

# Community Leadership: Best Practices for Brazos Valley

Report for the Brazos Community Foundation

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Community Leadership: Best Practices for Brazos Valley  
Report for the Brazos Community Foundation  
**Executive Summary**

May 7, 2008

This report was prepared as part of a graduate student capstone project at the George Bush School of Government and Public Service for our client, the Brazos Community Foundation (BCF). We believe the report has implications for the BCF and the broader nonprofit community in the Brazos Valley.

The project team identified ten potential community leadership roles based on best practices in the field and interests of the BCF. Students conducted interviews with 25 local nonprofit leaders, Texas A&M University representatives, as well as other community foundations to inform our recommendations.

After careful evaluation of data the group identified five community leadership roles with the most potential for implementation by the Brazos Community Foundation and the Brazos Valley at large. These roles received wide support, were feasible - based on available resources, and aligned with the mission and purpose of BCF. Students developed a series of action steps to provide guidance for the implementation of these roles. Through the interviews students discovered many opportunities for partnerships in implementing roles:

1. Nurture New Philanthropists
  - Bring together philanthropists
  - Education, cooperation, and mentoring of current and potential philanthropists
  - Matching donor interests with community needs
  - Find ways to keep money in the Brazos Valley
2. Nonprofit Excellence Awards
  - Create a Nonprofit Management Award
  - This award can be given at a Nonprofit Forum
  - Create a collaborative selection and review panel
3. Workshops and Trainings
  - Past Capstone nonprofit forums and workshops can be a basis for the future
  - Coordinate work with others
  - Provide opportunities for local trainings and workshops
4. Connect to University Resources
  - Further develop partnership with Bush School, Aggie Serve, etc.
  - Foster the creation networks between community and university entities
5. Nonprofit Resource Center
  - Participate in efforts to organize and develop a nonprofit resource center

The implementation of these action steps can help strengthen the capacity of regional nonprofits and improve the visibility of the Brazos Community Foundation.

## Introduction

The Brazos Community Foundation (BCF) wishes to be seen as a leader in the local nonprofit community, as well as a primary point of contact for local nonprofit organizations to fulfill their needs as service providers. The BCF also wishes to create and foster valuable partnerships among other nonprofit leaders in order to ensure that services are delivered where they are needed most, without a surplus of effort or duplication. Throughout the 2007-08 academic year, the Bush School BCF Capstone engaged in research, analysis, and marketing activities with the BCF to help build its position as a leader in the community. As citizens, nonprofits, local government, and corporations become more aware of the BCF's ability to act as an arbiter of philanthropy in the Brazos Valley community, a connectivity will follow that will strengthen community ties and attract additional resources. The project had four goals.

### *Goal 1: Identify potential community leadership roles for the BCF*

Capstone members investigated current literature to uncover community leadership methods for established community foundations and proven methods for management success and best-practices in nonprofit organizations. The Capstone Team met with Tiffani McKinney, Executive Director of BCF, to help identify possible opportunities and current interests of the BCF for additional Community Leadership roles.

### *Goal 2: Prioritize potential community leadership roles for the Foundation*

Capstone members conducted 25 interviews with local nonprofit and community leaders to explore the current state of the nonprofit sector of the Brazos Valley, the needs of local nonprofit organizations such as capacity building, training, and mediation, and possible methods for collaboration and other successful nonprofit practices. Once complete, Capstone members analyzed the interviews to uncover common themes, the current position of the local nonprofit sector, and the perspectives of its leaders. These roles were prioritized based upon interest in the community and feasibility for the BCF.

### *Goal 3: Support the Foundation's ability to implement one or more of the community leadership roles*

The Capstone identified potential partnership opportunities for the BCF with other local nonprofits for the implementation of selected community leadership roles based on information gathered during the interview process. In addition the students interviewed six Texas A&M representatives and academic experts to establish methods for implementing selected community leadership roles. Further research was conducted with Texas community foundations to explore funding and implementation examples.

### *Goal 4: Increase community awareness of the Foundation*

Fall Nonprofit Workshop: The Bush School, United Way, and BCF sponsored an all-day workshop in October that focused on the Standards of Excellence for Nonprofits and the National Nonprofit Congress. The presenters were Rose Mary Fry of the Texas Nonprofit Network and Dr. Angela Bies of the Bush School.

Spring Nonprofit Forum: The Capstone coordinated a spring nonprofit forum in April to provide training and to bring awareness of the BCF to the local nonprofit community. The forum included five workshop sessions, a lunch, a keynote speaker, and a panel session with the Capstone to present the final report and receive feedback.

