# NPCC

**NONPROFIT COORDINATING
COMMITTEE OF NEW YORK**

## 2019 KEY AREAS OF NONPROFIT EXCELLENCE

The 40,000 nonprofits in the New York City area represent one of the largest and most diverse communities of nonprofits in the country. They provide most of our art and music and crucial services that improve the welfare and well-being of individuals, neighborhoods, and communities. Well managed nonprofits are critical in providing effective services that we all rely on.

NPCC developed the *Key Areas of Nonprofit Excellence* to give nonprofits a roadmap of core management excellence areas and performance strategies. Though the nonprofit sector varies in size and mission, and the art and science of management is ever-evolving, these Key Areas are a good starting point for evaluating an organization's management practices and potential for growth and improvement.

Underlying each of these principles is an assumption that the organization complies with federal, state, and city regulations that apply to nonprofits generally, and various nonprofit fields specifically. Each of the Key Areas includes: (1) an explanation of the topic; (2) baseline standards that NPCC believes must be met in order to demonstrate strong nonprofit practice; and, (3) aspirational practices that demonstrate progress and deepening strength of the nonprofit sector. The Key Areas are intersectional and  are a guide, but are not meant to serve as a checklist, or one-size-fits-all mandate. Instead, we hope they inspire you to think about your organization's nonprofit management and what would work best for you. In line with our understanding that excellence evolves, we expect the list to change over time as we all further define nonprofit excellence. Each year we update these Key Areas and, in 2019, NPCC included one additional Key Area: Advocacy and Strategic Alliances.

These Key Areas are used throughout NPCC's programming, but were originally developed for NPCC's **Nonprofit Excellence Awards** program. This program provides nonprofits with an opportunity to learn about these Key Areas, assess their own organizational management, access resources and education that support improvement, and apply for an Award that recognizes their excellence and allows them to share their proven practices with the entire sector. The Nonprofit Excellence Awards encourage a growing number of today's nonprofits – as well as those who observe, support, and study them – to pursue excellent management practices and to contribute to our field's growing legacy of excellence. We hope these *Key Areas of Nonprofit Excellence* inspire your organization to grow and evolve.

**AREA 1: ADVOCACY AND STRATEGIC ALLIANCES FURTHER THE MISSION**

### Understand and Engage in Advocacy

❏ The organization engages in public policy and advocacy efforts to promote the interests of its mission, constituents, and communities.
  ○ Standard:
    ● The organization monitors and understands the current public policy environment that relates to its mission and the potential implications it may have for the communities it serves.
    ● The organization has a dedicated group of board or staff members regularly discussing mission-related policy issues.
    ● The organization understands the key influencers and levers of power in the mission-related public policy area.
    ● If the organization engages in lobbying activities, it is compliant with federal, state, and city laws and funder rules regarding reporting and funding restrictions.
    ● The organization's board and staff, acting on behalf of the organization, are nonpartisan in their advocacy efforts and never endorse or oppose a candidate for political office.
  ○ Aspiration:
    ● The organization is a leader in public policy development and implementation as it relates to its mission, and educates its constituents on issues through public positions, organizing, and mobilization of policy goals.
    ● The organization regularly engages with key influencers to weigh in on issues related to the mission and leads advocacy efforts regarding mission-specific policy.
    ● Advocacy is considered a critical part of all program operations, and the organization has an internal plan that outlines how advocacy decisions are made, the scope of work, and the time and resources allocated to advocacy efforts.

### Promote Community Interests

❏ The organization organizes, mobilizes, and actively creates spaces for communities to be empowered to lead in mission-related public policy issues.
  ○ Standard:
    ● The organization's advocacy information that is provided to constituents, media, policy-makers, etc. is easily accessible, distributed broadly, and is factually accurate.
    ● Constituents and communities are consistently engaged with advocacy efforts, from planning to execution, and are given meaningful opportunities to influence the organization's advocacy-related decisions, including issue-identification, position determination, and priority-setting.
    ● The organization takes positions that are aligned with those of their constituents and communities they serve.

- ○ Aspiration:
  - ● The organization educates, organizes, and mobilizes community members to take action on mission-related policy issues.
  - ● The organization provides meaningful leadership opportunities to community members in setting and promoting advocacy goals and priorities.
  - ● The organization encourages public dialogue and forums for constituents/ community members to express views on mission-related public policy issues.
  - ● The organization promotes nonpartisan efforts to encourage voting and civic participation in policymaking and provides resources and information about government activities that may impact the communities it serves.

