

## How can nonprofits avoid mission drift?

Nonprofits can be in danger of mission drift, where the organisation loses sight of its core purpose, as they struggle to balance other goals such as securing funding, raising their profile or recruiting new volunteers and staff. In the long-term, this can damage the nonprofit's reputation and lead to a loss of funding and support as the organisation is no longer pursuing what it set out to do.

There are a number of steps a nonprofit can take to safeguard itself against mission drift:

1. **Define the organisation's mission.** Take the time to articulate the purpose of the nonprofit. Many nonprofits will have a vision statement, which outlines the ultimate world which that nonprofit would like to see, and a mission statement, which outlines the role that nonprofit will play to achieve that vision. Creating a mission statement should be a collaborative process which involves Board members, staff, volunteers and service-users so that every level of the organisation buys into the mission.
2. **Communicate this mission.** Although the mission should have been created collaboratively, there will always be a level of turnover and a number of new recruits in any organisation. Ensure that your mission is highly visible and that the importance of it is emphasised.
3. **Create a strategy.** A nonprofit should have a strategy which aligns closely with its mission. By keeping the mission at the centre of the discussion when forming the strategy, the objectives selected should clearly make sense against the context of that mission statement.
4. **Evaluate new opportunities with the mission in mind.** Always assess whether a new opportunity will further the nonprofit's mission and strategy. It can be easy to feel that a nonprofit should apply for and accept every possible funding stream, but the restrictions imposed by some sources of funding can pull the organisation's activities away from the mission. Similarly, new partnerships and new activities should be assessed to ensure they align with the mission.
5. **Regularly review the organisation's mission.** Sometimes it is necessary for a nonprofit to narrow, broaden or shift its mission to reflect changing circumstances or changing needs in the community. Ensure the mission statement is up-to-date and well-communicated so that those supporting the organisation, whether through donated money, time or other resources, fully understand what they are supporting. A change in mission should be a well-thought out, conscious decision made by the organisation, not an unconscious drift from the agreed upon purpose.

For charities or sports organisations, having a clear mission is a requirement under the relevant governance code, as outlined below.

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## **Charities Code**

1. Core standards for advancing charitable purpose

1.1 Be clear about the purpose of your charity and be able to explain it in simple terms to anyone who asks.

1.5 From time to time, review what you are doing to make sure you are still:

- acting in line with your charity's purpose; and
- providing public benefit.

1.6. Develop your charity's strategic plan and associated operational plans.

1.8. From time to time, consider the advantages and disadvantages of working in partnership with other charities, including merging or dissolving (winding up).

## **Governance Code for Sport**

**Principle 1.** Leading our organisation

We do this by:

**1.1** Agreeing our vision, purpose, mission, values and objectives making sure that they remain relevant;

**1.2** Developing, resourcing, monitoring and evaluating a plan so that our organisation achieves its stated purpose and objectives;

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