



# Essential Shifts for a Thriving Nonprofit Sector

Brief for



The Community Foundation  
*for* Greater New Haven

# IN THEIR WORDS: Advice to the Next Generation of Leaders

Thank you for investing your time and talent. Stay passionate, engage mentors, be disciplined about work/life balance, network across sectors, take risks, be curious and creative, be kind always and take at least one moment every day to connect deeply and personally to the mission on which you work. **Think big, think long-term.** Take good care of your health. **Stay focused on your mission and have the discipline to say “no” to funds that are outside of your mission.** Try to find a mentor in the same or similar field that you can rely on. **Get coaching early. Develop sound management and leadership skills.** Don't over promise, be realistic; it's okay to fail, and it's okay to be quiet. **Be compassionate, dispense with anger, listen, use kind words.** Take advantage of leadership programs and professional development opportunities when you are young and climbing the ranks. **Think bigger. Do tangible stuff. Don't be a sheep.** Don't take yourself too seriously and don't get discouraged; surround yourself with good people. **Learn fund development skills early.** Do not get discouraged by disappointments. **Pay attention to building relationships between board and key staff leaders, and to supporting complete honest communication.** Executive coaching and leadership peer networks are invaluable. **Find the right people for the right roles.** Listen more than speak. Break norms. Know your style and openly communicate that to staff. **Provide as many professional development opportunities for all staff as you can afford to budget.** Learn to set boundaries! Learn to delegate! **Do not try to fit a person into a role—or create a position for a long time employee that is no longer effective.** Be aware of one's weaknesses and learning from mistakes. **Running a non-profit is like working in a perpetual start-up: it's fast, fun and furious: repeat.** When you leave, you take great memories. Seek information and guidance from others. **Listen and learn with patience. If you come from the for-profit sector you have a lot to learn about how the nonprofit sector operates.** Be prepared to be “all-in” in your chosen field. In such a



# Essential Shifts for a Thriving Nonprofit Sector

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# Overview

*Leadership New England: Essential Shifts for a Thriving Nonprofit Sector* was made possible by the contributions of more than 1,200 nonprofit leaders and board members who generously gave their time to complete the survey.

Sixty-six leaders in The Community Foundation *for* Greater New Haven (“CFGNH”) catchment area (referred to as “CFGNH leaders” throughout this brief) and 52 board members contributed to this brief. Feedback from these leaders is reported here and compared to the *Leadership New England* regional report (“LNE”) where there are significant differences and occasionally where there are similarities. Please refer to *Leadership New England: Essential Shifts for a Thriving Nonprofit Sector* for an understanding of key findings and data where there were no significant differences between the New England and CFGNH samples.

We hope that *Leadership New England: Essential Shifts for a Thriving Nonprofit Sector* provides useful information for the region and for the field at large. Third Sector New England is grateful to The Community Foundation *for* Greater New Haven for partnering on the regional report and this brief.

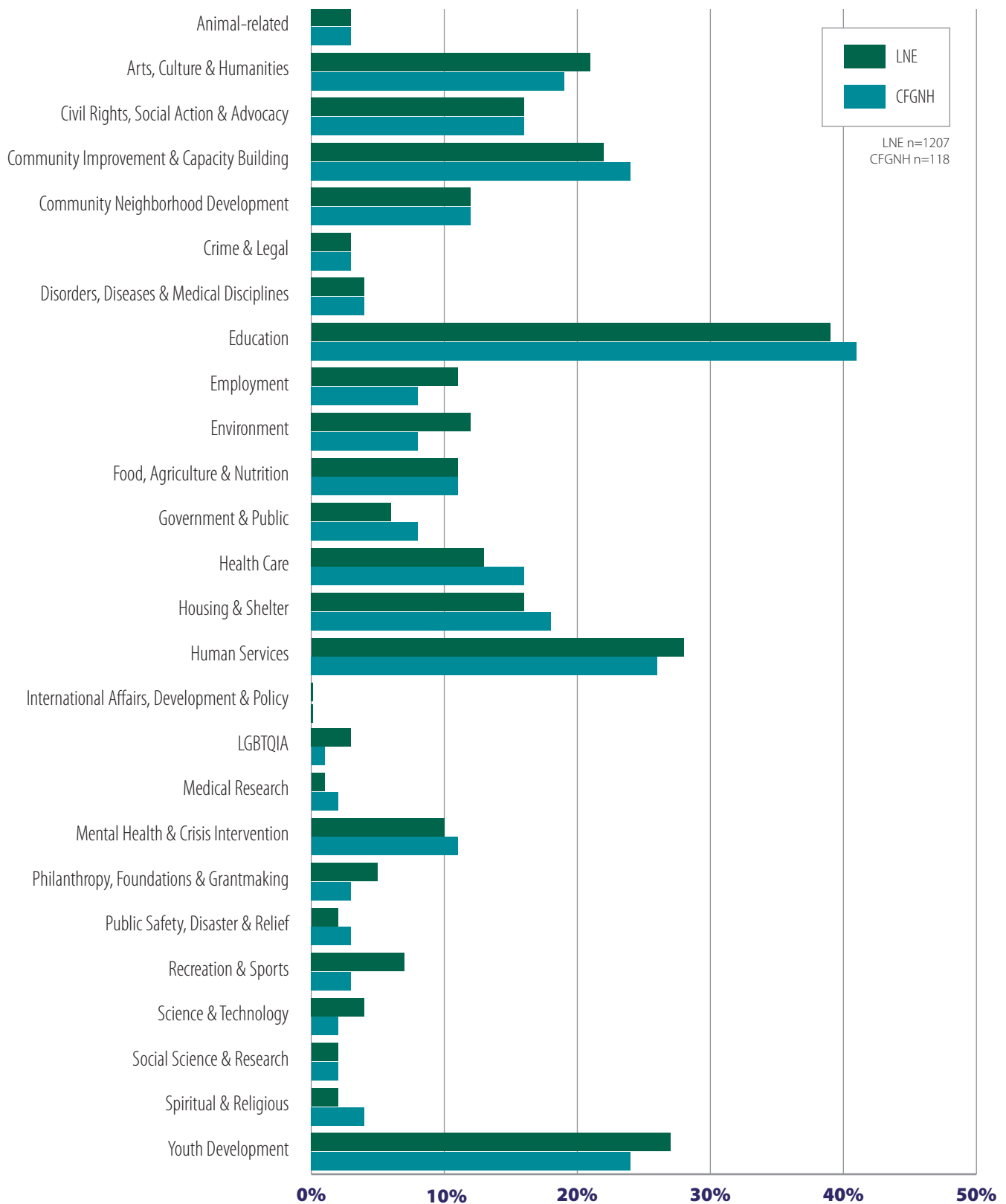
## About This Brief

This brief focuses on the 118 survey responses from the CFGNH catchment area. The catchment area (as defined per request of the CFGNH) includes mostly select towns and cities in New Haven County, Connecticut, with some additional selections from Fairfield Counties. The 66 leader responses and 52 board responses from the CFGNH catchment area have been compared statistically to the full LNE data set for several key measures, and significant differences are reported in the key findings below. As a reference point, the 66 responses from CFGNH leaders represent 8% of the 877 total leader responses from New England; the 52 responses from board members comprise 16% of the 330 total board responses.

