

## MISSION STATEMENT DEFINITION

A one-sentence statement describing the reason your organization or program exists. (what you do + who/what you do this for)

## PRIMARY AUDIENCES & FUNCTIONS OF A MISSION STATEMENT



### EXTERNAL

Inform Others of  
What You Do

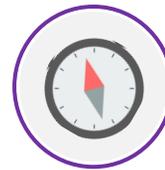
Your mission statement is a great way to summarize what your org is about, providing context for follow up information on programs and services.



### STAFF & VOLUNTEERS

Focus & Motivate  
Your Team

People want to believe in the work they do. Your mission statement should be easy for staff & volunteers to understand, remember, and own.



### LEADERSHIP

Guide Strategic  
Planning & Decisions

By definition, you cannot prioritize everything. Your mission statement should serve as your guiding star when considering priorities and new initiatives.

## GUIDELINES YOUR MISSION STATEMENT SHOULD FOLLOW



### Clear (Easy to Understand)

This is not a time to show off your vocabulary. Use concrete language and keep things simple. Try to keep to an 8<sup>th</sup> grade reading level, don't exceed 10<sup>th</sup> grade.



### Concise (Short & To-the-Point)

Don't fall prey to buzzwords, adjective strings and fluff. Aim for 5-14 words, 20 max. This is often the hardest part, but anything longer and you undermine its utility.



### Useful (Inform. Focus. Guide.)

It doesn't matter how short, clear or cute your phrase is if it fails to inform others about what you do and focus and guide internal team members and decisions.

# MISSION BUILDING BLOCKS

Rather than starting with an unstructured brainstorming session, we find it helps to take a step back and start with the different mission statement building blocks and frameworks.

## The Simplest Approach

The most straight forward approach is to pair high-level actions with a targeted beneficiary.

ACTION(S)

TARGETED BENEFICIARIES

The protection of all native animals and plants in their natural communities – Defenders of Wildlife  
To serve individuals and families in the poorest communities in the world – CARE  
Lift the spirits of America’s troops and their families – USO  
To inspire and empower people affected by cancer – Livestrong

## Examples of Alternate Frameworks

In addition to actions and targeted beneficiaries, some other possible building blocks include services, partners, causes, and problems. In order to keep things clear and concise, we recommend not exceeding more than 4 or 5 building blocks and no more than one word string (e.g. inspire and empower...OR...poverty, hunger, and social injustice).

ACTION(S)

SERVICE(S)

TARGETED BENEFICIARIES

Bringing clean, safe drinking water to people in developing countries – charity: water

ACTION(S)

SERVICE(S)

PROBLEM(S)

To create lasting solutions to poverty, hunger, and social injustice – Oxfam

ACTION(S)

BENEFICIARIES

SERVICE(S)

ACTION(S)

PROBLEM(S)

To connect people through lending to alleviate poverty – Kiva

ACTION(S)

BENEFICIARIES

ACTION(S)

PROBLEM(S)

Celebrating animals and confronting cruelty – The Humane Society

ACTION(S)

TARGETED BENEFICIARIES

CAUSE

Working to achieve lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender equality – Human Rights Campaign

ACTION(S)

CAUSE

TARGETED BENEFICIARIES

To inspire conservation of the oceans – Monterey Bay Aquarium

# ONE-PAGE MISSION WORKSHEET

## Guidelines for selecting and completing each building block

- **Choose 2-3 building blocks. 4 Max**
- 5-14 words total. 20 max.
- 1 word string (A, B, & C). Choose wisely.
- 8<sup>th</sup> grade reading level. 10<sup>th</sup> grade max.
- Target < 20 syllables total. 30 max.
- Avoid long or complicated words

\* **ACTION(S)** High level action verb(s) to kick things off. "To \_\_\_\_\_ ..."

List options. Circle your top 1 or 2.

\* **TARGETED BENEFICIARIES** The who/what that benefits from your work the most.

