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# Creating a Community-Centric Framework for Nonprofit Organizations in Hampton Roads, Virginia

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Capstone Title: **Creating a Community-Centric Framework for Nonprofits Organizations in Hampton Roads, Virginia**

Presented in the MDP Community Forum on: **May 10, 2024**

I approve this capstone as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Development Practice.

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# Creating a Community-Centric Framework for Nonprofit Organizations in Hampton Roads, Virginia

Regis University

Master of Development Practice

Kiandra Quinn

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## Personal Statement

In April 2022, I was hired by Chesapeake-based nonprofit, the Children's Health Investment Program of South Hampton Roads, as the Executive Assistant and Community Liaison. As a newcomer to the nonprofit world, I was eager to learn about all aspects of the industry, and the way it functions. While my specific interests ranged from food-insecurity to homelessness, I found CHIP to be a near-perfect learning opportunity for me. Being a part of an organization that serves low-income families has provided me with insight into the barriers that make it difficult to provide services to those who need it the most. While I expected to focus on the challenges that come along with systemic poverty, my interest in philanthropy and fundraising was piqued while working on a capital campaign during the summer of 2023.

The campaign was/is for the renovation of the CHIP headquarters. CHIP is housed in a 95-year-old house that was once a funeral home. While a building renovation has been discussed for the past few years, the need for a renovated space became critical when CHIP was awarded funding to create a community resource center in Winter of 2022; we have since named this center the Sankofa Family Center. The funding will go towards the implementation of programs selected by residents of the community. Although CHIP critically needs a renovated space to accommodate our growing programs and services, there are restrictions on using the grant funding towards the building expenses. Additionally, many of the individual and private donors that we've courted are happy to donate to the organization, however, those donations have often come with stipulations that complicate our efforts…such as being able to decide what our funding goes towards, and how our services should be delivered. For example, one of the conditions attached to one of our grants specifies that we can only provide services to residents

within a particular census tract, rather than to the entire area we typically serve. My colleagues and I found this confusing and wondered about the rationale behind our funders' decision to tie the funding to a census tract. I learned that a "building renovation" isn't seen as a worthy cause by many of our wealthiest donors. When I learned that this was a standard practice in the nonprofit sector, I wanted to understand the rationale behind it. If a nonprofit is effectively serving its clients, shouldn't the organization be able to decide how best to utilize their funds? Why are donors given so much space to dictate how an organization should carry out its mission?

Donor-centric philanthropy can pose significant challenges to nonprofits. When organizations prioritize the desires and preferences of donors above all else, they risk losing sight of their mission and the needs of the communities they serve. This approach may lead to mission drift, where nonprofits shift their focus to align more closely with donor interests rather than addressing the root causes of social issues. Additionally, reliance on a small group of donors for funding can create power imbalances, giving donors undue influence over organizational decisions and programs. Constantly catering to donor preferences may hinder innovation and risk-taking, as nonprofits fear jeopardizing funding by deviating from donor expectations. Ultimately, donor-centric philanthropy can undermine the effectiveness and autonomy of nonprofits, compromising their ability to enact meaningful change in society. The donor-centric fundraising model is the standard model in the nonprofit industry. However, there are new and burgeoning fundraising frameworks that de-center individual donors while placing the community at large at the center. My Capstone project focuses on exploring alternative models of fundraising that allow NGOs to maintain their autonomy while serving the most vulnerable members of our community.

## Introduction

My Capstone project explores contrasting approaches to fundraising, specifically the donor-centric and community-centric models. In my literature review, I analyze the evolution of modern philanthropic practices, tracing how the donor-centric model emerged as the "standard practice" of the nonprofit sector. I also explore its drawbacks that can be detrimental to a nonprofit's ability to effectively support its clients. Additionally, I investigate Community-Centric philanthropy, a fundraising model that prioritizes entire communities over individual donors by focusing on the collective needs, aspirations, and strengths of the community. Instead of tailoring initiatives solely to appease individual donor preferences, community-centric philanthropy engages with the community to identify its most pressing challenges and co-create solutions that address systemic issues. This approach recognizes that communities are diverse and complex, with varying needs and priorities, and aims to empower communities to drive their own development. Community-centric philanthropy also promotes collaboration and partnerships among stakeholders, including residents, grassroots organizations, and local institutions, to leverage resources and expertise for sustainable change.

Drawing on insights from the literature review, I conducted interviews with development professionals and nonprofit executives from ten community-based organizations in the Hampton Roads area. These interviews provided valuable insights into the fundraising culture and philanthropic landscape of the region. During my interviews, I learned that there's intense competition among nonprofits in the Hampton Roads region. However, most interviewees expressed a desire for increased collaboration among these nonprofits. Additionally, I found that while nonprofit organizations in the area acknowledge the significance of diversity, they face challenges in implementing meaningful and efficient strategies for integrating diversity into their

leadership. I learned that these organizations are beginning to adopt community-centered approaches in their philanthropic and fundraising efforts, despite being largely unfamiliar with the formal community-centric practice framework. Based on my research findings, I propose the establishment of a network designed to serve as a central hub and educational resource for organizations interested in adopting community-centric practices in the Hampton Roads area.

## Literature Review

**Modern Philanthropy and Donor-Centrism**

Philanthropy, in its various forms, has played a crucial role in shaping American society and infrastructure. Emerging from numerous cultural influences, U.S. philanthropy originated from traditions such as religious giving and collective agricultural practices and food distribution, particularly in Indigenous communities. Settler and immigrant communities fostered cultures of mutual assistance among their members, as the sustainability of these communities was dependent on collaboration (Philanthropy NY, 2008). Defined as, "goodwill to fellow members of the human race," (Merriam-Webster, n.d.), early philanthropic endeavors were intended to address immediate problems within communities. Communities would band together to build schools, churches, medical facilities, and other necessities. Money wasn't the only valid contribution; time and skills were equally valued (Moniz, 2020).

Modern philanthropy began to take shape during the American civil war. Service members were given donated weapons and supplies, while women's organizations were formed to provide relief to wounded soldiers, and to aid their families (Shaker & Ho, 2022). The post-civil war period brought drastic changes in the ways that charity was conducted. Many private charity organizations undertook massive efforts to address social issues such as poverty and illness. To effectively use their resources, organizations began taking a business-like approach to

giving (Billitteri, 2000). Modern charities, many of which would go on to become foundations, used systematic and scientific means to manage their giving. Whether they were wealthy industrialists or average citizens, donors wanted to know exactly what their money was being used for. Projects and organizations that received funding were held to strict reporting requirements so that philanthropic organizations could measure the impact of their giving (Billitteri, 2000). The ability for communities to receive funding was no longer based solely on need, wealthy donors evaluated "potential" and the return-on-investment they would receive for donating.

The growing popularity of "measured giving" gave rise to an idea that still permeates today, the idea that some projects, communities, and people are more worthy of investment than others. Many professional fundraisers today will emphasize a donor's right to invest in projects that align with their interests and values (Robinson, 2022). Upon examination we learn that a lack of diversity amongst funding sources has created an imbalance in power and nonprofit funding distribution. Within nonprofit organizations, the donor-centric model, a fundraising model that prioritizes the expectations and experiences of the donor, has long-been a staple of fundraising and development (Moody, 2022). The inherent power dynamics embedded in this approach can sideline the needs and aspirations of the very communities these organizations aim to serve. Nonprofits have traditionally prioritized major gifts from affluent, white, and mostly male donors and corporations, while neglecting the potential impact of nontraditional donor bases, such as low-income and BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) individuals (Funk, 2021). It is often assumed that low-income and marginalized individuals are either unwilling or unable to contribute to charitable and nonprofit causes (Rovner, 2015). Subsequently, the symbiotic relationship that NGOs have with donors has, in many cases, set the

stage for instances in which donors are given too much control over a nonprofit's practices, often derailing its mission. What is the impact of donor-centric fundraising practices and alternative models of fundraising on the organizations that have successfully implemented them?

