This report represents Voyageur Outward Bound School's responses to Charting Impact, a joint project of BBB Wise Giving Alliance, GuideStar USA Inc, and Independent Sector. Charting Impact uses five simple yet powerful questions to encourage strategic thinking and help organizations share concise information about their plans and progress toward impact.

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<th>Voyageur Outward Bound School</th>
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<td>1400 Energy Park Drive Ste 18, Saint Paul, MN 55108</td>
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<td><a href="http://www.vobs.org">www.vobs.org</a></td>
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**Mission:**
Our mission is changing lives through challenge and discovery.

The content of this Charting Impact Report is the sole product and responsibility of Voyageur Outward Bound School. This report does not in any way represent an endorsement from Independent Sector, BBB Wise Giving Alliance, or GuideStar, nor does it represent fulfillment of the BBB Wise Giving Alliance’s *Standards for Charity Accountability*. For more information on Charting Impact, visit [www.guidestar.org/chartingimpact](http://www.guidestar.org/chartingimpact)
1. What are we aiming to accomplish?

“There is more to us than we know. If we can be made to see it, perhaps for the rest of our lives we will be unwilling to settle for less.” — Kurt Hahn, Outward Bound Founder. At Voyageur Outward Bound School, we believe that there is more in us than we know, and we may discover that through the challenge of being outdoors, “on course,” together. If youth are to be leaders in their communities, it’s critical they recognize their ability to overcome the challenges that they will undoubtedly face in life, and realize that they can do difficult things. Our objective is to equip students with the social and emotional skills necessary to engage in their communities as leaders. Today, we face an education system focused on academic and cognitive achievement, gained through traditional classroom methodologies. Yet a young person’s success in school and in life is dependent not on their test scores or knowledge, but on non-cognitive, social-emotional skills like grit, determination, creativity, and collaboration. We believe the most effective and inspiring teacher of these crucial skills is nature. Through our outdoor experiential education programs, youth discover the strength of their character (to overcome obstacles), an ability to lead (with integrity and compassion), and a determination to serve their community when they return, because they will have discovered that the impossible is not impossible. In addition to our work with area schools and nonprofits, VOBS is proud to work directly with “open-enrollment” students including teens and adults wishing to take courses. Some of our specialty populations served include struggling teens, teens coping with loss, homeless youth and returning veterans. The results of some of these programs have been extraordinary, including helping homeless youth stay off the streets and returning veterans find ways to adjust more successfully to civilian life. We achieve our objective by ensuring our courses are designed with the principles that support our logic model. These design principles push staff to ensure our programs are designed sequentially and in a manner that inspires our students to discover their own potential. Our mission is to change lives through challenge and discovery.

2. What are our strategies for making this happen?

Learning Through Experience: We facilitate engaging, relevant, sequential experiences that promote skill mastery and incorporate reflection and transference. This includes learning from success and failure. Challenge and Adventure: We use familiar and unfamiliar settings to impel students into mentally, emotionally, and physically demanding experiences. This includes utilizing and managing appropriate risk. Supportive Environment: We design experiences that support each person's physical and emotional safety. This includes developing a caring and positive group culture. These design principles help instructors create and deliver courses that move students through a progression to gain what we call graduated levels of responsibility. We build a progression and structure for our students to assume more and more responsibilities and independence as they demonstrate their technical, personal, and interpersonal skill development. Students move through the following progression to take more ownership and leadership as their instructors step back and let the group own their experience. 1) Training Phase (Learning) -- Knowledge = Success Staff structure experiences designed to help students a) gain personal, interpersonal, and technical skill; b) practice problem-solving and decision-making skills; and c) experience natural results, consequences and rewards. 2) Main Phase (Leading) -- Transfer Responsibility = Gained Confidence Staff facilitates challenges for students to a) face adversity; b) experience successes and failures as learning opportunities with coaching and feedback; and c) solve real problems using effective conflict resolution and communication skills. 3) Final Phase (Responsibility) -- Apply It = Own It Staff recognizes and affirms students by a) increasing responsibility; b) raising the bar for collaboration as students set their goals together; and c) apply their mastery to achieve their vision and common goals.

