Strengthening Accountability of the Civil Society Sector

Standards Program Overview

December 2011

Imagine Canada

CASE FOR STANDARDS & GOALS

Case for Standards

- Improve the practices & increase the effectiveness of charitable & nonprofit organizations

- Promote transparency & accountability in the sector to help maintain public trust

- May help stave off further government regulation

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Goals

1. To foster public trust, promote confidence in the sector and protect both the credibility of the sector and the interests of the public.

2. To help charities and nonprofits improve their practices by providing educational tools and capacity-building initiatives.

3. To demonstrate the accountability of the sector to the public.

4. To continually evolve and enhance the standards and accreditation processes for the benefit of Canada's voluntary sector.

5. To create a community of practice in the charitable and nonprofit sector.

6. To unite the charitable and nonprofit sector through shared standards that demonstrate good governance of the community organizations that the public entrusts us to lead.

BACKGROUND
& REVIEW OF THE PROCESS

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Background - Dialogue & Consultation with the Sector

- Since 2006 Imagine Canada has been facilitating a discussion of standards for the charitable and nonprofit sector and gathering feedback through a series of webinars, discussion papers, and presentations.

- Feedback from the sector, a Standards Forum was held in March 2010.

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March 2010 Standards Forum

- Over 200 people participated in-person and via webcast.

- Imagine Canada provided a detailed proposal for the development of a Standards Program.

- Following a discussion, the group was in agreement with the general direction of the Program and agreed with the development of foundational standards in four areas:
  - Governance
  - Financial Accountability
  - Paid Staff Management
  - Volunteer Involvement
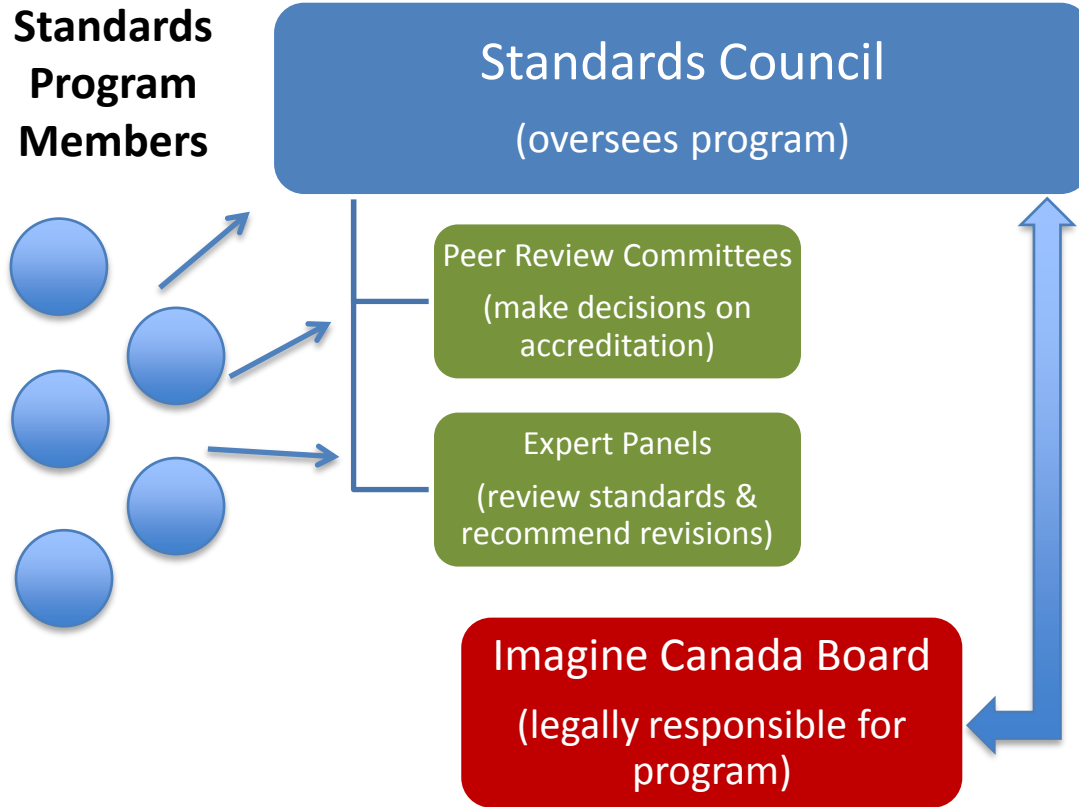
Founding Members

- Following the Forum, 51 organizations became Founding Members of the Standards Program.

