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Exploring Commons Governance, Nonprofit Commons Governance, and Convening  
Leadership in Nonprofit Organizations to Solve Complex Societal and Global Issues:  
A Qualitative Study

Submitted to Southeastern University

Jannetides College of Business, Communications, and Leadership

In partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy in Organizational Leadership

Patricia A. Clary

April 2022

Jannetides College of Business, Communications, and Leadership  
Southeastern University

This is to certify that the dissertation prepared by:

Patricia A. Clary

titled

**EXPLORING COMMONS GOVERNANCE, NONPROFIT COMMONS  
GOVERNANCE, AND CONVENING LEADERSHIP IN NONPROFIT  
ORGANIZATIONS TO SOLVE COMPLEX SOCIETAL AND  
GLOBAL ISSUES: A QUALITATIVE STUDY**

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## **Abstract**

Nonprofit organizations that operate independently without knowledge of effective governance principles and convening leadership through collective-action collaboration have less shared resources and philanthropic value to fulfill their organization's mission. Moreover, the COVID-19 pandemic accentuated awareness of the need for nonprofit organizations and voluntary action associations to collaborate, leading to increased shared resources and philanthropic value through governance and convening leadership. The purpose of this study was to examine four design principles of commons governance (Ostrom, 1990), five nonprofit commons governance principles and assumptions (Lohmann, 1992), and five convening leadership dimensions (Clary, 2021) to understand how governance and convening leadership contribute to shared resources and philanthropic value through collaboration for nonprofit organizations. Specifically, the aim was to operationalize governance and convening leadership in nonprofit and voluntary action associations through collaboration. Data from five research questions and 20 interview questions resulted in 1,097 data segments, 51 codes, 32 categories, and 47 themes. Ten participants from nine nonprofit organizations representing 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations and voluntary action associations in the state of Arkansas in the southeastern United States of America participated in the study. The findings showed that governance and leadership contribute to shared resources and philanthropic value through collaboration for nonprofit organizations, especially during crises. The findings further showed that a framework based on empirical data, when implemented, provides a practical model for the development and management of nonprofit organizations through collaboration, governance, and convening leadership contributing to the furtherance of an organization's mission.

*Keywords:* commons governance, convening leadership, collaboration, shared resources, philanthropic value, nonprofit commons governance principles and assumptions, nonprofit organizations, voluntary action associations, COVID-19

## **Dedication**

On my 72nd birthday, February 19, 2022, I dedicate this dissertation to my mother, Margaret Georgina Blondheim Schmieder, a life-long learner; my father, Allen Sylvester Schmieder, a life-long caregiver; and my husband, Alvino DeWayne Clary, a life-long partner of 55 years. I was one of seven children. My mother, Margaret, instilled a saturated love of learning and experiencing life through books and adventure in each of her children. My father, Master Sergeant Allen Schmieder, served in the United States Air Force during World War II and the Korean War. He was a devoted family man of faith who instilled an appreciation for the simplicity of a life lived with integrity and ethical values in his children. Alvino DeWayne Clary, my life-long partner and the father of our children David Wayne Clary and Christina Marie Clary Conforth, instilled in his family a can-do attitude. He never stops reaching beyond his imagination to pull a star from heaven and hand it to one of his family members to ride as their own. He is a genuinely great, godly, kind, and compassionate man, and it was his patience and grace that got me through.

*“Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD rises upon you.”*

Isaiah 60:1 New International Version

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## **Chapter 1 – Introduction**

The COVID-19 global pandemic accentuated awareness of the need for governance and leadership, leading to shared resources and philanthropic value for nonprofit organizations during times of crisis. The National Council of Nonprofits (NCON) reported that the novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) created an evolving situation with varied impacts worldwide and across the states (NCON, 2021). In a report released November 2021 by the Congressional Research Service, viral deaths in the United States surpassed the 675,446 deaths from the 1819 Spanish flu, the previously worst U.S. pandemic-related death total on record. The global economy saw a reduced growth rate of around -3.2%, and global trade was estimated to have fallen by 5.3% in 2020. The health emergency arising from the global pandemic has affected the \$90 trillion global economy and continues to grow (Jackson et al., 2021). In a study published by the World Bank, Blake and Wadhwa (2020) reported that the truly unprecedented COVID-19 crisis poses a serious threat in the fight against extreme poverty, as an accelerated downturn in the global economy affects every nation. The negative effects include food insecurities, higher healthcare costs, classroom closures, fragility and violence, internet inequalities, a widened gender gap, and a slowdown in business and jobs affecting all aspects of life (Blake & Wadhwa, 2020).

As defined in this study, COVID-19 is the novel coronavirus virus that began in late 2019 and led to a healthcare pandemic, as declared by the World Health Organization on March 11, 2020 (Sachin et al., 2020). Since March 2020, more than 30 association offices, foundations, and other groups have released COVID-19 impact reports through the Delaware Alliance for Nonprofit Advancement (DANA, 2020). Of the 900 nonprofit organizations reported by the DANA to be in the state of Delaware, 245 responded to a survey to understand the impact of COVID-19 on services and operations. The survey results revealed that 60% of those who responded estimated over \$21 million in lost revenue, with most revenue lost to program and fundraising venues. The loss of revenue was followed by a disruption in services to clients and communities and increased sustained volunteer absences (DANA, 2020, p. 7). Nonprofit organizations also faced an

increase in the demand for services and supplies from clients and communities and at the same time were expected to create clean and safe work environments with reduced resources and funding (NCON, 2021).

In December 2020, the Florida Nonprofit Alliance's (FNA) *Closing Out the Year: COVID-19 Effects on Florida Nonprofits in 2020* affirmed findings from the DANA report. McDermott (2020) reported 1,154 organizations participated in a survey from October 21 to November 10, 2020, representing a diverse sector of Florida's nonprofit community. The findings of this report showed that many organizations were small and run by volunteers, and the authors identified the loss of revenue (64%) and concern with future funding (59%) as significant concerns.

Additionally, 52% of nonprofit organizations experienced volunteer absences, creating staff and volunteer burnout, exhaustion, and stress. McDermott (2020) reported that 71% of nonprofits experienced a decrease in unrestricted revenue in 2020 and described that "nonprofits are looking to individuals in the short term to help raise money to keep their organizations open and functioning" (p. 13). A survey sponsored by the Arkansas Community Foundation, the University of Arkansas Clinton School of Public Service, and the University of Arkansas Little Rock was administered to Arkansas nonprofit organizations between June 22 and July 10, 2020. The results showed that "most [nonprofit] organizations in the state have experienced significant service disruption, including complete program cancellations, and many have had difficulty getting needed supplies [resources]" (Driver et al., 2020, p. 2). The survey population included 316 Arkansas nonprofit organizations intersecting with 11 different program and service areas in all 75 Arkansas counties. Clary (2020) concluded from a qualitative study of five nonprofit organizations in Sharp County, Arkansas that a lack of shared resources and philanthropic value directly correlated to a nonprofit leader's ability to convene stakeholders and collaborate.

The findings from the four studies portrayed a dismal outlook for nonprofit organizations struggling to acquire needed resources and philanthropic value necessary to meet the growing challenges of program and service delivery throughout the global pandemic. Nathanson and Boyer (2020) stated, "the

coronavirus crisis could be even more catastrophic for [nonprofit organizations] than the Great Recession” (para. 6). They further contended the rapidity of the economic decline “has people understandably concerned about the potential hit to their businesses and personal finances. In turn, they are likely to forego charitable contributions as a way of cutting expenses and preserving capital” (Nathanson & Boyer, 2020, para. 6). In an article for the *Nonprofit Quarterly*, Levine (2020) expounded on Nathanson’s and Boyer’s commentary:

As NPQ has noted in our recent series on the Great Recession, by and large the nonprofit sector came out of the recession stronger than it had entered it. But recovery from COVID-19’s impact may not be so easy. The global economic system has been shaken to its core. “Millions of people have lost their jobs,” write Boyer and Nathanson, “and many companies will not see the other side of this crisis.” (para. 4)

The impact of the global pandemic has had far-reaching implications for nonprofit organizations. The influence of COVID-19 disrupted nonprofit organizations’ ability to deliver programs and services. Finances dwindled, volunteers became scarce, and the staff experienced increased exhaustion and stress (Clary, 2020). The disruption illustrated an awareness of the need for shared resources and philanthropic value to serve communities better and fulfill organizational mission. Levey (2020) projected that revenue shortages related to COVID-19 could lead to nearly four in 10 nonprofit closures over the next 3 years. And yet, it may be possible for governance and convening leadership to increase resources and philanthropic value during times of national and global crisis. The purpose of this study was to explore how principles of commons governance, nonprofit commons governance assumptions, and convening leadership contribute to shared resources and philanthropic value through collaboration in nonprofit organizations during a global pandemic.

Commons governance principles (Ostrom, 1990), nonprofit and voluntary action commons governance assumptions (Lohmann, 1992), and convening leadership (Clary, 2021) provided the theoretical context of study to explore shared resources and philanthropic value in nonprofit organizations. Ostrom’s (1990)

commons governance principles include clearly defined boundaries, collective choice arrangements, monitoring, and conflict-resolution sanctions. Lohmann's (1992) nonprofit and voluntary action governance assumptions are social action, authenticity, continuity, intrinsic valuation, and ordinary language. Lastly, Clary's (2021) convening leadership framework reflects five attributes of the convenor as explored through the convenor's core beliefs, values, and attitudes; stakeholder diversity; creative co-learning and co-creating; and congruity of stakeholders.

In 2009, Ostrom was awarded the Nobel Memorial Prize in Economic Sciences for investigative research on economic governance. This scholar investigated how "human groups craft, implement, and adapt complex institutional arrangements in their practical efforts to address common problems and realize shared aspirations" (Cole & McGinnis, 2014, p. 1). Ostrom (1990) argued that Hardin's (1968) *Tragedy of the Commons* was a misnomer since commoners could manage commons property. Hardin theorized privatization or government were necessary to manage commons property. Later, Ostrom classified her analysis of the commons and commons property as common-pool resource (Zückert, 2012). The above terms commons property and common-pool resource are discussed more fully in Chapter 2 of this study. Lohmann's (1992) work, paralleling Ostrom's, considered an adaptive version of commons governance in nonprofit and voluntary action organizations. Bushouse et al. (2016) contributed further to the work of Ostrom and Lohmann, validating the benefit of Ostrom's contribution to nonprofit and voluntary action studies through commons governance. Clary's (2021) convening leadership framework considers the role of the convenor on the commons. Whereas the role of the convenor is to initiate larger stakeholder collaboratives to solve complex societal and global problems. Limited research is available, however, on the convenor in commons literature (Thompson, 2021). Additionally, research on how commons governance and convening leadership contribute to the greater fulfillment of an organization's mission during times of global pandemics is nonexistent.

Lohmann (1992) and Ostrom (1990) studied how governance contributed to the management of resources, concurring that there was a need to incorporate the



principles found in commons governance in nonprofit organizations. In the current study, the researcher explored how governance contributes to shared resources and philanthropic value for nonprofit organizations. This was conducted to bridge a gap in the research on how to operationalize the principles of commons governance, nonprofit and voluntary action commons governance assumptions, and convening leadership in nonprofit organizations. Lohmann (1992) suggested that a more academic approach to the study of commons governance in nonprofit organizations is needed. Therefore, the purpose of this qualitative study was to discover how commons governance identified by Ostrom (1990), nonprofit and voluntary action commons governance assumptions as posited by Lohmann (1992), and convening leadership (Clary, 2021) contribute to the furtherance of a nonprofit organization's mission through collaboration. To better understand the relationship between the variables, the researcher conducted in-depth interviews with nonprofit leaders within the Arkansas Community Foundation, St. James Missionary Baptist Church Community Outreach, the Hub of Ouachita Court, Walmart, and Walmart Foundation.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The problem was that nonprofit organizations that operate independently without knowledge of effective governance principles and convening leadership through collective-action collaboration have less shared resources and philanthropic value to fulfill their organization's mission (Austin & Seitanidi, 2012a, 2012b; Hayman, 2016; Idemudia, 2008; Jamali & Keshishian, 2009; Marek et al., 2015; Murphy & Bendell, 1999). Researchers have shown collaboration to be an effective and powerful route in addressing economic, social, and environmental challenges (Koschmann et al., 2012). In addition, collective-action collaboration is an equally effective approach in tackling complex social and global issues (Novelli, 2021), important public purposes (Guo & Acar, 2005), and sustainability challenges (van Hille et al., 2018); however, there are systemic challenges associated with collaboratives (Koschmann et al., 2012). Murphy and Bendell (1999) posited that collaboratives are often shrouded in conflict and concluded that there was a "need for more inclusive and accountable models of society, governance, problem

solving, standard settings, regulation, and community development” (p. 33). Jamali and Keshishian (2009) established that collaboratives operate with limited knowledge of shared boundaries; information; and exposure to cultures, structures, and processes, contributing to less-than-optimal outcomes in the partnership. Bryson et al. (2006) theorized that cross-sector collaboration can exacerbate the very problem being solved. Lastly, gridlock (Selsky & Parker, 2005), nonattainment of goals (Idemudia, 2008), and partners with siloed goals and approaches contribute to challenges in nonprofit organizational collaboration.

In a study on value creation in collaboration, Austin and Seitanidi (2012a) identified a lack of a common language and collaboration processes as critical factors in creating value when attempting to develop collaborative partnerships. These authors claimed that “greater knowledge of the processes for and extent of value creation in general and co-creation more specifically are required for needed theoretical advancement and practitioner guidance” (Austin & Seitanidi, 2012a, p. 728). Marek et al. (2015) posited that studies examining the connection between how nonprofit partnerships function and perform effectively remain relatively scarce. Samali et al. (2016) argued that a fundamental understanding of how and why nonprofits collaborate is missing in collaboration discussions. Hayman (2016) claimed that the delivery of preproven interventions (e.g., programs and services) resulted in programmatic staff and executives who operationalize organizational management as linear. At the same time, this short-term approach leaves no room for innovation, collaboration, or convening leadership. Hayman also reported, “Charities on the whole don’t collaborate but the fundamental reason for this is not just a lack of will and much more that the economy they are a part of won’t let them breathe enough to do so” (para. 10).

Moreover, Atouba and Shumate (2020) explored the roles of partner selection, trust, and communication in nonprofit partnerships. Future research was noted to be relational value, including collaborative leadership, conflict-resolution, and effective project management. The problem was that nonprofit organizations that operate independently without knowledge of effective governance principles and convening leadership through collective-action collaboration have less shared

resources and philanthropic value to fulfill their organization's mission (Austin & Seitanidi, 2012a; Hayman, 2016; Idemudia, 2008; Jamali & Keshishian, 2009; Marek et al., 2015; Murphy & Bendell, 1999). The aim of this study was to explore collaboration, the role of governance, and convening leadership in the collaborative process and to determine how they contribute to shared resources and philanthropic value in fulfilling the organization's mission.

### **Purpose of the Research**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore how principles of commons governance (Ostrom, 1990), nonprofit commons governance (Lohmann, 1992), and convening leadership (Clary, 2021) are operationalized to contribute to increased shared resources and philanthropic value in nonprofit organizations through collaboration. To accomplish this, the researcher considered the governance structure of nonprofit organizations to explore four of the eight commons governance design principles of Ostrom (1990) and five basic assumptions for nonprofit and voluntary action organizations (Lohmann, 1992) within four Arkansas-based 501(c)(3) organizations. These included the Arkansas Community Foundation, St. James Missionary Baptist Church Community Outreach, the Hub of Ouachita County, Walmart, and the Walmart Foundation. The Arkansas Community Foundation provides grants to improve neighborhoods, towns, and the State of Arkansas (Arkansas Community Foundation, n.d.). Similarly, Walmart and the Walmart Foundation provide grants creating opportunities for business and philanthropy to collaboratively transform systems and realize better outcomes (Walmart, n.d.). According to their website, St. James Missionary Baptist Church Community Outreach focuses on "alleviating hunger, homelessness, and poverty in Northwest Arkansas and throughout the surrounding state through community partnerships and our own Community Food Pantry" (St. James Missionary Baptist Church Community Outreach, n.d., para. 1). The fourth nonprofit organization in the study, the Hub of Ouachita County, collaborates to bring resources to area nonprofit organizations whereby strengthening the ability of the nonprofit community to work together without duplication of services, and freedom from competition (Hub of Ouachita County, n.d.).

As noted earlier, there are system challenges associated with collaboratives (Koschmann et al., 2012) that often contribute to limited results (Jamali & Keshishian, 2009; Murphy & Bendell, 1999; Turcotte & Pasquero, 2001). In a study of collaborative partnerships between business and NGOs, Jamali and Keshishian (2009), attributed their limited results in part to knowledge sharing, information symmetry, culture, structures, processes, and a common set of values. Moreover, Gazley and Guo (2020) considered the problem of collaboration to be found in the lack of attention to governance processes, theoretical and empirical evidence, leadership collaboration, knowledge about collaborative failure, and lastly, a lack of comparative studies. Therefore, in this dissertation, the researcher explored an effective approach to solving complex societal problems by applying the design principles of commons governance and nonprofit and voluntary action commons governance assumptions to four nonprofit organizations in the state of Arkansas. Additionally, convening leadership was explored as an integral component of successful governance, leading to shared resources and philanthropic value.

### **Research Questions**

The research questions were designed to understand better how commons principles (Ostrom, 1990), nonprofit and voluntary action commons governance assumptions (Lohmann, 1992), and convening leadership (Clary, 2021) contribute to shared resources and philanthropic value through collaboration.

- RQ1: What is the need for nonprofit and voluntary action organizations to collaborate?
- RQ2: What are the barriers or challenges in collective-action collaboration?
- RQ3: What do commons governance principles and assumptions look like in nonprofit and voluntary action collaboratives? (Lohmann, 1992; Ostrom, 1990)
- RQ4: How does the convenor contribute to collective-action collaboration? (Clary, 2021)

RQ5: What is the need for shared resources and philanthropic value in nonprofit and voluntary action collaboratives?

### **Significance of the Research**

The findings of this study provide a better understanding of how commons governance, commons governance assumptions, and convening leadership contribute to shared resources and philanthropic value through collaboration in nonprofit organizations and voluntary action associations to meet societal and global complex issues. Ostrom et al. (1999) contended, “Although the number and importance of commons problems at local or regional scales will not decrease, the need for effective approaches to commons problems that are global in scale will certainly increase” (p. 278). The complexity of societal issues spans the globe, as scholars and practitioners seek effective solutions to complex issues. The current researcher explored a practical approach to solving complex societal problems by applying the design principles of commons governance to four nonprofit organizations and voluntary action in the state of Arkansas. More purposefully, collaboration and convening leadership were explored as integral components of successful commons governance. The findings of this study have significant implications for cross-sector practitioners. In the United States, 1.6 million tax-exempt organizations encompass 501(c) designations from churches and cultural centers to food banks and disaster relief organizations (The Independent Sector, n.d.). In Arkansas, there are 12,083 nonprofit organizations that comprise 8,174 501(c)(3) public charities, which includes some religious organizations; 422 501(c)(3) private and public foundations; and 3,487 other 501(c) nonprofit organizations. The implications of the findings would benefit stakeholders, practitioners, and scholars interested in the voluntary, independent, and the third sector community of nonprofit organizations.

### **Conceptual Framework**

This study was based on three conceptual frameworks: commons governance (Ostrom, 1990), nonprofit and voluntary action commons governance (Lohmann, 1992), and convening leadership (Clary, 2021).

### ***Commons Governance***

Ostrom's (1990) groundbreaking work on governing the commons led to the identification of eight design principles illustrated by long-enduring common pool resource (CRP) institutions. Design principles, according to Ostrom, denote an element or condition that accounts for the success and sustainability, generation to generation, in governing the commons (Ostrom, 1990). The principles are (a) clearly defined boundaries, (b) congruence between appropriation and provision rules and local conditions, (c) collective choice arrangements, (d) monitoring, (e) graduated sanctions, (f) conflict-resolution mechanisms, (g) minimal recognition of rights to organize, and (h) for larger systems, nested enterprises (p. 90). In this study, the researcher explored four of Ostrom's principles: clearly defined boundaries, collective choice, monitoring, and conflict-resolution mechanisms.

### ***Nonprofit Commons Governance***

Correspondingly, seminal thought-leader Lohmann (1992) hypothesized commons governance could be applied to the work of nonprofit organizations and voluntary action when contextualized through a values-driven normative model of common goods. Hess (2008) validated the importance of Lohmann's (1989, 1992, 1995, 2001) work in "equating the nonprofit [third sector] sector with the commons was quite influential and made important inroads in understanding the collaborative nature of philanthropy" (p. 3). Lohmann (1992) identified four value principles that correlated to the commons: (a) proportion, (b) contextualism, (c) conservation, and (d) prudence. Furthermore, Lohmann considered nine basic assumptions applicable to nonprofit organizations and voluntary action: are (a) social action, (b) affluence, (c) authenticity, (d) continuity, (e) rationality, (f) near-universality, (g) autonomy, (h) intrinsic valuation, and (i) ordinary language. In this study, the researcher examined five of Lohmann's nine assumptions, which were interchangeably referred to as principles in this study. Social action, authenticity, continuity, intrinsic valuation, and ordinary language were explored to better understand how to operationalize nonprofit governance and leadership through commons governance and nonprofit principles and assumptions.

### ***Convening Leadership***

Although complex in nature, collaboration and collaborative processes can be better understood through a collaborative continuum recognizing the dynamics involved in collaboration and collective action (Cheng, 2019). At the intersectionality of a collaborative is the individual or individuals who work toward solving complex social problems—the convenor. A convenor is essential for successful collaborative action (Carlson, 2006) and increasingly more important to solve the complex societal and global issues nonprofit organizations address today. The dimensions of convening leadership posited by Clary (2021) include collaboration of stakeholders; core beliefs, values, and attitudes; culturally diverse; creative co-learning and co-creating; and congruity of stakeholders. In this study, the researcher explored how three frameworks, commons governance, nonprofit commons governance, and convening leadership contributed to shared resources and philanthropic value for nonprofit organizations and voluntary action associations.

### **Methodology**

Creswell's (2015) qualitative methodology approach was used to guide this research. Qualitative research is conducted to describe trends and explain the relationship among variables found in the literature. Moreover, a qualitative methodology often includes a three-step process: (a) collecting data for analysis by seeking answers to broad questions from the participants, (b) analyzing the information collected from participants using descriptions and themes, and (c) interpreting the meaning of the information. Research questions were open-ended, with general questions that the researcher would like answered during the study (Creswell, 2015). Purposeful sampling, a qualitative method of intentionally selecting participants and sites to understand better the central phenomenon, was chosen for this study (Creswell, 2015). The Arkansas Community Foundation, St. James Missionary Baptist Church, the Hub of Ouachita County, Walmart, and Walmart Foundation were selected to understand the phenomenon further. The participants were representative of the organizations' executive director, collaborative program director, or board of directors.

As modeled on Phase 2 of the research design of Puppo (2021), who interviewed a broad array of community stakeholders with the intent of discovering common themes within their varied perspectives, data were collected using in-depth interviews. According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), qualitative research is emergent by nature, and it is both inductive and deductive. The interview questions were derived deductively from an extensive literature review of commons governance, nonprofit and voluntary action commons governance, and convening leadership. The goal of the literature review was to reach bibliographical saturation, such that it would be reasonable to conclude that any additional resources would have minimal effect on the understanding of the theoretical constructs (Henson et al., 2020). While the preferred method of data collection would have been in-person, in-depth interviews, the current social distancing restrictions, and precautions undertaken by varying organizations and individuals due to COVID-19 required flexibility and the use of web conferencing technology such as Zoom. The interviews were fully recorded, and a transcription service was employed for data analysis purposes (Patton, 2014). The transcription service added to the already existing challenges of in-depth interviewing, such as truthful and incomplete responses; however, the interview process was structured to maximize interviewee responses through open-ended interview questions, uninterrupted responses, probing follow-up questions using the interviewee's own words, exploring through dialogue, and conducting follow-up interviews if necessary (Padgett, 2017). Qualitative research studies have varied numbers of participants ranging from as little as one in narrative research and three to 10 in phenomenology to 30 in grounded theory (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). While distinct from phenomenological research, the design of in-depth interviews is closely aligned to phenomenology. Following the guidance of Creswell and Creswell (2018) and Boyd (2001), as well as the methodologies of Williamson (2016) and Puppo (2021), the researcher anticipated that between five to 10 participants would be required to reach data saturation.

The qualitative data analysis process always begins inductively as the qualitative researcher engages the data collected (Padgett, 2017). MAXQDA



software was used to analyze the data. The codebook of expected codes from the literature review (Creswell & Creswell, 2018) was used to begin the coding process. Additionally, the data analysis process was conducted following the five-step process outlined by Creswell and Creswell (2018). Validity and reliability are essential components of the qualitative data analysis process (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Following the guidelines of Creswell and Creswell (2018), validity was ensured through triangulation and member checking to determine the accuracy of the findings. Reliability was determined by checking transcripts for errors and continually comparing data with the codes to make sure that the coding aligned with the original definitions of the codes.

### **Scope and Limitations**

The current researcher explored how commons governance principles and assumptions and convening leadership contribute to the attainment of shared resources and philanthropic value to meet societal and global complex issues through collaboration. The scope of the study had several limitations. The study's scope included four nonprofit and voluntary action organizations located within one state, which was a limitation, as a national study would have been more robust. Next, many of the literature review studies on commons governance were conducted in other countries. It is difficult, therefore, to generalize the findings in those studies to the operationalization of nonprofit and voluntary action organizations in the United States.

Additionally, limited literature exists on convening leadership in the commons (Lobo et al., 2016; Thompson, 2021). Lastly, Clary (2021) may have a biased view of convening leadership as the author of the study and the convening leadership framework. The view of the researcher may be an additional limitation.

### **Definition of Terms**

#### ***Basic Assumptions About Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector***

Lohmann (1992) attributed nine basic assumptions upon which the theory of the commons is premised. Some of the assumptions are explicit alternatives to

commonly employed assumptions set forth about the nonprofit and voluntary sector—and, as such, may be controversial. Others are straightforward and noncontroversial. In this dissertation, the researcher used assumptions and principles interchangeably when referring to nonprofit and voluntary action governance.

### ***Collaboration***

For this study, the definition of collaboration was a “process through which parties who see different aspects of a problem can constructively explore their differences and search for solutions that go beyond their own limited visions of what is possible” (Gray, 1989, p. 5).

### ***Commoning***

Commoning is a complex social and psychological process in which commoners engage when they are establishing and managing commons (Thompson, 2014, p. i).

### ***Commons***

Bauwens et al. (2019) defined the commons as “a social system for the long term stewardship of resources that preserves shared values and community identity” (p. 9). Thompson (2014) further stated, “generally conceived of as shared resources, communities that create, use, and or manage them social protocols that govern their usage, and a sense of mutuality, commons include natural resources and well as created resources such as knowledge and information” (p. i).

### ***Commons Leadership***

Commons leadership is the role of the leader in convening stakeholders in the work of the commons or commoning (Clary, 2021).

### ***Convening Leadership***

Convening leadership is the ability to bring together, mobilize, and lead stakeholders toward the common good in solving complex societal and global issues (Clary, 2021).

***Convenor***

The collaborative leadership network defines a convenor as an individual or group responsible for bringing people together to address an issue, problem, or opportunity. In the context of collaborative leadership, it usually involves convening representatives from multiple sectors for a multimeeting process, typically on complex issues. A convenor, or group of convenors working together, might invite public officials, business professionals, or leaders of community or nonprofit organizations to participate. Convenors use their influence and authority to call people together to collaborate. (Collaborative Leaders Network, n.d., para.2)

***Design Principles Commons Governance (Ostrom, 1990)***

Design principles denote an element or condition that accounts for the success and sustainability, generation to generation, in governing the commons (Ostrom, 1990).

***Nonprofit***

As defined by the Business Dictionary, a nonprofit organization is an organization whose primary goal is to help the community. Nonprofit also refers to organizations that are eligible for exemption from federal income taxation under Section 501(c)(3) of the tax code, plus the closely related social welfare organizations eligible for exemption under Section 501(c)(4) of the regulation (Salamon & Newhouse, 2019, p. 7).

***Nonprofit Leaders***

Nonprofit leaders (NPLs) are typified as the executive director (ED), chief executive officer (CEO), or another member of the leadership team. These leaders are responsible for strategically directing the organization while overseeing most management tasks in pursuit of the organization's mission (Kearns et al., 2015; Osula & Ng, 2014).

**Stakeholders**

A stakeholder is “any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of an organization’s objectives” (Mitchell et al., 1997, p. 854).

**Summary**

The COVID-19 pandemic accentuated the need for shared resources and increased philanthropic value through governance and convening leadership in nonprofit organizations to fulfill the organization’s mission. The state of Delaware conducted the first evidence-based research report in March 2020, with 245 respondents from a population of 900 nonprofit organizations within the state of Delaware. The findings indicated that organizations canceled events, philanthropic giving dipped, and staff and volunteer absences made the delivery of products and services challenging. Furthermore, a disruption in the supplies for service delivery contributed to staff anxiety and stress. In this study, the researcher examined the principles of commons governance (Ostrom, 1990), nonprofit commons governance (Lohmann, 1992), and convening leadership (Clary, 2021) to understand better how commons governance and convening leadership contribute to shared resources and philanthropic value through collaboration for nonprofit organizations.

## **Chapter 2 – Literature Review**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore how commons governance (Ostrom, 1990), nonprofit and voluntary action commons governance assumptions (Lohmann, 1992), and convening leadership (Clary, 2021) contribute to shared resources and philanthropic giving through collaboration.

### **Nonprofit Organizations**

Americans self-organize at every turn for social justice. Ranging from the abolitionist societies of the early 19th century to the Tea Party organizations of the early 21st century, Americans rally to meet the needs of others or take up causes to right an injustice (Never, 2016). Alexis de Tocqueville (2003) noted that Americans have a fundamental belief in the democratic ideal whereby all ideas have potential merit, with organizational forms following to fulfill these ideas. Although de Tocqueville captured the essence how nonprofit organizations may form, what distinguishes a nonprofit organization from other organizations is how assets are distributed. Earnings cannot be distributed to controlling interest parties, shareholders, or private owners (Johnson, 2011). A formidable sector, nonprofit organizations play an intricate role in economic and social services delivery in the United States.

Never (2016), citing 2015 data from the National Center for Charitable Statistics, posited that the number of nonprofit organizations (inclusive of public charities and other 501(c) organizations) grew by 45% from 1995 to 2015, representing 1.18 million registered nonprofit public charities in the United States. In that same period, public charities increased from 576,133 organizations to 1,182,187, or a 105% increase (p. 82). In 2019, the Urban Institute: National Center for Charitable Statistics reported an increase of the number of nonprofit organizations registered with the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) in the United States to be 1.54 million, representing an increase of 4.5 % from 2006. In that same year (2019), the nonprofit sector contributed approximately \$1.047.2 trillion to the U.S. economy, or 5.6 % of the gross domestic product (GDP). The report further clarified that public charities registered as IRS, 501(c)(3) public charities accounted

for just under two thirds of the nonprofit sector's total assets of \$3.79 trillion (NCCS Team, 2020, para. 2). Furthermore, Giving USA (2019) reported that in 2018, giving from individuals, foundations, and businesses totaled \$427.71 billion, with an estimated 25.1 % of U.S. adults that volunteered in 2017. The volunteer hours in 2017 had an estimated value of \$195 billion (NCCS Team, 2020, para. 2). Moreover, in 2018, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reported nonprofits accounted for 12.3 million jobs or 10.2% of private-sector employment. It is worth repeating that nonprofit organizations in the United States have become a formidable sector in the American fabric of life's economic and social supply chain (Never, 2016).

The pace at which the nonprofit sector and its organizations reinvent themselves and change depends on a multifaceted mix of internal and external dynamics (Norris-Tirrell, 2014; Renz, 2016). In the late 1880s, a settlement housing model addressed urban poverty (Norris-Tirrell, 2014), which created solutions to social problems with social science knowledge, compassion, and expertise (Hall, 2016). The growing population of the United States and an increased need for human services, changed the role and expectations of nonprofit organizations. Further, disease, war, economic swings, and natural disasters also brought an opportunity for expanded social services programs through nonprofit organizations (Norris-Tirrell, 2014). Van Slyke et al. (2002) detailed the evolutionary shift between government and nonprofit organizations beginning with President Eisenhower in 1955. Eisenhower's policy called for less reliance on the government for goods and services demanded by citizens and more reliance on the private sector. The Public Assistance Amendments of 1962 and 1967 followed due to the War on Poverty and the Great Society programs of the Kennedy and Johnson administrations, which created widespread contracting between government and nongovernmental agencies. Current President Biden signed an executive order on February 14, 2021, to reestablish a White House Office of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships within the President's Executive Office, strengthening the nonprofit sector and its partnership with the federal government (Biden, 2021). The reestablished office was to enlist, equip, enable, empower, and expand the

work of community-serving organizations, both faith-based and secular. In a separate fact sheet on the reestablishment of the White House Office of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships the global pandemic, a severe economic downturn, systematic racism, climate crisis, and polarization were cited as reasons to look to civil society partnership to meet such challenges. The state of the country created another opportunity to expand the program and services in the social delivery systems of nonprofit organizations. In the United States, nonprofit organizations are valuable partners and conduits in the federal government's delivery of programs and services to meet the growing needs of people in America (Abramson, 2020; Feiock & Andrew, 2006).

The nonprofit sector and institutional constructs are a robust industry in the United States, encompassing terms like the third sector, the civil society, the independent sector, and the social sector (Renz, 2016; Valentinov, 2011). Moreover, in many parts of the world, nonprofit organizations are referred to as nongovernmental organizations or NGOs (Renz, 2016). Community-based organizations (CBOs) are also descriptive of nonprofit organizations. Notably, many CBOs provide programs and services providing social services as their primary mission (Smith, 2010). Hall (2016) maintained the nonprofit sector referred to entities classified in section 501(c)(3) and 501(c)(4) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954. One such entity, voluntary associations, consists of a broader term to capture the range of organizations in section 501(c) of the IRS code. According to Hall, voluntary associations encompassed political parties, trade associations, and mutual benefit associations. The degree of tax benefit to the donor was varied depending on the entity. V. Ostrom (1991) considered voluntary association in commons work to be autonomous based on the authority and ability of individuals to contract with one another where whole property is shared in the assets of that voluntary association. Ostrom also argued that religious institutions and the press were autonomous and recognized these institutions as voluntary associations.