3. What are our organization's capabilities for doing this?

A dedicated, knowledgeable and well-connected board of directors leads Voyageur Outward Bound School. Daily operations are led by Executive Director Jack Lee. Jack brings over a decade of experience leading nonprofit youth-serving organizations, along with nine years of experience with Intel Corporation and an MBA from the University of Michigan.
Voyageur Outward Bound School

GuideStar Nonprofit Profile Charting Impact Report  •  Last Updated on 05.06.2016

Twin Cities Center is directed by Director of Operations Elizabeth "Poppy" Potter, who has more than 25 years' experience working at experiential education organizations, charter schools, and non-profit organizations and holds a Master's of Science in Experiential Education, and a teaching license in special education. Almost ten years of Poppy's experience was in a classroom, helping bring an understanding of education, urban youth and experiential education in to her role at VOBS. The VOBS wilderness base, Homeplace, located in Ely, MN, is led by Program Director Suellen Sack. Raised on a dairy farm in Bemus Point, NY, Suellen holds a B.S. from Fredonia State and an M.S. from Cornell University in chemistry. She is equally adept with a canoe paddle, chainsaw and dog team. Suellen served in the Peace Corps in Nepal, building a library and teaching kids in a remote village. VOBS instructors are passionate educators and experienced wilderness travelers, receiving more than a thousand hours of pre-employment and apprenticeship training. Over 30 enthusiastic volunteers support VOBS annually, serving as board and committee members, helping maintain facilities, and supporting fundraising efforts. A team of professional administrators leads VOBS' marketing, development, and financial management activities. VOBS is very fortunate to be the benefactor of a large and dedicated pool of individual and institutional donors.

4. How will we know if we're making progress?

Success is defined by gains in nine social-emotional measures: self-confidence, goal-setting, resilience, empowerment, problem solving, collaboration, group communication, compassion, and environmental awareness. VOBS gauges success by finding increases among its students similar to those represented in a recent evaluation of inner-city youth from River's Edge Academy (REA), a VOBS partner. REA students reported the following gains from participating in VOBS programming. (These numbers are Outward Bound Outcomes Instrument (OBOI) scores; see below for detail regarding the development and implementation of the OBOI): --90% increased self-confidence --87% increased goal setting --90% increased resilience --86% increased empowerment --89% increased problem-solving --92% increased communication --86% increased group collaboration --87% increased compassion --90% increased environmental awareness In addition, 58% of participating students increased their school attendance and 74% increased their grade point average into the "B" range that makes college possible. All VOBS participants take the Outward Bound Outcomes Instrument (OBOI), a validated survey developed by the national Outward Bound organization in partnership with the Blank-Read Training Institute. Data collected from the OBOI are analyzed by Ph.D. and masters-level independent evaluators from Indiana University. OBOI measures participant increases on nine social-emotional measures including self-confidence, goal-setting, resilience, empowerment, problem-solving, communication, group collaboration, compassion, and environmental awareness. It is the gold standard for quality that tells VOBS if its programs are "working" to achieve organizational goals.

5. What have and haven't we accomplished so far?

VOBS believes that young people who face the steepest challenges most deserve the potentially life-changing opportunity to experience Outward Bound. We also think that youth who have the greatest "nature deficiency" have the greatest opportunity to experience big changes through outdoor experiential education. That's why we founded the Twin Cities Center in 2011 to bring masses of low-income urban youth into Minnesota's green and wild places for Outward Bound's innovative courses. For youth who often don't know anybody who fishes or hikes or canoes, you can't just put out a brochure and say "scholarships available" and reach them. Instead the Twin Cities Center engages urban youth through close partnerships with individual schools and youth development organizations, often working with one group of youth over an extended period. In 2013, the center brought 889 urban youth into the outdoors, both within the greater Twin Cities area's magnificent natural park and river systems and on expeditions to Minnesota's stunning north country. 2014 brought well over 1000. Another 612 students were served in 2014 at our wilderness base in Ely, MN. Most participants return from their VOBS program with a deep conviction that they can do far more than they ever thought possible: a perception backed up by evaluations from parents and teachers reporting increased leadership qualities, communication skills, school attendance, and grades. We need to give greater numbers of urban youth the opportunity to discover the strength of their character through outdoor experiential education so that they can succeed in school and in life. VOBS has the ambition to engage even greater numbers of urban youth in these life-changing curricula. What sets Outward Bound programs apart from other
outdoor adventure organizations is our pedagogy, which emphasizes personal growth through challenge. Sequential challenges, defined goals and tasks, and engagement over time reflect best practices for social-emotional learning. Thus, every Outward Bound experience truly is a course designed not simply to provide an awesome day in nature but to drive the participant’s awareness of his or her full potential, power and character. We work very closely with our partnering schools and youth development organizations to reinforce existing curricula and to help youth's time with us transfer into all areas of their lives.