## Nonprofit Fields Represented

The responding CFGNH leaders and board members represent fields that are generally the most highly represented in New England respondents overall. As with the full LNE sample, education, human services, youth development, community development, and arts and culture were the five top areas represented by the nonprofits responding.

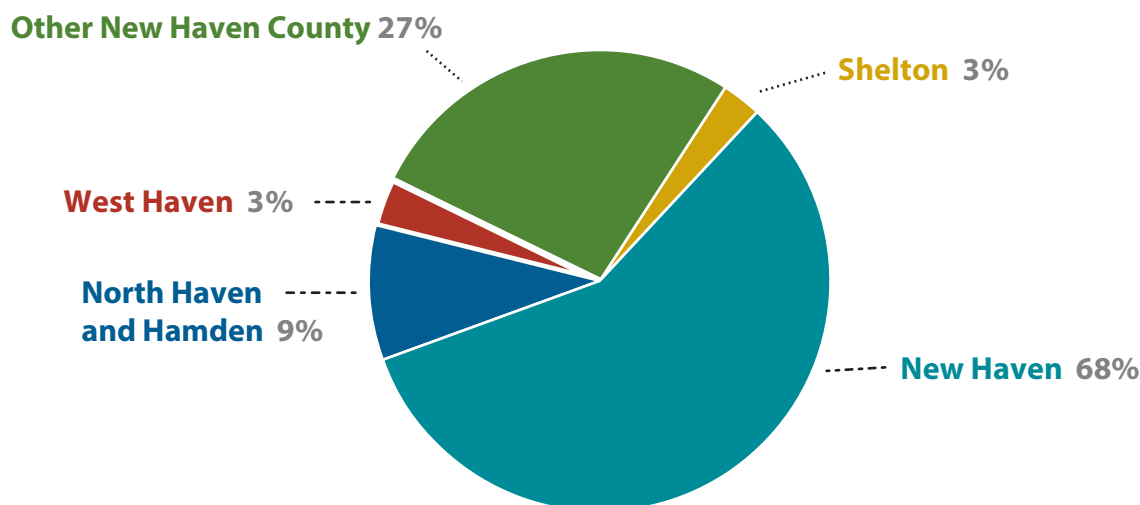
## LNE and CFGNH Leaders and Board: Organization Fields



# Geography

The CFGNH responses are almost all from New Haven County, with the majority (58%) coming from the city of New Haven; 12% from North Haven, West Haven, and Hamden; and another 27% from other towns in New Haven County.

## CFGNH Leader and Board Responses by Geographical Area



## Summary of Findings

CFGNH results correspond in many areas with those presented in the Leadership New England: Essential Shifts for a Thriving Nonprofit Sector (LNE) study. Key areas of difference between CFGNH and New England-wide responses are as follows and are further analyzed in the following sections:

- Board members made up 44% of CFGNH's total responses to this survey, a significantly higher percentage than the LNE sample as a whole, where board members made up only 27% of respondents.
- CFGNH had slightly higher reporting from all-volunteer organizations (those reporting "o" paid staff).
- CFGNH leaders are less likely than the full LNE sample to indicate that their organizations have staff participation in strategic planning and developing budgets, and are also significantly less likely to say that their organizational structures support distributed leadership.
- CFGNH board members are significantly less likely than the full LNE sample to indicate that paid sabbaticals for leaders would be a desirable method of transition support.
- In the event of their departure from their organizations, CFGNH leaders are significantly more likely than the full LNE sample to recommend to their boards that they consider a merger or strategic alliance.



