Dear SORP Colleagues:

The 2016-2017 year was another busy one for SORP. We continued to grow our membership, adding about 30 new members to bring us to a record high of 450 members as of July, 2017. As our organization has grown so has our workload, with a significant amount of work being done by our volunteer Board of Directors. As a result, during the last year SORP placed greater focus on finding and using paid help to do the organization's work. Towards this end, we completed the following actions:

- Hired SORP Past President Sergio Capozzi as the 2017 conference planner
- Refined Association Manager duties, and signed a 1-year new contract (October, 2016-September, 2017)
- Prepared an RFP and awarded a contract for an organizational fundraising assessment
- Completed a due diligence process about whether to hire an Executive Director
- Issued a Vacancy Announcement and Position Description for an Executive Director at the end of July

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A related action was conducting a Board of Directors skills assessment (conducted by our very enthusiastic Vice President of Development Margaret Bailey!) to help determine SORP’s future desired Board of Directors’ skill sets, and identify actions for which we would seek paid assistance.

Some other items of note pertain to the SCORP Ad Hoc Committee and the Education and Professional Development Committee. The SCORP Ad Hoc Committee was re-invigorated and led by Maren Murphy. Our Education and Professional Development Committee (led by Michael Bradley) hosted three webinars; all were well received and well attended.

This year’s conference was in Scottsdale, Arizona. We had a great venue at the very hip, avant garde SaguaroScottsdale Hotel. At conference, we heard powerful stories about personal experiences of culturally diverse youth and their involvement in the outdoor recreation profession. Conference Co-Chair, Francisco Valenzuela made some inspiring opening and closing remarks about what diversity and inclusion mean for him. A few other highlights from the 2017 conference include the following:

k I listened to some great presentations including advancing stewardship with volunteer resources from Anna Zawisza of Volunteers of Colorado, building a diverse workforce by Denise Barreto, easy to use tools for assessing racial and income equity relative to trail benefits by Kelly Pohl of Headwaters Economics, and facility design considerations for physically challenged visitors to water resource areas from John Mintz of Pacific Gas and Electric.

k This year we set a record for conference attendance, with 221 people attending representing government, non-profit organizations, and private businesses. I am proud to mention this was the 2nd highest conference attendance at a SORP conference, just one person short of the all-time attendance high set in Breckenridge in 2011.

k At this year’s conference, we gave our National Leadership Award to REI, and learned this is a forward-looking organization engaged in multiple outreach efforts to bring more diverse users into the realm of outdoor recreation.

The 2018 conference location will be in Burlington, Vermont, and we are looking forward to a great event. There is an important side story to our decision to locate the 2018 conference in Burlington. Our conference committee had originally chosen Asheville, North Carolina as the 2018 location. However, after learning of legislation signed by the Governor of North Carolina that discriminates against transgender individuals, we decided to “make a statement,” switching conference locations. I wrote a letter to the Governor of North Carolina explaining SORP’s decision to re-locate.

Two board members completed their terms and I want to thank them for their service: Elise Gatti and Robyn Ceuvorst. Two board members who served in 2015 and 2016 were “promoted” to the Executive Committee, with Annie McVay taking the Secretary position and Maren Murphy taking the Vice President of Operations position.
Each year, SORP puts on the National Outdoor Recreation Conference (NORC). This is our signature event and the premier conference for outdoor recreation professionals to showcase and learn about innovative and creative approaches to nature-based outdoor recreation research, planning, management, and policy development. This year’s conference was in Scottsdale, Arizona, and the program focused on efforts that help create a lasting legacy of conservation and stewardship by fostering relevant, inclusive, and sustainable outdoor recreation opportunities for all.

More than 220 participants attended the 2017 NORC, including planners, managers, researchers, scientists, policy makers, professors, students, and consultants employed by cities, counties, special districts, state and federal agencies, outdoor equipment and service industries, consulting firms, universities, and non-profit organizations. Participants came from 38 states, Canada, and Israel. This was one of our best attended conferences, an indication of not only the strength of the conference program, but also of the passion and enthusiasm of our members and other outdoor recreation professionals to share and learn.

