

Editorial: Training session helps charities build trust

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Above all else, charities must maintain the trust of donors. If an organization loses the public's faith, quickly lost will be the resources and donations needed to do good works.

Later this month, the Charities Review Council will offer a day of training for charities on the benefits of adopting the council's 16 accountability standards and posting compliance with those standards on the council's Web page.

The Charities Review Council is not well known, but Steve Thornton, Rochester Area Foundation's executive director, endorses the organization. "It (the Charities Review Council) has a long and distinguished history and is a valuable resource for the donor community," Thornton said.

In short, what the council does is offer people who give to charities a way to feel confident that their money will be used efficiently.

Encouraging charities to adopt the accountability standards is one technique. What's unique with the council is a new Internet-based self-assessment tool for charities. Through the council's web page, this tool also offers the public a window into local charities.

The standards can be viewed at the council's Web site (<http://www.smartgivers.org/home.html>). One of the most easily understood standards is this: "At least 70 percent of the organization's annual expenses are for program activity and not more than 30 percent for management/general and fundraising combined."

Thornton said some 20 local charities have signed up for the Rochester workshop. For these charities, participation in the council's online accountability review, "The Accountability Wizard," would greatly enhance public trust in their organizations.

The Rochester Area Foundation gave the council a \$5,000 grant to help develop the "Accountability Wizard." It is a wonderful way for small charities that don't have the resources to publish similar accountability reviews, but still want to demonstrate the kind of transparency that builds trust.