

# **With a Little Help from Our Friends: How Social Entrepreneurship Ventures Change the World on a Shoestring**

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## **ABSTRACT**

*This paper employs grounded theory to understand how social entrepreneurship ventures pursue the types of change that supporters demand with very limited budgets. A multiple case study found that organizations walk a fine line, inspiring supporters by emphasizing grand change goals while at the same time, buffering supporter enthusiasm from disappointment by refraining from identifying as mission critical any goals for which the factors that would influence success are largely outside of the organization's control. SEV's used inter-organizational cooperation to pursue change goals where short term failures were likely and where eventual success was only possible after a protracted effort.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Social Entrepreneurship is nothing if not a balancing act. On the one hand, social entrepreneurs must pursue improvements in some social condition that are inspiring both for themselves and for their major stakeholders. On the other hand, they must show progress towards those inspiring goals or risk losing stakeholder confidence. And they must do so within the confines of the resources that they are able to generate on an ongoing basis lest they risk financial collapse for the organization and a forced abandonment of its mission. Under these conditions, it might be relatively easy to show progress toward relatively unambitious goals. But unambitious goals are unlikely to engage stakeholders or even many social entrepreneurs. Ambitious goals, on the other hand, tend to be more difficult to achieve. Even if they are achieved, measurement of progress can prove problematic.

The question, then, becomes one of how social entrepreneurs go about identifying and pursuing ambitious social change goals while limiting existential threats to their ventures and ongoing missions.

Below, we report the results of a multiple-case study of progressive animal welfare organizations. These results offer a hint about how social entrepreneurs approach this challenge. With help from existing literature, we propose a model for understanding how social entrepreneurs prioritize goals and utilize inter-organizational cooperation and volunteers to pursue goals that might otherwise be out of reach.

The specific research questions of this study are:

- 1) How do social entrepreneurs approach aggressive missions and change goals and keep supporters motivated for the long term?
- 2) Why and when do social entrepreneurs engage in inter-organizational cooperation to pursue change goals?
- 3) How do social entrepreneurs engage volunteers in the pursuit of their missions, and in particular, in pursuit of long term change goals?

### **THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS**

Social Entrepreneurship Ventures (SEV's) can be thought of as simultaneously pursuing three different categories of goals: Those that keep the organization viable, those that seek to deliver services in the short term, and those that seek to bring about lasting change so that remediation is no longer necessary (Lane and Casile, 2011). The most challenging of these goal categories, in terms of both accomplishment and measurement, is realization of long term social change. For this reason, we might think of organizations that focus more on social change goals than other similar organizations do as pursuing more aggressive missions.

There are a number of reasons why a SEV might shy away from pursuing a more aggressive mission. For one thing, an aggressive mission is likely to appeal to a smaller pool of stakeholders than a more commonly accepted mission might. The Sea Shepherd organization, for example, is in business to protect whales by directly confronting and interrupting boats involved in whaling. Their financial supporters and volunteer pool consist of individuals and organizations that uniformly support this type of extreme action in support of the aggressive goal of a worldwide ban on whaling for all purposes. While devoted, this pool of external constituents is much smaller than the pool that would be able to support other, less drastic approaches to controlling whaling.

Then there is the question of measurement. A program for helping minorities succeed in college might pursue a mission of helping minorities graduate and get good jobs. A program with such a mission would be able to measure how many minority students used its services, how many graduated successfully as compared to those who did not use the program, and how many reported getting a job in their field upon graduation. But what of the program that aims to change the world in such a way that minorities are not disadvantaged in the first place? Such a program, to the extent that it succeeded at all, would succeed over the course of decades and possibly generations, and almost certainly with the help of other organizations. Some of these organizations might focus on K-12 education while others might focus on changing university culture and even commonly accepted ideas about scholarship and performance. There might be any number of means of measuring progress toward this goal—some of which might conflict with one another as to the level of progress being achieved. And it would be nearly impossible to track progress back to any one organization or effort. So it would be much more difficult for an organization with this more aggressive mission to show stakeholders tangible proof of progress, or to take credit for that progress.

Aggressive missions then, are likely to alienate some potential stakeholders and leave others hungry for proof of progress. Yet without at least some aggressive aspect to its organizational mission, it would be difficult to classify an organization as a SEV (Epstein and McFarlan, 2011; Kirk and Beth Nolan, 2010). Furthermore, it would be difficult for the SEV to justify its own existence (Moore, 2000). Yet, for most SEV's, the need to change the world must coexist with the reality of limited and often unpredictable funding sources. This gives rise to the question of how such organizations propose to do so much with so little. Not surprisingly, reliance upon volunteerism is common in SEV's. So is inter-organizational cooperation.

This section introduces the four major areas of inquiry that informed the multiple-case study discussed herein, and that will be used to interpret its results. These are: Organizational Missions, Stakeholder Expectations, Inter-Organizational Cooperation, and Volunteer Management.

### **Mission Statements**

For any organization, a mission statement can play an important role in setting and communicating organizational identity. In addition to guiding long term planning and day-to-day operations, a concrete statement of mission can help stakeholders understand why the organization exists (Rajasekar, 2013). It can also inspire both internal and external constituents and provide a sense of purpose (Steffens, Davidsson and Fitzsimmons, 2009). Beyond stakeholder engagement, a well-formulated mission statement can contribute to organizational performance (Green and Medlin, 2003; Bart and Baetz 1998).

While identifying a social mission may be optional for a traditional for-profit organization (Lumpkin, Moss, Gras, Kato and Amezcua, 2013), successful SEV's must identify and doggedly pursue a mission of bringing about some social good or remedying some social ill (Lane and Casile, 2011; Miller and Wesley, 2010; Light, 2008; Santos, 2012; Waddock, 2010). Institutional legitimacy can then be established and maintained by the measurement of outcomes and impact of the firm relative to its mission (Bagnoli and Megali, 2011; Hervieux, Gedajlovic and Turcotte, 2010).

An overly aggressive mission can damage the credibility of a SEV and alienate key stakeholders (Lumpkin, Moss, Gras, Kato and Amezcua, 2013). An overly aggressive mission, or one that is not aggressive enough, can also adversely impact the ability of organizational insiders and volunteers to identify with the organization and to feel engaged in carrying out its work (Suh, Houston, Barney and Kwon, 2011). This creates a challenge for social entrepreneurs to pursue missions that are sufficiently focused on world-change activities to inspire and engage both internal and external constituents while at the same time knowing the limits of what the organization can reasonably achieve within both its resource limitations and its institutional constraints.

