

Nonprofit Leadership Institute

Promoting good practice throughout the nonprofit sector

2006 Nonprofit Needs Assessment

Ottawa County Profile



Johnson Center
at Grand Valley State University

About the Nonprofit Leadership Institute

An initiative of the Dorothy A. Johnson Center for Philanthropy and Nonprofit Leadership, the Institute promotes good practice in the nonprofit sector by providing support, education, and information to leaders of nonprofit organizations. Visit www.johnsoncenter.org to access available resources and current workshop information.

Primary research for this needs assessment was provided by Nicole Notario-Risk and Reginald Oates. Thank you to the following committee members for their support and guidance throughout the project:

- Donna Cornwell
- Laurie Craft
- Maria Gajewski
- Larry Erlandson
- Abby Reeg
- Dan Rinsema-Sybenga
- Margaret Sellers Walker
- Linda Troyer
- Donna Vanlwaarden

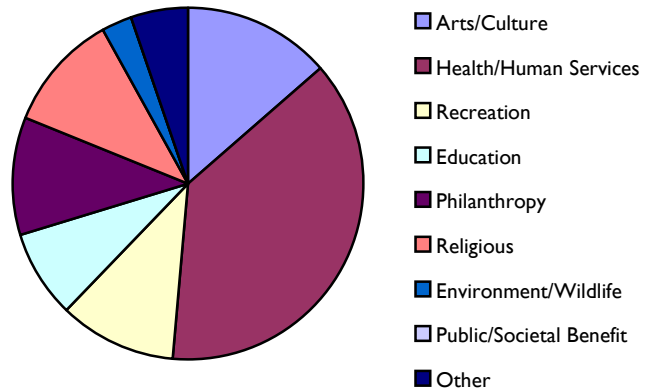
For questions or additional information about this report, please contact Nicole Notario-Risk at (616) 331-7232 or notarini@gvsu.edu.

Responses to the 2006 Needs Assessment Survey were received from 37 nonprofit organizations in Ottawa County, accounting for 19% of the total respondents in Kent, Ottawa and Muskegon counties. The following information highlights responses received from Ottawa County nonprofits.

Organization Category:

The largest sector of respondents, at 37.8%, was Health/Human Service organizations. Remaining organizational categories were represented as follows:

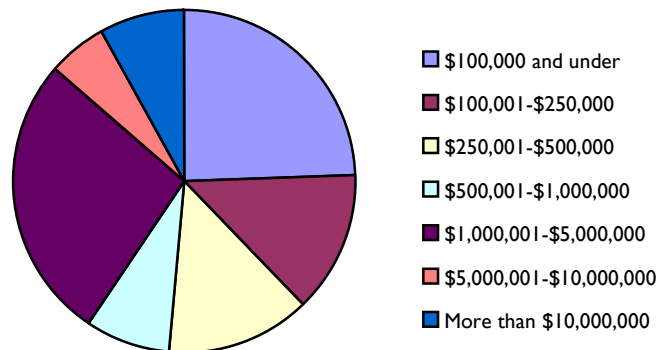
Organization Type	Response	Percent
Health/Human Services	14	37.8%
Arts/Culture	5	13.5%
Religious	4	10.8%
Philanthropy	4	10.8%
Recreation	4	10.8%
Education	3	8.1%
Other	2	5.4%
Environment/Wildlife	1	2.7%
Public/Societal Benefit	0	0.0%



Budget Range:

Approximately one half of respondents had annual operating budgets of \$500,000 and below. The number of responses and percentages for the budget categories are as such:

Budget Range	Responses	Percent
\$100,000 and below	9	24.3%
\$100,001 - \$250,000	5	13.5%
\$250,001 - \$500,000	5	13.5%
\$500,001 - \$1,000,000	3	8.1%
\$1,000,001 - \$5,000,000	10	27.0%
\$5,000,001 - \$10,000,000	2	5.4%
Over \$10,000,000	3	8.1%



Organization Age:

Subjects were asked how long their organizations were in operation, 32 of the 37 Ottawa county organizations (86%) reported being in existence 10 or more years.

CEO Longevity:

Nearly 87% of respondent organizations are led by Executive Directors who have been in their position 10 years or more. Only 8% of organizations reported to have Executive Directors in their position for four to six years. Just fewer than 3% reported to have been there less than three years as well as between seven to nine years.

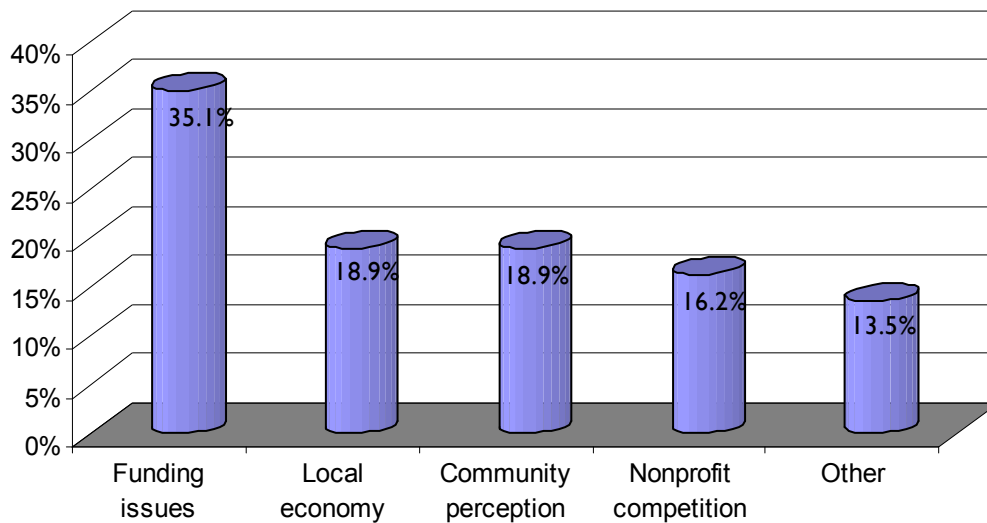
Human Resources:

