

# CHARITABLE GIVING

## Give With Confidence: How the Imagine Canada Standards Help Amplify Philanthropic Legacy

Every day, donors help charities and nonprofits reach millions of Canadians who depend on them for essential services. This support is more than a gift; it's part of a mutual relationship built on trust, shared values, and a common goal of creating lasting impact in communities across the country. In today's complex and uncertain environment, earning and maintaining that trust is more critical and more challenging than ever. It takes more than good intentions; it requires transparency, accountability, and a visible, sustained commitment to values-driven action.

Luckily, donors have never been more engaged. They are no longer passive contributors; they are active partners in shaping the future of the public good sector. Whether giving directly, through a donor-advised fund, a corporate foundation, or a legacy gift, they want to know that their investment is stewarded responsibly and sustainably. Strong governance, ethical management, and a demonstrated commitment to continuous improvement are no longer optional; they are expected.

Charities and nonprofits are rising to meet these expectations. A recent *Insights Charity Canada Project*<sup>1</sup> survey by Carleton University found that 76% of organizations have taken action in

the past year to strengthen accountability, enhance transparency around financials and outcomes, or review ethical fundraising and privacy practices, all of which are efforts aimed squarely at building and protecting public trust.

As expectations for transparency and accountability continue to rise, donors are seeking trusted, independent third-party validation mechanisms to inform their giving. Imagine Canada Standards accreditation offers just that: a nationally recognized symbol of credibility, strong governance and operational effectiveness. Through a rigorous, peer-reviewed process, accredited organizations demonstrate excellence in five key areas: Board Governance, Financial Accountability and Transparency, Fundraising Practices, Staff Management, and Volunteer Engagement.

A study published in the *Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization*<sup>2</sup> shows that external recognition fosters greater trust: certified charities receive approximately 10% larger gift sizes, inspire greater public trust and are more successful in acquiring new donors.

When donors see the Standards Trustmark, they can give with greater confidence, knowing that their contri-



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butions are going to responsible, well-managed organizations with the leadership, systems, and values needed to deliver on their mission, today and in the long term.

Since 2012, the Imagine Canada Standards, developed by the nonprofit sector, for the sector, have provided Canada's only national accreditation framework for all charities and nonprofits. This framework offers organizations a clear path to strengthen organizational practices, enhance accountability, and improve transparency. To ensure continued relevance, the Standards evolve to reflect the sector's growing responsibilities and changing expectations, and are governed by an independent Council made up of volunteer sector representatives responsible for overseeing the Standards.

Today, more than 280 organizations across Canada are accredited by Imagine Canada, representing a wide range of missions, sizes, and geographic locations. With 42% of these organizations maintaining their accreditation for over 10 years and a 97% retention rate, the program reflects a strong commitment and satisfaction among nonprofits to strive for nonprofit excellence. Accredited organizations are proud to be part of this network dedi-

1. <https://carletonu.yul1.qualtrics.com/reports/RC/public/2FybGV0b251LTY3OTdjNTIwOGVhODNhMDAwODViYzdmMi1VU185enhKcHR6aDB1N3ZjYTE=>

2. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0167268119300083>

cated to making a significant and positive impact with every donation they receive.

For advisors and estate planners, accreditation simplifies due diligence and minimizes risks. It provides a reliable benchmark to guide clients toward organizations that will protect and honour their philanthropic intentions.

For donors, the Standards provide peace of mind.

For the sector as a whole, accreditation builds a common foundation of trust.

The future of philanthropy goes beyond one-time transactions. It lies in long-term partnerships grounded in shared values and a commitment to collective impact. At a time when Canadians are giving less and more individuals than ever rely on the services provided by charitable and nonprofit organizations, accreditation has been an unwavering testament to the leadership and investment on behalf of organizations in their capacity and therefore, their future. Donors, through their support, can amplify this commitment, helping to build resilient organizations capable of

creating lasting, positive change in communities across Canada.

*Learn more about Imagine Canada Standards and discover the organizations that form our trusted network of accredited organizations by visiting [www.imagine-canada.ca/en/standards](http://www.imagine-canada.ca/en/standards).*

*You can also explore the vital work of Imagine Canada advocating for the sector, producing leading research, and providing tools and services that help charities and nonprofits strengthen their impact in communities across Canada and beyond.*