

Chapter 1.1

Developing mission, vision and values

Benefits of this chapter

As any athlete will tell you, success starts with a dream – a goal to reach for, an objective to accomplish, something to aspire to. For an aquatics federation, the dream is found in your mission, vision and values.

A mission statement expresses your federation's goals and overall purpose. In other words, it is the foundation for the future. For that reason, it is important to consider both present and future ambitions when developing your mission statement.

Your mission is the springboard for your vision, which describes what your organisation will look like in day-to-day operations. Your federation's values represent the core priorities in your organisation.

Together, mission, vision and values are the basis for your future success as an aquatics federation. But first you must have goals – you must have a dream!

Introduction

Developing a mission, vision and values can be both challenging and inspiring. As with any organisational endeavour, dedication is required to create formal processes and methods for abiding by them. The process may take time and patience, but the benefits are well worth all your efforts.

Devising a plan for your federation allows you to assess your immediate goals, resources and environment, while giving you liberty to dream for the future. Keep in mind that these dreams must be realistic – a swimmer never breaks a world record his first time off the blocks!

Remember that the aim of mission, vision and values is to grow as a federation. So ask yourself three critical questions:

- Who are we?
- What do we want to achieve?
- How can we achieve this?

Think about it. A strong foundation can promote unity within your aquatics federation, organise your allocated resources and grow your federation into the future.

Getting started

While every aquatics federation has multiple areas of focus – events, administration, development, etc. – one thing is clear. Each federation needs an effective, powerful mission statement before moving forward.

A mission statement is a critical component for any organisation. It is a fundamental step when deciding what you want your goals to be and how you want to develop your federation. It is the difference between being another typical “non-profit” or becoming a streamlined, effective aquatics federation with a professional approach.

The start of any plan begins with figuring out exactly what your purpose is, where you are today, where you want to be tomorrow and how you want to get there.

The whole process is a gradual one. It begins by analysing your current situation and defining your objectives with a mission statement, vision and values. Once you have these in place, you can dive in and move your federation forward!

Diagram 1.1 a
Move your federal forward



Developing a mission

A mission statement provides a guideline for you and your members. It states the reasons why your organisation exists and is an important piece of the puzzle as you develop your federation.

A strong, effective mission statement serves the following four purposes:

1/ Promotes unity

A clear, well-written mission statement can get the support of the entire federation. Having a mission statement that everyone believes in will foster a sense of unity.

2/ Allocates resources

Most federations have limited resources – financial, human, etc. Determining how to allocate them can lead to difficult decisions. With a clear mission statement in place, linking those hard choices to your mission can make your reasoning and your decisions defensible.

3/ Provides foundation for growth

Every federation needs a guideline to reference. A mission statement will be the first step your organisation will need to create growth in the later stages of strategic development.

4/ Creates culture

Your mission statement can set the standard within your federation. While it can be difficult to gain full acceptance at the beginning, establishing criteria can help your members feel committed to a common cause in the long-run.

A strong, effective mission statement features the following four characteristics:

1/ Identifiable

A mission statement should be one with which your members can identify. It should be the statement that inspires future success and from which important decisions can be made.

2/ Applicable

A mission statement should be a practical tool that allows your members to feel like they are part of your federation. It should be something that can speak to your members in their day-to-day activities.

3/ Measurable

No matter their position in your federation, your members and staff should be able to measure their performance against your mission statement. Your mission statement should be able to be quantified.

4/ Valuable

Your mission statement can set you apart from other sporting federations in your respective country and give you a competitive advantage. Look around and measure the competition in your region in terms of sponsorship, volunteers, etc.

Great examples of mission statements are those from USA Swimming and British Swimming:

USA Swimming

USA Swimming is the National Governing Body for the sport of Swimming. We administer competitive swimming in accordance with the Amateur Sports Act. We provide programs and services for our members, supporters, affiliates and the interested public. We value these members of the swimming community, and the staff and volunteers who serve them. We are committed to excellence and the improvement of our sport.

