

## STANDARDS FOR CHARITABLE ACCOUNTABILITY

This policy was officially approved by the Board of Directors of SERES Global on October 30, 2016. Reviewed on January 23, 2021.

### Preface

SERES Global has committed to adhering to the *Standards for Charitable Accountability* as established by the *Better Business Bureau (BBB) Wise Giving Alliance*. Those standards were developed to assist donors in making sound giving decisions and to foster public confidence in charitable organizations. The standards seek to encourage fair and honest solicitation practices, to promote ethical conduct by charitable organizations and to advance support of philanthropy.

The overarching principle of the BBB Wise Giving Alliance Standards for Charity Accountability is full disclosure to donors and potential donors at the time of solicitation and thereafter. The standards also recommend ethical practices beyond the act of disclosure in order to ensure public confidence and encourage giving. As voluntary standards, they also go beyond the requirements of local, state and federal laws and regulations.

The *Standards for Charity Accountability* were developed with professional and technical assistance from representatives of small and large charitable organizations, the accounting profession, grant making foundations, corporate contributions officers, regulatory agencies, research organizations and local BBBs. The BBB Wise Giving Alliance also commissioned significant independent research on donor expectations to ensure that the views of the general public were reflected in the standards.

At its **Board of Directors meeting on October 30, 2016**, it was formally approved that SERES Global commit to being in full compliance with the Wise Giving Alliance Standards for Charitable Accountability and to provide publicly available documentation that it has met those standards in regards to:

- How the organization is governed
- How the organization solicits, receives and expends its money
- The truthfulness of its representations, and
- Its willingness to disclose basic information to the public.

### Governance and Oversight

**Standard 1. The organization has a Board of Directors that provides adequate oversight of the charity's operations and its staff.**

SERES Global complies with this standard by having a Board of Directors that:

- Meets a minimum of four times per year with a majority in attendance;

- Conducts regular and ongoing performance evaluations of the Executive Director;
- Approves the annual operating budget;
- Reviews and approves fund-raising practices;
- Reviews organizational accounting procedures necessary to safeguard the organizations financial resources;
- Develops and approves policies which include the following:

Conflict of Interest Policy

Privacy & Communications Policy

Non-Discrimination, Equality & Diversity Policy

Gift Acceptance Policy

**Standard 2. Not more than one or 10% (whichever is greater) directly or indirectly compensated person(s) shall serve as voting member(s) of the board. Compensated members shall not serve as the board chair or treasurer.**

- Currently, all members of the SERES Global Board of Directors serve in a volunteer capacity without compensation.

**Standard 3. All transaction(s) in which any board or staff members has a material conflicting interests with the charity resulting from any relationship or business affiliation shall be governed by the organization's Conflict of Interest Policy.**

Factors that the SERES Global Board of Directors and/or Administrative Staff consider when concluding whether or not a transaction constitutes a conflict of interest and if such a conflict is material, include, but are not limited to:

- Arm's length procedures for the determination of grant and scholarship awards, the purchase of all materials and supplies, and determination of employee compensation;
- The size of the transaction relative to the total expense of the organization;
- Whether an interested party participated in a Board vote or administrative decision on the transaction;
- If competitive bids and/or fair market comparisons were sought;
- Whether the transaction is one-time, or recurring;
- Annual review of the SERES Global Conflict of Interest Policy by the Board and Executive Director.

## Measuring Effectiveness

**Standard 4. The Board of Directors completes an assessment, no less than every two years, of the organization's performance and effectiveness, and of determining future actions required to achieve its mission.**

To facilitate an annual assessment of organizational effectiveness, the SERES Global Board of Directors takes the following actions:

- Face-to-face meetings with key administrative staff twice a year.
- Review and approval of an Annual Report prepared by the Executive Director which includes descriptions of organizational accomplishments,

program accomplishments, current financial status, and goals for the upcoming year.

- Review and approval of an annual budget that is consistent with the mission and values of the organization.
- Completion of regular and ongoing performance evaluations of the organization's Executive Director.
- Review of regular reports from any affiliated organizational partners with whom SERES Global has a fiscal relationship.

**Standard 5. Submission to the organization's governing body, for its approval, a written report that outlines the results of the aforementioned performance and effectiveness assessment and recommendations for future actions.**

SERES Global meets this standard by the completion and submission of a comprehensive report to the Board of Directors by the administrative staff, which includes:

- A description of its organizational accomplishments over the prior year;
- A description of its program activities and the compiled results of evaluations of those activities by program recipients;
- A detailed annual financial statement;
- A proposed budget for the upcoming year based on;
- Recommendations for organizational, programmatic and fund-raising goals for the upcoming year.

## Finances

This section of the standards seeks to ensure that the charity spends its funds honestly, prudently and in accordance with statements made in fund raising appeals. To meet these standards, the charitable organization shall:

**Standard 6. Spend at least 65% of its total expenses on program activities.**

Since its inception in 2014, SERES Global has directed 91.8% of its total expenditures towards program activities. This substantially exceeds the BBB standard of 65%.

**Standard 7. Spend no more than 35% of related contributions on fund raising.**

Since its incorporation as a non-profit charitable organization in August of 2014, SERES Global has spent 5.8% of its related contributions on fund-raising. (Related contributions include donations, legacies, and other income received as a result of fund raising efforts.) Again, this percentage is substantially and favorably less than the standard (35%) established by the BBB.

