

Effective Practices for NGOs

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Submitted:

June 19, 2026

Accepted:

July 9, 2026

Revised:

July 23, 2026

Published:

September 10, 2026

Citation:

Miller R.M., Andrade, M.S., & Seeley, E. (2026). Effective Practices for NGOs. *Journal of Management Policy and Practice*, 27(2), 49–58.

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) play a critical role in addressing social, economic, and humanitarian challenges, yet their effectiveness is often difficult to measure objectively. This study examined how transparency, evidence-based practices, stakeholder trust, and leadership orientation shape perceptions of NGO effectiveness, advocacy, and longevity. Survey data were collected from 441 NGO stakeholders, including service recipients, volunteers, donors, and employees. Results showed that transparency and use of scientific evidence were positively associated with perceived NGO effectiveness, although scientific evidence had a stronger influence than transparency. When broader evidence-based practices were examined together, clear effectiveness measures emerged as the only significant individual predictor of perceived effectiveness. Stakeholder trust was strongly associated with willingness to recommend the NGO, while long-term strategic orientation predicted expected organizational longevity more clearly than confidence in current leadership. Findings suggest that NGOs may strengthen stakeholder perceptions by establishing measurable objectives, applying research in practice, communicating outcomes transparently, and building trust through stakeholder-centered practices.

Keywords: NGO effectiveness, transparency, evidence-based practice, stakeholder trust, organizational longevity

INTRODUCTION

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) play a critical role in addressing social, economic, and humanitarian challenges, yet assessing their effectiveness remains a challenge. NGOs operate across diverse contexts, pursue varied missions, and often work in environments where outcomes are difficult to quantify or compare using standardized performance metrics (Benjamin, 2012;

Willems et al., 2016). As a result, stakeholders, including donors, beneficiaries, volunteers, and partners, frequently rely on perceptions of effectiveness rather than objective indicators when forming judgments about NGO quality, legitimacy, and impact (Ebrahim & Rangan, 2014). These perceptions influence critical outcomes such as trust, advocacy, continued support, and organizational sustainability (Bekkers, 2012; Sargeant & Lee, 2004).

Prior research suggests that organizational practices related to transparency, accountability, performance monitoring, and leadership orientation shape how stakeholders evaluate NGOs, particularly in contexts characterized by information asymmetry and limited observability of impact (Ortega-Rodríguez et al., 2020; Saxton & Guo, 2011). Building on this literature, the current study examines how transparency, use of scientific evidence, trust-related practices, and leadership confidence are associated with stakeholder perceptions of NGO effectiveness and expected organizational longevity.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review synthesizes contemporary scholarship on organizational practices that shape stakeholder perceptions of NGO effectiveness, trust, and sustainability. Given persistent challenges in objectively measuring NGO outcomes, stakeholder perceptions are widely recognized as meaningful indicators of organizational legitimacy and performance (Benjamin, 2012; Willems et al., 2016). The review focuses on four interrelated streams of research: transparency and accountability, evidence-based decision-making, stakeholder trust and advocacy, and leadership confidence with a long-term orientation. These streams provide the theoretical foundation for the hypotheses developed in this study.

Transparency, Accountability, and Perceived Effectiveness

Transparency has been identified as a central mechanism through which nonprofit organizations signal accountability and legitimacy to stakeholders. From a governance perspective, transparency is not only a communicative practice, but a structural responsibility embedded in oversight, monitoring, and mission stewardship processes. Foundational governance scholarship emphasizes that boards and senior leadership play a critical role in ensuring that organizational activities, decisions, and outcomes are visible and interpretable to external stakeholders (Cornforth, 2003). In contexts where direct performance outcomes are difficult to observe, transparency becomes a proxy through which stakeholders assess organizational competence and ethical conduct.

Syntheses in the literature reinforce the importance of transparency as a governance signal rather than a standalone disclosure practice. Renz and Smith (2023), in their systematic review of nonprofit governance research, highlight how accountability mechanisms, such as financial reporting, operational disclosure, and performance communication, shape stakeholder expectations and perceptions of organizational effectiveness. Their review suggests that stakeholders interpret transparency as evidence of managerial capacity and responsible governance, particularly in mission-driven organizations operating under conditions of information asymmetry.

