

Discussion Questions: Introduction to Shared Services

Are shared services a good fit for your organization? To answer this question, you'll need to review the pros, the cons and the potential benefits of shared services for your organization and the community you serve. The following discussion questions will help you to consider the possibilities.

- 1.) What overhead services are you potentially interested in sharing?
 - Information technology
 - Accounting
 - Human resources
 - Marketing
 - Data management and compliance
 - Grant writing
 - Professional development
 - Other?

- 2.) How are these services currently being accomplished at your organization?
 - Who does the job now? Staff, contractors, volunteers, Board?
 - How much time is spent are spent completing the job?
 - What other expenses are involved? Equipment, software, subscriptions?
 - What is the cost to your organization based on the time spent? Remember that this will never be \$0 because there will always be an opportunity cost for the time that staff, Board, or volunteers spend to complete this job instead of focusing on other mission-related tasks.

- 3.) Are there potential service providers to outsource to?
 - Do they have a reputation for excellence?
 - Do they have experience working with nonprofit organizations? In your mission area?
 - How are services structured and what are the fees? How does this compare to your current services and costs?

- 4.) Are there other nonprofit organizations, based in your community or serving a similar social purpose, that are interested in sharing this service? Are there ways you could collaborate?

You might not know the answer to this question right away. Start by making a short list of the organizations you already collaborate with and the organizational leaders you trust. Ask to talk about the possibility of working together to access overhead services. Do not rush this process. It can take time to strengthen the relationship, identify areas of common interest, and understand the potential for mutual gain.