



CSO Organizational Strengthening Self-Assessment Tool

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Why Use This Tool?

At Common Ground Consulting, we engage with inspiring organizations who share a common mission: to improve the lives of people and strengthen the communities in which they live. Because we believe in the power of social profit organizations, we want you to be dynamic, powerful and effective. We want to see you achieve your mission and make the world a better place as a result. We have created this strategic (rather than comprehensive) assessment tool in order to help strengthen the commitment and capacity of your organization as quickly and easily as possible.

We want you to build capacity in order to reach more people, more effectively. This means you need to ensure that you manage and monitor your programs well, that your donors can trust you and see where their money goes, that you make decisions in a timely and transparent way, that you look after your valuable staff, and that you show the world the impacts your work is achieving. This tool can help you do that by identifying many of the standards with which an effective small or medium sized civil society organization (CSO) operates. You can think of this as a measurement of your strengths and weaknesses, or as an aspirational framework for future organizational development. Either way, we think it will help you meet your important goals.

How To Use This Tool

This tool measures your organizational capacity in five major categories:

- 1. Sustainable Impact, Project Management and Program Delivery.**
- 2. Financial Management.**
- 3. Internal Governance and Strategic Planning.**
- 4. External Relations, Communication and Fundraising.**
- 5. Human Resources.**

There are 58 standards overall, and in each case, you can score between zero and three points, depending on how developed your organizational capacity is in a particular area. Zero points generally means your capacity is that of a fairly new organization and you haven't yet set up basic procedures or sound practices. One point indicates a developing organization, where practices may be informal, patchy or inconsistent. Two points indicates a basically sound approach to the standard, and three points suggests a well-managed small or medium sized CSO. Some of the standards are considered especially **critical**, and these standards are shaded in blue. We think these standards represent a benchmark for reaching a basic level of good governance, program delivery and effective management. In order to "meet" these critical standards, you have to score a two or three (highlighted in bold), and we think these should be important priorities for developing your organizational robustness.

As you move through the standards, there are benchmarks to score yourself against and columns for your comments and insights. You might want to note stumbling blocks particular to your organization that are preventing you from performing better in one standard, remind yourself to thank the efforts of a staff member who has made an unacknowledged contribution, or reconsider how you currently do things in light of this standard. There's a column for you to prioritize how important an improvement

in this standard would be to your organization. There are also two columns for you to make notes about how you could improve your organization within a 30 day timeframe, or over a medium or longer-term period. There are many standards where a motivated organization could make significant changes in 30 days, and some which will require more time, planning and consideration.

Please keep in mind that there are no best answers to the questions or issues that this tool raises. Every organization is in a constant state of change and this process provides a snapshot of where an organization is in its development at a particular moment in time.

Following the standards sections, there is a scoring page, and an explanation of four very broad bands of organizational capacity. Primarily, this will reflect how experienced and well-funded your organization is at this moment; though we hope that it will also let you know where you stand in effectively managing the goals you have for your organization. Try asking yourself how much you can lift your organization's score in 30 days: it could make a significant difference!

We have also included a Five Step Action Planning section, which provides a framework for you to analyze your results from the self-assessment tool. What have you learned about your organization's strengths and weaknesses? Which priorities would make the biggest difference to the smooth and effective delivery of your programs or activities? What can you achieve quickly and in what areas do you need more time to achieve the change? What external assistance will you need to achieve your goals, and where can you get this help?

This CSO Strengthening Self-Assessment Tool will make clear what kind of an organization you are now, encourage you to consider what kind of organization you'd like to be in the future, and start you moving in that direction. And we're excited to see those results!

Standard 1: Sustainable Impact, Project Management and Program Delivery

#	Standard	Benchmarks	Priority 1-10	Self-Evaluation / Comments	30 Day Actionable Improvements	Medium & Long-Term Improvements	Score
1.1	CRITICAL: The CSO engages the beneficiaries of its services or mission in the conception, implementation and evaluation of its projects and programs.	<p>0. CSO does not engage beneficiaries in its services or mission.</p> <p>1. CSO beneficiaries sometimes provide input on an informal basis.</p> <p>2. CSO usually seeks beneficiary input before and after its projects and programs, and can describe beneficiaries' priorities and opinions.</p> <p>3. CSO routinely uses formal, written systems of beneficiary participation in the conception, implementation and evaluation of its programs and services.</p>					<p>Yes</p> <p>No</p> <p>/3</p>
1.2	CRITICAL: The CSO designs and facilitates projects and programs so that services may, where possible, be taken over by local communities or government bodies to enhance local capacity, autonomy and sustainability.	<p>0. CSO does not consider local capacity, autonomy and sustainability.</p> <p>1. CSO has a professed commitment to local capacity, autonomy and sustainability, but delivers programs or projects in which most skills and resources leave the community when the project is complete.</p> <p>2. CSO contributes to local capacity in the provision of its services by involving locals in service delivery; some skills and resources remain in the community when the project is complete.</p> <p>3. CSO designs its programs to make itself redundant in their delivery over time; most skills and resources remain in the community when the project is complete.</p>					<p>Yes</p> <p>No</p> <p>/3</p>

#	Standard	Benchmarks	Priority 1-10	Self-Evaluation / Comments	30 Day Actionable Improvements	Medium & Long-Term Improvements	Score
1.3	The CSO regularly monitors and reviews the progress and success of its projects and/or programs against previously established objective indicators.	<p>0. CSO does not monitor or review progress.</p> <p>1. CSO sometimes monitors or reviews progress, but informally and usually when required by donors. The CSO can describe strengths and weaknesses of its programs.</p> <p>2. CSO usually monitors and reviews progress and can describe changes made to service delivery.</p> <p>3. CSO formally and routinely monitors and reviews progress against previously established objective indicators. There is a written protocol for this.</p>					
1.4	The CSO's programs and services are provided on a needs basis, and needs assessments are carried out before programs are planned and delivered.	<p>0. CSO does not assess needs.</p> <p>1. CSO sometimes assesses needs, but informally and not before planning.</p> <p>2. CSO usually assesses needs before planning, but sometimes or always informally. The results influence project delivery in some ways.</p> <p>3. CSO formally and routinely assesses needs before planning, and results shape project delivery. Outcomes are considered in relation to needs assessments in evaluations.</p>					
1.5	The beneficiaries of the CSO's programs or projects are generally satisfied with the services provided.	<p>0. Beneficiaries are generally dissatisfied with the CSO's services, projects, and/or programs.</p> <p>1. Beneficiaries are neutral about the CSO's services, projects, and/or programs, and have major criticisms which the CSO has not addressed.</p> <p>2. Most beneficiaries are satisfied with the CSO's services, projects, and/or programs.</p> <p>3. Most beneficiaries are extremely satisfied with the CSO's services/projects/programs, demonstrated by considerable written feedback and/or interviews.</p>					

