

Penn School of Social Policy & Practice
University of Pennsylvania
Fall 2017

NPLD 786: STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP OF NONPROFITS

Telephone:

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Course Description

This course is designed to introduce students to the fundamental issues in strategic management and leadership of nonprofit organizations. Through research, analysis, and dialogue, students will understand multiple structures of accountability and the various stakeholders in nonprofits; understand the duties and dynamics of boards of directors in conjunction with other mechanisms of governance (e.g. chief executive officers, advisory boards, etc.); develop an understanding of strategic priorities, management techniques, and leadership skills for enhancing the effectiveness of nonprofit organizations. Students will be asked to think about the challenges of running nonprofit organizations in a comparative context, with cases drawn from both the U.S. and abroad.

The emphasis of this course is on acquiring operational skills grounded in research and critical thinking. The course is designed for those who may have had years of experience managing other people and programs in the nonprofit sector but who want to develop a more systematic mastery of this challenge, as well as students from other sectors who aspire to a nonprofit leadership role. Most class periods will consist of a combination of discussion and lecture. Lectures will introduce new concepts; class discussion and group exercises will allow us to explore and apply those concepts. Guest speakers will share their insights and experiences. You should feel free to ask questions during lectures and are encouraged to engage in discussions.

This course depends on the contributions of engaged participants. Each student is a valuable resource in terms of insights, questions, and life experiences. The extent to which a student serves as a well-informed resource, which is different from highly opinionated or outgoing, and contributes to the quality of class discussions will determine the student's participation grade.

Required Course Materials

- John M. Bryson. *Strategic Planning for Public and Nonprofit Organizations*, 4th Edition. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2011.

Recommended Readings

- Drucker, P. F. (1995). *Managing the non-profit organization: Practices and principles*. Taylor & Francis.
- *The Nonprofit Quarterly* (<http://www.nonprofitquarterly.org>).

Course Requirements and Grading Weights

A course calendar, which covers reading assignments and the topics to be covered in individual class sessions, is attached. This schedule is subject to change for reasons including the availability of guest speakers, the appearance of new and more interesting topics, etc. Changes to the calendar will be announced in class and posted on Canvas as soon as practical. Please check Canvas regularly.

Course grades will be assigned as follows:

1. Class Participation: 20%
2. Individual Case Analysis: 30%
3. Team Project: 50%

Student performance will be based on the components below. We will discuss the components thoroughly in class.

Team Project – “Strategic Planning” (A Consulting Project): The primary project associated with this course is the Team Strategic Planning Project. During the semester, students will be organized into small teams. This project offers an opportunity to apply what you have learned in the context of a specific nonprofit organization of your team’s choice – your partner agency. Your team will work with the partner agency to tackle a strategic problem or address an opportunity to improve the work of the organization. Using the tools and concepts introduced in the course you will provide the organization’s management team with a report that analyzes the situation and provides recommendations on how to move forward. Your paper should:

1. Define the issue: describe the problem or opportunity your team is addressing;
2. Generate alternatives: analyze the situation and identify alternatives using specific planning concepts, theories, and tools;
3. Recommend a course of action: make short- and long-term recommendations to management.

A one-page status report is due on October 10, 2017. Present your team project to class on December 9. Your presentation has a maximum time limit of 30 minutes (including Q&A). Final report (maximum page length 15 pages plus appendices; Times New Roman, 12-point font size, double spaced, one-inch margin all around) is also due on December 9. Detailed instructions will be provided later in class.

Individual Case Analysis: You will analyze three cases and submit a write up (maximum page length 2 pages; Times New Roman, 12-point font size, single spaced, one-inch margin all around). Please adhere to these formatting instructions. The study questions from the instructor are intended to help you identify the central issue(s) in the case. For the case analysis, focus on addressing the study questions and apply the most relevant theories/frameworks (most likely from the assigned readings of the same session).

Format for case analysis:

- Your case write-up should begin with a very short executive summary. The remainder of the case write-up should present in greater detail your responses to the discussion questions.

