

## 2008 Strategic Goals

**EXPANSION GOAL:** Establish the Council as a national leader with a distinctive voice for advancing the public's trust in charities.

**CULTURAL COMPETENCE GOAL:** Transform the Council to a more culturally affirming, inclusive organization that will effectively serve donors and nonprofits of all cultures and communities.

**NONPROFIT GOAL:** Champion nonprofit accountability by identifying and defining sound practices and vigorously engaging the nonprofit sector in those practices.

**DONOR GOAL:** Stimulate charitable giving by motivating and educating each generation of donors to be smart givers.

**LEAD BY EXAMPLE GOAL:** Earn public and nonprofit trust by modeling excellence in our recommended practices.

## Progress Toward Goals

**EXPANSION GOAL:** The Council is taking a national leadership role to be a distinctive voice for advancing the public's trust in charities.

Indicators:

- Business plan for expansion completed; technology vendor hired.
- Formalized relationship with at least one national service partner.
- At least one article placed in national media source.

We have been pursuing opportunities to expand beyond Minnesota via regional or national partnerships by assessing our internal operations (technology, personnel, etc.) in preparation of expansion, and by increasing our national visibility to enhance our reputation among potential national partners. For example, we invited nationally renowned NYU charitable giving trends researcher Paul Light to deliver the keynote address at our June Annual Forum Luncheon. Executive Director, Rich Cowles also published the enclosed opinion editorial piece in the local Star Tribune newspaper; additionally, the piece was featured in the national *Chronicle of Philanthropy's* daily email update, *Philanthropy Today*.

We have also been seeking national funding opportunities for regional or national expansion, with two significant grants secured. We have completed an expansion project charter to clearly define our goals, objectives and budgetary needs, and have established relationships with several funders aligned with expansion opportunities.

**CULTURAL COMPETENCE GOAL:** The Council is transforming to a more culturally affirming, inclusive organization that will effectively serve donors and nonprofits of all cultures and communities.

Indicators:

- Internal cultural competence assessment completed with an approved new set of inclusive values.
- Two new members from diverse cultures added to board; four new volunteer advisors from diverse cultures serving on committees.
- 25% increase in number of new Wizard participants that self-identify as organizations serving primarily communities of color.

We completed a comprehensive cultural competence diagnostic assessment facilitated by InclusionInc. We convened a new cultural competency task force composed of Board members and community representatives to lead us through this transformation. Three new members from diverse cultures have joined our board and three new volunteer advisors from diverse cultures are serving on committees. Recruiting highly qualified volunteers who will bring a diverse array of perspectives and expertise to our work is an ongoing priority, and there are two additional promising candidates from diverse cultures who we hope to welcome as we begin 2009. The recommendations resulting from the assessment are currently undergoing review and will next be prioritized and implemented.

**NONPROFIT GOAL:** The Council is a champion for nonprofit accountability through identifying and defining sound practices and vigorously engaging the nonprofit sector in those practices.

Indicators:

- 165 nonprofits enrolled in the Wizard in 2008 (including 15 renewals).
- 10 grant makers promote Wizard participation to grant seekers.
- Completed draft of updated standards – representing input from experts and tested for cultural bias – ready for broad public comment.

We had 50 nonprofits enroll in the Wizard last year, reaching 30% of our goal. We have been working to establish and maintain more personalized pre-enrollment follow-up with potential review participants. We have also enhanced the Accountability Wizard review process itself through improved usability, technical support, and educational content. We have continued to develop umbrella group relationships and encourage member participation.

We have also developed more detailed review reports and are now promoting our services to grantmakers. We exceeded our goal by 70%, with 17 grantmakers promoting Wizard participation to grantseekers. We can be helpful in their due diligence by making the information that we gather available in one convenient location – information such as the number of times a grant seeker’s board meets each year and whether they met quorum.

We have begun the process of updating and revising the Accountability Standards. The timeline for the project has been extended in order to pursue the Cultural Competence initiative. We decided to do this to ensure the revised standards reflect the input and expectations of an inclusive array of donors, grant makers, nonprofit leaders, community leaders, and academics. We have engaged issue-related experts in discussions of current good management practices.

