Dynamic Solution Associates, Inc. (DSA) has put together an assessment tool in line with best practices to measure the needs of nonprofit organizations. We use this tool as a starting point to determine areas that need managerial attention. This tool helps to review eight areas: mission, financial, board/governance, personnel, program, future/strategic planning, technology, marketability/fundraising. Due to the size, scope of services and missions of organizations, all questions may not be applicable.

Assessment Questions

MISSION
1. Does every activity of the organization fall clearly within the mission?
2. Is the mission reviewed periodically for current relevance?
3. Is your mission succinct and easy to understand?
4. Does the entire staff know the mission and their role?
5. Is your mission relevant to the root causes of a societal problem?

FINANCIAL:
1. Do you have a professional bookkeeper/accountant or are financial responsibilities handled by the staff?
2. What is your budget?
   a. What percent comes from government sources? Individual donors? Private foundations?
3. Do you have an auditor?
4. Do you know how to manage your audit?
5. Have you ever failed to make payroll in the past year?
6. Have you ever come close to failing to make payroll in the last year?
7. Do you have a reserve in the bank? If so how many months will it cover?
8. Do discrete programs have sufficient funds to operate on a monthly basis?
9. Are the programs bringing in as much as they are spending?
10. Has your budget significantly changed in the past three years?
    a. If yes, positively/negatively, what triggered the change?
11. Do you have checks and balances on your bookkeeping systems/staff?
12. Do you handle large amounts of cash ($500 or more)?
    a. If yes, do you have systems in place to track this cash?
13. In the last fiscal year, what was your income? Expenses? Assets?
14. Do you have functional expenses on your audit?
15. Were there any findings on your audit?
16. Do you have a whistleblower policy in place? (SE and PGG)
17. Do your orientation and training materials include information about the process of reporting suspected wrongdoing and to whom these reports should be made? (PGG)

BOARD/GOVERNANCE: Consider creating subsections for this section
1. How many people are on your board?
2. What percent regularly attend board meetings?
3. Are your board members from differing backgrounds? Do board members have a fundamental understanding of your organization's financial reports? (PGG)

4. How often does your board meet?
5. What percent of your board members contribute money?
6. How much did your board give in total in the last fiscal year? What percentage of your budget was that?
7. Are there any lawsuits pending against your organization?
8. Does the organization leverage the contacts of board members to raise money?
9. Do you have bylaws which contain term limits for board members? (SE)
10. Do board members sign a conflict of interest statement and do you have a written conflict of interest policy which is clearly understood by board members and staff? (SE)
11. Are board members provided with training on joining the board? What does this training constitute?(SE)
12. Do board members periodically review risk management issues relating to the organization, including director and officer insurance liability coverage? (SE)
13. Do board members participate in the performance evaluation of the organization, including reviewing resources spent on program, administration and fundraising? (SE)
14. Does our conflict of interest policy include an annual disclosure form? When was it last reviewed? How is it enforced (e.g. covered in orientation, signed annually by all board members)? (PGG)
15. How has the board adapted policies as the organization has changed? (PGG)
16. Does the board periodically assess its own performance? (PGG)
17. Are board members held accountable to their assigned duties and responsibilities? Do we have a process of removing nonperforming board members? (PGG)

PERSONNEL
1. How many people does your organization employ?
2. How many levels of staff do you have?
3. What sorts of benefits do you offer?
4. Are your salaries based on data from similar nonprofits?
5. Do employees meet regularly with their supervisors?
6. Do you have a grievance procedure in place for staff?
7. What is the average time you retain an employee?
8. How do employees have a voice in the direction of the organization a. In the short term? b. In the long term?
9. Do you have a hiring process?
10. Do you conduct a formal staff performance review process? (general)

PROGRAM
1. How many programs of the organization are there?
2. Have the programs changed substantially in the past year? If yes, how?
3. Have your programs consistently grown over time? Why or Why not?
4. Do you have outsiders evaluate the programs? If yes, how often?
5. Do you meet with other organizations doing similar work to compare methods or lessons learned?
6. Are qualitative and quantitative methods used in evaluating your programs? What amount of input do you get from program participants? (SE)

FUTURE/STRATEGIC PLANNING
1. Does your organization have a short term and/or long term plan in place?
2. Is the board involved in the planning process? To what extent?
3. Is the staff involved in the planning process? To what extent?
4. Does the planning examine all aspects of the organization?
5. Is an outside consultant used or is the planning done internally?

TECHNOLOGY
1. Does your organization use IBM or Mac?
2. How many computers does your organization have?
3. Do you have enough computers for your staff?
4. What is the speed of your computers?
5. Are the computers networked?
6. What type of software do you use?
7. Is your printer networked?
8. Do you have any professionals who work on your system?
9. How recently have you done a "document audit" in order to verify that all organizational documents are accessible and accounted for? (PGG)
10. Do you think you optimize the use of your website to effectively communicate and provide information to the public on your organization? (PGG)_

MARKETABILITY/FUNDRAISING
1. Do you have a development director? Do you outsource development?
2. Do you have recognizable names on your board?
3. Does your board help you raise money?
4. How well known is your organization?
5. Do you have methods in place to keep the name of your organization in the public (press, tv, radio, newspapers, etc.)
6. Do you have a market niche? What mechanisms do you have in place to capitalize on this niche?
7. Do you do regular mailings to your constituency? US mail or Email. How often?
8. How much do you raise from your donor base?
9. Do you have events? How much do they net? Gross? (Is employee time counted in this figure)?
10. Does everyone involved in your organization (board, staff, founder) take advantage of every opportunity to promote your organization?
11. Do you have a donor database? Which database do you use? (general)
12. Do you use your website for fundraising? (general)
13. Do you have a gift acceptance policy? (PGG)
14. In the last year, what percentage of funds did you raise from (i) private foundations, (ii) government grants and (iii) individual donors?

SE: Standards of Excellence (Maryland)

PGG: Principles for Good Governance (Independent Sector)