

## How to Use This Book

This book is not about how to retrench or get “lean and mean” in the face of tightening financial resources. Nonprofits that faced major cutbacks in the 1980s will wince at the recollection of those terms and processes. Today’s situation is different, and we advocate a different set of solutions in this book—expanding and deepening your nonprofit’s connection to the community; revisiting and, if necessary, revising your mission; and considering other approaches that get at the heart of mission work. At the same time, many of those past strategies can be enormously important in helping you overcome short-term crises, manage change, and use your resources more effectively, even as you adapt to a changed social, political, and fiscal environment.

Here are tips on how to use this book, as well as an explanation of how the various sections fit together.

- Chapter 1 attempts to answer the question What’s going on out there? In this chapter, we give an overview of the current situation. We discuss possible impacts and opportunities as a result of the changes under way. We also tell you how a cross section of nonprofit managers we surveyed is planning to respond to the situation. This chapter is background information. Use it to help you understand the changes afoot and how they might affect your organization.
- Chapter 2 presents an alternative model for thinking about your resources and your mission—what we call arenas of influence. We describe four basic approaches that fit different types of organizations: Take Care of Business, Bet on the Board, Work with Your Allies and Partners, and Come to the Table. These approaches extend from those that give the organization the most control to those that rely most on the involvement of people outside the organization. In this chapter, our goal is to help you see a new way of thinking about the environment you work in and to suggest ways you can work differently as a result.

- Chapter 3 outlines a process your organization can use as it figures out how to respond to cutbacks or shifting resources. We walk you through a six-step process that ultimately results in your selection of the best possible options for your organization. Our goal in this chapter is to translate the information in Chapter 2 into a process that fits your unique situation. This process will work whether you are in an organization that faces an immediate crisis, in an organization that wants to maintain a high degree of central control, or in an organization that wants to reach far out into the community and rely on many partners.
- Chapter 4 is a laundry list of strategies. Use this chapter if you prefer lists as a way of learning. We have collected a number of strategies for coping with restricted resources and organized them into three broad categories: Financial Strategies, Structural Strategies, and Engagement Strategies. You can read through this list to get a sense of the many approaches possible for coping with a change in your budget and to understand what others in your situation have tried. Some of the strategies apply to crises, others to organizational change, and still others to a new way of working as advocated in Chapter 2.
- Finally, we include Appendices: a strategies checklist, reproducible worksheets, and an explanation of our research process. A bibliography that highlights a few resources we think are especially helpful completes the book.