



ABRIENDO PUERTAS EXPANSION MANAGEMENT MODEL

CAPSTONE TEAM

Patricia Beifuss
Megean Blum
Sarah Broussard
Heather Gregory
Erin Hooper
Kelly Kravitz
William Mitchell
Effie Swanson
Lauren Tolman
Maritza Valdez

FACULTY ADVISOR

Dr. Lori Taylor, Ph.D.

May 9, 2011

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Abriendo Puertas is an education nonprofit, which employs a parental engagement initiative to reduce the number of Hispanic student dropouts in Texas. Through four core classes, the nonprofit teaches low-income, Hispanic parents how to provide educational support to their children. Mainly concentrated in the Rio Grande Valley of Texas, Abriendo Puertas enters client school districts and trains small groups of parent participants in the four core classes. The parental engagement model then dictates that this original group of parents becomes parent volunteers who are responsible for identifying the following round of parents and facilitating the four original sessions again. This model continues and the impact of the curriculum widens. To date, Abriendo Puertas has seen much success – both in recognition by external organizations and in the wide support of its parent participants and volunteers. As such, Abriendo Puertas hopes to expand its program across the state, most notably to the Fort Worth area. The nonprofit is interested in solidifying its current operations in the hope of expanding its impact.

Building upon previous research, an Expansion Management Model (EMM) was produced to guide Abriendo Puertas' efforts. Combining research-based best practices, an analysis of the nonprofit's current practices (based primarily on an internal assessment), as well as an in-depth evaluation of the perceptions of parents involved with Abriendo Puertas, the EMM includes tailored recommendations to Abriendo Puertas' needs. It also identifies potential expansion sites in Texas, consistent with current client school districts.

Several methodologies were used to understand the best practices of nonprofit management, the current practices of Abriendo Puertas, and provide a foundation for expansion recommendations. The first, a literature review, provided the EMM with proven best practices in three areas of focus: marketing and community outreach, resource development and fundraising, and volunteer management. A self-assessment was administered to Abriendo Puertas to illuminate the strengths and weaknesses of the nonprofit. Adapted from two existing tools, this self-assessment exposed the internal management and organizational structure of the nonprofit, as well as the how its current practices differ from literature-based practices. Further, observation and elite interviews at Abriendo Puertas' headquarters and around the Rio Grande Valley provided the opportunity to interact with key nonprofit personnel, as well as observe the implementation of the parental engagement model.

To guide the evaluation of the nonprofit, the Abriendo Puertas Parent Survey was created to glean the strengths and weaknesses of the program, as indicated by its participating parents. Conducted through telephone interviews of past and current parent participants and volunteers, the Survey illuminated the motivations of Abriendo Puertas parents, as well as their perceptions of obstacles to success. While the results are not generalizable, the Survey did indicate that overall respondents were pleased with the services provided by the program. However, it also demonstrated notable differences between former and current participants that can inform

volunteer management practices, as well as results that indicate a need for increased communication and marketing.

Finally, a demographic analysis was also conducted to identify several potential expansion sites. With propensity score matching, fourteen individual school districts in four regions were pinpointed for similarities to past and current Abriendo Puertas clients. These characteristics included the percentage of Hispanic students, the Hispanic dropout rate, the percentage of at-risk students, and the percentage of limited English proficiency students. Each of these districts represents a student population that may be receptive to the services provided by Abriendo Puertas: Edgewood ISD, Harlandale ISD, San Antonio ISD, South San Antonio ISD, Southside ISD, Southwest ISD, Corpus Christi ISD, Dallas ISD, Grand Prairie ISD, Irving ISD, Donna ISD, Edcouch-Elsa ISD, Mercedes ISD, and Sharyland ISD.

