This report represents SINGLE MOTHERS OUTREACH INC’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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Mission:
Single Mothers Outreach is a grassroots organization that scaffolds families facing sudden housing instability, income loss, emotional trauma, and social deterioration as the result of divorce or widowhood. With a mission to “empower single parents and their children by providing hope, support, and resources so families can become self-sustaining and thrive,” Single Mothers Outreach (SMO) directly helps women find jobs, get educated, secure housing, stabilize their children’s emotional states, manage their finances and help one another.

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1. What are we aiming to accomplish?

The overall goal of Single Mothers Outreach is to help women and children get safe, find jobs, secure housing, get educated, stabilize their children's emotional states, manage their finances, and help one another. Through expanding service numbers, new programs that meet emerging needs among mother-headed families, and increasing success in current programming, SMO aims to serve more families and serve each family better over the next three to five years. SMO's goals are: 1. Be the #1 resource for single parents in the vast Santa Clarita Valley region by providing comprehensive and timely services to meet their needs. 2. Raise community awareness of single parents' unique challenges and the impact those challenges have on society at large and Santa Clarita in particular. 3. Set single parents on a successful path toward financial, emotional and psychological self-sufficiency. 4. Create a platform for single parents to voice their challenges, needs, and concerns. 5. Expand organizational sustainability.

2. What are our strategies for making this happen?

First, SMO provides Emergency Stabilization for families who are in real danger of losing everything. Emergency stabilization provides participants with a customized single parent resource "prescription", a customized document containing community resources in a variety of areas, such as child care, food, clothing, legal, housing, and financial assistance specific to the parent's needs. An online e-group helps single parents connect, support, network, share resources, and encourage one another throughout the day. Beginning in 2014, SMO added intensive individual and group therapies for single parents facing mental health challenges as the result of unemployment, economic pressures, domestic violence, and a lack of family support. The program provides bilingual counseling and resources to resolve crises. Single Mothers Outreach also provides Bi-lingual Training Programs to facilitate low-income women getting a job, stopping financial free-fall, and attaining the life skills necessary to raise their families alone. SMO's Career and Technology Center offers computer-training programs to help women gain marketable skills to compete for jobs. Participants are trained in all fundamental office software programs and are provided with career assessment seminars, resume-building services, tips for effective interviews, job fair preparation, and professional donated clothing for job interviews. SMO's financial program helps low-income single mothers' increase their employability, manage their money, expand their emergency savings, decrease their debt, and make career choices that will strengthen their financial futures. Finally, SMO life skills workshops use professionals in specific fields to teach classes on topics including personal finance, healthy relationships, career and education, family law, and health and wellness. Complimentary childcare is provided for all seminars, training programs, and workshops. Finally, Single Mothers Outreach believes in celebrating the success of families who demonstrate they are on a path of growth. SMO holds rewards-based events for parents enrolled in college or a trade school, or who complete employment and financial literacy training programs. Each year, Make A Mother's Day treats qualifying single mothers to a special luncheon or family activity in recognition of their hard work near the Mother's Day holiday. Each year, SMO's Holiday Adopt-A-Family provides approximately hundreds of families with gifts and meals from families in the community, businesses, civic organizations, and church groups during the holidays. Dedicated participants in SMO's programs are the recipients of the community's generosity, which provides them with reinforcement for their efforts and shows newer clients that recovery is possible.

