

Capacity Building Programs

Program Overview

The DeVos Institute of Arts Management at the University of Maryland offers two-year teaching and mentoring programs for arts organizations across the United States and around the world. In collaboration with local partners, the Institute typically works with a diverse cohort, providing training and support for management professionals in the arts and cultural sector.

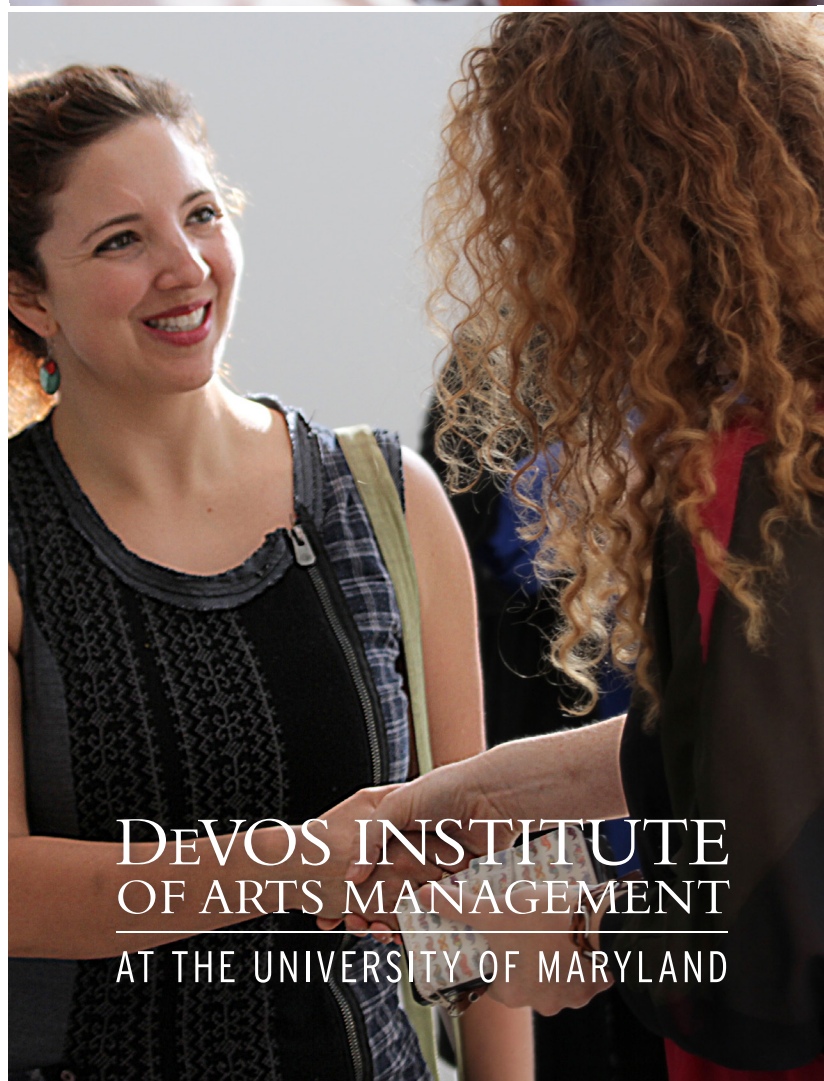
The DeVos Institute's programs are led by Chairman Michael M. Kaiser and President Brett Egan, as well as Institute senior staff and advisors. For each program, the Institute combines core arts management training—principles that influence the sustainability of any arts organization worldwide—with subject-specific master classes and one-on-one consultations.

The DeVos Institute relies on extensive research and close collaboration with local partners to tailor each program to specific conditions faced in the local community.