Based on the wishes of the client, the team identified three focus areas critical to successful nonprofit capacity building:

- **Marketing and community outreach,**
- **Resource development and fundraising, and**
- **Volunteer management.**

For small organizations such as Abriendo Puertas, it is important to ensure that the program is effectively supported by its staff and volunteers. Often, nonprofits have minimal resources to devote to the internal processes within their organizations and, as such, it is important that best practices results are followed. Nonprofit management literature illuminates how to best strengthen nonprofits, which is especially crucial for those wishing to expand.

Thorough research into the management practices of Abriendo Puertas and a foundation in established best practices create the basis of the Expansion Management Model. Intended to guide Abriendo Puertas' expansion, the model is comprised of several recommendations intended to facilitate strategic expansion, focusing on three key areas of growth: marketing and community outreach, resource development and fundraising, and volunteer management.

Before any organization, including Abriendo Puertas, can expand its services and solidify its capacity, it is critical that it have a clearly defined mission. Most importantly, a mission statement must be able to communicate to internal and external stakeholders – clients, donors, participants, and volunteers – the nonprofit's ultimate goal and reason for existence. This mission statement should then serve as an overarching guideline for any and all organizational activities, including the three areas of focus emphasized in this report.

Marketing and community outreach is crucial to any nonprofit, especially one hoping to enter new markets. Nonprofit marketing often suffers as a result of a lack of resources; however, the

benefits of consistently and effectively communicating with key stakeholders encourage nonprofits to allocate even limited resources toward its marketing efforts. Nonprofit marketing literature points to the importance of strategic marketing – most critically defining the mission and goals, conducting a situation analysis, and defining a target market. Without a clear understanding of whom the nonprofit intends to target – and what motivates them, as well as the internal and external contexts of providing services – Abriendo Puertas cannot remain consistently engaged with its audiences. Essential to nonprofit best practices is the development of a comprehensive marketing plan. Such a plan allows for organizations to not only communicate within their surroundings, but also facilitates other components of capacity building by effectively and consistently communicating the organization’s mission and goals.

Currently Abriendo Puertas has only the beginnings of strategic marketing. While the nonprofit does actively communicate with some stakeholders, mainly potential client districts and donors, it does so through only one channel – the president of the organization. Furthermore, the message of the nonprofit is somewhat inconsistent. Abriendo Puertas regularly uses two logos – communicating different messages about the organization, and its mission statement currently resembles a vision statement.

As such, the EMM recommends that Abriendo Puertas allocate resources toward its marketing efforts, specifically by:

- *Solidifying the organization’s mission statement,*
- *Researching and outlining a strategic marketing plan,*
- *Devoting additional staff time to marketing efforts, and*
- *Integrating marketing communications.*

With special attention to each of these recommendations, Abriendo Puertas will be able to solidify its marketing efforts in a manner that communicates its mission and engages community stakeholders, including clients, donors, and parents.

For a small but growing nonprofit organization, resource development and fundraising are key to ensuring the future financial success of the nonprofit as well as the success of its programs. The literature emphasizes the need for fundraising activities to be incorporated into the overall development of an organization, beginning with its board of directors. The nonprofit board should take an active role in the fundraising process, and personally contribute to the organization’s finances. Nonprofits should also conduct donor prospect research to learn about the characteristics and goals of its potential funders, which will ultimately increase its chances of securing a donation. Utilizing the organization’s website and building a relationship with donors online are also important, cost-effective ways to build a donor base. Ultimately, the goal of any nonprofit should be to have a diverse set of funding sources. Organizations should work to secure funding from a variety of different sources – including individuals, foundations,

government grants, and other funders – and should utilize a development staff when necessary to achieve this goal.

Currently, Abriendo Puertas has begun the initial phases of funding diversification, but much remains to be done. The organization has only one, part-time staff member who focuses solely on fundraising efforts, and the board of directors does not play a heavy role in developing the nonprofit's resources. However, Abriendo Puertas is in the process of developing its online outreach efforts; the organization is implementing a "click to donate" button on the website and planning an electronic newsletter to send to supporters.