Contemporary transparency research further conceptualizes transparency as a multidimensional construct encompassing financial openness, operational clarity, and the accessibility and relevance of disclosed information. Studies show that transparency is most influential when disclosures are consistent, stakeholder-oriented, and clearly connected to organizational goals and outcomes (Dethier et al., 2023; Ortega-Rodríguez et al., 2020). Governance frameworks similarly emphasize that transparency functions as part of broader accountability systems, reinforcing perceptions of effectiveness when aligned with evidence-based decision making and performance monitoring (Plaisance & Goujon Belghit, 2025).

This research suggests that transparency serves as a signal through which stakeholders infer organizational effectiveness, even in the absence of objective outcome measures. As such, we posit the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1 (H1). *NGOs perceived as more transparent and research-driven are rated as more effective by their stakeholders.*

Hypothesis 2 (H2). *NGOs with higher scores on transparency and use of scientific evidence will be rated as more effective overall.*

Transparency, Trust, and Stakeholder Advocacy

Trust is a foundational element of nonprofit–stakeholder relationships and a consistent predictor of supportive behaviors such as donating, volunteering, and recommending an organization (Bekkers, 2012; Sargeant & Lee, 2004). Research demonstrates that transparency contributes to trust by signaling ethical intent, accountability, and respect for stakeholder interests, which in turn strengthens perceived performance (Ghoorah, 2025; Maguregi et al., 2025).

Increasingly, trust is also shaped by perceptions of data governance and privacy protection. Research highlights that confidence in responsible data stewardship mitigates legitimacy risks associated with personal data collection and enhances stakeholder willingness to support organizations (Hillebrand et al., 2023; Li & Huang, 2023).

Beyond transparency and data protection, stakeholder trust is reinforced when organizations demonstrate responsiveness and meaningful engagement. Reviews of stakeholder relationship management emphasize that perceived voice and inclusion foster relational trust, which supports advocacy behaviors such as positive word-of-mouth and willingness to recommend (Mato-Santiso et al., 2021; Nguyen et al., 2024). These studies suggest the following hypothesis.

Hypothesis 3 (H3). *Higher stakeholder trust in an NGO will be positively associated with willingness to recommend the NGO to others.*

Leadership Confidence, Long-Term Orientation, and Organizational Longevity

Leadership and governance practices play a central role in shaping stakeholder expectations of NGO sustainability. Research on mission-driven organizations emphasizes leadership confidence, ethical conduct, and long-term strategic orientation as critical for navigating environmental uncertainty and maintaining legitimacy over time (Bansal & DesJardine, 2014; Suriyankietkaew & Avery, 2016). Stakeholders frequently rely on leadership cues as heuristics when evaluating organizational endurance (Willems et al., 2016).

Syntheses of NGO governance literature further underscore that long-term orientation reflects commitment to mission integrity, learning, and sustainability rather than short-term performance or donor appeasement (Cornforth, 2003; Ebrahim & Rangan, 2014). When NGO leaders are perceived as competent and future-focused, stakeholders are more likely to expect organizational longevity and continued impact, suggesting the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 4 (H4). *Higher levels of confidence in NGO leadership and a stronger perceived focus on long-term strategic goals will be positively associated with expected organizational longevity.*

METHOD

Participants

Participants in this study were stakeholders of NGOs who completed an online survey between April 2022 and April 2025. A total of $N = 658$ participants began the survey. After excluding incomplete responses and test entries, 441 fully completed surveys were retained for analysis (completion rate = 67.0%). Respondents were recruited through NGO partner networks, professional associations, and social media using a convenience sampling approach. Although the survey was distributed internationally, responses were concentrated in the United States (58%) and Ghana (25%), with the remaining 17% from other countries. This study was reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the authors' institution. All participants provided informed consent prior to participation.

Participants identified their primary stakeholder role with respect to the NGO they interacted with most frequently. The sample included service recipients (67%), volunteers (16%), donors (12%), and employees (5%). An additional 7.7% of respondents did not specify a primary role.

The sample skewed younger, with approximately 70% of respondents under age 35. While this limits generalizability, the inclusion of multiple stakeholder groups permits comparative analyses consistent with stakeholder theory's emphasis on multiple, and often competing, stakeholder claims (Freeman, 1984; Herman & Renz, 2008).

Measures

All Likert-type items were measured on 10-point scales ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 10 (*strongly agree*), unless otherwise noted.

