Giving What We Can Performance Review 2011-2012



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Summary of key points

GWWC operated as an entirely voluntary organization from Nov 2009 to June 2012. From July 4th 2012, GWWC hired approximately 2.5 new staff numerous interns, and spent about \$28,000 from July-December.

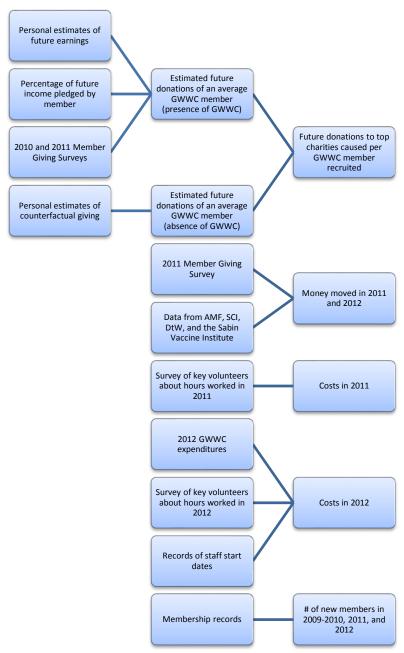
This document is a performance review of GWWC for the years 2011 and 2012. It focuses on GWWC's monitoring and evaluation, GWWC's output in terms of key performance metrics (money moved to top charities, new members recruited), and GWWC's inputs (dollars donated, staff hours, volunteer hours). It is relevant to donors who wish to very thoroughly investigate GWWC, and to GWWC's internal evaluation. It does not take account of other information that seems very important for deciding whether to donate to GWWC, such as what GWWC plans to do with additional resources, the strengths and weaknesses of GWWC's key staff, what the importance of GWWC's mission is, and the quality of GWWC's research. It also does not take account of the extensive work of GWWC's president (Toby Ord) in his consultations concerning the importance of cost-effectiveness in aid with DCP3, WHO, the (UK) Department for International Development, the (UK) Prime Minister's Office, the Center for Global Development, J-PAL, the World Bank, the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation, and the Copenhagen Consensus. This work may be valuable, but was not readily measurable at the time of this review.

The main conclusions of this report are as follows:

- 1. Average costs per member recruited have been low. From November 2009 to 2010, GWWC recruited 73 people to take the pledge to give, with an average of about 25 volunteer hours per member recruited. In 2011, GWWC recruited 107 new members, with an average of about 35 volunteer hours per member recruited. In 2012, GWWC also recruited 107 new members, with an average of 35 volunteer hours and 20 hours of staff time per member recruited. In financial terms, the cost per member recruited in 2009-2011 was almost 0, as GWWC had no income; small expenses were paid out of pocket by GWWC volunteers. In 2012, which includes the time in which GWWC took paid staff, financial cost per member recruited was \$260.
- 2. **GWWC** members reported giving about \$790,000 in 2011, with about \$360,000 of that going to top charities. About \$115,000 went to AMF, \$184,000 to SCI, and about \$28,000 to Deworm the World.
- 3. My best guess is that an additional GWWC member recruited results in about \$17,000 in counterfactually-adjusted, time-discounted lifetime donations to top charities. However, this estimate is highly uncertain, and the true value could easily be anywhere from several thousand dollars to over \$100,000. The assumptions behind this calculation are explained in detail in another spreadsheet and PDF. I don't believe the results of the calculation because too many of the inputs are speculative, but based on the returns GWWC has had so far, and