To improve Abriendo Puertas' resource development in the future, the team makes the following recommendations:

- *Expand and diversify the board of directors to provide oversight of the organization and take an active role in the nonprofit's fundraising efforts. As part of this process the board should also develop a board member handbook,*
- *Begin to conduct donor prospect research for individuals as well as foundation and other grant funding, utilizing the Foundation Center website,*
- *Develop a strategic plan for online outreach efforts,*
- *Expand the development staff as the organization grows, and*
- *Continue to work toward funding diversity.*

Finally, volunteer management is especially critical to a nonprofit such as Abriendo Puertas which relies heavily on its volunteers to complete its programs. Best practices in the areas of volunteer recruitment, volunteer training, and volunteer coordination and retention provide an overview of the key actions that nonprofits must take to improve their volunteer management. In volunteer recruitment, a nonprofit should first assess its need and develop specific position descriptions for its volunteers, keeping in mind the costs and benefits of volunteering. Then, an organization should develop a recruitment plan that outlines its overall recruitment strategy. After volunteers have been recruited, an appropriate training plan will help orient new volunteers to the organization and ensure that existing volunteers have the skills and information necessary to effectively complete their assigned tasks. Training serves not only to prepare volunteers, but also develops a sense of belonging within the organization. A clear grievance process should also be developed and explained to volunteers in the event that they have issues or feedback regarding their experience with the nonprofit. Volunteer coordination and retention works to ensure that existing volunteers continue to serve the organization. A volunteer coordinator can improve both coordination and retention and serve as a resource to volunteers. Recognizing volunteers for their work and contributions will also ensure that volunteers feel that they are making a difference in the nonprofit.

Currently, Abriendo Puertas does not take an active role in recruiting its first round of parent participants who will later become volunteers. The organization does, however, provide position descriptions for each of their volunteers and conduct an intensive training program with parent participants of the program before they are eligible to move forward and become volunteers. Abriendo Puertas also provides volunteer liaisons at some of its partnering schools, which work to coordinate volunteer efforts. To enhance retention, Abriendo Puertas holds a recognition ceremony annually and provides a certificate of achievement to each of its volunteers.

Given these current practices, the team recommends that Abriendo Puertas make the following changes to their volunteer management:

- *Develop a parent participant and volunteer database to assist with tracking these individuals,*
- *Become more engaged in the parent participant recruitment process and develop a recruitment plan, and*
- *Identify liaisons at each partnering school immediately, and work to hire a full-time volunteer coordinator as soon as possible.*

As the figure below shows, the EMM is graphically represented by a hierarchy of these recommendations. These recommendations are comprehensive and specific to the three areas of focus of the EMM and are presented in order of priority to ensure a solid base for Abriendo Puertas' expansion. By first defining its mission and solidifying its board, Abriendo Puertas will have the overarching goals and resources in place to facilitate subsequent recommendations. These two recommendations will serve as a basis on which the organization can grow. As the organization moves to implement further recommendations, it will be necessary to increase its staffing levels to expand the capacity of the firm. As the EMM demonstrates, with the increased ability to incorporate recommendations, Abriendo Puertas can turn to improving its volunteer management, marketing, and funding diversity. The careful tracking of volunteers will allow the nonprofit to evaluate its impact and better adapt to the needs of its parent participants and volunteers. Further, Abriendo Puertas must create a strategic marketing plan to disseminate a clear and consistent message to its stakeholders and communities. By defining identifying its target markets and conducting a situation analysis, Abriendo Puertas will be able to engage its stakeholders and reinforce efforts in other areas, such as volunteer management and resource development. Finally, Abriendo Puertas should continue seeking funding diversity. With a variety of funding sources the nonprofit will benefit from a more stable financial base.

The final set of recommendations shown on the EMM is intended to support the above steps. Each serves to more completely affect the management practices of Abriendo Puertas. Engaging the nonprofit in outreach to volunteers and donors, as well as comprehensively identifying the environment within which it works, will allow Abriendo Puertas to firmly prepare itself for expansion.