The nonprofit sector continues to evolve. It is vast, reaching, complex, influential, and remains a key partner in addressing global and societal issues (Jain,

2020; Natal & Brichter, 2012). As a result, many scholars have supported the idea of a movement to define the all-encompassing nonprofit organizations and voluntary action association nonprofit sector as a commons (Bushouse, 2017; Hess, 2008; Lohmann, 1992). Regardless of the name, third sector, civil society, independent sector, community-based organization, or NGOs, nonprofit organizations and voluntary action associations are essential to solving complex global and societal issues and include community organizations, cooperatives, advocacy groups, service organizations, political parties, schools, charitable organizations, and professional groups (Crosby, 1996). In this paper, nonprofit organizations refer to and encompass all the above, and the governance of these organizations was explored further through principles of commons governance (Ostrom, 1990) and assumptions of nonprofit organizations and voluntary action governance (Lohmann, 1992).

### ***Shared Resources***

According to Johnson (2011), the nonprofit organization's mission is the heart of the organization. Furthermore, Johnson contended that a clear understanding of the mission should direct board members in the use of resources to further the organization's mission. In a time of fiscal crisis for nonprofit organizations, however, many boards and nonprofit leaders are seeking new ways to address the challenges of limited resources (Moynihan & Smith, 2014). The fiscal crisis is being driven in part by reductions in state and local government revenue and collections (Moynihan & Smith, 2014; Weber Sattler, 2006). A decline in state and local government revenue is expected to continue for 50 years (Moynihan & Smith, 2014). In a study of convening and social entrepreneurship, Weber Sattler (2006) identified government budget deficits and a need for resources decreased an organization's capacity to fulfill their mission. Collaboration of nonprofit organizations is a pathway to shared resources where resources may take the form of funding or personnel (Proulx et al., 2014), space and nonemployee overhead (Takagi, 2018), or shared programming.

A plethora of research has shown fierce competition among nonprofit organizations to procure resources and philanthropic gifts (Ashley & Young, 2014;



Faulk, 2014; Harrison & Thornton, 2014; Seaman et al., 2014). Competition among nonprofit organizations is not new and can revolve around revenue sources, physical capital, clients, labor, or land. Increasingly so, nonprofit organizations also compete for prestige and political power are resources nonprofit organization compete (Ashley & Young, 2014).

The competitive nature of nonprofit organizations to acquire resources and philanthropic value has led researchers to question the proliferation of nonprofit organizations, leading to reduced levels of charitable giving (Harrison & Thornton, 2014); inequity in the distribution of resources (Seaman et al., 2014); the role of government funding, the second-largest revenue source for nonprofit organizations (Ashley & Young, 2014); the dilution of finite amounts of charitable funding; inefficient fundraising; and the duplication of services (Faulk, 2014). Laurett and Ferreira (2018) argued that the increase in nonprofit organizations and the rising levels of competition are trends of the industry. Maier et al. (2016) maintained that these trends contribute to the need for nonprofit organizations to adapt from traditional methods of collecting resources and a need to change management's approach to continue providing services.

Research after the Great Recession (2007–2009) has shown the need for nonprofit organizations to change their approach to management (Never, 2016). Renz (2016) noted a continued higher demand for services, coupled with a significant decline in government funding, a slow rebound in philanthropic support, and a lack of internal resources contributed to nonprofits' struggle to rebound following the recession. Five years after the recession safety nets remain frayed, stress levels are significant, with no relief in sight (Renz, 2016). Smith (2010) reported that, following Hurricane Katrina in 2005, executive directors of nonprofit organizations identified securing funding support, creating new approaches to problems, and responding to the needs of client requests among the top coping strategies for nonprofit organizations. Additionally, Smith cited that nonprofit organizations needed a "clear chain of command when key people are not available, a focus on mission consistency, and the need for continuity of service agreements in a disaster" (p. 104). The research of Never (2016), Renz (2016), and

Smith (2010) signaled the need to understand how nonprofit organizations operationalize their mission during times of crisis. Further research is needed to understand better how nonprofit organizations secure funding, create new approaches to problem solving, and respond to clients' needs. Additional areas of study include the chain of command, mission consistency, and continuity of service or collaborative agreements in place during crises. The author of this dissertation explored how four nonprofit organizations in Arkansas responded to the global COVID-19 pandemic in securing funding, creating new problem-solving approaches, and responding to clients' needs. More specifically, the current exploration of the chain of command, mission consistency, and collaborative agreements provided a better understanding of how commons governance is operationalized in nonprofit organizations.

### ***Philanthropic Value***

Philanthropic value in this paper is the intrinsic value that a donor ascribes to the social action of a nonprofit organization or voluntary action association. This paper sought to understand how intrinsic value to the donor of four Arkansas nonprofit organizations changed during the first year following the global pandemic of COVID-19 and, if so, were governance and convening leadership leading factors to the change? Overall, philanthropy in the United States has witnessed increased turbulence if not decline. Volunteering is down (Nesbit et al., 2018), workplace donations are down (Shaker et al., 2017), and, while United Way giving remains at high levels, donations to the charity have steadily declined since 2007. The Nonprofit Quarterly reports that American's are not giving at the level they had in past years, resulting in a steady decline of charitable contributions.

In the state of Arkansas, a report in 2018 produced by the MDC on the state of philanthropy in the state highlighted that the persistently poor, people of color, and women continued to fall between the cracks, affecting education, health, employment, and, indirectly, economic security. The implications presented to Arkansas Impact Philanthropy (AIP) recommended alignment of resources and leveraging its collective power to invest in well-being across the state (MDC, 2018, p. 2). A final analysis in the report addressed access to federal funding to address

the issues facing Arkansas and the well-being of its population. The 2020 census further reported three factors affecting philanthropy in the state of Arkansas, an undercount of Arkansas's population resulting in reduced federal funding, marginalized voice and political power in rural areas and communities of color, and lack of research to inform decision making.

A decrease in shared resources and philanthropic giving has increased the importance of an organizations philanthropic value against the backdrop of the changing face of philanthropic giving in America. In the 1980s, information technology and globalization was attributed to the change in philanthropic giving (Hall, 2016). Hall characterized the “new billionaires” as predominantly younger men, active business leaders, activists, and result-oriented individuals who wanted to yield measurable impacts. Additionally, Hall asserted that as the source of wealth was global, the young financiers began to consider global problems of hunger, disease, the environment, and economic development. The philanthropic landscape varied between foundations. For instance, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation focused on the global front of health, financial services for the poor, and agricultural development. In the United States, the foundation focused on funding schools, libraries, and scholarships (Hall, 2016). While financier George Soros interests included poverty elimination and the political development of democratic societies in Central and Eastern Europe (Hall, 2016). Google's founders Sergey Brin and Lawrence Page created a for-profit foundation exemplified as a social enterprise combining business and social change. A definitive shift occurred in philanthropy during this era, in that the focus of philanthropy changed from advanced industrial nations supporting developing nations to a flow of aid and influence in a broad area of multidirectional initiatives (Hall, 2016).

Duquette (2020) proposed American (e.g., United States of America) charitable giving is at a critical juncture, with COVID-19 presenting an economic contradiction likely to reduce giving. The reduced giving trend from the economic downturn of COVID-19 can be a factor in changing philanthropic giving in the United States. Solutions to the changing dynamics of philanthropy come from institutions, researchers, and practitioners. For instance, the Milken Institute

challenged philanthropists to think beyond their own networks and pool of known or well-established organizations, recognizing the solution to solving complex societal and global problems may lie with new grantees (Biggs, 2021). Political scientist Berry (2020) argued for expanding nonprofit advocacy with regulatory changes to clarify the rules of advocacy for 501(c)(3) nonprofits. In contrast, Seaman et al. (2014) endorsed consolidation and collaboration in the nonprofit sector and contended the benefit to nonprofit organizations would be significant. Seaman cited reduced costs, an increase in realized assets, larger markets, mitigating competition, and greater political influence would be realized through consolidation and collaboration. Therefore, theoretical, and empirical research is needed to better understand how governance contributes to the philanthropic value of an organization.

## **The Commons**

### ***Defining the Commons***

An all-encompassing definition for the commons has not been agreed upon by scholars; however, there are elements of the definition that most scholars do agree upon. The commons is a social system where shared resources are managed and shared by a group of people. Bauwens et al. (2019) defined the commons as “a social system for the long term stewardship of resources that preserves shared values and community identity” (p. 9). Thompson (2014) stated, “generally conceived of as shared resources, communities that create, use, and/or manage them social protocols that govern their usage, and a sense of mutuality, commons include natural resources and well as created resources such as knowledge and information” (p. i). Moreover, Hess and Ostrom (2007) argued that a commons is “a general term that refers to a resource shared by a group of people that is subject to social dilemmas” (p. 3). Never et al. (2020) extrapolated that resource sharing requiring collective action and the presence of a social dilemma embodied the definition of the commons. In addition, Berge and van Laerhoven (2011) contented any natural or manmade resource defined a commons if that resource could be held and used in common.

Hardin's (1968) seminal work on the *Tragedy of the Commons* proposed a shepherd allegory to illumine an open/free system where a shepherd could increase the need for a commonly pooled resource (CRP) until saturation of the resource was reached and the resource depleted. Hardin drew from biological and economic theories in the development of his theory based on population growth exceeding environmental resources (Frischmann et al., 2019). Hardin's "tragedy of the commons" postulated that when growth exceeded resources, the work of the commons would fall into ruin. Ruin, Hardin asserted, "is the destination towards which all men rush, each pursuing his own best interest in a society that believes in the freedom of the commons" (p. 3). Without regulation or privatization of the commons, individuals would abuse the shared resource as the freedom to use the shared resource was without boundary. Hardin (1968) speculated this unlimited use of the resource would lead the way to ruin for all. Hardin's theory was based on rational choice theory. The rational choice theory is based on the belief that people, usually selfish, choose a course of action that is most in line with their personal preferences and maximizes their own resource use (Burke, 2001). As such, Hardin (1968) advocated for privatization and regulation to manage the commons.

The research of Elinor Ostrom provided alternatives to rational choice. The first female to receive a Nobel Prize in Economics, Ostrom (1990), considered Hardin's (1968) tragedy of the commons model as an open-access model and not that of a commons (De Angelis & Harvie, 2014). Ostrom viewed the open seas and the atmosphere as having no limits with open access regimes; therefore, there was no limit on who was authorized to use them (De Angelis & Harvie, 2014). Ostrom (1990) theorized that local property could be successfully managed by local commons without any regulation by central authorities or privatization and thus conceptualized the commons as social systems. Jumbe (2006), an IASC colleague of Ostrom's, submitted that such management within the confines of a set of institutions or rules would protect the resources from abuse or overuse from overuse by people who do not respect the resources' fragility or limits. CPRs provide one example of common property regimes. Caffentzis (2005) categorized money, personal belongings, literary texts, and even children as communalized

property. According to Caffentzis, the 15th century Taborites formed the first community as commoners deposited all personal belongings into large open chests. An act such as displayed by the Taborites, is an example of common pool resources. Caffentzis further contended that based on the history of common property regimes, it was difficult to make a distinction between private property goods and common property goods. Additionally, Ostrom et al. (1999) hypothesized that “although the number and importance of commons problems at local or regional scales will not decrease, the need for effective approaches to commons problems that are global in scale will certainly increase” (p. 278).

### ***Commons Governance Principles***

The seminal work of the commons (Hardin, 1968) saw a re-emergence in the study of commons and the common good in 2009 when Elinor Ostrom was awarded the Nobel Memorial Prize in Economics. Ostrom (2010) received this award for her research and analysis on economic governance, most notably, in the commons (De Angelis & Harvie, 2014). Ostrom (1990) took an institutional approach to the study of self-organization and self-governance in common pooled resource situations (p. 1). In doing so, she countered Hardin’s (1968) assessment in *Tragedy of the Commons* of central regulation, of privatization, and of regulation by limiting the use of natural resources to ensure long-term economic viability. Ostrom’s (1990) groundbreaking work on governing the commons led to the identification of eight design principles as illustrated by long-enduring common pool resource (CRP) institutions. The term common pool resource “refers to a natural or man-made resource system that is sufficiently large as to make it costly (but not impossible) to exclude potential beneficiaries from obtaining benefits from its use” (Ostrom, 1990, p. 30).

Building on the work of Hardin (1968), Ostrom (1990), and Lohmann (1992), Hess (2008) coined the term *new commons* (NC). This term differentiated traditional common-pool resources and common property regimes from new commons. The term, according to Hess, denoted issues of social crisis, deprivation, and the sustainability of a variety of shared resources. Hess referred to the new commons as commons where preexisting rules or clear institutional arrangements

of shared resources had not been recognized. The tragedy of the commons captured by Hardin in an allegory of sheep grazing in a pasture, argued without governance arrangements, the resources would be over-exploited by commoners [users of the graze land] who would deplete the resource, destroying it in its entirety (McGinnis, 2011).

In this study, the researcher explored how traditional commons governance (Ostrom, 1990) and nonprofit commons governance (Lohmann, 1992), or new commons as coined by Hess (2008) contribute to shared resources and philanthropic value. Lohmann's (2016) research focused on governance, voluntary action, and association offered that the collective work of the Ostrom's and colleagues contributed to the interdisciplinary institutional theory, largely compatible with the third sector model.

The term third sector connotes something broader than the study of nonprofit organizations or civil society (Hall, 2016; Lohmann, 2016; Renz, 2016; Valentinov, 2011). As defined in this study, nonprofit organizations encompass voluntary action and associations, as well as organizations identified as being a part of the third sector, and civil society organizations. Ostrom (1990) studied variables related to self-organization, the capability of individuals to self-organize, and how CPR problems could be solved without external assistance. The work of Ostrom, her husband Vincent, and colleagues led to the development of the institutional analysis and development (IAD) framework. In a study of the IAD framework, McGinnis (2011) argued that there was an increase in sustainable governance when more of the principles were operationalized within a commons. Ostrom's (2011) IAD framework considered factors of social behavior, the rules, physical and material conditions, and the attributes of the community. A general language the IAD was used to analyze and test these factors, and how they affected the structure, individual incentives, and the outcomes.

McGinnis (2011) posited that the IAD framework helped those new to commons governance understand the interaction and design of the parts of an action situation and how they fit together as a whole (p. 169). Design principles, according to Ostrom (1990), denote an element or condition that accounts for the

success and sustainability, generation to generation, in governing the commons. The principles as identified were (a) clearly defined boundaries; (b) congruence between appropriation and provision rules and local conditions; (c) collective-choice arrangements; (d) monitoring; (e) graduated sanctions; (f) conflict-resolution mechanisms; (g) minimal recognition of rights to organize; and (h) for larger systems, nested enterprises (Ostrom, 1990, p. 90). In this study, the researcher explored four of the IAD principles of commons governance as identified by Ostrom: clearly defined boundaries, collective choice, monitoring, and conflict-resolution mechanisms.

**Clearly Defined Boundaries.** McGinnis (2011) concurred with Ostrom's (1990) assessment that boundaries are both biophysical and social and are clearly defined. De Angelis and Harvie (2014) stated, "legitimate users must be clearly separated from non-users; the common pool resource must be clearly separated (or distinguished) from its wider environment" (p. 285). Ostrom (2010), in her later research, identified boundary rules in institutional action situations to be such that they specified how actors are chosen to enter or leave a situation. At multiple levels of analysis, clearly defined boundaries considered the factors involved in to access to the resource. Ostrom (2010) factored ownership of the resource, whether an entry fee, paid fee, or lottery winning provided access to the resource. The cultural multiplicity of ethnicity, race, caste, gender, or family was also considered. Moreover, who owned the resources was a factor. The current researcher sought to understand better how clearly defined boundaries contribute to shared resources and philanthropic value in nonprofit organizations.

**Collective Choice.** Collective choice was identified by Ostrom (1990) as social behavior based on the decisions of the representatives [collaborative partners] (Forsyth & Johnson, 2014). The institutionalization of collective choice operates at three levels: an operational level, a collective choice level, and a constitutional level (Herzberg, 2015, p. 101). The operational level contains the day-to-day activities such as harvesting, or monitoring, or making maintenance decisions within a collective system. The collective choice level set the policies that govern the operational level. The rules set at the collective choice level structure



daily interactions such as how to monitor or how to set up the rule for accessing. At the constitutional choice level, who is involved is established and the rules to be used at the collective choice level are laid out (Herzberg, 2015).

De Angelis and Harvie (2014) extrapolated from Ostrom's work that "individuals affected by the resource regime must be able to participate in making and modifying its rules" (p. 285). The group then establishes processes to enable the most affected individuals to participate in making the rules (McGinnis, 2011, p. 180). McGinnis considered collective choice to be processes whereby collective decision-making, a consequence of constitutional choice processes, occurred in institutions. In Ostrom's IAD framework, constitutional choice was viewed as the process by which collective choice procedures were defined (McGinnis, 2011, p. 173). Hardin (1968) viewed government regulation and privatization as solutions reliant on collective action by the government to constrain the tragedy of the commons (Frischmann et al., 2019). Whereas Lohmann (1992) considered collective choice in nonprofit and voluntary action associations to be a term that guided collected action through rules established by collective action users. Ostrom (1990) questioned how collaborative partners could understand nuances associated in making collective action decisions citing examples of a user's understanding, for instance, in harvesting technologies, forestry machinery, or fishing nets. And yet, collective action was identified as an important consideration in establishing principles in governing the commons. Therefore, the current researcher examined collective choice in nonprofit organizations.

**Monitoring.** Monitoring takes place at the operational level of the institutionalization of the resource to be governed (Herzberg, 2015). A two-way process, in a collective action system, the users of the resource monitor one another in the appropriation of the use of the resource and the condition of the resource (De Angelis & Harvie, 2014). Monitoring is a common practice in systems like the media, police, or auditors and consists of many units in a public economy monitoring the activities of other units (McGinnis, 2011).

Bushouse (2011) studied governance structures using the IAD to understand the variation in service delivery of club goods. At the constitutional choice level of

an institution, Bushouse argued that there are two types of power to affect the rules at the collective-choice level: the number of principals at the decision-making level and the proximity of monitoring and enforcing of those rules. Bushouse stated that the rules-in-use is dependent on monitoring and enforcement of the rules; whereby, internal monitoring is conducted by the principals and external monitoring comes from entities separate from the collective. Bushouse asserted that monitoring varied for each governance structure and the IAD framework was not sufficient to account for the variation in service delivery across the for-profit, nonprofit, and public provider sectors. The study explored how commons governance and convening leadership contribute to shared resources and philanthropic value. Specifically, a segment of the research explored if the nonprofit organizations in the study had a monitoring system for internal and external shared resources.

**Conflict-Resolution Mechanisms.** The institutional analysis and development framework (IAD) developed by Ostrom (1990) included conflict-resolution mechanisms. As Dietz et al. (2003) noted in an article on the struggle of governance on the commons, sharp differences in power and value across interested parties made conflict inherent in environmental choices. When disputes inevitably rise among the different units in a public economy, it is important to have mechanisms or processes in place to help the disputing parties come to some resolution (Ostrom, 1990). In governing the commons, dispute measures or mechanism need to be available quickly and affordably as conflict arose (De Angelis & Harvie, 2014; McGinnis, 2011; Ostrom, 1990). McGinnis (2011) identified dispute measures to be the court system, arbitrators, government agencies, or other specialized mechanisms established for this purpose (McGinnis, 2011).

Dietz et al. (2003) captured the complexity of governance on the commons and the need for conflict-resolution mechanisms in a study of fish hatcheries. The results of their study drew attention to the global loss of more than 90% of the predatory fish population, due to industrialization of the fishing industry, an increased population, and advanced technologies. The findings showed a 10% additional increase in loss of predatory fish over a 15-year span of industrialized

exploitation. To address the complexity of governance as disputes arose, Dietz et al. identified governmental approaches to complement managerial ones: ballots, polling, formal legal proceedings to address adversarial processes, negotiation, and structure input from participants as conflict-resolution measurements. As conflict is inevitable in collaboratives, the current researcher explored the type of measurements nonprofit organizations in the state of Arkansas use to resolve conflicts.

The IAD framework consisted of nine principles for governing the work of the commons. Research and findings on the efficacy of these principles is varied. Berge and van Laerhoven (2011) argued that the design principles' generated rules are relevant and useful in a diversity of context. Forsyth and Johnson (2014) considered the design principles to offer a model of decentralization for the governance of local resources. They also argued that the individualistic approach of Ostrom (1990) and colleagues removed important aspects of the context of cultural diversity in the work of the commons. Johnson (2011) criticized Ostrom's work, likening her approach to common property regime as a cookie-cutter style prescribing both the nature of the problem and the solution. In an editorial on governing the commons for 2 decades, Berge and van Laerhoven (2011) considered the sustainability of global ecosystems like the oceans through governance. In the current study, the researcher explored four of the design principles (see Table 1) to understand how commons governance is operationalized in nonprofit organizations and voluntary action associations based in the United States.

**Table 1***Four Principles of Commons Governance (Ostrom, 1990)*

| Commons Governance Framework (Ostrom, 1990) |  |
|---|--|
| Clearly Defined Boundaries                  | Individuals or households who have rights to withdraw resource units from the CPR must be clearly defined, as must the boundaries of the CPR itself (Ostrom, 1990, p. 91).           |
| Collective-Choice Arrangements              | Most individuals affected by the operational rules can participate in modifying the operational rules (Ostrom, 1990, p. 93).   |
| Conflict-Resolution Mechanisms              | Appropriators and their officials have rapid access to low-cost local arenas to resolve conflicts among appropriators or between appropriators and officials (Ostrom, 1990, p. 100). |
| Monitoring                                  | Monitors, who actively audit CPR conditions and appropriator behavior, are accountable to the appropriators or are the appropriators (Ostrom, 1990, p. 94).                          |

*Note.* Table 1 represents a partial list of commons governance principles.

## Summary

Elinor Ostrom's (1990) seminal work emerged as the forerunner of commons governance for common pooled resources. Along with Victor Ostrom and a team of colleagues at the Indiana University, the design principles or the IAD have withstood research scrutiny and testing to remain formidable in determining the long-term sustainability of success in the commons. Aside from Lohmann (1992), however, limited research has been conducted to test the principles in nonprofit organizations where a shared resource might be a food distribution system or shared office space. Therefore, little is known on how the principles of commons governance are operationalized in nonprofit organizations in the United States and more specifically, Arkansas. The current researcher explored clearly defined boundaries, collective choice, monitoring, and conflict-resolution mechanisms, four of the eight design principles identified by Ostrom (1990) for governance on the commons asking the question, "In what ways did clearly defined boundaries, collective choice, monitoring, and conflict resolution contribute to shared resources and philanthropic giving during the first year of COVID-19 through nonprofit organization governance and convening leadership?"

## **Nonprofit Governance**

### ***Defining Nonprofit Governance***

There are many factors to be considered in the governance of a nonprofit organization where the nature of governance is determined mainly on the form of the entity. The current researcher looked at 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations, typically governed by a board of directors and voluntary action associations, informally governed by volunteers. The control and management of a nonprofit organization are two such factors to be considered in nonprofit governance (Hopkins & Gross, 2016). Additionally, McGinnis (2011) considered governance to be process driven as the rules and norms of the organization are formed. The process is iterative, in that the rules in the governance of the organization influence the policies of the organization and the policies are open to review and revision. McGinnis exerted self-governance to be the ability of commons and organizations to actively engage in determining the rules and processes of self- organization, whereas Bushouse (2011) considered governance to be at the constitutional-choice level of decision-making as determined by the organization's governance structure. Bushouse further contended the power to make the rules was directly connected to the governance structure.

Bushouse (2011) applied the institutional analysis and development (IAD) framework to identify six governance structures in the for-profit, nonprofit, and public providers service sectors. In the study of club goods, Bushouse posited that constitutional, collective, and operational consistency across the rules connected the sectors to outcomes. The variance of factors in nonprofit governance illustrates the need to better understand how governance contributes to shared resources and philanthropic value in fulfilling the mission of nonprofit organizations.

Johnson (2011) maintained that there is a division of power between the board of directors and the executive director in nonprofit organizations with a primary function of the board of directors to provide governance for the organization. By doing so, the board safeguards the public's trust for the organization. Hopkins and Gross (2016) stated that the board of directors is responsible for the oversight of the organization's mission, tax-exempt status,

resources, budget, executive director, and overseeing the organization's management. The philanthropic responsibility of the board would be to support fundraising activities of the organization. To fulfill its responsibilities, the board of directors creates the governing policies and procedures that are implemented by the executive director and staff. In this manner, the strategic direction set by the board of directors is managed by the staff. Johnson advocated the use of position descriptions to separate governance from management for officers, board, staff, and volunteers. To better understand how the separation of governance and management contributes to shared resources and philanthropic value and the ability of an organization to fulfill its mission, the current researcher explored five dimensions of nonprofit governance assumptions as proposed by Lohmann (1992).

### ***Nonprofit Commons Governance Assumptions***

The second framework in this dissertation was that of nonprofit organizations and voluntary action commons governance (Lohmann, 1992). Lohmann offered a set of first principles for charitable organizations and voluntary action associations. A broad category of social organizations, Lohmann referred to these organizations as a commons and compared the commons to social democracy based on de Tocqueville's science of association. Further, Lohmann (2016) linked the multivariate approach of the institutional analysis development framework (Ostrom, 1990) to nine basic assumptions for nonprofit organizations and voluntary action associations. For Lohmann (1992), commons governance principles (Ostrom, 1990) applied naturally to the third sector because the third sector was governed by rules, participated in collective-action decision making, held in common shared resources, and self-governed.

Lohmann (1992) asserted a new theoretical approach to the application of commons governance through nine basic assumptions, upon which the theory of the commons is premised in the nonprofit commons: (a) social action, (b) affluence, (c) authenticity, (d) continuity, (e) rationality, (f) near-universality, (g) autonomy, (h) intrinsic valuation, and (i) ordinary language. The current researcher explored social action, authenticity, continuity, intrinsic valuation, and ordinary

language, five assumptions of nonprofit organizations and voluntary action commons governance.

**Social Action.** Lohmann (1992) combined the words *social* (Schutz, 1970) and *action* (Weber, 1968) to connote a substantively meaningful life based on preconceived projects, acting out of subjective meaning to the individual. In philanthropy, social action is an action for the good of humanity, charity as action for the good of others, and altruism as the interest of others (Billis, 1991). Billis theorized that the action undertaken by nonprofit organizations and voluntary action associations would materialize in social action as predictable, recurring patterns. In this study, the researcher explored how social action was operationalized in nonprofit organizations based in the state of Arkansas during the first year of the global COVID-19 pandemic.

**Authenticity.** Authenticity in the nonprofit commons assumes the actors are authentic—that is, the actors are what they appear to be and what they inform others they are (Lohmann, 1992). Lohmann based the assumption of authenticity on the code of moral conduct, professional oaths, and ethical reporting with data and results found in empirical practices in the commons. Lohmann applied the same assumption of authenticity on the benefactor as the recipient of the shared resource or philanthropic value. The litmus test for authenticity was determined based on whether an organization organized and distributed the shared resource or philanthropic value to the intended benefactors. Being perceived as authentic is critical to organizations seeking to provide solutions to social problems and challenges. Therefore, the current researcher explored authenticity and how four nonprofit organizations in Arkansas are perceived in collaborative efforts to be authentic. If proven to be authentic, the researcher aimed to identify in which ways espousing values of moral conduct, professional codes, and ethical reporting were evident in governing the organizations.

**Continuity.** Lohmann (1992) presented continuity as an invisible force learned intergenerationally or experienced through tradition where action is appropriate as it is reasonable, predictive, or productive of desired consequences (p. 51). Lohmann associated consistent lifestyle choices and the experience of others in

nonprofit and voluntary action to be characteristic of the past, present, and future, promoting a sense of connectedness and continuity. In nonprofit organizations, continuity can be observed in time-honored traditions, events, and repetitive activities that can be caught and taught by actors in the organization. Lohmann theorized that intergenerational recruitment is a significant consideration in the decision-making of many commons. The assumption of continuity is an essential factor in nonprofit governance in commons work. In this study, the researcher explored how nonprofit organizations maintained continuity in recruiting new members in the first year of a global COVID-19 pandemic and the delivery of programs and services and determined whether that continuity led to shared resources and philanthropic value.

**Intrinsic Valuation.** Lohmann's (1992) intrinsic valuation assumption is based on Mead's qualitative social research, symbolic interactionism, and ethnomethodology. Thus, intrinsic valuation is evaluated on the values arising from within. In the commons, intrinsic valuation requires rules, and standards are recognized and used by members. Therefore, this dissertation explored the rules and regulations in the governance of nonprofit organizations in Arkansas that contribute to shared resources and philanthropic value in collaboratives.

**Ordinary Language.** Ordinary language assumes that philanthropic, charitable, and altruistic actors recognize and understand the language of the commons (Lohmann, 1992). Therefore, the current researcher sought to understand better how ordinary language contributes to shared resources and philanthropic value through governance.

## **Summary**

As shown in Table 2, this researcher explored whether social action, authenticity, continuity, intrinsic valuation, and ordinary language, as discussed in Lohmann's (1992) assumptions on the commons, are integral to governance on the commons in nonprofit organizations and voluntary action. More specifically, the researcher identified in what ways social action, authenticity, continuity, intrinsic valuation, and ordinary language contributed to shared resources and philanthropic value during the first year of COVID-19.



**Table 2***Five Assumptions of Nonprofit and Voluntary Action Commons Governance*


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Nonprofit and Voluntary Action Governance Framework (Lohmann, 1992)

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|                     |  |
|---------------------|--|
| Social Action       | Thus, a basic assumption of the theory of the commons is that nonprofit services and unproductive laborers are composed of social action, or “substantively meaningful experience emanating from our spontaneous life based upon preconceived projects” (Lohmann, 1992, pp. 47–48).                  |
| Authenticity        | The theory of the commons also assumes that actors operating in nonprofit and voluntary settings are authentic, that is they are what they appear to be to informed others also operating in the same context (Etzioni, 2014) (Lohmann, 1992, p. 49).  |
| Continuity          | Because individuals involved in many types of commons will be of different chronological ages, decisions of on-going groups, will as a consequence, inevitably take on an intergenerational character, as old members die and new ones are born or socialized into the group (Lohmann, 1992, p. 51). |
| Intrinsic Valuation | The proper basis for evaluating an autonomous common world is on the basis of values arising within it (Lohmann, 1992, p. 53).   |
| Ordinary Language   | This ordinary language assumption mandates that language regularly in use by charitable, philanthropic, and altruistic actors may also be employed in theories of their actions (Lohmann, 1992, p. 54).  |

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*Note.* Table 2 is a partial list of the dimensions of governance framework (Lohmann, 1992).

## **The Convenor and Convening**

### ***Framing Convening Leadership***

A convenor is essential for successful collaborative action (Carlson, 2006), and increasingly more so to solve the complex societal and global issues nonprofit organizations address today. Carlson looked at convening as a powerful tool in which leaders created a space for stakeholders to problem solve through collaboration. Carlson made a distinction between a leader's management and their ability to build consensus. Neal et al. (2010) drew from the definition of the word convene to define convening as “the art of gathering and “holding” people, in a safe and generative space, for the sake of authentic engagement” (p. 304). In the 15th century, the word convene was the derivative of the two Latin words: *venire*, meaning “come,” and *con*, meaning “together.” Convene as a verb means to come,

to cause, to assemble, or to convoke (Clary, 2021). Assemble, unite, come together, gather, congregate, and meet are all words synonymous with convening. Clary (2021) submitted that assembling stakeholders is a significant role for the convenor. It is in the assembly of the stakeholders' where commons are formed, governance occurs, and shared resources are managed.

Westley et al. (2013), in a theory of transformative agency in social-ecological systems, argued leadership per se may be passe as the focus of change transfers to institutional entrepreneurship. Leadership in these authors' framework capitalizes on the concept of actors and actor groups incorporating words such as stewards, knowledge carriers, leaders, interpreters, sense makers, networks, visionaries, experimenters, followers, reinforcers, and facilitators where transformation takes place through the efforts of several actors. According to Westley et al., institutional entrepreneurship, a concept developed by DiMaggio (1988), describes the work of convenors looking to bring transformational change to institutions.

Westley et al. (2013) contended that the focus on institutional entrepreneurship was better suited to emergence and change in adaptive systems and noted that to refocus on the endeavor itself one must shift from the concept of leader to that of entrepreneur [convenor]. What Westley et al. identified as institutional entrepreneurship, Clary (2021) maintained was the role of a convenor and convening leadership. According to Svendsen and Laberge (2005), convenors help build independent relationships to create a "stakeholders' network," which they define as "a web of groups, organizations and/or organizations who come together to address a complex and shared cross-boundary problem, issue, or opportunity" (p. 92). Additionally, the convenor helps collaborative members find solutions and innovations through the energy, resources, and intelligence of its members (Svendsen & Laberge, 2005).

A convenor can be an organization or someone who steps into a leadership role as a coalition convenor (Kemp, 2020). Moreover, a convenor may take the form of a collaboration of convening representatives from multiple sectors (Colburn, n.d.). Block (2008) maintained that there is an art to convening

stakeholders and that convening leadership is essential. In the context of a decentralized solution to the problem of cooperation, Lobo et al. (2016) affirmed Ostrom's (1990, 2000) argument that individuals can develop institutions that guarantee optimal cooperative solutions without the need for enforcement from leaders and proposed mutual monitoring as discussed in the previous section. Moreover, according to Ostrom, a leader may evolve from the group and can be the initial stimulant in presenting alternative ways of organizing. Van Belle (1996) argued that leadership can be instrumental in overcoming the difficulties found in the pursuit of public goods thus providing an efficient and effective solution to collective action [collaboration] problems.

Glowacki and von Rueden (2015) found leadership to be effective in small-scale societies with high efficacy in domains of collective action. Moreover, a leader's prior experience, age-related knowledge of the situation, body size, and social placement contribute to the effectiveness of the leader. In a study on leadership in social movements, Morris and Staggenborg (2004) suggested that leaders inspire commitment, are strategic decision-makers, influence collective outcomes, and create and recognize opportunities. Leaders in the global community were suggested by Crosby (1996) to be individuals who build global community or civil society in the world by creating organizations and exchange programs. Leadership inspires and mobilizes others to take collective action in pursuit of the common good (Crosby, 1996; Crosby & Bryson, 2010). Block (2008) offered that leadership in community building encompasses intentionality, convening, valuing relatedness, and presenting choices. Further, Block (2008) also described leaders as those who set the stage for institutional and civic engagement. In this regard, the leader not only designs the blueprint for the engagement but also provides the roadmap on how to arrive at the destination (Block, 2008). Collaborative governance offers an opportunity for the many roles of leadership on the commons (Agranoff & McGuire, 2003; Bryson et al., 2006). Emerson et al. (2011), based on the work of Agranoff and McGuire (2003), Bryson et al. (2006), and Carlson (2006), outlined leadership roles including sponsor, convenor, facilitator, mediator, public advocate, and others. The cultivation of commons leadership is essential to

create sustainability and provide a competitive advantage to the organization (Franzgen, 2020, p. 37). Fundamentally, collaborations do not rise spontaneously; someone must initiate them (Bertels, 2006). Clary's (2021) convening leadership framework features five dimensions, as shown in Table 3.