## **Interview Procedures and Participants**

The 25 nonprofit organizations that participated in the interviews represented a diverse group. They offer programs that ranged from community development and gentrification to general health issues and care for the terminally ill. These organizations range from the relatively old such as the Bryan/College Station Chamber of Commerce (founded 1952), to the fairly new such as Aggie Serve (founded 2005). This diversity is also manifested in the service area of the nonprofit organizations. Seven organizations served the Bryan/College Station area, 12 organizations stated that they served the 7 county area, and the rest fell somewhere in between.

We selected organizations to interview based on a variety of criteria. First, we requested Fall Workshop participants to volunteer for interviews. Second, we found the Brazos Valley's fifty largest nonprofits based on total assets. Finally, we chose interviewees in order to fully encompass the Brazos Valleys diversity. Of 35 originally selected organizations, 25 were interviewed within a four month period.

We developed an interview script and protocol that provided constancy through out the interview process. Each interview was conducted by two group members; one took notes while the other led the session. Findings were reached after data was rigorously analyzed using inter-rater reliability tests.

In addition, we interviewed six university representatives including administrators and academicians. Professors and university representatives were selected on the basis of knowledge of and connection to the nonprofit community. We used the same analysis processes to conduct the university interviews.

Emails were sent to various U.S. community foundations. They were asked to respond to how they funded and executed some or all of the 10 identified community leadership roles. Sixteen foundations responded.

## ***Opportunities and Challenges Confronting Brazos County Nonprofits***

We asked the organizations where they would like to see themselves in the next five to ten years and what roadblocks might prevent them from meeting those goals. One of the most common responses reflected a desire to expand the range of services or the serve area. Sixteen organizations mentioned that they intend to grow in some capacity including expanding services, new facilities and entering into new markets.

These organizations mentioned several barriers to achieving their objectives. While funding was typically mentioned, the most common areas identified included better public awareness, a desire

for stronger inter-organizational partnerships, retaining high quality volunteers and employees, and a perceived lack of leadership in their organization or community. Evaluating the needs of the community can benefit the work of the BCF by understanding what nonprofits confront.

Several organizations mentioned the need for better Awareness of the organization and improving their Image. Organizations felt the public was unaware of who they are or their mission or that there was confusion over their name and services. Eleven mentioned a problem in marketing their organization or in advertising their services to the public. Some complained of a “lack of a sellable image” while others simply wanted to make their organization more visible and therefore able to provide their services to more people.

Eight respondents indicated a need for better Partnerships. Organizations wanted to work with other organizations in some form of collaboration or partnership in an effort to either increase services, eliminate duplication, or be the organizer of collaborations. A couple of comments pointed out the need for partnerships in general or the lack thereof due to competition with for-profit organizations. As one respondent stated, “You cannot survive without partnerships.”

Six individuals mentioned the need for stronger Personnel including volunteers and staff. The general theme of this category is the difficulty in either retaining or managing the people who help make an organization operate. Comments ranged from a lack of volunteers to a work force that is unavailable for various reasons. Related to this idea is that many individuals discussed a need to improve volunteer leadership on the board. An example from one interview: “Board development is a challenge... we need a good combination of people who are not afraid to go out and ask for money”.

Other areas discussed include a desire for improved government involvement, improving funding capabilities and stability, healthcare costs and industry specific concerns about regulation, etc.

