

Young Nonprofit Professionals:
Preparing the Path for Leadership

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Abstract

The United States nonprofit sector is anticipating a gap in executive staffing as Baby Boomers begin to retire from leadership roles. In spite of these pending retirements, a crisis is not inevitable; there is a new generation of young nonprofit professionals seeking leadership opportunities. Transitioning Boomer executives, nonprofit leaders, and funders should encourage organizations to recruit, prepare, and engage young professionals to ensure sustainable success within individual organizations and across the entire sector. The sector needs to consider the following issues when preparing young professionals for leadership responsibilities: organizational and financial support, encouragement and infrastructure for internships, mentorships, professional development opportunities, and formal education. A review of literature and a recent survey of 172 young nonprofit professionals from around the country demonstrate the importance of focusing on these issues.

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In the past five years the issue of succession planning has become an important topic across the nonprofit sector as founders and leaders, mostly within the Baby Boomer (Boomer) generation (born between 1946 and 1964), prepare for retirement. Many nonprofit leaders and founders have grown professionally alongside their organizations' development and, therefore, have a powerful investment in their organizations and how they are run. Many of these organizations also are run by boards of directors comprised of seasoned professionals with characteristics and strategies similar to their executive leaders. There are serious concerns about how these leaders, boards and executives, will continue their legacies or be replaced when they transition out of the organization and/or sector.

According to a 2004 Annie E. Casey Foundation survey, "more than 2,200 nonprofit organizations found that 65 percent of respondents expected to go through a leadership transition by 2009, while just 57 percent had experienced a transition during the past 10 years (2005, p.2)." The Annie E. Casey Foundation and other researchers have found that more executives than ever are starting to plan for transition out of nonprofit organizations. With so many nonprofit organizations expecting founders and executives to leave their leadership roles, researchers within the sector are beginning to look at ways to prepare the next generation of leaders.

As Baby Boomers transition into retirement some contend that there is a potential crisis for the sector and others argue that these situations provide opportunities to capitalize on incorporating the skills and talents of young nonprofit professionals. The demand for formal nonprofit education among young professionals reflects the growing interest of young people in the nonprofit sector and in leadership roles. It will be critical for current nonprofit leaders to retain young professionals with a commitment to excellence in nonprofit work throughout the sector.

This paper defines the leadership gap and its potential impact on nonprofit organizations, outlines the experiences of young nonprofit professionals, and provides recommendations for incorporating young nonprofit leadership as a valuable strategy in

addressing this pending gap. Douglas Coupland's *Generation X*, defines Gen-Xers as individuals born between 1965 and 1979. For the purposes of this research young nonprofit professionals will target those ages 35 and younger which includes professionals from Generations X and Y (those born after 1979). A literature review and two surveys of young nonprofit professionals are the primary research resources. These resources provide strategies to professionals and organizations looking to seize opportunities for growth and sustainability.

Throughout this paper, the author will refer to herself as the "project researcher." The project researcher has been involved with nonprofit organizations since childhood as a volunteer, advisor, board member, and employee. Throughout her career she has faced significant restrictions in accessing leadership opportunities as well as age discrimination, and has heard of similar experiences from colleagues. She has sought out ways to support young nonprofit professionals and to strengthen the sector during the pending leadership succession.

The Problem: Defining the Leadership Gap

As Baby Boomers prepare to transition out of executive positions in the nonprofit sector, young nonprofit professionals are an essential component in continuing organizational missions and sustaining the entire sector. Young nonprofit professionals are seeking to overcome struggles with the Boomer generation of leaders related to leadership strategies, retention, age discrimination, financial compensation, and more.

The gap in leadership cited throughout this research is defined as the period of time when executive Boomers are preparing to leave their leadership roles to when new leadership is installed. It describes not only temporal gaps, but perceptual gaps in what well-qualified leaders look like. Boomer-generation executives and boards of directors often see current and effective leaders as having qualifications that differ from skills that young nonprofit professionals value for excellent leadership. Finally, the gap refers to the lack of communication, preparation, and support available to transitioning leaders out of and the next generation of leaders in to the sector.

Some young nonprofit professionals feel older leaders have not adequately prepared them to take over leadership roles or that Boomers lack the flexibility to adjust

to the next generation of emerging leaders. Others believe that young nonprofit professionals have not paid their dues, cannot commit to nonprofit work in a sustainable way, or are too complacent to lead nonprofit organizations. Young nonprofit leaders report that their experiences and strategies for effective leadership often conflict with the values of leaders in their 50s and 60s. There are executives who are committed to preparing and collaborating with the next generation of leaders, but may not know the best tools to manage the change in leadership. Additionally, executives and boards may not see preparation for leadership transition as a priority for sustaining the organization. Financial restrictions on both young nonprofit professionals and on nonprofit organizations limit the sector's ability to recruit and retain young professionals and reduce turnover within organizations.

All of these arguments are valid for nonprofit organizations in a constantly evolving sector. Finding strategic and attainable solutions that address bridging the gap between generations and the financial questions of leadership are important for sustaining and strengthening the sector. With thousands of new nonprofit organizations emerging every year in the United States, it is essential that the nonprofit sector design steps to engage and retain new leadership.

The literature review and survey results offer various strategies on preparing young nonprofit professionals for leadership roles and providing them with access to leadership opportunities. The project researcher hopes that this research and subsequent recommendations are beneficial for 1) boards of directors who will be working with their emerging leaders as Boomers transition out of executive roles, 2) executives who are deeply concerned with the future of their organizations, 3) senior staff who feel the tension between the generations and the leadership changes, and 4) young nonprofit leaders who can request using these strategies and gaining access to leadership roles within their organizations.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter examines the available research about the pending leadership gap in the nonprofit sector including the causes, consequences, and solutions, and the need for fostering young nonprofit leadership.

Leadership: The Boomer Generation

During the 1960s and 1970s in the United States, a generation was united by the principles of the Civil Rights Movement (Kunreuther, 2005, p. 3). Many of the organizations founded during this time still exist today with Boomers as organizational founders or leaders at the helm. Susan Kenny Stevens outlines some of the characteristics of Founder's Syndrome in *A Call Taken to Heart*: "These founders worry that their successors and their boards won't get the 'why' of what the organization is all about. 'I have begun grooming people, but they are all under 30. I actually think I could create processes and structures that these young, bright folks could carry on, but who would perpetuate the vision (2005, p.3)?"

Kenny characterizes Founder's Syndrome as behaviors that organizational founders possess, such as protectiveness and paranoia, around an, "organization's evolving professionalism" and how that might conflict with their original vision (p.5). Founders can struggle with sharing and delegating responsibilities as a result of their deep commitment to the organizational cause or mission which they created and developed.

Many executives, including some who are organizational founders, express great concern about who will succeed them and the competency of the next generation of leadership. Founders leaving or preparing to leave their organizations face both internal and external challenges. It can be difficult for them to delegate and share ownership of the mission and vision that they created (Stevens, 2005, p.5). These dynamics have a direct impact on the ability to bring the next generation of young nonprofit leaders to the forefront of organizations.

Seasoned executives and boards have additional concerns about Boomers leaving the sector beyond examining how to prepare the next generation for their pending leadership roles. Succession planning alone is a difficult process, but the sector overall

has done little to provide support to executives through retirement planning or even a sense of purpose and security after their employment in the sector (Kunreuther, 2005, pg. 16-19). It will be up to the current leadership (nonprofit executives and boards of directors) to find creative ways to recruit, integrate, and sustain young professionals in their organizations and to prepare for executives' pending exit from employed positions.

Emerging Young Nonprofit Leaders

The roadblocks that young nonprofit professionals experience and which need to be addressed in order to prepare for the future include: turnover in nonprofit organizations; stronger boundaries between personal life and professional career (Peters, Fernandopulle, Masaoka, Chan & Wolfred, 2002, p. 12-15); new leadership styles (Kunreuther, 2005); the value of academic experience (Moore, 2005); age discrimination (Moore, 2005); and the financial implications for a generation balancing the pressure of expensive student loans, high cost of living, and the prospect of raising families (Hansen, 1999).

Turnover among Young Nonprofit Professionals

High turnover in nonprofit organization is a cause *and* effect regarding the tension in preparing for the next generation of leaders. In *Wanted: A Little Respect*, Cassie J. Moore highlights that there are many strained relationships between young nonprofit professionals and their older supervisors because of a lack of trust and need for control expressed through older executives' micromanagement. These dynamics often lead nonprofit professionals to leave one place of employment for another (Moore, 2005).

The problem of retaining quality staff becomes evident in researching the turnover in nonprofit organizations. CompassPoint conducted a 2002 study, *Help Wanted: Turnover and Vacancy in Nonprofit*, to research staff retention issues and trends in California's Bay Area. The study found that "many in the new generation of professionals view being at a job more than five years as stagnation (CompassPoint, 2002, p. 3)." The trend for the seven percent of the nation's population employed in the nonprofit sector is to "move between the sectors at different phases in their careers (CompassPoint, 2002, p.4)." This may be especially true of young nonprofit

professionals looking for the right fit for their personal and professional goals as well as the ideal opportunity for upward mobility and mission-fit.

Research from the Annie E. Casey Foundation “learned that younger leaders with a more contemporary frame of reference often felt invisible or undervalued by older leaders.” The “contemporary frame of reference” refers to young professionals’ orientation to what makes an effective leader; this new model of leadership often focuses more on academic experience, willingness to take risks, and investment in innovative technologies and places less emphasis on “hands-on” experience. Boomer executives and leaders tend to place high value on hands-on experience within an organization and a movement and can be more dismissive of new strategies. Many Boomer executives developed their skills through hands-on experiences in movements such as the Civil Rights Movement, the Women’s Movement, and the Chicano Movement. These experiences provided them with perspectives and experiences with leadership that look unique from that of the new generation of nonprofit leaders.

Nonprofit leaders argue that they need to hire people who come equipped with real-life skills rather than train those with fewer hands-on skills (Moore, 2005). This approach exempts individuals and organizations from taking the time, effort, and responsibility to foster and communicate with new, young leadership in the sector and undervalues academic training and its benefits to nonprofit organizations. It also restricts access of young professionals with graduate degrees related to nonprofit management and leadership from gaining hands-on experience in the start of their careers.

Within their study of Boomers and young nonprofit professionals, Annie E. Casey Foundation also found a gap in experiences with preparing for new leadership. The Boomers described difficulty finding and grooming young leaders, and frustration with what they saw as the younger generation’s unwillingness to ‘pay their dues’ and to work their way up within organizations. Younger people described challenges for the next generation of leadership and the struggles they faced in balancing work and personal life. The most pressing issue in the study was an identified lack of pathways for dedicated younger staff to become leaders in organizations, especially those run by older directors (Kunreuther, 2005, p.5-6).

By not preparing for the new generation of leadership, the sector could face additional turnover from young professionals and executives. Without the proper culture and infrastructure, many organizations may find themselves struggling with ever-changing and inconsistent leadership.

