

DOES YOUR GUIDESTAR RATING MATTER?

You and the members of your organization are doing great work. Every day. No doubt. But is this enough?

In this day and age, with information at our fingertips and people everywhere asking for more accountability – from business and nonprofits alike, knowing the criteria people are relying on to judge your organization and the work you do, is not only critical, but simple.

Check out the websites donors use to look up how nonprofits are governed and how they allocate their funds. Because your nonprofit is supported by the public, the public has the right to know. What is important to remember is, that different websites provide different information and draw different conclusions from the information provided.

This guide is not meant to evaluate, judge, or in any way rate such websites. Instead, this is a simple explanation of the information aggregated by GuideStar, which contains the information of more than 10,000 nonprofit, big and small alike – provided so that you can decide if providing the information requested is important for your organization.

Depending on how much information you provide in your profile, your organization is identified by a particular Seal of Transparency that helps prospective donors understand your organization, potentially before they make a donation. According to GuideStar, *“The GuideStar Seals of Transparency is not a rating or ranking system. They are used to indicate your organization's commitment to transparency. When you share information through your GuideStar Nonprofit Profile, you have the opportunity to increase funding for your organization.”* (<https://community.guidestar.org/thread/4979-what-do-the-ratings-mean-eg-silver>)

What are the Seals?

- **Bronze:** Basic Information
- **Silver:** Financial Information
- **Gold:** Goals and Strategy
- **Platinum:** Progress and Results

How can these Seals help?

By monitoring and updating your GuideStar profile, you are better positioned to:

- manage your organizations' online identity
- increase funding by having your information available to donor-advised funds and thousands of foundations
- save time with your grant application - because some of these granting organizations pull data directly from your profile

Creating a GuideStar account is free and easy.

In addition to basic contact and financial information found in the Form 990, adopting certain transparency policies can boost the trust donors have in your organization. Examples of such policies might include, but are not limited to:

- Gift Acceptance Policy
- Conflict of Interest Policy
- Whistleblower Policy
- Document Retention and Destruction Policy
- Expense Reimbursement Policy
- Compensation Policy and the Use of a Compensation Committee
- Written policies and procedures governing the activities of chapters, affiliates, and branches to ensure their operations are consistent with the organization's exempt purposes
- Procedures for Monitoring the Use of Grants

For more information, visit the [GuideStar.org](https://www.guidestar.org) and consult your legal and financial advisors.