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A Guide to Project Management In Nonprofits: Strategies for Project Management in Small Teams

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Overview of Managing Projects at a Nonprofit

Working at a nonprofit requires managing multiple projects and people simultaneously. Nonprofit work demands significant time coordination. It involves support and collaboration with both internal staff meetings and external meetings with community

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partners. Additionally, nonprofit work involves the ongoing cycle of securing funding for programs, projects, and services, the logistics of managing these programs and services, creating processes and procedures, and responding to organizational changes or urgent community needs.

This article explores best practices for nonprofit project management while also taking into consideration an organization's bandwidth, concepts of high performing organizations, use of project management software, and project management frameworks for resource strapped organizations.

According to the Project Management Institute, only 16% of nonprofit projects are completed on time, while 53% are completed late and over budget, and 31% are canceled. However, high-performing organizations complete 90% or more of their projects on time, on budget, and to scope. The statistics from the Project Management Institute highlight the challenges of managing projects in the nonprofit sector. A lot is demanded of staff, and nonprofits are typically understaffed and under-resourced.

This article serves as a resource to help nonprofit professionals:

- Create a nonprofit project plan
- Steps to implement project management in nonprofits
- Implement nonprofit project processes and structures

Nonprofit organizations are often at capacity and under-resourced. Reports indicate that nonprofit leaders are struggling to hire employees, concerned about burnout, and dealing with stretched-thin staffing. For staff, burnout can come in the form of stress and/or a feeling of lack of control over their day to day work environment.

Some questions for reflection related to employee burnout might be:

- What support systems are in place to help staff manage stress and workload?
- How can we enhance our support systems to better address staff well-being?
- How do we currently monitor for signs of burnout among staff?
- How might improved workflows support staff?
- What feedback mechanisms can we implement to better understand burnout levels in our team?
- How are we currently allocating our limited resources to support our staff?
- What adjustments can we make to ensure resources are used more effectively to reduce stress?

Questions and key concepts guiding this article:

We developed this resource guided by the following questions and key concepts to help nonprofit professionals think about high performing organizations, theory of change, project management, process, logistics and collaboration on projects.

Project Management:

- How do you currently prioritize and manage multiple projects and people simultaneously in your nonprofit work?
- What tools or strategies have you found most effective in coordinating various tasks and responsibilities?
- What systems does your organization use to manage and organize staff and volunteers to complete tasks within a project?

Logistics and Management:

- What are the key logistical challenges you encounter in managing programs and services?
- How do you create and maintain effective processes and procedures in managing projects, tasks and initiatives?

Volunteer Coordination & Managing Volunteer Projects in a Nonprofit

- What are the biggest challenges you face when supporting and collaborating with volunteers?
- How do you ensure that volunteers are engaged and motivated?

Organizational Change and Rapid Response:

- How does your organization respond to organizational changes or urgent community needs?
- What processes are in place to manage such changes or crises effectively?

Staff Well-being:

- How do you manage the demands placed on staff, especially in an understaffed and under-resourced environment?
- What measures do you take to prevent burnout and maintain staff morale?

The reflective questions guiding this resource emphasize the importance of project management, logistical planning, and volunteer coordination. By exploring strategies for prioritizing multiple projects, maintaining efficient processes, and ensuring volunteer engagement, nonprofit professionals can enhance their organizational effectiveness. Addressing the challenges of organizational change and staff well-being is crucial for sustaining a motivated workforce and retaining employees.

Key concepts and terms reviewed

We will also review some key concepts and terms that can support organizations including:

- What is a project in the context of a nonprofit?
- What is a high performing nonprofit organization?
- What is the DARCI project management tool?

- What is the RACI Project Management Tool?
- What is the MOCHA Framework?
- Unique characteristics of nonprofits: An alternative project management framework
- Completing Projects in a Resource and Staff Constrained Organization
- Project Management Framework for a Small Team: DID
- What is the role and purpose of the Director in the DID project management framework?

What is a project in the context of a nonprofit?

For nonprofits, a project is a large undertaking or initiative to help accomplish the nonprofit's mission. A project could be a website update, fundraising campaign, awards dinner, program launch, or software integration. A project often supports a core program or service connected to the nonprofit's mission.

What is a high performing nonprofit organization?

A high performing nonprofit organization delivers outcomes by using staff, volunteers and program resources effectively. High performing nonprofits may excel in fundraising, innovation, volunteer management, collaborations, rapid response, program development and program innovation.

Some factors of high-performing nonprofit as detailed in *The Wisdom of Teams: Creating the High-Performance Organization* include:

- A clear and compelling mission
- Visionary leadership
- A culture of continuous improvement
- Strategic alignment with goals
- Flexible decision-making processes

These factors create a collaborative environment where staff and volunteers feel empowered, motivated, and committed to the organization's mission. Incorporating these organizational processes help with alignment in creating effective nonprofit project management practices and ease in implementation of projects. Building a high performing organization takes significant time and effort – especially when it comes to creating the decision making processes, training staff, implementing work structures, and hiring the staff aligned with the goals and values of the organization. Re-imaging organizational structures could take 3 to 9 months to change and then fully integrate the structures and work flows into the day to day work of the organization.

