

Drafting a Vision Statement

The Basic Principles of a Vision Statement

Your vision statement is the first part of a strategic plan, and an important way to unify and focus everyone in the organization on a shared goal. The vision statement describes the change your organization will have on the group you are targeting with your work in the next 20 years. The statement should be even simpler than your mission statement: a short, clear statement of only one or two sentences that describes the end result of your work.

Generally, we say that a vision statement should meet the following points:

1. It describes the final goal of your organization and the driving force for your work.
2. It includes three parts: people, place and change (in 20 years).
3. It is ambitious and inspirational.

A vision statement has three parts:

1. People: the group our work hopes to affect. Examples: “women with HIV/AIDS,” “Tibetan snow leopards,” or “NGOs working on homelessness.”
2. Place: the geographic location where your work is focused. Examples: “Bangkok,” “Yunnan Province,” or “Southeast Asia.”
3. Change: the major change this group will experience as a result of your organization’s work. Examples: “know and can advocate for

their legal rights,” or “significantly increase their English literacy.” It is okay if this goal is a bit abstract, as the strategic plan will require you to break it down into smaller steps later on. It should be ambitious and inspirational, and there should be a clear group consensus around the statement.

Bad Example 1: The living environment and quality of life of PLHIV have improved.

Good Example 1: The living environment and quality of life of PLHIV in Baoshan City, Yunnan Province are guaranteed.

Explanation: In the Bad Example there is no place where the organization works.

Bad Example 2: Everyone in the world enjoys equal rights in harmony.

Good Example 2: No more gender discrimination in Asian countries.

Explanation: The Bad Example includes the three elements of a vision statement, but it is too broad and hollow. It is unrealistic for a CBO to realize this.

Here are some examples of good vision statements:

1. “End forced eviction in Phnom Penh.”
2. “All people with HIV/AIDS in China know and can advocate for their legal rights.”
3. “All courts in Indonesia sentence drug users to rehabilitation not prison.”

Begin the vision statement with phrases such as:

- We strive for...
- We believe that...
- We are committed to...

Material List

- Flipchart
- Colorful pencils—4 to 5 colors for each group
- Tape
- A wall big enough to attach many photos

Process

The following exercise is one way to work together with a group to develop a vision statement. If your group is more than four or five

people, we recommend that you break the group down into groups of four or five. In a strategic planning meeting where you may have people of many different levels working together, it is best to create groups of people who will be comfortable speaking to each other. Assign one person who is good at facilitating discussions to be the group leader.

Step-by-step

1. **Identifying problems:** Ask each small group to create a list of three or four key problems they believe the organization is working to address, and write these down.
2. **Imagining the future:** Ask each group to imagine that they have been out of the country for ten years. They have arrived back to find that their dreams of how the society should be, in terms of the problems they have identified, have been fulfilled. The problems are solved and society is functioning just as they had always hoped. Give them a few minutes to discuss what that ideal society would be like.
3. **Creating a visual aid:** Each group should draw a picture of what this ideal future society will look like. Tell them that they can use color, shape, words and/or images. When the picture is done, each group should also come up with one sentence to describe this ideal future society.
4. **Sharing the vision:** Have each group present its picture and explain what it represents to the rest of the participants. The facilitator should capture key words, especially anything that is value-related (*e.g.*, equal access, affordable, quality health care, equitable allocation, democratic, etc.) and write these on a large sheet of paper or dry erase board where everyone can see them.
5. **Creating the final statement:** The entire group studies the words and statements and jointly constructs a vision statement that reflects the range of input.
6. **Delegating to a committee:** If the large group is finding it difficult to agree on a joint statement, we sometimes create a committee with

one representative from each group that works together separately to draft a vision statement, while other members work on other parts of the strategic plan. (Also see [How To Create A Strategic Plan.](#)) The committee can then present the statement and invite everyone to edit it.

Once you have reached a consensus among the participants in the large group, your organization will have a vision statement to guide its work.