

# Standards Basics Application Form

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## READ THIS SECTION FIRST

### General Instructions

This application is designed to collect information about how your organization is implementing the Standards for Excellence®: An Ethics and Accountability Code for the Nonprofit Sector.

The responses in this application and the materials submitted are considered confidential information, will not be subject to public inspection, and will be viewed only by Institute staff and individuals involved in the review process (peer reviewers, committee members). All staff, peer reviewers, and committee members are required to sign confidentiality and conflict of interest statements specific to each organization reviewed.

Only organizations that have successfully completed the review process will be publicly announced. If we find your practices particularly exemplary, we may ask your permission to share specific items on your behalf with other member organizations which are part of the Standards for Excellence network.

### About the Questions

The questions below are in three forms:

- Yes/No
- Description or Narrative
- File Upload

Your answers to these questions will be judged according to the benchmarks and measures included in the self-assessment tool. The reviewers use the same measures to evaluate your responses.

You must provide a response to all questions. Your responses will be used to evaluate your organization's adherence to the Standards, so provide full and complete responses. Incomplete applications will be returned to the applicant. If one or more of the Standards benchmarks is not applicable to your organization, please respond N/A along with an explanation of the special circumstances that make it not applicable to your organization. For questions which require a file upload, upload a document that includes your explanation.

For questions which request a narrative answer, please try to keep responses to 1,000 words or less. The one exception may be the program evaluation section, which could require a more substantive answer, depending on the number of programs offered by the organization.

In Section 2, you will be asked to attach board minutes for the past fiscal year, along with any board minutes from previous years which document board review or approval of policies or procedures required in this application. If a given policy has not been reviewed or approved in the past two years, there is no need to attach the minutes. Simply indicate the date of approval in the space provided for each policy.

## **Mechanics**

You may move freely throughout the form, because no responses are required. However, before you submit your application, ensure that you have provided a response to each question.

Each question will allow you to upload one file. We strongly encourage you to upload PDF files instead of Word, Excel, or other software which may not be accessible by our volunteer reviewers. If you do not have Adobe Acrobat, there are several free PDF creators available online to choose from.

As you're working on the application, make sure you have saved your responses before closing your browser window.

## ABOUT YOUR ORGANIZATION

### Basic Information

Legal Name

Abbreviations, Acronyms, or Doing Business As

Employee Identification Number (EIN)

Website

Street Address

City

State

Zip

Phone

Total Operating Budget (round to the nearest dollar)

Number of full time paid staff

Number of part time paid staff

Number of volunteers (not including board members)

Fiscal Year

How did you hear about us?

- One of our Replication Partners \_\_\_\_\_
- A Standards for Excellence Licensed Consultant
- A Standards for Excellence Volunteer
- A training program \_\_\_\_\_
- A colleague or friend
- Web search

Other, please specify... \_\_\_\_\_

### 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

### Lawsuit Disclosure

If so, attach a description of any such lawsuits or administrative complaints (or any pending administrative complaints or lawsuits). Address the following: involvement of senior staff as subjects of lawsuit(s) board involvement responding to the lawsuit(s) finding of liability or guilt

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

- Yes
- No

### Media Disclosure

If yes, please attach a copy of the media along with a description of the organization's response.

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

### Sustainability Disclosure

If yes, please provide a full disclosure of this information.

## Required Attachments

### Articles of Incorporation

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

### IRS Determination Letter

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

### State Charity Registration

If required 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.

List the states where the organization currently solicits donations.

### Bylaws

Attach the organization's bylaws.

### Annual Report

If published, attach a copy of the organization's most recent published annual report.

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

Provide the date the board approved applying for accreditation or recognition. (These minutes should be included uploaded to this application in Section 2.)

## 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 your mission statement.

Provide the date and page of the minutes where the board's most recent review of the mission can be found.

List the programs and services that the organization provides and describe how they relate to the organization's mission. Feel free to attach a document or a link to your website.

### Program Description

Optional Attachment: Attach a description of your programs.

### 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

For each of the programs listed previously in the application, describe the framework for how each program is evaluated, including how cost-effective the evaluation procedures are for the organization. Note: For Basics recognition, 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.

Describe what quantitative and qualitative data is collected.

Describe how the evaluation methods include input from program participants.

Describe how the organization measures outcomes related to efficiency and cost effectiveness (related to the organization's mission and strategic goals).

Describe how the organization measures outcomes for program participants (related to the organization's mission and strategic goals).

Describe how the evaluation information is used by the board and staff in organizational decision-making about improving, expanding, or discontinuing programs and services offered

#### **Program Evaluation Attachment**

Required Attachment: Attach examples or samples of program evaluation tools such as examples of logic models, surveys, pre- or post-tests, sample data reports, implementation planning, sample dashboards or board reports, etc.

#### **E. Strategic Partnerships**

No benchmarks are required in this area for Basics recognition.

