

Merger and Alliance Toolkit

1. Getting Ready: Assessment

1.1 Mission Statement Worksheet

Your organization's mission statement should be a simple expression of the impact you seek to have (e.g., *The Community Kitchen strives to ensure access to healthy food in our region*). As a group, recount your organization's current mission statement. (It's OK to look it up if no one can remember it.) Write it here:

[Hopefully the essence of the statement can fit in the space provided. The shorter, the better. An overly long mission statement is sure to include information better articulated somewhere else. Moreover, the longer the mission statement, the less likely it is that anyone will be able to commit it to memory, which means that it will have limited usefulness.]

Rewrite the statement, deleting all references to services, programs, or how the mission is accomplished. Sometimes these clauses begin with the word "by" or "through," as in the statement "The Community Center is committed to ending poverty in our neighborhood *through the provision of health and social services*." For this exercise, you would delete the second half of the sentence, beginning with the word "through."

You should now have boiled down your mission statement to its essence: a statement of what the organization is trying to accomplish and for whom. If, after following these instructions, you deleted the entire mission statement (or most of it), then your mission statement is probably too focused on service provision and not enough on outcome. Try writing a new statement: one that contains no references to services or programs, and thus passes the above test.

This restatement of your mission is what should be carried into discussions with your potential partner. If both organizations go through this exercise it will be easier to avoid getting stuck in a "mission rut" during negotiations. Instead of taking a stand in support of their beloved (and very specific) mission statements (a situation which can cause conflict over relatively minor wording differences), both organizations will be more open to discussing how the essence of their missions can best be advanced. It is this essence that is really each organization's reason for existence, after all, and it is more likely to be compatible with that of the other organization than a more specific, service-oriented statement.

The wordsmithing of the mission statement for the new (merged) organization can now be an attempt to incorporate the essence of the two original missions into one statement—a statement that still does not focus on programs.