#	Standard	Benchmarks	Priority 1-10	Self-Evaluation / Comments	30 Day Actionable Improvements	Medium & Long-Term Improvements	Score
1.6	The CSO usually meets deadlines for projects and program delivery.	<p>0. CSO rarely meets deadlines.</p> <p>1. CSO sometimes meets deadlines.</p> <p>2. CSO usually meets deadlines.</p> <p>3. CSO almost always meets deadlines, and the CSO has reasonable explanations for rare late deliveries.</p>					
1.7	The CSO has short-term, and, where appropriate, long-term timelines of actions and goals for its projects and programs.	<p>0. CSO does not have timelines, action plans and goals.</p> <p>1. CSO has some timelines, action plans and/or goals, but often not in written form, and often produced in an ad hoc manner.</p> <p>2. CSO usually has written timelines, goals and action plans, but these may or may not be reviewed.</p> <p>3. CSO routinely has written timelines, goals and action plans and utilizes these in planning and monitoring its projects.</p>					
1.8	CSO staff have strong project proposal development, writing and editing skills in a language or languages appropriate for their organization and work. Or: the CSO is taking effective steps to build staff capacity to an acceptable level within 12 months.	<p>0. CSO staff have little or no experience or skills in proposal development, writing and editing.</p> <p>1. CSO staff have weak skills in proposal development, writing and editing.</p> <p>2. CSO staff have some skills in proposal development, writing and editing, and the CSO provides good opportunities for training.</p> <p>3. CSO staff have strong skills in proposal development, writing and editing, and training is offered whenever required.</p>					

#	Standard	Benchmarks	Priority 1-10	Self-Evaluation / Comments	30 Day Actionable Improvements	Medium & Long-Term Improvements	Score
1.9	The CSO's practices and resources are environmentally sustainable.	<p>0. CSO has not considered environmental responsibilities.</p> <p>1. CSO gives basic consideration to environmental responsibilities, often engaging in recycling, car pooling, energy reduction efforts in the office etc.</p> <p>2. CSO prioritizes environmental practices, and regularly:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * uses less carbon intensive transport wherever possible (pubic transport/car pooling rather than cars, trains rather than planes, carbon off-setting etc); * procures materials responsibly (buying second-hand, local, energy efficient goods); and * reduces the energy requirements of the office or staff through requiring staff to switch off lights and appliances (not stand-by), reducing paper, and reducing/recycling waste. <p>3. CSO has an environmental policy which requires (and almost always implements) the above, such as less carbon intensive transport, responsible material procurement, and energy and waste reduction.</p>					
1.10	The CSO promotes the use of resources and technologies that can be owned and maintained by their targeted communities, wherever possible.	<p>0. CSO's resources are not accessed by its relevant community.</p> <p>1. CSO's resources are used by the community, but no resources would remain with the community at project completion.</p> <p>2. CSO employs and trains local people to maintain its resources and technologies wherever possible.</p> <p>3. CSO employs and trains local people to maintain its resources and technologies wherever possible, and actively works to transfer ownership of some resources to the community.</p>					

#	Standard	Benchmarks	Priority 1-10	Self-Evaluation / Comments	30 Day Actionable Improvements	Medium & Long-Term Improvements	Score
1.11	The CSO does not tie the provision of services or any other benefits to the acceptance or adherence to a particular political or religious creed.	<p>0. CSO explicitly ties provision of services or benefits to the adherence to political or religious creed.</p> <p>1. CSO does not explicitly tie provision to adherence to creed, but beneficiaries report this.</p> <p>2. CSO demonstrates service delivery on the basis of need. Religious and/or politically committed CSOs offer services without requesting proof/commitment of adherence to creed.</p> <p>3. CSO demonstrates service delivery on the basis of need. Religious and/or politically committed CSOs offer services without requesting proof/commitment of adherence to creed. CSO provides services to a diverse cross section of its relevant community.</p>					
CRITICAL STANDARDS MET? (Does your organization reach a score of 2 or 3 in all critical standards?)						YES / NO	
And, your overall score? (Count all your points in this category, including for critical standards.)						/ 33	
Comments:							

Standard 2: Financial Management

#	Standard	Benchmarks	Priority 1-10	Self-Evaluation / Comments	30 Day Actionable Improvements	Medium & Long-Term Improvements	Score
2.1	CRITICAL: The organization considers itself to be non-profit, and as such, all of its income, commodities, property and assets are employed to further the work of the organization, and not distributed.	<p>0. CSO distributes profit.</p> <p>3. The organization considers itself to be non-profit, and as such, all of its income, commodities, property and assets are employed to further the work of the organization, and not distributed.</p>					<p>Yes</p> <p>No</p> <p>/3</p>
2.2	CRITICAL: The organization maintains its accounts in a bank or credit union, in the name of the organization. All assets of the organization are held in the name of, or are legally assigned to the organization or its governing body.	<p>0. CSO does not maintain its accounts in a bank or credit union.</p> <p>1. CSO's accounts are in a bank or credit union, but not in the name of the organization. Not all assets are legally assigned to the organization or its governing body.</p> <p>3. The organization maintains its accounts in a bank or credit union, in the name of the organization. All assets of the organization are held in the name of, or are legally assigned to the organization or its governing body.</p>					<p>Yes</p> <p>No</p> <p>/3</p>
2.3	CRITICAL: The CSO maintains books of accounts according to generally accepted accounting principles.	<p>0. CSO has no books of accounts.</p> <p>1. CSO has books of accounts, which are out of date, not comprehensive and/or not in accordance with accounting principles.</p> <p>2. CSO has generally sound books of accounts which are current and cover relevant areas, but could benefit from capacity building.</p> <p>3. CSO maintains current and comprehensive books of accounts according to generally accepted accounting principles.</p>					<p>Yes</p> <p>No</p> <p>/3</p>