While high-performing organizations benefit from clear missions, visionary leadership, continuous improvement, strategic alignment, and flexible decision-making, these principles are crucial for effective project management in nonprofits. Implementing these factors creates a collaborative environment where staff and volunteers feel empowered and committed.

Establishing such a culture requires time and effort, especially in decision-making, staff training, and aligning work structures with organizational goals. This process, often taking several months, lays the foundation for smooth project implementation. An example of this is Wren Outdoors' adoption of project management software to enhance their operational efficiency as the organization expanded.

Project Management Software

Project management software tools can benefit nonprofits by streamlining operations, enhancing collaboration, and improving efficiency. These tools provide a central platform for managing projects, tasks, and deadlines, enabling teams to stay organized and focused on their programs and services. If used consistently, project management tools ensure that all team members are informed, reducing the likelihood of miscommunication and project delays. Additionally, project management software can offer insights through reporting and analytics, helping nonprofits track progress, measure impact, and make data-driven decisions. Through these tools, there is the potential for nonprofits to optimize their resources and scale programs.

While software tools offer benefits, they come with challenges and limitations. There is no unicorn when it comes to technology even if we wish unicorns existed! Implementing project management tools can introduce complexity, particularly for team members who may not be tech-savvy or familiar with project management methodologies. The initial learning curve and time investment required for setup, training and consistent uses can be significant. Additionally, no software can address all issues within a project or organization, such as interpersonal conflicts, changing external conditions, silo-ed team, lack of transparency, limited capacity, rapid response to unmet needs or unforeseen obstacles. Over-reliance on project management tools can lead to a rigid adherence and lack the human centered aspect of why people choose to work in the nonprofit sector.

Ultimately, while project management software can enhance organization and efficiency, thought these tools are not a substitute for strong leadership, effective communication, great organizational culture, transparency and adaptive strategies.

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Benefits:

- **User-Friendly Interface:** Intuitive and visually appealing interface that is easy to navigate.
- **Customization:** Highly customizable workflows and templates to fit various project needs.
- **Collaboration:** Strong collaboration features, including real-time updates and team communication tools.

Challenges:

- **Cost:** Can be expensive for larger teams or organizations due to the pricing structure.
- **Learning Curve:** Some advanced features may require time to learn and fully utilize.

Asana

Benefits:

- **Task Management:** Excellent task and project tracking with detailed assignment options and deadlines.
- **Integration:** Integrates well with other tools like Slack, Google Drive, and Microsoft Teams.
- **Workflow Automation:** Offers automation features to streamline repetitive tasks.

Challenges:

- **Complexity:** Can be overwhelming for new users due to the extensive features and options.
- **Limited Customization:** Some users find the customization options limited compared to other tools.

Trello

Benefits:

- **Simplicity:** Easy to use with a simple drag-and-drop interface based on Kanban boards.
- **Collaboration:** Great for team collaboration with clear visual task management.
- **Integration:** Integrates with various third-party applications and services.

Challenges:

- **Scalability:** May not be suitable for very large or complex projects due to its simplicity.
- **Feature Limitations:** Lacks some advanced project management features like Gantt charts and resource management.

Jira

Benefits:

- **Agile Support:** Excellent for agile project management with strong support for Scrum and Kanban methodologies.

- **Issue Tracking:** Robust issue and bug tracking capabilities.
- **Customization:** Highly customizable to fit specific project requirements and workflows.

Challenges:

- **Complexity:** Steeper learning curve, especially for users unfamiliar with agile methodologies.
- **Cost:** Can become expensive for larger teams with more advanced feature needs.

Basecamp

Benefits:

- **All-in-One:** Combines project management, team communication, and file storage in one platform.
- **User-Friendly:** Simple and straightforward interface that is easy for teams to adopt.
- **Flat Pricing:** Offers flat-rate pricing, which can be cost-effective for larger teams.

Challenges:

- **Limited Features:** Lacks some advanced project management features found in other tools.
- **Customization:** Less customizable compared to other project management solutions.

Scenario: Implementation of Project Management Software at Wren Outdoors

Background: Wren Outdoors, a nonprofit organization dedicated to providing outdoor activities and experiences for the community, has experienced steady growth over the past five years. Initially starting with a small team of 2 staff members, the organization has rapidly expanded to 10 staff members.

The Challenge: As the organization grew, so did the complexity of managing its various programs and activities. With multiple projects running simultaneously, staff members found it increasingly difficult to keep track of tasks, deadlines, and resources. Communication gaps and overlapping responsibilities led to inefficiencies and occasional missed opportunities for community engagement.