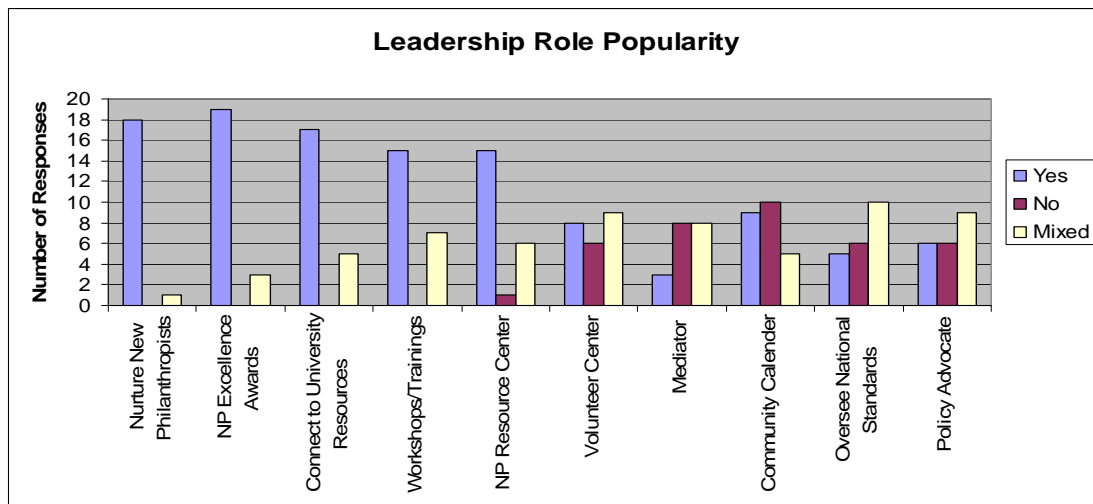
# Community Leadership Roles

We identified 10 potential community leadership roles that could be applicable to the Brazos community. These roles were identified through reviews of the literature and discussions with experts in the community. Community leadership functions are increasingly becoming a part of community foundations' every day work. The literature indicates that Community foundations need to do community leadership to stay relevant, unique, and useful (Bernholz 2005). This includes a variety of activities that go beyond resource development and asset building. Community leadership addresses the capacity and function of nonprofits as they work to improve the quality of life in their communities. Literature also offers several warnings to individual organizations and their executives as they consider which leadership roles are most appropriate for their foundation and the community.

- Community leadership roles are often difficult and time consuming tasks that can detract from a foundation's asset development responsibilities.
- Many organizations do similar work and community foundations must figure out where there is need and how they can benefit their communities in a way that is does not overlap existing services or resources (Bernholz 2005).

In light of the many challenges facing community foundations, it is important that they efficiently and effectively implement necessary community leadership programs. The remainder of this report considers community leadership roles for the Brazos Community Foundations and considers the feedback from interview participants, university experts, and responses from over 30 Texas based community foundations. Examples are drawn from existing literature, websites and interviews with community foundation professionals. Figure one summarizes the responses from interview participants and the extent to which each role was most supported by the local community. Community leadership roles with the most support are discussed first.

Figure 1



## *Nurture New Philanthropists*

A fundamental leadership role for community foundations is to nurture and strengthen the philanthropic community. Community foundations can identify donors' areas of interest and inform them of pertinent community needs. Often they are able to increase nonprofit organizations' fundraising efforts by "matching" donors with organizations in a number of ways. Giving can also be cultivated by promoting activities that raise community awareness and create social capital (Putnam 1995). Civic involvement and the desire to improve the community can result in more local giving. Community awareness can be raised by actively promoting and marketing community needs. This can be achieved through the use of web sites, newsletters, public service announcements, and donor based direct marketing techniques. Community foundations can also establish corporate philanthropy programs. These programs can both reduce corporations' administrative burden and provide them with tax reduction strategies.

There is growing evidence that donors want to be more involved in the changes in the community that their money is funding. Community foundations are well positioned to help donors meet their giving goals. Other similar roles of community foundations are (Hamilton 2004, 12):

- Introducing local donors and potential donors to "role models" in hopes of emulation.
- "Set up giving circles"
- "Enlarge donors' vision of what is possible"
- "Link donors' knowledge, experience, and networks to places where they are needed"
- Giving Catalogue - annual publication of all the "wish lists" of local nonprofits – this way, individuals can pick what they want to help with.

"Community foundations can engage and mobilize donors as participants and leaders in community problem solving, helping donors to share not just their money, but also their knowledge, expertise, and networks (Bernholz 2005, 39)."

Interviews: We asked interviewees if they felt "Community foundations can identify donors' areas of interest and inform them of pertinent community needs." Of the 19 organizations that responded, 18 said "yes", none said "no", and one gave a "mixed" response. Four "yes" respondents indicated that this role falls perfectly in line with the BCF's mission. Two organizations mentioned that this type of effort should be the BCF's number one priority. Another organization showed concern over area federal dollars being cut and said that the BCF should lead this effort. Four organizations indicated that the BCF could fill this role by making area philanthropists aware of different organizations, their work, and their needs. One organization mentioned that part of their organization already does this.

## *Nonprofit Excellence Awards*

These awards would recognize excellent management and governance practices among Brazos Valley nonprofit organizations. They would also create awareness and publicity for winning organizations and their causes. Community foundations have chosen to award improvement of management practices over time, innovation and creativity, as well as specific notable accomplishments. The recipients of these awards would gain validity in the eyes of foundations and other funders. Additionally, the Foundation offers other nonprofits a set of management

standards to which they could aspire. The awards can enhance the visibility of the foundation, which would draw in diverse peoples to serve on the awards committee. Community foundations can also take advantage of previously established award programs. Local nonprofits and nonprofit volunteers can be nominated by the community foundation for state and national awards.