New Leadership and Management Styles

Young nonprofit professionals are looking at new ways to structure management and communications within nonprofit organizations. Traditionally, Boomers have approached nonprofit management with a more hierarchal standard while emerging leadership is looking to include more staff and constituents in the decision-making processes as an effort to demonstrate a more inclusive style. For example, some young nonprofit leaders are taking on co-directors and rotating executive responsibility throughout the organization. Others are more focused on an inclusive approach to decision-making that conflicts with the traditional, corporate model (Kunreuther, 2005).

With a new focus on inclusiveness and equality in many nonprofit organizations, young nonprofit professionals are taking these concepts to a new level by exploring how non-hierarchal and alternative models of leadership might function within nonprofit organizations. Organizations, many led by young nonprofit professionals, are examining and practicing strategies that incorporate inclusive philosophies into their nonprofit structures and challenge traditional models as a way to best serve their missions.

Pablo Eisenberg addresses generational leadership fragmentation in the sector in his book *Challenges for Nonprofits and Philanthropy* (2005). He notes that young people are attracted to work environments that are not strongly focused on hierarchy and traditional corporate models, but instead to nonprofit cultures where collaboration and team-building are encouraged. Eisenberg argues that young people are interested in participating in the sector as demonstrated by their involvement through internships, Peace Corps, AmeriCorps, and so on, but they are interested in more challenging tasks rather than entry-level opportunities (Eisenberg, 2005, p. 200).

According to Kunreuther, younger leaders are seeking out more inclusive and holistic approaches to leadership that contrast the traditional hierarchical model of leadership employed by previous leaders. It is important to these leaders that everyone on staff is able to share their opinions about decisions and are able to simultaneously

work collectively on large issues and independently on individual tasks (Kunreuther, 2005, p.10-11). Research by Kunreuther with the Building Movement Project, *Generational Changes and Leadership: Implications for Social Change Organizations*, also notes the differences between generational leadership and decision-making:

Younger directors were more likely to talk about and try different approaches for decision making...Older directors might have begun their career with similar models and then opted for a more traditional hierarchy with input as time went on (Kunreuther, 2002, p. 32).

Moore reports on conflicting work styles between the generations in nonprofit fundraising. “Youthful impatience and a working style that differs from that of older colleagues can also cause trouble (2005, p.9).” The younger generation of nonprofit professionals looks for explanations and history behind courses of action that older professionals can find burdensome. Moore interviewed one individual who commented about the older generation’s philosophy, “You do it because I am telling you to do it. You don’t question why (2005, p.9).”

Young nonprofit professionals report being interested in leadership roles within their organizations, but feel they are excluded from leadership opportunities because they are being filled by Boomer executives or because young people are not valued as leaders. One participant from Indiana University’s 2006 Philanthropy Summit noted:

The Gen-Xers perceive a bottleneck above them, an inability to move into leadership roles. How do we create productive dialogues between the Baby Boomers and Generation X in the midst of what’s being framed as a crisis? ...It’s really a generational question and that we’re facing a sector-wide founder’s syndrome (Center for Philanthropy, 2006, p.11).

Organizations such as CompassPoint and Annie E. Casey Foundation have outlined recommendations for organizations to consider, but there is a cultural shift in the sector that will need to happen in order for these strategies, including innovative leadership qualities, to be accepted.

The Impact of Age

A common issue that Moore highlights is older professionals’ attention to the age of their younger colleagues. “Many young fundraisers say that co-workers or donors

often mention their age, and in some cases, colleagues ask them point blank how old they are (Moore, 2005, p.9).” Should the tables be turned and young people were to ask seasoned executives the same question, there would most likely be severe consequences.

One of the prevailing experiences of young nonprofit professionals is that of condescension and untrustworthy attitudes from older colleagues and people in leadership roles within organizations. Overt comments concerning employees’ young ages and their assumed lack of knowledge, experience, or capability in the shadow of seasoned nonprofit professionals are common (Moore, 2005). In the project researcher’s initial survey conducted with 50 young nonprofit professionals, participants recounted their experiences with age discrimination: “Nothing outright, but age is sometimes mentioned in meetings. Usually, casually or as a joke. It doesn’t go unnoticed (February, 2006).” “I recently heard that a number of people from outside NPOs in my field were concerned about my age. They thought it would be best if I didn’t participate in my job, but if I just sat back and absorbed more (February 2006).”

Moore recounts experiences of young people feeling they have limited access to fund-raising positions as a result of their lack of hands-on experience:

Young people with limited experience in development have a tough time landing their first fund-raising job, even when they have college degree that taught them how to manage nonprofit organizations... Would-be fund raisers who earn master’s degrees in nonprofit management often face a double challenge from employers: a perceived lack of experience while at the same time being judged as overqualified (Moore, 2005, p.13).

Moore found that her interviewees felt that hands-on experience was still more attractive to older executives than academic experience (Moore, 2005, p.14). The potential impact of these attitudes is clear in a quote by one young nonprofit professionals participating in Kunreuther’s research:

I’m not on the board of one organization anymore because a lot of older people came and told us we’re doing it wrong. Because I didn’t live through the ‘60s and struggle the same way, our legitimacy as leaders is questioned, or not understood, or challenged because we haven’t had the same life experiences (2005, p. 7).

One panelist who was an executive recruiter at the Indiana University Philanthropy Summit noted that the way nonprofits identify talent in the sector is changing. He highlighted the difference:

Talent used to mean an innate ability, but today many nonprofit leaders, when further probed, are trying to refer to brain power-both innate and trained abilities, as well as the ability to think strategically and creatively (Center on Philanthropy at Indiana University, 2006, p.14).

The Boundary between Work and Personal Life

Young professionals are coming to the nonprofit sector with new boundaries aimed at helping them balance their personal lives, meet realistic financial needs, and achieve their desire to work for a sound nonprofit organization (Hansen, 1999). Many young nonprofit professionals are looking at their employment in the sector as a way to contribute to their communities and maintain a healthy balance in their lives. Kunreuther notes Gen-Xers have a “work to live” style that often gets misinterpreted by Baby Boomers, who “live to work,” as a “slacker” mentality (2003, p. 451). Young professionals argue that they are not less motivated, but want to achieve a greater balance to prevent burnout and turnover, and to sustain them in the organization.

Burnout is one of the factors that drive young professionals from organization to organization looking for the right fit rather than trusting that one organization will support their work and foster their professional development as well as provide space for their personal lives, including starting a family. Young people argue that it is possible to strike a healthy balance between personal life and professional work by using strategic leadership and management skills, emerging technology, and collaboration within an organization. Young people get frustrated with the unhealthy work environments where they are expected to sacrifice much of their personal time for the sake of the organization and in order to prove their worth to leadership in the organization (Peters, Fernandopulle, Masaoka, Chan & Wolfred, 2002, p. 12-15).

Kunreuther’s Building Movement Project research notes that young people have demonstrated the same kind of commitment to their organizations through long work hours, but are simultaneously looking to balance their personal and professional lives. Younger professionals are particularly concerned with how they will make space for

family in their lives. Kunreuther found that many of the older professionals had gone through a similar experience in their 20s and 30s, but felt that the younger generation would be able to figure it out as they had. Kunreuther points to a lack of guidance from older leaders and the need for intergenerational communication on the issue:

“...the issue of the work/personal life divide is not simply a generational difference in the commitment toward work or an organization, but more a difference in the commitments younger people have or anticipate having outside of work. What the literature misses is the *deep conflict that younger staff or directors may feel when they have to make work/personal life choices*. It also points out that many older directors and staff may lack the capacity needed to help younger people navigate this rocky terrain” (2002, p.17)

Financial Implications

Another commonly cited reason for the struggle in retaining and sustaining young nonprofit professionals is funding. Pablo Eisenberg states that while some nonprofits are able to attract young professionals to their organizations through internships, they have not allocated the funding to retain those individuals as employees, and young people move to the for-profit sector, government, or other nonprofit organizations who can afford them (Eisenberg, p. 200).

Amanda Ballard’s advanced policy analysis, *Understanding the Next Generation of Nonprofit Employees: The Impact of Educational Debt*, describes the financial dynamics and burdens that young people face in the nonprofit sector and the differences experienced by young professionals in the for-profit and government sectors. She argues that financial burdens are an important cause for high turnover rates in the nonprofit sector for young professionals:

74.5% of graduates who enter the nonprofit work force graduated with educational debt. Average salaries for graduates entering the nonprofit workforce were 21.5% lower than those entering the private sector and 10.9% lower than those entering the government. Nonprofit workers tended to pay off debt more slowly, possibly delaying other major purchases (Ballard, 2005, p. 2).

These statistics may encourage young professionals to look to other sectors with higher-paying wages in order to manage their educational debt and to financially prepare

for having families and making large purchases. Ballard also highlights that this financial trend is different than previous generations:

...trends have shifted some of the burden of paying for higher education from the public sector to individuals. Students and their families now have much more responsibility for the cost of higher education than they did in the past and the majority of the students are using loans [to] meet this increased obligation (p.4).

Heather Boushey reinforces this argument in *Debt Explosion Among College Graduates*:

At no point in recent history have we required young people to shoulder so much of the burden for their post-secondary education through a lien on future wages...For many, rising loan burdens will mean abandoning their first career choice or graduate school in favor for more financial stability (2003).

These financial issues are frequently the cause of high turnover rates. Shelley Cryer in *Recruiting and Retaining the Next Generation of Nonprofit Leaders* points out that while the financial demands on young people often causes their high turnover rates in nonprofit organizations, these turnover rates influence executives' hesitancy toward hiring young nonprofit professionals. This hesitation also contributes to young people experiencing a lack of leadership opportunity and financial stability in the nonprofit sector (Cryer, 2004).

Because of budgetary constraints nonprofit organizations may not be able to provide competitive wages to young nonprofit professionals compared to other sectors. Alternative rewards are an excellent way to retain staff and develop new projects. In *The Chronicle of Philanthropy's* 2005 article Moore suggests using young professionals' talents to pursue new opportunities that utilize their strongest qualities. Executives can provide young professionals with new opportunities to lead projects and include them in the details of project management or leadership.

Many young nonprofit professionals perceive an underlying assumption that if young professionals are hired they will be willing to work harder for less pay and more responsibility than previous generations. This double standard leads to lack of sustainability within an organization and within the sector. This was a common theme in the first young nonprofit professional survey conducted in February of 2006. As one survey participant stated, "There seemed to be an assumption that since I was just starting

out, it was okay to dump extra work on [me], underpay me, etc. Speaking out about these things seemed impossible at the time (February, 2006).” This work style and attitude may slowly be forcing young professionals to look for jobs in other sectors like the government and the for-profit sector if not contributing to the constant shuffling of an individual from one nonprofit to another.

Young people are entering the sector when they must balance the pressure of expensive student loans, high cost of living and the prospect of raising families (Hansen, 1999). These past, current and future financial burdens have a significant impact on the nonprofit employment young professionals will seek out and whether or not they will stay in the sector. Research shows that young nonprofit professionals come to the sector with more than monetary gain as a motivation; this is supported by the fact that they continue in the sector looking for challenges and leadership opportunities and seek out nonprofit careers in the face of roadblocks.

