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## Guidelines & Principles: Assessment Tool

**Prepared for:**

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This assessment tool is designed to help you identify what your organization is doing well and create an action plan for addressing organizational challenges. Honesty is critical to conducting a thorough assessment and establishing real goals. Whether your results are a cause for celebration, make you mildly uncomfortable, or send up multiple red flags for potential crisis or conflict, please remember that the results belong to your organization. They are the first step in moving towards making your organization stronger, more efficient, and having greater mission impact.

[Read more about the Assessment Tool](#)

# On Fire

## Priority 1: Legally Required items for which you answered "No"

Research and consult with your board, staff and legal counsel. These items deserve your greatest attention.

	Subquestion	Question
	We have an annual audit, financial review, or compilation. (Audit required if spent over \$500,000 of federal money/grants) <b>US</b>	Financial Management: Required Reporting & Oversight
	We do not allow personal use of organizational funds or business credit cards. <b>US</b>	Financial Management: Required Policies & Plans
	We register our professional commercial fundraisers with the Iowa Attorney General, obtain a permit and update it as required. <b>IA</b>	Fundraising: Required Ethics, Responsibilities & Policies
	At least two-thirds of the board is independent, as defined by the IRS. <b>US</b>	Governance: Board Composition & Roles - Required
	We have an up-to-date registered agent and registered office filing with the Secretary of State. <b>NE, IA</b>	Governance Documents - Required
	We have established employee and volunteer record retention policies and procedures that are consistent with applicable laws and best industry practices. <b>US</b>	Human Resources: General - Required
	We have workers' compensation insurance. <b>NE, IA</b>	Human Resources: General - Required
	We adhere to all electioneering laws and regulation, including remaining non-partisan in position, communication and activities. <b>US</b>	Public Policy & Lobbying - Required
	We file accurate and timely reports on our lobbying activities. <b>US, NE, IA</b>	Public Policy & Lobbying - Required
	We meet all federal and state requirements for disclosure. <b>US, NE, IA</b>	Transparency & Accountability - Required

# On Fire

## Priority 2: Legally Required items for which you answered "In Progress"

These are items you need to finish. What are the next steps?

	Subquestion	Question
	We clearly and appropriately categorize our donated funds as unrestricted, temporarily restricted or permanently restricted in our financial statements and communications in accordance with the donor or grantor wishes/stipulations. <b>US</b>	Financial Management: Required Reporting & Oversight
	We have a whistle-blower protection policy in place that allows individuals to report financial misconduct without consequence for doing so. <b>US</b>	Financial Management: Required Policies & Plans
	We have secured the appropriate liquor and gaming licenses from the state (if applicable). <b>NE, IA</b>	Fundraising: Required Ethics, Responsibilities & Policies
	We clearly and appropriately categorize our donated funds as unrestricted, temporarily restricted or permanently restricted in our financial statements and communications in accordance with the donor or grantor wishes/stipulations. <b>US</b>	Fundraising: Required Accountability to Donors
	We have all required officers (president, secretary, treasurer, or as indicated in bylaws). <b>NE, IA</b>	Governance: Board Composition & Roles - Required
	We have up-to-date articles of incorporation. <b>NE, IA</b>	Governance Documents - Required
	We held an organizational meeting after incorporation to elect directors (if not named in the articles of incorporation), appoint officers and adopt bylaws. <b>NE, IA</b>	Governance: Board Policies & Procedures - Required
	We have established and abide by broad and encompassing anti-harassment and nondiscrimination policies. <b>US</b>	Human Resources: General - Required
	We have a written document retention and destruction policy that also covers electronic files and voice mail. <b>US</b>	Information Technology: Plans & Policies - Required
	We have workers' compensation insurance. <b>NE, IA</b>	Planning: Risk & Crisis Management - Required
	We ensure that the activities of the organization are nonpartisan. <b>US</b>	Public Policy & Lobbying - Required
	Our lobbyists are properly registered at the federal (if applicable) and state levels. <b>US, NE, IA</b>	Public Policy & Lobbying - Required
	We have a written, mandatory document retention and destruction policy, including guidelines for handling electronic files and voicemail, back-up procedures, archiving of documents and regular check-ups of the reliability of the system. <b>US</b>	Transparency & Accountability - Required
	We have a written conflict of interest policy that is signed by board members, staff and volunteers. <b>US</b>	Transparency & Accountability: Fairness & Equity Practices - Required

# On Fire

## Priority 3: Legally Required items for which you answered "Not Sure"

Discuss with your board, staff and legal counsel, then reclassify.

