

# CHARTING IMPACT

Your organization is committed to maximizing your impact and to telling the story of your progress in an accessible, concise way. People want to help you make a difference – through donations, volunteering, and more – but often struggle to find a succinct, consistent resource that clarifies what nonprofits want to achieve and what they have already accomplished.

Charting Impact responds to these needs. Developed with input from nearly 200 organizations, this thoroughly tested framework focuses on enabling your organization to be more effective. It encourages strategic thinking about how your nonprofit or foundation will achieve its intended impact, and helps you share concise information about your plans and progress with key stakeholders and the public.

At the heart of Charting Impact are five deceptively simple questions that require reflection, encourage learning, and promote communication about what really matters – results.

1. **What is your organization aiming to accomplish?**
2. **What are your strategies for making this happen?**
3. **What are your organization's capabilities for doing this?**
4. **How will your organization know if you are making progress?**
5. **What have and haven't you accomplished so far?**

BBB Wise Giving Alliance, GuideStar USA and Independent Sector developed Charting Impact as a common presentation that allows staff, boards, stakeholders, donors, volunteers, and others to work with and learn from each other. It complements planning, evaluation, and assessment that organizations already undertake, and can be used by nonprofits and foundations of all sizes and missions. As this, thoroughly tested framework becomes widely shared, it will be easier for organizations to collaborate and for potential supporters to direct their time and funds to those groups that are making a difference.

Answering the Charting Impact questions offers multiple benefits to organizations like yours. Using this common format to convey your organization's contributions to advancing the common good will:

- ***Encourage people to invest their money, time, and attention in effective organizations;***
- ***Highlight the difference your organization makes;***
- ***Sharpen your approaches; and***
- ***Position your organization to work with and learn from others.***

Share your answers to the five questions – your unique Charting Impact Report – using the online tool at [ChartingImpact.org](https://ChartingImpact.org). Publishing your responses through ChartingImpact.org creates a formatted report with a unique URL that you can share with your network. Your report will also be available on ChartingImpact.org, on your GuideStar or BBB Wise Giving Alliance profile, and – in the future – on other websites and information sources about nonprofits. Adding your report to this central database of information about nonprofit impact will also make it easier for potential funders and partners to find you.



## CHARTING IMPACT'S FIVE QUESTIONS

The Charting Impact framework can help your organization consider and communicate your progress toward impact. As more and more nonprofits and foundations share their answers to these questions, it will be easier for organizations to collaborate and for potential supporters to direct their time and funds to those groups that are making a difference.

### 1. What is your organization aiming to accomplish?

Clearly and concisely, state your organization's ultimate goal for intended impact. Identify the groups or communities you aim to assist, the needs your work is addressing, and your expected outcomes. Examine how your goals for the next three to five years (or an alternate timeframe specified in your answer) fit within your overall plan to contribute to lasting, meaningful change. When finished, ask yourself, "If someone unfamiliar with our work were to read this, would they have a clear definition of what long-term success means for my organization?"

### 2. What are your strategies for making this happen?

Describe your organization's strategies for accomplishing the long-term goals you cited in your previous answer. Specify the broad approaches you employ and why your organization believes these methods will benefit your target audience or advance your issue. Lay out near-term activities that serve as important building blocks for future success, explaining how these elements strengthen your organization's strategic approach.

### 3. What are your organization's capabilities for doing this?

Detail the resources, capacities, and connections that support your progress towards long-term goals. While describing your organization's core assets, identify both internal resources (including, but not limited to, staff, budget, and expertise) and external strengths (including partnerships, networks, and influence) that have contributed to, or will contribute in the future to, the accomplishment of these goals. Also include any future resources and tools that will further strengthen your work.

### 4. How will your organization know if you are making progress?

Explain key qualitative and quantitative indicators against which your organization assesses your progress toward your intended impact. In addition to describing what you measure, identify key milestones – what your interim targets are, and when you want to reach them – that signal progress and success. Include a description of your assessment and improvement process: the qualitative and quantitative methods you use as you monitor key indicators, and how your organization uses and will use that information to refine your efforts.

### 5. What have and haven't you accomplished so far?

Demonstrate recent progress toward your long-term goals by describing how your near-term objectives are propelling your organization toward your ultimate intended impact. Go beyond the outputs of your work to make clear how these outcomes are contributing to fulfilling long-term goals. In describing both outcomes achieved and those not yet realized, include what your organization has learned about what does and doesn't work, what risks and obstacles exist, and what adjustments to goals, strategies, or objectives have been made along the way.