviewing their proposal why the number of low-income clients served had

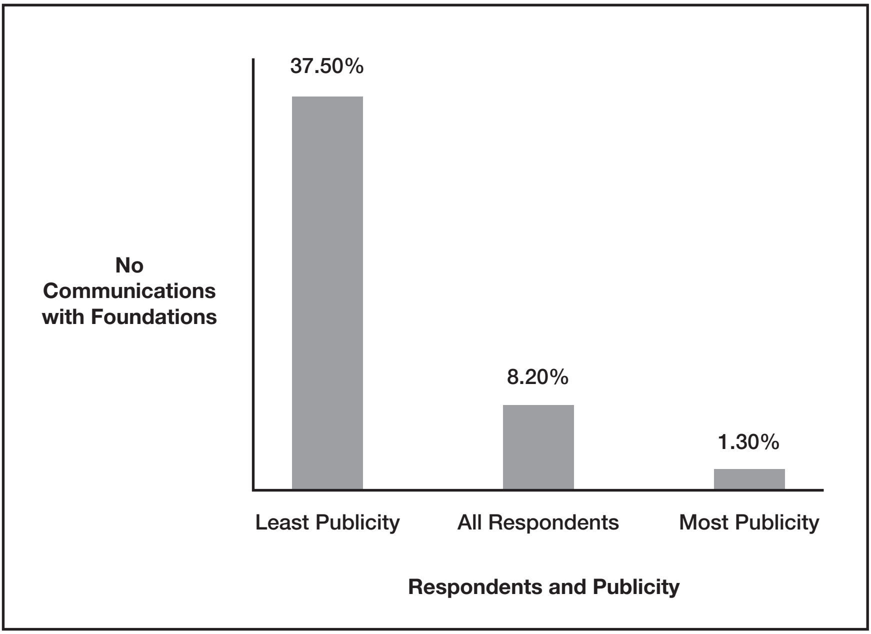

Figure 2.2 *Percentage of Respondents Never Communicating with Foundations*

decreased from the year before. A donor may very well have the same question when program numbers are highlighted in an annual report or online, but unless the grant professional is consulted, the marketing staff may not even realize the significance of this question. Other issues include the ratio of funds spent on programs as opposed to fundraising and administration, program accomplishments related to goals and outcomes, and expertise of key staff and volunteers—all are items that may be missed by marketing staff attempting to create newsletters, fact sheets, annual reports, or websites in a vacuum. While database software may give names and amounts for the donor roll, the human

Funder Perspective: The St. Paul Foundation

Trista Harris, Former Program Officer

Q: How effective do you think nonprofit public relations efforts are?

A: For a lot of organizations, public relations focuses on volume—for example, tons of newsletters. If you're sending slick newsletters, some foundations may feel you have enough money and don't need their funding. To me, it's more about the work you're doing. What is really helpful is when an organization is conducting systems change, they create research reports, for example, how to use incarceration rates, and look outside their own work. For example, an organization working in early education looked at the whole process and wanted to get the data out to the community. Public relations should be about a nonprofit's place in the world, not just about them individually. Good research reports and articles are helpful to us because we learn about trends through them and are able to connect to a number of nonprofits that we would otherwise not know about.

For foundation staff, events are less helpful. I get approximately 15 invitations each week and part of it is that I don't feel it's fair to go to one organization's event and not the other's. For a nonprofit whose proposal is pending or for a recent grantee, I may attend an event in order to find out more information outside of the proposal. For example, I recently attended a grand opening celebration of a building which we funded, because I wanted to see how it turned out. Also, I may visit a nonprofit to see how it functions when the public is present; for example, we recently funded a new community center and I wanted to learn what the community felt about it, hear their comments, and see the building actually being used. That way I can give honest feedback to our board—word on the street is always more valuable than chicken dinners. Such events also allow me to see the interaction between staff and clients, which can be very useful when reviewing proposals.

touch provided by stories of family foundation trustees can only be provided by grant professionals who are capturing that information year-round. On the other hand, grant professionals can improve their own proposals by borrowing the brand and image used for public relations efforts by using taglines on cover pages and including pictures, stories, or letters as appendices.