### **Stakeholder Expectations**

A mission statement can impact not only how stakeholders view a SEV, but also how the SEV views its stakeholders (Babnik, Breznik, Dermol and Sirca, 2014). Like all organizations, SEV's can be thought of as serving a hierarchy of stakeholders with some holding more sway over organizational success and survival than others (Clarkson, 1995). However, the disparity of interdependence can vary less across the stakeholder group for SEV's than it does for traditional organizations (Mort, Weerawardena, and Carnegie 2003). In part, this may be because stakeholders are important not only for their ability to provide resources, but also for their ability to garner legitimacy for the SEV within the wider community (Tracey, Phillips and Jarvis, 2011). In return, however, these stakeholders are increasingly looking for tangible evidence, not only of fiscal soundness, or even of service delivery, but also of genuine progress toward the long-term goals of the organization (Nichols, 2009; Ruebottom, 2011). This research seeks to add to existing knowledge by exploring how SEV's broadcast and pursue aggressive social change missions while at the same time managing the expectations of stakeholders with regard to timing and measurability.

### **Inter-organizational Cooperation and Its Impact**

Inter-organizational cooperation is by no means limited to SEV's. Schermerhorn, Jr. (1975) predicted that leaders would be motivated to cooperate with other organizations under conditions of resource scarcity and if there were a perception of value to be gained through cooperation. Popp et al (2014) provide an extensive review of networking literature. They identify a number of reasons why organizations would choose to cooperate. These include capacity-building, building social capital, outreach, and solving complex problems (Islett et al, 2011; McGuire, 2006; Milward and Provan, 2006). Given the limited and uncertain funding streams of SEV's, the long-simmering social problems that many of them seek to remedy, and the need for community outreach and support, networking with similarly-minded SEV's and other organizations seems a likely course of action.

Much of the research into SEV cooperation conducted to date has centered on collaborations with for-profit ventures or other SEV's with limited mission overlap where skills and resources may be complementary. Tukka Toivonen (2016) for example, explores social innovation communities where SEV's with compatible missions work together to maximize their innovative capabilities and chances for long-term success. Henry (2015) studied a cooperative arrangement between an animal welfare organization and a more generalized welfare organization in Ireland. This research seeks to further fine-tune our understanding of the conditions under which SEV's are most likely to seek partners for collaboration. Specifically, this research seeks to understand the types of objectives that are more likely to be pursued cooperatively rather than alone.

### **Volunteer Management**

While the benefits that volunteers provide to the organizations they serve may be difficult, if not impossible, to quantify with much accuracy (Salomon et al, 2011; Manetti et al, 2015), it is nonetheless true that a great many organizations rely on volunteers to carry out important tasks and to help them remain viable (Kreutzer and Jager, 2011). SEV's are among these organizations (Hager and Brudney, 2015). In addition to the services they provide, a strong and dedicated volunteer pool can help to establish legitimacy for an organization (Mason, Kirkbride and Bryde, 2007). While research on how volunteerism in SEV's can be developed and sustained has been somewhat limited to date (Thompson, 2011), there is growing interest in this area (Hager and Brudney, 2015). This research seeks to contribute to the growing body of knowledge about how successful social entrepreneurs maintain volunteer engagement and how the nature of organizational mission may influence the approach to volunteer engagement.

### **METHODOLOGY**

The goals of this study were to determine whether SEV's explicitly set, measured, and reported progress toward goals of three distinct natures: organizational viability, short-term service delivery, and long-term changes in the conditions they existed to address. The primary data source for this study was key informant interviews conducted with representatives from eight relatively progressive animal welfare organizations in different geographic areas. Questions were open-ended but structured with the same questions asked of each informant. The goal of the interviews was to:

- Determine organizational mission
- Ascertain specific organizational goals and determine to what extent each goal focused on:
  - Viability
  - Service Delivery or
  - Change
- Document how performance measurement was used to inform internal procedures and/or to provide data to external stakeholders.
  - Determine whom the organization considered to be its most important stakeholders.
  - Determine what the informants believed were the objectives of these important stakeholders—that is, in what ways did they believe the stakeholders saw this organization as advancing goals that were important to the stakeholders.

In addition, organizational web sites were searched for official mission statements and volunteer opportunities.

Informant interviews were coded by two independent coders under the direction of one of the primaries.

## OBSERVATIONS AND PROPOSITIONS

This section discusses two different sets of observations. The first considers the role that risk may play in determining whether or not organizational leaders will classify a long-term change goal as mission critical. It includes suggestions about how organizations might manage risks rather than abandoning high-risk goals that are important to organizational identity or stakeholder goodwill. The second considers whether more aggressive change missions increase the importance of volunteers to the organization.

### **Influences on Goal Criticality: Identity, control, cost, and risk**

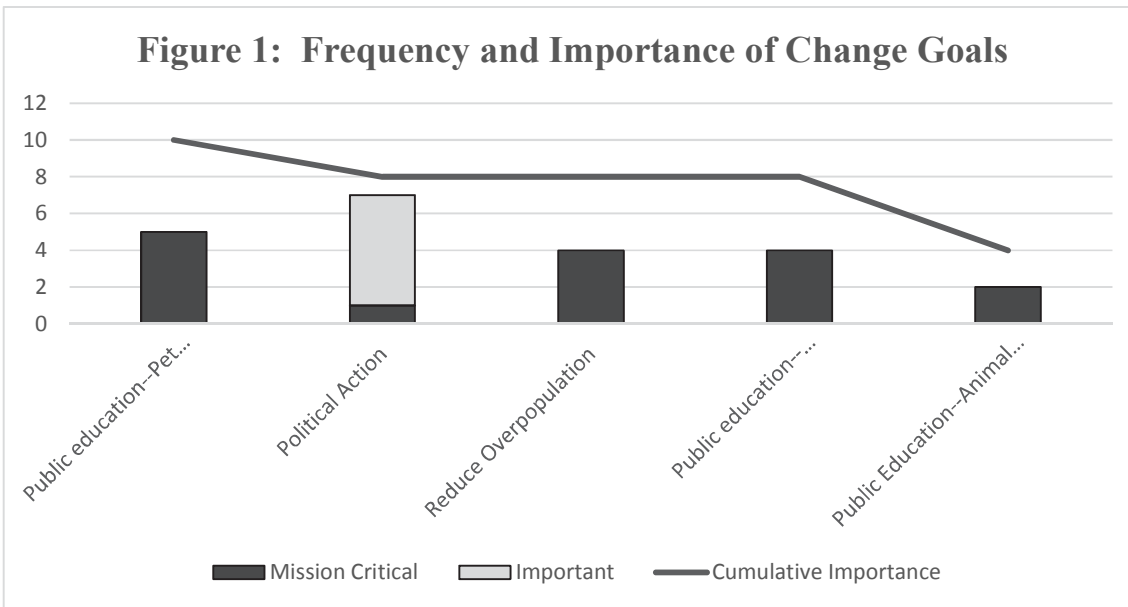
The semi-structured interview questions used in this study requested that informants identify the organization's most important service delivery and long-term change goals. The interview questions did not provide informants with any template for identifying or describing goals. Rather, it was left to the informant to describe these goals in her own words. However, in reviewing interview transcripts, sets of goals did emerge that were highly similar across organizations. In addition to identifying goals reported by informants, coders were also instructed to code for relative goal importance. Importance was coded as follows:

2 - Mission Critical. The organization cannot fulfill its fundamental reason for existing without pursuing this goal.