**Donor-Centrism and Nonprofit Autonomy**

As previously alluded to, nonprofits with donor-centric fundraising strategies are often forced to, at least partially, relinquish control to their wealthiest donors (Harkema, 2022). In their study, Costello and Malkoc explore the concept of personal control in charitable giving practices. The results showed that donors who felt a loss of control preferred donating time over money. Their rationale is that they cannot always influence how a nonprofit uses their money, however, they are able to control which specific activities they will spend their time doing (Costello & Malkoc, 2022). The idea of donors wanting to be more hands-on isn't always unwelcome, as many nonprofit organizations are keen on the idea of their donors volunteering their time for the cause. However, there's a clear difference between a donor who wants to dedicate time to the mission, and a donor who wants to decide what an organization's mission and activities should be. Misalignments over activities between donors and NGOs can often cause friction for an organization. *In his article "Beyond Donor 'Centric:' The Risks of Overemphasis on External Partners,"* Drew Coursin recounts a scenario where a nonprofit fundraising professional encountered criticism from potential donors, a wealthy couple, who disagreed with the organization's marketing. The couple believed the nonprofit was practicing "reverse racism" because its marketing materials predominantly featured people of color rather than white people. The fundraiser was surprised by the couple's reception to the campaign, considering the organization's clear emphasis on racial equity, and creating opportunities for people of color over

the past few years. This scenario calls attention to the potential downsides of relying too heavily on wealthy individual donors (Coursin, 2024).

Additionally, donor-centrism could potentially perpetuate harmful ideas such as saviorism, the idea that donors are the "heroes" of nonprofit work, and paternalism, the idea that beneficiaries are unable to properly make decisions for themselves or their community (Vu, 2017; Saunders-Hastings, 2019). Studies on the psychology of charitable giving have shown that the amount of paternalist attitudes present in a donor directly correlates to their motivations for giving. Gangadharan, Grossman, and Jones identified donors as having purely altruistic, warm-glow, or impure altruistic motivations for donating. In their study, the purely altruistic donors were primarily motivated by concern for the well-being of the beneficiary. However, the purely altruistic donors tended to have paternalistic beliefs, and their giving depended on how they perceived the beneficiaries' ability to make "good" choices. The warm-glow donors were less paternalistic, but also, less concerned about the well-being of the client; they were motivated by the positive feelings that came along with giving (Gangadharan et al, 2015).

Schroeder corroborates Gangadharan's research regarding donor motivation and the presence of paternalist beliefs. Her own research revealed that while many donors prefer paternalistic methods of giving, such as giving in-kind donations rather than money, recipients overwhelmingly prefer being able to choose how they will help themselves, what Schroeder refers to as agentic giving (Schroeder, 2017). The paternalist attitudes that prevail in the aid industry, even among larger organizations, such as World Health Organization and the Red Cross, point to a long-held belief that beneficiaries are incapable of making smart decisions for themselves, as previously mentioned (Schroeder, 2017; Goldstein, 2013). However, the idea that recipients would misuse cash or direct donations seems to be unsupported by research.

*GiveDirectly*, a nonprofit based in East-Africa, provides aid by making cash transfers to their recipients via mobile phone. In their study on the effectiveness of this approach, the results showed that cash recipients were able to improve different aspects of their lives by utilizing the cash they were given. With these cash transfers, participants in the program were able to cover their basic needs such as buying food, improving their homes and shelter, and covering costs of healthcare (Haushoffer & Shapiro, 2022).

With growing literature that reflects the effectiveness of agentic giving, why are so many nonprofits resistant to moving away from donor-centric practices? As we explore the challenges of donor-centric fundraising, it becomes apparent that its drawbacks have, arguably, hindered many nonprofit organizations in effectively serving their clientele. While a still small, yet growing number of nonprofit professionals advocate for replacing donor-centric fundraising strategies, many within the profession contend that the issue lies not with donor-centric approaches, but rather with organizations that struggle to maintain balance between donor relations and institutional priorities (Tripp, 2023). Tripp believes that donor autonomy, allowing contributors to decide how they'd like to contribute, holds the key to cultivating donors that are passionate about an organization's mission. This viewpoint is supported by Chalane in her article, "*Is Our Donor Focus Hurting or Helping our Nonprofits*," where she asserts, "Our job as fundraisers is to connect donors to what they want to see in the world" (Chalane, 2024). Both Tripp and Chalane believe that donor-focused fundraising will remain essential to the vitality of the nonprofit industry. Professionals who share these sentiments arguably prioritize gaining 'something' from donors over 'nothing.' In a sense, some fundraisers and nonprofit staff may find comfort in satisfying donors without insisting on their deep engagement in a cause. Conversely, there are those who argue that donors should never be the center of an organization's ecosystem,

emphasizing the need to center beneficiaries in all aspects. Efforts to move away from donor-centric fundraising models, and towards models that incorporate diversified funding streams, diversity, and social and economic justice have been met with both excitement and skepticism from nonprofit and fundraising professionals. Few fundraising professionals would argue that a donor-centric model is completely ineffective, however, the introduction of alternative models, such as community-centric fundraising, has shed light on the drawbacks of donor-centric fundraising strategies (Branaman, 2021). One drawback is that diversity integration often comes as an afterthought when development and fundraising executives are crafting fundraising plans for their organizations. Diversity plays an important role in fundraising as it ensures that an organization benefits from a broad spectrum of perspectives and experiences within its fundraising and development team. Blackbaud's report, *Diversity in Giving*, shows that white people are overrepresented in donor populations, with 75 percent of donors identifying as non-Hispanic whites (Rover, 2015). Organizations with donor bases that are largely homogenous may focus their fundraising efforts on appealing to one specific group, inadvertently neglecting the needs of people they're serving. It's important to consider this, especially when an organization's donor demographics differ significantly from that of the communities they work in.

**Why Diversity Matters**

In both the public and private sectors, an organization's lack of diversity is often perceived as a simple issue with a straightforward solution: hire more people from marginalized groups including people of color, women, and queer people. However, as authors Ely and Thomas stated, the act of increasing workplace diversity, in and of itself, is not going to make a lasting impact on the culture of a business. How an organization chooses to utilize its diversity is the key to creating change (Ely & Thomas, 2020). This is evident in the nonprofit space, as the

topic of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) has become a critical issue in recent years. While people of color are becoming increasingly represented amongst nonprofit staff, leadership positions are largely occupied by white individuals. This is particularly true in the case of high-capacity, high-budget nonprofit organizations (Danely & Blessett, 2022). Nonprofit leadership positions vary according to the size and needs of the organization; however, typical roles include board members, president, CEO, development director, program manager, communications directors, and direct supervisors.

Authors Azevedo, Gaynor, Shelby, and Santos argue that there is a link between board member diversity and advancing the interests of the beneficiaries served. Interestingly, the authors point out that diversity is understood in different ways, which often leads to a disconnect between board members, staff members, and beneficiaries, while increasing that understanding would likely lead to more effective fundraising (Azevedo et al, 2020). In their study, the authors discovered that the board members who were interviewed did not consider sexual and gender identities to be diverse traits. In discussing diversity, the interviewees primarily concentrated on matters related to race and gender, almost to the exclusion of other dimensions. Additionally, while most of the board members who were surveyed indicated that they valued diversity, the boards they were a part of were largely homogenous, and homogenous representation typically results in homogenous thinking. As previously alluded to, board members will often support ideas and programs they most identify with, which often differs from programs that beneficiaries would like to see implemented in their own communities (Azevedo et al, 2020).