The Ottawa County nonprofits that participated employ a combined 1,188 fulltime employees and a combined 904 part-time employees. They also reported to utilize a combined 4,416 volunteers in a period of a year.

Issues Facing West Michigan Nonprofit Sector:

Ottawa County respondents were given the opportunity to describe what they believed to be the most serious issue currently facing the West Michigan nonprofit sector. Thirty two respondents submitted 46 narrative responses, which were placed into eight categories based upon content similarity. As can be seen in the table, just over 40% of organizations indicated a response that was placed in the Funding Issues category, which included responses ranging from “funding,” to “funding with strings attached.” Responses included in the Community Perception category included those showing concern for public understanding of nonprofits, the level of understanding among donors, or the need to get the community interested in particular nonprofits.

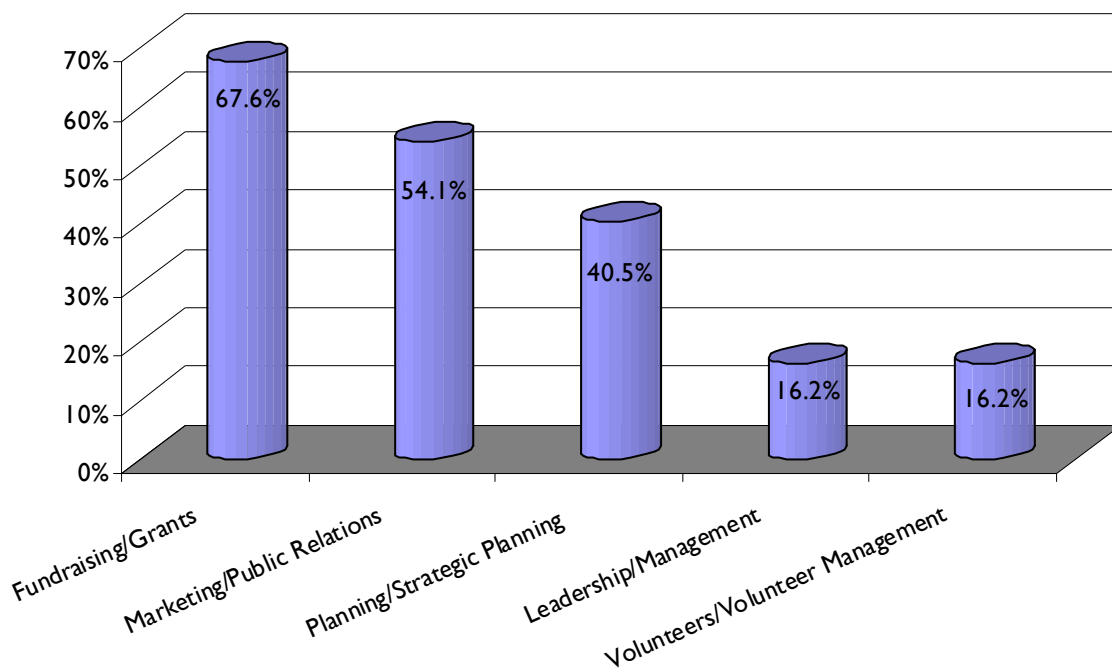
Issue Area	Response	Percent	Percent of Responses
<i>Note: Organizations could write-in an unlimited number of responses for this question. Percentages were calculated using two methods.</i>		<i>Out of 46 total responses</i>	<i>Out of 37 total organizations</i>
Funding issues	13	28.3%	40.6%
Local economy	7	15.2%	21.9%
Community perception	7	15.2%	21.9%
Nonprofit competition	6	13.0%	18.8%
Other	5	10.9%	15.6%
Volunteer management	2	4.3%	6.3%
Nonprofit collaboration	2	4.3%	6.3%
Fundraising	2	4.3%	6.3%
Meeting demand	2	4.3%	6.3%
Total	46	100.0%	124.3%



Critical Areas of Need:

When organizations were asked about their three most critical areas of need, over half of the answers were in three categories. Just fewer than 70% of organizations chose Fundraising/Grants Development/Advancement as a critical area of need, while 54% chose Marketing/Public Relations and 40% chose Planning/Strategic Planning. , Planning and volunteer management, which received 18% and 14% of answers respectively, were the second and third popular answers to this question. The other 44% of the responses were distributed fairly evenly among 13 categories. Thus, no other answer received more than 6 respondents to validate it. Risk Management received the lowest number of responses (0.0%). The complete list is as follows:

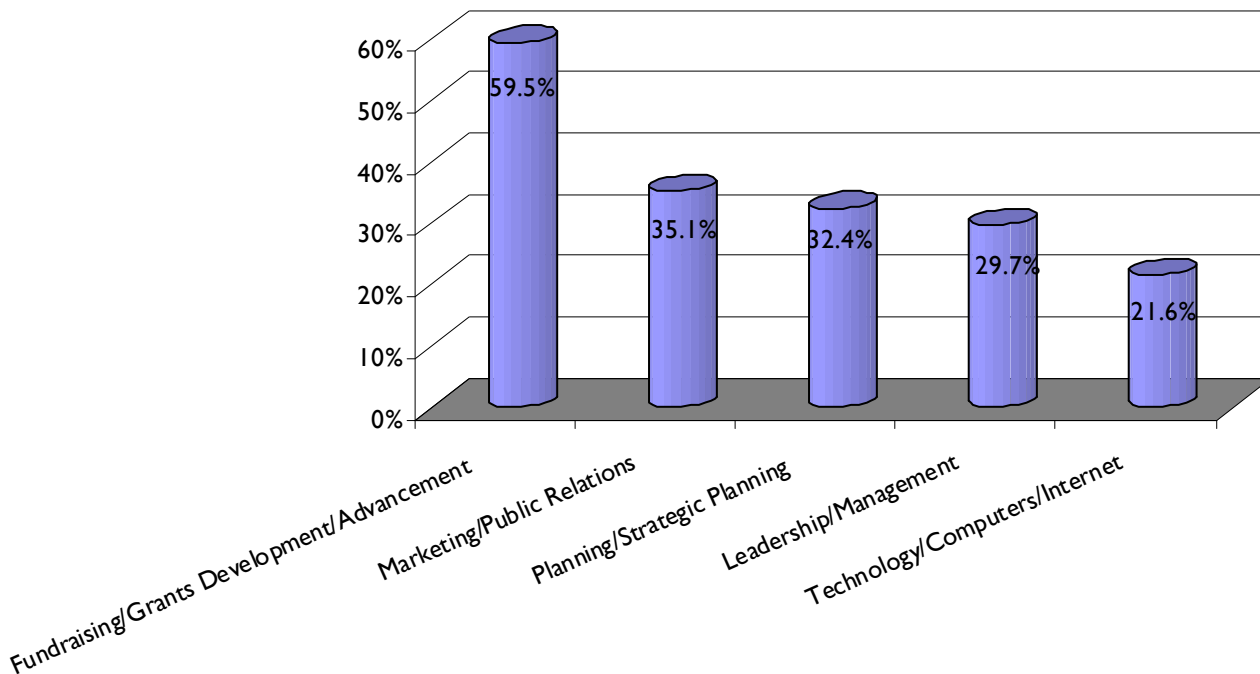
Need Area	Responses	Percent	Percent of Responses
<i>Note: Organizations could choose up to three responses for this question. Percentages were calculated using two methods.</i>		<i>Out of 106 total responses</i>	<i>Out of 37 total organizations</i>
Fundraising/Grants Development/Advancement	25	23.6%	67.6%
Marketing/Public Relations	20	18.9%	54.1%
Planning/Strategic Planning	15	14.2%	40.5%
Leadership/Management	6	5.7%	16.2%
Volunteers/Volunteer Management	6	5.7%	16.2%
Board Development/Governance	5	4.7%	13.5%
Financial Management/Budgeting	5	4.7%	13.5%
Evaluation/Outcome Measurement	4	3.8%	10.8%
Research Community Needs	4	3.8%	10.8%
Operations	4	3.8%	10.8%
Technology/Computers/Internet	3	2.8%	8.1%
Facilities	3	2.8%	8.1%
Personnel/Human Resources	2	1.9%	5.4%
Legal	2	1.9%	5.4%
Advocacy	2	1.9%	5.4%
Risk Management	0	0.0%	0.0%
Total	106	100.0%	286.5%



Compelling Needs in 3-5 Years:

When Ottawa County nonprofits were asked to look into the future three to five years to forecast the most compelling needs for their organization, nearly 60% of organizations listed Fundraising/Grants Development/Advancement as one of their choices. Thirty-five percent of organizations saw Marketing and Public Relations as an upcoming issue, followed by Planning and Strategic Planning (32.4%), Leadership and Management (29.7%), and Technology/Computers/Internet (21.6%). The lowest percentage of organizations (2.7%) identified Legal/Taxes as a future need. The complete list is as follows:

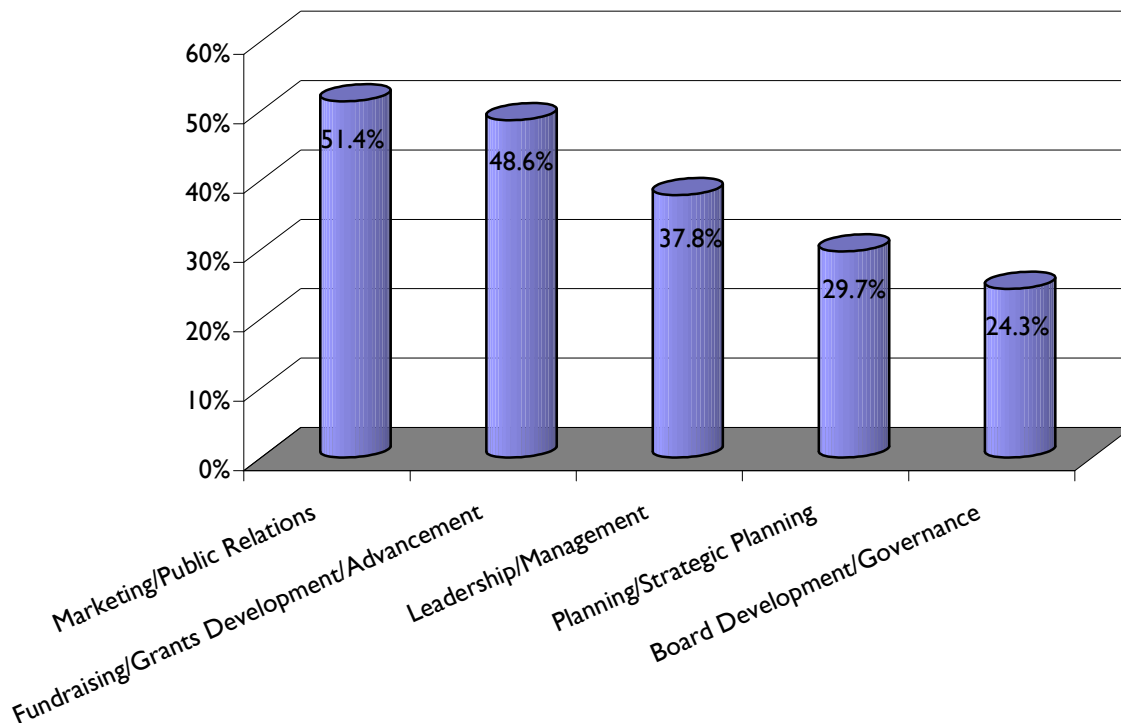
Need Area	Responses	Percent	Percent of Responses
<i>Note: Organizations could choose an unlimited number of responses for this question. Percentages were calculated using two methods.</i>		<i>Out of 107 total responses</i>	<i>Out of 37 total organizations</i>
Fundraising/Grants Development/Advancement	22	20.6%	59.5%
Marketing/Public Relations	13	12.1%	35.1%
Planning/Strategic Planning	12	11.2%	32.4%
Leadership/Management	11	10.3%	29.7%
Technology/Computers/Internet	8	7.5%	21.6%
Personnel/Human Resources	6	5.6%	16.2%
Volunteers/Volunteer Management	5	4.7%	13.5%
Board Development/Governance	5	4.7%	13.5%
Evaluation/Outcome Measurement	5	4.7%	13.5%
Operations/Program Delivery	5	4.7%	13.5%
Financial Management/Budgeting	4	3.7%	10.8%
Research/Community Needs	4	3.7%	10.8%
Advocacy	3	2.8%	8.1%
Facilities/Equipment Management	2	1.9%	5.4%
Risk Management	1	0.9%	2.7%
Legal/Taxes	1	0.9%	2.7%
Total	107	100.0%	289.2%



Training Needs:

Organizations in Ottawa County also were able to communicate subject areas in which training was desired. A choice indicated by 51.4% of respondents, Marketing/Public Relations was the highest rated training area. Following closely behind was Fundraising/Grants Development/Advancement (48.6%), Leadership/Management (37.8%), Planning/Strategic Planning (29.7%) and Board Development/Governance (24.3%). The categories indicated as needs by the fewest number of respondents included Operations/Program Delivery, Legal/Taxes, Advocacy, and Facilities/Equipment Management. The complete list is as follows:

Need Area	Responses	Percent	Percent of Responses
<i>Note: Organizations could choose an unlimited number of responses for this question. Percentages were calculated using two methods.</i>		<i>Out of 128 total responses</i>	<i>Out of 37 total organizations</i>
Marketing/Public Relations	19	14.8%	51.4%
Fundraising/Grants Development/Advancement	18	14.1%	48.6%
Leadership/Management	14	10.9%	37.8%
Planning/Strategic Planning	11	8.6%	29.7%
Board Development/Governance	9	7.0%	24.3%
Evaluation/Outcome Measurement	8	6.3%	21.6%
Research/Community Needs	8	6.3%	21.6%
Personnel/Human Resources	7	5.5%	18.9%
Financial Management/Budgeting	7	5.5%	18.9%
Volunteers/Volunteer Management	6	4.7%	16.2%
Risk Management	5	3.9%	13.5%
Technology/Computers/Internet	4	3.1%	10.8%
Operations/Program Delivery	3	2.3%	8.1%
Legal/Taxes	3	2.3%	8.1%
Advocacy	3	2.3%	8.1%
Facilities/Equipment Management	3	2.3%	8.1%
Total	128	100.0%	345.9%



Planning:

Organizations were asked a series of yes or no questions regarding various components of organizational planning. Questions were then asked to gauge their interest in training or resources related to these planning components.

