

# 2015 Commitments Assessment Benchmarking Report



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## Executive Summary

The Alliance for Strong Families and Communities Commitments of High-Impact Nonprofit Organizations and accompanying assessment tool offer human service organizations a unique tool and approach to assessing key areas of leadership, strategy, and culture. In the years to come, it is the Alliance's vision that the Commitments will provide all human service organizations a pathway for systems change and community impact. A total of 34 human service organizations and more than 3,000 staff completed the Commitments Assessment in 2015. The following sections include descriptive summaries of noteworthy discoveries and findings.

### Organizational Features

- In 2015, 34 Alliance member organizations and their staff participated in the Alliance Commitments Assessment. These organizations represent 17 states from across the U.S. The majority of organizations are designated as 501(c)(3) (n=28, 82.4%). Eight percent (n=3) are 501(c)(3)s with at least one for-profit social enterprise or subsidiary and 5.9% (n=2) of the organizations represent multiple 501(c)(3)s.
  - More than half (61.8%) of the organizations primarily serve one geographic area within their state, while 35.3% serve their entire state. These organizations have, on average, 12.8 service locations, with a range from four to 39.
  - More than one-third of the organizations have an annual operating budget between \$10 million and \$24.9 million, followed by \$1 to \$4.9 million (29.4%). Roughly one-third of these organizations employ 250 to 499 individuals.
  - More than 41% of these organizations had a CEO with tenure of one to three years, followed by 20-30 years (17.6%).

### Commitment Assessment Highlights

- Response rates per organization ranged from a low of 19.2% to a high of 100%, with an average of 57.9%.
- Leading with Vision had the highest score of (62%) followed by Executing on Mission (+55%).
- Governing for the Future and Advancing Equity had the lowest scores of 45.5% and 47.7% respectively.
- The two highest scoring statements on the Commitments Assessment were "Senior Leaders promote an environment of high integrity" (Leading with Vision), and "This organization is continually learning to improve its effectiveness in addressing social challenges" (Innovating with Enterprise).
- The two lower scoring statements on the Commitments Assessment were "Risk-taking in pursuit of organizational mission is encouraged by the Board of Directors" (Governing for the Future) and "Board members are trained in how to help the organization achieve its mission" (Executing on Mission).

## Introduction

The nonprofit sector has long been doing good work with children, families, and communities, but it continues to struggle to fully demonstrate its own excellence and impact at a community and systems level. Communities deserve high-impact nonprofits and impact is not about what nonprofits DO—how many they serve or how long they’ve been in existence, but more about the positive change they achieve and whether or not it lasts.

Not only are the personal, family, and community challenges nonprofits seek to eliminate or reduce extremely large and highly complex, but the economic, political, and cultural climates are, and continue to be, replete with headwinds that challenge the traditional course of human and community development work. These climates include factors such as shrinking resources, increased demand for human services and support, higher expectations of nonprofits to demonstrate a ROI, a highly partisan and polarized government, and a disengaged and uniformed public.

Within these volatile climates are specific conditions that nonprofits must understand and use to inform their present work and future plans—demand for effective practices and evidence-based tools to pursue them; rapidly emerging, changing, and improving science and technology; shifting demographics; erosion of funding streams; and redefinition of the social contract.

The Alliance for Strong Families and Communities Commitments of High-Impact Nonprofit Organizations and accompanying assessment tool offer human service organizations a new tool and approach to assess organizational excellence in key areas of leadership, strategy, and culture, and provide human service organizations a pathway for systems change and community impact.

### About the Commitments of High-Impact Nonprofit Organizations

Impact is not about what you do—how many people you serve, how long you’ve been in existence, or how far your service area reaches. It’s

about the positive change you achieve and whether or not it lasts. Because the Alliance believes that organizations do not achieve impact by accident but through dedication and rigorous attention to high standards, we’ve identified the Commitments to serve as a blueprint for impact. The Commitments were identified through an extensive literature review, the Alliance’s report *Disruptive Forces: Driving a Human Services Revolution*,



member engagement and feedback, and the Alliance's more than 100 years of experience in working with the human services sector. The following list provides a description of each Commitment within the three categories.

## Navigator Commitments

### Leading with Vision

Leaders at all levels are courageous and disruptive. They embrace new ideas and are open to looking outside of traditional relationships and hierarchies. Those who lead with vision are not deterred by complexity or ambiguity; when confronted by challenges, they listen carefully and think critically. They are among their organizations' best ambassadors and champions of the cause.



### Governing for the Future

Governing boards of high-impact nonprofits analyze market, political, and practice trends to define the organization's preferred future and ensure mission alignment. They push and support their organizations in pursuing lofty goals, taking risks, and innovating. They are guardians of the horizon, and they do this by helping their organizations define and realize their future aspirations, rather than focusing on solving operational problems.



## Strategic Commitments

### Executing on Mission

To execute on mission, organizations must articulate a clear purpose, target audience, and intended results of their efforts. High-impact organizations refuse to deplete resources across jumbled programs, services, and activities, even if it means rejecting funding. They continually examine their programs to assess relevancy to mission and divest those that are misaligned.



### Partnering with Purpose

As opposed to diluting their potential for impact across a diverse spectrum of programs, organizations will address the complexity of social problems through diverse networks that revolve around shared visions and values. Those who partner with purpose share control around program implementation, funding, and recognition to further the cause.



