

WHY ARE YOU DOING THIS?

A mission statement articulates the core values, purpose, vision, and scope of the organization. It is most useful when it represents all of its members, not just the founder or key officers of the board.

To write an original mission statement, ask members to respond to the following questions. Compile the responses and allow members to select the best words and phrases. As you revise and condense the statements, allow all members to participate so that the entire group will feel invested in the mission statement.

Whom does your organization serve?

Why is your organization important to the community?

What benefit do you expect to receive from participating in your organization?

What do you want your organization to accomplish in the future?

What are the major issues/concerns/opportunities facing your organization? What critical things need to be done?

HOW MISSION AND STRATEGY BREAK DOWN

MISSION

CORE VALUES	Essential and enduring tenets of an organization. Timeless guiding principles—such as freedom, justice, and equality—that require no external justification.
PURPOSE	An organization’s reason for being. Provides meaning and significance to an organization’s activities. Answers the question of why the organization does what it does.
PRIMARY GOAL	A central overarching objective that provides focus and structure to an organization’s efforts. Primary goals must be challenging yet attainable, and sufficiently concrete that you know when you’ve achieved them.
VISION	A tangible description of the future in which the primary goal has been achieved. Vision is rich, textured, and vivid—it’s where the poetry and music emerge.

STRATEGY

SCOPE	Describes where and how an organization will compete. Specifies who the customer is, what products or services are offered, and the range of activities the organization performs.
COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE	The unique sources of value that an organization offers its customers. It explains why its customers will prefer its products and services to those offered by other organizations.
LOGIC	Answers the questions of how and why the strategy will work. Specifies the key assumptions about the environment as well as how an organization will be designed and managed so as to create its competitive advantage.

From “The Sound of No Music,” James A. Phillips, Jr., Stanford Social Innovation Review, Fall 2004, 45-53.

ACHIEVING STRATEGIC CLARITY

Because resources are limited, nonprofits need to clarify their intended impact. Getting critical resource decisions right—allocating time, talent, and dollars to the activities that have the greatest impact—is what “strategy” is all about.

WHAT IS OUR INTENDED IMPACT?

Who are our beneficiaries?
What are the specific outcomes we seek for our beneficiaries?
How do we define success?
Who is accountable for success?
What won't we do?
What would make us obsolete?

WHAT IS OUR STRATEGY?

What are the most important elements of our programs?
What are the elements of our programs that meet the needs of our beneficiaries?
How can we generate the intended impact from our existing resources?
What is the logical cause and effect?
Where are the gaps or leaps of faith in this logic?
Are there other ways in which we could achieve the desired outcomes?
What amount of time do our beneficiaries need to be engaged to achieve these outcomes?
What else do our beneficiaries need to achieve these outcomes?

From “Zeroing In on Impact,” Susan Colby, Nan Stone, and Paul Carttar; Stanford Social Innovation Review, Fall 2004, 24-33.

DEFINING ORGANIZATIONAL POLICIES

Every organization should have bylaws which outline how the officers of the board will conduct business. In addition to bylaws, the board should establish and clarify policies that describe how the organization will carry out its function. Policies might address terms of service, committees, meetings, attendance, membership guidelines, election of officers, partnerships, fund-raising procedures, and personnel.

Policies should not be cumbersome. Their purpose is to improve the efficiency of the organization by clarifying the most common and most critical issues. Consider the following questions:

How do members join your organization? What is the commitment for members who join your organization? What is expected from them?
When do members meet? What attendance is required? What is the standard for behavior at activities carried out by the organization?
Who are the key personnel in the organization? What are their job descriptions and terms of service?
How are officers elected? How are committees formed? How are staff positions filled?
What is the scope of decision-making authority for respective officers, committees, and staff members?
What is the proper procedure for using and accounting for the resources in the organization (i.e., equipment, supplies)? Which out-of-pocket expenses will be reimbursed and through what procedure?
How are funds raised and by whom?
How will the organization's leadership receive and respond to complaints from its members? From its patrons?

USING VOLUNTEERS EFFECTIVELY

Volunteers need to feel that their time and skills are used effectively. They want their efforts to make a meaningful contribution toward the organization's purpose. They need to know clearly what their responsibilities are and how they will be held accountable. Your organization should establish guidelines that address the following issues:

What will be the criteria for the volunteers' roles?
How will new volunteers be screened (background check, references, etc)?
What volunteers' expenses be reimbursed and how?
To whom will volunteers report, and how will their work be evaluated?
What will be the standards for volunteers' performance?
How will volunteer committees be structured, and what guidelines will they need?
How will conflicts among volunteers and/or staff be resolved?

