

CASE STUDY: Hybrid Program Planning & Digital Enablement for Nonprofit Transformation



The Diehl Group | Consulting-Led Integration

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Diehl Group, led by Ellora Diehl, MBA, collaborated on a strategic hybrid program-planning framework designed to help nonprofit and faith-based organizations respond to post-pandemic disruption with clarity, structure, and modern operating systems.

The engagement focused on how organizations can move from outdated, intuition-driven programming to **system-based program design**—strengthening outcomes, restoring funding confidence, and expanding reach through intentional use of technology.

By integrating program-planning fundamentals with a practical technology strategy, this work positioned The Diehl Group as a bridge between mission leadership and operational execution—translating complexity into structured, scalable solutions for mission-driven institutions.

CLIENT OVERVIEW

The engagement served a cohort of nonprofit and faith-based leaders across the San Francisco Bay Area and beyond, delivered through a collaborative initiative in partnership with OCCUR (Oakland Citizens Committee for Urban Renewal), the San Francisco Foundation, and Carmen Bogan, MBA of *A Model Built on Faith*.

Participating organizations were navigating a rapidly changing environment defined by:

- Declining in-person engagement
- Shifts in donor and funder expectations
- Growing dependence on digital communication
- Increasing pressure to demonstrate measurable, data-backed outcomes

Within this collaboration, **Ellora Diehl, MBA, served as a subject-matter expert in hybrid program planning**, with a specific focus on **technology strategy frameworks that align digital tools with program design, measurement, and long-term sustainability**. Drawing on more than 15 years of cross-industry leadership experience spanning Telecom, Corporate Retail, Energy, Healthcare, and Biotech, she translated private-sector operational discipline into practical, mission-aligned guidance for nonprofit operating maturity and sustainability.

THE CHALLENGE: POST-COVID REALITIES FOR NONPROFITS & FAITH-BASED ORGANIZATIONS

Organizations were facing a compounding set of challenges:

- **Declining engagement** — fewer people attending services, lower giving, reduced participation
- **Unclear client base** — uncertainty around who is being served and how needs have changed
- **Outdated planning models** — programs built on history rather than current realities
- **Technology gaps** — limited confidence and inconsistent use of digital tools
- **Weak measurement** — insufficient data to demonstrate impact to funders

These challenges created a pattern not of motivation failure, but of **system failure**.

THE STRATEGIC APPROACH: HYBRID PROGRAM PLANNING

The Diehl Group collaboratively introduced a structured framework centered on **Hybrid Program Planning**—helping leaders redesign how programs are built, measured, and sustained in a digital-first world.

Rather than beginning with tools, the approach began with **program design fundamentals**, then aligned technology to support them.

The framework unified four core dimensions, supported by a diagnostic methodology to ensure recommendations were data-backed and intentional.

Diagnostic Methodology: Hybrid Program Planning Maturity Matrix

Before recommending technology or hybrid operating changes, the engagement applied a **Hybrid Program Planning Maturity Matrix** during the initial assessment phase.

This diagnostic tool was used to move organizations from operating within the **Cycle of Symptoms** toward a more stable, intentional, and fundable operating model.

The matrix evaluated readiness across four critical dimensions:

System Health (Program Logic Audit)

Programs were mapped against the **Input → Process → Output → Outcome** engine to identify structural breakdowns. In many cases, while inputs such as volunteers and donations were present, outdated or informal processes limited effectiveness—contributing directly to the “sideways challenges” experienced by leadership.

Digital Maturity (Technology as Vehicle Assessment)

Recognizing that the majority of community members are active smartphone and digital users, existing websites, communication platforms, and giving tools were evaluated for friction, accessibility, and alignment with current engagement behaviors.

Data Readiness (Planning Loop Assessment)

Organizations were assessed on their ability to **clarify goals, gather data, interpret results, and take action**. Many were collecting information but lacked the systems or discipline to translate data into decisions or program improvements.

Hybrid Sustainability

The feasibility of shifting from location-bound services to sustainable hybrid models—such as specialized digital portals, remote care, and hybrid special events—was assessed to ensure long-term viability rather than short-term experimentation.

