



Pathways for Addressing Social Needs: Mission, Vision, and Values

Defining What the Organization is About, Where it is
Going, and What it Stands For





Overview

- As a program or project is getting ready to launch it is important to be clear on its basic purpose, what it is hoping to achieve, and what principles it stands for.
 - The organization's mission, vision, and values provide explicit statements that define these three elements.
- The mission, vision, and value statements should be concise, clear, compelling, and realistic to motivate and inspire those in the organization to put them into practice.
- The mission, vision, and values need to be more than just statements on a piece of paper but lived and demonstrated in the daily operations of the organization.

The Mission



- The organization's mission is a clear statement that concisely outlines the reason why it exists, defining its core purpose, and expressing its commitment to those it is intended to serve.
- A mission statement is more than just words on paper but should provide a guide for how decisions are made in the organization.
- The strategic direction of the organization should be in alignment with its mission.
- For organizational leaders and executives, the mission statement serves as an important tool to ensure survival and growth.¹



Key Considerations in Developing the Mission

- Be clear in the target population you intend to serve with your programs.
- Concisely state what the organization does or key services it provides.
- Some organizations identify the specific geography or area they serve.
- Express key beliefs of the organization (some mission statements incorporate the institution's values).
- Communicate the organization's commitment to serving the area/community going forward.
- Highlight the key strengths of the organization and the image it wants to communicate to the public.
- Get input from all levels of the organization as the mission statement is being developed.
- Keep the statement short and simple so people can remember it.



Examples of Mission Statements

- *We are a group of Christian churches working to provide food to anyone with need in the Camden area. It is our privilege and responsibility to serve God by answering this call. (Camden Area Christian Food Pantry)*
- *We believe in making Greater Boston a better place to live, work, and raise a family. Our mission is to build POWER by developing local LEADERS so we can ACT together on issues that matter to our communities. (Greater Boston Interfaith Organization)*
- *To draw people together across civic, economic, political, and religious divides to affect social change and develop public leaders. To build relationships and action across differences. We exist to strengthen community, generate leaders, and foster meaningful relationships as we act together for a stronger Missoula. (Missoula Interfaith Collaborative)*

The Vision



- The organization's vision is an aspirational and future-focused statement that communicates what the company intends to become or the impact that it wants to make.
- The vision should be in alignment with the mission.
- The organization's goals and objectives should align with the vision that provides the foundation for their development.
- Vision statements, similar to the mission, should be concise and simple.
- Organizations should develop vision statements that will motivate the employees to want to achieve it.
- A vision statement serves as a north star for the board and leadership, guiding strategic planning, major decisions, and organizational priorities.²



Key Considerations in Developing the Vision

- Vision statements should describe a desired future state and inspire members of the organization to want to achieve it.
- Keep the vision statement concise and just a few sentences at most.
- Use the vision to help challenge the team to achieve the desired future state.
- Vision statements should be outcomes focused that create a clear picture of the desired future and are rooted in the mission.
- The vision is usually stated in a future tense.
- It is alright to develop visions that are bold and audacious.
- Seek input from different people in the organization as the vision statement is being developed.



Examples of Vision Statements

- *IM Houston creates a more caring, connected and respectful community. (IM Houston)*
- *A world where all people can mitigate or recover from crisis and thrive-with justice, dignity, and the unwavering certainty that they are valued and cared for unconditionally. (New York Disaster & Interfaith Services)*
- *We Desire to see through the power of Christ that cycles are broken and lives are transformed. (New Hope Compassionate Ministries)*
- *All people have a home. (Beacon Interfaith Housing Collaborative)*

Core Values



- The organization's core values include key principles, standards, and beliefs that impact the decisions made by the company, its culture, and the behaviors it expects from the employees.
- The values help to establish the foundation upon which organizational culture is built.
- The company's values should be key in making important decisions.
- Aligned values across the organization help to ensure success and improve overall satisfaction.
- Core values are vital to strategy execution because they guide your organization and employees' behavior.³



Key Considerations in Developing Values

- Seek input from the organization's leadership, employees, volunteers, and customers/clients to identify what principles are valued in the company.
- Utilize the feedback received to identify the major themes and key behaviors people feel should be a priority in the organization.
- Align the values with the organization's mission.
- Develop a list of the top values but keep it succinct and avoid creating a laundry list that is too long.
- Provide explanations for each value in terms of how they are put into practice in the organization.
- Leaders should use the values to guide their actions and should serve as a model in terms of how these principles are lived in the institution.



Examples of Core Values

- *Religious Liberty; Faith as a Force for Good; Equal Rights and Freedom; Supporting Opportunity for All; Racial Justice; Economic Justice; Promoting Civil Rights (Interfaith Alliance of Colorado)*
- *Harmony; Respect; and Indigenous Values (Native Americans for Community Action)*
- *Integrity; Quality; Respect and Dignity; Innovation; Empowerment (Saint Francis Ministries)*



Key Points

- The mission, vision and values of an organization should align and support each other.
- In developing mission, vision, and value statements be succinct and clear.
 - Short statements are better if you want people to remember and integrate them into their ongoing work.
- In developing the mission, vision, and values it is important to seek input across the organization.
- Integrate the mission, vision, and values into the daily work and operations of the organization so they are lived and practiced.
- Leaders of the organization need to be models of how the mission, vision and values are practiced through actions and not just words on paper.



Conclusion

- The mission, vision and values form the foundation upon which an organization can develop successful programs to serve unmet needs in the community.
- While guiding the day-to-day work of the organization, the mission, vision, and values also help to shape and direct the future strategic direction of the company.
- The mission, vision, and values are more than just words on paper but must be put into practice to help the organization chart its course forward.
- Organizations that have a compelling mission and vision and who live their values are creating a path for success by attracting good employees focused on meeting the goals.



Online Resources

- **Nonprofit Hub**

- Provides information to develop good mission and vision statements.

<https://nonprofithub.org/vision-vs-mission-statement-for-nonprofits/>

- **Funding for Good**

- Provides resources to help organizations draft a mission and vision statement.

<https://fundingforgood.org/crafting-a-stellar-vision-and-mission-statement-how-to-do-it-right-and-why-it-matters/>

- **OnStrategy**

- Provides resources to help an organization articulate its core values.

<https://onstrategyhq.com/resources/how-to-write-core-values/>



Reference Notes

¹Daniel Robothan, PH.D., Suzanna Windon, Ph.D., and Carolyn Henzi Plaza, *“Tips for How to Develop the Organizational Mission Statement,”* PennState Extension, January 14, 2025, <https://extension.psu.edu/tips-for-how-to-develop-the-organizational-mission-statement> (accessed January 20, 2026).

²Lena Eisenstein, *“What is a Vision Statement, and Why Does Your Organization Need One?”* BoardEffect, January 6, 2026, <https://www.boardeffect.com/blog/what-vision-statement-why-important/> (accessed January 25, 2026).

³Kate Gibson, *“The Role Core Values Play in Strategy Execution,”* Harvard Business School Online, November 21, 2023, <https://online.hbs.edu/blog/post/how-to-implement-core-values-in-the-workplace> (accessed January 22, 2025).