	Subquestion	Question
	Our annual tax returns and tax exemption documents are available to the public. <b>US</b>	Financial Management: Required Reporting & Oversight
	We file our biennial report with the Secretary of State on time. <b>NE, IA</b>	Financial Management: Required Reporting & Oversight
	We are prepared to provide financial disclosure information to any person requesting it, for all fundraising done in Iowa. <b>IA</b>	Fundraising: Required Ethics, Responsibilities & Policies
	We file a biennial report with the Secretary of State. <b>NE, IA</b>	Governance Documents - Required
	We have an up-to-date conflict of interest policy and signed disclosure forms for the board, staff, and volunteers. <b>US</b>	Human Resources: General - Required
	We have a personnel file(s) for each employee that includes all required federal and state documentation, as well as relevant employment, performance, disciplinary action and testing records with supporting documentation. This may be two separate files per employee—one accessible to direct supervisors and one held in confidence due to potential discriminatory information (i.e., health records, demographics, litigation, etc.) <b>US, NE</b>	Human Resources: General - Required
	When we promote public participation, we ensure that our activities are nonpartisan and within permissible lobbying limitations. <b>US</b>	Public Policy & Lobbying - Required
	We understand that we may support/oppose legislation subject to lobbying limitations. <b>US</b>	Public Policy & Lobbying - Required
	We comply with all legal, tax, financial and other filing/reporting procedures required by the state, including the biennial report and liquor and gaming licenses (if applicable). <b>NE, IA</b>	Transparency & Accountability - Required

# Important

## Priority 4: Strongly Recommended items for which you answered "No"

Research and discuss implementing these best practices with your board and/or staff.

	Subquestion	Question
	We have a clearly defined, written communication plan that guides both internal and external communications and supports our comprehensive organizational plan. The communication plan is directly related to the strategic plan and demonstrates accountability to constituents and the public.	Communication: General
	We openly communicate with other nonprofit organizations to share lessons learned and best practices.	Communication: General
	Our internal communication welcomes alternative perspectives and encourages participation at all levels in order to minimize defensiveness and build and maintain camaraderie.	Communication: Internal
	We have a media relations strategy that includes frequently updating all major press, television, radio and internet news sources, builds relationships with individuals in the local media, and coordinates messaging across media.	Communication: External
	In serving the public trust, we produce an annual report that contains information regarding activities and performance, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• an explanation of the organization's mission, activities, results</li> <li>• an explanation of how individuals can access programs/services</li> <li>• financial information, including income and expense statements, balance sheet and functional expense allocations</li> <li>• a list of board members, management staff, partners/supports and donors</li> </ul>	Communication: External
	Performance measures are realistic, specific, measurable and appropriate to the size and scope of the organization and its constituents. Measurement includes information on satisfaction, activities, results, and community input; both qualitative and quantitative data; and data on efficiency and effectiveness.	Evaluation: Methodology & Measurement
	We utilize external evaluators when appropriate and feasible. These evaluators follow the Guiding Principles for Evaluators set forth by the American Evaluation Association.	Evaluation: Methodology & Measurement
	Evaluation results are used to strengthen and improve our programs and activities by incorporating evaluation findings into strategic planning processes.	Evaluation: Use of Evaluation Results
	We share relevant lessons learned with other nonprofits and funding sources.	Evaluation: Use of Evaluation Results
	Board members understand how to read and interpret financial statements and the audit or financial review reports.	Financial Management: Reporting & Oversight
	In the audit process, the auditor is given the opportunity to meet with the board separately from management and staff.	Financial Management: Reporting & Oversight
	We have a board-approved investment plan that is in accordance with all legal requirements and is periodically reviewed and updated.	Financial Management: Policies & Plans
	We have appropriate internal controls and procedures to monitor and record assets received, held and expended.	Financial Management: Policies & Plans
	The funds we raise are used solely for the benefit of the organization.	Financial Management: Policies & Plans
	When undertaking responsibility of fiscal sponsorship for another organization, we do so only with board approval and full knowledge of its legal obligations and liabilities.	Financial Management: Policies & Plans
	We pursue and accept only the funds that are in alignment with our mission; that will not bring about adverse conditions for our constituents; and that we need to reasonably work toward achieving the mission over the foreseeable future.	Fundraising: Ethics, Responsibilities & Policies
	We have written contracts with fundraising consultants that cover compensation; responsibilities; acknowledgment of applicable fundraising laws, disclosure requirements and	Fundraising: Ethics, Responsibilities & Policies