1 - Important but not mission critical.

0 - The organization would like to pursue this goal and will pursue it, resources permitting. However, it is subordinate to other goals that are considered important or mission critical.

Figure 1 shows the top five most commonly reported change goals. The stacked bars in Figure 1 show the number of organizations that identified each goal as either important or mission critical. The line in Figure 1 shows the cumulative importance rating that each goal was assigned by all organizations in the study combined. It shows, for example, that education about pet ownership was identified as mission critical by five organizations. Multiplying this frequency (5) by a rating of 2 for being mission critical yields a total importance rating of 10 for that goal. Figure 1 also shows that political action was identified as important by six organizations and as mission critical by one. Although this goal appeared in interviews from more organizations than any other goal in the study did, its cumulative importance rating shared a three-way tie for second place because it was identified most often as important but not mission critical. In fact, it was the only change goal in the study to be rated as anything less than mission critical by those organizations that identified it as a goal.



By way of comparison, Figure 2 shows the five most frequently identified service delivery goals from the study. Again, the number of organizations identifying each goal as mission critical and important are stacked and the cumulative importance rating appears as a line.

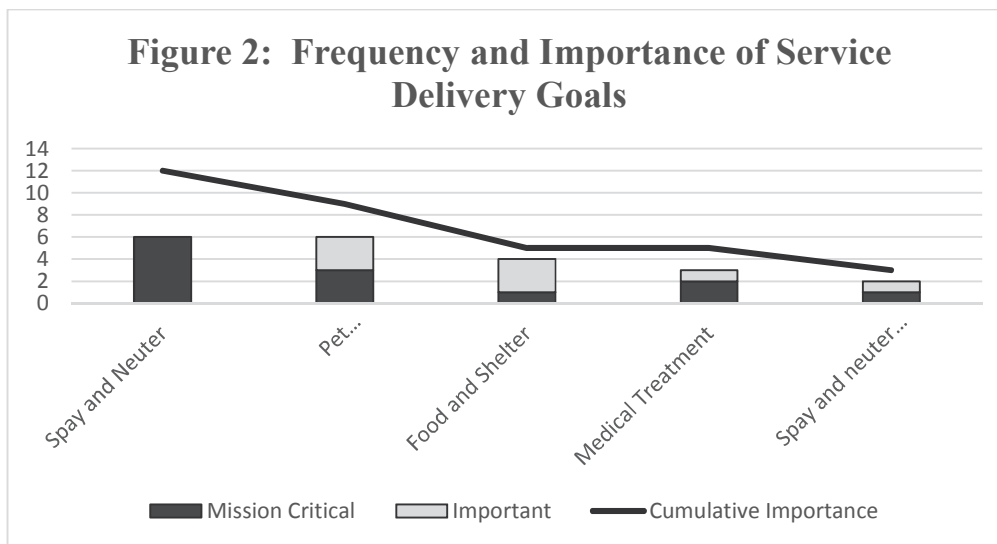


Figure 1 shows that a majority of organizations (6) were able to identify one change goal as important but not mission critical. In each case, it was the same goal—political action. Even taking into account less frequently cited change goals, all were described as being mission critical—except for political action. Figure 2, on the other hand shows that most service delivery goals were identified as important but not mission critical by some organizations. The only exception is spaying and neutering. It is perhaps not coincidental that the number of spay/neuter procedures performed, in addition to serving as an outcome measure for that service delivery goal, is also used as a behavioral measure for progress toward the change goal of reducing overpopulation.

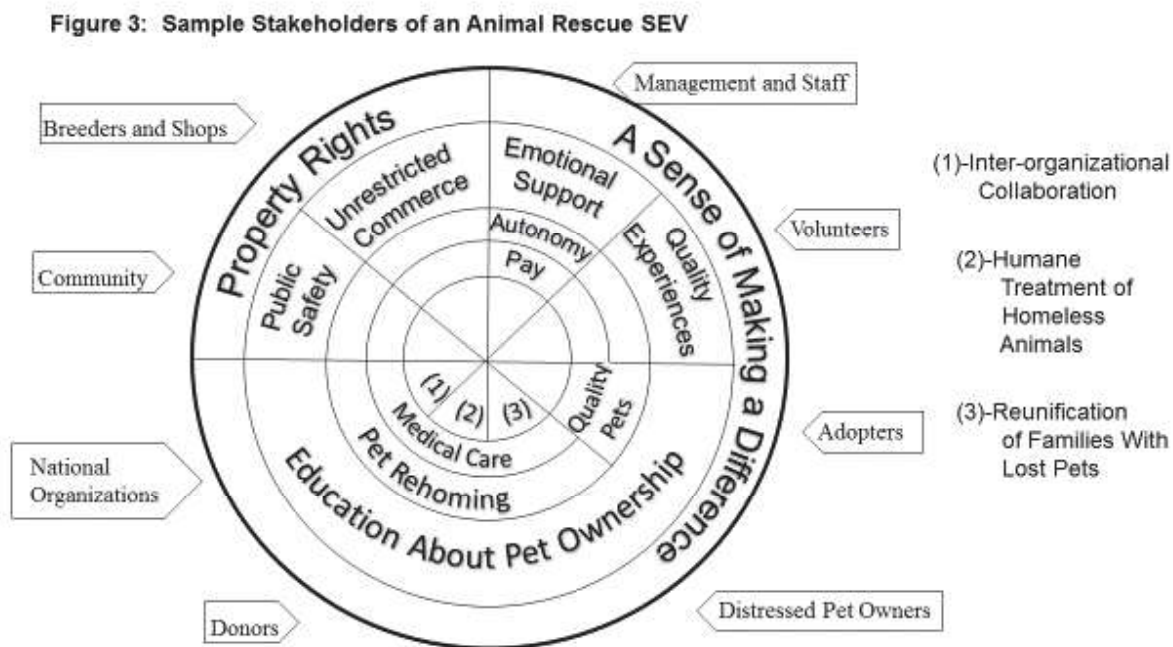
To be fair, political action is a catch-all goal category created by the authors. In the actual data, informants identified a number of more specific political action goals. These included such items as outlawing puppy mills, preventing breed-specific laws, and changing spay-neuter laws. Still, it is

noteworthy that this was the most often cited change goal and the only one to be identified as less than mission critical by any organization in the study.

