

Case Memo Analysis for “United Way Mass Bay and the Faith & Action Initiative” (C16-04-1759.0)

Summary:

A secular philanthropic nonprofit, The United Way of Massachusetts Bay (UWMB), were solely funding non faith-based programs, but in the mid-1990s the Senior Vice President, Pat Barnes, was hoping that would change. Through the UWMB Community Investment Committee (CIC), they funded projects that served the Boston area. As a way to better serve these communities, the CIC created the Community Ventures Committee (CVC) to identify programs that were serving youth and realized that there were organizations that were excelling in this area – religious programs. In 1995, the CVC began to fund several church programs that were not faith-based. For Barnes, she felt that funding the CVC’s church projects were not enough. Board member Anne Romney stated that if UWMB wanted to reach certain communities, then they should work with the black churches. Barnes was ecstatic to hear that someone else shared her same vision and she ask Romney to lead a faith-based initiative. Barnes and Romney recruited Gloria White-Hammond and established a committee of community and church members. If their initiative was approved, it would fund programs that are primarily youth-focused, do not exclude participants, will not attempt to convert the participants and more importantly, are faith-based. On March 27, 1998, Barnes and the committee members presented the faith-based initiative at a CIC meeting.

The Issues in Relation to Public Administration’s Bigger Issues:

The pros and cons of trying to achieve diversity – One of the issues shown in this case study is determining whether faith-based programs should be funded by the UWMB. As Barnes prepared for her March 27th meeting, she thought about all the questions that could be possibly raised. Although many people have felt that faith-based programs can negatively influence communities with their religious foundation, Barnes knew that religious programs have provided a lot of social services over the years and have made an impact in the community. Religion continues to be an important part of American’s lives and influences the decisions that people make (O’Neill, 2002). In addition, religious groups have had a strong influence in policy making and they are sometimes the forerunners lobbying for or against some of the biggest policy issues in the United States (O’Neill, 2002). Regardless of the religious groups’ stance on certain issues, there is no denying that they have been a major contributor in assisting the public and also, have helped ethnic groups that other nonprofits or the government has had difficulty reaching. UWMB’s issue with funding faith-based programs leads into a bigger public administration issue of trying to achieve diversity.

One of the biggest issues public administrators face when they want to fund certain programs is whether they are as efficient as other programs to provide services to the diverse communities. In terms of diversifying, there are a lot of services that faith-based programs could provide if they are funded. They could help a community that is not served or underserved by providing health care, education culture and human services (marriage counseling, youth groups, etc) with a spiritual guidance (Salamon, 1999). In some cultures and ethnic groups, people are more likely to work with their religious group because they have felt ostracized by other organizations (Silverman, 2002). Many public administrators have seen evidence that faith-based programs can provide services to the unreachable communities, which creates diversity in the non-profit sector.

However, public administrators struggle with whether there is a price paid when they attempt to attain diversity. Public administrators fear that by funding faith-based or other programs to achieve diversity, the community would lose some of their rights to have certain viewpoints in order to gain services. The fear that these organizations will only assist people that have similar views and exclude others in need (gays, lesbians, transgender, unmarried pregnant women, etc.) is what public administrators hope would not happen. Exclusion can impede achieving diversity in the long run (Kennedy, 2003). Making the move from funding secular programs to faith-based programs can also cause problems with funding. Donors may not

want to fund certain programs because of their societal impact regardless whether the goal is to achieve diversity (O'neill, 2002). Public administrators have a duty to alert their stakeholders and the public about their decision to fund faith-based programs (Svara, 2007). Finally, many questioned whether faith-based programs are as or more efficient as secular nonprofits to provide services to the diverse communities (Kennedy, 2003). Using faith-based programs as an example shows that sometimes the attempt to diversify the community served can create other or bigger problems. What the public administrators hope to achieve in one area, may cause failure in another or repercussion with stakeholders. While every public administrator tries to achieve diversity, they will need to consider whether the benefits outweigh the disadvantages.

Difficulty of organizing a new program – Another issue shown in this case study is determining how to manage and organize the faith-based programs. UWMB's issue with funding faith-based programs leads into a bigger public administration issue many organizations face when they are implementing something new – the organization and management of new programs. Implementation of new programs in the public sector or non-profits can be difficult if a plan is nonexistent. There are many different steps that public administrators need to consider before incorporating a new program. The three steps are (1) making sure that the staff understands the aspects of the new program, (2) creating an implementation plan and (3) ensuring there is monitoring and evaluations.