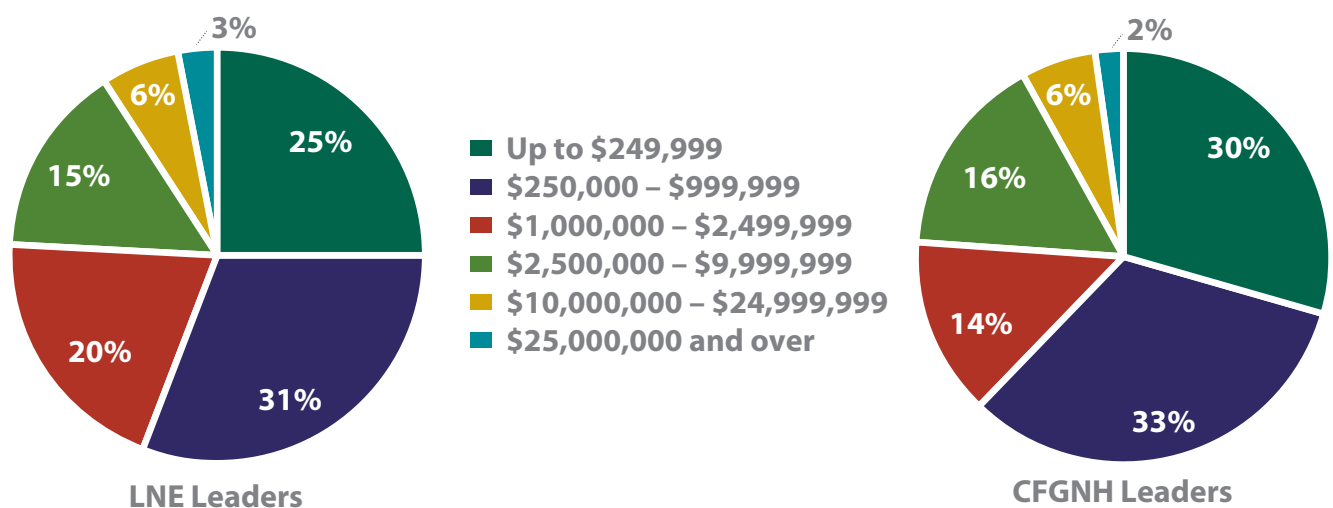
# CFGNH Leader Profile & Challenges

## BUDGET and STAFF SIZE

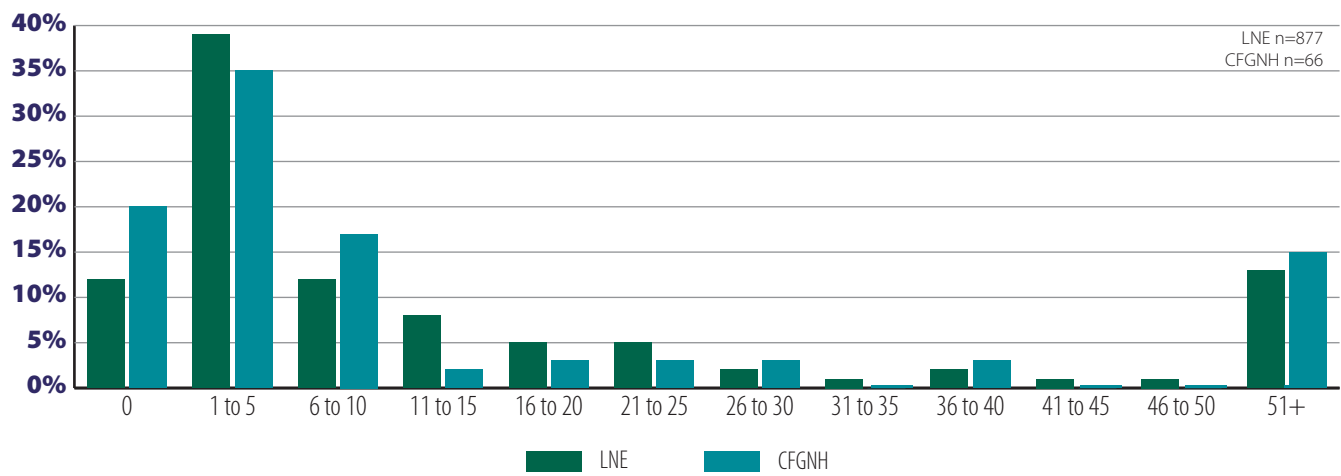
Responding CFGNH nonprofits have similar budgets to the rest of New England, with 63% of organizations at less than \$1,000,000 and 30% at less than \$250,000.

CFGNH leaders are marginally more significantly likely to have all-volunteer organizations (those reporting “o” paid staff), which may have contributed to the somewhat higher percentage of board members responding in the region. Board members with organizations that do not have paid staff may be more involved in the day-to-day leadership of the organization.

### LNE and CFGNH Leaders Organization Budget



### LNE and CFGNH Leaders How many paid staff does your organization have?

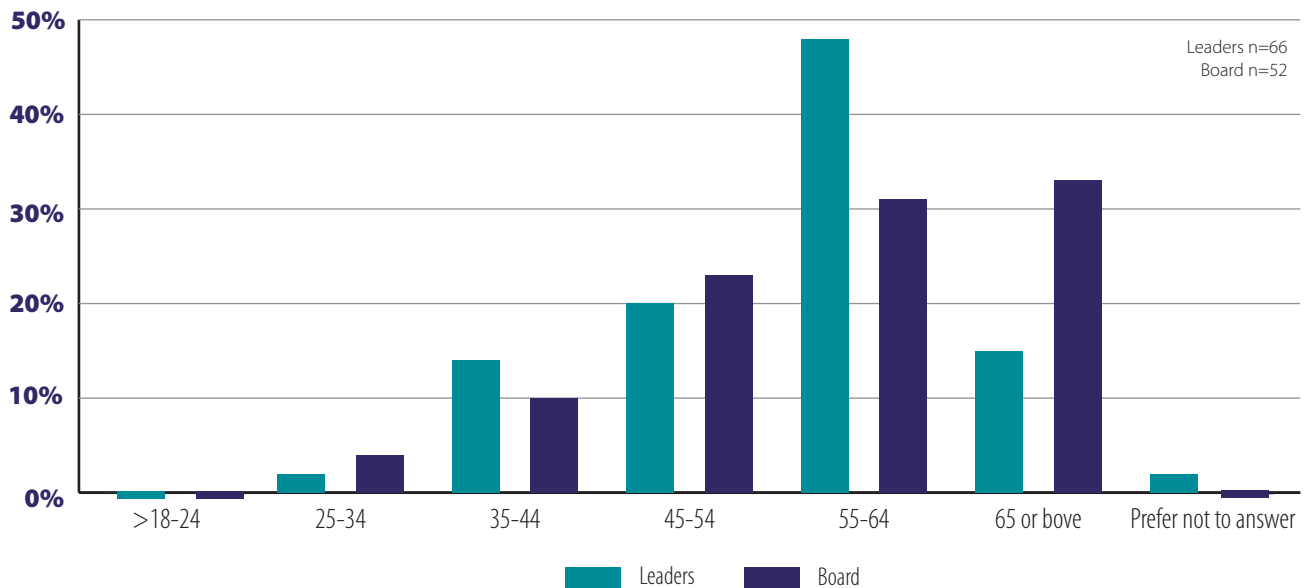


## DIVERSITY AND AGE

Both CFGNH leaders and board members are similar to the wider LNE sample in terms of age range, with 63% of leaders and 64% of board members age 55 or older.

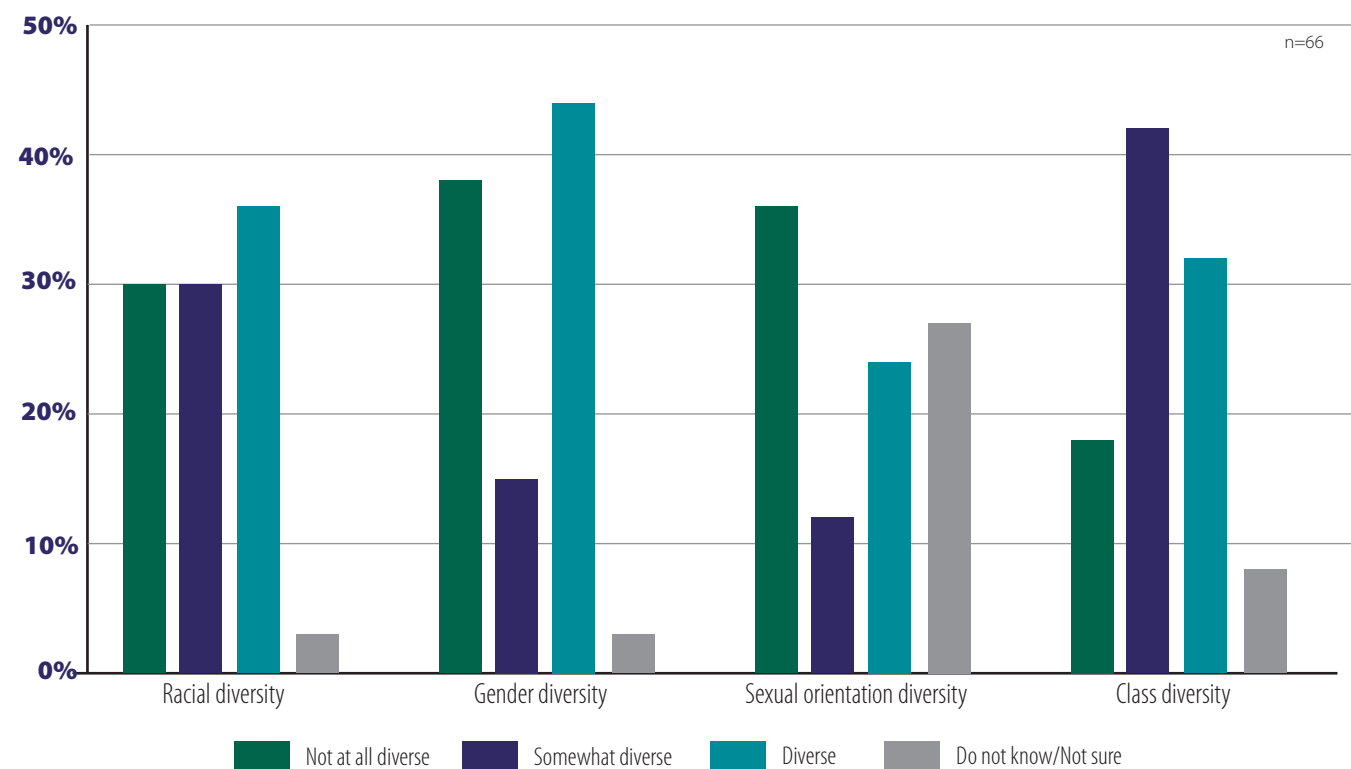
The vast majority of CFGNH leader respondents are white, which echoes findings from the LNE sample as a whole: 85% of CFGNH leaders and 87% of CFGNH board members are white. CFGNH leaders, like their other New England counterparts, describe their staff as “somewhat diverse” to “diverse” in terms of race, gender, sexual orientation, and class.