Perceived NGO Effectiveness

Perceived effectiveness was measured using a single global item: "I feel that this NGO is effective." Single-item measures are appropriate for concrete, global evaluations and have demonstrated acceptable reliability and predictive validity in organizational research (Bergkvist & Rossiter, 2007; Fisher et al., 2016; Wanous et al., 1997).

Transparency and Research-Driven Practices

Transparency and evidence-based practice were assessed using a four-item composite scale ($\alpha = .77$), indicating strong internal consistency (Cronbach, 1951). Items measured perceptions of accurate outcome reporting, willingness to disclose both positive and negative results, use of scientific evidence, and data-informed decision-making. Exploratory factor analysis supported a single-factor solution, with principal axis factor loadings of .37 for transparency, .81 for scientific evidence use, .87 for research implementation, and .78 for clarity of effectiveness measures, with the single-factor solution accounting for 53.9% of variance. Transparency's weaker loading (communality = .14) indicates that while it is retained in the composite for theoretical reasons, it functions as a relatively distinct indicator compared to the three more tightly correlated research-practice items ($\alpha = .86$ excluding transparency; $\alpha = .77$ for the full four-item scale) (Hair et al., 2019).

Trust Dimensions

Trust was assessed using facet-specific indicators consistent with social capital theory (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998). Relational trust was measured using three items: relational care ("The NGO cares about me"), valuing opinions ("The NGO's staff value my opinions"), and cultural sensitivity ("This NGO values my culture"). Procedural trust was measured using the item "My personal information is safe with the NGO."

Each item captures a distinct trust dimension rather than forming a latent composite. Although multi-item scales are generally preferred, single-item indicators are defensible when assessing specific, concrete perceptions (Wanous et al., 1997).

Willingness to Recommend

Stakeholder advocacy was measured using the item "I would recommend this NGO to my friends who want to help others."

Leadership Robustness and Long-Term Orientation

Leadership robustness was assessed using a reverse-coded item measuring perceived dependence on current leadership. Long-term orientation was assessed using a bipolar item contrasting short-term versus long-term focus. Together, these indicators capture perceived organizational resilience and sustainability.

Procedure

Data were collected using an online survey administered through Qualtrics between April 2022 and April 2025. The study received approval from the Institutional Review Board at the authors' university. Participants reviewed an informed consent statement prior to beginning the survey and were informed that participation was voluntary and anonymous.

To reduce potential common method variance, the survey included procedural safeguards such as separating predictor and outcome constructs and varying item ordering (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Harman's (1967) single-factor test indicated that no single factor accounted for the majority of variance, suggesting that common method bias was unlikely to explain the observed relationships.

RESULTS

This section presents the results of the hypothesis testing examining the relationships among transparency, stakeholder trust, leadership perceptions, and organizational outcomes. Each hypothesis was tested using 441 participants including volunteers (71%), employees (12%), donors (8%), and recipients (4%). The findings are reported below. Note that survey question items referred to reflect only those survey questions included in this study.

Hypothesis 1. NGOs Perceived as More Transparent and Research-driven Are Rated as More Effective by Their Stakeholders.

Respondents rated NGOs on transparency in research methodology (Q31_40), use of scientific evidence (Q32_1), and overall effectiveness (Q22_1) using a 10-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 10 = Strongly Agree). After listwise deletion on the three focal variables (Q31_40, Q32_1, Q22_1), the analytic sample comprised $n = 384$ respondents. Both unstandardized (b) and standardized (β) regression coefficients are reported.

Bivariate correlation analysis revealed significant positive relationships between perceived transparency and effectiveness ($r = .19$, $p < .001$) and between scientific approach and effectiveness ($r = .35$, $p < .001$). A multiple regression model with transparency and scientific approach as predictors explained 13.2% of the variance in perceived effectiveness ($R^2 = .132$, $F(2, 381) = 29.03$, $p < .001$).

The standardized regression coefficients indicated that use of scientific evidence ($\beta = .321$, $p < .001$) was a stronger predictor of perceived effectiveness than transparency ($\beta = .101$, $p = .043$). The unstandardized coefficients were $b = 0.291$ ($SE = 0.045$) for scientific approach and $b = 0.079$ ($SE = 0.039$) for transparency. The modest correlation between transparency and scientific approach ($r = .29$, $p < .001$) suggests that stakeholders view these as relatively independent dimensions of NGO practice rather than overlapping facets of a single underlying construct.