Twelve sponsors and exhibitors helped make the conference a success. These partners included the US Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, Trails Unlimited, Aramark, Recreation Resource Management, Logan Simpson, CHM Government Services, Active Network, Design Workshop, Discovery Agents, Forever Resorts, and iZone Imaging. In total, they contributed more than $30,000 to the conference effort. Our sponsors and exhibitors are vital partners and key members of the outdoor recreation profession. Through their financial contribution to SORP and our annual conference, they not only help support the organization, but also the community of professionals who plan and manage the great outdoors.
Because of the generosity of our members and other donors, SORP was able to provide a total of 10 scholarships for students and new professionals to attend the conference. Educating and nurturing the next generation of outdoor recreation professionals is a core tenet of SORP and we pride ourselves on our robust scholarship program. More than 30 people and organizations contributed items to this year’s conference auction, one of the primary ways we raise money for our scholarship programs. In total, the auction helped SORP raise more than $3,500 that will be used for future scholarships.

The conference program was centered on four main tracks or overarching topics, including diversity of engagement, diversity of opportunity, diversity of profession, and perspectives and dialogue. The full conference program included:

- 3 training sessions,
- 4 plenary sessions,
- 5 field workshops,
- 18 poster presentations, and
- 49 concurrent presentations.

For the first time, SORP made an effort to integrate conference outcomes and resolutions into the conference program and specific presentations. We asked several of the presenters to facilitate a dialogue on the question of “How can outdoor recreation professionals ensure that recreation opportunities and the profession itself are relevant and inclusive?” Some of the emergent themes from these sessions include:

- Relationships/community engagement,
- Reframing needs from different perspectives,
- Addressing implicit bias in outdoor recreation,
- The power of the economy, and
- Breaking down professional “silos”

The SORP board will use these themes to develop a resolution statement for relevancy and inclusion. The resolution statement will help guide future SORP activities, including conferences, training sessions, and strategic goals for the organization. We will also continue the dialogue and learning through our webinars, routine communications, and future conferences. In addition, we hope and will encourage other organizations and outdoor recreation professionals to use the resolution to help guide their relevancy and inclusion efforts.

We look forward to seeing you at next year’s National Outdoor Recreation Conference in Burlington, Vermont!
Strategic Planning

By Rachel Franchina

The Strategic Plan details SORP’s mission, goals and objectives for a five-year timeframe (2017-2021). In 2016, the SORP board decided to refocus the Strategic Plan on goals for a fixed five-year timeframe instead of reviewing and updating it on an annual basis. In addition to providing a management framework for SORP, the Strategic Plan also serves as a communication tool to members, the profession, and potential funders.

There are six major goal categories:

- Communication and Marketing,
- Membership,
- Professional Development and Education,
- Financial Strategy,
- Strategic Partnerships, and
- Operations.

At the fall planning meeting in Scottsdale, Arizona the board had a robust discussion on SORP operations as the organization continues to grow and expand its influence. To that end, the goals under the Operations category were revised as follows to reflect this emphasis.

Goal 1: SORP will be guided by an active and engaged Board of Directors whose diversity reflects the community we serve.

Goal 2: Maintain appropriate balance of volunteer and paid staff to provide continued high level of service to our members and the profession.

Attendance at SHIFT Festival

Rachel Franchina, VP of Operations, once again had the honor of representing SORP at the 2016 Shaping How we Invest For Tomorrow (SHIFT) Festival in Jackson Hole, Wyoming. The purpose of the festival is to unite natural allies – youth engagement proponents, outdoor recreationists, land managers, and conservation advocates – around the common goal of protecting public lands.

The 2016 Festival, entitled “Outdoor Rec & Our Public Lands,” focused on three main topics: the public land transfer movement; funding for public lands; and next-generation engagement and cultural relevancy. The third topic was of particular interest to SORP as we were planning for the 2017 National Outdoor Recreation Conference (NORC) with a theme of “Creating a Relevant and Inclusive Future.” Rachel attended a Relevancy, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion workshop hosted by the Avarna Group (who we invited to be keynote speakers at the 2017 NORC) and participated in presentations and panel discussions where she made several important connections with leaders in promoting relevancy and inclusion in the outdoors. Rachel also participated in discussions with the SHIFT and other conference organizers about the importance of building upon the common goals of organizations to have a greater collective impact across the outdoor recreation industry.
Financial Committee Report

By Josh Nadas

Committee members: Josh Nadas (chair), John Baas, Rachel Franchina, and Margaret Bailey.