### CFGNH Leaders and Board What is your age?



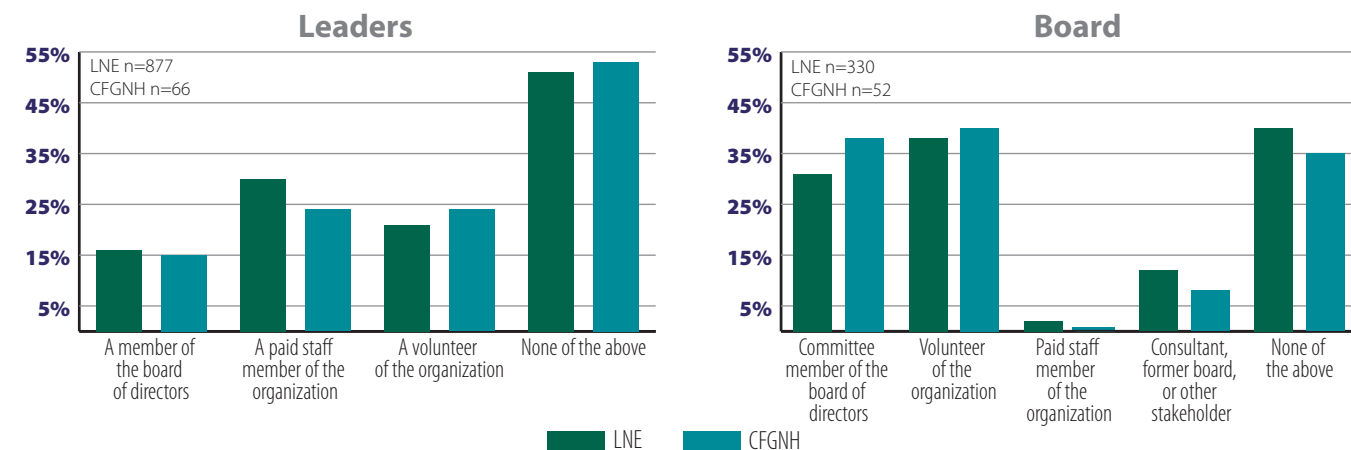
While the racial makeup of both leaders and boards in the CFGNH area appears to be similar to the rest of New England, CFGNH boards have significantly fewer women members: 42% of CFGNH board members are female, compared to 59% in the LNE sample. Nationally, women still hold fewer board chair positions<sup>1</sup> and leadership positions at large nonprofit organizations, and women leaders are paid less overall than their male counterparts by anywhere from 11% to 36%, depending on organization budget size.<sup>2</sup> The New England results show that there is a significant difference in the distribution of salary by gender: those receiving salaries in the \$100,000–\$199,999 range are more likely to be men, and those receiving salaries of \$50,000 to \$99,999 are more likely to be women. Organizations and foundations can help to ensure gender equity by supporting boards to diversify their membership and increasing awareness about pay-scale inequities.

# CFGNH Leaders How diverse do you feel your staff is?



In addition, the CFGNH and LNE samples were similar in regard to respondents’ prior positions: many leaders and board members started in a role somewhere else within the organization’s system—as volunteers, staff, or board members. Supporting capacity to build diversity among volunteers, boards, management teams, and the “bench” of nonprofit organizations can help ensure that the leadership pipeline in the region’s nonprofits will continue to diversify and be reflective of the region’s demographics.

## Leaders and Board Prior to your current position, did you hold any other positions with the organization?



*I need staff. I can't afford staff. I can't afford the time to raise the money to hire staff. It's a circular nightmare.*

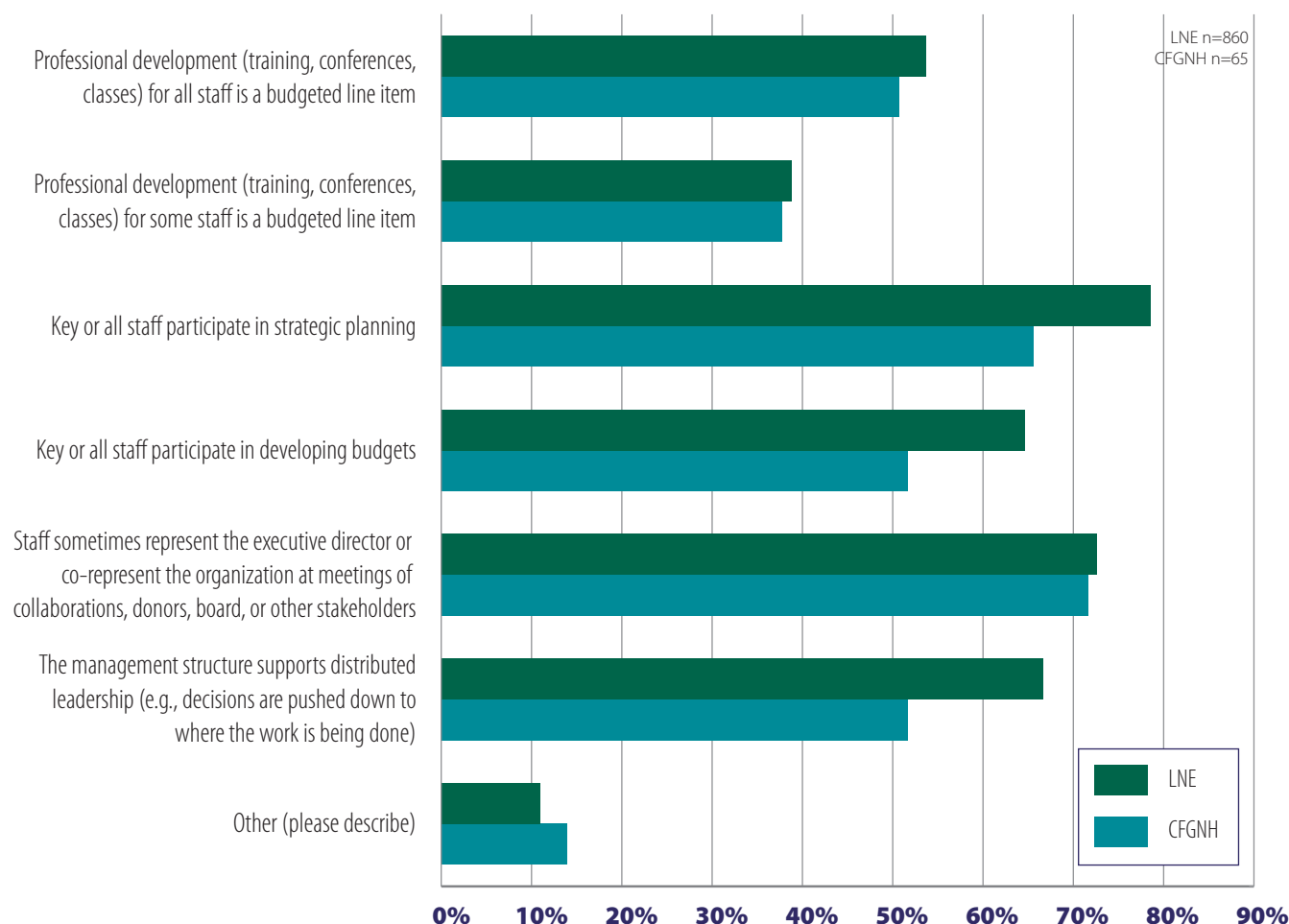
*Funding for workforce is woefully inadequate; increased qualifications without funding for increased compensation.*