- intuitive plausibility checks, I do think it is possible to be fairly confident that each GWWC member recruited results in several thousand dollars of additional donations.
- 4. A large portion of current GWWC members are keeping their pledges, and there is no sign that this will change soon. In surveys of members with about a 60% response rate, about 90% of members reported that they were keeping their pledges, and reported incomes and donations that were consistent with that. In addition, people who joined in earlier years were about equally likely to report that they were keeping the pledge. The people who reported their 2011 income to GWWC (144 of 250 members at the time) gave an average of 13.2% of their income to charity. Though these results look good, I would stress some caution in extrapolating them forward because it is possible that extremely committed people were more likely to join GWWC early.
- 5. **GWWC's monitoring and evaluation could be improved in various ways.** Key improvements would involve machine-readability of data, integration of different sources of data, standardization of reporting dates and practices, new questions for GWWC's surveys, and getting more frequent feedback from GWWC's members about where they're giving. The specific details are hard to summarize.
- 6. However, it is very unclear to what extent the new members are a result of the activities of GWWC's staff, rather than organic growth. This makes it extremely difficult to make a meaningful claim about whether additional donations to GWWC would result in additional new members recruited or what the marginal cost per member recruited would be. One important reason this is unclear is that as the amount of resources spent per year by GWWC has increased, the number of new members recruited per year has not increased. Moreover, GWWC has very little data that speaks to this question. It therefore seems that one's assumptions about this are basically left to intuitive plausibility judgments based on examining GWWC's input and output and qualitatively looking at their plans and activities.
- 7. However, the number of new members recruited as a result of the \$28,000 in donations to GWWC does not have to be very high to justify the expense. If we accept the estimated returns per GWWC member recruited, it only takes a few members recruited by GWWC's staff's activities for the project as a whole to be worthwhile. Those with more pessimistic estimates of the value of recruiting GWWC members could reasonably disagree.

Big picture outline of how data is used in this analysis



Info in boxes to the right is determined by info from connected boxes to the left, plus judgment and/or modeling.

Abbreviations used in this document

AMF – The Against Malaria Foundation

SCI – The Schistosomiasis Control Initiative

DtW - Deworm the World

"Top charities" – GWWC's current recommended charities. Donations to top charities in previous years are defined relative to the top charities of previous years.

"Money moved" – dollars that were donated because of GWWC's influence, whether through GWWC members or otherwise

Overview of GWWC's performance so far

Past costs per unit benefit

Benefits	Nov 2009- 2010	2011	2012	
Members recruited	73	107	107	
Total money moved (\$) to all charities (giving review)	897793	787237	not available	
Total money moved (\$) to top charities (giving Review)	388681	358282	not available	
Total money moved (\$) to top charities (from the	1,737,860 excludi			
charities)		donor	317418	
Note that Nov 2009-2010 had two giving seasons, which partially explains why more was donated during that period than in2011				

Nov 2009-2010 2011 2012 Costs Total key volunteer hours 1820 3683 6362 Accounting costs 0 0 27861 2200 Full time staff hours 0

From November 2009 to 2010, GWWC recruited 73 people to take the pledge to give, with an average of about 25 volunteer hours per member recruited. In 2011, GWWC recruited 107 new members, with an average of about 35 volunteer hours per member recruited. In 2012, GWWC also recruited 107 new members, with an average of 60 volunteer hours and 20 hours of staff time per member recruited. In financial terms, the cost per member recruited in 2009-2011 was almost 0, as GWWC had no income; small expenses were paid out of pocket by GWWC volunteers. In 2012, which includes the time in which GWWC took paid staff, financial cost per member recruited was \$260.

From November 2009 to 2010, GWWC members reported giving about \$390,000 to GWWC's top charities, with an average of about \$215 moved per key volunteer hour. In 2011, GWWC members reported giving about \$360,000 to GWWC's top charities, with an average of about \$100 moved per volunteer hours. Data for 2012 is not yet available, though the survey is underway. Based on data from SCI and AMF, GWWC moved about \$320,000 to GWWC's top charities in 2012. We do not yet have data from GWWC's 2012 giving review

Note that in 2010, one large donor gave £640,000 to SCI (£800,000 including UK government gift aid, or \$1.4m) on the basis of GWWC's recommendation. This person was not a GWWC member, so this number was not counted in the member giving survey. We do not have data on this individual's later donations.

This gives some kind of rough indication of GWWC's past costs per unit benefit, but it does not immediately show (i) whether the increasing expenditures per year resulted in more members recruited than would otherwise have been recruited or (ii) whether additional resources would result in additional members recruited.

Did additional resources result in new members recruited?

It is not possible to confidently answer this question based on the data in this review. It is noteworthy that costs significantly increased in 2012, but there was no change in the number of members recruited. This observation is consistent with multiple possibilities. Some of them include:

- 1. Additional resources did not yield many additional members, either because resources were not used by trying to recruit additional members, they were used ineffectively, or the amount of additional resources was too small to make a difference (\$27,000 isn't a lot of money).
- 2. It became more challenging to recruit additional members, and additional resources helped keep performance at the same level. A small number of key volunteers devoted less time to developing GWWC in 2012 because they had moved on to other important projects, and additional resources could have helped mitigate decreases in members recruited which would be expected to result from this. 2011 also had an unusually successful media push. Perhaps 2011 was unusually lucky in this respect, or the media is less interested in GWWC's story now than it was then.
- 3. Increasing resources spent on GWWC did increase members moved, but we have yet to see the effects of it because the members joined/will join in 2013. GWWC's available data weakly

speaks against the last explanation because 29 people have joined GWWC between 1 January 2013 and 16 May 2013, whereas 36 joined GWWC between 1 January 2012 and 16 May 2012.