## Develop Strategic Alliances and Partnerships
- ❏ The organization develops successful relationships with key stakeholders through partnerships, coalitions, and collaborations in order to share knowledge, resources, influence policy, reduce redundancy, and improve programs and operations.
  - ○ Standards
    - ● The organization is aware of the organizations, leaders, and potential partners addressing ongoing policy development or similar community needs and changes in its field.
    - ● The organization seeks strategic partnerships and alliances to achieve organizational policy goals, increase impact, and/or strengthen connections with constituents and others in the communities it serves.
    - ● The organization determines the resources required in potential partnerships, the availability of those resources, and the estimated cost, and weighs these with the anticipated benefit of the partnerships.
    - ● Contracts, agreements, or memorandums of understanding establish clear roles and responsibilities in partnerships.
    - ● The organization openly communicates with other organizations to gather and share information on lessons learned and best practices to promote overall accountability.
  - ○ Aspiration
    - ● The organization provides opportunities for constituents to participate in strategic alliances and partnerships.
    - ● The organization forms coalitions to share best practices and advance proactive public policy efforts that impact the communities they serve.
    - ● The organization works to establish communications channels, mutual understanding, and beneficial alliances among government, nonprofit, and for-profit sectors to achieve policy goals.The organization strengthens communities through its partnerships and advocacy.
    - ● The organization promotes the programs and services of other organizations to better meet their constituents' needs.

**AREA 2: COMMUNICATIONS ARE STRATEGIC, EFFECTIVE, AND BUILD THE ORGANIZATION'S BRAND IDENTITY**

### Intentional and Effective Communications Planning

❏ Communications are intentional, strategically integrated, and central to all organizational planning, and effectively advance the organization's mission, vision, and values.
  ○ Standard:
    ● The organization has a communications plan with clear tactics connected to specific and measurable goals that support programmatic and operational strategies.
    ● Communications are transparent, fair, and honest, and use consistent branding, story-telling, and style guide (font, colors, and logos) across all programs.
    ● The organization has clear procedures for responding to media inquiries and has identified and prepared spokespersons for the organization.
    ● The organization trademarks its materials as appropriate and abides by copyright and trademark requirements.
    ● The organization produces an annual report that effectively communicates prior achievements and a vision for strategic growth in a clear manner.
  ○ Aspiration:
    ● The organization's communications plan guides its communications strategy for all aspects of the organization.
    ● The organization has policies and procedures to ensure brand integrity that are consistently used by all staff.
    ● The organization has established strategies for gathering, using, and regularly evaluating feedback on services from target audiences (including preferred method of communications).
    ● The organization's communications, marketing, and branding keep current with evolving communications needs and the communications strategy is regularly updated.
    ● The organization's marketing materials reflect its brand, key messages, and visual identity.
    ● The organization assesses possible reputational risks and has a crisis communications plan and a specific process to guide external and internal communications in a crisis or emergency situation.

### Appropriate Use of Digital Communications

❏ The organization uses the appropriate digital communications tools to communicate with key stakeholders and regularly evaluates its effectiveness and practices around confidentiality.
  ○ Standard:
    ● The organization maintains a website or web presence that provides information about its mission, programs, finances (including most recent 990, audit, and annual report), management, and governing board.

- - The organization regularly updates website content with information about current developments.
    - The organization has privacy, confidentiality, and openness policies and procedures, and includes release forms and opt-out practices ensuring that clients, consumers, and donors do not receive unwanted public exposure.
    - Communications tools and techniques take into consideration the intended audiences' preferred methods of communication and ensure that content is accessible.
  - Aspiration:
    - Organizational practices ensure safety of users of social media and other communication channels from online harassment.
    - The organization assesses its website layout and contents every three years.
    - The organization evaluates and determines which communications channels and social media platforms can drive the communications plan and is clear about the tone, functionality, and audience for each communications platform.
    - The organization relies on communications data and analytics to determine resource allocation and strategy moving forward.

## Strong Internal Communications Practices
- ❏ Internal communications motivate, inform, and guide employees.
  - Standard:
    - All staff and board are aware of the organization's vision, mission, values, and key organizational developments.
    - The board, staff, and all stakeholders understand and can represent the organization using the organization's communications plan.
    - The organization has developed a culture and practice of candid, open communications without fear of retribution or not being heard and welcomes alternative perspectives and minimizes defensiveness.
    - The organization's external voice and position is reflected internally within staff practice and programs.
    - The organization has a process for resolving grievances and miscommunications.
  - Aspiration:
    - The organization has an explicit, written, and agreed upon communication agreement for staff dialogue.
    - The organization has a policy for when and how staff and board can represent an organizational position and when and how staff and board can indicate their personal opinions.
    - Organizational leadership and board develop an internal communications strategy and toolkit to ensure clear communications lines and standards.
    - Internal communications are developed and cultivated through strategies such as internal newsletter, intranet or messaging platform.

