

GOAL, OBJECTIVES & ACTIVITIES

A. DRAMATICALLY INCREASE THE NUMBER OF NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS ABOUT WHICH THE COUNCIL PROVIDES INFORMATION.

- **Conduct a feasibility study to determine a means of providing meaningful information about nonprofits involving Council training and nonprofit self-certification.** Conducted a comprehensive study, involving four focus groups of funders, donors and nonprofits, resulting in a plan for a new product to be implemented in 2005. The new product will involve nonprofit self-evaluation, employing a user-friendly online tutorial. The Council will verify nonprofit responses, which will be far less time consuming than the current process, in which the Council initiates and conducts all Reviews. Thus the stage is set for donors to have evaluative information on a considerably greater number of nonprofits than the Council is currently able to provide. The focus groups helped shape this product and were enthusiastic about its potential to improve both donor information and nonprofit commitment to accountability.
- **Initiate 60 Charity Reviews, maintaining current reports on at least 250 nonprofits.** Completed 67 Reviews and maintained reports on at least 250 nonprofits at any given time (258 at year-end). Note that the level of activity was lower than most years (typically we complete 90 – 100 Reviews in a year) due to our focus on product research and development through the Feasibility Study.
- **Seek contracts with federated campaigns to conduct Reviews of their agencies.** The Council completed six reviews of Community Health Charities member agencies.

B. IDENTIFY SEGMENTS OF DONORS WHO WOULD USE THE COUNCIL'S SERVICES TO BECOME MORE INFORMED CONTRIBUTORS, UNDERSTAND THEIR NEEDS AND INTERESTS, AND TAILOR PRODUCTS TO SERVE THEM.

- **Expand Great Givers curriculum and impact toward becoming the catalyst for a statewide youth philanthropy movement.** We completed the greatgivers.org website that reinforces the concepts taught in the Council's Great Givers curriculum. Much of the website development was completed by a college student with youth as advisors. We unveiled the website at our Annual Forum in June, where guest speaker Sarah Andersen of the Hugh J. Andersen Foundation focused funder and nonprofit attention on the importance of youth philanthropy, resulting in a prominent Star Tribune article. We began a 17-month project to increase Great Givers use and impact. Primary focus will be on developing web-based projects in 2005 that will teach students about community involvement, nonprofits, volunteering and philanthropy. These projects will be constructed so as to satisfy the new Social Studies graduation standards – thereby meeting a timely need for teachers seeking such projects.
- **Increase outreach to elderly through presentations by board, staff and volunteers.** Made eight community presentations. We tabled focused outreach to the elderly for when the new product is functional.
- **Conduct market research on the Council's auto donation information. Adjust information and market accordingly.** We were unsuccessful in getting funding for this project. Congressional action to restrict the amount donors can deduct for auto donations is expected to reduce public interest and need for information relating to auto donation.
- **Create avenues for continual input from donors on our standards, reviews and information services.** We engaged four advisory groups of donors, funders and nonprofits as part of the aforementioned feasibility study. We will tap into these groups as we implement the new review model, and build into the model means of ongoing feedback and suggestions from both donors and nonprofits.

C. INCREASE THE NUMBERS OF DONORS WHO RELY ON THE COUNCIL'S SERVICES.

- **Update our communications plan, focusing on media education and response, and donor communications.** We responded to 36 media requests for information or interviews. We developed a media workshop plan but decided to wait until late 2005 to coordinate with launching our new review product.
- **Develop relationships with community partners who can help the Council advance its visibility with individual donors.** We developed a higher profile with the One Percent Club, resulting in 75 additional members subscribing to our Giving Guide. Through the Great Givers project, we developed a partnership with the Association of Fundraising Professionals and worked on several joint projects, including sharing an information booth at the Education Minnesota teachers' conference and a Job Shadow Day in February 2005 matching students with professionals.
- **Expand board alumni involvement in representing the Council to the community.** Thirty "alums" attended a September gathering that included an information exchange on our new review model.

D. INCREASE THE ORGANIZATIONAL AND FINANCIAL CAPACITY OF THE COUNCIL TO ADVANCE ITS MISSION.

- **Organize and mobilize the Council Board to achieve strategic goals.** We have restructured committees around our strategic plan, which has focused, engaged and energized board members. We added a Board Development Committee, whose charge includes ensuring effective board meetings and meaningful board member education and engagement.
- **Aggressively carry out fundraising plan, involving entire board focusing on developing and nurturing donor relationships.** Each board member was assigned 10 major or prospective donors to communicate with; each member offered three new contacts.
- **Seek opportunities to present educational workshops for fees.** We presented an Accountability Workshop to 30 Greater Duluth nonprofits, supported by five area funders.

2004 TARGETS

Because we've taken so many "soundings" from donors and nonprofits over the past two years related to our strategic plan and feasibility study, we limited our evaluation to online surveys, completed by 104 donors and 14 nonprofits:

Council information helps donors make better-informed giving decisions—90% of surveyed donors indicate one or more of the Council's information services helped them make better-informed giving decisions. Below is a list of our services and the percentage of donors who said that the service helped them make informed giving decisions:

- Charity list—94%
- Publication articles—61%
- Charity reports—40%
- Phone services—23%

Nonprofits raising funds in MN nonprofits consciously adhere to the Council's standards—90% of reviewed charities agree that it's important to meet our standards. 100% indicated that it is important for their organization to meet Council standards. Additionally, many indicated that the Council review has led, or will lead, to changes in their organizations as follows:

- Disclosure—75%

Governance—84%
Financial Activity—59%
Fundraising—50%

Several respondents indicated why they agreed to be reviewed, including:

“I want our organization to be readily available to the public. As we become a more high profile organization, I think it's important that we share all of our information to potential donors. We want these donors to feel positive about our organization and what we do-giving them confidence to donate to us.”

“This kind of review is important for the community and for non-profit organizations. It gives donors an impartial and reliable source of information about organizations to which they are considering donating.”

“Charities Review Council is a respected monitor of charities. We sought their review and want to be in compliance as best we can be.”

The Council expands its constituency—25% increase in the number of distinct visitors who access the Council web site.

We have monthly stats of distinct visitors only. The monthly average increased by 19% to 9285. Other stats available for the entire year, however, indicated greater increase in web activity: page views increased 35% to 311,542; reports viewed increased 69% to 169,913.

POPULATION SERVED

The Council serves donors throughout MN through publications (semi-annual Giving Guide is distributed to 18,000 individuals, nonprofits and businesses), phone call and email inquiries (we responded to 2810 requests for information about charities) and our website crcmn.org (See Indicator results above.)

UNANTICIPATED RESULTS

Our advisory groups reinforced the need for finding a means by which we can provide information on a greater number of nonprofits. And in our year-end online survey, half of the 104 respondents said they had a good grasp of our standards, while half said they could learn more.

CHANGES BASED ON RESULTS

We are proceeding with the self-evaluation model developed in our feasibility study described above, along with an educational website for donors.

OTHER OUTCOMES

The value of the Council as an independent resource for donors was reinforced with the outpouring of gifts to Tsunami victims late in 2004. As with the enormous philanthropic response after 9/11, we were repeatedly asked for help in making effective donations. We developed a special web page addressing these issues.

SHARING RESULTS

We put nearly all our information on our website, and will include the results of recent evaluations.