## STAFF DEVELOPMENT

CFGNH leaders are less likely than the full LNE sample to indicate that their organizations have staff participation in strategic planning and developing budgets, and are also significantly less likely to say that their organizational structures support distributed leadership.

Facilitative and distributed leadership is more in demand, where the leader's job is to ensure that staff has the training, structures, and systems in place to participate in organizational activities like planning and budgeting, and are also empowered to make decisions within their areas of expertise and department. As illustrated in Building Movement Project's "Next Shift: Beyond the Nonprofit Leadership Crisis" report, next-generation leaders are trending away from highly hierarchical executive "command and control" models and seeking flatter management and more peer-oriented organizations within which to work.<sup>3</sup> Holding too much power and decision making in one position can lead to an over-dependence on one person, which has consequences for eventual transitions and organizational sustainability.

## LNE and CFGNH Leaders How does your organization strengthen its staff?



EXECUTIVE TRANSITIONS

CFGNH leaders anticipate leaving their positions at the same rate as other New England leaders: 62% think they will leave within five years, with 42% of those (26% of the total sample) leaving within two years.

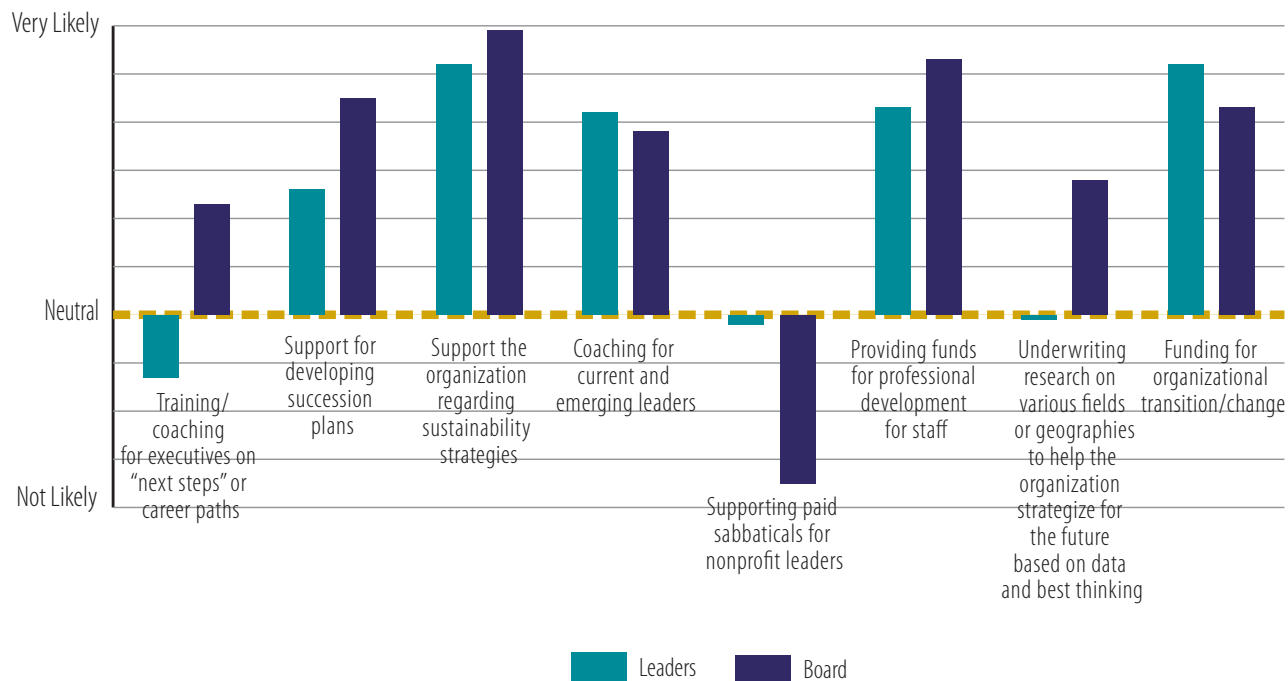
Like respondents elsewhere in the region, the majority of CFGNH leaders and boards say they do not have any type of succession plans in place (59% and 56%, respectively). Leaders and board members recommend several key areas where they are likely to need funding and support in the event of transitions in their organizations; most highly ranked were supports related to sustainability strategies as well as funding for staff professional development and organizational change work.

*Training is an absolute necessity in order for our organization to survive. Funds need to be identified for certification as well.*

LNE and CFGNH Leaders How long do you foresee remaining in your current position?



## CFGNH Leaders vs. Board What support are you or your organization likely to need in preparing for a leadership transition?



*I love my work and the folks I work with, but the constant demands of not having enough resources to do our work and the amount of overtime it takes to keep afloat makes me constantly question whether I can/should continue.*

While the CFGNH leaders and board members say they need mostly the same supports as those of their New England counterparts, CFGNH board members were significantly less likely than the full LNE sample to indicate that paid sabbaticals for leaders were a desirable method of transition support.

National studies of sabbatical programs have shown that removing the leader from the organization for three months not only typically rejuvenates the leader and adds time to his or her tenure at the organization, it also strengthens the board of directors and the management teams who in both cases step up while the leader is absent and take on new responsibilities.<sup>4</sup> This may be a useful and important tool to improve sustainability strategies at CFGNH organizations, where 73% of leaders and 60% of board members say there is not someone on staff who could succeed the current leader.

CFGNH leaders were also significantly more likely than leaders in the LNE sample to recommend their board consider a merger or strategic alliance in the event of their departure from the organization. Though beyond the scope of the data in this particular study, when taken in total with other findings from the CFGNH area as discussed above, this finding could indicate that CFGNH leaders recognize both a need for increased leadership capacity within their own organizations and a willingness to embrace new nonprofit structures that are more collaborative across organizations.