British Swimming

In partnership with the key stakeholders High Performance Swimming shall deliver a comprehensive training and competition programme of the highest professional standards for world class athletes and their coaches with the objectives of maximising performance outcomes at the London 2012 Olympic Games and building a sustainable legacy for the sport in the future.

Developing a vision

A vision is a statement that communicates the long-term outlook of your federation. It defines what you want your organisation to become while taking into consideration the purpose and core values from within your federation. It is what inspires your members to reach their full potential.

A strong, effective vision statement serves the following four purposes:

1/ Establishes direction

A vision identifies the direction you want your federation to go. It provides continuity and commitment toward building a future.

2/ Determines environment

A vision statement builds loyalty among your members by getting them involved. It encourages open communication and creative solutions. It also promotes interest and focus for the future.

3/ Empowers federations

A vision should stretch the organisation's capabilities and image of itself. It gives shape and direction to the organisation's future.

4/ Creates cohesiveness

It should resonate with all members of the organisation and help them feel proud, excited, and part of something much bigger than themselves.

A strong, effective vision statement features the following four characteristics:

1/ Motivating

A vision statement creates opportunities for members to become leaders. It allows members to think creatively and think of unique opportunities to achieve future successes.

2/ Powerful

A vision statement is a strong message that empowers your members to believe that what they do day-to-day is part of greater benefits and success to come.

3/ Captivating

A vision statement is memorable and gets your members' to take notice and start thinking about the future.

4/ Effective

A vision statement can be used throughout your federation as a reminder on a daily basis. It is simple and can serve as an inspirational reminder for all who read it.

Taking another look at USA Swimming and British Swimming, both provide good examples of vision statements:

USA Swimming

To inspire and enable our members to achieve excellence in the sport of swimming and in life.

British Swimming — a vision for swimming

Our Vision is to ensure everyone has the opportunity to participate in swimming at whatever level they choose throughout their life. Our programmes will be underpinned by strong values and delivered by a committed, well trained workforce in facilities which meet the needs of all.

Developing values

Core values establish the foundation of your federation's culture. Defining these values can help motivate your members on a daily basis. The right values are a great tool to inspire positive behaviour and generate a positive working environment.

Strong values serve the following five purposes:

1/ Create a base

Values set goals for a federation and guide decision-making. They are an essential starting point.

2/ Establish positive identity

Positive core values help your members identify themselves with your federation. They build loyalty with your members through involvement and promote common interest.

3/ Provide open environment

Values should provide members with the opportunity to reflect and have open discussions. Creating an open and safe environment lets members feel they have an open channel for communication and are encouraged to think of creative solutions for the future.

4/ Reflect integrity

Values should reflect the integrity and respect that your federation has for itself and its members.

5/ Provide consistency

Without consistent application of your federation's core values, members won't know what to expect from you from one day to the next.

Strong values feature the following four characteristics:

1/ Compelling

Values are what your federation believes in, which will determine how your members perceive you. Values should inspire passion and convey emotion.

2/ Declaring

Values define what you stand for. They tell your members how you will help them now and in the future.

3/ Setting priorities

Values indicate the priorities of your federation and what the federation believes are the most important aspects of the organisation.

4/ Consistent

Values should remain consistent. Whether your federation is well-established or just getting off the blocks, your values should be consistent and transferable from one stage of development to the next.

Useful tips

Things to avoid when developing your mission, vision and values:

Mission

- Closed mindedness
Collaborate with your members and seek their input
- Disorder
Review your mission to make sure it flows and represents all relevant components important to your federation

Vision

- Short-term thinking
Thinking long-term promotes commitment
- Traditional thinking
Thinking "outside the box" encourages open and creative solutions

Values

- Uncertain statements
Use powerful expressions to assert your beliefs
- Negative tone
Everyone wants to be associated with a positive and encouraging message