By Cohen's (1988) conventions the transparency–effectiveness correlation is small ($r = .19$) and the scientific evidence–effectiveness correlation is medium ($r = .35$); the overall model effect size is Cohen's $f^2 = .152$, on the boundary between small and medium effects.

Sensitivity analyses examined whether this pattern varied by stakeholder role. Subsample sizes were uneven (volunteers $n = 285$, employees $n = 49$, donors $n = 31$, recipients $n = 18$), but bivariate correlations were directionally consistent across roles, and a formal test of role $\times$ predictor interactions was non-significant, $\Delta R^2 = .008$, $F(6, 371) = 0.59$, $p = .74$, indicating that the transparency–scientific–effectiveness pattern holds across stakeholder groups.

These findings support Hypothesis 1 and demonstrate that NGOs which are transparent about their operations and employ evidence-based practices are perceived as being more effective. Although this hypothesis tested the combined factors of transparency and use of the scientific approach, data from research were shown to be more influential than transparency when reviewed individually. The combined R^2 of .132, although important, indicates that other factors also influence the perception of effectiveness among respondents.

Hypothesis 2. NGOs With Higher Scores on Transparency and Use of Scientific Evidence Will Be Rated as More Effective Overall.

Survey participants responded to questions on NGO transparency in research methodology (Q31_40), use of scientific evidence to meet goals (Q32_1), research implementation (Q33_1), clear effectiveness measures (Q34_1), and overall effectiveness (Q22_1) using 10-point Likert scales. After listwise deletion across all five variables, the analytic sample was $n = 378$. A multiple regression examined the relationship between evidence-based practices and perceived effectiveness; both unstandardized (b) and standardized (β) coefficients are reported to allow comparison of predictor strengths.

All evidence-based practice measures correlated significantly with perceived effectiveness: transparency ($r = .19$, $p < .001$), scientific evidence use ($r = .33$, $p < .001$), research implementation ($r = .37$, $p < .001$), and clear effectiveness measures ($r = .41$, $p < .001$). The evidence-based practice measures also correlated substantially with each other ($r = .26$ to $.70$, $p < .001$).

A multiple regression analysis with all four evidence-based practice measures predicting effectiveness yielded a significant model (See Table 1). In the joint model, transparency (Q31_40), scientific evidence uses (Q32_1), and research implementation (Q33_1) did not contribute significant unique variance once clarity of effectiveness measures was included. Only clarity of effectiveness measures (Q34_1) emerged as a significant individual predictor ($\beta = .264$, $p < .001$).

A nested-model comparison formally confirmed that adding research implementation and clarity of effectiveness measures significantly improves prediction over the H1 model, $\Delta R^2 = .058$, $F(2, 373) = 13.15$, $p < .001$ (both models were refit on the common $n = 378$ sample to permit direct comparison; H1 R^2 on this sample = $.122$, reflecting slightly less variance explained than in the $n = 384$ sample used for H1 alone). See Tables 1 and 1a.

TABLE 1
MULTIPLE REGRESSION PREDICTING EFFECTIVENESS (Q22_1) -- HYPOTHESIS 2

Predictor	b	SE	t	p	β
Transparency (Q31_40)	.048	.038	1.25	.214	.062
Scientific evidence (Q32_1)	.065	.062	1.05	.295	.072
Research implementation (Q33_1)	.104	.070	1.49	.138	.107
Clear effectiveness measures (Q34_1)	.241	.062	3.92	<.001	.264

Note. $R^2 = .180$, adjusted $R^2 = .171$, $F(4, 373) = 20.46$, $p < .001$, $n = 378$. β = standardized coefficient.

TABLE 1A
COLLINEARITY DIAGNOSTICS FOR THE HYPOTHESIS 2 REGRESSION MODEL

Predictor	VIF	Tolerance
Transparency (Q31_40)	1.14	0.88
Scientific evidence (Q32_1)	2.17	0.46
Research implementation (Q33_1)	2.37	0.42
Clear effectiveness measures (Q34_1)	2.07	0.48

Note. VIF = variance inflation factor. All VIF values were below the conventional concern threshold of 5 and below the stricter threshold of 2.5, indicating that multicollinearity did not substantially inflate standard errors in the model. Although the predictors were moderately to strongly intercorrelated, $r = .26$ -. $.70$, the VIF values remained below conventional thresholds. Therefore, the nonsignificant unique contributions of Q31_40, Q32_1, and Q33_1 appear to reflect Q34_1's dominant explanatory role rather than problematic multicollinearity.