**Table 3**

*Convening Leadership Framework*

| Convening Leadership Framework (Clary, 2021) |   |
|--|---|
| Collaboration of Stakeholders                | Convenors will necessarily have to learn how to facilitate collaboration of larger stakeholder networks (Clary, 2021, p. 199).  |
| Core Beliefs, Values, and Attitudes          | Convenors will want to understand how the beliefs values, and attitudes of all stakeholder's factor into the operationalization of commons governance (Clary, 2021, p. 200)   |
| Culturally Diverse                           | Convenors will need to develop a keen understanding of cultural differences, develop a global mindset, and be able to facilitate collaboration by highlighting diversity as a positive trait (Clary, 2021, p. 200). |
| Creative Co-Learning and Co-Creating         | Convenors need to facilitate a creative co-learning and co-creating environment to assist stakeholders to think outside of the box and derive a new approach to a major challenge (Clary, 2021, p. 200).            |
| Congruity of Stakeholders                    | Convenors need strong negotiation skills to meet challenges associated with collaborative stakeholder networks (Clary, 2021, p. 202).   |

***Convening Leadership***

Clary (2021) contended that an individual who convenes stakeholders to solve societal and global challenges collaboratively in a developed stakeholder network characterizes convening leadership. Additionally, convening leadership is operationalized in collective-action collaboration through five principles collaboration of stakeholders, core beliefs, values, and attitudes; culturally diversity; creative co-learning and co-creating; and congruity of stakeholders (Clary, 2021). In this study, the researcher further explored how Clary's (2021) principles of convening leadership contribute to shared resources and philanthropic value in nonprofit organizations.

**Collaboration of Stakeholders.** Collaboration in recent years has been increasing (Guo & Acar, 2005), so much so that collaboration has become a phenomenon giving way to the organizational modality of this century (Austin & Seitanidi, 2012b). The phenomenon of collaboration crosses continents and sectors. In the largest study of CEOs on the topic of sustainability, 766 United Nations Global Compact (UNGC) members were interviewed amidst the face of rising global competition, technological change, and a serious economic downturn. Industry collaboration and multistakeholder partnership was viewed by 78% of the CEOs to be a critical element in their approach to sustainability (Lacy, et al., 2010). For instance, India's Companies Act 2013, article 135 mandates companies who meet a specific criterion are required to spend 2% or more of their average profit on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) activities. (Jain, 2020). The Act generated \$7 billion in 2019, necessitating collaboration between nonprofit organizations and businesses; however, companies seldom have the capacity or infrastructure to pursue social goals (Jain, 2020). In 2016–17, 1895 CSR projects were implemented in India showing the effectiveness of business and NPO partnerships in executing this critical social mission.

Today, elements of collaboration are fundamental in political, legal, socioeconomic, and environmental sectors (Emerson et al., 2011). Bingham (2009) argued that collaboration founded in democracy could be strengthened with a revised legal infrastructure. Nonprofit collaboration bolsters organizational efficiency and effectiveness and drives a broader social and system change (Samali et al., 2016). Gazley and Guo (2020) identified antecedents, processes, and outcomes as three variables on collaborative activity. In contrast, Emerson et al. (2011) showed that external conditions such as politics, environment, or regulations may impact the efficacy of a collaboration. In a study on value creation in stakeholder networks, Schneider and Sachs (2017) added that prior prominent social identities can bring discord to stakeholder relationships impacting value creation. Schneider and Sachs further argued understanding value and its creation is distinct to each group based on trust and cooperation. Although this section has captured the essence of collaboration and identified some barriers to collaboration,

the purpose of this study was to better understand how to facilitate collaboration of stakeholders through convening leadership that contributes to shared resources and philanthropic value in nonprofit organizations.

**Core Beliefs, Values, and Attitudes.** According to Jain (2020), at the organizational level, values define the ethical character of organizations, whereas the core values give an organization timeless character. The implications of Jain's research on the nonprofit organization and business collaborations showed that as collaborations are operationalized, organizational values should be considered. When the stakeholders consider and adopt the values, coalescing around the values can lead to the longevity of the partnership (Tsasis, 2009). Osula and Ng (2014) conducted a study of leadership theory trends for nonprofit leaders, arguing that the accountability necessary to build stakeholder trust required increased skill competencies, collaboration, visionary leadership, and character associated with the leader's values and ethics. Ajzen (2005) successfully argued that the more abstract a value, affect, or belief, the less it guides behaviors or attitudes toward a specific event or situation. Based on cognitive values, the leader's personal character can effectively lead others toward the common goal (Jacobs & Buijs, 2011; Osula & Ng, 2014).

A study of stakeholder attitudes in water management interventions argued stakeholder attitudes derived from their place of meaning. Jacobs and Buijs (2011) found that an early discussion of place meanings could contribute to successful collaboration. According to Cheng et al. (2003) places "inform who we are and therefore how we are to behave; in short, to be somewhere is to be someone. More importantly, places are also imbued with socially constructed (and often politically defined) expectations of appropriate behavior" (p. 90). Cheng et al. offered that place encompassed social and political processes based on the research of Canter (1977), biophysical attributes and processes (Relph, 1976), and social and cultural meanings (Sack, 1992). In another study, Chen (2015) studied the attitude of tourism stakeholders toward practices of sustainability in the arctic. Chen explored three stakeholder groups: tourism businesses, local residents, and tourists in Arctic destinations. This author's findings showed that it is imperative when

implementing sustainability concepts for tourism development that all voices in the collaborative network are integrated and heard. While varied in response, the stakeholder attitudes brought clarity to how tourists, tourism business owners, and residents viewed tourism and environmental sustainability. Limited research is available on how core beliefs, values, and attitudes contribute to shared resources and philanthropic value. Therefore, in the current dissertation, the researcher explored this phenomenon through in-depth interviews to better understand how convening leadership can bring clarity to the voice of collaborative stakeholder voices.

**Culturally Diverse.** Natal and Brichter (2012) analyzed the partnership between a nonprofit organization and a local government in Mexico to understand how societal diversity led to participative forms of decision-making to address the concerns of diverse and well-organized groups of citizens. Natal and Brichter found that the partnership between local government and nonprofit organizations had the potential to be more inclusive in the decision-making process, to reduce the cost of policymaking transactions, and to encourage economic development. Additionally, Natal and Brichter discovered differences in socio-economic groups in terms of culture, language, and influence could be neutralized when cultural diversity was considered. The study by Natal and Brichter provided a parallel to the role of the convenor in commons work. The research of Emerson et al. (2011) illustrated how the disparity of resources among participants can become a barrier to engagement due to cross-cultural settings such as language, customs, and culture.

In a study on frontstage and backstage institutional convening, Mair and Hehenberger (2014) referred to convening as bringing together dissimilar actors with different motives and interests. These scholars discovered that diversification in the stakeholders as acted out in convening events and activities resulted in mutualistic coexistence. In the conclusions of their study, they highlighted cultural diversity as a positive trait. This study explored how the convenor presents culturally diverse collaboration that leads to shared resources and philanthropic value.

**Creative Co-Learning and Co-Creating.** Dietz et al. (2003) considered how sharp differences in power and values among stakeholders could result in conflict in commons governance. Dietz et al. submitted that if the conflict did not bring demise to the group, conflict could lead to learning and change. When alternative strategies were presented, stakeholder groups' changing perspectives, interests, and philosophies could conclude with consensus and less conflict (Dietz et al., 2003). Ansell and Gash (2012) identified that the role of the convenor was to encourage, enable, and facilitate stakeholders to work together effectively. Van Hille et al. (2018) emphasized the importance of convenors to adopt alternative influencing strategies to bring about change in collaboratives. Based on research by Gray (1989) and Wood and Gray (1991), van Hille et al. (2018) argued that a convenor's lack of formal power was the catalyst for the need for alternative strategies. Assisting with reframing problems that lead to stalemate and intractable conflict is a critical role for collaborative leaders (Crosby & Bryson, 2010). Collaborative leaders can help reframe problems by assisting stakeholders understand underlying assumptions and beliefs and identifying alternative framings (Feyerherm, 1994).

Research shows governance is complex in collaboratives. There is limited research, however, on the convenor's role in leading collaborations in nonprofit organizations. Therefore, this dissertation explored how convenors facilitate creative co-learning and co-creating environments and the elements of the environment to move through and overcome significant challenges in collaboration.

**Congruity of Stakeholders.** Aarons et al. (2014) studied collaboration, negotiation, and coalescence for interagency-collaborative in healthcare teams. They hypothesized shared, and competing interests, agendas, and negotiations added to the complexity of collaboration. Their research, based on Campbell and Mark (2006) and De Dreu et al. (2000), showed that diverse views of stakeholders could result in joint outcomes when negotiation considered problem-solving techniques, the social complexion of the stakeholders, and less egotistical delivery. The research of Hoefler and Sliva (2014) showed that a lack of negotiation skills



was a gap in nonprofit leadership development, whereas Sankaran et al. (2010) contended effective communication skills could strengthen negotiation skills.

Zohar (2015) defined negotiation as “a way to resolve conflicts or disagreements or divide resources among two or more parties, carried out willingly by free choice” (p. 1). Zohar studied leadership skills to have in times of crisis. Stakeholders may experience conflict in collaboration (Aarons et al., 2014; Bingham, 2009; Franzgen, 2020; Natal & Brichter, 2012), resulting in a need for a skilled negotiator to help stakeholders find common ground. Ostrom (1990) posed that conflict resolution mechanisms should be identified and implemented during the collaboration process. The current researcher explored how four nonprofit organizations approach negotiation in times of conflict in collaborations, and the results are presented in Chapter 4. Additionally, the researcher explored how a skilled convenor can bring congruity to stakeholders through negotiation that contributes to shared resources and philanthropic value.

Five research questions framed the study and informed the development of the in-depth interview questions. The dimensions of the three frameworks explored in this research provided structure for the interview questions developed more fully in Chapter 3. Table 4 illustrates the relationship between the research questions and the interview questions. A qualitative approach provides a research design to explore the trends and explain the relationship among the variables found in the literature.

**Table 4***Research Questions and Interview Questions*

| Research Questions   | Interview Questions  |
|--|--|
| RQ1: What is the need for nonprofit and voluntary action organizations to collaborate?   | Interview questions will explore collaboration in nonprofit organizations and voluntary action associations.   |
| RQ2: What are the barriers or challenges in collective-action collaboration?   | Interview questions will explore the benefits, barriers, and challenges in governance and leadership when collaborating with stakeholder groups.   |
| RQ3: What do commons governance principles and assumptions look like in nonprofit and voluntary action collaboratives (Lohmann, 1992; Ostrom, 1990). | Interview questions will explore commons governance principles (Ostrom, 1990), clearly defined boundaries, collective-choice agreements, monitoring, and conflict-resolution mechanisms, nonprofit commons governance principles (Lohmann, 1992), social action, authenticity, continuity, intrinsic valuation, and ordinary language. |
| RQ4: How does the convenor contribute to collective-action collaboration (Clary, 2021).  | Interview questions will explore convening leadership (Clary, 2021), collaboration of stakeholders, core beliefs, values, and attitudes, culturally diverse, creative co-learning and co-creating, and congruity of stakeholders.  |
| RQ5: What is the need for shared resources and philanthropic value in nonprofit and voluntary action collaboratives?                                 | Interview questions will explore how collaboration contributes to shared resources and philanthropic value.  |

**Summary**

Gazley and Guo (2020) submitted that as nonprofit organizations are increasingly called upon to collaborate to tackle our time's most challenging social problems, scholars and practitioners must generate evidence-based knowledge from the existing literature and use it effectively in future work. Ostrom's (1990) institutional analysis and development (IAD), the first of three frameworks of this dissertation, identifies nine governance principles that may account for the success and sustainability of common-pooled resources if amply applied. Lohmann (1992), building from the research of Ostrom, applied the principles of commons

governance to nonprofit organizations and voluntary action. Lohmann presented the eight dimensions as assumptions. In this study, the researcher used assumptions and principles interchangeably when referring to nonprofit and voluntary action governance. Lohmann, the second framework, included eight principles of nonprofit and voluntary action. Five of Lohmann's assumptions were explored in the study to understand better how governance and leadership contribute to shared resources and philanthropic value in nonprofit commons. The third framework proposed by Clary (2021) addresses the role of the leader in convening stakeholders in the work of the commons or commoning (Bauwens et al., 2019; Dietz et al., 2003; Hardin, 1968).

Through this study, the researcher sought to contribute to the existing literature by studying commons governance, nonprofit commons governance, and convening leadership to understand better how a model for collaboration based on governance and leadership contributes to shared resources and philanthropic value. The researcher investigated nine dimensions of commons governance and nonprofit commons governance in this study. Additionally, five dimensions of convening leadership were explored. The researcher expected to discover that commons governance and convening leadership contribute to shared resources and philanthropic value in nonprofit organizations and voluntary action associations.

### **Chapter 3 – Methodology**

The qualitative methodological approaches suggested by Creswell (2015) and Creswell and Creswell (2018) were used to guide the current research. Researchers employ qualitative methods to describe trends and explain the relationship between variables. A qualitative methodology often includes a three-step process. First, the researcher collects data for analysis by seeking answers to broad questions from the participants. Second, the researcher analyzes the information collected from participants using descriptions, codes, categories, and themes. Third, the researcher interprets the meaning of the information. The current research questions were open-ended, with general interview questions that the researcher aimed to answer through the study. The Arkansas Community Foundation, St. James Missionary Baptist Church, the Hub of Ouachita County, Walmart, and the Walmart Foundation were selected to understand the phenomenon further. The participants were required to be the organizations' executive director, collaborative program director, or a member of the board of directors.

#### **Research and Interview Questions**

To explore whether and how governance and leadership contribute to shared resources and philanthropic value for nonprofit organizations through collaboration, five research questions provided the framework for 20 interview questions, as shown in Table 5. As familiarity with the terms associated with commons governance, nonprofit commons governance, convening leadership, and collaboration may vary among interviewees, the definition of the term was included in the IQs. Additionally, a list of the terms used in the IQs and the questions was provided to the interviewees before the interview. Table 5 illustrates the association between the RQs and IQs, and Table 6 includes the definitions of the terms.

**Table 5***Association Between the RQs and IQs*

| Research Questions   | Interview Questions   |
|--|---|
| RQ1: What is the need for nonprofit and voluntary action organizations to collaborate?   | IQ1: What does collaboration look like in your program, collaboration, or organization? Who are the stakeholders? How do you identify the stakeholders? For what purposes do you collaborate?   |
| RQ2: What are the barriers or challenges in collective-action collaboration?   | IQ2: As you think about collaborative efforts, what are the benefits of collaboration?<br>IQ3: What have you observed as barriers or challenges in collaboration?   |
| RQ3: What do commons governance principles and assumptions look like in nonprofit and voluntary action collaboratives (Lohmann, 1992; Ostrom, 1990)? | IQ4: How do stakeholders (or your organization) collectively determine how the group will be governed?<br>IQ5: How do stakeholders (or your organization) access shared resources? Who makes this determination?<br>IQ6: How do stakeholders (or your organization) monitor the use of shared resources among stakeholders?<br>IQ7: How do stakeholders (or your organization) manage conflict?<br>IQ8: Social action is an action taken for the good of humanity, charity as an action for the good of others, and or altruism as the interest in others. How would you describe social action in your program, collaboration, or organization?<br>IQ9: Authenticity implies stakeholders are what they appear to be and say and that shared resources they receive reach the client. How does your organization communicate authenticity to collaborative stakeholders?<br>IQ10: Continuity is an invisible force learned intergenerationally or experienced through tradition where the action of the stakeholder is reasonable, predictive, or productive of desired outcomes. In nonprofit organizations, recruiting board members or stakeholders to open positions within a program, collaboration, or organization (e.g., paid or volunteer) would illustrate continuity. How does your organization integrate, teach, or maintain continuity in recruiting new stakeholders?<br>IQ11: Intrinsic valuation in nonprofit governance refers to the rules, standards, or values that stakeholders recognize and use. What rules, standards, or values are recognized and used in your organization? How do these rules, standards, or values contribute to shared resources or philanthropic value?<br>IQ12: Ordinary language suggests a common language is adopted, used, and recognized by stakeholders. For instance, terms like fiduciary responsibility, endowment, community investment, or unrestricted funds might be considered common language in philanthropy. What does ordinary language look like in your program, collaboration, or organization, and how is that language communicated to collaborative stakeholders? |

| Research Questions   | Interview Questions   |
|--|---|
| RQ4: How does the convenor contribute to collective-action collaboration (Clary, 2021)?                              | <p>IQ13: What have you observed as three best practices of a convenor?</p> <p>IQ14: What has been your experience in how a convenor's core beliefs, values, and attitudes influence collaborative efforts?</p> <p>IQ15: What has been your experience in how a convenor brings together socio-economic groups with differences in culture, customs, language, influence, and disparity of resources?</p> <p>IQ16: How does a convenor facilitate collaboration among stakeholders?</p> <p>IQ17: What have you observed as a technique a convenor would use to reframe a problem to help stakeholders find common ground during times of conflict?</p> |
| RQ5: What is the need for shared resources and philanthropic value in nonprofit and voluntary action collaboratives? | <p>IQ18: How have you observed the need for increased (if at all) shared resources and philanthropic value in collaborations since COVID-19?</p> <p>IQ19: How have you observed (if at all) governance and convening leadership contribute to shared resources and philanthropic value in collaborations?</p> <p>IQ20: How have you observed (if at all) collaboration contributes to shared resources and philanthropic value?</p>   |

**Table 6***Definition of Terms Used in the Interview Questions*

| Term                 | Definition   |
|----------------------|--|
| Authenticity         | Authenticity implies stakeholders are what they appear to be and say and that shared resources they receive reach the client.  |
| Collaboration        | Collaboration is a formalized, joint-working arrangement between organizations that remain legally autonomous while engaging in ongoing, coordinated collective action to achieve outcomes that none of them could achieve on their own. |
| Continuity           | Continuity is an invisible force learned intergenerationally or experienced through tradition where the action of the stakeholder is reasonable, predictive, or productive of desired outcomes.  |
| Convening Leadership | Convening leadership is attributed to the convenor as the individual or entity responsible for bringing stakeholders together to manage a shared resource, address an issue, problem, or opportunity.                                    |

| Term                                     | Definition  |
|--|---|
| Governance                               | Governance is an element or condition that contributes to the success or failure of the collaborative and can include the social, economic, or political structures or rational principles that govern the nonprofit organization.  |
| Intrinsic Valuation                      | Intrinsic valuation in nonprofit governance is the rules and standards or values recognized and used by stakeholders.   |
| Ordinary Language                        | Ordinary language suggests there is a common language that is adopted, used, and recognized by stakeholders. For instance, terms like fiduciary responsibility, endowment, community investment, or unrestricted funds might be considered common language in philanthropy.                             |
| Shared Resources and Philanthropic Value | Shared resources and philanthropic value can be funding, personnel, office space, programming, or a commodity like food, whereas philanthropic value is linked to the social action of a nonprofit organization and encompasses voluntary giving, service, or association.                              |
| Social Action                            | Social Action is an action taken for the good of humanity, charity as an action for the good of others, and or altruism as the interest in others.  |
| Stakeholders                             | Stakeholders are “any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of an organization’s [collective-action collaboration] objectives” (Mitchell et al., 1997, p. 854). Commons are formed in the assembly of stakeholders, governance occurs, and shared resources are managed. |

Additionally, the researcher developed an interview protocol to facilitate the interview (see Appendix A).

### **Analysis of the Organizations**

The nonprofit organizations participating in this study engaged in collective action collaborations with other nonprofit organizations, government agencies, community groups, or for-profit organizations. They were also convening

organizations and, in some instances, the granting funder of the organizations' direct services. The initial organizations were identified by working with the Arkansas Community Foundation (ARCF) program director, with the criteria for participation predicated upon the participant's position in the organization and knowledge of how the organization is governed. After an initial introduction by ARCF to the executive director or program director of each organization, the researcher initiated a follow-up conversation to determine their interest in participating in the study.

While the study was not a case study, an analysis of each organization as though framed in a case study provided the background for each organization in order to understand the contextual significance that each organization brought to the study. A case study is the exploration of a program, event, activity, process, or one or more individuals (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). In this study, the researcher explored one program offered through each of the four nonprofit organizations as experienced and observed by the individuals in each organization. Additionally, the collected demographic information collected allowed for interpretive implications of the study results in terms of organizational and programmatic similarities and differences. Finally, the organizations self-selected from which contextual lens participants responded during the interview process.

### **Data Collection**

The interview questions provided inquiry through in-depth interviews into the essence of commons governance and convening leadership. The researcher derived the IQs deductively from an extensive literature review of commons governance, nonprofit and voluntary action commons governance, and convening leadership. More specifically, the questions were formulated to explore whether commons governance and convening leadership contribute to increased shared resources and philanthropic value in nonprofit organizations through collaboration.

Based on Phase 2 of the research design of Puppo (2021), who interviewed a broad array of community stakeholders with the intent of discovering common themes within their varied perspectives, the researcher collected data using initial in-depth interviews with follow-up interviews as necessary. According to Creswell



and Creswell (2018), qualitative research is emergent by nature. It is both inductive and deductive. The goal of the literature review was to reach bibliographical saturation in order to conclude that any additional resources would have minimal effect on the understanding of the theoretical constructs (Henson et al., 2020). The research and interview questions were constructed through a thorough literature review. Although the preferred method of data collection would have been in-person, in-depth interviews, social distancing restrictions and precautions undertaken by varying organizations and individuals due to COVID-19 necessitated flexibility, such that web conferencing technology such as Zoom was required. The interviews were fully recorded, and a transcription service was used for data analysis purposes (Patton, 2014). A transcription service added to the already existing challenges of in-depth interviewing, such as truthful and incomplete responses; however, the interview process was structured to maximize interviewee responses through open-ended interview questions, uninterrupted responses, probing follow-up questions using the interviewee's own words, exploring through dialogue, and conducting follow-up interviews if necessary (Padgett, 2017).

Qualitative research studies have varied numbers of participants ranging from as little as one in narrative research and three to 10 in phenomenology to 30 in grounded theory (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Although distinct from phenomenological research, the design of in-depth interviews is closely aligned with phenomenology. Following the guidance of Creswell and Creswell (2018) and Boyd (2001), as well as the methodologies of Williamson (2016) and Puppo (2021), the current researcher determined that this study required five to 10 participants to reach data saturation. The participants were executive directors, board members, or collaborative program director from four organizations. The researcher anticipated that the executive director could designate individuals from within the organization to participate in the study who met the research population's desired profile. The researcher strove to balance perspectives from each organization, given the logical constraints that may result from imbalanced participation.

Southeastern University (SEU) has a stringent review process for research involving human subjects. To conduct research using human subjects, researchers under the auspices of Southeastern University must agree and adhere to the protocols found in the Request for IRB Review of Research Involving Human Subjects set forth by SEU before the commencement of research. The rights of the participants must be considered and protected. The researcher submitted the IRB application as shown in Appendix B.

The participants received an Informed Consent Form (see Appendix C). This form provided details about the research scope, the protocols for participation, the purpose of the research, the confidentiality considerations of participants, and the participant's rights (Creswell, 2015). The participants were asked to sign, date, and return the form before the interviews commenced. Furthermore, each participant understood that they did not have to respond to any question. Moreover, participants were able to leave the study at any time for any reason. A copy of the executed form was provided to participants for their records. Additionally, participants were notified that the interview would be audio- and video-recorded and asked to sign an Audio and Video Recording Consent Form, as shown in Appendix D. The form was returned to participants before conducting the research.

All forms of communication, including emails, notes, audio file recordings, and transcriptions, were kept on the researcher's personal computer. The researcher kept the personal computer password-protected and stored the computer in a locked office at her home. All participant names were replaced with pseudonyms during the research data analyses, with all data scheduled to be destroyed 5 years after the study has been completed. Video or audiotapes were transcribed and destroyed within 30 days of the interview.

### **Data Analysis**

The qualitative data analysis process always begins inductively as the qualitative researcher engages with the collected data (Padgett, 2017). Creswell and Creswell (2018) correlated data analysis to peeling back the layers of an onion. The data were segmented and taken apart through the overall data analysis process in this scenario. The process includes using simultaneous procedures where data

collection and writing up the findings are conducted concurrently, or the researcher analyzes an earlier interview while a second or third interview takes place.

Winnowing the data in the overall process occurs as the researcher aggregates the data into a small number of themes. The data are so “dense and rich, all of the information cannot be used in a qualitative study” (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 192); therefore, the researcher winnows the data.

Additionally, using a qualitative data computer program for assistance aids the researcher in data analysis. In this study, MAXQDA software was used to analyze the data. The codebook of expected codes from the literature review (Creswell & Creswell, 2018) was used to begin the coding process. The data analysis process followed the five-step process outlined by Creswell and Creswell (2018). The five-step process requires “sequential steps to be followed, from the specific to the general, and involving multiple levels of analysis” (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 193). As presented by Creswell and Creswell, the five steps are (a) organizing and preparing the data for analysis, (b) reading or looking at all the data, (c) coding the data, (d) generating a description and themes, and (e) determining how to represent the data in the description and themes.

Validity and reliability are essential components of the qualitative data analysis process (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Qualitative validity occurs as the researcher verifies the accuracy of research findings using varying procedures. Qualitative reliability is reflected in the researcher’s consistent approach across different researchers and projects. In qualitative research, it is essential for the researcher, the participant, and the study reader to deem the findings accurate. The accuracy of the findings provides validity to the research and is one of the strengths of qualitative research and can be examined through validity strategies (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Based on the strategies posited by Creswell and Creswell (2018), validity was ensured through triangulation, member checking, and clarifying the researcher's bias. The researcher triangulated the responses from participants to build a coherent justification for themes (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). In addition, the researcher validated the accuracy of the findings “by taking the final report or specific descriptions or themes back to participants and determining whether the

participants felt they were accurate” (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 200). Lastly, the researcher self-reflected on the findings based on the researcher’s background in nonprofit management. Creswell and Creswell posited that reflexivity is a core characteristic of qualitative research. To ensure qualitative reliability, the researcher checked transcripts for errors and continually compared data with the codes to ensure that the coding aligned with the original definitions of the codes. The researcher also documented the protocols used for data analysis with memos about the codes and their definitions (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

### **Scope and Limitations**

Through this study, the researcher explored how commons governance and convening leadership contribute to shared resources and philanthropic value in nonprofit organizations to meet societal and global challenges through collaboration. The scope of the study had several limitations. The study’s scope included four nonprofit and voluntary action organizations located within one state, which may be a limitation, as a national study would be more robust. Next, many of the literature review studies on commons governance were conducted in other countries. It is difficult to generalize the findings in those studies to the operationalization of nonprofit and voluntary action organizations in the United States.

Moreover, very little literature on convening leadership in the commons exists (Thompson, 2021). Additionally, the researcher's perspective may present a limitation, as Clary (2021) may have a biased view of convening leadership and collaboration as the author of the study and the convening leadership framework explored in this study. Finally, given the chaotic times in which this dissertation was written, the participants selected for the study may have chosen not to participate due to state or federal regulations at the time of data collection. Additional organizations may need to be identified that meet the intention in selecting the initial study population.

**Summary**

The qualitative methodological approaches outlined by Creswell (2015) and Creswell and Creswell (2018) were used to conduct the research. Qualitative research describes trends and explains the relationship among variables found in the literature. Four Arkansas-based nonprofit organizations were selected for the study, with participants reflective of the organization's leadership and knowledgeable about the organization's governance. After a thorough review of commons governance, nonprofit commons governance, and convening leadership literature, the researcher identified five RQs and 20 IQs to collect and analyze data. An in-depth interview approach was used to collect data, and data analysis was conducted using Creswell and Creswell's (2018) five-step process. Based on the qualitative validity strategies posited by Creswell and Creswell, validity was ensured through triangulation, member checking, and clarifying the researcher's bias. To provide qualitative reliability, the researcher checked transcripts for errors and continually compare data with the codes to ensure that the coding aligned with the original definitions of the codes. The researcher also documented the protocols used for data analysis with memos about the codes and their definitions (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The study's scope and limitations included the study's location, the researcher's bias, and limited comparative studies.

## **Chapter 4 – Findings**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand how to operationalize principles of commons governance and convening leadership through collaboration, whereby a nonprofit organization realized an increase in shared resources and philanthropic value. Research is inconclusive, however, regarding how to operationalize principles of commons governance and convening leadership in nonprofit organizations. Lohmann (1992) and Thompson (2021) posited that a more academic approach to the study of commons governance and convening leadership is needed. Therefore, the findings of this study contribute to the body of knowledge on commons governance and convening leadership for practitioners and scholars of nonprofit organizations.

Using a qualitative research design, the researcher examined how nonprofit leaders operationalized commons governance principles and assumptions and convening leadership through collaborative action based on five research questions and 20 interview questions. The sample population included the executive director, a program director, and a board member from four nonprofit organizations in the state of Arkansas. A senior staff member with the Arkansas Community Foundation identified the four nonprofit organizations based on the study's participant criteria. During the preinterview overview of the research project and processes and again during the interview with the executive directors, it became apparent that there was a reluctance with the executive directors to involve board members in the research project. Additionally, one of the initial four organizations withdrew from the study. The population from three participating organizations could not meet the sample size to reach data saturation with only one or two participants from each organization, as the study required between five to 10 participants to reach data saturation.

### **Data Collection**

Additional help from the Arkansas Community Foundation and purposive and snowball sampling produced seven more participants from seven nonprofit organizations located in Arkansas. The population and sampling demographics of

the participants and organizations is shown in Table 7. The criteria to participate in the study were predicated upon the participant's position in the organization and knowledge of the governance. Overall, 10 participants filling multiple roles within the organization were interviewed. The participants represent one chairman of the board, two board members, four executive directors, one nonprofit organization founder, four program funders, six program directors, one senior pastor, and one researcher. The 10 organizations participated in collaborative efforts and delivered or enabled community-based, county, or regional programs and services.

**Table 7**

*Population and Sampling*

| Population and Sampling |   |
|-------------------------|---|
| Participants            | One Chairman of the Board<br>One Nonprofit Organization Founder<br>One Senior Pastor<br>One Researcher<br>Two Board Members<br>Four Executive Directors<br>Six Program Directors              |
| Organizations           | Participated in Collaborative Efforts<br>Delivered or Enabled Community Based, County, or Regional Programs and Services<br>Foundations<br>Faith-Based<br>Community-Based<br>Higher-Education |
| Convening Organizations | 10  |
| Missional Objectives    | Community Building<br>Connecting Resources<br>Fostering Cooperation<br>Collaborating<br>Funding<br>Education<br>Piloting Programs<br>Reducing Food Insecurity                                 |

Additionally, nine of the 10 organizations were convening organizations. Missional objectives included community building, connecting resources, fostering cooperation, collaborating, funding, education, piloting programs, and reducing food insecurity through programs, resources, education, and advocacy. The organizations were foundations, faith-based, community-based, and higher

education institutions. No variances occurred in the way that data were collected. The interviews ranged between 43 and 90 minutes in length, with an average interview time of 65 minutes. Random numbers from P-1 through P-10 were assigned to deidentify the participants.

### **Data Analysis**

Upon receiving approval from the SEU IRB, the recruitment process began by contacting each identified participant. In total, 10 participants contributed to the research. Data collection consisted of in-depth interviews using Zoom. Step one of data analysis consisted of transcribing the Zoom-recorded interviews with the software program Otter.ai. The transcriptions were then exported from Otter.ai to a Word document and placed on the researcher's laptop. The researcher saved the Word documents into a password-protected folder. After printing and reading each interview, the researcher performed an initial culling of the interview and identified key terms in designing the code system for data analysis. A codebook was developed using the key terms, Research Questions 1–5, and Interview Questions 1–20. To provide context for the study, the researcher further developed the code system to explore an organization's collaborative partners, examples of convening, the interviewees' role or position within the organization, the interviewees' value system, the service area of the organization, and services provided by the organization. The codes and interview transcripts associated with Participants 1–10 were uploaded into MAXQDA. As participants' responses were analyzed in MAXQDA, new codes were identified.

The coding process for data analysis was rigorous and detailed. The responses to each interview question (IQ), of which there were 20, were analyzed a minimum of four times. Using MAXQDA, a code system was developed for the IQ. The results of the code system were then exported into an Excel spreadsheet, where the code system was analyzed a second time, generating subcategories. The subcategories were analyzed a third time and grouped into categories. The fourth and final time for data analysis occurred as the categories were grouped into themes. This process was repeated for all 10 interviews, at which point it was evident that saturation had been reached. Krathwohl (2009) contended that



saturation is achieved when the same instances are found repeatedly, and the concept is well defined.

As stated in Chapter 3, validity was ensured through triangulation, member checking, and bracketing the researcher's bias to determine the accuracy of the findings. In addition, to validate the accuracy of the results, a final report of the themes was provided to the participants. No modifications were made to the first proposed method of triangulation. Additionally, it was written that reliability would be determined by checking transcripts for errors and continually comparing data with the codes to ensure that the coding aligned with the original definitions of the codes (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The voice recording of the interview was used to fact-check the transcribed interviews. The transcribed documents were verified multiple times to assure that the coded segments aligned with the original definition of the codes.

## **Results**

To better understand how principles of governance and convening leadership contribute to shared resources and philanthropic value and how governance and convening leadership are operationalized in nonprofit organizations through collaboration, there were five research questions. The questions were as follows:

- RQ1: What is the need for nonprofit and voluntary action organizations to collaborate?
- RQ2: What are the barriers or challenges in collective-action collaboration?
- RQ3: What do commons governance principles and assumptions look like in nonprofit and voluntary action collaboratives? (Lohmann, 1992; Ostrom, 1990)
- RQ4: How does the convenor contribute to collective-action collaboration? (Clary, 2021)
- RQ5: What is the need for shared resources and philanthropic value in nonprofit and voluntary action collaboratives?

In the remainder of this chapter, the researcher discusses the findings of the five RQs and the corresponding 20 IQs. The order in which the analysis and findings are presented in the study is presented in Table 8.

