

Sources Revealed

How do you measure the success of your nonprofit organization?

Washington Business Journal

“We use surveys and staff observation tools to measure changes in knowledge and attitudes and to identify improvements in the areas of responsibility and accountability, teamwork, leadership, creativity and many others. We also track success with the response to our annual recruitment efforts. In the fall of 2008, we had 230 applications for 100 openings in **Brainfood** After School, and due to limited resources continue to turn away far too many young people in search of a positive place to learn and grow.”

— **Paul J. Dahm, executive director, Brainfood**

“**Higher Achievement** measures its success by the improvements of our 500 scholars — hardworking middle school students from underserved neighborhoods. The five primary performance indicators are: school grades, standardized test scores, school attendance, school punctuality, placement in college-preparatory high schools. Through 360-degree surveys, we also track the changes in our scholars’ attitudes and behaviors, including public speaking, critical thinking, focus, reading for pleasure, and more. For organizational health, we also regularly analyze our cost effectiveness, burn rates and retention of staff, scholars and mentors.”

— **Lynsey Jeffries, executive director, Higher Achievement**

“At College Summit, we measure our success based on the impact we make on the people we serve — our students and our communities. When we see change in the way students, teachers, school administrators and parents view high school, not as a final destination but as a launch pad to college and career success, then we know we have helped to create a cultural shift.”

— **Vinette Brown, development director, College Summit**

“**DonorsChoose.org** measures success by the number of teachers and students we support in low-income classrooms across the country each year. Our goal this year is to deliver \$25 million in classroom resources and experiences like books, microscopes, violins and field trips. We also measure success by the number of individual donors, ‘citizen philanthropists,’ we engage in giving to public education.”

— **Katie Bisbee, executive director, DonorsChoose.org**

“We actively measure our success in two areas: program outcomes and organizational effectiveness. We measure our [organizational] success in our ability to meet organizational and financial goals as well as in our ability to share these goals through our financial statements and annual reports. Our recent certification through the Standards for Excellence program, part of the Maryland Association of Nonprofit Organizations, has provided us with an extra measure of success that keeps us functioning at the highest standards currently in the nonprofit sector — which involves strict adherence to eight guiding principles and 55 rigorous benchmarks.”

— **Ana Lopez, executive director, Community Bridges**