

AMEEN ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY ASSESSMENT TOOL: SAMPLE QUESTIONS

LEADERSHIP CAPACITIES

CAPACITY ELEMENTS	1	2	3	4	SCORE
Mission	No written mission or limited expression of the organization's reason for existence	Mission that somewhat reflects its values and purpose, but it is used by few and only occasionally.	Clear mission that reflects its values and purpose; held by many within organization and often referenced	Clear mission that reflects its values and purpose, universally held within organization and frequently referenced	
Vision	No clear vision of what the organization aspires to become or achieve	Somewhat clear or specific vision, but rarely used to direct actions or set priorities	Clear and specific vision held by many within the organization and often used to direct actions and set priorities	Clear, specific, and compelling vision, universally held within organization and consistently used to direct actions and set priorities	
Board Governance	Roles of board and management are unclear; board rarely reviews budgets or holds ED accountable	Roles of board and management are clear and the board functions according to by-laws, reviews budgets; it does not regularly review ED performance, monitor potential conflicts of interest, or review audits	Roles of board and management are clear and function well; board reviews budgets, audits; it co-defines performance targets and actively encourages ED to meet targets; annual review of ED's performance, but board not prepared to hire or fire ED	Board and management work well together with clear roles; board fully understands and fulfills fiduciary duties, actively defines performance targets and holds ED fully accountable; board empowered and prepared to hire or fire ED if necessary; board periodically evaluated	
ED Leadership Effectiveness	Some difficulty building trust with others; micromanages projects; inconsistent attention to organizational vision	Some success in building trust with others; generally confident in others' ability to be successful; visible commitment to organization and its vision	Actively and easily builds trust with others; encourages others to succeed; gives others freedom to try out new ideas, and grow; shows constant commitment to organization and its vision; inspires others around vision	Constantly establishes win-win relationships with others, both within and outside the organization; creates opportunities to motivate and promote people's development; articulates path to achieving vision that enables others to see where they are going	

ADAPTIVE CAPACITIES

CAPACITY ELEMENTS	1	2	3	4	SCORE
Strategic Planning	If strategic plan exists, it is rarely or never referenced	Strategic plan exists and sometimes directs management decisions	Strategic planning carried out on a near-regular basis; strategic plan used to guide management decisions	Strategic planning exercise carried out regularly; strategic plan used extensively to guide management decisions	
Evaluation / Performance Measurement	Some data on program activities and outputs (e.g., number of children served) are collected, but outcomes are not measured (e.g., the extent to which the drop-out rate has been lowered)	Solid data on program activities and outputs are regularly collected, and some outcomes are measured	Performance measured and progress tracked in multiple ways on a regular basis; multiple indicators used in evaluation, with primary focus on outcomes	Comprehensive system (e.g., balanced scorecard) used for measuring performance on a continual basis; benchmarking used by staff in target-setting; useful outcome indicators exist in all areas; longitudinal studies conducted	
New Program Development	Limited ability to create new programs; new programs created only in response to funding availability	Limited assessment of gaps in ability of existing programs to meet recipient needs, with little or limited action taken; some ability to modify existing programs and create new programs	Occasional assessment of gaps in ability of existing programs to meet recipient needs; demonstrated ability to modify and fine-tune existing programs and create new programs	Continual assessment of gaps in ability of existing programs to meet recipient needs; efficiently and effectively creates new, innovative programs to meet needs in local area or other geographies	
Assessment of External Environment & Community Needs	Planning not supported by systematically collected information about community needs or external opportunities and threats	Information about community needs or external opportunities and threats used to inform planning, although collection is haphazard	Information about community needs and external opportunities and threats is regularly used to inform planning	Clear, established systems regularly used to assess community needs and external opportunities and threats; information systematically collected and used to support and improve planning efforts	
Partnerships & Alliances	No partnerships or alliances with other for-profit, nonprofit, or public sector entities	If relationships do exist, some may be precarious or not fully mutually beneficial	Some key relationships with a few types of relevant entities (e.g., for-profit, nonprofit, public sector) have been built and leveraged; action around common goals is generally short term	Strong, high-impact, relationships with variety of relevant entities (government as well as for-profit, other nonprofit, and community agencies) are leveraged and maintained; relationships anchored in long-term, mutually beneficial collaboration	

