



## **Dashboard Reporting for Nonprofits**

As CPAs who are very focused on good controls, we advocate for complete reports directly from your accounting system to your board and finance committee, but we also understand the value of financial highlights that can be found in a dashboard report.

Some people have the personality for a dashboard report "give me the big picture and let's move on". Some people just don't like the detail and avoid it at all costs, and still others find dashboard information to be a very useful supplement and interpreter of more detailed information.

What should be in your dashboard? There are books on the topic, for example boardsource.org has a publication available in print and PDF versions called "The Nonprofit Dashboard: Using Metrics to Drive Mission Success". They also have four member resource PDFs on dashboards.

Dashboards can address financial information, program activities and program service accomplishments.

What financial information is important to your organization? If cash is tight, cash account balances will be key. It will be useful to compare them to the prior month and, if your activity is seasonal, compare them to the same month one year ago.

Total income, total expenses, and year to date surplus or shortfall can be an important alert.

What about client statistics? The total number of clients you are currently serving and the first-time clients served this month.

If volunteers are a key part of your service delivery, what about the number of volunteers or volunteer hours?



Other significant events that occurred since the last report can be listed. Examples might include renewal of a large grant or approval of a new grant or program, or funding source that was discontinued.

One of the objectives of dashboard reports is to provide information so you can make adjustments before a problem arises. Like your car's dashboard tells you gas is low, or you better slow down, your business dashboard should warn you about deficits, cash flow challenges, funding changes, or additional demands for service and support.

It's healthy and can be fun to brainstorm about what key information will keep the organization and its board informed about the organization's direction and progress.