Political action goals stood out in another way in this study. None of the seven organizations that cited this goal reported that they were acting alone to pursue it. One study subject even stated that they were serving as a focal point for organizing joint action by local organizations with similar goals. By comparison only two informants reported being engaged in joint efforts on any other goal in this study.

**Stakeholder Consensus:** There are at least two reasons why political action goals may stand out from other change goals. First, consensus among stakeholders may be lower for actions that seek to change laws than for actions to seek change that is voluntary. One informant, for example, reported that, until recently, one member of the organization’s board operated a dog breeding facility. Some of the laws that this organization might have pursued to reduce cruel confinement or overbreeding might have adversely impacted this board member’s business. In fact, the informant reported that the strain between the organization’s mission and this trustee’s activities did ultimately lead to a parting of the ways.

Figure 3 shows some of the major stakeholders for a typical animal rescue that engages in change efforts.



Even with this simplified model, it is not difficult to imagine how stakeholders might be divided over political action goals. The American Kennel Club, for example, is a powerful environmental constituent with its own Political Action Committee and Government Relations Division. While this organization is sometimes aligned with organizations in this study (for example in opposition to breed-specific laws), it also actively works to defeat legislation about overbreeding and cruel confinement. (See <http://cqrcengage.com/akc/lac> for a sample of AKC political issues). Adopters, on the other hand, might object to paying higher adoption fees so that a portion can be devoted to political causes in which they have no interest. Communities which might be very happy to have an animal rescue to take in strays that Animal Control collects might not be at all happy when the rescue organization tries to prevent them from passing breed-specific laws, or when they interrupt lawful commerce by arranging protests of pet stores and puppy mills.

Needless to say, the notion that stakeholders might be at odds with one another is not new. Thompson (1967) pointed out that stakeholders might disagree not only about the desirability of some outcomes, but also as to the cause and effect mechanisms by which desired outcomes may be brought about. However, for SEV's, the problem may be more complex to manage since a larger pool of stakeholders tends to be involved. At the very least, a larger percentage of the stakeholder group tends to hold sway over organizational decision-making (Mort, Weerawardena, and Carnegie 2003). The question, then, becomes one of how organizations manage competing stakeholder demands.

Meyer and Rowan (1977) offered decoupling as a means by which organizations might avoid excessive scrutiny in areas where stakeholder goals are not uniformly in alignment with organizational goals. In this scenario, we could argue that SEV's mute their emphasis on political change in order to minimize the antagonization of potentially critical stakeholders who do not approve of such action. However, this explanation is not consistent with the behavior of the SEV described above which did choose to part with a stakeholder rather than with the goal of political action. In addition, decoupling is probably not a feasible approach given the transparency of the organizations involved and the seeming prominence of organizational mission in motivating staff, volunteers, and donors alike. Beyond the subjects of this study, Smith and Woods (2015) offer a model for stakeholder engagement for SEV's in which both transparency and inclusion of stakeholders in decision-making figure prominently.

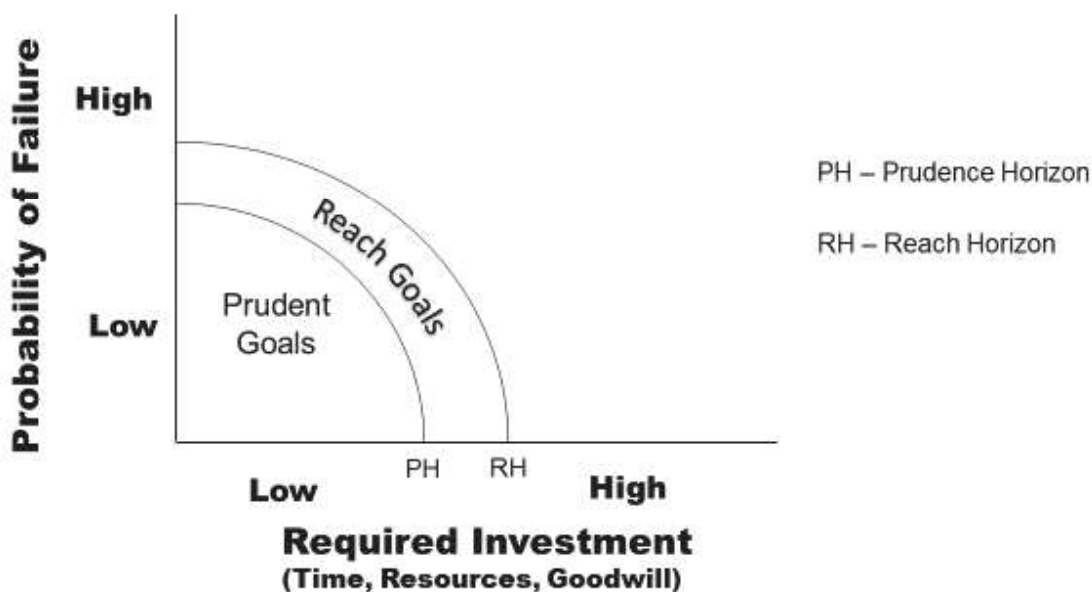
**Resource Commitments and Probability of Failure.** A more plausible explanation for the consistent subjugation of political action to other change goals across organizations, as well as the tendency to pursue this goal jointly rather than independently, could have to do with the nature of the task of effecting political change. On the one hand, among change goals, political action lends itself to outcome measurement better than most. For any given time period, an organization can measure whether or not legislation was enacted and the quality of that legislation relative to what the organization wanted. However, successful passage of legislation can often take a large scale effort—larger than what any SEV can muster alone. It can also take years to realize success even under the best of circumstances. So the best an organization can hope to achieve in pursuit of a goal such as this is a long, drawn out effort toward an outcome that may or may not ever materialize for which the organization will never be able to take full credit. Therefore, it is not the type of goal that would lend itself well to stakeholder engagement.