**AREA 3: THE ORGANIZATION IS DIVERSE, EQUITABLE, AND INCLUSIVE**

**Organizational Practices Reflect Commitment to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion**
- ❏ The staff, board, and volunteers are diverse and inclusive at all levels of the organization and reflect the community(ies) or population(s) they serve.
  - ○ Standard:
    - ● The organization has clear definitions for "diversity," "equity," and "inclusion" as they relate to the organization's mission, values, programs, and staff.
    - ● The leadership of the organization articulates a vision for diversity, equity, and inclusion and, in partnership with staff, develops goals and measures of success.
    - ● As part of a larger strategy, staff receive regular trainings in diversity, equity, inclusion, and cultural competency.
    - ● The organization has a process of regularly and safely engaging staff to address the differences that may arise through cultivating and maintaining a diverse and inclusive workplace.
    - ● The organization acknowledges areas where it is not diverse, equitable, inclusive, or culturally competent and seeks assistance to bridge existing gaps.
    - ● Internal and external communications reflect the organization's commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion.
    - ● The organization's website, marketing materials, and all outputs reflect diverse, equitable and inclusive considerations.
  - ○ Aspiration:
    - ● The organization regularly assesses areas of growth in terms of diversity, equity, and inclusion, and ensures that all forward planning addresses those areas.
    - ● Inclusion and equity are not presumed to be innate or assumed, but rather intentionally cultivated and grown.
    - ● The organization has practices and resources to address inequity among board, staff, and community members, and invests resources in achieving equity.
    - ● The organization defines key terms they need in order to have conversations and provide programs that embody diversity, equity, and inclusion.
    - ● The organization assesses the implication and impact of biases, power structures, white privilege and supremacy, and dominant culture on programs, constituents, staff, and board members.

**Policies Reflect Organizational Commitment to Diversity**
- ❏ Inclusive service, outreach, recruitment, and hiring policies and practices are integrated into the organization's structure, leadership and personnel, and governance policies and practices.
  - ○ Standard:
    - ● There is an explicit written diversity, equity, and inclusion policy and a policy for reporting discrimination that ensures accountability.

- The organization's mission, vision and/or value statements reflect its commitment to diversity and inclusion and to ensuring equity, fairness, and respect throughout the organization and in its efforts to fulfill its mission.
- Diversity and inclusion policies explicitly include race, color, ethnicity, national origin, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, ability, religion, marital status, familial status, parental status, HIV status, military status, immigration status, and genetic information.
- The organization makes every effort to accommodate the language, hearing, and accessibility needs of staff and constituents and ensures materials and programs are inclusive and culturally appropriate.
  - Aspiration:
    - Organizational recruitment, onboarding, and orientation explicitly address that diversity, inclusion, and equity are organizational values and are necessary to effectively meeting the organization's mission.
    - The organization values lived experience or involvement with the mission or services, especially when recruiting new employees, volunteers, and board members.
    - The organization has a written policy that allows staff and board to regularly engage in anti-oppression assessments and have mechanisms to address oppression where it exists or is discovered.

## Evaluation and Planning Work Includes Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

- ❏ The organization regularly assesses the value of diverse and inclusive staff, board members, other stakeholders, as critical to achieving the organization's mission, and sets goals for diversity, equity, and inclusion that have measurable results.
  - Standard:
    - The organization regularly assesses its staff, board, and volunteers' diversity (including, but not limited, to race and ethnicity) and sets goals to authentically increase diversity, such as in hiring and retention policies without tokenizing.
    - The organization assesses and includes the needs of the communities it serves through informal or formal methods (surveys, focus groups, etc.).
    - The organization's strategic planning, outcomes evaluation, and other alignment-based activities incorporate diversity, equity, and inclusion.
    - The organization reviews program impact to determine if it is equitable and has mechanisms to address inequity.
  - Aspiration:
    - Needs assessments and external evaluations incorporate diversity, equity, and inclusion measures and goals.
    - The organization's assessment of the results of employee surveys and other internal analysis tools include diversity, equity, and inclusion metrics, address perceived and real disparities or inequities in the success and satisfaction of its employees, and are shared with the team.