Findings

In her writings for *Nonprofit Quarterly* and Annie E. Casey Foundation, Kunreuther emphasizes how important it is for current Boomer leadership to pay attention to the next generation of young nonprofit professionals and their values. Kunreuther proposed six recommendations in preparing for new leadership based on research with Annie E. Casey Foundation:

- Invest in young leaders,
- Identify and nurture more leaders of color,
- Make it viable for executive directors to leave,
- Broaden sites of intergenerational discussion,
- Examine current organizational structures, and
- Promote a healthier balance between work and personal/family life (p.4).

In their work with the Building Movement Project, Kunreuther, Blain, and Fellner describe, in *Generational Leadership Listening Sessions* recommendations for working across the divide including:

- Create opportunities to build relationships and analysis within and across generations;

- Define the needs and costs of support for departing and emerging leaders;
- Generate tools and information for the next generation of leaders; and
- Pursue new studies to add context and fill gaps in existing research (2004, p. 35- 38).

Kunreuther (2005) states that preparing for new generational leadership means, "...valuing new ideas...by setting aside biases borne of [Boomers'] early movement experience and by nurturing young leadership with contemporary and critically needed perspectives both within and outside of their organizations (Kunreuther, p.4)."

Kunreuther highlights the importance of older leaders and funders engaging to prepare the next generation of leaders (2005, p.17):

Older directors almost never spoke of younger staffers or peers either as people to mentor or nurture as colleagues, or as future leaders in their organizations. Only a few of the younger directors and staff talked about learning from or talking to older peers; instead they learned from the work (Kunreuther, 2005, p.17).

Intergenerational and inclusive conversations on how desired goals can be achieved will be essential in crafting the next generation of nonprofit organizations. These conversations can help prepare both older and younger generations of leadership to understand various perspectives.

One speaker at the 2006 Philanthropy Summit made comments on mentorship and opportunity for young people in the sector:

I can't tell you how many people contact me asking for a mentor, asking my advice in reaching the top spot. So often I find myself telling people who are in that VP leadership slot that you might have to leave the field. Go do something else before you will be accepted as a leader in the field...I can't say get this degree, have these kinds of experiences to look better in the pool. Time and again, qualified people who achieved on every level get passed over because their skills aren't valued...You find those who are passed over become less and less willing to take a risk and will either settle for where they are or leave the field completely (p.11).

Pablo Eisenberg addresses the need for internships that lead to paid employment opportunities. The sector as a whole should work with funders, institutional and

individual, to address the need for appropriate financial compensation for young nonprofit professionals in an effort to retain them as the next generation of leaders (Eisenberg, 2005, p. 200).

Nonprofit organizations should prepare to:

- Financially compensate both retiring executives and incoming leaders by securing funds through collaborative support of individual and institutional funders;
- Anticipate shifts in leadership styles along with personal and professional boundaries from young nonprofit professionals which may require more flexibility than in the past;
- Provide ongoing support to emerging leaders through strategies such as mentorship and professional development; and
- Learn to work past cultural differences that may have created a sense of distrust or even discrimination in the past.

Leaders and researchers in the field of nonprofit management are highlighting the importance of intergenerational communication, board involvement, and funder influence in preparing for leadership transition. The following chapter examines the perspectives young nonprofit professionals throughout the United States and their experiences with leadership in the sector.

METHODS

The project researcher conducted two online surveys of young nonprofit professionals in the Denver metro area. Both surveys were conducted through Survey Monkey, one in February 2006 and one during September 2007. Participants for both surveys were solicited through several local list serves including Denver Young Nonprofit Professionals' Network (DYNPN), Colorado Nonprofit Association, Regis University's Masters of Nonprofit Management Program, and Colorado College's Public Interest Fellowship Program. Commentary from both surveys will be referenced throughout the research paper with an emphasis on the most recent survey.

The first survey had a total of 50 respondents during a two week period. The original survey was then refined and re-administered. The 172 young nonprofit professionals (ages 35 and younger) who participated in the week-long 2007 survey completed 27 questions related to the next generation of leaders.

Questions were in multiple choice and open-ended or essay format. The open-ended questions were included in the survey as a direct result of the high response rate the project researcher received to open-ended questions in the initial, February 2006 survey. The first six questions collected basic information for respondents on their participation in the nonprofit sector. The remaining questions focused on young nonprofit professionals' access to leadership opportunities and their experiences with current nonprofit leaders. See Appendix A.

The online survey gathered quantitatively and qualitatively significant information. Collecting data from this larger sample group of young nonprofit professionals minimized the potential for a few "gripping" or "bitter" individuals that would influence research trends among a small group of interviewees.

The primary benefit of this research approach is that it has the potential to bring in information from a wide range of individuals and organizations, and trends in the local sector become more obvious from a larger population. The online survey also provides an anonymous and convenient method for participants to respond; young people tend to use online resources more frequently making this a more reliable means of gathering data within this age group.

A limitation to this method, however, is that the researcher has only partial knowledge of individuals' personal experiences in comparison to alternative approaches such as a focus groups or personal interviews where interviewees have more opportunities to clarify their responses. The project researcher included a final question at the end of the 2007 survey for participants to leave their contact information and asked them if they may be contacted for follow up questions. Future research should allow for more time to follow up with these individuals.

Survey Monkey provided statistical analysis built into its programming as well as a spreadsheet with all of the survey responses organized accurately and clearly. Percentages for responses were hand tabulated and trends from essay-style questions were extracted and labeled in a statistical format. Longer essay responses that lacked some statistical pattern were examined individually.

Results

In total, 172 young nonprofit professionals nationally participated in the second, week-long survey. The results of the survey provide information on the next generation's experience in nonprofit culture and their readiness and willingness to take on leadership roles in the nonprofit sector.

The first section of the survey covered general information about those who participated in the survey including the age of the respondents, employment within nonprofit organizations, and nonprofit professional development opportunities. The remaining questions in the survey address issues of leadership and other related experiences in the nonprofit sector.

Demographics

Respondents consisted primarily of individuals between the ages of 19 and 35. The majority of participants (34.3%) identified themselves as being between the ages of 27 and 30, followed by the age groups between 31 and 35 (31.3%), 23 to 26 (29%), and 19 to 22 (3.5%). The vast majority of respondents (88.3%) were currently employed at a nonprofit organization. Other responses included individuals who had worked for nonprofits in the past and individuals looking for work in the nonprofit sector.

The following tables show the number of organizations respondents had worked in, reasons why young nonprofit professionals left their employed positions, and reasons that respondents enjoyed working for nonprofit organizations.

Table One

Number of Organizations in which Respondents had Worked

Number of Organizations	Percentage of Respondents
1-3	75.9%
4-6	19.2%
7-9	3.6%
10 or more	1.2%

Table Two

Reasons Young Nonprofit Professionals Left Previous Positions at Nonprofit Organizations

Reason	Percentage of Respondents
Better Opportunity	64.7%
Needed to Make More Money	49.7%
Relocation to a new geographic area	45.1%
Lack of professional development opportunities	33.5%
Conflicts with senior management	21.9%
Change in professional interests	16.7%
Not enough flexibility	9.8%
Exposed to discrimination	6.3%
Conflicts with co-workers	5.7%
Conflicts with board of directors	5.7%

Table Three

Reasons for Enjoying Working at Nonprofit Organizations

Reason	Percentage of Respondents
Enjoy giving back to the community	82%

Personal sense of satisfaction	81.5%
Positive work environment	58.3%
Professional challenges	57.2%
Co-workers	56%
Flexibility	53.7%
Working with clients	42.7%
Encouraging/Supportive leadership	40%
Professional development opportunities	37%
Financial compensation	2.8%

When compared with research from the literature, these results are consistent with other studies. Members of this study indicated that the top three reasons for enjoying nonprofit work were similar to their executive counterparts from other research including: enjoyment in giving back to the community, personal sense of satisfaction, and positive work environment. Financial compensation was the least-cited reason for enjoying working at a nonprofit organization.

Leadership

Survey respondents answered questions related to their experiences and preparation for leadership roles within nonprofit organizations. The following table lists respondents' current leadership roles. Regardless of current leadership experience the majority of respondents (74.4%) indicated that they felt they had the necessary skills to serve in a nonprofit leadership position and a large number (68.6%) reported that they had opportunities to serve in leadership roles either through their employment or volunteer work.

Table Four

Respondents' Current Leadership Roles in Nonprofit Organizations

Responses	Percentage of Respondents
Currently do not serve in a leadership role	52.9%
Board member	20.3%
Executive Director	6.9%
Senior staff	6.9%

Other leadership role

5.2%

A large percentage of respondents (90.4%) felt that young nonprofit professionals faced barriers to professional success and leadership related to age discrimination, lack of opportunities and lack of trust. Respondents noted the reasons why they felt there were barriers for young nonprofit professionals:

- “I think trust is the biggest issue. Many have specific training where our predecessors do not and are ingrained that their way to leadership was the only way.”
- “I think there is a little bit of "ageism" in this sector. I think the older generation values years of experience over innovation, creativity, etc.”
- “I think that boards of nonprofits will not be ready for the paradigm shifts that will come with younger executives. Younger executives will not bring as much experience in terms of years served and working in high-level nonprofit organizations, but they will bring new ideas that will change the culture of their organizations. I'm not sure that boards are ready for that.”
- “I think there is a new style of work/leadership in younger professionals that is very different from the current nonprofit leaders. If nonprofit organizations want to recruit/retain this next generation of leaders, they may have to look at the workplace a little differently (more flexibility, higher quality of life, different styles of problem-solving, etc). Otherwise, I see mass exodus of younger professionals moving into other environments better suited to their style of work/leadership.”
- “Current leadership is entrenched and may not be thinking how to prime young leaders to succeed them. Young leaders also need to be motivated by mission and compensated enough to deal with financial realities.”
- Age. Lack of a master’s degree. The catch 22 of experience (how do you get a job without experience? how do you get experience when no one will give you a job?)

Mentorship

Several survey questions addressed the issue of mentorship opportunities for young people in the sector. Over half of the respondents had a mentor in their nonprofit

work and of those that had worked with a mentor, 93.6% felt that having a mentor was helpful to advancing their professional career. Less than half (43.8%) noted that mentorship would strengthen their leadership experience and capability.

Professional Development

The majority of survey respondents (53.1%) had between one and three professional development opportunities in the last year. Less than one quarter of respondents (20.2%) reported having between three and five professional development opportunities and 7.5% reported having no professional development opportunities. Less than half of the people surveyed (46.4%) noted professional development skills and opportunities as helpful in strengthening their leadership capabilities.

Formal Education

Respondents noted that formal education was an important tool in advancing their nonprofit careers. More than half of respondents (61.8%) reported possessing formal education specifically related to nonprofit work and nearly one-third (30.7%) identified formal education as being an opportunity or skill that would be helpful in strengthening their leadership abilities. The following table describes how respondents felt their formal education was valued in their nonprofit work compared to that of hands-on experience.