Engineered Result

By using this matrix, the engagement moved beyond reactive problem-solving and provided a **data-backed blueprint** for strengthening programs, improving outcomes, and increasing funding readiness.

1. Program Planning as a System

Leaders were guided to reframe programs not as isolated activities, but as **operating systems** that drive mission and outcomes.

Using a clear planning structure, organizations examined:

- **Inputs** — money, facilities, staff, volunteers, equipment

- **Processes** — how services are delivered
- **Outputs** — units of service provided
- **Outcomes** — the real impact on people and communities

This created a shared language for accountability and continuous improvement.

2. Diagnosing the “Cycle of Symptoms”

A central diagnostic tool was the **Cycle of Symptoms**, which illustrated how poor program planning leads to:

- Insufficient or misaligned inputs
- Ineffective processes
- Low or unclear outputs
- Weak outcomes
- **Decreased funding and credibility**

Rather than treating attendance, engagement, or giving as isolated challenges, leaders learned to address the **system design** that produces those results.

3. Technology as the System Enabler

Technology was positioned not as a trend, but as a **strategic lever** for breaking the Cycle of Symptoms.

Leaders learned how digital tools strengthen programs by improving:

- Data collection and clarity
- Visibility and credibility
- Operational efficiency
- Giving access in a cashless world
- Collaboration across distributed teams

Technology was reframed as a vehicle—moving connection, information, and impact faster and farther than traditional methods alone.

4. Technology Strategy Framework

Technology Strategy Framework



To prevent random adoption of tools, the framework introduced a clear planning loop:

1. Clarify goals
2. Gather the right data
3. Interpret results
4. Take action

This ensured that every technology decision served mission outcomes—not trends.

HYBRID TECHNOLOGY ESSENTIALS

Organizations were equipped with a practical model for modernization, including:

- **Data Collection** — SurveyMonkey, Google Forms, analytics tools
- **Website Fundamentals** — clear branding, mobile design, donation access
- **Social Media Management** — Buffer, Hootsuite, automation platforms
- **Email Marketing** — Mailchimp, Constant Contact
- **Collaboration Tools** — remote communication platforms
- **Donation Software** — Givelify, PayPal, Zelle, CashApp
- **Design Tools** — professional visual communication

Rather than prescribing specific tools, the framework emphasized **functional categories** that scale with organizational size and capacity.

THE HYBRID MODEL: A NEW OPERATING REALITY

Leaders were introduced to a sustainable hybrid model in which in-person and digital engagement coexist:

- On-site services supported by continuous online platforms
- Remote care and specialized digital portals
- Virtual groups and demographic-specific programming
- Hybrid special events and online fundraisers
- Zoom-based baptisms, prayer services, and education programs

Hybrid was reframed not as a pandemic response, but as a **long-term operating strategy**.

RESULTS: FROM ACTIVITY TO SYSTEMS

Through this framework, participating organizations achieved:

- Expanded reach beyond physical walls
 - Improved operational clarity through defined systems
 - Stronger outcome storytelling for funders and boards
 - Increased funding readiness through hybrid engagement
 - Future-ready program design adaptable to ongoing change
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CONSULTING VALUE PROPOSITION

This engagement demonstrates The Diehl Group's ability to:

- Translate disruption into structured program systems
- Diagnose root causes through system design, not surface symptoms
- Operationalize technology as a mission enabler

- Equip leaders with practical, scalable frameworks
 - Build organizations that are not only impactful—but **sustainable and fundable**
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To explore how this framework can be applied to your organization:

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Location: Global / San Francisco, CA

Public Introduction & Community Impact

This hybrid program planning framework was introduced to the San Francisco Bay Area community as a proactive response to the evolving needs of mission-driven organizations.

The work was featured in the *Oakland Post* (June 8, 2022), highlighting the importance of strategic program planning and technology enablement for nonprofit and faith-based leaders navigating post-pandemic realities.

Source: Oakland Post, June 8, 2022

<https://issuu.com/postnewsgroup/docs/06-08-22-oakland-final>