

## Getting the Right Start- Develop Effective Operations

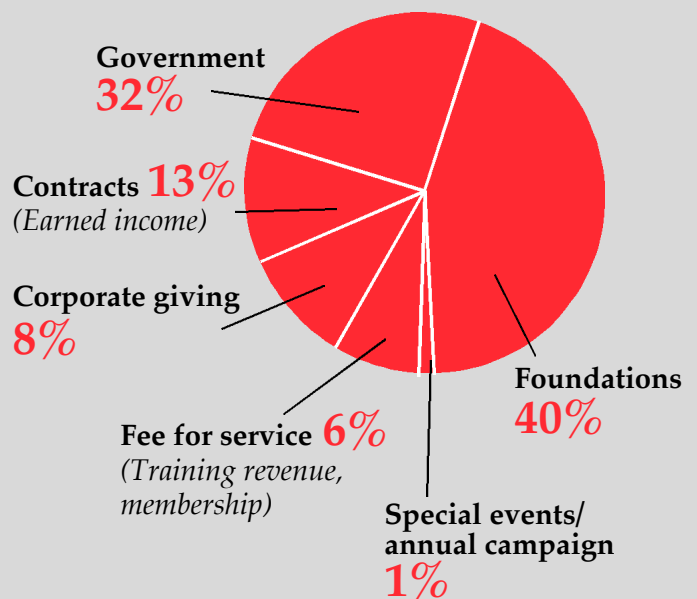
**Y**outh development training and technical assistance resource centers are large in scope but small in staffing, typically having one or two paid staff at startup and, over time, growing to an average of seven full and part time staff. It is most common in the very early years for a startup center be hosted by another organization. The conventional wisdom on operations startup varies but there is consensus on the importance of focusing not just on the external growth of the organization, but on the operational foundation as well. Both are crucial to long term success.

### Begin and build with funding

Obtaining financial support for youth development training and technical assistance resource centers remains a consistent challenge. Invest initial fund development efforts in landing one substantial funding source. The vast majority of organizations began with the support of one large, stable funder and maintained this funding for four years or more, some as long as twenty years. These foundation and government grants ranged from \$50,000 – \$1 million. (See *Making The Case.*) Most rely on foundation (community and private) and local, state and federal government support. Diversifying funding is a long term, ongoing, and necessary task. A growing source of funding for those with established records, contacts and products is earned income or contracted work with large local entities like charter schools, afterschool programs, and networks of local organizations, and city / state

### Where's the funding?

#### Current Funding\*



\* Funding source distribution based on a current assessment of 13 youth development training and technical assistance resource centers of varying sizes.

government (juvenile justice, city-wide initiatives). Geographic scope precludes successful special event revenue and individual support for resource centers is virtually nonexistent.

## **Determine governance**

Determine initial governance needs. Many training and technical assistance resource centers began with advisory councils (and several still operate this way) and moved to board governance only when nonprofit status was established. Others reside within larger nonprofit organizations and rely solely on advisors for council and support. Most centers now utilize a formal governance structure with varying board representation schemes: designated seats, broad community representation, and/or community members of influence. The most important task is to clarify which governance structure best enables the organization to do its work most effectively.

## **Create strong internal systems**

In most cases, strong and sound internal systems that reflect the simpler needs of a small nonprofit are essential startup needs because youth development training and technical assistance resource centers have so few staff. Finding an organizational hosting arrangement where accounting and human resources and other management systems are in place and operational is necessary. Most existing intermediaries were originally hosted by a funder, community-based organization, another intermediary, nonprofit management organization, or academic institution.

## **Hire the required staff**

Leadership requires a unique and broad set of skills. Hire staff that have the skills and are comfortable with the array of roles necessitated by a training and technical assistance resource center. (*See Tools and Resources: Leadership Skills and Qualities Checklist.*) Since this will often be a small staff team, predetermine the capabilities needed and be intentional about hiring. Two divergent options are to: a) hire for nimble, broad and transferable internal and external skills among the entire team or b) split the skill set and hire trustworthy internal operations staff and others with strong external skills.

*"It is like running a small business—you never leave. You are always in it; it manages me—I need to manage it. Early on the leader has to be as engaged in community building—as much as you are managing your intermediary. The leadership team has to be interchangeable—nimble—so others can go—e.g. training, products."*