This report represents SACRED ROK’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.

**SACRED ROK**

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**Mission:**

The mission of Sacred Rok is to support youth in nature, helping youth to learn to respect nature and through that, to respect themselves. We accomplish our mission through taking young people on camping trips, educational presentations, and working with other youth-serving agencies. Yosemite rock climber and Executive Director Ron Kauk leads young people on trips to Yosemite National Park to learn to sit on a rock, sit by a river, and experience the healing ceremony of nature. This includes incarcerated youth from Juvenile Hall, who for the first time are exposed to an experience outside of the guns, gangs, and drugs in their own neighborhood. Ron and the young people develop a mutual respect, a part of the mentorship offered by Sacred Rok.

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1. What are we aiming to accomplish?

The Sacred Rok Board of Directors has adopted the following goals: 1. Programming and activities - Day trips and camping trips in collaboration with other youth-serving agencies, building relationships with young people and partner agencies. 2. Telling the story of Sacred Rok – this includes our book Letters from Sacred Rok, the newsletters, the website, the Facebook page, videos, and educational presentations. 3. Building organizational capacity including continuing to support grant writing, website maintenance, and bookkeeping. 4. Long term goals - sustainability funding and finding land to provide a place where our Sacred Rok youth can return at any time for a safe haven, a refuge for these young adults to experience the healing ceremony of nature.

2. What are our strategies for making this happen?

It has been eight years since we started Sacred Rok. We are continuing to build relationships through the art of communication, appreciation and respect. Simply being and being in the moment - these experiences show the way back to the basics. When we say "relationships" at Sacred Rok we mean with all life – air, water, and land. This is the Law for the Real World. When we say "communion with our senses" we mean tuning in and remembering how to feel as well as think. Our experiences continue to help us better understand the word education and commit to the reality of Education Nature’s Way. We tell our story and share what we have learned. Our core strategy is to work with youth serving agencies to provide a healing experience at Yosemite for young people who have not had this opportunity, either a day trip or camping trip. We provide healthy, organic, locally grown food on these trips and help them to know the importance of good food and clean water. Foster youth and incarcerated youth may not have left their own neighborhood to witness the beauty and pace of the natural world, nor have young people at the Boys & Girls Club. We also work with American Indian youth and elders. Yosemite has a powerful resonance to the American Indian community. The Miwok, Paiute, Mono, and Chukchansi tribes have lived in the Sierras for centuries. The Miwok People were evicted from their homes in Yosemite Valley as late as the 1960s, when the last homes were burned, and many young people in these tribes no longer have the connection to their history and culture in the park, nor the opportunity to connect with its granite rocks, rushing waters, and healing power. One of Sacred Rok's goals is to tell the story to help people understand the importance of nature, to share how we can learn to get back to the basics of being human, talking, walking, and breathing. Our 2013 book, "Letters from Sacred Rok," and our 2015 book, "Voices From The Inside Out," powerfully tell our story. "Voices From The Inside Out" was co-written with the Merced County Probation Department, sharing the voices of the young people who are incarcerated. Their story was also shared in the "Search for Freedom" documentary. We are also did a video with the American Indian elders and youth allowing them to share their experiences and feelings with their own culture and how it plays out in Yosemite. Ron also makes presentations at Patagonia locations in the San Francisco Bay Area, as well as to foster parents and foster youth, in addition to showing his movie, Return to Balance: A Climber's Journey, at the Yosemite Visitor Center on weekends in the summer.

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

Our programmatic activities are day trips and overnight camping trips to Yosemite National Park. Each trip is led by Sacred Rok Executive Director Ron Kauk, and camping trips are supported by Katie Lambert, our extraordinary cook and camp manager. We limit each trip to 4-6 young people in order to be able to focus on the healing experience of the ceremony of nature, the setting, and the building of trust and relationships. We take the youth on repeat trips to help them become more comfortable; and to build ongoing relationships over time. Ron is a calm, intuitive, and charismatic leader who respects and has gained the respect of the youth participants. Katie Lambert is a compassionate and nurturing cook who is trusted and beloved by the young people on the trips. Nature provides the curriculum and the structure – wind, weather, and water are our guides. A typical day trip in Yosemite Valley might include a stop at Fern Spring to fill water bottles and appreciate the ancient water flowing from the ground, a hike from Tunnel View up to Old Inspiration Point, or a walk to the base of El
4. How will we know if we're making progress?