#	Standard	Benchmarks	Priority 1-10	Self-Evaluation / Comments	30 Day Actionable Improvements	Medium & Long-Term Improvements	Score
2.4	CRITICAL: The CSO's accounts have been audited by a qualified auditor and found to be sound.	<p>0. CSO has never been audited, and will not consider auditing. Or: the CSO has been audited and found unsatisfactory.</p> <p>1. CSO has never been audited before, but intends to undergo audit as soon as financially possible.</p> <p>2. CSO's accounts have been audited by a qualified auditor, and found to be sound.</p> <p>3. CSO's accounts have been audited by a qualified external auditor for the last three years and found to be sound.</p>					<p>Yes</p> <p>No</p> <p>/3</p>
2.5	CRITICAL: The CSO's charter prescribes that in case of its dissolution, any assets remaining after the settlement of debts and liabilities shall be transferred to another CSO body or bodies in accordance with the applicable laws.	<p>0. CSO has no charter.</p> <p>1. CSO has a charter, which does not make provision for dissolution, or would transfer assets to a non-CSO body.</p> <p>2. CSO's charter makes provision for responsible transferral of assets to a CSO body or bodies, but needs assistance in tightening the legality of the document.</p> <p>3. CSO's charter prescribes that in case of its dissolution, any assets remaining after the settlement of debts and liabilities shall be transferred to another CSO body or bodies in accordance with the applicable laws.</p>					<p>Yes</p> <p>No</p> <p>/3</p>
2.6	CRITICAL: The CSO prepares an annual budget.	<p>0. CSO has no budget.</p> <p>1. CSO does some budgeting, but in an ad hoc, informal or non-comprehensive way.</p> <p>2. CSO has an annual budget, but could benefit from capacity building in this area.</p> <p>3. CSO has prepared sound annual budgets for the last three years, or for as long as it has existed if newer.</p>					<p>Yes</p> <p>No</p> <p>/3</p>

#	Standard	Benchmarks	Priority 1-10	Self-Evaluation / Comments	30 Day Actionable Improvements	Medium & Long-Term Improvements	Score
2.7	The CSO makes reasonable financial information, including at least the most recent annual budget and account of expenditure, available for public inspection without hindrance and within 30 days of the request being made.	<p>0. CSO refuses to make reasonable financial information publicly available.</p> <p>1. CSO keeps inadequate financial information, or hinders public inspection.</p> <p>2. CSO allows for public inspection of reasonable financial information within 30 days, but needs assistance to prepare it in a form for public inspection.</p> <p>3. CSO has publicly available financial information, including annual reports and budgets, on its website or otherwise readily available for public inspection.</p>					
2.8	The CSO has maintained balance sheets, income & expenditure statements (or receipts & payment accounts) and cash-flow statements for at least three months.	<p>0. CSO has no balance sheets, income & expenditure statements (or receipts and & payment accounts) or cash-flow statements.</p> <p>1. CSO has some, but not all of these items.</p> <p>2. CSO has all of these items for the last three months, but could benefit from capacity building in this area.</p> <p>3. CSO has maintained sound balance sheets, income & expenditure statements (or receipts and & payment accounts) and cash-flow statements for at least 12 months, or less if it is a new CSO.</p>					
2.9	The CSO regularly maintains cashbooks, salary and petty cash records.	<p>0. CSO has no cashbooks, salary and petty cash records.</p> <p>1. CSO has some, but not all of these items.</p> <p>2. CSO has all these items for the last three months, but could benefit from capacity building in this area.</p> <p>3. CSO has maintained sound cashbooks, salary and petty cash records for at least the last 12 months, or less if it is a new CSO.</p>					

#	Standard	Benchmarks	Priority 1-10	Self-Evaluation / Comments	30 Day Actionable Improvements	Medium & Long-Term Improvements	Score
2.10	The CSO has a joint signatory system. (E.g., the CSO requires more than one unrelated signatory to all payments exceeding \$1,000.)	<p>0. CSO's finances are controlled and signed for by one person only, or entirely controlled by people related by birth or marriage.</p> <p>1. More than one unrelated person can sign for financial matters, but CSO has no joint signatory system, and refuses to implement one.</p> <p>2. More than one unrelated person can sign for financial matters, but CSO has no joint signatory system. CSO commits to implement one.</p> <p>3. CSO has a joint signatory system.</p>					
2.11	The checks made payable to a CSO signatory are not signed by him/her.	<p>0. Cheques are regularly paid to the signatory and signed by the signatory.</p> <p>1. Cheques are sometimes paid to the signatory and signed by the signatory.</p> <p>2. Cheques are only paid to the signatory in the case of salary withdrawals.</p> <p>3. Cheques are never paid to the signatory without another signatory signing.</p>					
2.12	The CSO regularly files its tax return with the appropriate tax authorities.	<p>0. CSO has never filed a tax return.</p> <p>1. CSO usually files a tax return, or has been operational for less than 12 months.</p> <p>2. CSO routinely files a tax return but could benefit from capacity building in this area.</p> <p>3. CSO routinely files financially sound and detailed tax returns.</p>					

#	Standard	Benchmarks	Priority 1-10	Self-Evaluation / Comments	30 Day Actionable Improvements	Medium & Long-Term Improvements	Score
2.13	The CSO prepares variance records (the difference between budgeted and actual expenditure) at least annually.	<p>0. CSO has no variance records and refuses to produce them.</p> <p>1. CSO has no variance records, but will commit to produce them.</p> <p>2. CSO has prepared variance records in the last 5 years, which may be simple or less than perfect.</p> <p>3. CSO has prepared variance records at least once every two years, and records are financially sound.</p>					
2.14	The CSO maintains fixed assets records for its major assets.	<p>0. CSO has no asset records.</p> <p>1. CSO has some asset records.</p> <p>2. CSO has reasonably sound asset records for major assets.</p> <p>3. CSO has comprehensive and current fixed asset records in accord with generally accepted accounting principles.</p>					
2.15	The CSO has sufficient resources to continue its operations at the current level for at least one year, or has a viable plan to generate sufficient resources.	<p>0. CSO does not have sufficient funds to complete current projects, and does not have a plan to generate funds.</p> <p>1. CSO has sufficient funds to complete its current projects.</p> <p>2. CSO has sufficient funds to complete its current projects and a viable plan to generate further resources.</p> <p>3. CSO has sufficient resources to continue its operations at the current level for at least one year, and a viable plan to generate further resources.</p>					

