

Southwest Florida Nonprofit Capacity Report 2017

**Report prepared for the Southwest Florida Community Foundation by
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Introduction

Under the mission of cultivating regional change for the common good, the Southwest Florida Community Foundation (Foundation) has been seeking ways to help local nonprofit organizations (NPOs) reach their goals, to build their capacity. Capacity is the ability of NPOs to fulfill their missions in an effective manner (De Vita & Fleming, 2001). Supporting NPOs in building their organizational capacity not only helps each individual organization, but enhances their ability to contribute to shared goals (Banyai & Fleming, 2017), making regional change possible.

The Nonprofit Capacity Survey (Survey) is one such initiative. Since 2012, the Foundation has worked with regional partners, such as the United Way of Lee, Hendry, Glades, and Okeechobee counties and the City of Fort Myers, to distribute the Survey based on the Core Capacity Assessment Tool (CCAT) (TCC Group, 2015).

The Survey is administered with the intention of learning with NPOs about organization capacity in our region. The aggregated regional results inform capacity building interventions led by the Foundation, such as the grantee tribes. Additionally, the report process is designed to support individual agencies on their quest for improvement as an organizational capacity building intervention itself, providing direct support back to NPOs in the form of a tailored confidential agency results report with introductory recommended capacity building resources.

This report provides some additional information about how the Survey has been administered and shared through the years, as well as the most recent regional results on nonprofit capacity and capacity building areas.

Background

The Survey measures capacity across four areas:

- (1) Leadership - mission, goal-setting, board development, and executive effectiveness;
- (2) Adaptive capacity - strategic planning and evaluation, overall ability of an organization to react to change;
- (3) Management - achievement of results, donor relations, and decision-making, and
- (4) Technical - volunteer management, facilities and corporate infrastructure; and communications and marketing.

These four areas of organizational capacity have been determined to be key factors in NPO success and effectiveness (TCC Group, 2015), and gaining an understanding of these four areas regionally helps with capacity building efforts and the ability of organizations to engage in collaborative work around shared goals (Banyai & Fleming, 2017).

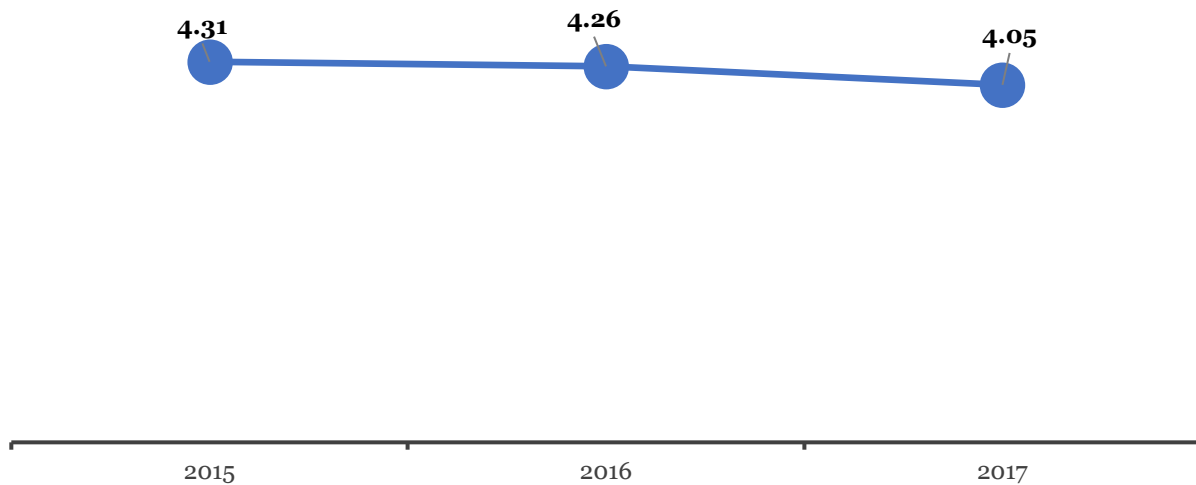
The survey has been administered five times, in 2012, 2014, 2015, 2016, and 2017 gathering data from nearly 300 local nonprofit organizations, including the most active organizations in the region. The Survey went through a major overhaul in 2015 to make it easier for NPOs to take and benefit from participating in the Survey. The last three administrations, 2015, 2016, 2017, were the same version, meaning that now there is a more stable and reliable data set to work from to make regional analyses. All regional analysis starts with 2015 for this reason.