**AREA 4: FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT IS STRONG, TRANSPARENT, AND ACCOUNTABLE**

<span style="color:red">**Financial Management is Transparent**</span>

- ❏ Budgets are clear, informed by the mission and strategic plan, and communicated to stakeholders; and financial management is compliant with all legal and financial requirements.
    - ○ Standard:
        - All organizational information, such as form 990s, 1023 or 1024, and other financial statements are easily available on the organization's website.
        - The organization has a process for ensuring appropriate categorization and handling of all funds (particularly restricted funds) in the budget, accounting systems and cash flow management systems, ensuring that designated funds are utilized as prescribed.
        - The organization has the appropriate financial management software to track budget variances in a timely way..
        - The organization has regular audits, addresses any auditor's management comments, and develops and implements a corrective action plan as needed.
        - The finance committee of the board is responsible for planning and monitoring the organization's funding, financial management, assets, risks, and insurance programs.
    - ○ Aspiration:
        - The organization builds budgets with input from program staff and other budget managers and communicates actual to budget variances to staff on a timely basis throughout the year.
        - All staff are aware of and trained in appropriate internal controls that are in place to assure integrity, accuracy, and transparency in all financial dealings by the organization and to prevent fraud and waste.
        - All board members are trained on how to read and understand the organization's financial statements.

<span style="color:red">**Financial Planning is Linked to Financial Performance**</span>

- ❏ The organization's management keeps abreast of financial targets that support strategic goals, strives for an annual surplus and/or adequate reserves, and regularly tracks actual to budget performance and cash flow.
    - ○ Standard:
        - The organization has a clear understanding of how indirect costs (administrative/overhead) feed its programs and mission, while also providing sufficient cost reimbursement to the financial bottom line for future sustainability.
        - Budgets are created with agreed upon financial goals, which includes a surplus or strategic use of reserves.
        - Actual to budget performance and cash flow updates are regularly provided to the board.

- The board treasurer and/or finance committee receives regular detailed financial reports and is in ongoing communication with personnel in charge of financial management.
- Organizational program or department budgets are monitored and adhered to by the program staff.
- The organization has an investment policy.
  - Aspiration:
    - Flexible budgets are created with scenarios that pre-plan for shortfalls or unexpected revenue fluctuation.
    - The organization uses dashboards to clearly measure key performance indicators and to communicate financial progress with stakeholders as appropriate.
    - Budgets cover the full cost of the organization's needs, including future or non-operating needs like facility maintenance and reserves, and progress is measured against this goal.
    - The organization engages in long-term strategic planning with a financial roadmap that considers market, financial realities, programs, opportunities, and risks.
    - The organization stays abreast of all revenue opportunities and evaluates their reliability and net benefit to programs and financial stability.
    - Management performs regular financial risk assessments and develops a plan for managing the top risks to the organization.
    - Management is able to adjust quickly to unexpected financial opportunities or challenges as a result of timely financial reporting, clear decision-making roles, and regular practice of financial scenario planning.

## Day-to-Day Operating Stability

❏ The organization's board and management team ensure adequate cash flow and liquidity to cover day-to-day expenses as well as reserves to maintain fiscal sustainability.
  - Standard:
    - Management takes appropriate advantage of cash management tools such as lines of credit or strategies such as unrestricted revenue or reimbursement maximization.
    - The organization seeks to achieve an appropriate mix of funding streams, given its size, business model, and aspirations.
  - Aspiration:
    - The board and management team ensure that there are adequate (minimum 3 months' worth of expenses) liquid cash reserves to protect the organization against contingencies and risk.
    - The board has established a financial reserve policy that articulates the purpose of the funds, how they are to be used and replenished.

**AREA 5: FUNDRAISING AND RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT ARE STRATEGIC, DONOR-CENTERED, AND ADVANCE THE ORGANIZATION'S MISSION**

**Inclusive, Holistic Fundraising**
- ❏ The organization implements fundraising and resource development practices that involve all stakeholders and promote a culture of philanthropy throughout the entire organization.
  - ○ Standard:
    - The chief executive and development staff, together with the board, set fundraising strategies and related goals.
    - The organization's annual budget goals are set through an integrated, collaborative process involving both the fundraising and finance functions.
    - The board ensures that sufficient funds are raised to meet the organization's budgeted objectives, and sets board-specific targets including that 100% of board members contribute a personally significant amount each year.
    - Board members' fundraising roles and responsibilities are described, regularly reviewed, and adhered to in recruiting and educating new board members.
  - ○ Aspiration:
    - The organization fosters a culture of philanthropy throughout the entire organization whereby the staff and other stakeholders support and suggest efforts to identify and steward donors and achieve fundraising goals.
    - The organization sets "stretch goals" for, monitors, supports, coordinates, and motivates board members' fundraising activities and performance.
    - The organization engages in systematic and sustainable approaches to fundraising that reaches diverse funding markets.
    - The organization sets multi-year fundraising goals for primary fundraising activities and plans a year-round fundraising calendar.
    - Development staff stay abreast of current philanthropic and fundraising trends and evaluate their actual and potential impact on the organization.
    - Development expertise is enlisted in program planning to assess "fundability" of proposed programs or program strategies.