	proper fund handling; and appropriate fundraising behavior and techniques.	
	We publicly recognize charitable contributions as appropriate and maintain donor confidentiality as requested. We never trade or share donor names with others unless given express permission by the donor.	Fundraising: Accountability to Donors
	The board includes members with the diverse skills, expertise and experience necessary to fulfill all needed board roles, including at least one person with financial expertise.	Governance: Board Composition & Roles
	Committee members are provided with clear job descriptions and understand their roles and responsibilities.	Governance: Board Composition & Roles
	We have an up-to-date board member policies and procedures handbook.	Governance Documents
	We have a board attendance policy and abide by it.	Governance: Board Policies & Procedures
	All board members receive relevant financial literacy, legal, lobbying and advocacy training as needed.	Governance: Board Policies & Procedures
	We strictly prohibit financial loans to members of the board or to personnel.	Governance: Board Policies & Procedures
	At a minimum of every two years, the board reviews the organization's bylaws, mission statement, articles of incorporation and corporate policies and amends them as needed to reflect organizational growth and development.	Governance: Board Responsibilities: Oversight
	The board has an organizational transition plan to maintain daily operations during a change in executive or board leadership.	Governance: Board Responsibilities: Oversight
	Board members are provided with fundraising training and support materials.	Governance: Board Responsibilities: Fundraising & Development
	Board members (who are not employees) receive no monetary compensation from the organization.	Governance: Board Responsibilities: Independence
	We have board-approved employee benefit policies, including medical insurance, retirement benefits, vacation and other paid time off, etc.	Human Resources: Policies, Procedures & Plans
	We have a volunteer engagement plan that fits our needs.	Human Resources: Policies, Procedures & Plans
	We provide clear, equitable procedures for taking disciplinary action with staff.	Human Resources: Hiring, Development & Retention
	We work to retain quality employees by providing and periodically assessing factors related to employee satisfaction, including fair compensation, training, and opportunity for advancement.	Human Resources: Hiring, Development & Retention
	We provide staff and volunteers with clear, current job descriptions and the tools they need to produce quality work.	Human Resources: Performance & Compensation - Required
	We have a technology use policy that addresses personal use of the organization's information and technology, such as computers, phones, social media, data, etc.	Information Technology: Plans & Policies
	We maintain and are ready to implement a catastrophic recovery plan that includes hardware and software inventory for insurance purposes, off-site back-up of key data and software information, and remote/alternative access in the event of an emergency.	Information Technology: Plans & Policies
	We have up-to-date virus protection, firewalls, and password protection.	Information Technology: Systems & Support
	All staff and volunteers receive ongoing training on those systems that are relevant to their work.	Information Technology: Systems & Support
	The board periodically reviews our mission, vision and values to consider societal and community changes.	Planning: Mission
	The plan includes clearly defined, measurable goals and objectives that are set by the organization to achieve our mission.	Planning: Strategic Plan
	The plan clearly identifies goals and performance measurements.	Planning: Operational Plan
	Our bylaws include board liability and indemnification language that clearly define the circumstances under which the organization will indemnify its directors, officers, volunteers and employees against claims arising from the performance of their duties.	Planning: Risk & Crisis Management
	We have a leadership/executive transition plan.	Planning: Risk & Crisis Management
	We assist our constituencies in public and civic engagement by encouraging voting and other participation in local, state and federal policy-making efforts.	Public Policy & Lobbying
	We encourage our board members, staff, volunteers and constituents to act as advocates and ambassadors for our organization and the entire nonprofit sector.	Advocacy
	We build relationships with elected officials,	

	community leaders and other nonprofits in order to strengthen our ability to effect change and impact public policy.	Advocacy
	We do not create strategic alliances purely to meet funding challenges.	Strategic Alliances: Assessment
	As appropriate, we foster relationships with similar organizations; state, regional, and national associations; government; and business to ensure effective use of charitable resources and to advance our mission.	Strategic Alliances: Relationship Building & Strategies
	We have researched and understand the tax implications and the potential exempt status impact of partnering with a for-profit entity.	Strategic Alliances: Relationship Building & Strategies
	We have a written memo of agreement/understanding for every collaborative commitment.	Strategic Alliances: Relationship Building & Strategies
	We have established and regularly measure clearly defined levels of performance in our activities, and we share those with the public.	Transparency & Accountability: General
	We provide multiple means for contacting the organization to request information and provide input.	Transparency & Accountability: Accessibility & Public Information
	We have a written code of ethics that our board members, staff and volunteers adhere to.	Transparency & Accountability: Fairness & Equity Practices
	Volunteer recruitment activities are targeted and specific, clearly identifying the work to be done, the hours to be committed, and the intended impacts of the volunteer activity.	Volunteer Engagement - General
	Each volunteer has a direct connection to an identified supervisor and understands with whom to communicate when the supervisor is unavailable.	Volunteer Engagement - General
	Volunteer performance is evaluated regularly (at least annually) with the supervisor through a formal process.	Volunteer Engagement - General

# Important

## Priority 5: Strongly Recommended items for which you answered "In Progress"

These are items you need to finish. What are the next steps?

	Subquestion	Question
	Our communication standards are clearly stated in writing and are part of the orientation of all employees, volunteers and board members.	Communication: General
	Our communications are clear, easily accessed and kept up to date.	Communication: General
	Management actively solicits, carefully listens, and respectfully responds to the views of internal constituents.	Communication: Internal
	We ensure that information provided to policy makers, the media and the public is timely and accurate, and that the social and political context of information is clear to avoid misunderstanding or manipulation of the message.	Communication: External
	We have a graphics standards policy that governs the fonts, colors, logo and other such details used in all external communications, and this is employed consistently.	Communication: External
	Our evaluation strategy is ongoing and includes input from a wide variety of stakeholders including staff, board, funders, community members, etc.	Evaluation: Methodology & Measurement
	We regularly monitor the needs and satisfaction of stakeholders and provide a grievance procedure to address complaints.	Evaluation: Methodology & Measurement
	Our programs take into account and respond to the experience, needs, and satisfaction of the constituents they serve.	Evaluation: Use of Evaluation Results
	We actively assess the usefulness and accuracy of our evaluation practices and modify them as needed.	Evaluation: Use of Evaluation Results
	We generate accurate, relevant and consistent financial reports which include the comparison of actual to budgeted revenue and expenses, and which identify and explain any significant variances.	Financial Management: Reporting & Oversight
	We have an audit committee of the board that does not share members with, and works independently of, the finance committee.	Financial Management: Reporting & Oversight
	We have a board-approved risk management plan that is periodically reviewed and updated.	Financial Management: Policies & Plans
	We ensure separation of specific financial duties as a system of checks and balances to the extent possible given the size of our organization.	Financial Management: Policies & Plans
	We project, monitor and adjust cash flow as needed to ensure appropriate cash flow.	Financial Management: Policies & Plans
	We comply with all Do-Not-Contact list laws.	Fundraising: Ethics, Responsibilities & Policies
	Compensation for fundraising personnel and consultants is not based on a percentage of funds or on other commission based formulas.	Fundraising: Ethics, Responsibilities & Policies
	We use funds according to donor intent and comply with specific conditions for donations.	Fundraising: Accountability to Donors
	We have an established process to recruit and select new board members that ensures board members represent the best interests of the organization, the infusion of new ideas and community perspectives, and the preservation of institutional memory via staggered terms and term limits.	Governance: Board Composition & Roles
	We have a code of ethics and conduct for the board.	Governance Documents
	Board meetings are held at least quarterly, and regular attendance is required.	Governance: Board Policies & Procedures
	We regularly and consistently monitor and enforce the conflict of interest policy.	Governance: Board Policies & Procedures
	Periodically, the board reviews its size, composition and operational structure.	Governance: Board Responsibilities: Oversight
	We have a crisis communication plan written in the board manual.	Governance: Board Responsibilities: Oversight
	Board members volunteer their time and raise funds from external sources.	Governance: Board Responsibilities: Fundraising & Development
	Each board member discloses all material facts and relationships and refrains from voting on any matter where there is a conflict of interest.	Governance: Board Responsibilities: Independence
	We have a set of personnel policies and procedures. All employees receive a copy and submit a signed acknowledgement of such.	Human Resources: Policies, Procedures & Plans
	We support the training and development of	Human Resources: Hiring, Development &

