

## Nonprofit Startup Checklist

### 1. Needs Assessment

- Will my organization satisfy a currently unmet need in the community?
  - There are a myriad of social organizations already in operation serving the needs of their communities. What makes yours any different, and what will convince people to financially support your organization?
- Do you have a mission statement?
  - A mission statement will clearly and succinctly define why your organization exists and the population whom you serve
- Do I have a sustainable business plan for my organization?
  - A business plan is simply a more detailed document specifying questions of who the organization serves, what the organization does that is unique, and how much capital it will require. For more help take a look [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#).
- Can my nonprofit demonstrate impact to potential supporters?
  - Funders are becoming increasingly concerned about evidence-based outcomes generated from their dollars. If you cannot substantiate your program results statistically, you need to rethink your plan.

### 2. Foundational Requirements

- Have you established an [effective](#) board of directors?
  - A nonprofit board needs to be comprised of passionate supporters of your cause and have the necessary social clout and/or financial support to drive your mission forward.
- Have you developed your organizational [bylaws](#)?
  - Bylaws are rules that govern the internal management of the organization, and at minimum, they cover protocols for electing board members, how board meetings are conducted, and the roles of officers within the organization.
- What are your human capital needs?
  - Founders can rarely do everything on their own necessary to operate a successful nonprofit, so what are your deficiencies and will you meet these needs with paid staff or committed volunteers?
- Have you developed an annual fundraising strategy?
  - The lifeblood of a nonprofit is the ability to consistently raise enough funds to fulfil its mission year after year.

### 3. State and Federal Filing Requirements

- Have you filed [Tennessee State Articles of Incorporation](#)?

- Have you filed IRS Form [SS-4](#) to obtain an Employer Identification Number (EIN)?
- Have IRS Publication [557](#) (Tax-Exempt Status for Your Organization), Form [1023](#), Form [872-C](#), and Form [8718](#) been obtained from the IRS?
- Has an application been made to the Tennessee Department of Revenue for a tax-exempt certificate? (A copy of the IRS Determination Letter is required.)

#### **4. Elements Needed for Longevity**

- Have you set up systems and policies for things such as the following?
  - Risk management and insurance
  - HR and employment issues
  - Account and fundraising disclosures
- Are you completing the following regular activities?
  - Board meetings
  - Tax withholdings
  - File [990 Tax Form](#) with the IRS annually
  - File annual report with state government annually