### Investing in Capacity

High-impact organizations' budgets position them for the future and are used, first and foremost, as policy and strategy guides, as opposed to binding documents. They continually improve the operating systems and business functions that support resource generation and high performance. Organizations raise unrestricted revenue to allow risk taking, finance good overhead, and scale what works. High-impact organizations seek and identify efficiencies to reinvest dollars in their missions.



### Measuring that Matters

High-impact organizations relentlessly focus on achieving outcomes tied to meaningful, measurable change in lives, systems, and communities. They infuse performance management in all levels of their organizations. Staff relish the ability to improve their approaches and inform their decisions with internal and external data, research, and practice evidence. Organizations also commit to using evidence to educate funders, government agencies, and the public on the impact of their social interventions.



## Cultural and Values Commitments

### Co-Creating with Community

By being nimble and connected to community, high-impact organizations are uniquely positioned to identify and efficiently mobilize around emerging needs, even if the work goes outside of the scope of contracts and funding commitments. Organizations work with and through their communities to build solutions that maximize their assets. Residents view organizations as vital institutions and economic engines, and they have a sense of shared ownership in the missions.



### Innovating with Enterprise

Through cultures of innovation, staff are comfortable with ambiguity, and they recognize that uncertainty often inspires creativity. High-impact organizations encourage staff in all positions at all levels to challenge the status quo and take calculated risks. Instead of punishing failure, they reward it along with success, only punishing inaction.



### Engaging All Voices

High-impact organizations know that placing residents and clients at the center of decision making and goal setting achieves meaningful and durable outcomes for individuals, families, and communities. Their practices, policies, and relationships all reflect a person-centered, asset-based orientation. Through this orientation, organizations create multiple pathways through which individuals can provide feedback that shapes their own paths and that of the organization and broader community.



### Advancing Equity

High-impact organizations understand that equity is central to human development. Instead of viewing advocacy efforts as separate from their program or service delivery, organizations view it as part of their social justice orientation to address issues of disparity and disproportionality. They tackle relationships that cause and sustain inequity and seek to reduce the social exclusion of underrepresented and marginalized communities in society and social processes.



For more information, visit [alliance1.org/commitments](http://alliance1.org/commitments).

### About the Commitments Assessment Tool

In collaboration with researchers at American Institutes for Research (AIR), an online survey tool was created that allows all staff from participating human services organizations to complete it. The Commitments Assessment Tool allows organizations to establish baseline competencies in Commitment areas, track longitudinal performance, and report progress across the Commitments. Each staff member receives a unique confidential link to complete the assessment, which measures how well the organization performs in each of the Commitments areas.

For each Commitment area there are 14-17 indicator statements. Participants use a six-point Likert type scale of “trueness” ranging from 1 (never true) to 6 (always true) to rate the organization. There is also a ‘do not know’ response option. The Alliance Evaluation and Research Services Department collects and analyzes the data and provides each organization with a final report of its analysis. The department also suggests resources that will assist the organization in building its competencies.

The Commitments framework is aspirational in nature and organizations working along the path to becoming high(er)-

impact organizations recognize that the Commitment Assessment process is more like a marathon, rather than a sprint, and that it is not enough to commit to just measuring the Commitments—but to making progress. For more information about the Commitments Assessment Tool, visit [alliance1.org/commitments/assessment](http://alliance1.org/commitments/assessment).

## The Report

This report provides a summary of the data received in 2015, the inaugural year of the tool. It is designed to provide organizations that have participated in the Commitments Assessment with external benchmarks and comparison data along key organizational characteristics. It reflects initial data and findings from the first year of the Commitments Assessment. This report will be updated annually, as additional Alliance member organizations engage in the assessment process and a larger, longitudinal dataset is built over time. Given that the Commitments Assessment is a new tool and only one year of data collection has concluded, We have not included a thematic analysis and interpretation of the results that would lend itself to broader generalizations beyond the organizations in the sample to date.

## Understanding the Data

Percent to max scores are presented for each of the Commitments, by Commitment group area (Navigator, Strategic, and Cultural/Values). Percent to max score is used so that each Commitment can be compared on the same scale (0-100 percent). Commitment areas are broken into sections to provide the most accurate depiction possible. Commitment percent to max scores are broken out by key variables including organization type, geographic region, annual operating budget categories, number of service locations, staffing size, CEO tenure, and staff categories. These variables were intentionally chosen to assist organizations in understanding how they compare to the overall sample. The top 15 items and the 15 lowest scoring items are also provided. Key definitions include:

**Percent to Max Score:** The average total score for each Commitment divided by the highest points possible for a given Commitment. This score is then placed on a 100 point scale for ease of comparison.

**Mean:** The mean or average of response ratings on a scale of never true (1) to always true (6).

**Median:** The midpoint of the frequency of the range of scores on a scale of never true (1) to always true (6).

**Highest Possible Score:** The highest possible score in a Commitment, given the number of items and the scale.

**Standard Deviation (S.D.):** A measure used to determine the amount of variation across the range of responses.

**Range:** The lowest and highest scores for the sample by Commitment.

## Confidentiality

No identifiable data remain for individual staff or individual organizations. Table cells having data for fewer than five organizations for a given area/statement appear with the number of organizations reporting only and no data are reported. This method is used as a means for protecting the privacy of potentially identifiable organizations or staff. By omitting exact numbers when a group of subcategory numbers are very low, the ability to identify individual responses is limited and privacy is protected to the degree possible in small samples.

