

# Developing a Mission Statement

USDA • Natural Resources Conservation Service • July 1999

## What is it?

The mission statement is the Planning Committee's description of who they are and what they're trying to accomplish. The mission statement says:

- Who we are
- Why we exist
- What we do
- What we stand for

By answering these questions, the mission statement gives the group strategic direction. It serves as a guide for decision making and goal development.

## Why is it important?

The mission statement informs people in the planning area about the committee and the planning process. Local community groups see the committee's mission statement in promotional brochures and other correspondence. It is included in the resource plan and in grant applications to inform stakeholders and funding agencies. The mission statement helps the media accurately convey the Planning Committee's intentions and activities to the public.

The mission statement also helps the Planning Committee stay focused. The process of developing the mission statement clarifies areas of agreement and disagreement, and ensures common understanding is reached early in the planning process. The mission statement articulates the focus and direction of the Planning Committee. This facilitates their decision-making later in the planning process. The mission statement can help keep the Planning Committee motivated, by giving a clear verbal reminder of the group's purpose and objectives.

Finally, the mission statement can demonstrate the organizational relationship between the Planning Committee and related organizations. For example, if the Planning Committee acts as a citizen advisory committee to the County Board, then the Planning Committee's mission statement usually acknowledges that relationship. This helps clarify how the Planning Committee relates to other organizations in the planning area.

## How do we do it?

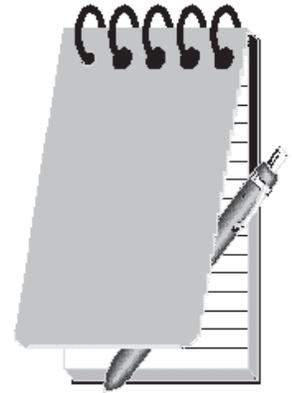
Using the assistance of a facilitator, an easy way to develop a mission statement is as follows:

- Write the following questions on a flip chart:
  1. Who are we?
  2. What do we do?
  3. Why do we exist?
  4. What do we stand for?



The facilitator asks the group, brainstorming-fashion, to provide their answers until each topic is fully addressed.

- All answers are posted around the room so that group members can see what's been written.
- Next, each member of the group is asked to privately draft a mission statement utilizing all or part of the information in front of them. Allow about 20 minutes for this, or until most people have finished writing.
- Everyone--or those who wish to do so--shares their mission statement with the entire group.
- The shared mission statements are written so that everyone can see them at the same time.
- Next, with the group's input, the facilitator underlines key phrases or words that are common among the various statements.
- Using consensus, the group selects one or two of the statements to work on. These are modified until the group devises a statement all can support.



Once developed, a typed copy of the mission statement should be provided to all group members. A large copy of it should be on display at all future group meetings.

### Example Mission Statements

- 1) To develop, enhance and protect the ecological and socioeconomic values of the natural resources while continuing private ownership.*
- 2) The objective of the Planning Committee is to develop a Comprehensive Management Plan for the natural resources in the entire Embarras River Basin. They hope to unite private citizens, public groups, and government agencies to address the resource problems related to watershed management.*
- 3) We the members of the Nippersink Creek Watershed Planning Committee, have a vision for the watershed that will:*
  - Include a water quality suitable for a full range of recreational activities*
  - Maintain, protect and enhance a balanced watershed fishery*
  - Preserve and enhance an ecosystem that supports a balanced wildlife habitat*
  - Adequately handle surface water runoff*
- 4) The mission of the Planning Committee is to develop and encourage the funding and implementation of a long-range plan among landowners, government entities, and other appropriate groups which will help ensure safety to human inhabitants through proper enhancement, management and protection of the ecological and socioeconomic resources within the Blackberry Creek Watershed. This will include but not be limited to stormwater management, groundwater quality, aesthetic values, wildlife protection, and reduction in flood damages.*

### The Next Step

The Planning Committee will establish a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), if they haven't already done so. Refer to the factsheet, "Setting Up The Technical Advisory Committee" for suggestions. They'll also work with the TAC to determine their inventory needs. See the factsheet "Determining Inventory Needs" for more information on this issue.