

## OPEN FORUM

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### **Facilitated by Michael Ruane Children and Families Commission of OC**

The Open Forum was scheduled at the close of the Summit, and focused on soliciting feedback and suggestions on the day's outcomes and structure, and on identifying ways in which nonprofit leaders could continue to engage on subjects of critical import to the sector. Comments are organized into three sections: Participants and Structure, Further Topics for Discussion, | Suggestions to Support the Sector.

#### **Participants and Structure**

While many were encouraged by the large group who attended the Summit, some pointed out that certain groups seemed underrepresented. Missing or underrepresented groups mentioned included:

- ❖ Faith-based communities;
- ❖ Organizations serving minority and diverse populations;
- ❖ Smaller grassroots organizations;
- ❖ Organizations doing prevention programs and services (community organizing);
- ❖ Organizations involved with the 10 Year Plan to End Homelessness in Orange County.

One major concern seemed to be the lack of funder presence at the Summit, although several were in attendance. Funders were not, however, listed in the participant directory. Though it was mentioned that Orange County does not have many regional funders, one suggestion was to include county or state funders in the event as well.

There were also a few comments about the Summit structure. The Board participation element seemed greatly appreciated, and though funder participation seemed unbalanced, the interactions of CEOs/EDs with Board Members and funders were productive. One participant also suggested that smaller versions of the Summit event happen on a regular basis. Again, a better funder to nonprofit ratio was desired in future events.

#### **Further Topics for Discussion**

The largest discussion centered on which further topics nonprofit leaders would like to see discussed and what topics they felt were left unaddressed at the Summit. Suggested topics included the following:

- ❖ Supporting leveraged activities and efforts

- ❖ High level perspective on board/government development
- ❖ Expert perspectives on Finance, PR, and marketing trends
- ❖ Social enterprise funding resources
- ❖ How to develop an aligned grants database (e.g., California Grants Project)
- ❖ Supporting overhead
- ❖ Tax implications for nonprofits—new 990 regulations
- ❖ Nontraditional project funding
- ❖ HR capacity
- ❖ IT infrastructure needs
- ❖ Collaborative advocacy to influence policy
- ❖ Linkages between state/national opportunities and local nonprofit community
- ❖ Orange County vision for our community

### **Future Steps Regarding the Nonprofit Sector**

Participants gave several suggestions on what they would like to see happen in the nonprofit sector, and what they would like to be championed by nonprofits, funders, or both. These suggestions often overlapped with the desire to see certain topics discussed in the future.

Relative to continuing the momentum begun by the Summit, participants suggested:

- ❖ Create an ad-hoc council of funders and nonprofit executives to draft an action plan from today's experience and oversee its implementation
- ❖ Offer an annual event like this in Orange County
- ❖ Generate more Board-ED-Funder interactions like this one

General suggestions for strengthening the sector included:

#### *Nonprofit Organization-specific:*

- ❖ Rethink Public Relation strategies
- ❖ Encourage involvement in public policy
- ❖ Create a collective purchasing community to buy technical services, office supplies, insurance, etc.

#### *Funder-specific:*

- ❖ Fund a pool of human resource, legal, etc., professional resources for nonprofits to tap into
- ❖ Be realistic about overhead costs
- ❖ Rethink mandatory collaboration

- ❖ Create a streamlined grants database, or common grant application

*General:*

- ❖ Have a local broker to link state and national opportunities with local nonprofits
- ❖ Encourage advocacy at the federal level to ensure changing tax laws affect nonprofits in a positive way
- ❖ Provide more funding and partnerships for nontraditional projects
- ❖ Create an OC image—the real OC versus the perceived OC (i.e., business leaders need to see that there are unemployed, homeless people)
- ❖ Create a unified vision for the nonprofits in OC

This last significant suggestion concerned the creation of a collective vision for a healthy nonprofit community in Orange County. After one participant expressed the need for a heightened focus on safety-net services, the point was made that the County needs a comprehensive vision for a healthy community that includes education, arts, and culture.

The Open Forum ended on the positive response that participants would like to have a Summit annually.