More than half (61.8%) of the organizations primarily serve one area within their state, while 35.3% serve their entire state (figure 2). These organizations have, on average, 12.8 service locations, with a range from four to 39. On average, these organizations serve more than 8,000 individuals annually, ranging from 400 to more than 38,000.

Organizations vary in size as indicated by their annual operating budget (figure 3) and number of individuals they employ (figure 4). More than one-third of the organizations have an annual operating budget between \$10 million and \$24.9 million, followed by \$1 and \$4.9 million (29.4%). Roughly one-third of these organizations employ 250 to 499 individuals.

More than 41% of these organizations had a CEO with tenure of 1-3 years, followed by 20-30 years (17.6%) (figure 5).

Figure 2: Type of Service Organization

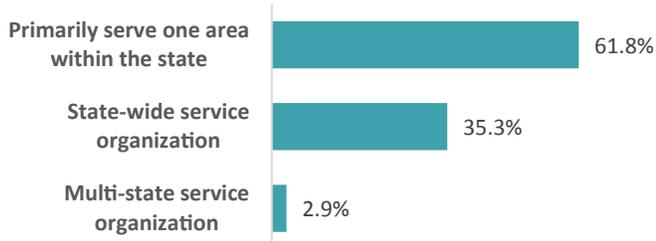


Figure 4: Number of Individuals Employed

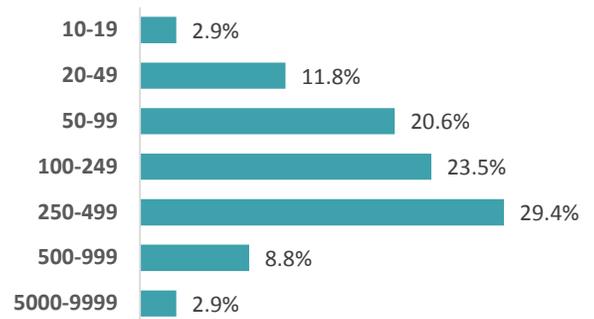


Figure 3: Annual Operating Budget (in millions)

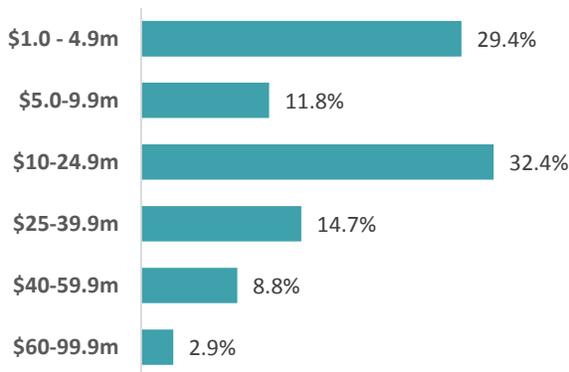
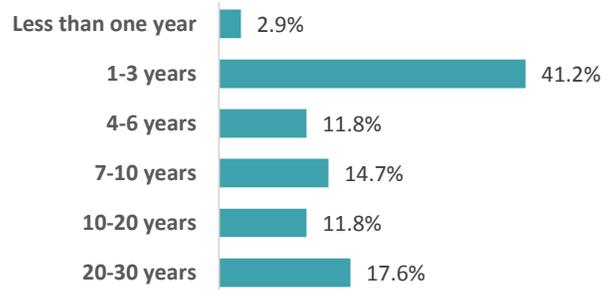


Figure 5: CEO Tenure



## Do Not Know Responses

If a respondent does not know an answer to a question on the Commitments Assessment, he or she is instructed to select “do not know.” Given the design and purpose of the Commitments Assessment, what a person knows about his or her organization is just as important as what he or she does not know. Each organization participating in the Commitments Assessment received a summary report presenting its scores, excluding the “do not knows” and rather presenting a full summary of the “do not knows” by Commitment.

For the purposes of this report, it is assumed a “do not know” reflects an absence of knowledge on the part of the respondent or a lack of understanding about the area/statement in question and therefore are excluded from the percentile scores presented in this report. When “do not knows” were coded as “0” in the dataset, there was very little impact on overall Commitment scores, except for in the case of Governing for the Future. Given this, in the item-by-item summary, the top 15 and 15 lowest items include “do not knows,” coded as “0.” This provides the most accurate information in terms of strengths and weaknesses. Since the Commitments Assessment is a relatively young tool, the Alliance will continue to monitor and research the statements and areas that receive a greater number of “do not knows” and refine the tool as needed.