**Prudent Goals, Reach Goals, and Out-of-Reach Goals.** While transparency and goal achievement may be critical for maintenance of stakeholder engagement (Smith and Woods, 2015), the actual process of setting goals, measuring progress towards achievement of goals, and reporting that progress can be fraught with difficulty for any organization (Micheli and Manzoni, 2010). While managers at SEV's may dearly want to engage stakeholders by clarifying organizational goals and demonstrating progress towards them, they can find that some of the goals they see as central to the organizational mission defy measurement (Townley, Cooper, and Oakes, 2003).

Figure 4 suggests that certain goals may be considered prudent goals. These are goals that the organization can reasonably expect to achieve within a relatively short time frame with the resources available to them. In addition, they are goals that are shared by the organization's primary stakeholders (Clarkson, 1995) thereby minimizing the risk of stakeholder alienation by pursuing or achieving these goals.



**Figure 4: Goal Prioritization**



While it could be argued that the pursuit of goals that are not prudent is an irresponsible use of stakeholder resources, it is important to remember that SEV's exist to pursue a dual mission (Diochon and Anderson 2011). Social entrepreneurs must balance a desire to remediate social ills with a requirement for fiscal soundness (Short, Moss, and Lumpkin 2009). In fact, it can be argued that SEV's come into existence for the specific purpose of remediating social ills where both markets and governments have failed (Santos, 2012). Therefore, it seems reasonable that a SEV will set both prudent goals and reach goals where reach goals are those that may alienate some stakeholders, take a long time to achieve, consume significantly more resources than they produce, and/or have a fairly high probability of incurring multiple failures on the way to hoped-for success. In fact, while any number of social enterprises might limit their goals to those that are considered here to be prudent, it would be difficult to consider an organization a SEV unless there were some effort under way to bring about long-term social change (Mair and Noboa, 2006). By their nature, these goals would largely fall in the reach category shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1 also constrains the zone of reach goals due to the realities of operating a SEV. In order to maintain stakeholder engagement, SEV's must balance both social and economic logics (Dacin, Dacin, and Matear 2010). As such, they must remain within the range of believability for major stakeholders by not overreaching.

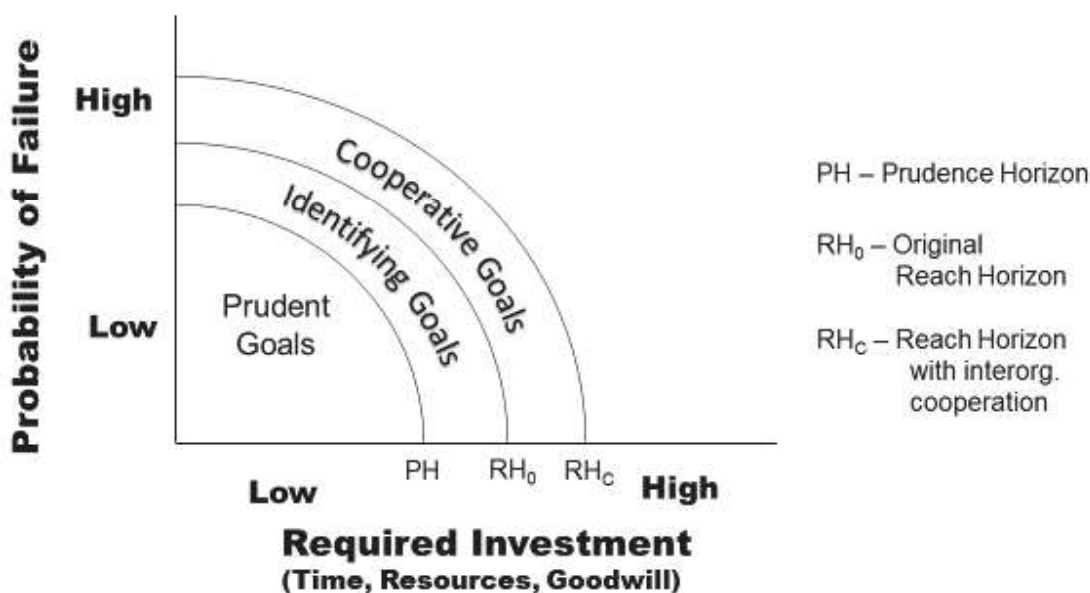
**Identifying goals.** It is important to remember that an organization's mission both shapes its identity and communicates that identity to stakeholders. In so doing, it helps to focus on why the firm exists (Rajasekar, 2013). It is equally important to remember that without at least some long-term change aspect to its organizational mission, it would be difficult to classify an organization as a SEV (Epstein and McFarlan, 2011; Kirk and Beth Nolan, 2010). Furthermore, it would be difficult for the SEV to justify its own existence (Moore, 2000). This may help to explain why, with the exception of political action goals, organizations in this study universally classified long-term change goals as mission critical.

The importance of long-term change goals may be even more salient for organizational insiders than for external stakeholders. In a separate analysis of mission statements, we coded published mission statements as being (1) focused primarily on long-term change, (2) focused primarily on service delivery, or (3) exhibiting balanced emphasis on long-term change and service delivery. We also coded insider

reports about organizational missions in the same way. In the analysis of published mission statements, we found three of the eight organizations in the study to be focused on long-term change. However, based on insider interpretations of mission statements, three additional organizations (six in total) appeared to emphasize long-term change over service-delivery (Lane and Casile, 2016). It wasn't that the organizational insiders didn't know what the mission was. In many cases, they could recite it word for word. In all cases, they could accurately paraphrase it. However, insiders seemed to focus more intently on the change aspects of the mission.

For the reasons discussed above, we propose that a majority of long-term change goals in SEV's, in addition to being reach goals, are also the goals by which these organizations tend to identify themselves. It is true, of course, that many SEV's in our study identified more prudent service delivery goals as mission critical as well. However, revisiting Figure 2, these do not appear to be the activities that set animal rescues that are SEV's apart from the many animal rescues that deliver similar services without pursuing a long-term change mission. We argue, therefore that, as shown in Figure 5, it is the long-term change goals that SEV's identify as mission critical that define the identity of the SEV. Although we do not mean to imply a 100% overlap between reach goals and identifying goals, we cite the considerable overlap in this study and the preceding arguments in substituting the term 'identifying goals' in the place of 'reach goals' in Figure 5.

**Figure 5: Identifying Goals and Collaborative Goals**



In this context, it is perhaps not surprising that organizations would downplay a goal, such as political action, that, by its nature, demands to be shared among organizations rather than claimed by any. As previously mentioned, one organization in this study had a goal of serving as the focal point for other local groups to work together in areas of common interest for maximum effect. It is noteworthy that this is the only organization in the study that listed political action as a mission critical goal and the only one that attempted to use outcome measures for this goal (as opposed to measures of behaviors or skills). This may indicate that ability of organizational insiders to identify uniquely with a political action effort influences the importance given to this effort relative to other organizational goals. It may even change efforts to measure progress toward the goal.