## 2. LEADERSHIP: BOARD, STAFF, and VOLUNTEERS

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 its stakeholders.

### A. Leadership and Governance

#### Governance, Fiduciary Responsibility and Board and Committee Meetings

How often does the board meet?

Who is responsible for board minutes? Describe how board and committee minutes are distributed to board/committee members and describe where board and committee minutes are stored.

#### Board Annual Calendar

Optional Attachment: Attach a copy of the board's annual board calendar.

#### Board Meeting Minutes

Required Attachment: Attach board minutes for the past fiscal year (at least four board meetings), along with any board minutes from previous years which document board review or approval of policies or procedures required in this application. If a given policy has not been reviewed or approved in the past two years, simply indicate the date of approval. 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.

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

- Yes
- No

If yes, to which committees has the board designated decision-making authority?

### **Committee Minutes**

If yes, Required Attachment: If the board has delegated decision making authority to any committee, attach the committee minutes for the past fiscal year, plus any demonstrating committee review or approval of Standards required elements. (e.g. Executive committee, Finance committee, Audit committee, etc.).

### **Executive Supervision, Performance and Compensation**

Describe the board's role in setting the executive's compensation.

Provide the date and page of the minutes where the board's most recent review of the executive's compensation can be found. This is required annually.

Describe the executive's compensation package.

### **Executive Contract**

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

### **Executive Compensation Policy**

Optional Attachment: Attach a copy of the Executive Compensation Policy.

### **Executive Authority**

Optional Attachments: Attach any board policies which grant authority to management in specific areas.

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

## Board Effectiveness

### Board Job Description

Required Attachments: Attach a copy of the board's job description or list of expectations.

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

What is your average board meeting attendance?

Describe any active board committees, their purpose and how often they meet.

## Succession Planning and Leadership Development

### Board List

Required Attachment: Attach a list of current board members. Clearly list all officers and provide the term-end dates for each board member.

Describe the board's role in planning for succession and transition of the executive.

If there has been an executive transition in the past five years, describe the organization's most recent executive search and hire process.

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

- Yes
- No

If not, provide an explanation.

### Board Member Independence

Are board members compensated?

- Yes
- No

If so, describe how compensation was set. (This does not include reimbursement for reasonable expenses).

Do any employees serve as a voting member of the board?

- Yes
- No

If so, describe how the board ensures that the employee is not in a position to exercise undue influence.

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

### Board Meetings

These requirements are covered in the Governance and Fiduciary section above.

## B. Leadership and Operational Management

### Executive Functions

Describe what management policies the executive has implemented to ensure the proper functioning of the organization's operations. (Many of these will be requested later in the application).

## Supporting the Board

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

Indicate the pages which address the following:

	Employee Policies
Recruitment, Selection, and Hiring	<input type="text"/>
Screening and Background Checks (if applicable)	<input type="text"/>
Working Conditions	<input type="text"/>
Supervision and Regular Evaluation	<input type="text"/>
Firing and Separation	<input type="text"/>
PTO and Leave	<input type="text"/>
Benefits	<input type="text"/>
Confidentiality of Employee and Organization Information	<input type="text"/>
Grievance Procedures for Employees	<input type="text"/>
Whistleblower Policy	<input type="text"/>
Orientation and Education	<input type="text"/>
Growth and Development	<input type="text"/>
Evaluation	<input type="text"/>
Code of Ethics/Standards for Excellence	<input type="text"/>

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

Do employees acknowledge receipt of these policies in writing?

- Yes
- No

Are any staff related to other staff members by blood or marriage?

- Yes
- No

If so, explain how your organization ensures that no supervisory relationship exists between related staff members.

### **Employee Orientation**

Required Attachment: Attach employee orientation documents such as an agenda or checklist

Describe the executive's role in the evaluation of employees.

### **Employee Evaluation**

Required Attachment: Attach any tools or methodology used for employee evaluations

Are all employee evaluations completed and up to date?

- Yes
- No

## **C. Cultural Competency**

No benchmarks are required in this area for Basics recognition.

### 3. LEGAL COMPLIANCE AND ETHICS

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 monitors and keeps up with current information on laws and regulations that are applicable to its nonprofit status and mission area.

Describe the process the organization follows to complete an internal compliance review. This may include, but is not limited to complying with laws and regulations related to IRS filing requirements, board governance, human resources, licensing, financial accountability, taxation, valuation of in-kind gifts, unrelated business income, document retention and destruction, related entities, data security, accessibility, fundraising, lobbying, and advocacy.

#### Internal Compliance Review

Optional Attachment: Attach a copy of any documents, policies, or procedures utilized to facilitate the organization's internal compliance review.

#### Document Destruction and Retention

Required Attachment: Attach a copy of the document retention and destruction policy and schedule.

The organization holds all licenses it needs to perform its programs and services.

- Yes
- No

The organization is registered as required with all applicable federal, state, and local authorities.

