



Standards *for* Excellence Institute

Application for Standards for Excellence Basics Recognition

1. MISSION, STRATEGY, and EVALUATION

This section of the application is designed to collect information about the core purpose of your organization, your organization's programs, and how you evaluate your effectiveness and efficiency in meeting your mission. We will ask what you do with the data you collect from your evaluations and how this information is utilized in decision-making, in short-term planning, and in planning for the organization's future strategy and direction.

A. Mission and Impact

Type the organization's mission statement. Describe how key organization leaders and representatives and community partners helped to shape the mission. Describe how your organization ensures that its mission statement accurately reflects its current priorities and activities? *

Mission: Provide the date and page number of the board minutes where the board's most recent review of the values and vision can be found. This approval should take place every three to five years. *

+ Select a file

Type the organization's values statement(s) and describe how it guides the work of the organization and the community it serves. Describe how your organization incorporates equity, inclusion, and diversity into its mission, vision, and values statements *

Provide a list of the programs and services offered by your organization. Describe how they relate to the organization's mission. Attach a document with the information which may include a link to the organization's website where programs are described.

+ Select a file

B. Planning Strategically

No Benchmarks are required in this area for Basics recognition.

C. Organizational Evaluation

No Benchmarks are required in this area for Basics recognition.

D. Program Evaluation

The organization should provide a response to each of the questions below regarding its plans to evaluate each of its programs. The organization should demonstrate that data collection has begun.

What data (qualitative and quantitative) does your organization collect and monitor? *

Describe how the evaluation methods include input from program participants. *

How does your organization evaluate the cost-effectiveness of its evaluation methods? *

How does your organization make sure that when evaluating programs, the process is fair to everyone? Do you consider items like age, gender, ethnicity, etc., to ensure that diverse experiences are included? *

How is evaluation data shared across the organization, including board, staff, and program participants when applicable? *

E. Strategic Partnerships

No Benchmarks are required in this area for Basics Enhanced recognition.

2. Leadership

This section of the application will ask you to answer questions about how the leaders of your organization contribute to its success. You will be asked to provide information about board operations, the board/staff relationship, and management functions. This section also asks you to contemplate how your leaders demonstrate cultural competency organization wide – in the organization's culture, the policies and procedures of the organization, the management of employees and volunteers, in its programs and services, and in the way the organization interacts with those that you serve.

A. Leadership and Governance

Governance, Fiduciary Responsibility and Board and Committee Meetings

How does your board ensure that its members are connected to the mission, its composition is diverse, and that board members understand their fiduciary responsibilities? *

What practices does your board use to exercise governance for the organization?

Include items such as:

- 1) how many members are on the board;
- 2) how often the board meets;
- 3) whether the board has delegated its authority to any committee;
- 4) method for taking and storing minutes.

Please describe these practices that your board uses to exercise governance for the organization? *

Board Annual Calendar

Attach a copy of the board's annual board calendar.

Board Meeting Minutes Please attach a full fiscal year of board minutes.

Attach any board minutes from previous years which document board review or approval of policies or procedures required in this application. Each required decision or action should be clearly documented in the minutes. Attach the minutes in chronological order with the oldest minutes first and the most recent minutes last

How many documents will you be uploading for Board Minutes? *

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8
- 9
- 10
- 11
- 12

Are there any additional minutes outside of the current fiscal year that contain approval of policies in this application? *

- Yes
- No

Has the board designated decision-making authority to any committee? *

- Yes
- No

Executive Supervision, Performance and Compensation

Describe the process the board undertook to conduct the Executive's most recent performance evaluation and the setting of compensation and benefits. Include who was involved in the process, what methods of evaluation were used, and if the job description was reviewed as part of the process. *

Provide the date of the board's minutes within the last year for when the review was discussed by the board. *

Describe the Executive's compensation package. List any resources used such as compensation reports. *

Executive Contract

If there is a contract in place, attach a copy of the executive director's contract.

+ Select a file 📎

If the contract is attached, provide the minutes where the board's most recent approval can be found.

+ Select a file 📎

Executive Compensation Policy

Attach a copy of the Executive Compensation Policy.

+ Select a file 📎

Provide the date and page of the minutes where the board's most recent approval of the compensation policy can be found.

Attach the tool used for the most recent evaluation of the Executive. This does not need to be a completed evaluation with data or final report, just the tool that was used. *

+ Select a file 📎

Executive Authority

Attach examples of the governing policies described above.

+ Select a file 📎

If these policies are attached, provide the minutes where the board's most recent approval of the attached policies can be found.

+ Select a file 📎

Board Effectiveness

No Benchmarks are required in this area for Basice recognition.