**Cooperative Goals.** Figure 5 also shows a third tier of goals which we call cooperative goals. We conceptualize these as long-term change goals for which the risks of failure are so high, the resource

commitments so great, the time frame for eventual success so long, and possibly the agreement among stakeholders weak enough that these goals would not be in reach for the organization to pursue unilaterally. Nonetheless, they are goals that are important for organizational insiders and may also be necessary to engage some external stakeholders.

As a general rule, insiders do not see these goals as identifying the organization or defining its mission. This may be because reliable measurement would be impossible and possibly not even desirable. Or it may be because there is a general understanding that these goals may one day need to be abandoned—preferably without bringing about the end of the organization or a crisis of identity. Nonetheless, it is noteworthy that the most cooperatively pursued goal in this study, political action, was the single most cited goal of any type in the study (7 out of 8 informants) even though it qualified as mission critical, and therefore an identifying goal, for only one.

Theoretical and empirical support for organizational collaborations in general, and in social entrepreneurship in particular, are fairly well established. Inter-organizational collaboration is sometimes thought of as cooperation between organizations with different missions and different resources in order to attack a problem from different angles (Henry, 2015; Gray, 1989). Such collaborations can bring about new resource constellations and synergies that enable innovative new solutions to entrenched problems (Austin, 2000; Austin et al 2004; Prahalad, 2005; Rangan et al, 2007). How often this actually happens is a matter that is open to debate (Choi, 2015; Turner and Martin, 2005; Huxham and Vangen, 2004; 2009). In any case, the type of collaboration we are positing here is the broader understanding of the term as different organizations working together in pursuit of mutual goals (Guo and Acar, 2005; Das and Teng, 2000). While not all of these relationships can be relied upon to create synergy and innovation, they do allow organizations to share costs and risks (Eisenhardt and Schoolhoven, 1996; Ring and Van de Ven 1992); and to pool resources to achieve economies of scale (Contractor and Lorange 1998; Mohr and Spekman, 1994). They can also enhance the legitimacy of the effort being jointly undertaken (Baum and Oliver 1991).

Collaboration is a common choice among SEV's seeking to maximize their impact in a world of often shrinking resources (Di Domenico, Tracey, and Haugh, 2009). Research into these collaborations often focuses on more formalized arrangements such as social innovation communities (Toivonen, 2016) and formal partnerships (Henry, 2015). Similar to their counterparts among for-profit organizations, these arrangements can serve as incubators for start-ups (Toivonen, 2016) as well as leverage limited resources (Teng, 2007) to pursue goals that might otherwise be out of reach (Kourula and Laasonen, 2010; Galaskiewicz, Bielefeld, and Dowell, 2006; Guo and Acar, 2005). While certainly, these arrangements are used to achieve short-term service-delivery goals (Choi, 2015; Henry, 2015; Austin, 2000), there is also some evidence that they are utilized to pursue long-term change goals. These include collaboration for taking political action (Austin, Stevenson, and Wei-Skillern, 2006; Austin and Harmeling, 1999).

Although none of the organizations in this study had formed a formal social innovation community (Toivonen, 2016) all but one subscribed to a common set of guidelines and reporting principles called the Asilomar Accords (<http://www.asilomaraccords.org/read.html>). In addition, all reported varying degrees of short-term cooperation with other animal welfare agencies. Examples include occasional sharing of information and resources and arranging transports of adoptable animals from low spay/neuter regions to high spay/neuter regions. As previously stated, formal long-term cooperative arrangements were rare among study subjects. Notable exceptions were collaborations for taking political action and, in one case, the building of a joint center housing six different organizations with missions deemed to be complementary.

The following four propositions stem from the foregoing discussion about the influence of identity, control, cost, and risk on internal determination of goal criticality for long-term change goals:

*Proposition 1: SEV's will tend to emphasize and regard as mission critical those change goals that they see as defining the organization and showcasing its uniqueness.*

*Proposition 2: SEV's will avoid identifying a change goal as mission critical if the successful pursuit of that goal depends on factors that lie largely outside of the organization's direct control.*

*Proposition 3: SEV's will pool resources with other organizations in order to pursue change goals that are important but that are beyond the means of the organization to effect change on its own.*

*Proposition 4: SEV's will pool resources with other organizations in order to share the legitimacy risk of pursuing change goals that are important but for which success is uncertain.*

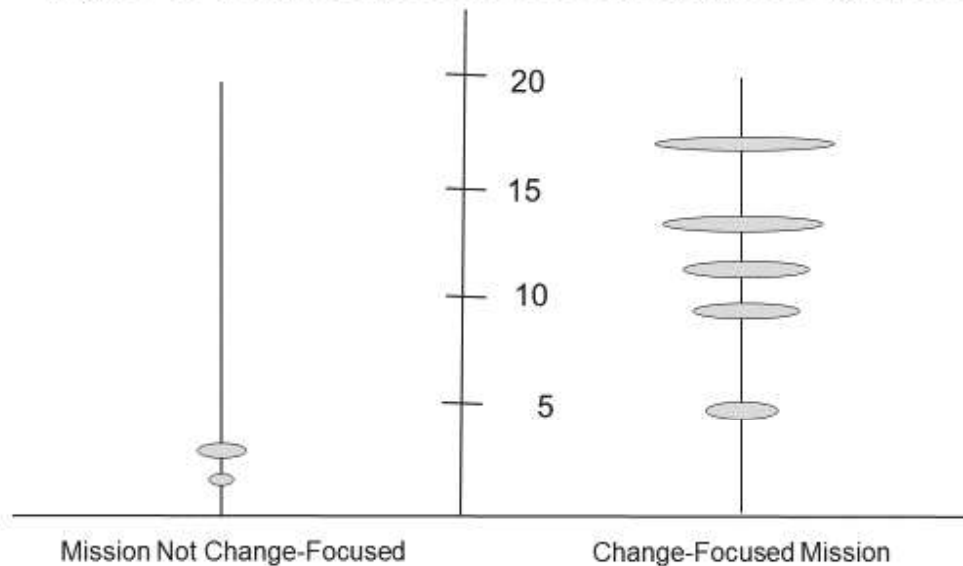
### **The Role of Volunteers in Expanding Goal Horizons**

Up to this point, we have considered the role that inter-organizational cooperation might play in allowing SEV's to pursue goals that involve higher levels of risk and resource expenditures than their organizations can prudently manage. In this section we argue that recruitment and utilization of volunteers is another mechanism by which SEV's pursue goals that would otherwise be out of reach. Unlike cooperation, however, reliance on volunteers does not preclude a high level of organizational identification with the goal.