The Solution: To address these challenges, Wren Outdoors decided to incorporate a project management software called Trello. This decision was made after careful consideration of the organization's needs for better coordination, transparency, and accountability.

Implementation: The implementation of Trello was carried out in four phases:

1. Assessment and Planning:

- A team was formed to assess the specific requirements of each department.
- Customized training sessions were scheduled to ensure all staff members were comfortable using the new software.

2. Pilot Program:

- Trello was initially introduced to staff to test its functionality and gather feedback.
- Adjustments were made based on user feedback to optimize the software for the organization's unique needs.

3. Full Rollout:

- Trello was launched organization-wide, with ongoing support and training sessions.
- Regular check-ins and updates were scheduled to address any issues and to ensure that the software was being used effectively.

4. Daily Management:

- To ensure the successful adoption and continuous use of Trello, one team member was assigned the responsibility of overseeing its day-to-day usage.
- The Operations Coordinator took on this role and was tasked with monitoring the software to ensure that all staff members were utilizing it effectively.
- The Coordinator conducted regular training sessions, provided support for any technical issues, and encouraged the team to keep their tasks and projects updated on a daily basis making sure all staff utilized the system whenever they were working on a project.
- The proactive management ensured that Trello became an integral part of the organization's workflow, helping maintain consistency and efficiency across all projects.

Outcomes:

- **Improved Efficiency:** Staff members reported a significant improvement in their ability to manage tasks and meet deadlines. The centralized system allowed for better visibility of project timelines and resource allocation.
- **Enhanced Communication:** The software facilitated better communication and collaboration among team members, reducing the likelihood of misunderstandings and duplicated efforts.
- **Greater Accountability:** With clearly defined roles and responsibilities, staff members felt more accountable for their tasks, leading to increased productivity and job satisfaction.
- **Streamlined Processes:** The organization was able to streamline its workflows, ensuring that outdoor programs and activities were delivered more effectively to the community.

The incorporation of Trello into Wren Outdoors' daily operations shows adopting project management software can enhance organizational efficiency. This strategic move helped Wren Outdoors manage its growth. As organizations like Wren Outdoors continue to expand, the complexity of their projects may require project management frameworks. Such frameworks are essential for systematically planning, executing, and

monitoring projects to achieve organizational goals. They provide a structured approach that integrates best practices, methodologies, and tools, ensuring that projects are completed on time, within scope, and on budget. Emphasizing the importance of project management frameworks is crucial for any organization looking to sustain growth and improve operational efficiency.

We will review a few different models of project management frameworks and how they might be used by organizations.

What is the DARCI project management tool?

The DARCI project management tool is a framework designed to clarify roles and responsibilities within a project or organization. The tool was created by the Social Transformation Project Robert Glass. Each role within the DARCI grid helps ensure clear communication and accountability.

The acronym stands for Decider, Accountable, Responsible, Consulted, and Informed:

1. **Decider (D):** The person or group with the authority to make final decisions.
2. **Accountable (A):** The individual responsible for the project's success and ensuring tasks are completed.
3. **Responsible (R):** The team members who will carry out the tasks.
4. **Consulted (C):** Individuals whose input is sought during the project.
5. **Informed (I):** Stakeholders who need to be kept updated on progress but do not contribute directly to the decision-making process.

The DARCI tool is used to increase transparency and efficiency in decision-making processes, ensuring everyone involved understands their specific roles and responsibilities. It can be helpful for complex projects to improve organizational effectiveness and collaboration.

Reflection Questions

- *How will you prepare for the roles defined by the DARCI framework?*
- *How will you foster a culture of accountability and collaboration within your team using the DARCI framework?*
- *What potential challenges do you foresee in implementing the DARCI model, and how will you prepare to address them?*
- *How will you handle situations where roles and responsibilities overlap or are unclear?*
- *What contingency plans will you have in place if the DARCI roles need to be adjusted during the project?*
- *What steps will you take to clearly define each role within the DARCI framework before the project begins?*
- *How will you ensure that all team members understand their specific roles and responsibilities?*

- *What tools or methods will you use to track and report on the roles and responsibilities as the project progresses?*

The DARCI project management framework brings clarity and structure to roles and responsibilities within projects, enhancing overall efficiency and accountability. Nonprofits often operate with limited resources, making it crucial to ensure that everyone involved understands their specific duties and decision-making authority. By delineating roles, the model helps to streamline communication and foster collaboration among team members. This structured approach not only mitigates the risk of overlooked tasks and miscommunication and also empowers individuals by providing clear expectations and accountability.

What is the RACI Project Management Tool?

The RACI Project Management Matrix originated in the 1970s, created by management consultant James R. Robinson. He designed this tool to help organizations clearly define and assign roles and responsibilities within projects and processes.