Super-Short Version (1-4 words)

Somewhat Short Version (5-10 words)

**SERVICE(S)** What service(s) do you provide?

**PROBLEM(S)** What problems does your products or services solve?

**CAUSE** Is there an overarching cause you support?

**PARTNERS** Are there any non-standard partners that are critical to your model?

\* Indicates strongly recommended. All others optional.

Now on a separate piece of paper or whiteboard, string selected blocks into a draft mission statement. Continue refining and compressing until the result fits within guidelines.

**TARGETED BENEFICIARIES**

**The who/what that benefits from your work the most.**

This is arguably the most important piece of your mission statement. Consider what would be important to include, but be prepared to trim if necessary

**1. Who or what distinct groups benefits from your work?**

Brainstorm the groups you serve, then consolidate into up to 4 high-level groups here.

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**2. Cut any that resemble donor, volunteer, shareholder roles. These are not needed.**

You can always revisit them when you get to the optional partner building block.

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**3. If you're left with more than one option, rank them, then look to combine or cut.**

Don't worry, you'll have an opportunity to add additional color back in in step 5.

**4. Still more than 2 groups? Repeat step 3 or keep number and size of other blocks small.**

If you are stuck, move to step 5 and then circle back.

**5. Do you serve everyone in this group? How can you be more descriptive?**

E.g. geographical, demographic, or other classifications that will help people understand your focus.

**Super-Short Version (1-3 words)**

**Kinda-Short Version (3-8 words)**

# ACTION(S) BUILDING BLOCK

## ACTION(S)

High level actions to kick things off. "To \_\_\_\_\_ ..."

Run through the list of example action words below. Indicate possible fits, cross out those that don't apply, then circle your favorites. Lastly, write the top 2-4 options down.

Act	Conserve	Expose	Locate	Recognize
Activate	Consolidate	Express	Magnify	Reconcile
Address	Construct	Facilitate	Make	Record
Advance	Contribute	Fashion	Manage	Recreate
Affect	Convert	Fight	Match	Refine
Aid	Convey	Find	Measure	Regulate
Align	Coordinate	Focus	Mentor	Renew
Alleviate	Craft	Form	Merge	Research
Alter	Create	Formalize	Mobilize	Resolve
Analyze	Cure	Foster	Model	Restore
Apply	Customize	Gather	Mold	Restructure
Assemble	Defend	Generate	Motivate	Revamp
Assess	Define	Grow	Navigate	Reveal
Assign	Deliver	Guide	Nurture	Route
Assist	Deploy	Help	Obtain	Run
Attain	Design	Highlight	Offer	Save
Balance	Develop	Honor	Operate	Serve
Bolster	Diagnose	Host	Orchestrate	Shape
Brighten	Discover	Identify	Organize	Share
Bring	Distribute	Illuminate	Oversee	Shorten
Build	Educate	Impart	Package	Solve
Care	Elevate	Implement	Perfect	Sponsor
Catalog	Eliminate	Improve	Persuade	Spread
Celebrate	Empower	Increase	Pinpoint	Standardize
Centralize	Enable	Inform	Pioneer	Steward
Challenge	Encourage	Innovate	Place	Stop
Champion	End	Inspire	Plan	Streamline
Change	Engage	Instill	Predict	Structure
Channel	Engineer	Instruct	Prepare	Support
Coach	Enhance	Integrate	Preserve	Sustain
Collaborate	Enrich	Interface	Prevent	Train
Combine	Equip	Intervene	Produce	Transform
Comfort	Examine	Invent	Promote	Unite
Communicate	Exceed	Launch	Protect	Validate
Confront	Expand	Lead	Question	Visualize
Connect	Explore	Lift	Realign	Work

List Your Favorites. Circle Top 1-3 Actions:

# SERVICE(S) BUILDING BLOCK

SERVICE(S)

High level actions to kick things off. “To \_\_\_\_\_...”

If there is a unique or highly-focused way that you serve your mission, you may want to consider including it here. Intentionally limiting the activities and services that you perform can be an effective way of combatting service/feature creep.