Which interpretation one prefers is strongly dependent on priors. In any case, it is somewhat disappointing that the number of members recruited in 2012 did not exceed the number of members recruited in 2011.

How good is it to recruit a new member of GWWC?

The most straightforward way to quantify the value of recruiting a new member of GWWC is in terms of counterfactually-adjusted, time-discounted lifetime donations to top charities per GWWC member. I tried to answer this question with a modeling exercise, but the truth is that we have very little hard data on the question. I explain my model for this calculation in a more detailed spreadsheet and PDF. I don't believe the result of the calculation because too many of the inputs are speculative, but based on the returns GWWC has had so far and intuitive plausibility checks, I do think it is possible to be fairly confident that each GWWC member recruited results in several thousand dollars of additional donations.

My best guess is that an additional GWWC member recruited results in about \$17,000 counterfactually-adjusted, time-discounted lifetime donations to top charities. However, this estimate is highly uncertain, and the true value could be anywhere from several thousand dollars to \$130,000. Some key areas of uncertainty for this estimate include:

- 1. How much will GWWC members earn over their lifetimes?
- 2. Of the total amount that members have pledged to give, what percent will they actually give?
- 3. What proportion of these future donations will go to top charities?
- 4. Of the total amount that GWWC members will give, what fraction would have been given in the absence of GWWC?
- 5. Of the total amount that GWWC members will give to top charities, what percentage of this would have been given to top charities in the absence of GWWC?
- 6. What discount rate should we use for future donations?

I have relied on survey data of GWWC members to try to answer these questions, but it is very challenging to get a robust estimate of what people will do, and would otherwise have done, over the next few decades, and that is what has to be done if we're going to estimate the full value of recruiting a member of GWWC.

Are current GWWC members keeping their pledges?

In GWWC's survey of member giving in 2010, 106 of 184 members responded, and 96 of them (90%) said they were up to date on their giving. In GWWC's survey of member giving in 2011, 155 of 250 members responded, and 140 of them (90%) said they were up to date on their giving.

When analyzing the data from GWWC's survey of member giving in 2011, I also looked at whether people who joined earlier were less likely to be keeping their pledges. They were not. For details, see the table below:

Year joined	Number joining by year	Portion answering 2011 survey by year of joining	Portion reporting that they fulfilled the pledge to give in 2011	
2009	36	67%	96%	
2010	37	76%	93%	
2011	107	73%	88%	

Though these results look good, I would stress some caution in extrapolating them forward because it is possible that extremely committed people were more likely to join GWWC early.

Even though this survey was given in 2012, I haven't included data for people joining in 2012, since they were not required to fill out the survey for giving in 2011.

Part of the survey asked GWWC members how much they made in 2011. 144 of 155 (92.9%) GWWC members taking the 2011 survey answered this question. (Everyone else who took the survey just answered whether they kept their pledge, but did not report on their income.) For these members, I calculated what portion of their income was donated to charity. For these 144 members, the average was 13.2% given to charity, and 11% pledged. If these people were together keeping their pledges, we could expect to see \$621,967 in donations from them in 2011, and they reported giving \$784,429. For more detail on this group, see the following table:

Answered survey and income question?	Number of people	Average of % of income donated to charity	Average of percent pledged	Sum of Pre-tax income * percent pledged	Sum of Total Donations 2011
No	106		10%	0	2808
Yes	144	13%	12%	621967	784429
Grand Total	250	13%	11%	621967	787237

Do students who start working keep their pledge to give?

Based on members' reported occupations at the time of joining GWWC and their reported earnings in the 2011 member giving survey, it appears that GWWC members who join as students and then start working mostly keep their pledges. 109 of the 250 (43.6%) of the GWWC members eligible for the 2011 member giving survey were students when the joined Giving What We Can. 79 of these 109 (72.4%) people answered the 2011 member giving survey. I broke down this group of 79 students by their reported pre-tax earnings in 2011, counted the number in each group, their pretax income * percent pledged their total reported donations in 2011, their donations to top charities in 2011, the % of their income they donated to charity, the % of their income they donated to charity, and the % of them who reported fulfilling the GWWC pledge.