The RACI matrix categorizes role involvement into four distinct levels:

1. **Responsible:** These are the individuals or team members charged with implementing a specific task. Depending on the task's complexity, more than one person might share this responsibility. For instance, during a nonprofit program implementation phase, a program coordinator might be responsible for organizing a community outreach event.
2. **Accountable:** This is the person who has the final authority to approve the task's completion, ensuring it is done effectively. Clear accountability is essential for task ownership and timely completion. For example, in the context of organizing a community outreach event, a program director might oversee the entire process, including planning, coordinating volunteers, and conducting post-event evaluations.
3. **Consulted:** These are the individuals who provide essential input and expertise. This typically involves multiple people from various disciplines, relevant to the project phase and specific activities. For instance, a program director might consult a fundraising manager for insights on donor engagement strategies and to identify key stakeholders who could support the event.
4. **Informed:** These are the stakeholders who are kept updated on the task's progress. This group might include board members, senior leadership, and other program teams. In smaller organizations, it could also encompass the executive director.

How to Use the RACI Matrix in the Nonprofit Sector

1. **Identify Tasks and Deliverables:** Compile a comprehensive list of all tasks and deliverables for the project, such as organizing a

- fundraising event or launching a new community program.
2. **Define Roles:** Determine all the roles involved in the project, including program coordinators, fundraising managers, volunteer coordinators, and executive directors.
 3. **Assign RACI Codes:** For each task and deliverable, assign a RACI code to the relevant roles. For example, the program coordinator might be responsible for event logistics, the fundraising manager accountable for meeting fundraising targets, volunteers consulted for their availability, and the executive director informed about overall progress.
 4. **Communicate and Agree:** Discuss the RACI assignments with the project team and key stakeholders to ensure everyone understands and agrees with their roles and responsibilities.
 5. **Review and Monitor:** Regularly review the RACI matrix to ensure it remains accurate and relevant, making adjustments as needed to reflect changes in the project or team structure.

Example RACI Matrix Tool

	Development Manager	Development Director	CEO	Director of Communications & Marketing	
Create donation page	R	A	I	C	R = Responsible
Design donation page	I	A	I	R	A = Accountable
Create images for page	I	I	I	R	C = Consulted
Test donor experience	R	A	I	C	I = Informed

What is the MOCHA Framework?

The mocha framework, created by the Management Center, is a tool that nonprofits can use to organize staff, teams and volunteers when leading and implementing projects. A project management framework helps nonprofit professionals identify who is responsible for different aspects in a project. Nonprofits as organizations have unique characteristics which can impact resources and capacity. Factors such as limited funding, staff capacity and providing rapid response to communities create a need to make sure there is clarity in project management. MOCHA is a widely used framework in managing projects.

Structure of the MOCHA framework (developed by the Management Center)

M	MANAGERS: HOLDS THE OWNER ACCOUNTABLE, SHARES FEEDBACK & REVIEWS PROGRESS.
O	OWNER: DIRECT RESPONSIBILITY TO COMPLETE THE PROJECT. TYPICALLY 1 OWNER.
C	CONSULTED: PROVIDES INPUT & PERSPECTIVE. SHARES RESOURCES OR REFERRALS.
H	HELPER: IMPLEMENTS THE WORK
A	APPROVER: SIGNS OFF ON THE FINAL PRODUCT

Manager

Holds the owner accountable by delegating authority and responsibility to the owner. The manager serves as a resource, shares feedback, asks probing questions, reviews progress, and may intervene if the project gets off-track or there is a significant issue. The manager is likely the owner's supervisor.

- In the context of nonprofit projects, a manager in the MOCHA framework is the owner's supervisor. For example, if the project is a year end campaign perhaps the Director of Development is the owner and the manager in the MOCHA is the Chief Development Officer.

Owner

Has direct responsibility to complete the project. The owner coordinates all steps and tasks to accomplish goals related to the project to ensure successful completion. The owner collaborates with the helper and the consultant and seeks guidance from the manager. Authority is given to the owner to make decisions on the project at the start likely by their manager. On a project there is typically only 1 owner.

- In the context of a nonprofit project, the owner is the person leading the project. For example, if the project is a year end campaign perhaps the Director of Development is the owner. Another example could be, a Director of Programs serves as the owner in launching a new program for the organization.

Consulted

Provides input and perspective. They are not responsible for doing the work. They offer insight, input, knowledge or perspective. A consulted party might point others toward answers or referrals who can help with the work. They are not do-ers of the work.

- In the context of nonprofit projects, the consulted could be a mentor, coach, volunteer with insight and expertise in the area of the project.

Helper

The helper implements the work and contributes to project success. This person helps with aspects of the project as needed determined by the owner. The helper does not own the project but rather supports the project goals.

