

Goal Setting

Center for Student Leadership Resources

Goals help define your organization, give direction and avoid chaos. Goals can help motivate members by communicating what the organization is striving for as well as providing a basis for recognizing accomplishments and successes. Organizations that set goals are more effective in recruiting members.

Three Levels of Defining Organizational Priorities

1. Mission Statement -- a broad, general statement that tells why your organization exists. The mission statement clearly states the purpose of your organization and usually does not change from year to year (often this is the first statement in your constitution).
2. Goals -- are statements describing what your organization wishes to accomplish. They should relate to the mission and purpose of your organization. Goals are the ends toward which your efforts will be directed and often change from semester to semester, depending on the nature of your organization.
3. Objectives -- are descriptions of exactly what is to be done in order to accomplish each goal. Objectives should be clear and specific statements of measurable tasks that will be accomplished as steps toward reaching your goals. Objectives set the plan of action for the organization – they should be short term and have deadlines. Each goal should have a number of objectives associated with it.

Goals Should Be . . .

- Owned by the organization
- Stated in terms of accomplishment
- Specific
- Measurable
- Congruent with the organization's purpose and values
- Realistic
- Periodically evaluated and revised

Steps for Setting Goals and Objectives

1. Brainstorm a list of potential goals as a group
2. Choose from the brainstorm list those you want to work on
3. Prioritize
4. Determine objectives for each goal and plans of action for each objective
5. Move into action, follow through (many groups fail to evaluate and revise; thus their goals are never achieved)

Developing an Action Plan

- What is to be done?
- How will it be accomplished?
- What are your resources in terms of people, money and materials?
- Who is responsible for completing each task?

- What is the timeline? What is the deadline?
- How will you know when it is accomplished? How will you measure the results?

How to Brainstorm and Prioritize Goals: The Blue Dot / Red Dot Activity

1. Divide members into groups of 3 to 5 (depending on size of organization) and give each group 5 sheets of paper and a marker
2. Give the groups 20-30 minutes to generate goals for the organization. Instruct them to only write one goal per sheet of paper
3. Have each group, one at a time, explain and hang on the wall each of their goals. Put similar goals near or on top of each other on the wall.
4. Give everyone 3 blue dots and 3 red dots (stickers). First the blue dots: blue dots indicate priority. Instruct everyone to stick the blue dots on a goal they feel particularly strong about or spread them out among their top three choices. Give everyone time to distribute his or her blue dots.
5. Red dots: red dots are energy. Instruct members to place the red dots on goals which they feel they have the energy to accomplish or on the goals which they feel the combined organization has energy to accomplish (may or may not be the same goal(s) selected for the blue dots).
6. Examine the goals that received a high number of blue dots and red dots. These should be the goals your organization focuses on for the upcoming year.
7. At this point, form committees to look at each goal and write objectives for each goal. Remind members that objectives should indicate a plan for action and a timeline for accomplishment.
8. At future meetings ask the committees to report on their progress. Committees should feel comfortable enlisting other organization member's help since all members agreed to the importance of the selected goals.

The Blue Dot / Red Dot activity is a good way to help organizations brainstorm and prioritize. The use of the blue and red dots allows the organization to get input from all members rather than just the dominating members that speak up. Since all members participated in the formation of the goals they are more likely to be invested in the action plans developed to accomplish each goal.