Seven of the eight organizations in this study relied heavily upon volunteers. Informants made statements such as, "We couldn't do what we do without our volunteers." One informant had informally estimated that the organization's 600 volunteers fulfilled the duties of 19 full-time paid positions. These reports are consistent with the findings of a larger survey where Hager and Brudney (2015) found that 97% of 2,065 respondents reported that volunteers help to improve the quality of the services they offered to at least a moderate extent. Two thirds reported that they did so to a great extent. Similarly, these respondents reported that volunteers helped to bring down costs moderately (93%) or to a great extent (67%). The one organization in this study that did not report significant reliance on volunteers limited its activities to spaying and neutering. This rendered them unable to utilize volunteers without significant medical qualifications.

Hager and Brudney (2015) also found that about two thirds of organizations reported difficulty recruiting enough volunteers with approximately one fourth reporting that this was a serious problem. Informants in this study of animal rescue SEV's suggested that an organizational environment that volunteers found unwelcoming or uninspiring could be a sign of poor management or poor community relations. Unfortunately, the scope of this study did not extend to interviewing volunteers or exploring volunteer programs in depth. One informant did mention that one approach her organization took to engaging volunteers was to offer a wide variety of interesting volunteer opportunities. The number of volunteer opportunities available could be gleaned from each organization's web site. As figure 6 demonstrates, there was a fairly wide disparity with the number of opportunities ranging from 2 to 17.

**Figure 6: Number of Volunteer Opportunities by Mission Focus**



Clearly the analysis in Figure 6 is very rough. The number of volunteer opportunities offered is only one of many indicators of how much an organization values its volunteers. It is a convenience measure to be sure. In addition, since the sample itself was geared toward progressive organizations, it is not surprising that five of the seven organizations that used volunteers clustered in this group while only two reported missions that emphasized service delivery (1) or were evenly balanced between service delivery and change (1). Nonetheless, it is noteworthy that there are no overlaps between the two groups. The two organizations with the least focus on long-term change are also the two that offer the narrowest variety of volunteer opportunities.

Certainly, with a sample of seven, this finding could be artifactual. It could also be a reflection of the fact that there is more to do at an organization that is trying to change the world rather than simply carry out day-to-day activities. It is noteworthy, however, that when asked what volunteers do, informants in both groups reported that the favored activity by the vast majority of volunteers was spending time with the animals—walking, socializing, and providing care. These are all service delivery tasks. So, there remains a question of whether organizations with a strong change mission would value volunteers more than less change-focused organizations; and if so, why.

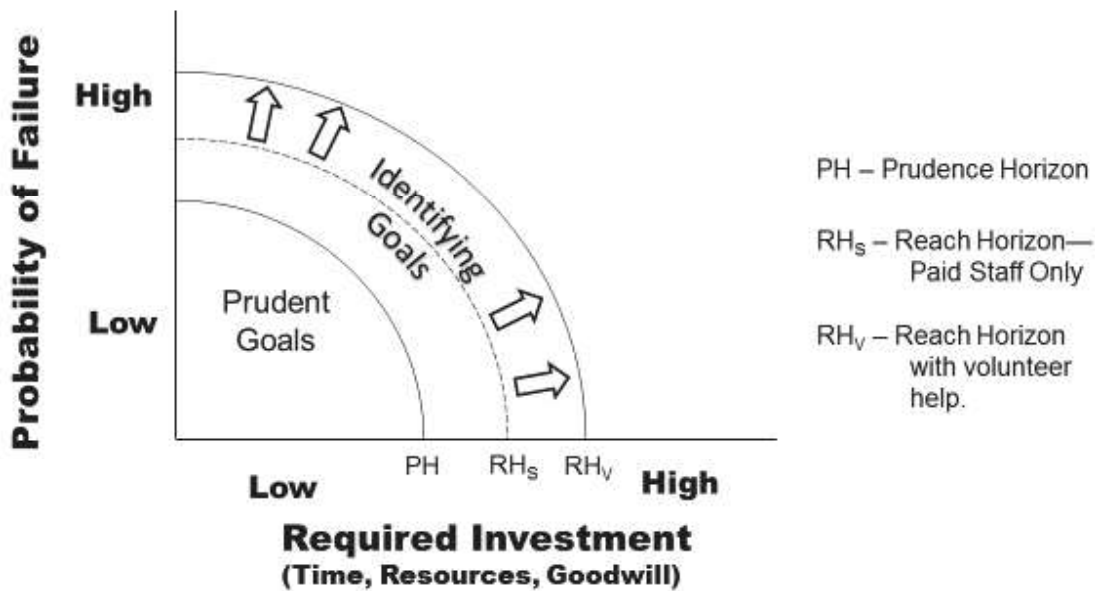
Obviously, having volunteers to do work that would otherwise be paid work frees up resources for change-focused organizations to invest in the pursuit of change goals. So, in that regard they enable the change mission even if they are not working toward it. However, there may be an additional benefit of volunteer engagement which is particularly desirable for the change-focused organization. Hager and Brudney (2015) found that two thirds of organizations in their survey believed that volunteer engagement improved public support for their programs or improved community relations to a great extent. Nearly all believed they did so at least moderately. Comments by informants in this study tend to reinforce those findings. One informant implied that the relationship might even be bi-directional in the sense that engaged volunteers were a sign of strong community support.

Referring back to Figure 1, it seems that community outreach and community education are particularly important to organizations in this study with three of the top five change goals dealing with public education. Comments by informants indicate that some volunteers work directly toward change goals by conducting school visits and public tours of the facility; and in one case even making movies for the organization. However, volunteers also have ready access to virtually all organizational reporting

about goals, activities, and results. Some even have dedicated volunteer newsletters to keep them abreast of the organization's efforts, including change efforts. This means that even volunteers who prefer to work exclusively in service delivery areas are exposed to the organization's change mission. One informant who was her organizations' volunteer coordinator remarked that they were always teaching in everything that they did from adoptions to volunteer training. She also expressed the belief that well-trained volunteers would carry the organization's message to their homes and their communities with them.

Based on the formal and informal community outreach that volunteers can provide to a SEV, and in particular for the change mission of a SEV, Figure 7 suggests that an engaged volunteer pool that is well-trained and well managed can extend the reach horizon for a change-focused SEV, not only by expanding and freeing up resources, but also by increasing the likelihood for success of change efforts.