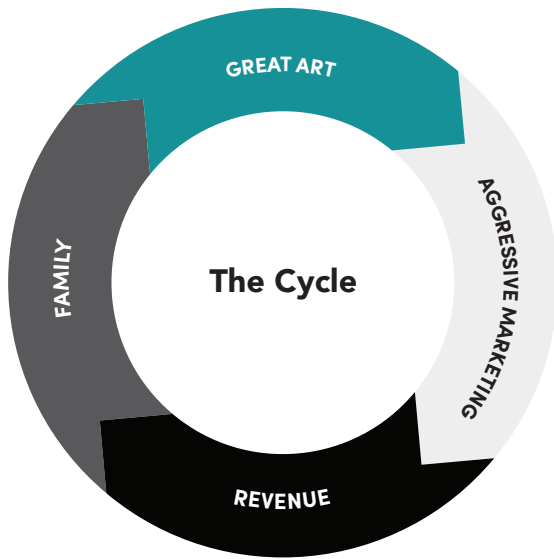
The Cycle

The DeVos Institute's seminars are rooted in a simple, but comprehensive, theory of organizational activity that prioritizes four sequential functions:

1. The consistent production of bold, transformative **art**;
2. Aggressive **marketing** that creates demand for this art, and the institution behind it, attracting and exciting patrons;
3. Cultivation of a "**family**" of supporters—ticket-buyers, trustees, and volunteers—drawn by this art and marketing, and who wish to see the organization succeed; and
4. **Fundraising** that transforms the goodwill of this family into resource through contributions, volunteerism, and board service.



DEVOS INSTITUTE
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AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND



When this “cycle” repeats year after year, all parties—staff, board, and family—sense they are part of a winning enterprise and, committed to the organization’s continued success, grow more generous and productive. This conceptual framework forms the backbone of the Institute’s training, at the heart of which lives total dedication to the long-term planning of great art that engages an ever-increasing pool of audience members.

Online master classes drill down on the topics introduced during the group seminars. One-on-one consultations then allow each organization to develop plans in such critical areas as mission, artistic planning, fundraising, marketing, board governance and engagement, and sponsorship.

Selection Process

Organizations are selected for participation through a competitive application process that assesses their goals, financial status, artistic plans, and commitment to the program. The DeVos Institute works closely with partners in each community—such as foundations and government agencies—to assemble a cohort of dynamic, diverse arts organizations committed to building capacity through the program.

In general, participating organizations are able to articulate an impending opportunity or need that the program would address, and may include those that:

- are on the eve of a major new artistic partnership, program expansion, or diversification of community outreach;
- anticipate succession at the staff or board leadership level;

- are approaching or undergoing a complex real estate transition;
- face an upcoming financial cliff resulting from the conclusion of support from a primary source of funding;
- have made strides in revenue diversification but need to substantially deepen this practice;
- have an exemplary and sustained cultural program but struggle to support day-to-day operations.

Program Outcomes

The programs focus heavily on the development of strategies to combat challenges facing domestic and international arts institutions.

The near-term outcome of each program is the stabilization of participating organizations’ artistic planning, fundraising, and marketing practices. The long-term outcome is a cadre of sustainable organizations that serve as models for other organizations.

Program History

Capacity building programs have been mounted in Baltimore, Boston, Chicago, Dallas, Detroit, Grand Rapids, Greater San José, Los Angeles, Miami, New York City, Orlando, Portland, and San Francisco. Most recently, programs were launched in Atlanta, Austin, Denver, New Orleans, Palm Beach, Pittsburgh, and Washington, DC., as part of the Arts Innovation and Management (AIM) Program in partnership with Bloomberg Philanthropies. AIM is the largest capacity building program of its kind to date.

International capacity building programs have been offered in Croatia, England, Ireland, Trinidad and Tobago, and Vietnam.

The DeVos Institute was also in a six-year partnership with the Ford Foundation to provide intensive support to 27 organizations across the United States. These included four Native American communities, national service provider networks, and a wide array of community-based organizations working at the intersection of social justice and artistic practice.