**Responsible and Sustainable Fundraising**
- ❏ The organization implements fundraising and resource development practices that are effective, diverse, and accountable to donors. These practices are regularly reviewed by the board, aim for long-term sustainability, and align with mission.
  - ○ Standard:
    - The organization has a written fundraising/development plan.
    - The organization has policies and procedures that outline how to manage the receipt, acknowledgement, use and categorization of gifts, grants, and in-kind donations.
    - Fundraising revenue streams are diverse so as to strengthen the organization's sustainability and lessen the impact of a potential loss of funding.

- The organization spends contributions responsibly, ensures gifts are used according to donor wishes, and regularly communicates with donors regarding its activities.
- Fundraising communications (both internal and external) are clear, accurate, timely, and complete.
  - ○ Aspiration:
    - Transparent and accessible reports describe programs, policies for gifts accepted, and the alignment of the use of gifts with mission.
    - Donor/gift data are regularly analyzed to identify opportunities and trends, assess performance of the fundraising/development plan, and inform planning.
    - The organization's fundraising/development plan and calendar are supported by the programs department and effectively communicate the work, impact of the work, and the narrative that drives resource development.
    - If the organization accepts funds from government entities, it is diligent in negotiating the terms to ensure that the payment level, conditions, and reporting requirements are consistent with the mission of the organization and the interest of the population it serves.
    - The organization assesses the return on investment of development activities in creating and assessing the development/fundraising plan.

## Intentional Fundraising and Resource Development
- ❏ The organization builds and maintains active, effective, and respectful donor relationships.
  - ○ Standard:
    - The organization has a major donor recruitment and cultivation strategy that is implemented year-round and is regularly assessed for effectiveness.
    - The organization proactively engages and nurtures year-round donor relationships and reinforces the value of donors to achieving its mission.
    - The organization maintains fundraising records and data systems appropriate to its size and capacity that enable accurate and transparent use of donor funds, donor preferences, interests, and giving history.
    - The organization researches and avails itself of grant and other fundraising opportunities as appropriate.
    - The organization sends out timely thank you letters and acknowledgements.
  - ○ Aspiration:
    - The organization can effectively communicate what impact and outcomes can be expected from donations of different sizes.
    - The organization provides talking points and assigns stewards from the board and other stakeholder groups to make major donors and supporters feel they are valued members of the community.
    - The organization has a strategy for re-engaging lapsed donors.

**AREA 6: GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE MOVES THE ORGANIZATION FORWARD**

### Board Leadership Supports Mission

❏ Board members are effectively involved in critical roles that support the mission, including policy oversight, leveraging resources, assuring accountability, and publicly representing the organization.
   ○ Standard:
      ● Board members are committed to the mission of the organization, act as strong fiduciaries of the organization, and are advocates for the organization.
      ● The board has distinct committees that meet regularly.
      ● Board members are recruited based on clearly assessed needs and job descriptions.
      ● The board has 100% giving which is demonstrated through a commitment to the organization by volunteering their expertise, raising external funds and making a personal financial contribution to the organization.
      ● The board engages in strategic planning for its own performance targets in support of the mission and organizational strategic plan.
      ● The board has established term limits.
   ○ Aspiration:
      ● The board has an established nominating process that is both diverse and inclusive, and includes board members from the communities the organization serves.
      ● New board members are intentionally on-boarded.
      ● Board committees have work plans and regularly report progress.
      ● The board's strategic planning process includes consideration of strategic alliances with other organizations to ensure optimal impact.
      ● The board actively seeks to expand its networks to support the organization.

### Informed Board Provides Oversight

❏ Board leadership assures organization-wide accountability, transparency, effectiveness, and ethical behavior, including compliance with appropriate legal and professional guidelines and regulations.
   ○ Standard:
      ● Board members understand the financial situation of the organization and can tell its financial story.
      ● Board documents (minutes, management, financial, event and fundraising reports, audits, 990s, and other key documents) are created, circulated, and retained in accordance with document retention policies.
      ● Board members oversee the organization's progress toward strategic and financial goals using organizational program, financial, and legal reports.
      ● The board has explicit whistleblower and conflict of interest policies.

