

## GUIDELINES FOR WRITING A NORC PROGRAM MISSION STATEMENT

### What is a Mission Statement?

A mission statement tells the community why you exist. It is a value statement that sets the tone for your program, while motivating and unifying all partners in the program. A mission statement is a written, easy-to-remember sentence, short list of bullet points, or brief paragraph conveying the NORC program's purpose, what you are hoping to achieve, and the principles that guide your work. For NORC programs to succeed, core partners or others associated with the program need to be involved in the development of the mission statement so that they understand why they are working together in partnership. An effective mission statement resonates with the partners, as well as with the different seniors and community constituencies the partnership hopes to affect.

### Elements of a Clear Mission Statement

A typical mission statement contains three key components:

1. Your purpose. What are the opportunities or needs that you want to address?
2. Your business. What are you doing to address those opportunities or needs?
3. Your values. What principles or beliefs guide your work?

A well-crafted mission statement:

- Expresses your purpose in a way that inspires support and ongoing commitment.
- Is articulated in a way that is convincing and easy to grasp.
- Uses proactive verbs to describe what the partnership does.
- Is free of jargon.
- Is short enough so that everyone connected to the effort can easily repeat it.

An example:

(Partnership name) supports the independence and well-being of older adults by raising awareness, leveraging resources, and coordinating services through a committed partnership with all parts of the community.

1. The purpose: to support the independence and well-being of older adults.
2. The business: raising awareness, leveraging resources, and coordinating services.
3. The values: committed partnership with all parts of the community.

A well-crafted mission statement like this one becomes the glue that binds the various parts of the partnership together. It also drives all decisions and actions by the partners.

## Steps for Developing a Mission Statement

- All partners articulate their own expectations for this partnership and for what it can accomplish in the community.
- Partners then have an open discussion about:
  1. The purpose. What are the opportunities or needs that they want to address?
  2. The business. What are they doing to address those opportunities or needs?
  3. The values. What principles or beliefs guide their work?
- From the discussion, create a list in each of the three categories. Group together similar themes. Look for commonality; listen for rationales behind favorite positions.
- Partners reach out to their constituencies for ideas.
- Choose a person or two from the partnership team to write a draft.
- Circulate the draft to all other partners for reactions, improvements, and input; insure that all viewpoints are heard.
- Write a revised statement that reflects the input. Strive for a statement that all can buy into (100% agreement is not needed on every word).
- Come to agreement on the overall statement. Solicit members' commitment regarding the statement.
- Publicize the mission statement. Public acknowledgement helps send the message that there is a unified partnership ready to make the program work.