Special thanks to Rubén Austria, the Executive Director at Community Connections for Youth. People like him are the driving force of sustainable nonprofit work. Without his guidance, I would not have been able to develop the first Capacity Building Institute under the South Bronx Community Connections Demonstration Project, and would not have had the absolute pleasure of helping these promising nonprofits pursue their missions.

I've learned so much from Rubén over the years — juvenile justice reform, community and system partnerships, community building, organizational development, and proposal writing — the list goes on and on. I am deeply appreciative of the support he's given me, and I hope that I can inspire others in the same way he has inspired me.
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The Capacity Building Institute (CBI) is a six-month program designed to assist grassroots nonprofit organizations in developing their organizational systems. In July 2017, Lydia Sierra Consulting and the Syracuse cohort of six grassroots nonprofit organizations came together for their first of six sessions. Each session was designed to address a specific aspect of nonprofit organizational management.

As part of the CBI, each organization was allotted twenty (20) hours of technical assistance (TA). TA was provided in the areas of Institutional Development, Financial Management, Board Development, Evaluation, and Marketing. All hours were honored, but not equally. Some organizations were not developed enough to undertake the strategies being taught in the individuals sessions and others claimed they did not have the additional time to do more than attend the monthly sessions.

“Thanks for your accessible, warm and professional approach, Lydia!”

—Participant
Recruitment

Outreach was conducted by circulating flyers among faith and community-based organizations at Community Connection for Youth (CCFY)’s Learning Community meetings. Organizations were accepted on a first-come, first-serve basis. The Syracuse 2017 Cohort included the following organizations:

• Baby Momma’s Association, Executive Director, Faye Williams

• Faith and Hope Community Center, Executive Director, Arthur Harrison

• Fall Forward, Executive Director, Olivia McCheyne

• Good Life Foundation, Inc., Executive Director, Hasan Stephens

• Nurturing Individuals Abilities, Executive Director, Marissa Saunders

• Street Addiction, Inc., Executive Director, Timothy Bey-Jennings
The CBI's application process included an online Nonprofit Assessment Form sourced from The Five Life Stages of Nonprofit Organizations by T. Terence Donovan and Judith Sharken Simon. These assessment forms were designed to assess each individual organization's progress and needs, and to identify organizational strengths and weaknesses in the seven areas of governance, staff leadership, financing, administrative systems, staffing, products and services, and marketing. The results served as a framework to guide each organization's continuing development, and allowed Lydia Sierra Consulting to adjust the workshops to better address the needs of the participant organizations.
Nonprofit organizations naturally progress through five stages of development. In The Five Life Stages of Nonprofit Organization, each stage is assigned a brief title and image. The titles and images are meant to be brief descriptors of the primary tone or activity for that stage. (See Fig. 1, pg. 6). The five stages of nonprofit organization development are as follows.

**Stage One: Imagine and Inspire.** This is the vision or idea stage. The organization is not been formalized. Progress is determined by imagination and inspiration.

**Stage Two: Found and Frame.** This is the start-up phase of the organization. It has received its official nonprofit status and all activities related to its founding and framing have occurred or are in progress.

**Stage Three: Ground and Grow.** In this stage, the organization is concerned with building its foundation by grounding its activities and growing its “business.”

**Stage Four: Produce and Sustain.** This is the mature phase of the organization’s life. Production is at its peak and sustaining the organization is a high priority.

**Stage Five: Renew and Review.** In this stage, the organization is reinventing itself through a process of review and renewal.
Lydia Sierra Consulting, LLC, began as a sole proprietorship in 2005, but was formally established in 2015. The principal, Lydia Sierra, has more than 20 years’ experience working with faith- and community-based organizations serving urban communities. She holds a Masters of Administration in Human Services and has completed two years towards her PhD in Public Administration. From direct services to executive and board management, Lydia has experienced the challenges and triumphs of working at each organizational level, including that of founder and executive director.

Lydia Sierra, MSA, Organizational Development Specialist
Lydia Sierra facilitated all workshops, provided all TA for determining legal structure, governance, staff leadership, financial planning (i.e. prospect research, organizational budgets, etc.), administrative systems, and products and services. Lydia Sierra also subcontracted the following consultants who are experts in the specific areas of marketing, program design, evaluation, and financial management.