Programs and Public Relations

In direct contrast to traditional marketing, organizations fare better in terms of building community image when their public relations efforts center on program activities. This may be as simple as celebrating a milestone: the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline answering the one millionth call to their suicide hotline, or Lutheran Social Services in Austin, TX, placing their 7,000th adoption. Other activities take longer to execute but may have income opportunities as well: the board of directors of Wellspring House in Gloucester, MA, asked one of its founders, Rosemary Luling Haughton, to write a short history of the organization; the result: "The Wellspring Story," which is sold at Wellspring events and at their administrative offices. Similarly, a film crew accompanying Interplast volunteer surgeons to Vietnam documented the team's experiences to produce "A Story of Healing," which earned the 1997 Academy Award for best documentary, short subject. The 28-minute film is now available online for free, although donations are encouraged.

Grant professionals should keep track of program-related snippets of information in a centralized location—either physical or virtual—not just to alert the marketing team as needed, but also in order to include them in grant proposals, funding reports, and other contacts with foundations. This may take some concerted effort on the part of both the grants team as well as the program staff, hence sending out periodic inquiries via email or convening informal meetings to brainstorm ideas for potential funder-appropriate public relations activities may be advisable.

Some events may be related to showcasing program results and therefore also need the coordination of both grant professionals and program staff—not just for the production of the event but also to ensure that grantors and potential funders are invited. I Have a Dream Houston publicizes the results of their program evaluation annually through an event called "Year in the Dream" attended by an audience of donors, volunteers, and community leaders. Although the event does serve as a cultivation tool to find new donors, its main purpose is to demonstrate to funders the impact of their contributions. Underwritten by a corporate sponsor, the event is free and no solicitation occurs during the proceedings.

With the growth of online public relations tools, many organizations are turning to the Internet to engage new audiences and improve their image in the broader community. Blogs can be helpful for publicizing activities and events, such as the education and community programs blog of the Walker Arts Center in Minneapolis, MN, and for highlighting program events in a way that bring them to life, such as volunteers of Project Hope documenting their experiences during humanitarian trips to other countries. Not every blog, e-newsletter, or networking tool is created equal; however, it is important to remember to remain donor-centric and even in many cases differentiate among them based on the target audience. Again, the grant professional can offer immense help to the marketing department with regards to insight and information about institutional donors and their preferences.

Best Practice: Bike Pittsburgh

Being a membership organization, Bike Pittsburgh values the participation of their constituents in guiding the direction and goals of the organization. When strategic planning was initiated in 2008, it was decided to create a process that was as transparent as possible and to involve the entire constituency in order to get the benefit of everyone's input. Therefore, a kickoff meeting was announced, and members of the public were invited to attend. For those who could not attend, comments and suggestions were encouraged in advance through email. The meeting was attended by approximately 40 members of the public—members who wanted to have a say in what Bike Pittsburgh was doing or planned to do in the future. In addition, the meeting was attended by the board of directors and selected people from the community such as those working at other nonprofits, community leaders, students, and other bike enthusiasts. As a result of this kickoff meeting and the subsequent strategic planning process, the organization created a comprehensive plan of action for the future, with long, medium, and short term goals. The results were summarized into a one-page document called the Strategic Plan Summary, listing three main goals or areas of concern for Bike Pittsburgh. Not only has the strategic plan helped the organization's internal operations by making staff and volunteers more focused, but it has also formed their public relations effort. It is used as a public relations tool to introduce Bike Pittsburgh to the community and to solicit comments and feedback. It is taken along to meetings and handed out at events as part of our outreach effort and aims to make the entire organization more transparent to the public.

Programs that possess a high degree of community outreach or involvement can also be used indirectly for the purpose of building community image, as long as care is taken to ensure that they remain programmatic in nature. The People's Grocery in West Oakland, CA, holds monthly "Grub Parties," that offer free cooking demonstrations, musical performances and interactive discussions to build community awareness around the issue of healthy eating. In addition to the targeted demographic, people from other communities frequently attend to learn more about the organization; often these attendees become donors or volunteers.