Interviews: We told interviewees the following: “These awards would recognize excellent management and governance practices among Brazos Valley nonprofit organizations. They would also create awareness and publicity for winning organizations and their causes.”

Of the 22 organizations that responded, 19 said “yes”, none said “no”, and three gave “mixed” responses. One organization suggested that such awards be “dovetail[ed] into the Newman 10 awards. An organization suggested that the BCF recognize community philanthropists as well as stellar nonprofit managers. Another recommended that they recognize volunteers. Three organizations mentioned that awards would help with their marketing and public relations efforts. One organization said that awards would help to bring attention to lesser known and understood community nonprofits. Another suggested that giving awards would help the BCF to increase visibility in the community. An origination offered a warning: to be prepared to “play politics” if the excellence awards role is taken on. Two of the mixed responses were concerned with the choice of who gives the awards, and how they are decided.

### ***Connect to University Resources***

Texas A&M University and the various nonprofits in the Brazos Valley represent complex and decentralized networks. Successful community-university partnerships seem to depend on the ability of involved parties to define and understand the various goals and needs of the networks many entities. Common language and definitions as well as clearly communicated goals will greatly increase the chance of successful community-university partnerships occurring (Checkoway 1997; Cox 2000). Connecting various institutions presents many of the network communication problems already mentioned in the discussion of community calendars (Cox 2000). The BCF and the Bush School can help to articulate the benefits of mutual collaboration to both the University and the nonprofit sector. By acting as a “bridge” between two separate nonprofit and University entities, the BCF and the Bush School can help them connect in mutually beneficial ways. The aid of University experts and volunteers has the potential to supply the Brazos nonprofit community with need assistance.

Texas A&M University has a rich tradition of service. With part of its mission being to prepare “students to assume roles in leadership, responsibility, and service to society”, Texas A&M University seems to be a prime candidate for nonprofit partnership.

Interviews: We told interviewees the following: “Texas A&M University can be a great asset and ally for your organization. Help would be given to connect with the University resources, such as experts or volunteers that would help your organization.”

Of the 22 organizations that responded, 17 said “yes”, none said “no”, and five gave “mixed” responses. One organization indicating a “yes” response said that this would be helpful because of A&M’s large size. Two other organizations mentioned a disconnect between the University and the community that they would like to see the BCF do something about. Another

organization pointed to a lack of involvement caused by competing “theory vs. practice schools.” One organization mentioned the benefits they could derive from potential student volunteers, while another mentioned that they would like to see “professors on the board.” An organization suggested that the BCF could “provide nonprofits with information and direction” in this area, while another said that they could help nonprofits see the university as a resource. Another gave advice to keep any such role organized and consistent, and another organization mentioned that this should not be the BCF’s priority.

Four “mixed” response organizations mentioned that they already have relationships with the university, indicating that they need no more help. Three of these organizations said that while they may not need help in this area, other nonprofits might. One organization mentioned that this role would take a lot of work.

We gained additional insight from our six university interviews. Professors provided ideas and insights on how to implement leadership roles. University administrators discussed their views on the University’s role in connecting to the local nonprofit community.

### ***Workshops and Trainings***

Community foundations can serve a sponsor and host for workshops and trainings. Typically these are provided to the nonprofit community but they can also be provided to the general public. As experts on their service area, Community Foundations are in a unique position to identify what works in that particular community and what does not. They can ensure that nonprofits receive accurate and timely information (Hamilton 2004; Bernholz 2005). The Brazos Valley has many unique opportunities and challenges for the nonprofit sector, and training opportunities are only marginally available in the local area. Often these workshops are offered as part of a comprehensive resource center, but they can also be offered in collaboration with other partners in the area.

Interviews: To help interviewees understand the definition we said, “Workshops and trainings would provide management, governance, and capacity building information and tools. These would also provide times to network with other area nonprofit organizations.”

Of the 22 agencies that responded, 15 said “yes”, none said “no”, and seven gave “mixed” responses. Five organizations offered advice on what type of workshops and trainings to offer: grant writing (two mentioned this), standards, governance, startups, management, efficiency, budgeting, leadership, fundraising ideas, accounting software, how to do mail outs, and capacity building. Two organizations said that this was a good role because currently trainings are far away and are expensive. One mentioned networking as being a positive side effect of workshops and trainings. Another said that this role might help nonprofits to retain employees. One mentioned St. Joseph’s Hospital as already doing this, and finally, an organization said that this should be the BCF’s number one priority.

