

Focusing on Agency Board Development and Self-Assessment

UJA-Federation of New York, through its Jewish Communal Network Commission (JCNC), is increasingly committed to ensuring the sustainability of its beneficiary agencies through effective leadership, particularly at the board level. Good governance can make the difference between an agency that simply fulfills its mission and one that is both mission-based and ready to adapt to change and continuous growth.

that can assist targeted agencies with the recruitment and cluster placement of new board members who have the requisite skills and backgrounds to positively influence change. The task force recommends board prospects and may provide input for training, mentoring, and consultation services in the areas of governance and leadership.

“Cluster placements can strengthen a board by bringing in a number of people that may better represent the diversity of the community, add much-needed skills and expertise, and supplement the existing board structure,” said Cheryl Fishbein, chair of the new task force. “A cluster of new board members also helps to infuse new energy at the agency.”

In addition, JCNC created a pilot grant program to facilitate the process of board self-assessment for network agencies. Twelve-month grants of \$8,000 each were awarded in the 2005 – 2006 fiscal year to Berkshire Hills-Emanuel Camps, the Jewish Community Center of the Greater Five Towns, the Jewish Community Center of Staten Island, Selfhelp Community Services, and Westchester Jewish Community Services.

Any assessment process, and self-assessment in particular, is the first step to understanding how well a board is doing and looking at what changes, if any, are needed. JCNC’s grant supports the use of the Board Self-Assessment Tool, prepared by Board Source, a leader in this field. This comprehensive,

easy-to-use, and confidential tool covers the key issues of governance. Each board member of the involved agencies completes an online survey, which includes all the important areas concerning an agency board, such as mission, strategic planning, financial issues, fundraising, and recruitment of new members. In addition, the survey is customized to include questions relating not only to Jewish values, but also to an agency’s relationship to UJA-Federation and the agency network.

THE FINDINGS BECOME ACTIONABLE

To analyze and interpret the results of the survey, agencies select their own facilitator or consultant who meets with board members and senior staff and guides the development of action projects stemming from this effort. “The self-assessment survey provides objective feedback about the board and the dynamics among board members,” said Hilda Chazanovitz, project manager at the Management Assistance Program (MAP). “With the right facilitator, the findings become actionable.”

The steps taken by agencies after completing this process may include filling particular gaps of expertise on the board, establishing committees that do not previously exist, planning for a greater focus on fundraising, and spending more time on community outreach. All the boards are more engaged as a group

and with the executive director — a critical partnership.

Based on the success of this pilot, a similar grant program is being offered in the current fiscal year. Among the types of agencies that could benefit from this program are those in transition or the early stages of growth or expansion, those that need to better define their roles or are considering changes in lay or professional leadership, and those that are re-evaluating their mission or programs. For additional information, contact Hilda Chazanovitz at chazanovitzh@ujafedny.org or 1.212.836.1647.

MAP recruits business professionals who provide pro bono consulting services to UJA-Federation beneficiary agencies. For additional information about volunteering in your area of expertise, please call 1.212.836.1646.

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For many years, the Volunteer and Leadership Development Division (VLDD) has worked toward identifying and referring qualified leadership to the boards of directors of network agencies. Susan Kohn, executive director of VLDD, says her department’s excellent track record is due to the personalized attention her staff gives to assessing and matching the needs of an agency with the talents, skills, interests, and time of prospective leadership.

Building on this and other UJA-Federation initiatives to support board leadership, such as the Agency Board Leadership University, *UJA-Federation Governance Primer*, and new grants for capacity building, JCNC and VLDD established the Task Force on Board Development.

ASSISTING TARGETED AGENCIES

The new 19-member task force of experienced lay leaders, many with direct agency board involvement, develops strategies

Solutions

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Capacity-Building Services Expand to Better Assist Agencies

Organizational capacity building has long been central to the objectives of UJA-Federation of New York in fulfilling its mission. The concept known as value-added capacity building refers to the impressive panoply of expertise, resources, and training that UJA-Federation offers to beneficiary agencies. With capacity building, agencies at various stages of organizational development are able to receive services that respond to their individual needs.

Like other nonprofit organizations, UJA-Federation provides these direct capacity-building services to its network of agencies to help them survive and grow. Pro bono consultants in the Management Assistance Program (MAP) and UJA-Federation professionals have always been available to assist agencies in serving their constituencies and achieving their goals. Capacity-building grantmaking, whether through UJA-Federation or private or public funders, enables these agencies to better use scarce resources, since an investment in capacity has leveraging power for their future performance.

How these services are viewed has been broadened to include a variety of specific capabilities. Among them are:

- Technical capacity, encompassing technology, accounting, human resources, and fund development
- Management capacity, ensuring the efficient use of resources
- Leadership capacity, focusing on the vision to inspire and make decisions
- Adaptive capacity — the highest level — assessing organizational effectiveness, planning, and collaboration with others

PERFORMING AT OPTIMUM LEVEL

When capacity building works, the results are threefold: an improvement in an organization’s capacity to do what it already does, an improvement in its capacity to grow, and an improvement in its ability to sense the need for change. All three are required for an agency to perform at its optimum level.