Vivian Cotte, Marketing Expert
Vivian Cotte is a marketing expert with over 20 years of experience in designing, branding, editing, creating digital content, websites and social media strategy. As former Editor of Latina Magazine, she is an expert at market positioning and creating a public image that will attract donors and corporate partners. Vivian assisted organizations in need of developing a strong brand and a marketing plan.

Amy Svirsky, PhD, Principal Investigator
Amy is an experienced evaluator who serves as backbone staff for Albany Promise, a collaboration built on the Collective Impact Model at Albany University. Amy is responsible for operations and data collection/analysis. Amy assisted participating organizations in developing their program evaluation systems.

Yara N. Ortiz, BA in Accounting
Yara is the Finance Director at a Montessori Charter School. She is currently working towards her license as a Certified Public Accountant. Yara assisted participating organizations in developing financial management systems training them on building their Financial Management Systems and using QuickBooks.
Baby Momma Association (BMA) is a grassroots organization created with compassion for young women trying to fight their way out of a net of bad decisions and missed opportunities. By providing information, resources, and exposure BMA helps young women identify their purpose, realize their dreams, and attain a better quality of life.

BMA has lived in the heart of founder Faye Williams since 2005. Having moved to Central New York from Hampton, Virginia in December of 2001, she began working for the Appeals Program of the Frank H. Hiscock Legal Aid Society in February of 2002. Working in the heart of downtown Syracuse, she saw the commonality of young women getting pregnant, quitting school, having babies, and becoming more and more dependent on the social welfare system. Seeing those baby carriages being pushed down Jefferson Street to the Civic Center on Montgomery Street was heartbreaking. She knew something had to be done to help these young women realize a better way.

Baby Momma Association, Inc was incorporated on August 25, 2017 as a direct result of the Capacity Building Institute and Faye’s desire to develop her vision.
BMA's Nonprofit Life Stage Pre-Assessment indicated that the organization had a home stage (i.e. overall stage) score of 1. Relative to the home stage, the major arena needing improvement within the organization was governance. Arenas within the home stage level included governance, staff leadership, financing, administrative systems, staffing, products and services, and marketing.

“

“It was useful and collaboration among participants is especially valuable, as we are all local.”

—Participant
BMA’s Nonprofit Life State Post-Assessment indicated that the organization had a home stage (i.e. overall stage) score of 2. This score shows an increase from the Pre Assessment Measure of 1.

Major arena changes included:
● Increased scores in Governance (stage 1 → stage 2), Staffing (stage 1 → stage 2), Products and Services (stage 1 → stage 2) and Marketing (stage 1 → stage 2)
● Decreased scores in Financing (stage 2 → stage 1)
● Steady scores in Administrative Systems (stage 1 → stage 1)
● Staff Leadership (stage 1 and stage 3 and stage 5 → stage 4)

At the end of the six months, BMA experienced significant growth. The following are a few significant goals achieved during the Capacity Building Institute that explain the increase in organizational stage and scores:
● BMA was officially incorporated as a nonprofit organization
● BMA recruited 6 board members and 6 volunteer staff
● BMA developed a program design and named the program Journey to a Better Life Bootcamp - a 6 week program with case management and financial literacy training
● BMA’s founder and executive director wrote her first proposal and budget for a $5,000 request for building the capacity of her organization.

Next Steps for BMA:
● BMA will complete the 1023 application for obtaining federal tax exemption.
● BMA will continue to strengthen the board through monthly meetings and trainings
● BMA will purchase case management software to strengthen program delivery
● BMA will purchase financial management software to develop its financial management system
● BMA will develop a professional website.
The mission of Faith and Hope Community Center (FHCC) is to foster healthy children and families through anger management, athletic activities, and youth development. At the Center, youth are exposed to positive adult role models and learn different ways of handling anger and resolving conflicts. FHCC has an all-volunteer staff, operating without a direct source of income or revenue and relying solely on individual donations and the out-of-pocket contributions of the cofounders to remain viable. Fortunately, FHCC owns the building it occupies with no debt incurred and has been able to continue serving the young people of their community who are most in need of leadership and guidance. 