2017 Results

A total of 101 nonprofits took the survey in 2017, including Foundation grantees where the Survey is used to help support and track direct capacity building efforts. This regional analysis reflects the 81 NPOs that voluntarily elected to take the Survey. The average weighted composite score for SWFL NPOs in 2017 was 4.05/5.0, a drop of 4.9% from 2016. Regional aggregated composite score averages from 2015-2017 can be seen in Figure 1.

Figure 1 - Regional composite capacity scores 2015-2017

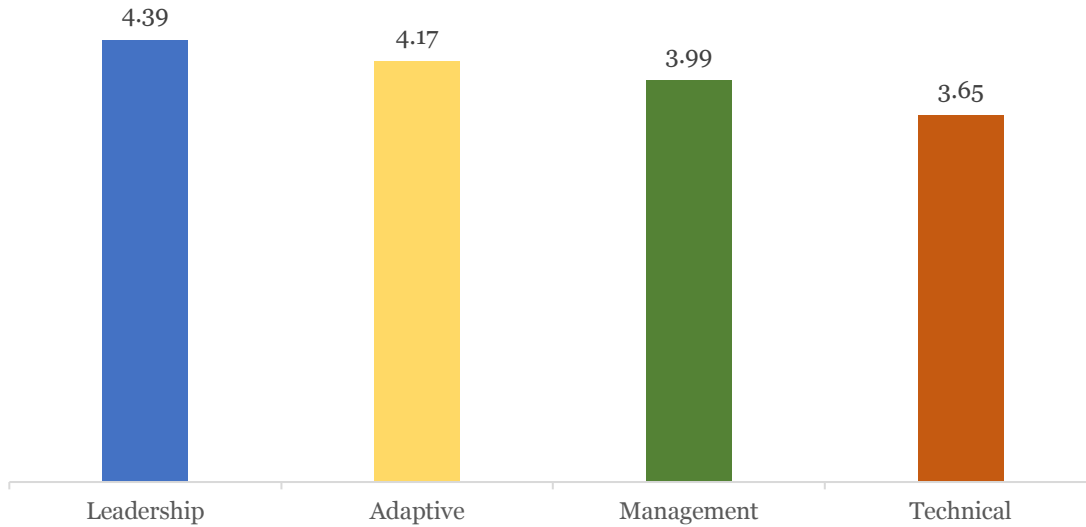


However, this should not necessarily be interpreted as an actual decline in capacity. First, not every agency takes the Survey every year, meaning there are a variety of different NPOs reporting each year and they have a wide variety of capacities and sophistication. Second, there is an element of trust building and learning that is occurring through the Survey. This can be seen through the Survey scores of those participating in the grantee tribe. It is not uncommon for NPOs to report unrealistically high scores (nearly perfect) on the Survey pre-test before engaging in the tribe process. On the post-test Survey, after nearly a year of monthly technical assistance and peer interactions, NPOs typically report slightly lower, more realistic, assessments of their capacity on the Survey. This can be attributed, in part, to image management, considering the Foundation is a funder to many NPOs and they want to show themselves in the best possible light. However, as can be seen in the tribe, as NPOs interact with the Foundation more regularly and recognize that there is a genuine interest in their organizational development and that the Foundation is not using the results for decision-making, the scores calibrate and become more useful.

Additionally, the Survey serves as a capacity building intervention itself by introducing key concepts in organization capacity to local nonprofits. From the first administration all four areas of capacity improved, which is largely attributed to the nonprofits becoming more aware of the importance of capacity by taking the survey.