#	Standard	Benchmarks	Priority 1-10	Self-Evaluation / Comments	30 Day Actionable Improvements	Medium & Long-Term Improvements	Score
2.16	Travel expenditure is recorded and within reasonable limits. Air travel is economy class.	<p>0. Travel expenditure is not recorded, or is not within reasonable limits.</p> <p>1. Travel expenditure is sometimes recorded, and is within reasonable limits.</p> <p>2. Travel expenditure is routinely recorded, and is within reasonable limits.</p> <p>3. Travel expenditure is routinely recorded, and is within reasonable limits. A travel expenditure and/or expenses policy exists. Air travel is economy class.</p>					
2.17	<p>The CSO does not have surpluses or monies validly set apart, excluding restricted funds, of more than 18 months operating costs. These surpluses or monies set apart must be responsibly held or invested according to accepted financial management standards.</p> <p>For the purposes of this rule, "restricted funds" means any funding received by the organization that could not be spent and treated as revenue during the intended year due to conditions made by the donor.</p>	<p>0. CSO has surpluses or monies set apart, including restricted funds, of more than 18 months operating costs. These surpluses or monies set apart are not responsibly held or invested according to accepted financial management standards.</p> <p>1. CSO has surpluses or monies validly set apart, excluding restricted funds, of more than 18 months operating costs. These surpluses or monies set apart are not responsibly held or invested according to accepted financial management standards.</p> <p>2. CSO has surpluses or monies validly set apart, excluding restricted funds, of more than 18 months operating costs. These surpluses or monies set apart are responsibly held or invested according to accepted financial management standards.</p> <p>3. The CSO does not have surpluses or monies validly set apart, excluding restricted funds, of more than 18 months operating costs.</p>					

#	Standard	Benchmarks	Priority 1-10	Self-Evaluation / Comments	30 Day Actionable Improvements	Medium & Long-Term Improvements	Score
2.18	The CSO maintains a list of all donors and sources of funding which is available for public inspection without hindrance and within 30 days of the request being made.	<p>0. CSO does not have a donor and/or sources of funding list.</p> <p>1. CSO has a list of major donors or sources of funding, but it is not publicly available.</p> <p>2. CSO has a list of all donors and sources of funding, and is taking steps to make it ready for public inspection.</p> <p>3. CSO has a list of all donors and sources of funding, which is on its website, or readily available for public inspection.</p>					
CRITICAL STANDARDS MET? (Does your organization reach a score of 2 or 3 in all critical standards?)						YES / NO	
And, your overall score? (Count all your points in this category, including for critical standards.)						/ 54	
Comments:							

Standard 3: Internal Governance and Strategic Planning

#	Standard	Benchmarks	Priority 1-10	Self-Evaluation / Comments	30 Day Actionable Improvements	Medium & Long-Term Improvements	Score
3.1	CRITICAL: The CSO has a written charter and bylaws that sets out at least: the CSO's vision and aims, governance, organizational and decision-making structure and financial policies and practices.	<p>0. CSO has no written charter or constitution.</p> <p>1. CSO has a written document or documents that explain some of its vision, structure or practices.</p> <p>2. CSO has a written charter or bylaws that sets out either 1) the CSO's structure, governance and financial practices; or, 2) the CSO's vision, aims, and direction, but not both.</p> <p>3. The CSO has a written charter or bylaws that sets out at least: the CSO's vision and aims, governance, organizational and decision-making structure and financial policies and practices.</p>					<p>Yes</p> <p>No</p> <p>/3</p>
3.2	CRITICAL: All staff of the organization declare conflicts of interest, and the organization takes reasonable steps to avoid staff with conflicts of interest making recruitment, procurement, service provision or financial decisions that could be considered conflicted.	<p>0. CSO has conflicts of interest in recruitment, procurement, service provision and/or financial decisions.</p> <p>1. CSO has no conflict of interest policy or avoidance practices, but no current conflicts.</p> <p>2. CSO has a list of conflicts of interest and staff excuse themselves from decisions that could be considered conflicted.</p> <p>3. CSO has a written list of all declarations of interest. Policies for amelioration of conflict are in written form and are routinely employed.</p>					<p>Yes</p> <p>No</p> <p>/3</p>

#	Standard	Benchmarks	Priority 1-10	Self-Evaluation / Comments	30 Day Actionable Improvements	Medium & Long-Term Improvements	Score
3.3	CRITICAL: The CSO has a well-developed strategic plan, with measurable objectives for the next 3-5 years. The CSO monitors and reviews its plan at least once a year.	<p>0. CSO has no strategic plan, written or described.</p> <p>1. CSO has an unwritten strategic plan for the next 1-2 years at a minimum.</p> <p>2. CSO has a sound, written strategic plan for the next 3-5 years. The plan may have some oversights or not be revisited annually. The CSO could benefit from capacity development or improvement in this area.</p> <p>3. CSO's strategic plan is sufficiently detailed and sound. The strategic plan has measurable objectives for the next 3-5 years, and is monitored and reviewed at least annually. The strategic plan aligns well with projects and day-to-day priorities.</p>					<p>Yes</p> <p>No</p> <p>/3</p>
3.4	CRITICAL: The CSO has a Board of Directors, Advisory Committee, or other formal governance body of at least five members.	<p>0. CSO has no governing body or other formal governance body.</p> <p>1. CSO has a governance body, but it is largely non-functional due to absence, conflict or any other reason, or it consists of fewer than five members.</p> <p>2. CSO has a Board of Directors, Advisory Committee, or other formal governance body of at least five members.</p> <p>3. CSO has a Board of Directors, Advisory Committee, or other formal governance body of at least five members which is appropriately involved in the leadership of the organization.</p>					<p>Yes</p> <p>No</p> <p>/3</p>
3.5	The governing body meets at least four times a year, and minutes are kept.	<p>0. CSO has no governing body or other formal governance body.</p> <p>1. CSO has a governance body, but it is largely non-functional due to absence, conflict or any other reason.</p> <p>2. CSO's governing body has met at least four times in the previous 12 months and minutes were kept.</p> <p>3. CSO's governing body has met at least four times a year for the past three years and minutes were kept.</p>					

