INTRO TO MISSION STATEMENTS

MISSION STATEMENT DEFINITION

A one-sentence statement describing the reason your organization or program exists. (what you do + who/what you do this for)

PRIMARY AUDIENCES & FUNCTIONS OF A MISSION STATEMENT

EXTERNAL
Inform Others of What You Do

Your mission statement is a great way to summarize what your org is about, providing context for follow up information on programs and services.

STAFF & VOLUNTEERS
Focus & Motivate Your Team

People want to believe in the work they do. Your mission statement should be easy for staff & volunteers to understand, remember, and own.

LEADERSHIP
Guide Strategic Planning & Decisions

By definition, you cannot prioritize everything. Your mission statement should serve as your guiding star when considering priorities and new initiatives.

GUIDELINES YOUR MISSION STATEMENT SHOULD FOLLOW

Clear (Easy to Understand)

This is not a time to show off your vocabulary. Use concrete language and keep things simple. Try to keep to an 8th grade reading level, don't exceed 10th grade.

Concise (Short & To-the-Point)

Don't fall prey to buzzwords, adjective strings and fluff. Aim for 5-14 words, 20 max. This is often the hardest part, but anything longer and you undermine its utility.

Useful (Inform. Focus. Guide.)

It doesn't matter how short, clear or cute your phrase is if it fails to inform others about what you do and focus and guide internal team members and decisions.

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### MISSION BUILDING BLOCKS

Rather than starting with an unstructured brainstorming session, we find it helps to take a step back and start with the different mission statement building blocks and frameworks.

#### The Simplest Approach

The most straightforward approach is to pair high-level actions with a targeted beneficiary.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACTION(S)</th>
<th>TARGETED BENEFICIARIES</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The protection of all native animals and plants in their natural communities – Defenders of Wildlife</td>
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<tr>
<td>To serve individuals and families in the poorest communities in the world – CARE</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lift the spirits of America’s troops and their families – USO</td>
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<tr>
<td>To inspire and empower people affected by cancer – Livestrong</td>
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#### Examples of Alternate Frameworks

In addition to actions and targeted beneficiaries, some other possible building blocks include services, partners, causes, and problems. In order to keep things clear and concise, we recommend not exceeding more than 4 or 5 building blocks and no more than one word string (e.g. inspire and empower...OR...poverty, hunger, and social injustice).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACTION(S)</th>
<th>SERVICE(S)</th>
<th>TARGETED BENEFICIARIES</th>
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<tr>
<td>Bringing clean, safe drinking water to people in developing countries – charity: water</td>
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<tr>
<th>ACTION(S)</th>
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<th>PROBLEM(S)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To create lasting solutions to poverty, hunger, and social injustice – Oxfam</td>
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<tr>
<td>To connect people through lending to alleviate poverty – Kiva</td>
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<td>Celebrating animals and confronting cruelty – The Humane Society</td>
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<tr>
<th>ACTION(S)</th>
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<th>CAUSE</th>
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<tr>
<td>Working to achieve lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender equality – Human Rights Campaign</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACTION(S)</th>
<th>CAUSE</th>
<th>TARGETED BENEFICIARIES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To inspire conservation of the oceans – Monterey Bay Aquarium</td>
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ONE-PAGE MISSION WORKSHEET by TopNonprofits

Guidelines for selecting and completing each building block

- Choose 2-4 building blocks. 5 max.
- 5-14 words total. 20 max.
- 1 word string (A, B, & C). Choose wisely.

* ACTION(S) High level action verb(s) to kick things off. “To __________ ...”

List options. Circle your top 1 or 2.

* TARGETED BENEFICIARIES The who/what that benefits from your work the most.

Super-Short Version (1-3 words)

Somewhat Short Version (4-8 words)

SERVICE(S) What service(s) do you provide?

PROBLEM(S) What problems does your products or services solve?

CAUSE Is there an overarching cause you support?

PARTNERS Are there any non-standard partners that are critical to your model?

* Indicates strongly recommended. All others optional.

Now on a separate piece of paper or whiteboard, string selected blocks into a draft mission statement. Continue refining and compressing until the result fits within guidelines.

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ONE-PAGE VISION WORKSHEET

VISION STATEMENT DEFINITION

A short phrase describing the future you are ultimately working towards (i.e. your final destination or desired end state)

HOW A VISION STATEMENT DIFFERS FROM A MISSION STATEMENT.

Mission statements and vision statements are complementary but unique.

MISSION
- Present tense
- Describes what you do and who/what benefits from this work

VISION
- Future Objective
- Description of a future you are ultimately working towards

Example from
MISSION: To create lasting solutions to poverty, hunger, and social injustice.
VISION: A just world without poverty.

GUIDELINES YOUR VISION STATEMENT SHOULD FOLLOW

Clear (Easy to Understand)
- Simple and concrete language
- 8th grade reading level. 10th max
- Avoid buzzwords and jargon

Concise (Sort & To the Point)
- 5-14 words (20 max)
- Avoid words > 12 letters or 4 syllables
- No more than 1 word string (A, B, and C)

BRAINSTORMING QUESTIONS

What would the world look like if this problem was solved?

If you were completely successful, what would this look like for you and your customers?

(Rare) Do you want to self impose a timeline? (Good for urgency. Awkward if not achieved.)

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