**Table 8**

*Research Analysis and Findings Order as Presented in the Study*

| RQs         | Theme                   | IQs       | Analysis and Findings                            |
|-------------|-------------------------|-----------|--|
| RQ1         | Collaboration           | IQ1       | What Does Collaboration Look Like?               |
| RQ2         | Barriers and Challenges | IQ2–IQ3   | Benefits and Barriers                            |
| RQ3: Part A | Governance              | IQ4–IQ7   | Commons Governance (Ostrom, 1990)                |
| RQ3: Part B | Governance Assumptions  | IQ8–IQ12  | Nonprofit Governance Assumptions (Lohmann, 1992) |
| RQ4         | Convenors               | IQ13–IQ17 | Convening Leadership (Clary, 2021)               |
| RQ5         | Mission Fulfillment     | IQ18–IQ20 | Shared Resources and Philanthropic Value         |

**RQ1: Collaboration**

The first research question of this study was: “What is the need for nonprofit and voluntary action organizations to collaborate?” The participants were asked one interview question with three follow-up questions designed to understand the need for collaboration better. The questions were

- IQ1: What does collaboration look like in your program, collaboration, or organization?
- a. Who are the stakeholders?
  - b. How do you identify the stakeholders?
  - c. For what purposes do you collaborate?

Previous authors have defined collaboration as a process whereby stakeholders constructively explore their differences and search for solutions that go beyond their limited visions of possibility (Gray, 1989). Researchers have shown collaboration to be an effective and powerful route in addressing economic, social, and environmental challenges (Koschmann et al., 2012). In addition, collective-action collaboration is an effective approach in tackling complex social

and global issues (Novelli, 2021), important public purposes (Guo & Acar, 2005), and sustainability challenges (van Hille et al., 2018). In February 2021, current President Biden signed an executive order to reestablish a White House Office of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships within the President's Executive Office. The executive order strengthened the nonprofit sector and its partnership with the federal government. The reestablished office was to enlist, equip, enable, empower, and expand the work of community-serving organizations, both faith-based and secular, to the extent of the law (Biden, 2021). The presidential order was signed as the United States of America “grapple[d] with a global pandemic, a severe economic downturn, the scourge of systematic racism, an escalating climate crisis, and profound polarization” (Biden, 2021, para. 1, 3). President Biden's executive order underscored that in the United States, nonprofit organizations are valuable partners and conduits in the delivery of programs and services to meet the growing needs of people in America (Abramson, 2020; Feiock & Andrew, 2006). To understand better the importance of collaboration within and across sectors, data from the interviews were analyzed. The results of the first IQ follow. Notated within the participant comment is a bracketed and italicized emergent correlating category or theme.

### ***Interview Question 1: Collaboration***

Data analysis for IQ1 began in MAXQDA, where eight codes emerged from 103 data segments: collaborative partners (46), governance processes (16), collaborative efforts (10), access to resources (7), programming (7), relationship-building (6), philosophy of collaboration (6), and strategic partners (5). The MAXQDA codes were then exported to an Excel spreadsheet and analyzed again, resulting in 13 subcategories. The subcategories were further analyzed and grouped into seven categories: accomplishing strategic objectives (40), stakeholder relations (25), shared resources (16), core value (11), community building (8), equity building (2), and forced partnerships (1). From the subcategories, the data were analyzed further and grouped into three themes: strategic directive (54), collaborative partnerships (33), and shared resources and philanthropic value (16).

As described by P-10, collaboration was a core value of the organization [*core value*]. P-10 offered, “We have a set of five beliefs; one of those five is that communities working together can solve their own problems [*core value*].” P-9 underscored that collaboration was extremely important and one of the primary roles of the organization [*strategic directive*]. Similarly, P-8 stated, “Collaboration is everything. I would say in my position, almost everything I do is in some sort of collaborative.” Coalescing collaborative stakeholders around an organizational mission was central for P-3 [*core value*], who stated, “You find individuals [*stakeholders*] that have a common passion to achieve a certain organizational mission, and you come together to achieve that mission.” When the collaboration is mission-vision driven, the organization realizes strategic alliances contribute to meeting organizational objectives [*strategic directive*]. As P-3 explained, “We are going to go after collaborative partners [*stakeholders*] that are passionate about the same topic and bring resources that we might use to help achieve that objective [*collaborative partnerships*].” To P-7, collaboration was having a common goal and working together to meet the task, actions, and strategies of the goal [*collaborative partnerships*]. P-1 viewed collaboration as an opportunity for collaborative stakeholders to engage in the community where engagement led to the accessibility of new partners [*shared resources and philanthropic value*].

### ***Follow-Up Questions (IQ1)***

The two follow-up questions in IQ1 were, “Who are your stakeholders, and how do you identify stakeholders?” Notated within the participant comment is a bracketed and italicized emergent correlating category or theme. The study results indicated that collaborative stakeholders were found at every level of society and cut across all sectors. Culling one typology of stakeholder from each of the participant responses, stakeholders represented funders (P-1), business (P-2), government agencies (P-3), end-users (P-4), nonprofit organizations (P-5), association memberships (P-6), school districts (P-7), grantees (P-8), internal department teams (P-9), and legislators. Other stakeholders identified in the study included churches; civic organizations; families; volunteers; foundations; board

members; donors; community activists; community leaders; local, county, regional, and state agencies; federal agency partners; and the communities served.

Three steps emerged regarding how P-3, P-4, and P-9 approached identifying stakeholders. First, they identified the strategic outcomes [*accomplishing strategic outcomes*] of the collaborative effort [*collaborative partnerships*] in alignment with the organization's mission and vision [*strategic directive*]. Second, they compiled a list of potential stakeholders [*stakeholder relations*]. Third, a meeting of the stakeholders was convened, allowing stakeholders to self-select in becoming a part of the collaborative effort [*stakeholder relations*]. An organic approach to identifying stakeholders was voiced by P-6, who submitted stakeholders come from personal relationships [*stakeholder relations*], recalling incidents where a member from the community would approach her and say, “Oh, I appreciate what you’re doing in our community. There are so many people in our county that need food and clothing. Let me help you [*equity building*].” Networking, where staff members of the organizations were involved at the community level or served on regional, state, and national boards, also provided an opportunity to identify stakeholders [*community building and stakeholder relations*].

When asked for what purposes they collaborate, the results showed that collaboration was a way to support each other’s work [*accomplishing strategic objectives*]. P-1 spoke of serving on a collective board with like-minded collaborators to accomplish goals and projects to meet the community's needs [*community building*]. P-10 noted an account where the mayor asked him to bring leaders from the community together [*collaborative partnerships*] to develop a disaster plan for the community [*community building*]. The collaborative spent several months meeting to develop a plan for this emergent community need [*shared resources and philanthropic value*].

In talking about why they collaborate, several participants presented collaboration as a two-way path [*collaborative partnerships*]. First, collaboration contributed to access to shared resources and philanthropic value for the organization [*shared resources and philanthropic value*]. Second, collaboration

provided an avenue to share an overabundance of resources with collaborative partners [*shared resources* and *philanthropic value*]. P-5 talked about how they disseminate donated items to other nonprofit organizations in the community for distribution to the end-users or clients served [*shared resources* and *philanthropic value*]. Moreover, P-5 referred to their organization as a resource for resources [*collaborative partnerships*]. In a monthly collaborative meeting, stakeholders [*collaborative partnerships*] discuss who needs what and how to better serve the needs of the community [*strategic directive*] through donations received [*shared resources* and *philanthropic value*]. P-5 said, “Everybody in our community collaborates with each other for the good of our community [*community building*].” Another purpose to collaborate was identified by P-10:

For instance, we work together collaboratively on grant writing [*collaborative partnership*]. So, we work together [*collaborative partnership*] to make sure that every county in the state of Arkansas is served with those grant funds [*shared resources*], and that they have the resources they need to make sure that people have plenty of food [*philanthropic value*].

The study showed that collaboration led to shared resources, as articulated by P-9: “We do not have a lot of resources whether they are financial resources, human resources, intellectual resources, and things like that. Without sharing resources, the types of things we are trying to do would be impossible [*shared resources* and *philanthropic value*].” P-7 shared that by collaborating with 10 other organizations [*collaborative partnerships*], they served 2,000 clients as opposed to 200 [*strategic directive*]. Participant P-10 explained,

So, whether it is federal, state, or regional, or very local, in a community, we feel like knowing who the players are and building those relationships with them [*stakeholder relations*], and then living out those relationships in a way that is beneficial to both sides [*strategic directive*], is vital to what we do.

The first research question (RQ1) explored the need for nonprofit organizations to collaborate. In culling the data, analyzing the data, and by

grouping the data into subcategories and categories, three themes emerged: strategic directive, collaborative partnerships, and shared resources and philanthropic value. The implications of these findings are discussed more fully in Chapter 5.

### **RQ2: Barriers and Challenges in Collaboration**

The second research question (RQ2) was: What are the barriers or challenges in collective-action collaboration? Two interview questions (IQ2 and IQ3) were asked of the participants. The questions were:

IQ2: As you think about collaborative efforts, what are the benefits of collaboration?

IQ3: What have you observed as barriers or challenges in collaboration?

Research has shown collaboration to be an effective and powerful route in addressing economic, social, and environmental challenges (Koschmann et al., 2012). In addition, collective-action collaboration is an equally effective approach in tackling complex social and global issues (Novelli, 2021), important public purposes (Guo & Acar, 2005), and sustainability challenges (van Hille et al., 2018). However, systemic challenges are associated with collaboratives (Koschmann et al., 2012). Murphy and Bendell (1999) posited that collaboratives are often shrouded in conflict. The research of Jamali and Keshishian (2009) established that collaboratives operate with limited knowledge structures and processes that contribute to less-than-optimal outcomes. Bryson et al. (2006) theorized that cross-sector collaboration could exacerbate the very problem being solved. Lastly, siloed partners and varying approaches to obtaining goals also contribute to challenges in nonprofit collaboration. Although collaboration is an effective tool in addressing complex societal and global problems, studies examining the connection between how nonprofit partnerships function and perform effectively remain relatively scarce (Marek et al., 2015). Samali et al. (2016) submitted that a fundamental understanding of how and why nonprofits collaborate is missing in collaboration discussions. The problem is that nonprofit organizations that operate independently without knowledge of effective governance principles and convening leadership through collective-action collaboration have less shared resources and philanthropic

value to fulfill their organization's mission (Austin & Seitanidi, 2012a, 2012b; Hayman, 2016; Idemudia, 2008; Jamali & Keshishian, 2009; Marek et al., 2015; Murphy & Bendell, 1999). The purpose of this study was to explore collaboration, the role of governance, and convening leadership in the collaborative process and how they contribute to shared resources and philanthropic value in fulfilling the organization's mission. A better understanding of the benefits, barriers, and challenges of collective-action collaboratives and the implications for practitioners and scholars who practice, teach, or study collective-action collaboration was needed. To understand better collective-action collaboration, data from the interviews were analyzed. The results of the second interview question (IQ2) follow. Notated within the participant comment is a bracketed and italicized emergent correlating category or theme.

### ***Interview Question 2: Benefits of Collaboration***

The data for analyzing IQ2 was first analyzed in MAXQDA, where eight codes emerged: collaboration (13), relationships (13), access to resources or funding (11), engagement (10), grounds our work (8), voice (4), access to volunteers (2), and access to other partners (1). The MAXQDA codes in 67 data segments were then exported to an Excel spreadsheet and analyzed into 18 subcategories. The subcategories were further analyzed and grouped into eight categories: shared resources (14), shared goals (13), asset building (11), unifying (10), program support (7), strategic partners (7), funding (4), and no benefit (1). From the subcategories, the data were analyzed further and grouped into three themes: asset building (22), mission fulfillment (24), and shared resources (20).

The second interview question (IQ2) explored participant responses: As you think about collaborative efforts, what are the benefits of collaboration? Notated within the participant comment is a bracketed and italicized emergent correlating category or theme. A statement by P-3 captured the essence of the benefit of collaboration: "We are always better together [*unifying*]." The findings showed collaboration built social capital [*asset building*] (P-9), provided access to knowledge [*shared resources*] where collaboration improved the community [*asset building*] (P-5) and provided an environment where trust among collaborators



could be developed [*asset building*] (P-4). Participants P-3, P-4, P-8, and P-9 viewed collaboration as an incubator where individual strengths and expertise could rise to the top [*asset building*]. P-4 said, “Everyone has an experience and an expertise, and when we collaborate, it creates an opportunity for something new and different, that perhaps we wouldn’t have been able to do on our own [*unifying*].” For P-3, collaboration brought out the best in people [*asset building*].

The participants spoke of the support they received for their programs [*program support*] through collaborative stakeholders [*strategic partners*] and that that support was strategic to their mission fulfillment [*mission fulfillment*]. Participant P-3 posited, “People become engaged in your work [*shared goals*]. And because they are engaged, they take ownership [*unifying*], and it becomes their work as well [*shared goals*].” Program support was voiced as a mutual benefit among collaborative stakeholders [*program support*] and took on many forms. At the state level, working through the governor’s office, as a collaborative partner [*strategic partners*], the organizational goals of Participant 2 were inserted into the overall state plan in addressing a societal challenge [*mission fulfillment*]. Participant 2 recognized a similar benefit where her organization was able to support the local school district [*strategic partners*] in a child nutrition program [*shared goals*], whereby fulfilling the strategic objectives of her organization [*mission fulfillment*]. For Participant 3, a direct benefit of county-wide collective-action collaboration [*strategic partners*] was the unification of the stakeholders [*unifying*], void of any competition [*asset building*], as the collaborative partners coalesced around a common project [*shared goals*].

Another benefit of collective-action collaboration came from strategic initiatives [*shared goals*] in which an organization or individual could not solve the societal challenge alone [*program support*]. P-8 explained, “So, collaboration is necessary to build movements of people [*strategic partners*] who are all working together [*shared goals*] on issues that seem intractable sometimes [*mission fulfillment*].” For P-2, strategic initiative collaboratives provided a platform for conversations [*asset building*] on meeting a family’s nutritional needs, whether the base conversation was about child health, economic development, education, or

environmental issues [mission fulfillment]. Advocacy [*mission fulfillment*], whether for shared resources such as food through national partners [*shared resources*] (P-10), or advocacy as a voice for hunger at the state level [*strategic partners*], was a benefit (P-2). Findings showed a benefit of collective-action collaboratives was mutual support [*strategic partners*] toward the obtainment of the goals [*shared goals*] for the strategic initiative of the collaborative [*mission fulfillment*].

The findings showed that opportunities to receive funding for programs and services [*program support*] (P-2) or to collaborate in grant-writing for funding [*funding*] (P-10) were a benefit of collaboration [*shared resources*]. P-1 offered that access to potential partners, especially foundations [*strategic partners*], can occur in collaboration [*funding*]. A strength of the collaborative process was the organic conversations that led to working collaboratively to apply for funds [*funding*]. P-10 illustrated how a collaborative grant resulted in a refrigeration system that benefited the entire community [*shared resources*]. The findings showed that collective-action collaboratives led to shared resources [*shared resources*]. Shared resources [*shared resources*] were identified as equipment, space, vehicles, expertise, food, funding, advocacy, knowledge, access to a population base, research support, and volunteers [P-1, P-2, P-3, P-4, P-5, P-7, P-8, P-9, P-10]. P-5 spoke of how her organization might be the recipient of products or the disseminator of the products [*shared resources*], depending upon the donated products.

Additionally, the findings showed a duality in pooling resources. P-7 submitted that in pooling resources [*shared resources*], collaborative stakeholders could provide more services in the community on a much bigger and more significant scale [*mission fulfillment*]. Only one participant, P-6, did not see any benefit in collective-action collaboration. The organization that P-6 represents is supported by the community; however, the organization models a siloed nonprofit organization, illustrative of one of the challenges of nonprofit collaboration.

### ***Interview Question 3: Barriers to Collaboration***

The data related to IQ3 were analyzed first in MAXQDA, where 16 codes emerged from 65 data segments: diversity (10), time considerations (8),

personalities (7), motives (7), capacity (6), lack of funding (5), right people at the table (4), turf wars (4), building relationships (3), communication (2), hard work (2), insecurities (2), invisible (2), measuring outcomes (1), nonprofits lack of sustainability (1), and trust (1). The MAXQDA codes were exported to an Excel spreadsheet and analyzed into 36 subcategories. The subcategories were analyzed a third time and grouped into eight categories: challenging work (19), capacity (18), differences (14), alignment (5), perceptions (5), no barriers (1), very few (1), and there are so many barriers (1). From the categories, the data were analyzed a fourth time and grouped into three themes: strategic alignment (19), organizational capacity (18), and challenging work (24). No barriers (1), very few (1), and there are so many (1) were identified as outliers.

The third interview question (IQ3) explored participants' responses to the question: "What have you observed as barriers or challenges in collaboration"? Notated within the participant comment is a bracketed and italicized emergent correlating category or theme. Out of 65 data segments, one participant, P-2, stated that there were no collaboration barriers or challenges. P-8, however, sighed, smiled, and said, "There are so many." P-6, who did not perceive any benefit in collaboration, articulated frustration in being in a system where the organization's viability was overlooked [*challenging work*], and federal regulation required a membership to receive goods and services at a reduced dollar rate [*organizational capacity*]. This rate was often higher than if purchased in a local store [*organizational capacity*].

The other remaining participants in the study identified many barriers and challenges in collaboration. The barriers and challenges subjectively stated were comments like, "They [convenor or funder] want to be saviors to fix our community without asking us [direct services provider] to what the real needs are" (P-2) or "If you do not have the capacity [*organizational capacity*] to do the audits or fulfill the reporting requirements required, then you are eliminated as a collaborative partner" (P-7). The lack of a strong volunteer pool to support the organization's operations was also expressed by P-7 [*challenging work*].

We used to have a volunteer named Mark [pseudonym]. He was in his mid-eighties and a Purple Heart veteran. Mark had a truck and a trailer to pick up donated items. Well, Mark died. So, we do not have a truck and a trailer at our disposal anymore. And the people moving into the area are not prone to volunteer like they were 10, 15, 20 years ago.

Time constraints further contributed to barriers and challenges in collaboration (P-9) as collaboration was a slow and time-consuming process (P-8, P-9). As P-4 stated, collaboration “takes a lot of time to do this work [organizational capacity].” P-2 acknowledged that while collaboration took a lot of time, collaborating could lead to organizational capacity through resources, funding, and other opportunities [organizational capacity]. P4, P-5, and P-8 equally expressed that a lack of funding to support collaboration efforts proved to be a barrier [organizational capacity]. Collaborations are often under-resourced, according to P-8:

There has to be somebody who has the resource and capacity to keep calling the group together to help synthesize what the group decided and discussed, to engage one on one with members to make sure that they're staying in the fold. And enough to buy the lunches that people eat when they come together for the meeting. And if none of that is resourced, then very often, it's people who are already exhausted and have a million other priorities, who have to do that, in addition to everything else, and it just doesn't get done.

Collaboration is challenging work (P-8). Turf wars added to the difficulty of the work (P-2, P-10). P-10 said, “We get guarded of our turf [challenging work]. Our human nature allows us to be turf warriors.” Other dimensions that contributed to the challenges in collaboration were communication with collaborative partners (P-10), creating trust within the organizations (P-4), expecting project conclusion results quickly (P-8), second-guessing the motives of collaborative partners (P-3), and taking time to build the relationships necessary for collaboration (P-1) [challenging work]. Working with national partners or chains was also viewed as challenging [challenging work]. P-5 expressed dissatisfaction in working with

national organizations that promise a resource delivery and then do not show up [*organizational capacity*]: “I’ve been disappointed with them.” Two other elements that contributed to the challenging work of collaboration were personality disparities (P-3, P-8, P-10) and the culture of the organization where there was no room for change or to try something new (P-7) [*challenging work*].

Successful collaboration requires strategic alignment within collaborative partners. The following factors were cited by the participants as barriers and challenges to collaboration: competing agendas (P-2), board leadership (P-9), accountability in funding requirements (P-4), and an organization’s culture contrary to collaboration [*differences*]. Moreover, getting collaborative partners [*strategically aligned*] was also noted to be a barrier or challenge in collaborative efforts (P-8, P-9). The comment by P-9 summed up how differences can waylay the strategic alignment of collaborative partners: “You can sometimes easily gather around one banner of a cause. But then, when you start digging, you realize that everybody looks at it differently [*strategic alignment*].”

The second research question (RQ2) explored the benefits (IQ2) and the barriers and challenges (IQ3) in collective-action collaboration. In culling, analyzing, and grouping the data into categories and subcategories, three themes—strategic directive, collaborative partnerships, and shared resources and philanthropic value—emerged in response to IQ2. Additionally, three themes emerged from the findings in IQ3: strategic alignment, organizational capacity, and challenging work. The implications from the results are discussed fully in Chapter 5.

### **Research Question 3A: Commons Governance Principles and Assumptions**

This study’s third research question (RQ3) was: “What do commons governance principles and assumptions look like in nonprofit and voluntary action collaboratives?” (Lohmann, 1992; Ostrom, 1990). Nine interview questions (IQ4–IQ12) were asked of participants exploring nine principles and assumptions in Lohmann’s (1992) and Ostrom’s (1990) findings. Interview questions IQ4–IQ7 were asked of participants to explore how commons governance principles were operationalized in nonprofit organizations.

- IQ4: How do the stakeholders (or your organization) collectively determine how the group will be governed?
- IQ5: How do stakeholders (or your organization) access shared resources? Who makes this determination?
- IQ6: How do stakeholders (or your organization) monitor the use of shared resources among stakeholders?
- IQ7: How do stakeholders (or your organization) manage conflict?

Responses from the questions illuminated several factors that determine how nonprofit organizations and voluntary action associations are governed.

The researcher examined 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations, typically governed by a board of directors and voluntary action associations, informally governed by volunteers. The control and management of a nonprofit organization are two such factors to be considered in nonprofit governance (Hopkins & Gross, 2016). Additionally, McGinnis (2011) thought governance to be process-driven, as the rules and norms of the organization are formed. The process is iterative in that the rules in the governance of the organization influence the policies of the organization, and the policies are open to review and revision. McGinnis exerted self-governance to be the ability of commons and organizations to actively engage in determining the rules and processes of self-organization, whereas Bushouse (2011) considered governance to be at the constitutional-choice level of decision-making as determined by the organization's governance structure. Bushouse further contended that making the rules is directly connected to the governance structure.

Commons governance considers the social system of communities where people manage and share resources (Bauwens et al., 2019; Ostrom, 2000; Thompson, 2014). Bauwens et al. (2019) determined that the commons preserved the shared values and community identity by stewarding the resources. Hess and Ostrom (2007) viewed the commons as an answer to social dilemmas, while Thompson (2014) submitted that social protocols governed the commons. Although scholars have not agreed upon an all-encompassing definition for the commons, Never et al. (2020) extrapolated that resource sharing required collective action, and the presence of a social dilemma embodied the definition of the commons. In

addition, Berge and van Laerhoven (2011) contented that any natural or manmade resource defined a commons if that resource could be held and used in common.

The seminal work of the commons (Hardin, 1968) saw a re-emergence in the study of commons and the common good in 2009 when Elinor Ostrom was awarded the Nobel Memorial Prize in Economics. Ostrom (2010) received this award for her research and analysis on economic governance, most notably, in the commons (De Angelis & Harvie, 2014). Ostrom (1990) took an institutional approach to the study of self-organization and self-governance in common pooled resource situations (p. 1), whereas Ostrom's (1990) groundbreaking work on governing the commons led to the identification of eight design principles as illustrated by long-enduring common pool resource (CRP) institutions. The principles as identified were (a) clearly defined boundaries; (b) congruence between appropriation and provision rules and local conditions; (c) collective-choice arrangements; (d) monitoring; (e) graduated sanctions; (f) conflict-resolution mechanisms; (g) minimal recognition of rights to organize; and (h) for larger systems, nested enterprises (Ostrom, 1990). Aside from the work of Lohmann (1992), limited research has been conducted to understand how the principles of commons governance are operationalized in nonprofit organizations and voluntary associations in the United States and, more specifically, Arkansas. Four governance principles in Ostrom's (1990) framework were explored in this study: (a) clearly defined boundaries, (b) collective choice, (c) monitoring, and (d) conflict-resolution mechanisms. In the study, the four principles associated with the organization's governance and operationalized governance through clearly defined boundaries, access to shared resources, monitoring the shared resources, and conflict management within collective action collaborations.

Data analysis for IQ4–IQ7 was conducted using MAXQDA software. Twelve codes emerged from four IQs resulting in 208 data segments: how conflict is operationalized (31), who determines access to shared resources (25), informal versus formal (24), access to shared resources (22), what is a shared resource (17), philosophy of conflict (18), governance structure (15), institutional governance (13), monitoring system (13), how is monitoring operationalized (12), what are the

barriers and challenges in monitoring (9), and lead program manager (9). The 12 code systems were merged in MAXQDA and analyzed again, resulting in five categories: conflict mechanisms (31), shared resources (53), collaborative governance (39), governance operationalized (24), and conflict obstacles (18). The final analysis resulted in 193 data segments in four themes: conflict (77), shared resources (53), governance (39), and monitoring resources (24), as shown in Table 9. To understand better how commons governance is operationalized in nonprofit organizations, the results from IQ4–IQ7 follow. Notated within the participant comment is a bracketed and italicized emergent correlating category or theme.

**Table 9**

*IQ4–IQ7 Categories and Themes*

| Governance                                  | Shared Resources         | Monitoring Resources    | Conflict            |
|---|--------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------|
| Institutional governance                    | Governance               | Barriers and challenges | Conflict obstacles  |
| Access to shared resources (who determines) | Informal versus formal   | Operationalized         | Conflict mechanisms |
|   | Institutional governance | Team leader             |                     |

***Interview Question 4: Governance***

The fourth interview question (IQ4) explored how the stakeholders in the collaboration determined how the group would be governed [*governance*]. The results identified two distinct approaches to governance. The study results showed nonprofit 501(c)(3) organizations were governed by corporate documents like the articles of incorporation, organization bylaws, and corporate policies and procedures [*institutional governance*] (P-1 to P-10). Additionally, if the nonprofit organization was the grantor of funding, governing documents like a memorandum of understanding (P-4, P-10), membership agreement (P-10), or federally mandated regulation could factor into the governance of the organization [*governance structure*]. The nonprofit organizations in this study were 501(c)(3) organizations; however, in collaborative efforts, loosely organized collaborations of stakeholders



reflected voluntary action associations. Like voluntary action associations, collaborations that formed organically tended to be informally governed (P-1, P-5, P-8). As P-8 noted, “One of my collaboratives has been very intentional in not forming a 501(c)(3) because to do so requires so much organization building, time, and resources, dedicated to bylaws, rules, and procedures [*informal versus formal*].” P-2 noted that informal coalitions do not require a separate organization and manage with an elected chair and treasurer [*governance structure*].

Governance was operationalized at the board of director level (P-6, P-10), where the executive director, administrator, or president represented decision-making policies and procedures [*governance*] to the staff [*lead program manager*]. The results of the data analysis showed that in forming collective-action collaboratives, the structure and governance [*governance structure*] of the collaboration depended on the situation (P-9) and was emergent (P-8). Moreover, collaborative partners contributed to the design of the meeting (P-4), shared priorities (P-8), identified additional stakeholders (P-9), developed the scope of the work (P-4), and co-created the governance structure of the collaboration [*governance structure*] (P-1). Informal and elected positions [*governance structure*] were determined by collaborative members (P-1), where position descriptions [*collaborative governance*] moved from informal to more formal positions [*informal versus formal*] as the collaboration evolved (P-1, P-10).

#### ***Interview Question 5: Access Shared Resources***

The fifth interview question (IQ5) was “How do stakeholders (or your organization) access shared resources, and who makes this determination?” Analyzed data showed shared resources [*what is a shared resource*] among the nonprofits studied to be buildings, (P-1), materials and information (P-4)], funding (P-4) food commodities and health and hygiene products (P-6), cash (P-7), grant funding (P-8), office space (P-9), and volunteers (P-10). P-4 explained the intentionality of program design and collaborative partnership funding for projects and initiatives:

We will go through a process of deciding on pilot projects that have funding attached to them and then design and facilitate a process for disseminating

the resources and implementing the project. Additionally, we will use an external facilitator to guide collaborative stakeholders through the process, intended to be a very equitable process in which we create the space for the conversation and implementation to be facilitated.

Data showed the governance structure [*governance*] of an organization factored into how shared resources [*access to shared resources*] could be accessed. For instance, P-3 and P-6 indicated the board of directors determined who could access a shared resource [*institutional governance*], while decision-making for organizations associated with national affiliates (P-2) occurred at the national level through MOU agreements [*who determines access to a shared resource*]. Additionally, a distinction was made between nonprofit organizations operating for less than 1 year and nonprofit organizations with a more extended working history. The results showed in newly forming 501(c)(3) organizations, the executive director [*lead program director*] of the organization determined how shared resources [*who determines access to shared resources*] could be accessed (P-6). In nonprofit organizations operating with a formal governance structure [*informal versus formal*], however, corporate documents [*governance*] designated how collaborative stakeholders could access shared resources [*access to shared resources*] (P-10). Data collection and reporting were also used to quantify the allocation of shared resources to specific demographic groups (P-7, P-10).

The funder was a prominent deciding factor in access to shared resources (P-4, P-7, P-8, P-9). P-8 said,

There is a contract [*governance*] involved, so it [*access to shared resources*] is spelled out by whoever decided to give money to the collaborative. If 10 different funders contribute to the pooled fund, each one of them has some specific restriction [*governance*] about how the funds can or cannot be used [*who determines access to shared resources*].

For P-9, collaborative stakeholders could also determine how a collaborative stakeholder accessed a shared resource. Whereas nonprofit organizations with a mission to be a resource provider to community stakeholders, the management team decided [*who determines access to shared resources*] how

collaborative partners accessed the shared resource (P-5, P-6). The data analysis showed collaborative stakeholders communicated a need for shared resources or an overabundance of shared resources [*shared resources*] in monthly meetings (P-1), networking with community partners (P-3), the organization's newsletter and social media outlets (P-5), personal contact with collaborative partners (P-6), in surveys and emails (P-9), and training or collaboration events (P-10).

### ***Interview Question 6: Monitoring Shared Resources***

The sixth interview question (IQ6) was: "How do stakeholders (or your organization) monitor the use of shared resources among stakeholders?" The study results showed that although a monitoring system to account for internal and external shared resources was crucial, actual monitoring of the shared resources faced barriers and challenges counterproductive to monitoring [*barriers and challenges*]. In one organization, new federal regulation due to COVID-19 no longer required proof of identity or income to receive the shared resource. The regulation, according to P-6, "left no affordable way for any collaborative efforts to account for the shared resources among collaborative stakeholders." For example, pre-COVID-19, a letter from the Social Security Administration had to be presented to the organization for the client to receive goods or services. During the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, however, documentation was no longer necessary. The finding is important as the authenticity of the organization can come into question when a monitoring system is not in place [*barriers and challenges*]. The study showed that voluntary action associations without 501(c)(3) designations created the need for 501(c)(3) organizations to become fiscal agents, whereby transferring the burden of monitoring the shared resource to the fiscal agent (P-9). P-7, who had experience as a fiscal agent, maintained that voluntary action associations are not required to conduct an audit and were empirically found to be less likely to monitor the number of clients served and the goods and services received and distributed; [*barriers and challenges*] the fiscal sponsor could not keep in good faith that the shared resource reached its intended client (P-7). Another barrier and challenge were the expectations grantees placed upon grantors to produce shared resources in the collaborative work; for example, when P-8

convened a statewide collaboration, the stakeholders identified that an activity calendar of statewide events would eliminate duplication of services. The stakeholders' expectation was that the compilation of such a document would be the responsibility of P-8, and P-8's bandwidth could not support such a document [*barriers and challenges*].

When monitoring did occur in the organization, the responsibility to do so often fell to a staff person [*team leader*] (P-1, P-3, P-9, P-10) whose monitoring could be calendaring (P-1), accounting for financial donations (P-3), compiling and submitting funder reports (P-8), and attending meetings (P-4). Monitoring shared resources per memorandums of understanding [*operationalized*] was operationalized in reporting and communicating (P-1, P-2, P-9, P-10) with internal stakeholders like the board of directors and external stakeholders like funders. P-10 illustrated the role of technology in monitoring resources as follows:

We will take our intake form from paper to a web-based program. Although our client base will remain anonymous to one another, our program staff will be able to monitor the resource activity of stakeholders. The demographic data will help us understand in real-time the full impact of the goods and services distributed through our collaborative stakeholders. Moreover, we will be able to access reports that show us how many women were served, and of the women, how many were single moms, how many children under 18 were helped, and even how many clients have a chronic illness. The use of technology will be a game-changer for us and our collaborative stakeholders.

### ***Interview Question 7: Conflict Management***

The seventh interview question (IQ7) was: "How do stakeholders (or your organization) manage conflict?" Data analysis of the participants' responses to IQ7 were varied, and the participants did not embrace the topic of conflict and conflict management. P-3 stated that there had never been an issue of conflict among the stakeholders. Moreover, managing conflict was not something P-3 liked to do, and this participant acknowledged that conflict was always a challenge [*conflict obstacle*]. P-5 and P-9 also maintained they had not had any conflict issues in

collaborative efforts. P-8 voiced that conflict was uncomfortable and preferred to collaborate in harmonious situations [*conflict obstacle*]: “I do not see a lot of people in open confrontation in meetings and conversations. I am conflict adverse [*conflict obstacle*].” The participants offered the motivation of stakeholders (P-3), competing priorities and frustration with the process (P-4), and avoidance of conflict (P-8) as some of the challenges in conflict management [*conflict obstacles*].

As the interview transitioned to techniques used in conflict management, P-4 pondered the importance of conflict management training [*conflict mechanism*] for collaborative stakeholders:

We rarely think about conflict management and conflict resolution as a training component. For a group of organizations working in the same space, we just want to give them technical skills related to doing better, like delivering their service. We tend to focus on working better together and how we can help collaborative partners work better together. Conflict resolution should be an important part of the training component.

P-10 offered an example on conflict management from the book of Matthew in the New Testament:

I go back to the book of Matthew. And if I have a problem with someone, I need to talk to you personally. And if that doesn't work, I need to bring someone with me, and we need to talk together. The Bible says to bring an elder, a deacon, a third party to be an arbitrator, basically, on our behalf. And if that doesn't work, then in Scripture, it says to bring that person before the whole church [*collaboration*] and, as a group, you know, work through that process.

Moreover, from an HR perspective, P-10 contributed that a process for arbitration and the perceived organizational support (POS) standards [*conflict mechanism*] that shows how organizations care about the well-being of their employees and stakeholders were a part of the governance documents of the organization.

The results showed that P-3, P-5, P-7, and P-10 had policies and procedures [*conflict mechanism*] to bring about conflict resolution. In addition, P-1 through P-

10 operated with MOUs, contracts, and agreements with incorporated arbitration clauses [*conflict mechanism*]. P-3, P-8, and P-10 related a more informal approach to conflict resolution as a conversational intervention [*conflict mechanism*]. P-10 preferred to meet with the individual in a one-on-one meeting where the parties worked together to resolve the conflict. P-3 stated, “I am going to seek a resolution and work it out together,” and P-8 articulated, “Dissension sometimes happens; however, keep hanging out with us, maybe the next time will be your cup of tea.” The results showed other tactics [*conflict mechanisms*] for conflict management to be discussing the conflict in stakeholder meetings (P-1, P-3, P-7, P-8, P-9, P-10).