The DeVos Institute has received support for its work from funding partners worldwide, including the

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American Express Foundation; Arkansas Arts Council; Arts Council England; Bloomberg Philanthropies; Castellano Family Foundation; City of San Jose Office of Cultural Affairs; Dick and Betsy DeVos Family Foundation; DTE Energy Foundation; Dyer-Ives Foundation; Ford Foundation; Frey Foundation; Grand Rapids Community Foundation; Hewlett Foundation; John S. and James L. Knight Foundation; Kresge Foundation; Laura Pels International Foundation for Theater; Miami-Dade County Department of Cultural Affairs; Michigan Council for Arts and Cultural Affairs; Ministry of Arts and Multiculturalism of Trinidad and Tobago; Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Croatia; Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Tourism of Vietnam; Oregon Community Foundation; Steelcase Foundation; Trust for Mutual Understanding; Upper Manhattan Empowerment Zone; William Penn Foundation; and U.S. Department of State.

Program Activities

The DeVos Institute's programs consist of three integrated components:

Group Seminars: The Institute, in partnership with local leadership, hosts a series of group seminars designed to support managers and boards in such areas as:

- Mission
- Long-term Artistic Planning
- Marketing, Communications, and Engagement
- Institutional and Programmatic Marketing
- Fundraising and Revenue Development
- Maximizing Board Productivity
- Strategic Planning, Financial Planning, and Implementation

Each organization's executive director (or equivalent), artistic director (or equivalent), and governing board chair are expected to attend each seminar.

Planning Prompts: To support progress between seminars, the Institute has developed a suite of practical planning prompts. These no-nonsense tools assist managers and their boards in the development of concrete next steps in follow up to each seminar. Ultimately, these planning assignments can be combined to contribute to a strategic plan.

Online Master Classes: Between seminars, organizations also participate in online master classes hosted in a webinar format—to share progress and challenges, and deepen dialogue on areas of focus. Most master classes will review a set of planning prompts submitted by volunteers for feedback from an Institute representative in the group setting.

Consultative Services: Tailored assistance to each organization takes place in two forms: one-on-one consultations and site visits.

One-on-one consultations provide hands-on assistance to each organization as it develops and implements plans in each core competency area. Each organization is paired with an Institute advisor based on organizational discipline and key areas of interest.

Participants and their advisors convene monthly via conference calls to track progress, troubleshoot challenges, and refine strategies.

Program participants define the objectives of their one-on-one consultation in the form of one- and two-year benchmarks in 12 key areas, which are refined in consultation with their assigned advisor.

These objectives structure the consultative support and serve as a "contract" between the participating organization, the Institute, and the program partners.

Site visits are offered to each participating organization to discuss challenges specific to the organization.

Evaluation

Each organization evaluates its progress at the beginning and end of the program through the Cycle Audit, the Institute's organizational self-diagnostic. This evaluation is designed to assist each organization in its effort to evaluate and maximize its capacity in each area of the Cycle and establish a baseline from which to measure progress during the program.



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"This has been one of the most valuable experiences in the history of our organization. We are thankful foundations value the arts and recognize the need for capacity building, which is critical to our growth. The various seminars and training on the best practices regarding boards, development, and financial management have really helped to strengthen our organizational operations and to think about new ways of accomplishing certain tasks."

Jenenne Whitfield, Program Participant
Executive Director, The Heidelberg Project
Detroit, Michigan

"You and your instruction have made it possible for us to grow into a thriving mid-size organization in Dallas. We are now primed to go national and become a nationally recognized dance company. I'm not sure if that this vision would have been achievable if BWDP was not a part of this program."

