

Results Driven

Organizations are clear about where it is headed and how it will know when it gets there – be it goals, objectives, or results. High performing organizations exhibit outcomes oriented planning, whether it is long term strategic planning, or monthly departmental goals. All relevant staff and boards are results oriented and have actionable work plans that will realistically lead them towards the accomplishment of said goals.

Criterion 10: Outcomes Evaluation

- A. Comprehensive: A comprehensive agency evaluation of program and service results and community impact is conducted at least every three years.
- B. Action Driven: The agency uses the evaluation results to improve service delivery.

Continuous Improvement

Organizations should be able to measure the health and impact of programs, services, and operations to inform continuous improvement and ensure consistent quality of services. They also build upon and share knowledge through the organization which can lead to identification of opportunities for meaningful change, improvement, and innovation.

Criterion 11: Performance Management

- A. Management Systems: The organization has the necessary checks and balances in places to assure the consistent and efficient delivery of services.
- B. Goals: The organization's plan includes clear, realistic, and measurable financial and program goals for each service area. These goals are clearly communicated to staff and drive organizational performance.
- C. Continuous Improvement: The organization uses objective information to review and refine the efficiency and effectiveness of its programs.

Criterion 12: Internal Controls

- A. Process Management: Controls are in place to ensure that programs and services are effective and efficient. Agency operations, including programs and services, are regularly improved based on information gathered through monitoring processes and evaluation.
- B. Information Management: Data management systems are available that allow for readily accessible, accurate, timely, and confidential information.

Quality and Consistency of Messaging and Operations

An organization should be consistent about how they operate or provide services so that boards and staff have the confidence that there are documented procedures to follow and ability to monitor and improve practices. Organizations should be seen to continually strengthen their processes to assure greater consistency and quality in organizational practice, which can weather the inevitable challenges and changes inherent in the nonprofit sector.

Criterion 13: Communications

- A. Plan: A communication plan has been established to define how the organization should communicate to reinforce mission, programs, strategic direction, and performance against goals. The communication plan should be appropriate to the mission, scale, and complexity of the organization.
- B. Internal: Internal communication is frequent and open. Multiple communication mediums are used to reinforce messages.
- C. External: The organization regularly communicates with all identified external constituent groups. External communication efforts are frequent, clear, consistent, and well thought out. Multiple communication mediums are used to reinforce messages.

Criterion 14: Policies and Procedures

Operating policies and procedures (for example, governance, insurance, physical space, human resources, financial performance, service delivery) are in writing, updated regularly in accordance with appropriate law and service adjustments, understood, and consistently applied by board, staff, and volunteers.



Criteria for Management Excellence

Purpose of Criteria:

To improve organizational performance practices, capabilities, and results of the nonprofit sector. To serve as a working tool for understanding and managing performance, and guiding organizational planning, improvement, and capacity building efforts.

Use of Criteria by The Forbes Funds:

To extend due diligence of grant making through use of a standard method for assessing agencies and determining critical needs for support.

Core Values and Concepts:

The assessment will help your organization determine how well you are able to:

Say What They Do
Do What They Say
Prove It



The criteria are built upon the following set of interrelated values and concepts that nonprofit organizations exhibit when they are high performing organizations.

Visionary Leadership

The organization's leaders set direction, values, and expectations that balance the needs of clients and stakeholders. They ensure the creation of strategies and systems for achieving results and ensuring organizational sustainability. The values and strategies guide all activities and decisions. Senior leaders are responsible to the governance body for actions and performance. The governance body is responsible ultimately for the ethics, actions, sustainability, and accountability of the organization and its leaders.

Criterion 1: Mission and Operating Principles

- A. Mission: The organization has a clear mission that explains its reason for existing, who it serves, and how. A consistent mission statement is communicated in writing both internally and externally.
- B. Operating Principles: The organization has a consistent set of values or principles that are used as a basis for daily operations and decision-making.

Criterion 2: Planning

- A. Multi-Year Planning: The organization has a strategic plan that maps out what the organization wants to accomplish and staffing needs over a defined period of time.
- B. Financial Alignment: Each goal in the organization's strategic plan is tied to realistic funding sources. The organization's annual budget is developed to support the implementation of the strategic plan.
- C. Measurable Indicators: The organization has identified measurable indicators/benchmarks that will be used to measure progress against its strategic plan.

Criterion 3: Risk Management

- A. Risk Management: The organization has policies and procedures in place to minimize risk incurred during the course of day-to-day operations and delivery of its programs and services.
- B. Unplanned Events: There are written policies to manage leadership transitions, unplanned events, and/or crises. These policies are understood by board, staff, and volunteers.

Criterion 4: Financial Management

- A. Policies and Procedures: The organization has policies and procedures in place, which provide for sound financial management and protection of its assets. Financial transactions are documented and summarized in accordance with legal policies and generally accepted accounting standards and ensure that the assets of the organization are protected.
- B. Fundraising: The organization follows ethical fundraising practices to generate support for its mission and programs.
- C. Financial Stability: The organization has a plan for long-term financial stability and uses clear financial performance measures to monitor its health relative to these goals.

Client Centered

Being client centered entails both an understanding of client's current needs and anticipating future ones. It takes into account the impact your service has on the client and their satisfaction. A client centered organization differentiates its services and communications based on different client segments.

Criterion 5: Client Feedback

- A. Customer Service: The organization has policies and procedures in place that guide the interaction between staff and clients.
- B. Client Feedback: The organization has established methods to obtain client feedback on the quality and appropriateness of its programs and services.

Valuing Employees and Partnerships

An organization's success depends on the diverse backgrounds, knowledge skills, creativity, engagement, and commitment to the mission by its workforce and partners. An organization that values its workforce commits to its employee success on the job, development, and input. External partnerships require strategic alliances, setting valid requirements, and measurements and maintenance of services through evaluating results, communication, and continuous improvement.

Criterion 6: Human Resource Management

- A. Roles and Responsibilities: Each position within the organization is clearly defined in writing. Staff members understand their roles, responsibilities, and reporting structure.
- B. Performance Evaluation: The organization has a structured annual review process that includes performance goals, compares staff performance to

- stated performance goals, and provides an opportunity to identify training and development needs.
- C. Training and Development: When funding allows, staff members are able to pursue training and professional development opportunities that are in keeping with their role and their development needs.

Criterion 7: Collaborations and Partnerships

- A. Partnership Relevance: The organization is clear about the purpose and types of collaborations and partnerships that are essential to advance its mission. There is an organized process to develop and monitor those relationships.
- B. Partnership Rationale: The relationship has a jointly developed structure and shared responsibility; mutual authority and accountability for success; and sharing of resources and rewards.

Management by Fact

Organizations depend on the measurement and analysis of information. Measurements are related to service needs and strategy and should also provide data and information about key processes, outputs, and results. Analysis refers to extracting larger meaning from data and information that is used to support evaluation, decision making, and continuous improvement. This involves using data to determine trends, and cause and effect relationships which can be used in management decisions.

Criterion 8: Program Structure

- A. Program Relevance: Each program area supports the mission of the organization.
- B. Program Rationale: The focus of each program area is clearly defined and based on fundamental reasons for why the organization does what it does. Staff and external constituents understand the design and focus of programs.
- C. Evidence-Based: The organization's program model is derived from best practices and current research.
- D. Outcome Measures: The organization is clear about the impact it hopes to achieve and has identified ways to measure and monitor progress.

Criterion 9: External Trends

- A. Data Driven: The organization uses data to evaluate the needs of its service population.
- B. Current and Relevant: Needs assessments are frequently updated and used to adjust programs and services.