One “mixed” comment mentioned the United Way already partially fills this role. Another warned that the BCF should not “be too burdened with this [role].” One organization questioned whether or not the BCF could bring in attractive speakers or if they would be able to overcome “buy in” hurdles.

## ***Nonprofit Resource Center***

A nonprofit resource center provides local nonprofits with a variety of services to strengthen their capacity to serve their various constituencies. This includes a “library” of resources that often includes information about funding sources, technical assistance and a network of potential providers. This type of center can also offer workshops (discussed in separate section), referrals, and consulting services. They often also produce some type of publication that serves to educate and communicate to nonprofits about upcoming events and opportunities. These services are open to all nonprofits and community foundations can use their experience to identify and approach organizations that are in need of specific help (Hamilton 2004, 17). Smaller community foundations can collaborate with other local entities to provide a nonprofit resource center. Foundations can fulfill this role with by simply posting links to nonprofit consultants on their websites. The examples in discuss in more detail potential activities related to operating a nonprofit resource center.

Interviews: We told interviewees the following: “This center could provide information to nonprofits on potential funders, grant writing, and community resources. This type of center could also offer workshops, trainings, and consulting services.”

Overall, the interviews indicated a positive response from the community. Fifteen organizations indicated that this would be an important or critical asset to the nonprofit community. While only one organization gave a negative response, six gave a mixed response. The mixed responses indicated a belief that other organizations in the community are already providing this type of service, would like to, or should. One concern was that this type of endeavor is not within the scope or ability of the BCF.

## ***Volunteer Center***

A volunteer center can be a central place for volunteer recruitment, training, and placement. It becomes a one-stop shop for individuals interested in volunteering. A well-established volunteer center has the ability to recognize deep-rooted community problems and given enough discretion, it can help focus organizations and volunteers towards a innovative solutions.

A volunteer center could serve nonprofits as a capacity builder for the recruitment of volunteers. In a 2004 study, the Urban Institute found that many organizations did not posses connections to potential volunteers. This capacity-building option points to the value of community volunteer centers. It also validates their role in their ability to match volunteers with organizations that need them (Urban Institute 20).

Volunteer centers can also help nonprofits in training and managing volunteers. According to the Urban Institute, most charities and congregations are unable to invest substantial staff resources in volunteer management. The study found that even those nonprofit organizations that do have a full-time paid staff member as volunteer manager; it is rare that they are able to devote all of their time to volunteer coordination. Most of the time, managing volunteers is just one component of their job, even when their title is volunteer coordinator (Urban Institute 8). An extensive search revealed no community foundations that operate volunteer centers except in a funding capacity.

Interviews: During our interviews, we told interviewees the following: “This center could be a central place for volunteer recruitment, assessment, and organization matching.”

The responses to this question were very mixed, and did not lean in either a positive or a negative direction. Nine out of the 25 organizations indicated a mixed response, and the other organizations were split between positive and negative. Some organizations expressed the idea that the volunteer center should be linked to the nonprofit resource center in order to maximize efficiency and use.

### ***Mediator***

Community foundations can be in the unique position to act as a mediator between like-minded, but in some cases very different groups. Starting conversations among local nonprofits on how to address community needs is one of the “most common and cost effective” community leadership tactics (James Irvine Foundation 2003, 22). This mediation conserves community resources by improving the productivity of nonprofits and reducing the number of unnecessary services and efforts (Hamilton 2004; Bernholz 2005). One such example given by the Wayne Community Foundation is interfaith coordination. They facilitate interfaith meetings for all interested clergy in their area. They help to coordinate and unite these various organizations toward common goals and projects.

In his work, “Treating Networks Seriously: Practical and Research-Based Agendas in Public Administration,” Laurence O’Toole discusses what are known as “wicked problems.” These issues are too complex for one sector to handle and require further collaboration. Policies dealing with complex issues are likely to require networked structures for execution (O’Toole 1997, 46). These wicked problems are numerous in today’s society and can include pandemic, natural disasters, education, security, poverty, etc. In big policy areas like these, the government has different agencies that attempt to solve parts of the same problem, and it is the same in the nonprofit world. In order to achieve something meaningful in any one area, several agencies and organizations must be used.

The following are some ways community foundations can carry out the convener role (Hamilton 2004, 8):

- Making introductions
- Brokering partnerships
- Helping to mend frayed relationships
- Educating disparate players about one another’s work
- Bringing new voices into community decision making
- Linking diverse stakeholders

By bringing together diverse community actors, community foundations help “communities find a more powerful vision and a more unified voice (Hamilton 2004, 8).” Regular communication and interaction between community service providers fosters partnerships that help these organizations “carry out initiatives, leverage investments and mobilize community participation (James Irvine Foundation 2003, 23).”

