



7. We Define and Achieve Success by Clarifying, Measuring, and Evaluating the Results of our Work.

We have clarity of purpose, and we demonstrate and communicate our unique value. We define what success looks like and we align our work guided by our mission, strategic thinking and planning. We measure program impact with the tools we have, centering the voices of those served, and we seek to improve based on feedback. We disaggregate impact measures and service evaluation data by race to inform how we do our work.

NONPROFITS

- **Regularly clarify organizational purpose and unique value**, including vision, mission, and values.
- **Create actionable strategic plans and annual operating plans**, and develop the organizational capacity to execute on the plans. Note that this will look different for each organization, with emphasis on usefulness over formality; the key is deciding on and using a process for clarifying, prioritizing, and making progress on the most important work, and taking concrete steps to build the capacity to get there.
- **Design and measure program impact**, and adjust programs based on what is learned.
- **Prioritize evaluation by people served** and disaggregate service evaluation data by race.

FUNDERS

- **Engage in conversations about and fund actionable strategic planning** and the capacity needed to execute the plans.
- **Help nonprofits improve their services and tell their stories by funding responsive program evaluation** by people served and by funding program impact measurement.
- **Seek impact measures and program evaluation disaggregated by race.**
- **Regularly seek grantee and applicant feedback**, ideally through a third-party, anonymous, benchmarked survey, to learn from their experiences with the grantmaking process and personal interactions.

“[I] look to see if you are solving problems for today or are you solving it for tomorrow. [For example], are you pulling someone out of the river or going upstream to see why they are falling in? [I prefer] the long-term solution –are you stepping back and collaborating or are you fixing smaller problems? What [will] be different in the community in five or ten years?”—Local funder representative

“One of the challenges we have is measuring the change. How do we capture beyond number of hours and volunteers what is the impact of this service?”—Local nonprofit leader

“Doing good isn’t enough anymore. Many organizations are doing good. But [they’re] not transforming the world or making profound change. We are devaluing the good work that nonprofits do [to create a community safety net] in search of transformation.”—Local nonprofit leader

“I wish we could educate funders about what questions they should be asking us about our outcomes. I’m tired of reporting on things that we don’t really have impact on. For example –we report on high school graduate rates. But I know it isn’t because of [our programming] that the kids have graduated. What is meaningful for the organization? What impact are they really making?”—Local nonprofit leader

“We will seek input from our stakeholders, especially those who benefit from our programs and services, as we shape our strategy and do our work. Rather than prescribing solutions to challenges faced by a group or community, we will co-create change together, and our beneficiaries’ input will guide our most important decisions.”—Prosper Strategies’ *Nonprofit Impact Manifesto*

IMPACT: Nonprofits face real costs and practical challenges to demonstrating impact; what each organization can realistically do with its resources is going to look differently, given their missions, services, and budgets, so there is no one size fits all.

“A majority of nonprofit organizations struggle to effectively measure and demonstrate the impact of their work.... Based on a survey of more than three hundred and fifty senior nonprofit executives, the report, *Connecting Dollars to Outcomes: How to Measure Outcomes That Deliver Mission Impact in Nonprofits*, found that while 71 percent of respondents considered outcomes measurement to be important and 76 percent said it was a top priority for their organization in 2019, only 20 percent believed they were “very effective at demonstrating outcomes....” The most commonly cited obstacles to implementing outcomes measurement were a lack of staff (37 percent), lack of a tracking system to measure outcomes (30 percent), and data silos (27 percent).” Respondents also critiqued outcomes measurement as “more beneficial to large, well-resourced nonprofits (69 percent), as minimizing the complexity of social issues (60 percent), and as focused on the short term (45 percent).” —Philanthropy News Digest’s *Nonprofits Struggle to Demonstrate Impact*

MYTH: Transcend the myth that nonprofits are simple, unsophisticated and unaccountable “do-gooders.”

REALITY: “Great nonprofits are engineers of social good. They use data to inform, listen to stakeholders, skillfully leverage community assets and design bold solutions to address a community’s greatest challenges or unmet needs. They create impact with thin margins while being accountable to the communities they serve.”—Lynda Schueler of Housing Forward, in Forbes Nonprofit Council’s *10 Biggest Myths About Nonprofit Work*

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Do we regularly clarify and communicate a clear statement of our organizational purpose and unique value to the community, including our vision, mission, and core values?

___ YES ___ NO ___ NOT SURE ___ N/A PRIORITY: High Medium Low

If so, HOW? If not, WHY?

Brainstorm: How Do We Improve? Ideas, Learning, Next Steps

Have we defined our own success and identified impacts/success indicators that we measure and communicate?

___ YES ___ NO ___ NOT SURE ___ N/A PRIORITY: High Medium Low

If so, HOW? If not, WHY?

Brainstorm: How Do We Improve? Ideas, Learning, Next Steps

Do we have an operating plan that spells out specific actions with a timeline and people responsible for specific results to achieve our intended impacts and goals?

YES **NO** **NOT SURE** **N/A** **PRIORITY:** **High** **Medium** **Low**

If so, HOW? If not, WHY?

Brainstorm: How Do We Improve? Ideas, Learning, Next Steps

Do we have the capacity, human and resource, needed to deliver on our plan? And if not, do we have a plan to develop capacity?

YES **NO** **NOT SURE** **N/A** **PRIORITY:** **High** **Medium** **Low**

If so, HOW? If not, WHY?

Brainstorm: How Do We Improve? Ideas, Learning, Next Steps

Do we co-create programs with the people and communities we serve, centering community voice in the creation and design of programs?

YES **NO** **NOT SURE** **N/A** **PRIORITY:** **High** **Medium** **Low**

If so, HOW? If not, WHY?

Brainstorm: How Do We Improve? Ideas, Learning, Next Steps

Do we seek client and customer feedback on our work and do we evaluate ourselves based on this feedback?

YES **NO** **NOT SURE** **N/A** **PRIORITY:** **High** **Medium** **Low**

If so, HOW? If not, WHY?

Brainstorm: How Do We Improve? Ideas, Learning, Next Steps

Do we analyze and use internal data and information to inform decision-making and improve our work?

YES **NO** **NOT SURE** **N/A** **PRIORITY:** **High** **Medium** **Low**

If so, HOW? If not, WHY?

Brainstorm: How Do We Improve? Ideas, Learning, Next Steps

Do we look at our impact measures and service evaluation data disaggregated by race, and do we use that information to change and improve our work?

YES **NO** **NOT SURE** **N/A** **PRIORITY:** **High** **Medium** **Low**

If so, HOW? If not, WHY?

Brainstorm: How Do We Improve? Ideas, Learning, Next Steps