**Standard 8. Avoid accumulating funds that could be used for current program activities. To meet this standard, the charity's unrestricted net assets available for use should not be more than three times the size of the past year's expenses or three times the size of the current year's budget, whichever is higher.**

**Standard 9. Make available to all, on request, complete annual financial statements prepared in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles.**

SERES Global makes available on its website the following documents, all of which have been prepared in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles:

- An Annual Report which includes a summary income statement and balance sheet.
- A copy of its 501(c)(3) public charity annual 990 tax return to the Internal Revenue Service.
- Information on how to obtain further detailed information regarding financial statements.

**Standard 10. Include in the financial statements a breakdown of expenses (e.g., salaries, travel, postage, etc.) that shows what portion of these expenses was allocated to program, fund raising, and administrative activities.**

SERES Global meets this standard in both its summary and detailed financial reports, all of which are readily available for public inspection through its website, its annual 990 report to the IRS, or upon legitimate request for more detailed financial information.

**Standard 11. Accurately report the charity's expenses, including any joint cost allocations, in its financial statements.**

SERES Global meets this standard in both its summary and detailed financial reports, all of which are readily available for public inspection through its website, its annual 990 report to the IRS, or upon legitimate request for more detailed financial information.

**Standard 12. Have a board-approved annual budget for its current fiscal year, outlining projected expenses for major program activities, fund raising, and administration.**

The SERES Global Board of Directors approves the annual operating budget for the upcoming fiscal year at its regularly scheduled annual general meeting.

### **Fund Raising and Informational Materials**

A fund raising appeal is often the only contact a donor has with a charity and may be the sole impetus for giving. This section of the standards seeks to ensure that SERES Global's representations to the public are accurate, complete and respectful. To meet these standards, SERES Global shall:

**Standard 13. Have solicitations and informational materials that are accurate, truthful and not misleading, both in whole and in part.**

One of the core values of SERES Global is the transmission of complete, truthful and clear communications with its various publics.

SERES Global solicits and generates funds for its charitable programs through the following mechanisms:

- Personal contact with donors through small fund-raising gatherings
- Presentations to schools, churches and other community philanthropic organizations
- Press releases regarding SERES Global and its affiliates' activities
- On-line solicitations through its website and email campaigns
- Participation in professional conferences, community events and festivals

All appeals using these venues clearly describe the primary programs of SERES Global.

The Annual Report of SERES Global (also available for public inspection on the SERES Global website) and the regular newsletters of SERES Global substantiate the scope and nature of its expenditures in accordance with what has been stated, expressed or implied in its solicitation materials.

**Standard 14. Have an Annual Report available to all, on request, that includes:**

- The organization's mission statement,
- A summary of the past year's program service accomplishments,
- A roster of the officers and members of the board of directors,
- Financial information that includes (i) total income in the past fiscal year, (ii) expenses in the same program, fundraising and administrative categories as in the financial statements, and (iii) ending net assets.

SERES Global makes readily available on its website, an Annual Report which meets all the criteria listed above.

**Standard 15. Include on any charity websites that solicit contributions, the same information that is recommended for annual reports, as well as the mailing address of the charity and electronic access to its most recent IRS 990 tax return.**

SERES Global meets this standard by making readily available on its website on the page entitled Corporate Documents links to all SERES Global incorporation documents in both the United States and Guatemala, all SERES Global policies, and all SERES Global Annual Reports and 990 tax returns.

**Standard 16. Address privacy concerns of donors by:**

Providing a clear, prominent and easily accessible privacy policy on any of its websites that tells visitors

- i. What information, if any, is being collected about them by the charity and how this information will be used;
- ii. How to contact the charity to review personal information collected and request corrections;
- iii. How to inform the charity (e.g., a check off box) that the visitor does not wish his/her personal information to be shared outside the organization, and;
- iv. What security measures the charity has in place to protect personal information.

It is the stated policy of SERES Global to never share personal information publicly or with outside organizations without the expressed consent of the

person involved. The SERES Global Privacy and Communications Policy also addresses all of the above-mentioned issues in section b.

**Standard 17. Clearly disclose how the charity benefits from the sale of products or services (i.e., cause-related marketing) that state or imply that a charity will benefit from a consumer sale or transaction. Such promotions should disclose, at the point of solicitation:**

- The actual or anticipated portion of the purchase price that will benefit the charity (e.g., 5 cents will be contributed to abc charity for every xyz company product sold),
- The duration of the campaign (e.g., the month of October),
- Any maximum or guaranteed minimum contribution amount (e.g., up to a maximum of \$200,000).

SERES Global does not currently supplement its charitable contributions through the sale of products or services.

**Standard 18. Respond promptly to and act on complaints brought to its attention by the BBB Wise Giving Alliance and/or local BBBs about fund raising practices, privacy policy violations and/or other issues.**

SERES Global does not qualify for inclusion in the list of organizations approved by the Better Business Bureau Wise Giving Alliance. (That requires being a national organization in scope.) However, we have voluntarily chosen to adhere to the Wise Giving Alliance Standards as evidence of our commitment to be an honest, professional and responsible non-profit charitable organization. Any concerns or complaints may be brought to our attention through the Contact Us link on our website, or by writing to us at:

**SERES Global  
1804 S Viewcrest Ln  
Spokane Valley, WA 99212**

We will address those concerns in a prompt and respectful manner, seeking to positively resolve any complaints or concerns brought to our attention.