

National Standards for U.S. Community Foundations™

National Standards accreditation represents operational effectiveness to foster excellence in community philanthropy.

We do this in two ways:

1. **We create standards** for operationally and legally sound community foundations.
2. **We lead community foundation staff and boards** through the process of achieving operational excellence.

With confidence in their operations, community foundations can innovate and take risks necessary to solve complex social problems.

Benefits to Your Foundation

- **Training for your staff and board** through National Standards guidance on the website and ongoing webinars and trainings.
- **Legal guidance** from attorneys including sample policies and answers to your foundation's legal questions related to accreditation.
- **Communications toolkit** for highlighting the value of accreditation to your community.
- Displaying the National Standards logo that **symbolizes organizational excellence** on your communications materials and on Guidestar.

Who is accredited?



- The Majority of all U.S. Community Foundations
- 96% of the 25 Largest Community Foundations
- 1/3 of accredited community foundations have assets of \$10 million in assets or less

Recognition of Accreditation from Policymakers and Regulators

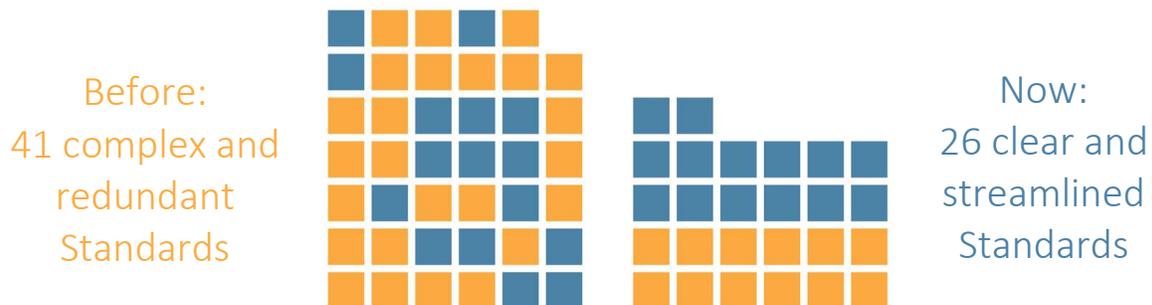
- Legislators and regulators at the local, state, and federal level recognize National Standards as a useful way to evaluate community foundations.
- Three states, Iowa, Kentucky, and Maryland recognize National Standards with **tax credit legislation** connected to donations to community foundations with accreditation. Several other states are also working on passing legislation.
- California law permits accredited community foundations to be **eligible managers of land trust endowments**.
- Accredited community foundations receive **bonus points when applying for the HUD Secretary's Award** for Public-Private Partnerships.

For Community Foundations, From Community Foundations

Community foundation leaders began conversations about a voluntary self-regulation program in the late 1990s. These leaders recognized that policymakers were considering increasing regulation on foundations and that community members had difficulty distinguishing community foundations from other types of foundations and nonprofits. By the early 2000s, field leaders organized and began the design of the National Standards accreditation program. In 2005, the first community foundations were accredited under the program.

In 2008, the Community Foundation National Standards Board, a Type I supporting organization of the Council on Foundations, was created to administer the National Standards. The Council owns the National Standards and the Community Foundation National Standards Board administers the program. This structure incorporates checks and balances for the accreditation program to ensure program integrity.

Every five years, the National Standards and the accreditation program are reviewed and updated. The National Standards revision occurs in a two-part process, engaging the field and welcoming input from all parties. The latest revisions were completed in 2014, became effective in January 2015, and are applicable to a community foundation's next accreditation cycle.



Benefits to Community Philanthropy

- **Evidence of Excellence:** The dollars set aside for charity are limited and precious. The National Standards seal helps donors identify well-managed partners that can connect them to the causes they care about in their communities.
- **Accountability:** Community foundations of all sizes use National Standards as a roadmap to establish legal, ethical, and effective practices that withstand the scrutiny of donors, government, and media.
- **Impact:** National Standards set consistent expectations among community foundations boards and practitioners, helping them focus and make effective use of time and talent. They also provide a framework for documenting, communicating, and providing training and technical assistance to advance best practices.

Review of Accreditation

For the first ten years of the program, a community foundation's accreditation was reviewed in five year cycles. Now, with the online application, community foundations annually update and make changes to their original submission and reviewers check those changes. In addition, the National Standards program checks compliance through noncompliance report investigations, and by randomly verifying through onsite and virtual meetings.