



Key characteristics of

Healthy Organizations

**Episode 1: Org Health Checklist
& Mission Statements**



ABOUT RIVER NETWORK

River Network grows and strengthens a transformational national network of water, justice, and river advocates.

We envision a powerful and inclusive movement that ensures abundant clean water for all people and nature to thrive. We believe that joy and hope for our planet flows through our rivers.

Meet the network and search our Water Protectors Map on our website!
rivernetwork.org ←



IN PARTNERSHIP

This work is produced by River Network with collaborative support from the Hudson River Watershed Alliance.

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Hudson River
Watershed Alliance



Department of
Environmental
Conservation

Hudson River
Estuary Program



ORG HEALTH CHECKLIST

For new / early stage / in-transition groups



MISSION STATEMENT

A well-written Mission Statement defines the organization's purpose, guides the work the organization engages in, and clarifies the organization's niche role in the community. A Mission Statement should be succinct: one sentence that clearly states **WHY** the organization exists.

- *What are the main goals of your mission statement (up to three)?*
- *Does your mission statement state why your organization is unique?*
- *When was the mission statement last revised/updated?*
- *Does the mission statement help you decide what projects and programs are right for your organization?*

Some organizations also have vision and values statements: a vision statement states WHAT the organization will do, and a values statement suggests HOW the organization will achieve it. Not all of these pieces are necessary, but in combination they can help with making clear decisions about how to invest the organization's capacity.



MISSION

1. Connects to the organization's values
2. Describes why the organization exists
3. Describes the work the organization does
4. Identifies the geographic region and the population serviced by the organization
5. Provides direction and guidance to those involved

A mission statement answers the question of WHAT an organization does (as well as WHO, and WHERE)



MISSION? VALUES? VISION?

MISSION

Answers WHAT
(& WHO, WHERE)
What actions does the
organization primarily
take to achieve its goal?
What do you do?

VALUES

Answers HOW
What methods or themes
will unite the ways you
approach your work?
How will you accomplish
your work?

VISION

Answers WHY
What long term goal will
be realized if the work is
successful? Why do you
do the work you do?

LANGUAGE

- Clear & concise
- Direct
- Simple
- Memorable
- Short (1 sentence is plenty)

EVALUATION

- What makes the organization unique?
- Does it help us make decisions?
- Does it compel someone to fund or support with their time?
- Is it relevant to the time/place?