Our 5 measurable objectives are: Objective 1-Walk and Breathe Calmly: Participants will learn to appreciate simple basic actions as they hike. Ron will have them focus on their walking and breathing as they hike, and will model walking slowly, thinking about body balance, and controlling breathing. He will talk about how these simple elements are the key to his hiking and rock climbing abilities. Objective 2-Take Care of Your Surroundings: Participants will learn the habit of picking up trash even if it is not their own, leaving a natural place cleaner than when they entered. Participants will pick up litter in a picnic or camping area and debrief on what they found, why there is so much litter, and their responsibility for keeping the environment clean. Objective 3-Respect Nature: Participants will learn to respect the plants, animals and environment where they tread. As they walk or hike, they will learn about respecting the plants and wildlife and minimizing the human footprint on the environment. They will look for animals and signs including tracks and droppings. They will discuss and reflect on the significance of what they observed, and how respecting social surroundings is an extension of this philosophy. Objective 4-Learn About Safety: Participants will learn about protecting their personal safety and health as well as those around them. Ron will discuss issues such as footwear, clothing, alertness, hydration and nutrition. They will learn the importance of personal responsibility in staying safe in areas in proximity to danger, such as a steep slab or rushing river. They will also discuss the importance of watching out for the safety of those around them. Objective 5-Be Mindful of Food and Water: Participants will learn and appreciate the food and water that they consume. They will hike to a spring and fill their bottles, taste the pure water, and learn where the spring comes from. They will discuss issues surrounding bottled water, and what that does to the environment.

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

We seek positive outcomes - changes in knowledge, attitude, or behavior - for youth participants. Short-term outcomes include increased self-confidence in nature and caring for the environment. Young people learn to sit at peace under a tree or by a river. They are calmer and better able to manage anger and control their impulses. We surveyed Boys & Girls Club participants regarding whether the trip made them less stressful or anxious; 75% said "Yes" and 25% "Maybe." Another survey question asked if the trip would help them to be more patient and to think before they act; 86% said "Yes" and 14% "Maybe." Before the trip one Boys & Girls Club teen would at times speak rudely to staff to a point where they had to contact his parents. After the trip, his relationship with staff improved, based on their bonding experience in Yosemite. He got involved with the club activities such as basketball tournaments. Another teen always wanted to be the center of attention - after the trip, she toned herself down, becoming more helpful in the kitchen when serving snacks, calmer, and more respectful. Longer term outcomes include respect for nature and themselves, being respected and valued by adults, positive peer and adult relationships, and hopes and goals for the future that lead to more engagement in school or work. Participants have developed strong positive relationships with trip leader Ron Kauk as well as with the staff who accompany them on the trips. The Sacred Rok trips have had an astonishing impact on the Boys & Girls Club youth. “These trips enlighten our youth and provide new experiences. One teen who will be a sophomore in high school always seem to glow after each Yosemite trip, and she is just so humble when she's present at the club. The younger participants enjoy their close relationship with the staff member who went on the trips. They seek him out for enjoyment and entertainment, and enjoy sing-alongs during the bus rides. The older youth participants have also become more open, and less likely to get into trouble.” We surveyed Boys & Girls Club participants to see if they thought being in nature would help them in home and in school, and 85% said yes. 100% said the trip gave them a better understanding of nature and the natural world. 86% said
the trip made them more confident about being in nature. The mentor reported that: “When they get a chance to visit this beautiful place they return with a positive outlook. They demonstrate a more positive attitude, are respectful and responsible, and earn great grades; one also received recognition as “youth of the month.” One teen had been struggling with her science class, to a point where she was failing. The trips served as an outlet, where she could de-stress herself, be sincere, feel harmonious, and to be self-reflective. Since she started the trips, she began improving, increasing her grade by two letters. She cherishes these trips up to Yosemite.”