Although publicity is mostly beneficial to nonprofits, there can be times when staff and volunteers may prefer to remain unexposed. Negative publicity resulting from a crisis, both internal and external, can have disastrous effects on the reputation of an organization. A well-thought out crisis management plan is essential to ensure that operations continue in times of adversity and that funding and public opinion remains unaffected as much as possible. A few years ago, Stephens College experienced financial troubles due to lagging enrollment; instead of ignoring the issue, their leaders chose to address the crisis in front of current and potential funders—even those who were unaware of it. In these conversations, the college communicated the progress that had been made due to a new presidency, as well as the improvements in enrollment, staff, and programs. Further, funders who arrived for a site visit were shown buildings that had been closed down during the financial crisis in order to bring home the need for their support.

In the wake of several reports of fraud, mismanagement, and general non-stewardship of public trust, many nonprofits face tough questions and guilt by association from their communities. With the passing of the Sarbanes-Oxley Act for corporate entities, nonprofits also face higher expectations and stricter guidelines even though they are currently exempt from most of the provisions of the act. For instance, independent audits, while not required for smaller nonprofits, are essential to maintain the fiscal integrity of an organization; the creation of an audit committee to oversee this process can do wonders in this regard. The American Institute of Certified Public Accountants has created an Audit Committee Toolkit for Not-for-Profit Organizations, with recommendations on how to form and adhere to stated audit and other policies. Other essential, although not required, policies include those addressing conflicts of interest, disclosure, and whistle blowing. The Board Source and the Independent Sector published a paper titled The Sarbanes-Oxley Act and Implications for Nonprofit Organizations, an excellent description of how nonprofits of all sizes can voluntarily adopt governance best practices.

Negative publicity resulting from a regional or national issue—such as product recalls and health scares—can actually serve as positive influences on the public profile of associated charities in some cases. For example, the 2008 salmonella outbreak in the peanut butter industry paved the way for a high profile crisis management solution by the American Peanut Council, including frequent press releases and updates. Similarly, the American Veterinary Medical Association received the 2007 Nonprofit Public Relations Award for Crisis Management during the 2007 pet food recall.

Creative tactics can make even the most mundane of nonprofit events seem interesting and can lead to excitement on the part of the media and the community. The Pennsylvania Convention Center celebrated its expansion in 2007 with a demolition event witnessed by hundreds. Supporters watched as a 200-foot kite string attached to the key to the expansion door was cut to activate the first smash by a 2000-plus pound wrecking ball into the roof of a three-story brick building.

Experts in the Field

While initiated publicity through press releases, publications, and the like may establish image, true credibility comes by being viewed as an expert in one's field. Expertise may come from individuals—staff and volunteers—associated with an organization and holding a reputation for knowledge and skills specific to a certain area. For this reason, hospitals spend considerable resources on recruiting a high cadre of physicians, and academic institutions proudly announce the credentials of their professors. The staff and volunteers of smaller nonprofits can also take steps to establish credibility and expertise. The Westside Infant-Family Network in Culver City, CA, hires therapists with Master's level or higher education and at least 10 years of experience and displays their credentials and prior experience visibly on the website and in published materials. On the other hand, many organizations with highly experienced and knowledgeable staff do not realize that displaying these individuals' expertise will lend credibility to an organization. Grant professionals often do not take the time to uncover such information either; however, a section on key personnel or human resource capabilities should always be included in proposals, whether required by a foundation or not. A good way to keep abreast of this type of information is to require all staff and key volunteers to submit a bio-data to the grants department. Once polished, this information can also be sent to the marketing or public relations department to include on the website or in other types of materials. A simple questionnaire as below can be developed by the grants professional and circulated among new employees and volunteers, with updates requested on an annual basis.

Name:
Title:

Please provide brief answers to the following questions. Please also attach your most recent resume if available.

Education:
Highest degree earned: ______________________
Institution: ______________________
Concentration/Major: ______________________
Other diplomas, certifications, or courses related to current occupation:
____
____
____

Experience:
Title at most recent prior job: ______________________
Organization: ______________________
Major duties:
____
____
____

Other relevant positions and/or jobs:
____
____

Any awards, commendations, or honors relevant to current position:
____
____
____

Figure 2.3 ***Bio-Data Worksheet***

Blogs, as mentioned earlier, can also establish the credibility of nonprofit staff and volunteers, such as ECHO's blog postings by the director of their Department of Agricultural Resources on technical topics and specialized areas of agriculture. Other more traditional methods of establishing expertise are through speaking engagements and award nominations; staff and volunteers should always be on the lookout for conferences pertaining to their field of interest and should apply to participate on high level committees outside of their own organizations. This will lead to a gradual image-building not only on a personal level but more importantly for the benefit of the organization.

