



Overview

A mission statement defines what the organization does. A vision statement provides a vision for the future. A values statement shapes the actions of the group. The philosophy (vision and mission) influences the types of programs and services offered by the Member Organization.

Vision and mission statements should provide common direction for all, be motivational and inspirational, enable the organization to understand its parameters, and empower employees and volunteers, and allow for continuity.

A mission statement describes the present – what the organization is. A vision statement describes the future – what the organization wants to be.

Groups that clearly define their vision and mission are more likely to attract committed volunteers and members because they will be answer the following questions: What do we do? Who do we serve? Why do we exist? Who would be interested in joining and why?

A Vision Statement

A vision statement is a brief, clearly articulated statement of what the organization intends to become and achieve in the future- a dream of future success that inspires people to get and stay involved.

Example: Our Soccer Club envisions that all youth between the ages of 4 and 18 will have the opportunity to play soccer in a safe and healthy environment.

A Mission Statement

A mission statement is a brief, precise and clear statement of the purpose of the group and the needs it addresses.

Your mission statement should be able to answer three main questions in no more than a couple of sentences: a) what business are you in and what the club does, b) for whom are you in business for, and c) how will you achieve your vision. It guides the development and design of the group's programs and services.

A checklist for a good mission statement:

- Does it begin with a verb?
- Is it clear and simplistic?
- Does it describe 'for what', 'for whom', and 'how'?
- Is it realistic?
- Does it describe the uniqueness of the organization?
- Does it embrace all members of the organization?
- Does it provide options for growth and development?

Example: Our Soccer Club offers the opportunity for young people between the ages of 4 and 18 to play organized soccer. We recognize the importance of fair play and safety for all involved.

Writing a Vision or Mission Statement

1. Answer the key questions “Why does our organization exist?” and “Twenty years from now, what will people say about the organization?”
 - Consider large-scale issues like the moral/ethical convictions of the organization and the public image the organization wants to project.
 - Allow those involved in the process to be idealistic in their thoughts
 - Gather input from as many people as possible
 - Brainstorm with a group of people who bring various perspectives to the table.
2. List all of the answers on a single sheet.
3. Ask members to circle their top 3 choice words or ‘phrases’ that best represent their view of the group’s purpose.
4. Bring the group’s list down to a few words.
5. Start writing the statement.
 - Use dynamic, action words. For example, ‘we *strive* to be more dynamic’ implies greater effort than ‘we *try*’
 - Avoid the use of past tense. For example, ‘we *give*’ is more active and carries more impact than ‘we *gave*’
 - Include a social categorization. For example, a vision statement that begins with ‘we *will grow into*’ is more effective than one that begins with the more impersonal ‘to *grow into*’.
 - Condense, condense, condense! For example, ‘*lead the way in bringing affordable athletic activities to families across the province*’ could be condensed into ‘*we bring affordable athletics to all families*’. The meaning remains, but less words increase the impact.
6. Take a break – a day, a week, a month – before reviewing it one last time and adopting the statement.
7. Review the statements regularly (yearly or every second year) to make sure that they are still relevant to the organization.

Values Statements

A values statement is a set of statements describing the fundamental beliefs and principles that guide an organization’s actions. A values statement is a valuable governance tool for the organization, answering the question, “*How will we carry out our mission?*”

Unlike a mission or vision, a values statement favours descriptive definitions over the use of single words. For example, rather than using the word *accountability*, a values statement should use a phrase such as “*we are committed to honesty and transparency in all matters relating to the use of donor donations.*” Descriptive definitions provide employees and volunteers with more information and direction.

Writing a Values Statement

As with mission and vision Statements, input should be gathered from a broad range of sources. Once this information is obtained, the group should:

- Agree on a group of core values from which the organization would like to operate
- Discuss the differences which may exist between these preferred values and the actual values of the organization (the values reflected by the behaviour of the organization's membership)
- Design actions to align actual behaviour with preferred values
- Incorporate these actions into the organization's strategic plan

How values are defined is very important. During initial discussions, terms like family, professionalism and religion are likely to be shared amongst the group. These represent important aspects of life, but are not, in themselves, values. Values are defined by asking yourself *what* you value about these things. For example, individuals who are talking about the importance of family may say things like '*family is always there for you*', '*family gives you a sense of security*' or '*family cares*'. Dependability, security and caring are words which represent core values.

A values statement may be presented as a standard list of core values. However, this format may be augmented or replaced by other formats, including:

- A code of ethics
- A set of founding principles
- The incorporation of extensive values into the organization's mission and vision