	personnel and provide them with opportunities for growth and advancement.	Human Resources: Hiring, Development & Retention
	The board conducts an annual performance review of the chief executive. The chief executive's performance assessment is based on organizational accomplishments, and the total compensation package is reasonable, reflecting his/her performance as well as industry standards.	Human Resources: Performance & Compensation - Required
	Our technology policy prescribes how all organizational information is gathered and stored, how accuracy is maintained, how and what information is backed up, and to whom information is made available.	Information Technology: Plans & Policies
	We have appropriate and up-to-date telecommunications equipment, compatible computer hardware and software, and internet access.	Information Technology: Systems & Support
	We monitor ongoing technological developments that have the potential to impact our information systems or mission.	Information Technology: Systems & Support
	We have a values statement that reflects our core beliefs and principles and drives the work we do.	Planning: Mission
	We openly communicate with counterparts in our field to share best practices, ensure effective resource allocation, and prevent duplication of services.	Planning: Stakeholder Input & Responsiveness
	The strategic plan reflects the results of an environmental assessment that includes information on strengths/challenges the organization faces, as well as opportunities for, and perceived threats to mission achievement.	Planning: Strategic Plan
	The plan clearly defines specific operational, program, financial, fundraising, communication, personnel and evaluation activities; delineates timelines; and assigns specific responsibility for implementation.	Planning: Operational Plan
	We work with our board to monitor the risk management plan on a regular basis and update it as new risks are identified or as circumstances change.	Planning: Risk & Crisis Management
	We have an advocacy plan.	Planning: Risk & Crisis Management
	We have an understanding of the current public climate and the resulting impact on policy.	Public Policy & Lobbying
	We advocate publicly on behalf of our mission and organizational values.	Advocacy
	We provide stakeholders with nonpartisan resources and training on issues important to us and our constituencies.	Advocacy
	We carefully consider how entering into strategic alliances will affect all parties involved and identify the key staff, board, and other stakeholders that should be involved.	Strategic Alliances: Assessment
	We identify, promote, and provide referrals to other organizations that may be better able to meet the needs of constituents.	Strategic Alliances: Relationship Building & Strategies
	We have written policies and procedures governing the activities of our chapters, branches, and affiliates.	Strategic Alliances: Relationship Building & Strategies
	We adhere to established, professional standards for the nonprofit sector, our subsector and our particular activity area(s).	Transparency & Accountability: General
	We engage all stakeholders in the development of goals and service delivery methods.	Transparency & Accountability: Accessibility & Public Information
	We ensure confidentiality and non-discriminatory service to our constituents.	Transparency & Accountability: Fairness & Equity Practices
	We have a written position description for every volunteer position.	Volunteer Engagement - General
	We have an ongoing orientation/communication plan to keep volunteers apprised of changes within the organization as well as enhanced opportunities for volunteer involvement.	Volunteer Engagement - General
	The volunteer program as a whole is evaluated annually to assess cost and benefits of the program, to document impact on mission achievement, and to direct future volunteer initiatives.	Volunteer Engagement - General

# Important

## Priority 6: Strongly Recommended items for which you answered "Not Sure"

Discuss with your board and/or staff and reclassify.

