

# National Standards for U.S. Community Foundations™

**National Standards** accreditation represents operational effectiveness to foster excellence in community philanthropy.

We do this in two ways:

1. **We create standards** for operationally and legally sound community foundations.
2. **We lead community foundation staff and boards** through the process of achieving operational excellence.

With confidence in their operations, community foundations can innovate and take risks necessary to solve complex social problems.

## Benefits of Accreditation

- **Training for your staff and board** through National Standards guidance on the website and ongoing webinars and trainings.
- **Legal guidance** from attorneys including sample policies and answers to your foundation's legal questions related to accreditation.
- **Communications toolkit** for highlighting the value of accreditation to your community.
- Displaying the National Standards logo that **symbolizes organizational excellence** on your communications materials and on Guidestar.

## Who is accredited?



66% of all U.S. Community Foundations  
94% of the 25 Largest Community Foundations

## Recognition of Accreditation from Policymakers and Regulators

- Legislators and regulators at the local, state, and federal level recognize National Standards as a way to evaluate community foundations.
- Three states, Iowa, Kentucky, and Maryland, already recognize National Standards with **tax credit legislation** connected to donations to community foundations with accreditation. Several other states are also working on passing legislation.
- California law permits accredited community foundations to be **eligible managers of land trust endowments**.
- Accredited community foundations receive **bonus points when applying for the HUD Secretary's Award** for Public-Private Partnerships.

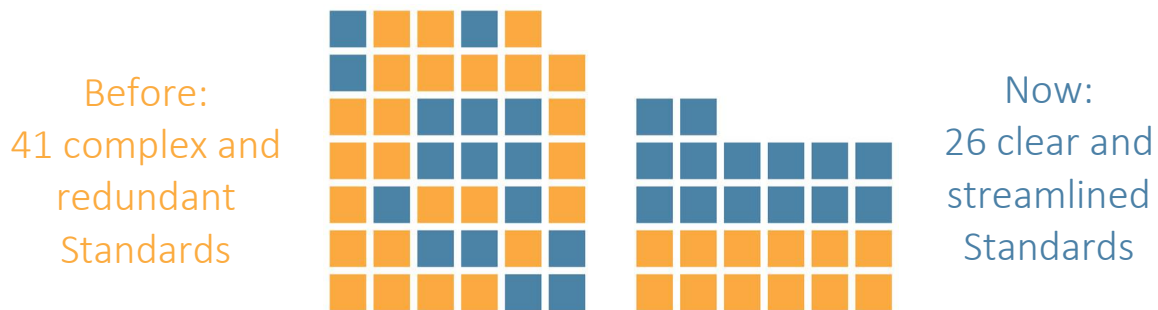


## For Community Foundations, From Community Foundations

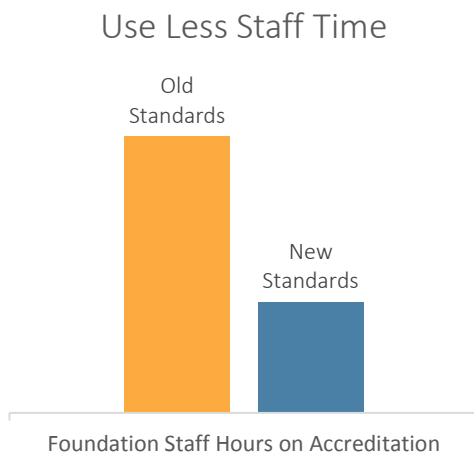
Community foundation leaders began conversations about a voluntary self-regulation program in the late 1990s. These leaders recognized that policymakers were considering increasing regulation on foundations and that community members had difficulty distinguishing community foundations from other types of foundations and nonprofits. By the early 2000s, field leaders organized and began the design of the National Standards accreditation program. In 2005 the first community foundations were accredited.

In 2008, the Community Foundation National Standards Board, a Type I supporting organization of the Council on Foundations, was created to administer the National Standards. The Council owns the National Standards and the Community Foundation National Standards Board administers the program. This structure creates a checks and balances structure for the accreditation program to ensure program integrity.

Every five years, the National Standards and the accreditation program are reviewed and updated. The National Standards revision occurs in a two-part process, engaging the field and welcoming input from all parties.



The Standards Action Team started meeting in 2013. They reviewed and revised the 41 existing National Standards and recommended 26 streamlined Standards to the Council on Foundations Board. These proposed Standards were then opened to the field for comment, and the Council's Board of Directors voted to accept their recommendations in March 2014.



The Community Foundation National Standards Board then took the 26 National Standards and reviewed the process for submission and review.

One of the most common comments was that the Standards process took too long – often as much as 100 hours of staff time. The Standards Action Team was clear that the revised Standards had to be easier to use for all community foundations. The new process and streamlined standards could cut staff hours spent on accreditation by half or more.

**The new process will take effect in January 2015, applicable to your next accreditation cycle.**



## 2015 National Standards Revisions At-a-Glance

We Heard	We Responded
<p><b>What passes National Standards?</b> The National Standards requirements are vague. What the reviewers know will pass and what I know to submit are very far apart.</p>	<p><b>Clarity, sample documents, and checklists:</b> We hear you! Overtime, it became unclear what actually passed Standards, but we are working with you to fix this.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We separated the legal requirements from the organization effectiveness requirements.</li> <li>• We are offering <b>new and updated resources</b>. Policy samples now include coversheets with law, best practices, and common mistakes.</li> </ul>
<p><b>The process is cumbersome!</b> The binders, the coversheets, it is confusing and redundant. There has to be an easier way.</p>	<p><b>Online at last:</b> For years, the cost of online accreditation software was prohibitive. However, we've found a cost friendly solution that simplifies your renewal process. You will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Confirm your compliance with the full National Standards just once.</li> <li>• Annual updates to your accreditation will <b>only ask about changes in your policies or the law</b>.</li> </ul>
<p><b>The Standards are redundant!</b> National Standards ask for the same information multiple times.</p>	<p><b>Streamlined:</b> The Standards Action Team rigorously reviewed the National Standards and found the redundancies.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The new Standards <b>retain the same level of rigor without the extra hoops</b> to jump through.</li> <li>• New Standards are added to reflect changes to our work, like using social media.</li> </ul>
<p><b>It takes so long!</b> Accreditation sometimes takes more than a year and hours upon hours of staff time. Help!</p>	<p><b>Up to 60% time savings:</b> Streamlined National Standards, new samples, online submission, and easy annual updates save you time and money:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Minimize staff time</b> spent on accreditation without jeopardizing the program's integrity.</li> <li>• Spend more time on the work that impacts your community.</li> </ul>
<p><b>It's hard to budget for Standards.</b> A one-time expense every five years is difficult to budget when our budget is only a few percent of our total endowment. This hurts!</p>	<p><b>Easy to budget:</b> Because accreditation will be updated annually, the cost of the program is now spread out over years. The initial online submission is \$1,250 and annual renewal is \$1,000 (subject to inflation).</p>

Online portal accessible January 2015, applicable to your next accreditation cycle!