Gayle Halperin, Program Participant
President/Producer, Bruce Wood Dance Project
Dallas, Texas

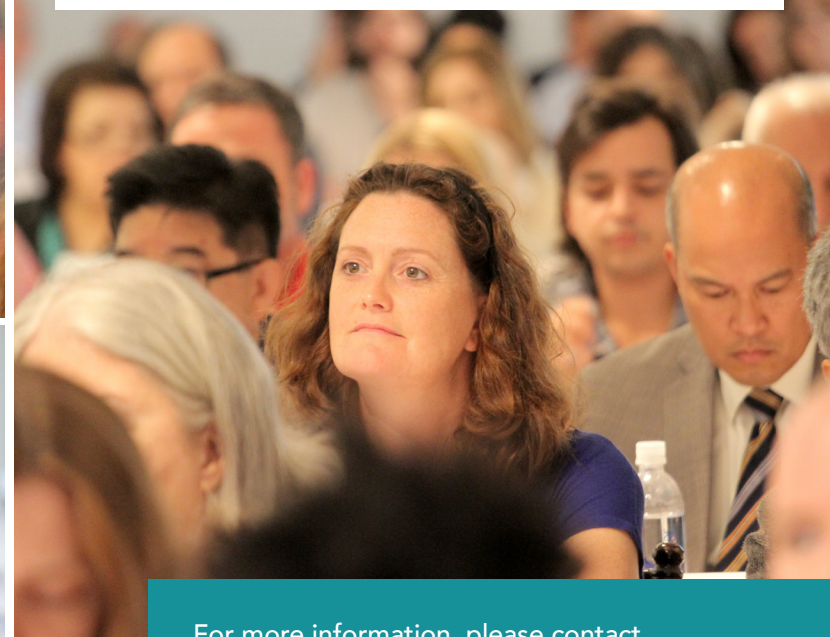


"The capacity building seminars offered senior staff three commodities in short supply for nonprofits: time; expertise; and support to reflect and develop new strategies and tactics to achieve our programmatic and fundraising goals."

Ellen Metzger, Program Participant
Strategic Advisor, Artists for Humanity
Boston, Massachusetts

"The DeVos Institute programme has led to a complete shift in mindset within the organisation. We are now thinking holistically about our artistic programme, marketing, fundraising, and family growth."

Cian O'Brien, Program Participant
Artistic Director, Project Arts Centre
Dublin, Ireland



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Impact

The DeVos Institute's training programs for communities balance universal best practices with rigorous study of local conditions to deliver timely, practical advice for managers and their boards in cities throughout the world.

Recent programs in Detroit, Michigan (2010–12) and Dublin, Ireland (2012–14) focused on revenue diversification under difficult economic circumstances. Deep recessions in both regions had decimated foundation, corporate, and government funding; parallel losses in earned revenue followed shortly thereafter.

While program participants differed in scale, artistic discipline, capacity, and background, most recognized that a shift in organizational strategy and culture was a necessity. Even for those that had entered the recession on firm footing, most participants in both cities came to the program aggressively seeking new sources of revenue.

The Institute entered both communities in partnership with local leadership, utilizing its theory of management, the Cycle, as the framework for a three-part training program consisting of group seminars, online master classes, and extensive one-on-one consultation.