UJA-Federation has established for a number of agencies a relationship between its capacity-building services and the organizational review process. This action promotes

the importance of capacity building as an adjunct to grantmaking.

To provide advice and support in the development, implementation, and oversight of capacity-building strategies, the Jewish Communal Network Commission (JCNC) established a Task Force on Agency Capacity and Excellence (ACE) last year. Among its functions, this team of lay leaders and professionals evaluate proposals and recommend the allocation of small capacity-building grants for such purposes as board development, branding and marketing, and website enhancement.

Along with providing capacity building in the New York metropolitan area, UJA-Federation’s Continuum of Capacity-Building Services benefits a variety of grantees in Israel. Services include individual consultations, workshops, and a management-training course for executive directors.

The following two case studies — at the Metropolitan Council on Jewish Poverty and the YM & YWHA of Washington Heights & Inwood — demonstrate how capacity building can be used to effect change and growth.

A Tribute to Len



MAP Consultant Leonard Sloane

For the past five years, readers of this newsletter have seen the attribution line, “Written by Leonard Sloane, a MAP consultant and a former financial columnist for *The New York Times*.” Following this issue, Len will no longer write and edit *Solutions*. As he moves on to other areas of interest at UJA-Federation — which, thankfully, will include an occasional MAP project — we wanted you to know the man behind the byline.

Len was introduced to MAP through a friend. It was a great match!

Recently retired, Len enjoyed a successful career as a business and financial reporter, editor, and columnist in New York City for more than 40 years. For most of those years, he wrote for *The New York Times*, enlarging the scope of its coverage of personal finance

(Continued on third page.)

Met Council Receives JCNC Grant to Support Resource Development

Metropolitan Council on Jewish Poverty is an organization that provides a host of programs and services to populations in need, both directly and through UJA-Federation's 27 Jewish community councils — grassroots agencies that are on the front line of services to New York City's neediest. Met Council first contacted the Management Assistance Program (MAP) more than a decade ago, when it asked for help on writing and designing its annual report. The finished product was an attractive, professional brochure that is still used as a template for documents published by the agency.

Since then, Met Council has contacted MAP many times on more elaborate projects — and has been more than satisfied each time. Recently, the agency received a three-year \$80,000 capacity-building grant from the JCNC to help change its organizational culture and to focus on resource development.

"We know that MAP understands us and our challenges, so we don't have to reinvent the wheel every time we talk to them," said William E. Rapfogel, chief executive officer of Met Council. "Having a conversation with their consultants is like talking to a trusted peer."

Those conversations have been many over the years. In 2002, Met Council wanted to determine whether it could use a database and whether such a database would prove to be an effective tool. A MAP

consultant helped the agency target its data-processing needs and establish priorities in reorganizing its computer systems.

ALL-PURPOSE SPACE FOR RESIDENTS

Soon afterward, the agency needed assistance from a consultant as it built the Linda and Jerome Spitzer Residence for senior citizens on Manhattan's Upper East Side. MAP provided architectural services on a pro bono basis that were extremely useful in designing an all-purpose space for the residents.

In 2004, a fundraising audit was required, and again MAP stepped into the breach. After spending dozens of hours at Met Council headquarters and interviewing the staff, a MAP consultant helped the agency understand its challenges and identify its opportunities in a variety of areas, including donations, direct mail, and development. The consultant presented the agency with a long-term strategic plan that has since helped Met Council become increasingly effective in raising money for its programs, and served as the impetus to the agency's current \$80,000 capacity-building grant.

A more unusual request to MAP was made that same year. Met Council entered an annual competition among nonprofit enterprises to prepare a business plan, sponsored by the investment firm of Goldman Sachs. Since there was no one on the agency's staff trained to prepare a plan, a MAP



Meeting together at Met Council (from left) are Willie Rapfogel (executive director), Rabbi Cohen (executive consultant), Gary Gutterman (director of housing), Racquel Bercovich (community affairs associate), and Ilene Marcus (chief of staff)

consultant agreed to perform an analysis and help it create for the first time a market strategy and a cost-benefit analysis. As a result of this work, the plan was adopted by Met Council, and the agency was chosen as a semifinalist in the competition.

Met Council is preparing a public launch of its fee-based home-care service program and contacted MAP once again. A consultant currently is aiding executives at the agency in selecting a new name and deciding how to brand and market this program so that it is differentiated from other Met Council programs and services.

AGENCY MATCH

The new capacity-building grant from the JCNC — which requires an agency match and further funding from the agency for two additional years — has a number of objectives, including engaging the board and senior staff more fully in specific fundraising strategies, exploring an online fundraising presence, and generating additive funds for Met Council and its network of Jewish community councils.

Pro bono consulting can be limited in the level of engagement due to its volunteer nature. In addition, implementing the consultant recommendations often has associated financial costs that are beyond the resources of many agencies. Organizational capacity-building grants augment the work of pro bono consultants and enable agencies to move beyond research and analysis to execution. These grants can be an incentive to agencies, encouraging risk taking and innovation.

