

When You Need Support and Can't Add Staff

How nonprofits are using focused strategic support to navigate funding pressure, limited capacity, and organizational strain

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Right now, many nonprofit leaders are facing a difficult reality:

Funding is shifting.

Budgets are tightening.

Teams are stretched thin.

And more responsibility continues to fall on fewer people.

For many organizations, the instinct is understandable:

“We'll just carry more ourselves.”

“We can't afford additional support.”

“We'll revisit strategy when things calm down.”

As a former Executive Director, I know this mindset well. In moments of uncertainty, leaders often take on more in an effort to protect their organization, save money, and keep things moving forward.

But over time, this approach can create a different kind of cost:

Important work gets delayed.

Fundraising becomes reactive.

Boards disengage or remain unclear on their role.

Strategic planning gets pushed aside for immediate needs.

Leadership burnout increases.

And eventually, organizations find themselves working harder, and not necessarily moving forward.

There Is a Middle Ground

For many nonprofits, the answer right now is not hiring additional full-time staff. And it may not be a large consulting engagement either.

Increasingly, organizations are exploring focused or fractional strategic support as a way to create structure, momentum, and leadership partnership during periods of strain or transition.

This type of support is designed to meet organizations where they are:

- Flexible in scope
- Short-term or ongoing
- Focused on immediate priorities
- Embedded enough to provide meaningful support
- Strategic without adding unnecessary complexity

The goal is not to “take over” an organization.

The goal is to help leaders stop carrying everything alone.

What Focused Strategic Support Can Actually Look Like

Every organization’s needs are different, but this kind of support often includes areas such as:

Clarifying Priorities

When everything feels urgent, it can become difficult to determine what actually deserves time and attention. Focused support can help leadership teams identify realistic priorities aligned with current capacity and resources.

Strengthening Board Engagement

Many organizations are realizing that boards need to play a more active role during periods of financial uncertainty. This work may involve clarifying expectations, improving communication, or helping boards become stronger strategic and fundraising partners.

Creating Sustainable Fundraising Structures

In moments of funding pressure, the instinct is often to simply “do more fundraising.” But sustainable fundraising requires focus, alignment, and realistic expectations. Strategic support can help organizations identify where effort will have the greatest impact without overextending already stretched teams.

Supporting Leadership During Transition or Growth

Whether navigating staffing changes, organizational growth, funding shifts, or leadership fatigue, having an external strategic partner can create space for clearer thinking and stronger decision-making.

Moving Strategy Into Action

Many organizations already know what they want to do. The challenge is often capacity, accountability, and implementation. Focused support can help create structure and momentum so important work continues moving forward.

What This Is Not

Focused strategic support is not:

- A replacement for your team
- A lengthy report that sits on a shelf
- Someone coming in to “fix” your organization
- A one-size-fits-all consulting model

Instead, it is a collaborative approach designed to support leaders, strengthen organizational clarity, and create realistic forward movement during challenging periods.

Why Organizations Are Exploring This Right Now

Nonprofit leaders are being asked to navigate an increasingly difficult landscape:

- Funding uncertainty
- Increased operational pressure
- Staffing limitations
- Leadership fatigue
- Expanding organizational demands

In many cases, organizations do not need more activity. They need clearer focus, stronger alignment, and strategic support that matches the reality of their current capacity.

Sometimes the most valuable investment is not adding another permanent role.

It is creating enough space, structure, and partnership for leadership to move forward sustainably.

If this resonates with where your organization is right now, I'd be glad to [connect](#) and explore what focused strategic support could look like for your team.



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