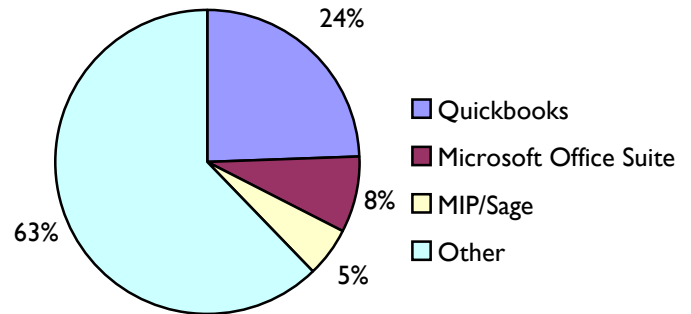
Over 50% of organizations who responded to the question indicated that they currently have Financial Management Policies and Procedures, a Strategic Plan, and Fund Development Plan in place. The lowest percentage of respondent organizations (18%) indicated they had a Succession Plan in place for their Executive Director. Strategic, Marketing/Advertising, and Fund Development plans appeared to be three priorities for organizations to focus on in the next two years. The highest percentage of respondent organizations indicated that both training and resources would be helpful in creating both a Strategic and Fund Development plan.

	Does your organization currently have:		Is it a current priority for the next 2 years?		Would resources be helpful in this area?		Would training be helpful in this area?	
	Total Respondents	% Yes	Total Respondents	% Yes	Total Respondents	% Yes	Total Respondents	% Yes
Strategic Plan	34	68%	29	90%	25	72%	27	67%
Succession Plan for Executive Director	33	18%	28	50%	29	55%	27	48%
Marketing/Advertising Plan	34	47%	28	86%	30	90%	31	84%
Fund Development Plan	34	50%	29	86%	29	83%	29	83%
Financial Management Policies/Procedures	35	80%	25	68%	27	41%	27	33%
Information Technology Plan/Assessment	34	38%	26	58%	28	61%	27	52%
Workforce Development Plan	34	24%	24	33%	26	46%	26	46%
Disaster Plan	34	38%	25	40%	24	38%	27	41%

Financial Management:

Several questions were posed to Ottawa County about their use of budgeting software. Of the 37 organizations from Ottawa County, close to 78% (29 respondents) reported they do use financial management software. Of the six respondents (16%) that said that they did not use software, all but one reported that it was not needed in their organization. Overall, twelve different software programs were listed by respondents. The table below shows the three most popular software programs reported to be used by Ottawa County nonprofits.

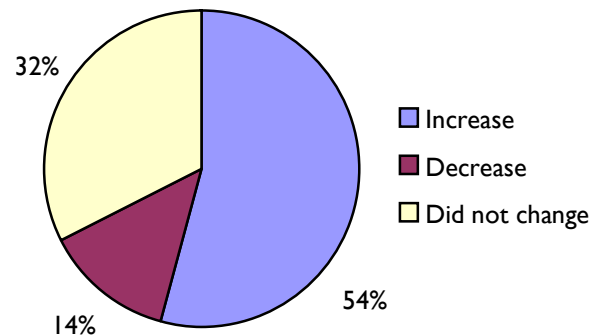
Program	Responses	Percent
QuickBooks	9	24.3%
Microsoft Office Suite	3	8.1%
MIP/Sage	2	5.4%
Other	23	62.2%
Total	37	100.0%



Funding Outlook:

Nonprofits in Ottawa County were asked about the status of their funding over the last twelve months. Of the 37 respondents: 20 (54%) stated an increase, 5 (13%) reported a decrease, and 12 (32%) reported their funding had not changed. The most popular reason for decreases in funding over the last 12 months has been a decrease in individual contributions. It must be noted that difficulty exists in drawing conclusions from this data due to the fact that organizations were not asked to report changes in expenditures during the same time period, and there is no evidence of the magnitude of the reported funding increases.

Change	Responses	Percent
Increase	20	54.1%
Decrease	5	13.5%
Did not change	12	32.4%
Total	37	100.0%



Fund Development:

Respondents were asked several questions regarding the inclusion of fund development professionals on their organization's staff. Nearly 60% of Ottawa County respondents reported they did not have a fund development professional on staff. The majority of organizations that reported not having a fund development professional had annual operating budgets less than \$1 million.

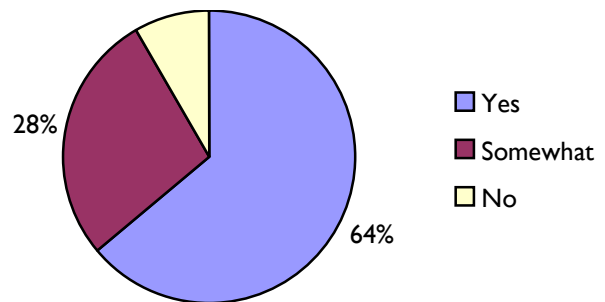
Over two-thirds of respondent reported to have not recruited a fund development professional in the last two years. The 30% respondents that did recruit in this area were asked what level of education was most desirable for someone in this position. Just over 90% of those respondents indicated that a Bachelor's degree was most desirable.

Information Technology:

Overall, approximately 70% (26) of Ottawa County respondents reported that they do include information technology needs into their annual operating budget. Most of the organizations who do not budget for these particular needs have budgets of \$100,000 or less.

Approximately 62% of those Ottawa County organizations who responded felt they did have sufficient hardware and an adequate computer network to meet their technological needs. Roughly 27% reported their hardware and network to be somewhat sufficient while 3% felt it was not.