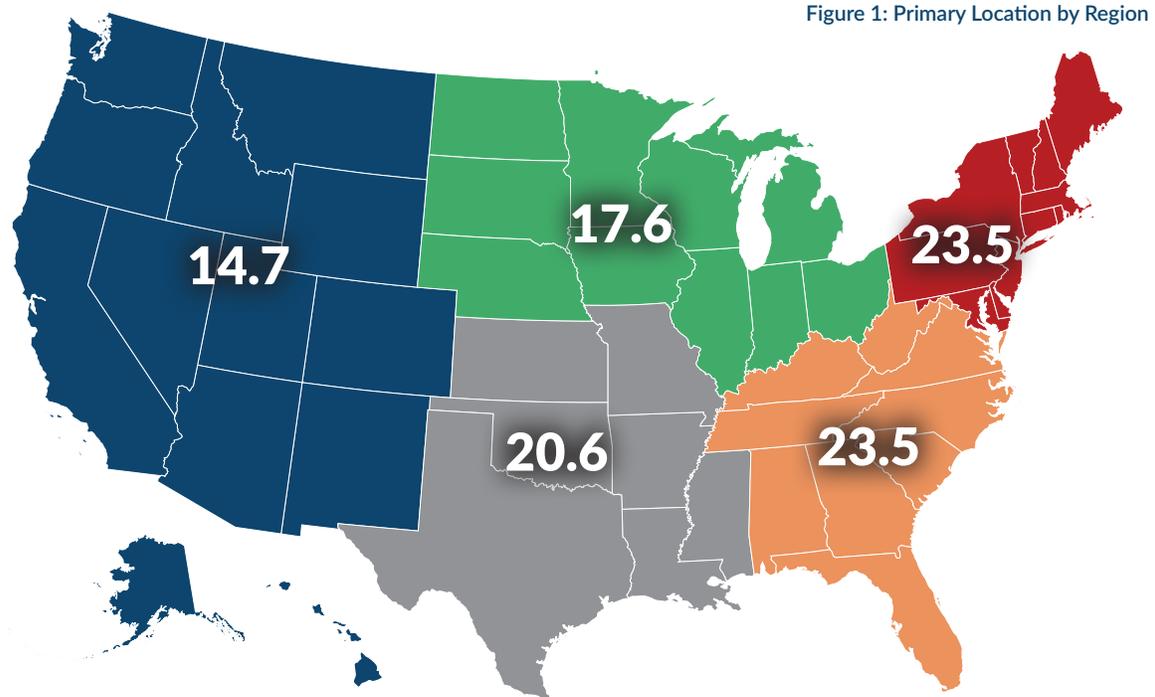
## Organizations that took the Commitments Assessment: Sample Summary

In 2015, 34 Alliance member organizations and their staff participated in the Alliance Commitments Assessment. These organizations represent 17 states from all five U.S. regions (figure 1). The majority of organizations are designated a 501(c)(3) (n=28, 82.4%). Eight percent (n=3) are 501(c)(3)s with at least one for-profit social enterprise or subsidiary and 5.9% of the organizations represent multiple 501(c)(3)s.

The following section provides a summary of organizational characteristics ranging from the size of organizations to the number of service facilities and the types of services offered.

Table 1

Northeast	23.5
Midwest	17.6
Southeast	23.5
South	20.6
West	14.7



## Commitment Assessment Benchmarks

The following section provides a summary of benchmarks for the Commitments Assessment. The data presented below are based on the organizations that took the Commitments Assessment in 2015 (n=34).

### Response Rates

Response rates per organization ranged from a low of 19.2% to a high of 100% with an average of 57.9% (figure 6).

### Commitments at a Glance

Percent to max scores for each Commitment are presented below. Leading with Vision had the score (62%), followed by Executing on Mission (56.7%). Governing for the Future and Advancing Equity had the lowest scores (figure 7).

Figure 6: Response Rates

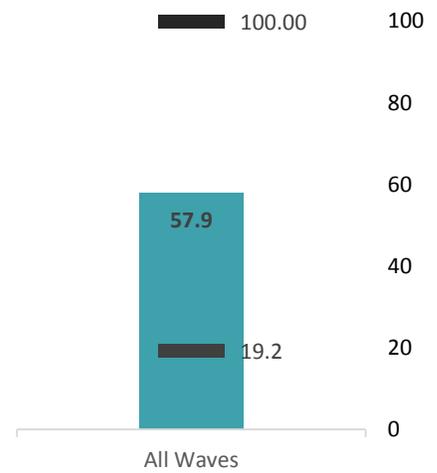
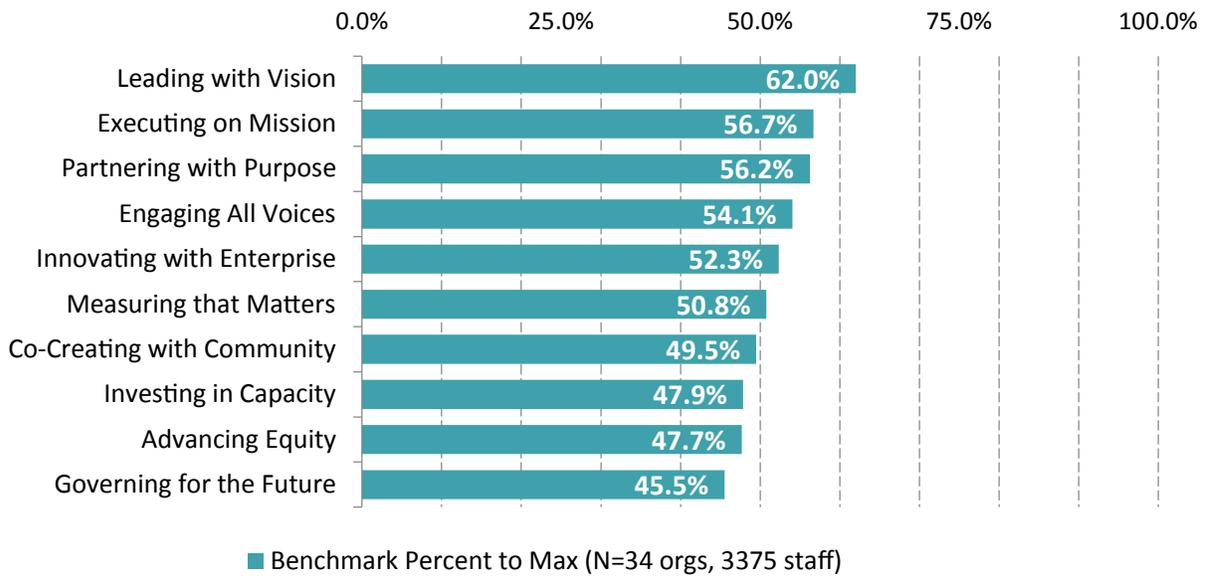