Many nonprofits also create advisory boards consisting of experts that are not engaged in day-to-day operations but lend their reputation and advice on issues of importance. For example, community health organizations with lesser-known staff or volunteers may be able to find recognized physicians to act as advisors on a specific project or on ongoing concerns. Grant professionals can play an essential role in the identification of experts in the foundation community with expertise in specific social issues, as detailed in board of director recruitment strategies in Chapter 1. The flip side of client or public advisory boards to improve programs or grantseeking efforts will be discussed in Chapter 5.

Further, expertise can be established on an organizational level in several ways. The first is through advocacy efforts, which are mostly defined within the mission or programs of certain organizations. Although several advocacy nonprofits are highly well-known, organizations with community-based programs can also assist in legal or legislative advocacy efforts despite having a programmatic focus. Nonprofit advocacy is important because it attempts to solve major issues on a local, regional or national level—the same issues that nonprofit staff attempt to solve on an organizational level. Girls Incorporated in New York, NY, and the Edgewood Center for Children and Families in the San Francisco Bay Area, CA, are examples of organizations with a service mission that have included advocacy as a major organizational goal and are actively involved in changing public policy. While more resource-intensive, combining services with advocacy can sometimes lead to a higher profile in the community and can translate into funding as well. The Henderson Mental Health Center in Fort Lauderdale, FL, raised awareness about mental illness by sponsoring a premiere viewing of the movie *Canvas* at a local theater in 2007. The actors and director were brought in to attend the viewing and give interviews to the local television and radio stations. As a result, the theater was packed and many new people became aware of Henderson; some also ultimately supported the organization financially.

A second method for establishing organizational expertise and credibility is through the sharing of knowledge and skills with others based on a competitive advantage. The simplest form of this is by building a database of statistics, reports, resources, publications, stories and more on a specific subject—ensuring that the press, public, researchers, and other interested parties contact that specific organization when needing information related to that area of specialty. Children at Risk in Houston, TX, is considered the premier source of data regarding local children's well-being thanks to their legislative reports, white papers, school rankings, and an annual publication called "Growing Up in Houston," which tracks several key indicators as diverse as environmental health and juvenile justice. Consequently, the press, funders, and even other grant professionals in the region trust this source of information more than those provided by official sources such as the Texas Education Agency's drop-out rates or the city of Houston's homeless population data.

On another level, Port Huron Hospital in Port Huron, MI, produces and broadcasts a television program called Today's Health featuring local physicians, health care specialists, and experts with the latest, most accurate information on current health care topics. Some YMCAs also present fitness- and health-related topics on local television and radio stations. Still other efforts are time specific: Mount Washington Observatory in North Conway, NH, recently conducted a summer series of lectures entitled "Science in the Mountains" with weekly topics focusing on climate change. Funded by foundations and other entities, the lectures were provided free to the public. Smaller nonprofits with limitations on resources or staff time may also engage in community advocacy, which consists of changing public opinion on a limited scope through presentations, conferences, or trainings on related issues. For example, several domestic violence agencies conduct trainings for police officers and health care professionals on how to recognize and deal with victims. Such trainings, although part of the mission, increase the public's image of these organizations as valuable resources in the community and provide the organizations the opportunity to offer outreach services to a larger audience.

While working in a specific area, program staff as well as grant professionals may realize a gap in the community or a service area that requires attention on a larger scale than one organization can address. One way of dealing with such issues is by building collaborations with similar organizations for the provision of services—this concept and its importance to funders is explained in Chapter 4. However, from a community image standpoint, one avenue of addressing service gaps or community needs is through community events and conferences. Some projects may be time- and locale-specific, such as the Maternity Care Coalition in Philadelphia, PA, attempting to address the region's childbirth crisis resulting from a rash of maternity unit closures by convening town hall meetings and making similar grassroots advocacy efforts. Other activities can be ongoing, such as quarterly or annual seminars bringing interested parties together to discuss what can be done about a certain issue.