The first part of the third research question (RQ3A) explored four governance principles in questions IQ4–IQ7 (Ostrom, 1990). Four themes—governance, shared resources, monitoring resources, and conflict—were discussed. The implications of these findings are discussed further in Chapter 5 in order to provide a better understanding of how commons governance is operationalized in nonprofit organizations contributing to the furtherance of an organization’s mission.

### **Research Question 3B: Nonprofit Governance Principles and Assumptions**

This study’s third research question (RQ3) was: “What do commons governance principles and assumptions look like in nonprofit and voluntary action collaboratives (Lohmann, 1992; Ostrom, 1990)?” Nine interview questions (IQ4–IQ12) were asked of participants exploring nine principles and assumptions in Lohmann’s (1992) and Ostrom’s (1990) findings. Interview questions IQ8–IQ12 were asked of participants to explore how commons governance principles and assumptions were operationalized in nonprofit organizations and voluntary action associations contributing to shared resources and philanthropic value.

- IQ8: How would you describe social action in your program, collaboration, or organization?
- IQ9: How does your organization communicate authenticity to collaborative stakeholders?
- IQ10: How does your organization integrate, teach, or maintain continuity in the recruitment of new stakeholders?

IQ11: What rules, standards, or values are recognized and used in your organization? How do these rules, standards, or values contribute to shared resources or philanthropic value?

IQ12: What does ordinary language look like in your program, collaboration, or organization, and how is that language communicated to collaborative stakeholders?

Before the data were analyzed in MAXQDA, the researcher hand coded the data and identified 71 codes with eight codes for social action (IQ8), 16 codes for authenticity (IQ9), 25 codes for continuity (IQ10), 11 codes for intrinsic valuation (IQ11), and 13 codes for ordinary language (IQ12). The codes were analyzed again, resulting in four categories: social action enacted, community building, culture, and systemic. Authenticity resulted in four categories: corporate reporting, culture, relationships, and transparency. Continuity resulted in stakeholder characteristics, building relationships, networking, what, how and by in five categories. Three categories in intrinsic valuation were values, mission driven, and shared results. The final assumption explored, ordinary language resulted in three category types of ordinary language, challenges, and operationalize. The data were analyzed a third time, generating 290 data segments in 15 themes in MAXQDA. The data segments and themes for IQ8–IQ12 are as follows: social action (52) with three emergent themes common good (20), community building (12), and culture (20). Authenticity (56) with three emergent themes accountability (17), a culture of transparency (18), and relationships (20). Continuity (61) with three emergent themes integration of stakeholders (18), governance with stakeholders (23), and maintain relationships with stakeholders (20) and intrinsic valuation (58) with three emergent themes: characteristics (26), operationalized (19), shared resources and philanthropic value (19), as shown in Table 10. To understand better how commons governance is operationalized in nonprofit organizations and voluntary action associations, the results from IQ8–IQ12 are presented in the following sections. Notated within the participant comment is a bracketed and italicized emergent correlating category or theme.

**Table 10***IQ8–IQ12 Categories and Themes*

| Social Action      | Authenticity           | Continuity                              | Intrinsic Valuation                    | Ordinary Language      |
|--------------------|------------------------|---|--|------------------------|
| Common Good        | Accountability         | Integration of Stakeholders             | Characteristics                        | OJ Jargon              |
| Community Building | Culture & Transparency | Governance with Stakeholders            | Operationalized                        | Communication Barriers |
| Culture            | Relationships          | Maintain Relationship with Stakeholders | Shared Resources & Philanthropic Value | Operationalized        |

***Interview Question 8: Social Action***

The eighth interview question (IQ8) was: “How would you describe social action in your program, collaboration, or organization?” Three themes common good, community building, and culture emerged through data analysis. P-1, P-3, and P-8 described social action to be for the good of others with a focus on charity [*enacted*]. P-3 stated, “a lot of the things we do are humanitarian, charity, and altruistic in focus.” P-6 also thought their organization exhibited social action through each of the elements of social action; the good of humanity, charity as an action taken for the good of others, and altruism as the interest in others [*common good*]. P-1, P-2, and P-10 believed social action to be action taken for the good of humanity [*enacted*]. P-10 showed within the context of social action there to be a tension between being a consumable charity that consumes people’s time, resources, and finances and meeting an immediate need [*common good*]. P8 also reflected on charity being an action taken for the good of others with this comment: “Rather than, only giving in response to a charitable impulse? I would like us to yes to the person who is hungry, but also ask why are they hungry? And what can we do about that [*action taken for the good of humanity*]?” P-8 wanted the conversation to go deeper, indicating a wholistic approach to societal challenges was a topic of further research.



The culture of the organization contributed to how social action was actuated in the organization with the culture engrained in organizational values [*values driven*]. The values were expressed as a desire to prepare better citizens for the good of the community (P-1), to work themselves out of a job as there were no more hungry people (P-2), and to look at the systemic issues facing a community (P-9) [*systemic*]. For P-6, being a faith-based organization framed their value in doing the best they could to be the hands and feet of Jesus without being judgmental and for P-4, the value was to ensure that everyone had the support system needed to take care of themselves and their families [*values driven*]. Moreover, for P-4, respect for the client and approaching a job with excellence was expressed in the culture of the organization [*values driven*]. Simply put, a value in P-4's organization was summed up with the comment "nobody wants children to go hungry."

P-9 articulated that two sets of values framed social action in their organization [*values driven*]. The first set focused on internal values comprised of relationships, priorities, stewardship, and having joy in one's work. Whereas the external values embraced serving local communities, operating with strategic initiatives, and being inclusive. Moreover, P-9 stated that the internal and external values "define a culture that creates any social action that we are going to do [*mission driven*]" (P-9). The mission of the organization linked to the values of the organization for P-3, P-6, and P-9, although social action was also described to be humanitarian, charity-based, and altruistic. Social action extended to community building to ensure a better life for the next generation (P-1) [*community building*] and a better place to live in the state of Arkansas (P-9). Moreover, for P7, social action included outreach to the surrounding communities, thinking outside the four walls of the organization to collaborate with other organizations in serving immigrants and undocumented people in the United States [*collaboration*]. The results from the data showed collaboration to be effective in community building [*community building*] (P-2, P-4, P-7, and P-8).

***Interview Question 9: Authenticity***

The ninth interview question (IQ9) was: “How does your organization communicate authenticity to collaborative stakeholders?” Three themes accountability, culture, and relationships emerged through data analysis. Authenticity for this question implies that the stakeholders are what they appear to be and say and that shared resources they receive reach the client. Results showed authenticity occurred when organizations were accountable to stakeholders (P-1, P-2, P-3, P-4, P-5, P-6, P-9, and P-10). Written reports to stakeholders and funders (P-1), data collection and research [*data*] (P-2), tracking intake of individuals and families served (P-6), and reporting on goods and services distributed [*written reports*] (P-10) were among the way participants accounted for goods, services, and funds received. Authenticity was attributed to accurate accounting records, as noted by P-10: “In our annual audit by pulling a percentage of receiving invoices and distribution invoices, our parent company can literally track everything down to the client.” In addition to annual audits [*annual audits*], P-10’s organization monitors its agencies with the same intricacies with which they are audited and monitored [*transparency*]. I always tell our agencies, “The purpose of these donated items is to serve the client [*authenticity*].” Like P-10, nonprofit organizations were required to maintain documents of clients served, and invoices for receiving and for distribution of good and services, for a minimum of 3 years. Reporting to stakeholders was conducted through advisory and board meetings [*formal communication*] (P-9), communicating with donor and volunteers on the results of an activity or program and in annual business meetings [*formal and informal communication*] (P-3). Intrinsically, authenticity was communicated through the actions of the staff. P-8 stated, “We follow through on what we say we are going to do, and we give people the ability to give us feedback anonymously.” Furthermore, in addition to accurate accounting, intrinsic valuation, and formal and informal communication, nonprofit organizations use official documents like their Employee Identification Number (EIN) and 501(c)(3) status [*corporate documents*] (P-6).

Authenticity was embedded in a culture of transparency within the participant organizations (P-3, P-4, P-5, P-6, P-7, P-8, and P-9). P-6 articulated this

organizational value as follows: “We do not hide anything. You are welcome to come and look at everything we do.” The results showed that an open communication policy [*open policy*] allowed complete transparency in anything specific to what the public needed to know (P-3). P-7 also acknowledged that an open door [*open policy*] policy and a genuine desire to serve everyone, regardless of associated funding, exhibited authenticity [*culture*]. Moreover, P5 equated authenticity to actions and being honest and truthful [*trust*]. Additionally, P5 offered that funding for programs and services was a direct result of a culture of transparency [*trust*]: “We have helped a lot of people and I think, if we did not, we wouldn’t be funded, our donations would not be as they are.” A culture of authenticity begins in the workplace; as P-4 maintained, “Our authentic self-shows up in the way we speak and interact with one another internally. The expectations we set for how we work together, and then role model that behavior that when the team goes into the community [*transparency*].” Although, P-4 thought they could do a better job to foster authentic behavior in allowing clients to openly share, without feeling judged [*trust*]. The findings also showed authenticity to be about building trust in the community through transparent reporting, diversity in the board of directors, in being authentic, or being and doing what they say they are and do [*authenticity*] (P-9). P-8 brought a culture of transparency back to prioritizing relationships with good customer service, returning phone calls, accessibility to stakeholders in your work with community groups [*relationships*].

Building authentic relationships required coming together in meetings whether one-on-one, in a group setting, or through a Zoom connection [*meetings*] (P-1, P-4). P-1 offered, “You can tell if a person is authentic when you sit down with them, break bread with them, and look them in the eye [*personal connection*].” Relationship building with stakeholders occurred in storytelling about the lives helped through the organization [*storytelling*] (P-2), by participating in projects where people got involved in the “doing of giving [*volunteers*]” (P-3), and in showing up in the community [*equity*] (P-8). For P-7, who received a grant to serve individuals that tested positive for COVID-19, the relationships built with the funders and individuals served extended beyond grant contract. During a peak

in the number of COVID-19 cases, P-7's organization went from delivering 40 home care boxes to 160. Relationships building occurred within the walls of an organization that embraced a culture of transparency and a can-do spirit that said that they will make a way to serve these families and find other resources [*results*].

### ***Interview Question 10: Continuity***

The tenth interview question (IQ10) was: "How does your organization integrate, teach, or maintain continuity in the recruitment of new stakeholders?" Three themes—integration of stakeholders, governance with stakeholders, and maintain relationships with stakeholders—emerged through data analysis. Continuity in this study implies there is an invisible force learned intergenerationally or experienced through tradition where the action of the stakeholder is reasonable, predictive, or productive of desired outcomes. In nonprofit organizations, recruiting board members or stakeholders to open positions within a program, collaboration, or organization (e.g., paid or volunteer) is illustrative of continuity. The results showed that when organizations recruit new stakeholders, they identify stakeholders that align with the organization's strategic objective [*organizational alignment*] (P-7), strengthen the composition of the stakeholder group [*diversity*] (P-3, P-10), and are committed to the work [*people committed to the organization*] (P-1). P-8 suggested that continuity occurred as new organizations were identified to form new relationships to meet the strategic initiatives of the collaborative effort [*organizational depth*]. When a new stakeholder was integrated into the collaboration, it fell to the convening organization to assure there was a process to address how new stakeholders were equipped, empowered, and had a sense of belonging [*organizational depth*] (P-8). Two spectrums of how stakeholders were identified came from P-6, who stated simply, "It is through word of mouth [*people interested in the organization*]" and P-10, who maintained a spreadsheet to analyze gaps in stakeholder diversity [*organizational depth*]. For P-10, diversity was the age, gender, race or ethnicity, sexuality, how a stakeholder identified, and the industry or business of the stakeholder [*organizational depth*].

The recruitment of board members or stakeholders was an intentional process of the organization (P-3, P-4, P-5, P-7, P-8, P-9, P-10). The results showed that board members and stakeholders were vetted and prequalified through organizational guidelines and corporate documents (P-3, P-5, P-8, P-10). In addition, they received an orientation or onboarding process to assure continuity [continuity] (P-4, P-9). For P-9, transferring the institutional knowledge was important: “It tells you what you have tried in the past, what you have learned from the past, where you have failed, and where you have succeeded [institutional knowledge].” The findings showed that governing boards with scheduled rotation for board members contributed to continuity [rotating terms/term limits] (P-5, P-10). P-10 explained rotating terms and term limits:

Board of directors are elected to a 3-year term, after which you can be elected for one additional 3-year term. On the completion of your 6-year term, a board member is required to retire off the board. After 1 year, a board member can be re-elected to an additional 6-year term. Six years may sound like a lifetime; however, we really need that continuity of understanding and depth of understanding that comes from being with the organization for a long time. In addition, we have a 15-member board, and on a rotation basis, maybe five rotate off at any one time because we are watching to make sure that we always have that institutional memory and knowledge that's active in the lives of our volunteers, as well as our staff [rotating terms/term limits].

A model of how a board member, staff, or volunteer came from P-5's organization, where an individual began as a volunteer of the organization, was asked to serve as a board member, transitioned into a staff position, and circled back to being a volunteer of the organization [process]. The rotation of board members further contributed to maintaining the relationships important to continuity [maintain continuity]. The research findings showed that how an organization maintained relationships influenced continuity within the organization. For instance, in P-1's organization, when a board member rotated off the board, that board member oftentimes served in an advisory role [succession]. In addition,

organizational culture [*culture*] (P-3), community advisory boards for the recruitment of new collaborative partners [*networking*] (P-4), relationship building through social and informal meetings [*relationships*] (P-6, P-8), and retaining representation of community stakeholders [*networking*] (P-2) emerged as dimensions in maintaining relationship for organizational continuity [*maintain relationships*].

### ***Interview Question 11: Intrinsic Valuation***

The 11th interview question (IQ11) was asked in two parts: “What rules, standards, or values are recognized and used in your organization?” and “How do these rules, standards, or values contribute to shared resources or philanthropic value?” In response to this question, characteristics, operationalization [*operationalized*], and shared resources and philanthropic value emerged as the themes. The study findings showed characteristics of intrinsic valuation to be embedded within the organization. An example would be the purchase order form used in P-3’s organization. At the top of the form are the following words: “We receive these funds in our organization and we are going to do our best to steward these funds based on missional specific values of the organization and not spend anything that goes against those stated values [*values*].” The value spoken of by P-3 was also echoed by P-5: “Anything we are given, we try to use it responsibly. We value the donations that are given to us. We value the money [*values*].” Furthermore, social values were aligned with intrinsic valuation (P-10); these values included focuses on child hunger or senior citizens choosing between food and prescription medication [*characteristics of values*].

The participants in the study reported that the mission of the organization was the origin of intrinsic valuation [*operationalized*] (P-1, P2, P3, P7). The values embedded in organizations were a part of performance evaluations and reinforced by leadership (P-4), resource allocation decisions (P-3), written into corporate guidelines and documents (P-5), and developed as standards of excellence in a strategic plan (P-10) [*operationalized*]. P-9 maintained their organization had as few rules as possible. Moreover, they liked to “keep it as simple as possible for collaborative stakeholders. Do not make it a rule unless it is really important and do

not put it in writing unless you are going to enforce it [*operationalized*].” Although the rules and standards in an organization might change, the values do not, as stated by P-10: “We have been clear to articulate that the strategic plan is a living document and the standards in the document may change [*rules and standards*].” In addition, the results showed that leadership modeling (P-4), documents that reinforced organizational value (P-3), aligning organizational opportunities with the mission statement (P-1), and building community trust through relationship building (P-8) contributed to intrinsic valuation where the values, rules, and standards were used and recognized by stakeholders.

Through the second part of IQ11, the researcher explored whether intrinsic valuation contributed to shared resources and philanthropic value. The results showed that intrinsic valuation contributed to shared resources and philanthropic value, through collective-efforts [*shared goals*] (P-2), asking for money [*philanthropic value*] (P-3), and shared responsibility [*shared responsibility*] (P-1). Moreover, creating values together [*values*] (P-4), word-of-mouth testimonials [*stewardship*] (P-6), and meeting activity and program objectives [*operationalized*] (P-7) were direct results of intrinsic valuation [*intrinsic valuation*]. Additionally, results showed that stewardship was a value [*stewardship*] (P-8, P-9), embodying respect for all stakeholders [*value*] (P-4), local decision-making [*value*] (P-8), ethics and integrity [*value*] (P-5), delivering goods and services in a timely manner [*value*] (P-5), and doing work that supports the mission of the organization [*value*] (P-1) contributed to shared resources and philanthropic value.

### ***Interview Question 12: Ordinary Language***

The 12th interview question (IQ12) was: “What does ordinary language look like in your program, collaboration, or organization, and how is that language communicated to collaborative stakeholders?” The three themes that emerged through the data were: OJ jargon, communication barriers to ordinary language [*communication barriers*], and how ordinary language is operationalized [*operationalized*]. In this study, ordinary language was identified as a common language that is adopted, used, and recognized by stakeholders; however, ordinary language is not necessarily a term familiar to stakeholders. P-3 said of ordinary

language, “I think every organization has its own language [*OJ jargon*].” Likewise, P-9 stated, “We are very comfortable with our ordinary language [*OJ jargon*].” The results showed words like allocated funds or designated funds [*terms*] (P-3) endowment, philanthropy, unrestricted funds, or social capital (P-8), underserved or the under resourced (P-5), Hopes Closet (P-6), and food insecurity (P-2) [*terms*] were indicators of OJ jargon. Acronyms like T-flat program, CSFP, CACFP, SF, and SP (P-10), ROI (P-8), and USDA (P-2) also contributed to the use of ordinary language [*acronyms*]. For P-4, the use of OJ jargon was expected where federal funding and research-based projects were dependent on meeting regulated standards as expressed in contracts and publications.

The results showed that terms like food insecurity (P-2), underserved (P-5), or social capital (P-8) created [*communication barriers*]. P-4 thought that creating a new common language in which all stakeholders understood the meaning of what was implied through the OJ jargon was important [*co-create a common language*]. P-8 saw a disparity in understanding OJ jargon between business stakeholders and nonprofit organizations and voluntary associations [*challenge*]. For P-8, OJ jargon and the world of philanthropy was like “The ground we walk on and the air we breathe.” Whereas, business stakeholders might say, “What are you even talking about? [*stakeholder comprehension*].” Additionally, in presentations, the stakeholder comprehension of the definition of a word created communication barriers [*challenge*]. P-1 articulated the challenge as follows:

You know, there are some groups when you say, retirement, they think, okay, I need a half a million dollars to make sure I'm secure. Do I have my IRA in order? Is everything in place for my retirement? Whereas, for a person from my area, regarding retirement, they have not even gotten close to that level. They might be thinking something as simple as, do I have savings accounts in place, or do I have money set aside for an emergency fund? The people from my area are at a different level and range of understanding and these two groups are separated by two different worlds [*stakeholder comprehension*].



The results further showed contributing factors to communication barriers included language that was too ponderous and lofty (P-8), using OJ jargon with the thought that everyone has a basic understanding of the language (P-9), and the use of acronyms [*clarity in communication*] (P-10). Conquering the divide between stakeholder groups and organizational jargon was operationalized in a variety of ways. P-10 compiled a glossary of terms that was presented to new stakeholders [operationalized]. Furthermore, at board, staff, or other stakeholder meetings the glossary of terms was distributed [*clarity in communication*]. The findings demonstrated other methods to limit OJ jargon included weekly communication in laymen's terms [*stakeholder comprehension*] (P-3), creating a common language [*language barrier*] (P-4), using language that makes sense to everyone [*terms are understood*] (P-9), and explaining the definition of an acronym is one is used [*acronym*] (P-10).

The third research question (RQ3) was presented in two parts in this study. Part A explored four governance principles in questions IQ4–IQ7 (Ostrom, 1990). Part B explored commons governance and principles in nonprofit organizations and voluntary action collaboratives in questions IQ8–IQ12 (Lohmann, 1992). In culling the data, data analysis, and grouping the data into categories, 19 themes emerged. Four themes—governance, shared resources, monitoring resources, and conflict—were discussed in response to questions IQ4–IQ7. Additionally, three themes in each question IQ8–IQ9 were discussed. The implications of these findings are discussed further in Chapter 5 and provide a better understanding of how commons governance is operationalized in nonprofit organizations contributing to the furtherance of an organization's mission.

#### **RQ4: Convening Leadership**

The fourth research question (RQ) was: "How does the convenor contribute to collective-action collaboration? (Clary, 2021)" Five interview questions (IQ13–IQ18) were asked to explore how the convenor contributes to collective-action collaboration. The five questions were:

IQ13: What have you observed as three best practices of a convenor?

- IQ14: What has been your experience in how a convenor's core beliefs, values, and attitudes influence collaborative efforts?
- IQ15: What has been your experience in how a convenor brings together socio-economic groups with differences in culture, customs, language, influence, and disparity of resources?
- IQ16: How does a convenor facilitate collaboration among stakeholders?
- IQ17: What have you observed as a technique a convenor would use to reframe a problem to help stakeholders find common ground during times of conflict.

A convenor is essential for successful collaborative action (Carlson, 2006), and increasingly more so to solve the complex societal and global issues nonprofit organizations address today. Carlson (2006) looked at convening as a powerful tool in which leaders created a space for stakeholders to problem solve through collaboration. Carlson distinguished between a leader's management and their ability to build consensus. Neal et al. (2010) drew from the definition of the word convene to define convening as "the art of gathering and "holding" people, in a safe and generative space, for the sake of authentic engagement" (p. 304). Clary (2021) submitted that assembling stakeholders is a significant role for the convenor. It is in the assembly of the stakeholders' where commons are formed, governance occurs, and shared resources are managed.

Westley et al. (2013) created a theory of transformative agency in social-ecological systems, arguing that leadership per se may be passe as the focus of change transfers to institutional entrepreneurship. Leadership in these authors' framework capitalizes on the concept of actors and actor groups incorporating words such as stewards, knowledge carriers, leaders, interpreters, sense makers, networks, visionaries, experimenters, followers, reinforcers, and facilitators where transformation takes place through the efforts of several actors. According to Westley et al. institutional entrepreneurship, a concept developed by DiMaggio (1988), describes the work of convenors looking to bring transformational change to institutions.

Westley et al. (2013) contended the focus on institutional entrepreneurship was better suited to emergence and change in adaptive systems and noted that to

refocus on the endeavor itself one must shift from the concept of leader to that of entrepreneur [convenor]. What Westley et al. (2013) identified as institutional entrepreneurship, Clary (2021) maintained—was the role of a convenor and convening leadership. According to Svendsen and Laberge (2005), convenors help build independent relationships to create a “stakeholders’ network,” which they define as “a web of groups, organizations and/or organizations who come together to address a complex and shared cross-boundary problem, issue, or opportunity” (p. 92). Additionally, the convenor helps collaborative members find solutions and innovations through the energy, resources, and intelligence of its members. (Svendsen & Laberge, 2005).

A convenor can be an organization or someone who steps into a leadership role as a coalition convenor (Kemp, 2020). Moreover, a convenor may take the form of a collaboration of convening representatives from multiple sectors (Colburn, n.d.). Block (2008) maintained that there is an art to convening stakeholders and that convening leadership is essential. In the context of a decentralized solution to the problem of cooperation, Lobo et al. (2016) supported Ostrom’s (1990) argument that individuals can develop institutions that guarantee optimal cooperative solutions without the need for enforcement from leaders and proposed mutual monitoring as discussed in the previous section. Moreover, according to Ostrom (2000), a leader may evolve from the group and can be the initial stimulant in presenting alternative ways of organizing. Van Belle (1996) argued that leadership can be instrumental in overcoming the difficulties found in the pursuit of public goods thus providing an efficient and effective solution to collective action [collaboration] problems.

Glowacki and von Rueden (2015) found leadership to be effective in small-scale societies with high efficacy in domains of collective action. Moreover, a leader’s prior experience, age-related knowledge of the situation, body size, and social placement contribute to the effectiveness of the leader. In a study on leadership in social movements, Morris and Staggenborg (2004) cited that leaders inspire commitment, are strategic decision-makers, influence collective outcomes, and create and recognize opportunities. In terms of leadership in the global

community, Crosby (1996) posited that these individuals build global community or civil society in the world by creating organizations and exchange programs. Leadership then inspires and mobilizes others to take collective action in pursuit of the common good (Crosby, 1996; Crosby & Bryson, 2010). Block (2008) offered leadership in community building encompasses intentionality, convening, valuing relatedness, and presenting choices. Further, Block also described leaders as those who set the stage for institutional and civic engagement. In this regard, the leader not only designs the blueprint for the engagement but also provides the roadmap on how to arrive at the destination (Block, 2008). Collaborative governance offers an opportunity for the many roles of leadership on the commons (Agranoff & McGuire, 2003; Bryson et al., 2006). Emerson et al. (2011), based on the work of Agranoff and McGuire (2003), Bryson et al. (2006), and Carlson (2006), offered leadership roles including sponsor, convenor, facilitator, mediator, public advocate, and others. The cultivation of commons leadership is essential to create sustainability and provide a competitive advantage to the organization (Franzgen, 2020, p. 37). Fundamentally, collaborations do not rise spontaneously; someone must initiate them (Bertels, 2006). Clary's (2021) convening leadership framework features five dimensions, as shown in Table 3.

Data analysis for IQ13–IQ17 was conducted in MAXQDA, and five codes emerged from five IQs resulting in 172 data segments: best practices (52), core beliefs, values, and attitudes [CBVA] (31), socio-economic groups [*socio-economic*] (32), facilitate collaboration [*collaboration*] (38), and congruity in conflict [*conflict*] (25). The data segments from the five codes were transferred to an Excel spreadsheet, further analyzed, and grouped into codes, categories, and themes whereas the following themes emerged as shown in Table 11. To understand better how commons governance is operationalized in nonprofit organizations, the results from IQ13–IQ17 follow. Notated within the participant comment is a bracketed and italicized emergent correlating category or theme.

**Table 11***IQ13–IQ17 Categories and Themes*

| Best Practices   | Core Beliefs, Values and Attitudes                   | Socio-Economic Groups  | Collaboration                                    | Congruity in Conflict   |
|--|--|--|--|---|
| Characteristics of a convenor [ <i>convenor</i> ]        | Expectations of the convenor [ <i>expectations</i> ] | Diversity and inclusion [ <i>D&amp;I</i> ]                       | Meeting design [ <i>meeting</i> ]                | Acknowledge there is a conflict [ <i>acknowledge conflict</i> ]       |
| The convenor as connector [ <i>connector</i> ]           | Influences of the convenor [ <i>influence</i> ]      | Socio-economic groups operationalized [ <i>operationalized</i> ] | Monitoring and maintenance [ <i>monitoring</i> ] | The convenor's role in conflict resolution [ <i>convenor's role</i> ] |
| The proficiencies of a convenor [ <i>proficiencies</i> ] | Convening operationalized [ <i>operationalized</i> ] | Understanding the tensions [ <i>tension</i> ]                    | Building relationships [ <i>relationships</i> ]  | Techniques used in conflict management [ <i>techniques</i> ]          |

***Interview Question 13: Best Practices***

The 13th interview question (IQ13) was: “What have you observed as three best practices of a convenor?” Through analyzing the data, the themes characteristics of a convenor [*convenor*], the convenor as connector [*connector*], and the proficiencies of a convenor [*proficiencies*] emerged. The characteristics of a convenor were listening (P-9, P-10), flexibility [*flexible*] (P-9), the ability to motivate people [*motivator*] (P-3), transparency, and the ability to drive the collaborative forward [*convenor*] (P-4). P-4 articulated that transparency occurred in the forming phase of collaborative work, as a part of the process of collaboration where people needed latitude in dealing with their own fears and insecurities in joining a collaborative effort [*transparency in the process*]. In addition, P-3 believed that a convenor should have a vision for the collaborative effort and be passionate about the purpose of the collaboration [*vision and passion*]. P-3 stated,

Without a vision, people are not going anywhere. And, if they are not competent, it does not matter how many resources they have available, they are not going to manage them well. And then, being able to motivate people to move forward is critical.

One final characteristic competency [*competent*] that P-3 offered could also be linked with the proficiencies of a convenor [*proficiencies*]. The skill of a convenor emerged in the participant responses in the form of questions the participants asked. For instance, P-2 thought the convenor should be asking, “Who else should be sitting at this table? [*asking who should be at the table*].” In doing so, the convenor works with the collaborative members to assure that everyone who should be at the table, was at the table [*proficiencies*]. For P-3, collaborative members included state agencies; people and organizations involved in child nutrition; school districts; YMCA or similar service providers; and representatives at the local, regional, and state levels [*inclusive*]. P-3 offered one illustration of what it means to have everybody at the table: “It is making sure you have somebody at the table who represents the governor’s office, or is the lobbyist, or who aids education administrators, that can help you get your hearing at the state capitol when you need it [*strategic partners*].” The findings also showed that the convenor should be a skilled administrator performing duties like updating the stakeholder list so it is current [*detailed*] and scheduling collaborative meetings [*planning*] (P-2).

The results showed it was incumbent upon the convenor to help the collaboration identify these strategic partners [*proficiencies*]. Additionally, the results showed that convenors needed to be skilled in encouraging collaborate members to think outside of the box [*think outside the box*] and create an atmosphere for honest conversation [*honest conversation*] among collaborative members (P-1). Furthermore, realistic expectations [*realistic expectations*] of what the collaborative could achieve was identified by P-8. The participants voiced that it was the skill of the convenor to set these expectations at the onset of the collaborative work. In doing so, the convenor provided collaborative members to an opportunity to communicate the bandwidth of organizational capacity (e.g., volunteers, funding, resources) [*informed decision-making*] (P-7).

Being a dot connector [*dot connector*] was identified as a proficiency by P-10, who stated,

We need to listen and be a dot connector. As we (e.g., convenors) listen, we must be good at connecting the dots for people because someone can say one thing, on one side of the room, and another can say something else. Although, the two comments may seem unrelated, a good convenor can connect the dots and help them see that what they are saying could be the solution to their issue.

The third theme to emerge in response to IQ13 centered on relationships and building rapport among collaborative stakeholders. In this vein, the convenor emerged as the connector [*connector*]. P-8 said, “I think it is important to invest in making time for social connection, not just work connection [*social connection*].” The results showed the intentionality of the convenor to build rapport with collaborative members to be a best practice [*build rapport*]. As a connector, the findings further showed the convenor needed to be able to create an inviting atmosphere where collaborative members felt comfortable in the space [*create a comfortable atmosphere*] (P-1). Convenors also needed to meet people where they were as they joined the collaboration (P-4, P-9). Moreover, the convenor needed to listen to collaborative members and answer any questions as the collaboration formed [*create a comfortable atmosphere*]. The characteristics of convening leadership and the ability of the convenor to work with stakeholders in collective action collaboration are shown in Table 12.

**Table 12**

*Convening Leadership Characteristics and Skillset*

| Collaboration of Stakeholders (IQ13)   | Characteristics of Convening Leadership   | Ability of the Convenor  |
|--|---|--|
| Best Practices of Convening Leadership | Competent<br>Connector<br>Flexible<br>Listens<br>Passionate<br>Transparent<br>Visionary | Creates an environment for transparency<br>Encourages stakeholders to think outside the box<br>Fosters social and professional connections<br>Identifies strategic partners<br>Motivates stakeholders<br>Moves a collaborative forward<br>Operationalizes a strategic agenda<br>Sets the expectation of collaborative stakeholders |

**Interview Question 14: Core Beliefs, Values, and Attitudes**

The 14th interview question (IQ14) was: “What has been your experience in how a convenor’s core beliefs, values, and attitudes influence collaborative efforts?” Through analyzing the data, the themes expectations of the convenor [*expectations*], influences of the convenor [*influences*], and convening operationalized [*operationalized*] emerged. The findings showed that the core beliefs, values, and attitudes of the convenor influenced collaborative efforts. P-3 suggested that if a convenor’s core belief was that they could be successful in bringing the stakeholders together [*core belief*], then that basic belief would result in a positive outcome in the work of the collaboration. In contrast, if the convenor launched the collaboration without honest input from the collaborative stakeholders, then the outcome would be negative [*honest sharing*] (P-3). P-4 proposed a convenor brings a set of beliefs, values, and attitudes [*CVBA*] to the space. Also, how the space is designed, what happens in the space, who can speak in the space, and process of collaboration in the space stems from the convenor’s CVBA. P-4 posited, “If a convenor’s CVBAs are not inclusive, equitable, or humble, or if the convenor lacks confidence in trusting the process, then the convenor can have a negative influence on the outcome of the collaborative effort [*create the culture*].” Other expectations of the convenors that emerged in the findings were the convenor would lead from their heart toward a common goal [*authentic*] (P-6, P-7), they would set the stage for the norms of the group [*shared space*] (P-9), and they would be knowledgeable in the issue and understand the history behind the complexity of the challenge [*understands the history*] (P-10). A final expectation of the convenor is they would be able to story-tellers relevant to the collaboration members and collective-effort [*storytellers*] (P2).

The findings also revealed the culture of the collaboration is going to be reflective of a convenor’s CVBAs [*culture*] (P-3). Furthermore, for P-3, the culture of the collaboration as set by a convenor was a definitive factor in the active engagement of stakeholders in the collaborative effort [*influences*]. P-8 referred to the convenor’s influence as the personal flavor of the convenor where a convenor may exhibit an exuberant personality or be intense, or even a good



conversationalist [*convenor's personality*]. The personification of the convenor's personality influenced the dynamics of the collaboration [*influences*]. As P-10 summarized,

The convenor's CVBAs can change the dynamics of the group and the willingness of the people at the table to have to follow through and continue to work on a project; depending on whether convenor railroads the collaborative-efforts with an agenda or creates an interactive space that allows for participation and engagement of stakeholders [*changes group dynamics*].