#	Standard	Benchmarks	Priority 1-10	Self-Evaluation / Comments	30 Day Actionable Improvements	Medium & Long-Term Improvements	Score
3.6	Except for family trusts, at least 60% of the senior management and governing structure of the CSO are unrelated to one another.	<p>0. 51% or more of the senior management and governing members of the CSO are related to one another.</p> <p>1. 34-50% of the senior management and governing members of the CSO are related to one another.</p> <p>2. 20-33% of the senior management and governing members of the CSO are related to one another.</p> <p>3. Less than 20% of the senior management and governing members of the CSO are related to one another.</p>					
3.7	The governing body approves the annual budget and reviews the actual expenditures of the organization.	<p>0. CSO has no governing body or budget.</p> <p>1. CSO has budget and a functioning governing body.</p> <p>2. CSO has an annual budget approved by the governing body.</p> <p>3. CSO has a governing body that routinely approves the annual budget and reviews the actual expenditures of the organization.</p>					
3.8	No finding on grounds of fraud or breach of trust have been made against the CSO. If any adverse finding has been made, the CSO has taken all reasonable steps to prevent a recurrence, and has taken considerable action to tighten its controls and checks.	<p>0. A finding on grounds of fraud or breach of trust has been made against the CSO in the last two years.</p> <p>1. A finding on grounds of fraud or breach of trust has been made against the CSO in the last two years. The CSO has taken all reasonable steps to prevent a recurrence, and has tightened its controls and checks.</p> <p>2. No suit or adverse finding has been made against the organization within 5 years.</p> <p>3. No suit or adverse finding has been made against the organization ever, or within 10 years.</p>					

#	Standard	Benchmarks	Priority 1-10	Self-Evaluation / Comments	30 Day Actionable Improvements	Medium & Long-Term Improvements	Score
3.9	The CSO has a clear and written mission statement that defines the current direction and activity of the organization, including its fundamental purpose, values, and communities served.	0. CSO has no clear mission, written or otherwise. 1. CSO has a clear mission, but it is not in writing. 2. CSO has a clear mission statement, in written form. 3. CSO has a clear mission statement, in written form, which is integrated into the organization's planning and activities.					
CRITICAL STANDARDS MET? (Does your organization reach a score of 2 or 3 in all critical standards?)						YES / NO	
And, your overall score? (Count all your points in this category, including for critical standards.)						/ 27	
Comments:							

Standard 4: External Relations, Communication and Fundraising

#	Standard	Benchmarks	Priority 1-10	Self-Evaluation / Comments	30 Day Actionable Improvements	Medium & Long-Term Improvements	Score
4.1	CRITICAL: The CSO promotes its services, projects and/or programs effectively and often to beneficiaries and stakeholders (both current and potential).	<p>0. CSO does not promote its services.</p> <p>1. CSO promotes its services to a limited extent, and to some of its stakeholders. The CSO mostly communicates its work informally.</p> <p>2. CSO promotes its services to all relevant stakeholders.</p> <p>3. CSO has a clear and strategic external communications plan related to its mission-focused activities, and promoted to all relevant stakeholders.</p>					<p>Yes</p> <p>No</p> <p>/3</p>
4.2	CRITICAL: The CSO transparently reports its impact to its donors and other relevant stakeholders.	<p>0. CSO does not monitor its impact.</p> <p>1. CSO monitors its impact informally.</p> <p>2. CSO monitors its impact and aggregates and reports its results.</p> <p>3. CSO monitors its impact against predetermined objective indicators and routinely aggregates and reports its results to all relevant stakeholders.</p>					<p>Yes</p> <p>No</p> <p>/3</p>
4.3	<p>CRITICAL: The CSO's communications to its beneficiaries and stakeholders are inclusive, and appropriately tailored to the communities it serves.</p> <p>Communications use local languages and, if required, are available in an oral mode.</p>	<p>0. CSO does not make an effort to communicate to beneficiaries.</p> <p>1. CSO communicates to beneficiaries in an inappropriate language or mode. For example, most of its information is in written form targeting a community with low literacy, or is only available in English when targeting migrant communities.</p> <p>2. CSO usually communicates to beneficiaries in an inappropriate language or mode.</p> <p>3. CSO prioritizes inclusive communication with beneficiaries, and understands well the communication needs of its beneficiaries. This may include the use of translators, information in multiple or minority languages, and effective oral modes of communication where appropriate.</p>					<p>Yes</p> <p>No</p> <p>/3</p>

#	Standard	Benchmarks	Priority 1-10	Self-Evaluation / Comments	30 Day Actionable Improvements	Medium & Long-Term Improvements	Score
4.4	The CSO seeks, where appropriate, to be involved in wider organizational and/or advocacy or campaign networks and with other relevant organizations on a geographic, interest and/or sectoral basis.	<p>0. CSO is not a member of any networks or involved with any wider organizations.</p> <p>1. CSO is an inactive member of one or more networks or organizations.</p> <p>2. CSO is an active member of one or more networks or organizations.</p> <p>3. CSO is a leading member of networks and/or organizations which relate to the CSO's geographic, interest and sectoral relationships.</p>					
4.5	The CSO's current and former donors generally express satisfaction with the workings of the organization.	<p>0. Former and current donors are generally dissatisfied with the CSO.</p> <p>1. Former and current donors display mixed reactions about the CSO, and/or have serious criticisms.</p> <p>2. Former and current donors are generally satisfied with the CSO.</p> <p>3. Almost all former and current donors are very satisfied with the CSO and often recommend it.</p>					
4.6	The CSO has funding from multiple sources, or is actively and effectively seeking diversified sources of funding.	<p>0. CSO has only unreliable sources of funding.</p> <p>1. CSO has one or two reliable sources of funding. The CSO is actively and effectively seeking more diversified sources of funding.</p> <p>2. CSO has been funded by two or three reliable sources of funding in the past two financial years and is actively and effectively seeking more diversified sources of funding if needed.</p> <p>3. CSO has been funded by four or more reliable sources of funding in the past two financial years and has secure funding for the next financial year. The CSO is actively and effectively seeking secure sources of funding if required.</p>					

