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Sustainability Strategies for Nonprofit Organizations During General Economic Downturns

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Abstract

Many leaders of nonprofit organizations (NPOs) lack strategies to build and maintain a financially sustainable organization to continue providing vital social services. The purpose of this single case study was to explore the financial strategies some NPO leaders used to maintain financial sustainability during general economic downturns. Five purposively selected leaders of an NPO in northwestern Indiana participated in the study. The resource dependency theory and the change management theory were the conceptual frameworks that guided the study. Data were collected from face-to-face and telephone interviews and a review of company documentation. Member checking was conducted with participants and data triangulation occurred with an analysis of organization documents that reinforced the validity of the findings. Data were analyzed using Yin's 5-step process of coding of participants' responses, including examining, categorizing, tabulating, creating a data display, and testing the data. Data analysis of organizational documents, interview transcripts, and the organization's social media sites revealed 3 themes: partnerships, fundraising, and diversification as the strategies used to maintain financial sustainability during periods of economic downturns. The findings of this study might contribute to positive social change by providing information to NPO leaders to help improve financial strategies and sustainability for community service organizations during general economic downturns and maintain social services.

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