	Subquestion	Question
	Our communication plan includes goals, target audiences, key messages, strategies, tools, intended outcomes and the means to evaluate results.	Communication: General
	We copyright or trademark organizational materials as appropriate.	Communication: General
	We exchange information via regularly scheduled and attended meetings, regularly printed and/or e-mailed informational updates, and reports on meetings of the board of directors and its committees.	Communication: Internal
	The line of communication between staff and the board of directors is clearly defined and well understood.	Communication: Internal
	We have written policies and procedures for developing public statements and positions on issues, and all internal constituents are aware of and trained on these statements, positions, and policies and procedures.	Communication: External
	We ensure that board and staff distinguish between personal opinion and organizational positions.	Communication: External
	We employ appropriate data collection and analysis tools in order to produce accurate, timely, and useful evaluation information.	Evaluation: Methodology & Measurement
	Information that is collected from persons served is kept confidential, and we never identify specific persons served unless we have their written permission.	Evaluation: Methodology & Measurement
	We have a written memo of agreement/contract with every external evaluator and/or consultant.	Evaluation: Methodology & Measurement
	Measurement informs the operational plan and is used to evaluate organizational effectiveness.	Evaluation: Use of Evaluation Results
	We provide training to all board members on how to read and understand nonprofit financial statements, including an audit or financial review report.	Financial Management: Reporting & Oversight
	The board reviews and approves the organization's budget annually.	Financial Management: Reporting & Oversight
	We have a board-approved credit card policy for the organization.	Financial Management: Policies & Plans
	We have contract management policies & procedures appropriate for the size and activities of our organization (if applicable).	Financial Management: Policies & Plans
	Our annual budget devotes a significant portion of resources to programs that pursue our mission. It also provides sufficient resources for effective administration and for fundraising activities (if applicable).	Financial Management: Policies & Plans
	We plan for a balanced budget. If a budget deficit occurs, the board is informed in a timely manner and participates fully in determining a plan to restore the budget to a balanced state.	Financial Management: Policies & Plans
	We expend funds responsibly and ensure that funds are used according to funders' wishes and requirements.	Financial Management: Policies & Plans
	We work towards diversifying our funding sources as much as possible in an effort to strengthen the organization's sustainability and to lessen the impact of a potential loss of a significant amount of funding from any one source.	Financial Management: Policies & Plans
	The board assumes overall responsibility for raising sufficient funds to meet our budgeted objectives. This includes 100% of board members financially supporting the organization in accordance with a written board giving policy, and board members raising funds from external sources.	Fundraising: Ethics, Responsibilities & Policies
	We work towards diversifying our funding sources as much as possible in an effort to strengthen the organization's sustainability and to lessen the impact of a potential loss of a significant amount of funding from any one source.	Fundraising: Ethics, Responsibilities & Policies
	We are familiar with the legal distinctions between staff, consultants, and contract employees, and ensure that we have the ability to adequately manage and supervise fundraising activity conducted by contractual providers.	Fundraising: Ethics, Responsibilities & Policies

We have a fundraising budget and system to track expenditures.	Fundraising: Ethics, Responsibilities & Policies
We have policies in place regarding the receipt, disposal and management of charitable gifts and grants.	Fundraising: Accountability to Donors
We strive to have board representation that reflects the diversity of our community and constituency.	Governance: Board Composition & Roles
Board members are provided with clear job descriptions and understand their roles and responsibilities.	Governance: Board Composition & Roles
We have an up-to-date committee handbook with each committee's charter (or other clear statement of authority and purpose), policies and procedures.	Governance Documents
The board follows the voting procedures as defined in the bylaws.	Governance: Board Policies & Procedures
We have an up-to-date board calendar with meetings and organizational events.	Governance: Board Policies & Procedures
We have a process for educating board members to ensure they can carry out their oversight, fundraising and independence responsibilities.	Governance: Board Policies & Procedures
We keep as permanent records all financial information for the organization.	Governance: Board Policies & Procedures
The board actively participates in and approves the organization's strategic plan.	Governance: Board Responsibilities: Oversight
The board has a succession plan for the chief executive, board members and key staff.	Governance: Board Responsibilities: Oversight
We provide training and education so that board members can advocate for the organization.	Governance: Board Responsibilities: Fundraising & Development
We have a set of volunteer policies and procedures; all volunteers receive a copy and submit a signed acknowledgement of such.	Human Resources: Policies, Procedures & Plans
We have all appropriate documents for our independent contractors on file.	Human Resources: Policies, Procedures & Plans
We employ individuals and utilize the help of volunteers suitable for the positions they occupy and committed to the mission, values and objectives of our organization.	Human Resources: Hiring, Development & Retention
We conduct background checks on those who come in contact with vulnerable populations, who perform financial duties, or who serve in other sensitive areas.	Human Resources: Hiring, Development & Retention
We evaluate staff job performance annually.	Human Resources: Performance & Compensation - Required
We have a technology security policy, including measures to ensure security if employees or volunteers have remote access to proprietary/confidential information.	Information Technology: Plans & Policies
Our technology plan includes regular assessments and funds for maintenance and making necessary technology upgrades.	Information Technology: Plans & Policies
More than one individual is responsible for maintaining our information systems. (One person should be primary and at least one should be back-up).	Information Technology: Systems & Support
We allocate sufficient resources to train our board, employees, and volunteers in the use of technology equipment.	Information Technology: Systems & Support
Our board and staff can and do articulate a shared vision for the organization.	Planning: Mission
The plan is tied to an approved budget.	Planning: Operational Plan
We have a crisis communication plan.	Planning: Risk & Crisis Management
We have a fund development (diversification of funds) plan.	Planning: Risk & Crisis Management
We ensure that board and staff distinguish between personal opinion and organizational positions.	Public Policy & Lobbying
We ensure that individuals who are authorized to act as advocates and ambassadors for our organization are knowledgeable and prepared to speak on our behalf.	Advocacy
For our public policy and advocacy activities, we have adopted a written policy that clarifies the scope of the work, as well as the time and resources to be allocated to those activities.	Advocacy
We only create alliances with competent and functioning organizations.	Strategic Alliances: Assessment
Decisions regarding alliances are consistent with the strategic goals of our organization and will positively impact our brand and image.	Strategic Alliances: Assessment
We receive assistance from larger, more experienced nonprofits through alliances and resource sharing.	Strategic Alliances: Relationship Building & Strategies
We openly communicate with other nonprofits to gather information and share lessons learned and best practices.	Strategic Alliances: Relationship Building & Strategies

