

Crafting Initial Mission, Vision, and Value Statements

Every nonprofit organization should have mission, vision, and value statements. Each will keep your clinic focused and grounded. In this time of uncertainty within the healthcare environment, having a clear idea of what you are doing, what you want to accomplish, and what are critical aspects of your clinic's operations will ensure long-term success. Crafting these initial statements will be the responsibility of the Planning Team.

1. A mission statement describes the purpose for which your organization exists. With a well-crafted mission statement, you can consider every proposed activity and compare it to your mission statement. This will keep you clear-headed, focused, and out of trouble. It answers the question, "Why did we start this organization?"
2. A vision statement describes what your community would look like if you completed your mission statement. Often times, vision statements can feel unattainable. What they do, though, is keep you looking forward and working towards an ultimate goal. It answers the question, "How would we know that we completed our mission?"
3. Value statements reflect the core of your work. These items are the things that keep you grounded and firmly adhering to what the organization believes in. Mission and vision statements frequently change; value statements typically don't change. These statements answer the question, "What does our organization believe in?"

The Benefits of a Well-Defined Mission, Vision, and Values Statements:

- A well-defined mission statement can and should motivate Board, staff, volunteers, and donors. It also helps attract people and resources. A mission statement is not just for internal use or to submit to the IRS for tax-exempt status. It is a beacon that will attract people and resources to your cause, and ensure they will be the right people and resources. Make your mission statement compelling as well as clear. It will be your best public relations tool.
- A good mission statement can help you get 501(c)(3) status. Since you plan to apply for tax-exempt status, the IRS will be looking at your mission statement to see if your organization matches its requirements for that type of entity. Know what you are applying for and draft your mission to match the requirements.

- A good vision statement will provide motivation. A solid vision statement should tell the story of how the organization will impact the community if it is successful with its mission. This statement can provide a larger context for the organization and help keep the organization focused.
- Values can help when making tough decisions. Just as a mission statement can help organizations stay focused, value statements can do the same thing. During challenging times and when tough decisions are put in front of an organization, the organization can ask itself, “Will doing this be in line with our values?”

Some Tips for Writing Your Mission, Vision, and Values Statements:

- Allow enough time. Time spent now will pay off later, so don't rush the process. Provide time to reflect on the information you gather, to write an initial draft, to allow key participants to read it, and to make changes.
- Be open to new ideas. This is especially important for the founders of the organization. You may have had tunnel vision while getting your organization set up, but now it is time to allow some fresh perspective. Use brainstorming techniques to ensure that all ideas come forward freely. You can winnow them down later.
- Keep it short and only include what you need. Your mission and vision statements should be one or two sentences, clear, and concise. Values can be a bit longer, as you will want to be able to have a few brief words to describe your values in various documents.
- Periodically review your mission, vision and values statements. As your organization grows and changes you should review the mission, vision, value statements and assure it still represents who you are as an organization. These statements are usually re-evaluated during your strategic planning sessions.

Refer to the [Church Health website](#) for strong examples of mission, vision, and values statements. Notice how the vision element is split between Core Purpose and Aims.