



Tiers at a Glance

Benchmark Measurement	Standards Basic Recognition	Standards Basics Enhanced Recognition	Accreditation
MISSION, STRATEGY, and EVALUATION			
A. Mission and Impact			
The statement of mission is clear	x		
The mission is defined and approved by the board	x		
The organization has a value statement(s) that guides the work of the organization.			x
The organization's activities are consistent with its mission.	x		
The organization's vision statement is clear and connected to the mission.			x
B. Planning Strategically			
The organization engages in long-term planning activities (strategic planning, financial forecasting, sustainability planning, etc.)			x
The organization engages in short-term planning activities (annual planning, work plans, implementation planning, etc.)			x
The organization defines specific goals and objectives and these goals clearly support the organization's mission			x
The organization evaluates the success of the organization's programs (success is measured by mission fulfillment)			x
The organization's board and staff have reviewed the mission statement within the last 3 to 5 years	x		
The organization has identified critical strategic issues and trends in the community		x	
C. Organizational Evaluation			
The organization defines how it measures organizational effort (in terms of financial or human capital measures)			x
The organization evaluates its culture and values			x
The organization has clearly stated a percentage of the organization's effort devoted to each program			x
D. Program Evaluation			
The organization has provided a description of the framework for how each program will be evaluated. The framework should include all the elements below:	x		
The evaluation methods are cost-effective for the organization	x		
Quantitative and qualitative data is being collected (at Basics tier, data collection must have begun)	x		
The evaluation methods include input from program participants as part of the evaluation	x		
The evaluation methods measure the satisfaction of program participants		x	
The evaluation methods measure outcomes related to efficiency and organizational effort	x		
The evaluation methods measure outcomes related to effectiveness and outcomes for program participants. (These outcomes should be related to the organization's mission and strategic goals)	x		
40% of programs (as defined by organizational effort) are being evaluated in the manner described		x	
100% of programs are being evaluated in the manner described			x
The evaluation methods encourage candid input from board, staff, and program participants	x		
Information gained through program evaluations is used by the board and staff in organizational decision-making	x		
Evaluation efforts consider power dynamics within the nonprofit and the community.	x		
E. Strategic Partnerships			
The organization partners with other organizations to help meet its mission			x
The organization has a written procedure for determining who to partner with on what programs or issues and process for annual review of partnerships.			x
The organization completes due diligence on potential partners			x
Where the partnership would require it, the organization has in place a contract, MOU, or similar documentation			x

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LEADERSHIP: BOARD, STAFF, and VOLUNTEERS			
A. Leadership and Governance			
(1) Governance and Fiduciary Responsibility			
The responsibility for recording board minutes is designated to a specific person	x		
Board minutes demonstrate that the board understands its duties of care, loyalty, and	x		
Accurate and clear minutes reflecting board and committee actions are kept	x		
Board and committee minutes are distributed to all board members	x		
Committees who have been given decision-making authority report any	x		
committee actions to the full board			
When presented to the board, these committee actions are reflected in the board minutes	x		
The full board meets at least four times a year	x		
Board agendas are strategically structured around decision-making		x	
Board meetings are efficient, effective, and engaging		x	
Board and committee minutes are stored in a secure location and are backed up as needed	x		
Benchmarks related to board composition found below under section 2A5 (Board Member Independence)	x		
The board has established bylaws and other organizational governing documents	x		
The board periodically reviews the bylaws and policies (demonstrated by the minutes, board agendas, board calendar, etc.)	x		
(2) Executive Supervision, Performance, and Compensation			
The board has reviewed and approved the executive's compensation	x		
The board has reviewed the executive's performance	x		
The board helps the executive plan for improvement on areas of growth identified in the		x	
board has granted the executive authority to enforce management policies		x	
The executive has a board approved job description or contract.	x		
The board works in partnership with the executive to accomplish the organization's goals		x	
(3) Board Effectiveness			
The board takes responsibility for the operations of the board (demonstrated across the other benchmarks)	x		
The board has evaluated its performance at least once in the past two years			x
The board plans for improvement on areas of growth identified in the evaluation			x
Board members have a written job description or expectations	x		
Board members regularly attend meetings	x		
Board members participate in board and organization activities as outlined in written board expectations	x		
Board members participate in board committees if required	x		
All committees have a stated purpose			x
The board has a strategy for recruiting and selecting new board members			x
The board recruitment strategies address how the board will ensure that board members have an appropriate mix of talent, connections to the community, and diversity inclusive of the community served			x
The organization's bylaws outline a limit on the number of consecutive terms a board member may serve	x		
The board appropriately orients new board members		x	
New member board orientation includes expectations and responsibilities, an introduction to the Standards for Excellence code and any other code of ethics, values, etc.		x	
The board provides educational opportunities and leadership development for board		x	
When necessary, the board takes action to remove board members who do not comply with board policies	x		
(4) Succession Planning and Leadership Development			
The board plays a role in planning for the succession and transition of the executive	x		
The board has plan for board leadership succession and board member transitions			x
The board has planned for the succession and transition of the executive			x
If a new executive has been appointed or hired in the last five years, the board followed its succession plan			x
All employees and volunteers have a position description which outlines their work and responsibilities	x		
The executive has planned for the transition of key staff and volunteer leaders			x
(5) Board Member Independence			
Board members do not receive compensation, except allowable reimbursement of expenses (such as transportation or childcare). To foster inclusivity, modest financial support may be provided to a board member to allow them to fully participate in board activities.	x		
There are at least five independent and unrelated directors who care deeply about the mission, who are from the community, and who understand their fiduciary duties.	x		
If employees have a vote on the board, they are not in a position to exercise undue influence	x		