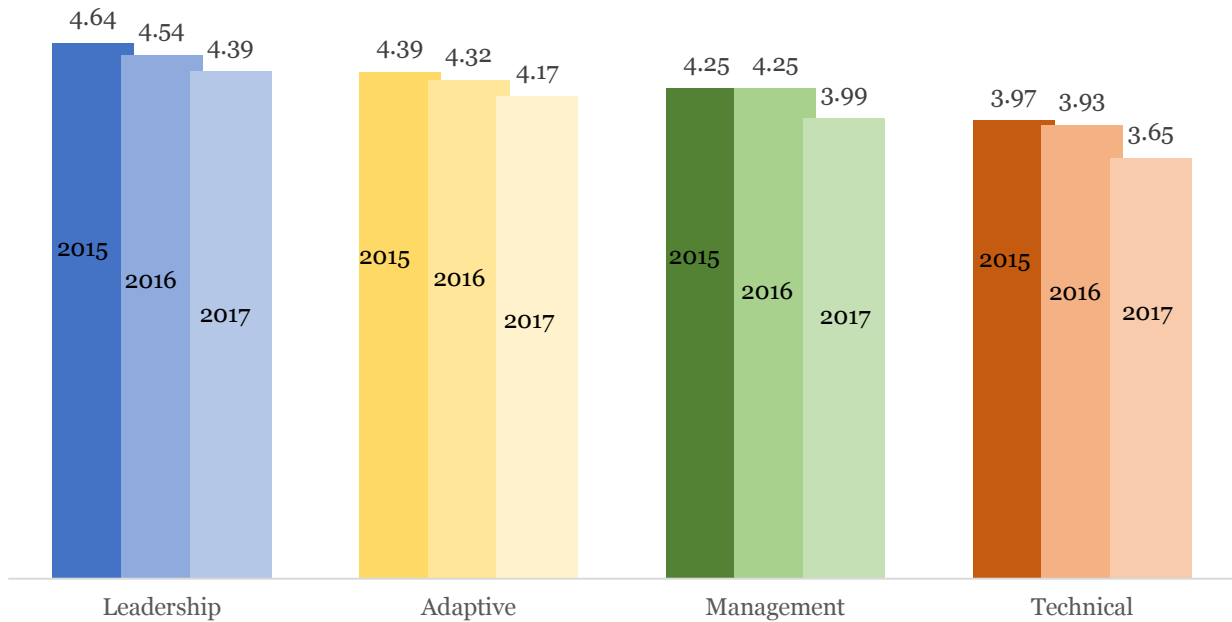
When looking at each of the capacity areas, NPOs report the most capacity in leadership and least in technical. Figure 2 shows the 2017 regional average scores in each of the four capacity areas tested on the Survey.

Figure 2 - Regional average capacity by area 2017



When comparing each of the capacity areas year to year, the same trend as in the composite scoring emerges – scores are pushing downward toward a more realistic reflection of capacity. While the overall trend data may not be useful for drawing conclusions, the relative scores between the capacity areas are. SWFL NPOs believe they are doing well in leadership, are somewhat adaptive and managed well, but need the most support in their technical capacity. With the lowest capacity scores begin reported in technical capacity, a picture of SWFL NPOs needing overhead support begins to emerge.

Figure 3 - SWFL regional capacity by area 2015-2017



From year to year on the Survey, the top areas of concern in NPO capacity has changed only slightly. Overall, the lowest scoring questions across the region have posed consistent challenges across the years, with minor reshuffling of prioritization year to year. Table 1 shows the specific areas that were most often identified by SWFL NPOs as places in need of improvement in 2017. Highlighted in yellow are the most frequently cited area of concern for local NPOs. Focusing on these areas will build NPO capacity in individual organizations and the region.

Table 1 - Regional areas for capacity building

Leadership	Adaptive	Management	Technical
Organization's connectivity and use of strategic goals	Strategic planning	Active, growing donor base	Having enough staff
Board diversity	Development of new, relevant programs	Performance targets linked to strategy	Having enough technology for operations
Organization culture, identity	Making adjustments based on performance data	Formal, clear system for decision-making	Database management, reporting

References

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