

GOALS, OBJECTIVES & ACTIVITIES

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

- ***Implement a new method of conducting reviews that involves web-based nonprofit education and self-assessment followed by Council verification.*** Successfully launched the Accountability Wizard in December 2005, a new online self-evaluation tool through which nonprofits provide answers to questions designed to determine how they measure up against our widely accepted Accountability Standards. Council staff verifies responses, maintaining our role as an objective third party. Integral to the Wizard review process are the many educational components available to nonprofits, including explanations of the standards' importance and resources to help organizations striving to meet standards.
- ***Partner with federated campaigns and community foundations to encourage nonprofits to participate in the self-evaluation process.*** Presented at several key meetings that laid promising groundwork for future collaboration with federated campaigns such as the Greater Twin Cities United Way, United Ways of Minnesota and Community Health Charities. The role of the Council's review results as a tool in helping community and family foundations with their funding deliberations was noted by Central Minnesota Community Foundation President Steve Joul, a Council board member, who sent 35 letters to regional community and family foundations expressing strong support of the Council's services and urging reciprocal support, both in terms of funding our work, as well as encouraging organizations they are considering supporting to undergo the Council's review process.

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.

- ***Develop enticing, donor-friendly, educational website communicating the results of the new review process.*** Launched new website, the Smart Givers Network, in December 2005, featuring many new and exciting features for both donors and nonprofits. Donors have access to informed giving resources and improved charity search functions, while reviewed nonprofits have new promotional appeal to donors through their organizational snapshot. Reviewed organizations are also highlighted for their acceptance of non-cash donations such as vehicles and other goods—clothing, furniture, etc.
- ***Expand Great Givers curriculum and impact toward becoming the catalyst for a statewide youth philanthropy movement.*** Developed and promoted two new curricula designed to teach students about community involvement, nonprofits, volunteering and philanthropy. These lesson plans were constructed to satisfy the new Social Studies graduation standards—thereby meeting a timely need for teachers seeking such projects. Featured the Great Givers curricula with a display booth at Education Minnesota (formerly Minnesota Education Association) Conference in October. Collaborated with the Association of Fundraising Professionals to develop a Job Shadow Day for students interested in development careers in nonprofits.
- ***Create avenues for continual input from donors on our standards, reviews and information services.*** Donors have increased opportunities through the Smart Givers Network website to contact Council staff regarding their questions, feedback and suggestions. Council also solicits feedback explicitly through an annual informational services email survey. In addition, every nonprofit that completes a review has an opportunity to provide feedback at the end of the Accountability Wizard.

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

- **Leverage our new review product to aggressively market our charity information services to the giving public.** Hired marketing consultants to assess the Council's promising marketing opportunities and to devise a comprehensive plan to utilize those opportunities for implementation in 2006.
- **Hold a media workshop, drawing attention to the Council as a resource for informed giving.** Held a media workshop in November 2005, including a panel of experts on philanthropy, moderated by Council Executive Director Rich Cowles: Bill King, President of the Minnesota Council on Foundations, Joe Selvaggio, founder of Project for Pride in Living and Executive Director of the One Percent Club, and Blaine Markuson, Minnesota Assistant Attorney General. The event resulted in a key Star Tribune article about the Accountability Wizard as well as broadened recognition among Minnesota media outlets regarding the Council as a valuable resource for informed givers.
- **Expand board alumni involvement in representing the Council to the community.** Held an Alumni Gathering in September 2005, drawing 30 current and former staff, board members and volunteers, highlighting the Council's new review process and website. Feedback from attendees indicated their strong support of the Council's newest features as well as a shared sense of pride in being associated with the Council as a unique and valued asset to philanthropy in Minnesota. Additionally, the Council benefited from expanded community representation by more former board members serving on committees in 2005 than ever before.

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

- **Structure and mobilize the Council Board to achieve strategic goals.** Restructured committees to directly correspond with strategic plan objectives. Board members have been engaged and focused throughout the development and launch of the Accountability Wizard and the Smart Givers Network, have celebrated the successful completion of these new features, and are rejuvenated by the excellent opportunities enhancement and promotion of these improved services will bring for greater fulfillment of the Council's mission.
- **Carry out fundraising plan, involving entire board focusing on developing and nurturing individual donor relationships.** Board members were assigned individual prospective donors with whom they communicated. They also offered personal contacts whose contributions totaled \$10,425, exceeding board member contact contributions from every other year on file by at least 35%.
- **Formalize volunteer program to increase the number of volunteers engaged in helping the Council achieve strategic goals.** Implemented systems and practices recommended through Volunteer Resource Center's volunteer management course. The number of Council volunteers increased by 33% from 2004 to 2005.

