

MISSION, GOALS & OBJECTIVES

When starting a parks group, it is important to have a clear sense of both your overarching mission and your goals for both your park and for your group. Keep the following points in mind while your group is thinking about its mission.

WHAT'S A MISSION?

A group's overarching mission reflects a set of core beliefs and assumptions that define the need for the organization and the results it expects to achieve. A mission:

- ◆ Reflects a purpose and vision.
- ◆ Articulates a group's basic beliefs and assumptions.
- ◆ Is often implied rather than explicitly stated.
- ◆ Reflects how the organization intends to contribute to the community/larger society.
- ◆ Answers the questions: What are we trying to accomplish? How will we do it? Where? For whom? Why?

Very often parks groups incorporate one or more of these three things into their mission:

- ◆ **Physically Improving the Park:** from cleaning and planting to major renovations
- ◆ **Programming the Park:** hosting regular and special events, from concerts to a day camp
- ◆ **Increasing/Improving Park Usership:** Bringing children into a playground, or school groups into a natural area, or dog lovers into a dog run.

You should take the time to develop a **mission statement**. It will help your group articulate its purpose, and focus its ideas. According to Ron Meshanko of Ecumenical Resource Consultants inc., a group's mission statement "should be a one-sentence, clear, concise statement that says who the [group] is, what it does, for whom and where. Period!"

Example: "The friends of Lovely Park is a 501(c)(3) community-based organization providing social, educational, and multicultural after-school programming for high school students in Lovely Park, and the surrounding community of Jamaica, NY."

Adapted from *Measures of Success* by Richard Margoluis and Nick Salasfsky, Island Press 1998; *Three Sigma, Inc.*, http://www.threesigma.com/mission_operational.htm; and *the Internet Nonprofit Center*, <http://www.nonprofits.org/npofaq/03/21.html>

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WHAT'S A GOAL?

A goal is the purpose toward which an endeavor (your project) is directed, and focuses your group's work to reflect the larger overarching mission. A good goal is:

- ◆ Visionary—it should offer an image of the state you are trying to achieve.
- ◆ General—it should be defined broadly enough to encompass all the activities you will do in trying to achieve it.
- ◆ Brief—simple, succinct, and easy to remember and understand.
- ◆ Measurable—so that you will be able to know if you have achieved it!

Example: To create and support a sustainable coalition of partners for Lovely Park that will raise money, hold events, and act as advocates for the park with minimal support from government agencies.

WHAT'S AN OBJECTIVE?

Objectives measure particular outcomes or accomplishments of a project. Ideally the accomplishment of each objective brings you one step closer to the achievement of the project's goal. A good objective is:

- ◆ Impact-oriented—do not describe a process, but represent desired changes in particular factors.
- ◆ Measurable—specific in terms of numbers.
- ◆ Time-limited—achievable within a specific period of time.
- ◆ Specific—clearly defined and easy to understand.
- ◆ Practical—achievable and appropriate within the context of the project.

Example: Convene monthly meetings of representatives from at least five of the community groups working in Lovely Park.

HOW DO YOU ACHIEVE YOUR OBJECTIVES?

Once you have mapped out your objectives, you can determine the activities you should be doing to achieve them. Activities are:

- ◆ Linked to particular objectives
- ◆ Focused on specific tasks
- ◆ Feasible & appropriate

Example: Send invitation letters to the presidents of all of the community groups working in or around Lovely Park.

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