The findings support Hypothesis 2 at the level of the overall model, but the pattern of significant predictors differs from simple bivariate patterns. Transparency (Q31_40) and scientific evidence use (Q32_1)—along with research implementation (Q33_1)—do not contribute significant unique variance once all four predictors are entered simultaneously. Instead, it is the applied, outcome-demonstrable end of

the evidence-use spectrum—having clear effectiveness measures (Q34_1, $\beta = .264$)—that uniquely predicts perceived effectiveness.

The high correlations among evidence-based practice measures indicate that stakeholders perceive these as interconnected aspects of a cohesive approach to program management. The 18.0% variance explained represents a meaningful improvement over the two-predictor model in Hypothesis 1 (13.2%), confirming the incremental value of assessing implementation fidelity and outcome measurement.

Hypothesis 3 (H3-H3). Higher Stakeholder Trust in an NGO Will Be Positively Associated With Willingness to Recommend the NGO to Others.

Participants were asked to rate their trust in the NGO (Q53_1: "The NGO cares about me") and their likelihood of recommending the NGO to friends (Q25_1) using 10-point Likert scales. After listwise deletion, the analytic sample comprised $n = 396$. Simple linear regression assessed the predictive relationship between trust and recommendation likelihood. A moderation test used hierarchical regression to examine whether stakeholder role moderated the trust–recommendation relationship; the continuous trust predictor was mean-centered prior to computing all role $\times$ trust product terms to reduce multicollinearity (Aiken & West, 1991).

The analysis revealed a strong positive correlation between trust and recommendation likelihood ($r = .46$, $p < .001$). Linear regression confirmed that trust significantly predicted recommendation likelihood ($b = 0.448$, $SE = 0.044$, $\beta = .465$, $p < .001$), with trust explaining 21.2% of the variance in recommendation likelihood ($R^2 = .212$, $F(1, 394) = 105.9$, $p < .001$).

This relationship remained consistent across stakeholder roles, with no significant interaction between role and trust in predicting recommendation likelihood ($F(3, 388) = 0.488$, $\delta R^2 = .003$, $p = .691$). The analysis supports this hypothesis in that higher levels of trust lead to a greater likelihood of recommending the NGO to others.

Hypothesis 4. Higher Levels of Confidence in Ngo Leadership and a Stronger Perceived Focus on Long-Term Strategic Goals Will Be Positively Associated With Expected Organizational Longevity.

Stakeholders rated the organization's dependency on current leadership (Q21_40, reverse-coded), focus on long-term goals (Q20_1), and expected longevity (Q18, on a scale from "Less than one year" to "5+ years"). After listwise deletion, the analytic sample was $n = 376$. Note that Q21_40 measures leadership dependency (higher = more dependent on current leadership), so the expected relationship with longevity is negative. Correlation and multiple regression analyses examined relationships between leadership characteristics and perceived sustainability. An interaction test examined whether leadership dependency and long-term focus jointly influenced longevity.

Analysis revealed a weak negative correlation between leadership dependency and expected longevity ($r = -.08$, $p = .120$), which did not reach statistical significance. Conversely, long-term focus correlated positively with expected longevity ($r = .18$, $p < .001$). The correlation between leadership dependency and long-term focus was negligible ($r = .04$, $p = .436$).

Multiple regression with both leadership dependency and long-term focus predicting expected longevity yielded a significant model ($F(2, 373) = 7.65$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .039$). Long-term focus emerged as a significant positive predictor ($\beta = .182$, $b = 0.172$, $SE = 0.048$, $p < .001$), while leadership dependency approached but did not reach conventional significance ($\beta = -.088$, $b = -0.077$, $SE = 0.045$, $p = .085$). No significant interaction effect was detected between the two predictors ($F(1, 372) = 1.68$, $\delta R^2 = .004$, $p = .196$).

This hypothesis was partially supported, in that leadership dependency was not correlated with expected longevity, but long-term focus was. This suggests that organizational design related to long-term focus is more important than current leadership.

Overall, hypotheses involving transparency and stakeholder trust were consistently supported. Transparency was positively associated with both perceived effectiveness and multiple dimensions of stakeholder trust. Trust, in turn, was positively associated with stakeholder advocacy. Long-term strategic

orientation emerged as a significant predictor of expected organizational longevity, whereas perceived leadership robustness did not demonstrate a significant effect.