Regional representation is another form of diversity that's often overlooked and underappreciated. In their article *Nonprofit Segregation: The Exclusion and Impact of White Nonprofit Networks*, Danley and Blessett describe their findings after studying nonprofit

organizations in Camden, New Jersey. The authors used a CRT (Critical Race Theory) framework while conducting the study. CRT is a race-conscious framework that is used to analyze society, laws, and media through an intersectional lens (LDF, 2023). During their study, the authors discovered that most of the nonprofit leaders didn't live in the urban communities that they served. Rather, they lived in wealthy suburbs away from their beneficiaries (Danley & Blessett, 2022). Power dynamics between white-led, high-capacity nonprofits and grassroots nonprofits were strongly evident in the funding and development of the nonprofits that were surveyed. The organizations that were headquartered in affluent communities, or had leaders who live in affluent communities, had the added benefit of having a more affluent social network. This means having knowledge of grants and other funding opportunities that small, grassroots nonprofits may not have access to. Additionally, corporate, private, and community foundations are often more likely to give funding to organizations who are already financially stable. Essentially, nonprofits are rewarded for having money (Danley & Blesset, 2022).

The literature suggests that diversity in nonprofit organizations not only strengthens connections with beneficiaries, but also yields financial benefits (Horak & Cui, 2017). In a study of receptivity to diversity among nonprofit board members, Brickers found that racially and gender diverse nonprofits were 21 percent more likely to financially outperform organizations with less-diverse boards, as they benefit from having a broader knowledge base (Brickers, 2021). A primary responsibility of a nonprofit's board of directors is to identify potential financial resources and opportunities for the organization. Even a nonprofit's beneficiaries may inadvertently engage in fundraising by sharing their positive experiences with the organization (Conrardy, 2024). In her article, *Three Reasons to Include Beneficiaries in Your Nonprofit's Board*, Conrardy asserts that the beneficiary experience is "powerful," and may bring a layer of

authenticity when engaging with communities. In my own experience, having experienced an organization's services and programs gives clients a unique perspective. The organization that I currently work for actively cultivates LEx leaders (lived experienced leaders) who often participate in advocacy efforts with the organization.

**Community-Centric Fundraising**

Community-Centric Fundraising (CCF) is a model of fundraising that is centered around equity and social justice (CCF, 2024). As defined by the Community Centric Fundraising council's website, "CCF is Aimed at grounding fundraising and philanthropic practices in racial and economic justice, the movement was created by and centered around communities of color." CCF utilizes a set of 10 principles as a guideline for equitable fundraising (CCF, 2024):

1. Fundraising must be grounded in race, equity, and social justice.

2. Individual organizational missions are not as important as the community.

3. Nonprofits are generous and mutually supportive of each other.

4. All who engage in the community are equally valued, whether volunteer, staff, donor, or board member,

5. Time is valued equally as money.

6. Donors are treated as partners.

7. A sense of belonging, rather than othering, is fostered.

8. Social justice work is not just charity and compassion, but essential to the betterment of communities.

9. Social Justice work is holistic and transformative, not transactional.

10. Healing and liberation require a commitment to economic justice.

While there is still some focus on donor-relationships within the CCF model, this framework emphasizes an organization's responsibility to the community over the satisfaction of individual donors. In 2015, nonprofit fundraising professionals based in Seattle, including Vu Le from Nonprofitaf.com, met to explore how fundraising could become more closely aligned with equity and social justice. Over the course of several meetings, the group decided to formally invite nonprofit leaders, especially women and people of color, to hold an official meeting. In August of 2018, the first chapter of Community-Centric fundraising was chartered.

At first glance, the CCF framework may not seem conducive to sustainable fundraising, as much of the framework calls for educating donors, and having difficult conversations surrounding race, equity, systemic oppression, and wealth; topics that may alienate wealthy, white donors, in particular. However, the CCF model encourages organizations to be transparent with their donor base, and that a donor's individual wishes should not interfere with the organization's mission, and ability to serve clients. One of the most contentious tenants of the model is the prioritization of community over that of individual organizations. The framework calls for organizations to consider the needs of the collective when applying for grants and other funding sources, even encouraging organizations to decline grant opportunities if they feel that another NGO in the community could benefit from the grant more. This line of thinking directly opposes the "Scarcity Mindset" that seems to be prevalent in the nonprofit community; the fear of not having enough resources to carry out the mission (White, 2023). Additionally, the CCF model seeks to foster a sense of belonging rather than the "othering" of beneficiaries. The goal of community-centric fundraising is clear; to build strong relationships with communities while actively engaging beneficiaries in the fundraising process.

As a newly developed framework, there is limited literature on CCF's effectiveness. Additionally, finding real-world examples of nonprofit organizations successfully putting the entire CCF framework into practice proved to be challenging. However, the CCF framework was not designed to be a "one-size-fits-all" model, and nonprofits are encouraged to implement the model's tenants and practices in a way that fits their organization. Upon researching CCF-focused organizations, it seems as if many fundraising departments, though they could still be considered donor-centric, have begun to examine the role that fundraisers have in engaging communities. Keegan lays a foundation for fundraisers to not only consider their responsibility to their agencies and donors, but also consider ways to promote equity within their nonprofit ecosystem (Keegan, 2021). This idea of prioritizing equity over equality prompts professionals to question the source, destination, and decision-making behind donations (Frederickson, 1990). Keegan also provides a painful example of what can happen when the wishes of the community are overlooked by nonprofits. In a Southeastern city in the US, African American community members wanted to clean and revitalize a historically Black cemetery in the city. While the volunteers made significant progress on their own, a local foundation purchased the cemetery with the intent to bolster the cleanup efforts. Tension and conflicts arose between the organization and the volunteers. The volunteers, many of whom were descendants of those buried at the cemetery, felt their wishes for the cemetery were being ignored, while the foundation was able to proceed as they wished. This left the volunteer group feeling powerless and resulted in the end of the group's efforts (Keegan 2021). While the foundation may have been well-intentioned, its actions and decision to disregard the opinions of the community, arguably, caused more harm than good.

As mentioned previously, identifying agencies with fully realized community-centric funding practices has been difficult. However, one notable example of a company utilizing a community-centric donor model comes from *AutoStraddle,* an online media company geared towards queer-identified women. Founded in 2009, *AutoStraddle* serves as a hub for LGBTQ+ individuals to connect and discuss pertinent issues, while celebrating the queer community. Initially, the publication depended on revenue from advertising, however, ad revenue proved to be an inconsistent funding source. Although the company was growing in popularity, advertisers were hesitant to run ads on the site due to their discomfort with topics such as trans-issues and same-gender sexuality (AutoStraddle, 2020). Financially struggling, the publication decided to launch a paid membership program in 2014. While some of their readers were put off by the blog's request for support, many of their supporters fully embraced the program, as they felt they were investing in a community, rather than just a company. In 2019, *AutoStraddle* continued practicing community-centric strategies by holding a fundraiser to hire a director for the membership program, the first one they ever had (CCF, 2021; Autostraddle, 2019). Through trial and error, the company's staff took note of how transparency made a difference in the amount of money their supporters were willing to give. The company sent out impact reports and updates to their readers, displaying honesty when it came to asking for money that was needed, and why. As of 2024, the company is 100 percent member-funded, and exceptionally, 70 percent of the contributions they receive are $50 or less. Cases like that of *AutoStraddle's* are difficult to come by. However, research suggests certain organizations may be better-suited to some community-centric approaches, such as membership giving, than others. While many nonprofits that support the arts, such as museums or theatres, essentially, have a built-in base of supporters (Opera

America, 2022), service-oriented nonprofit organizations may have a more difficult time due to the public not understanding the methods behind their services.

**Conclusion**

As this literature review has demonstrated, fundraising practices are slowly evolving. While donor-centrism is still the dominant fundraising model of the industry, recent conversations surrounding DEI and social justice-work have encouraged nonprofit professionals to examine the effects of donor-centric fundraising practices. There is increased awareness of social justice and equity-based fundraising practices, such as community-centric fundraising. However, due to a lack of research and literacy of the subject, as well as a lack of practical and real-world examples, there is some hesitancy among nonprofit organizations to explore the framework further.

