

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 60d, due to poaching, natural attrition, medical leave
- Ability to fill these roles 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 rethink of which operations were truly essential
- Cash-flow: 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 our mission, funding problems and the organizational ethics
- Implement best choices, measure for efficacy, and reassess as needed

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. 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

Results

- 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 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