



Where Are You Headed and How Are You Going to Get There?

Is your organization spinning its wheels wondering in which direction to go? Are your members confused regarding the organization's mission or reason for being?

Is your organization clear about its goals but does not seem to get anywhere? Do your members never seem to know who is supposed to be doing what in order to achieve those goals?

There is one way to avoid these pitfalls: use a goal setting and action planning process. Organizations cannot survive and flourish for a very long time without some basic goals. Goals give an organization a purpose and direction to move towards the entire year. In order to establish a successful organization, it's important to create a clear mission, goals, and an action plan to provide direction and to meet the needs of your members.

How to determine where you're Headed

It is important for your organization to have a clearly defined **mission**. A mission is a broad, general statement that clarifies why your organization exists. The mission doesn't change from year to year and is often the first statement in your constitution.

It is also important for your organization to establish **goals**, which are statements describing what your organization wishes to accomplish during a given year. Goals often change from year to year. The members of your organization should work together to come up with a list goals for the year, and the goals should be conceived as ways to fulfill your organization's mission. You can think of your mission as the reason **WHY** your organization exists and your goals as **WHAT** your organization does during a given year in order to fulfill that rationale for existence.

Once you have a list of goals for the year, your organization should create an **action plan**, which is a detailed map that outlines what you need to have and do in order to accomplish each goal. Action plans breakdown goals into measurable tasks with associated timelines and required resources.



What are your goals for this year?

Why should your organization set goals each year? There are lots of reasons:

1. Goals give your organization direction.
2. Goals allow your organization and its members to channel time, energy and ideas into something collectively agreed upon as meaningful.
3. Goals can help motivate members by clarifying and communicating what the organization is striving to achieve.
4. Goals help the organization plan ahead and be prepared.
5. Goals are a way of recognizing and measuring your organization's accomplishments and successes.
6. Your members will be more productive if they have a clear idea of what they need to accomplish and why.

It is important to set goals collectively. There will be greater commitment and motivation among officers and members if everyone participates in helping to determine the goals. Also, if goals are established as a group, there will be clearer understanding of what the organization is trying to accomplish and why.

Goals should have the following characteristics:

1. They should be attainable while also being challenging and providing opportunities for growth for your members.
2. They should be meaningful and relevant to your mission.
3. They should benefit your constituencies.

Look back at the mission you outlined for your organization. This is your organization's reason for being. Considering why the organization exists, the members can brainstorm a list of possible goals to try to accomplish this year in order to fulfill that mission.



Once you have a list of possible goals, the members of your organization can discuss which of the goals it would be feasible to accomplish during the upcoming year and what the priority order should be for those goals. Once you have a prioritized list of the goals you want to accomplish, list them below. After your list is completed, begin action planning.