Combining some of the strongest elements of donor-centric fundraising, such as maintaining strong donor relationships, with essential community-centric principles, such as donor education, could be a means to reconcile the two frameworks. While it is abundantly clear that donors of all kinds are important to nonprofit sustainability, nonprofit organizations could benefit from having honest conversations with their donors, and educating donors when needed, as donors who thoroughly understand an organization's mission could support in various ways. Additionally, this literature review reveals the importance of meaningful diversity within nonprofit leadership, as well as the donor base. Organizations with diverse representation have an easier time connecting, and serving their clients. While it would likely take years for the nonprofit community to move towards community-centric fundraising on a large scale, we see that organizations are making small strides by implementing changes as needed.

## Introduction to Community Context

Located in the Southeastern part of Virginia and Northeastern North Carolina, the Hampton Roads region is a collection of cities and counties nestled around the Chesapeake Bay. It is a geographically diverse region, and includes urban environments such as Norfolk and Portsmouth, suburban communities like Virginia Beach and Chesapeake, and rural areas such as Suffolk and Smithfield. The region is also ethnically diverse and is home to people of varying racial and cultural backgrounds. Such diversity reflects the range of lifestyles and socioeconomic backgrounds within the Hampton Roads Community.

While there are over twelve cities and counties within the region, my focus within Hampton Roads will be on nonprofits serving four cities: Norfolk, Chesapeake, Virginia Beach, and Portsmouth.

The region is home to a population of approximately 1.79 million, making it the second most populous area in the Commonwealth. As a metropolitan region, Hampton Roads is home to a mixture of suburban, urban, and rural communities. The area is notable for having a large military presence, anchored by Naval Station Norfolk, which is the world's largest naval base. This military influence contributes to the region's diversity. The racial makeup of Hampton Roads is also diverse and is as follows: 52.61% White, 30.18% Black or African American, 8.486% Hispanic or Latino, and 4.34% percent Asian, and less than 1% Indigenous American (GHRC, 2023).

Due to the extensive size and diversity of this region, a multitude of nonprofits have emerged to address the myriad needs within this varied community. There are currently 10,071 nonprofit organizations in the Hampton Roads region. These organizations employ 90,980 people in the community. Combined, these organizations have assets of $34 billion. The largest nonprofits in the region, in terms of people employed, are healthcare facilities such as hospitals. 726 of these

organizations have mid-sized budgets, budgets in between 200,000 and $2 million (Cause IQ, 2024).

My project will include a diverse array of organizations spanning sectors such as health, arts, food insecurity, poverty reduction, homelessness, and support for families affected by violence, among others. These nonprofits are characterized by their direct engagement with beneficiaries, operating at the grassroots level to address pressing local needs. By collaborating with these organizations, we aspire to amplify their impact, foster mutual support and learning, and catalyze positive change throughout our community.

## Needs Assessment and Findings:

In order to understand the fundraising strategies employed by nonprofits in the region, I conducted a needs assessment by interviewing fundraising professionals from various nonprofits across Hampton Roads. I opted for interviews as my main research method to understand the prevalent fundraising practices in the region. Moreover, I aimed to assess the level of familiarity that development professionals had with the community-centric fundraising framework and equitable fundraising practices.

**Methodology**

**Semi-Structured Interviews:** Between February 1st and April 9th, a total of ten interviews with nonprofit leaders were conducted, this included Development Directors and Nonprofit CEOs. I intentionally selected a sample size of ten, believing it to strike a balance between manageability and the range of perspectives it would offer. Originally, my intention was to conduct interviews solely with fundraising professionals from health-focused nonprofit organizations. This decision was driven by my current employment at a health-focused nonprofit, where I already possess connections and familiarity within this sector. However, I decided to diversify the sample to

include various types of nonprofits to explore how different organizational focuses impact fundraising strategies. During my literature review, I came across the notion that community-centered fundraising strategies might be better suited for specific kinds of nonprofit organizations. During my interviews, I aimed to explore this concept further.

A guide was created specifically to ensure that the ideas I wanted to explore during the interviews were explored thoroughly. I wanted to gain the interviewees opinions on these questions:

- What current fundraising practices did their organizations employ?
- How much influence do donors have on decision-making within the organization?
- How familiar are they with the community-centric fundraising framework?
- How does diversity within leadership impact fundraising?
- How would you describe the philanthropic landscape in the Hampton Roads region?

The interviews were carried out through different channels: Six were done via zoom, three were conducted over the phone, and one was held in person.

**Interviewee Demographics:**
- 8 interviewees identified as female.
- 2 identified as male.
- 1 self-identified as queer (orientation was not asked).
- 4 Identified as people of color.
- 6 identified as white.

**Service-Type:**
As previously mentioned, the services that these nonprofits offered were varied. This sample included:

- **The Foodbank of Southeastern Virginia** - A foodbank serving all South Hampton Roads (Norfolk, Virginia Beach, Chesapeake, Portsmouth)

- **Community of United Focus** - An organization that supports families and individuals who have been impacted by community violence and incarceration.

- **The Up Center** - A nonprofit focused on providing critical support services for children and families, particularly in the form of mental health services and mentorship programs.

- **ForKids** - A nonprofit that serves individuals and families who are experiencing homelessness.

- **CHIP of South Hampton Roads** - A nonprofit that provides home-visiting services to families who live at or 200% below the poverty line.

- **Rogue VA** - A nonprofit theater company that performs in community spaces rather than traditional venues.

- **Tidewater Arts Outreach** - An organization that provides arts programs for the elderly.

- **Virginia Museum of Contemporary Art** – A contemporary art museum located in Virginia Beach.

- **Healthy Chesapeake** – An organization that acts as a convener of programs and communities.

- **Virginia Early Childhood Foundation** - A foundation that supports programs focused on Early childhood education and impact. (***Note:*** *This organization is headquartered in Richmond, VA but has provided several nonprofits in the Hampton Roads region with funding.*)

**Limitations:**

1. In the interview phase, some of the individuals I planned to interview either failed to attend their scheduled sessions or could only accommodate interviews outside of my original schedule. Consequently, I had to hastily identify additional organizations to interview.

2. Although I found that several of the nonprofits, I interviewed had already integrated community-centric practices (details to follow in the findings section), the concept of "community-centric philanthropy" remains relatively new in the fundraising space, with several interviewees displaying unfamiliarity with the term.

**Secondary Research:** I engaged in research by reviewing literature and content concerning donor-centric fundraising practices, as well as community-centric fundraising practices.

**Limitations:**

1. As mentioned in my literature review, there is a lack of literature surrounding community-centric and other equity-based fundraising practices. Much of the information that I found concerning the framework came directly from the community-centric fundraising website hosted by the creators of the framework, Communitycentricfundraising.org.

2. The number of nonprofits who have fully implemented equity-based fundraising practices is minimal, thus, it was difficult to find examples of organizations who have successfully realized the framework in its entirety.

**Findings:**

Throughout my interviews, which were conversational in nature, the majority of participants were transparent about their fundraising strategies and the culture of the organizations they worked for. Additionally, they delved into the strengths of the Hampton Roads community and the challenges they face in fundraising within the region. Regarding discussions on race, gender, and diversity, most participants openly shared personal anecdotes about how their identities influenced their roles as fundraising and development professionals. I examined my data by identifying common themes across the interviews. The emergent themes and results are outlined below:

1. **Philanthropy in Hampton Roads is Competitive and Relationship-based:**

Given the geographical and economic closeness of Hampton Roads cities, I wanted to explore how this interconnectedness influenced fundraising strategies in the area. One interviewee characterized the region as "small but mighty" in terms of its fundraising capabilities. Another interviewee observed that "Everyone in Hampton Roads knows each other." An interesting discovery was that nearly all participants expressed a desire for greater collaboration among the independent cities of Hampton Roads. Many interviewees voiced disappointment about the level of competition among nonprofits in different cities, with one participant describing it as "disheartening." A few participants noted that nonprofits in the region not only compete for funding, but are also in competition for clients, although their programs could complement each other.