Table Five

Value of Formal Education Compared to Hands-on Experience

Value	Percentage of Respondents
Equal to	43%
Less than	30.8%
More than	16.8%

Respondent Suggestions

Other strategies that respondents identified as being important to career advancement included (1) leadership and advancement opportunities, (2) financial support, (3), networking, (4) working collaboratively with current leadership (board or directors, executive directors), and (5) openness by current leadership with next generation.

Respondents offered advice to young people entering the nonprofit sector in the areas of networking, internships, mentoring, experience, education and professional development, organizational culture, hard work, financial strains, balance between work and personal life, and love for nonprofit work:

- “Take advantage of networking possibilities of YNPN (Young Nonprofit Professionals Network) and other organizations.”
- “Do an internship and/or get ‘real world’ work experience.”
- “Find a mentor...whether it’s in your organization, in the field, or even in your community.”
- “Continually look for ways to develop professionally, don’t wait for it to come to you.”
- “I would suggest getting a degree or certificate in nonprofit management.”
- “Learn about the environment you are going to enter, face the challenges, know when to say enough is enough and move on to another agency.”
- “Work for more inclusive, representative boards- if your staff is of a different generation than the board you will have problems.”
- “We need to force some of the entrenched leaders out of the way so we can develop their agencies to their full potential.”
- “Weigh out your lofty goals of helping people with the reality that hard work is not necessarily professionally rewarded in this field.”
- “Be prepared to work very hard.”
- “While your heart is initially in the right place, you’ll quickly burn out on lack of compensation, lack of respect for what you do, and the fear of not knowing if you or your program will be funded year-to-year.”
- “Be prepared to take jobs that pay little and you work hard. But go into this industry if your heart is in it because it will be a great reward.”
- “Often pay is terrible and will not get much better until you are in your late 30s or early 40s.”
- “Be really sure you want to work in this field-the pay is not great and it is a very tough field, so if you’re not really dedicated, you will end up like a lot of people who burn out and leave.”

- “If you really want to pay off your college/post college debt, don’t work for a nonprofit. It’s so sad to say, but there are very few in the nonprofit sector that are in it for the money.”
- “Don’t work more than 40 hours per week-there will ALWAYS be more to do- and you will burn out if you try to take it all on.”
- “I would encourage everyone to take part in the nonprofit sector as either a professional, a board member, or a volunteer during their lifetime.”
- “It is rewarding, challenging, and fulfilling.”
- “Keep at it...it’s worth it!”

Succession Planning

Respondents were asked to estimate the ages of their executive directors, senior management, and boards of directors. The following table reports the survey responses.

Table Six

Respondents’ Estimated Age of their Organizational Leadership

Age	Executive Directors	Senior staff	Board
20 to 30	1.1%	9%	1.1%
31-40	12.8%	34.3%	12.2%
41-50	26.1%	50%	44.7%
51-60	46.7%	40.6%	58.1%
61-70	9.9%	8.1%	30.8%
71-80	0%	1%	6.9%
81 & older	0%	0%	1.7%

Over half of the executive directors in this survey were estimated to be above age 50. This means in the next 10-15 years approximately half of the survey respondents’ executive directors will be planning on leaving their leadership roles. This number is lower than that cited in the literature. It provides an advantage in that it provides nonprofits with additional time to collaborate with staff and prepare for executive transition in the next decade.

A large majority of respondents (80.5%) felt that young nonprofit professionals served an important role in the pending leadership transition within the nonprofit sector

while 13.5% felt that young nonprofit professionals did not play an important role because they should not be involved or because there were no opportunities to be involved in planning. Just less than six percent of survey participants had other responses to this survey question. Table Seven shows respondents' knowledge about their nonprofits' succession plans at the time of the survey and in the next five years.

Table Seven

Organizational Succession Planning during Survey and in the Next Five Years

	Yes	No	Don't Know
Currently planning	21.5%	38.4%	29%
Next 5 years	16.8%	19.7%	52.5%

Survey respondents repeatedly highlighted strategies for how current leadership can include the next generation of nonprofit leaders in the age of succession planning through leadership opportunities, grooming for leadership roles, mentoring, education, addressing age discrimination, and considering young people as beneficial parts of nonprofit organizations:

- “By engaging them. Current leadership often talks as though the sector will fall apart when they retire, while current young professionals talk about wanting to take on bigger challenges. Clearly a communication breakdown. Leaders of today need to engage younger generations they work with now.”
- “Work with [young nonprofit professionals] instead of viewing them as competition. Have the mindset that we're who carry on [the entire Boomer executive's] work, so help us understand and know that we have the organization's best interest in mind.”
- “I think if current leadership showed that they value and appreciate the next generation of nonprofit leaders by providing them with the necessary training and skills to make career advancements that would be very beneficial.”
- “Offer some kind of back to school incentive, or partner with local schools for discounts or other benefits for employees who utilize opportunity.”
- “Stop falling victim to ‘Founders Syndrome’ - the baby boomers started a lot of these nonprofit orgs and for some reason they think they're the only ones fit to run them, they still see anyone under the age of 40 as ‘kids’ and think we haven't

paid enough dues to deserve a leadership role. The boomers tend to worker harder, not smarter.”

- “Young leaders are different-we embrace technology and change much more quickly and need to have the freedom to try new things. We’re just as qualified, smart, energetic, and committed as current leadership- we may just not do things as they have always been done.”
- “I think the previous generation can sometimes feel like since they had to do things the hard way, “pay their dues,” that we should have to do the same. More sympathy for our situation could lead to less menial pay and work for those trying to break into the field, which would help more people stay in the field- or with the same org- long enough to become leaders.”
- “Listen to [young nonprofit professionals]-pay attention to what they have to say and the ideas they have. Understand that they are going to be the next generation of nonprofit leaders whether [Boomer executives] assist or not, so for the community’s sake, take some time to give credit to those that are moving up the system.”

DISCUSSION

The following chapter reviews the results of the young nonprofit professionals' survey and compares its findings to the literature and impact on the nonprofit sector. Overall, the survey outcomes were consistent with the findings within the literature review.

Many respondents echoed the findings from authors such as Cassie Moore and Frances Kunreuther dealing with wanting increased responsibility and more trust from Boomers executives. In the project researcher's surveys, young people commented on their frustration with not being trusted or entrusted with additional leadership and organizational responsibilities. Many seemed to feel stifled by the traditional methods of working in the sector including "paying their dues."

Young nonprofit professionals are seeking out leadership roles on a volunteer basis, paying for their own professional development or education, and feeling that they have the skills to serve in leadership roles. While over half of the survey participants did not identify themselves as serving in a leadership position, slightly more than 20% were serving on boards of directors and approximately 14% were serving in high level positions including executive directors. From another perspective, that means 86% of survey respondents' organizations were led by individuals over age 35. It is promising to see a small percentage of Gen-Xers serving in executive positions and the sector will continue to benefit as these numbers increase. Further research is needed including a comparison of leadership roles among young professionals with the for-profit and government sectors. Additionally, research should be conducted over the long term to see how these percentages differ from the past and how they may change in the future.

Most young people in the survey reported having the same passion for their work as Boomers in nonprofit leadership positions which parallels the data from the literature. Despite reports of little flexibility, conflicts within nonprofit organizations, and many anecdotal experiences with age discrimination, young professionals are not citing these as the most common reasons that they left their previous nonprofit organizations. It seems that young people's passion for the work helps them to overcome challenges such as financial constraints, conflicts, and discrimination. The recommendations survey respondents provided for strategies to use in building a career in the nonprofit sector were

similar to those noted throughout the literature on preparing young people for leadership during and after executive transition.

Survey respondents indicated a sense of urgency in implementing recommendations, but at the time of the survey few knew if their organizations were currently participating in succession planning or would be within the next five years. Communication in this circumstance seems to be an important issue to highlight, as organizations need to communicate from the top down about their succession planning strategies in order to start preparing young people and their organizations.

Respondents felt that advancement opportunities (such as leadership roles as Executive Directors and board members), formal education, financial support, professional development opportunities, networking, mentoring, collaboration with current leadership, and open communication between the generations were all important strategies for developing young people in their nonprofit careers. The literature reports a similar overlap in the areas of formal education, mentoring, open communication, financial support and formal education. While the literature states that the financial question is a major issue for young people in the nonprofit sector, only 1.7% reported financial support as an opportunity or skill that would be helpful in strengthening their leadership experience and capability.

The financial implications for young people staying in the sector does seem to be concerning for many and the research trends appear to be somewhat inconsistent. The second most reported reason for leaving previous nonprofit positions by survey participants (49.7%) was that they needed to make more money. The literature also reflects the impact of financial constraints on nonprofit employment for young people. The lack of funding for the nonprofit sector's most valuable resource, people, will impact young professionals and Boomers alike. Nonprofit organizations and their funders have not adequately prepared to address the fiscal responsibilities needed to sustain young people in the sector and to support those executives exiting the sector after untold years of diligent work and service to communities domestically and internationally.

The data from the second survey provides useful information in guiding the recommendations for young nonprofit professionals executives, and boards of directors.

The research outcomes reinforce the majority of the findings reported in the literature review and help support the final recommendations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

There are a number of recommendations and strategies nonprofit organizations and individuals can consider that will help them prepare for the next generation of leaders. These include improved organizational dynamics, financial support, internships, mentorship, professional development, and formal education. In order to implement these strategies the Boomer generation of nonprofit leaders and the young nonprofit professionals will need to commit to a process that will enable communication and smooth transitions. Young professionals, executives, and boards will need to invest in strategies benefiting nonprofit organizations' health and survival. These strategies will shift organizational cultures and dynamics to be more inclusive and understanding of the intergenerational struggles including personal and professional needs.

Young nonprofit professionals need to advocate for themselves and balance their desires for leadership roles with the needs of the organization, the board, and the executives. Young professionals also need to read and learn more about trends in succession planning in order to have some orientation to the challenges that the board and executives face

Executives and Boards of Directors

To recruit and retain quality young nonprofit professionals and improve organizational dynamics, nonprofit leaders need to encourage intergenerational communication, recognize the value and necessity of young nonprofit professionals in the sector, and consider new leadership and management styles. Leaders at all levels need to expect and facilitate conflict as it arises to generate innovative solutions that will support the long-term health of nonprofit missions.

Eventually, Boomers will retire and there will be leadership gaps which boards will need to fill. Rather than act defensively, boards and executives can take a proactive approach in preparing for the inevitable future. Without preparation, nonprofits are likely to face greater hardship, potentially limiting services nonprofits provide which the government and for-profit sectors do not.

Young people have evolving strategies for management and leadership that will be unconventional for many boards. Rather than dismissing new models, boards should objectively consider the benefits and limitations of any new management and leadership

style and be willing to take calculated risks. This requires faith and objective examination of the benefits and costs to traditional, hierarchal models of leadership and organizational management. As with any transition, some individuals will not feel comfortable with risk or change despite whatever positive outcomes may result. This is to be expected and open communication about these realities will help better prepare any organization for the future.

