This report represents CHI CHI RODRIGUEZ YOUTH FOUNDATION'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.
1. What are we aiming to accomplish?

The first priority of the Chi Chi Rodriguez Youth Foundation, Inc. (CCRYF) is decreasing the high school dropout rate in Pinellas County. Currently a disappointing 71.8% of students are graduating high school on time, and this statistic only worsens for students considered economically disadvantaged. The second goal is to nurture students in a well-rounded environment. To accomplish that the CCRYF began collaborating with the Pinellas School District and other local youth development organizations; specifically The First Tee and the Boys & Girls Club of the Suncoast. By joining our agency services, research and curriculum we increased our academic support services and the Life Skills development of our youth both in school time and out of school time. The model provides students with more than just a daily 8:35am to 2:35pm educational experience. Keeping students safe, healthy and stable encourages them to gain a sense of security and pride when they come to, as they like to call it, their second home.

2. What are our strategies for making this happen?

The CCRYF operates the Chi Chi Academy reaching 95 students at a time in the dropout prevention model public school. The Academy offers a 9 to 1 student to teacher ratio unique to dropout prevention schools. With the help of Foundation and Golf Club staff, students receive real life career education in a working public business during “shadow” time. Also accessible through the school is daily counseling and remedial assistance through professional educators. Outside of the classroom, the CCRYF collaborates with the Boys & Girls Club of the Suncoast, to bring a licensed Club to the campus for After School and Summer Programming. Boys & Girls Clubs focuses youth on five core areas: Education & Career, Character & Leadership, Health & Life Skills, The Arts, and Sports/Fitness/Recreation. This collaboration gives students a safe, healthy, stable environment all the way to 6pm each day at a low or zero cost to struggling parents. In 2005, the CCRYF sponsored a chapter of The First Tee, a national program teaching the Life Skills Experience and Nine Healthy Habits through the game of golf. All of our programs combined bring a full experience to our students, focusing back on our main goal; provide the keys to success not only to graduate high school, but to become a productive member of society. All programs take place on 170 acres of land owned by the City of Clearwater and leased for $1 a year by the Foundation.

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

With 170-acre campus of recreational green space land education opportunities are endless. On the campus is a 30-acre driving range and 140-acre par 69 public golf course. The golf course living classroom environment provides knowledge of local animal habitats, horticulture, and careers in the golf industry. Both give plenty of access to our community youth for recreation and Life Skills Experience programs run year-round by The First Tee of Clearwater coaches. The Pinellas County School Board partnership provides four classroom portables, desks, books and thirteen teachers. This keeps our costs low with only providing support services of two staff members, building facilities, electricity and additional academic supplies. Approximately 25 cents of every dollar spent at our public Golf Club and Sports Complex goes directly to supporting our education programs. This allows us to keep overhead costs low and work with a small staff at the Youth Foundation. Staff members explain how basic educational skills like math and reading are used on an everyday basis.

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

Student progress is monitored through school based testing. These include daily class tests, report cards and Florida’s Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) scores. Comparing student scores from previous years shows their improvements in all different levels of academics. Another indicator would be discussing behavioral improvements with teachers, counselors and coaches. Less behavioral issues and higher attendance rates mean more time in the classroom learning.
the future, we will be monitoring our student grades and attendance throughout high school and eventually their graduation rate. Through The First Tee of Clearwater’s Life Skills Experience certifying classes, we will be able to track student abilities to use Life Skills and Core Values in real life experiences in and out of school.

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

In 2007 and 2008 our school and campus grew with the additions of a middle school and a 30-acre driving range to be used for Life Skills Experience and public recreation. With the first class of students going through five (5) years of school at Chi Chi’s now being seniors in high school, we cannot currently track an actual graduation rate of our students receiving a complete programming package. In the next 10 years and beyond, we will be monitoring all students throughout their high school careers and graduation. After the 10th year, we will have a greater amount of students to show an overall outcome of our programming and progress towards our overall goal. Currently, our first graduating class all passed their FCAT’s and are on track to graduate this coming June (2014). They will be the first graduating class who spent five years at the Chi Chi Rodriguez Academy. In 2011, the Academy earned the highest rating from the Florida Department of Education based on FCAT scores. In 2013, the Academy FCAT scores showed significant growth in reading. Also in 2013, The First Tee of Clearwater Life Skills Experience increased certifying participants by 5%, 35% of them diverse. Students are unable to certify without the knowledge of core values and skills to use those core values on and off the golf course.