Reported income	#	Sum of Pre-tax income * percent pledged	Sum of Total Donations 2011 GR	Sum of 2011 GR Tier 1 Total	Average of % of donations to top charities	Average of % of income donated to charity	Average of Did you fulfill your Pledge to Give in 2011?
Didn't answer survey	30	0.00		0.00			
Answered survey	79	85349.15	80521.88	57378.15	64.96%	12.83%	87.34%
Income unreported	6	0.00	0.00	3120.00			100.00%
0	18	0.00	11088.80	9492.00	65.91%		83.33%
0 to \$5000	17	3767.90	7736.13	3938.93	58.03%	23.24%	82.35%
\$5000 to \$10,000	11	8604.08	5701.58	4673.82	79.53%	7.43%	90.91%
\$10,000 to \$20,000	9	12074.66	12147.09	10838.69	84.57%	10.15%	88.89%
\$20,000 or more	18	60902.51	43848.28	25314.71	50.79%	8.21%	88.89%
Grand Total	109	85349.15	80521.88	57378.15	64.96%	12.83%	87.34%

Overall, this group of students donated a large portion of the total their pledges required them to give in 2011. Collectively, their pledges committed them to donating about \$85,000 and they reported donating about \$80,000. It is noteworthy, however, that the 18 of these former students who earned over \$20,000 per year were committed to donating about \$61,000 in 2011, and only donated about \$44,000.

Where are GWWC members donating?

GWWC members reported giving about \$790,000 in 2011, with about \$360,000 of that going to top charities. About \$115,000 went to AMF, \$184,000 to SCI, and about \$28,000 to Deworm the World. For more details, and comparisons with previous years, see the table below:

	Nov 2009- 2010	2011	2012
Total money moved (\$) to all			not
charities (giving review)	897793	787236	available
Total money moved (\$) to			not
top charities (giving Review)	388681	358282	available
Total money moved (\$) to			
top charities (from the	not	not	
charities)	available	available	317417
AMF money moved (\$), giving			not
review	28404	114592	available
SCI money moved (\$), giving			not
review	200,056	183928	available
DtW money moved (\$), giving			not
review	73013	28146	available
AMF money moved (\$), from	not		
AMF	available	38500	129970
SCI money moved (\$), from	not	not	
SCI	available	available	187448
DtW money moved (\$), from	not	not	not
DtW	available	available	available

It's not clear why more donations didn't go to AMF in 2011 because we don't know when people made those donations in 2011. If many of the donations were made in the beginning of the year, that would be consistent with GWWC members responding to GWWC and GiveWell strengthening their recommendations of AMF. If they were made late in the year, it would suggest that GWWC members did not strongly respond to these recommendations. We do have data from AMF which suggests that GWWC members and other people influenced by GWWC gave more to AMF in 2012 than they did in 2011, which favors the first interpretation.

Sources of evidence this review draws on

Join survey

When someone joins GWWC, there are two steps. First, the person must fill out an online form [here](http://www.givingwhatwecan.org/getting-involved/joining-us). Then, GWWC mails them a welcome letter. In the welcome letter, GWWC asks for the following information:

- 1. Date of Birth
- 2. Current Occupation
- 3. Current Income (if applicable)
- 4. Average Future Income (estimate)

- 5. Years Until Retirement (estimate)
- 6. Total Future Earnings (estimate)
- 7. Pledged Future Donations (estimate, with the suggested calculation: average-future-income × years-until-retirement × percentage-pledged)
- 8. What percentage of your income do you think you would have donated over your lifetime if you had not heard of *Giving What We Can*?
- 9. Percent pledged

GWWC also asks them to sign a paper copy of their pledge to give until they retire. Someone is only counted as a member of GWWC if they mail this paper copy to GWWC. This is a significant filter, since only 293 of 705 (41.6%) of the people who applied to join GWWC have returned their pledge forms.

