Written by Mel and Pearl Shaw
Monday, 28 January 2013 16:56

Successful fundraising begins long before a fundraising plan is ever created. It starts with your organization's vision and mission. These two items are at the core of non-profit operations. It is the vision and mission that drive your strategic direction and goals. And it is the strategic direction that influences fundraising and the use of funds.

The chief executive for your organization is the person responsible for the vision and mission. Depending upon the structure of your organization this person could be the director, executive director, the chief executive officer, the president or chancellor. He or she is the person responsible for ensuring board members, employees, and volunteers understand the mission and vision and are in agreement with these. He is also responsible for ensuring the organization's strategic direction — as documented in the strategic plan — is rooted in the mission and vision.

The work of defining your nonprofit's mission and vision may have been done years ago. Or, these may be still evolving. Sometimes the process of defining these can appear to be complicated and too time consuming. But clearly defining these is critically important – they are the bedrock from which you will create your strategic, business, and/or operating plans. They are what will ultimately drive your fundraising.

Here's how it works. Your mission and vision inform the creation of your strategic plan. Your strategic plan sets the path for your operations and activities. Knowing your current and projected future operations and activities informs your fundraising. While you can always raise some money, meeting your fundraising goal will require that you know how much you are seeking to raise and for what current and projected purposes. It all ties back to your mission and vision.

Here are our simple definitions. Your vision statement communicates your vision for the future — what you are seeking to achieve. Your mission statement communicates the purpose of your organization. Your strategic plan communicates how you will bring your vision and mission to life..

Your vision and mission statements should be short and concise — one or two sentences at most, if possible. Your strategic plan can be as simple or as complex as your organization

requires. We are partial to short, clearly written plans that include easy-to-understand and easy-to-measure goals and objectives.

Once the vision and mission are established, it is the chief executive's responsibility to ensure they are understood and that the board and employees are in agreement with them. All parties need to know these statements – and what they mean – inside and out. All need to be able to discuss the vision and mission when talking about the organization. Each needs to know the goals and objectives contained in the strategic plan and the progress being made toward these. These are some of the first steps in building towards fundraising success.

© Mel and Pearl Shaw

Mel and Pearl Shaw are the authors of "Prerequisites for Fundraising Success." They provide fundraising counsel to nonprofits. Visit them at www.saadandshaw.com.