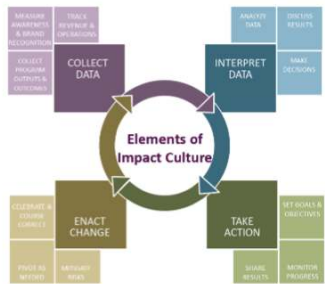# Organizational Checklist for an Impact Culture

Impact Culture: Impact is the bottom line of the social sector. A social sector organization with an impact culture is energized by data, curious to learn, takes deliberate action and embraces change.

Elements of Impact Culture

INSTRUCTIONS: Based on where you are in the nonprofit lifecycle, walk through each checklist item and ask yourself or your management team to gauge how embedded these elements are in your culture. Level 1 loosely correlates with the start-up phase; Level 2, the growth phase; and Level 3, the maturity phase.

Score on your own or score with your team as a fun self-assessment. If you do it as a group, have everyone rate it by giving a thumbs up (good), thumbs down (not good) or thumbs to the side (neutral). Then, develop a short Action Plan to address any deficits or use as a guide for Strategic Planning.

Level 01 — *Organization Understands and Appreciates Why Impact Is Important*

- Board and staff can recite what the organization is trying to achieve and why it is important to the community/greater good
- Everyone truly believes that measuring impact will lead to being a high-impact, high-performance organization – which ultimately means making a bigger difference for those you serve
- Everyone appreciates that change is difficult and embraces impact management as an opportunity to demonstrate progress and continuous improvement
- Staff track their impact (e.g., IT, HR, finance, & development) through outputs and outcomes
- Program and development staff are on the same team and aligned on program outcomes to be measured
- Staff understand their role in impact management and have performance measures directly connected to the organization's strategy and impact
- Board tracks its own impact (e.g., funds raised, attendance) to improve engagement and ensure accountability
- Board and staff regularly share results openly, celebrate success and discuss course corrections

Level 02 — *Organization Proactively Designs & Measures Programs/Operations Using Best Practices*

- All Level 1 items firmly embedded in culture
- Staff use a sophisticated program design model, such as Lean Startup
- Staff regularly track best practices nationally and embed them into their activities
- Data is collected, stored properly, and analyzed on schedule, as planned
- Staff feel empowered to question why data is being collected, especially if it is not used
- Staff have systems and tools to help them collect and interpret real-time data and make changes as needed
- Stories are utilized to illustrate success and bring data to life
- Staff possess necessary skills and are encouraged to critically assess all aspects of their work
- Staff do not want to move forward on major decisions without data and careful reflection
- Staff are rewarded for embracing impact management

Level 03 — *Organization Champions Impact Management to Grow & Improve*

- All Level 1 and 2 items firmly embedded in culture
- Organization shares information freely, internally and externally, and "cross-pollinates" as much as possible
- Improvements are made based on data collected and analyzed
- Organization is benchmarking its data against best practices
- Staff receives feedback on how ideas and improvements have led to positive change
- Organization is a learning organization where staff are encouraged to be curious and invest in their professional development
- Organization appropriately charges donors/funders for impact management and audits as a direct cost of doing business
- Organization is using cost-benefit analysis and social return on investment in its donor/investor conversations
- Board and staff have richer and more informed conversations
- Donors better understand the big picture through data and stories
- Organization takes calculated risks and worries more about moving the needle than fear of failure
- Funders are taking notice

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