- In the context of nonprofit projects, a helper might be: a volunteer, program assistant, fundraising coordinator, project coordinator or any staff person or volunteers that assists the owners.

Approver

This person signs off on the final project or key decisions that will impact completeness of the project. Typically the approver is the owner's supervisor or the manager's supervisor. The

approver typically has a very high level of authority in the organization.

- In the context of nonprofit projects, the approver might be the Executive Director, Founder, or CEO. An individual who needs to give final approval to a project.

The MOCHA project management framework is helpful for nonprofits because it provides clarity of work. Using this framework helps team members understand their defined roles and responsibilities, clarifying who is responsible for each task. Clarity prevents confusion and duplication of efforts, enabling better collaboration in a project. The MOCHA Framework provides a structured approach to planning, implementing, setting goals, and making decisions within a project.

Reflection Questions:

- *How might you be able to use the MOCHA project framework at your organization to support project management?*
- *How might the MOCHA project management framework provide role clarity in projects?*
- *What contingency plans will you have in place if the MOCHA roles need to be adjusted during the project?*
- *What steps will you take to clearly define each role within the MOCHA framework before the project begins?*

Unique characteristics of nonprofits: An alternative project management framework

Nonprofit organizations possess unique characteristics that distinguish their day-to-day operations. The day-to-day work of a nonprofit requires care and attention to detail from caseload management, managing volunteers, participating in community meetings and rapid response.

Each of these elements plays a critical role in the overall functioning of a nonprofit and contributes to its time-intensive nature. The coordination and support of volunteers, effective program management, handling organizational change, and the need for rapid response to emerging issues are all essential components that require strategic planning and

dedicated management. This underscores the importance of efficient processes and time management to achieve the organization's mission.

Volunteers

Volunteers, who are essential to nonprofit operations, require coordination, training, and ongoing support to remain engaged and effective. Supporting volunteers involves significant time to ensure volunteers are well-prepared and motivated to contribute to the organization's mission. Managing, recruiting, training and retaining volunteers requires logistics and coordination which are components of project management.

All volunteer programs need recruitment. The recruitment process involves identifying potential volunteers, outreach into the community and a volunteer intake process to ensure alignment and fit. Training of volunteers ensures that individuals understand their role and purpose within the context of the organization they are serving. Sometimes training occurs before a volunteer starts their first shift or other times it may occur onsite. Typically a volunteer training covers: organization's mission, values, and specific duties the volunteer will perform. Regular training helps to keep volunteers informed about new policies and procedures.

Engaging volunteers also lead to volunteer retention. Keeping volunteers engaged involves regular communication through meetings, volunteer opportunities, feedback and volunteer appreciation. Recognizing volunteers' contributions through awards, certificates, and public acknowledgment helps maintain their motivation. Providing opportunities for volunteers to share their experiences and feedback can also enhance their sense of involvement and commitment.

Supporting volunteers includes addressing their needs and concerns which involve resolving conflict, providing additional resources, or adjusting volunteer roles to better match skills and interests. Ensuring a positive volunteer experience can lead to higher retention rates and a more dedicated volunteer base.

Volunteer management is logistics, coordination, tasks, goals and milestone setting all of which require project management.

Program Management

Program management involves overseeing multiple projects, tracking progress, and ensuring goals are met, all of which demand significant time and resources. A nonprofit program is a core component of an organization's mission and how the organization serves the community. Building, launching, managing and scaling programs requires planning, strategic, goal setting, collaboration and implementation to ensure that the nonprofit's programs are successful and aligned with the organization's mission and objectives.

Programs are created and designed to fit an unmet need. Organizations may develop programs through pilot testing or adapting existing ones. Designing a program involves understanding the necessary inputs such as staff, volunteers, program supplies, activities, or services to yield specific outcomes and results. Programs are often designed using strategy, evidence-based research, or a logic model. Alternatively, organizations might organically create activities that evolve into programs.

Organizations expand their programs and services in a variety of ways. Program expansion may come about because of rapid response to community disasters or a founder has a new idea that supports an unmet community need. Program expansion could be more methodical through strategic planning, a feasibility study, or organizing program concepts into a plan. There is not one specific path to developing, expanding, scaling and creating programs. Each organization is unique in their approach to how they expand and may be connected to their organization's theory of change. Creating an approach to planning programs can help with the challenges or unknown elements that may impact nonprofit program development and implementation.

Adjusting nonprofit programs ensures relevancy and the ability for a nonprofit to effectively address community needs. By regularly evaluating program outcomes and incorporating feedback from participants and community partners, nonprofits can refine their strategies and improve program and service delivery. This adaptive approach in program development helps organizations stay aligned with their mission and achieve greater impact.

Expanding programs, responding to community needs and monitoring programs involves logistics, collaboration, tasks, strategy and decision-making all core components of project management.