Boards of directors and executives need to collaborate with young professionals and communicate about new types of leadership models. Boards need to be more flexible and open-minded about these models, look at their power structure, reassess current sustainability and retention practices, and embrace a creative process for nonprofit management. Additionally, boards should consider recruiting more young nonprofit professionals into governance roles as a way to attain the next generations' perspectives and guidance. Young professionals will benefit from having an understanding of the history of nonprofit management and the benefit to hierarchal models. Being prepared to openly discuss the benefits and challenges to new governance and management models will help them in gaining credibility and respect.

Boards and executives need to play a leading role in setting up open communication among individuals within the organization to discuss their internal challenges related to engaging emerging leadership. Boards should set a standard for their organizations by using resources such as facilitators when conflicts arise and keep the focus on the greater goal of preparing for leadership transition. The board and executives should be transparent and share their plans and concerns for executive succession planning with the entire staff and begin to have a genuine discussion about their anticipated steps for the future.

Organizational leadership should be aware and knowledgeable about research and trends in succession planning and emerging nonprofit leaders. With so many governance and fiscal responsibilities, this may seem like a fringe priority, but the board and funders should continually emphasize its importance and relevance in organizational sustainability.

Boards, executives, and young people need to set a foundation of trust and confidence that all parties have the best intentions for the mission of their organizations

and their clients. The perception of limited hands-on experience should not be considered as a deterrent in weighting young peoples' perspectives and talents.

Finally, boards and executives should address the financial impact of retirement on Boomer executives and begin to plan for ways to recognize their commitments and innovations. There is available research on how to aptly recognize the work of retiring executives and their visions for nonprofit organizations.

Funders and Financial Solutions

Boards of Directors need to prepare to work with a new generation of leaders and simultaneously prepare for the succeeding generation. This means addressing the fears and concerns of Boomer executives and founders. The sector overall has done little to provide executives with retirement planning or a sense of purpose after their employed activism is completed (Kunreuther, 2005, pg. 16-19). Addressing the financial needs of succeeding executives and young nonprofit professionals will be equally important in preparing for this transition.

Boards should begin planning now for their executives' financial retirement needs. Simultaneously, the board should design policies and procedures that will help to support the financial needs of young people without breaking their budgets. It is not necessary to simply increase salaries for young nonprofit professionals, although boards should examine how the cost of living changes on an annual basis. Boards can become more involved in advocacy within the philanthropic sector by partnering to create funding specifically for organizational health and sustainability.

Boards can institute policies that reward staff members who independently seek out professional development and educational opportunities. Institutional funders should consider funding specifically for developing individuals within organizations through grants aimed at professional development and formal advanced education. Funders need to directly link adequate financial support for recruiting and retaining staff to successful organizational outcomes. Funders should investigate innovative funding strategies such as sustaining activism, loan-forgiveness programs, and retirement planning in order to recognize and promote the value of nonprofit employees across generations.

Young nonprofit professionals will need to be realistic about nonprofit organizations' capacities to offer staff competitive wages. As some survey respondents

noted, young people may need to look at getting second and third jobs in order pay off student loans. Young people should be encouraged to get involved with advocacy on a state and national level in order to get the government to consider educational debt forgiveness strategies for those working in the nonprofit field.

Promote a Healthier Balance

In order to retain quality young professionals and reduce turnover rates, nonprofits should research strategies that promote a balance between work and personal life for all staff and encourage to staff to maintain this balance. It is clear from the research, that young people are willing to make some sacrifices on behalf of their careers, but may be increasingly questioning how their personal life can play more of a role in balancing out their professional careers. Kunreuther provides the following recommendation:

To address this issue, discussions (in organizations and more broadly) are needed to understand how to create manageable jobs that allow for family life, relaxation, and renewal. It is important to acknowledge that staff members derive meaning from their work and at the same time, need to limit the reach work has into every aspect of their lives. Older directors can spend time with young staff and young directors to help them develop ways to stay in the work while maintaining activities outside the office. Finally, funders can help by trying to ensure that organizations set realistic goals rather than encouraging them to do more for less (2005, p.18).

Kunreuther highlights a multi-faceted approach to resolving this issue by including young people, Boomer executives, and funders in roles that will help to shift the culture within nonprofit organizations. It is likely that the sector will continue to see increased research on the issue of retention and sustaining activism in the coming years. Currently, Urgent Action Fund for Women's Human Rights (UAF) is preparing to release a publication on the importance of sustaining activists among women in conflict zones. A small group of Gen-Xers involved with Urgent Action Fund are examining a funding model that would financially support organizational efforts to sustain staff through professional development opportunities, recognition strategies, and financial support. Other individual and institutional funders should explore similar strategies.

The sector needs continued research on the impact of nonprofit efforts to encourage the balance between work and personal life among young nonprofit professionals. Results from the research will allow organizations to learn about the most effective strategies.

Internship and Mentorship

Like Pablo Eisenberg, survey respondents highlighted the importance internships play for young nonprofit professionals. More nonprofit organizations should consider starting internship programs that are aimed at retaining those interns as staff once their internship is completed. This would create a learning experience for the intern, staff for the organization, and help to develop consistent staffing within the organization. Organizations can look to models such as Princeton University and Colorado College who are developing programs where students can apply for paid internships with partnering nonprofit organizations. These universities are making sure that the interns are gaining valuable experience in the nonprofit sector while organizations are receiving quality interns and work.

Repeatedly, survey respondents commented on the importance of mentors within the nonprofit sector. A formal network of mentoring opportunities for older leaders and emerging leadership should be created to help facilitate this process. Organizations like the Young Nonprofit Professionals Network (YNPN) would be an excellent place for this exchange to happen.

Nonprofit organizations should encourage young nonprofit professionals to seek out a mentor and support their taking time to meet and consult with them. Nonprofit organizations may wish to consider establishing mentor partnerships within organizations between leaders or former leaders, seasoned nonprofit professionals, volunteers, and young staff.

Professional Development

The research demonstrates that young nonprofit professionals appreciate professional development opportunities. Leadership should include professional development as a part of any budget and figure out ways to encourage staff to participate in this strategy and compensate them in different ways based on financial capacity.

Nonprofit organization should work collaboratively with funders to make professional development and capacity building a funding priority.

In the last year Denver Young Nonprofit Professionals Network (DYNNP) created Learning Circles, eight-week long courses specifically designed for professional development among young nonprofit professionals. The Learning Circles are led by some of the best leaders and trainers in the local nonprofit sector. Organizations should connect their staff with these types of opportunities and encourage them to participate. Any knowledge young people gain from these experiences will directly benefit the mission and clients in any nonprofit.

Formal Education

The efforts of Boomer executives is what has created the concepts taught in the nonprofit management programs and led to a healthy and thriving nonprofit sector. Boomer leaders should learn more about the impact formal education has on nonprofit organizations by taking risks and hiring young professionals with less hands-on experience and more academic knowledge. Leaders should work with their boards to create policies that encourage staff to receive formal education. Steps like these help to support and value the academic experiences of young nonprofit professionals

CONCLUSION

Current nonprofit leadership from the Boomer generation and young nonprofit professionals can collaboratively implement new skills and experiences to guide and sustain a resilient generation of nonprofit organizations. This collaboration and communication will help to decrease turnover, create innovative strategies for recruiting and retaining staff, and design revolutionary leadership techniques while honoring the history of the sector. This may help to address decreased turnover, innovative strategies for recruiting and retaining staff, and designing revolutionary styles of leadership while maintaining the spirit of the sector. Implementing any combination of the above strategies will help to communicate the value that young nonprofit professionals have in the sector and within specific organizations. Conflict will arise, but with a strategic and flexible approach, organizations are bound to be better prepared for successful executive transition.

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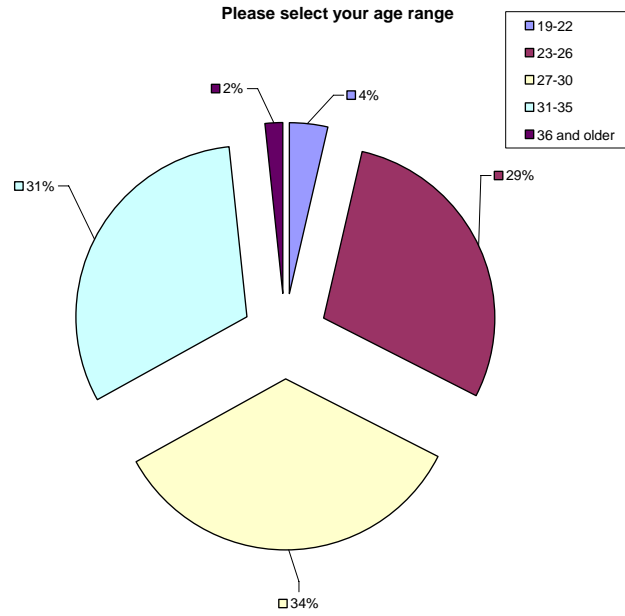
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APPENDIX A: YOUNG NONPROFIT PROFESSIONALS SURVEY

1. Please mark your age:

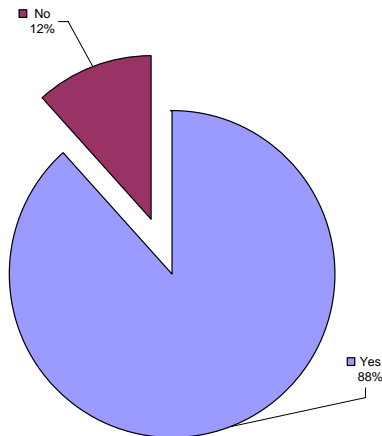
- 18 or younger: 0%
- 19-22: 3.5%
- 23-26: 29%
- 27-30: 34.3%
- 31-35: 31.3%
- 36 and older: 1.7%



2. Are you currently employed with a nonprofit organization?

- Yes: 88.3%
- No: 11.6%

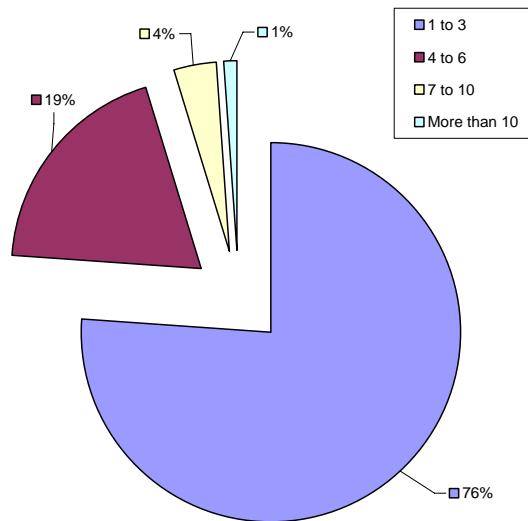
Are you currently employed with a nonprofit organization?