I am happy to report that SORP finances are healthy. SORP’s total assets and liabilities are about $140,000. One of the changes that the board has made is to move our fiscal year to match the federal government’s fiscal year. In addition to better alignment for grant reporting purposes, changing our fiscal year helps to show the majority of SORP’s financial activity in the same fiscal year, which improves transparency, and presents a more realistic picture of our net income.

SORP is on pace to enjoy a healthy financial year since we have generated more revenue than expenses. While this is an important benchmark for financial health, SORP’s mission is to serve the members, and be the voice for outdoor recreation practitioners. Among other things, these funds form the cornerstone of our financial ability to bring on an Executive Director.

During the last year, the SORP board spent a significant amount of time deliberating whether or not to increase funding for additional paid staff. After a significant and robust debate, the board felt that increasing our organizational capacity vis-a-vis an Executive Director would pay dividends to the organization in the long term. There are some short-term risks associated with this move, in particular SORP has to carefully manage funds in order to maintain solvency. Put simply – the organization must find some additional revenue in order to sustain an executive director over the long term. The board believes this is possible, and is working hard to pursue both earned and contributed income options to ensure long term financial health.

SORP SCORP Ad Hoc Committee

By Cindy Mendoza

Committee members: Maren Murphy (chair), John Baas, Cindy Mendoza, Mary Donze, Janit Llewellyn, Martha Droge, and David Siegenthaler

During 2016-2017, the SCORP Ad Hoc Committee focused on two items: 1) review and revise the SCORP Excellence Award criteria, and 2) preparing for and hosting the 2107 SORP University session at the 2017 conference.

Upon the advice of committee members, the SCORP Excellence Award was combined with the Project Excellence Award to avoid honoring well-funded states only for their SCORPs. The group wants to explore ways to award different types of planning innovations and model approaches for producing the SCORP documents in the future.

The SORP and the National Park Service hosted SCORP University, a half-day training session, at the 2017 National Outdoor Recreation Conference in Scottsdale, Arizona. The session attracted the largest group ever for this event and received an overwhelming positive response. The process included:

- Prior to SCORP University, the creation and distribution of personal invitations, a session description, goals for the training, and tentative agenda, which helped advertise the session and gave participants a justification to request funding to attend.
- The identification of and preparation for break-out session topics for small group discussion based on feedback from the previous year’s event.
k The recruitment of key planners to give short presentations on model approaches for planning innovations and efficiencies.

k A mix of speakers and activities during the session, including an interactive activity to identify what participants were most interested in learning more about.

k The collection of testimonials to include in next year’s session advertising.

k A follow-up packet for participants that included all session presentations, small group discussion notes, and contact information for all SCORP attendees and leads.

k A first ever National SCORP Writer’s Conference Call is to be held this fall as a free technical assistance and peer-to-peer sharing opportunity facilitated by National Park Service staff. The idea behind such a call is to create an informal forum for SCORP preparation discussions, ideas for new techniques, and to encourage helpful collaboration across jurisdictional boundaries.

**Membership and Communications Committee Report**

*By Annie McVay*

**Committee Members:** Annie McVay (Chair), Elise Gatti, Kelsey Depew, Danna Stroud, Brenda Adams-Weyant, Maren Murphy, Mike Bradley and Michelle Ahearn

The Membership and Communications (M&C) Committee is responsible for developing a strategy and schedule for association communications, developing strategies to recruit and retain members, and recommending member services and benefits.

The M&C Committee focused on implementing the SORP Strategic Plan, including:

**2017 Scholarship Recipients**

k Develop an annual communication plan to allow us to think strategically about the timing of our communications. The committee developed an annual communication schedule for general and conference related communications. We increased the use of social media including Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn.

k An analysis of our fee structure and rates. Based on recommendations from the Marketing and Communications Plan developed by Dr. Vince Mangini and the Public Relations Plan developed by Cal Poly San Luis Obispo students, professional membership rates were increased modestly while student membership rates were reduced.

k Website Redesign. The SORP website was completely redesigned. The new design incorporates a more modern look, more effective layout and the inclusion of an extensive resource library.

k The committee will continue implementing the SORP Strategic Plan by focusing on the following tasks:

  k Implement marketing and public relations recommendations.
Education and Professional Development Committee Report