In this study, how a phenomenon such as how a convenor's core beliefs, values, and attitudes influence collaborative efforts is operationalized through attributes of the convenor as expressed by the participants in the study [*operationalized*]. The findings indicated that respect that was earned through previous experiences and relationships [*convenor respect*] (P-2), having a servant's heart [*servant's heart*] (P-2, P-6), and being open [*openness*] to collaborative stakeholders' ideas were valued attributes of convenors. Moreover, these attributes influenced collaborative-efforts. In organizations where convening was a part of the organizational mandate, values like building relationships [*relationships*] and giving a voice to stakeholders [*values played out in collaboration*] (P-9), loving people and meeting people where they were when they entered the collaborative effort [*meeting people*] (P-7) and embracing storytelling [*storytelling*] (P-5) modeled the operationalization [*operationalized*] of the convenor. Furthermore, having a servant's heart [*servant's heart*] (P-5, P-6), earning respect among collaborative stakeholders (P-2), and acknowledging the collective value stakeholders brought to the collaborative process [*value sharing*] (P1) additionally operationalized the convenor's influence [*influence*]. Finally, creating a culture to attract cross platform collaborations [*create a culture*] (P-3, P-4), working hard [*hard work*] (P-8), and convening to solve the collaborative agenda [*no agenda*] emerged as how the convenor's core beliefs, values, and attitudes influence the collaborative effort [*operationalized*]. Table 13 presents the findings on how the

core beliefs, values, and attitudes of the convenor in collective action collaborations influence the outcome of the collaborative effort.

**Table 13**

*Convening Leadership Core Beliefs, Values, and Attitudes of the Convenor*

| Core Beliefs, Values, and Attitudes (IQ14)   | Shaped by the Core Beliefs, Values, and Attitudes of the Convenor   |
|--|---|
| Convenor's Core Beliefs, Values, and Attitudes                                     | Creates and designs a space for collaboration<br>Determines what happens in the space<br>Determines who speaks in the space<br>Establishes the processes and sets the norms for collaboration<br>Works toward a common goal             |
| Positive Influences on the Outcome of Collaborative Efforts                        | Convenor's disposition<br>Loving people<br>Openness to stakeholder's ideas<br>Previous experience and relationships<br>Relationship building<br>Servant's heart<br>Valuing stakeholders   |
| Negative Influences on the Outcome of Collaborative Efforts<br>Personal Attributes | Inequitable vs. Equity<br>Exclusivity vs. Inclusivity<br>Arrogant vs. Humility<br>Knowledge of the history of the collaboration<br>Knowledge of the challenges, issues, and complexities of the collaboration<br>Relevant story-telling |

***Interview Question 15: Socio-Economic Groups [Socio-Economic]***

The 15th interview question (IQ15) was: "What has been your experience in how a convenor brings together socio-economic groups with differences in culture, customs, language, influence, and disparity of resources?" Through analyzing the data, the following themes emerged: diversity and inclusion [*D&I*], socio-economic groups operationalized [*operationalized*], and understanding the tensions [*tension*].

The topic of diversity and inclusion was important to the participants. During the global COVID-19 pandemic when the interviews for this study took place, the United States of America was trying to rebound from a state of political unrest, racial tensions, and mounting disruptions to the healthcare system. The results of the study reflected participants' acknowledgment of this diversity. As P-2 stated, "I would think over the last year or two, that bringing together socio-economic groups would be a more purposeful goal of every group that we have

worked with, and it is a sign of the times, pandemic and all [*pandemic awareness*].” P-4 contributed with, “We could have done a better job and we are constantly asking, ‘How do we create a community that is diverse and stronger?’ [*builds community*]” (P-10). For P-3, the global COVID-19 and other crisis situations galvanized people with difference in backgrounds, cultures, and customs around the need and a common goal [*pandemic challenges*]. As operationalized [*operationalized*] for P-3, it was the vision and mission [*vision and mission*] that laid the foundation to pursue diversity and inclusion in and out of the organization pre COVID-19. Similarly, all the participants (P-1 through P-10) advocated for diversity and inclusion on their boards and in collaborative stakeholder meetings. The findings showed, however, that the participants who represented funding organizations, found it challenging to be inclusive of all stakeholders when there was a noticeable difference in the disparity of resources [*all-inclusive*]. P-10 illuminated the challenge as follows:

Well, I need people from wealth class, middle class, and poverty class to all be at my table. But if my wealth class lady says, “Well, if they would just get off the couch”; and, if the language is always, they—and they need to do this, then I must redirect the language and help them understand the differences [*bridging the divide*].

Diversity and inclusion [*D&I*] requires finding methods to operationalize [*operationalized*] the communication gap to talk about sensitive issues [*sensitive issues*] (P-8, (P-10). The results of the study showed that participants endeavored to include socio-economic groups [*socio-economic groups*] in written communication like multiple-language documents [*interactive process*] (P-4), providing accommodations if needed to attend stakeholder meetings [*stakeholder meetings*] (P-4), diversified staff fluent in multiple languages [*team diversity*], electronic communication [*accessibility*] (P-8), multimodal meetings, and conversations with a lot of groups [*multimodal experience*] (P-8). Limited methods of how to operationalize [*D&I*] in nonprofit organization collaboration, were identified in the study and more research is needed to study this phenomenon. The third theme understanding the tension [*tensions*] provided some insight into why the results

showed there was an inequity in the composition of stakeholders in collaborative efforts. As stated by P-8, “It is easy to connect and collaborate with people who are similar.” P-9 equated the challenge to the difference between funding organizations and service provider organizations where service provider organizations were in a position of needing resources [*understanding tensions*]. As mentioned earlier in this section, the racial tension between the races and cultures also contributed to the inequity [*tensions*]. In contrast, P-6 claimed there were no people of color in their county; therefore, they could not have collaborative-efforts that had differences in culture, customs, language, influence, and disparity of resources [*blind bias*]. One result showed socio-economic groups to be hard work [*hard work*] (P-10). At a very basic level of the wealth in classes of population there are tension nonprofit organization leaders must address. P-10 captured the essence of this thought with an illustration:

An illustration from P-10 highlights some of the complexities:

It is tough to bring the wealth class, middle class, and poverty class together in collaborative work. We took one of the ladies from one of our programs to a national conference. It was a volunteer group that attended the conference. Our president of the board, another volunteer, and two members of our classes. On the plane ride home, one of the ladies from one of our classes, the community member, opened up to a person, that she had a bunch of silverware in her luggage that she had been taken from dinner. And they were like, “What, why did you do this?” And you know, they were just shocked. So, there are those kinds of things when we bring in different socio economic groups, it is very, very difficult.

P-10 reiterated the need to be ever present in the room, in the conversation, and in building bridges between the groups. Building collaboratives of all socio-economic groups with differences in culture, customs, language, influence, and disparity of resources falls to each one working in the nonprofit and voluntary action sector (P-10). Table 14 illustrates how convening leadership works with diverse stakeholder groups.

**Table 14***Convening Leadership and Working with Diverse Stakeholder Groups*

| Convening Leadership (IQ15)                                  | Convenor's Working with Diverse Stakeholder Groups Should   |
|--|---|
| Socio-Economic Groups  | Advocate for diversity and inclusion in stakeholder groups<br>Develop a personal philosophy of diversity and inclusion for stakeholder groups<br>Embrace stakeholder groups that are diverse and inclusive<br>Realize disparity in resources of stakeholders contributes to challenges in collaboration<br>Understand tension exists in socio-economic diverse stakeholder groups |
| Techniques to Break Down Barriers to Diversity and Inclusion | Acknowledge that tension exists<br>Build bridges through communication and conversations<br>Diversify staff<br>Offer multiple-language documents<br>Provide resources to attend stakeholder meetings  |

***Interview Question 16: Facilitate Collaboration [Collaboration]***

The 16th interview question (IQ16) was: “How does a convenor facilitate collaboration among stakeholders?” The researcher observed that the participants—all of whom who served in convening roles—spoke sometimes as the convenor and sometimes to the desired characteristic of the convenor. Additionally, the participants voiced that the convening role was a collaborative effort between the convenor and the convening organization. Through analyzing the data, three themes emerged: meeting design [*meeting*], monitoring and maintenance [*monitoring*], and relationship building [*relationships*]. The first theme was about the design of the meeting. The results showed there was not one way to design the meeting space or agenda; however, there were important aspects to consider in convening stakeholders. At a meta or organizational level, as a convenor, P-4 viewed the convenor's role to be that as a trainer and the stakeholders were in a training session [*train the trainer*], documenting the process of convening to provide a resource for stakeholder's as they left the session. As P-4 explained, “You are learning the process for implementation for the relationships you are building here, but also for many other places in your life or career [*meeting design*].” P-3, P-4, P9, and P-10 articulated that the meeting design should include ways to engage the stakeholders. For P-3, this was a convenor's reasonability to know the stakeholders in the room and how they would be able to fill roles needed within the collaboration [*knowing the stakeholders*]. P-

10 engaged stakeholders by working in groups; whereas P-9 preferred to hire a facilitator who believed in the mission of the collaboration to convene over the meeting [*meeting with a facilitator*]. P-9 stated, “The facilitator is responsible for facilitating the discussion, making sure all the voices are heard, and making sure that we are reporting back to our groups as the reports are ready.” In small group work, the results showed P-10 assigned a listener in the group, a reporter or an individual that could report back what the small group had discussed and reminded the stakeholder’s that everyone’s input was essential to the outcome of the meeting [*collaborative work*]. The design of the meeting also needed to consider the dynamics socio-economic groups brought to the collaborative [*group dynamics*] (P-8) keeping the common interest of the stakeholders at the forefront of the meeting design [*meeting*] (P-5) and asking stakeholders to step into strategic positions (P-3).

The second theme in facilitating collaboration was in the monitoring and maintenance of stakeholder interactions after the meeting concluded [*monitoring*]. The results showed that tactically, someone had to be responsible to follow up with stakeholders [*follow up*] (P-8). The results further showed follow up occurred in conversation, email communication, text messages, lunches, and meetings (P-3, P-8, P-10). P-10 considered follow-up to be moving a little further down the field toward the goal line for the collaborative effort, recognizing that “the real work is going to happen down the road, and I need the stakeholders to stay engaged in order to achieve the strategic outcome of the collaboration [*encourage ownership*].” In this manner, for P-10, the conversation continued, the stakeholders were engaged, and the real work began with the goal in mind [*monitoring and maintenance*]. In monitoring and maintenance [*monitoring*] and in the meeting design [*meeting*] building relationship [*relationships*] the convenor’s ability to foster and build relationships was essential to a successful outcome. The constraints in a continued state of social distancing due to COVID-19 created challenges as expressed by P-4:

It is hard right now, in a digital world. We have to find creative ways to you know, meet stakeholders in the hallway, over coffee, or at the kiosk. We ask ourselves as convenor’s “How do we facilitate meaningful conversations on

Zoom and tell stories that showcase our commonalities and align our goals and purpose? [*social interaction*].

For P-9, consideration of the digital world circled back to the meeting design and creating a space for relationships to form as stakeholders connected [*social interaction*]. The results showed that relationship building [*relationships*] centered on working toward a common goal [*objective*] (P-7), helping collaborative stakeholders understand that they mattered [*value-added*] (P-10), meeting with stakeholders before the formal meeting [*knowing stakeholders*] (P-3), listening to stakeholder input (P-9), and remaining connected outside of collaboration meetings [*building relationships*] (P-1). P-1 shared the importance of the establishing and maintaining relationships with collaborative stakeholders. P-1 stated, “I can talk to one stakeholder and express a need where that stakeholder shares the need with another stakeholder. Although, the result may not be immediate, the connection is there for future opportunities [*collaborative interfacing*].” P-8 expressed that it was incumbent upon the convenor to meet the participant’s where they were to surface and help break down barriers in collaboration [*collaborative interfacing*]. Breaking down barriers to collaboration included understanding the capacity [*capacity*] of the stakeholder partners [*building relationships*]. The results of the study showed that the participants had expectations of convening leadership in facilitating collaboration, as shown in Table 15.

**Table 15**

*Convening Leadership and Expectations in Facilitating Collaboration*

| Facilitate Collaboration (IQ16) | Expectation of Convening Leadership   |
|---------------------------------|---|
|                                 | Build relationships with the stakeholders                                     |
|                                 | Document the collaboration outcomes   |
|                                 | Engage the stakeholders   |
|                                 | Facilitate stakeholder conversations  |
|                                 | Follow up with all stakeholders on accepted responsibilities                  |
|                                 | Help stakeholders understand they are value-added to the collaborative effort |
|                                 | Know the capacity of stakeholders   |
|                                 | Provide opportunity for all stakeholder voices to be heard                    |
|                                 | Train the collaborate stakeholders how to convene                             |
|                                 | Work toward a common goal   |

***Interview Question 17: Congruity in Conflict [Conflict]***

The 17th interview question (IQ17) was: “What have you observed as a technique a convenor would use to reframe problem to help stakeholders find common ground during times of conflict?” Through analyzing the data, the themes acknowledge there is a conflict [*conflict*], the convenor’s role in conflict resolution [*convenor’s role*], and techniques used in conflict management [*techniques*] emerged. The themes that emerged through analyzing the data underscored that conflict was to be expected in collaborative work (P-1, P-3, P-5, P-6, P-7, P-8, P-9, P-10). P-1, P-3, and P-9 offered that conflict should be acknowledged. P-1 said, “Be quiet, and listen to the conflict. Then, identify the commonalities and help each other understand the source of the conflict [*conflict*].” P-3 suggested to refocus the conflict [*conflict*] by acknowledging the conflict and reminding stakeholders that what they were doing together mattered. P-9 asserted that at the end of the day, while there may not be consensus, everyone’s voice should have been heard, and a group vote helps to move the collaborative-effort forward [*acknowledge agreement not reached*]. The convenor’s role was important in reframing the problem to help stakeholders find common ground during times of conflict. The findings showed the convenor is expected to find commonality among the stakeholders [*identify commonalities*] (P-1), remind stakeholders of the purpose of the collaborative effort [*focus on group objective*] (P-8), and refocus stakeholders on the mission of the group [*mission*] (P-3). In addition, P-3 shared,

I think what you (e.g., the convenor) try to do is remind people that they have passion, and the reason there is conflict is because there is an objective, and they care about what they are doing. Additionally, we may or may not agree on exactly how to do it. But the objective is the same [*keep the objective at the forefront*].

Moreover, it was incumbent upon the convenor to know the culture of the collaboration to help stakeholders rally around the objective instead of personal preferences [*understand the culture*] (P-3). For P-1, where convening brought different aged group stakeholders together, the findings showed the root cause of conflict stemmed from age differences, racial tensions, and a lack of shared history



[*looking for commonality*]. To address the conflict, P-1 suggested, “The best way to dissolve the conflict is helping both groups understand they are saying the same thing, only from their perspective. Therefore, the convenor must help them appreciate the perspective each one brings [*help them find commonality*].”

Similarly, P-4 proposed that the convenor should engage the stakeholders in a back-and-forth conversation to get both groups to a place of agreement.

The results revealed several techniques that convenors could use to help reframe conflict. If the conflict involved a few people, P-6 found meeting in person in an office to be effective [*face-to-face*]. Moreover, P-8 asserted that gathering information prior to resolution was a good technique [*gather information*] as was letting people talk openly about the conflict [*hearing stakeholder voices*] (P-9). P-5, however, thought that a convenor should be skilled in managing conflict to frame a negative situation to a positive frame, but acknowledged that not everyone had the talent to do so [*reframe an issue*]. A unique finding was expressed by P-7, who thought stakeholders could be persuaded with a personal example to resolve conflict by stating what she would commit to improve to change the outcome of the conflict [*techniques*]. By doing so, P-7 said, “I am not pointing fingers, and I am willing to put some skin in the game to help resolve the issue” [*no finger pointing*].

Two methods that a convenor can use in reframing conflict came from P-4 and P-10. P-4 recalled an experience in observing a convenor who asked everyone in the group to consider the exercise of backing down a ladder. Once the group had backed down the ladder figuratively, the convenor asked everyone to step back and consider how they went off the rails. The convenor then interacted with the comments bringing the group to consensus [*stepping back*]. P-10 had a great deal of respect for a convenor who used a parking lot approach to conflict reframing. In P-10’s scenario, the convenor captures items that kind of relate to the topic of discussion in a parking lot on her flip chart. She hears what the stakeholders say and places it in the parking lot to maybe revisit at another time. This keeps the group focused on the objective. P-10 recalled a time where the objective was to focus on childhood hunger; however, the members wanted to talk about the deadbeat dads who are not working. The convenor reframed the situation by

placing the deadbeat dads in the parking lot and refocusing the collaborative-effort on childhood hunger. Table 16 as shown reflects the convening leadership role in collective action collaboration.

**Table 16**

*Convening Leadership and Conflict Resolution*

| Congruity in Conflict (IQ-17) | Convening Leadership Role   |
|-------------------------------|---|
|                               | Acknowledge there is conflict<br>Help stakeholders appreciate other perspectives<br>Rally around the objectives of the stakeholders and not personal preferences<br>Refocus the conflict on the mission<br>Reframe the problem with group exercises |

The fourth research question (RQ4) explored how the convenor contributed to collective-action collaboration (Clary, 2021). In culling data, analyzing, and grouping data into codes, categories, and themes, five codes—best practices, core beliefs, values, and attitudes, socio-economic groups, facilitate collaboration, and congruity in conflict—emerged. In addition, three themes emerged in each of the five IQs asked of participants in this study. Overall, the findings from 172 data segments were used to answer RQ4. The implications of these findings are discussed further in Chapter 5 and provide a better understanding of how a convenor contributes to collective-action collaboration in nonprofit organizations contributing to the furtherance of an organization’s mission.

**RQ5: Mission Fulfillment**

The fifth research question (RQ5) was: “What is the need for shared resources and philanthropic value in nonprofit and voluntary action collaboratives?” Three interview questions (IQ18–IQ20) were asked of the participants to explore the need for shared resources and philanthropic value in nonprofit and voluntary action collaboratives. The questions were:

IQ18: How have you observed the need for increased (if at all) shared resources and philanthropic value in collaborations since COVID-19?

IQ19: How have you observed (if at all) governance and convening leadership contribute to shared resources and philanthropic value in collaborations?

IQ20: How have you observed (if at all) collaboration contributes to shared resources and philanthropic value?

According to Johnson (2011), the nonprofit organization's mission is the heart of the organization. Furthermore, Johnson contended that a clear understanding of the mission should direct board members in the use of resources to further the organization's mission. In a time of fiscal crisis for nonprofit organizations, however, many boards and nonprofit leaders are seeking new ways to address the challenges of limited resources (Moynihan & Smith, 2014). A plethora of research has shown fierce competition among nonprofit organizations to procure resources and philanthropic gifts (Ashley & Young, 2014; Faulk, 2014; Harrison & Thornton, 2014; Seaman et al., 2014). Competition among nonprofit organizations is not new and can revolve around revenue sources, physical capital, clients, labor, or land. Nonprofit organizations also increasingly compete for prestige and political power as resources (Ashley & Young, 2014).

The competitive nature of nonprofit organizations to acquire resources and philanthropic value has led researchers to question the proliferation of nonprofit organizations, leading to reduced levels of charitable giving (Harrison & Thornton, 2014); inequity in the distribution of resources (Seaman et al., 2014); the role of government funding, the second-largest revenue source for nonprofit organizations (Ashley & Young, 2014); the dilution of finite amounts of charitable funding; inefficient fundraising; and the duplication of services (Faulk, 2014). Laurett and Ferreira (2018) argued that the increase in nonprofit organizations and the rising levels of competition are trends of the industry. Maier et al. (2016) maintained that these trends contribute to the need for nonprofit organizations to adapt from traditional methods of collecting resources and a need to change management's approach to continue providing services.

Philanthropic value was defined in this paper as the intrinsic value ascribed to the social action of a nonprofit organization or voluntary action association. This

researcher sought to understand how intrinsic value changed during the first year following the global pandemic of COVID-19 and, if so, whether governance and convening leadership were the factors leading to the change. Overall, philanthropy in the United States has witnessed increased turbulence, if not decline.

Volunteering is down (Nesbit et al., 2018), workplace donations are down (Shaker et al., 2017), and while United Way giving remains at high levels, donations to the charity have steadily declined since 2007. The *Nonprofit Quarterly* has reported that Americans are not giving at the level they had in past years, resulting in a steady decline of charitable contributions.

In the state of Arkansas, a report in 2018 produced by the MDC on the state of philanthropy in the state highlighted that the persistently poor, people of color, and women continued to fall between the cracks, affecting education, health, employment, and, indirectly, economic security. The implications presented to Arkansas Impact Philanthropy (AIP) recommended alignment of resources and leveraging its collective power to invest in well-being across the state (MDC, 2018, p. 2). A final analysis in the report addressed access to federal funding to address the issues facing Arkansas and the well-being of its population. The 2020 Census further reported three factors affecting philanthropy in the state of Arkansas, an undercount of Arkansas's population resulting in reduced federal funding, marginalized voice and political power in rural areas and communities of color, and lack of research to inform decision making. A decrease in shared resources and philanthropic giving has increased the importance of an organization's philanthropic value against the backdrop of the changing face of philanthropic giving in America.

Duquette (2020) proposed that American (e.g., United States of America) charitable giving is at a critical juncture, with COVID-19 presenting an economic contradiction likely to reduce giving. The reduced giving trend from the economic downturn of COVID-19 may be a factor in changing philanthropic giving in the United States. Solutions to the changing dynamics of philanthropy come from institutions, researchers, and practitioners. For instance, the Milken Institute has challenged philanthropists to think beyond their own networks and pool of known

or well-established organizations, recognizing the solution to solving complex societal and global problems may lie with new grantees (Biggs, 2021). Political scientist Berry (2020) argued for expanding nonprofit advocacy with regulatory changes to clarify the rules of advocacy for 501(c)(3) nonprofits. In contrast, Seaman et al. (2014) endorsed consolidation and collaboration in the nonprofit sector and contended the benefit to nonprofit organizations would be significant. Seaman cited that reduced costs, an increase in realized assets, larger markets, mitigating competition, and greater political influence would be realized through consolidation and collaboration. Therefore, theoretical, and empirical research is needed to better understand how governance contributes to the philanthropic value of an organization.

The final section of this study, RQ5: Mission Fulfillment, report the responses of the participants P-1 through P-10 to IQ18–IQ20 in a collective voice. The 102 data segments contributed to three categories and eight themes. The salient response by the participants that can be better understood in the context of the categories and themes as shown in Table 17. To understand the need for shared resources and philanthropic value in nonprofit organizations and voluntary action association collaboratives participant responses to IQ18–IQ20 follow. Notated within the participant comment is a bracketed and italicized emergent correlating theme.

IQ18: How have you observed the need for increased (if at all) shared resources and philanthropic value in collaborations since COVID-19?

IQ19: How have you observed (if at all) governance and convening leadership contribute to shared resources and philanthropic value in collaborations?

IQ20: How have you observed (if at all) collaboration contributes to shared resources and philanthropic value?

**Table 17***IQ18–IQ20 Themes*

| Increased Need  | Governing and Convening  | Collaboration  |
|---|--|--|
| Increased need for shared resources and philanthropic value [ <i>shared resources</i> ] | Governance and convening contribute to shared resources and philanthropic value [ <i>governance</i> ]  | Collaboration contributes to shared resources [ <i>collaboration sr</i> ]    |
| Increased need for shared philanthropic value [ <i>philanthropic value</i> ]            | Governance and convening contribute to shared resources and philanthropic value [ <i>convening</i> ]   | Collaboration contributes to philanthropic value [ <i>collaboration pv</i> ] |
| Increased funding [ <i>increased funding</i> ]  | Governance and convening leadership contribute to shared resources and philanthropic value [ <i>shared resources &amp; philanthropic value</i> ] | Collaboration Challenges [ <i>challenges</i> ]                               |

***Interview Question 18: Increased Need***

The results showed that there was an increased need for shared resources and philanthropic value in collaborations since the COVID-19 global pandemic. P-1 ascertained that there was a greater desire to get assistance to individuals because of COVID-19; therefore, there was an opportunity to share resources [*shared resources*], more so than ever before. The increase in the demand for goods and services resulted in philanthropic value [*philanthropic value*] to nonprofit organizations as experienced by P-1. P-1 oversaw a program that supported small business owners with grants of \$1,000. During COVID-19, federal funding for the sustainability of small business in the United States trickled down to nonprofit organizations [*philanthropic value*]. In the words of P-1, “The funders used nonprofit organizations to get that funding out to those business owners.” As a result, P-1 was able to distribute close to \$200,000 to small business owners [*increased funding*]. P-1 said,

We saw some things we have never seen before in grant funding. In terms of flexibility in how the funds were managed and distributed, and in the latitude, we had to lead and decide how to structure the program for the

distribution of funds, was just unreal. Two years ago, we would have never gotten that kind of help.

P-2 received \$1.7 million in grants [*increased funding*] in the 18 months since the onset of COVID-19. This participant attributed the funding increase to the philanthropic value [*philanthropic value*] they had established over the years in receiving, allocating, and managing resources from state and national collaborative partners [*collaboration sr*]. P-2 understood the difference that the size of the funding allocation to local nonprofit groups made. Rather than giving a grant of \$5,000 they were able to give grants in the amount of \$50,000 [*increased funding*] without limitation on how the resources were expended. The increase in funding [*increased funding*] created opportunities for an increase in collaboration [*collaboration pv*]. Whereas the goods and services could no longer be provided in-person due to local, state, and federal regulations resulting from COVID-19, creative alternatives to provide goods and services required collaborative partners [*collaboration sr*]. For P-2, online opportunities and virtual classes were developed that became transferable for use by stakeholders in school districts that would not have been available prior to COVID-19 [*increased collaboration*].

P-3 saw an increase of 20% in giving [*increased funding*] following COVID-19 with less activity (e.g., offering community programs and services) and more giving. Within the organization, however, a greater degree of collaboration occurred in departments to meet the needs of the community and provide goods and services more creatively [*increased collaboration*]. P-4 maintained that COVID-19 created the epitome of need for shared resources [*shared resources*] in a system where the supply chain was broken, the food banks struggled, and schools needed support. P-4 articulated,

If we hadn't come together to share resources, and to provide that support for the organizations working in the space, then, the individuals who faced food insecurity, and the support service organizations, who were trying to make sure they had what they needed, you know, I don't think we would have seen things go the way we did [*shared resources*].

P-5 expressed there was a greater need to provide goods and services to the clients they served. As a result, the nonprofit organizations had to come together and work together to meet the demand [*increased collaboration*]. The need for goods and services provided by P-7 increased 90% due to COVID-19 [*shared resources*]. The increased need of 90% in addition increased the need for more collaboration and collaborative partners [*increased collaboration*]. P-7 indicated, “Yes, COVID-19 increased the need for more collaborative partners for sustainability in meeting this increased need for goods and services [*increased collaboration*].” Although P-6 could not quantify an increase in funding to the organization, the philanthropic value [*philanthropic value*] of stakeholder involvement and contribution to the organization increased. The board members of the organization took it upon themselves to talk to members of the community about the mission of the organization [*philanthropic value*], as they could with COVID-19 restrictions. The informal conversations led to increased philanthropic value [*philanthropic value*] for the organization. The relief funding from state and federal agencies accentuated the need for more collaboration among nonprofit organizations and voluntary action associations within the state of Arkansas [*increased collaboration*] (P-8). Although P-8 acknowledged that it was harder to collaborate because of distance and emotional bandwidth, there was a level of frustration among funders to allocate funds where collaborative infrastructures did not exist, organizations were siloed, or there was duplication of effort. P-8 articulated, “I am not going to say that there has not been collaboration certainly there has, but it just a little bit felt like silos have been very emergent and apparent over the last year [*challenges*].” P-8 had further observed a lack of communication among nonprofit and voluntary action organizations where people were not talking to one another. In these instances, very little had taken place to improve the quality of life for people affected by COVID-19 in these communities. P-8 explained,

I would ask one group why they did not involve another group working on a similar project. It was as though random people were doing bits and pieces to provide goods and services to meet the needs of the community without collaborative-effort [*challenges*].



P-8 contributed further with a reminder that the work of collaboration is hard, slow, and at times, messy resulting in an attitude of “I am just going to get this done, my way, in my time, and we may collaborate later [*challenges*].” P-9 saw an increase in funding [*increased funding*] during the COVID-19 pandemic. As P-9 explained, foundations that could not act as quickly to allocate state and federal funding, gave their organization, a nimbler organization, the funds, knowing that they had the ability to turn the funding around within 2 weeks [*collaboration sr*]. The need to disburse state and federal funding brought with it a need for increased collaboration [*increased collaboration*]. P-9 stated, “So yes, there was a lot of increase in collaboration around a specific work or shared resource [*shared resource*]. Everybody was putting in money wherever they could to meet mission specific objectives.” In analyzing the data, P-10 also observed the need for increased shared resources and philanthropic value in collaborations since COVID-19 [*increased need*]. In large part the increase for need for shared resources came from caring for the needs of the elderly, one of the population groups most susceptible to and affected by COVID-19 in the early months of the pandemic. In addition, there was a need to resource school districts with food for those children who no longer had breakfast or lunch at school. For P-10, shared resources were distributed to collaboration partners in innovative ways [*increased collaboration*].

### ***Interview Question 19: Governance and Convening***

The data showed the governance structure of an organization during a crisis mattered [*governance*] (P-3). For P-3, governance was operationalized through adherence to the corporate bylaws, core values, and mission of the organization. According to P-3, COVID-19 forced them to look at their structures in how they did things, tighten up processes and procedures to make necessary adjustments to fulfill the mission [*governance*]. For P-3, the governance of the organization contributed to a flexible structure to account for additional processes and procedures during a crisis; however, the governance of the organization (e.g., bylaws, core values, and mission) were not in jeopardy [*governance and convening*]. Furthermore, the data also showed that the convenor had an important role to play in a crisis [*convening leadership*]. P-4 contended that the convenor and

convening leadership could help collaborative stakeholders cut through the noise, multiple meeting requests, and availability of resources to identify philanthropic partners who wanted to contribute to meeting the needs of individuals during the pandemic [*shared resources* and *philanthropic value*]. Governance and convening leadership were identified through research analysis as contributory factors in a philanthropic gift by a community donor to P-7 that funded her position for 3 years to serve and support the community [*governance and convening leadership*]. A feature article on P-7's leadership, collaboration, and governance structure in how goods and services were distributed to those who needed them, prompted the gift [*shared resources* and *philanthropic value*].

### ***Interview Question 20: Collaboration***

The results showed there was a need for increased collaboration [*increased need*] among nonprofit organizations and funders, as shown by participants' responses in IQ18 and IQ19. An increase in the need for collaboration was attributed to an increase in the demand for shared resources [*collaboration sr*] (P-5), organization sustainability to provide goods and services [*governance & leadership*] (P-7), reduced barriers to stakeholder collaboratives [*challenges*] (P-4), meeting the needs of the community in creative ways [*collaboration pv*] (P-10), and collaborative partners that brought resources [*collaborative sr*] (P-8). P-8 spoke of the resources collaborative partners brought using the example of a collaboration focused on vaccine outreach [*collaboration sr*]:

This group brought a ton of resources. In addition to funding, they have technical support, all kinds of like PSAs, and communication capacity to support vaccine outreach. And it was it was all relationship driven. Conversations occurred like, "Hey, we got a collaborative group already working on this. You don't need to reinvent the wheel, just come join up with us." And, I mean, so far, so good. The collaborative funders are meeting together, and they are collaborating. As they come into the collaboration, they are determining how they intersect and choosing if they want to partner up or if they just want to be glad, you are doing it.

Another increase in the need for collaboration was attributed to the awareness that the problems brought about by the global pandemic were bigger than any one individual or organization to solve. P-10 spoke of the need as a community to share resources and recognize the value of collaborative work.

### **Closing Statement**

The purpose of this study was to examine the principles of commons governance (Ostrom, 1990), nonprofit commons governance (Lohmann, 1992), and convening leadership (Clary, 2021) to understand better how commons governance and convening leadership contribute to shared resources and philanthropic value through collaboration for nonprofit organizations. Specifically, the researcher sought to understand how to operationalize commons governance and convening leadership in nonprofit organizations and voluntary action associations. Through MAXQDA data analysis software program and hand coding, the researcher developed 1,097 data segments, 51 codes, 32 categories, and 47 themes that answered RQ1–RQ5. Ten participants from nine nonprofit organizations representing 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations and voluntary action associations participated in the study. The participants were representative of local, regional, state, and national nonprofit organizations. In addition, they represented rural and metropolitan areas in the state of Arkansas. Furthermore, the participants represented board members, executive directors, senior program managers, funders, and goods and services providers. Every participant was involved in collaborative efforts varying from informal collaboration in rural communities to formal collaboration in metropolitan population base. The implications from the findings of this study are presented in Chapter 5.

## **Chapter 5 – Discussion**

The problem that the researcher addressed through this study was that nonprofit organizations that operate independently without knowledge of effective governance principles and convening leadership through collective-action collaboration have less shared resources and philanthropic value to fulfill their organization's mission (Austin & Seitanidi, 2012a, 2012b; Hayman, 2016; Idemudia, 2008; Jamali & Keshishian, 2009; Marek et al., 2015; Murphy & Bendell, 1999). Moreover, the global COVID-19 pandemic accentuated awareness of the need for nonprofit organizations and voluntary action associations to collaborate, leading to increased shared resources and philanthropic value through governance and convening leadership.

As discussed in Chapter 1, the purpose of this study was to examine the principles of commons governance (Ostrom, 1990), nonprofit commons governance (Lohmann, 1992), and convening leadership (Clary, 2021) to understand how commons governance and convening leadership contribute to shared resources and philanthropic value through collaboration for nonprofit organizations. Specifically, the researcher sought to understand how to operationalize commons governance and convening leadership in nonprofit organizations and voluntary action associations. Through the literature review in Chapter 2, the researcher established a foundation to understand nonprofit organizations in the United States. In this study, the nonprofit sector was synonymous with names like third sector, civil society, independent sector, community-based organization, or NGOs; nonprofit organizations and voluntary action associations are essential to solving complex global and societal issues. Furthermore, this sector includes community organizations, cooperatives, advocacy groups, service organizations, political parties, schools, charitable organizations, and professional groups (Crosby, 1996). In addition, the literature review included an overview of the commons, commons governance principles, nonprofit governance, nonprofit governance assumptions, and convening leadership.

A qualitative research methodology was discussed in Chapter 3; qualitative research describes trends and explains the relationships among variables found in

the literature. A three-step process was used by the researcher to collect the data for analysis by seeking answers to broad questions from the participants. Second, the researcher analyzed the information collected from participants using descriptions, codes, categories, and themes, and third, the researcher interpreted the meaning of the information. Five research questions and 20 interview questions guided the study. Ten participants from nine nonprofit organizations representing 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations and voluntary action associations participated in the study. The participants were representative of local, regional, state, and national nonprofit organizations. In addition, they represented rural and metropolitan areas in the state of Arkansas. Furthermore, the participants represented board members, executive directors, senior program managers, funders, and goods and services providers. Every participant was involved in collaborative efforts varying from informal collaboration in rural communities to formal collaboration in metropolitan population base.

