What’s inside

Tracking overhead costs

A close look at “Charitable Choice”

Understanding servant-leadership
This issue of Philanthropy Matters focuses on relationships: between government funding and faith-based charities, between nonprofits' accurate reporting and the public trust, and between fundraising's history and present.

Our cover story, "Operation Accountability," takes a look at a new study about overhead costs and how well nonprofits track and report them. This study makes it clear that a dialogue among nonprofit practitioners, policy makers, regulators, and the accounting profession is necessary to help improve cost measurement and reporting, build greater public trust in the nonprofit sector, and create a better climate for fundraising.

Although government support for faith-based charities has been hotly debated, there is little research that examines how the policy has been implemented and what the results have been. In "Counting on Faith for Charity," we share the preliminary results of a new study that will help inform the many public policy issues that "Charitable Choice" legislation has introduced.

"Leading by Serving" takes a look at a philosophy that foundations, nonprofits, and private corporations have used to foster strong relationships among staff and with donors and customers.

Finally, we revisit an old friend. In "Rosso Redux," we tell you about Hank Rosso's Achieving Excellence in Fundraising, which has been revised to reflect new research and ideas that have emerged since the classic handbook was first published in 1991. Approximately three-quarters of the second edition is new material, but Rosso's basic concepts and philosophy are still its foundation.

Hank believed that philanthropy is built on good relationships. Paul Schervish calls these communities of participation. With this issue of Philanthropy Matters and our other educational and research activities, we at the Center on Philanthropy at Indiana University want to make sure you find your relationship with us a helpful one. Write and let us know what's on your mind. We're listening.
If your work has anything to do with fund raising, there is undoubtedly a dog-eared, well-read book on your office shelf. Perhaps you take it down periodically to spend some time with an old friend, turning to the folded-down corner of the chapter on planned giving before a meeting with a potential donor. Or maybe you’ve given a copy to a new staff member. That friend who has been a bedrock of good advice since 1991, Hank Rosso’s Achieving Excellence in Fund Raising, has just gotten a new lease on life: a second edition that is significantly revised to reflect the research that has equipped philanthropy with new ideas and tools since the first version of the handbook.

Henry A. Rosso’s fund raising principles, strategies, and methods are the basis for every chapter. When Rosso edited the first edition of Achieving Excellence, he based it on the curriculum taught at The Fund Raising School, which he founded. Since then, the School has expanded upon many of Rosso’s ideas and developed an updated curriculum, which is reflected in the new edition.

About three-quarters of Achieving Excellence is new material, written by 29 authors associated with the School. All of its chapters have been either rewritten or updated and enhanced, and its 11 new chapters include “Women as Donors,” “Trends in Major Donor Behavior,” “Diversity of Cultures,” “Special Events for the Twenty-first Century,” and “The Effective Use of Technology in Nonprofits,” among others. This edition offers solutions for case development, the latest research on continued professional development, ideas for using the Internet as a fund raising vehicle, and a wealth of tips from top fund raisers.

Both seasoned professionals and those new to the field will find the new edition useful and illuminating, says Tempel. “There’s a lot of new information, and it is undergirded with recent research,” he says. “You don’t have to read it from cover to cover, but can read around in it, selecting a chapter when you need it.” It also has “a very complete bibliography,” he adds. “If you want to know something about a particular subject, you’ll find much of the key material written on it listed here, from practical to theoretical.”

The second edition of the book is dedicated to the memory of Rosso, who, Tempel says, always was concerned that those who might most need the information offered by The Fund Raising School were those least able to access it. This also was the impetus for a new workbook series offered through the School, as well as the first edition of Achieving Excellence.

“One of Hank’s favorite sayings was that ‘fund raising is the gentle art of teaching the joy of giving,’” says Tempel, for whom Rosso was a mentor, colleague, and friend. “What is most rewarding about putting together this edition is that we really have created something here that people can depend on, that allows what we learned from him to be a gift passed on to the next generation.”

To order this book, e-mail dpittman@iupui.edu or call (317) 684-8901.
In the corporate world, overhead is the cost of doing business. In the nonprofit sector, though, the phrase “it takes money to make money” can be more Catch-22 than common sense, and organizations find themselves under increasing pressure to show that overhead costs are a small portion (if not a shrinking slice) of their financial pies.

