

Fall Executive Committee Meeting
October 26-27, 2012, Chicago

Topic: Building Capacity

Background: During the strategic planning process in 2010 – 2011, the Board agreed that capacity building needed to be a focus and included it as one of five goals in the Strategic Plan. In order to assist with the plan’s implementation, YALSA’s Board directed the President at their June 2012 meeting to appoint a Capacity Building Taskforce. As this is a new area of focus for YALSA that also involves a new taskforce, the Executive Committee may want to discuss strategies for helping the board understand this focus and what their role in supporting it is.

Action Required: Discussion

Capacity Building Background Information

What is and isn’t capacity building and why are we doing it now?

- According to the National Council of Nonprofits, “...nonprofit capacity building refers to activities that improve and enhance a nonprofit’s ability to achieve its mission and sustain itself over time.”
- “Nonprofits have an obligation to seek new and even more effective ways of making tangible progress towards their missions, and this requires building organizational capacity. All too many nonprofits, however, focus on creating new programs and keeping administrative costs low instead of building the organizational capacity necessary to achieve their aspirations effectively and efficiently.” – excerpt from *Effective Capacity Building in Nonprofit Organizations*
- According to the National Council of Nonprofits, the need for nonprofit capacity building is vitally important right now because the economic downturn is dramatically impacting the ability of nonprofits to serve individuals and communities.

Strategic Plan Goal

YALSA has the resources it needs to fully support and fund projects relating directly to its mission and strategic plan.

Objective 5a: YALSA’s human resources support YALSA’s programmatic and organizational initiatives at a high level of efficiency, quality and effectiveness.

Strategy: Strategically expand and manage YALSA’s human resources (e.g. staff, consultants, interns, volunteers).

Objective 5b: YALSA’s Board of Directors effectively advances YALSA’s mission and goals.

Strategy: Build the capacity of the YALSA Board of Directors through recruitment, training, identifying and clarifying roles within the Board and establishing a Board committee structure.

Objective 5c: YALSA's budget fully supports YALSA's priority activities and initiatives.

Strategy: Expand and diversify YALSA's revenue base.

Strategy: Reallocate resources when necessary.

Strategy: Continue to control expenses.

Objective 5d: YALSA's brand attracts new members, partners, sponsors, and funders.

Strategy: Create and implement a branding strategy for YALSA.

Capacity Building Taskforce

Charge: To work with staff, the Board, Fiscal Officer, Financial Advancement Committee (FAC), and other YALSA groups as appropriate in order to facilitate the implementation of the Capacity Building goal in the strategic plan. Taskforce size: 5-7 members, including the Fiscal Officer and FAC Chair. Term: Oct. 2012 through June 30, 2014.

Members: Mary Hastler (chair), Sandra Hughes-Hassell, Chris Shoemaker, Allison Tran, Penny Johnson, Kate McNair, Shannon Peterson (board liaison), Beth Yoke (staff liaison)

Board Members & Capacity Building

How do we help the board to better understand the rationale behind the goal and what we seek to achieve from it? For example, board members need help understanding that capacity building is not focused on adding new initiatives but instead involves better positioning the association to prioritize, focus on those priorities and identify and align resources to support the priorities.

These include things like:

- identifying a communications strategy
- improving volunteer recruitment
- adopting new governance practices
- developing a leadership succession plan
- identifying more efficient uses of technology
- engaging in collaborations with community partners

The board needs to be able to effectively answer the question, what will give YALSA increased strength and effectiveness, enabling the association to survive the challenges of the current economy and sustain itself well into the future?

Next Steps

Where do we want the board to begin thinking about how YALSA can build capacity? How best do we prepare the board to make decisions relating to capacity building? Would it be beneficial to have some training/building of understanding of what capacity building means?

What are YALSA’s greatest needs for capacity building? In order to determine that, would it be beneficial to purchase the Core Capacity Assessment Tool (\$300)?

- The Core Capacity Assessment Tool (CCAT), is a 146-question online survey that measures a nonprofit organization's effectiveness in relation to four core capacities— leadership, adaptability, management, and technical capacities—as well as organizational culture. The tool provides a real-time findings report, a prioritized capacity-building plan, and the technology to generate self-selected benchmark reports from a national database of 2500+ nonprofits. More info is at www.tcccat.com/

In order to help the board make some progress with this goal, it may be helpful to provide board with concrete items to react to at Midwinter. What are some action steps or possible recommendations that the Executive Committee may have around the capacity building goal?

Additional Resources:

- Capacity building, www.councilofnonprofits.org/capacity-building
- *Effective Capacity Building in Nonprofit Organizations*, www.vppartners.org/sites/default/files/reports/exec_summary.pdf (.pdf)
- Organizational Capacity Assessment Tool, <http://caseygrants.org/resources/org-capacity-assessment/>