Figure 7: Percent to Max Score with Do Not Knows Removed





## Navigator Commitments

The foundational navigator Commitments address the priorities of those who guide the organization to achieve impact. They assert that nonprofit organizations cannot afford to rely on leadership styles and governance models that worked in the past.

## Navigator Commitments Percent to Max Scores\*

Table 2

	Number of Organizations	Leading with Vision	Governing for the Future
<b>Operating Budget</b>	34	62%	45.5%
Less than 1 million	0	-	-
\$1-4.9 million	10	65.5%	47.5%
\$5-9.9 million	4	-	-
\$10-24.9 million	11	60.5%	46.0%
\$25-39.9 million	5	65.4%	46.9%
\$40-59.9 million	3	-	-
\$60-99.9 million	1	-	-
\$100 million or more	0	-	-
<b>Type of Organization</b>			
State-wide service organization	12	62.5%	45.9%
Multi-state service organization	1	-	-
Primarily serve one area within the state	21	62.5%	47.4%
<b>Geographic Region</b>			
Northeast	8	58.9%	42.3%
Central Midwest	6	67.7%	52.4%
Southeast	8	65.5%	49.0%
South	7	61.6%	46.6%
West	5	60.6%	42.7%
<b>CEO Tenure</b>			
Less than one year	1		
1-3 years	14	61.4%	44.4%
4-6 years	4	-	-
7-10 years	5	63.4%	47.0%
10-20 years	4	-	-
20-30 years	6	59.4%	46.1%
30 or more years	0	-	-
<b>Staff Size</b>			
1-4	0	-	-
5-9	0	-	-
10-19	1	-	-
20-49	4	-	-
50-99	7	65.7%	50.7%
100-249	8	61.2%	46.5%
250-499	10	63.6%	47.5%
500-999	3	-	-
1000-4999	0	-	-
5000-9999	1	-	-
10000+	0	-	-
<b>Staff Category</b>	<b>Number of Responses</b>		
Executive Staff & CEO	149	73.6%	63.0%
Director Level Staff	225	63.9%	46.9%
Management Level Staff	399	63.0%	43.7%
Professional Level Staff	1116	61.1%	41.1%
Direct Service Staff	827	61.7%	46.6%
Support Service Staff	479	61.1%	45.8%
Board of Directors	26	64.9%	73.2%
<b>Sample Range of Scores</b>	34	49.5% - 77.3%	34.3% - 62.6%

\*To protect the confidentiality of participants, table cells having data for fewer than five organizations for a given area/statement appear with the Number of Organizations reporting only and no data are reported.



## Strategic Commitments Percent to Max Scores\*

Table 3

	Number of Organizations	Executing on Mission	Partnering with Purpose	Investing in Capacity	Measuring that Matters
<b>Operating Budget</b>	34	56.7%	56.2%	47.9%	50.8%
Less than 1 million	0	-	-	-	-
\$1-4.9 million	10	80.4%	60.6%	58.1%	72.1%
\$5-9.9 million	4	-	-	-	-
\$10-24.9 million	11	72.8%	53.7%	53.4%	64.4%
\$25-39.9 million	5	77.1%	59.9%	60.4%	69.5%
\$40-59.9 million	3	-	-	-	-
\$60-99.9 million	1	-	-	-	-
\$100 million or more	0	-	-	-	-
<b>Type of Organization</b>					
State-wide service organization	12	74.5%	55.4%	55.7%	67.1%
Multi-state service organization	1	-	-	-	-
Primarily serve one area within the state	21	75.9%	57.7%	56.4%	68.1%
<b>Geographic Region</b>					
Northeast	8	68.1%	51.9%	50.3%	62.9%
Central Midwest	6	83.8%	64.2%	66.5%	76.1%
Southeast	8	79.1%	60.0%	62.2%	73.2%
South	7	76.3%	56.5%	55.5%	66.0%
West	5	71.4%	54.2%	50.6%	62.0%
<b>CEO Tenure</b>					
Less than one year	1	-	-	-	-
1-3 years	14	72.8%	55.1%	53.4%	63.1%
4-6 years	4	78.5%	56.4%	57.0%	73.4%
7-10 years	5	74.0%	55.9%	56.9%	69.2%
10-20 years	4	81.6%	62.1%	61.4%	72.2%
20-30 years	6	74.4%	59.7%	55.8%	70.2%
30 or more years	0	-	-	-	-
<b>Staff Size</b>					
1-4	0	-	-	-	-
5-9	0	-	-	-	-
10-19	1	-	-	-	-
20-49	4	-	-	-	-
50-99	7	78.5%	60.0%	60.2%	70.0%
100-249	8	76.2%	56.0%	56.2%	68.8%
250-499	10	75.0%	57.9%	58.8%	68.3%
500-999	3	-	-	-	-
1000-4999	0	-	-	-	-
5000-9999	1	-	-	-	-
10000+	0	-	-	-	-
<b>Staff Category</b>	Number of Responses				
Executive Staff & CEO	149	85.4%	72.2%	74.6%	78.6%
Director Level Staff	225	75.3%	61.9%	63.4%	70.1%
Management Level Staff	399	74.4%	58.1%	58.3%	69.9%
Professional Level Staff	1116	73.4%	53.1%	49.5%	62.6%
Direct Service Staff	827	75.1%	56.6%	55.8%	68.8%
Support Service Staff	479	70.3%	53.2%	55.6%	64.1%
Board of Directors	26	81.4%	64.6%	66.4%	53.6%
<b>Sample Range of Scores</b>	34	44% - 71.7%	38.1% - 73.2%	38.8% - 68.6%	41.5% - 68.6%

