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CENTER FOR AGRO-ECOLOGY

From Reactive to Responsive: Building Organizational Capacity for Nonprofits

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Feeding Our Futures, Moving Forward Together

Eastern Shore Food Security Symposium

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Chesapeake College



ROB LEVIT
LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT AND STRATEGY



Reflection Questions for Capacity-Building: Identifying an Opportunity for Growth

Based in part on "Building Capacity in Nonprofit Organizations", The Urban Institute, 2001

From Survival to Stability (The Foundation)

1. **The "Margin" Check:** Does our organization currently operate with a "frantic pace" that signals constant stress, or have we established a "rhythm and velocity" that allows for deep worker and strategic thinking?
2. **Financial Mindset:** Are we operating with an "allowance mentality" – waiting passively for the next grant – or are we actively building "working capital" and reserves to control our own destiny?
3. **Resource Audit:** Select your goals and priorities. On a scale of 1 (Suboptimal) to 5 (Optimal), how would you score the *Time*, *Energy*, and *Resources* currently allocated to them? Based on this assessment, is the allocation correct?
4. **Human Sustainability:** Are we treating our staff and volunteers like a renewable resource that must be nurtured and replenished, or are we slowly depleting them through burnout and crisis management?
5. **Operational Friction:** Do our internal systems and infrastructure truly "serve our purpose," or is our staff spending disproportionate energy "serving the system" (battling bureaucracy or outdated tools)?

Building Capacity & Governance (The Engine)

1. **The Governance Balance:** In our board meetings, what percentage of time do we spend in *Fiduciary* mode (oversight/compliance) versus *Strategic* (partnership) and *Generative* (visioning) modes? Do we have the right balance?
2. **Leadership Depth:** Are we relying too heavily on a singular leader (founder or executive), or are we actively developing new leadership and the next generation to ensure the organization thrives beyond the current tenure?
3. **Adaptive Capacity:** If the needs of our community or the funding landscape changed strictly tomorrow, does our organization have the "adaptive capacity" to restructure and pivot, or are we rigid in our current programs?
4. **Network Value:** Are we merely extracting resources from our network, or are we a "net contributor" – bringing value, connections, and support to our partners and ecosystem?
5. **Strategic Alliances:** Are we holding onto total autonomy at the expense of impact? Is there a program or function where a strategic alliance (or even a merger) would better serve our mission than trying to go it alone?

Envisioning the Future (The Horizon)

1. **The Innovation Portfolio:** Do we have a defined "portfolio" of new experiments and innovations we are testing, or is 100% of our energy consumed by maintaining legacy programs?
2. **Generative Imagination:** When was the last time our leadership engaged in an "act of imagination" to envision the organization 3, 5, and 10 years from now, rather than just solving the problems of today and next week?
3. **Outcome Clarity:** Are we measuring our success by "outputs" (how many people we served) or by "outcomes" (how the community has fundamentally changed because we exist)?

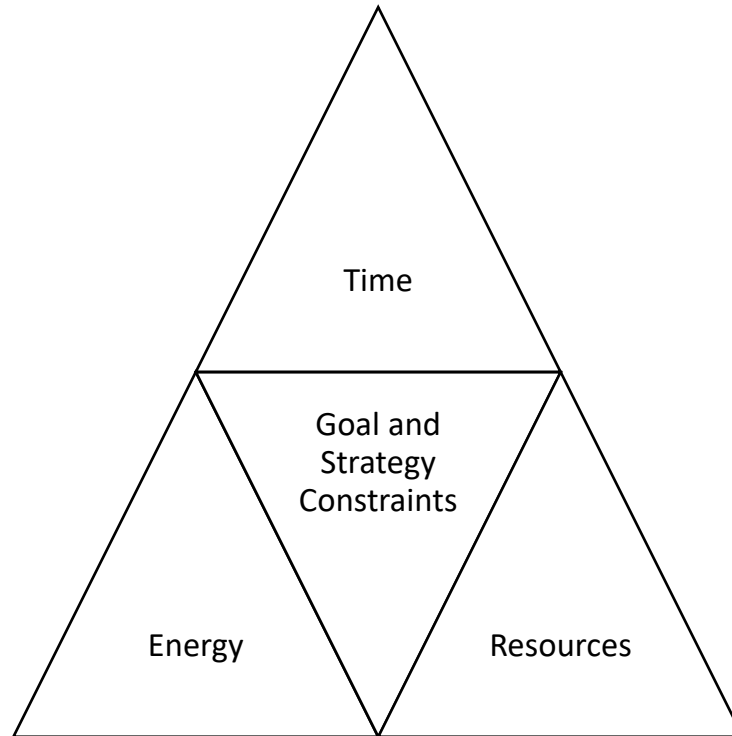
ROE = Return on Energy

Positive Producers	Distractors	Energy Suckers

To Fully Meet Mission

What Must We Do?	
What Should We Do?	
What Could We Do?	