Organizational Change

Organizational change, such as restructuring or implementing new policies, procedures or programs takes time to plan, communicate, and implement effectively. Change management is a gradual process that involves getting buy-in from board members, staff, volunteers, community leaders, program partners and funders. and ensuring a smooth transition.

There are different types of change that can occur within an organization which are detailed below:

- Happened change: In response to external factors beyond control
- Reactive change: In response to an event
- Strategic change: Connected to leadership, funding or programs
- Anticipatory change: Expected due to an event such as recession

A detailed plan during organizational change is necessary, outlining the steps, timelines, and resources needed for implementation. This plan should include clear milestones and performance metrics to track

progress and ensure accountability. Regular updates and transparent reporting keep everyone informed and aligned.

Managing resistance to change is a common challenge. Nonprofits must anticipate and address resistance by understanding its root causes and addressing them proactively. This might involve listening to concerns, providing additional support, or adjusting the change plan. Building a culture of open communication and continuous improvement helps mitigate resistance and foster a positive attitude toward change.

Rapid Response

Rapid response to emerging community issues requires immediate attention and coordinated action. The immediate need after a community crisis can divert resources from planned programs, adding to the time demands on nonprofit staff and leadership.

Effective rapid response starts with a defined process. Nonprofit leaders establish clear procedures for identifying, assessing, and responding to crises. Certain crises can be predicted based on history, data collection, weather related patterns and consistent unmet needs in the community. A clear procedure for rapidly responding to a crisis may include being aware of news alerts and a communication plan to ensure timely and accurate information flow.

Having predefined roles and responsibilities streamlines decision-making and action during a crisis. Being prepared for rapid response involves maintaining an inventory of essential supplies and equipment and establishing partnerships with other organizations and agencies that can provide additional support.

Resource allocation during a rapid response is challenging. Nonprofits must make quick decisions about how to best use their limited resources to address the immediate needs of the crisis. This requires flexibility and adaptability and a clear understanding of priorities. Establishing a contingency fund provides the financial flexibility needed to respond to unexpected events.

Even though unplanned, the logistics of a rapid response coordination is a way to see an organization's ability to handle project management because it entails all the aspects necessary related to a project: decision making, logistics, collaboration, clear establishment of roles, communication, resource allocation and completion of tasks.

Completing Projects in a Resource and Staff Constrained Organization

Nonprofit organizations often operate under significant constraints due to limited staff capacity. Challenges that nonprofits experience include: time, staff capacity, restricted budget, employee retention and intense

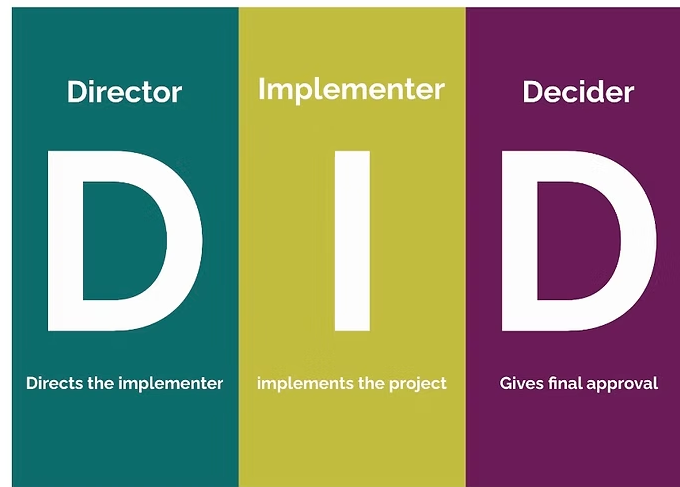
rapid response to community needs. Sometimes staff and volunteers can be stretched thin, taking on multiple roles and responsibilities beyond their primary job descriptions. This overextension can lead to increased stress and burnout, as employees try to manage heavy workloads with limited resources.

Creating ease in workflows, organizational structure, support in projects and developing operational procedures can create more cohesiveness and role clarity within projects. All of these factors can reduce stress, lead to greater efficiency within an organization and support employees in their roles.

We reviewed multiple models of project management frameworks, each designed to optimize efficiency and productivity. These frameworks work well for organizations with ample resources and staffing, where roles can be clearly defined and distributed among many team members. However, what happens if an organization is leading a project with only three staff members or even just two? Or perhaps there is a scenario where an organization has ten employees, but in reality, only 2-3 people are involved in the day-to-day work of the project. In such scenarios, the challenge lies in adapting these frameworks to fit the constraints of a small team, where employees often juggle multiple roles and responsibilities. Constraints of a small team can complicate task management, as each person may be responsible for various aspects of the project, from planning and execution to monitoring and reporting.

