

The Grand Experiment

What would happen if a local foundation were to provide select nonprofits with access to fundraising counsel?

Funded by

The Assisi Foundation of Memphis, Inc.

Dr. Jan Young, Executive Director

Conducted by

**Saad&Shaw**

Executive Summary

Fundraising capacity and infrastructure are the foundation of nonprofit sustainability. Yet many nonprofits struggle to build and sustain these. When seeking to grow their revenue, nonprofits often look to increase their professional fundraising staff. Sometimes these investments pay off handsomely. Other times a revolving door evolves, with staff joining and leaving for many reasons, without a change in fundraising results.

Our experience has shown that small investments in fundraising counsel can help nonprofit leaders increase their knowledge and understanding of fundraising, and begin to implement appropriate strategies. These investments can help ensure that future larger investments are appropriately managed, and at times can uncover previously unrecognized talents and alternatives.

In 2014, The Assisi Foundation of Memphis, Inc., under the direction of executive director Dr. Jan Young, launched The Grand Experiment with Saad&Shaw to learn how nonprofits would respond to the opportunity to work with fundraising counsel. She awarded non-monetary technical assistance grants in amounts ranging from five to twenty hours to six mid-South nonprofits.

The selected nonprofits included those with a culture and history of successful fundraising as well as emerging grassroots organizations. The results were impressive.

- Over \$1.5 million in grants and in-kind resources from foundations, granting agencies, or individuals has been raised/pledged to date.
- One organization produced a case for support brochure and secured funding for a small-scale feasibility study and fundraising plan.
- One moved from planning a staff-led campaign to launching a board-led campaign with staff support.
- One secured the majority of equipment it needed for expansion through in-kind resources.
- One realized it was unwilling to make the changes required to diversify funding and expand operations.
- One wants to continue working with Saad&Shaw, requesting a fundraising plan and ongoing counsel OnDEMAND services to build fundraising capacity beyond the executive director.
- All reported they gained new insights into fundraising, fund development, and donor cultivation, solicitation, retention, and engagement.