When an entire community voices its opinions and takes part in the creation of local programs and initiatives, the community is more likely to view these efforts as legitimate. Community foundations can help build what Putnam calls social capital- “features of social organization such as networks, norms and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit (1995, 67).”

Tools:

- Contacts- community foundations are best at the role of convener when they have extensive networks within their communities.
- Host workshops and meetings- help to educate community leaders on important best practice issues and consequences. These meetings also help to shape community discourse by focusing on issues of great consequence (Bernholz 2005, 38).
- Developing and linking local leadership- This can occur through seminars and workshops or through informal introductions (Bernholz 2005, 38). By hosting these types of meetings, community foundations help to “introduce” community members to each other.

Interviews: We told interviewees: “Community foundations can act as a mediator between like-minded but very different groups. This mediation conserves community resources by improving the productivity of nonprofits.”

Of the 19 agencies that responded, three said yes, eight said no, and eight gave mixed responses. One “yes” response indicated that this role is desirable because it would help to solve duplication of service issues. Another indicated that they supported the BCF filling such a role if they would help to settle “turf issues”, especially among their own clients.

Several respondents felt that mediation was not a good role for the community foundation. They felt that other nonprofits that already fill this role (Project Unity, Community Partnership Board, and Brazos Valley Dispute Resolution Board). Three organizations said that they already have internal mechanisms that fill this role. Three saw this as not being a need in the community. Four thought that a mediator role should not be a priority for the BCF.

Some of the respondents expressed similar reservations about duplication or inappropriate for BCF. For instance, one respondent said that this is a good idea, but does not see it as being part of the BCF’s mission. Another organization urged “extreme caution” for the BCF in trying to take on such a role. Two organizations offered more vague comments, saying that “someone has to do it”, and that it’s “an interesting idea.”

A possible component of the mediator role we failed to discuss in the interview process is that of information clearinghouse. Community Foundations can act as a central place for the retention and distribution of community information. A central objective location ensures that information can be correctly and easily made available to the nonprofit sector as well as the general public. The Dallas Indicators Project and the Rhode Island Foundation’s Kids Count project examples that follow give specific ways that this role can be carried out.

## *Community Calendar*

A centralized community calendar could allow all Brazos Valley Nonprofits to better inform the nonprofit community of their events. A centralized community calendar would allow organizations to schedule events to minimize overlap and maximize their impact and success.

While this calendar seems to offer community benefits, multiple challenges arise:

- Communication and coordination within a network can be difficult (O’Toole 1997; Agranoff and McGuire 1999).
- Various stakeholders already producing calendars may not want to give this function up – ownership becomes an issue.
- Viability is uncertain. It is unclear whether something like a centralized community calendar will be accepted and used in the Brazos Valley.

Despite these conceivable roadblocks, other methods might be employed in order to achieve the desired benefits of a community calendar:

- Work with organizations that already have a community calendar function. The BCF can foster communication and possibly cooperation between the various calendar producing entities in the Brazos Valley ([lifeinthebrazos.com](http://lifeinthebrazos.com), [the Arts Council of Brazos Valley](#), [KBTX](#) and [KMAY](#) to name a few).

The BCF could possibly get a neutral third party (not present in the Brazos Valley) to host an online calendar that all in the nonprofit community can post to and utilize.

Interviews: To clarify the definition we told interviewees the following: "A community calendar would allow all Brazos Valley Nonprofits to inform the nonprofit community of their events and event dates. This would allow organizations to schedule events to maximize their impact and success."

Of the 24 agencies that responded, nine said “yes”, 10 said “no”, and five gave “mixed” responses. Besides generally approving comments like “good idea” and “very beneficial”, four organizations mentioned current confusion caused by multiple community calendars, rendering them ineffective. They seemed hopeful that a centralized community calendar could alleviate some of this confusion. One organization said that such a calendar would help with marketing. An organization said that the community foundation would be good at filling this role because they would be able to be a neutral party. Finally, one organization gave a “yes” response with the warning that any entity trying to fill this role would be facing a difficult task. They further counseled that the BCF would have to investigate aggressively all area events, including university and business activities if they wanted to fill this role.