# IN THEIR WORDS: CFGNH Leader and Board Advice to the Next Generation of Leaders

Collaboration. **Transparency when talking about the conditions of the organization to resource partners is essential.** Do not accept status quo. Change is good, stimulating, and rewarding. **Take accounting and finance classes. HR is hard—learn as much as you can.** Effectively managing people is the hardest part of the job. **Be aligned in all ways, staff/staff, staff/board, board/board—same for ED with all stakeholders. Talk it through if differences are clear.** Be visible. Be connected to community stakeholders, and demand that your board does the same. **The most important issue for emerging nonprofit leaders is to believe and have commitment to the organization and what it will do for the community and the individual.** Be clear about the expectations and compensation for your work and how your vision fits with the mission and goals of the board of directors. Learn the history well. **Stay hopeful, even though it's painful. Stay true to your personal mission, and let yourself and your understanding of the work evolve.** Make partners in all sectors of the community. **It's is the hardest job you will ever have but hopefully the most rewarding, too.** Network, network, network, and think outside of the box to “unlikely” partners. **Effective nonprofit leaders must be mission-driven BUT also understand organizational design, have good financial management skills, and realize the importance of strategic planning.** You must have a vision of where you want to go—a leader does not simply do daily maintenance. **Community development: spread leadership staff into the community.** A good leader continues his/her study of both the particular field of concentration and management/leadership skills. **Continue to attend leadership development and self-awareness courses and training.** Find a peer network! **Governance is critical. It isn't the most interesting area of board responsibility, but it is foundational: good governance with board term limits, clear understanding of what board work is, good policies and procedures and strong support for the executive in areas of fund development and financial management.** Be BOLD. Our best actions as an organization have happened when the Board and executive leadership made bold moves to solve problems. **Learn to change and identify emerging issues, funding sources, and opportunities.** Know yourself and be yourself; work from your strengths and partner with others with complementary strengths. Try new things; be willing to make and to learn from mistakes and failures. Evaluate openly, to learn not to prove.





# Recommendations

Addressing the high numbers of current leaders leaving their organizations is not just about replacing exiting leaders with new leaders to fill the same roles; it's about examining the structures nonprofits use to accomplish their missions, developing sustainability strategies, and exploring what the roles of leaders will look like in the generations to come. The Community Foundation *for* Greater New Haven may want to consider continuing to support organizations in “sustainability planning” as a way to explore different leadership structures and management practices that will catalyze leader development and help prepare organizations for leadership transitions.



# SHIFT #1

## SHIFT THE FRAMEWORK FOR SUCCESSION PLANNING TO DEEP SUSTAINABILITY.

It is time to change how the sector thinks about and approaches succession planning. Succession planning is not just about preparing for an individual leader transition; nor should it be viewed as a technical fix or a transactional exercise. Rather, it is about ensuring organizational sustainability by identifying and addressing key vulnerabilities so that the organization is not dependent on any one leader, funder, strategy, or way of thinking. Succession planning touches on everything from framing choices for the future (including asking whether the organization should exist), developing sustainable business models, to strengthening staff and board leadership – in essence, all the core activities needed to support the success of the organization’s mission and its leaders over time.

When the frame of succession planning shifts to overall organizational sustainability, nonprofits can better prioritize and budget for succession planning at the emergency, planned and permanent leave levels. Similarly, funders can align funding for succession planning and transitions, and particularly strategic leadership development, with their other support for nonprofit missions. This approach keeps organizations prepared for a moment of potential crisis – while also strengthening their capacity for impact on a continuing basis.

### Changing Nonprofit Structures

Thinking outside the traditional leadership structures and management boxes can help organizations to weather transitions well and be more sustainable. Among the possibilities: flatter organizations; different, shared leadership models; and collective use of resources with like-minded organizations’.

For organizations requiring a turn-around, it’s critical to carefully review options such as skilled interim leadership, shared management models, merger or closing before seeking out the special single leader who can put the organization back on its feet. There may be mythical leaders who can do this, but the sector is overly reliant on the heroic leader as the solution to the “frail” or failing nonprofit.

Capacity builders can help these processes by exploring, researching and supporting new types of management models that do not focus on one person holding most of the responsibility at the top. New models could contribute to fresh and interesting financial models, leadership across collaborations and networks, and increased inclusion as more mission-driven people from diverse backgrounds are involved in leadership.

Changing nonprofit leadership structures is essential both in ensuring the effectiveness of an organization and in attracting the next generation of strong leaders. Building Movement Project’s *Next Shift* report found that “younger leaders are more interested in co-directorships, flattened hierarchies (pushing down responsibility and authority), networked organizations, and participatory approaches.”<sup>6</sup> The sector will benefit by investing now in developing and supporting new kinds of structures and working environments.

*Funding for capital needs to be complemented by training and staff funds.*

*Programs/funding to support leadership development should include a pot of money that lets organizations hire temporary staffing that allows those in training to take something “off their plate” and give to temporary staff so that training does not become yet another “to do” on an already overfull plate.*

*Look at supporting actual leaders, not just managers with fancy titles.*

*Who’s taking risks for making social change?*

*Strengthen them.*

## Departing Boomers

There will certainly be some unsettledness as leaders depart. Some organizations may not survive; particularly ones where the purpose of the organization is likely to diminish upon the exit of a founder or ones that have survived only through overreliance on a heroic leader. In sectors or regions where leaders are all of a similar age and have built trusting relationships that enable them to collaborate easily with each other, use shorthand, and at times create collective impact – those networks will need to be re-populated. As good as they might be, however, no one leader or generation of leaders is indispensable.

Many nonprofit boomers who are leaving their jobs will want to continue doing meaningful work in ways that provide flexibility and less responsibility<sup>7</sup>. Some of these leaders may be interested in staying involved in the organization that they are leaving and many board members may want the same. While we know from the field of executive transition management that it is not considered best practice for the departing leader to stay engaged with the organization, it will be a question with which many organizations, specifically boards, will wrestle.

## Building the Pipeline of Next Generation Leaders

Supporting the next generation of leaders is a critical task for organizations and capacity builders, with special attention to those who reflect the demographics of the changing New England landscape. As aging, white leaders depart organizations, it will be critical for the next generation to be more intentional than their predecessors at engaging younger, more diverse people in roles across the organization and creating pathways for power and influence. In order for organizations to remain relevant they must be of and speak to their communities’ hearts and minds, and provide quality, culturally competent programs and services.

Recommendations:

- 1 Help nonprofits invest in sustainability strategies, regardless of when a transition will occur.
- 2 Explore different structures, including more distributed leadership models that enable organizations to be more holistically “leaderful” in meeting their missions and more effective overall.
- 3 Support organizations in transition and boomers as they depart their leadership roles.
- 4 Offer leadership and development opportunities to Gen X’ers and Millennials such as peer learning, immersive leadership programs, and coaching.
- 5 Engage in conversations about the new opportunities created by the transition of boomers, and how we can structure work to both thoughtfully engage the wisdom of boomers and support bold new leadership.