\*To protect the confidentiality of participants, table cells having data for fewer than five organizations for a given area/statement appear with the Number of Organizations reporting only and no data are reported.



## Cultural and Values Commitments

A set of leaders, strategies, and operations alone will not translate to high impact. These cultural and values commitments articulate how the nonprofit achieves impact with and through people and communities. These commitments represent the uniqueness and differentiating value of the nonprofit sector.

## Cultural and Values Commitments Percent to Max Scores\*

Table 4

	Number of Organizations	Innovating with Enterprise	Co-Creating with Community	Engaging All Voices	Advancing Equity
<b>Operating Budget</b>	34	52.3%	49.5%	54.1%	47.7%
Less than 1 million	0	-	-	-	-
\$1-4.9 million	10	64.0%	60.8%	71.9%	58.1%
\$5-9.9 million	4	-	-	-	-
\$10-24.9 million	11	58.6%	55.9%	69.2%	54.0%
\$25-39.9 million	5	64.3%	61.1%	75.1%	57.9%
\$40-59.9 million	3	-	-	-	-
\$60-99.9 million	1	-	-	-	-
\$100 million or more	0	-	-	-	-
<b>Type of Organization</b>					
State-wide service organization	12	60.7%	56.1%	71.3%	54.6%
Multi-state service organization	1	-	-	-	-
Primarily serve one area within the state	21	61.2%	59.2%	71.4%	56.7%
<b>Geographic Region</b>					
Northeast	8	56.5%	53.3%	67.5%	51.8%
Central Midwest	6	68.6%	64.5%	77.4%	63.0%
Southeast	8	64.8%	63.5%	76.1%	58.1%
South	7	60.4%	55.8%	70.7%	54.6%
West	5	57.9%	54.4%	67.8%	52.9%
<b>CEO Tenure</b>					
Less than one year	1	-	-	-	-
1-3 years	14	59.5%	55.3%	69.1%	53.8%
4-6 years	4	-	-	-	-
7-10 years	5	61.3%	57.4%	73.1%	56.5%
10-20 years	4	-	-	-	-
20-30 years	6	59.6%	59.8%	71.6%	55.8%
30 or more years	0	-	-	-	-
<b>Staff Size</b>					
1-4	0	-	-	-	-
5-9	0	-	-	-	-
10-19	1	-	-	-	-
20-49	4	-	-	-	-
50-99	7	63.8%	61.0%	72.3%	59.8%
100-249	8	60.5%	58.2%	71.6%	54.7%
250-499	10	61.9%	59.2%	72.5%	56.8%
500-999	3	-	-	-	-
1000-4999	0	-	-	-	-
5000-9999	1	-	-	-	-
10000+	0	-	-	-	-
<b>Staff Category</b>	<b>Number of Responses</b>				
Executive Staff & CEO	149	68.3%	70.1%	75.3%	66.6%
Director Level Staff	225	61.0%	61.3%	70.5%	57.4%
Management Level Staff	399	60.8%	58.0%	72.5%	54.8%
Professional Level Staff	1116	59.8%	53.4%	68.3%	52.2%
Direct Service Staff	827	61.3%	59.4%	75.4%	57.8%
Support Service Staff	479	58.6%	55.3%	66.5%	51.8%
Board of Directors	26	62.3%	65.5%	73.9%	59.6%
<b>Sample Range of Scores</b>	34	37.0% -68.4%	34.5% -64.7%	42.2% -68.6%	35.7% -62.8%

\*To protect the confidentiality of participants, table cells having data for fewer than five organizations for a given area/statement appear with the Number of Organizations reporting only and no data are reported.

## Item by Item Summary

The following tables provide the top 15 scoring items and the 15 lowest items, as indicated by mean score (scale of (1) never true to (6) always true). For the item-by-item analysis, the “do not knows” are coded as “0.”