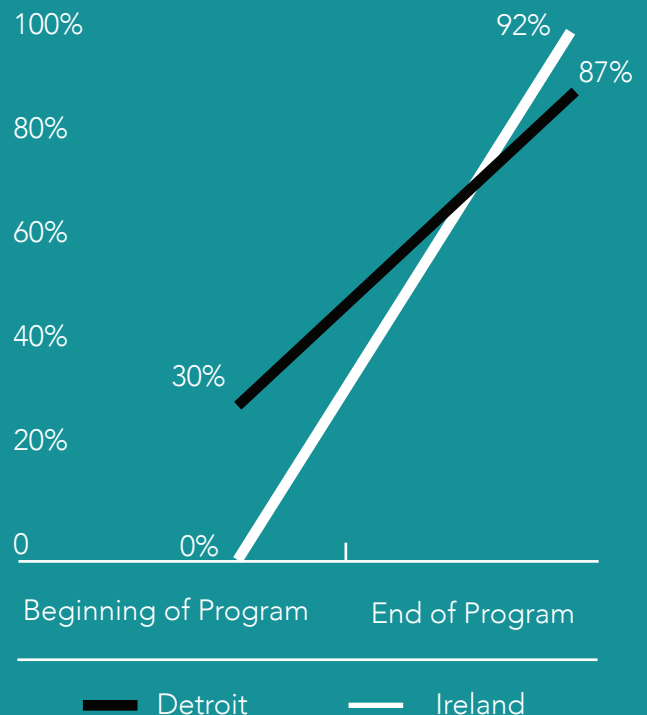
An Emphasis on World-Class Programming

Each program began with a study of the conditions required to produce high-quality, transformational programming. In both Detroit and Ireland, the historical dominance of corporate and public philanthropy—often made on an annual basis—had lulled many organizations into an 11-month planning cycle; the art was “following the money.” When that money became increasingly unpredictable, the scale and quality of the art took a hit in many instances. A frustrating “Catch-22” resulted: the short planning timeframe was inhibiting organizations from attracting the best artistic collaborators, sufficiently marketing their offerings, exciting and engaging their “family” of supporters, and attracting new donors.

The first step—both a leap of faith and a key strategy—was to begin to dream again, and to share that vision more broadly and more often. By extending

their planning timeframes, organizations began to give themselves the time required to market their offerings more aggressively and build a more diverse base of support. They also opened new paths of communication with key funding partners, including their counterparts in government and private philanthropy.

Planning Major Activities One Year or More in Advance



- The number of organizations planning programming less than one year in advance decreased by 92 percentage points in Ireland and 57 in Detroit.
- The number of organizations planning programming more than two years in advance increased by 17 percentage points in Ireland and 6 in Detroit.

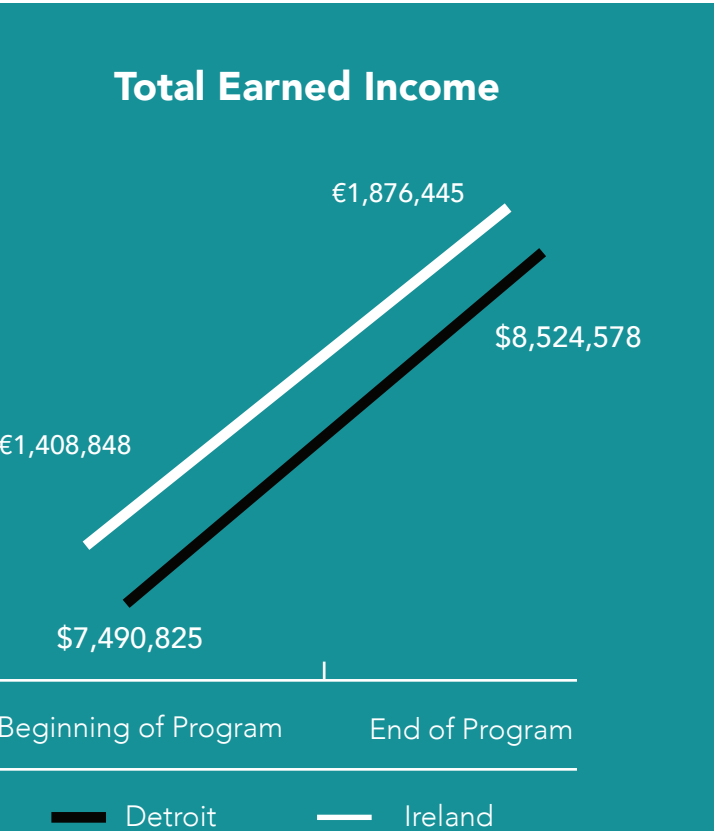
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Two Strategies for Aggressive Marketing