Public relations can be a daunting task for those involved in grant seeking, and for many larger organizations there is often no need for interaction between the two areas. Many large entities have made concentrated efforts to interconnect departments and teams for specific tasks and purposes, although it is by no means a common occurrence. Smaller organizations have a slight advantage in that due to size and limited resources, grant professionals may be asked—even expected—to contribute in some way to the public relations effort. Regardless, by recognizing that this interaction is necessary in order to coordinate and streamline efforts for the benefit of the entire organization, staff and volunteers can embark on the path of improved branding, messaging, and ultimately more funding.

Best Practice: The Rose

The Rose in Houston, TX, is a nonprofit providing breast cancer screening, diagnosis, and access to care to women through a network of health care providers and physicians offering pro-bono services. The logical next step from more than 20 years of collaborative efforts to increase access to breast healthcare in the Houston area was for The Rose to unite its informal health care provider network and bring together key stakeholders from breast cancer agencies throughout the state for the purpose of public discussion of issues. In 2005, the First Annual Breast Health Summit, co-sponsored by The Rose and the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation Houston Affiliate, brought together more than 175 breast health care providers, physicians, social services agencies, community representatives, and survivors for a single purpose: to improve access to breast healthcare, particularly for low-income and uninsured clients. The summit was initially funded by a grant from the Centers for Disease Control. A presummit survey identified areas of greatest concern and created extraordinary interest in the event; the day ended with a list of objectives for future summits and 40 people responded to a "call to action" for planning the next summit. The summit was evaluated immediately and results disseminated through collaborators' websites and reports. The unique aspect of this summit series is that although many local conferences about breast cancer do exist, the Breast Health Summit is the only conference devoted to increasing access to care for the uninsured. Further, conference presenters are leaders and pioneers in the field of breast health and medicine. Interest and foundation funding has increased as the years have passed, and at the 4th Annual Breast Health Summit in 2008, a record-breaking attendance of 237 health care providers attended the day-long event. The success of the annual summits is best demonstrated by the creation of the Breast Health Collaborative of Texas, formalized in 2006 and now consisting of approximately 80 organizations from throughout Texas. Advocacy efforts of the Collaborative resulted in expanded Medicaid coverage for both screening and treatment, state-supported funding increased breast cancer screening by 20%, and National Treatment Funding doubled the number of women receiving treatment each month. As a direct result of these grassroots advocacy efforts, the National Breast Cancer Coalition Fund awarded the Collaborative its 2008 Best Practices in Breast Cancer Advocacy Award.

Chapter 2 Checklist

Organizational Readiness

Indicator	Status
Does every staff and board member of our organization know and understand our mission statement?	
Do we conduct a strategic evaluation on a regular basis?	
Do our employee and volunteer evaluations include mission-specific goals and objectives?	
Are key stakeholders including clients, volunteers, and community leaders regularly contacted for advice and feedback?	
Do our public relations efforts include program-related activities aimed at improving community image?	
Is staff from programs and grants departments involved in public relations strategizing?	
Is our organization unified in branding and messaging across programs, locations, and departments?	
Do we have a crisis management plan and an audit committee?	
Do we adequately showcase the expertise of our employees and volunteers?	
Do we have access to credible community leaders or other people who will lend a positive community image to our organization?	
Do we conduct advocacy or knowledge-sharing activities aimed at establishing our organization's credibility and improving the sector as a whole?	

Grant Professional Readiness

Indicator	Status
Do I have a clear understanding about my organization's mission and vision?	
Am I able to explain to funders how each of our programs aligns with our mission?	
Do I provide input to my leadership about funders' understanding of my organization's mission and programs?	
Am I involved in my organization's overall marketing and public relations activities?	
Do I work with marketing and programs staff to discuss funder-appropriate public relations activities?	
Do I keep track of the expertise and skills of our employees and volunteers and utilize them in my grant seeking efforts?	
Do I inform and educate my leadership about possible community-building, knowledge-sharing, and advocacy activities that may be important from a funder's perspective?	