- These early adopters agreed to a shared leadership approach and committed financial support to the development of the Standards Program.

- The Founding Members worked with Imagine Canada in 2010 to shape the development of the Program.

Standards Steering Committee

- Twenty-seven organizations sat on the Standards Steering Committee, which led the development of the Program.
- This group:

  - Developed a model outlining how organizations will be accredited

  - Updated and revised the standards

  - Identified capacity-building activities to complement the standards

  - Proposed a governance structure and budget for the Program

  - Provided input on brand identity for the initiative

STANDARDS PROGRAM OVERVIEW

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Governance

Standards Program Members

Standards Council
(oversees program)

Peer Review Committees
(make decisions on accreditation)

Expert Panels
(review standards & recommend revisions)

Imagine Canada Board
(legally responsible for program)

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Accreditation Process

PREPARATION STAGE
3-9 Months
(May take more or less time depending on organization)

REVIEW & APPROVAL PROCESS
6-9 Months

COMPLIANCE & RENEWAL PROCESS
5 YEARS

Application Preparation and Submission

Board/staff of participating organizations sign "participation agreement" & begin application readiness process with support of Standards staff and access to resources

Includes online self-assessment, electronic application manual/guide, & support/consultation with Standards staff who will access volunteer peer reviewers/mentors and resources to assist organizations in their preparation for application

Board/staff of participating organization submit application & supporting documentation for review by peer review committee

Intake periods for peer review committees will occur twice a year

Application Review

Standards staff review application and prepare package for peer review committee - may include communication with participating organization

7 regional members of a national peer review committee in 1st yr. of program

Decision Process

Peer review committee meets twice per year to review applications and prepare reports
(i.e. 2 intake periods annually)

Review Committee Takes Decision & Submits Report on 1 of 4 Possible Outcomes:

1. **Accreditation**
2. **Conditional Accreditation (90% Compliance)**
3. **Revise & Resubmit***
4. **Non-accreditation**

Compliance Process

Board/staff of participating organization submits compliance documents

Compliance will also be monitored through onsite spot checks/audits of 3-5% of organizations by peer reviewers & staff

Renewal

Mid-way through accreditation the staff/board of participating organization begins preparation for next accreditation cycle using previous report as baseline

*The Revise and Resubmit process could include a teleweb/teleconference communication or onsite visit if determined appropriate by the peer review committee.

Capacity Building

- Capacity-building efforts will be scaled to match staff capacity, participant needs, and funding and will be rolled out as the program grows.

- Publicly available information and resources will include the standards and supporting evidence, a searchable database of existing tools and resources, and information on training opportunities.

- Information available to participants will include an accreditation handbook, a discount code for training, assistance from staff, the opportunity to have a staff member sit on a peer review committee, and an online community network.

Standards

Standards are grouped into five key areas:

1. Governance
2. Financial Accountability
3. Staff Management
4. Volunteer Involvement
5. Fundraising

In recognition of the diversity of the charitable and nonprofit sector, the standards are grouped into three levels:

- Organizations with less than 1 FTE,
- Organizations with 1- 50 FTEs and operating expenses up to $5 million,
- Organizations with more than 50 FTEs or operating expenses of more than $5 million.

PROGRAM PILOT

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Program Pilot

- We are piloting the program in 2011

- All founding members (52) were being invited to participate in the pilot and 27 of them have agreed to do so.

- Participating organizations signed a "participation agreement" that explains how the program works, what their rights and responsibilities are, etc. and pay the applicable fee.

- Web conferences were held with pilot participants between April and August to answer questions and share resources.

- Completed application forms were due November 30.

- We hope to be able to announce the first group of accredited organizations by April 2012.

For More Information

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