

Have I got a great idea...



Every year, thousands of good-hearted people are inspired to start a new nonprofit organization.

Someone comes up with a “unique” solution to a community problem. Maybe it’s a new method for curing substance abuse, a different way of working with at-risk youth, or a response to a threat to our environment. Whatever the concept, the creator may be so anxious to get started that they plunge into the complex paperwork of legal incorporation, sign up a token board, and start applying for that holy grail – a grant.

Not so fast.

To be successful, you need to:

Understand the nonprofit world, and the essential role of a governing board;

Look at other organizations in the same field of service and see if your idea may be perceived as a duplication of effort; and

Develop a detailed three year Action Plan with a realistic estimate of expenses and income, and how you will raise the income.

Launching a nonprofit organization cannot be a solo flight. Although it has all the risks of starting a new business, you will **not** own the fruits of your labor. The community “owns” the nonprofit corporation, and it is governed by a community board. They have even been known to fire the founder.

New nonprofits need to **recruit board members** who have several years of experience on successful nonprofit boards. These veterans can help teach other members, who might be chosen for commitment to the goal, or for special skills or knowledge.

Individual donors as well as foundations frequently despair over what they perceive as the **proliferation of nonprofits**. They care less about how unique your organization is, and more about how you can work cooperatively with other existing and trusted providers. So, you must become an expert in your field and familiar with your “competitors,” who are really your potential allies. Are you duplicating an existing service? Could a community problem be solved better by working together?

Make a plan, Stan. Download “Get Ready, Get Set: What You Need to Know Before Starting a Nonprofit” at www.cnmsocal.org/Services/p_grgs.html. Competition for foundation grants is fierce. Starting a nonprofit business takes careful program and financial planning, many hours of volunteer labor, and a commitment to learn to fundraise from the all-time best source of donations: individuals.