2005 TARGETS

Because we've taken so many "soundings" from donors and nonprofits over the past three years related to our strategic plan and feasibility study, we limited our evaluation to our passive website survey, completed by 63 constituents, and an information services survey sent to our email recipients and completed by 86 constituents:

- **Council information helps donors make better-informed giving decisions**

Indicator: 90% of surveyed donors indicate one or more of the Council's information services helped them make better-informed giving decisions.

58 of 63 (92%) respondents to our online survey indicated that our web site helps them make better-informed giving decisions.

76 of the 77 (98.7%) respondents to our email survey who had used our charity list in 2005 indicated that the service helped them make informed giving decisions.

80 of 86 (93%) respondents to our email survey indicated that they believe they have a good understanding of our standards and how meeting them demonstrates accountability in nonprofit organizations.

The following are among the many positive comments submitted by online survey participants:

"I have been supporting one of your reviewed organizations for five years, yet I never really knew how responsible it was financially. In two or three minutes on your website, I received reassurance that it is indeed operating highly responsibly. Thank you for your service."

"I give to many charities and you have helped me make the best choices."

"I found this site to be very helpful. I want to know where my money is going when I donate."

- **Nonprofits raising funds in MN nonprofits consciously adhere to the Council's standards**

***Indicators: 150 nonprofits enrolled in the new self-evaluation process by year-end
90% of reviewed charities agree that it's important to meet our standards.***

When we set this goal, we knew it was ambitious and would require everything to go perfectly. But we wanted to "go for it" in an effort to make the new products useful for the 2005 holiday giving season. But we also knew that the organization could be successful on a much slower schedule. And in fact, due to prolonged staff absence for health reasons in our very small organization, the initial launch of the Wizard, and the subsequent enrollment of nonprofits, was delayed three months, deferring enrollment in the "Wizard" until 2006.

Nevertheless, we are absolutely pleased with what we consider a very successful year for the Council due to the development and launch of the new review process, the Accountability Wizard, and redesign of our new website we are calling the Smart Givers Network. As the response of the nonprofit community to the Accountability Wizard has been even more positive than we anticipated, we have high expectations for 2006 and beyond due to the product development in 2005.

- **The Council expands its constituency**

Indicator: 25% increase in website access, as measured by number of distinct visitors

This indicator depended on the success of meeting our ambitious product launch schedule. However, because we launched our new website on December 1, 2005, we compared the number of distinct visitors from January through November in 2005 to the number of distinct visitors from January through November 2004, showing an 8% increase. A technology consultant also brought it to our attention that our statistics had been significantly overstated through our prior web host, and since this inaccuracy has been remedied in our new website, a comparison of December 2004's distinct visitors to December 2005's distinct visitors is not useful. Our capabilities in statistical reporting with our new website are significantly improved, more versatile, and will be widely applicable for indicating key trends in our online services to donors and nonprofits.

POPULATION SERVED

The Council serves donors throughout Minnesota through publications (semi-annual Giving Guide is distributed to 18,000 individuals, nonprofits and businesses), responding to phone call and email inquiries and our website smartgivers.org. We also provide educational services designed to help nonprofits striving to understand and meet our accountability standards.

UNANTICIPATED RESULTS

As noted in the indicator results above, the launch of the Accountability Wizard was delayed due to staff absence, but it was launched in December 2005 with several organizations already enrolling in the review process.

We found it difficult to devote as much time as we'd like to developing the Great Givers youth philanthropy program in a year where we were riveted on other product development to change the way we do business. We contracted for project coordination, and while we ended up with a good product, our small staff felt a little preoccupied and less connected to the project than we would have liked.

CHANGES BASED ON RESULTS

The Accountability Wizard and Smart Givers Network have positioned us to much better serve donors and nonprofits. We are proceeding with the promotion of the Accountability Wizard to nonprofits, while developing new features to improve our services to donors through the Smart Givers Network.

OTHER OUTCOMES

The value of the Council as an independent resource for donors was reinforced with the outpouring of gifts to Katrina victims in 2005. As with the enormous philanthropic response after the Tsunami, 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.