

THE CHALLENGE: WE LOST A TON OF STAFF AND THEN GOT A 2-MILLION-DOLLAR PROJECT

- A 50-person non-profit lost more than 30% of key specialist staff over 60 days, due to poaching, natural attrition, medical leave.
- Ability to fill these roles was limited due to low salary and specialist skills needed.
- While at lowest staffing levels, the non-profit won a high-profile, 2-million-dollar project. Under normal operations, this project required significant hiring. Under its skeleton operations, it required a strategic reconsideration of which operations were truly essential.
- Cash-flow was compromised. Project funding would be reimbursed after work was performed. The non-profit needed to fund all new roles and work to establish the program before receiving funding.

THE TECHNIQUE: EVALUATE OPERATIONS, IDENTIFY ESSENTIAL WORK, ELIMINATE OR RE-THINK AS NEEDED

- Baseline ideal workflow and essential operations.
- Creatively consider all options for changing how we work: contract workers, train apprentices, outsource, etc.
- Develop scenarios based on any and all ideas.
- Assess those scenarios based on HR considerations, ability to achieve the mission, funding problems, and the organizational ethics.
- Implement best choices, measure for efficacy, and reassess as needed.

THE INTERVENTION

- Conducted workshop with strategic team, developing strategic overview for 3, 6 and 9-month key targets. Prioritized goals.
- In workshop, revisited mission and current client needs: had that changed? Could they modify how they supported our clients? Was everything they did for them currently relevant?
- Built restructuring scenarios based on strategic workshop outcomes. Gathered information from HR and finance to add detail. Revised scenarios. Selected and moved forward with a hybrid option.
- Designated implementation lead and developed organizational communications.
- Implemented on an accelerated timeline as required by the 2-million-dollar project.

THE RESULTS

- The solution involved fundamentally restructured teams, reporting structures, and how the non-profit did its work.
- On a task-level, work was evaluated for "essential-now," "important-future," and "optional-for-now." This created prioritization on a functional level, allowing for a triage of work able to be done with the current funds, and this solution offered a 6-month and 9-month outlook for how work would re-expand to serve its mission.
- Staff were creatively reassigned, some given sabbaticals or temporary part-time assignments based on skills available and task priorities set. Long-term investments were made in staff able to develop specialist background needed for some roles.
- Non-profit was able to successfully launch the 2-million-dollar project, present itself well in the high-visibility role, and rebuild its staffing in an even more effective way to meet its revised mission.