3. With how many nonprofit organizations have you been employed in the past?

- 1-3: 75.9%
- 4-6: 19.2%
- 7-10: 3.6%
- More than 10: 1.2%

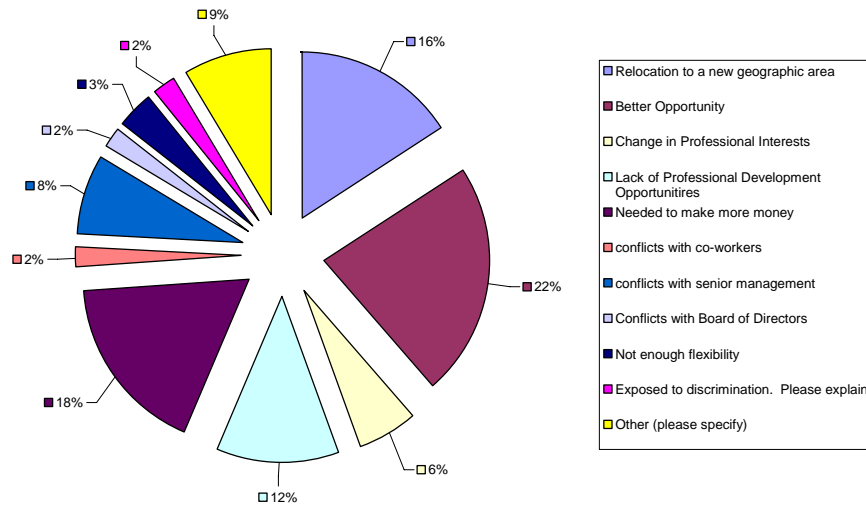
With how many nonprofit organizations have you been employed in the past?



4. What were some of your reasons for leaving previous positions at nonprofit organizations? Mark all that apply

- Relocation to a new geographic area: 45.1%
- Better opportunity: 64.7%
- Change in professional interests: 16.7%
- Lack of professional development opportunities: 33.5%
- Needed to make more money: 49.7%
- Conflicts with co-workers: 5.7%
- Conflicts with senior management: 21.9%
- Conflicts with board of directors: 5.7%
- Not enough flexibility: 9.8%
- Exposed to discrimination: 6.3%
- Other: 24.8%

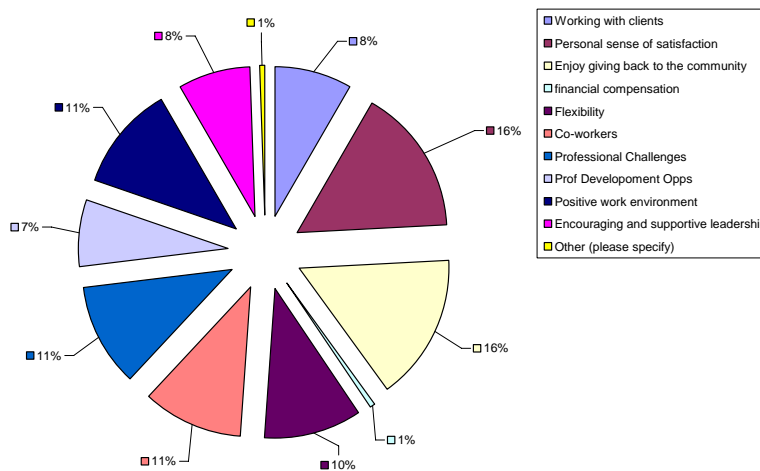
What were some of your reasons for leaving previous positions at nonprofit organizations?



5. What do you like about working for nonprofit organizations? Mark all that apply.

- Working with clients: 42.7%
- Personal sense of satisfaction: 81.5%
- Enjoy giving back to the community: 82%
- Financial compensation: 2.8%
- Flexibility: 53.7%
- Co-workers: 56%
- Professional challenges: 57.2%
- Professional development opportunities: 37%
- Positive work environment: 58.3%
- Encouraging and supportive leadership: 40%
- Other: 3.4%

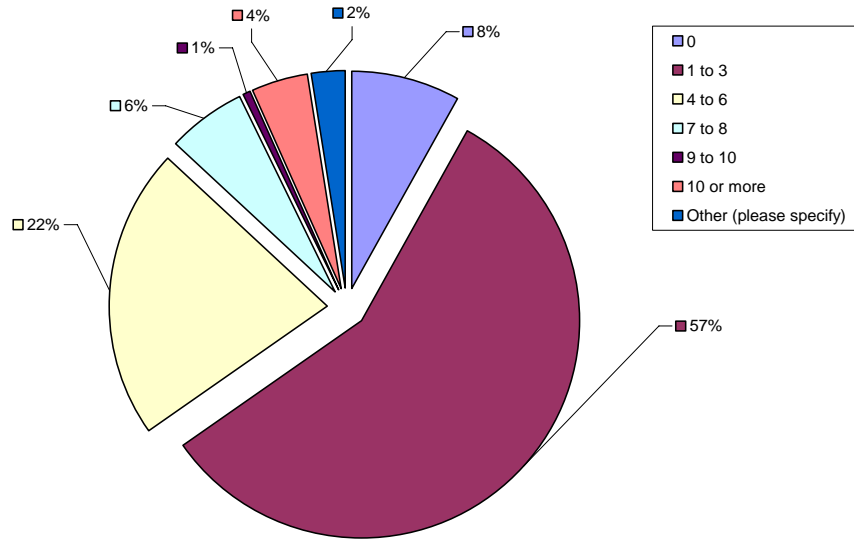
What do you like about working for nonprofit organizations?



6. How many professional development opportunities did you have in the last year?

- 0: 7.5%
- 1-3: 53.1%
- 3-5: 20.2%
- 5-7: 5.2%
- 7-9: 5.2%
- 10 or more: 4%
- Other 2.3%

How many professional development opportunities did you have in the last year through your nonprofit organization?

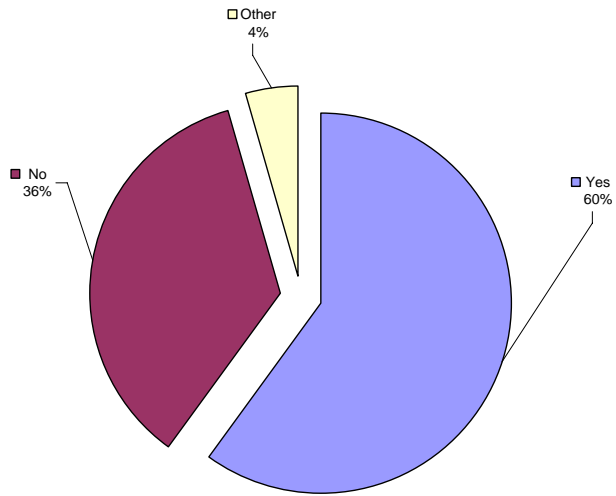


Leadership

7. Do you feel you have adequate leadership opportunities at your current nonprofit organization? Please explain.

- Yes: 61.3%
- No: 36.3%
- Other: 4.5%

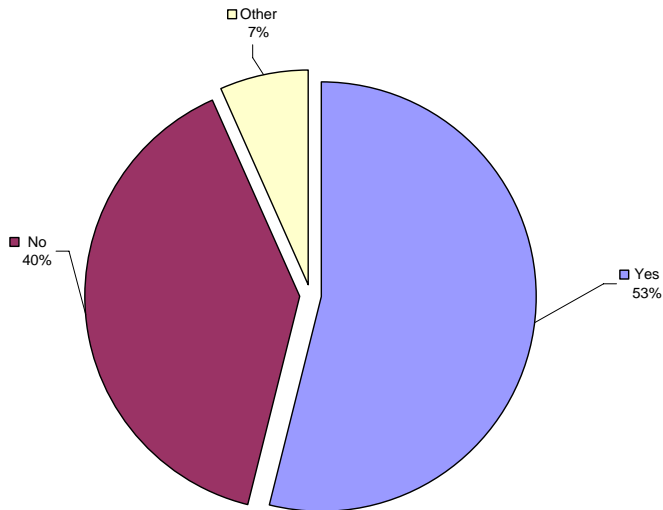
Do you feel you have adequate leadership opportunities at your current nonprofit organization?



8. Have you had a mentor or mentors in your nonprofit work?

- Yes: 52%
- No: 38.1%
- Other: 6.3%

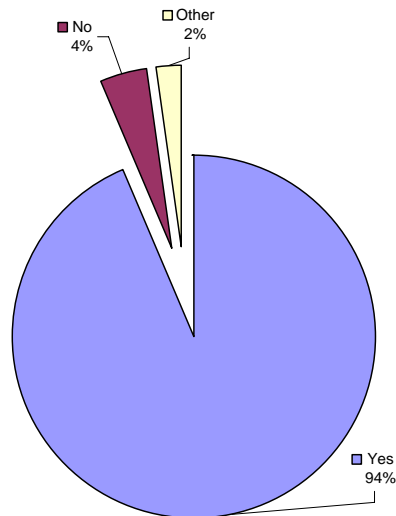
Have you had a mentor(s) in your nonprofit work?



9. If you had a mentor, do you think having a mentor was/is a helpful tool in advancing your career?

- Yes: 93.6%
- No: 4.2%
- Other: 2.1%

If you had a mentor, do you think having a mentor(s) was/is a helpful tool in advancing your career?



10. What other strategies do you think would be helpful to you in advancing your nonprofit career?

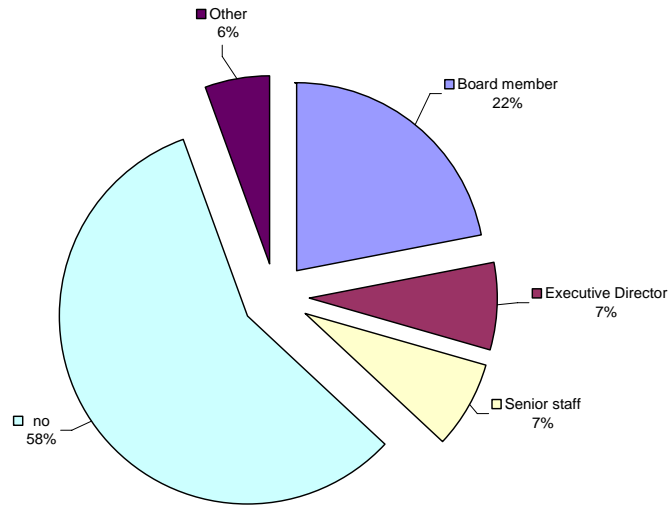
This open-ended essay question provided many of the same answers repeatedly. The following list summarizes nearly all of the responses:

- Advancement opportunities (leadership as executives of board members)
- Education
- Financial support
- Professional development
- Networking
- Mentors
- Working collaboratively with current leadership (board of directors, executive directors)
- Openness by current leadership with next generation

11. Do you serve in leadership roles in any nonprofit organizations as a?

- Board Member: 20.3%
- Executive Director: 6.9%
- Senior staff: 6.9%
- No: 52.9%
- Other: 5.2%

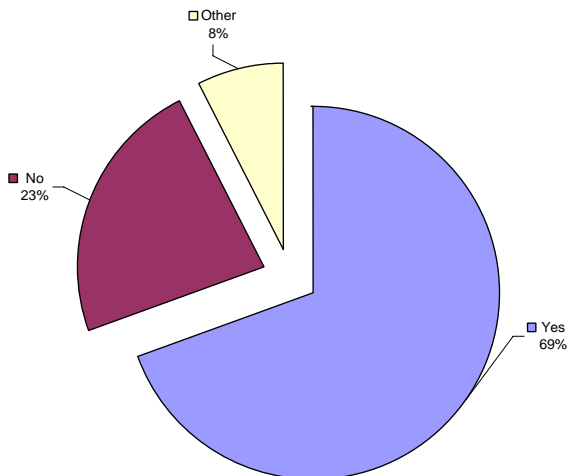
Do you serve in leadership roles with any nonprofit organizations as a: board member, executive director, senior staff, other, or no?