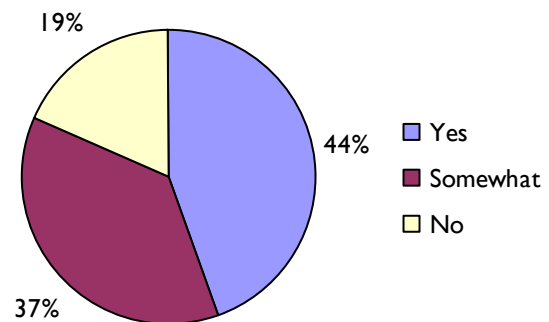
	Response	Percent
Yes	23	62.2%
Somewhat	10	27.0%
No	3	8.1%
Total	37	100.0%



Donor Database:

The majority (72%) of Ottawa County respondents indicated that they do use an electronic database. When asked which software they used, a variety of fifteen software packages were reported. Microsoft's Access and Excel were the two applications most used by Ottawa County organizations. Just less than 81% of the organizations felt their staff was adequately or somewhat adequately trained to use the donor database software. Approximately 19% of organizations felt their staff was not adequately trained in this area.

Staff Training	Response	Percent
Yes	12	44.4%
Somewhat	10	37.0%
No	5	18.5%
Total	27	100.0%



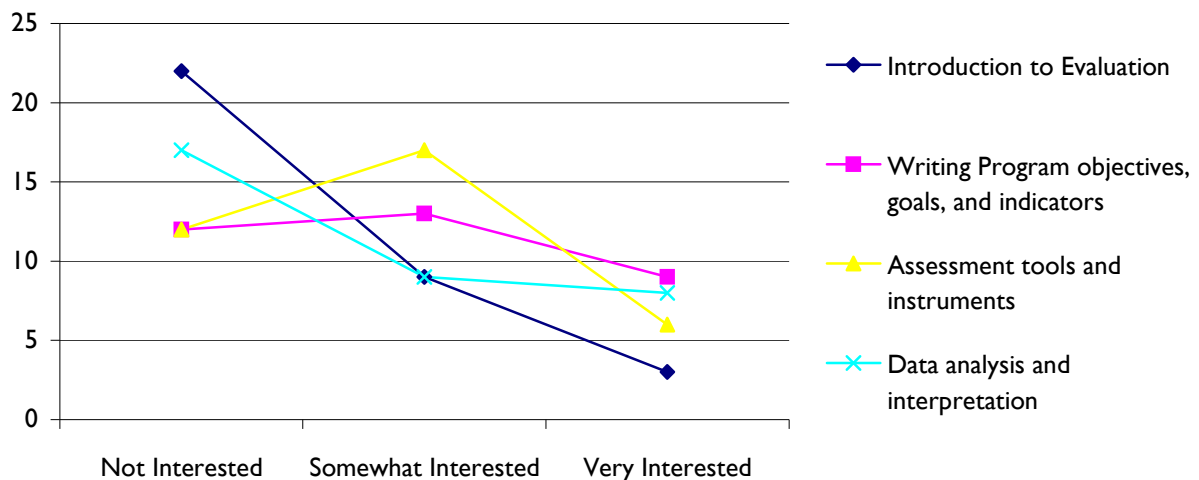
Website:

Nearly 90% of Ottawa County respondent organizations reported to have a website. Approximately two-thirds of those organizations reported updating their sites on a regular basis, ranging from daily to quarterly.

Program Evaluation:

Respondents were posed a series of questions to measure their receptiveness to training in a variety of topics relating to program evaluation. Interest level in the various topics appeared mediocre in general, but there were several opinions that stood out. Approximately 65% of respondents reported they were not at all interested in an introductory course in program evaluation. Just fewer than 25% of respondents in Ottawa County indicated they would be very interested in training on writing program objectives, goals, and indicators. The table below shows the overall interest levels in program evaluation training.

Number of Respondents	Not Interested	Somewhat Interested	Very Interested	Total
Introduction to Evaluation	22	9	3	34
Writing Program objectives, goals, and indicators	12	13	9	34
Assessment tools and instruments	12	17	6	35
Data analysis and interpretation	17	9	8	34



Respondents then were asked to indicate their interest in several, more in-depth topics related to program evaluation. The responses to the topics were nearly identical, and the plurality of the respondents showed some interest in the sessions. Those who were somewhat interested in the topic indicated they may need more information (for example: speakers, cost, time, etc.) in order to make a decision regarding whether or not they would attend.

Number of Respondents	Not Interested	Somewhat Interested	Very Interested	Total
Relationship between program planning, management, and evaluation	10	14	9	33
Setting up systems to ensure accurate and effective measurement	12	12	9	33

Board Development/Governance:

Several questions were posed to respondents regarding the nature and function of their Board of Directors. Based on the responses, just fewer than 90% of organizations reported to have term limits, job descriptions, and a nomination process. In addition, less than a quarter of organizations (24%) indicated their board members receive external board training. Upon closer inspection, respondents that reported not receiving internal training also do not receive any external training. Based on the responses, it appeared that organizations were not substituting external board training for internal training.