Board Job Description

Attach a copy of the board's job description, agreement letter, or list of expectations, ensuring that the document reflects equity and community considerations. Include responsibilities like attending meetings, helping raise money, being on committees, following the organization's values, and getting involved in the organization's programs. *



Provide the date and page of minutes where the approval or review of the board's job description occurred. *

Board Orientation Materials

What is your average board meeting attendance? (Example: Percentage of members who attend each meeting)

Board Committee Descriptions

Describe any active board committees, their purpose, how they are comprised (board members, volunteers, staff, both) and how often they meet. *

Board Successions and Transitions

Attach a list of current board members with term and dates for each board member. Clearly indicate which board members are officers, and what position they hold. *



Board Succession Policy

No Benchmarks are required in this area for Basics recognition

Executive Successions and Transitions

Describe the board's role in planning for succession and transition of the Executive. If there has been a transition in the last 5 years, what methods or processes were used to transition leadership? *

Has there been an Executive transition in the past five (5) years? *

- Yes
- No

Executive Transition

Do all employees and volunteers have a position description outlining their work and responsibilities? *

- Yes
- No

Board Member Independence

Are board members compensated/provided modest stipends as part of their service on the board? (This does not include reimbursement for expenses or payment for services outside of their board role.) *

- Yes
- No

Do any employees currently serve as voting members of the board? *

- Yes
- No

Are any board members related by blood or marriage? *

- Yes
- No

Are any board members related to staff members by blood or marriage? *

- Yes
- No

If any employees currently serve as voting members of the board how does the board monitor the employee's conflicts of interest? In addition, please describe how your board strives to maintain board member independence? Include language from relevant policies, such as conflict of interest, that informs the board's practices.

B. Leadership and Operational Management

Executive Functions

Describe the management policies the executive has implemented to ensure the proper functioning of the organization's operations. *

Supporting the Board

No Benchmarks are required in this area for Basics recognition.

Board Support

No Benchmarks are required in this area for Basics recognition.

Organizational and Financial Sustainability

No Benchmarks are required in this area for Basics recognition.

Managing Employees and Volunteers

Personnel Policies

Attach a copy of all personnel policies including, but not limited to: employee handbook, recruitment/selection/hiring policies, screening and background checks (if applicable), working conditions, supervision and regular evaluation, firing and separation, PTO and leave, benefits, confidentiality, grievance procedures, whistleblower policy, orientation and education, and growth and development. *

+ Select a file



Provide the date and page of the minutes where the board's approval of the policy can be found. *

Volunteer Policies

Does the organization utilize volunteers? *

Indicate the pages which address the following:

Personnel Policies

Recruitment, Selection, and Hiring *

Screening and Background Checks (if applicable) *

Working Conditions *

Supervision and Regular Evaluation *

Firing and Separation *

PTO and Leave *

Benefits *

Confidentiality of Employee and Organization Information *

Grievance Procedures for Employees *

Whistleblower Policy *

Orientation and Education *

Growth and Development *

Evaluation *

Recognition (Volunteers only) *

Do employees and volunteers acknowledge receipt of these policies to confirm?

Do employees and volunteers acknowledge receipt of these policies in writing? *

- Yes
- No

Are any staff related to other staff members by blood or marriage or living in the same household? *

- Yes
- No

Employee Orientation

How does the Executive oversee the functions of staff and volunteer selection and ensure that new staff members and or volunteers are treated fairly? How often are employees given feedback through a formal evaluation process and given an opportunity to develop and grow in their position? How are the principles of the Standards for Excellence incorporated into orientation, training, evaluation, and management of staff and volunteers? *

Employee Evaluation

Attach any tools or methodology used for employee and volunteer evaluations. *

+ Select a file 📎

Are all employee evaluations completed and up to date? *

- Yes
- No

C. Justice, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

No Benchmarks are required in this area for Basics recognition.

3. ETHICS AND LEGAL

This section of the application will ask you to answer questions about how your organization ensures its compliance with the laws and regulations that govern nonprofits, including public disclosure laws and whistleblower requirements. You will be asked to describe how your organization addresses conflicts of interest issues and maintains ethical practices in its governance, operations, and service to program participants.

A. Maintaining Legal Compliance

Describe how the organization stays current with information on laws and regulations that affect the organization? What methods are used and who is involved? How often are policies (including but not limited to: bylaws, financial, advocacy/lobbying, and employee policies) reviewed for legal compliance? *

Describe the process the organization follows to complete an internal compliance review. Who is involved? What steps were taken and what is the result? Describe how the organization stays compliant with your state's regulations that govern nonprofit organizations. Describe how the organization ensures that its facilities and programs are accessible to the community they serve. Describe any steps taken and reference the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) or other requirements. *

Internal Compliance Review

Attach a copy of all documents related to the organization's compliance review.