**Figure 7: The Effect of Volunteerism on Goal Feasibility**



Proposition 5 is based on the belief that volunteers provide multi-faceted utility to change-focused SEV's in particular and that, therefore, these organizations will exert exceptional effort to attract, engage, and retain a strong and satisfied volunteer pool.

*Proposition 5: SEV's with missions that focus on long term change will seek to attract and engage volunteers as informal liaisons with important stakeholder groups.*

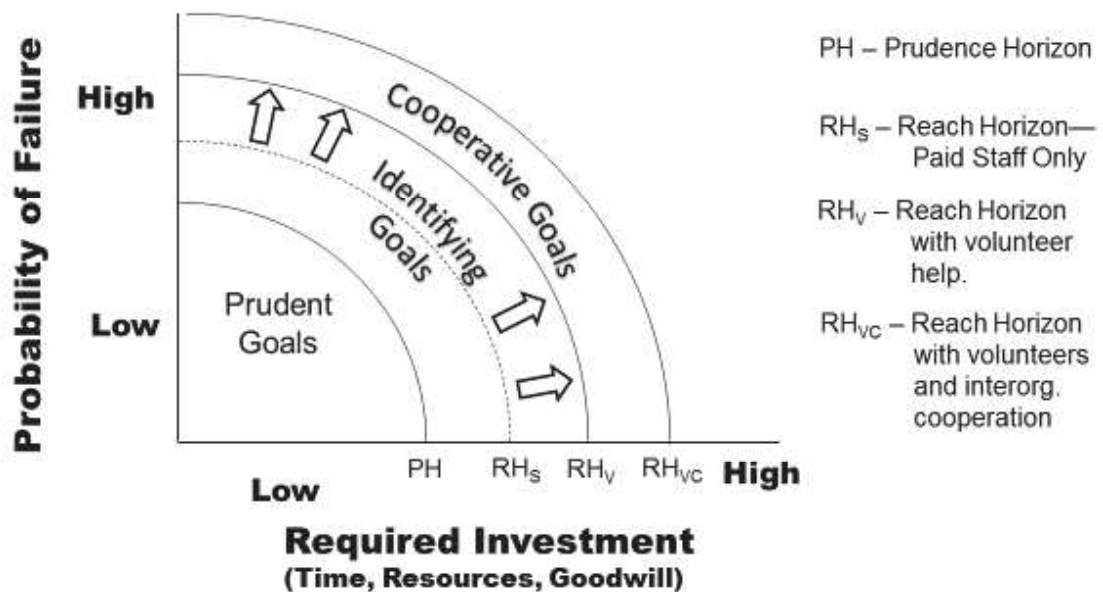
**The interplay between volunteerism and collaboration.** This paper has argued that volunteers and inter-organizational collaborations accomplish the same objective—that is—to expand a SEV's capabilities beyond what it could do without these associations. In the case of volunteerism, we argue that this extra reach does not require that the organization give up any of its organizational identity as it might need to in a cooperative effort. For that reason, volunteer help might seem preferable to collaborations. It is noteworthy, however, that the norm for organizations in this study was to utilize both volunteerism and collaborations to extend their capabilities to pursue challenging goals.

Smith, Meyskens, and Wilson (2014) offer an interesting perspective on SEV persistence in Social Venture Strategic Alliances based on identity theory. They argue that, although the theory itself was developed at the individual level of analysis (Ashforth and Mael 1989), it has been applied with some success at other levels of analysis (Kistruck, Beamish, et al. 2013; Livengood and Reger 2010). They

argue specifically that, in addition to a sense of organizational identity, a SEV can develop a separate, but not completely distinct, relational identity based on strategic alliances with organizational partners. This approach has already been applied to the study of social venture alliances (Kistruck, Sutter, et al. 2013; Dacin, Dacin, and Tracey 2011; Battilana and Dorado 2010). To be fair, the alliances studied thus far have tended to be between two or more organizations with different but overlapping missions (a socially-minded for-profit organization and a not-for-profit SEV). The organizations of this study were all not-for-profit SEV's with considerably more mission overlap and, due to their similarities, less task interdependence. Nonetheless, Smith, Meyskens, and Wilson's (2014) model is consistent with the formation, and probably the persistence, of the types of collaboration for political action noted in this study. The success factors that they cite, most notably, identity congruence of the organizations involved, and the ability to improve or at least protect reputation, would indicate that these associations would have value for the SEV's involved.

Relational identity notwithstanding, the ubiquity of both volunteerism and alliance behavior in SEV's would indicate that the two mechanisms are not substitutes for one another. Figure 8 and Proposition 6 suggest that both play a role in extending organizational reach.

**Figure 8: Volunteerism, Cooperation, and Organizational Reach**



*Proposition 6: SEV's with missions in which long term change is more prominent than immediate action will utilize both volunteers and inter-organizational collaboration to pursue change goals that would otherwise be beyond their capabilities.*

## IMPLICATIONS

As both the study and practice of social entrepreneurship mature, there will be continuing interest in the behaviors of social entrepreneurs that improve the prospects for the long-term success of these ventures. Measures of success that would serve for any entrepreneurship venture, such as survival, profitability (or sound fiscal footing), and growth, are also appropriate measures of success for SEV's. However, for the SEV, these measures fall well short of providing a complete picture. For both practitioners and those who seek to understand social entrepreneurship, it is becoming increasingly important to identify the processes and tools by which successful social entrepreneurs navigate the complex resource and institutional environments in which they operate. This research seeks to contribute

to that understanding by examining SEV's that have moved beyond questions of survival to become well-established in their service areas. The propositions offered based on this study are intended to suggest fruitful areas of exploration into how successful SEV's move beyond survival and service goals to pursue the world-changing goals that inspired their creation and, if they are truly successful, continue to define them.

## LIMITATIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH

The observations above are based on a small number of organizations in a single type of social endeavor. However, they offer a glimpse into how savvy social entrepreneurs may manage to keep SEV's alive and relevant even in the face of competing demands from stakeholders, limited resources, and objectives with long and uncertain time frames. If social entrepreneurship is to be brought to bear to address a growing array of social challenges—including some of the more intractable social challenges, then it will be useful for practitioners and researchers alike to understand the strategies that bring about long term success when short term success is not an option.

From a research point of view, the obvious next step would be to test the propositions posited here with larger and more varied data sets. With the propositions above in mind, it may be possible to develop a survey instrument and collect survey data from a larger, more varied sample of SEV's and perhaps less change-oriented providers of similar services. This data could then be subjected to statistical analysis to see if the correlations suggested here hold up. It might also be useful to tease out the specific characteristics of goals that make them more desirable for collaboration as opposed to in-house pursuit with volunteer help.

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