Energy and Capacity Audit: Time – Energy – Resources Matrix



- Columns 1-3: 5 = Optimal, 3 = Sufficient, 1 = Suboptimal
- Columns 4-5: 5 = Highest, 3 = Average, 1 = Lowest

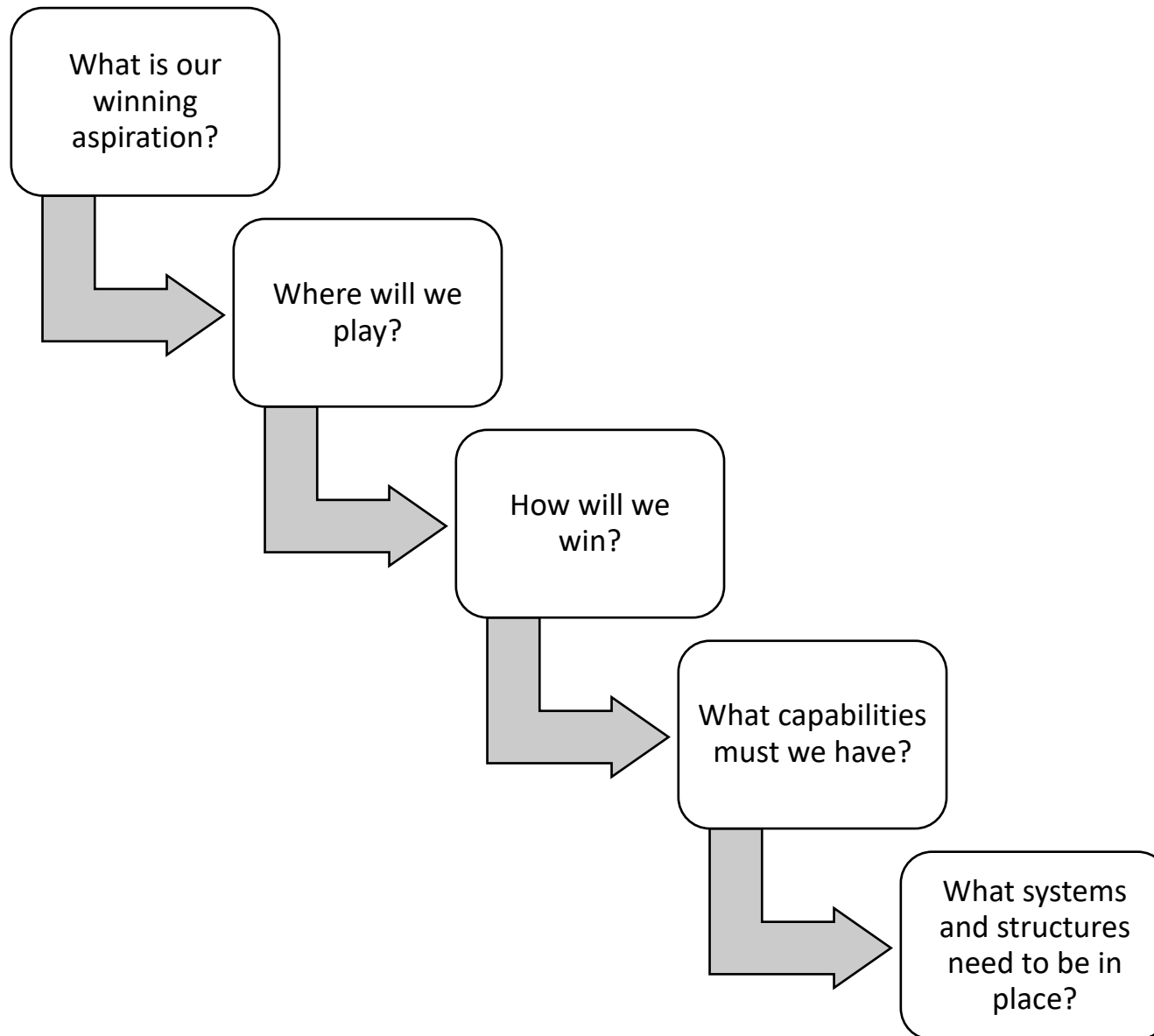
Goal	Time	Energy	Resources	Urgency	Complexity	Score