- Yes
- No

If required, the organization's facilities are compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

- 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**

Required Attachment: Attach a copy of the organization's whistleblower policy.

Describe how board members, staff, and volunteers are made aware of the organization's whistleblower policy.

## **D. Conflicts of Interest**

### **Conflict of Interest Policy**

Required Attachment: Attach a copy of the organization's conflict of interest policy

Describe how the organization ensures that its board, staff and volunteers with significant independent decision-making authority are made aware of the conflict of interest policy.

Describe how the organization ensures that the conflict of interest policies are followed and annual disclosures are signed.

**Conflict of Interest Statement**

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

**E. Ethics**

Describe how the organization encourages professional behavior on the part of its board, staff, and volunteers and how it ensures that its program participants are treated with respect.

**Confidentiality Policy**

Required Attachment: Confidentiality or Privacy Policy that protects the privacy of participant information

**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**

Describe the process for developing and approving the budget.

**Budget**

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

Provide the date and page where the board's approval of the budget can be found This is required annually.

**Internal Financial Statements**

Required Attachment: Attach copies of the four most recent quarterly internal financial statements (budget-to-actual reports and other financial information) reviewed by the board of directors. 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.

Describe how the board reviews the percentages of the organization's resources spent on program, administration, and fundraising.

Provide the date and page of the minutes where the board's review of the percentages can be found. This is required annually.

**Form 990**

Required Attachment: Attach a copy of the organization's most recent Form 990.

Provide the date and page of the minutes where the board's review of the 990 can be found. This is required annually.

**Audit and Management Letter**

Required Attachment: For organizations with operating budgets over \$500,000, attach the most recent audit and management letter, along with management's response (if applicable). If the organization has an operating budget under \$500,000, you may optionally provide a copy of the most recent compilation or review completed by an independent reviewer.

Provide the date and page of the minutes where the board's review of the audit and management letter can be found. This is required annually.

## B. Internal Controls and Financial Policies

### Internal Control Policy

Required Attachment: Attach a copy of the organization's policies and procedures which address internal financial controls

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

## C. Personnel Policies

These were addressed above in Leadership section.

## D. Administrative Policies

No benchmarks are required in this area for Basics recognition.

## E. Risk Management and Insurance

Describe how the organization assesses and manages risk.

### General Liability Insurance

Required Attachment: Attach a copy of the General Liability Insurance declaration page covering the current period. (or board minutes documenting the board's decision to forgo insurance)

### Directors and Officers Liability Insurance

Required Attachment: Attach a copy of the Directors and Officers Liability Insurance declaration page covering the current period. (or board minutes documenting the board's decision to forgo insurance).

## 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. and B. Resource Plan and Sources of Income

No benchmarks are required in this area for Basics recognition.

### C. Fundraising Activities

Describe how the organization ensures that any solicitations of individuals or corporations clearly outline the organization's mission, the use of the funds solicited, and all required IRS disclosures and state disclosures for solicitations (if applicable). The requested attachments will be judged for their and compliance with the Standards for Excellence code, the Internal Revenue Service regulations and disclosure requirements and applicable state charitable solicitation regulations.

If the organization raises money online, provide a link to web pages where donations are being solicited.

### Solicitations

Required Attachment: For each of the different sources of income pursued, attach one sample of the solicitation, marketing piece, or proposal, include individual solicitations, private or government grant proposals, sponsorships, cause marketing promotional pieces. Provide at least one sample.

### Receipts

Required Attachment: For individual solicitations and corporate contributions, provide a copy of three recent sample receipts sent to donors. Include one of each of the following: cash gifts, in-kind gifts, and gifts where the donor received something of value in return.

## D. Donor Relationships and Privacy

### Donor Relations

Required Attachment: Attach a copy of the policy which covers donor relationships and privacy.

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

## E. Acceptance of Gifts

No benchmarks are required in this area for Basics recognition.

## F. Fundraising on Behalf of the Organization

Does the organization compensate employees or outside fundraising consultants based on a percentage of the amount raised or other commission formula?

- Yes
- No

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

- Yes
- No

### Fundraising Consultants

If Yes, Required Attachment: Provide a list of the outside fundraising consultants hired by the organization in the last three years. Provide documentation that they are registered with the state's office that regulates charitable fundraising, if applicable.

## 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 Basics recognition.

### **B. Advancing the Mission through Public Policy and Advocacy**

Describe the organization's education and advocacy activities.

### **C. Engaging in Lobbying and Political Activity**

Describe how the organization ensures its activities are non-partisan.

Does the organization engage in lobbying?

- Yes
- No

If yes, describe the organization's lobbying activities.

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

#### **Lobbyist Registration**

If Yes, Required Attachment: If the organization's board, staff, volunteers or an external consultant has lobbied on behalf of the organization, provide evidence that they are registered with the appropriate local, state, or federal officials.