Bringing **clean, safe drinking water** to people in developing countries - charitywater

To create **lasting solutions** to poverty, hunger, and social injustice - Oxfam

To connect people **through lending** to alleviate poverty - Kiva

**Optional: Skip unless you want to consider including this building block.**

## 1. Brainstorm the products or services that you provide your targeted beneficiaries

Jot down as many as you can think of. Tip: Use sticky notes for the first round.

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

## 2. Consolidate into 1-3 high-level groups here

Group and consolidate into up to 3 high-level words. Tip: If using sticky notes, physically group them.

\_\_\_\_\_

## 3. If you still have more than one, is there a way to summarize it without commas or the use of “and”? If not, is this really where you want to use your one allotted word string?

\_\_\_\_\_

## 4. Gut checks:

- Is the resulting word or phrase unique/interesting enough to include?
- Are you ok limiting yourself to services that fit within this?

**Resulting word or phrase:**

# PROBLEM(S) BUILDING BLOCK

## PROBLEM(S)

What problems does your products or services solve?

If are focused more on addressing a specific problem for a broad audience, you might consider calling this out directly.

Celebrating animals and confronting **cruelty** - The Humane Society

To connect people through lending to alleviate **poverty** - Kiva

To create lasting solutions to **poverty, hunger, and social injustice** – - Oxfam

This building block is optional. If you don't solve these problems for everyone in the world, you should still pair with targeted beneficiary.

### 1. Brainstorm all of the problems you help solve

Jot down as many as you can think of. Tip: Use sticky notes for the first round.

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### 2. Consolidate into 1-3 high-level groups here

Group and consolidate into up to 3 high-level words. Tip: If using sticky notes, physically group them.

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3. If you still have more than one, is there a way to summarize it without commas or the use of "and"? If not, is this really where you want to use your one allotted word string?

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### 4. Gut checks:

- Is the resulting word or phrase unique/interesting enough to include?
- Do you also have a targeted beneficiary? If not, do you really solve this for everyone?
- Is there value in further limiting who you focus on addressing these problems for?

Resulting word or phrase:

## CAUSE

Is there an overarching cause you support

If you are focused more on addressing a specific problem for a broad audience, you might consider calling this out directly. Can also be used in place of multiple problems.

To inspire **conservation** of the oceans - Monterey Bay Aquarium

Working to achieve lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender **equality** - Human Rights Campaign

This building block is optional, and should not be used in addition to problems. Ideally, it should still be paired with targeted beneficiaries.

### 1. What causes does your organization support (1-3 high-level groups here)

Group and consolidate into up to 3 high-level words. Tip: If using sticky notes, physically group them.

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2. If you still have more than one, is there a way to summarize it without commas or the use of “and”? If not, is this really where you want to use your one allotted word string?

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### 3. Can everything you do be tied directly to this cause?

Jot down as many as you can think of. Tip: Use sticky notes for the first round.

### 4. Gut checks:

- Does everyone have a consistent understanding of what this cause is?
- Do you also have a targeted beneficiary? If not, do you serve everyone in the world?
- Is there value in further limiting who you focus your efforts on?

Resulting word or phrase:

**PARTNERS**

**Are there any non-standard partners that are critical to your model?**

To equip nonprofits of all sizes with practical insights from **top organizations and leaders**  
- TopNonprofits

**This building block is optional and one that is not needed unless a truly unique element to your organizations model.**

**1. Brainstorm all of the categories of partners your organization works with to serve your targeted beneficiaries.**

Jot down as many as you can think of. Tip: Use sticky notes for the first round.

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**2. Cross out things like donors, volunteers, shareholders. Jot down top 3 remaining.**

They are important, you just don't need to call them out here. Add to supporting text outside mission.

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**3. Eliminate any of these remaining categories that are also true of the competition.**

Again, we're only considering items that are truly unique here.

**4. If you still have more than one, is there a way to summarize it without commas or the use of "and"? If not, is this really where you want to use your one allotted word string?**

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**5. Gut checks:**

- Is this something outside stakeholders will care about?
- Will it help focus your internal team?
- Will including it help guide prioritization and strategic decision making?

**Resulting word or phrase:**