By Michael Bradley

Committee Members: Michael Bradley (Chair), Maren Murphy, Chad Schneckenburger, Margaret Bailey, Elise Gatti, Robyn Ceurvo, and Stephanie Grigsby

The Education and Professional Development (E&PD) Committee focuses on promoting learning and professional development opportunities for students and established outdoor recreation professionals. Each year, the E&PD Committee selects qualified students and awards conference scholarships to attend SORP’s National Outdoor Recreation Conference. At the 2017 conference in Scottsdale, Arizona, four student conference scholarships were awarded to undergraduate and graduate students representing three different universities throughout the U.S. Each year, our student scholar applicant pool continues to expand, drawing in students with a range of degree specializations that involve outdoor recreation and active living. This is an encouraging sign, indicating that SORP is the recognized leader in the outdoor recreation profession on university campuses. Another reflection of SORP’s commitment to reaching out to new professionals is the continued involvement of student representatives on the SORP Board of Directors. SORP is honored to have such great representation from the academic community. Student Delegates to the board bring a unique and fresh perspective to the board. For this year, Emily Porter (Northwest Missouri State University) will serve as the student delegate to the board. A special note of appreciation to the Student and New Professional Scholarship Sub-Committee members for their hard work and dedication to this endeavor.

During the fourth year of offering webinars, SORP offered three presentations during the last half of 2016 and the first half of 2017 that attracted 300 registrants across the US and Canada from all segments of our profession - government, non-profit, private practice, and academia.

1. An Interagency Approach to Visitor Use Management – presented by Rachel Franchina (United States Forest Service) and Kerri Cahill (National Park Service) – 89 Registered, 70 Attended
2. Making the Case for Parks and Trails - presented by James Sallis and Amanda Wilson (The University of California, San Diego) – 106 Registered, 69 Attended
3. Environmental Education and Outdoor Recreation: Strategies for Impact - presented by Sara Bodor (North American Association for Environmental Education), Ashley Hoffman (Kentucky Association for Environmental Education), and Katie Navin (Colorado Alliance for Environmental Education) – 105 Registered, 70 Attended

The committee also ensured the continued success of one of the newer initiatives for the E&PD Committee, the New Professional Conference Scholarship. This scholarship is geared towards new professionals in the outdoor recreation profession and intended to provide them an avenue to attend the National Outdoor Recreation Conference, take advantage of networking opportunities, and generally help to prepare them to be the future leaders in this profession. SORP awarded six New Professional scholarships, from five different organizations, for the 2017 conference in Scottsdale and plans to continue this endeavor for future conferences.
Goals for the coming year:

k Continue to expand opportunities for involving and engaging aspiring outdoor recreation professionals at the annual conference and through other means.

k Continue pursuing the establishment of a formal accreditation process for academic programs specializing in outdoor recreation planning through the NRPA Council on Accreditation.

k Collaborate with the Membership and Communications Committee to establish an Education and Professional Development page on the SORP website.

k Provide direct opportunities for professional development to SORP members.

k Seek additional sources of funding for the SORP Scholarship Fund.

Awards Committee Report

By Maren Murphy

Committee Members: Maren Murphy (Chair), Margaret Bailey, Michael Bradley, Kevin Chesley

Each year SORP recognizes and honors individuals and groups for their outstanding accomplishments in the field of outdoor recreation planning, management, research, and policy, as well as in service to SORP. The Board made a few changes to the award program ahead of the 2017 National Outdoor Recreation Conference. Statewide recreation plans (such as SCORP Plans) are now recognized under the Project Excellence category. The Distinguished Service Award is now known as the Individual Service Award. In addition, each organization (office) is limited to one nomination.

In 2017, we received a record number of nominations with 22 nominations total. SORP was pleased to honor four projects from around the country with the Project Excellence Award that exemplify innovation and creative solutions, collaboration, and provide important benefits and contributions to the local and national outdoor recreation community.