#	Standard	Benchmarks	Priority 1-10	Self-Evaluation / Comments	30 Day Actionable Improvements	Medium & Long-Term Improvements	Score
4.7	The CSO's donors and funding sources do not conflict with its mission, objectives or capacity, and do not undermine its independence or identity. Conditions placed on the CSO by funders do not conflict or interfere with the CSO's mission, objectives or capacity.	<p>0. A full list of donors and funding sources is not available.</p> <p>1. Donors and funding sources conflict or interfere with the CSO's mission.</p> <p>2. Donors and funding sources do not conflict or interfere with the CSO's mission.</p> <p>3. Donors and funding sources do not conflict or interfere with the CSO's mission, and the CSO has a written policy of not accepting funds from sources which conflict with its mission.</p>					
CRITICAL STANDARDS MET? (Does your organization reach a score of 2 or 3 in all critical standards?)						YES / NO	
And, your overall score? (Count all your points in this category, including for critical standards.)						/ 21	
Comments:							

Standard 5: Human Resources

#	Standard	Benchmarks	Priority 1-10	Self-Evaluation / Comments	30 Day Actionable Improvements	Medium & Long-Term Improvements	Score
5.1	CRITICAL: Staff salaries are paid on time.	<p>0. Staff report wages have not been paid for periods of three months or more in the past year.</p> <p>1. Staff report wages are sometimes paid late or not paid. Or, staff have taken pay cuts, or been asked to take pay cuts to cover financial losses or shortfalls.</p> <p>2. Staff report wages are usually paid on time.</p> <p>3. Staff report wages are always paid on time.</p>					<p>Yes</p> <p>No</p> <p>/3</p>
5.2	CRITICAL: The CSO has recorded roles and responsibilities statements for all permanent staff and governing body members, which reflect their actual responsibilities.	<p>0. CSO has no roles statements, and staff report confusion or conflict over roles and responsibilities.</p> <p>1. CSO staff have a clear understanding of their own role and responsibilities.</p> <p>2. CSO staff have a clear understanding of the roles and responsibilities of themselves and others.</p> <p>3. CSO has written roles statements, which are sufficiently detailed and sound and reflect the actual responsibilities of staff.</p>					<p>Yes</p> <p>No</p> <p>/3</p>
5.3	CRITICAL: The CSO has a consistently applied salary structure.	<p>0. Salaries are decided on an ad hoc basis at recruitment, and/or salaries are not consistently applied across the organization. Staff feel salaries are unfair or inconsistently applied.</p> <p>1. Salaries are generally based on competency, responsibility and seniority. Staff feel salaries are generally consistent across the organization.</p> <p>2. CSO has a written salary structure, and it is consistently applied. Staff feel salaries are consistent across the organization.</p> <p>3. CSO has a formal salary structure, and it is consistently applied. Staff feel salaries are consistent across the organization and that salaries are comparable within the sector and region.</p>					<p>Yes</p> <p>No</p> <p>/3</p>

#	Standard	Benchmarks	Priority 1-10	Self-Evaluation / Comments	30 Day Actionable Improvements	Medium & Long-Term Improvements	Score
5.4	CRITICAL: Staff are paid according to responsibility, competency and seniority, and irrespective of race, gender, ethnicity, age, sexuality, or disability.	<p>0. CSO has little diversity amongst its staff, and/or staff report feeling discriminated against and/or harassed.</p> <p>1. Women, younger or older staff, disabled, transgender, lesbian, gay or bisexual staff or people of color earn significantly less than is average across the organization.</p> <p>2. CSO staff are diverse, and women, younger or older staff, disabled, transgender, lesbian, gay or bisexual staff or people of color earn similar rates of pay to the organizational average.</p> <p>3. CSO applies an affirmative action policy to the recruitment and promotion of women, younger or older staff, disabled, transgender, lesbian, gay or bisexual staff and people of color and staff feel their workplace is diverse and equitable.</p>					<p>Yes</p> <p>No</p> <p>/3</p>
5.5	CRITICAL: The CSO prioritizes opportunities for professional development for its staff.	<p>0. Staff receive no professional development.</p> <p>1. Professional development opportunities occur sometimes, but the CSO does not/ cannot usually fund them.</p> <p>2. Staff regularly have funded opportunities to attend workshops, courses, seminars and conferences, temporarily take on higher duties, undertake secondments etc. Staff feel professional development opportunities are sufficient.</p> <p>3. Staff are encouraged, and funded to attend workshops, courses, seminars and conferences, temporarily take on higher duties, undertake secondments etc. Senior staff mentor junior staff and ensure professional development opportunities are equitably distributed. Staff feel professional development opportunities are generous and all staff are aware of their availability.</p>					<p>Yes</p> <p>No</p> <p>/3</p>

#	Standard	Benchmarks	Priority 1-10	Self-Evaluation / Comments	30 Day Actionable Improvements	Medium & Long-Term Improvements	Score
5.6	CRITICAL: Employees are free to join and participate in associations or trade unions.	<p>0. CSO prohibits union membership.</p> <p>1. CSO allows union membership, but does not allow organizing in the workplace.</p> <p>2. CSO allows union membership, and where one or more staff are union members occasional time is allowed for union meetings, staff are allowed to recruit and advertise union activities, collective bargaining is allowed in pay negotiations and staff are permitted a union representative in HR-related interviews and proceedings.</p> <p>3. CSO allows union membership, and where one or more staff are union members occasional time is allowed for union meetings, staff are allowed to recruit and advertise union activities, collective bargaining is allowed in pay negotiations and staff are permitted a union representative in HR-related interviews and proceedings. CSO has union members who report no hindrance to union organizing.</p>					<p>Yes</p> <p>No</p> <p>/3</p>
5.7	The CSO has a written personnel policy, which includes at least a salary scale, and a dismissal and termination policy. It may also include policies on salary increments and promotions, performance assessments, retirements and resignations and general organizational discipline.	<p>0. CSO has no consistent personnel strategy and/or most staff report dissatisfaction with their treatment or conditions.</p> <p>1. CSO has a consistent personnel strategy, but it is not written and/or some staff report dissatisfaction with their conditions or treatment.</p> <p>2. CSO has a written personnel policy, which includes at least a salary scale, and a dismissal and termination policy. Staff report general satisfaction with their conditions and treatment.</p> <p>3. CSO has a written personnel policy, which includes a salary scale, and policies or descriptions of: its dismissal and termination policy, salary increments and promotions, performance assessments, retirements and resignations and general organizational discipline, including a harassment and grievance procedure. Staff generally report satisfaction with their conditions and treatment.</p>					