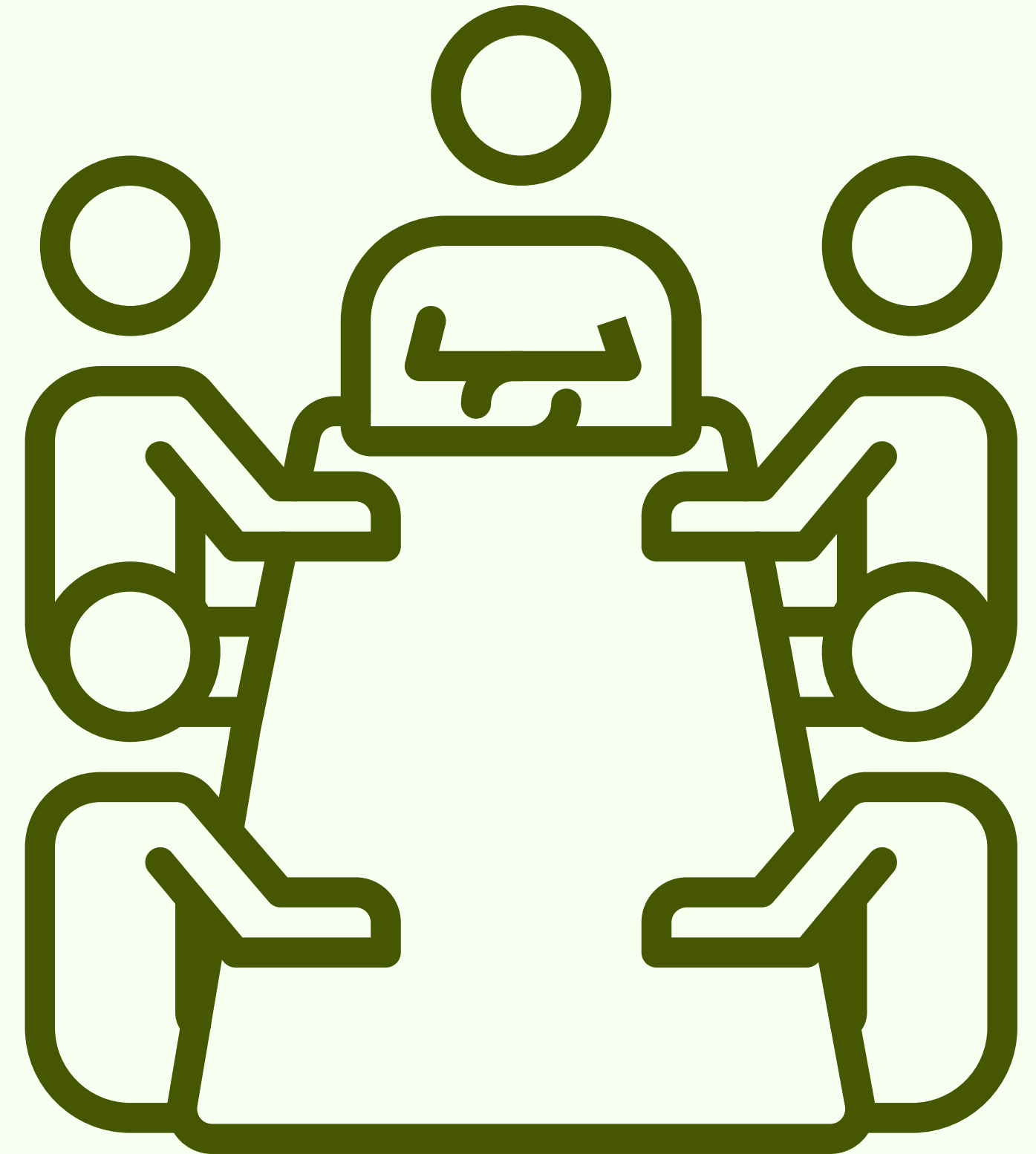


WHO'S INVOLVED?

- The Board/Org Leadership creates the mission statement
 - May use input from others: staff, volunteers, service-users
- Regularly evaluated and updated every ~5 years

Why update?

- New organizations working in your area (on similar goals)
- Changes in the issues (relevance)
- New strategies/resources informing the type of work



HOW-TO

KEY WORDS/PHRASES

Think of NOUNS

People: who is impacted or engaged?

Places: what is the geographic reach?

Things: what do you use to get there?

ACTION-ORIENTED

Think of VERBS

Collaborate?

Change?

Create?

Connect?

Train?

Educate?

SPECIFIC

Think of ADJECTIVES

What makes the work unique?

What makes the work relevant?

What makes the work distinguished?

EXAMPLE:

***River Network grows and strengthens a
transformational national network of
water, justice, and river advocates.***

EXAMPLE:

*The Hudson River Watershed Alliance's
mission is to unite and empower
communities to protect our shared waters.*

Mission Statement – The reason your organization exists.

Your Current Mission:
Questions to Discuss: What words or phrases clearly describe the reason your organization exists? What's the broadest way to describe your work? Where do you work (geographic boundaries) and for whom do you do this work?
Write Them Out: Using the words and phrases generated above, draft a few versions of a new or refined mission statement for your organization.
Review Your Mission: Once you have a final draft, use the questions below to review and assess your mission statement. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Does it clearly connect with the values your organization?• It is broad enough to allow flexibility?• It is as succinct as possible and short enough for people to remember and repeat?• Is it a unifying force providing direction and guidance?• Does it express why your organization exists?

Guidelines:

- Simple and concrete language
- 8th grade reading level
- Avoid buzz words
- 20 words or less
- Avoid words >12 letters or 4 syllables
- No more than 1 word string (A, B, and C)

HOMework

- Use the Mission Statement worksheet to draft (or revise) a mission statement
- If you're happy with your mission statement, use the review questions at the bottom to evaluate the effectiveness of your statement

RECAP

- Mission statement answers WHAT, WHO, WHERE
- How to evaluate a mission statement
- Who is involved in writing a mission statement
- How to write a mission statement



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☐ LEADERSHIP

Regardless of whether a group is an incorporated nonprofit organization or a collection of committed community members, it's important to have an organized leadership structure. This could be a co-leader model, a team model, or a working group model - or something unique to your group!

- *How many people currently make up your leadership team?*
- *Do you need to in-fill any expertise or skills on your leadership team?*
- *Does your leadership team model advance the work and values of the organization?*
- *Does the leadership team have a shared understanding of how decisions are made?*

For more information on leadership models, [check out this article](#) from the Johnson Center for Philanthropy at Grand Valley State University.

☐ DEFINED ROLES

Defining roles for those involved in your group or organization serves a number of purposes: avoiding confusion and duplication of efforts, giving individuals the ability to self-manage confidently, guiding work and directing outcomes, and giving folks a sense of purpose. It's a best practice to define roles in writing with a position or role description, similar to a job description.

- *What roles exist in your group/organization?*
- *Which roles need clarity and a written description?*
- *Are any roles/positions out-of-date, and need revision?*
- *Where do you keep/will you keep position descriptions, so members can access them?*

☐ FINANCE / BUDGET

Whether your group/organization is grant-funded, relying on individual donations, or accepting business sponsorships, it's important to understand your revenue and expenses. This will allow you to anticipate an accurate budget and understand what resources you need in the future. Even organizations hosting one or two events per year can benefit from a basic budget!

- *How are you tracking income and expenses (and who is responsible for this?)*
- *How are others involved in the organization made aware of spending / income?*
- *Where can you access your organizational budget?*
- *Does your budget reflect the goals laid out in your workplan/roadmap?*

☐ WORKPLAN (ROADMAP)

A workplan (or roadmap) helps guide the work of the group/organization within a certain timeframe. Some organizations find it helpful to create a 12-month workplan, while others find it more accessible to plan for 3 or 6 months at a time. No matter the timeframe, defining actions in a workplan will help those involved in the organization feel organized, and will advance progress toward the mission.

- *Where can you access the organization's workplan?*
- *Is the workplan up-to-date?*
- *Are others in the organization referring to the workplan regularly?*
- *Does the workplan help you identify the best ways to utilize funds?*

Follow this link to access a [basic workplan template](#) - for guidance on using the template, check out [this short video](#).

THANK YOU!

Find more
information at
www.rivernetwork.org

***Explore membership, resources, and join
our newsletter & online community!***

