



## **THE APPLICATION REVIEW PROCESS**

After receiving copies of your application for the Standards for Excellence voluntary certification program, application packages are initially reviewed Standards staff. In this thorough overview, a staff member checks the applications for completeness. Any initial concerns are conveyed to applicant organizations, which then have the opportunity to amend, explain, and/or expand any portions in question.

Following the initial staff review, application packages are sent to a team of peer reviewers. Peer reviewers are individuals who have extensive experience in the nonprofit sector. Each reviewer has been screened and trained. To the extent possible, peers who have experience with organizations that are similarly sized to the applicant organization will be recruited for each review. Teams should also consist of reviewers with diverse areas of expertise. Every effort will be made to avoid conflicts of interest. Applicants are given an opportunity to deselect potential reviewers with conflicts or concerns. Additionally, peer reviewers must sign conflict of interest forms specific to each application.

First, each member of the peer review team reads the application and checks for adherence to the Standards on their own. Within fifteen days of receiving the application, the team and a Standards staff member will meet to deliberate over the application. Here peer reviewers work as a team to read, discuss, and make final recommendations on the application. Standards staff will work with the applicants to gather additional information if needed. If such follow-up is required, the peer reviewers may schedule additional meetings to continue the evaluation. Standards staff will then write a brief report outlining the results of the team's evaluation.

The team's recommendation for the application is then taken to the next meeting of the Standards Committee. The Standards Committee votes on recommendations and ultimately decides whether to award the Seal of Excellence. The committee may accept the application as presented, request changes in order to consider acceptance, ask for additional information or modification, or may accept the application with minor modifications required by the date of the three-year review.

Applicant organizations are notified as soon as possible about the decision of the Standards committee.