In Chapter 4, the findings from the study were reported. The use of MAXQDA, a data analysis software program, and hand coding by the researcher resulted in 1,097 data segments, 51 codes, 32 categories, and 47 themes that emerged from the participant's response to RQ1 through RQ5. Through the first research question (RQ1), the researcher wanted to understand whether there was a need for collaboration among nonprofit organizations and voluntary action associations. The second research question (RQ2) explored the barriers and challenges in collective-action collaboration. The third research question (RQ3), presented in Part A and Part B, explored commons governance principles and assumptions (Lohmann, 1992; Ostrom, 1990). Of interest to the researcher was how the principles of governance could be operationalized in nonprofit organizations and voluntary action associations. The fourth research question (RQ4) focused on the role of the convenor and convening leadership. The researcher wanted to explore how the convenor contributed to collective-action collaboration. The fifth research question (RQ5) circled back to the impact of the COVID-19 global pandemic and the need for shared resources and philanthropic value in nonprofit organizations and voluntary action associations. In the next

sections of this chapter, the researcher provides the answers to the research questions, the implications and limitations of the study, suggestions for further research, and a summary.

The answers to RQ1 through RQ5 are discussed in the following section. Within each RQ, the literature is presented that frames the concept explored through the response to the interview questions, IQ1 through IQ20. Overall, there are 20 concepts discussed in this section with a synthesized singular finding for each IQ. The singular finding is then discussed further in the implications section of this chapter; whereby, carrying the theme of the concept explored forward with implications to the nonprofit sector.

### **RQ1: Collaboration (IQ1)**

Through the first research question (RQ1), the researcher wanted to understand whether there was a need for collaboration among nonprofit organizations and voluntary action associations. Theoretical findings established a need for collaboration. Researchers have shown collaboration to be an effective and powerful route for addressing economic, social, and environmental challenges (Koschmann et al., 2012). In addition, collective-action collaboration is an effective approach for tackling complex social and global issues (Novelli, 2021), important public purposes (Guo & Acar, 2005), and sustainability challenges (van Hille et al., 2018). Furthermore, scholars have defined collaboration as a process whereby stakeholders constructively explore their differences and search for solutions that go beyond their limited visions of possibility (Gray, 1989).

The participants in this study were asked, “When you think of the word collaboration, what does collaboration look like in your organization? Who are the stakeholders? How do you identify the stakeholders? For what purposes do you collaborate?” The findings based on this IQ showed that collaboration emerged as an important function in how nonprofit organizations and voluntary action associations work together to solve social issues and challenges. Moreover, in reciprocity between collaborative stakeholders, collaboration contributed to the access of shared resources and philanthropic value or to provide an avenue to share an overabundance of resources with collaborative partners. Additionally,

collaboration was viewed as a core value or strategic directive in which to meet organizational objectives. Collaboration stakeholders were representative of the business community, government agencies, end-users, nonprofit organizations, association memberships, school districts, grantees, internal department teams, and legislators. Other stakeholders identified in the study included churches; civic organizations; families; volunteers; foundations; board members; donors; community activists; community leaders; local, county, regional, and state agencies; federal agency partners; and the communities served. The research findings showed that the emerging trend for nonprofit organizations and voluntary action associations is to integrate collaboration into the culture of the organization to solve social issues and challenges through shared resources and philanthropic value.

### **RQ2: Barriers and Challenges (IQ2 & IQ3)**

To answer the second research question (RQ2), the researcher explored the barriers and challenges in collective-action collaboration. Although collaboration is an effective tool in addressing complex societal and global problems, studies examining the connection between how nonprofit partnerships function and perform effectively remain relatively scarce (Marek et al., 2015). Furthermore, researchers have described the systemic challenges associated with collaboratives (Koschmann et al., 2012). Collaboratives are often shrouded in conflict (Murphy & Bendell, 1999); siloed partners and varying approaches to obtaining goals also contribute to challenges in nonprofit collaboration (Marek et al., 2015).

The participants in this study were asked, “What have you observed as barriers or challenges in collaboration?” The research findings showed that a barrier to collaboration occurred when the funders determined the needs of the community without the input of the direct service provider of the goods or service. In addition, when service providers were asked by funders to do audits or fulfil reporting requirements while being aware that the organization has limited capacity was also found to be a barrier to collaboration. Being transparent in collaborative partnerships could find service providers vulnerable and susceptible to funders’ assessment. Similarly, the viability of a service provider could be questioned in a

system in which shared resources trickled down from the national level to the local level. Other barriers were an aged community, fewer volunteers, time constraints, funding, and organizational capacity. In-fighting and turf wars was additionally identified as barriers to collaboration as was building trust. A significant barrier that contributed to siloed nonprofit organizations was when the organizational culture, did not allow room to change or try something new. Although collaboration is gaining acceptance and momentum in the nonprofit sector, the research shows that the status quo culture, siloed operations, and increased scrutiny and stringent reporting requirements from funders present barriers and challenges.

### **RQ3A and RQ3B: Governance and Governance Assumptions**

The third question presented in RQ3 Part A and RQ3 Part B explored commons governance principles and assumptions (Lohmann, 1992; Ostrom, 1990). Ostrom's (1990) groundbreaking work on governing the commons led to the identification of eight design principles illustrated by long-enduring common pool resource (CRP) institutions. Design principles, according to Ostrom (1990), denote an element or condition that accounts for the success and sustainability, generation to generation, in governing the commons. Correspondingly, seminal thought-leader Lohmann (1992) hypothesized commons governance could be applied to the work of nonprofit organizations and voluntary action when contextualized through a values-driven normative model of common goods. Many factors should be considered in the governance of a nonprofit organization. In this study, the researcher looked at 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations, typically governed by a board of directors and voluntary action associations, informally governed by volunteers.

#### ***Part A: Commons Governance (Ostrom, 1990)***

**Clearly Defined Boundaries (IQ4).** McGinnis (2011) concurred with Ostrom's (1990) assessment that boundaries are both biophysical and social and are clearly defined. De Angelis and Harvie (2014) stated, "Legitimate users must be clearly separated from non-users; the common pool resource must be clearly separated (or distinguished) from its wider environment" (p. 285). In later research,



Ostrom (2010) identified boundary rules in institutional action situations to be such that they specified how actors are chosen to enter or leave a situation. At multiple levels of analysis, clearly defined boundaries considered the factors involved in to access to the resource.

Participants in this study were asked, “How do stakeholders (or your organization) collectively determine how the group will be governed?” The findings showed that two distinct approaches to governance in which nonprofit 501(c)(3) organizations were governed by corporate documents such as articles of incorporation, organization bylaws, and corporate policies; however, in collaborative efforts, loosely organized collaborations of stakeholders reflected voluntary action associations. Like voluntary action associations, collaborations that formed organically tended to be informally governed. Governance was operationalized at the board of director level, where the executive director, administrator, or president represented decision-making policies and procedures to the staff. In forming collective-action collaboratives, the structure and governance of the collaboration depended on the situation and was emergent. Moreover, collaborative partners contributed to the design of the meeting, shared priorities, identified additional stakeholders, developed the scope of the work, and co-created the governance structure of the collaboration. Informal and elected positions were determined by collaborative members, and position descriptions moved from informal to more formal positions as the collaboration evolved. The research shows organic voluntary action associations are loosely governed whereas 501(c)(3) organizations’ governance was typically a formal governance structure with corporate documents.

**Collective-Choice Action: Access to Shared Resources (IQ5).** Collective choice was identified by Ostrom (1990) as social behavior based on the decisions of the representatives [collaborative partners] (Forsyth & Johnson, 2014). The institutionalization of collective choice operated at three levels: an operational level, a collective choice level, and a constitutional level (Herzberg, 2015, p. 101). The operational level contains the day-to-day activities such as harvesting, or monitoring, or making maintenance decisions within a collective system. In this

study, the researcher explored shared resources and philanthropic value and how the access to the shared resources is governed through collective choice collaboration. A shared resource in the study could be funding, personnel, office space, programming, or commodities like food, whereas philanthropic value is linked to the social action of a nonprofit organization and encompasses voluntary giving, service, or association.

The participants were asked, “How do stakeholders (or your organization) access shared resources?” and “Who makes this determination?” The findings showed that the governance of an organization was a deciding factor in how a collaborative stakeholder accessed a shared resource. In 501(c)(3) organizations, the decision to share resources like office space, food commodities, personnel, or funding was determined by the board of directors, the chief executive officer, and, in some instances, a program director. If the organization was affiliated with a national organization, the decision-making power or rule (Bushouse, 2011) could be determined at the national level with a trickle-down impact to the local level. Moreover, governing documents like a memorandum of understanding could also stipulate how nonprofit organizations or voluntary action associations could access a shared resource. In organizations organically or newly forming, the decision-making for determining access to a shared resource was left to a core leadership team comprised of collaborative stakeholders. The findings from this research showed that decision-making related to how collaborative stakeholders accessed shared resources could fall to the board of director, chief executive officer, program director, or collaborative stakeholders and occurred at local, state, or national levels.

**Monitoring (IQ6).** Monitoring takes place at the operational level of the institutionalization of the resource to be governed (Herzberg, 2015). A two-way process, in a collective action system, the users of the resource monitor one another in the appropriation of the use of the resource and the condition of the resource (De Angelis & Harvie, 2014). Monitoring is a common practice in systems such as the media, police, or auditors and consists of many units in a public economy monitoring the activities of other units (McGinnis, 2011).

The participants in this study were asked, “How do stakeholders (or your organization) monitor the use of shared resources among stakeholders?” The findings showed that the global COVID-19 pandemic presented challenges to funders and service providers of goods and services as federal regulation ceased to require proof of identity or income for a client to receive assistance. This finding is important as authenticity, discussed in RQ3 Part B, became a contributing factor for funders and collaborative stakeholders in deciding which organizations would be the recipients of funding and shared resources. In addition, 501(c)(3) organizations became fiscal agents for voluntary action associations that were not mandated to perform the reporting requirements of funders. Once the nonprofit organization released funding or a shared resource to the voluntary action association, further monitoring was not required, and the intent of the shared resource to reach the client of the association, was inferred. The findings from the research found that monitoring of funding and shared resources was accomplished by reports compiled by fiscal sponsors for funders and organization stakeholders.

**Conflict Management (IQ7).** The institutional analysis and development framework (IAD) developed by Ostrom (2011) included conflict-resolution mechanisms. As Dietz et al. (2003) noted in an article on the struggle of governance on the commons, sharp differences in power and value across interested parties made conflict inherent in environmental choices. When disputes inevitably rise among the different units in a public economy, mechanisms or processes must be in place to help the disputing parties come to some resolution (Ostrom, 1990). In governing the commons, dispute measures or mechanism need to be available quickly and affordably as conflict arose (De Angelis & Harvie, 2014; McGinnis, 2011; Ostrom, 1990). McGinnis (2011) identified dispute measures to be the court system, arbitrators, government agencies, or other specialized mechanisms established for this purpose (McGinnis, 2011).

The participants in this study were asked, “How do stakeholders (or your organization) manage conflict?” The findings showed that the data analysis demonstrated that conflict management was a challenge for nonprofit leaders. In addition, conflict management was uncomfortable; however, the participants

identified the motivation of stakeholders, competing priorities and frustration with the process, and avoidance of conflict as reasons for conflict among collaborative stakeholders. Conflict management was operationalized in the organizations through arbitration and perceived organizational support clauses in human resources documents. In addition, MOUs, contracts, and agreements incorporated arbitration clauses. A less informal resolution to conflict management was to sit down and discuss the conflict. The most common approach to conflict resolution was avoidance, the least effective method for conflict management, although more generally accepted policies, tools, and methodologies were available.

***Part B: Nonprofit Commons Assumptions (Lohmann, 1992)***

The responses of the participants answered IQ8–IQ12 from an external stakeholder perspective or from an internal organization process. The principles and assumptions of Lohmann (1992) as applied to nonprofit organizations and voluntary action associations addressed the culture of the organization and how the organization or team members enacted the principles of Lohmann’s studied in this research.

**Social Action (IQ8).** Lohmann (1992) combined the words *social* (Schutz, 1970) and *action* (Weber, 1968) to connote a substantively meaningful life based on preconceived projects, acting out of subjective meaning to the individual. In philanthropy, social action is an action for the good of humanity, charity as action for the good of others, and altruism as the interest of others (Billis, 1991). Billis theorized that the action undertaken by nonprofit organizations and voluntary action associations would materialize in social action as predictable, recurring patterns.

The participants were asked, “How would you describe social action in your organization?” The results showed social action was exhibited in the organization through programs and services that served the good of humanity, charity as an action taken for the good of others, and altruism as the interest in others. Moreover, social action was inherent in the culture of the organization as a core value or missional directive. Furthermore, social action was shown to be a catalyst in outreach to organizations outside of a collaborative network and was found to be an

effective tool in community building. The findings from the research showed social action to be effective in community building, outreach to organizations outside of a collaborative network, and inherent in the culture of nonprofit organizations and voluntary action associations.

**Authenticity (IQ9).** Lohmann (1992) based the assumption of authenticity on the code of moral conduct, professional oaths, and ethical reporting with data and results found in empirical practices in the commons. Authenticity in the nonprofit commons assumes that the actors are authentic—that is, the actors are what they appear to be and what they inform others they are (Lohmann, 1992). Moreover, Lohmann applied the same assumption of authenticity on the benefactor as the recipient of the shared resource or philanthropic value. In this study, authenticity implied that the stakeholders were what they appeared to be and say and that the shared resources they received reached the client.

The participants were asked, “How does your organization communicate authenticity to collaborative stakeholders?” Reporting, data collection and research, and tracking the intake of individuals and families served were methods to show an organization’s accountability. The reports, when distributed transparently to stakeholders, generated organizational trust. In addition to transparent reporting, diversity in the board of directors also signified the organization and contributed to organizational trust. The trust in a nonprofit organization or voluntary action association correlated to the authenticity of an organization and could lead to additional or increased shared resources and philanthropic value. The findings from the research show that authenticity, when transparent, contributed to organizational trust and could lead to additional or increased shared resources and philanthropic value.

**Continuity (IQ10).** Lohmann (1992) presented continuity as an invisible force learned intergenerationally or experienced through tradition wherein the action of the stakeholder is reasonable, predictive, or productive of desired outcomes. In nonprofit organizations, recruiting board members or stakeholders to open positions within a program or organization (e.g., paid or volunteer) would illustrate continuity.

The participants in this study were asked, “How does your organization integrate, teach or maintain continuity in the recruitment of new stakeholders?” The results demonstrated that continuity occurs as stakeholders are integrated into the organization through an orientation process that provides access to the governing documents of the organization and institutional knowledge. In addition, maintaining a relationship with the stakeholder through social and informal meetings emerged as an important finding. Additionally, the findings showed that identifying and recruiting new stakeholders often occurred organically, whereby an individual might enter the organization as a volunteer and then rotate through positions in the organization as a program volunteer, staff member, or board member. A governance structure supportive of a 6-year term for board members was found to maintain relationships and organizational continuity. The results show that the transference of institutional knowledge through an onboarding process, a governing model that retained board members, and establishing and maintaining relationships with stakeholders contributes to organizational continuity.

**Intrinsic Valuation (IQ11).** Lohmann’s (1992) intrinsic valuation assumption is based on Mead’s qualitative social research, symbolic interactionism, and ethnomethodology. In the commons, intrinsic valuation requires rules, and standards are recognized and used by members. In this study, intrinsic valuation in nonprofit governance referred to the rules, standards, or values recognized and used by stakeholders.

The participants were asked, “What rules and standards or values are recognized and used in your organization? And how do these rules and standards or values contribute to shared resources or philanthropic value?” The results of the study showed intrinsic valuation to be embedded in the mission and organizational systems where the staff, volunteers, and stakeholders embraced the values, structure, culture, and processes of the organization. Furthermore, during a crisis such as a global pandemic, the results showed that nimble organizations could be flexible with the organization’s structure and processes without adapting the values or mission of the organization. In addition, intrinsic valuation was operationalized through collective efforts, shared responsibility, transparent and authentic

stewardship, respect for stakeholders, and local decision-making with integrity contributed to shared resources and philanthropic value. The results showed that when the intrinsic valuation was embedded in the mission and organizational structure in times of crisis, nonprofit organizations and voluntary action associations could be flexible with the organization's structure and processes without changing the values or mission of the organization.

**Ordinary Language (IQ12).** Ordinary language suggests that there is a common language that is adopted, used, and recognized by stakeholders (Lohmann, 1992). In the commons, ordinary language assumes that philanthropic, charitable, and altruistic actors recognize and understand a language common to all. In the nonprofit sector, ordinary language additionally suggests there is a common language that is adopted, used, and recognized by stakeholders. For instance, terms like *fiduciary responsibility*, *endowment*, *community investment*, or *unrestricted funds* might be considered common language in philanthropy.

The participants were asked, "What does ordinary language look like in your organization, and how is that language communicated to collaborative stakeholders?" The results of this study showed that the use of ordinary language was common in the nonprofit sector with words like *allocated funds*, *social capital*, *underserved*, *under resourced food insecurity*, or *designated funds*. In addition, the nonprofit sector uses a plethora of acronyms, like SCFP, CACFP, ROI, and USDA. In some instances, federal funding reporting required the use of language-specific terminology as regulated in contracts and publications. Stakeholders, however, viewed ordinary language as lofty or ponderous. Moreover, in the nonprofit sector, the use of ordinary language was intrinsic in the culture of the organization, even though the use of the language created communication barriers among stakeholders. Finally, the results showed a glossary of terms, communicating in laymen's terms, using language that made sense to everyone, and creating a common language that all stakeholders understood were identified as methods to narrow the communication gap brought about using ordinary language. Ordinary language can create communication barriers with stakeholders, resulting in the

potential loss of shared resources and philanthropic value for nonprofit organizations and voluntary action associations.

#### **RQ4: Convening Leadership**

A convener is essential for successful collaborative action (Carlson, 2006) and increasingly more so to solve the complex societal and global issues that nonprofit organizations address today. Carlson (2006) viewed convening as a powerful tool in which leaders created a space for stakeholders to problem solve through collaboration. Carlson distinguished between a leader's management and their ability to build consensus. Neal et al. (2010) drew from the definition of the word convene to define convening as “the art of gathering and ‘holding’ people, in a safe and generative space, for the sake of authentic engagement” (p. 304). In the 15th century, the word *convene* was the derivative of the two Latin words: *venire*, meaning “come,” and *con*, meaning “together.” Convene as a verb means to come, to cause, to assemble, or to convoke (Clary, 2021). Assemble, unite, come together, gather, congregate, and meet are all words synonymous with convening. Clary submitted that assembling stakeholders is a significant role for the convener. It is in the assembly of the stakeholders where commons are formed, governance occurs, and shared resources are managed. Clary contended that an individual who convenes stakeholders to solve societal and global challenges collaboratively in a developed stakeholder network characterizes convening leadership. Additionally, convening leadership is operationalized in collective-action collaboration through five principles collaboration of stakeholders, core beliefs, values, and attitudes; culturally diversity; creative co-learning and co-creating; and congruity of stakeholders (Clary, 2021). in this study, the researcher explored how Clary’s principles of convening leadership contribute to shared resources and philanthropic value in nonprofit organizations.

#### ***Convening Leadership (IQ13–IQ17)***

##### **Collaboration of Stakeholders: Three Best Practices (IQ13).**

Collaboration has been increasing in recent years (Guo & Acar, 2005), so much so that collaboration has become a phenomenon, giving way to the organizational



modality of this century (Austin & Seitanidi, 2012b). Today, the elements of collaboration are fundamental in political, legal, socioeconomic, and environmental sectors (Emerson et al., 2011). Nonprofit collaboration bolsters organizational efficiency and effectiveness and drives broader social and systemic change (Samali et al., 2016). In their research, Gazley and Guo (2020) identified antecedents, processes, and outcomes as three variables on collaborative activity. Whereas, in contrast, Emerson et al. (2011) showed that external conditions such as politics, environment, or regulations may impact the efficacy of a collaboration. Clary (2021) contended the convenor is the individual or entity responsible for bringing stakeholders together to manage a shared resource, address an issue, problem, or opportunity.

The participants in this study were asked, “What have you observed as the three best practices of a convenor?” The results of this study showed that the convenor was understood to be a competent and proficient convenor and connector of collaborative stakeholders. Overall, a convenor’s soft skills were identified as good listening skills, flexibility, and ability to motivate stakeholders; was transparent; and could drive the collaborative forward. In addition, the results showed that the convenor was expected to have a vision for the collaborative effort and be passionate about the purpose of the collaboration. The results further showed that, administratively, the convenor was understood to be the one who operationalized the strategic agenda of the collaborative with scheduling, updated rosters, and managed the informal emergent governance. Furthermore, the results showed that it was incumbent upon the convenor to set the strategic agenda, identify strategic partners, encourage stakeholders to think outside of the box, create an environment for transparent conversations, and to set the expectations of collaborative stakeholders at the onset of the collaborative work. Finally, the convenor was seen as a dot connector, the individual who—by understanding the capacity of a stakeholder and in listening to them—could bridge the gap between two stakeholders, helping them find a solution to their issues. As a connector, the findings further showed the convenor needed to be able to create an inviting atmosphere that fostered social and professional connections, building rapport with

collaborative stakeholders. The three best practices of a convenor incorporate the convenor's ability to be passionate about the work, facilitate stakeholders with different perspectives, and be a competent leader with administrative skills.

**Core Beliefs, Values, and Attitudes (IQ14).** According to Jain (2020), at the organizational level, values define the ethical character of organizations, whereas the core values give an organization timeless character. The implications of Jain's research on the nonprofit organization and business collaborations showed that, as collaborations are operationalized, organizational values should be considered. When the stakeholders consider and adopt the values, coalescing around the values can lead to the longevity of the partnership (Tsasis, 2009). Osula and Ng (2014), in a study of leadership theory trends for nonprofit leaders, argued that the accountability necessary to build stakeholder trust required increased skill competencies, collaboration, visionary leadership, and character associated with the leader's values and ethics.

The participants in the study were asked, "What has been your experience in how a convenor's core beliefs, values, and attitudes influence collaborative efforts?" The findings showed that the convenor's core beliefs, values, and attitudes influenced collaborative efforts. The convenor was understood to be the individual that created the space for collaboration to occur. Moreover, in the collaborative space, it was the convenor who designed the space, determined what happened in the space, identified who could speak in the space, established the processes of how the work of the collaborative would move forward, and set the norms for the collaboration. The results further showed that the participants wanted convenors who led from their heart, but were also knowledgeable in the issue being solved and understood the history behind the complexity of the challenge. The convenor, thusly, created the culture of the collaboration. Moreover, the culture, as determined by the convenor, was a definitive factor in the active engagement of stakeholders in the collaborative effort. The research showed that the stakeholders' wanted a convenor who could attract cross-platform collaborations, worked hard, and did not have a personal agenda. Also, the research showed that the personality of the convenor also influenced the collaborative stakeholder, whereas a convenor may

exhibit an exuberant personality, or be intense, or even be a good conversationalist. A convenor operationalized convening leadership through storytelling, earned respect, a servant's heart, transparency, and openness. Lastly, as institutional convenors, the results showed that building relationships with collaborative stakeholders, giving voice to stakeholders, loving the stakeholders, and meeting the stakeholders where they were when they entered the collaborative effort were important values for organizational stakeholders. The convenor assembles the stakeholders and is the force behind the collaborative effort as they lead with knowledge, compassion, and understanding of the stakeholders and the mission.

**Culturally Diverse: Socio-Economic Groups (IQ15).** Natal and Brichter (2012) analyzed the partnership between a nonprofit organization and a local government in Mexico to understand how societal diversity led to participative forms of decision-making to address the concerns of diverse and well-organized groups of citizens. Natal and Brichter found that the partnership between local government and nonprofit organizations had the potential to be more inclusive in the decision-making process, to reduce the cost of policymaking transactions, and to encourage economic development. Additionally, Natal and Brichter discovered that differences in socio-economic groups with varying differences in culture, language, and influence could be neutralized when cultural diversity was considered. The study by Natal and Brichter provides a parallel to the role of the convenor in commons work. Emerson et al. (2011) presented findings illustrating how the disparity of resources among participants can become a barrier to engagement due to cross-cultural settings such as language, customs, and culture.

The participants in the study were asked, "What has been your experience in how a convenor brings together socio-economic groups with differences in culture, customs, language, influence, and disparity of resources?" Their responses showed that diversity and inclusion were important to the participants especially in consideration of a rebounding United States from a state of political unrest, racial tensions, and mounting disruptions in law enforcement, healthcare, and educational systems. Although diversity and inclusion were important, the participants wondered if there were more, they could do to create organizations and

collaborations that were diverse and inclusive. When diversity and inclusion were operationalized, clauses on diversity and inclusion were incorporated into the culture of the organization through vision and mission statements with diversity and inclusion embedded and practiced at all levels in the organization. The results, however, showed disparity of resources to be a challenge in stakeholder collaborations when there was a division of classes as signified by the wealth class, middle class, and poverty class. In these instances, the research showed that it is incumbent upon the convenor to find methods to talk about these sensitive issues. The results of this study showed that the participants endeavored to include socio-economic groups in written communication like multiple-language documents, providing accommodations if needed to attend stakeholder meetings, diversified staff fluent in multiple languages, electronic communication, and multimodal meetings. The research further showed that racial tension between the races and cultures contributed to inequity in collaborative efforts where there was a difference in the culture, customs, languages, influences, and disparity of resources. Although the research showed diversity and inclusion to be important, there were limited methods of how to operationalize diversity and inclusion in nonprofit collaboration. The results showed diversity and inclusion should be an objective for each one working in the nonprofit and voluntary action sector. Tensions exist in bringing together socio-economic groups with differences in culture, customs, language, influence, and disparity of resources that can be a hinderance to collaborative efforts.

**Creative Co-Learning and Co-Creating (IQ16).** Dietz et al. (2003) considered how sharp differences in power and values among stakeholders could result in conflict in commons governance. Dietz et al. submitted that if the conflict did not bring demise to the group, conflict could lead to learning and change. When alternative strategies were presented, stakeholder groups' changing perspectives, interests, and philosophies could conclude with consensus and less conflict (Dietz et al., 2003). Ansell and Gash (2012) identified that the role of the convenor was to encourage, enable, and facilitate stakeholders to work together effectively. Furthermore, van Hille et al. (2018) emphasized the importance of convenors to

adopt alternative influencing strategies to bring about change in collaboratives. Based on research by Gray (1989) and Wood and Gray (1991), van Hille et al. argued that a convenor's lack of formal power is the catalyst for the need for alternative strategies.

The participants in this study were asked, "How does a convenor facilitate collaboration among stakeholders?" The research findings showed that the convenor was expected to perform several duties, including training stakeholders on how to convene collaborations for such time as the stakeholder transitioned to a convening leadership role. Another responsibility of the convenor was to know the stakeholders in assigning follow-up activities; facilitating the meetings and assuring all voices are heard, with reporting systems in place; and keeping the common interest of the stakeholders at the forefront in the meeting design. Additionally, the results showed that in convening collaborative stakeholders, a tactical individual responsible for follow-up with the stakeholders was necessary, and this task fell to the convenor. The results showed building relationships centered on working toward a common goal, helping collaborative stakeholders understand that they were valued, meeting with stakeholders before the formal meeting, listening to stakeholder input, and remaining connected outside of collaboration meetings were methods to operationalize convening leadership in collaborative efforts. In collaboration facilitation, the convenor is viewed as a trainer, delegator, and moderator who sets the strategic direction and oversees the implementation of the collaboration mission.

**Congruity of Stakeholders: (IQ17).** Aarons et al. (2014) studied collaboration, negotiation, and coalescence for interagency collaboration in healthcare teams. They hypothesized that shared and competing interests, agendas, and negotiations added to the complexity of collaboration. Their research, which was based on previous studies by Campbell and Mark (2006) and De Dreu et al. (2000), showed that diverse views of stakeholders could result in joint outcomes when negotiation considered problem-solving techniques, the social completion of the stakeholders, and less egotistical delivery. The research of Hoefler and Sliva (2014) showed that a lack of negotiation skills was a gap in nonprofit leadership

development, whereas Sankaran et al. (2010) contended that effective communication skills could strengthen negotiation skills.

The participants in the current study were asked, “What have you observed as a technique a convenor would use to reframe a problem to help stakeholders find common ground during times of conflict?” The findings showed that conflict is to be expected in collaboration and that the convenor plays a pivotal role in helping stakeholders reframe the problem and find common ground. How a convenor operationalizes conflict resolution is by finding the commonalities among the stakeholders and refocusing the conflict, whereby acknowledging the conflict and reminding stakeholders that what they are doing together matters. As the convenor engages in this activity, the reframing of the conflict refocuses the attention and purpose of the stakeholders back to the vision and mission of the collaboration. The research further showed that the convenor needed to understand the culture of the collaboration to help stakeholders rally around the objective rather than personal preferences, and the convenor should help the collaborative stakeholders appreciate the individual perspectives they bring to the collaborative effort. Informal and formal methods for reframing a situation emerged within the research. The most common practice was that of meeting one-on-one; however, other methods like openly talking about the conflict, acknowledging that sometimes conflict cannot be resolved, and using collaboration facilitation techniques were tactics a convenor could draw from to help resolve issues. Convenors can redirect stakeholders in finding common ground by refocusing stakeholder attention and efforts on the core mission and objectives of the collaboration.

#### **RQ5: Shared Resources and Philanthropic Value: Mission Fulfillment**

According to Johnson (2011), the nonprofit organization’s mission is the heart of the organization. Furthermore, contended Johnson, a clear understanding of the mission should direct board members in the use of resources to further the organization’s mission. In a time of fiscal crisis for nonprofit organizations, however, many boards and nonprofit leaders are seeking new ways to address the challenges of limited resources (Moynihan & Smith, 2014). A plethora of researchers have shown fierce competition among nonprofit organizations to

procure resources and philanthropic gifts (Ashley & Young, 2014; Faulk, 2014; Harrison & Thornton, 2014; Seaman et al., 2014). Competition among nonprofit organizations is not new and can revolve around revenue sources, physical capital, clients, labor, or land. Increasingly so, nonprofit organizations also compete for prestige and political power as resources (Ashley & Young, 2014). The competitive nature of nonprofit organizations to acquire resources and philanthropic value has led researchers to question the proliferation of nonprofit organizations, leading to reduced levels of charitable giving (Harrison & Thornton, 2014); inequity in the distribution of resources (Seaman et al., 2014); the role of government funding, the second-largest revenue source for nonprofit organizations (Ashley & Young, 2014); the dilution of finite amounts of charitable funding; inefficient fundraising; and the duplication of services (Faulk, 2014). Laurett and Ferreira (2018) argued that the increase in nonprofit organizations and the rising levels of competition are trends of the industry. Maier et al. (2016) maintained that these trends contribute to the need for nonprofit organizations to adapt from traditional methods of collecting resources and a need to change management's approach to continue providing services. A shared resource in the study could be funding, personnel, office space, programming, or commodities like food, whereas philanthropic value is linked to the social action of a nonprofit organization and encompasses voluntary giving, service, or association. In this study, the researcher explored whether governance and convening leadership contributed to shared resources and philanthropic value through collaboration, emphasizing the year following the global COVID-19 pandemic.

### ***Shared Resources and Philanthropic Value (IQ18–IQ20)***

#### **Increased Need: Shared Resources and Philanthropic Value (IQ18).**

The participants in the study were asked, “How have you observed the need for increased (if at all) shared resources and philanthropic value in collaborations since COVID-19?” The findings from the research showed that there was an increased need for shared resources and philanthropic value in collaboration since the global COVID-19 pandemic. The increase in the demand for goods and services provided by the nonprofit sector resulted in increased shared resources and philanthropic

value in nonprofit organizations and voluntary action associations. During COVID-19, federal funding for the sustainability of small business in the United States trickled down to nonprofit organizations, resulting in hundreds of thousands of dollars in allocations of funding to small business owners through the nonprofit sector. Additionally, the amount of grant dollars increased substantially for programs and services that helped with the basic needs of individuals and families. The results showed funding increased within one organization exponentially, allowing for an increase in funding to grantees from \$5,000 to \$50,000. The requirements of how the funds were allocated and distributed became more flexible and the ability to collaborate with more stakeholders increased. In addition, nonprofit organizations and voluntary action associations sought more creative ways to provide needed resources to clients, with programs and services transferable across mediums using technology (e.g., Zoom, YouTube, and other social media outlets). The need for collaboration also extended to departments within an organization seeking creative outreach solutions. During national crises, client needs increase and can contribute to an increased availability of shared resources and philanthropic value through grant funding and collaboration.

**Governance and Convening Leadership (IQ19).** The participants in this study were asked, “How have you observed (if at all) governance and convening leadership contribute to shared resources and philanthropic value in collaborations?” Their responses showed that the governance structure of an organization during a crisis mattered. The corporate bylaws, core values, and mission of the organization became documents to which organizational leaders could refer in order to remain mission centric in an environment that cultivated chaotic reactive responses to the complex societal challenges brought about by the COVID-19 global pandemic. The findings showed that organizations with a culture of flexibility could pivot in the processes of operations, without jeopardizing their mission. The convenor and convening leadership could help collaborative stakeholders cut through the noise, multiple meeting requests, and availability of resources to identify philanthropic partners who wanted to contribute to meeting the needs of individuals during the pandemic. The convenor in mission-centric



collaborations operating under a flexible governance structure were able to keep stakeholders focused on the core objectives of the collaboration.

**Collaboration (IQ20).** The participants in the study were asked, “How have you observed (if at all) collaboration contributes to shared resources and philanthropic value?” The findings revealed that collaboration contributed to shared resources and philanthropic value and was attributed to an increase in the demand for shared resources, an organization’s capacity, and sustainability to provide goods and services, reduced barriers to stakeholder collaboratives, meeting the needs of the community in creative ways, and collaborative partners that brought resources to the table. With an awareness that the problems brought about by the global pandemic were bigger than any one individual or organization to solve, the nonprofit organizations and voluntary action associations collaborated to meet the needs of the community. The magnitude of the COVID-19 pandemic necessitated collaboration of multiple nonprofit organizations and voluntary action associations to meet increased community needs.

### **Implications**

In the section that follows, the implications of the findings from the IQs of this research are presented regarding how collaboration is implemented, how governance is operationalized (Ostrom, 1990), how the culture is developed (Lohmann, 1992), and how leadership can influence collaboration (Clary, 2021). The researcher also evaluates how these lead to increased access to shared resources and philanthropic value, thus contributing to the fulfillment of an organization’s mission. Additionally, this section includes the implications of the COVID-19 global pandemic.

### ***Collaboration Implications***

The emerging trend is for nonprofit organizations and voluntary action associations to integrate collaboration into the organization's culture to solve social issues and challenges through shared resources and philanthropic value (IQ1). Moreover, the current results showed that although collaboration is gaining acceptance and momentum in the nonprofit sector, the status quo culture, siloed

operations, and increased scrutiny and stringent reporting requirements from funders present barriers and challenges (IQ2). Therefore, the following recommendations contribute to a culture that embraces collaboration internally and externally and overcomes barriers and challenges identified in siloed organizations. The recommendations related to collaboration are

- Organizations should integrate collaboration into the culture of the organization.
- Organizations should consider a business model that incorporates the five key traits of a learning organization; a shared vision, mental models, team learning, personal mastery, and systems thinking.