2. **Organizations view their donors as partners and hold those connections in high regard:**
Interviewees were asked how they would characterize the relationship between donors and their organization. While my review of the literature suggested that fundraising professionals and nonprofit organizations often felt "beholden" to the wishes of individual donors, interviewees responded that their donor relationships were more akin to partnerships. One interviewee, who worked for an arts organization, responded that she was rarely pressured by donors to utilize their donations in a specific way. She commented that her donors are passionate about the arts, and that they trusted that the organization would utilize their donations in the best way possible. Another respondent, a development director for a foodbank, remarked that "feeding people is an easy sell" which points to the idea that organizations with straightforward and "easy to understand" missions have an easier time raising donations. This notion was further supported when another interviewee, who worked for a mental and

community-health nonprofit, commented that donors are often unaware of how their programs "worked."

A recurring theme among interviewees was the significance of trust and transparency in nurturing healthy donor relationships. Participants emphasized the importance of keeping donors informed about organizational developments to ensure they feel their contributions are aligned with the overall mission. While some literature describes this as a "donor-centric" approach, there was consensus amongst the interviewees that donors were entitled to know how their funds are being used. Regarding potential pushback on funding overhead, interviewees noted that open communication about organizational needs often mitigated donor concerns. One respondent illustrated this example:

> *"We do have options that allow donors to choose which programs they want to donate to if they're passionate about a particular issue. But we're upfront with them about using a percentage of their donation to pay for admin costs. We take time to explain what admin costs are. A lot of people think we work for free."*

This corroborates one of the cornerstones of the CCF fundraising model; treating donors as partners and educating them when needed.

### 3. Community-Centric Fundraising is nascent in Hampton Roads:

The term "Community-Centric Fundraising" was unfamiliar to a few of my interviewees. One interviewee was very familiar with the term and knew about the CCF framework. Four interviewees had vague ideas of what CCF meant but wanted me to define it for them within the context of my project. Four participants had never heard the term before. Despite having limited knowledge of CCF's official framework, most of the interviewees described implementing fundraising practices that align with the CCF philosophy. One participant, the director of a theater nonprofit, described the importance of including people from the community in the theater's productions. He described standard theater practices as

(paraphrasing) "Companies from big cities putting on plays, and then leaving." He subsequently mentioned the importance of all communities having access to theater, and the significance of seeing their communities represented in productions. Another interviewee mentioned their organization's cost-sharing program, a model that allows their partner agencies to essentially "pay what they can" to utilize their services. This model also considers non-monetary contributions to be a form of payment, for example, providing a venue space in place of cash. One participant, who oversees development duties while acting as executive director of her organization, also noted how the communities they work in have "taken care of them," by providing them with donations in the form of food, cash, and volunteer hours. For some of the organizations interviewed, their community-centric practices were more applicable to specific programs within their organization. For one organization, a home-visiting nonprofit, their Family Resource Center provides more opportunities for community-input than their home-visitation program.

The CCF model suggests that organizations should shift focus away from traditional funding sources like grants and individual donations. However, all participants emphasized the significance of securing and nurturing such funding streams. One interviewee stated, "Major gifts will always be a good thing, and mobilizing the community gives us leverage when we're asking for those gifts."

4. **Nonprofits acknowledge the significance of DEI, but encounter challenges in effectively integrating it into their organization.**

Participants were asked how diversity in leadership impacts fundraising practices for their organization. An interesting find, which was supported by my research, is that the majority of interviewees focused their DEI practices specifically on racial and gender diversity within their

leadership, including their board members. One participant inquired about different aspects of diversity, and subsequently mentioned that their board was also geographically diverse. A few of the interviewees were transparent about the lack of diversity within their organization's board. While one interviewee remarked that, while their board was more diverse than in prior years, membership was still primarily determined by who had the ability to bring in the most money and attention to the organization. One interviewee described how her organization avoids tokenism while trying to create diversity on their board: *"We not only look at the gaps in diversity, but we also look at the gaps in skill and expertise. We want to ensure that everyone on our board has something substantial to offer."*

Another interviewee spoke on why diversity was important for his organization:

*"Diversity in our organization helps with messaging and communication. When you don't have people in your organization who look like the people you're serving, you end up having to translate your message twice."*

When questioned about their DEI practices, seven interviewees pointed to the events and protests following George Floyd's death in 2020 as a crucial turning point for their organization's engagement with DEI practices. One interviewee highlighted a "community-wide call to action" urging organizations to recognize the significance of social justice in their service to clients. However, aside from hiring more diverse staff and leadership, few of the interviewees were specific about how their engagement with DEI changed. Two participants discussed the DEI training that their organizations completed. One participant expressed dissatisfaction with the training, noting that she believed the sessions were "too sanitized" to truly catalyze change within their organization. An interviewee described how their company's DEI training made them feel as if they were "being talked at" because of the lack of discussion between trainers and participants.

5. **Nonprofits face challenges in organizing fundraising events that are both financially successful and inclusive.**

During interviews, participants were questioned about their organization's efforts to promote inclusivity in fundraising for the community. The majority indicated that their organizations had not undertaken significant changes to ensure fairness in fundraising, as respondents emphasized their organization's gratitude for contributions of all levels. However, one interviewee noted a tendency to tailor development messaging towards donors outside their client demographics. Another participant, a development director at a homelessness-focused nonprofit, expressed concerns about the exclusive nature of their fundraising events, which predominantly target wealthy individuals. Despite attempts to host inclusive events, these events often incurred more costs than revenue, leaving the development team with a feeling of "defeat." Another interviewee from a grassroots nonprofit had similar sentiments. While they've been relying on small donations and in-kind gifts, she shared that her organization is actively seeking major gifts and corporate sponsorships:

*"Our organization holds events that are open to all, people of different income levels, but they don't make much money. We want to honor the people that have always supported our organization, but we need to attract major donors in order to grow."*

In my literature research, organizations utilizing the CCF framework acknowledge the difficulty of sustainable growth and without major gifts. However, some organizations have adopted measures to potentially enhance equity in fundraising. For instance, galas with mixed seating, where seat placement isn't determined by the ticket price. Additionally, membership giving allows donors to contribute at levels that suit their financial means.


**Conclusion**

While none of the nonprofits I interviewed have fully adopted the CCF framework, it appears that they are integrating aspects of it into their practices. Challenges persist, particularly concerning diversity in leadership, which is a common struggle across both for-profit and nonprofit sectors. Despite recognizing areas for improvement, such as fostering inclusive fundraising events, most interviewees expressed a willingness to dive deeper into community-centric practices, indicating that there could be a growing interest among nonprofits in the region.

The dynamic of competition among the cities of Hampton Roads is a significant factor and could either be the region's greatest strength or weakness. While there is often competition among cities for resources and funding, participants in my interviews recognized the ample opportunities for collaboration among nonprofits in serving the community.

Overall, these findings highlight the complexities of philanthropic practices in Hampton Roads, suggesting the need for continued dialogue and innovation to foster a more inclusive and collaborative approach to fundraising and community support.

## Theory of Change:

Based on my research and findings, donor-centric philanthropy, while tested and effective, can unintentionally perpetuate inequities in communities. My theory of change asserts that developing a network centered on community-centric philanthropy will enable nonprofit organizations in the Hampton Roads region to serve clients more effectively by incorporating practices that promote equity and inclusion. Additionally, the CCF framework will allow organizations to diversify their funding streams so as not to remain reliant on individual, wealthy donors.

**Goal:**

The overarching goal of my project is to enable community-centric philanthropic practices to be implemented in the Hampton Roads region.