### Top 15 Items

Table 5

Statement	Commitment	Valid N	Mean	Median	Standard Deviation
9) Senior leaders promote an environment of high integrity.	Leading with Vision	3335	4.4	5	1.6
1) This organization is continually learning to improve its effectiveness in addressing social challenges.	Innovating with Enterprise	3353	4.3	5	1.5
4) This organization is intentional in making its facilities welcoming to community residents or participants.	Co-Creating with Community	3348	4.3	5	1.7
3) This organization works to align its programs within the core mission.	Executing on Mission	3316	4.3	5	1.8
5) Participants are viewed as assets by the organization's senior leaders.	Leading with Vision	3342	4.2	5	1.8
1) Senior leaders have skills that enable them to work within different types of communities.	Leading with Vision	3356	4.1	5	1.8
4) Staff uses participant strengths in reaching individual service goals.	Engaging All Voices	3328	4.1	5	2.0
4) The organization has established policies and practices to ensure information quality.	Measuring that Matters	3326	4.0	5	2.1
7) Senior leaders ensure that the organization keeps pace with changing community conditions.	Leading with Vision	3343	4.0	4	1.7
4) Staff members are empowered to identify new solutions to challenges.	Innovating with Enterprise	3347	4.0	4	1.6
10) Senior leaders create an environment so that staff sees themselves in the organization's vision.	Leading with Vision	3321	4.0	4	1.6
13) Creating a climate of mutual support among staff is a feature of this organization.	Innovating with Enterprise	3354	4.0	4	1.6
3) Senior leaders forecast future trends to identify challenges and opportunities.	Leading with Vision	3341	3.9	4	1.8
15) Senior leaders guide the organization through complex and uncertain change.	Leading with Vision	3341	3.9	4	1.7
14) The organization is clear about which population(s) benefits most from its services.	Executing on Mission	3325	3.9	5	2.0

## 15 Lowest Items

Table 6

Statement	Commitment	Valid N	Mean	Median	Standard Deviation
8) Investments are currently made to prepare staff leaders to facilitate cross-organizational work teams.	Investing in Capacity	3318	2.1	1	2.3
14) The board of directors is actively engaged in organizational efforts to develop large scale social change initiatives.	Governing for the Future	3347	2.1	0	2.4
13) The board of directors works with senior leaders to ensure that the organization achieves community resident engagement.	Governing for the Future	3346	2.0	0	2.4
12) The board of directors regularly reviews the performance of the top executive of the organization.	Governing for the Future	3345	2.0	0	2.5
10) In this organization, participants work with researchers in the design of research studies or evaluation of findings.	Engaging All Voices	3318	2.0	1	2.1
9) This organization develops measures to track outcomes that show reductions in disparities for underrepresented groups in the community.	Advancing Equity	3311	2.0	1	2.2
6) The organization hires or contracts out for staff that can help build non-governmental revenue sources.	Investing in Capacity	3322	1.9	0	2.3
3) The board of directors engages community residents to determine how the organization can best operate within the current environment.	Governing for the Future	3349	1.9	0	2.2
10) Funders come to this organization to identify solutions to problems.	Innovating with Enterprise	3346	1.9	0	2.2
11) This organization does not proceed with a new initiative without input from community stakeholders.	Co-Creating with Community	3347	1.8	0	2.2
8) The board of directors helps analyze market trends affecting the organization.	Governing for the Future	3337	1.8	0	2.3
9) Financial systems are not integrated with other systems in the organization.	Investing in Capacity	3307	1.8	0	2.3
1) Past or former participants influence agency strategic direction through their engagement with the board of directors.	Governing for the Future	3355	1.7	0	2.0
13) Board members are trained in how to help the organization achieve its mission.	Executing on Mission	3317	1.6	0	2.3
7) Risk-taking in pursuit of organizational mission is encouraged by the board of directors.	Governing for the Future	3347	1.4	0	2.0

## Making the Most of the Commitments Data

In 2015, 34 Alliance member agencies and more than 3,000 staff participated in the first ever Commitments Assessment to help capture organizational excellence and drive strategic organizational change for impact. From the experiences of these 34 organizations, we are beginning to learn more about how organizations that strive for excellence and impact are engaging with and using their Commitments Assessment data. The Commitments Assessment goes deep into the Commitments framework, so understanding how organizations are sharing their results with staff and using their data is crucial.

### How Organizations Are Sharing their Commitments Assessment Data with Board Members and Staff

A growing body of evidence suggests that when people are at the center of identifying goals and aspirations and developing the plans to achieve them, they are more committed to the process and to being successful. This means organizations that engage staff in leadership, strategy, and culture will not only have stronger organizations but be more likely to get at the impacts they are designed to achieve. High-impact organizations create multiple pathways through which stakeholders can provide feedback—the Commitments Assessment serves as one of those pathways.

One vital step or question organizations are asking is, “With whom and how should we share our results, and why?” In this first year, many of the organizations are choosing to share results with leadership teams, staff committees, board members, and staff across the organization in many different ways. The Alliance believes that when sharing these results, it is important to make it clear to staff that their feedback and perspectives are respected and valued; that the Commitments are a marathon, not a sprint; and that the organization is committed to not just measuring the Commitments, but making progress.

Here are some ways in which organizations in the first year shared their Commitments results with an eye towards advancing the larger Commitments strategy:

- Sharing regular CEO blog posts focusing on one or two key Commitments with staff
- Including summary of results in all-staff newsletters with thank you for completing the assessment
- Presenting Commitments results to senior leadership and the board of directors
- Presenting Commitments results at all-staff meetings
- Tiered sharing of Commitments results, where results are shared with the leadership team, then members of the leadership team share results in small meetings with their staff

### How Organizations Are Prioritizing what to Act on with Their Commitments Assessment Results

Given the holistic and comprehensive nature of the Commitments framework, the data resulting from the assessment process is rich and abundant. This can present a challenge when determining where to begin and how to best use the data to inform decision making, actions, and priorities; therefore, setting priorities and a process for doing so is key.