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

Single Mothers Outreach is led by DaAnne Smith, Executive Director. DaAnne has an educational background in Business Management from Pepperdine University and California State University, Northridge. Her previous professional and leadership experience includes employment at banks, businesses, churches, and various non-profit organizations for almost 30 years. Her specialty is business analysis with an emphasis on office administration, database management, and finances. In 2008, The Signal Newspaper recognized DaAnne as one of the "51 Most Influential People" in the Santa Clarita Valley. DaAnne was also named a recipient of the Bank of America Local Heroes Award in 2010, one of ten Los Angeles residents to receive this prestigious award. DaAnne has assembled a team of highly-qualified volunteers that assist with office
administration and service provision. Instructors for SMO’s various training programs and support groups are paid contractors, mostly single parents. Their efforts are supervised by the Programs and Services Director, Maria Clemens. Ms. Clemens holds a Master of Social Work degree from CSUN and has more than a decade of therapeutic counseling experience. Four (one bilingual) interns earning their Master in Social Work degrees provide case management/counseling services through a long-term partnership with CSUN. Professional supervision is provided by Maria Clemens, MSW, who is supervised by Licensed Clinical Social Worker, Tiffani Brooks. Single Mothers Outreach experienced unprecedented growth since its reorganization in 2008. The budget increased by 183%, the staff size has grown, and the number of volunteers has quadrupled. The organization has garnered tremendous clout in the region, and the network of agencies relying on SMO has exploded. Mothers have historically sought help from SMO through referrals from social service agencies, churches, shelters, government, word of mouth, and the internet. As the only agency for single mothers in Santa Clarita, SMO's service numbers have continually increased. In 2013, SMO was recognized for its work by being awarded the Nonprofit Leadership Award by the Valley Industry Association, SCV Economic Development Corporation, The Magazine of Santa Clarita, and the SCV Chamber of Commerce. More than 100 dedicated volunteers, many of whom were single mothers at one time themselves, routinely perform invaluable support for the organization. SMO has successfully demonstrated the ability to operate an extremely cost-effective program that provides significant community service. With an enthusiastic Board of Directors, a tireless and passionate Executive Director, devoted volunteers, and an important position in the local community, Single Mothers Outreach is confident that it will achieve its goals.

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

The majority of families who come to Single Mothers Outreach for assistance are impoverished, have experienced housing changes because of eviction or foreclosure in the previous six months, and are struggling with significant emotional, physical, or financial trauma. For these families, safety in their living situation, employment, and support can be very challenging to achieve. Single Mothers Outreach uses evidence-based approaches in working with clients. The programs of Single Mothers Outreach are tracked by the organization’s Director of Programs and Services, Maria Clemens, who has more than a decade of therapeutic counseling experience. The success of SMO programs are measured by 1) the number of clients who utilize SMO's case management services and show improvement using a mental health assessment tool; 2) the number of women who seek services from social support partners, measured by client referral statistics and corroborated by referral partners; 3) the number of participants who complete career center, financial literacy, and life skills development trainings, verified by attendance numbers and measured by improved financial habits (dollars saved and debt paid off); 4) the number of clients placed in temporary housing; and 5) the number of women who seek employment/complete job applications, and obtain employment. Single Mothers Outreach employs specific measurement reporting tools to collect information on client demographics, attendance at training workshops and other key indicators that measure clients' progress toward self-sufficiency. Changes to income levels, the amounts of money clients save and the amounts of debt paid off are all verified. Regular evaluations of participant feedback and success rates are key to keeping programs relevant and meaningful for our clients. Pre- and post- surveys are also distributed to participants in SMO's programs, and feedback regularly guides program adjustments.

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

The organization’s ultimate long-term goal is increasing self-sufficiency in mother-headed households. Key elements in achieving this goal include: Financial Literacy and Management - Progress is demonstrated through continuing testimonials, reports of jobs obtained, promotions, debt paid off, and other indicators. Technology training - Progress is demonstrated through attendance numbers, skills assessments, and program completions. SMO realized through low attendance that complimentary childcare was necessary and began providing it. The addition of gift card drawings were also added to entice on-time attendance. The program also increased participant accountability through weekly instructor calls to discuss goals and progress with participants, and implemented measures to transfer trainings to participants who demonstrated commitment to the program. Jobs - Progress is demonstrated through efforts to increase employability, active job seeking,
resume building, and interviewing. SMO fulfills these objectives by offering ongoing career workshops and connecting single parents with H.R. professionals who volunteer their services. Obstacles we have worked to overcome include the challenges faced by job seeking by a membership with challenges that include over 50% domestic violence. Reinforced Case Management has helped implement supports to make job seeking and housing placement more viable for members with challenges. Another challenge in executing our programs is ensuring mothers are able to participate. Childcare limitations and transportation difficulties are often faced to greater degrees by single parents who don't have a spouse to rely on or their own car. SMO provides childcare for the majority of its classes and group programs to mitigate childcare limitations. Also challenging is ensuring SMO provides responsive services in Spanish. The social work interns/case managers and the Programs & Services Director are all bilingual, and more SMO programs are being provided in Spanish each year. Most of SMO's core career and technology training is provided in Spanish and we are actively seeking partners to deliver an ESL program for clients of both the Domestic Violence Center and SMO. Finally, a challenge is ensuring that participants in SMO programs are fully engaged in activities that promote self-sufficiency. SMO continues to refine case reviews to determine eligibility and is investigating a series of "growth" tracks, each containing goals set by the parent.