Of the 10 organizations that gave negative comments, four mentioned the United Way or 211 as already filling this role. Additionally, three organizations thought that the Chamber of commerce should fill this role. Two of these organizations specifically mentioned duplication of services being a danger if the BCF were to try to undertake a community calendar. Two organizations pointed to this being too difficult of an undertaking because getting organizations to report would be very hard. Two other organizations viewed this role as not needed in the community.

Mixed comments generally pointed to the difficulty of such an undertaking. An organization asked how a single calendar will gain legitimacy as “the only calendar” when there are so many in existence already. One organization mentioned 211 as already doing this and another mentioned the Chamber of Commerce as being a good candidate for such a job.

### *National Standards*

There is growing recognition that National Standards are useful for nonprofits because it helps establish the credibility of nonprofits and provides a universal measure to compare different types of nonprofit organizations. Implicit in these standards is that they improve the quality of management practices among nonprofit organizations leading to healthier and more productive organization. “Unclear goals and progress measures make it difficult for communities to judge whether interventions are working. Some community foundation leaders and staff play a valuable role by helping define credible performance targets, accepting accountability for progress towards goals, and evaluating and publicizing results” (Hamilton 2004, 18).

Community foundations are able to help local leaders and their organizations address important issues such as measurement, accountability, and evaluation. They are also able to help them understand how such measures can inform their organization’s activities and decisions (Bernholz 2004, 39). Community foundations can act as a gatekeeper by making performance measurement results known to the public. This increased knowledge helps inform individual, government, and corporate giving- effectively “weeding out” ineffective and poor performing organizations (Hamilton 2004, 18-19).

Community foundations can:

- Help develop a “common language, vision, and set of expectations” among those they serve (Hamilton 2004, 19).
- Use their experience to frame issues, recommend best practices, and identify problem areas that need further research (Hamilton 2004, 18-19).
- Use their influence to communicate which organizations will best use the resources they are given (Hamilton 2004, 18-19).

Interviews: Once again, to clarify we told interviewees the following: “This would increase the quality of management practices among nonprofit organizations in the Brazos Valley. Best Practice Standards would give added credibility to all organizations that meet the standards

Of the 21 organizations that responded, five said “yes”, six indicated “no”, and 10 indicated “mixed” responses. One organization said that they favored national standards because of the added credibility they might give area nonprofits. Another mentioned the benefits coalitions of nonprofits could have when approaching policy makers – national standards would give them a means to unite. Another organization thought that national standards would be good for small or startup nonprofits that are sometimes “run in bad ways.” They believe that national standards could act as a reference source for these organizations.

Three “no” organizations said that they have internal mechanisms that already monitor standards- one specifically mentioned their board. Two organizations worried about the extra

amount of work that national standards would entail. Two organizations saw administering national standards as not being the BCF's role.

One "mixed" comment said that for such an initiative to work it would have to be voluntary. Another organization thought it would be too cumbersome if audits were involved, and that this was the job of each organization's board. Two organizations said that this role belonged under "workshops and trainings." Two more said that it would be very difficult to get area nonprofits to participate in such an endeavor. One organization said that national standards would only be useful if they do not "cause a lot of extra work for the organizations." Finally, an organization said that this would have to be a joint effort.

### ***Policy Advocate***

An advocate for policy solutions brokers regional solutions by cordoning efforts across multiple sectors. They could also help the community to connect with government resources by advocating policy solutions to local nonprofit needs.

"The solutions to many problems extend beyond the boundaries of any one city. Yet developing a common vision and concerted action across cities, school districts, police departments, and so forth can be difficult unless someone steps forward to facilitate the process. As even-handed conveners for community visioning and problem solving, community foundation staff often have the sophisticated process skills needed to help players across the region work together (Hamilton 2004, 9)."

There are several roles that community foundations can play in advocating for policy solutions (Bernholz, 2005, 38-39):

- "Brokering regional solutions: Community foundations can help to facilitate action across cities, school districts, and service areas to address regional problems that extend beyond the boundaries of any one city."
- "Maximizing access to government resources: Community foundations can help communities to connect with the public sector to access government resources and develop collaborative solutions."
- "Advocating and partnering for policy solutions: With the devolution of federal authority to state and local control, community foundations are increasingly becoming active policy advocates on a range of community issues. More community foundations will pursue policy roles, either directly or indirectly, as the issues their constituents face cannot be addressed solely through grant funding."

Government procedure and regulations can be confusing and overwhelming to individual organizations within a community. Community foundations, by gaining knowledge of issues and possible solutions, can help their community to effectively interact with local, state, and federal government (Hamilton 2004, 14).