Does your board...	Yes	% Yes	No	Total
Have active committees?	28	75.7%	9	37
Have term limits?	32	86.5%	5	37
Receive internal training?	26	74.3%	9	35
Receive external training?	8	23.5%	26	34
Have a nominating process?	32	88.9%	4	36
Review by-laws annually?	21	58.3%	15	36
Have attendance policy?	25	67.6%	12	37
Have diverse representation?	22	59.5%	15	37
Have job descriptions?	33	89.2%	4	37

Respondents were also asked to rate the board's overall performance on a numerical scale of 1 to 10. In Ottawa County, the median board received a rating of 8 out of 10.

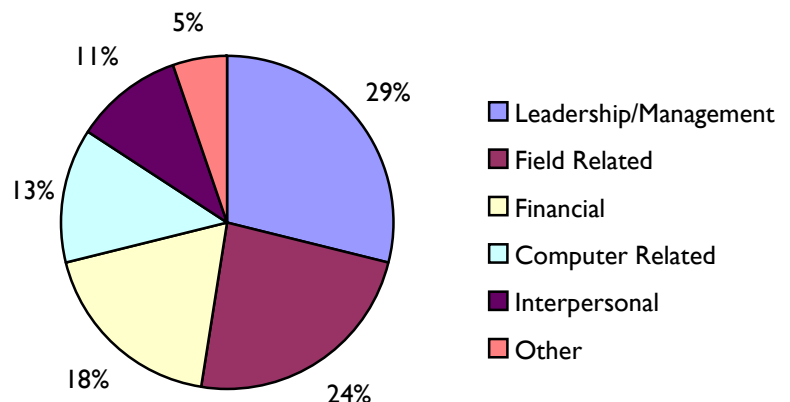
Personnel/Human Resources:

Respondents were asked a series of questions related to issues of employment and training for organizational staff. Overall, approximately 74% of respondents from Ottawa County reported they do not experience problems with employee retention. Of the organizations that did report having retention issues, there was not a particular organizational size, budget or type that stood out as problematic.

Approximately 72% of Ottawa County respondents offer professional development opportunities to their staff. All of the organizations that did not offer those opportunities had an annual operating budget of less than \$1 million. A positive indicator for offering professional development to employees was budgeting for such training. Approximately 92% of organizations that budgeted for professional development actually offered the benefit. This was equally true in organizations with both small and large annual budgets.

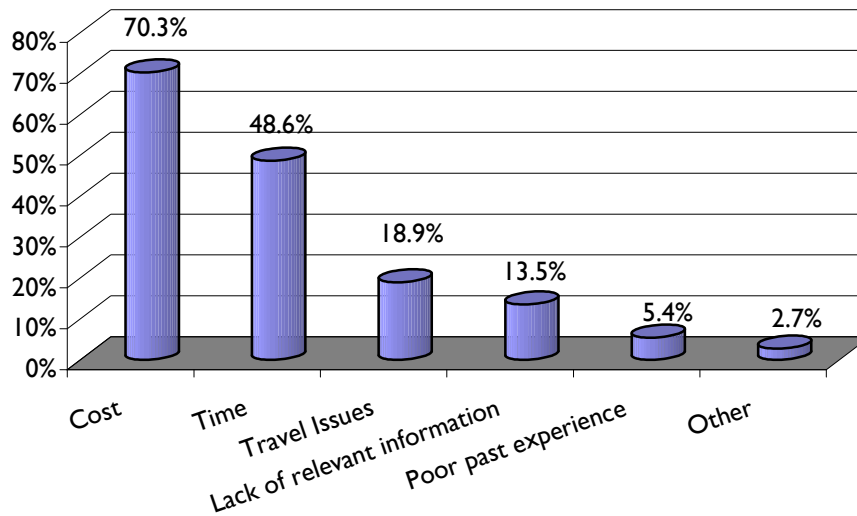
Respondents were given the opportunity to write in their main educational and training needs experienced by staff. The responses were placed into six categories based on similar subject matter. The "Leadership/Management" category includes responses discussing supervisory training, volunteer management, and various other leadership issues. The "Computer Related" category contains needs for training with computer software, hardware, or networking. The "Financial" category includes budgeting, accounting, and other similar needs. Responses were determined to be "Field Related" when discussing training requiring expertise in the activities of specific nonprofits. Approximately 29% of respondents chose Leadership and Management training as a primary staff need. Less than a quarter of organizations indicated Field Related needs.

Category	Response	Percent
Leadership/Management	11	28.9%
Field Related	9	23.7%
Financial	7	18.4%
Computer Related	5	13.2%
Interpersonal	4	10.5%
Other	2	5.3%



Barriers to Training:

Respondents were given the opportunity to indicate specific constraints on the obtainment of additional employee training. Of the five six choices provided to them, the largest percentage of respondents (70%) reported cost to be the largest impediment to obtaining further employee training. Nearly half of Ottawa County respondents reported time to be constraint experience.



