

2018 COMMON REPORT

In 2018, Charities Review Council (the Council) worked to transform philanthropy by building donor and nonprofit relationships for strong, vibrant, and just communities. We are building a culture of philanthropy where donors, funders, and nonprofits are engaged partners, working together toward stronger communities in Minnesota and beyond. When donors and nonprofits work together in partnership, they are better able to meet the community’s needs and find innovative solutions to community concerns.

Population served

The Council serves both donors and nonprofits. In 2018, we served more than 563 nonprofits via the Accountability Wizard[®] (our online capacity building tool) and the Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Toolkit, providing more than 2,400 hours of customized technical assistance along the way. Additionally, we sent 7,300 constituents our semiannual Smart Giver Newsletter and responded to more than 1,000 donor support calls and emails, each one having the potential to translate into one or more confident gifts to strong nonprofits! We also continued to provide extensive online resources to both donors and nonprofits on our website and via our social media platforms, including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn.



2018 strategic priorities and goals

Guided by our strategic plan¹, we provided spaces, places, and tools for donors, funders, and nonprofits to come together in authentic and meaningful partnership. In 2018, we achieved the following through our three programs.



Expand our reach with donors, funders, and nonprofits

Indicator	Progress	Key Activities
Increase the number of donors using our list of Meets Standards [®] nonprofits by 15%.	7,300 recipients of our Smart Giver Newsletter and 22,651 unique pageviews of our online list, representing a 20.3% increase.	Through quality content, engaged marketing, and cleaned mail and email lists, we exceeded our goal and increased usage of our list. That means more people are consulting our information and resources before making gifts so they can be informed and educated around their philanthropy.
Increase the number of culturally specific nonprofits engaged in the Accountability Wizard [®] review process by 25%.	28% of organizations new to the Accountability Wizard [®] were culturally specific, increasing the new culturally specific organizations by 10%, while the total number in 2018 (including renewing organizations) was 27%. 21% of all nonprofits currently engaged in the review process are culturally specific.	Through targeted outreach efforts, we were able to engage several new nonprofits in the review process that identify as culturally specific and successfully re-engaged many more that otherwise would have expired in 2018.
Add 22 new nonprofits engaged in the Accountability Wizard [®] review process.	26 new nonprofits enrolled for the first time.	Through our outreach and marketing efforts, we enrolled 26 nonprofits that had not been reviewed before, reaching 118% of our goal.

Unanticipated results and key learnings

Accountability Wizard®

81% of nonprofits in the Accountability Wizard® in 2018 that Met Standards® indicated the review process helped position their organization to “better/more effectively work toward its mission”, an increase from 78% in 2017, and 94% indicated it made their organization “more accountable and transparent”. We attribute this great success to our continued development of our online resources and our care and attention with the assistance we provide to nonprofits as they undertake the review.

Our Nonprofit Services team is regularly adding helpful resources for our nonprofit partners to access during the Accountability Wizard® review process, including helpful links, key definitions, focused explanations, and sample policies. With this information, more than 54% of organizations self-identified a need in 2018 for changes related to governance before receiving the Council’s review results. Further, 65% indicated the review process increased their knowledge around governance once they met the Standards. In partnership with the Council, more than 81% of our nonprofit partners made positive changes to strengthen their organization’s governance practices and policies.

Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Toolkit

We aimed to add 100% more nonprofits using the DEI Toolkit in 2018. Partway through the year, we engaged with a consulting firm to develop and license a separate version of the Toolkit that can be used by for-profit companies. Moving forward, royalties from this for-profit version will help fund the ongoing development and marketing of the nonprofit version in a more sustainable way, allowing us to focus much more heavily on improving the Toolkit and marketing it to more nonprofits. This shift in focus in 2018 meant that we added 60% more nonprofits using the Toolkit; with this new funding source, we are hopeful that 2019 will see even greater growth.



Inspire and support culturally responsive giving

Indicator	Progress	Key Activities
Reference culturally specific philanthropy in at least 30% of communications.	22% on Facebook, 22% on Twitter, 28% on LinkedIn, and 78% in our email newsletters.	Throughout the year, we provided information about culturally specific philanthropy across all our communications.

Unanticipated results and key learnings

New Ways of Connecting and Giving

Guided by our new strategic plan and our commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion, we set a new goal around sharing information with donors about culturally specific philanthropy since information and resources on charitable giving is so often dominated by traditional models of philanthropy. With this being a new focus in 2018, this year served as an opportunity for us to learn what the right balance is for our community and set a baseline for moving forward.

We also had conversations with several culturally specific organizations to learn about how we can improve our services and increase their engagement with our work, as well as to explore potential collaborations between our organizations. We constantly strive to improve our services to be more inclusive of and accessible for nonprofits and donors of all backgrounds and experiences. We look forward to continuing these conversations and putting them into action in 2019.



Be recognized as a leader in advancing philanthropy

Indicator	Progress	Key Activities
Increase the click rate on Council communications by 10%.	13.75% increase to the click rate on Council communications.	By cleaning our email newsletter list and constantly improving the messaging in our e-newsletters, we increased our click rate by 13.75%, bringing us to a click rate 28.8% higher than the industry average.