The Seven Essential Elements of a Nonprofit of Excellence



Element	What We are Doing Well	Δ
Golden Mission		
Engaged Board		
Effective Leadership		
Trained Staff and Volunteers		
Vital Programs		
Diverse and Consistent Funding Sources		
Community Outreach and Partnerships		

The Strategy Cascade – adapted from Lafley and Martin



The Strategy Cascade Guiding Questions

What is our winning aspiration?	The organization's guiding purpose and ultimate definition of success.
Where will we play?	The specific markets, customers, channels, and geographies where the organization will compete.
How will we win?	The unique value proposition and competitive advantage used to succeed in the chosen markets.
What capabilities must we have?	The core activities and specific competencies required to deliver the winning value proposition.
What management systems are required?	The support structures, metrics, and processes needed to execute and sustain the strategy.

Logic Model – A Hypothesis of Organizational Success and Impact

Inputs (What we put in)	Activities (What we do day in, day out)	Outputs (Quantitative measurement of our activities)	Initial Outcomes (Short term results and impact)	Intermediate Outcomes (Medium term results and impact)	Longer-Term Outcomes (Long term results, impact and transformation)

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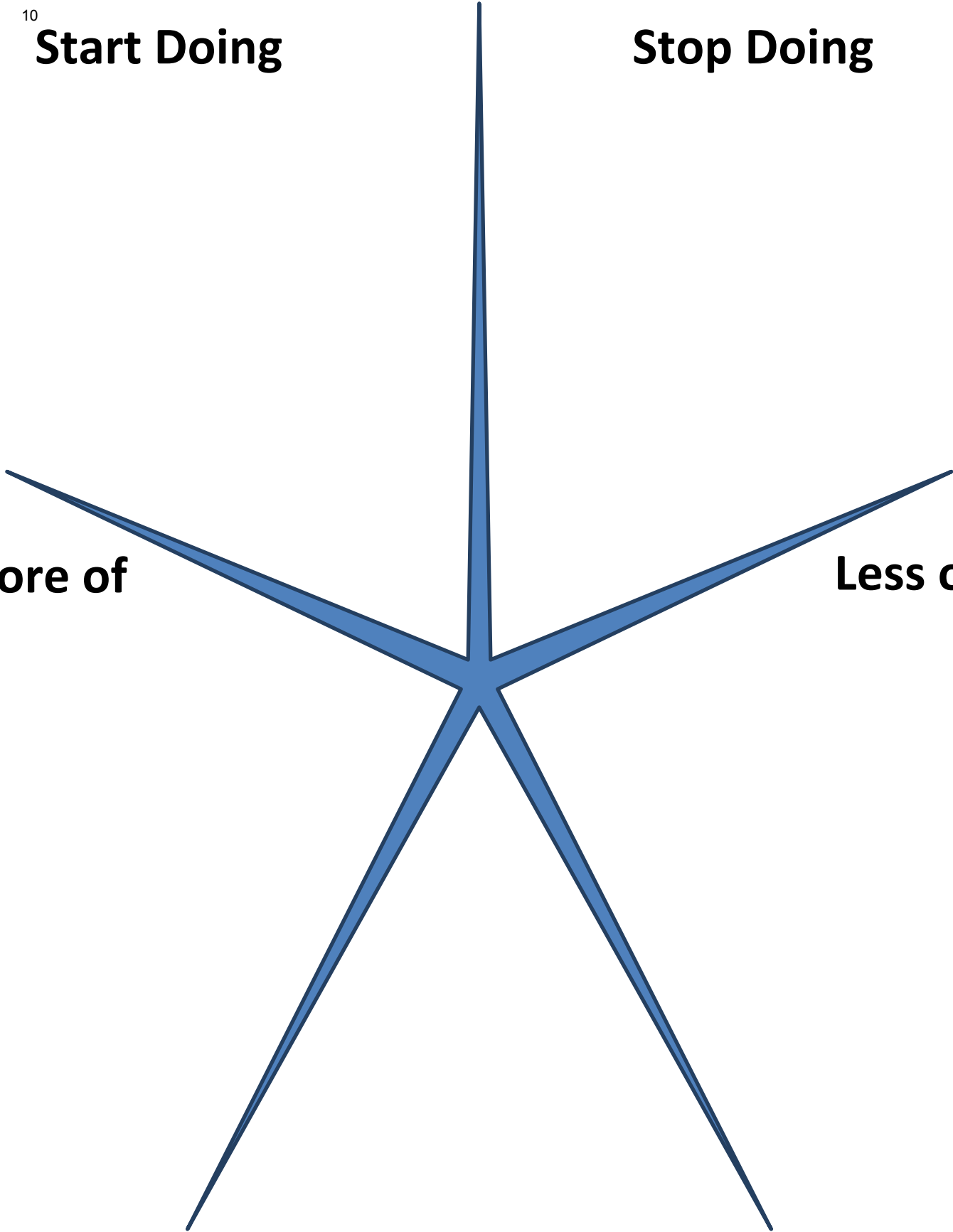
Start Doing

