

# Community Visioning Info

**Why do communities write vision statements?** To fulfill three needs:

**1. Purpose.** To know why we are here. Clarifying our vision provides a foundation and clarity for self. It answers the questions: “Why am i here?” “Do i belong?” “Is this what i believe in?”

**2. Outreach.** To tell the world what we are about. To invite others who will be the right fit. To let people know what we are aiming at here, so they can discern whether or not they might want to live with us. To call in what and who we want.

**3. Guidance.** A foundation to build on. A touchstone to remind us of what our core is—especially during troubled times—that we can return to as needed. A consciously chosen influence on decisions of how we live together: policy & agreements, resource allocation (time & money), culture and how we relate with one another.

Writing down our vision forces us to get clear on what that vision is. And going through the process together, as a group, helps us connect with each other’s passions and build shared understanding.

**Sample definition of terms.** Example for a nonprofit focused on food and hunger issues:

*Vision* is what the world looks like when you have achieved everything you want, e.g. “a world free from hunger.”

*Mission* is how you will engage with the issue, e.g. “We will run a soup kitchen to serve homeless people in Lane County.”

*Goals* are the next level down in specificity, e.g. “We aim to open our kitchen by the beginning of next year. We expect to serve dinners 7 nights a week to 250 people. We want to own our own facility within 5 years.”

*Objectives & Tasks* are the next level down in specificity. Objectives are what it will take to achieve each goal (e.g. “in order to own our own facility, we will need to raise X amount of dollars, convene an ad hoc committee to research locations, etc.”), and Tasks are actions with names and dates attached.

These definitions vary in different organizations. It can be helpful to adopt a common terminology for an organization engaged in visioning so that the members know which term means what. In addition,

*Values* are the underlying principles or qualities that run through everything a person or group does. (For a good example of community mission and values, see the website of the Du-má Community in Eugene: <http://www.efn.org/~dlamp/>.)

Note that agreeing on your group’s vision is not the same as determining your group’s organizational structure. And it won’t make tough decisions easy! Because there will still be varied interpretations, different people will emphasize different parts, new people will come in who weren’t there for the original process, and so on. Nonetheless, it’s still a good idea. Once you create the shared vision, you’ll have years of figuring out how to live it. Good years, we hope!