Percent pledged, pledged future donations, and estimate of counterfactual donations play an important role in my analysis of average lifetime donations per member. Everyone who returns a form fills in a percentage pledged, but people often leave their estimated future earnings or their estimated counterfactual donation percentages blank or imprecise. 129 of 313 (41%) did not estimate their future earnings, 103 of 313 (33%) did not estimate their counterfactual donation percentages, and 21 of 313 (6.7%) gave vague estimates. Of those who gave precise estimates,

Areas to improve

It is important that GWWC improve on the conversion ratio (# of online requests to join/# of paper pledges returned) and the machine-readability of the data it gets. For these purposes, I recommend that GWWC:

- 1. Require new members to answer the above questions when they join online
- 2. Require numerical answers to questions and require people to select currency from a drop-down menu (which can include "other" with a write-in option)
- 3. Collect phone numbers from people joining
- 4. Send a different paper copy of the welcome letter asking people to sign and return their copies
- 5. Actively follow-up by e-mail and phone with members who do not return paper copies of their pledges within a specified timeframe, such as 1 month
- 6. Track the conversion ratio (# of online requests to join/# of paper pledges returned) and treat it as an important recruitment metric

There is also an important question GWWC is not asking about when members join: is GWWC changing where you donate? I recommend adding some questions like the following to the joining survey:

- 1. What types of charities do you plan to donate to over the next several years?
 - a. I plan to give to charities recommended by GWWC or GiveWell
 - b. Other
- 2. Has GWWC influenced which charities or causes you plan to donate to? (Yes or No)
- 3. If so, how? Check all that apply:

- a. I wouldn't otherwise have donated to charities recommended by GWWC or GiveWell
- b. I wouldn't otherwise have donated to charities working in the developing world

Member giving survey

The main input into my evaluation of how much GWWC members give, and where they are giving it, is the member giving survey.

10/22/2011 survey (for giving up to 10/22/2011, and for giving in 2011)

GWWC sent out their [first member giving

survey](https://docs.google.com/spreadsheet/viewform?formkey=dFVJZTFIcWtOYnpUOW9qSUtPNFF fQUE6MA#gid=0) on 10/22/2011, asking members to report on donations since they joined. The key information gathered from this survey involved: total amount donated by charity, income, whether people reported keeping their pledges. Follow the link for a full list of questions.

9/23/2012 survey (for giving in 2011)

GWWC sent out their [second member giving

survey](https://docs.google.com/spreadsheet/viewform?formkey=dGVISy1PYVJ4NXM0S0pjazhlc2VPN lE6MO#gid=0) on 9/23/2012. The key information gathered from this survey involved: total amount donated by charity, income, whether people reported keeping their pledges. Follow the link for a full list of questions.

Areas to improve

It would be desirable to improve the machine-readability and organization of GWWC's data from member giving surveys. To improve machine-readability and organization, I recommend:

- 1. Answer fields that require integer values
- 2. Currency fields answerable with a drop-down menu
- 3. A question for each charity GWWC is interested in, rather than organizing responses in terms of which charity people gave most to, second most to, etc

GWWC also isn't getting as much information as it could about what GWWC members are using to decide where to give, and where they would have given in GWWC's absence. I suggest that GWWC add the following question for this purpose:

- 1. What resource do you primarily rely on when deciding where to give?
 - a. GWWC
 - b. GiveWell
 - c. Friends
 - d. Other (please specify)

Since I wrote this review, GWWC has made changes to its member giving survey to deal with the issues above.

Some additional problems are:

- GWWC is not getting very frequent feedback about where GWWC members are giving and how much they are giving
- It is difficult to meaningfully compare data from the member giving surveys with data from charities
- It is hard to know when GWWC members are giving.

Although GWWC's most recent survey asked members to report only on donations in 2011, I found many cases where members were claiming a donation for 2011 and AMF was reporting that the same amount was donated in 2012. This suggests that the member giving surveys may yield incorrect information about when members are making donations. To address these issues, I recommend that GWWC consider some additional/alternative methods of improving GWWC's records:

- 1. Use a donation report system similar to 80,000 Hours, possibly with some additional bells and whistles, such as including fields for tracking donations by charity, and year, and for updating questions from the join survey (such as expected future earnings). A nice interface, and something which told people whether they were up to date on their pledge might give members more incentive to keep GWWC up to date on their giving.
- 2. Have a donate button with a system like GiveWell's

Data from charities

Against Malaria Foundation (AMF)

When someone donates to AMF for the first time, AMF asks where the donation was inspired by. A possible answer is GWWC. AMF shares data with GWWC about how much people inspired by GWWC have donated to AMF over time.