The question of neutrality: One danger of community foundation involvement in policy advocacy is a potential violation of their neutral status. This type of violation could alienate members of their community that they are trying to help. The James Irvine Foundation article

“Community Catalyst” gives an example of some criteria that Ventura Community Foundation uses to decide on their level of involvement in a particular policy issue. They will be involved if (2003, 25-26):

- The issue is of paramount importance to Ventura County’s future.
- The Alliance’s position has overwhelming consensus among Alliance participants (defined as 92 percent, or 46 of the 50 members).
- There is no other group that can fill the gap or take on this role.
- The position is fully consistent with the mission, principles and values of the Alliance.
- The position is deeply grounded in an objective analysis of the issue.
- By taking a position, the Alliance adds significant value and weight to the policy debate.
- The Alliance’s intended policy outcome is agreed upon and achievable.
- The position will not compromise the Alliance’s credibility in the community. (James Irvine Foundation 2003, 25-26).”

Interviews: To clarify, we told interviewees: “The Brazos Community Foundation could help to broker regional solutions by cordoning efforts across multiple sectors. They could also help the community to connect with government resources by advocating policy solutions to local nonprofit needs.”

Of the 21 organizations that responded, six said “yes”, six said “no”, and nine gave “mixed” responses. One “yes” respondent said, “If you are not out there making noise, you are overlooked.” This respondent said they already have efforts to do this, but indicated that any additional effort in the community would be welcome. Another organization suggested that whoever takes on this role could “help get the word out on laws.” Another said that, like the national standards, any effort to add credibility is good. Finally, one organization suggested that the BCF work with TANO and other statewide organizations in trying to fill this role.

Two of the “no” respondents said that they already have organizations that do this for them. One organization said that this is what the COG does. Three organizations warned that policy advocacy is not included in the BCF’s mission. One of these organizations worried that this type of action could hurt the BCF’s ability to raise money.

Two “mixed” response organizations warned that filling such a role would be difficult because of the diversity in the local nonprofit community. One of these organizations said that the BCF would have to focus on very broad issues for it to work. Two mentioned that other organizations already do this, indicating that there is no need for the BCF to. One of these also thought that the BCF lacks the experience and personnel power now to fill such a role. Another organization suggested that any such endeavor would have to be a community wide effort. Finally, an organization warned that this would be a “big job.”

## Conclusion and Recommendation

### *Goal 1: Identify potential community leadership roles for the BCF*

We met this goal by effectively conducting a review of relevant literature on community foundations' societal role. We also uncovered community leadership best practices through both literature and various examples.

### *Goal 2: Prioritize potential community leadership roles for the Foundation*

After conducting interviews with local nonprofit leaders and university representatives, we rigorously analyzed responses and subjected them to inter-rater reliability tests. We used this information to develop five recommended community leadership roles. We chose these roles based on community support, resource availability, and BCF mission alignment.

### *Goal 3: Support the Foundation's ability to implement one or more of the community leadership roles.*

We developed a series of action steps for the implementation of the five recommended roles:

- Nurture New Philanthropists
  - Bring together philanthropists
  - Education, cooperation, and mentoring of current and potential philanthropists
  - Matching donor interests with community needs
  - Find ways to keep money in the Brazos Valley
- Nonprofit Excellence Awards
  - Create a Nonprofit Management Award
  - This award can be given at a Nonprofit Forum
  - Create a collaborative selection and review panel
- Workshops and Trainings
  - Past Capstone nonprofit forums and workshops can be a basis for the future
  - Coordinate work with others
  - Provide opportunities for local trainings and workshops
- Connect to University Resources
  - Further develop partnership with Bush School, Aggie Serve, etc.
  - Foster the creation networks between community and university entities
- Nonprofit Resource Center
  - Participate in efforts to organize and develop a nonprofit resource center

### *Goal 4: Increase community awareness of the Foundation*

In October, we hosted the Fall Nonprofit Workshop and Townhall Meeting. Fifty people attended to hear Ms. Rose Mary Fry speak about nonprofit standards. In April, we hosted the first annual Bush School Spring Nonprofit Forum. This all day event was attended by over 100 community members, and included two keynote speakers, a speech by Dr. Elsa Murano, President of Texas A&M University, as well as six workshop sessions. This event was covered by two local newspapers, The Bryan/College Station Eagle and The Battalion. See the following links to read these stories:

<http://media.www.thebatt.com/media/storage/paper657/news/2008/04/23/News/Bush-School.Sponsors.Forum.To.Train.For.Nonprofit.Work-3342439.shtml>

<http://www.theeagle.com/lifestyles/Working-together>

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