In fact, many nonprofits do not adequately track or report their fundraising or administrative expenses despite clear accounting standards, according to an ongoing major study conducted by the Center on Philanthropy at Indiana University and the Center on Nonprofits and Philanthropy at the Urban Institute.

The result of nonprofits’ incorrect and inconsistent reporting of financial information, say researchers involved with the Nonprofit Fundraising and Administrative Cost Project, is that it is difficult for donors, policy makers, watchdogs, and even the charities themselves to understand nonprofit finances, compare spending, and
discern how contributions are used.

“Fundraising and administrative costs are real expenses needed to manage the nonprofit organization, evaluate performance, and ensure legal compliance,” says Thomas H. Pollak, senior research associate at the Urban Institute’s Center on Nonprofits and Philanthropy. “Yet many people automatically believe that the lower they are, the better the nonprofit uses donations.”

This misperception provides “significant incentive,” says Pollak, to underreport costs or lump them into program expenses. Those and other reasons for incorrect reporting can mean that donors, who often are more willing to fund programming than overhead, may be unwittingly basing giving decisions on inaccurate information. Ironically, nonprofits that report accurately may find themselves at a disadvantage in competing for philanthropic dollars.

In this giving and reporting climate, the ratio of overhead to program costs is the most common measure of nonprofit organizational efficiency. That’s why, says the study’s researchers, many groups tout their low overhead ratios in information provided to donors. Such percentage-driven guidelines may not tell the whole story, however. The study also examined cost variations among different types, ages, and sizes of nonprofits and what affects them, and those findings will be released in coming months, as will other aspects of the study, such as:

• nonprofits’ fundraising and management costs
• how charitable fundraising is done within nonprofit organizations and by whom
• the return on investment in fundraising tactics such as telephone solicitation, direct mail, special events, planned giving, and others
• the use of cost “efficiency” standards

The Nonprofit Fundraising and Administrative Cost Project is the largest national study of such costs to date and combines, in three phases, analyses of data drawn from multiple sources. Phase one examined tax forms of more than 37,500 nonprofits—Internal Revenue Service Form 990, the publicly available return that most nonprofits are required to file annually. Phase two gathered information using an original survey of overhead costs and accounting practices of more than 1,500 randomly selected nonprofits that broadly represent the entire nonprofit sector. Phase three will include a small number of case studies of selected organizations.

The study has received funding from The Atlantic Philanthropies (U.S.A.) Inc., the Ford Foundation, The David and Lucile Packard Foundation, the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, and the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation.

**Zero-Sum Game**

“Donors, policy makers, nonprofit managers, board members and scholars all need accurate, comparable financial information, and until now, there has been little reliable data on what nonprofits’ costs really are, how they are reported, and how and why they vary,” says Patrick M. Rooney, project co-leader and director of research for the Center on Philanthropy at Indiana University.

Initial findings of the study indicate that 37 percent of nonprofits reporting private contributions of $50,000 or more reported no fundraising or special event costs on their 2000 IRS Forms 990. Nearly 25 percent of nonprofits reporting contributions of $1 million to $5 million also reported no fundraising or special event costs.

While these figures are startling, the researchers say there can be credible reasons for reporting zero fundraising costs. Some organizations, for example, rely on volunteers, board members, or related organizations (such as the United Way, or “Friends of” groups) to do fundraising. Some are entirely supported by endowments, fees, or other long-term support. “While some nonprofits undoubtedly refrain from reporting any fundraising expenses for these reasons, our analysis shows that those explanations account for maybe half of nonprofits reporting no such costs,” says Mark Hager, research associate at the Urban Institute’s Center on Nonprofits and Philanthropy.

Other possible reasons, the researchers say, are ignorance of—or poor training in—correct cost tracking and accounting and reporting procedures; failure to allocate staff time and other costs correctly across fundraising, administrative, and program expense categories; or an intentional desire to increase the organization’s public image by appearing to have lower costs. Some

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**Philanthropy Matters**
Are faith-based organizations (FBOs) more effective providers of social services than secular organizations? Groundbreaking research is attempting to answer that question based on an objective look at service providers’ effectiveness, accountability, and adherence to First Amendment boundaries between church and state.