#	Standard	Benchmarks	Priority 1-10	Self-Evaluation / Comments	30 Day Actionable Improvements	Medium & Long-Term Improvements	Score
5.8	The CSO has a written recruitment policy that sets out the process and criteria for recruiting new staff.	<p>0. Staff are recruited informally, through personal networks.</p> <p>1. Staff are sometimes recruited informally, and sometimes hired through an advertised interview process.</p> <p>2. Jobs are almost always advertised and interviews are almost always held.</p> <p>3. CSO has a written recruitment policy that sets out the process and criteria for recruiting new staff. New openings are always advertised as widely as possible. Candidates are interviewed against a previously determined set of criteria, in front of an interview panel that includes one external interviewer.</p>					
5.9	The CSO's staff reflect the diversity of the communities in which they work, and the beneficiaries of their projects and programs.	<p>0. CSO staff do not reflect the diversity or constitution of the communities in which they work, or the beneficiaries of their projects and programs.</p> <p>1. Some CSO staff reflect the diversity or constitution of the communities in which they work, or the beneficiaries of their projects and programs.</p> <p>2. CSO staff are diverse, and if the CSO does not reflect the constitution of their relevant community, the organization is taking steps to prioritize the hiring of such staff.</p> <p>3. CSO staff reflect the diversity of the communities in which they work, and the beneficiaries of their projects and programs.</p>					

#	Standard	Benchmarks	Priority 1-10	Self-Evaluation / Comments	30 Day Actionable Improvements	Medium & Long-Term Improvements	Score
5.10	CSOs with disabled staff provide appropriate facilities and assistance.	<p>If the CSO has disabled staff members:</p> <p>0. CSO provides no facilities and assistance.</p> <p>1. CSO provides some facilities and assistance. (Or, has no disabled staff members).</p> <p>2. CSO provides adequate facilities and assistance.</p> <p>3. CSO provides adequate facilities and assistance, and disabled staff members are offered the same opportunities as abled staff (i.e., travel, training), even when they require extra assistance.</p>					
5.11	The CSO deals appropriately with staff grievances and/or harassment.	<p>0. Staff consider that the CSO deals poorly with grievances and/or harassment, and grievances and/or harassment are a problem for the organization.</p> <p>1. CSO has no consistent and fair system, even informally, for dealing with grievances and/or harassment.</p> <p>2. CSO has an informal system for grievances and/or harassment which is consistent and fair.</p> <p>3. CSO has a formal grievance and harassment procedure which is consistent and fair. Staff generally report satisfaction with how grievances and/or harassment are handled. Grievances and harassment occur rarely in the organization, but are reported when they occur.</p>					
5.12	The CSO holds staff meetings, which all staff may attend, and all senior staff must usually attend, at least twice a year.	<p>0. CSO does not hold staff meetings.</p> <p>1. CSO holds infrequent, irregular, informal and ad hoc staff meetings.</p> <p>2. CSO holds staff meetings, which all staff may attend, and all senior staff must usually attend, at least once a year.</p> <p>3. CSO holds staff meetings, which all staff may attend, and all senior staff must usually attend, at least twice a year. Agendas are circulated before the meeting and minutes are kept.</p>					

#	Standard	Benchmarks	Priority 1-10	Self-Evaluation / Comments	30 Day Actionable Improvements	Medium & Long-Term Improvements	Score
5.13	All staff receive comparable staff development, promotion and training opportunities.	<p>0. CSO has little diversity amongst its staff, and/or staff report feeling discriminated against in opportunities for development, promotion and training.</p> <p>1. Women, younger or older staff, disabled, transgender, lesbian, gay or bisexual staff or people of color undertake less development, promotion and training opportunities.</p> <p>2. All staff undertake comparable development, promotion and training opportunities.</p> <p>3. All staff are offered and undertake comparable development, promotion and training opportunities. The CSO monitors the equity of professional development and promotion opportunities and outcomes and applies affirmative action policies.</p>					
CRITICAL STANDARDS MET? (Does your organization reach a score of 2 or 3 in all critical standards?)						YES / NO	
And, your overall score? (Count all your points in this category, including for critical standards.)						/ 39	
Comments:							

How does your organization score? (Please see the next page for an example scoring sheet.)

Category	Critical Standards Met?		Score	Percentage
1. Sustainable Impact, Project Management and Program Delivery	Yes	No	/ 33	%
2. Financial Management	Yes	No	/ 54	%
3. Internal Governance and Strategic Planning	Yes	No	/ 27	%
4. External Relations, Communication and Fundraising	Yes	No	/ 21	%
5. Human Resources	Yes	No	/ 39	%
All Critical Standards Met?	Yes	No	/ 174	%
Overall Score (including critical standards scores):				

Starting-Up: Many critical standards not met. Scores less than 30% in **ANY** one category.

Organizations which are starting up will generally not meet all critical standards, and will score mostly 0s and 1s. These CSOs may be new, or newly funded. This usually means the CSO has been focussing its energies on its programs or activities, and hasn't yet had the time, funding or experience to create organizational policies, procedures or practices. These organizations should focus on accessing help to reach the critical standards, and use the standards as an aspirational tool to assist and guide their development. The following templates may be useful in identifying priorities, sources of assistance, and making timelines.

Growing: Some critical standards not met. Scores more than 50% in **EVERY** category.

Organizations which are growing will score unevenly. They are on their way to meeting the critical standards, and may be in the process of creating good policies and procedures which will ensure their organization runs more professionally and effectively. These organizations can use this tool to benchmark their progress in meeting professional standards, and to identify and prioritize areas they may have neglected.

