

How to write a mission statement

Adapted from work by Janel M. Radtke

Every organization has a mission, a purpose, a reason for being. Often the mission is why the organization was first created. A good mission statement should accurately explain why your organization exists and what it hopes to achieve in the future. It articulates the organization's essential nature, its values, and its work.

An effective mission statement must resonate with the people working in and for the organization, as well as with the different constituencies that the organization hopes to affect. It must express the organization's purpose in a way that inspires commitment, innovation, and courage.

At the very least, your organization's mission statement should answer three key questions:

1. What are the opportunities or needs that we exist to address? (the purpose of the group)
2. What are we doing to address these needs? (the work of the group)
3. What principles or beliefs guide our work? (the values of the organization)

Here is a mission statement that attempts to answer these questions.

The mission of Big Brothers /Big Sisters of America is to make a positive difference in the lives of children and youth, primarily through a professionally-supported, one-to-one relationship with a caring adult, and to assist them in achieving their highest potential as they grow to become confident, competent, and caring individuals, by providing committed volunteers, national leadership, and standards of excellence.

The purpose: to make a positive difference in the lives of children and youth so that they'll achieve their highest potential

The business: Providing and supporting committed volunteers who have one-to-one relationships with children and youth

The values: individuals who are confident, competent, and caring; leadership and standards of excellence

Your mission statement should.....

- Express your organization's purpose in a way that inspires support and ongoing commitment
- Motivate those who are connected to the organization
- Be articulated in a way that is convincing and easy to grasp
- Use proactive verbs to describe what you do
- Be free from jargon
- Be short enough so that anyone connected to the organization can readily repeat it