

Starting an Organization

Starting an organization is the most exciting journey you can embark on. Okay, so maybe we're a little biased here. But of all of the adventures any of us can imagine, not one beats starting an organization for long term satisfaction and gratification. That is of course, if the organization thrives and actually does what it was founded to do.

So, while we are always thrilled to help new leaders start new organizations, we take the process very seriously in order to offer guidance for establishing the most enduring structural elements. Some of these elements apply to all types of organizations – non-profit/NGOs, for-profit corporations, government agencies and committees, local, state, national, international. Others apply only to specific types.

First, before you embark on this journey, make sure no other organizations with similar missions already exist in your area. You might find such an organization and by offering your assistance to them, reach your goal of increasing bicycling far sooner than if you had spent the time building a brand new organization. Too many new organization leaders don't take the time to find out about existing organizations. Such redundancies impair the effectiveness of both organizations and waste limited resources.

If you find that your area truly is in need of a new organization, here is a brief overview and resources for starting an organization. Make sure to, [please contact us](#) early on in the process to get our feedback. Every organization is unique, but there are many common mistakes we can help you avoid. Also, visit our [Management page](#) for even more resources.

The “Six Ps” of Healthy Organizations:

PEOPLE

All that is needed to form an organization is two or more people to come together in order to make a specific change, as a group rather than as individuals. Voila! That's it. You've got an organization. All the other stuff simply adds to the structure. So always remember that people are the most important element of your organization. Without them, you're just another

individual.

Choose your first fellow leaders with great care. Try for at least five as this is a good variety of brains and hearts to create a robust purpose and structure for the organization. Together you will be the founders of this organization and will set the tone for many generations. However, if you do not choose them well, your organization won't last but a few painful years. Continue this rule of cautious invitations to potential leaders throughout the life of the organization in order to preserve and build on your respected, widely beneficial reputation. This way you will avoid attracting people who want to lead the organization for their own benefit or their own short-sighted initiatives.

Once you've brought together your fellow founding leaders, work towards these important goals for the people of your organization:

- Teamwork
- A strong and respected executive director, owner or agency director.
- Many regular volunteers who offer their time to increase bicycling.
- A culture of compassion, respect and kindness towards each other.
- A backdrop of fun and pride to be part of the team
- All leaders work together towards the organization's mission.
- All leaders take part in regular, on-going planning; meetings are fun.
- Substantial and growing dues paying membership, customer list or public participation with regular communications.

PURPOSE

You will have a certain idea of the purpose of this new organization. The other leaders you invite to become founding leaders will agree with you, but will have different perspectives on this core purpose. These varying perspectives will combine into a much more powerful mission statement than any one of you could have created alone. One of your first meetings must be to determine the purpose of the organization and vote to approve the mission statement that will guide the organization throughout its life.

The mission statement must clearly state the unique and needed purpose of the organization in just one, easily remembered sentence so that all leaders can learn it and proudly adhere to it. Use the One Street template at this early meeting to develop your [mission, vision, values and goals](#) for the organization.

Also at an early meeting that includes discussion of purpose, choose the name of the organization – this is lots of fun! Make sure to avoid boring names or ones that will be confused with other similar organizations. And don't make it too long! You need people to relate to and remember this name.

PROJECTS/PRODUCTS

Your constituents or customers will look for lively interesting projects and products from your organization. In order to gain their support, either financially or through mobilization for campaigns, you need to show them your organization is doing its job. Here are a few important goals to shoot for:

- Real measurements of increasing bicycling such as more bikeways, thousands of children educated, millions of dollars expended on bicyclists' safety.
- Innovative products designed to encourage new riders complete with promotions.
- Always three projects, programs or products underway that are increasing bicycling.

POLICIES

Policies are only as good as the culture of the organization, so start by creating and preserving a culture of ethics, kindness and respect towards everyone. Once you are confident this culture is inherent throughout the organization, establish:

- Legal compliance – for U.S. non-profits, we recommend incorporating as a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization through the IRS.
- Complimentary roles and responsibilities, agreed to and respected by all.
- A workplan/budget approved by all leaders and followed each year.
- High quality documents to help guide the team such as:
 - [Mission/vision/values/goals](#)
 - [Bylaws](#)
 - [Letters of Commitment](#)
 - [Employee Agreement s](#)
 - [Employee Handbook](#)
 - [Ethical Policies](#)

PROMOTION

You cannot attract the people or the funding necessary to build and grow your organization without an on-going, comprehensive promotions system that includes:

- All victories, product releases and new efforts are promoted through the media, the organization's web site and other innovative channels.
- Ideally an organizational identity manual or at least strict use of the same logo, colors, patterns and taglines.
- Professional appearance and respected reputation.
- Media always call the organization first for bicycling info.
- Regular system of news stories, press releases, newsletters, communication and web site updates.
- Creative ads and marketing mechanisms.
- Most constituents know and appreciate the organization.

PAYMENT

This final P emphasizes the end goal of fundraising and promotions efforts. Unless the constituents, customers or agencies actually pay, these efforts will be meaningless. So make sure your organization has all the elements in place to ask for and receive payments, including:

- Dues from members, no less than \$25 per year, including a system for asking, thanking and requesting renewals.
- Fees for services.
- Diverse funding sources that include members/donors, government funding, and program fees.
- For-profit corporations understand the value of products that increase bicycling and invest appropriately, though payment may come in the future.
- Government agencies assist in tapping government funding for increasing bicycling.

Source: www.OneStreet.org