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(6) Board Meetings			
Note: Board meetings are covered above in Governance and Fiduciary Responsibility	x		
Note: Board agendas are covered above in Governance and Fiduciary Responsibility		x	
Note: Minutes are covered above in Governance and Fiduciary Responsibility	x		
Note: Committee minutes are covered above in Governance and Fiduciary Responsibility	x		
B. Leadership and Operational Management			
(1) Executive Functions			
The executive has established management policies as needed to provide for the proper functioning of the organization	x		
The executive assesses their own performance as part of the board's performance evaluation		x	
(2) Supporting the Board			
The executive provides accurate and timely program and financial information and resources to the board		x	
The organization has a procedure for setting and reviewing compensation for its employees			x
This compensation plan is fair and considers comparative elements (vertically within the organization, horizontally within the industry, or generally in relation to the economy)			x
The board has reviewed the compensation structure for the organization			x
The organization has articulated what contributions volunteers make to the organization			x
The organization utilizes this volunteer information in evaluations of organizational effort and program efficiency or in grant writing or reporting			x
(3) Organizational and Financial Sustainability			
The organization has a sustainability plan or has considered organization sustainability in the organization's other planning activities (program, strategic, financial),			x
(4) Managing Employees and Volunteers			
Note: these are required for staff at Basics tier and for volunteers at Basics Enhanced			
All staff and volunteers receive an orientation to their position and to the organization	x		
This orientation includes an introduction to the Standards for excellence and any other code of ethics or values statements	x		
The executive ensures that all employees and volunteers are regularly evaluated.	x		
The organization's employee policies cover all legally required elements	x		
All employees receive a written evaluation at least annually.	x		
The employee and volunteer policies outline the following requirements:	x		
Recruitment and hiring	x		
Screening of potential employees and volunteers (if applicable, background checks should be employed for employees and volunteers working with children and youth)	x		
Orientation and position-specific training	x		
Supervision and regular evaluation	x		
Recognition (for volunteers)	x		
Working conditions	x		
Telecommuting (if applicable)	x		
Employee benefits including vacation and sick leave, insurance, etc. (applicable only to paid employees)	x		
Grievance procedures	x		
Whistleblower policy	x		
Confidentiality of employee, client and organization records and information	x		
Employee and volunteer professional development	x		
Policies address equity, fairness and safety for volunteers and staff.	x		
(5) Personnel Policies			
The organization has written personnel policies that are reviewed and approved by the board every 3-5 years.	x		
The organization has written volunteer policies that are reviewed and approved by the board every 3-5 years.	x		
C. Diversity, Equity and Inclusion			
The organization has a clear picture of the community they serve based on mission and stakeholders of the organization.		x	
The organization effectively and intentionally creates a culture that demonstrates practices of diversity, equity and inclusion for program participants, board, staff and volunteers.		x	
The organization has an assessment tool to assess the organization's diversity, equity and inclusion in terms of policy, environment, programs, staff and board.		x	
The organization has a board approved justice, diversity, equity, and inclusion plan for the organization based on their assessments.			x

