



## THE COMMON FORM

# How the Common Form was developed

The data fields collected by the Common Form were developed with extensive stakeholder engagement. They are based on existing and common organizational profiles—and in the case of the financial measures, drawn from scholarly and practitioner literature.

This has been a phased and iterative process:

### Phase 1: Organizational Information

The **2016 Ontario Task Force on Social Enterprise Impact Measurement** recommended, among other things, the development of a uniform set of organizational indicators that would form part of a common approach to impact measurement. The Task Force envisioned that these organizational indicators would include descriptive indicators about the organization as well as key measures of financial size and sustainability. In consultation with Ontario social enterprises, Common Approach expanded the idea of “organization indicators” into a common organizational profile, the Common Form.

The content suggested in the first version of the Common Form was based on existing and common organizational profiles. These included Canadian initiatives that have already built consensus around key indicators, such as the Centre for Social Innovation’s **Impact Dashboard** and the **Community Foundation of Canada**’s Grantmaker’s Forum common application. It also included international efforts such as **B Labs, Charity Navigator**, and the **International Comparative Social Enterprise Models (ICSEM) Project**. The financial indicators were drawn from a review of scholarly and practitioner literature that was conducted by researchers working with Common Approach.

### Phase 2: Common Form is a form

The second version of the Common Form sought to take the Organization Profile and convert it into the format of an actual form while also taking into account further input and feedback from Common Approach’s National Advisory Committee of social purpose organizations.



### Phase 3: Common Form “beta”

Given the overwhelming support from social purpose organizations (SPOs) for the Common Form coming from the national advisory committee and SPO circle and the opportunity to reduce the burden of manually applying to multiple funders and programs, the next round of feedback was focused on funders, as they are key to making the Common Form a reality.

Common Form **beta demos were created in video format** to demonstrate the use case for the Common Form alongside the document outlining the fields of the Form. During this stage of the process, the technological development of the Common Form and its potential platforms and interfaces for use began to unfold.



### Phase 4: Common Form ontology

The initial plan for the Common Form was that it become an additional section added to the Common Impact Data Standard’s ontology. However, given the transformation and expansion of the Form after various rounds of community input, the need for the Common Form as its own ontology became apparent. It contains information above and beyond that needed for the Common Impact Data Standard.

While built using relevant pieces of the Common Impact Data Standard, the Common Form ontology was drafted by Prof. Mark Fox and Common Approach staff and updated to complement relevant existing models and standards, like **Microsoft’s Common Data Model** and the **XBRL standard**.



#### CURRENT PHASE

### Phase 5: Integration into software

While we are now ready to share more documents and resources about the Common Form and its implementation, we will officially launch the Form as an available tool for social purpose organizations after we get both impact measurement and grant management softwares aligned and able to test this data exchange, and provide it as a tool to SPOs.



## Next Phase: Common Form Technical Committee

As we start to onboard users of the Common Form, we will recruit a “technical committee” to lead our community-driven governance of the standard. This technical committee will be composed of representatives SPOs, funders, investors and others who will make sure that the Common Form fields stay relevant to the needs of our community.

Join the Common Approach community, stay up to date on our efforts to make impact measurement better, and help shape impact measurement standards:



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