



# Vision, Mission and Values

by E. Grant MacDonald

There is no absolute consensus on the nature of statements of organizational vision, mission and values. There is however agreement that they are very important in communicating externally what a non-profit is all about and in aligning board and staff decisions on the direction of the organization. After surveying various viewpoints on the subject here is one widely accepted approach to these three concepts and how they fit together.

**Vision**    *“The kind of community we want to help build”*

- Mission and vision should not be used interchangeably
- A vision is a picture or image of the future that your organization is seeking to achieve
- An organization’s vision will not likely be unique, there will be other organizations pursuing it, some of whom could be partners, most of whom will be considered stakeholders
- Vision tends to be inclusive rather than exclusive.

**Mission**    *“The piece of the vision that we are focused on”*

- The mission of an organization should be a statement of its purpose or reason for being.
- The mission of the organization serves to focus the work of the organization on those things that it believes are critical to realizing the vision. The mission statement answers the question: what role do we play in realizing this vision, what is our area of expertise or excellence?
- The mission ought to be the main source of authority within the organization, not people or positions. It is the mission that keeps everyone aligned to the same purpose.
- The determination of mission requires leadership and a willingness to let go of the idea that everyone’s wish about the role of the organization needs to be accommodated. Attempts to do so often result in vague statements.

- An organization’s statement of mission tends to be more exclusive relative to vision or values. It forces people to make choices about what is the most important work that the organization can do in achieving the vision. What is our “core” work and what is not?
- Missions can and should change over time as the needs and resources of the community change. Given a changing environment organizations should review their mission on a regular basis.
- A powerful mission statement will include specific kinds of impacts, results or outcomes the organization is most committed to realizing. These are sometimes stated as “**goals or objectives.**” Goals can have more of a short-term (2-5 years) orientation. Goals are often the product of some strategic planning.

### **Organizational Values** “*What we believe in.*”

- Organizations should articulate their core values. Indeed, those in the voluntary and non-profit sector often talk a lot about their deeply held principles or philosophies but seldom articulate and enshrine them.
- The values of the organization are the bedrock of its operation; they should not change; they ought not to be subject to the changing winds of new boards, new staff or funding opportunities.
- Organizational values are not much different than personal values; they are really collectively held personal values.
- Values can be described in single words such as *integrity, diversity, respect, innovation, and learning* but are more meaningfully crafted as short phrases such as “*we are committed to enhancing the independence of residents*”.
- Organizational values cannot be imposed; they are what exists within the organization. They may have to be discovered or made visible. There must however be a consensus on what are the four or five most important or core values guiding the organization. These are the four or five principles that will not be compromised.
- It is folly to try to operate with more than a few (5 or 6) core values otherwise sooner or later some will have to be compromised.
- People typically have very different understandings of the meaning of certain value statements
- It is not difficult to achieve consensus on the organization’s core values. The effort that goes into discussing the “meanings” of different values is very useful in bringing people together. Arriving at a values statement can be a powerful exercise in organizational dialogue.
- The core values of the organization tend to be inclusive and confirming.

# Organizational Vision, Mission and Values Work Sheet

Our organization is \_\_\_\_\_

## 1. Our Vision

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## 2. Our Mission

The mission of our organization is to:

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**Objectives:** In pursuing this mission we will bring about the following results:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_

## 3. Organizational Values

Our organization will, at all times and in all circumstances, express its commitment to:

\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_,  
\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_

and \_\_\_\_\_



**FOCUSING THE WORK OF  
OUR ORGANIZATION**

**VISION**

The world, or future, we want to see

**MISSION**

Our organization's particular role in  
achieving the vision

**VALUES**

What principles guide us in  
pursuing our mission