

# Focus on Nonprofit Leadership



Over the past few years, the Meyer Foundation has increased its focus on strengthening and supporting the executive leadership of its grantees. In 2005, to learn more about the challenges and professional development needs of executive directors, Meyer and CompassPoint Nonprofit Services conducted a national study of executive directors of community-based nonprofits in eight major cities. Nearly 2,000 executives answered questions about their career paths, likely tenure, board relationships, and major frustrations. A report on these findings, *Daring to Lead 2006*, was released in March of 2006.

In addition to revealing deep anxiety about fundraising and financial sustainability, the survey responses highlighted key challenges that affect the ability of nonprofit organizations to recruit new leaders to replace those who are leaving.

Some key findings of *Daring to Lead 2006*:

- Three out of four executives plan to leave their jobs within five years.
- Boards of directors and funders contribute to executive burnout.

*"Thanks for sending us a copy of Daring to Lead...This is an important piece of work that has implications for our leadership programs here at United Way."*

- Executives believe they make significant financial sacrifices to lead nonprofits.
- Many nonprofits lack the staffing depth to develop leaders inside the organization.
- Executives recognize the need for new sources of income and long-term sustainability, but need help with fundraising and financial management.

---

## COMING SOON: Follow-up to *Daring to Lead*

**As a follow-up to *Daring to Lead 2006*, Meyer is partnering with CompassPoint, Action Without Borders, and the Annie E. Casey Foundation on a national survey to learn more about the challenges facing younger leaders who might become nonprofit leaders later in their careers. Anticipated report release date is March 2008.**

AMANUEL MELLES

Director, Organizational Capacity Building  
United Way of Greater Toronto

Investing