One of the biggest reasons there is implementation failure is because public administrators do not know what are the goals or ideas of the new program. In the case study, UWMB will start a program that will fund an entirely new group of agencies. Understanding the purpose of funding faith-based agencies is extremely important. The staff will need to know the goals of the program and why funding these organizations are important (Kennedy, 2003). They should also know how the missions of these organizations coincide with their own and what services these agencies can and will provide (Kennedy, 2003).

Once the public administrators know and understand the goals of the program, an implementation plan should be created. There is no one way to integrate a program or reorganize an agency, but there are some key elements that are involved. Identifying the actors and agencies that need to be involved is the first step (Patton and Sawicki, 1993). When an organization is going through a change or new implementation, it is important that roles are distinguished. According to Bowditch and Buono (2005), they stated that there are three key roles: the strategists, implementors and recipients. The strategists are the visionaries of the plan and state the intended outcomes, the implementors are the people who design the specific day-to-day plan and the recipients are people that adapt and adjust to the change (Bowditch and Buono, 2005). After determining what roles people take, other aspects such as how long will the implementation will take and the depth of change needed should be decided (Bowditch and Buono, 2005). Once the roles and plan are finalized, they can proceed to implement the program, but this step is an integral part that should not be skimmed over (Johnson, 1996).

Finally, creating monitoring and evaluations guidelines for the new program are necessary. CIC committee chair, Kathryn Plazak, raised the issue that faith-based organizations could use these funds to convert participants into their religion. Plazak's valid concern should be an aspect of what UWMB's monitors. Monitoring is not just a way to find the negative aspects of a program. UWMB can monitor the program's benchmarks of desired outputs and outcomes (Rossi, Lipsey and Freeman, 2004). Like all of the UWMB-funded organizations, the faith-based ones should report how they are using the funding and what has been accomplished. In addition, UWMB should evaluate the effectiveness of the organizations to see if they had an impact on the targeted population (Osborne and Gaebler, 1993). This will let UWMB know if they are making the right decision to fund faith-based programs. Organizing new programs is not an easy task and public administrators should take the time and effort to ensure that implementation is done correctly and effectively. In conclusion, the case study had many issues that displayed bigger public administration issues non-profits and governments face. Acknowledging the bigger issues and using public administration skills and knowledge to address them will allow organizations to accomplish their goals and mission.

Reference List

- Bowditch, J. and Buono, J. (2005). *A Primer on Organizational Behavior (6th ed.)*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley and Sons.
- Johnson, W. (1996). *Public Administration: Policy, Politics, and Practice (2nd ed.)*. Boston: McGraw Hill
- Kennedy, S.S. (2003). Privatization and Prayer: The Challenge of Charitable Choice. Retrieved on October 7, 2007 from The American Review of Public Administration through San Francisco State University: <http://arp.sagepub.com>
- Lundberg, K. (2000). United Way and the Faith & Action Initiative (A): Should Faith be Funded (CR16-04-1759.0). Retrieved on September 8, 2007 from Harvard University, Case Program, John F Kennedy School of Government website: <http://www.ksgcase.harvard.edu>
- O'neill, M. (2002). *Nonprofit Nation: A New Look at the Third America*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass
- Osbourne, D. and Gaebler, T. (1993). *Reinventing Government: How the Entrepreneurial Spirit is Transforming the Public Sector*. New York: Plume
- Oster, S. (1995). *Strategic Management for Nonprofit Organizations: Theory and Cases*. New York: Oxford University Press
- Patton, C. and Sawicki, D. (1993). *Basic Methods of Policy Analysis and Planning (2nd ed.)*. Upper Saddle River: Prentice Hall
- Rossi, P., Lipsey, M. and Freeman, H. (2004). *Evaluation: A Systematic Approach (7th ed.)*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications
- Salamon, L. (1999). *America's Nonprofit Sector: A Primer (2nd Ed.)*. New York: The Foundation Center
- Silverman, R.M. (2002). Vying for the Urban Poor: Charitable Organizations, Faith-Based Social Capital, and Racial Reconciliation in a Deep South City [Electronic Version]. *Sociological Inquiry*, Volume 72, Issue 1, Page 151-165, Feb 2002, doi: 10.1111/1475-682X.00010
- Svara, J. (2007). *The Ethics Primer for Public Administrators in Government and Nonprofit Organizations*. Sudbury: Jones and Bartlett Publishers.