

MISSION AND VISION STATEMENTS

“If you don’t know where you’re going, it doesn’t matter which way you go.”
-The Cheshire Cat, *Alice in Wonderland*

Publications

Angelica, Emil. *Wilder Nonprofit Field Guide to Crafting Effective Mission and Vision Statements*, Wilder Publishing.

Websites

www.nonprofits.org

www.not-for-profit.org

www.delawarenonprofit.org

In this Section:

- Ins and Outs of a Mission Statement
- Criteria of a Mission Statement
- Mission Statement Checklist
- Strategic Planning/ Checklist



DELAWARE HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES
Division of State Service Centers State Office of Volunteerism
Governor's Commission on Community and Volunteer Service

Mission Statement: The ins and outs

Mission Statement

- Tells why the organization exists
- Is typically one sentence to a paragraph that tells who the agency is, what services it provides, and for whom
- Should be clear and concise, as to set the organization apart from others
- The mission statement is the only foundation upon which a long-range strategic plan (the blueprint for carrying out the organizations 'business' _ can be developed.

Your Mission: It's not what you do, but the difference you make

The mission of a nonprofit organization comes from its core competitive advantages. It must be clearly articulated, fully understood, and completely embraced by all. It must demonstrate the difference an organization will make for those it serves, rather than merely describing what it does. And, a mission statement needs to communicate this in as few words as possible.

Because of its fundamental importance in the life of nonprofit organizations, columns have been written on mission statements, and any library or bookstore with a strong business and management section will have shelf space devoted to the subject. Since it outlines the organization's values, purpose, hope and dreams, everyone in the organization should understand the mission statement.

Mission Statement Criteria

(Adapted from the Center for Nonprofit Organizations)

Establish boundaries– The “bounds” of the service delivered in reasonable terms regarding types and numbers of people and geographic limits. Describes WHY the organization exists, not what methods are used. Defines clearly the “business” of the organization. Basically, the organization itself asks itself: “What is the reason for our existence?”

Act to motivate the board, staff, volunteers, and donors– In designing or revising the mission statement, all must have input. Changes come about because either the environment changes or the needs of one or more of the constituents change. Short enough to remember and easy to communicate.

Help in the process of evaluation– The mission statement helps in the process of organizational evaluation. Often, mission statements are often unclear to the public at large, and argued about among non-profits themselves. It is a formidable challenge for an organization's mission statement to serve as a measure against which results and benefits of the services provided can be evaluated.

Creating a New Mission Statement or rewriting an Existing One

Use may use the checklist listed above to assist you in writing your missions statement, or you may engage an experienced writer who will fashion the document based on your input. You can usually find the right person by checking with consultants in your area that specialize in long range/ strategic planning and fundraising. If there is a local Association of Fundraising Professionals (AFP) chapter in your area, ask their officials for leads.

Stay on Course

Your mission statement is working at its best when it clearly and firmly guides the board in making effective decisions about the organization’s future. It motivates and challenges the staff to meet well-defined shared goals. It is the responsibility of the leadership to see to it that the organization always operates within the confines of the mission.

Mission Statement Checklist

(Adapted from the Center for Nonprofit Organizations)

1. Ends, not means

Remember, your mission statement doesn't relate how, but rather why. It should focus on the results your organization accomplishes through its programs and services.

2. Effort

Would such as: try, seek, influence, and encourage suggest staff organizes activities around things other than results.

3. Verbs

Beware of using verbs in your mission statement!

4. Nouns embodying activities

Does your mission statements use nouns that signify a type of “means” rather than an outcome? Beware of words such as advocacy, education, program, and service.

5. The Unidentifiable

Check carefully to make sure there is not any technical language or jargon in your mission statement.

6. Brevity

The shorter, the better. Burying the mission statement in two or three padded paragraphs will be sure to weaken its power to guide and shape your organization.

7. Being too broad or too narrow

Your mission statement should be broad enough to allow for growth and expansion, but narrow enough to keep the organization clearly and strongly focused.

8. Uniqueness

It is important to consider your mission in light of other similarly situated organizations, and to ensure that your organization “stands out.”

Strategic Planning, Vision Statement

Strategic Plan

- Includes clearly stated and defensible initiatives and respective costs
- Allows for the creation of the fund-raising plan

Vision Statement

- Describes the organizations future
- Is more detailed than the mission statement
- Describes where you are going or would like to go
- Brainstorming among the key staff members plays a major role in creating a vision

Together they:

- Provide direction for your organization
- Focus on present and future goals of the organization

Note: More information may be found by googling “mission statement” and “vision statement,” or in the book *Volunteer Management: mobilizing all the Resources of the Community*. The book may be borrowed from any public library in the State.

OK, you've written your mission statement, used the checklist, using the form below, have a few people from various sections of the organization rate the statement.

1. The mission or vision statement has been drafted collaboratively. _____
2. The Mission or vision statement expresses the organization's essential values and goals so that they are visible to those both inside and outside the organization. _____
3. The mission or vision statement expresses thee essential elements: a clear sense of identity, clear goals, and the values that inform the goals. _____
4. The mission or vision statement strives for brevity, portability, and memorability. _____