

WRITING A STATEMENT OF VALUES & ETHICS

Earning and Maintaining the Public Trust

While the Mission Statement defines *what* a nonprofit does, the Statement of Values and Ethics reflects *how* it conducts business, interacts with constituents, honors donors' wishes, and implements the best practices of its mission sector. Nonprofit organizations must do more than follow the law; they need to earn and maintain the public's trust by demonstrating an organization-wide commitment to ethical practices. These core values must permeate the organization's culture and be supported by policies and procedures that guide the board and staff. Excellent organizations develop a statement of values that define how they commit to the public good; embrace transparency, integrity and honesty; respect the worth and dignity of individuals; value diversity; commit to excellence; steward resources; and maintain accountability to the public.¹ Following are a list of questions to consider as you draft your organization's Statement of Values and Ethics.

- How will we serve our constituents and why?
- What are the underlying ethics that influence all of our actions?
- What deeply held convictions of the board and staff inspire us to fulfill the mission?
- What are the rights of our donors?
- How do we embrace diversity and promote inclusiveness in hiring, board recruitment, and constituencies served?
- How does our organization constantly earn the trust of its constituents and the public?
- How do we avoid even the appearance of conflict of interest or private benefits?
- How do we fulfill our commitment to transparency?
- How can we most efficiently use our resources?
- How do we evaluate our mission and its impact on communities?
- How do we adhere to best practices of the nonprofit sector and of our specific mission area?
- What are our standards for personal and professional conduct?
- What are our responsibilities as stewards of public resources?

Need a hand writing your organization's values? WE CAN HELP!

¹ Independent Sector; Statement of Values and Code of Ethics for Nonprofit and Philanthropic Organizations; adapted from the model code of ethics for nonprofit organizations in 2004; www.independentsector.org/code_of_ethics, accessed 7-20-2015

Nonprofit resource courtesy of



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