

Supporting Community Action and Philanthropy across the World

CSOs provide individuals and communities the means to meet challenges, express their aspirations and make positive and lasting changes to the quality of their own and other peoples' lives. These organisations enable immeasurable improvement in the daily lives of people, have a major impact upon public knowledge and policy and, arguably, underpin healthy or emerging democracies throughout the world. Civil society, already a huge and dynamic sector, is growing with unprecedented and accelerating speed.

What CSOs operate in each community, country and region of the world? What work do they do and how do they pursue it? Which CSOs do the best job of reporting their goals, accomplishments, needs? How can societies' resources be allocated more effectively? How can information on civil society be used to inform better policies? What kind of work is being done by CSOs in different regions? What activities are underrepresented or overrepresented in each community or country? These are just a few of the questions that GuideStar services are designed to answer.



Making connections, building success

GuideStar International has its roots in the United States where Buzz Schmidt, its chief executive, founded the first GuideStar service in 1994. By 2000 GuideStar (www.guidestar.org) had established itself as an essential resource for American philanthropy and nonprofit practice and the leading source of information about American nonprofits. In 2002 Schmidt began the process of building GuideStar UK (www.guidestar.org.uk). Launched in 2005, GuideStar UK is the first place to look for comprehensive information about every charity in England and Wales. In response to growing global interest in the GuideStar model, Schmidt and others active in the development of the early GuideStars established GuideStar International in 2004.

The GuideStar International team at our offices in London.



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GuideStar International

*Illuminating the work of the
world's civil society organisations*



GuideStar International seeks to revolutionise philanthropy and nonprofit practice through information.



“We believe that the public provision of clear and thorough information about civil society organisations is vital in ensuring the success of the sector.”



GuideStar International (GSI) works with leaders of civil society throughout the world to build a network of national online “GuideStar” services that report the aims, activities, accomplishments and finances of each country’s civil society organisations (CSOs)¹.

GuideStar International’s work is premised upon the belief that every national society gains from a diverse population of innovative, energetic, well-resourced and responsive CSOs. We further believe that transparency achieved through the provision of clear and thorough reports about each CSO at a public website is vital to ensure the strength and success of this civil society. These convictions form the basis for, and heart of, the GuideStar proposition. GuideStar services are used extensively by grant-makers, individual donors, researchers, trustees, policy makers, the media, general public, and the CSOs themselves to make decisions, allocate resources and otherwise pursue their work on behalf of society more confidently and effectively.

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¹Through these private organisations, variously known as NGOs, CBOs, charities, nonprofits, etc., citizens combine to pursue and promote a broad range of initiatives for the public good

Providing essential information on civil society organisations

GuideStar International operates five principal programmes:

Emerging GuideStars

initiates and supports the development of online national GuideStar services. Working with national and regional partners, GSI helps to assemble the operating data, financial, human and governance resources and relationships necessary to support sustainable GuideStars.

GuideStar Alliance (GSA)

is the formal association of national GuideStar services. GSI facilitates communication among national GuideStars; promotes best operating practices, enables collaborative international or interregional operating activity among national services, and protects the value and integrity of the GuideStar brand internationally for the benefit of all partners.

GuideStar UK

operates the free public website that serves England and Wales. With comprehensive, up-to-date, self-generated reports on the activities, finances and institutional attributes of 168,000 charities, GuideStar UK offers a valuable model to help support development of new national services.

GuideStar Technology Collaborative

provides the flexible, state-of-the-art, technology platform needed to develop, operate and deliver national GuideStar services to the public. GTC eliminates development expenditure and risk for new GuideStar services, provides national services with a low-cost, high-quality ongoing operating system, enables the efficient sharing of new ideas and solutions from around the world by all partners and will support the development of GuideStar Global.

GuideStar Global

will combine access to information about CSOs from each national GuideStar service in one common web portal. The GuideStar Global site will allow users to search in their native language, view search results from every national service, and then navigate to the relevant national website to view the full report about an organisation of interest.

In addition to operating these programmes, GuideStar International is sole owner of GuideStar Data Services.

GuideStar Data Services

a UK-registered Community Interest Company, builds innovative web applications and services that make GuideStar UK data increasingly vital and valuable for professionals and institutions that work with, within and for civil society.

“GuideStar International is producing the essential raw material for serious research on the nonprofit or voluntary sector. If successful, the data it generates will revolutionise the third sector research enterprise in addition to bringing greater transparency to the world of philanthropy and voluntary sector activity.”

Lester M. Salamon, Director,
Centre for Civil Society Studies,
Institute for Policy Studies, Johns
Hopkins University