	We ensure board approval with full knowledge of our legal obligations and liabilities when undertaking responsibility for fiscal sponsorship of another organization. (Note: the IRS views fiscal agency differently from fiscal sponsorship; get legal advice before proceeding).	Strategic Alliances: Relationship Building & Strategies
	We work to establish communication channels, mutual understanding, and natural alliances among the government, nonprofit and for-profit sectors.	Strategic Alliances: Relationship Building & Strategies
	We make information about our operations, governance, finances, programs and activities widely available to the public in the form of an annual report	Transparency & Accountability; Accessibility & Public Information
	We have established screening procedures to ensure the safety of clients and minimize potential liability to the organization.	Volunteer Engagement - General
	We have current written volunteer policies and procedures that are accessible to all volunteers, including attendance policies, confidentiality policies, grievance procedures, and other key information to minimize risk and maximize effectiveness.	Volunteer Engagement - General
	We have a clear and documented grievance procedure whereby volunteers may address issues including (but not limited to) harassment and discrimination.	Volunteer Engagement - General
	We have a thoughtful recognition system which provides individual and group recognition and celebrates the impact of volunteers.	Volunteer Engagement - General

# Excellent

## Priority 7: Legally Required items for which you answered "Yes"

Monitor these items to maintain your 501c3 status and good standing in your community. Identify ongoing filings, board activities, etc. required to remain in compliance.

	Subquestion	Question
	We meet all federal requirements for public disclosure. <b>US</b>	Communication: Required
	We comply with all financial reporting and tax laws, including withholding and payment of federal and state income taxes, Social Security payroll taxes and unrelated business tax reporting (if applicable). <b>US</b>	Financial Management: Required Reporting & Oversight
	We have a policy in accordance with federal law to handle, store and destroy financial records and supporting documentation. <b>US</b>	Financial Management: Required Policies & Plans
	We have a board-approved lobbying expense policy and follow all procedures and filings required by law (if applicable). <b>US, NE, IA</b>	Financial Management: Required Policies & Plans
	We comply with all federal, state and local laws and regulations concerning fundraising practices. <b>US, NE, IA</b>	Fundraising: Required Ethics, Responsibilities & Policies
	We provide appropriate acknowledgement and receipts to donors, in accordance with IRS code. <b>US</b>	Fundraising: Required Accountability to Donors
	We have the required number of board members (3 in NE, 1 in IA). <b>NE, IA</b>	Governance: Board Composition & Roles - Required
	We have our IRS determination letter. <b>US</b>	Governance Documents - Required
	We have an up-to-date conflict of interest policy and signed disclosure forms for the board, staff, and volunteers. <b>US</b>	Governance: Board Policies & Procedures - Required
	We comply with all federal, state and local employment laws in hiring and employing personnel. <b>US, NE, IA</b>	Human Resources: General - Required
	All compensation paid is reasonable and substantiated. <b>US</b>	Human Resources: Performance & Compensation - Required
	We are aware of and in compliance with all regulations and industry standards relating to the types of data the organization collects, transmits, and stores. Examples include health care information under HIPAA, credit card information under PCI DSS, and online information from children under COPPA. <b>US</b>	Information Technology: Plans & Policies - Required
	We have all necessary/appropriate insurance (i.e., general liability, property, directors and officers, etc.) to protect our organization, employees, volunteers and board members. <b>US, NE, IA</b>	Planning: Risk & Crisis Management - Required
	We are aware of the 501(h) election. <b>US</b>	Public Policy & Lobbying - Required
	When we engage in lobbying, we adhere to legal expenditure limitations. <b>US</b>	Public Policy & Lobbying - Required
	We comply with all legal, tax, financial and other filing/reporting procedures required by the federal government, including the 990. <b>US</b>	Transparency & Accountability - Required
	We have our EIN, IRS determination letter, articles of incorporation, bylaws, resolutions, board meeting minutes, records of actions taken by the board, accounting records, current list of board members and current membership list (if applicable) as readily accessible permanent records. <b>US, NE, IA</b>	Transparency & Accountability: Accessibility & Public Information - Required
	We have a whistleblower policy with specific procedures for reporting violations of organizational policy or applicable laws and ensure that those making such reports are protected from repercussions. <b>US</b>	Transparency & Accountability: Fairness & Equity Practices - Required

# Excellent

## Priority 8: Strongly Recommended items for which you answered "Yes"

Congratulations on your commitment to best practices! Monitor these practices and identify ongoing activities that will ensure they continue and strengthen.

