



*A (company) is not a machine but a living organism and, much like an individual, it can have a collective sense of identity and fundamental purpose. This is the organizational equivalent of self-knowledge - shared understanding of what the (company) stands for, where it's going, what kind of world it wants to live in and, most importantly, how it intends to make that world a reality."*¹

The Mission Statement explains the fundamental purpose of an organization or initiative. It gives the reason for the organization's existence. It answers the question "Why do we exist?"

To develop a Mission Statement the question to be asked is "What are we here to do together?"

Some guiding questions in building a Mission Statement:

1. What is our purpose?
2. How do we behave?
3. Whom do we serve?

Vision

Sometimes, Mission Statements can include a Vision Statement to state a sense of direction. Such a statement says if we are true to our purpose today, what might be the result in the future. A Vision statement answers the question "where are we going?"

Values and Beliefs

Mission and Vision tell of what we are and where we are going, and values and beliefs tell about how we believe, act and behave while we are en route.

Sometimes groups work on values and beliefs statements separately from the Mission Statement. A beliefs statement is sometimes called "common ground" or "grounding assumptions". Values statements are usually referred to as "Ground Rules", "Process Guidelines" or "Climate Goals". Regardless of what we call them they are a crucial part of the formation of an organization or initiative, because the process of developing them together is key to creating a strong and coherent foundation from which to accomplish our goals.

The articulation of our Values and Beliefs can act as a template or guide that will predetermine our decisions and predict how we perform our duties and live in our relationships to the group. Our activities should reflect our beliefs and values in practice (what we do) and process (how we do it).

**Why are we here ?
What do we stand for?
Where are we going?**

To develop your Mission Statement:

1. Do a separate brainstorm on each of the above three questions. Record everything on three sheets of flipchart paper.
2. Go through your lists together and categorize the 20 most important words under the following headings:

Action	How	Where	Who	When	What	Missing

(The "missing" category is for words you find you need to complete your Mission Statement that you haven't found on your flipcharts)

3. Using these 25 words, write your Mission Statement, ensuring it answers the above three questions.

(You may use this same process for revisiting and revising your existing Mission Statement.)

References for this exercise include:

1. The Fifth Discipline Fieldbook, Strategies and Tools for Building a Learning Organization, P. Senge, R. Ross, B. Smith, C. Roberts and A. Kleiner
2. The Strategic Process, Henry Mintzberg, James Brian Quinn and John Voyer.
3. Building a Learning Organization, Dufour, R.
4. Thanks also to: Nancy Gale, Director, Williams Lake, BC, Child Development Centre