DISCUSSION

Studies have shown that transparency is an important factor in the perceived effectiveness of an NGO (Cornforth, 2003; Renz & Smith, 2023). This study examined that relationship in the first two hypotheses, which explored the impact of research on perceptions of transparency and effectiveness. The results indicate that transparency does increase perceived effectiveness, but it is not as significant as other factors.

The first hypothesis (NGOs perceived as more transparent and research-driven are rated as more effective by their stakeholders) examines the impact of transparency and use of published scientific research for improving operations. Results indicate that the use of external research had a bigger influence on perceived effectiveness than transparency, but both were relevant. The second hypothesis (NGOs with higher scores on transparency and use of scientific evidence will be rated as more effective overall) includes NGOs applying their own research to inform operational improvement and having and reporting on clear effectiveness measures. This suggests that, when these factors were examined together, stakeholders placed the greatest weight on whether NGOs had clear ways of measuring and reporting their effectiveness.

This suggests that respondents view internal indicators of success as the central marker of effectiveness, with other evidence-based practices adding little beyond this. Stakeholders (e.g., workers, volunteers, administrators), most of whom have an internal role in the NGO, have greater confidence in internal measures. Given their frontline experience with organizational operations, they may regard internal assessments of effectiveness as more reliable than external scientific evidence or an NGO's own research, especially when these sources are perceived as remote from, or insufficiently applicable to, practical organizational realities. Clear effectiveness measures may be more meaningful to stakeholders who value job security and their own contributions. Stakeholders know how to contribute to these measures, and as such, value them and see them as demonstrating effectiveness.

The third hypothesis predicted a relationship between trust and recommending an organization. The question assessed trust, "The NGO cares about me." The correlation between trust and recommending an NGO is related to previous research, which indicates that responsible data stewardship in terms of personal data collection enhances stakeholder support (Li & Huang, 2023; Hillebrand et al., 2023). This appears to correspond to recommending an NGO as measured in this study. Additionally, literature reviews of NGO stakeholder relationship management indicate that having voice and feeling included contribute to trust and willingness to recommend (Mato-Santiso et al., 2021; Nguyen et al., 2024).

The fourth hypothesis predicted that confidence in leadership and a focus on long-term strategic goals would predict expected longevity of the organization. However, only strategic goals predicted expected longevity, not leadership. This partly supports previous research indicating that leadership confidence, ethical conduct, and long-term strategic orientation are important for navigating uncertainties and maintaining organizational legitimacy (Bansal & DesJardine, 2014; Suriyankietkaew & Avery, 2016). In the current study, stakeholders perceived an NGO as a strong organization when it pursued long-term goals (rather than relying on leadership confidence) and viewed this as key to longevity.

Future Research

This research is dependent upon subjective measures of NGO effectiveness. Future research could look at various objective metrics that an organization might use to measure effectiveness. Publicly traded companies provide objective measures such as stock prices, returns on investment, and profit margins. Developing similarly objective measures would be valuable to this field of research. This research also grouped all stakeholders together. Additional research might show different perspectives according to the type of stakeholder, such as donors, employees, and recipients.

CONCLUSION

This paper establishes that NGO effectiveness is impacted by transparency, the use of scientific research, and the application of internal research. However, the use of clear organizational objectives provides the most significant impact, to the point that it overwhelms other measures. Indeed, having clear organizational goals becomes a heuristic for determining the effectiveness of an NGO. Trust was also shown to be influential in recommending an NGO. Trust included both safely managing data and respecting the voice of stakeholders. Finally, the research showed that a strong institution, rather than a strong leader, was most important in the perceived longevity of the organizations.

NGOs looking for lessons from this research should consider developing clear measurable objectives that are easily available internally and publicly. However, NGOs should not only draw on available research but also apply it in practice and learn from its implementation. This process can create a virtuous cycle of applying evidence, assessing results, making adjustments, and repeating the process. It should take place within a framework of transparency that allows stakeholders to see how decisions are made and to evaluate actual outcomes against the NGO's stated objectives. Another lesson is that trust engenders the goodwill that will cause stakeholders to recommend the organization to others. Finally, the strength of the organization itself, not the current leadership, impacts the perceived longevity of the NGO.

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