



New businesses and organizations are created from dreams of what could be. To turn dreams into reality, start with crafting vision and mission statements for your business. Explore the differences between each, and see how good statements can help to guide everyday decisions.

Vision and Mission Differences

Committees often write mission and vision statements because it is expected, with little knowledge of their purpose. By understanding the difference between the two types of statements, it's easier to recognize how the day-to-day work of the mission makes the vision a reality.

VISION is about the future. MISSION is what you do every day to achieve the future you imagine.

What's the Purpose of the Statements?

Writing vision and mission statements helps to clarify and refine your thinking and communicates who you are and what you do to others — especially to funders and loan officers. Both types of statements should be included in your business plan.

Writing the statements will help to prevent mission creep and ultimately help to develop a shared culture within your business or organization, creating a workplace built on relationships where employees are empowered to make decisions. This type of culture enhances your ability to adapt when forces beyond your control change. Being thoughtful about this will build a strong foundation for your non-profit or for-profit urban farm.

How to Get Started

You may find it useful, but more difficult, to write your vision first. Often, daily actions (the mission) are already occurring and much easier to identify. Sometimes we lose sight of the why (the vision).

Take a step back from your busy life to sit outside and focus on the future. Draw or write down words and short phrases that describe the future you want to create. Then do the following:

1. **Explain** your vision to someone. Have them repeat what they heard. Take notes, because they will use different words and perhaps be more concise.
2. **Write a draft.** Focus on the vision. If you end up describing actions, file them for use in your mission statement. Refer to the design rules below to help guide your writing.
3. **Seek feedback** from multiple people, including people of various ages, as well as friends, relatives, and those who know nothing about your project. The purpose is to make sure anyone can understand the vision. If you work with others on the project, make sure they provide input too.
4. **Rewrite** and rewrite again until you are satisfied. Repeat the process as necessary.
5. **Repeat** these steps for the mission statement. When you are done, have someone new read both statements to check if the actions described in the mission support the vision.

Use Design Rules

Guide development of your statements with design rules from [Cabrera Research Lab](#):

Vision Statement Design Rules

- Intrinsically motivating.
- Depicts a desired future state.
- Short and simple.
- Measurable.
- Enculturated.

Mission Statement Design Rules

- The actions are done repeatedly.
- The actions bring about the vision.
- Explains who does what for whom.
- Clear, concise, and easily understood.

Tips

Getting your statement right takes patience and practice. It can be difficult to create a short, measurable, motivating, and enculturated statement about the future while also crafting a clear and concise mission statement that supports it. This challenge leads some organizations to create hybrid statements using aspects of both types. Sometimes the mission is implicit in the vision.

For example, Walt Disney’s vision is “to make people happy,” so we know their mission is to create happy, fun movies, amusement parks, and toys —and by doing those things, they are working to achieve their vision of happy people.

Review for Simplicity

Focus on making sure that anyone reading your statements understands who you are and what you do. Derek and Laura Cabrera recommend having a 9-year-old to read your statements and then explain in their own words what they think you are trying to achieve. If they are struggling to understand, listen to their feedback and revise your statement.

Expect and Embrace Change

Statements can and should be refined over time. As you get better at what you do, so will your ability to communicate your vision, mission, values, and goals succinctly and clearly.

Statement Examples

There are many ways to communicate your vision and mission. It is better to use what works for you than to struggle to achieve a perfect statement according to design rules. The following vision and mission statements do not conform exactly to the design rules above but serve the same purpose of communicating the future (the vision) and how it will be achieved (the mission).

Example 1: Growing Home

Growing Home combines aspects of both mission and vision into a brief paragraph:

“Growing Home is a USDA-Certified Organic urban farm, workforce development center and non-profit social enterprise in the Englewood neighborhood of Chicago. We believe that everyone deserves a good job, to eat well, and to live in a vibrant, supported community. We serve our communities through paid innovative employment training and local, healthy, affordable food.”

Example 2: Advocates for Urban Agriculture

Instead of having a vision statement, this Chicago-area coalition communicates what they do (their mission) — educate, endorse, connect, and advocate. The final phrase in their statement, “allow urban agriculture to thrive,” describes the future they would like to see:

“We educate and train agriculture practitioners throughout the Chicago region. We endorse good practices for urban growing operations of all types and sizes. We connect growers, consumers, and resources through an active coalition. We advocate for policies that allow urban agriculture to thrive.”

Additional Resources

[Vision and Mission Statements: A Roadmap of Where You Want to Go and how to Get There](#), Iowa State University Extension and Outreach.

[Flock Not Clock: Design, Align, and Lead to Achieve Your Vision](#), Cabrera Research Lab.

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As you plan your urban farm, if you’d like feedback on your vision and mission statements, contact Kathryn Pereira, Extension Educator, Local Food Systems and Small Farms, kpereira@illinois.edu.

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