Project Excellence Awards

1. Project: Community Empowerment Initiative

Partners: California Department of Parks and Recreation
External Affairs Division

From 2013 to 2016, 37,610 underserved Californians have been served through outdoor recreation programming and leadership training, over $368 million in grants has helped create over 100 new local parks, and over 3,000 staff have been trained on breaking down stereotypes and barriers to foster greater communication and appreciation for diversity.
2. Project: Granite Mountain Hotshots Memorial State Park  
**Partners:** Arizona State Parks and Trails, Yarnell Hill Memorial Site Board, Arizona Department of Transportation, And Arizona Public Service

Granite Mountain Hotshots Memorial State Park, Arizona State Parks and Trails' first memorial park, is the only firefighter memorial of its kind in the country and serves as a lasting tribute to 19 Hotshots, elite wildland firefighters, who lost their lives on June 30, 2013, in the Yarnell Hill Fire. The 320-acre park is an immersive experience, rather than a monument, and offers a place to mourn and heal in an authentic way.

3. **Project: LatinXplorers**

**Partners:** Sierra Club, Latino Outdoors, The Next Door, Inc., Oregon Public Health Institute, Oregon Community Health Workers Association, Regional Health Equity Coalition, The Willamette Partnership

At the start of 2016, the Willamette Partnership and Next Door Inc. reached out to Sierra Club Outdoors (SCO) to collaborate on a project to bring the health benefits of time outdoors to a primarily rural Latinx community just outside Hood River, Oregon. Hood River is known for its plethora of outdoor opportunities by the white community and mostly white tourists, but is seldom enjoyed by the Latinx population that has been living there for generations. In August, 2016, 18 new hike leaders received formal two-day training in outdoor leadership and basic first aid with a focused goal of creating more access to the outdoors for all people. This project created a space for the LatinXplorers to weave their histories and cultural heritage into outdoor experiences, and build new outdoor leaders in Hood River.

4. **Project: Lower Rio Grande Valley Active Plan Partners:**
   a. Cities of Brownsville, Harlingen, Port Isabel, South Padre Island, Ranch Viejo, Los Indios, Combes, San Benito, Laguna Vista and Los Fresnos
   b. Halff Associates Inc.
   c. Toole Design Group
   d. Adventure Cycling Association

The Lower Rio Grande Valley “Active Plan” promotes a unique blend of active tourism and active transportation into an ambitious vision for 10 communities within Cameron County, Texas, an area with perhaps the greatest health, obesity and socio-economic challenges found anywhere in Texas and the Southwest. Rather than competing, the communities responded to these challenges by coming together to create the ground-breaking “Active Plan.” In addition to large-scale recommendations like proposing an extension of the U.S. Bicycle Route System into Texas, the plan also locates active transportation corridors in places where local residents live, making embracing an active lifestyle much easier for all.
Individual Service Awards

The Individual Service Award honors an individual who has made outstanding contributions to the outdoor recreation profession, including teaching, planning, management, research, policy development, leadership, or innovative problem-solving and creativity. The award may recognize one specific contribution or a series of contributions.

Dr. Nick Morris

Nominated by Stark County Park District

Dr. Nick Morris was awarded the Individual Service Award for his exceptional advocacy and community outreach for the Stark County Park District as the Education Department Manager. Through the work of Dr. Morris, the Park District was able to position parks to implement public health initiatives and reach more communities through the promotion of eating well and leading active lifestyles. Beginning in 2014, Dr. Morris continued his community outreach initiatives when he established and became Program Director for the Academy of Collaborative Education after Stark Parks received a grant from the Herbert W. Hoover Foundation. Dr. Nick Morris is a community leader, as well as a champion of growth and development for the communities he represents.

Mary Donze

Nominated by Missouri State Parks

Mary Donze was awarded the Individual Service Award for her exemplary service and career-long commitment to protecting Missouri’s significant natural landscapes and cultural landmarks, while providing outdoor recreation opportunities to all corners of the state. Ms. Donze has worked for Missouri State Parks for over 34 years as a park planner, and her accomplishments include multiple Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plans, authoring various strategic plans and surveys for the state park system, and developing planning methodologies. Ms. Donze has also been very involved in urban outreach initiatives in St. Louis and has served for many years as one of the principle organizers of the annual Wonders of Wildlife (WOW) National Outdoor and Conservation School. She has also served as a mentor for new employees and has served on a department-wide strategic planning steering committee. Ms. Donze has been a member of SORP for 22-years, with 10 of those years serving on the SORP Board as Vice President of Operations and an At-large Representative, and has been instrumental in planning and coordinating the annual SCORP University training.
Arnold Randall
Nominated by Forest Preserves of Cook County