**Assumptions:**

**1. Interest from fundraisers and development professionals** – My interview results show a willingness from fundraisers to explore community-centric practices. However, it is an assumption that fundraisers in the greater Hampton Roads nonprofit community will be interested in engaging with the framework.

**2. Interest from Nonprofit Organizations (leadership) –** Although development professionals oversee the fundraising aspects of nonprofits, leaders in nonprofits, such as executive directors and board members, often have the final say on the organization's fundraising plan and strategies. This project assumes that nonprofit leaders will be open to exploring CCF as well.

**3**. **Assuming that the community-centric model is sustainable** – Based on my research, only a small number of organizations have successfully adopted the CCF model in its entirety. Among those that have, they've outlined the challenges in transitioning from a donor-focused approach to one centered around the community. My project assumes that non-profits can effectively integrate this framework, ensuring the sustainability of community-centric fundraising within their organization.

**Activities**

1. **Meet with Fundraising Professionals –** This activity involves meeting with fundraising professionals from nonprofit organizations in Hampton Roads to learn about their current

fundraising practices within their organization, and to gauge interest in community-centric fundraising.

2. **Create CCF Resources and Educational Materials** – My research reflects that fundraisers in the region have a vague understanding of CCF practices. Developing materials such as pamphlets, mailers, and presentation materials will familiarize organizations with the CCF Framework.

## Outputs

1. **Fundraising Professionals Meet to have dialogue with about CCF practices –** Fundraisers and other nonprofit leaders around the region will meet regularly to discuss CCF practices. Because of the interconnected nature of Hampton Roads, it is important that organizations from all Hampton Roads cities are a part of this initiative.

2. **Nonprofit leaders implement CCF Practices that are appropriate for their Organizations -**The CCF framework is malleable, meaning, that it can be molded to suit a nonprofit's unique needs. Organizations will be able to apply CCF practices in a way that helps bolster their organization. However, the goal should be that the organization's practice remains grounded in CCF's core principles.

## Short-Term Outcomes

1. **Increase in CCF Knowledge** – Nonprofit professionals will demonstrate an increase in CCF knowledge by implementing the practices within their organization.

2. **Increase in collaboration among Hampton Roads nonprofits –** There will be more collaboration between nonprofits across the cities rather than competition.

3. **Increase in the number of inclusive fundraising events –** My interviewees discussed the difficulties in creating lucrative fundraising events. However, having more knowledge of CCF could lead to more creative solutions for equitable fundraising.

4. **Increase in Diversity in Nonprofit Leadership –** One of the main themes in my research is the need for meaningful diversity in nonprofit leadership. This outcome will reflect an organization's willingness to create a leadership team that is reflective of the people they are serving.

## **Long-Term Outcomes**

1. **Creation of a community-centric nonprofit ecosystem** - Nonprofits organizations in Hampton Roads operate in a community-centric manner. Considering the needs of the entire nonprofit community and the people we serve while making funding decisions.

2. **Nonprofit Sustainability** - Organizations that use this framework are successful at sustaining their organizations and programs.

# Theory of Change – Community Centric Fundraising

| Goals | By establishing a network centered on community-centric philanthropy, we can empower Hampton Roads nonprofits to better serve their clients by adopting practices that promote equity and inclusion, while also empowering organizations to develop fundraising strategies that allow for greater autonomy and sustainability. | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Assumptions** | **Activities** | **Outputs** | **Short-Term Outcomes** | **Long-Term Outcomes** |
| • Fundraisers and donors are willing to engage in meaningful dialogue regarding the decolonization of philanthropy.<br>• Local nonprofits will be interested in implementing this framework.<br>• Assuming that philanthropy and social justice are compatible<br>• A community-centric model is practical and sustainable | • Meet with fundraising professionals from Hampton Roads non-profits to learn about current fundraising strategies and to gauge interest in joining the network.<br>• Create resources and educational materials/events that can guide nonprofits into implementing this framework. | • Fundraising professionals meet to have dialogue regarding CCF practices.<br>• Nonprofit leaders implement community-centric practices that are appropriate for their organizations. | • Increase in knowledge surrounding CCF principles and practices.<br>• Increase in collaboration among nonprofits within Hampton Roads.<br>• Increase in the number of inclusive fundraising events.<br>• Increase in diversity in Hampton Roads nonprofit leadership. | • Nonprofits organizations in Hampton Roads operate in a community-centric manner. Considering the needs of the entire nonprofit community and the people we serve while making funding decisions.<br>• Organizations that use this framework are successful at sustaining their organizations and programs. |

## Stakeholder Analysis:

This project will focus on nonprofit organizations in the cities of Virginia Beach, Norfolk,

Chesapeake, and Portsmouth. Stakeholders Include:

1. **Clients and Nonprofit Participants –** One of the main objectives of Community-Centric

   philanthropy is to empower organizations to effectively serve their clients. These clients,

   who receive services from nonprofits, are the most impacted by the practices of these

   organizations. Initially, I conducted interviews with five recipients of nonprofit services

   in Hampton Roads. However, as the project continues, I intend to expand the number of

   clients interviewed**.**

2. **Nonprofit Organizations -** Nonprofit Organizations play the central role in this project.

   As the main stakeholders, these organizations will determine if and how they will adopt

   CCF practices. While the focus of my research is on development professionals and

   nonprofit leadership, these decisions will impact all individuals working for and

   collaborating with these organizations, as well as those benefiting from their services.

3. **Local Governments Agencies –** Nonprofits often "fill in the gaps" regarding community

   resources and services. Subsequently, local government agencies have a stake in the

   performance of the nonprofits within their communities and service areas. Moving to a

   community-centric framework means that local govt. representatives will have to become

   familiar with the new practices of the organizations they partner with.

| Stakeholder Analysis | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Type of Stakeholder | Name of person/org | Relationship to Project | Incentives, motivations, risks | How to Engage |
| **Beneficiary/Impacted Stakeholder** | Residents of Hampton Roads, VA | Because this project is focused on developing an equity-based and community-centric framework, beneficiaries will be the most impacted by the implementation of said framework. | Motivations: Increased decision-making power over which development projects are funded. Risks: Not wanting to participate. Having low trust of nonprofits due to negative past experiences. | Engage residents though semi-structured interviews and surveys. |
| **Primary Stakeholder/Decision Maker** | Fundraising professionals and nonprofit leaderships from Ten nonprofits and community-based organizations. | These organizations contain the fundraising and development departments that will be the subjects of the project. They will decide whether this equity-based fundraising framework will be implemented or not. | Motivations: If the nonprofits implement equity-based fundraising strategies, they will be able to mitigate the detrimental effects of donor-centric philanthropy. Motivation: Nonprofits will achieve financial stability by diversifying revenue streams. Motivation: nonprofits will achieve more autonomy by utilizing a fundraising strategy that's less reliant on donors. Risks: Community-Centric fundraising strategies are often slow-moving and long-term. It may require more time to establish a consistent revenue stream. Risks: NGOs may alienate donors by prioritizing the needs of the organization over donor wishes | Interview fundraising professionals and fund developers on their current fundraising practices. |

| Primary Stakeholder/Decision Maker | Local Government. | If the participating organizations choose to implement a community-centric fundraising strategy, staff will be required to participate in equity-training, and in community-centric fundraising initiatives and events. | Motivation: Achieving job security by supporting a sustainable fundraising plan. Motivation: Being able to connect more easily with clients by involving them in community-centric practices. Risks: Staff may not want to undergo the additional training required to understand community-based principles. Risk: The fundraising plan may not be successful, thus, putting jobs at risk. | Educate staff on equity and community-based fundraising principles by making it a mandatory part of ongoing training. |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |

## Program Description: Community Connect of South Hampton Roads

Incorporating community-centric practices into fundraising and philanthropic endeavors will increase the effectiveness of nonprofit organizations. The core elements of community-centric philanthropy such as emphasizing diversity within nonprofit leadership, centering clientele, and valuing non-monetary contributions, can significantly strengthen a nonprofit's capacity to connect with and serve their communities more adeptly.

