

**W**e are a nation formed from the bold volunteer spirit of the people.

Our communities continue to depend upon people coming together to volunteer – to serve. “To volunteer is to choose to act in recognition of a need, with an attitude of social responsibility and without concern for monetary profit, going beyond one’s basic obligations.”<sup>1</sup>

The information in this fact sheet can help groups become more productive. To make the best of everyone’s desire to make a difference, group members need to create a shared vision, develop a mission statement, and commit to identified goals, objectives and plan of action.

As a starting point, when planning for a group’s future, members may want to consider the following questions:

- Where have we been?
- Where are we now?
- Where do we want to be?
- How do we want to get there?
- How will we know when we have arrived at our destination?

The success of a group may depend upon bringing people together, both physically and philosophically. Our view of the world is influenced by the values we hold. Our values become the basis for our personal vision, mission, goals, objectives and actions. The group needs to



reconcile differing perspectives, find common ground and create a shared vision.

*“The vision embodies people’s highest values and aspirations. It inspires people to reach for what could be and to rise above their fears and preoccupations with current reality.”<sup>2</sup>*

<sup>1</sup> Susan J. Ellie and Katherine H. Noyes. *By The People – A History of Americans as Volunteers* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Inc., Publishers, 1990), 4.

<sup>2</sup> Kathy Walker et. al, “Strategic Planning and Mobilizing Resources,” *LEADS Curriculum Notebook* Unit IV, Module 2 (Kansas State University, 2002), 1.

### What you will learn:

- How to encourage greater focus on issues of importance to a group
- Why a shared vision is important to a group’s success
- What a mission statement should consist of and how it can be used
- The importance of identifying goals and setting objectives
- How strategic thinking and action planning tools help to produce results

## Creating a shared vision

A group's shared vision

- communicates a sense of purpose;
- expresses what is important and why;
- focuses on the future;
- reflects the shared values of group members; and
- uses pictures, images and words to bring the vision to life.

The shared vision statement should be clear and concise, and create a visual image in the mind of the reader. It may be as brief as a few words or a more detailed collection of points that create the desired visual image.

## Developing a mission statement

How will your group reach this shared vision? A mission statement could tell us this. The statement becomes a tool to communicate the group's purpose to others. A mission statement will tell people 1) what you do, 2) for whom do you do it, and 3) how you will get it done. The mission statement

- sets the group's direction;
- is clear and concise;
- is realistic;
- reflects the values and beliefs of the group;
- demonstrates a commitment to serving others;
- is inspirational; and
- is action oriented.

Working to develop a mission statement will produce additional benefits. The process can generate enthusiasm and excitement for the work at hand.

## Identifying goals, objectives, projects & activities

A group goal is a broad statement of something that the group expects to attain or achieve. *Goals* may be short, intermediate or long-term in nature. Well-written goals are believable, attainable and based on identified needs.

*Objectives* are statements of specific, measurable and attainable outcomes that contribute to the achievement of a particular goal. Outcome-based objectives focus on

- changing people's behavior or circumstances;
- changing something about the community; or
- establishing a process for achieving a particular goal.

*“Strategic planning provides a systematic approach to planning for future development and allocating needed resources for anticipated changes.*

*Strategic planning considers possible future events and trends, and then bases planning and resource allocation on anticipated changes.”<sup>3</sup>*

## Developing an action plan

An action planning process helps groups

- see the “big picture;”
- focus on vision, mission, goals and objectives;
- build consensus around planned actions;
- work more efficiently;
- attract human and financial resources; and
- establish short-, intermediate- and long-term plans.

During the planning process, your group may identify additional information or skills that are needed to accomplish group goals. The group can then take steps to acquire what is necessary for success. Other opportunities and barriers to implementing established plans may also surface. These can be considered when finalizing the group's action plan and project

<sup>3</sup> Walker, 1.

## Blueprint for a shared vision

What you will need: blank sheets of unlined paper, markers or pencils in assorted colors, wall space to display group work

1. Provide each person with a blank sheet of unlined paper and colored markers or pencils.
2. Have each person take a moment to visualize what their community would look like if the issues or problems of concern to the group were resolved.
3. Ask each person to either draw a picture or list descriptive words that represent their community vision.
4. Display all work on an open wall.
5. Have each person briefly explain his or her vision.
6. Have group members identify the common theme(s).
7. Use the themes to craft a shared vision statement.

timelines. Operating procedures, policies and incentives may also be needed to support implementation of group plans. Allow time to put these procedures, policies and incentives into practice.

A nine-step action planning process can help your group generate the information it needs to develop a plan of action. Follow these steps for each goal your group has decided to focus upon:

1. Describe the goal to be achieved or the problem to be solved.
2. Define specific, measurable and attainable outcome-based objectives.
3. Research possible projects or activities to address goals and objectives.
4. Evaluate the pros and cons for each possibility.
5. Select the most appropriate

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## Blueprint for a mission statement

1. Think about your group or an organization you are familiar with.
2. Write a mission statement, using the example and table provided below as a guide.

*Example:*

Group or organization's Name	What you do	For whom do you do it	How you will get it done
University of Maine Cooperative Extension	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improve lives</li> <li>Focus on issues and needs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maine people</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Through an educational process</li> <li>By using research-based knowledge</li> </ul>
<b>Mission Statement</b>	To help Maine people improve their lives through an educational process that uses research-based knowledge focused on issues and needs.		

*Your group:*

Group or organization's Name	What you do	For whom do you do it	How you will get it done
<b>Mission Statement</b>			

## Blueprint for objectives

1. Consider one of your group's goals.
2. Write a specific, measurable, attainable objective related to the group goal you selected. Use the example and blank table provided below as a guide.

*Example:*

Goal	Do what	To what extent	To whom	By when
Improve the in-home safety of older adults	Install grab bars for bathtubs	In 30% of the homes in a given town	For adults 60 years of age or older	By the end of this calendar year
Specific, measurable, obtainable objective: By the end of this calendar year, 30% of homes inhabited by residents 60 years of age or older in our town will have bathtub grab bars.				

*Your group:*

Goal	Do what	To what extent	To whom	By when
Specific, measurable, obtainable objective:				

## Blueprint for detailed work plan

Possible work plan format:

Project/activity description	Task(s) to be done	Who is/are the responsible person(s)	Task(s) to be completed by when?	Costs, if any?	Other

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- possibility(ies) to implement.
- Detail the tasks that are required to accomplish the project or activity.
  - Establish a timeline.
  - Allocate resources.
  - Assign responsibilities.

Once the plan is complete, projects or activities can be staffed, implemented and evaluated.

This structured approach to your work may seem overwhelming, but the time you spend on the front end of your group's development will be invaluable over the long haul. The shared vision statement and mission statement will provide the foundation your group needs to productively move into the future. Periodically develop or review group goals, objectives, projects and activities to keep everyone headed in the same direction.

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*This fact sheet was developed by Deborah Killam, Extension educator. Editor: Kyle McCaskill Graphic designer: Cindy Eves-Thomas*

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