What Aspect of the training seemed most helpful?
The patience, humbleness and expertise you have shown. Your spirit is what many need to identify their gifts.
Thank you.
—Anonymous
FHCC’s Nonprofit Life Stage Pre-Assessment indicated that the organization had a home stage (i.e. overall stage) score of 1, embarking on stage 2. Relative to the home stage, the major arena needing improvement within the organization were Financing and Administration. Arenas above the home stage level included Governance and Staff Leadership.

**What Aspect of the training seemed most helpful?**

Lydia’s passion and intellect.

The organizational development training sessions and the technical assistance sessions. —Anonymous
FHCC's Nonprofit Life Stage Post-Assessment indicated that the organization had a home stage (i.e. overall stage) score of 2. This score shows an increase from the Pre Assessment Measure of 1. Major arena changes included:

- Increased scores in Governance (stage 3 → stage 5), Administrative Systems (stage 1 → stage 2), Staffing (stage 1 → stage 4), Products and Services (stage 1 and stage 2 → stage 2 and stage 3)
- Decreased scores in Staff Leadership (stage 5 → stage 1 and stage 2) and Marketing (stage 3 → stage 2)
- Steady scores in Financing (stage 1 → stage 1)

FHCC experienced growth because organizational leadership saw the opportunity to build capacity and receive support as an urgent exercise for taking their organization to the next level. They involved their two founders, a proposal writer, and two volunteers.

FHCC needed direction to develop their organizational systems. However, it appeared that what the organization needed most was to reconnect with their community. They proceeded to develop partnerships with all of the participating organizations of the Capacity Building Institute. They reached out to friends of the organization and developed a plan and roles for volunteers to fill. They are currently reviewing their mission and revitalizing the board of directors.

FHCC developed a website with a donation feature. They developed an organizational budget and a plan for raising individual donations and grants. They received donation of furniture and a commercial refrigerator. They developed a partnership with Habitat for Humanity to develop a program for young men to receive construction skills training and job placement opportunities. They completed their 990 and ensured that they continued to be in compliance with New York State.

They utilized their TA assistance for financial management and fund development. They requested a capacity building grant to upgrade their technological capacities by purchasing and managing a website, installing an electronic bookkeeping system, and repairing and purchasing program equipment. They are also planning a Statewide Amateur Boxing Show as a fundraiser.
Fall Forward Ministries (FFM) exists to empower individuals affected by the criminal justice system to create sustainable freedom through a restorative relationship with God, self, and others. FFM believes that freedom is found through the establishment of restorative relationships. FFM was founded in 2013 by Olivia McCheyne, a formerly incarcerated woman who knows firsthand how difficult it is to overcome the many challenges of reintegration. Formerly incarcerated and recovered people join together in reaching back into correctional facilities to lead out their brothers and sisters. This is achieved through three major avenues: an incarcerated person by-mail correspondence program, visiting incarcerated people, and the creation of the New York State Reentry Guide, which will provide extensive reentry resource information to individuals returning from incarceration into all 62 New York counties.

What Aspect of the training seemed most helpful?
Everything!
—Anonymous
FFM’s Nonprofit Life Stage Pre-Assessment indicated that the organization had a home stage (i.e. overall stage) score of 2. Relative to the home stage, the major arena needing improvement within the organization was Governance. Arenas above the home stage level include Financing. However, it was later learned that the organization scored high in this area because they had a financial plan, not because they had developed their financial systems.

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<th>Fall Forward Ministries Scoring Sheet</th>
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**I would like to do this again next year, is that possible?**

—Anonymous
FFM has been planning and creating systems for a number of years. The executive director has made important partnerships and has a revolving door of interns that show great care and buy-in for the organization and its mission. An all-volunteer staff keeps programs running and assists with outreach, writing, data entry, and organizational planning.

The organization achieved significant growth in pre- and post-measures due to the development of a comprehensive strategic and financial plan. Through the Capacity Building Institute and Street Addiction Inc., a partnership was formed with Syracuse University to provide FFM with pro-bono assistance to obtain its incorporation and 501c3. This demonstrates that the organization is still in formation phase and therefore still in phase 2.