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ETHICS and LEGAL			
A. Ethics			
The organization's leadership has adopted a clear set of ethical principles, such as a code of ethics, code of conduct, or values statement			x
The organization's code of ethics, code of conduct, or values statement is readily available to all stakeholders (board, staff, volunteers, program participants, donors, the public)			x
Those representing the organization conduct themselves in a professional manner	x		
The organization has a grievance procedure in place that addresses problem solving and actions for addressing and resolving complaints effectively.		x	
The organization effectively handles complaints by program participants, employees, board members, volunteers, or others		x	
There are policies and procedures in place that protect the confidentiality and privacy of program participant's personal information	x		
B. Maintaining Legal Compliance			
The organization's 990 is filed on a timely basis and contains accurate information about the organization's operations (including UBIT, valuing in-kind gifts, lobbying, governance and management, related entities and related transactions)	x		
The organization is registered as required with all applicable federal, state, and local authorities	x		
As appropriate, the organization holds all licenses it needs to perform its programs and services	x		
The organization has a policy outlining document destruction and retention (includes a policy and a schedule)	x		
If required, the organization's facilities are ADA compliant	x		
The organization's employee policies cover all legally required elements	x		
The organization maintains a regular schedule of internal compliance reviews	x		
The board of directors is aware of the results of the regular internal compliance review	x		
C. Required Public Disclosures			
The organization complies with all federal and state disclosure laws	x		
The organization has designated a representative who is responsible for ensuring that the organization is complying with federal and state disclosure laws		x	
The organization makes its form 1023, form 990, and IRS determination letter available upon request	x		
D. Reporting Misconduct and Whistleblower Protection			
The organization has a whistleblower policy in place that allows employees, board members, volunteers to report wrong doing without risk of retaliation for reporting.	x		
The organization's board, staff, and volunteers are all made aware of the whistleblower policy	x		
E. Conflicts of Interest			
The organization has a conflict of interest policy. The policy identifies the types of conduct or transactions that raise conflict of interest concerns	x		
The policy sets forth procedures for disclosure of actual or potential conflicts	x		
The policy provides for review of individual transactions by the uninvolved members of the board of directors	x		
The conflict of interest disclosure statement provides a space for the board member, employee or volunteer to disclose any known interests that the individual, or a member of the individual's immediate family, has in any business entity which transacts business with the organization	x		
The disclosure statement is signed upon appointment or hire and annually thereafter by all board, staff, and volunteers with significant independent decision- making	x		
FINANCE AND OPERATIONS			
A. Financial Budgeting, Reporting and Monitoring			
The board approves the organization's budget each year. If applicable, the capital budget is also approved	x		
The organization's budget reflects the organizations mission, vision, values, goals and objectives	x		
Regular internal financial statements are prepared by staff	x		
The board reviews (at least quarterly) internal financial statements which identify and explain any material variation between actual and budgeted revenues and expenses	x		
The board reviews the budget to ensure there is enough income to pay its expenses	x		
The board reviews how much of the organization's resources are spent on program, administration and fundraising.	x		
If required, an audit is conducted by a CPA hired by the board	x		
The full board reviews and accepts the audited financial statements	x		
The board receives a copy of the management letter along with management's response	x		
The board monitors implementation of the recommendations in the management letter	x		