12. Do you feel you have opportunities to serve in leadership roles in your nonprofit work or volunteer work?

- Yes: 68.6%
- No: 22.7%
- Other: 7.5%

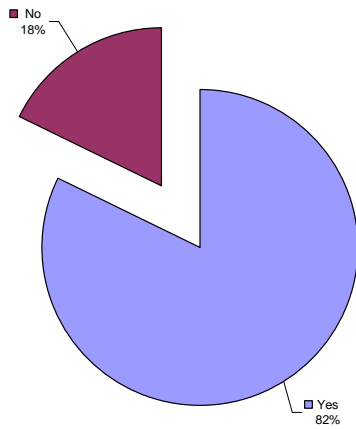
Do you feel you have access to leadership roles in your nonprofit work or volunteer work?



13. Do you feel you have the necessary skills to serve in a leadership role at a nonprofit organization?

- Yes: 74.4%
- No: 16.2%

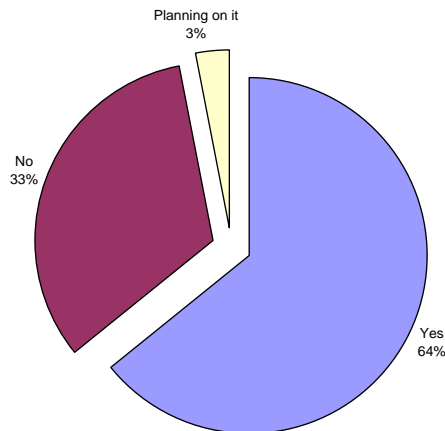
Do you feel you have the necessary skills to serve in a leadership role at a nonprofit organization?



14. Do you have any formal education specifically related to nonprofit work?

- Yes: 61.8%
- No: 31.5%
- Planning on it: 3%

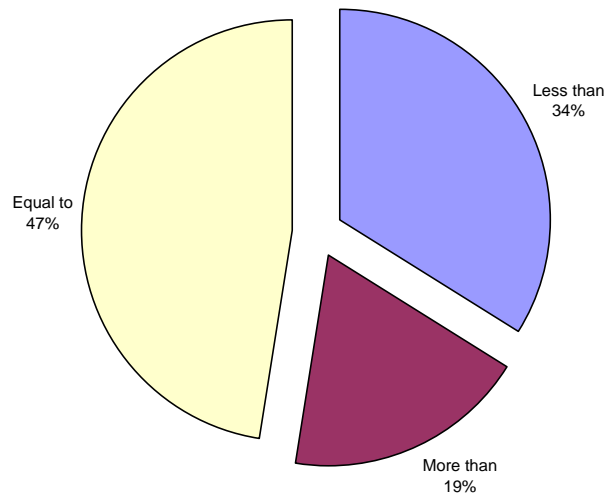
Do you have any formal education specifically related to nonprofit work?



15. Do you feel that formal education is valued less than, more than, or equal to hands-on experience in your nonprofit work?

- More than: 16.8%
- Less than: 30.8%
- Equal to: 43%

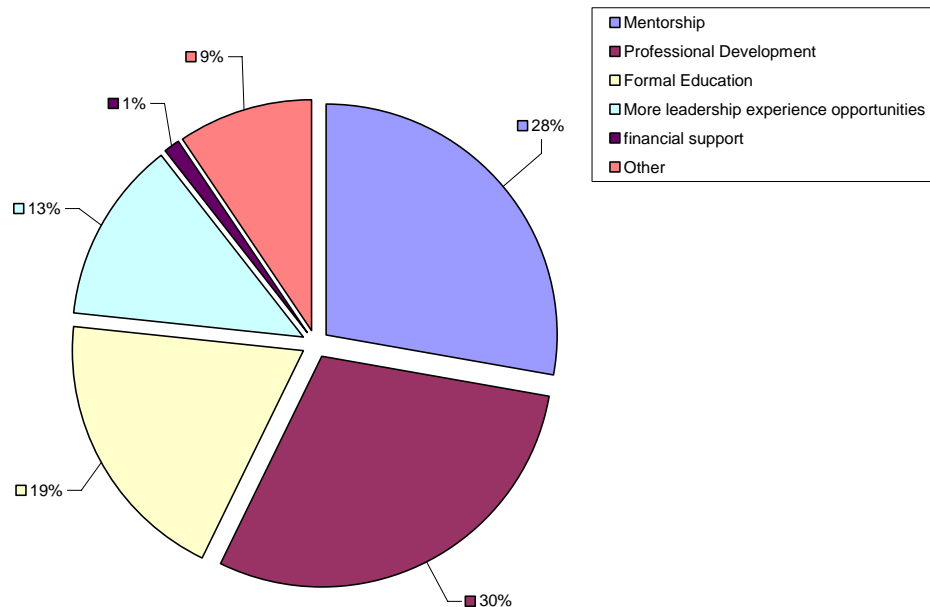
Do you feel that formal education is valued less than, more than, or equal to hands-on experience in your nonprofit work?



16. What opportunities or skills would be helpful in strengthening your leadership experience and capability (i.e. professional development, mentorship, formal education)?

- Mentorship: 43.8%
- Professional Development: 46.4%
- Formal education: 30.7%
- More leadership experience opportunities (hands-on experience): 20.1%
- Financial support: 1.7%
- Other: 14.9%

What opportunities or skills would be helpful in strengthening your leadership experience and capability (i.e. professional development, mentorship, formal education)?



17. How can the current leadership help develop the next generation of nonprofit leaders?

As in other questions, this open-ended essay question yielded many of the same comments on important tools for engaging the next generation of leaders.

- Leadership opportunities/responsibilities/grooming
 - *Give young professionals opportunities to lead...don't be afraid to share all the responsibilities for a project with us...show us what must be tracked and keep us informed so we know how to do it when the time comes.*
 - *Be willing to take chances with younger staff.*
 - *...baby boomers need to step aside, promote, and allow fresh leadership to step in.*
 - *By engaging them. Current leadership often talks as though the sector will fall apart when they retire, while current young professionals talk about wanting to take on bigger challenges. Clearly a communication breakdown. Leaders of today need to engage younger generations they work with now.*
 - *Allow young nonprofit leaders to take on greater responsibility, be board members.*
 - *I think encouragement and actually putting programs in place to enable nonprofit leaders to take on additional responsibility or work with more seasoned professionals.*
 - *Give them more responsibility.*

- *Cultivate young professionals.*
 - *Work with [young nonprofit professionals] instead of viewing them as competition. Have the mindset that we're who carry on [the entire Boomer executive's] work, so help us understand and know that we have the organization's best interest in mind.*
- **Mentoring and education**
 - *Take time to teach and listen to the next generation.*
 - *I think if current leadership showed that they value and appreciate the next generation of nonprofit leaders by providing them with the necessary training and skills to make career advancements that would be very beneficial.*
 - *Offer some kind of back to school incentive, or partner with local schools for discounts or other benefits for employees who utilize opportunity.*
 - *Pay for professional development training AND professionals memberships, so the next generation can network with emerging and established leaders. Offer flexible work schedules and incentives for employees wishing to obtain a masters degree.*
 - **Address discrimination**
 - *...break down discriminatory barriers...*
 - *...talking openly about discrimination issues...*
 - *Stop falling victim to "Founders Syndrome"- the baby boomers started a lot of these nonprofit orgs and for some reason they think they're the only ones fit to run the, they still see anyone under the age of 40 as "kids" and think we haven't paid enough dues to deserve a leadership role. The boomers tend to worker harder, not smarter.*

There were several comments from participants that were framed as pleas to the older generation of leaders to consider the benefits to having young people in leadership roles and succession planning.

- *By trusting the next generation is capable of becoming leaders and giving us more responsibilities. Sometimes a person full of innovative ideas to shale things up can do more for an institution than someone with a resume full of experience.*
- *I feel supported in advancing my career among people in the field I respect. However, I have also encountered resistance from some older professionals who are unwilling to work with younger staff, adopt technology and new ideas to advance our work in the field. Additionally, as retired baby-boomer return to the field as volunteers, it is sometimes difficult for them to "let go" of their own way of doing things when they were paid.*
- *Openness, trust, and flexibility. Young leaders are different-we embrace technology and change much more quickly and need to have the freedom*

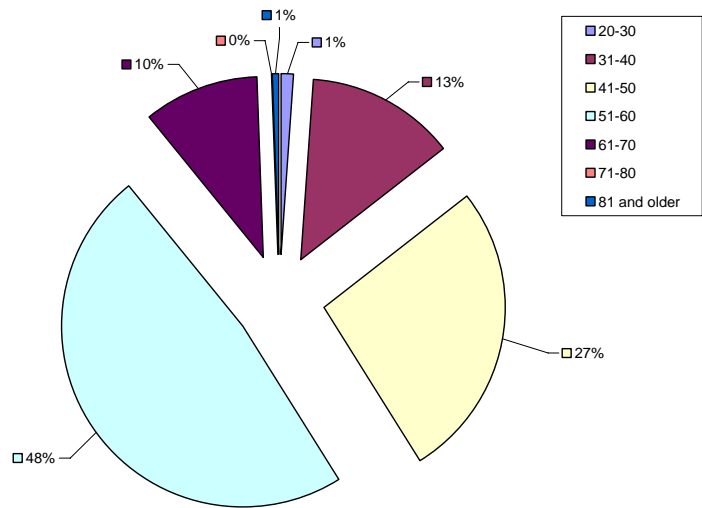
to try new things. We're just as qualified, smart, energetic, and committed as current leadership- we may just not do things as they have always been done.

- *Not be so closed minded to the needs and progressive thinking it will take to serve this generation.*
- *Current leaders seem unwilling to relinquish some of the control that they will need to be able to 'groom' the next generation of nonprofit leaders.*
- *Listen to them-pay attention to what they have to say and the ideas they have. Understand that they are going to be the next generation of nonprofit leaders whether [Boomer executives] assist or not, so for the community's sake, take some time to give credit to those that are moving up the system.*
- *By asking the next generation of nonprofit leaders what their needs are and which needs aren't being met. This has to be an honest conversation and all those needs might not possibly be met for the good of the organization. But this type of communication would be a step in the right direction for creating greater understanding of how to fill gaps in succession planning.*
- *I think the previous generation can sometimes feel like since they had to do things the hard way, "pay their dues," that we should have to do the same. More sympathy for our situation could lead to less menial pay and work for those trying to break into the field, which would help more people stay in the field- or with the same org- long enough to become leaders.*

18. What would you estimate as the approximate age for your Executive Director?
(Mark all that apply.)

- 20-30: 1.1%
- 31-40: 12.8%
- 41-50: 26.1%
- 51-60: 46.7%
- 61-70: 9.9%
- 71-80: 0%
- 81 and older: .5%

What would you estimate as the approximate age of the executive director(s) at your nonprofit organization?