“Faith-Based Social Service Provision Under Charitable Choice: A Study of Implementation in Three States,” is being conducted by a team of 10 researchers for the Center for Urban Policy and the Environment at the School of Public and Environmental Affairs at Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI). The study is supported by the Ford Foundation with assistance from the Indiana University Foundation.
Family and Social Services Administration, the Joyce Foundation, and the Center on Philanthropy at Indiana University.

President George W. Bush's Faith-Based Initiative is the most recent example of public funds being directed to religious organizations that provide human services; the initiative was preceded in 1996 by a "Charitable Choice" provision of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA). The provision encouraged states to contract with FBOs to provide services to welfare recipients. The IUPUI study is analyzing human services delivery under the PRWORA's Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) block grant program.

"We can't draw broad conclusions about Charitable Choice laws from this research," says Sheila Suess Kennedy, principal investigator on the project and associate professor of law and public policy and philanthropic studies at IUPUI. "But I do think our work helps inform public policy. It's not going to be possible any longer to simply assert that FBOs are more effective social service providers— it has to be proven. What we've said by undertaking this study is that this should be an evidence-based rather than an ideological debate."

The study has looked at FBO-government interaction in three states, chosen because of their differing political cultures and religious landscapes: Indiana, Massachusetts, and North Carolina. Preliminary findings show that in all three states, relatively few new faith-based providers have become government contractors. Many religious organizations, the Kennedy research team suggests, continue to be wary of partnering with government, some because they fear their ability to accomplish their religious mission will be compromised.

"You're not going to bite the hand that feeds you, and rules and regulations come along with the money," says Kennedy. "There's a fear that government funding could mean a loss of the prophetic voice of the religious sector."

Under PRWORA, government can't require a faith-based organization to diminish or mask its religious character. However, funding may not be used to pay for religious exercises, and FBOs can't make clients' receipt of benefits contingent on religious participation.

More education may be necessary to maintain this delicate balance, if a sample of 30 percent of the congregational leaders in one Indiana city is any indication. The study found that 67 percent of respondents to a questionnaire were unaware that tax dollars cannot pay for religious activities like prayer and bible study. The ability of states to assure constitutionally appropriate program implementation, says Kennedy, is also a concern, as states may lack the resources to monitor for constitutional violations.

Neither the original Charitable Choice legislation of 1996, nor the faith-based initiative that has followed it, defined "faith-based," so the researchers conducted a survey to determine the differences that exist among religious organizations and between secular and religious providers. The survey listed eight criteria for identifying the level of influence of faith in an organization.

Researchers assigned respondent's FBOs to categories of faith influence and found that:

- Providers with a strong faith influence had fewer organizational networks for providing services.
- Strongly faith-influenced providers increased their community involvement as a result of partnering with government.
- Moderately faith-influenced organizations faced fewer management challenges than either secular or strongly faith-influenced organizations.

Another preliminary finding of the study is based on a two-year tracking of job-training service providers in Indiana. Analysis reveals that faith-based job training and placement efforts are somewhat less effective than those of secular organizations.

However, Kennedy is quick to point out that providers in only one state were studied, and, she says, these conclusions don't indicate anything about the comparative efficacy of other types of social service provision.

"What we've said by undertaking this study is that this should be an evidence-based rather than ideological debate."

—Sheila Suess Kennedy
Associate Professor of Law and Public Policy, IUPUI

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“The servant-leader is servant first. The best test is: do those served grow as persons; do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants? And, what is the effect on the least privileged in society; will they benefit, or at least, not be further deprived?”
—Robert K. Greenleaf

Most foundations and the nonprofit organizations they fund are in the business of serving people—in fact, serving is why they exist. During tough economic times, though, both grant makers and grant seekers must lead to survive. Servant-leadership, a leadership/life philosophy that applies service principles to every level of decision making, has the potential to help transform that conundrum into a solution.

In the essay “Servant-Leadership and Philanthropic Institutions,” authors Larry C. Spears and John C. Burkhardt list the 10 characteristics central to the development of servant-leaders: Listening, empathy, healing, persuasion, awareness, foresight, conceptualization, commitment to the growth of people, stewardship, and building community.