## SHIFT THE VISION FOR GOVERNANCE.

The primary role of boards of directors is governance. Clarity about the roles and responsibilities of boards can help break the cycle of leaders' frustration with their boards' fundraising challenges as they view them in their truer role of overall stewardship, not primarily as fundraisers. The most critical aspect is educating and holding boards accountable to be more careful stewards that watchdog their organizations to prevent them from slipping into critical condition. The cycle of heroic leaders parachuting in to "turn around" nonprofits where boards were not paying enough attention needs to be fixed – and it can only be fixed with careful stewardship and bold leadership.

If boards spent more time focused on sustainability – developing a shared vision for the organization's mission, along with strategies to implement that vision, achieving operational excellence, and finding the resources to support the work – than on worrying about the next fundraiser, organizations will be better positioned to succeed. By emphasizing fundraising no matter the state of the organization's overall health and strategic relevance – boards and leaders put the cart before the horse.

In order to shift the vision for governance, leaders and boards need to develop generative and transformative partnerships. On the whole, New England board members responded that they feel they are in partnership with the leaders of their organizations. But the gap between leader and board responses on core issues in the survey suggests that the partnership still needs work. In particular, founding boards of newer organizations need to mature into allowing paid staff to do their work and to share in visioning and strategy. Conversely, boards of organizations with long-term, trusted leaders should not abdicate their role of stewardship and blindly "follow" paid staff. Governance is a delicate balance and no one size fits all. In special circumstances, there are times when boards have to lead on their own, and times when they have to follow, but these should be the exception. All boards should be seeking a balanced and intentionally designed partnership with executive leadership.

Conducting annual performance reviews can help build trust and understanding between the board and leader, but it is not enough. Reviews have to be effective and meaningful. Partnering with the leader through an honest, two-way conversation about the review process and the need for more consistent quality feedback is important. Not only will good communication help retain a good but stressed leader longer, but it also allows a board to identify issues to be resolved more quickly and build trust – this trust will support the board and leader to have sound, practical conversations regarding the leader's eventual transition. Equally important is for boards to engage in their own assessment process on a regular basis and use the information to improve their work.

Leaders, boards, funders, and capacity builders all need to work together to help boards govern well. Governance models continue to evolve, and boards need to embrace adaptive strategies for different situations and contexts. The sector needs to reconsider governance and its primary role in ensuring the mission of the organization and structure the board as much as it needs to in order to do its job and operate with excellence at any point in an organization's life cycle.

# SHIFT #2

*"We could all use a clearer view of how we can affect policy, connect to the community and do the keep learning about best practices so we can [be] better strategic advisors to our organization."*

*"I wish board members would take the time to understand nonprofit management and governance issues, as well as more deeply understand our organization's work. It is difficult to find a balance between leading and educating the board and reporting to them."*

Recommendations:

- ① Address organizational sustainability by examining relevance, increasing the ability to use financial and other data to plan and make strategic decisions regarding program strategies and cost centers, and focused, strategic fund development activities.
- ② Provide opportunities for board members and leaders to engage in learning about the shifting role of governance in the 21st century as siloed boards become more open and fluid in overseeing organizations that will increasingly work in collaborations, networks and shared spaces.
- ③ Offer frameworks, tools and opportunities for board members and leaders to develop generative and transformative partnerships.
- ④ Engage board members in learning to apply a leadership approach to their governance role, as framed in the insightful and practical *Governance as Leadership: Reframing the Work of Nonprofit Boards*<sup>8</sup>.
- ⑤ Develop more conversation and case studies on leadership subjects ranging from: founding or start-up challenges and joys; leading change during times of growth and scaling; re-awakening the “tired” organization; how to do a turn-around and not burn out; or when and how to successfully approach strategic alliances or allow the organization to close.

## SHIFT THE STRUCTURAL PARADIGM TO ROBUST INVESTMENT IN THE SECTOR.

Nonprofits can run great programs, but in order for organizations to be healthy and sustainable in the long-term, leaders and funders alike need to face up to the realities of what it takes to lead and manage organizations – financial capital, leadership development, learning and innovation and a well-compensated staff. Nonprofit overhead has long been the elephant in the room. The expectations placed on nonprofits and their leaders remain high, yet the core needs of nonprofits are often discounted with the outdated rationale and culture of thinking that low overhead = efficient and effective management. It is time for funders, nonprofits and communities to support these high expectations by investing resources and equally important, develop a culture that affirms the support of infrastructure and investments in leadership so that organizations can effectively fulfill their missions. To the extent that organizations and their funders share the same understanding of what nonprofits need in order to be effective, then nonprofits are freer to explore new options for structuring their staff and systems, and for investing in the leaders and the staff who do the work.

It's time to escape this dysfunctional cycle. The National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy's recent report, *Cultivating Nonprofit Leadership*<sup>9</sup>, articulates the importance of investing in leadership and recommends concrete strategies for doing so. We support their recommendations and offer some of our own based on the feedback from New England leaders.

### Recommendations:

- ① Invest more in multi-year general operating support, leadership development and learning activities that support nonprofits to adopt sound strategic and operational practices for the long haul.
- ② Start, continue or expand investments in nonprofit capacity building, including investing in foundation learning about capacity and learning with peers. Based on the response from New England leaders and board members the region could use more:
  - Learning opportunities and professional development for nonprofit leaders and staff, such as scholarships to attend trainings, conferences and professional association events, as well as resources to develop internal learning capacity.
  - Grants programs for coaching of leaders, leadership teams and boards, succession planning help, and for classic (but improved) organizational development activities such as organizational assessments and board, fund and financial development.
- ③ Create and fund more networking opportunities with nonprofits, funders and capacity builders to engage together and collaborate on moving the sector forward in a positive and powerful way.
- ④ And for nonprofits, use collective voice to create a shared vision of a highly effective and well-resourced sector and advocate for the changes needed.

# SHIFT #3

*“Funders seem to focus on wanting to be part of ‘something new and sustainable’ and on the lowest percentage possible for ‘administrative costs’ as compared to direct funding of services and programs. Need to understand, support and help fund the development of personnel as a necessary part of an organizational budget if the organization wants to succeed. Employees presumably already have a passion for the mission, so developing their personal capacities to lead can lead to their being more effective for the organization.”*

# Conclusion

*Only with this kind of broad and strategic investment in the capacity of organizations and their people will the sector be able to become truly resilient, and better able to address inequities and deliver on the promise of strengthening our communities and our region for years to come.*

The resiliency of the nonprofit sector and its leaders can no longer be left to chance or to the ability of people and organizations to continue doing more with less. As the biggest leadership transition the sector has ever faced is now upon us, this change creates an opportunity for the sector to shift how it works. Given the chronic challenges this report points to, it is our responsibility to use this rare opportunity to generate key shifts in the sector. Funders, capacity builders and nonprofits themselves have a responsibility for reinforcing the sector's resiliency while helping it move collectively from mere survival and stabilization to more impact – from “good to great”<sup>10</sup>.