FFM’s request for a capacity building grant was to pay for their 501c3 application fees, apply for nonprofit reduced bulk postage, develop marketing material, strengthen community outreach efforts, and to advance the web-based New York State Reentry Guide.
Good Life Philanthropic Youth Foundation
Website: www.agoodlifefound.org

Good Life Foundation’s (GLF) mission is to cultivate a movement of entrepreneurial thinking and action among at-risk youth, by combining life coaching, financial literacy, and entrepreneurial training to interrupt the cycle of poverty, violence, and incarceration, and improve academic performance in the lives of the youth that it affects. Through partnerships and collaborations, GLF provides various services and programs with the purpose of encouraging successful and productive careers and life strategies for at-risk youth. GLF is build around a comprehensive program involving an individualized youth plan that integrates experiential and expressive education through hip-hop culture to encourage life skills, financial literacy, and entrepreneurship.

The circles got everyone talking and knowing each other.
—Anonymous
GLF’s Nonprofit Life Stage Pre-Assessment indicated that the organization had a home stage (i.e. overall stage) score of 4. Relative to the home stage, the major arena needing improvement within the organization was Marketing and Products and Services. Arenas above the home stage level included Governance and Marketing. Marketing was included in both arenas because the organization was in the process of revamping its marketing materials.

"I thank you for what, without a doubt, was the most interesting set of training lectures I have ever attended."

—Anonymous
GLF’s Nonprofit Life Stage Post-Assessment indicated that the organization had a home stage (i.e. overall stage) score of 4. This score shows no increase from the Pre Assessment Measure of 4.

Major arena changes included:
- Staff Leadership (stage 3 → stage 3 and stage 4)
- Products and Services (stage 2 → stage 2 and stage 4)
- Marketing (stage 1 and stage 5 → stage 4)
- Steady scores in Governance (stage 4 and stage 5 → stage 4 and stage), Financing (stage 4 → stage 4) and Staffing (stage 4 → stage 4)

GLF’s executive and program directors consistently attended all sessions and utilized the time to review their strategic plan, programs, and marketing material. However, GLF was the most mature organization in the cohort, and it was not clear how beneficial the Capacity Building Institute was for the growth of their organization. Their presence was very beneficial for the Capacity Building Institute overall. They also formed partnerships with the other organizations and served as a source of encouragement and resource to the participating organizations.

Their request for a capacity building grant was to launch a digital and media branding campaign in order to increase the number of clients, funders, and volunteers to ensure the sustainability of the organization.
The purpose of Nurturing Individuals’ Abilities Ministry (NIA) is to mend the broken, strengthen the weak, and encourage the weary through outreach, programs, and direct services that will educate, empower, and increase the self-awareness of participants. NIA currently works with young girls and women at risk of or engaged in the sexual-abuse-to-prison pipeline in Onondaga County. The sexual-abuse-to-prison pipeline is a process by which young girls and women are criminalized or punished for the common reactions to violence or sexual trauma, which then exacerbates their involvement in the juvenile and criminal justice system, leading to a cycle of abuse and imprisonment. NIA will address the individual trauma faced by an increasing vulnerable population of females ages 13 - 17 that are identified as high risk of being victims of sexual, physical, and mental abuse, and at risk of arrests, re-arrests, or placement by reducing the risk-taking behaviors in school, at home, and in their community.

What Aspect of the training seemed most helpful?
The patience, humbleness and expertise you have shown. Your spirit is what many need to identify their gifts.
Thank you.
—Anonymous
NIA’s Nonprofit Life Stage Pre-Assessment indicated that the organization had a home stage (i.e. overall stage) score of 1, embarking on stage 2. Relative to the home stage, the major arena needing improvement within the organization was the development of Financing, Administrative and Staffing Systems. Arenas above the home stage level include Governance, Staff Leadership, Products and Services, and Marketing.

What Aspect of the training seemed most helpful? The patience, humbleness and expertise you have shown. Your spirit is what many need to identify their gifts.