PROPERLY ORIENT VOLUNTEERS. Give them information about the organization, its mission, a calendar of activities, and a list of personnel or members. Clearly explain your expectations of the volunteer, how his performance will be evaluated, and your organization's policies and procedures. Be sure volunteers understand their role in the organization.

CREATE AN INVITING ENVIRONMENT. Introduce new volunteers by name. Show them around.

GIVE MEANINGFUL ASSIGNMENTS. Let volunteers know to whom they report, what their budget is, and when an assignment must be completed. For complicated assignments, list the steps and procedures to properly complete the job.

USE VOLUNTEERS FULLY. Involve as many volunteers as reasonable in planning sessions. Listen to their suggestions and implement any worthwhile ideas. Determine the personal goals of new volunteers in order to align them with the group's goals.

DESIGNING VOLUNTEER JOBS

Before you set loose a band of volunteers to do something, take a few minutes to thoughtfully consider why and how the job should be done. A little preparation will save you from a lot of misunderstanding and mistakes.

VOLUNTEER JOB POSITION DESIGN WORKSHEET

Job title and purpose:
Responsibilities :
Necessary skills, knowledge, personality:
Time commitment and timeline (hrs., days, etc.):
Time definitions (flexible, night/day, short- or long-term, etc.):
Necessary training or support:
Committee work or job-sharing possibilities:
Supervisor/accountability:
Recruitment method:

ACCOMMODATE A RANGE OF TIME AVAILABILITY—one-time projects, several assignments within a one-week period, flexible leadership positions or “consulting” roles.

CLUMP SIMILAR ASSIGNMENTS together for a committee to share as well as defining discrete jobs for individuals.

IDENTIFY JOBS FOR ALL PERSONALITY TYPES—some for people who like thinking and planning, some for leaders who like to be in charge, and some for those who enjoy working with other people.

DEFINE JOBS THAT REQUIRE VARYING SKILLS ranging from specific to general. Keep in mind that some people enjoy doing things that are different from their careers.

PLANNING FOR EFFECTIVE MEETINGS

As the saying goes, “Two heads are better than one.” That’s why successful organizations bring together people frequently to plan goals and solutions. A well-planned and facilitated meeting helps participants to contribute their best thinking. As you get ready for and conduct a meeting, address the following questions.

What is the purpose, or expected outcome, of the meeting?
Who needs to be there?
What items should be on the agenda?
What materials will be needed, and who will prepare them?
How will the room be set up?
Who will facilitate the meeting, and what facilitation skills will he need?
What will be the ground rules for orderly discussion?
How will consensus-building techniques be used to help participants make decisions?
How will you handle conflict as it surfaces?
Following the meeting, what “next steps” and assignments need to be done?
Following the meeting, how well did the group accomplish the expected outcomes?

From Miranda Duncan, “Effective Meeting Facilitation: The Sine Qua Non of Planning,” National Endowment for the Arts—Lessons Learned. The full article and sample tools, forms, and checklists are available at <http://arts.endow.gov/resources/Lessons/>.

PERSUADING PEOPLE TO GET INVOLVED

Marketing isn't just about telling people about your arts events—that's just one tool called promotion or publicity. There are six other tools that you can change, improve, or otherwise manipulate to get people involved in what you do:

PRODUCT—All of the services and experiences that your organization offers its patrons, volunteers, and staff.

PRICE—Not just the ticket price, but also the “opportunity cost” of participating in your activities.

PLACE—The physical locations of your events, rehearsals, meetings, and ticket sales.

PHYSICAL EVIDENCE—The ways you show people that what you do is good before they have the chance to experience what you offer.

PROCESS—How your organization and its personnel interact with each other and with your patrons.

PEOPLE—The attitudes and behavior of everyone your audience, participants, or visitors meeting during their involvement in your activities.

A good marketing plan addresses how to use these tools favorably to present a positive impression of your organization. Keep in mind that if just one of these tools reflects badly on your organization, it could discourage someone from getting involved. Yet it takes a majority of these tools reflecting positively to persuade someone to participate.

WHAT WORKS?

A study of 164 cultural organizations in Scotland found that those who successfully marketed their programs do several things in common:

Designate a staff member with specific responsibility for marketing.

Articulate a marketing plan as part of the overall organizational strategy.

Set measurable marketing goals in advance.

Collect and analyze audience information.

Design marketing activities for specific target audiences.

Adapt marketing practices to suit each arts event and/or individual target audiences.

Aim to develop specific groups of new participants while at the same time satisfying existing participants and audiences.

Evaluate the success of each marketing activity.

Consult with marketing personnel about programming decisions.