“The characteristics of the servant-leader are the tools for success for grant makers and grant seekers,” says John Lore, president and CEO of Connect Michigan Alliance and former board chair of the Association of Fundraising Professionals. “There is a direct correlation between servant-leadership and successful philanthropy.”
The servant-leader concept was first articulated in 1970 by long-time AT&T executive Robert K. Greenleaf, who concluded that authentic leaders are chosen by followers. The ability to lead with integrity, Greenleaf wrote in his essay “The Servant as Leader,” depends on the leader’s skills for withdrawal and action, listening and persuasion, and practical goal setting combined with intuitive foresight.

“Leaders worthy of the designation servant-leader are those men and women whose values have come out of a life of servitude and desire to help others,” says Milton Murray, former director of Philanthropic Service for Institutions. “The purest of motives emerge when the leader puts others and their well-being first.”

Spears, who is CEO and president of the international Greenleaf Center for Servant-Leadership, located in Indianapolis, says servant-leadership is particularly relevant in light of recent business scandals. “In the last few years we have witnessed a number of scandals in both for-profits and nonprofits as individual leaders—or, as in the case of Enron, entire organizations—have fallen as a result of greed and a lack of caring for others. Servant-leadership provides a strong set of values and ethics for people and organizations. It is an idea that puts people first.”

The best efforts of nonprofits and foundations to improve opportunity, promote peace, or build community cannot succeed unless those efforts are reflected internally as well as externally, says Spears. “Servant-leadership challenges each individual to look into his or her own heart and make conscious choices that will lead to a deepening commitment to others.”

The declining stock market has eroded the assets of many foundations, causing some grant makers to cut staff, reassess their mission statements, and cut funds to nonprofits they previously supported. In an increasingly challenging environment for both foundations and nonprofits, a philosophy that emphasizes serving others with compassion and understanding has the potential to build trust not only within foundations and nonprofits, but also with their clients and constituents. Building trust and stronger relationships can help sustain institutions during times of trouble, says Spears.

In fact, some organizations applying the principles of servant-leadership may emerge from difficult times more successful than ever before. For example, the merger of Sisters of St. Joseph Health System and the Daughters of Charity Health System, which joined to form Ascension Health, now constitutes the largest not-for-profit Catholic healthcare organization in the United States. Sister Joyce DeShano, chair of Ascension’s board, has credited its tradition of servant-leadership with “having helped to create a spirit of trust that allowed for a smooth merger and transition,” says Spears.

The servant-leadership philosophy also has benefited for-profit organizations such as The Men’s Wearhouse, TD Industries, and Southwest Airlines. Many of these companies have also appeared on Fortune magazine’s annual listing of the “100 Best Companies to Work For.”

“Although our company only began using the term servant-leadership” in the 1990s, we’ve had an intuitive sense that the key to choosing leaders lies in looking for people who enjoy helping others learn, achieve, and grow… because it feels like the right way to build a company, and because it is good for business,” says George Zimmer, president and CEO of The Men’s Wearhouse.

By committing themselves to basic servant-leadership characteristics such as “listening” and “healing,” says Spears, nonprofits can create and strengthen relationships with foundations, and foundations can improve their own relations with grantees. “Nonprofits and foundations already do a great deal to ameliorate a broad range of societal pains, but much more is needed. Servant-leadership offers inspiration and insights for those who are willing to make the life-long commitment needed to both understand and practice it.”

“Servant-leadership provides a powerful set of behaviors that can be practiced by both foundations and nonprofit organizations to their mutual benefit.”

— Larry Spears, President and CEO
The Greenleaf Center for Servant-Leadership

Contact Larry Spears at (317) 259-1241 or lspears@greenleaf.org. Visit the Greenleaf Center for Servant-Leadership Web site at www.greenleaf.org.
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Operation Accountability
organizations also may be “netting out” professional fundraising costs altogether, so that when a fundraiser spends $100 to raise $100, zero is reported instead of the $100 that was actually spent.

De-mythologizing the Dialogue
Whether intentional or not, inconsistent reporting of overhead costs, say the researchers, has the potential to damage the credibility of the entire nonprofit sector. While studying these issues might initially seem to be a Pandora’s box, better information on how nonprofits calculate and report such costs is needed. The researchers hope to initiate a dialogue grounded in research and improve understanding among nonprofit professionals, the accounting profession, and regulators. The study also is providing nonprofits insights they can use in their own operations.