When there aren't enough staff members to allocate specific roles within the project management framework, the burden can fall disproportionately on a few individuals. Increased workload can lead to potential burnout, reduced morale, and inefficiencies that compromise the project's success. Additionally, the lack of specialized roles may result in a decrease in the quality of work and missed deadlines, as employees struggle to meet all their obligations. Therefore, it is crucial to find flexible and adaptable project management solutions that can be scaled to the size of the team, ensuring sustainability and effectiveness even in resource-constrained environments.

Project Management Framework for a Small Team: DID



D = Director

What is the role and purpose of the Director in the DID project management framework?

Role of Director: The role of director might be an individual who oversees the implementer; perhaps the director is a supervisor or manager for the individual who implements the project. In this role, the director gives direction and guidance to the individual implementing the project. To keep the process streamlined, the individual implementing the project might go to the director for questions, opportunities or challenges related to the project.

Responsibilities of Director: Making key decisions about project direction, allocating resources, and setting priorities to ensure the project aligns with GFI's mission and goals.

Daily or Weekly Tasks for Director: Set project milestones or communicate to implementer to set project milestones depending on their experience, making strategic decisions, resolving high-level issues, and providing guidance to the Implementer.

Example position of a Director: A position involves supervision or management of another employee some examples could be Director of Development, Director of Programs or Program Director.

I = Implementer

What is the role and purpose of Implementer in the DID project management framework?

Role of Implementer: The role of the implementer involves executing the project plan. This individual is responsible for carrying out the tasks and activities necessary to complete the project. They ensure that the project stays on track and meets the outlined goals and objectives.

Responsibilities of Implementer:

- Executing project tasks and activities according to the project plan.
- Coordinating with team members and stakeholders to ensure smooth project implementation.
- Monitoring project progress and making necessary adjustments to keep the project on schedule.
- Reporting on project status to the director and other relevant stakeholders.
- Managing project resources effectively to ensure efficient use of time, budget, and materials.

Daily or Weekly Tasks for Implementer:

- Completing assigned tasks and activities on a daily or weekly basis.
- Communicating regularly with the director to provide updates on project progress and any issues encountered using a project management tool or during supervision meetings.
- Attending and participating in project meetings and discussions or leading these meetings and discussions if that level of authority has been delegated to you by your supervisor.
- Updating project documentation and records to reflect current progress and status.
- Addressing any day-to-day challenges and finding solutions to keep the project moving forward.

Example position of an Implementer: Positions focused on project execution, such as Project Coordinator, Program Coordinator, or Operations Manager.

D = Decider

What is the role and purpose of Decider in the DID project management framework?

Role of Decider: The decider is typically a high-level executive, such as a CEO or executive director, who provides final approval for a project. This role involves making crucial decisions or approvals that affect the overall direction and success of the project but staying out of the day-to-day operations.

Responsibilities of Decider:

- Providing final approval on major project decisions and milestones.
- Ensuring that the project aligns with the organization's strategic goals and priorities.

- Authorizing significant changes to the project scope, budget, or timeline.
- Offering high-level guidance and support to the director and implementer as needed.
- Reviewing and approving final project outcomes and deliverables.

Weekly or Monthly Tasks of Decider:

- Reviewing project progress reports and updates from the director or implementer depending on the organizational structure
- Making decisions on critical issues that require executive intervention.
- Approving major project expenditures and resource allocations.
- Ensuring that the project remains aligned with the organization's mission and long-term objectives.

In the context of organizational decision-making, it is essential to distinguish between the roles of the director, implementer and decider. The decider, perhaps a CEO or Executive Director is likely not involved in the day to day of any projects that are being coordinated by the Implementer. A CEO or executive director is likely handling issues, situations and projects that connect to the larger strategy of the organization. The day to day implementation is done by the implementer who is supervised by the director. The decider provides context in advance of the project to the director guiding this person on the information they need to review or decide which is determined prior to starting the project.

Information a decider may need to review could include:

- Budgetary expenses over a certain amount
- Significant issues with a project that involve a donor, important community leader or collaborating organization
- Major impediments to moving the project forward or delays

Example position of a Decider: High-level executive roles such as Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Executive Director, or Chief Operating Officer (COO).

Sample Scenario: Small Team Managing a Project within a Larger Organization

Organization: GreenFuture Initiative (GFI)

Project: Community Urban Garden Development

Team Size: 3 Members

Larger Organization Size: 25 Employees

Project Overview: GreenFuture Initiative (GFI), a nonprofit dedicated to promoting sustainable urban living, is embarking on a new project to develop 3 community urban gardens. The project aims to provide fresh produce to local communities, create green spaces, and promote environmental education. Although GFI has 25 employees, only a small

team of three will manage this project due to limited resources and the need to maintain focus on other ongoing initiatives.

Individual: Alex

Director within the DID Project Management Framework

Role: Vice President of Programs

Responsibilities: Provides direction, overarching strategy, guidance and supervision to the individual in the role of implementer.

