

Organizational Life Stage Self-Assessment

Review the descriptions below. Which of the options most closely describes the life-cycle stage of your nonprofit? Which stage describes where you envision the organization in 1-3 years?

Current Stage: _____

Future Stage: _____

Start-Up

- A 501c3 has been established to respond to a community need.
- The founding board governs, manages operations, and actively fundraises.
- First marketing efforts are beginning – most reliant on word of mouth.
- The organization has no or very limited staffing.
- Measurement of impact is beginning.
- Building resources to become more established.
- Volunteers are important for carrying out day-to-day functions.

Growth

- The organization is becoming established in the marketplace/service area and consistently delivers programs and services, which successfully meet community needs.
- There is more division of labor and individual accountability.
- Leadership staff are hired, and the board shifts away from day-to-day management of activities toward governance and fundraising support.
- The skill set needed for the board is changing.
- Operations and management of programs and activities shifts to staff.
- The organization is focused on becoming financially sustainable and creating additional programs.
- Communication and marketing are more coordinated, including media and public relations.
- Identity, brand, and culture become impact-focused, not founder(s)-focused.
- Volunteers support the mission and carry out fundraising events with guidance and direction from staff.

Maturity

- Quality programs and services are consistently carried out with robust evaluation processes and measurements of success in place to assess impacts and identify changing community needs.
- The board is focused on strategy and impact, governance, Executive Director oversight, and supporting fundraising.
- Management is fully delegated to the Executive Director and their designees.
- The organization engages in sophisticated marketing, communications, and fundraising.
- Funding sources are in place to meet current and future growth.
- There is a well-defined organizational culture and reputation based on programming and successes.
- Volunteers support programs and services as needed and are fully managed by staff.
- There is a second or third generation of governance and staff leadership.

Decline

- The community needs change, and/or the organization is no longer well-positioned to respond.
- The board moves from governance back into operations, focusing on organizational stability.
- Financial resources no longer meet the current level of operations.
- Decrease in public/member interest and ability to attract talent.
- Increase in staff, board, and volunteer turnover.
- Decreased communication and transparency.