Schistosomiasis Control Imitative (SCI)

In their 12 January 2012 e-mail, SCI told GWWC how they attribute donations made in 2010 and 2011 to GWWC. The donations were through the SCI website, JustGiving, The Big Give, standing orders, checks, and Charity Giving (http://www.charitygiving.co.uk).

In an e-mail, SCI told GWWC that they attributed donations to GWWC in 2012 in the following way:

- 1. All donors who specified, either by including a message with their donation or replying to an enquiry, confirming that they had chosen to donate because of GWWC.
- 2. Following a particular press/radio/television piece about GWWC (e.g. The radio broadcast on NPR in December 2012) SCI attributed all donations from the US that were not repeat donations to GWWC. SCI said that most donors who come through GiveWell prefer to make their donations either through the GiveWell online donation mechanism or via the Imperial College Foundation in order to be able to include the gift in their tax return. As a result SCI did not attribute the majority of US donations to GiveWell.

- 3. Unless specified to the contrary, SCI attributed all donations from Australia to GWWC.
- 4. SCI attributed all repeat donations from individuals who have at some point stated that they have a connection to GWWC.
- 5. SCI believes that the majority of donations made within the UK have come to hear about SCI via GWWC. SCI has removed all donations that they know have come from other sources, however, when in doubt as the donor has not specified, SCI feels there is a high probability that UK donations are attributable to GWWC.

This is how GWWC got 2012 numbers from SCI. In my opinion and in the opinion of GWWC, this seems likely to overestimate donations to SCI that are attributable to GWWC.

Deworm the World (DtW)

The most recent data from DtW came from an e-mail from Alissa Fishbane in April 2012. DtW estimates that GWWC moved \$200K to DtW from 2009 to April 2012. GWWC has not sought additional updates from DtW about giving in 2012.

CEA Expenditures Record

I got the 2012 cost data from the CEA expenditures record. CEA has separate accounts for GWWC, 80,000 Hours, and CEA Central. CEA Central provides administrative support and covers office space costs for GWWC. To calculate GWWC's expenses for the purposes of this report, I used all expenses attributed to GWWC, plus 50% of the expenses attributed to CEA Central.

Volunteer Surveys

I got the data on volunteer hours spent on GWWC from surveys of volunteers. The survey for volunteer hours from before 2012 is [here](

https://docs.google.com/spreadsheet/viewform?formkey=dGtEUk9zWEpVY29BTW9GOVFSdFdTRmc6 MQ#gid=0). GWWC sent this survey to volunteers who had key leadership positions in GWWC. This survey was taken in February 2012.

The survey for volunteer hours in 2012 is [here](

https://docs.google.com/spreadsheet/viewform?formkey=dEhCeHowRmx2bDQzdnBkNjROaFdDZlE6 MA#gid=0). GWWC sent it to every volunteer they thought worked 10+ hours per week on GWWC in 2012. This survey was taken in May 2013.

Areas to improve

Since these surveys cover long periods of time and are taken much later than when people were actually working, they are probably less accurate than they could be, GWWC receives updates on the quantity of volunteer effort less frequently than it otherwise could, and volunteers may be less accountable than they could be. To address these issues, I suggest that GWWC consider having more frequent, automated recording of volunteer hours.

Areas to improve monitoring and evaluation

General areas to improve on monitoring and evaluation for these performance metrics

Integration

Currently, the above information is not available in a central location. I believe that all of the information GWWC has about GWWC members, other people who are inspired by GWWC to donate to GWWC-recommended charities, GWWC staff, and GWWC volunteers should be integrated. It took a great deal of effort to pool all of the above information together. In the future, I recommend that all of this information would be entered into CEA's central database (CiviCRM) as soon as it comes in.

Another integration issue I ran into is that in order to get the above information, I had to ask multiple different staff members and volunteers. This could be addressed in one of two ways. As mentioned above, when the new information comes in, it could be regularly entered into CEA's central database (CiviCRM), so that someone looking for data only has to check in one place. Alternatively, it might be desirable to have one staff member be responsible for managing all of the data. I suspect this would help with standardization, and this person could get quick and efficient at managing GWWC's data.

Standardization

Member giving surveys, volunteer surveys, and analysis of member giving reports are not given at regular times, and are not given in exactly the same format yet. I recommend that GWWC set standard procedures and dates to do these reviews, and follow those standard procedures and dates.

Other, more specific areas to improve

For other, more specific areas to improve, see all the subsections labeled "Areas to improve" in the section "Source of Evidence."