- The case is designed to get you to think about issues. In analyzing and writing up the case, adopt the perspective of a consultant who has been hired by the organization to succinctly advise it on the critical issues at hand. Stitch together the arguments in a smooth way in your write-up.
- Be sure to use the data in the case when appropriate. Write-ups which ignore relevant data are incomplete. However, note that just because some data is presented in the case, it does not necessarily mean that the data is crucial or relevant to the solution you propose. Good strategists know what data to use, and how that data must be used.

Class Participation: This course is designed to be participatory in nature; that is, participants are expected to contribute productively to class discussion and learning. Your active participation is what makes the class engaging and interesting. Therefore, attendance is mandatory. Class discussion suffers in your absence and so does your participation grade. If for some unavoidable reasons (e.g., medical issue, a job interview) you have to miss a session, please submit within one week a make-up assignment (no more than 2 pages, single spaced) that summarizes the assigned readings and answers the study questions. The instructor will still grade your participation based on the submitted analysis, providing that you also submit the necessary documents as evidence of the excuse for your absence.

How is participation graded? Every student starts off with a “B-” (i.e., 80%) for participation and accumulates points through their contributions to case discussions. You can drop below a “B-” for participation if you: (1) demonstrate that you are poorly prepared for discussion, or (2) have absences and do not submit the make-up assignment.

The instructor (or TA) will take notes at the end of class regarding student participation. Your class participation will be evaluated as follows:

- 3 points: Outstanding positive engagement in classroom discussion with insightful comments and excellent understanding of concepts
- 2 points: Active engaged participant in class
- 1 point: Attended class and contributed a little to the discussion
- 0 point: No attendance (no make-up assignment)

In grading class participation, the instructor will take into account the amount of participation, but will base primarily on quality of comments including factors such as:

- **Relevance:** do your comments speak directly to the issues and concepts being addressed? Do they extend our understanding of those issues or concepts?
- **Additivity:** do your comments reflect active listening to the comments of other class members? Have they incorporated insights introduced earlier and built upon them?
- **Persuasiveness:** have your points been well articulated, argued, and supported, such that others take note of the convincing nature of your points?
- **Questioning:** have your comments reasonably questioned the comments of others or challenged their assumptions without disparaging the person who offered them?
- **Integration:** Have your comments integrated the thoughts and perspectives in the existing discussion?

Grade Scale

The following grading scale will be used for final grades.

98 – 100%	= A+	80 – 82.9%	= B-
93 – 97.9%	= A	77 – 79.9%	= C+
90 – 92.9%	= A-	73 – 76.9%	= C
87 – 89.9%	= B+	70 – 72.9%	= C-
83 – 86.9%	= B	Below 70%	= Failing

Submission of Work and Late Assignments/Papers

All assignments/papers, except for the final exam, are to be submitted in hard copies. assignments are due by 11:30am on the assigned due date. A deduction of one full letter grade will be taken for all late papers. The instructor may make exceptions in exceptional circumstances. Failing to plan ahead, unfortunately, is a common problem and not an exceptional one.

COURSE CALENDAR

DATE TOPIC

Session 1: August 29th - Course Introduction

Management. Leadership. Strategy. Planning. What do these concepts mean for nonprofit organizations?

Activities:

- Review of syllabus and expectations
- The introductory lecture

Session 2: September 5th – Executive Director vs. Board of Directors

Why does a nonprofit organization need a board of directors? Why is it important? Who ‘owns’ a nonprofit? What are the responsibilities of the nonprofit board and how does it function? What are the responsibilities of the Executive Director? Where to draw the line?

Required Readings:

- Millesen, J. (2002). Who “owns” your nonprofit? *Nonprofit Quarterly*. Available at: <https://nonprofitquarterly.org/2002/09/21/who-owns-your-nonprofit>.
- Renz, D. O. (2007). Exploring the puzzle of board design: What's your type? *Nonprofit Quarterly*. Available at: <http://bloch.umkc.edu/mwcnl/resources/documents/exploring-the-puzzle-of-board-design.pdf>.
- McCambridge, R. (2015) BoardSource’s Board Governance Index: Is your board ‘normal’? *Nonprofit Quarterly*. Available at: <https://nonprofitquarterly.org/2015/01/27/nonprofit-board-governance-boardsource-index>.