	Subquestion	Question
	Our organizational communications adhere to the highest ethical and professional standards, as well as any industry specific standards that may exist, including principles of transparency, fairness and honesty.	Communication: General
	We have a system in place for promptly and respectfully responding to grievances or complaints from both internal and external sources.	Communication: General
	Our internal communications are guided by clear policies and practices.	Communication: Internal
	Our constituents are provided with ongoing opportunities to interact with the board and management regarding the organization's activities.	Communication: External
	We have defined, ongoing and sustainable procedures in place for evaluating our programs, procedures, and outcomes in relation to our mission.	Evaluation: Methodology & Measurement
	We have a thorough understanding of the community in which we operate, including the needs of constituents, services provided by the government and other nonprofits, and applicable trends (i.e., economic, demographic, etc.).	Evaluation: Methodology & Measurement
	We train our personnel in evaluation methods to improve their understanding and utilization of data developed from evaluation activities.	Evaluation: Use of Evaluation Results
	We keep complete, current and accurate financial records with supporting documentation in a manner that complies with standard accounting practices from FASB or GASB.	Financial Management: Reporting & Oversight
	Financial audits are approved by the board and certified by the Executive Director and CFO.	Financial Management: Reporting & Oversight
	We have a board-approved financial management policy that is periodically reviewed and updated.	Financial Management: Policies & Plans
	We have a clear procurement and purchasing policy, including signature authority, for the organization.	Financial Management: Policies & Plans
	We maintain a financial reserve equal to three to six months of operating expenses.	Financial Management: Policies & Plans
	Our board and Executive Director are familiar with the Association of Fundraising Professionals' Code of Ethical Principles and Standards of Professional Practice, and ensure that all fundraising professionals acting on behalf of the organization adhere to these.	Fundraising: Ethics, Responsibilities & Policies
	Fundraising communications include clear, accurate, honest information about the organization, its activities and the intended use of funds.	Fundraising: Ethics, Responsibilities & Policies
	We conduct our fundraising activities in a manner that upholds the public trust in stewardship of contributed funds.	Fundraising: Accountability to Donors
	The board has no more than one employee (typically the chief executive) serving on the board, and he/she does not serve as the chair, vice-chair, secretary or treasurer.	Governance: Board Composition & Roles
	We have up-to-date bylaws which include board liability & indemnification language.	Governance Documents
	We have a clear policy on board member term limits, rotation (term staggering), number of consecutive terms, and removal written in our bylaws, and we abide by these.	Governance: Board Policies & Procedures
	We educate the board and staff about what constitutes conflict of interest.	Governance: Board Policies & Procedures
	The board conducts an annual evaluation of itself.	Governance: Board Responsibilities: Oversight
	All board members make personal financial contributions to the organization.	Governance: Board Responsibilities: Fundraising & Development
	Board members make decisions in the best interest of the organization and not in the interest of another entity, including themselves.	Governance: Board Responsibilities: Independence
	Our work environment is safe and healthy.	Human Resources: General
	We have a plan in place for the succession of the executive director, key board leadership and key employees.	Human Resources: Policies, Procedures & Plans
	We have a formal orientation program for new employees.	Human Resources: Hiring, Development & Retention

	The board periodically reviews our organization's compensation structure (including benefits) using industry-based salary and benefit surveys.	Human Resources: Performance & Compensation - Required
	We have a written technology plan that is integrated into our short-term and long-term strategic and operational plans.	Information Technology: Plans & Policies
	We have reliable information systems in place that provide timely, accurate, and relevant information to facilitate workflow and track our data.	Information Technology: Systems & Support
	We have a clear, motivating vision statement about the organization's future that reflects a world enhanced by the accomplishment of our mission.	Planning: Mission
	When planning activities, our organization is responsive to community needs and solicits input from a variety of sources with varying perspectives: staff, board members, funders and other constituents.	Planning: Stakeholder Input & Responsiveness
	We create a written strategic plan every three to five years.	Planning: Strategic Plan
	We create a written operational plan every year which aligns with the strategic plan and specifies how organizational activities will be implemented.	Planning: Operational Plan
	We have a risk management plan that protects the organization's assets—its property, financial and human resources, documents, programmatic content and material.	Planning: Risk & Crisis Management
	We participate in and support the formation and amendment of public policy consistent with our mission.	Public Policy & Lobbying
	We proactively develop strategies to address key issues facing our organization, its constituencies and the nonprofit sector, and we include our stakeholders in those efforts.	Advocacy
	We are open to strategic alliances as a means to help achieve goals, improve effectiveness and efficiency, ensure effective use of resources, improve services, and strengthen community connections with constituents and others.	Strategic Alliances: Assessment
	We are aware of and coordinate with other organizations providing similar or complementary services in our community.	Strategic Alliances: Relationship Building & Strategies
	Our board of directors is open to consolidating or merging with other organizations if it would be in the best interest of our constituents, community, or service area.	Strategic Alliances: Relationship Building & Strategies
	We use our resources responsibly for the purpose of serving the public interest. Financial audits are approved by the organization's board and certified by the Executive Director and the CFO.	Transparency & Accountability: General
	We provide our constituents with ongoing opportunities to interact with the board and management regarding the organization's activities.	Transparency & Accountability: Accessibility & Public Information
	Information regarding our fees and services is readily available to the public.	Transparency & Accountability: Fairness & Equity Practices
	We have a volunteer engagement plan	Volunteer Engagement - General
	We have a system whereby volunteers are oriented and trained for the specific skills and knowledge needed to perform their volunteer roles, as well as to understand the limits of their work and the latitude they may have for decision-making on behalf of the organization.	Volunteer Engagement - General

# Not Relevant?

## Priority 9: All items for which you answered "N/A"

These items are not relevant to your organization. If you have second thoughts about their relevance, research them and consult with your colleagues and legal counsel.

