



What is a Standards for Excellence Peer Reviewer?

Peer reviewers are trained individuals responsible for evaluating an organization's compliance with the Standards for Excellence.

Using a peer review process ensures that individuals with diverse opinions and expertise in the non-profit sector will review and judge the application packages, and that the outcome will be fair.

Peer reviewers restrict their opinions to documents, activities, policies and processes that are covered by the Standards for Excellence. This ensures that all organizations are being treated alike, and that any potential biases of peer reviewers are avoided.

Peer reviewers always have the opportunity to make suggestions to the Standards Committee for addition, deletion or revision of the existing standards.

Time Commitment:

Prospective reviewers attend a two-hour training session conducted by Standards for Excellence staff. Peer reviewers generally review one to two applications per year.

The total time commitment for a peer review is no more than 10 hours per applicant organization.

Qualifications Needed:

At least three years of experience working with a nonprofit organization in a position of responsibility which involves development or execution of policy or governance of the organization.

Overview of Peer Review Process:

Applications from non-profit organizations are first reviewed for completeness by Standards for Excellence Institute staff. They are then sent to trained peer reviewers. Peer review teams are chosen from a pool of available peer reviewers who have no conflict of interest with the organization under consideration.

Peer reviewers review applications individually, evaluating for adherence to the Standards. An application checklist is provided to guide the review process. Peer reviewers spend an average of 4-6 hours reviewing applications on their own.

The team of peer reviewers meets within 15 days of receiving the application, to discuss each individual's assessment of the application package. A Standards Institute staff facilitates this meeting. Peer reviewer team meetings take approximately 3 hours.

If additional information is needed, staff contacts the organization and then shares any additional information with the peer review team. A second and, rarely, a third peer review team meeting is held -- usually by telephone conference call.

The peer review team agrees on whether or not to recommend the organization for Standards of Excellence, and on what requirements, expectations and observations are to be recommended.

The Standards Committee reviews the peer review team's recommendations and takes final action on whether or not the organization will receive the Standard of Excellence. If necessary, a representative of the Peer Review Team clarifies recommendations.

Conflict of Interest/Confidentiality of Interest:

Members of Peer Review Teams perform their work anonymously. The organization being evaluated does not know the names of the peer reviewers.

To avoid conflicts and protect the confidentiality of applicants, peer reviewers agree to and sign a Conflict of Interest and Confidentiality Statement, and fill out a Disclosure Form and Application.

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