Thank you.
—Anonymous
NIA’s Nonprofit Life Stage Post-Assessment indicated that the organization had a home stage (i.e. overall stage) score of 4 and 5. This score shows an increase from the Pre Assessment Measure of 1.

Major arena changes included:
- Increased scores in Staff Leadership (stage 3 and stage 4 → stage 5), Financing (stage 1 → stage 5), Administrative Systems (stage 1 → stage 3), Staffing (stage 1 → stage 2) and Marketing (stage 2 and stage 3 and stage 4 → stage 5)
- No decreased scores
- Steady scores in Governance (stage 3 → stage 3) and Products and Services (stage 4 → stage 4).

NIA has a strong history as a service provider but was not institutionalized. The Capacity Building Institute helped the founder, Ms. Marissa Saunders, decide on a legal structure and incorporate as a nonprofit. She utilized the training sessions to recruit and train board members, to develop and organize her plans, and to develop community partnerships. NIA’s scores significantly increased due to the development of the organization’s strategic and financial plan. However, the organization is a stage 2 organization.

I made a note on the page for the change of photo for Good Life Foundation. The organization is a stage 2 organization.

NIA requested a capacity building grant to obtain its nonprofit incorporation certificate in order to identify and obtain larger funding sources, to develop marketing materials including a website and brochures, and to purchase a laptop, printer, and software.
Street Addiction Institute (SAI) is a 501(c)(3) community-based nonprofit organization whose mission is to conduct intervention, prevention, and research on trauma, grief, loss, and behavioral addiction on the street and neighborhood violence in Syracuse, New York. The agency’s core values are respect for culture and spirituality, and the use of compassion in efforts to reshape the behavior of those drawn into gang/street activity, as well as those traumatically affected by such behaviors.

SAI developed from a university-community partnership in 2008 undertaking joint research on gang violence. This led to the development of a model that demonstrated that the draw of the street and street crime is behavioral addiction. This conclusion was based on ethnographic interviews with former gang members and a second university-community study that addressed the work of SAI Trauma Response Team. SAI operates with a dedicated staff of 5 full-time employees, 18 part-time employees, and 30 volunteers. The organization needs to develop capacity to manage the significant growth experienced in the last two years. The organization’s pre-assessment scores demonstrate the organization’s need to develop a strategic plan to set the organization on a clear path of growth and sustainability.
Street Addiction did not complete the training and did not complete the post-assessment.

**Post-Assessment Review**
Street Addiction did not complete the training and did not receive a post-assessment review.

**Pre-Assessment Scoring Sheet**

**What Aspect of the training seemed most helpful?**
The patience, humbleness and expertise you have shown. Your spirit is what many need to identify their gifts.
Thank you.
—Anonymous
The information presented above clearly illustrates the value of Lydia Sierra Consulting’s Capacity Building Institute. Four of the six participating nonprofit agencies succeeded in increasing their home stage of development while one remained at current stage while making improvements.

Here are the following conclusions:
- Participating in this Capacity Building Institute expedites the development process by helping nonprofits strengthen the major nonprofit arenas of Governance, Staff Leadership, Financing, Administrative Systems, Staffing, Products and Services, and Marketing.
- The Technical Assistance (TA) component is critical. Having time for grassroots leaders to get individual assistance on targeted topics (identified by the needs assessment) was critical to being able to move the organizations forward.
- Meeting together monthly for $\frac{1}{2}$ day was not enough. However, it is not clear that a longer day would have been more productive. Perhaps extending the Capacity Building Institute to a 10-12 month process would enable the work to be slower but more continuous and the Technical Assistance could meet the needs with even more targeted focus.
- A cohort of grassroots organizations worked well. It will be of interest to follow up and see how the capacity building funds were used, did the organizations use what they learned to move their organization forward? That is an empirical question, and one that Lydia Sierra and Dr. Svirsky are in discussions about pursuing.

Finally, the Syracuse cohort showed great potential for collaboration. The organizational leaders are all impactful strong leaders with great passion and leadership ability. The growth of these organizations is sure to increase community capacity for criminal justice reform in Syracuse, New York.
FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THIS REPORT
OR
TO LEARN HOW YOU CAN BRING A CAPACITY BUILDING INSTITUTE TO YOUR AREA

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