Harnessing the Power of Data: An Exploration of Data Management Practices within a Nonprofit Organization  
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### Capstone Project Description

Nonprofits are under considerable pressure to gather and report detailed data on the populations they serve, due to reporting mandates and appeal to the growing information demands of its stakeholders.

With the Ronald McDonald House Charities® of Southern Colorado, this project aims to identify data management processes within a nonprofit setting and find data gaps to enhance organizational efficiency.

### Organizational Context

Ronald McDonald House Charities® of Southern Colorado  
- Served over 30,000 families since 1987  
- 6 full-time & 5 part-time staff  
- Volunteer force of 300  
- Serves Children's Hospital Colorado, Colorado Springs, St. Francis Medical Center, and outpatient facilities/clinics  
- Opened new 25,000 sq. ft. "house" in August 2019 to meet increased family needs

### Scholarly Background

- Amount of data amassed by NPOs is contingent upon available technology, user competency, and perceived value of data collection within organizational culture (Umar & Hassan, 2019)
- Data is most often collected for reporting mandates & to facilitate resource allocation (Umar & Hassan, 2019)
- Factors that stimulate collection of performance data in NPOs include "goal clarity, leadership support, innovative culture, and stakeholder involvement" (Rathi & Given, 2017, p. 1063)

### Methods of Study

**A) Qualitative & Quantitative Interviews**  
- Qualitative interviews were conducted either in person at RMHCSC Headquarters or via email, over a two-month period with all 6 full-time staff, 2 part-time staff, and 2 key volunteers, as well as with GRMHIS Software Developer  
- Key points of interviews were transcribed in MS Word  
- A quantitative question set (created by RMHCSC leadership) was also used to streamline interviews and gauge database entry / use on an individual and departmental level

**B) Database Training**  
- Entry-level training was completed of the GRMHIS and Volgistics to better understand usage practices and capabilities

### Findings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Database</th>
<th>Type of Data Captured</th>
<th>Strength(s)</th>
<th>Weakness(es)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GRMHIS</td>
<td>Family Demographics, Personally Identifiable Information (PII), Emergency Contacts, Health Status, &amp; Food Allergies</td>
<td>Easily generates statistical reports, Customizable, User-friendly</td>
<td>Does not have internal security features to protect PII</td>
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<tr>
<td>Volgistics</td>
<td>Volunteer Demographics, PII, Emergency Contacts, Training Status, Skill Sets, Length of Service, Hours Worked</td>
<td>User-friendly, Report generation, Ability to easily communicate with volunteers</td>
<td>Charges user fees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salesforce</td>
<td>Donor demographics, PII, Donation history, Billing Capabilities</td>
<td>Ability to generate financials, Low-overhead cost, Effective donor management</td>
<td>Not user-friendly, lack of technical support and training standards</td>
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</tbody>
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1) No Significant Database Overlap  
- All 3 databases house unique and salient data without significant overlap, therefore not resulting in duplication of administrative efforts.

2) Diverse Data Capture  
- A diverse breadth of data is captured within the databases

3) Volunteers Play an Important Role in Data Management  
- Volunteers are often checking in families and inputting their data into GRMHIS, relieving administrative burdens on staff  
- Key volunteers have been given greater responsibilities pertaining to data capture and cleanup within Salesforce and management of marketing mailing lists.

### Takeaways

- **Staff Satisfied with Databases**  
  Staff are satisfied with database capabilities, and use them regularly to perform specific administrative functions

- **Modernization of Data Capture**  
  RMHCSC has modernized its administrative processes by investing money and training into its database systems

- **Data Captured Informs Stakeholders**  
  Data captured within databases helps fulfill reporting mandates and satisfies stakeholder requests

### Recommendations

I. **Create Policy Standard for Salesforce**  
Create training manual on current data management practices within Salesforce

II. **Broaden Training Efforts of GRMHIS**  
Ensure volunteers & staff adhere to record entry standards for uniformization of data entry

III. **Consider Capture of Additional Data**  
- Email addresses of families can increase communication about programs/events, serve as another form of contact during emergencies, and be utilized for fundraising/marketing purposes
- Ensure that staff who regularly need reporting data to achieve departmental goals have the training and autonomy to access that data on demand in GRMHIS

IV. **Add Virtual Platform for Donations**  
To increase donations for the "Share-a-Night" direct mail fundraiser, include a web address to give donors a virtual platform to donate