The following survey results illustrate how our services are strengthening nonprofits to better fulfill their missions. The survey participants are all of the nonprofits who have current reviews.

- 60% (or 239) of 397 nonprofits participating in the review process identified a need for change and/or growth in at least one of the following areas: Public Disclosure, Governance, Financial Activity, Fundraising, or Other.
- 57% (or 229) of 397 of reviewed nonprofits now have a better understanding of the accountability standards.
- 72% (or 285) of 397 of reviewed nonprofits have improved their commitment to accountability.
- 83% (or 331) of 397 of reviewed nonprofits indicate the Wizard was a useful experience for their organization.

**DONOR GOAL:** The Council is stimulating charitable giving by motivating and educating each generation of donors to be smart givers.

Indicators:

- 100% increase in number of (600 new) online personalized My Smart Giver subscribers.
- 90% of My Smart Giver subscribers request a review of a charity.
- 50% of email newsletter subscribers click through to additional information on Smart Givers Network website.

We increased the number of My Smart Giver account subscribers by 81% in 2008 to 1,091. 73% of these subscribers requested a review of a charity. While we came short of our goal of 50% of subscribers clicking through to additional information on our Web site, the 30% who did is at the leading edge of the industry average of 15-30% from email newsletters.

**LEAD BY EXAMPLE GOAL:** The Council is earning public and nonprofit trust by modeling excellence in our recommended practices.

Indicators:

-Council meets or exceeds all Accountability Standards; review of other recommended practices underway.

We have engaged our board of directors in an informational self review and determined that we do meet all of our Accountability Standards. We are also evaluating and considering adoption of other recommended practices (e.g. MCN Principles & Practices, Independent Sector Principles, AFP donor bill of rights, etc.).

### **Population Served**

The Charities Review Council served over 12,000 individuals, nonprofits, and businesses throughout Minnesota in 2008. Donors are served through our semi-annual newsletters, Web services found at SmartGivers.org, and telephone inquiries. We also strengthen nonprofits by encouraging organizational transparency and accountability, achieved through our on-line tutorial, the Accountability Wizard, and Council staff assistance.

### **Unanticipated Results**

While we had originally intended to revise and renew our Accountability Standards at the same time we were working through our cultural competence assessment, our board decided to push the timeline for the Standards revision back slightly to focus solely on the cultural competence initiative. The lasting organizational transformation that we will embark upon through the cultural competence initiative will help to ensure that the updated Standards are inclusive of a wide array of donors and nonprofits and free from cultural bias. We do still expect the Standards revision to be completed by the end of 2009.

Additionally, while the number of nonprofits that have enrolled in the Accountability Wizard review process this year has been significantly lower than we anticipated, we are optimistic about our position to serve more of them in more valuable ways in 2009, as mentioned below.

### **Lessons Learned and Changes Based on Results**

One key finding from our program evaluation has been that organizations need much more hands-on assistance than we had originally anticipated. We are working to remedy this in two main ways. First, we are re-engineering the Accountability Wizard review process to be more user-friendly and streamlined for participants. Second, we are developing a volunteer program for technologically savvy 'helpers' to provide on-site technical assistance as organizations go through the review process. This has worked wonders in the three pilot cases we've tried. Not only do participants get past the avoidance obstacle, once they get started, they complete the process more quickly.

In order to understand the giving habits of our potential donor constituents, we have been conducting research about different types of donors to inform the development of the next phase of our service enhancements. We have also realized the need for over-arching cohesive strategies to guide both our Fund Development and Marketing Communications Plans moving forward. Therefore, we are planning to hold at least one joint meeting of both of these board committees at the start of 2009, with the possibility of an ongoing task force made up of representatives from both committees to ensure that we are reaching out to potential new constituents and engaging them in our work in the most effective ways.

### **Sharing Results**

Nearly all of our information can be found on our Web site, [www.SmartGivers.org](http://www.SmartGivers.org), including the results of recent evaluations.