**Implementing Technical Skills, Practices, and Processes
In Order to Support the Growth and Sustainability of a
Boston Non-Profit:**

THE
ST. MARK
COMMUNITY
EDUCATION
PROGRAM

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Northeastern University

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Executive Summary

The report provides an overview of my evaluation and analysis of current processes at the St Mark Community Education Program (SMCEP). The primary objective of my report is to provide discovery acquired through my consulting and offer suggestions regarding the best methodology for stimulating technical skills, services, and practices within the SMCEP. I will highlight opportunities for the non-profit to strengthen and maximize their technical skills and digital footprint. Given current challenges at the macro, micro, and meso level, the organization needs to develop a digital volunteer management database in order to enhance their outreach potential, as it relates to mass communication, increasing the skills of their volunteers, increasing opportunities for students through accessibility and resources, and enhancing accessibility to funding and giving programs. I will identify the appropriate sponsor or partner that can best provide the SMCEP with the necessary technical skills to sustain and grow their operations beyond their current scope, prioritizing ease of implementation. Utilizing a situational analysis, stakeholder analysis, and gap analysis, I will formulate a series of recommendations to enable the SMCEP to develop technical skills, services, practices, and processes within their organization in order to maximize and optimize their operational capacity and support.

Discovery

The St Mark Community Education Program is a non-profit organization led by Director Mike Oliver, with the support of a Board and coordinators of different departments, including Ina Lee, the volunteer coordinator, amongst other key stakeholders. (See Appendix) The SMCEP maintains operations through the support they receive from partners, sponsors, volunteers, and the local community. The culture of the organization has been extensively clarified through their partnerships with Northeastern University, as students have been able to aid the organization in the development of a volunteer handbook, digital volunteer application, and a website domain. These tools have enabled the SMCEP to create a more organized culture with communication channels in place, both digitally and in-person. These tools have also allowed the SMCEP to establish Human Resource Management processes to more readily sustain their mission to "build a vibrant community where immigrants can thrive and enrich their communities by providing English and Citizenship classes as well as a network of support services." (SMCEP, n.d.)

The current volunteer recruitment process at the SMCEP largely relies on third party sponsors, while digitized management systems at the SMCEP are minimal. Formalized volunteer management systems would allow the organization to more readily recruit and maintain volunteers. This relates to the organization's lack of a digital database or website to manage, maintain, and engage volunteers, as well as provide meaningful internal data, which could reveal skills and interests. This data will provide insight toward opportunities that could optimize processes, while creating leverage for the SMCEP in attracting additional sponsors or partners. Utilizing platforms available in the digital age to manage volunteers will do well to strengthen the SMCEP's operations as "only 55% of nonprofits assess volunteer impact." (Burger, 2021b) As the SMCEP was formed by a religious institution, the lack of a volunteer management scope

relates to a historic issue facing similar organizations, as some "faith-based organizations lack…information technologies, management structures, and financial systems [which] limit their ability to manage complex social services." (Clerkin & Gronbjerg, 2007)

As the SMCEP seeks increased technical skills across their organization, they should consider best practices within the nonprofit world. Skills-based volunteering (SBV) programs and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programs benefit non-profit sponsors and partners as they "have been shown to increase employee engagement and retention, while also measurably enhancing the skills and talents that employees bring back to their desks." (Holly & Letts, 2017) Nonprofits often utilize these programs in order to develop skills and agility amongst their workforce. The corporations of Fidelity and John Hancock developed SBV programming to increase the development of employees' specialized skills. (Holly & Letts, 2017) The benefits of these programs are twofold, as employees further their skills through practical application, and nonprofits are provided with skilled workers to increase their organization's potential impact and scope. While these programs may be extremely helpful toward maximizing the level and avenues of support provided to the SMCEP, given the scope of technical services and skills needed to further develop the organization's processes, a project consultant would be the most appropriate recommendation for my sponsor, taking into account their size, scope, and current partnerships.

Recommendations

Prioritizing ease of implementation through familiarity and available resources, we must identify opportunities through the strength of the SMCEP's relationship with Northeastern University (NEU). The SMCEP would do well to recruit a highly skilled technical NEU student who can serve as a project consultant to develop a digital database for volunteer management, as well as increase the organization's digital presence, scope, and technical abilities. Project consultants typically deal with deliverables that are "complex, ranging from strategic planning and website design to phone bank training and program tracking software." (Holly & Letts, 2017) Previous consultants, sourced from Northeastern, have done well to create a website and social media presence for the non-profit, however the SMCEP would do well to maximize the strategies related to their digital impact. The consultant should work to "create exciting, shareable content [to] encourage volunteers to post about their own experiences," (Mobilize, n.d.) thus maximizing the impact of their social media scope. Additionally, they should introduce "volunteer management software that empowers supporters to easily post about their next opportunity and share custom sign-up links with their friends and family." (Mobilize, n.d.) This speaks to the best practice for nonprofits to engage with current partners, sponsors, and volunteers in order to gain additional support.

The project consultant would do well to integrate volunteer management processes through the establishment of an organizational database, utilizing digital volunteer management software and sites. "Post COVID-19, many organizations have shifted to offering remote volunteer opportunities. For organizations making this shift, volunteer management software can help keep volunteers organized, updated on new opportunities, and provide them with an easy way to register…to save an organization time, make registration easier, and improve

decision-making." (Burger, 2021a) Further, "an automated volunteer management system allows you to understand your volunteer's interests and gives you the ability to add those supporters to your donor pipeline." (FrontStream, 2016) This speaks to the ability for a volunteer management system to more readily identify technically skilled workers by developing "detailed volunteer profiles to track volunteer history, interests, skills, and other important data." (Double the Donation, 2020). In this way, the SMCEP would do well to optimize their digital volunteer application in order to gauge the skills of volunteers. Maximizing engagement and communication efforts through digital platforms would streamline the recruitment process and create new opportunities through the identification of volunteers' skills.