MANAGEMENT CAPACITIES

CAPACITY ELEMENTS	1	2	3	4	SCORE
Staff	Drawn from a narrow range of experiences; interest and abilities limited to present job; little ability to solve problems as they arise	Drawn from somewhat diverse experiences; good capabilities, including some ability to solve problems as they arise; many are interested in work beyond their current jobs and in the success of organization's mission	Drawn from diverse experiences with a broad range of skills; most are highly capable and committed to mission and strategy; eager to learn and develop, and assume increased responsibility	Drawn from extraordinarily diverse experiences with a broad range of skills; most are highly capable in multiple roles and committed to mission, strategy, and continuous learning; eager and able to take on special projects; frequent source of ideas for improvement and innovation	
Funding Model	Strong dependence on a few funders, largely of same type (e.g., government, foundations, corporations, or individuals)	Multiple types of funding sources with only a few funders in each type, or many funders within only one or two types of funders	Solid base of funders from many types of funding sources; some ability to guard against funding instabilities (e.g., operating reserves, small endowment); has developed some sustainable revenue-generating activity	Highly diversified funding streams; organization insulated from potential funding instabilities (e.g., fully developed endowment); has developed strong and sustainable revenue-generating activities	
Financial Operations Management	Gifts and grants deposited and acknowledged; bills paid regularly; supporting documentation collected and retained	Financial activities consistently documented and reported; appropriate checks and balances exist; activities tracked to budget	Established internal controls govern all financial operations; activities fully tracked, supported, and reported; some attention paid to cash flow management	Robust systems and controls govern all financial operations and their integration with budgeting, decision making, and organizational goals; cash flow actively managed	
Recruiting, Development, & Retention of Staff	Very limited training, coaching, and feedback; infrequent performance appraisals; no systems/processes to identify promising new staff and managers	No system for staff development; feedback/coaching occur sporadically; performance evaluated occasionally; inconsistent efforts to identify promising new staff and managers	Limited use of a staff development system; frequent coaching and feedback; performance regularly evaluated; ongoing effort to identify promising new staff and managers	Full use of a staff development system with ongoing coaching and feedback; performance appraisals are institutionalized; Well-planned process to recruit, develop, and retain key managers; ED takes active interest in managerial development	

OPERATIONAL CAPACITIES

CAPACITY ELEMENTS	1	2	3	4	SCORE
Staffing Levels	Some positions within and peripheral to organization (e.g., staff, volunteers, board, senior management) are unfilled, inadequately filled, or experience high turnover and/or poor attendance	Critical positions within and peripheral to organization are staffed, though some inappropriately; attendance problems are limited; high turnover is sometimes a challenge	Critical positions within and peripheral to organization are adequately and appropriately staffed; attendance problems are rare; turnover is limited	All positions within and peripheral to organization are adequately and appropriately staffed; attendance problems are extremely rare; turnover is limited; vacancies filled immediately	
Fundraising	Generally weak fundraising skills and lack of expertise (either internally or accessible externally)	Main fundraising needs covered by some combination of internal skills and expertise, and access to external fundraising assistance (if/when needed)	Fundraising needs adequately covered by well-developed internal fundraising skills; occasional access to some external fundraising expertise (if/when needed)	Highly developed internal fundraising skills and expertise in all funding source types to cover all needs; access to external fundraising expertise for additional extraordinary needs	
Computers, Applications, Network, & Email	Limited/no use of computers or other technology in day-to-day activity and/or little or no usage by staff of existing IT infrastructure	Adequately equipped at central level; incomplete/limited equipment at locations aside from central offices; equipment sharing may be common; satisfactory use of IT infrastructure by staff; periodic training provided to some staff members	Solid hardware and software infrastructure that contributes to increased efficiency; regular use of IT infrastructure by staff, though some accessibility challenges for front-line staff may exist; periodic training provided to all staff members	State-of-the-art, fully networked computing hardware with comprehensive range of up-to-date software applications; all staff have individual computer access and e-mail; high usage level of IT infrastructure by staff; regular training provided to all staff members	
Buildings & Office Space	Inadequate physical space for serving clients and/or providing staff with individual and team work space	Physical space can be made to work well enough to suit organization's most important and immediate needs; a number of improvements could increase effectiveness and efficiency	Fully adequate physical space for the current needs of the organization; decor partially reflects cultural traditions of clients and communities served	Physical space well-suited for current and anticipated future needs; well-designed to enhance effectiveness and efficiency; decor clearly reflects and affirms cultural traditions of clients and communities served	

The Ameen Consulting Organizational Capacity Assessment Tool is a derivative product of the Capacity Assessment Grid created by McKinsey and Company for Venture Philanthropy Partners (www.vpppartners.org), and published in *Effective Capacity Building in Nonprofit Organizations (2001)*. It was modified, reorganized and assembled in document and electronic format by Ameen Consulting & Associates and is used with permission from Venture Philanthropy Partners.