



Questions and Answers

Q. Why did the Central Ohio BBB Education Foundation decide to develop a seal program?

A. The goal of the BBB Foundation seal program is to offer a highly visible accountability tool that will help inform donors, will assist charities in establishing their commitment to ethical practices, and will encourage greater confidence in giving. Many, if not most, Americans have trouble finding the information they need to evaluate charities and make decisions about giving. A detailed donor expectations survey of 2,003 Americans commissioned by the Wise Giving Alliance in the spring of 2001 found that 70% of adult Americans said it was difficult to tell whether a charity soliciting their contribution is legitimate. Public attention on charity accountability has grown in recent years, particularly in the wake of September 11th and a series of high profile charity scandals. In turn, charities themselves are seeking credible means to ensure donors that they operate ethically and in accordance with donor intentions. Moreover, there have been numerous requests from charities over the years to be able to advise donors that they meet BBB standards.

Q. Why are there two versions of the seal?

A. Each Better Business Bureau has the opportunity to offer the same seal to their local charities. The set of standards under which each Better Business Bureau conducts a review are the same, as is the seal. The primary difference is a geographical indicator noted by the website address near the bottom of the seal.

In our case, the local seal for the Central Ohio BBB Foundation is available to local Central Ohio charities that solicit funds from the public.

Seals with the give.org website indicate that those charities have been reviewed by the Wise Giving Alliance (WGA), the national charity review program of the Council of Better Business Bureaus. After the launch of the national seal program, it became available to the national network of local Better Business Bureaus. Seals with the centralohiobb.org website indicate that those charities have been reviewed by the Central Ohio BBB Foundation.

Q. Until now charities couldn't tell donors that they met BBB charity standards?

A. That's correct. Because of a long-standing policy precluding use of the BBB name by outside organizations, Central Ohio charities that meet the BBB charity standards have never been permitted to state this fact in their materials or to use the Better Business Bureau name. The seal is offered as a voluntary option for those Central Ohio organizations that the Central Ohio BBB Foundation has determined meet the BBB-WGA standards.

Q. How will a seal assist donors?

A. The seal provides a clear, concise and accessible means for potential donors to find out if a Central Ohio charity meets the comprehensive BBB Charity standard. Charities that qualify for the seal will be able to display the seal in printed solicitation materials, in advertisements, on their websites and in other approved venues. Furthermore, the seal will help to extend public awareness of the Central Ohio BBB Education Foundation's work in charity accountability.

Q. How will a seal assist charities?

A. The seal provides charities with a widely recognized (surveys have shown that 98% of the public is familiar with the Better Business Bureau name) and meaningful mechanism by which to demonstrate their commitment to accountability and ethical practices. Display of the seal instantly conveys to the donor the charity's adherence to strong and comprehensive standards.

Q. How will the seal program be funded?

A. Qualified Central Ohio charities that apply for participation in the seal program will pay a \$100.00 annual fee. The fees will be directed towards establishing and monitoring the seal program.

Q. Which charities are eligible to display the seal?

A. Publicly soliciting Central Ohio charities that are at least three years old and meet all of the applicable Standards for Charity Accountability are eligible to apply for the seal. Currently, the Central Ohio BBB Foundation reports on local area charities that request to be reviewed or have been subject of recent public inquiries. However, if a local charity has not yet been evaluated and is interested in applying for the seal program, the BBB Foundation will complete the requisite evaluation in relation to standards.

Q. How does the seal differ from other charity watchdog reporting efforts?

A. The Central Ohio BBB Foundation looks beyond "the numbers" while many other charity watchdogs confine their reports and conclusions solely to the charity's finances. The BBB Foundation evaluates the charity's governance, fundraising practices, solicitations and informational materials, as well as how it spends its money. Therefore, compliance with this seal will send a more complete confirmation of the charity's accountability.

Q. How will charities be permitted to use the seal?

A. Permissible uses of the seal will include the charity's direct mail appeals, annual report, posters, newspaper and magazine advertisements, billboards, websites and television public service announcements. The website seal will feature a "click to check" function that provides a direct hyperlink to the BBB Central Ohio report on the organization.

Q. Will the Central Ohio BBB Foundation continue to report on Central Ohio charities that do not apply for the seal and/or do not meet standards?

A. Yes, the BBB Foundation will continue to produce reports on those charities that are the subject of recent inquiries regardless of whether the subject charity intends to apply for the seal. Reports on both those charities www.centralohiobb.org.

Q. How will the Central Ohio BBB Foundation monitor the seal and address seal abuses?

A. As with all charity reviews completed by the BBB Foundation, participating charities will be required to submit a variety of support documents and related information in order for the BBB Foundation to complete an evaluation in relation to standards including: audited financial statements, IRS Form 990, bylaws, articles of incorporation, direct mail appeals, brochures, budgets, board rosters and tax exempt status determination letters.

Charity evaluations are in effect for 2 years. However, they could be amended at any time based on new information or a change in charity practice. The BBB Foundation staff will routinely monitor seal holder organizations for adherence to seal program requirements. In addition, the Central Ohio BBB Foundation will also conduct Internet monitoring for unauthorized use of the seal online. Further, the Central Ohio BBB Foundation will promptly investigate and act on any donor and/or charity complaints related to seal usage.

If a Central Ohio charity participating in the seal program is found to no longer meet the standards, the charity would be required to remove the seal from their website and to cease distribution of any printed materials that displayed the seal logo. The BBB Foundation may also alert the public to any seal abuses through prominent website notices, press releases and other information channels.