While the integration of community-centric principles is feasible within individual nonprofits, a pivotal aspect of the CCF model lies in fostering partnerships with other nonprofits and stakeholders that are operating within a shared service area. Despite the unique missions and approaches of each nonprofit, their common thread is the commitment to serve and uplift their respective communities.

To successfully implement community-centric fundraising in Hampton Roads, awareness of the CCF framework and its practices must increase. My research shows that while Community-Centric Philanthropy is still new to the Hampton Roads region, local organizations and fundraisers are not yet fully exploring or implementing the framework. To address this, I propose creating Community Connect of South Hampton Roads, a network for fundraising and development professionals interested in adopting community-centric fundraising practices within their organizations.

Before establishing the network, I propose a two-year series of monthly "lunch and learn" sessions. These sessions aim to bring together development and fundraising professionals to deepen their understanding of community-centric philanthropy. Each lunch hour will feature presentations from CCF experts and community members who are implementing community-centric practices. These

gatherings will provide a relaxed and enjoyable environment for sharing ideas and learning more about the community-centric framework.

**This network is strategic for several reasons:**

1. During my needs assessment, most of the people I interviewed voiced a desire for enhanced collaboration among the cities in Hampton Roads. The CCP framework underscores the significance of favoring collective communities over individual entities. Through the collective adoption of CCP principles, nonprofit organizations in the area can establish the foundation for such collaboration, integrating it as a routine aspect of their operational strategies, and giving organizations an opportunity to learn how to collaborate effectively. All of my interviewees commented on the fact that the competition among nonprofits in the region is strong. Developing a network will give organizations an opportunity to collaborate on events and fundraising campaigns, while creating a sense of "togetherness" amongst nonprofits in the Hampton Roads Community. Additionally, the network will give organizations an opportunity to become familiar with each organization's services and offerings. This will lead to an increased number of client referrals and partnerships amongst members of the network. As mentioned previously, the Hampton Roads Community is interconnected, economically and geographically. Hampton nonprofits will often serve multiple cities in the region. Having representatives from each of Hampton Roads' cities will paint a clear picture of the resources that are available.

2. My research reflected that prioritizing diversity within an organization can have financial advantages. Diversity among staff and leadership offers a broader spectrum of expertise and viewpoints, enhancing the organization's ability to engage with its beneficiaries.

My interviewees expressed their desire to implement more inclusive fundraising practices, yet they also conveyed the challenges they faced in previous attempts. Forming a network would provide fundraising professionals with a space to explore inclusive fundraising practices and collaborate on strategies that would work for their organizations. Additionally, by engaging with a wider range of community members, nonprofits can access diverse revenue streams. This reduces dependence on a small number of large donors and makes the organization more financially sustainable in the long run.

3. In my experience, bolstering community engagement remains a priority for nonprofits in the region. Implementing community-centric practices can significantly enhance community engagement for nonprofit organizations by fostering a sense of ownership and involvement among community members. Community-centric fundraising practices, such as crowdfunding campaigns, community events, and peer-to-peer fundraising, create opportunities for individuals to not only contribute financially, but also to become advocates for the cause. This active involvement cultivates stronger connections between the organization and its supporters, building trust and loyalty over time. A network can amplify the impact of these efforts. By sharing best practices, and collaborating on initiatives, participating organizations can leverage each other's strengths and expertise to achieve greater community engagement outcomes. Additionally, the network provides a platform for ongoing learning and adaptation, allowing organizations to continuously refine their approaches based on collective insights and feedback.

**Goals and Activities**

1. **Goal**: Convene nonprofit fundraisers and development professionals to explore and learn about community-centric fundraising by hosting "lunch and learn" lunch hours. The goal

of these sessions is to provide development professionals with an enjoyable and informal opportunity to learn about community-centric fundraising.

**Activities:**

a. **Preliminary Research and Planning -** The project will begin with a detailed assessment of the nonprofit landscape in South Hampton Roads to gain a deeper understanding of the region. This data collection will cover the areas of focus, locations, and demographics of the clientele served by these organizations. During this phase, a comprehensive list of potential participants will be compiled, with a specific focus on development professionals, fundraisers, and nonprofit CEOs.

b. **Initial Outreach –** Once potential participants and organizations are identified, outreach efforts will commence primarily through email, phone calls, and in-person meetings. The Hampton Roads Community Foundation (HRCF), a respected and well-known community foundation in the region, could play a pivotal role in this initial outreach. In addition to funding regional organizations, the HRCF strongly supports initiatives centered on diversity, equity, and inclusion by hosting free events open to all Hampton Roads community members. As a major philanthropic institution, fostering collaborative efforts that empower and uplift local communities is invaluable. Community-Centric Fundraising (CCF) practices not only align with HRCF's mission of improving life for Hampton Roads residents but can also enhance the foundation's understanding of the region's diverse needs and assets. HRCF's influence will be instrumental in inviting potential participants to the lunches, given its widespread respect within the community.

c. **Securing Partnerships and Venues -** Grants and sponsorships will be sought from foundations and other philanthropic organizations to cover expenses for venue rental,

catering, and speaker fees. Additionally, restaurants and venues will be approached to explore the possibility of hosting the lunch hours on a regular basis. The lunch hours will be held at different restaurants and venues throughout the cities of South Hampton Roads, rotating to a new location each time. This approach allows participants to become familiar with each city in the region.

d. **Reaching out to CCF experts -** Individuals who have significant experience and knowledge in CCF will be invited and scheduled to speak during the lunch hours. Potential guest speakers will be found through professional networks, as well as the official Community Centric Fundraising website. The goal is to identify organizations that have successfully implemented CCF practices. The sessions led by these experts should focus on introducing the core principles of CCF, sharing case studies and best practices, and providing practical advice on how to implement CCF strategies within organizations. Additionally, interactive elements, such as workshops or group activities, will be added to enhance the learning experience and encourage active participation.

e. **Developing an agenda -** Agendas will be created for each lunch hour. The agendas will include a mix of presentations, discussions, and networking opportunities. Each session should begin with a brief introduction to CCF concepts, followed by a presentation by the guest speaker. After the presentation, there will be a question-and-answer segment where attendees can interact with the speaker. To foster networking and collaboration, a portion of the lunch hour should be dedicated to informal discussions and networking among the participants.

f. **Continuous Improvement -** After each lunch hour, feedback will be collected through surveys, feedback forms, and informal conversations to ensure continuous improvement.

Analyzing this feedback will provide insights into what aspects are working well and what areas need improvement. This information will be used to refine the agenda, improve the selection of speakers, and enhance the overall attendee experience. Additionally, establishing a feedback loop with participants will foster a sense of community and involvement, encouraging them to take an active role in shaping future events.

2. **Goal –** Developing a formal network for nonprofit organizations in South Hampton Roads that are interested in implementing CCF practices.