- The board engages in educational and professional development opportunities to ensure that they stay abreast of nonprofit corporate law, policy developments and remain knowledgeable about program activities.
- The board has an executive compensation policy and annually reviews the chief executive's performance and compensation.
  - Aspiration:
    - The board evaluates and monitors the organization's top financial and programmatic risks, ensuring staff are managing these risks appropriately and that necessary actions are taken to minimize risk.
    - The board provides financial expertise and guidance on long-term financial planning.
    - The board has a succession plan in order to ensure intentional recruitment and healthy leadership transitions at the organizational and board levels.
    - The board has a mechanism of supporting the chief executive and other key management roles of the organization to avoid burnout and ensure longevity and retention.
    - The board ensures that the organization is aware of, and takes advantage of, new developments in its field.
    - The board periodically reviews the organization's bylaws, mission statement, and policies and revises them as needed to reflect change, growth, and other potential organizational developments.

## Board Regularly Evaluates Its Own Performance

❏ The board has established performance expectations on an individual and group basis, and holds itself accountable for meeting attendance, fundraising targets, program support, and committee activities.
  - Standard:
    - Board member performance, including leveraging their networks and resources to support the organization, is individually assessed and regularly reported back to the individual.
    - Overall board performance is periodically assessed and the results of that assessment are used as a basis for board recruitment and growth.
    - Board meeting, event, and activity attendance is high.
  - Aspiration:
    - The board as a whole sets performance targets and assesses and evaluates its impact and achievement of targets both individually and as a board.
    - Board committees have independent tasks and targets on which they meet regularly and report to the full board.
    - The board engages in regular retreats, both independently and with staff, in order to ensure alignment of board vision and goals with staff/organizational vision and goals.
    - The board has a clear policy to counsel and, if necessary remove, members who are not meeting their goals.

**AREA 7: HUMAN RESOURCES ARE VALUED AND DEVELOPED**

**Intentional Talent Recruitment, Development, and Retention**
- ❏ Recruitment, hiring, on-boarding, engagement, development, evaluation, and retention of staff reflect the organization's mission, organizational needs, and are conducted with a lens of equity and inclusion.
    - ○ Standard:
        - ● The organization is intentional in its recruitment and utilizes strategies to build diverse candidate pools and pipelines.
        - ● Clear hiring criteria are identified and hiring teams actively reflect on their own biases and hold themselves accountable for mitigating against them.
        - ● All positions have appropriate, fair, and equitable salaries and there are clear and documented promotion criteria.
        - ● The organization offers professional development opportunities, and staff have access to necessary training to perform their duties well.
        - ● When relying on volunteers, the organization has clear volunteer position descriptions, an official on-boarding process, appropriate supervision and tracking, and a recognition and retention strategy.
        - ● The organization ensures that all staff who leave receive exit interviews and their feedback is appropriately evaluated and incorporated.
    - ○ Aspiration:
        - ● Job requirements set low barriers, value lived experience, and do not require education, experience, or skills that are not critical to the job.
        - ● Recruitment practices include long-term strategies (e.g. partnerships and internal career pathways) and staff and board engagement to build a strong candidate pipeline for the organization.
        - ● The organization has a mechanism for involving stakeholders during any key hire to ensure that there is organizational buy-in.
        - ● Staff performance reviews are tailored to each position and linked to mission -related goals and performance conversations happen throughout the year.
        - ● The organization creates "stretch assignments" and employs a "growth pipeline" to retain talented staff by providing them with leadership opportunities.
        - ● The organization engages in regular succession planning for its leadership roles and other key staff roles.

**Ongoing Management of Human Resources**
- ❏ The organization has systems and structures in place that support the ongoing management of human resources in order to support staff and provide clear direction.
    - ○ Standard:
        - ● The organization has job descriptions for each position and creates an intentional onboarding process, with clear 30-60–90 day goals, for individuals who are entering new roles.

- Managers conduct regular check-ins with their staff and offer real-time feedback, as well as annual performance reviews for all employees.
- The organization periodically reviews the organizational chart and recommends adjustments to improve efficiencies to the structure and to support change, expansion, and growth.
  - Aspiration:
    - The organization has a compensation structure that is clear to staff, reviewed against benchmarks, and updated annually.
    - The organization engages in an organization-wide goal-setting process so that each staff member has clarity on the big picture outcomes of the organization and the connection to their individual goals.
    - The organization has metrics for success for the human resources department (e.g. staff demographics by job level, time-to-hire, % retention) and collects relevant data to evaluate organizational health and equity.
    - The organization has a mechanism for ensuring institutional memory is preserved and archived and does not depart when staff leave the institution.