Indicator	Progress	Key Activities
Increase social media engagement by 10%.	Twitter: 7.07 engagements per day LinkedIn: 5.1% engagement rate Facebook: 8.44 engagements per day	In 2018, we saw a 14% increase in engagements per day on Twitter, and our engagement rate on LinkedIn more than tripled. We continued to experiment with paid posts to reach more people on Facebook and will continue this tactic in 2019.
Launch an updated version of the Accountability Standards®.	Launched updated Accountability Standards® on January 1, 2019.	We gathered a cohort of nonprofit and philanthropic sector leaders, donors, and sector experts to update the Accountability Standards® and ensure they both meet updated legal requirements and remain relevant to the entire sector.

Unanticipated results and key learnings

Greater Online Engagement

The Council's website and social media platforms continue to be a virtual space for our donor and nonprofit partners to engage and learn. We updated many of the existing resources on our website and blog while continuing to add new content, and we saw a total of 24,255 unique pageviews of these resources in 2018, representing a 12.9% increase over 2017.

The Council is a Resource for News Media Organizations

The Council continues to be a sought-after resource for news media organizations for questions ranging from the behavior of certain nonprofits to the best ways to engage with disaster relief philanthropy to how to manage your year-end giving. In 2018, Executive Director Kris Kewitsch was interviewed by news media organizations across Minnesota more than six times, and the Council was highlighted in at least three additional articles.



Align internal structures and resources to meet external demands

Indicator	Progress	Key Activities
Hire an Engagement & Outreach Manager.	Engagement & Outreach Manager hired.	After a competitive and in-depth application and interview process, the Council hired a new Engagement & Outreach Manager to lead our outreach and engagement efforts, building our relationships with other organizations across all of Minnesota.

Unanticipated results and key learnings

Internal Improvements

Our goals and activities related to this strategic priority were mostly internal improvements meant to help the Council work more efficiently and effectively while meeting the sector's needs and constantly improving our work. For example, we took steps to improve communication between staff and the board, worked to establish mutually agreed-upon board values and a strong, positive board culture, and engaged with various consulting services to expand our functionality and resources without having to increase our staff.

Engagement & Outreach Manager

We hired DeeDee LeMier as our first Engagement & Outreach Manager in 2018, and we have already seen great returns. This position has allowed us to be much more present in Greater Minnesota, meeting face-to-face with nonprofits and community leaders we would otherwise be unable to meet with. This has allowed us to work on developing workshops and resources for nonprofits in Greater Minnesota where such trainings and professional development are normally unavailable, inaccessible, or irrelevant. We will continue to develop these offerings in 2019.



Develop an organizational business model framed for growth

Indicator	Progress	Key Activities
Increase the average Accountability Wizard® review fee by 6%.	Average Accountability Wizard® fee of \$728.99, an increase of 25.2%.	The full cost of each nonprofit review is \$3,000, but the Council provides discounts to smaller nonprofits based on their budget size, with a minimum fee of \$100 for any organization with annual expenses of up to \$500,000. Through targeted outreach, we engaged a greater number of large organizations in order to raise the average fee and increase the sustainability of the review process.

Unanticipated results and key learnings

Internal Improvements

Our goals and activities related to this strategic priority were mostly internal improvements meant to help the Council grow and increase our sustainability. For example, we hired All In One Accounting as our new finance contractor to manage our financial recordsⁱⁱ and develop better financial reports to help our board and staff make better ongoing decisions.

Average Accountability Wizard® Fee

Hiring our new Engagement & Outreach Manager allowed us to strengthen our existing relationships, build new relationships, and increase engagement with nonprofits across all of Minnesota. This included adding targeted outreach to large nonprofits that had not been reviewed before. The added revenue from these organizations helped increase the sustainability of the Accountability Wizard® review process for the Council, allowing us to keep the review process affordable for all nonprofits, no matter their size.

Changes that will be made based on the 2018 results

Updated Accountability Standards®

In 2018, we brought together a cohort of nonprofit sector leaders, philanthropic sector leaders, donors, and sector experts to review the Accountability Standards® and revise them to make sure they remain relevant and meaningful. We ensured the Standards are up-to-date with legal requirements and refreshed the language to reframe it around the nonprofits' assets, not deficits. On January 1, 2019, we launched the newest version of the Accountability Standards®.ⁱⁱⁱ

Streamlined Accountability Wizard® Review Process

With the launch of the newly updated Accountability Standards®, our Nonprofit Services team unveiled an updated review process that shortened the assessment by over 10%. Further, our ongoing efforts to update and improve the Accountability Wizard® software and add new information and resources within it continue to improve our nonprofit partners' experience and make our services more accessible and beneficial.

Engagement and Outreach Plan

With the help of our new Engagement & Outreach Manager, we are developing new processes in 2019 to improve our ongoing engagement with our nonprofit partners. With increased and improved communications and more efficient internal logistics, we will continue to increase our nonprofit partners' engagement with our programs.

Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Toolkit Development

Since launching the DEI Toolkit, we have received much feedback from our nonprofit partners who have used it. In 2019, we will continue to improve the Toolkit based on this feedback, building a robust and educational tool that will benefit the whole nonprofit sector.

ⁱ See our 2018–2020 strategic framework at <https://smartgivers.org/about/strategicframework/>.

ⁱⁱ See our 2018 financials when they are available at <https://smartgivers.org/about/reports-financials/>.

ⁱⁱⁱ Read more about the new Standards at <https://smartgivers.org/creating-common-ground-with-the-new-accountability-standards/>.