



STRATEGIES TO GUIDE YOUR NONPROFIT EXPLORATION JOURNEY

Starting a nonprofit is one option you may consider on your journey to impact an issue or challenge identified in a community. As you determine the best course of action, we recommend following the 5 steps outlined in this worksheet. Keep in mind, a nonprofit is a legal structure and there are requirements that must be upheld.

1 RESEARCH the issue and opportunity through a needs assessment:

A needs assessment is the process for determining if there is an actual, measurable need to the problem you wish to solve.



- What is the challenge, opportunity, or other issue you wish to address?
- How do you know this is a challenge, opportunity, or issue?
What data and information do you have to support this belief?
- Who or what would be served in the community? *(Try to quantify the need, how many people need the service you plan to provide? Consider your geographic location. Knowing where you want to serve will prepare you for how many you can serve.)*
- What knowledge, skill, experience, and/or resource do you possess that you think would be useful to address the challenge, opportunity, or issue? List them here:

2 IDENTIFY who else in the community is working to address the need you have identified:

It is important to recognize who else in the community is working directly or indirectly to address the needs you have identified.



- Identify all the potential partners in the work. Is there a government entity, other nonprofit organizations, a business, or an individual in the community working to address the same or a similar challenge, opportunity, or issue? If so, list them in the table below along with the connection and their contact information. Understanding the ecosystem that currently exists is important to understanding the potential impact you can make.

Name:	Contact information:	Connection to the identified need:

3 CONNECT with at least three people identified in STEP TWO:

Once you have identified partners in the work, it is important to conduct data collection through surveys, online searches, and interviews. Here are some helpful questions you can ask during an interview with a fellow colleague working in the community.

- What is your mission?
- What programs do you operate to work toward your mission?
- Do you have plans to grow or expand your services? Why or why not?
- Who do you partner with?
- Who do you serve?
- How many people need your services, and do you feel you are able to adequately meet the existing need?
- Are there gaps in addressing this issue that you see in our community?
- Who is on your board?
- Do you have paid staff, if so, how many?
- How many volunteers partner with the organization?
- What are your biggest challenges?
- What is your operating budget?
- Where does the bulk of your annual funding come from? Are you able to raise the funds you need to meet your mission?



4 DETERMINE the best strategy for making an impact:

Starting a nonprofit organization is one option when considering how to best make an impact. You might also consider the strategies listed below.



- **Strategy 1: VOLUNTEER** You could assist on the front lines to deliver direct services. You could join a committee and focus on programming, marketing, fundraising, or other key areas. You might even join as a board member and govern the direction and oversight of the organization.
- **Strategy 2: BECOME AN EMPLOYEE** You may be the person existing organizations are looking for to improve your community. Similar to the volunteer opportunity, based on your knowledge, skill, and experience you may serve the organization as a paid employee.
- **Strategy 3: START A PROGRAM** You may be the person an existing organization is looking for to create a new program that aligns with its current activities. The structure may vary from being fully integrated into the existing entity to being a fiscally sponsored program.
- **Strategy 4: DONATE** In addition to fundraising as a volunteer or employee, you may be in a position to contribute financially to an existing entity performing the work that connects with your vision and values. Contributions may be made directly to an organization or through a donor advised fund at your local community foundation.
- **Strategy 5: START A NEW ORGANIZATION** Creating and sustaining a new organization is a challenge. Our friends at the National Council of Nonprofits offer a solid five-step process to pursue this strategy — and you've already completed **STEP ONE!** Visit their page at councilofnonprofits.org

5 ADDITIONAL RESOURCES to consult along your journey:

Once you have identified partners in the work, it is important to conduct data collection through surveys, online searches, and interviews. Here are some helpful questions you can ask during an interview with a fellow colleague working in the community.

- Iowa Commission on Volunteer Service: volunteeriowa.galaxydigital.com
- Iowa Nonprofit Alliance: iowanonprofitalliance.org
- Larned A. Waterman Iowa Nonprofit Resource Center at the University of Iowa: inrc.law.uiowa.edu
- Community Foundation of Greater Des Moines: desmoinesfoundation.org
- National Council of Nonprofit Organizations: councilofnonprofits.org
- Your Local Community Foundation: iowacommunityfoundations.org

