

MISSION STATEMENT CHECKLIST
(Adapted from The Center for Nonprofit Organizations)

- ✓ Ends, not means. Does your mission statement address what difference your organization will make for those you serve, or does it merely describe what your organization does? Remember, your mission statement doesn't relate HOW, but rather WHY. It should focus on the RESULTS your organization accomplishes through its programs and services.
- ✓ Effort. Does the language used in your mission statement elevate effort to effect? (Words such as try, seek, influence, or encourage suggest staff organizes activities around righteous exertion rather than results.)
- ✓ Verbs. Does a verb -- any verb -- figure prominently in your mission statement? Even when they don't equivocate as the ones mentioned above, verbs ordinarily refer to something that is to "go on," rather than the intended OUTCOME. Beware of your verbs!
- ✓ Nouns embodying activities. Does your mission statement use nouns that signify a type of "means" rather than an outcome? Beware of words such as advocacy, education, program, and service.
- ✓ The unidentifiable. Check carefully to make sure there is no technical language or jargon -- meaningless to the outside world -- in your mission statement.
- ✓ Brevity. Is your mission statement too long? Does it ramble, making it difficult to locate the main point? Burying the mission in two or three padded paragraphs will be sure to weaken its power to guide and shape your organization.
- ✓ Accuracy, not cosmetics. Is your mission accurate? Or does it embroider or glorify your organization's intentions to make them SOUND better, loftier, more extensive, or more glamorous than they are?
- ✓ Too broad or too narrow. Your mission statement should be broad enough to allow for growth and expansion, but narrow enough to keep the organization clearly and strongly focused. Does it allow for your organization to be "all things to all people," or, on the other hand, restrict the organization from meeting changing needs?
- ✓ Net value added. If your organization is a federation or another type of membership organization, or if your board has authority over other boards, does your mission statement deal with the additional result intended beyond what the members of subsidiaries would have produced themselves anyway?
- ✓ Uniqueness. Does your mission statement focus on what is unique about your organization? It is important to consider your mission in light of other similarly situated organizations, and to ensure that your organization "stands out in the crowd."