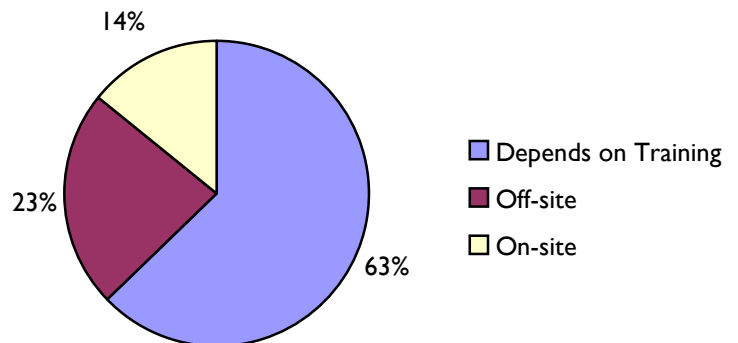
Respondents were asked to rate the importance of a variety of training and information resources on a five-point scale. Among the most important sources of training indicated were: peer networking, State/National conferences, colleagues, professional associations, and the Internet. Libraries, college-based management courses, and paid consultants were rated as the least important training sources.

Ideal Characteristics of Training

When asked about ideal characteristics of desired training workshops, responses indicated that preference depends highly on the specifics of the training being provided.

Overall, very few respondents would always prefer to attend training in one particular place. Only 14% of organizations would prefer to have training on site at their organization. The majority of respondents are open to learning in different locations, again depending on the specifics of the training.

Location	Response	Percent
Depends on Training	22	62.9%
Off-site	8	22.9%
On-site	5	14.3%
Total	35	100.0%

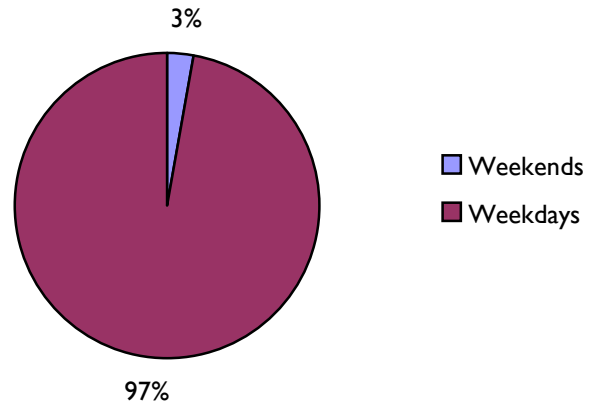


While subject matter, cost, time and various other aspects of training must be taken into consideration, respondents were asked about their willingness to travel a particular distances (one-way) to attend training. Close to half of the organizations are willing to travel up to 50 miles in one direction to obtain training. It appeared distances greater than 50 miles would be given deeper consideration.

Distance (miles)	Response	Percent
26-50	14	41.2%
0-25	11	32.4%
No preference	4	11.8%
51-75	3	8.8%
76-100	1	2.9%
100+	1	2.9%

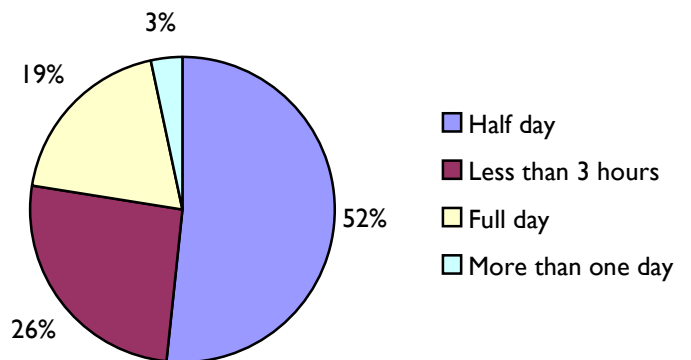
Ottawa County organizations spoke out in near unanimity with regard to whether training should be offered on weekdays or weekends. Thirty four of thirty-five respondents would prefer trainings to be held on weekdays.

Time of Week	Response	Percent
Weekend	1	2.9%
Weekday	34	97.1%
Total	35	100.0%



Unlike the preferred time of week, respondent ideas regarding the ideal length of training were much more diverse. Approximately 50% of the respondents would prefer a half day training session. The remaining options provide little indication of preference. This again, may depend on the characteristics such as cost, topic, location, etc.

Length	Response	Percent
Half day	16	51.61%
Less than 3 hours	8	25.81%
Full day	6	19.35%
More than one day	1	3.23%



National/State Organization Affiliation

Almost 70% of the responding Ottawa County organizations were affiliated with state or national-level organizations. In addition, all 25 of the affiliated organizations reported to have utilized training and workshops provided by their larger parent organizations.

Capacity Building:

Ottawa County respondents were asked if they felt there were adequate resources available to assist them in capacity building. Overall, 75% of the organizations stated they do not have adequate resources. Upon further evaluation, those organizations indicated what specific resources they would like to have available to them to assist with capacity building. Close to 45% of respondent organizations indicated Grants for Capacity Building and Coaching Services for the Executive Director as one of their choices. Less than one third of organizations chose Increased Workshops and Seminars, Networking Opportunities, and Online Resources as one of their choices.

Capacity Building Resources	Response	Percent	Percent of Responses
<i>Note: Organizations could choose an unlimited number of responses for this question. Percentages were calculated using two methods.</i>		<i>Out of 65 total responses</i>	<i>Out of 37 total organizations</i>
Grants for capacity building	17	26.2%	45.9%
Coaching services for Executive Director	16	24.6%	43.2%
Increased workshops	12	18.5%	32.4%
Networking Opportunities	11	16.9%	29.7%
Online Resources	8	12.3%	21.6%
Other	1	1.5%	2.7%
Total	65	100.0%	175.7%