Arnold Randall was awarded the Individual Service Award for his remarkable sense of integrity, openness, leadership and enthusiasm for collaboration to the Forest Preserves of Cook County. In 2010, Mr. Randall was appointed to serve as the General Superintendent of the Forest Preserves of Cook County, one of the country’s oldest and largest conservation districts. Under his leadership, the Forest Preserves of Cook County has made significant progress in strengthening natural resource protection as well as improved outdoor experiences on the nearly 70,000 acres of public lands. Mr. Randall also works extensively across boundaries to achieve common conservation goals and improve outdoor recreation in an often-challenging urban environment. He is committed to ensure that the more than five million residents of Cook County have the opportunity to connect with the Forest Preserves. Recently, the Forest Preserves launched its multi-year Centennial Campaign and Next Century Conservation Plan to bring new and diverse audiences to the preserves and to safeguard these remarkable resources for the next 100 years.
The Development Committee’s focus in 2016 was on supporting existing SORP programs including Student and New Professional Conference Scholarships and Conference Program, expanding strategic partnerships, and initiating a Board Development Assessment and Fundraising Feasibility study.

The SORP Student and New Professional Conference Scholarships are a current SORP program that requires approximately $5,000 to support on an annual basis. For the first time in SORP’s history, the SORP Board with 100 percent participation, funded $2,500 of this program. This SORP Board commitment was a cornerstone for seeking additional conference sponsors. The Development Committee was successful in developing approximately $34,000 in Conference Sponsorships to ensure the success of the 2017 National Outdoor Recreation Conference.

The Development Committee recognized the need to identify strategic partnerships that align with existing SORP programs but also to align with new programs that can support SORP in its growth. To support this initiative, the SORP Development Committee began discussions with its Federal Agency partners (e.g. National Park Service, US Forest Service, and Bureau of Land Management) and members of the outdoor industry. These preliminary discussions included identifying needs of these respective parties and how those needs aligned with those of SORP and its members. These initial discussions will be continued into 2017/18 with the objective of solidifying formal agreements to provide support. SORP also responded to a Request for Proposals from the Foundation for Sustainable Parks and Recreation to support this organization in the management of the Christopher K. Jarvi Partnership Scholarship. SORP was successful in responding to this RFP and is currently negotiating an agreement with this organization to assist with management and oversight of this prestigious and important outdoor recreation partnership scholarship program. SORP also began discussions with the Sign Research Foundation to ascertain opportunities for SORP members to support this organization in their expansion of outdoor recreation research.

Board development focused on working with the SORP board to assess our capacity to lead as a volunteer organization. An assessment tool was provided to the board members and was reviewed during the Fall Planning Meeting. Additionally, to provide insight to the long term fiscal sustainability of SORP, the Development Committee organized and issued an Request for Proposals for a Phase 1 Fundraising Assessment. This RFP was awarded in June of 2017 and the findings of this work are anticipated by this fall.
Audit Committee Report

By John Baas

Committee Members: Josh Nadas (chair), John Baas, Rachel Franchina, and Margaret Bailey

The board held its annual audit meeting as part of the mid-year meeting in Scottsdale. Highlights of the audit were the following:

- The joint conference with RMS brought in more money than we had anticipated.
- Some expenses seemed high because of the fiscal year beginning and end dates.
- There was more board travel than anticipated.
- Conference facility costs were more than we budgeted.
- Field workshops costs more than we anticipated.

Some concerns raised by the audit committee included the following:

- Extra money was spent on SORP and RMS staff for conference, which was not anticipated.
- We underspent on scholarship money compared to anticipated.
- SORP experienced higher than anticipated costs related to web services, but underspent on training.
- As noted above, there are several disconnects between budget and spending that should be corrected in subsequent annual budgets.
- There was some discussion about the need for having an outside, independent audit conducted. This is a best practice for non-profit organizations, and we are aware of similar organizations (i.e. RMS) conducting financial audits.
- Due to the variation in conference revenue and the timing of when all conference related expenses are paid, it is difficult to have a “real time” picture of SORP’s net income. Not having a clear picture of our net income could make it difficult to solicit new funding sources since some prospective donors ask to review the balance sheet before donating to an organization.