	Subquestion	Question
	Our communication plan ensures that we are making the appropriate information available to the public and communicating in a clear and timely manner with those who request information.	Communication: General
	We have an understood forum for suggestions.	Communication: Internal
	We have one or more spokespersons that are authorized to make public statements on behalf of the organization and all internal constituents are aware of these spokespersons.	Communication: External
	We conduct evaluations in ways that are culturally sensitive and appropriate to the communities we serve.	Evaluation: Methodology & Measurement
	Evaluation results are communicated to a broad range of constituents including staff, board, constituents, funders, and community members.	Evaluation: Use of Evaluation Results
	We qualify as a public charity either under the "public support test" or the "facts and circumstances test" or by qualifying as a supporting organization to another public charity. <b>US</b>	Financial Management: Required Reporting & Oversight
	The board reviews financial reports at least quarterly.	Financial Management: Reporting & Oversight
	Financial loans to staff or board members are strictly prohibited. <b>NE, IA</b>	Financial Management: Required Policies & Plans
	We have a clear expense reimbursement policy for the organization.	Financial Management: Policies & Plans
	The board considers applicable industry benchmarks for expenditures on programs, administration and fundraising.	Financial Management: Policies & Plans
	We do not consider bequests, planned gifts and pledges when determining the annual budget and do not include these dollars in budgeting for program expenditures until the gift is actualized.	Financial Management: Policies & Plans
	We have a board-approved fund development plan that strives to raise funds efficiently so that a significant percentage of funding can be applied to programs/services.	Fundraising: Ethics, Responsibilities & Policies
	We have a grants management system (if applicable) in place to enhance efficiency and transparency, and to ensure proper and timely reporting.	Fundraising: Ethics, Responsibilities & Policies
	We regularly communicate with donors about our activities and make information available through multiple outlets.	Fundraising: Accountability to Donors
	The board is comprised of individuals who represent the best interests of the organization.	Governance: Board Composition & Roles
	We carry the appropriate level of liability insurance, including Director & Officer insurance.	Governance Documents
	Board members are provided with an orientation and board manual.	Governance: Board Policies & Procedures
	We keep as permanent records minutes of all board meetings and documentation of any actions taken by the board without a meeting.	Governance: Board Policies & Procedures
	The board conducts an annual performance review of the chief executive. The chief executive's performance assessment is based on organizational accomplishments, and the total compensation package is reasonable, reflecting his/her performance as well as industry standards.	Governance: Board Responsibilities: Oversight
	We have a whistleblower policy with specific procedures for reporting violations of organizational policy or applicable laws and ensure that those making such reports are protected from repercussions. <b>US</b>	Human Resources: General - Required
	We consider best industry practices as well as our own unique circumstances when establishing policies and procedures.	Human Resources: Policies, Procedures & Plans
	We strive to employ staff and volunteers who reflect the diversity of the community, as appropriate for program effectiveness.	Human Resources: Hiring, Development & Retention
	A record of all performance evaluations, along with employee signature and comment, are kept in each employee's personnel records, and used to help determine compensation.	Human Resources: Performance & Compensation - Required
	We have a social media policy that outlines clear	

rules around the use of social media and designates one person to oversee social media efforts.	Information Technology: Plans & Policies
Our support agreements are up-to-date.	Information Technology: Systems & Support
The plan provides a framework for regular progress reports and is reviewed and updated regularly by staff and board members.	Planning: Operational Plan
We have a data backup and recovery plan.	Planning: Risk & Crisis Management
We never use federal funds to pay for lobbying activities. <b>US</b>	Public Policy & Lobbying - Required
We have procedures in place to track lobbying expenses for reporting purposes.	Public Policy & Lobbying
We ensure that information provided to policy makers, the media and the public is timely and accurate, and that the social and political context of information is clear to avoid misunderstanding or manipulation of the message.	Advocacy
The board regularly conducts environmental scans to identify organizations providing similar services and to assess our relationship to those organizations.	Strategic Alliances: Assessment
As appropriate, we assist smaller and/or less experienced nonprofits through alliances and resource sharing.	Strategic Alliances: Relationship Building & Strategies
We have written policies and procedures that guide our organization in assessing, establishing, working in, and dissolving strategic alliances.	Strategic Alliances: Relationship Building & Strategies
We register our professional commercial fundraisers with the Attorney General, obtain a permit and update it as required. <b>IA</b>	Transparency & Accountability - Required
We openly communicate with other nonprofit organizations to share lessons learned and best practices.	Transparency & Accountability: Accessibility & Public Information
Volunteer assignments are made with careful consideration of the volunteer's skills, needs, and interests.	Volunteer Engagement - General
We have clearly articulated and documented accountability and discipline procedures for volunteers that address lack of performance as well as policy violations.	Volunteer Engagement - General