RELIABILITY-AUTONOMY MATRIX
DEFINITIONS AND INSTRUCTIONS

RELIABILITY
Projecting and tracking revenue and expenses is key to managing any enterprise. In the case of nonprofit organization, boards and managers are under legal mandate to exercise their best judgment concerning what revenue will be available, and whether it is reasonable to expect a particular funding source will be renewed. The Reliability Rating is an indicator of to what extent and organization can predict its revenues year-to-year budgeting, staging, and program planning.

AUTONOMY
The autonomy of nonprofit organizations is directly related to the extent of their reliance on suppliers of funds. From government contracts to foundation grants, organizations know they are signing onto a variety of conditions that are attached to funding, comparable to “if you take the King’s shilling you do the King’s bidding.” These conditions can range from general targeting of an activity to extremely detailed specifications dictating the ingredients, personnel, time, place, and manner of activity. The Autonomy Rating indicates to what extent an organization is constrained by their reliance on conditional revenue.

INSTRUCTIONS
To analyze and organization’s revenue using the worksheet provided, first enter the revenue dollar amount and name of the funding source for the fiscal year ending in 2006. For example, enter “Department of Human Services Community Services Block Grant” in Column A, and the grant amount, “$490,130” in Column C. If necessary, it is fine to collapse several funding sources into one category. Just be sure to enter the number of funding sources included in each row/category in Column B.

Next, if the funding source is a federal, state, or local government agency, use your best judgment to estimate Autonomy and Reliability ratings by filing in Columns E and G with a rating between one and five. For specific Non-Government Revenue categories, Reliability and Autonomy ratings have been provided.

The worksheet will automatically produce two numbers for each funding source: a Total Reliability Score and a Total Autonomy Score, each on a scale of one to five.

The scores can help an organization understand the natures of its management challenges, and point to available strategies to offset disadvantages in its funding profile.

Note: When using the worksheet, you can change the Reliability and Autonomy Ratings for Non-Government funding sources if you feel there are special circumstances in your own situation and relationships.

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