There is a great deal of knowledge about how to strengthen nonprofit effectiveness that comes from several decades of field-building and the hard-won experience of nonprofit leaders, capacity builders and funders alike. Examples of some of the drivers of effectiveness include strong governance, sound strategy and programs, operational excellence, cultural competence, financial stability, and successful fund development.

Now is the time to put this knowledge and understanding to use on a wider scale. That means investing in nonprofits so that they have what is needed to meet their missions and thrive. Being “stable” is often how nonprofit leaders define success – but this misses the mark. It is time to fight the misperception that nonprofits are different, that organizations do not need investment, and that their leaders do not need support to learn, reflect and innovate.

The highest-functioning leaders and organizations appear to know what it takes. They have figured out how to engage in deep learning about organizational development, and they know what their organizations need to achieve mission impact. The key now is to help more nonprofit leaders – and their successors – follow the lead of the sector's pioneers. The bottom line is that the sector needs to act more like a learning system. This learning system perspective would ensure that the best of what the boomers and their predecessors have created and learned can be adapted to new challenges, while also integrating the ideas of the next generations of leaders who are creating their own brand of doing good.

But supporting nonprofits and their leaders to learn is just the start. Funders and capacity builders also need to support organizations to build higher-performing boards, create succession plans grounded in a longer-term vision for sustainability, achieve financial stability, strengthen the leadership skills of their staff, and work in more collaborative and networked contexts. Only with this kind of broad and strategic investment in the capacity of organizations and their people will the sector be able to become truly resilient, and better able to address inequities and deliver on the promise of strengthening our communities and our region for years to come.



# Leadership New England **Funders & Supporters**

## Major Funding Partners

Barr Foundation  
The Community Foundation *for* Greater New Haven  
Hartford Foundation for Public Giving  
The Initiative for Nonprofit Excellence at the Rhode Island Foundation  
The Boston Foundation  
United Way of Massachusetts Bay and Merrimack Valley

## Funding Partners

Connecticut Community Foundation  
The Community Foundation of Northwest Connecticut  
Maine Community Foundation  
New Hampshire Charitable Foundation  
The Vermont Community Foundation

## Additional Funding Partners

Connecticut Health Foundation  
Essex County Community Foundation  
Greater Worcester Community Foundation  
United Way of Central Massachusetts

## Outreach Partners

Associated Grant Makers	Massachusetts Nonprofit Network
Common Good Vermont	New Hampshire Center for Nonprofits
Community Foundation of Western Massachusetts	New Hampshire Community Development Finance Authority
Connecticut Association of Nonprofits	Regional Housing Network of Massachusetts
Cultural Alliance of Fairfield County	The Cape Cod Foundation
Fairfield County Community Foundation	The Hyams Foundation
Greater Lowell Community Foundation	The Lenny Zakim Fund
Hartford & Connecticut Statewide LISC	United Way of Pioneer Valley
Henry P. Kendall Foundation	VSA Massachusetts
Human Service Forum	William Caspar Graustein Memorial Fund
Maine Association of Nonprofits	Women's Fund of Western Massachusetts
Marlboro College	YMCAs of Connecticut
Massachusetts Alliance for Economic Development	YMCAs of Maine
Massachusetts Immigrant & Refugee Advocacy Coalition	YMCAs of Massachusetts
	YMCAs of Rhode Island
	YMCAs of Vermont and New Hampshire



# Endnotes

1. “Leading with Intent: A National Index of Nonprofit Board Practices,” *BoardSource*, January 2015.
2. *Guidestar Nonprofit Compensation Report* (2014), [www.guidestar.org](http://www.guidestar.org).
3. “Next Shift: Beyond the Nonprofit Leadership Crisis,” by Frances Kunreuther and Patrick Covington (The Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2007), [www.buildingmovement.org](http://www.buildingmovement.org).
4. *Creative Disruption: Sabbaticals for Capacity Building & Leadership Development in the Nonprofit Sector*, Linnell & Wolfred. Published by Third Sector New England and CompassPoint Nonprofit Services (2009).
5. “You Don’t Need an Empire to Build Strength for Change,” by Deborah Linnell (*Nonprofit Quarterly*, January 2011).
6. “Next Shift: Beyond the Nonprofit Leadership Crisis,” by Frances Kunreuther and Patrick Covington (The Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2007), [www.buildingmovement.org](http://www.buildingmovement.org).
7. “The Leadership in Leaving,” by Frances Kunreuther, Phyllis Segal, and Stephanie Clohesy (2013), [www.buildingmovement.org](http://www.buildingmovement.org).
8. *Governance as Leadership: Reframing the Work of Nonprofit Boards*, by Richard P. Chait, William P. Ryan, and Barbara E. Taylor. Copyright BoardSource (2005). John E. Wiley & Sons, Hoboken, NJ.
9. “Cultivating Nonprofit Leadership: A (Missed?) Philanthropic Opportunity” by Niki Jagpal and Ryan Schlegel(2015) [www.ncrp.org](http://www.ncrp.org)
10. Jim Collins has written extensively on good-to-great concepts in both for-profit and nonprofit sectors, in *Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap . . . And Other’s Don’t* (2001) and in *Good to Great in the Social Sectors: A Monograph to Accompany Good to Great* (2005)

# IN THEIR WORDS: Advice to the Next Generation of Leaders

competitive field, with the economic conditions existing today, you will need to be committed, efficient and resilient if you are to succeed. **The organization you build is not yours. If you do your job well, the organization won't even blink when you leave, it will keep on running just fine.** Never take a break from board development and trainings. **Be respectful, develop people skills, give staff credit for the work of the organization, honor diversity, and make every effort to avail oneself and staff of professional development opportunities.** Look for challenges to take on, that is where you learn. However, don't lose sight of the day-to-day as that is where the relationships and respect are built. **Get support, talk to people, find a mentor.** Learn as much as possible about financial management and development. **Expect a long learning curve! Ask peers for advice!** We all need to rethink the model. It isn't working. **Get into an executive leadership development program, get yourself a personal coach, demand constant feedback from your peers and superiors and shadow a leader you admire.** Keep the fire and do strive for work-life balance to keep the creative juices flowing. **Fundraise like crazy, it's what it's all about, the ability to pay for things and keep things running.** Know your field from the bottom up. Get in and do the work before assuming any leadership. **Keep learning! Scan the horizon. Being good today, does not ensure you will be good/relevant tomorrow. Learn from others' experience, but take risks.** Use an executive coach and develop a peer support network. **Financial stability makes mission possible.** Try to minimize anxiety and maximize inspiration. **Stay authentic to yourself and your personal mission and find situations that provide "right livelihood" in order to fulfill your mission; your energy and intelligence is needed.** Hold on to your passion for what you do. **If you are passionate about your mission, all is possible.** Be relentlessly driven in accomplishing mission. It's worth the effort. Network, Network, Network. Balance, Balance, Balance. Breathe, keep faith. It's worth it.



For more information on the **Leadership New England** report or to access our interactive website of leadership data, go to: **[www.tsne.org](http://www.tsne.org)**

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