The Commitments are not designed to be addressed all at once. Instead, organizations are leveraging their data to help establish a prioritizing process around developing strategies, targeting investments, and building capacity with staff. The Commitments Assessment data serves as a platform to engage staff and other stakeholders in conversations around the results, which can help inform organizational priorities. The contexts in which these organizations operate vary (i.e., where they may be in their strategic planning process, transitioning of leadership staff, or efforts to transform key service areas, etc.), as do the prioritizing processes. However, some of the strategies organizations have shared with us include:

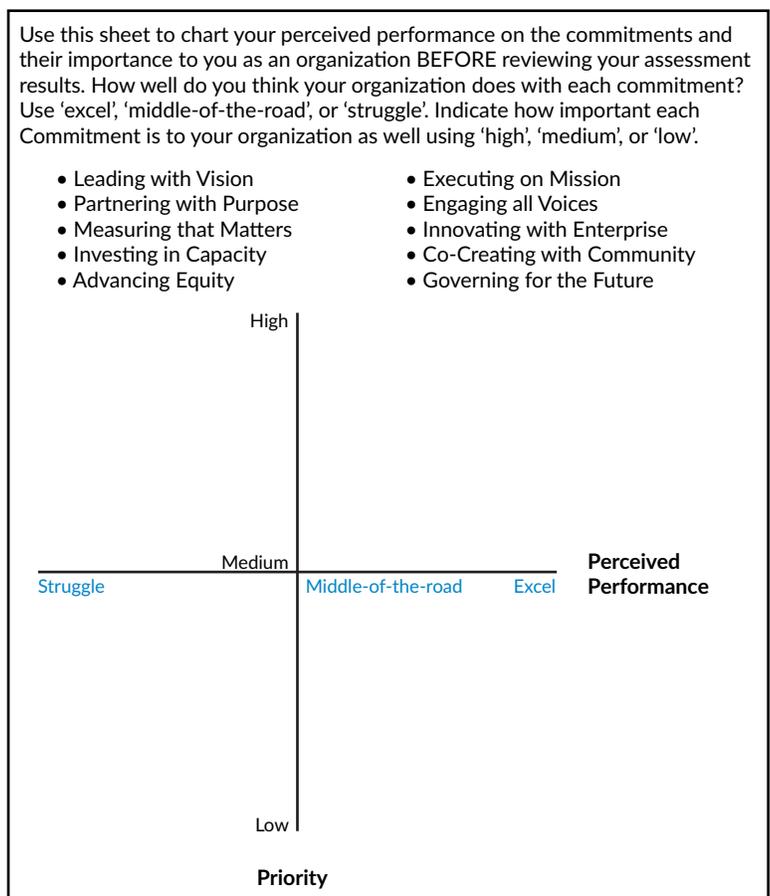
- Asking staff to share where they were surprised by the data, what stood out to them, or digging in deeper around lower scoring areas. Why are the lows, low?
- Asking staff to identify the areas they would like to personally work on and where they would like to invest their time further. In some cases, organizations are co-creating strategic work plans with their staff.
- Gathering feedback through small staff focus groups where staff discuss the results at greater detail and depth.
- Asking leadership committees or staff to answer key questions about the organization’s results.
- Comparing Commitment Assessment results/ common themes to the organization’s strategic plan.
- Reflecting on pressures the organization may be facing and determining which Commitments offer solutions to some of those challenges.
- Focusing on the areas with higher “do not know” responses and developing communication plans around key areas of importance for the organization.

To help organizations identify their top priorities, the Alliance has worked with some of these early adopters to develop a simple matrix for organizations, their staff, and leadership to complete (figure 8). Organizations can begin to rank how important each Commitment is, and how well their organization does with each Commitment. Organizations may complete the matrix prior to receiving their results to help check assumptions.

“The Commitments Assessment results helped us check assumptions. For example, staff clearly saw us measuring key outcomes across the organization, but board members were unaware that we were. This told us that we needed to develop a practice of sharing data across all levels of the organization.”

—Commitment Assessment Participant

Figure 8: Prioritizing Matrix



Others complete it while reviewing their results and use the data to help assess where they fall and which areas they would like to take action on.

## How Organizations Are Using Their Commitment Assessment Data to Inform Strategic Planning and Objectives

Organizations that took the Commitments Assessment in 2015 often scheduled their participation to coincide or support their strategic planning process and timeline. Early strategic planning efforts have included:

- Using the Commitments Assessment results to develop strategic objectives and identify how staff will help implement them, knowing that the assessment itself provides a measure of long-term progress.
- Working with staff to develop annual work plans that support strategic objectives.
- Using the Commitments Assessment results as a catalyst to re-introduce a training curriculum for staff in leadership positions.
- Using the results as key indicators and baseline data on staff feedback to support specific strategic objectives.

## Next Steps

Organizations that took the Commitments Assessment in 2015, its first year, are at the beginning of a process that will lead the sector to greater impact. The Alliance thanks them for learning alongside us as we move along the Commitments journey together. If your organization has not taken the Commitment Assessment and is interested in learning more, visit [alliance1.org/commitments/assessment](http://alliance1.org/commitments/assessment).

Access these materials online:

- Alliance Commitments Assessment website
- Commitments Assessment orientation manual
- Tool Technical Overview
- Discussion Guide