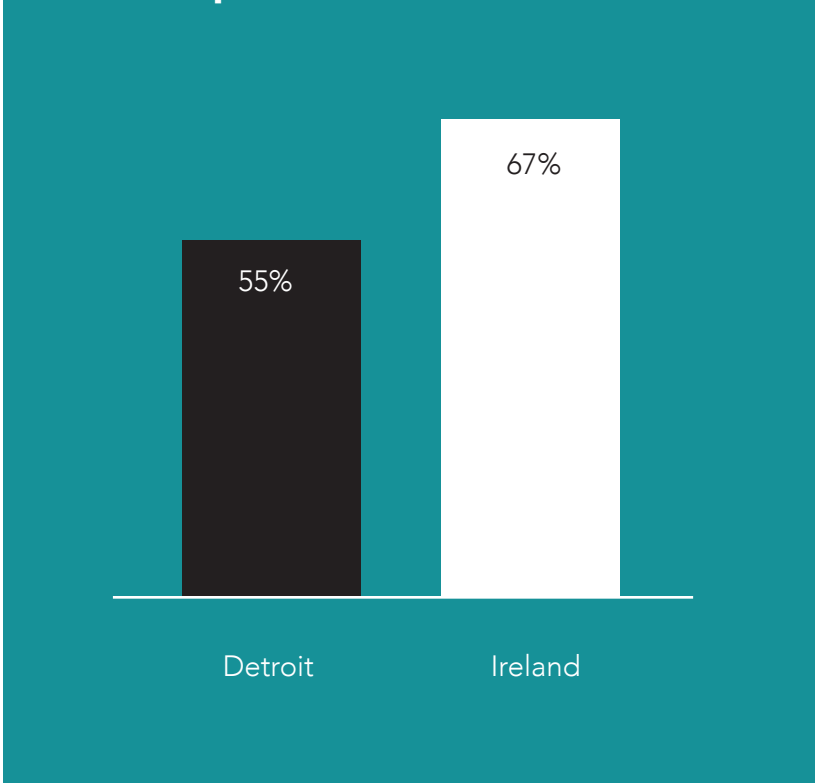
To produce adventurous and meaningful art, organizations must compete aggressively for audiences' attention and loyalty through effective marketing. Programmatic marketing sells tickets and drives participation, while institutional marketing emphasizes creative use of organizational assets to elevate visibility, create loyalty, and build enthusiasm. Through training in both perspectives on marketing, participating organizations reported significant growth in earned income from ticket sales, fees, merchandise, and other sources.

- In Detroit, total earned income increased 14 percent—an average of \$51,688 per organization—on a median annual budget of \$487,000.
- In Ireland, 58 percent of responding organizations increased earned income, and by an average of 54 percent, or 6 percent of total annual revenue.

Additionally, a majority of participants in both programs expanded their reach to serve new audiences—another key indicator of marketing effectiveness, engagement, community impact, and financial diversification.



