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Level Best

**HOW SMALL AND GRASSROOTS
NONPROFITS CAN TACKLE EVALUATION
AND TALK RESULTS**

Marcia Festen
Marianne Philbin



John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

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by Marcia Festen and Marianne Philbin.

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THE CHARDON PRESS SERIES

Fundamental social change happens when people come together to organize, advocate, and create solutions to injustice. Chardon Press recognizes that communities working for social justice need tools to create and sustain healthy organizations. In an effort to support these organizations, Chardon Press produces materials on fundraising, community organizing, and organizational development. These resources are specifically designed to meet the needs of grassroots nonprofits—organizations that face the unique challenge of promoting change with limited staff, funding, and other resources. We at Chardon Press have adapted traditional techniques to the circumstances of grassroots nonprofits. Chardon Press and Jossey-Bass hope these works help people committed to social justice to build mission-driven organizations that are strong, financially secure, and effective.

Kim Klein, Series Editor

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To Willa and Genevieve, Ruby and Ella

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INTRODUCTION

*Everything that can be counted does not necessarily count,
and everything that counts cannot necessarily be counted.*

Albert Einstein

The expression “Do your level best” means “Make your very best effort.” As we talked with nonprofit leaders about this book, we began to think of “level best” as the level to which all nonprofits aspire. Solid program evaluation can help nonprofits achieve that level of performance.

The expression originated during the California gold rush of the 1840s, when people panning for gold would shake the sand and gravel from the riverbed until it was level, the better to spot the fragments of gold. This book will help you become more capable and confident about evaluation so that you can make the “gold” in your work stand out.

Level Best is intended for new and established grassroots and smaller nonprofit organizations that seek better measures to document and share results in ways that are practical, efficient, and meaningful. Our goal is to help demystify evaluation and to offer practical strategies that enable more confident decision making, sound program and organizational planning, and increased accountability and credibility.