



Case Study:

501c3 Launch for a Youth-Serving Organization

The founders needed a long term way to sustain their mission. The Bayer Center helped them turn their program into an organization.

The Client

Two men, motivated by the large number of youth at risk in their neighborhood, began a program where adolescents could find options for healthy activity as well as a critical sense of home and belonging. Twenty years later they believed even more in the importance of this work – continuing to carve out approximately 30 hours every week from other commitments to keep it going - but knew something had to change before they burned out. Previously-attempted partnerships had left them without funding or credit for their successes, and they had decided they wanted to become an independent organization.

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The founders had taken some initial steps, including successfully applying for 501c3 status. However, the intricacies of complying with rules and regulations, creating computer systems for managing money and data, and creating compelling communications felt overwhelming. They approached the Program to Aid Citizen Enterprise (PACE) which provides grants for capacity building for organizations with African-American leadership, and successfully applied for funding to support consulting through this transition. PACE matched the group with the Bayer Center.

Our Work

As well as salaried staff, the Bayer Center's Executive Service Corps (ESC) program gives nonprofits access to professionals with particular talents. The Bayer Center mobilized an ESC-based team for this project with a complementary set of skills – one consultant who had deep knowledge of planning, support services and the African-American community and another with business planning and financial management systems expertise.

The client needed more than a plan – they needed people who would be part of the team through the implementation phase, wrestling collaboratively with questions that emerged every step of the way. Over the next nine months, the team worked through everything from budgeting to outcome tracking to donor messaging. Later, another ESC consultant provided technical assistance in QuickBooks and creating a chart of accounts.

The Result

The founders had created a program that was making a significant impact in children's lives. What they needed was confidence and language that could communicate that value to others – a case for support with the kind of structure and rigor that funders use for decision-making. They also needed fundamental systems for their new independent organization. By the end of the consulting engagement, they were able to communicate and prove the full value of what they were doing for the youth, including not only the well-known central program but the mentoring and life skills that accompanied it.



While their initial application for program funding was disappointing, they proved in the next two years that they were indeed able to manage money carefully and deliver results, and were subsequently rewarded with a much larger grant from another funder. The organization successfully completed its ramp up to supporting a staff of three, and continues to meet a critical community need.

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