Met Council has stated many times that the support and encouragement from UJA-Federation is critically important to its mission. "Anytime we don't know what to do, we call MAP," noted Ilene S. Marcus, Met Council's chief of staff. "Just the notion of going to them and explaining a problem is very, very valuable to us. If they can't offer us a solution through MAP, they are usually able to direct us to other resources either within or outside UJA-Federation."

Washington Heights Y and MAP: A Long-Term Partnership Getting Stronger

The YM & YWHA of Washington Heights & Inwood has made use of the Management Assistance Program (MAP) since MAP's creation in the mid-1980s. Recently, the Washington Heights Y has expanded its involvement with MAP to include the capacity-building services now being offered.

"MAP has been a great resource for us, and we're thrilled to have had the support of UJA-Federation over the years," said Martin G. Englisler, executive vice president of the Washington Heights Y. "This program exposes us to external people with whom we can work collaboratively and achieve great impact for the future."

STRIVING TO REPOSITION ITSELF

The center has historically served elderly Jews who live in upper Manhattan and currently has about 3,500 senior members. But its reach has

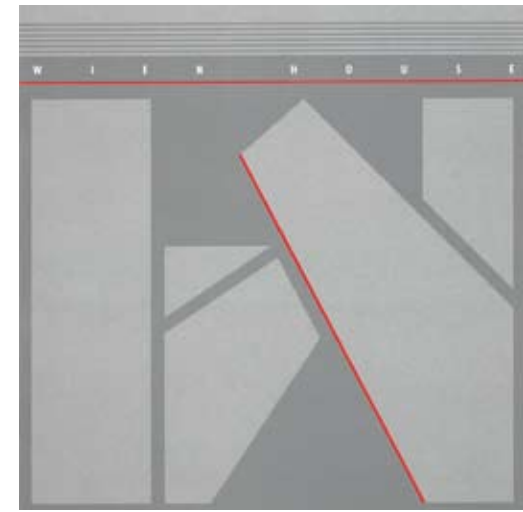
expanded to also encompass children, starting at nursery-school age, and Orthodox families, along with other ethnic groups in the area — especially the Dominican population. Many young Jewish families are moving to northern Manhattan, and the Washington Heights Y is striving to reposition itself to take advantage of this opportunity and reacquire the community with its services.

One of the first projects MAP's pro bono consultants worked on for the agency was a logo and brochure in 1990 for its Wien House senior housing facility. "To this day, I attach it to fundraising letters," noted Mr. Englisler. "It's as good as anything you'd get from a luxury condo in New York."

MAP also provided the Washington Heights Y with facilitators for retreats — someone who helped the executive and his team create a better organizational structure and establish priorities in a time of very rapid growth. Soon after, another consultant was engaged to help the agency better understand its staff-board relationships.

TRAINING UNSKILLED WORKERS

Most recently, the agency created a welfare-to-work program in conjunction with F.E.G.S. Health and Human Services System, a beneficiary agency of UJA-Federation. The idea was to train unskilled workers for better-paying jobs, including jobs at the Washington Heights Y itself.



Brochure for the Wien House, an early MAP project for the Washington Heights Y

A MAP consultant collaborated with Mr. Englisler in establishing and implementing this program.

A team of MAP consultants is now working with the Washington Heights Y to develop three important components of its strategic-planning program: a new positioning statement, an outreach campaign, and new marketing materials, including a logo. The goal is improved brand recognition, a 10-percent expansion of programming, and increased online program registration.

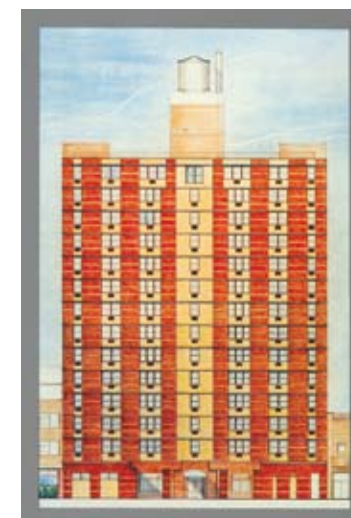
The graphic design will be integrated into a newly enhanced website, which is funded by a \$5,000 capacity-building grant from UJA-Federation's Jewish Communal Network Commission. Another MAP consultant has assessed the content of the site and made recommendations for improving navigation and accessibility. Mr. Englisler hopes with an easier-to-navigate, interactive site, its web traffic will increase by 20 percent.

"It's now a standard thing for our staff to inquire, when we have a need, whether MAP can provide assistance," he added. "Its matches are with sophisticated, capable people that we could never find on our own. I take every opportunity I can to get help from MAP."

A Tribute to Len, continued from front page.

and analyzing conditions in many industries, including Wall Street, Seventh Avenue, and Hollywood. He also presented a daily radio program called "Personal Finance" on WQXR, appeared on national TV and radio programs, wrote three books, and lectured frequently on financial planning, investing, and other economic subjects.

He is widely recognized as an expert in financial, economic, and monetary affairs — with an ability to present complex matters in a down-to-earth format. We thank him for bringing those same journalistic skills to our newsletter.



Artist's rendering of Wien House senior housing facility