### ***Governance Implications***

The research concerning general governance shows organic voluntary action associations are loosely governed whereas 501(c)(3) organizations' governance was typically a formal governance structure with corporate documents (IQ4). The findings related to decision-making on authorizing access to shared resources show that the decision could rest with the board of directors, chief executive officer, program directors, or collaborative stakeholders and occurred at local, state, or national levels (IQ5). Additionally, the research shows that the monitoring of funding and shared resources was accomplished by reports compiled by fiscal sponsors for funders and organization stakeholders (IQ6). Moreover, the research concerning conflict resolution showed that the most common approach to conflict resolution was avoidance, which is the least effective method for conflict management, even though more generally accepted policies, tools, and methodologies were available in the organization (IQ7). The recommendations related to the governance are as follows:

- Organizations should have a charter document that expresses the purpose of the organization and its operational structures.
- Organizations should formalize and codify the decision-making process for accessing shared resources.

- Collaborating agencies should attempt to use compatible reporting tools to consolidate and monitor resource usage.
- Organizations should implement a standardized conflict resolution and grievance policy and process.

### ***Culture-Centric Implications***

The current results indicate that social action can be effective in community building, outreach to organizations outside of a collaborative network, and can be inherent in the culture of nonprofit organizations and voluntary action associations (IQ8). The findings also show that organizational authenticity, when transparent, contributes to organizational trust and could lead to additional or increased shared resources and philanthropic value (IQ9). Moreover, the results related to continuity shows that the transference of institutional knowledge through an onboarding process, a governing model that retained board members, and establishing and maintaining relationships with stakeholders can contribute to organizational continuity (IQ10). In addition, the research shows that when the intrinsic valuation is embedded in the mission and the organizational culture, in times of crisis, nonprofit organizations and voluntary action associations could be flexible with the organization's structure and processes without changing the values or mission of the organization (IQ11). Ordinary language can create communication barriers with stakeholders, resulting in the potential loss of shared resources and philanthropic value for nonprofit organizations and voluntary action associations (IQ12). The recommendations related to the culture development are as follows:

- Organizations should promote and foster a culture of participation in social action efforts.
- Organizations should adopt a company culture of authenticity.
- Organizations should have a formal succession plan for stakeholders.
- Organizations should develop mission and vision statements that includes the intrinsic attitudes, beliefs, and values of the organization.

- Organizations should develop methods and techniques to communicate with stakeholders in common language they understand and to minimize jargon using mnemonics, or acronyms.

### ***Convening Leadership Implications***

The research concerning convening leadership highlighted the three best practices of a convenor, which are the convenor's ability to (a) be passionate about the work, (b) facilitate stakeholders with different perspectives, and (c) be a competent leader with administrative skills (IQ13). The research also showed that the convenor assembles the stakeholders and is the force behind the collaborative effort as they lead with knowledge, compassion, and understanding of the stakeholders and the mission (IQ14). Moreover, the findings indicated that tensions exist in bringing together socio-economic groups with differences in culture, customs, language, influence, and disparity of resources and can be a hinderance to collaborative-efforts (IQ15). Additionally, in collaboration facilitation, the convenor is viewed as a trainer, delegator, and moderator who sets the strategic direction and oversees the implementation of the collaboration mission (IQ16). Lastly, convenors can redirect stakeholders in finding common ground by refocusing stakeholder attention and efforts on the core mission and objectives of the collaboration (IQ17). The recommendations related to convening leadership are:

- Convening leadership should develop and incorporate the three best practices into their leadership approach.
- Convening leadership should lead with a servant's heart with knowledge of the stakeholders and mission.
- Convening leadership should adhere to a personal philosophical belief in diversity and inclusion and establish a culture that promotes those values.
- Convening leadership should understand how an authentic leadership style can facilitate strong sustainable collaborative efforts.
- Convening leadership should adopt an ethical decision-making model to ameliorate conflict between stakeholders by focusing on the mission.

***COVID-19 Global Pandemic Implications***

The research concerning the impact of the COVID-19 global pandemic shows that during national crises, client needs increase and can contribute to an increased availability of shared resources and philanthropic value through grant funding and collaboration. The research also showed that a convenor in mission-centric collaborations operating under a flexible governance structure was able to keep stakeholders focused on the core objectives of the collaboration. Furthermore, the researcher concluded that the magnitude of the COVID-19 global pandemic necessitated collaboration of multiple nonprofit organizations and voluntary action associations to meet increased community needs.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

The findings of the current study contribute new insights into the literature on commons governance (Ostrom, 1990), nonprofit commons assumptions (Lohmann, 1992), and convening leadership (Clary, 2021). More specifically, the researcher explored how governance and leadership could be operationalized through collaboration in nonprofit organizations and voluntary action associations. The findings also introduce additional questions and research opportunities regarding the same topic. Additional research is needed to further confirm and expand these findings. Some recommendations for future research are offered. To begin, the current study was conducted in the state of Arkansas within the southeastern United States. One suggestion for future research is to replicate the current study by collecting data within a region, national, or international scope. The increased dataset would allow for further exploration. Furthermore, a more regional, national, or global approach to the current study using a phenomenological methodology would allow for a better understanding of the experience of nonprofit leaders. Moreover, a replication of this current study using a case study from one or more global cities would provide an in-depth, multifaceted understanding of a complex issue in real-life context that is global in scope.

In addition to a qualitative phenomenological or case study methodology, another area of future study may be to use a quantitative method research design to complement the qualitative findings of the current study in alignment with the

dimensions of commons governance, nonprofit commons principles and assumptions, and convening leadership. A quantitative study would contribute to the examination of data sets more generalized to a region, national, or global area. A random sampling method would allow for the stratification of the sample to provide equal representation of demographics of the organization including the structure of the organization (e.g., annual income, number of staff members, volunteers, age, race, gender, ethnicity), the governance and leadership of the organization (e.g., the 14 aspects of governance and leadership in this current study, replicated in a quantitative study), and the program and outreach scope. Using such a dataset, it would be possible to examine how governance and convening leadership contribute to shared resources and philanthropic value through collaboration as generalized to a larger data set. Another recommendation is the use of a mixed-method approach, which may demonstrate a correlation between an organization's collaborative efforts, convening leadership, and governance structure. Moreover, an area of future research may be to replicate the current study by collecting data within each dimension of governance and convening leadership. An in-depth exploration of each dimension could provide a greater understanding of how governance and convening leadership is operationalized in nonprofit organizations and voluntary action associations.

Convening leadership, the third framework explored in this study, offers additional topics for future research. For instance, the findings showed that the convenor was the trainer, delegator, and moderator who sets the strategic direction and oversees the implementation of the collaboration mission. Future research could explore whether convening organizations use multiple convenors to unite stakeholders from different organizations or if there is one convenor. Future scholars could consider the distinctive role differences between a convening organization leader and the convenor tasked with collaborative outcomes asking questions such as, "How is one distinctively different from the other?" "How do they share the responsibility for reaching collective outcomes?" "How do they work together in creating the space for collaboration?" or "How do they determine the design to operationalize diversity and inclusion in the collaborative effort?" In

addition to a more in-depth study on the characteristic of a convenor, future researchers could explore how organizations identify a convenor and how convenors are mentored and empowered in collective action collaboration.

Finally, the current researcher explored commons governance (Ostrom, 1990), commons governance principles and assumptions (Lohmann, 1992), and convening leadership (Clary, 2021). Moreover, collaboration and the implications from crises due to the COVID-19 global pandemic were explored in this current study. The findings are generalized to nonprofit organizations and voluntary action associations in Arkansas, a state in southeastern United States of America. This research design could be applied to future studies. The findings as discussed in the implications section in this chapter offer a model based on empirical data that when implemented provide the nonprofit sector principles for the development and management of nonprofit organizations. The framework for the model considers the collaboration, governance, culture, and convening leadership of a nonprofit organization and how these four dimensions contribute to the furtherance of the mission and the sustainability of the nonprofit organization. The framework as proposed would be another opportunity for future studies.

### **Summary**

In conclusion, how nonprofit organizations and voluntary action associations collaborate, are governed, and convene stakeholders needs to be a subject at the forefront of research and discussion for the improvement in the sustainability of nonprofit organizations in Arkansas, the United States of America, and other countries around the world. As Ostrom et al. (1999) contended, “Although the number and importance of commons problems at local or regional scales will not decrease, the need for effective approaches to commons problems that are global in scale will certainly increase” (p. 278). The complexity of societal issues spans the globe as scholars and practitioners seek effective solutions to complex issues. Through this study, the researcher sought to explore design principles and assumptions of nonprofit governance that contribute to successful governance and convening leadership in nonprofit organizations and voluntary action associations to provide effective approaches to complex societal issues.

Additionally, the researcher aimed to bring awareness to the significant implications for cross-sector practitioners. In the United States, 1.6 million tax-exempt organizations encompass 501(c) designations from churches and cultural centers to food banks and disaster relief organizations (The Independent Sector, n.d.), whereas in Arkansas, there are 12,083 nonprofit organizations, consisting of 8,174 501(c)(3) public charities, which includes some religious organizations; 422 501(c)(3) private and public foundations; and 3,487 other 501(c) nonprofit organizations. Based on the findings of this study, the researcher concluded that collaboration, governance, culture-centric nonprofit organizations, and convening leadership contribute to shared resources and philanthropic value in nonprofit organizations and voluntary action associations. Furthermore, the researcher concluded that in times of crisis, the need to collaborate is essential to meet the increased need in the demand for programs and services in the community to meet the needs of people. Finally, the present study contributed to the literature with implications that can benefit stakeholders, practitioners, and scholars interested in the voluntary, independent, and the third sector community of nonprofit organizations.



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## **Appendix A**

### **Interview Protocol**

**Opening Comment:** Thank you for taking time today to participate in this research study. I am pleased you are a part of this study that will help us better understand the importance of governance and leadership in collaborative efforts.

**Interview Details:** The interview will last approximately 60 minutes and will be recorded to ensure the highest quality in data analysis. You will be asked 20 questions of which there are no right or wrong answers. If you do not respond, we will skip that question and move on to the next question.

**Key Terms:** Key terms were emailed to you to help us align our thoughts in data analysis. Did you receive a copy of the terms?

**Your Rights and Confidentiality:** As a reminder, what you say during this interview will remain anonymous. Neither your name or any other identifying information will be associated with the audio or video recording. Do you understand that your participation in this research is voluntary, and there is no penalty for refusal to participate and that you are free to withdraw your consent and participation in this project at any time?

**Responses to Questions:** Please respond to the questions from your perspective as a board member, senior executive, or a collaborative program director of your organization.

**Questions:** Do you have any questions now? If not, we can begin.

**Collaboration:** The first three questions explore collaboration. Collaboration is a formalized, joint-working arrangement between organizations that remain legally autonomous while engaging in ongoing, coordinated collective action to achieve outcomes that none of them could achieve on their own (Cornforth et al., 2015, p. 6).

1. What does collaboration look like in your program, collaboration, or organization? Who are the stakeholders? How do you identify the stakeholders? For what purposes do you collaborate?
2. As you think about collaborative efforts, what are the benefits of collaboration?

3. What have you observed as barriers or challenges in collaboration?

**Governance:** The next set of questions explore governance in the context of collaboration or collaborative efforts. Governance is an element or condition that contributes to the success or failure of the collaboration and can include the social, economic, or political structures or rational principles that govern the collaboration or nonprofit organization.

This study considers shared resources and philanthropic value and how the resources are governed through collaboration. A shared resource can be funding, personnel, office space, programming, or a commodity like food, whereas philanthropic value is linked to the social action of a nonprofit organization and encompasses voluntary giving, service, or association.

As you respond to this next set of questions, consider the role of governance in collaboration around shared resources and philanthropic value and what you have observed in collaborative efforts.

4. How do stakeholders (or your organization) collectively determine how the group will be governed?
5. How do stakeholders (or your organization) access shared resources? Who makes this determination?
6. How do stakeholders (or your organization) monitor the use of shared resources among stakeholders?
7. How do stakeholders (or your organization) manage conflict?

The next set of questions speaks directly to the culture of the collaboration or organization. Would you please respond to these questions from the lens of your organization or the program you direct?

8. Social action is an action taken for the good of humanity, charity as an action for the good of others, and or altruism as the interest in others. How would you describe social action in your program, collaboration, or organization?

9. Authenticity implies stakeholders are what they appear to be and say and that shared resources they receive reach the client. How does your organization communicate authenticity to collaborative stakeholders?
10. Continuity is an invisible force learned intergenerationally or experienced through tradition where the action of the stakeholder is reasonable, predictive, or productive of desired outcomes. In nonprofit organizations, recruiting board members or stakeholders to open positions within a program, collaboration, or organization (e.g., paid or volunteer) would illustrate continuity. How does your organization integrate, teach, or maintain continuity in recruiting new stakeholders?
11. Intrinsic valuation in nonprofit governance refers to the rules, standards, or values recognized and used by stakeholders. What rules, standards, or values are recognized and used in your organization? How do the rules, standards, or values contribute to shared resources or philanthropic value?
12. Ordinary language suggests there is a common language that is adopted, used, and recognized by stakeholders. For instance, terms like fiduciary responsibility, endowment, community investment, or unrestricted funds might be considered common language in philanthropy. What does ordinary language look like in your program, collaboration, or organization, and how is that language communicated to collaborative stakeholders?

**Convening Leadership:** The convenor is the individual or entity responsible for bringing stakeholders together to manage a shared resource, address an issue, problem, or opportunity. This next set of questions explores the role of the collaborator or convenor. Would you please respond to the question from your observation or experience?

13. What have you observed as the three best practices of a convenor?
14. What has been your experience in how a convenor's core beliefs, values, and attitudes influence collaborative efforts?
15. What has been your experience in how a convenor brings together socio-economic groups with differences in culture, customs, language, influence, and disparity of resources?

16. How does a convener facilitate collaboration among stakeholders?
17. What have you observed as a technique a convener would use to reframe a problem to help stakeholders find common ground during times of conflict?

**Shared Resources and Philanthropic Value:** This study explores if governance and convening leadership contribute to shared resources and philanthropic value through collaboration, emphasizing the year following the COVID-19 pandemic.

18. How have you observed the need for increased (if at all) shared resources and philanthropic value in collaborations since COVID-19?
19. How have you observed (if at all) governance and convening leadership contribute to shared resources and philanthropic value in collaborations?
20. How have you observed (if at all) collaboration contributes to shared resources and philanthropic value?

**Closing Comments:** Is there anything you would like to say about nonprofit governance, convening leadership, or collaboration that we may have missed? The following steps will be to transcribe the interview and begin data analysis. When finished, I will email a copy of my findings to you to confirm that the intent of your conversation was accurately presented. Thank you again for your participation. Your input and insight will contribute to the field of the nonprofit sector. Well done!

**Key Terms**  
*As Defined for This Study*

**Authenticity** implies stakeholders are what they appear to be and say and that shared resources they receive reach the client.

**Collaboration** is a formalized, joint-working arrangement between organizations that remain legally autonomous while engaging in ongoing, coordinated collective action to achieve outcomes that none of them could achieve on their own.

**Continuity** is an invisible force learned intergenerationally or experienced through tradition where the action of the stakeholder is reasonable, predictive, or productive of desired outcomes.

**Convening leadership** is attributed to the convenor as the individual or entity responsible for bringing stakeholders together to manage a shared resource, address an issue, problem, or opportunity.

**Governance** is an element or condition that contributes to the success or failure of the collaborative and can include the social, economic, or political structures or rational principles that govern the nonprofit organization.

**Intrinsic valuation** in nonprofit governance is the rules and standards or values recognized and used by stakeholders.

**Ordinary language** suggests there is a common language that is adopted, used, and recognized by stakeholders. For instance, terms like fiduciary responsibility, endowment, community investment, or unrestricted funds might be considered common language in philanthropy.

**Shared resources and philanthropic value** can be funding, personnel, office space, programming, or a commodity like food, whereas philanthropic value is linked to the social action of a nonprofit organization and encompasses voluntary giving, service, or association.

**Social Action** is an action taken for the good of humanity, charity as an action for the good of others, and or altruism as the interest in others.

**Stakeholders** are “any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of an organization’s [collective-action collaboration] objectives”

(Mitchell et al., 1997, p. 854). Commons are formed in the assembly of stakeholders, governance occurs, and shared resources are managed.

## Appendix B

### Institutional Review Board Request

FOR IRB OFFICE USE ONLY:  
IRB Protocol # \_\_\_\_\_

#### REQUEST FOR IRB REVIEW OF RESEARCH INVOLVING HUMAN SUBJECTS

Please complete this Request for Review as thoroughly as possible.

FORM MUST BE TYPED—HANDWRITTEN DOCUMENTS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED.

Type of Review Requested:

Exempt (Status, see RR 101)     Expedited     Full Board

For details regarding types of review, please see "Levels of Review" under FAQ at  
<https://www.seu.edu/irb/faq/>

#### 1. Research Project (This section to be completed for ALL types of reviews requested)

Protocol Title: A study on how governance and leadership contribute to shared resources and philanthropic value in nonprofit organizations.

Date of Submission: \_\_\_\_\_ Research project start date\*: Upon Approval

*\*The project start date cannot be earlier than the protocol's approval date. To start research as soon as the protocol is approved, please note "upon approval" for the project start date.\**

Research project end date\*: 06-31-22

*\*The project end date should be the date after which data collection ceases. This date should not exceed one year from the start date for expedited/full board review and no more than three years for exempt protocols, without an extension approval by the IRB.*

Unfunded

Internal Funding    Source: \_\_\_\_\_

External Funding (provide grant title and award # below) Grant Award #: \_\_\_\_\_

Grant Title: \_\_\_\_\_ Sponsor/Agency: \_\_\_\_\_

#### 2. Principal Investigator (PI) (This section to be completed for ALL types of reviews requested)

##### a. Faculty/Staff PI (Do not complete this section if you are a student.)

Name: Joshua Henson    Email: jdhensen@seu.edu

College/Department: JCBEL

Class Research Project     Independent Research Project

Course Name and #: LDRS 9013-LDRS 9043

Training must be completed before application can be reviewed. Training completed:  YES  NO



3. Co-Investigators (This section to be completed for ALL types of reviews, if applicable.)

- a. Name: Patricia A. Clary  
 Institution (if not SEU):  
 Email: paclary@seu.edu  
 Training must be completed before application can be reviewed. Training completed:  YES  NO
- b. Name:  
 Institution (if not SEU):  
 Email:  
 Training must be completed before application can be reviewed. Training completed:  YES  NO
- c. Name:  
 Institution (if not SEU):  
 Email:  
 Training must be completed before application can be reviewed. Training completed:  YES  NO
- d. Name:  
 Institution (if not SEU):  
 Email:  
 Training must be completed before application can be reviewed. Training completed:  YES  NO

4. Cooperating Institutions (This section to be completed for ALL types of reviews.)

- a. Will the research be conducted on the SEU campus?  YES  NO  
 If "no," please indicate the location(s): Arkansas
  - a. Was permission granted to conduct the research at the off-campus location?  
 YES  NO  N/A  
*If "yes," please attach a copy of the documentation.*
  - b. Is this research being done in cooperation with any institutions, individuals, or organizations not affiliated with SEU?  YES  NO  
 If "yes," please list: Arkansas Community Foundation, St. James Missionary Baptist Church Community Outreach, The Hub of Ouachita County, Walmart and Walmart Foundation
    - a. Has the other institution's IRB/ethics board approved this study?  YES  NO  
 If "yes," please attach a copy of the approval
  - c. Are you directly or indirectly in a position of leadership over the participant pool? (Examples include but are not limited to: supervisor, manager, pastor, professor)  
 YES  NO

5. Research Project Description (This section to be completed for ALL types of reviews.)

- a. Rationale: Provide (in lay terms) a concise statement of the project's general aims in relation to the broader field of research.

The purpose of this study is to explore if principles of commons governance, nonprofit commons governance, and commons leadership contribute to an increase in shared resources and philanthropic value in collaborative stakeholder groups in nonprofit organizations.

- b. Specific Aims: Identify the variables to be manipulated and/or measured, and describe their expected relationships.

Commons governance (Ostrom, 1990): clearly defined boundaries, collective-choice agreements, monitoring, conflict-resolutions mechanisms  
 Nonprofit commons governance (Lohmann, 1992): social action, authenticity, continuity, intrinsic valuation, ordinary language  
 Commons leadership (Clary, 2021): collaboration of stakeholders; core beliefs, values, and attitudes; culturally diverse; creative co-learning and co-creating; congruity of stakeholders  
 Exploring if governance and leadership influence a nonprofit organization's ability to access shared

- c. Study Procedures: Describe the activities in which the participants will be engaged. Provide methods, procedures, interventions, and manipulations. Also, include the actual materials (including informed consent) participants will see and/or specific questions that will be asked, if possible. If this level of detail is not possible, provide an idea of the types of questions and the reason that greater specificity would not be possible at the point of submission. When using a methodology that might put the participants at risk, please reference previous research that used the same or similar methodology (use a separate page if more space is needed).

Summary. Leadership from four nonprofit organizations based in Arkansas will participate in in-depth interviews to discover common themes within their varied perspectives. A web conferencing technology like Zoom will be used to conduct in-depth interviews.

The interview questions are attached as Appendix A.

The Participant Informed Consent form as detailed by SEU is attached as Appendix B. The informed consent form will be signed and collected before participants can participate in the interview.

A consent form for permission to audio and video record participants via technology like Zoom will be signed and collected from each participant prior to the begin of the interview. The audio and video consent form is attached as Appendix C.

- d. Use of Deception: Describe in detail any deception used and explain why deception is critical to the research. When using a methodology that might put participants at risk, be sure to reference previous research that might use the same methodology.

NA

- e. **Training:** Describe any supervision or training that will occur for research personnel involved in this study, including CITI training and any additional training. For student investigators, please include relevant research experience and/or coursework.

CITI training has been completed by the student investigator. The student has completed all academic courses required to conduct the study. Including:

LDRS 7313 30 Advanced Quantitative Methods  
 LDRS 7213 70 Quantitative Research Methods  
 LDRS 8853 40 Research Seminar in Organizational Leadership  
 LDRS 7123 80 Foundations of Research

For protocols involving tests, surveys, questionnaires, or interviews:  N/A

- f. **What type(s) of instruments/activities will be used (Check all that apply.)**

Test/Survey/Questionnaire

Type:  published/standardized  researcher-created  other (please explain)

Format:  paper  telephone  online  other (please explain)

Interviews

Type:  published/standardized  researcher-created  other (please explain)

Format:  face-to-face  telephone  online  other (please explain)

Please attach a copy of any tests/surveys/questionnaires and/or interviews, etc.

- g. **Will the subjects encounter the possibility of stress or psychological, social, physical, and/or legal risks that are greater than those ordinarily encountered in daily life or during performance of routine physical or psychological examinations and/or tests?**

YES  NO

If YES, please justify:

- h. **Will information be requested that subjects might consider personal and/or sensitive?**

YES  NO

If YES, please explain:

- i. Will the subjects be presented with materials that might be considered offensive, threatening and/or degrading?  YES  NO

If YES, please explain (include measures planned for intervention if problems occur):

## 6. PARTICIPANTS

### a. Participant Population

*Research involving study participants who are likely to be vulnerable to coercion or undue influence (such as minors under the age of 18 (45 CFR 45 Subpart D), prisoners (45 CFR 47 Subpart C), pregnant women, human fetuses, neonates (45 CFR 45 Subpart B), persons with mental disabilities, or persons whose economic status would leave them susceptible to coercion) is not eligible for exempt status.*

- a. How many participants are needed for the study?

12-16

### b. Target Populations Include:

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Athletes  | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Persons over the age of 18 ONLY |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Children 0-6 (Parental consent required)                                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Persons with English as a second language  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Children 7-17 (Parental consent & child assent required)                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Physically impaired                        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Developmentally disabled (Guardian consent & Participant assent required) | <input type="checkbox"/> Pregnant women                             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Elderly   | <input type="checkbox"/> Teachers                                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mentally ill  | <input type="checkbox"/> SEU staff                                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Military personnel  | <input type="checkbox"/> SEU students                               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Persons convicted of a crime or on parole                                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Non-SEU college students                   |
|  | <input type="checkbox"/> Victims of crime                           |

**b. Describe the subjects of this study:****a. Describe the sampling population:**

Nonprofit executive directors and organization leadership e.g., executive director, board member, and program staff director. +

**b. Describe the subject selection methodology:**

Arkansas Community Foundation (3), St. James Missionary Baptist Church Community Outreach (3), The Hub of Ouachita County (3), Walmart and Walmart Foundation (3)

**c. Describe the procedures used to recruit subjects. Include copies of scripts, flyers, advertisements, posters, web based solicitations and/or emails:**

The Arkansas Community Foundation (ARCF) was instrumental in identifying subjects of the study and making initial contact with organizational leaders. The initial contact by the ARCF will be followed by phone call and email to identify organization liaison with student investigator. +

**d. What is the expected duration of participation for each segment (e.g., gender, ethnicity) of the sampling population?**

Demographics: 45-75 minute in-depth interview

**a. If there is more than one session, please specify the duration of each session:**

NA

**c. Participant Compensation and Costs**

a. Participants will receive:  Compensation  Required Course Credit  Extra Credit  N/A

**a. If compensation/course credit/extra credit is offered, please complete the following:**

Type (e.g., gift card, cash, extra credit):

Amount:

Source:

**b. If required course credit is offered for participation, please describe what alternative assignment(s) students may complete to get an equal amount of credit should they choose not to participate in the study:**

c. Are other inducements planned to recruit participants?  YES  NO

If yes, please describe:

**d. Participant Risks and Benefits****1. What are the benefits to participants in this study?**

Each of the organizations will receive findings related to their organization for the purposes of further evaluation of and education related to how governance and leadership contribute to shared resources and philanthropic value through collaboration with stakeholders.

## 2. What are the risks (physical, social, psychological, legal, economic) to participants in this study?

Participants may reflect on their organization's governance model. These reflections may lead to system-wide changes in governance, leadership, and collaboration with stakeholders.

- a. Indicate the degree of risk (physical, social, psychological, legal, economic) the research poses to human subjects (select the one which applies).

**MINIMAL RISK:** a risk is minimal where the probability and magnitude of harm or discomfort anticipated in the proposed research are not greater, in and of themselves, than those ordinarily encountered in daily life or during the performance of routine physical or psychological examinations or tests.

**GREATER THAN MINIMAL RISK:** Greater than minimal risk is where the probability and magnitude of harm or discomfort anticipated in the proposed research are greater than those ordinarily encountered in daily life, or during the performance of routine physical or psychological examinations or tests.

## 7. Confidentiality and Data Security (This section to be completed for ALL types of reviews.)

- a. Will personal identifiers be collected?  YES  NO
- b. Will identifiers be translated to a code?  YES  NO  N/A
- c. Will recordings be made (audio, video)?  YES  NO

- a. If "yes", please describe:

Participants will be assigned a pseudonym name at the time the data is transcribed and coded for analysis.

- b. If any type of audio or video recordings will be made of participants (including photographs), please describe how the participants' consent for this recording will be obtained.

The participants will be asked to sign an audio and video consent release form and return to the student investigator prior to participation in the interview. (Appendix C)

## d. Who will have access to data (surveys, questionnaires, recordings, interview records, etc.)?

Patricia A. Clary

## e. Describe how participant confidentiality will be protected and research records secured.

All participant records of this study will be kept private. Any written results will discuss findings and will not identify the participants. Research records will be on a password protected computer.

## f. How long will the records be retained? (SEU retains records for 5 years)

## g. How will the records be destroyed after this time?

Records will be erased using commercial software applications designed to remove all data from the storage device.



## 8. Consent

## a. Informed consent

1. Will consent forms be utilized?
- 
- YES
- 
- NO

If "no," Section 8b must be completed.

- a. Will the consent form be presented on
- paper or online
- ?
- 
- Paper
- 
- Online

- b. If the participants are minors, will
- assent
- forms be used?
- 
- YES
- 
- NO
- 
- N/A

If "no," please explain.

*\*\*Please attach the consent and/or assent form(s) that the participants and/or parent/guardian will be required to sign.*

## b. Waiver of written informed consent (only to be completed if the answer to 8a1 is "no")

1. Will the only record linking the participant to the research be the consent document and will the principal risk to the participant be a breach of confidentiality?  YES  NO
2. Is this a minimal risk study that involves procedures for which written consent is not normally required?  YES  NO
3. Explain how consent will be obtained.

Consent will be part of the directions within the email introduction of the study. In addition, the participants will voluntarily upon agreement with the informed consent participate in the study. The informed consent will be the first item in the electronic email. (Appendix B)

## 9. The Principal Investigator should initial all items below:

- I confirm that I have reviewed the protocol and any attachments, and I approve them.
- I confirm that all items required by the IRB checklist (below) are submitted with this protocol. (If applicable)
- I confirm that the proposed consent form is, in my judgment, appropriate for this research.
- I understand that as Principal Investigator, I have ultimate responsibility for the conduct of IRB-approved studies, the ethical performance of protocols, the protection of the rights and welfare of human participants, and strict adherence to the study's protocol and any stipulations imposed by the Southeastern University Institutional Review Board.
- I understand that it is my responsibility to ensure that the human participants' involvement as described in the funding proposal(s) is consistent in principle, to that contained in the Request for IRB Review. I will submit modifications to the IRB as necessary.
- I agree to comply with all Southeastern University policies and procedures, as well as with all applicable federal, state, and local laws, regarding the protection of human participants in research.

Principal Investigator Signature Date

Questions? Please contact the IRB ([irb@seu.edu](mailto:irb@seu.edu))

**SUBMISSION CHECKLIST:**

For submission to be complete, all applicable documents must be sent as attachments to:  
[lrj@seu.edu](mailto:lrj@seu.edu)

Incomplete protocol submissions will not be sent out for review and will be returned to the investigator(s).

| YES                      | N/A                      |  |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | This Request for Review application, fully completed and signed by researcher.   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | #4b Documentation of permission to conduct research in a location other than SEU.  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | #4d IRB approval documentation from another institution  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | #5a Research project description (check N/A if typed on form).   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | #5f Tests, questionnaires, interview questions, surveys, scripts, etc.   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | #6b3 Recruiting materials (including scripts), text of email or web-based solicitation.  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | #8a Consent and/or assent form(s).   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | #8a If using oral consent, researcher must provide a copy of the consent document that will be read to research participants and, if required, the name and address of the individual who will witness the oral consent. The oral consent document should include a statement indicating that completion of the research exercise will confirm the participants' consent to participate. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | CITI training certificate(s).  |



## **Appendix C**

### **Informed Consent Form**

**TITLE:**

A Qualitative Study Exploring if Commons Governance and Commons Leadership Contribute to Shared Resources and Philanthropic Value in Nonprofit Organizations

**INVESTIGATOR:**

Patricia A. Clary, Ph.D. Student

**PURPOSE:**

The purpose of this study is to explore if principles of commons governance, nonprofit commons governance, and commons leadership contribute to collaboration and an increase in shared resources and philanthropic value in nonprofit organizations.

**PROCEDURES:**

This study will be administered through Zoom, a web conferencing technology. You will be asked to respond to 20 questions. One question will be to examine what your organization experienced in the first year of the global pandemic and if there was a need to collaborate with community stakeholders to access shared resources or realize more significant philanthropic funding. Four questions will explore how principles of commons governance are practiced in your organization and if these principles contribute to shared resources and increased philanthropic giving. Five questions will be asked to explore the variance of how nonprofit commons governance is implemented in your organization. One question will address the different ways commons governance principles are operationalized in nonprofit organizations. One question will address the barriers and challenges to collective action collaboration. Six additional questions will be asked to explore the role of the convenor in convening stakeholders. This study is designed to last approximately 45—75 minutes. The time will be divided, with around three minutes allocated for asking and responding to each question.

**RISKS OF PARTICIPATION:**

There are no known risks associated with this project which are greater than those ordinarily encountered in daily life.

**BENEFITS OF PARTICIPATION:**

You will receive findings related to your organization for the purposes of further evaluation of and education related to how governance and leadership contribute to shared resources and philanthropic value through collaboration with stakeholders. If you are interested, we will send you a copy of the study results when it is finished.

**COMPENSATION:**

There is no compensation for participating in the study.

**YOUR RIGHTS AND CONFIDENTIALITY:**

Your participation in this research is voluntary. There is no penalty for refusal to participate, and you are free to withdraw your consent and participation in this project at any time. The records of this study will be kept private. Any written results will discuss group findings and will not include information that will identify you.

**DATA:**

Research records will be stored on a password-protected computer in a locked office, and only researchers and individuals responsible for research oversight will have access to the records. Data will be destroyed five years after the study has been completed. Video or audiotapes will be transcribed and destroyed within 30 days of the interview.

**CONTACTS AND QUESTIONS:**

You may contact Patricia A. Clary, principal investigator, or Dr. Joshua D. Henson (research chair) at the following addresses and phone numbers, should you desire to discuss your participation in the study and/or request information about the results of the study.

Patricia A. Clary (Principal Investigator)

paclary@seu.edu

870.847.6776

Dr. Joshua D. Henson (Research Chair)

jdhenon@seu.edu

850.843.4913

The principal investigator will give you a copy of this form to keep for your records.

**STATEMENT OF CONSENT**

I have read the above information. I have received answers to any questions I have at this time. I am 18 years of age or older, and I consent to participate in the audio-video interview.

Printed Name of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_

Participant Signature

\_\_\_\_\_

Researcher Signature

\_\_\_\_\_

**Appendix D**

**Audio or Video Recording & Transcription Consent Form**

The proposed study involves the audio or video recording of your interview with the researcher. Neither your name nor any other identifying information will be associated with the audio or video recording or the transcript. Only the researcher and persons responsible for research oversight will have access to the records.

The researcher will transcribe the recording. Video or audiotapes will be transcribed and destroyed within 30 days of the interview. Transcripts of your interview may be reproduced in whole or in part for use in presentations or written products that result from this study. Neither your name nor any other identifying information (such as your voice, picture, or organization) will be used in presentations or written products resulting from the study.

By signing this form, I allow the researcher to audio or videotape me as part of this research. The researcher will give you a copy of this form for your records.

**STATEMENT OF CONSENT**

I have read the above information. I have received answers to any questions I have at this time. I am 18 years of age or older, and I consent to participate in the audio-video interview.

Printed Name of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_

Participant Signature

\_\_\_\_\_

Researcher Signature

\_\_\_\_\_