Strengthening: All critical standards met. Scores more than 70% in **EVERY** category.

Organizations which are strengthening are professional organizations which are generally well managed. They have met all the critical standards, signifying that their practices meet a competent standard for institutional capacity. These organizations deliver programs effectively, are well managed, trustworthy and equitable. For strengthening organizations, this tool will help to check that they are operating at a good standard in all categories, and to identify strengths and weaknesses.

High-Performing / Robust: All critical standards met. Scores more than 85% in **EVERY** category.

Organizations which are robust are highly effective and very well managed. They score highly overall, signifying that care and attention (and usually experience and funding) have been spent ensuring that the organization's practices and policies are sound and professional. CSOs which score robustly in this tool will deliver programs to a reliably high standard, treat their staff well, manage finances responsibly and have great relationships with the communities and donors with which they work.

Example Score Sheet

Category	Critical Standards Met?	Score	Percentage
1. Sustainable Impact, Project Management and Program Delivery	YES No	25 / 33	76%
2. Financial Management	YES No	48 / 54	88%
3. Internal Governance and Strategic Planning	YES No	19 / 27	70%
4. External Relations, Communication and Fundraising	Yes NO	15 / 21	71%
5. Human Resources	YES No	25 / 39	64%
All Critical Standards Met?	Yes NO	132 / 174	76%
Overall Score (including critical standards scores):			

- Starting up: Many critical standards not met. Scores less than 30% in **ANY** one category.
- Growing:** **Some critical standards not met. Scores more than 50% in EVERY category.**
- Strengthening: All critical standards met. Scores more than 70% in **EVERY** category.
- Robust: All critical standards met. Scores more than 85% in **EVERY** category.

So, this hypothetical CSO did not meet all the critical standards, but scored more than 50% in each category. Therefore, they are considered a **“Growing”** organization. While they scored highly overall, averaging 76%, they would need to attend to the critical standard or standards they didn’t meet in order to move into the “Strengthening” group.

A 5 Step Action Plan

The following pages provide a template to assist you in your institutional strengthening efforts.

- * First, identify your organizational strengths and weaknesses.
- * Second, identify your organizational priorities. Which standards would make the biggest difference to the effectiveness of your mission? Choose some which will be quickly achievable, but make an impact, and some which will require sustained work, which will really benefit your programs and practices over time.
- * Third, note any critical standards you didn’t meet, and make action plans for meeting them.
- * Fourth, set some 30 day goals. How much can you achieve in the next 30 days?
- * Fifth, set medium and longer-term goals to develop your organization into a more professional outfit.

Organizational Strengths

Organizational Strengths - List your two highest scoring categories. (i.e., Financial Management.)	

Standard # (ie, 1.11)	Organizational Strengths - List your ten highest scoring standards: (i.e., 5.5 Professional Development.)

Organizational Weaknesses

Organizational Weaknesses - List your two lowest scoring categories: (I.e., Financial Management.)	

Standard # (ie, 1.11)	Organizational Weaknesses - List your ten lowest scoring standards: (I.e., 5.5 Professional Development.)

30 Day Actionable Improvements

Priority 1-10	Standard # (ie, 1.11)	30 Day Actionable Improvements	External assistance required? If so, where will you find/fund it?	Responsible Actor	Deadline
eg: 6	eg: 1.9	<p>eg: <i>Improve environmental sustainability:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Inform staff at staff meeting on 8/3 to switch appliances off standby and turn common space lights off. Make posters to remind everyone.</i> - <i>Check feasibility of car pooling at staff meeting on 8/3.</i> - <i>Start recycling.</i> - <i>Require double-sided printing and ask people to reduce paper.</i> - <i>Solicit staff suggestions for sustainability/carbon reduction suggestions.</i> - <i>Do a carbon audit.</i> 	eg: <i>Undertake free online carbon auditing tool.</i>	eg: <i>Office Manager will coordinate.</i>	eg: <i>8/4 office energy/paper savings 8/11 recycling 8/30 car-pooling and carbon audit.</i>

Priority 1-10	Standard # (ie, 1.11)	30 Day Actionable Improvements	External assistance required? If so, where will you find/fund it?	Responsible Actor	Deadline

Priority 1-10	Standard # (ie, 1.11)	30 Day Actionable Improvements	External assistance required? If so, where will you find/fund it?	Responsible Actor	Deadline

Priority 1-10	Standard # (ie, 1.11)	30 Day Actionable Improvements	External assistance required? If so, where will you find/fund it?	Responsible Actor	Deadline

Priority 1-10	Standard # (ie, 1.11)	30 Day Actionable Improvements	External assistance required? If so, where will you find/fund it?	Responsible Actor	Deadline

Medium / Long Term Goals

Priority 1-10	Standard # (ie, 1.11)	Medium / Long Term Goals	External assistance or materials needed? If so, where will you find/fund it?	Responsible Actor	Deadline
eg: 6	eg: 2.4	<p>eg: <i>Get audited!</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - make Sofia responsible for process, have Daniel share her workload. - produce preliminary list of assets, expenditure, income - research auditing process and requirements - liaise with 2012 budgeting committee 	<p>eg: -Search for a pro-bono auditor. -Contact API or similar. (Accountants for the Public Interest.) -Read API's "What a Difference Preparation Makes: A Guide to the Nonprofit Audit"</p>	eg: Sofia	<p>eg: -start research now -search for pro-bono auditor 8/20 -begin compiling information 10/3 -begin audit 12 months from now: 8/3/2012</p>

Priority 1-10	Standard # (ie, 1.11)	Medium / Long Term Goals	External assistance or materials needed? If so, where will you find/fund it?	Responsible Actor	Deadline

Priority 1-10	Standard # (ie, 1.11)	Medium / Long Term Goals	External assistance or materials needed? If so, where will you find/fund it?	Responsible Actor	Deadline

Priority 1-10	Standard # (ie, 1.11)	Medium / Long Term Goals	External assistance or materials needed? If so, where will you find/fund it?	Responsible Actor	Deadline

Priority 1-10	Standard # (ie, 1.11)	Medium / Long Term Goals	External assistance or materials needed? If so, where will you find/fund it?	Responsible Actor	Deadline