**Activities:**

a. **Evaluation of data from lunch hours –** The feedback and data gathered from the lunch hours over the past two years will be analyzed to assess participants' experiences, the effectiveness of the sessions, and their interest in forming a formal network. Additionally, discussions will be held to evaluate participants' interest in establishing a network and will help gauge the level of commitment while collecting suggestions for the network's structure and activities.

b. **Defining the network and Strategic Planning-** Interested participants will begin holding monthly meetings to clearly define the network's objectives, vision, and mission and outline the network's goals. Participants will ensure that the network's goals are in alignment with the principles of community-centric fundraising and the needs of the Hampton Roads nonprofit community. Additionally, developing a comprehensive strategic plan is crucial; this plan should detail the steps for establishing and sustaining the network, including timelines, necessary resources, and key milestones.

c. **Organizational structure -** A steering committee will be formed, consisting of development professionals who participated in the lunch hours. This committee will guide

the network's formation and operations, with clearly defined roles and responsibilities, including leadership positions such as chairperson, secretary, and treasurer. Additionally, a governance framework will be established that includes bylaws, membership criteria, and decision-making processes to ensure transparency, accountability, and effective management of the network.

d. **Membership and Recruitment -** A membership campaign will be launched to recruit nonprofit development professionals in the region. This campaign will leverage email marketing, social media, and partnerships with local nonprofit associations to reach potential members. To attract and engage prospective members, introductory events and webinars will be held. The benefits of membership, including access to events, resources, and a supportive community of peers, will be clearly articulated. Emphasis will be placed on how membership can enhance both their professional growth and their organization's fundraising efforts.

e. **Activities and programs -** Monthly meetings, workshops, and events will be arranged for network members, focusing on continuous learning, sharing best practices, and collaborative problem-solving. These gatherings will be interactive, offering ample networking opportunities. Furthermore, peer support and mentorship initiatives will be implemented to encourage knowledge exchange and build community. Experienced practitioners who are adept in equitable fundraising will mentor newcomers, guiding them in adopting equity-based strategies. Finally, a centralized online platform will be established to facilitate resource sharing, including case studies, templates, and toolkits related to Community-Centric Fundraising (CCF), alongside opportunities for discussions and collaborations among members.

f. **Sustainability and growth -** To ensure the network's sustainability, efforts will focus on securing funding through various avenues such as grants, sponsorships, and membership fees. A comprehensive fundraising strategy will be developed to support ongoing operations and activities. Continuous evaluation of the network's effectiveness and impact will be conducted, gathering feedback from members and stakeholders to pinpoint areas needing enhancement. This feedback will inform iterative improvements to the network's programs, activities, and services, ensuring they remain responsive and beneficial to the community.

## Sustainability

Sustaining the network a requires a multi-faceted approach that prioritizes fostering collaborative relationships, building institutional capacity, and securing long-term funding. Central to its sustainability is the cultivation of strong partnerships among participating nonprofit organizations and stakeholders. These partnerships should be nurtured through regular communication, shared decision-making processes, and a collective commitment to the core principles of community-centric philanthropy. Additionally, developing a robust governance structure for the initiative, with clear roles and responsibilities outlined for all stakeholders, will help ensure accountability and continuity. Building the capacity of participating nonprofits is also essential for sustainability. This can be achieved through training and professional development opportunities focused on community-centric practices, leadership diversity, and effective collaboration techniques. Securing long-term funding is another critical aspect of sustainability. This will involve diversifying funding sources, pursuing grants while leveraging resources from the network members. Ongoing evaluation and adaptation are necessary to ensure that the initiative remains responsive to the evolving needs and priorities of the Hampton Roads region.

**Evaluation**

Evaluating the network's effectiveness presents several challenges. Firstly, assessing the   impact of community-centric philanthropy involves measuring intangible outcomes such as increased community engagement, strengthened social connections, and enhanced trust within the community.  However, evaluations can still be conducted through a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods. Surveys and interviews can gather stakeholders' perceptions and experiences, providing valuable insights into the effectiveness of the network in fostering collaboration and implementing community-centric practices. Tracking key performance indicators such as the number of collaborative projects initiated, and community participation rates can offer quantitative evidence of the network's impact over time. Additionally, network members will provide feedback on the impact that implementing CCF practices has had on their respective organizations.

1. **Surveys:** The network will develop surveys to collect feedback from member organizations, stakeholders, and community members on their perceptions of the network's effectiveness in promoting community-centric philanthropy. Survey data will be analyzed regularly to identify areas for improvement and measure progress over time.

2. **Key Performance Indicators (KPIs):** Define and track KPIs aligned with the goals of the network, such as the number of collaborations formed between member organizations, diversity metrics in nonprofit leadership, and the percentage of non-monetary contributions received by member organizations.

3. **Impact Assessments:** Implement qualitative and quantitative assessments to measure the impact of community-centric practices adopted by member organizations. This could

include measuring improvements in community engagement, trust, and the overall well-being of target communities.

4. **Peer Learning and Reflection:** Facilitate regular peer learning sessions and reflection exercises where member organizations share their experiences, challenges, and lessons learned in implementing community-centric philanthropy.

5. **Stakeholder Interviews:** Conduct interviews with key stakeholders, including nonprofit leaders, community members, and funders, to gather insights into the network's effectiveness in promoting community-centric philanthropy. Use these interviews to identify success stories, challenges, and opportunities for growth.

6. **Collaborative Projects and Initiatives:** Track the development and outcomes of collaborative projects and initiatives initiated by the network. Evaluate the extent to which these projects align with community needs and contribute to the network's overarching goals of promoting equity and community-centric practices.

# Implementation

**Timeline:**

The implementation of this project will take three years. The first two years will be spent conducting preliminary research and hosting the "lunch and learn" lunch hours. The third year will be dedicated to the formation of the network and promoting the network across the Hampton Roads region. In the third year, the network will begin with monthly meetings, training sessions, and workshops.

| Activities | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 12 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 |
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| Lunch Hours | ▓ | ▓ | ▓ | ▓ | ▓ | ▓ | ▓ | ▓ | ▓ | ▓ | ▓ | ▓ | ▓ | ▓ | ▓ | ▓ | ▓ | ▓ | ▓ | ▓ | ▓ | ▓ | ▓ | ▓ |
| Initial Research | ▓ | ▓ | ▓ | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Monthly Meetings | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
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| Evaluation | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
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| Activities | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 | 32 | 33 | 34 | 35 | 36 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Lunch Hours | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Initial Research | | | | | | | | | | | | |
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| Trainings Workshops | | | ▓ | | ▓ | | ▓ | | ▓ | | ▓ | |
| Evaluation | ▓ | | | | | ▓ | | | | | | |
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**Funding:**

Funding for lunch hours will be pursued through traditional channels such as grants, sponsorships, and in-kind donations. These funds will cover speaker fees, venue rentals, and meals. For establishing the network, emphasis will be placed on securing grants that align with the mission of promoting community-centric philanthropy. These resources will support meeting expenses, marketing, workshops, and administrative needs. Additionally, funding is necessary for a network coordinator, a full-time position that will be responsible for organizing the lunch hour events and overseeing the administrative functions of the network. Additionally, the network coordinator's responsibilities will include overseeing event planning, outreach, workshop coordination, and advocacy oversight. As the network expands, funding strategies will evolve to include campaigns and community events, engaging local residents and businesses in advancing our vision. By diversifying funding sources and leveraging member expertise, we aim to ensure the network's long-term sustainability and community impact.

The budget below reflects expenses for the lunch and learn events (for two years) and for the initial year of the network:

## Budget:

**Personnel Costs:**

**Network Coordinator (Full-time):**

Salary and Benefits: $65,000 per year x 3 years = **$195,000**

**Lunch and Learn Event Costs:**

Venue Rental: $400 per session x 24 = **$9,600**

Catering (Lunch for 30 attendees): $15 per person x 30 x 24 = **$10,800**

Speaker Fees $700 per session x 24 = **$16,800**

**Total = $232,200**

**Network Costs**

**Meeting Expenses:**

Venue rental for monthly meetings: $200/month x 12 months = $2,400

Refreshments and snacks for attendees: $250/month x 12 months = $3,000

*Total meeting expenses***:** $5,400

**Outreach and Promotion:**

Website development and hosting: $500

Marketing materials (flyers, brochures): $1000

*Total outreach and promotion:* $1,500

**Training and workshops:**

Guest speaker: $2000

Training workshops/seminars: $3000

*Total training and development:* $5,000

**Administrative Costs:**

Office Supplies (pens, paper etc.): $1,000

**Network Costs = $12,900**

# Total Project Costs = $245,100

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