



What is Thrive Advisory Service and what does it offer?

[Thrive Advisory Service \(Thrive\)](#) is a consulting service designed to support foundations that are deciding about how to build or grow a program of capacity strengthening support for their organization partners. Thrive was birthed and inspired by the LeadersTrust and the Resilience Initiative, and is now a project housed within the LeadersTrust.

Led by Holly Delany Cole and Paula Morris, and supported by members of LeadersTrust and Resilience Initiative staff as needed, Thrive partners with foundation staff to facilitate their discernment and planning about the design and launch of capacity strengthening initiatives. We are co-planners. We serve as resources, guides and project managers to foundation staff as they consider:

- The values, vision, purposes and goals which inform the capacity-strengthening support initiative.
- Resolution of 'making the case' internal questions, concerns, or other barriers to design and launch.
- Their capability and readiness for mounting and sustaining a capacity-strengthening initiative.
- The potential scope and duration of the program and its relationship to budget and timeframe.
- Trade-offs and possibilities inherent between approaches which are broadly organized, reaching many organizations, or those structured to 'go' more deeply.
- Internal staffing capacity and external implementation support needed to launch and maintain the Initiative.
- What is already known about the capacity strengthening priorities of our organization partners, and what we still need to learn.
- How to best engage organization partners in informing the design and ongoing delivery of our capacity strengthening support.
- The different options and vehicles that the capacity strengthening initiatives can take to fully meet institutional goals and the goals of organization partners.
- What consultants and programs are available and a good match to support implementation.

What is Thrive's consulting approach?

To help address topics such as these, our consulting support may be of short- or longer-term duration and could include any or all of the following:

- Offering coaching and resources including sharing existing models, examples, and principles of trust-based capacity strengthening in action.
- Facilitation of decision-making processes and discussions within the foundation.
- Hands-on support to help the foundation structure an inquiry process with its organization partners including carrying out the inquiry process, and analyzing the data.
- Hands-on support to help the foundation identify its internal staffing needs for its capacity initiative including support for search and recruitment of staff.

- Sharing of information about potential implementation consulting partners locally and nationally, and support for partner selection including brokering introductions and managing and resourcing the selection and contracting process.
- Working over time and as needed with foundation staff to organize their plan for an initiative and prepare it for internal review and approval.
- Serving as an ongoing thought partner, troubleshooting support, and touchpoint and resource as needed during the implementation of the capacity strengthening program.

What experience and resources does the Thrive Advisory Service bring?

As our [bios](#) indicate, Holly and Paula are both practitioners and innovators with long association with key capacity-strengthening initiatives in the nonprofit and philanthropic sectors. We show up to this work with:

- **Practical hands-on experience of designing, launching and growing foundations' capacity strengthening initiatives.** As well as serving as past Directors of the Resilience Initiative and LeadersTrust, we have each led nonprofit organizations, managed organizational development consulting practices and served in various roles – staff and trustees – for a range of philanthropies.
- **Knowledge of, and connections to, practitioners and thought leaders in the field.** Over the past twenty years, we have built a robust network of practitioners and philanthropic partners with deep experience in capacity strengthening. Our relationships and familiarity with resonant, imaginative models means we can connect foundations to many strong programs and skilled practitioners.
- **A point of view on capacity strengthening informed by direct experience in nonprofit leadership as well as deep work with leaders.** We bring decades of experience in many roles in nonprofit organizations, and, through LeadersTrust and Resilience Initiative, we have been in ongoing relationship and partnership with hundreds of leaders as they work to strengthen their organizations.

What is not in scope for Thrive Advisory Service?

- **We are not general consultants on foundation strategy writ large.** While we can offer thought partnership on how strengthening the capacity of organization partners can best contribute to a foundation's overall strategy and vision, we are not generalist foundation strategy consultants.
- **We are not the implementation team for a foundation's ongoing capacity strengthening program.** As noted above, our support is focused on supporting a foundation as they are at the planning and initial launch stage of their capacity strengthening program, or when they are intending to grow or refocus an existing program. We can help identify and offer initial support as needed to any external consulting team that will be the ongoing implementation partner for the foundation.
- **We are not the point people for foundations that wish to participate in the Resilience Initiative and LeadersTrust's core programs, we will make "warm" hand-overs.** Although Holly and Paula both have long affiliation with LeadersTrust and the Resilience Initiative, we will not ultimately be

the staff leads if a foundation wishes to engage either of those institutions to support delivery of their capacity strengthening program. Rather, Thrive's goal is to ensure that foundation partners are present to the range of strong models and partner programs delivering trust-based capacity-strengthening that exist, and to the many skilled practitioners in the field – including, and beyond, the LeadersTrust and the Resilience Initiative.

What are some of the key principles and practices that inform Thrive Advisory Services' perspective?

While Thrive Advisory Services will be tailored to the specific goals and needs of each foundation, they will also be informed by the perspective we have gained on what **elements** make up a trust-based approach to capacity strengthening. Examples of these include:

- Recognizing that capacity strengthening funding is most impactful when offered **as a complement and addition to** Multi-year General Operating Support and/or broad, flexible program funding.
- Recognizing that organizations understand the most about their individual needs and circumstances and that those wishing to “help” should listen to them.
- Enabling organizations to decide about the shape, scope and timing of the assistance offered.
- Creating access to ongoing thought partnership and accompaniment from an experienced consultant or coach to organizations as a key resource beyond funding.
- Bringing visibility to local resources that already exist and taking steps to expand and strengthen the capacity of those resources.
- Looking for and catalyzing opportunities for mutual learning and exchange specifically among capacity-strengthening providers, foundations and the local nonprofit community.
- Recognizing that leaders' ability to make connections with other leaders grappling with similar circumstances matters.
- Understanding that capacity-strengthening opportunities are best offered more than once, and over time.
- Centering justice, equity, diversity and inclusion (JEDI) considerations in determining which organizations are supported in capacity-strengthening initiatives and how. This includes, for example: prioritizing organizations that are led by and serve communities that have been under-resourced and those whose vision and missions are in pursuit of social and racial justice however that is expressed.
- Centering equity, justice and wellness in the definitions of what constitutes capacity-strengthening and what leadership projects focus on.

To explore how we could be helpful to you...



Write to us at Thrive@theleaderstrust.org with your questions or wishes and we will get back to you. To schedule an initial meet-up use our [calendly link](#).
Learn more about [Holly and Paula](#).