+ Select a file

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Document Destruction and Retention

Attach a copy of all administrative policies related to compliance, including: document retention and destruction, joint venture (if applicable), and filing 990s. *

+ Select a file

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+ Select a file

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Does the organization hold all up to date licenses required to perform its programs and services? *

- Yes
- No

Is the organization registered, as required, with all applicable federal, state, and local authorities. *

- Yes
- No

B. Required Public Disclosures

Describe how the organization ensures that it responds to requests for public documents, like the organization's Form 990, Form 1023, and IRS determination letter. *

C. Reporting Misconduct and Whistleblower Protection

Whistleblower Policy

Attach a copy of the organization's whistleblower policy. *



Describe how board members, staff, and volunteers are informed about the organization's whistleblower policy and processes. How does the organization protect those who "blow the whistle" and retain confidentiality of those who report improprieties? *

D. Conflicts of Interest

Attach a copy of the organization's conflict of interest policy and disclosure form. *



Describe how board members, staff and key volunteers are informed of the conflict of interest policy. Who signs an annual disclosure form? Which groups, such as the governance committee, review the conflicts of interest disclosures and monitor the potential conflicts in decision-making processes? Please provide the date and page of the minutes where the board approved the conflict of interest policy. *

Attach a copy of the organization's annual conflict of interest disclosure statements signed by board, staff, and volunteers with significant decision-making authority. *



When a conflict of interest situation arises, what steps are taken by the organization? Describe how this process might be different for conflicts involving staff or board, depending on their role, and what methods are used to monitor the conflict of interest (such as recusing for a decision in meetings). *

E. Ethics

Ethics Code

Describe how the organization ensures that its board, staff, and volunteers treat individuals involved with its programs fairly and with respect. *

Confidentiality Policy

Attach a copy of the organization's Confidentiality or Privacy Policy that protects the privacy of participant information. *



How is confidentiality or privacy enforced throughout the organization? Provide examples based on roles within the organization, and policies and practices followed. Describe what methods are in place to hold employees and key volunteers (including board members) accountable for following the policy. *

4. FINANCE AND OPERATIONS

This section of the application will ask you to answer questions about the finances and operations of your organization. Areas covered include financial budgeting, reporting, and monitoring; internal controls and other financial policies, personnel policies, administrative policies, and risk management practices.

A. Financial Budgeting, Reporting, and Monitoring

Budget

Describe the process for developing and approving the budget. How does the budget reflect mission, values, goals, and objectives and ensure there is enough revenue to cover expenses? Who is involved and what steps are taken? *

Attach a copy of the most recently approved organizational budget. Include a capital budget, if applicable. *

Provide the date and page of the minutes where the board's annual review of the budget can be found. *

Internal Financial Statements

Attach copies of the four most recent quarterly internal financial statements (budget-to-actual reports and other financial information) reviewed by the board. The documents attached should illustrate that the board monitors actual income and expenses in relation to the budget. Board minutes provided in the application should demonstrate this review on at least a quarterly basis. *

How does the board and staff work together to determine good financial stewardship? How does the board and staff work together to ensure the organization has enough income to pay for its expenses? What methods are used to demonstrate what percentage of the organization's resources are devoted to the activities of programs, administration, and fundraising? (for example: functional reporting, 990) *

Provide the date and page of the minutes where the board reviewed the percentages. This is required annually. *

Form 990

Attach a copy of the organization's most recent Form 990. *

Provide the date and page of the minutes where the board's annual review of the 990 can be found. *

Audit and Management Letter

Is the organization's operating budget over \$750,000/\$500,000/\$300,000? *

- Yes
 No

B. Financial Policies

Attach a copy of the organization's policies that address internal financial controls. *

Provide the date and page of the minutes where the board's approval of the policy(ies) governing internal controls can be found. *

C. Administrative Policies

No benchmarks are required in this area for Baseline recognition.

D. Risk Management and Insurance

How does the organization assess and manage risk? Who is involved and what processes does it follow? Does the organization have a formally adopted risk management plan? How does it determine which risks to mitigate through policy and which to mitigate through insurance? How often does the board review the organization's insurance coverage? *

General Liability Insurance

Attach a copy of the General Liability Insurance declaration page covering the current period. If the board has opted to forgo insurance, attach the board minutes documenting the board's decision. *

+ Select a file

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Attach a copy of the Directors and Officers Insurance declaration page covering the current period. If the board has opted to forgo insurance, attach the board minutes documenting the board's decision. *

+ Select a file

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5. RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

This section of the application will ask you to answer questions about the organization's resource development planning and stewardship. Questions will ask how the board and staff determine which sources of income they will seek, including income from fee for service activity, government contracts and grants, foundation grants, corporate partnerships, contributions or sponsorships, individual solicitations, long-term investments, social enterprise, and unrelated business income.