Additionally, external volunteer systems and software provide additional opportunities for corporate giving, be it through the provision of volunteers or financial benefits, while also increasing accessibility toward opportunities to apply for volunteer grant programs. "With a tool like Double the Donation's database search widget, your volunteers can quickly search their employer's name to find out everything they need to know about their company's corporate giving programs. Make sure to place this tool on your volunteer sign-up page, as well as on your website's corporate giving or Ways to Get Involved page." (Double the Donation, 2020). This would also engage volunteers to more readily donate through increased knowledge of giving opportunities and enhanced accessibility through the database search widget. Further, using a digital platform like 360MatchPro, the SMCEP "can automate all of your matching gift and volunteer grant communications to ensure all of your supporters are well-educated about their corporate giving opportunities. 360MatchPro allows you to quickly scan your database for email domains that align with known corporate giving programs." (Double the Donation, 2020)

Leveraging a highly skilled technical consultant through Northeastern's Experiential or Service Learning programs with the mission of developing a volunteer management system, would do well to offer the SMCEP "the ability to connect with those corporations offering volunteer opportunities to eager employees. Tools like…volunteer management software help charities and nonprofits organize their valuable volunteer data, [and] provide engaging opportunities that keep supporters coming back for more!" (FrontStream, 2016)

Additionally, as the SMCEP's need for technical skills amongst their volunteer pool relates to establishing a digital presence to increase the scope of their outreach and operational strength, recruiting a highly skilled technical consultant speaks to the short-term nature of the typical consultant relationship. "Often, the expertise provided by the company is not a skill that the nonprofit needs every day on staff. The ability to have backup experts increases the effectiveness of the nonprofit by providing it with technical and analytical expertise, such as system design, performance management, financial modeling, and market analysis, that it often doesn't have and doesn't need full-time." (Holly & Letts, 2017) Thus, it would be most appropriate for the consultant to work alongside Ina Lee, the volunteer coordinator, in order to train her on how to use the new systems and software, in an effort to maximize the organizations outreach potential, as it relates to support toward sustaining their operational mission and goals.

In alignment with best practices for nonprofits, the SMCEP should maximize their existing partnership with NEU in order to recruit a highly skilled technical project consultant that can optimize and digitize current processes and practices at the SMCEP. Further, the SMCEP can seek a monetary donation and event sponsorship from their NEU partnership, as the University gives back to organizations making change in their communities. (Northeastern University, n.d.)

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Appendix

STAKEHOLDERS	ATTRIBUTES (what we know, what we need to find out)	CONCERNS/ EXPECTATIONS	DESIRED IMPACT (on: attitudes, knowledge, behaviors)
Internal: Board of Directors/ Program Director	-Mike Oliver: Director -Vu Nguyen: President -Elisabeth Metalus: Treasurer -Six Board Members	-Lack of formalized fundraising team within the Board -Lack of marketing expertise -Missing an individual with experience using guidebooks online for nonprofits	-Create more support for the Board, as it relates to CSR benefits, to allow them time to focus on expanding the organization. -Will offer knowledge through insight from new volunteers. -Should enhance attitudes through additional support.
Internal: Volunteer Coordinators	-Ina Lee, Volunteer Coordinator -Peg Toro, Citizenship Class Coordinator -Beth Beagan, Website Coordinator -Suezanne Bruce, Social Media Coordinator -ESOL Class Coordinators	-Most of these positions began as short-term volunteers, but grew into more sustainable leadership positions. -Responsible for onboarding, training, scheduling, and coordinating classes	-Provides the Website Coordinator and Social Media Coordinator with volunteers to work with their departments. -Highly skilled technical volunteers can increase the relevant, technical skills of these coordinators. -Should enhance attitudes through additional support.
External: Organizational Sponsors	-Eastern Bank -Arbella -Rian Immigrant Center -English New Bostonians -Cummings Foundation -East Boston Savings Banks	-Mostly financial institutions -Great opportunity to expand upon one of these relationships toward achieving project deliverable	-Will provide additional support and resources for the SMCEP. -Work to stimulate an in-kind, or employee giving program through a CSR or ERG -Provide Sponsors with knowledge of the mutual benefits of a CSR-like sponsorship.

External: Organizational Partners	-Boston Cares -Northeastern University -Brookline High School -Boston College -Fragomen -Somerville/ Brockton/ Thomas Craine/ Boston Public Library -M.I.R.A. -City of Boston	-Educational and cultural institutions -Provide short-term volunteers -Can provide additional resources for the SMCEP	-Recruiting volunteers from technical departments within educational institutions will meet skill needs. -Increasing volunteer commitment through increased engagement. -Make partners aware of the additional resources they could provide to assist the SMCEP.
External: Local Community	- St Marks/ Dorchester -Greater Boston Area -Diverse	-Program is free and available to all -Classes promote better opportunities for immigrants. -Perhaps this group is the most readily available for long-term volunteer commitment.	-Will enhance community support for the organization through enhanced awareness of the organization and its mission. -Provide further access for students to gain knowledge through their class offerings. -Engage the local community to volunteer.