Supplemental Readings:

- Brown, W.A., & Guo, C. (2010). Exploring the key roles for nonprofit boards. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, 39(3), 536-546.

Activities:

- Lecture: “Board Governance & Executive Leadership: The Basics”
- Roundtable discussion of the assigned readings
- Discussion of mini-case examples
- Form teams; choose organizations to work with

Session 3: September 12th – Mission, Vision, and Goals

What is the mission of an organization? Who creates it? How to establish an effective organizational vision? How are organizational goals set? Who sets them? Why are clear goals important? How do you align the goals of multiple stakeholders?

Required Readings:

- Bryson, Chapter 2

Supplemental Readings:

- Drucker, Part 1

Activities:

- Lecture: The Centrality of Mission
- Roundtable discussion of the assigned readings
- Case Study 1: *Casa de Esperanza*
- Group activity – work on your team project.

Deliverables:

- *Case Analysis* due

Session 4: September 19th – Initiating and Agreeing on a Planning Process

Why is it important to create a strategic plan for your nonprofit organization? What are the key components of a strategic plan? Identify and involve the key stakeholders of the organization in the process.

Required Readings:

- Bryson, Chapters 3 & 4
- Topakian, K. (2013). Marrying mission with strategic planning & evaluation. *Nonprofit Quarterly*. Available at: <https://nonprofitquarterly.org/2013/11/20/nonprofit-strategic-planning-evaluation>.

Activities:

- “Stories from the Trenches” (Guest speaker session I): Barrett T. Young, Chief Operating Officer, Rescue Mission of Trenton
- Lecture: “Stakeholder Analysis”
- Roundtable discussion of the assigned readings
- Group activity – work on your team project.

Session 5: September 26th – Environmental Scan

To respond effectively to changes in its environment, an organization must understand the external and internal contexts within which it finds itself in so that it can develop effective strategies to link these two contexts in such a way that public value is created.

Required Readings:

- An, S., Wu, V., & Guo, C. (2017). How stakeholder mobilization saved Sweet Briar College. *Journal of Nonprofit Education & Leadership*, Special Issue 2, 4–10.
- Bryson, Chapters 5 & 6

Activities:

- Large Group Role-Play: Stakeholder Mobilization (Sweet Briar)
- Lecture: “SWOT Analysis; Matrix Map”
- Group activity – work on your team project.

Session 6: September 30th – World Café (Use and Improve Strategic Analysis Tools)

When: 1:30-4:30pm

Where: Caster D26/27 (larger space for team activities)

Activities:

- Lecture: “Strategic Analysis Tools: A Review”
- World Café
- Group activity – work on your team project

October 5-8 Fall Term Break

Session 7: October 10th – Money Talk

How does the organization fund its work? Who is in charge of the finances? How is the organization accountable to funders? Who determines budget priorities? How are they set and revised? How can you be accountable to funders while avoiding pitfalls of resource dependency? What is the role of leadership in financing the organization?

Required Readings:

- Polanco, H.H. and S. Walker (2016). Models and components of a great nonprofit dashboard. *Nonprofit Quarterly*. Available at: <https://nonprofitquarterly.org/2016/05/09/financial-management-models-of-a-great-nonprofit-dashboard>.
- Bell, J. (2011). Beyond financial oversight: Expanding the board’s role in the pursuit of sustainability. *Nonprofit Quarterly*. Available at: <https://nonprofitquarterly.org/2011/04/26/beyond-financial-oversight-expanding-the-boards-role-in-the-pursuit-of-sustainability>.

Supplemental Readings:

- Bryson, Chapter 11

Activities:

- “Stories from the Trenches” (Guest speaker session II): Shanna Hocking, Associate Vice President for Individual Giving, Children's Hospital of Philadelphia
- Roundtable discussion of assigned readings
- Update on your team project: problem statement.

