

The following 11 sectors are an attempt to classify charitable organizations into manageable groups. Each represents a *purpose* that an organization may have (versus other classifications that revolve around *who* is served, or *where* they are served). Many organizations do not fall readily into one sector, and sometimes they will have different programs from different sectors. Even one program could be, arguably, assigned into more than one sector (does, for example, an afterschool mentoring program fit in “Education,” “Human Service,” or “Children & Youth”?). The following is an attempt to make a useful classification, but the proliferation of charitable organizations is too great to accommodate a rigid classification system.

1. ARTS & CULTURE

Organizations in this sector provide artistic and cultural programming. It includes a variety of organizations, from performing arts groups to music groups; museums, ballet companies and symphonies; and literary and historical societies. It also covers public or educational television and radio, and producers of certain faith-based programming for radio or television (but not worship services or direct religious instruction). Filmmakers and nonprofits that use creative expression to communicate values and ideas belong here. Also included are entities that seek to influence Hollywood, the media, and entertainment industries, such as those advocating for decency, warnings, ratings, or family programming. Organizations that directly seek to affect the culture in the sense of “society” or “public opinion” are placed with the “Social, Civic & Public Policy” sector.

2. CHILDREN & YOUTH

Organizations in this sector have a purpose to serve the needs of children and teens, and often focus on underprivileged young people. This area covers organizations such as little leagues, 4-H, scouting, camping programs, school outreaches, sports clubs, boys and girls clubs, mentoring initiatives, and various programs offering recreational and character development for children and youth. Often these are large national organizations with small local chapters, like Boys & Girls Clubs of America or the scouting organizations. Human service entities (see “Human Services & Medical” sector) that focus on children and youth also fit here. These include nonprofit daycare centers, literacy programs, crime prevention, athletics, student exchange programs, college entrance support, after-school tutoring or mentoring, and drug and alcohol abuse prevention. Also, child protection, adoption, and foster care programs are included here.

3. DISASTER RELIEF & DEVELOPMENT

This sector includes organizations that seek to provide for people’s basic needs for food, clothing, shelter, medical care, and education in light of man-made or natural disasters, or due to a severely under-developed economy. Generally, the focus is overseas. Some organizations, like Catholic Relief Services and Samaritan’s Purse, meet immediate urgent needs in the face of disaster. Others, like World Vision, CARE USA, and Opportunity International, have a long-term strategy to enable self-sufficiency through economic development, community development, microeconomic enterprise, or other approaches.

4. EDUCATION

Institutions in this sector provide education through private, parochial, and public schools—elementary, secondary, technical/specialty institutes, colleges and universities. Organizations dedicated to specialized training that does not lead to a degree are included here, as are nonprofit home schooling organizations. Giving to one’s alma mater supports this sector, unless designated for a program fitting another sector (e.g., medical research or an arts program). Also, local entities that are educational in character belong here, such as PTAs and libraries. Programs dedicated to resolving a specific educational problem such as assisting underprivileged teens earn college acceptance or mentoring initiatives fit in the “Children & Youth” sector.

5. ENVIRONMENT & ANIMALS

This sector includes organizations that help protect and preserve the environment and care for animals, both domestic and wild. Included here are organizations that focus on the prevention of cruelty to animals, animal rights, protection of endangered species, pet adoption programs, and the like. Also, those that seek to protect the environment and natural resources, create solutions for pollution, and preserve wetlands or green space fit here. Community beautification groups and zoos belong here too.

6. FAITH-BASED SERVICES

This sector includes organizations that provide a wide array of diverse services that have a religious basis. Services may be humanitarian, medical, educational, religious, cultural, advocacy, environmental, or in other areas. Some of these would be purely religious, such as “evangelism” and “discipleship” programs. However, church and worship services are not included here, but under “Place of Worship & Spirituality.” Generally, organizations in this sector blend two purposes, meeting a human need and sharing a religious viewpoint. Christian organizations frequently “share the gospel” with persons served—though this means different things for different groups—though most do not make openness to such presentations a condition for services. Organizations in this sector usually seek to bring a holistic approach to their clients, tending concurrently to physical, social, or educational needs and spiritual needs.

7. FAMILY & MARRIAGE

This sector includes organizations dedicated to helping families and strengthening marriage and the family as an institution in society. It includes both large national entities such as Focus on the Family and Families First, and small local organizations that may, for example, provide assistance with unwanted pregnancies, day care, or aid for poor families. Diverse organizations are encompassed, those offering: parenting skills programs, marriage enrichment, divorce counsel, teen pregnancy prevention and services, family counseling, and other services. Pre-marital counseling and programs to deepen or improve marital relationships are included here. Some organizations may be more oriented toward education of society regarding the importance of marriage and the family, than toward the provision of services.

8. HUMAN SERVICES & MEDICAL

This broad category includes organizations that address any of a huge array of human needs, including services for the poor, the underprivileged and underserved, and the ill. It covers activities such as elder care, substance abuse counseling, job training, help for the homeless, prisoner re-entry programs, development of “life skills,” welfare, the relief of poverty, etc. Health organizations are also included, such as hospitals and health facilities, mental health services, nursing homes, and hospices; as well as disease-specific organizations, such as those addressing heart disease or cancer, which conduct research and/or provide patient services. Large multi-purpose entities such as the Salvation Army and Red Cross fit here. When human services are provided solely for children and youth, they are classified under “Children & Youth.”

9. PLACE OF WORSHIP & SPIRITUALITY

This sector includes organizations that are dedicated to advancing faith, religious training, and the worship of God. It includes churches, synagogues, temples, and mosques. Generally, it includes a donor’s place of worship. Typically, a worship service is at the heart of the program—though these will vary from the very formal to the informal. Some are less oriented towards worship and have an educational style; they may provide information, programs, or resources to help spiritual growth. Often places of worship have many supplemental programs that cross into other areas, such as programs to aid persons in need (in “Human Services” sector) or foreign “missions” programs. But the emphasis here is on the core services of the place of worship—its preaching, teaching, and worship programs. Also included are capital needs and funding for expansion.

10. SOCIAL, CIVIC, PUBLIC POLICY & PHILANTHROPY

Organizations in this sector address issues in society or overseas by organizing, educating, advocating, or taking local action (versus directly providing services), or advance generosity and volunteerism. Civil rights and religious freedom groups that oppose oppression; those advocating for the family or an ethnic group, or for minority or women’s or other human rights (for the born and unborn); and those supporting equality or justice issues, belong

here. These organizations may operate locally, regionally, nationally, or internationally. They usually have a specific viewpoint that they promote through educational programs and public relations efforts. They may be affiliated with a sister organization that engages in lobbying for its cause. “Think tanks” often provide the research and analysis on which these groups rely, and fit here too. Organizations that encourage or facilitate generous giving of personal or corporate assets, time, and skills, and thus seek improvements in society, also belong here. Civic groups serving local communities such as Rotary, Lions, and Kiwanis also fit in this sector, though their character is mostly different.

11. URBAN

These organizations are focused on solving problems within cities. They range from community or economic development entities through to outreaches to a small class of persons such as prostitutes or homeless drug addicts. While they often provide a “human service” (see “Human Services & Medical” sector), they are marked by being geographically narrow. Groups that seek to solve problems with a broader impact within a city—such as transportation, zoning, or recreation and green space—also fit here.

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