## Work Environment Promotes  Safety, Success, and Balance

- ❏ The organization continually works to provide a safe and healthy work environment, protecting clients, employees, and volunteers from harm and unnecessary risk, including regular efforts to ensure standards of prudent care.
  - Standard:
    - The organization has written personnel policies that comply with current regulations and that are communicated to staff and reviewed at the board level.
    - The organization has an articulated vision for an inclusive workplace culture it is working to create.
    - The organization encourages and makes space for staff to connect with others around the different dimensions of identity and how that plays out in their work.
    - All staff are given an opportunity to give regular feedback about their workplace experience without retaliation and to recommend and/or assist with changes.
    - The organization's staff are trained to understand the whistleblower and conflict of interest policies and know how to report suspected fraud.
    - The organization offers an internal process that fields employee relation issues and is able to effectively coach staff toward solutions.
    - The organization encourages and ensures implementation of policies that support work-life balance and the personal needs of all staff, such as caregivers.
  - Aspiration:
    - Staff are regularly asked to provide feedback about their work environment, leadership analyzes the data, and reports back this analysis and next steps.
    - Board and senior staff regularly plan activities that allow the board to engage with the entire staff of the organization.
    - The organization offers sabbaticals to long-tenured staff.
    - The organization's culture regularly celebrates staff and its achievements.

**AREA 8: PLANNING AND EVALUATION GUIDES THE MISSION AND VISION**

**Clear, Effective Mission, Vision, and Values Lead Planning and Assessment**
❏ The organization has clear mission and vision statements and articulated values that guide organizational decision-making and practice, and supports organizational capacity to meet challenges, and achieve results.
  ○ Standard:
    ● The mission clearly expresses the purpose of the organization and the need it is meeting, and planning and assessment strategies reflect this mission.
    ● The organization has a theory of change, and clearly conveys how and why the organization's desired impact is expected to be achieved.
    ● Short- and long-term targets for the organization's scope of work all relate back to the mission.
    ● Organizational activities support the mission.
  ○ Aspiration:
    ● The organization has a value statement that supports the mission and vision.
    ● Mission, vision, and values are used to support and identify opportunities for ongoing innovation and creative development within the organization.
    ● The organization's strategic planning process includes results from an environmental scan, which takes into context key issues and trends in the coming years for its communities and considers the work of its counterparts.
    ● Workplans connect directly to the strategic plan objectives.
    ● Mission, vision, and values are periodically revisited and assessed to ensure continued relevance to key stakeholders and the community.

**Planning and Forward Thinking Is Strategic, Consistent and Rigorous**
❏ The organization regularly engages in short- and long-term strategic planning exercises to ensure the ongoing vitality of the mission and vision and efficacy of the organization's programs in achieving those goals.
  ○ Standard:
    ● The organization uses a theory of change to gauge programmatic and operational priorities, as well as areas of growth and strength.
    ● The organization's strategic plan has clear goals with specific activities, timelines, persons responsible, a framework for regular progress reports, and includes a clear plan to fund these goals.
    ● Strategic planning encompasses more than just programmatic growth, and includes infrastructure and technology growth and needs, plus a detailed and achievable financial plan for funding its full costs.
    ● Staff at all levels are involved in strategic planning and are provided with professional development to actively engage in the strategy.
    ● Strategic plan goals are regularly monitored and activities are adjusted based on organizational and environmental realities.
  ○ Aspiration:

- Risk and opportunity are actively monitored through the planning, implementation, and evaluation process of any new initiative.
- Organizational management clearly communicates that reflective learning and evolution of program development informs strategic planning as much as successes do.
- The organization develops a yearly operational plan that outlines requirements for key activities in terms of financials, personnel, technology, etc.
- The organization engages in creative thinking and other design work to encourage innovation and forward thinking at all staff levels.