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B. Financial Policies			
The organization has board-approved polices that address:	x		
Internal controls	x		
Investment of the organization's assets		x	
Purchasing practices		x	
Unrestricted current net assets (reserves)			x
C. Personnel Policies			
Note: These measures were included in the leadership section above	x		
C. Administrative Policies			
Nonprofits have administrative policies in place that are needed based upon work mission and values.		x	
The organization has board-approved polices that address:		x	
Crisis and disaster planning		x	
Information technology		x	
Communications & Social Media		x	
D. Risk Management and Insurance			
The organization has a proces to regularly assesses risks that organization and its operation may	x		
The organization carries liability insurance or can provide a full board decision to opt out.	x		
The organization carries directors and officers' insurance or can provide full board decision to opt-out.	x		
RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT			
A. Resource Plan			
The organization has a board-approved resource development plan in place that outlines a framework for ensuring the organization's financial resources			x
The plan is regularly reviewed for alignment with the organization's budget			x
The plan includes diversified sources of income that align with the organization's values and			x
A process is in place for evaluating the cost-effectiveness of all resource development activities			x
The organization's fundraising ratio is more than 3:1 (it costs \$1 or less to raise \$3 or more). If it is not be able to explain. Smaller, younger organization may need additional time to meet this			x
B. Sources of Income			
The organization evaluates its sources of income for impact on the community and the organization, overall mission alignment, feasibility, and associated risk. (These may include individual contributions, foundation and corporate grants, government grants and contracts, fee for service, social enterprise, cause marketing, investments, etc.)			x
C. Fundraising Activities			
Solicitation and promotional materials are accurate and truthful and correctly identify the organization, its mission, and the intended use of the solicited funds	x		
The organization includes all state required disclosures on fundraising, solicitations, and receipts	x		
All solicitations and gift receipts contain the required IRS and state disclosures	x		
All statements made by the nonprofit in its fundraising appeals about the use of a contribution are honored	x		
Solicitations are free from undue influence or excessive pressure	x		
Solicitations are respectful of the needs and interests of the community the organization serves, the donor or potential donors	x		
D. Donor Relationships and Privacy			
The organization keeps needs of communities central to fundraising efforts	x		
The organization avoids situations where donors have undue influence over the organization.	x		
The organization's board approved fundraising polices should address:	x		
The donor's right to determine how their personal information is used	x		
The donor's right to remain anonymous	x		
The donor's right to request that the organization curtail repeated mailings or telephone solicitations from in-house lists	x		
The donor's right to have their name removed from any mailing lists, particularly those which are sold, rented, or exchanged	x		
The organization honors the known intentions of a donor regarding the use of donated funds	x		
E. Acceptance of Gifts			
The organization's board approved fundraising polices should address:			x
The acceptance and disposition of charitable or in-kind gifts that are received in the course of its regular fundraising activities			x
Procedures to determine any limits on individuals or entities from which the organization will accept a gift			x
The type of property which will be accepted			x
Whether to accept an unusual or unanticipated gift in light of the organization's mission and organizational capacity			x

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F. Fundraising On Behalf of the Organization			
Staff, board members, volunteers, consultants, contractors, or other organizations or businesses <u>fundraising on behalf of the organization are provided appropriate direction and oversight</u>			x
All paid professional fundraising consultants are properly registered with the <u>appropriate state authorities</u>	x		
Internal and external resource development personnel are not compensated based on a percentage of the amount raised or other commission formula	x		
PUBLIC AWARENESS, ENGAGEMENT AND ADVOCACY			
A. Educating and Engaging the Public			
The organization ensures that materials are provided in a way that is accessible to the <u>community considering reading levels, language access, and different abilities</u>			x
The organization publishes an annual report or makes readily available at its <u>website the following information:</u>		x	
Mission		x	
Contact Information		x	
Program activities		x	
Board members		x	
Key management staff		x	
Summary Statement of Financial Position		x	
Summary Statement of Financial Activities			x
The organization's contact information and key staff members are easily accessible through <u>means which are readily available to the public</u>		x	
The organization has a procedure in place for verifying the accuracy and sufficiency of <u>information that is distributed to the public</u>			x
B. Advancing the Mission Through Public Policy and Advocacy			
The organization has a board-approved advocacy policy which outlines the process by which the <u>organization determines positions on specific issues relevant to their constituents</u>			x
<u>The organization can articulate it's advocacy goals and activities</u>	x		
The organization is aware of critical policy issues that have the potential to impact <u>their community</u>			x
<u>The organization has developed partnerships around critical policy issues</u>			x
C. Engaging in Lobbying and Political Activity			
<u>All of the organization's activities are non-partisan</u>	x		
<u>The organization transparently reports its lobbying activities</u>	x		
If required, all internal or external lobbyists are registered with the appropriate <u>federal, state, or local authorities</u>	x		