Daily Tasks or Weekly Tasks: Guides key decisions about project direction, determines implementers level of authority to make decisions, allocates resources to projects, and sets priorities to ensure the project aligns with mission and goals.

Individual: Jamie

Implementer within the DID Project Management Framework

Role: Director of Community Projects

Responsibilities: Creates, coordinates and Implements the project plan, coordinates day-to-day operations, coordinating with volunteers and contractors, and ensuring tasks are completed efficiently.

Daily Tasks: Scheduling workdays, ordering materials, overseeing the implementation of activities, and maintaining project timelines.

Individual: Morgan

Decider within the DID Project Management Framework

Role: CEO

Responsibilities: Provides final approval and decides if the project meets all its goals. If there are any issues within the project, this role decides major decisions with information given to them by the person in the role of director.

Weekly or Monthly Involvement: Reviews progress on the project with information provided to them by the director and ensures all project aspects meet the set criteria before final approval.

Challenges and Adaptations:

- **Small teams:** This project management framework can be useful for small teams or projects where there are not a lot of individuals involved in the day-to-day of the project.
- **Distinct Roles:** Each team member has distinct roles and they also support each other within their area of expertise, role, level of authority or position within the organization. In this project management framework, the directors supports and guides the implementer and the decision maker gives the visionary support when needed or makes difficult organizational decisions related to the project.

- **Communication and Collaboration:** Effective communication is crucial. Each person within this project management framework knows who is responsible for decisions in the project and their level of authority. Understanding the level of authority and who can make a decision in a project is a priority when working on tasks, steps or milestones within a project.
- **Milestone Setting and Tracking:** Setting realistic project milestones and tracking progress against these milestones is one method for the director to guide the implementer. Support and tracking milestones provides a clear roadmap and ensures timely completion of tasks.
- **Clear Role Definition:** Ensuring that the roles of Director, Implementer, and Decider are well-defined and understood can prevent confusion and overlapping responsibilities. This clarity can enhance efficiency and accountability. Understand these aspects within a role: decision making, level of authority, handling unforeseen circumstances, challenges with community partners or donors, etc.
- **Strategic Alignment:** The Decider must ensure that the project aligns with the organization's strategic goals. This alignment ensures that the project contributes to the overall mission and long-term objectives of the organization.

In conclusion, the DID project management framework offers a structured approach for nonprofit organizations to effectively manage projects by clearly defining the roles and responsibilities of the Director, Implementer, and Decider. The Director oversees and guides the Implementer, ensuring that the project aligns with the organization's mission and goals while providing strategic direction and resource allocation. The Implementer is responsible for executing the project plan, coordinating daily operations, and maintaining communication with the Director to ensure smooth implementation and timely completion of tasks. The Decider, typically a high-level executive, provides final approval for significant project decisions and ensures alignment with the organization's strategic objectives.

Despite its structured approach, the DID framework acknowledges that project management tools and methodologies cannot address all challenges. Interpersonal dynamics, unforeseen external conditions, and complex decision-making scenarios often require adaptive strategies and strong leadership beyond what any software can provide. Additionally, the framework emphasizes the importance of clear communication and role definition to prevent confusion and overlapping responsibilities. Understanding each team member's level of authority and decision-making capabilities is crucial for the project's success.

By fostering effective collaboration and maintaining strategic alignment, the DID project management framework supports nonprofits in achieving their project goals while contributing to their broader mission. However, organizations must remain flexible and responsive to challenges, leveraging the strengths of each person's role within the framework to navigate complexities and drive successful project outcomes.

Resources, Books and Articles Related to Project Management in a Nonprofit:

Worth, M. J. (2018). Nonprofit management: Principles and practice (5th ed.). SAGE Publications.

Anheier, H. K. (2014). Nonprofit organizations: Theory, management, policy (2nd ed.). Routledge.

Frumkin, P. (2005). On being nonprofit: A conceptual and policy primer. Harvard University Press.

Oster, S. M. (1995). Strategic management for nonprofit organizations: Theory and cases. Oxford University Press.

Additional Peer Reviewed Books and Resources on Project Management in the Nonprofit Sector

1. Johnson, E. R., & Smith, A. B. (2021). Nonprofit Project Management: Best Practices and Strategies. New York, NY: Routledge.
2. Brown, T. F., & Wilson, C. D. (2019). MOCHA Framework: Enhancing Nonprofit Project Management Effectiveness. *Nonprofit Management and Leadership*, 31(2), 145-160.
3. Roberts, K. L., & Patel, R. M. (2020). Implementing MOCHA Principles in Nonprofit Project Management: A Case Study Analysis. *Journal of Nonprofit & Public Sector Marketing*, 32(4), 389-403.
4. Kogon, K., Blakemore, S., & Wood, J. (2015). *Project management for the unofficial project manager*. BenBella Books.

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