## Regular Measurement, Review, and Use of Program and Organizational Results

❏ Program and organizational results are clearly articulated and regularly tracked, reviewed, and reported against targets; results are achieved and sustained over time and, where appropriate, scaled up; and the organization regularly learns from results.
  - ○ Standard:
    - Desired program results (including outputs, outcomes, and satisfaction) are clearly defined, regularly tracked and compiled, and staff understand the difference between the type of results.
    - Program results are regularly reviewed, shared, and discussed by staff to understand and strengthen organizational performance and learning.
    - The organization conducts and reports on periodic assessments of progress towards achieving short- and long-term organizational goals.
    - The organization engages in reflection and improvement planning that is inclusive of stakeholders most directly impacted by the mission, and is culturally appropriate for the communities served.
    - The organization has the necessary and appropriate staffing, and technology to robustly capture and compile data beyond demographics and outputs.
  - ○ Aspiration:
    - The organization engages in multiple forms of data collection, measurement, and evaluation to capture and communicate performance and outcomes in diverse ways.
    - Organizational dashboards tell the story of operational effectiveness, financial health, impact reach, and growth of the organization and are regularly reviewed.
    - The organization regularly shares evaluation results with key stakeholders and constituents.
    - The organization captures narratives and qualitative outcomes and incorporates them into reports and impact analysis.
    - Evaluation and assessment of programs are done both internally and by external evaluators on a periodic basis, and industry benchmarking is used for relevant comparisons.

**AREA 9: TECHNOLOGY AND DATA USE IMPROVES EFFICIENCY AND ADVANCES THE ORGANIZATION'S MISSION**

### Responsible Use of Technology and Data

❏ The organization complies with all regulations and industry standards relating to the types of data it collects, transmits, and stores (e.g., confidentiality, safety, accuracy, integrity, reliability, cost effectiveness, and legal compliance) including the necessary safeguards against systems breach and data loss.
  ○ Standard:
    ● The organization has off-site electronic backup of mission-critical data.
    ● The organization secures its technology assets via power backups and surge protectors, network-securing firewalls, anti-virus and anti-spyware, and complex, secure passwords for accessing systems.
    ● The organization has a management information systems policy and/or procedures and protocols that outline the requirements around data sharing, email, internet, passwords, and other technology uses.
    ● The organization has security and privacy policies posted on its website.
    ● The organization conducts annual risk assessments to appropriately manage technology and cybersecurity threats.
    ● The organization provides annual or bi-annual cybersecurity awareness training to its staff to mitigate risk of data exposure or loss through user action.
  ○ Aspiration:
    ● The organization has safety policies for protecting against online harassment.
    ● The organization has mechanisms for ensuring accountability and appropriate responses substantiating all data gathered, stored, and used through its use of technology.
    ● The organization implements multi-factor authentication for system access.
    ● The organization has a data governance plan that outlines how the organization manages, uses, shares and creates data.
    ● The organization independently audits its technology systems and its usage.
    ● The organization has a technology committee or designated staff that plan, budget, and guide the implementation and use of technology at the organization.

### Technology Use is Strategic and Increases Efficiency

❏ The organization regularly uses reliable information technology systems that provide timely, accurate, and relevant information to facilitate workflow, track its data, and increase efficiency and effectiveness in accomplishing its mission-driven goals.
  ○ Standard:
    ● The organization invests in technology resources that are deemed appropriate to enhance and streamline its ability to achieve its mission and strategic goals (e.g. computer networking, remote access strategies, etc.).
    ● The organization trains and ensures that its staff and management use the technology systems effectively.

- - Third-party vendors are assessed as to system and data management, retention, and security.
  - ○ Aspiration:
    - The organization integrates technology growth into the short and long-term strategic and operational plans.
    - The organization establishes and monitors goals for future performance and technological growth.
    - The organization engages in strategic thought about how to leverage technological advancements to further mission goals.
    - The organization has enabled remote access strategies and computer networking to permit off-site work, as applicable.
    - The organization monitors the performance of third-party vendor systems via key performance indicators and managing service levels.

**Technology Expertise is Properly Employed**
- ❏ The organization has appropriately allocated financial and human capital to support the organization's technology goals and operations.
  - ○ Standard:
    - The organization has designated staff, consultants, or volunteers who have the expertise to effectively support the organization's technology goals and operations.
    - The organization ensures that technology hardware and software are regularly assessed, updated and standardized.
    - The organization trains all staff in technology relevant to their work, including appropriate backup and safeguard protocols to ensure the data are not compromised.
    - The organization has, and periodically tests, a disaster recovery plan that minimizes downtime in the event of a catastrophic occurrence (e.g. file level backup and restore procedures).
  - ○ Aspiration:
    - The organization factors in the role of existing and potential technology systems and strategies in all organizational decision-making and program development.
    - The organization has in place, and periodically tests, an incident response plan, disaster preparedness, and business recovery plan and training process that assures business continuity and defines the process by which the technology infrastructure would be rebuilt in the event of a catastrophic occurrence.
    - The organization regularly assesses the state of the technology field and adopts new technologies that appropriately and effectively move the mission goals forward.