A. Resource Plan and Sources of Income

No benchmarks are required in this area for Basic recognition.

B. Fundraising Activities

How does the organization structure adherence to ethical fundraising practices concerning staff, volunteers, consultants, contractors, or collaborating organizations involved in fundraising activities? What policies and procedures guarantee compliance with relevant laws, including the proper registration of consultants with state authorities where required? *

How does the organization ensure that fundraising materials are accurate, honest, respectful, and clearly represent the mission? List which states you must comply with fundraising disclosures. List the websites and social media accounts which the organization uses to solicit donations online.

Solicitations

Provide an example of solicitation materials such as: individual donor or sponsor letter, grant proposal, cause marketing promotional piece, fundraiser event materials, or promotional pieces.

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+ Select a file 🗑

Receipts

Cash gifts *

+ Select a file 🗑

In-Kind Gifts *

+ Select a file 🗑

Gifts where the donor received something of value in return *

+ Select a file 🗑

C. Donor Relationships and Privacy

Donor Relations

Attach a copy of the organization's donor relationships and privacy policy. *



Provide the date and page where the board's approval of the policy can be found. *

D. Acceptance of Gifts

Gift Acceptance

No benchmarks are required in this area for Basic recognition

E. Fundraising on Behalf of the Organization

Detail the organization's commitment to fair and ethical compensation practices during fundraising efforts by elaborating how the organization prevents the use of percentage-based or commission-based payment structures for staff and consultants involved in fundraising. How does the organization maintain alignment with its mission, ensure equitable compensation, and avoid practices that could be considered ethically questionable? *

Has the organization hired any outside fundraising consultants in the last three years? *

- Yes
 No

6. PUBLIC AWARENESS, ENGAGEMENT, and ADVOCACY

This section of the application will ask you to answer questions about the organization's interactions with the public and lawmakers, including keeping the public informed about the organization's activities, public education and advocacy efforts, engagement in community affairs, and lobbying.

A. Educating and Engaging the Public

No benchmarks are required in this area for Baseline recognition.

Publicly Available Information

Include links for online resources below

B. Advancing the Mission through Public Policy and Advocacy

How does the board confirm the organization's advocacy efforts operate within a written advocacy policy? Elaborate on the criteria used to determine what positions the organization may take, and how it seeks to keep the public informed, and when to take action on issues. How often does the board review the criteria to ensure that the policy is in harmony with its values and mission? *

C. Engaging in Lobbying and Political Activity

If your organization is a 501(c)3, what methods does the organization use to assure the public that its activities related to campaigning candidates are non-partisan? Describe your methods for oversight relevant to your organization's tax-exempt status. *

Does the organization engage in lobbying? *

- Yes
 No

Does the organization engage in lobbying? *

- Yes
 No

If the organization has participated in lobbying as defined by their applicable federal, state, or local authorities in the past year, describe how these costs or activities were reported.

Does your organization use outside lobbyists? *

- Yes
 No

Items Requested as part of the Intent to Apply Portion of the Application:

Type of Application *

Basics

Please select your state *

Maryland

Total Operating Budget (round to the nearest dollar) *

\$ [REDACTED]

Number of full time paid staff *

2

Number of part time paid staff

2

Number of volunteers (not including board members). *

20

What is the Fiscal Year of the organization

calendar year

Intended Submission Date *

[REDACTED]

Did you or someone in your organization attend a Standards for Excellence training in the past year? *

- Yes
- No

If yes, which training? *

[REDACTED]

How did you hear about us? *

- One of our Replication Partners

Disclosures

Are there currently, or have there been in the last five years, any lawsuits or formal administrative complaints (such as Equal Employee Opportunity Commission, complaint pending before a regulatory body) brought against the organization? *

- Yes
 No

Has your organization been the subject of any negative or unfavorable print or electronic media in the last year? *

- Yes
 No

Is there any other information that the Standards for Excellence® reviewers should know about the organization which may affect if it will continue to stay in business in the future? *

- Yes
 No

Required Attachments

Articles of Incorporation

Attach the organization's Articles of Incorporation along with any associated Articles of Amendment. *

+ Select a file 

IRS Determination Letter

Attach a copy of the organization's IRS determination letter or other document describing your organization's tax exempt status. *

+ Select a file 

State Charity Registration

In the states where you fundraise, attach a copy of the letter certifying your registration with the State Charities Office (e.g., Attorney General, Secretary of State) is current/in good standing. *

+ Select a file 

List the states where the organization currently solicits donations. *

MD

Bylaws

Attach the organization's bylaws. *

+ Select a file 

Annual Report

Attach a copy of the organization's most recent published annual report. *

+ Select a file 

If the annual report is available online, include the link below.

Provide the board minutes where the board approved applying for accreditation or recognition. *

+ Select a file 

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