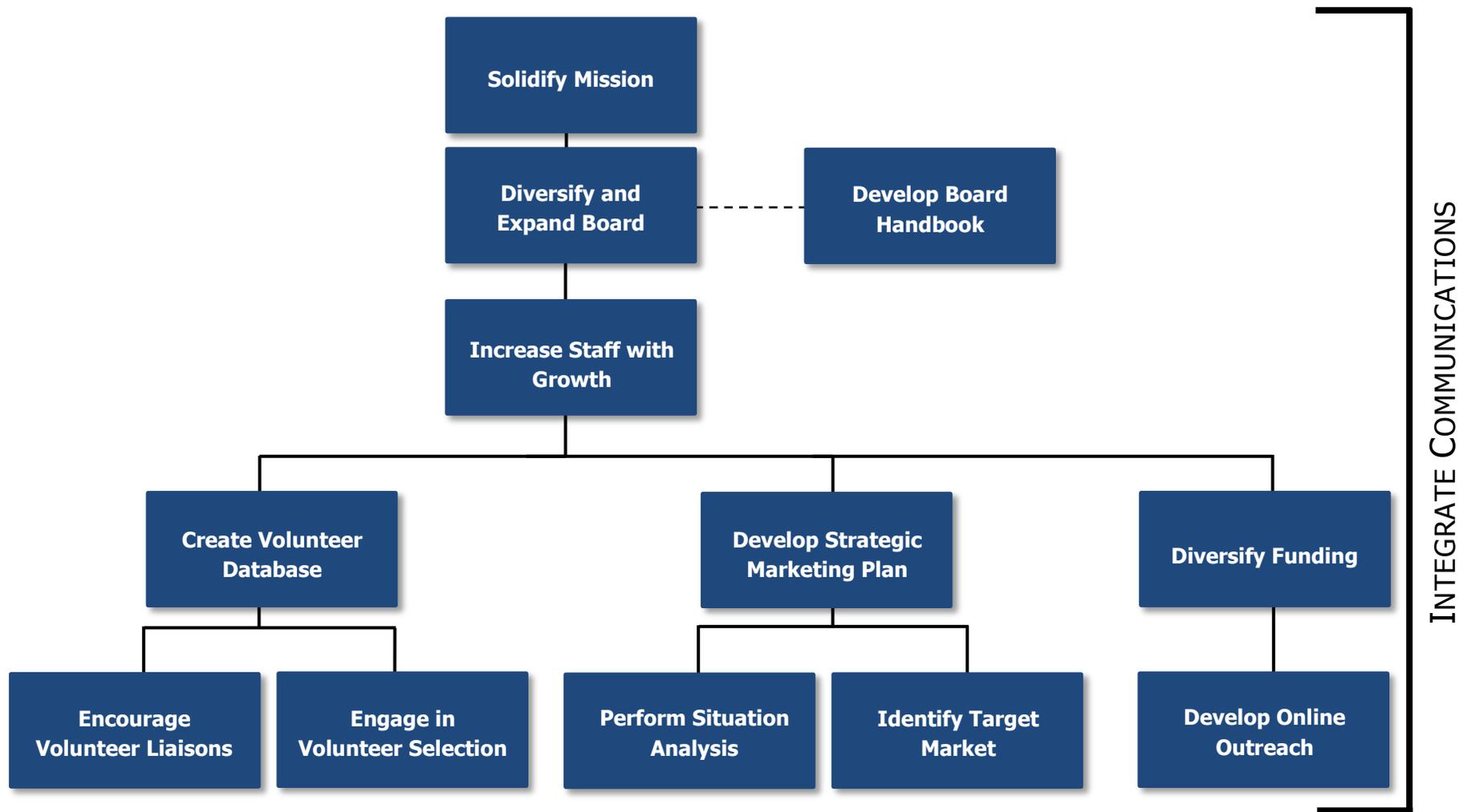


Figure 1 Abriendo Puertas Expansion Management Model