Deliverables:

- 1-page team project status report (problem statement) *due*

Session 8: October 17th - Measuring and Monitoring Effectiveness

How can nonprofits ensure that they are doing what they say? How can organizational effectiveness be measured and monitored? What are the common symptoms of an ineffective organization? How do we learn from successes and failures?

Required Readings:

- Herman, R. D., & Renz, D. O. (1999). Theses on nonprofit organizational effectiveness. *Nonprofit & Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, 28(2), 107-126.
- Kaplan, R.S. (2001). Strategic performance measurement and management in nonprofit organizations. *Nonprofit Management & Leadership*, 11(3), 353-370.

Activities:

- Lecture: “10 ways to kill your nonprofit”
- Roundtable discussion of assigned readings
- Case Study 2: *Seattle Day Nursery*
- Group activity – work on your team project.

Deliverables:

- *Case Analysis* due

Session 9: October 24th – Competitive and Collaborative Strategies

What types of collaborations do nonprofits enter into? How can organizations share resources but maintain autonomy? When should you give, when should you hold back? How can organizations co-manage decision-making? How do nonprofit organizations compete with other organizations for resources and clients?

Required Readings:

- Guo, C., & Acar, M. (2005). Understanding collaboration among nonprofit organizations: Combining resource dependency, institutional, and network perspectives. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, 34(3), 340-361.
- Gazley, B., & Brudney, J. L. (2007). The purpose (and perils) of government-nonprofit partnership. *Nonprofit & Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, 36(3), 389-415.
- Austin, J. E. (2000). Strategic collaboration between nonprofits and businesses. *Nonprofit & Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, 29(1_suppl), 69-97.

Activities:

- Lecture: “Two Wings of Nonprofit Strategy”
- Roundtable discussion of assigned readings
- Simulations: *Balancing Competition and Collaboration within a Homeless Services Provider Network: Brookfield County’s Continuum of Care*

October 31st – No Class

Session 10: November 7th – Innovation and Growth Strategies

Why are innovations important, and how do they occur in the organization? What is needed to help the organization grow and scale up successfully?

Required Readings:

- Tracey, P. & Jarvis, O. (2006). An Enterprising Failure. Why a promising social franchise collapsed. *Stanford Social Innovation Review*. Available at: https://ssir.org/articles/entry/an_enterprising_failure.

Supplemental Readings:

- Waterman, R. H., Peters, T. J., & Phillips, J. R. (1980). Structure is not organization. *Business Horizons*, 23(3), 14-26.
- Hurst, D. K. (1984). Of boxes, bubbles, and effective management. *Harvard Business Review*, 62(3), 78-88.

Activities:

- Roundtable discussion of assigned readings

- Case Study 3: *Appalachian Mountain Club*
- Group activity – work on your team project.

Deliverables:

- *Case Analysis* due

Session 11: November 14th – Managing Human Resources Strategically

Who sets the direction for employees? Should nonprofit staff have special requirements? Who is responsible for personnel decisions? How are volunteers different from employees? How can they be managed effectively? How can you create a motivated workforce?

Required Readings:

- Akingbola, K. (2013). A model of strategic nonprofit human resource management. *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations*, 24(1), 214-240.
- Guo, C., Brown, W. A., Ashcraft, R. F., Yoshioka, C. F., & Dong, H. K. D. (2011). Strategic human resources management in nonprofit organizations. *Review of Public Personnel Administration*, 31(3), 248-269.

Activities:

- “Stories from the Trenches” (Guest speaker session III):
Dave Griffith, Executive Director, Episcopal Community Service
- Roundtable discussion of assigned readings
- Progress report: where are you on the team consulting project?

November 21st follows a Thursday class schedule. No Class.

November 23rd – 26th: Thanksgiving

November 28th – (No class, due to a combined session)

How are things going with your team consulting project? Get ready for the presentation!

Sessions 12-13: Saturday, December 9th – Present Your Plan!

Combined Session (10a.m. – 4p.m.). Lunch will be provided.

Activities:

- *Group project presentation*
- Concluding remarks

Deliverables:

- *Group project report* due