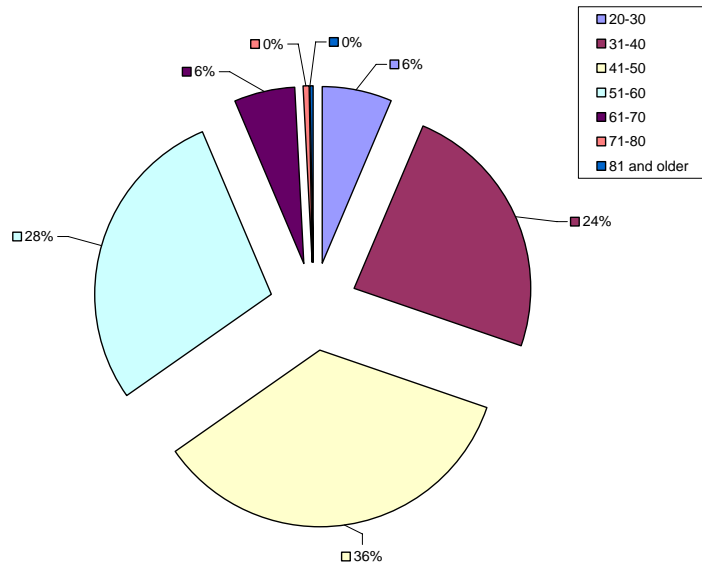


19. What would you estimate as the approximate age for your senior management?

(Mark all that apply.)

- 20-30: 9%
- 31-40: 34.3%
- 41-50: 50%
- 51-60: 40.6%
- 61-70: 8.1%
- 71-80: .5%
- 81 and older: .5%

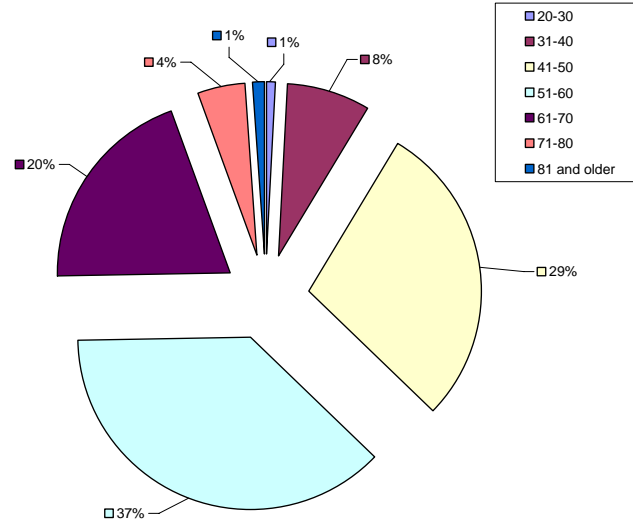
What would you estimate as the approximate age(s) of the senior management at your nonprofit organization?



20. What would you estimate as the approximate age for your Board of Directors (Mark all that apply.)

- 20-30: 1.1%
- 31-40: 12.2%
- 41-50: 44.7%
- 51-60: 58.1%
- 61-70: 30.8%
- 71-80: 6.9%
- 81 and older: 1.7%

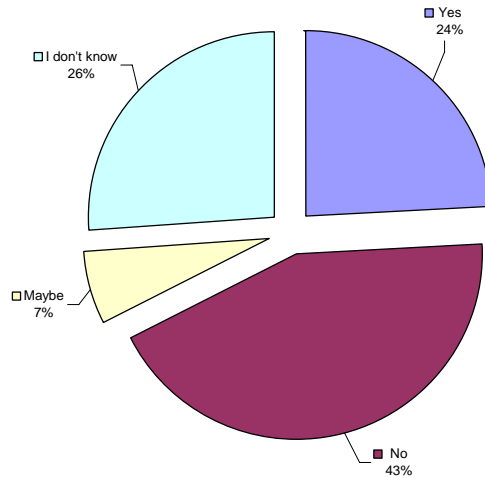
What would you estimate as the average age of the board of directors at your nonprofit organization?



21. Is your organization involved in succession planning at this time?

- Yes: 21.5%
- No: 38.4%
- Maybe: 5.8%
- I don't know: 23.2%

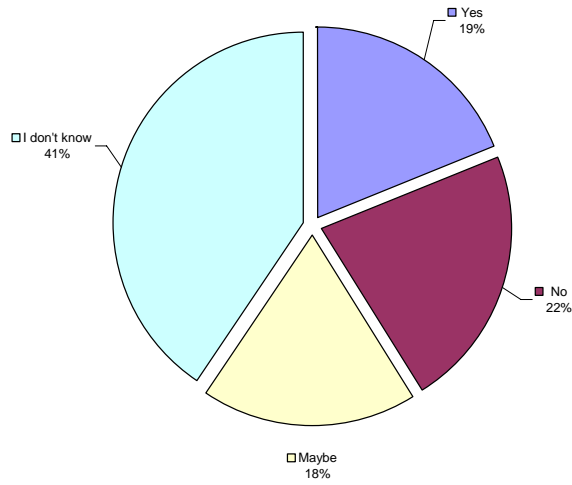
Is your organization involved in succession planning at this time?



22. Will your organization be planning an executive succession in the next five years?

- Yes: 16.8%
- No: 19.7%
- Maybe: 16.2%
- I don't know: 36%

Will your organization be planning an executive succession in the next five years?



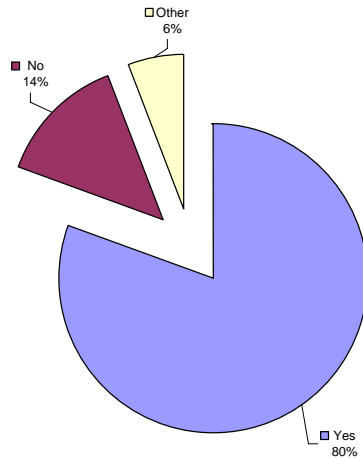
23. Do you feel that young nonprofit professionals play an important role in the pending leadership transition for the nonprofit sector? Please explain.

Yes: 80.5%

No: 13.5%

Other: 5.9%

Do you feel that young nonprofit professionals play an important role in the pending leadership transition for the nonprofit sector?



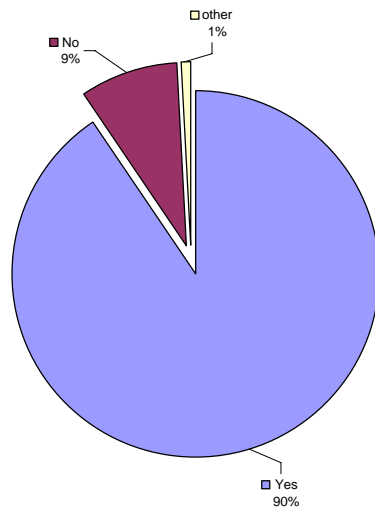
24. Do you see young nonprofit professionals (35 and younger) facing barriers to professional success and leadership in the nonprofit sector? If so, what are they?

Yes: 90.4%

No: 8.5%

Other: .9%

Do you see young nonprofit professionals (35 and younger) facing barriers to professional success and leadership in the nonprofit sector?



25. What advice would you share with young people entering the nonprofit sector?

The responses for this question covered a diverse range of recommendations and highlighted the importance of the following:

Networking:

- *Networking is key.*
- *Take advantage of networking possibilities of YNPN and other organizations...*

Internships:

- *...take internships that will advance your knowledge of the field and will be a valuable use of your time.*
- *Do an internship/get real world work experience.*
- *Take advantage of internship opportunities, even if just part time ones while also working.*
- *Take internships to gain experience.*

Mentors:

- *Find a mentor...whether it's in your organization, in the field, or even in your community.*
- *Find an experienced professional to ask to be your mentor.*

Experience, education, and professional development (even if individuals pay for it themselves)

- *Continually look for ways to develop professionally, don't wait for it to come to you.*
- *Formalized education is helpful.*
- *Grab every opportunity you can to get the most experience.*
- *Get experience first, then go back to school.*
- *I would suggest getting a degree or certificate in nonprofit management.*

Organizational culture

- *Learn about the environment you are going to enter, face the challenges, know when to say enough is enough and move on to another agency.*
- *Work for more inclusive, representative boards- if your staff is of a different generation than the board you will have problems.*
- *We need to force some of the entrenched leaders out of the way so we can develop their agencies to their full potential.*
- *But the frustration of dealing with office politics, the corporate world of some nonprofits, and the lack of organization and leadership at some nonprofit will be extremely frustrating.*
- *...nonprofits are not inherently good. They must examine their cultures and internal practices.*

Hard work:

- ...go “above and beyond” the job description...
- Weigh out your lofty goals of helping people with the reality that hard work is not necessarily professionally rewarded in this field.
- Be prepared to work very hard.

Financial strains:

- While your heart is initially in the right place, you’ll quickly burn out on lack of compensation, lack of respect for what you do, and the fear of not knowing if you or your program will be funded year-to-year.
- Don’t do it for the money.
- Be prepared to take jobs that pay little and you work hard. But go into this industry if your heart is in it because it will be a great reward.
- Often pay is terrible and will not get much better until you are in your late 30s or early 40s.
- Get a second and third job.
- Get a second job to support yourself.
- Try not to have too much debt going into it.
- Be really sure you want to work in this field-the pay is not great and it is a very tough field, so if you’re not really dedicated, you will end up like a lot of people who burn out and leave.
- If you really want to pay off your college/post college debt, don’t work for a nonprofit. It’s so sad to say, but there are very few in the nonprofit sector that are in it for the money.
- Do it part-time for your heart and get a stable job to meet the bills.

Balance between work and personal life:

- Create balance between work and life.
- Practice and prioritize self care.
- Don’t burn yourself out.
- Don’t work more than 40 hours per week-there will ALWAYS be more to do- and you will burn out if you try to take it all on.
- Maintain boundaries.

Love for the work:

- It is rewarding, challenging, and fulfilling.
- Keep at it...it’s worth it!
- Don’t stop at just your job. Get involved with other organizations, networks, committees, etc.
- I would encourage everyone to take part in the nonprofit sector as either a professional, a board member, or a volunteer during their lifetime.

26. Please share any specific comments or stories about your experience in the nonprofit sector.

27. May I contact you for follow up questions? Please include your name and contact information.

Thank you for your participation in this survey on young nonprofit professionals. You will be able to find a copy of the final report on the Emily Davis Consulting website at www.emilydavis.info. Please feel free to contact me with any additional comments or questions.