Expanded Audience Base



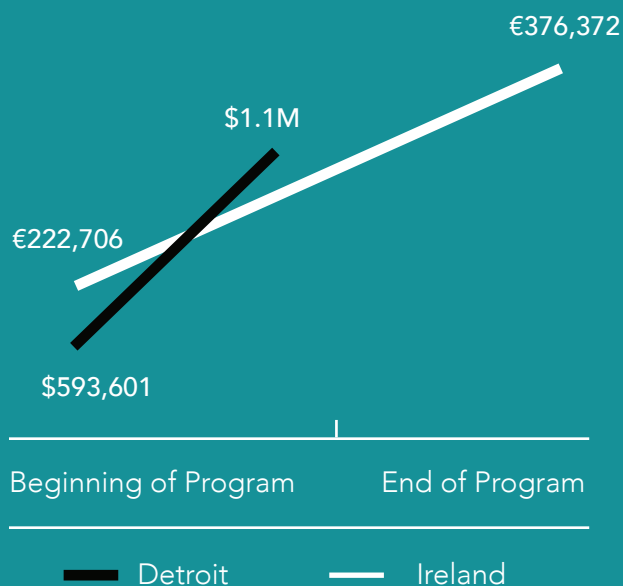
Fundraising

In both environments, fundraising posed specific challenges. Detroit's deep economic recession eroded the historical dominance of generous foundations and corporate philanthropy—and exposed the need for private philanthropy. In Ireland, public subsidy had, for most organizations, replaced the need for meaningful private investment. In both environments, most organizations required a culture shift toward a more broad-based approach to revenue diversification. Through a focus on building an increasingly diverse "family" of donors, foundation officers, board members, and volunteers, participants in both programs delivered impressive results:

- In Detroit, contributions from individuals increased 85 percent, from \$593,601 to \$1.1 million across the cohort.
- In Ireland, where private philanthropy is nascent, total contributions from individuals increased by 69 percent, from €222,706 to €376,372.
- In Detroit, the number of individual donors to participating organizations increased by 29 percent.

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Increased Contributions from Individual Donors



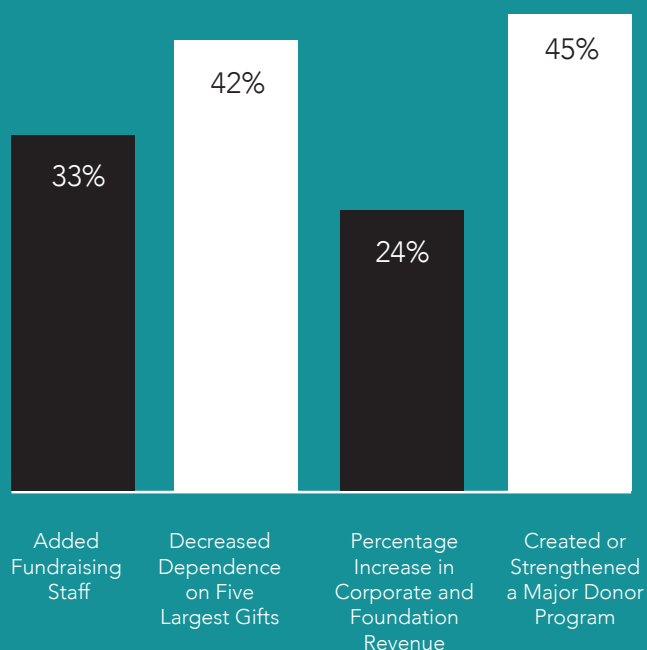
- In Ireland, the number of individual donors increased by 16 percent.
- In Ireland, 42 percent of organizations decreased dependence on their top five largest gifts as a percentage of their total contributed income, indicating progress on donor diversification.

Board Productivity and Engagement

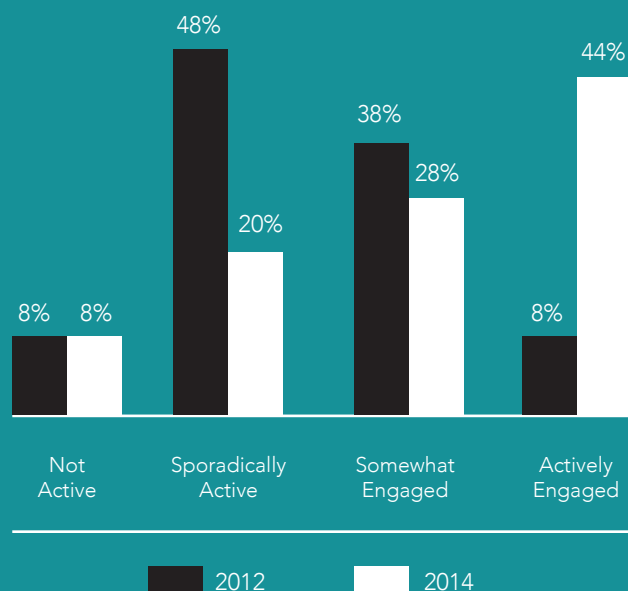
The role of volunteer trustees varies by environment and organization. But one principle applies in virtually every context: nonprofit staffs can rarely build a truly diverse, growing family on their own, and the goodwill and ambassadorship of others are essential. The role of the American board is, almost without exception, to provide governance and to raise funds on behalf of the organization. Increasingly, boards in other parts of the world are embracing fundraising as a core responsibility. However, many staffs have yet to provide their busy, volunteer trustees with the structure required to be effective fundraisers; similarly, many boards have yet to focus their energy on activities that will truly move the mission and finances of the organization forward. These issues received heightened focus as part of both the Detroit and Ireland programs. As a result:

- 65 percent of organizations in Detroit reported a meaningful increase in board engagement, resulting in an expanded board, a more productive board, or more board giving.
- In Ireland, 90 percent of organizations reported an engaged board, up from only 50 percent at the beginning of the program and indicative of strong progress on a fundamental indicator of an organization's fundraising strength.

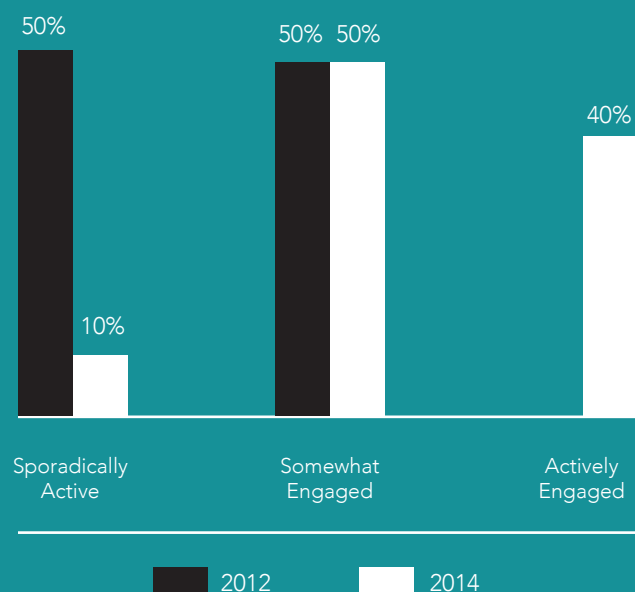
Ireland : Key Performance Indicators in Fundraising



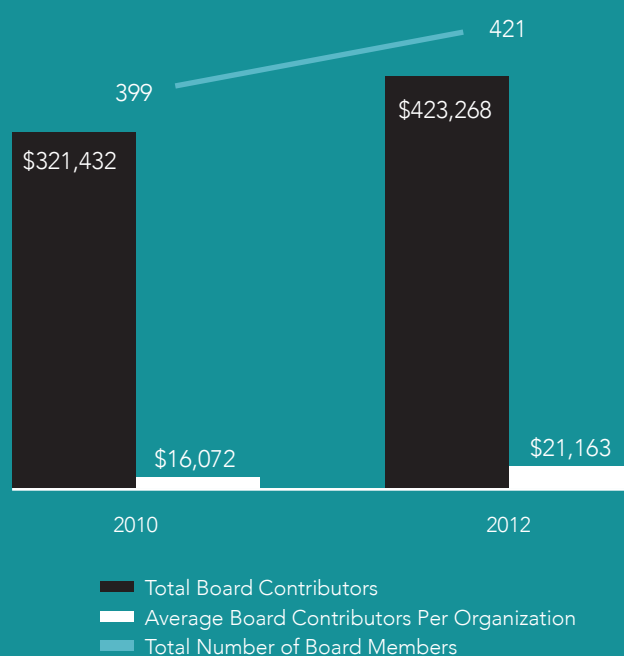
Detroit: Board Engagement



Ireland: Board Engagement



Detroit: Board Members and Contributors



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