“The project is especially significant in an uncertain fundraising climate. Nonprofits can’t control funding cuts from charitable foundations, the government and individuals, but they can control some of their costs if they have a clearer picture of what they really are,” said Elizabeth Boris, director of the Center on Nonprofits and Philanthropy at the Urban Institute. “It will let nonprofits evaluate their costs and financial practices against similar organizations and develop internal benchmarks to guide their decision making.”

“The information and tools generated by this project,” says Eugene R. Tempel, executive director of the Center on Philanthropy at Indiana University, “will give nonprofits better ways to show the true costs of operating and average fundraising and administrative costs for organizations like theirs, and we’ll show why donors who want quality programs should support reasonable costs needed to sustain them.”

Initial results are available at http://www.coststudy.org
Faith-based and secular providers had the same rates of placement into jobs, and these jobs offered similar hourly wages. However, the study shows that clients placed by the faith-based providers worked substantially fewer hours per week and were less likely to be offered health insurance.

Final results from the study and links to the publications will be available after November 5 on the project’s Web site, http://ccr.urbancenter.iupui.edu. In the meantime, the study has added an important level of evidence to the national dialogue about Charitable Choice. Tempting Faith, a one-hour documentary report on the study and the issues it examines, has aired nationally on PBS. Other studies on aspects of Charitable Choice, including one at the Rockefeller Institute affiliated with the State University of New York, are now underway.

“This is an important issue and we certainly won’t be the last to look at it,” Kennedy says. “There’s so much research that needs to be done.”

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Charity, Philanthropy, and Civility in American History
Edited by Lawrence J. Friedman and Mark D. MCGarvie
Cambridge University Press, 2003
Cloth, 480 pages, $40

“Will be soon acclaimed as one of the most important works ever published on a subject too long neglected.” — Bertram Wyatt-Brown, Richard J. Milbauer Professor of United States History, University of Florida

“The single most important work to come out of the new philanthropic studies... it should be read by researchers, policymakers, and thoughtful practitioners alike.” — Susan A. Ostrander, Professor of Sociology, Tufts University

In the introduction to Charity, Philanthropy, and Civility in American History, Lawrence J. Friedman, professor of history and philanthropic studies at Indiana University, emphasizes how little attention serious scholars have paid to the history of American philanthropy. Questions surrounding the values of liberal capitalism, political democracy, and the marketplace have been left unanswered. In the last half-century, scholars have examined the centrality of diversity in American culture, including the charitable work of African Americans, Hispanics, Native Americans, Hasidic Jews and other ethnic groups, but this research has not been incorporated into a general history of philanthropy. The same holds true for the recognition and study of women’s involvement in philanthropic endeavors, and the study of clients of philanthropy. In short, Friedman asserts, there has been a dire need for professional historians to step up to the plate and update the history of American philanthropy.

Charity, Philanthropy, and Civility in American History brings the history of philanthropy into the mainstream, expanding the boundaries of its definition. The book is designed for a broad audience and is accessible and non-technical.

To order this book or other resources from the Center on Philanthropy, e-mail Denys Pittman at dpittman@iupui.edu or call (317) 684-8901. A list of resources is available on the Center’s Web site at www.philanthropy.iupui.edu.
Why Choose a Deferred Gift Annuity at the Center on Philanthropy?

“Jim has been on The Fund Raising School faculty for many years. Karen also was a fundraiser and attended Hank Rosso’s Principles and Techniques course in the 1980s. We each chose a deferred gift annuity as a retirement strategy and to support the work of The Fund Raising School at the Center on Philanthropy. Once payments begin in the year we selected, our plan will provide a guaranteed income to fit our anticipated needs. When the gift matures, it will be used to maintain the training materials used by The Fund Raising School.”

— Karen and Jim Greenfield

Rates for Deferred Charitable Gift Annuities*

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*Payment is based on value of gift and current annuity rates at time of gift. There is a minimum donation of $5,000, and deferred gift annuities are not available in all states.

For additional information about charitable gift annuities and other gift plans that provide an income stream and/or tax benefits, please contact the Indiana University Foundation, Office of Planned Giving Services, at (800) 558-8311, or e-mail at iuf@indiana.edu.

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