Stop Doing

More of

Less of

Keep Doing



About Rob Levit



Rob Levit is a gifted facilitator and consultant who has worked extensively with educational, corporate and nonprofit clients on strategic planning, team development and leadership skills. He is known for his inclusive, engaging and interactive style that fosters learning, collaboration and clarity for participants. Rob has provided keynotes, trainings and facilitations for a wide array of organizations including the Colorado Oil and Gas Conservation Commission, Exelon, Governor's Office for Children, Maryland Nonprofits, Anne Arundel County Public Schools, American Nurses Association, ASHRM, Talbot County Public Schools, Anne Arundel Medical Center, The World Bank, Maryland Fund for Excellence, Heim Lantz, The New Jersey Hospital Association, Leadership Development Institute, Northwestern Mutual, the TEACH Institute and Hospice of the Chesapeake among many others. Rob is a multi-award-winning nonprofit leader including the 2011 Martin Luther King Peacemaker Award, 2012 Mentor of the Year Award and a 2013 Innovator of the Year Award from The Maryland Daily Record as well as two Community Trustee awards from Leadership Anne Arundel. Rob is also a Licensed Consultant from Maryland Nonprofits' Standards for Excellence Institute®, a Certified Trainer in Workplace Conflict Resolution from the Mediation Institute at Eckerd College and holds an Executive Leadership Certificate from Cornell University.



Dr. Ursula McClymont, Vice President of Medical Affairs, Baltimore Medical System:

I have participated in many leadership seminars (i.e. Center for Creative Leadership, American College of Physicians, Partners in Leadership) over the past few years and found the training sessions facilitated by Mr. Levit to be more practical, informative and challenging. He challenges participants to evaluate themselves in an honest and transparent way. I was able to apply the concepts easily, in a manner that allowed me to measure my successes and failures. His style of teaching keeps you engaged. After four hours, there is no desire to leave because you are captivated. His sessions are thought provoking and challenges participants to be innovative.



Patricia Cully, Director, Parrot Labs Cyber Mission, KeyW Corporation:

It is my pleasure to recommend Rob Levit as a trainer and facilitator for your organization. Mr. Levit delivered a three day train-the-trainer course to a group of our instructors and kept the group focused and on track using engaging and interactive techniques that allowed for maximum collaboration and increased learning. The group consisted mostly of individuals with from technical fields and Rob was able to effectively teach them to use adult learning principles, Bloom's taxonomy, and presentation best practices to in practical and immediately applicable ways to improve training outcomes. The evaluations I received from the students indicated that Rob did an outstanding job and employees at my company have requested him for future trainings.



Jamie Heinmiller, Wellbeing Specialist, Anne Arundel Medical Center:

Rob Levit is an outstanding speaker. I've had the chance to be a part of two different presentations at our Health System. One session was for a leadership training group and the other session was for employee week. Both times, Rob engaged with the diverse teams by using practical examples to get the groups motivated, laughing, and primed with positive energy. Rob himself approaches the audience with energy, making them laugh out loud. The time flies by and never seems like it is long enough. Somehow, he finds a way to connect with everyone in the room. When I think of speakers that made an impact in my work, I think of Rob.