ORGANIZATIONAL MISSION AND VALUES TOOLKIT

As an organization that services domestic and sexual violence survivors, it is essential that your mission and organizational values remain current, accurate, and reflective of the work you do to end trauma and violence. Staff, board members, and partners must understand and support these commitments, using them to guide their decisions and practices.

This resource provides activities that can be conducted within your organization and with board members to review your mission and core values for continued relevance and accuracy. It is designed to strengthen alignement with these statements and ensure they are consistently integrated in all aspects of the organization's practices and operations.

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FUTURES WITHOUT VIOLENCE

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The **Supporting Organizational Sustainability to Address Violence Against Women Institute** (SOS Institute) offers resources, technical assistance support, and an interactive, multi-day training to help U.S. Department of Justice Office on Violence Against Women grantees, partner organizations, and community-based organizations, enhance their programming organizational infrastructure and capacity.

For questions and additional information, please contact Futures Without Violence, at: learning@futureswithoutviolence.org.

PART I

Mission Statement Review

What's Your Mission?

A mission statement is a clear and concise definition of your organization's single most important purpose. This purpose is what guides you. It's what sets you apart from other organizations. It's what every project, initiative, and team goal should work toward. It's helpful to periodically review your mission statement to ensure it is still reflective of the work your organization is committed to and prioritizes. Use these activities below with staff, executive teams, board members, and even stakeholders to examine your current mission, revise it or to create a new one entirely.

A. Mission Statement Review, Part 1.

Material:

Pre-printed or written mission statement for the organization in large font and markers.

Instructions:

1. Read the mission statement as a group and discuss: "What does your mission mean to each of you?"
2. Circle words that are meaningful. These words may speak to your core values.
3. Is the wording easy to understand, straightforward and concise?
4. **Is it specific, short and sharply focused?**
5. Does the statement demonstrate what guides you, motivates you, and sets you apart from other organizations?

B. Mission Statement Review, Part 2.

Review your mission and respond to the following questions: [1]

- Does our mission still feel relevant within the context of the anti-domestic and-sexual violence movement?
- Does our mission statement feel inclusive to our service population and programs?
- Are there language shifts that need to be made within our mission?

[1] Adapted from Washington Coalition Against Sexual Assault, http://www.wcsap.org/rethinking-your-mission-or-vision-statement

- What impact do we want to make in our community? Does our mission still reflect this?
- How are we accomplishing our mission goal? Has the approach of the organization changed in a significant way that it should be encompassed in our mission?
- Has our movement or society at large shifted our issue? Does this shift require us to shift as well?

C. Writing a New Mission Statement:

Is your current mission outdated?

Write a new mission statement

- What would be the 2 or 3 words that explain the essence of why we exist?
- Using these words, draft a sentence with the following:

  Purpose - reason for existence, our cause, for whom we do it.

  Impact - the change or improvement that we are making, the benefit.

- Write 3-4 versions and ask staff, board, or other stakeholders for feedback.
- Review and analyze, using the assessment recommendations listed in the previous page.
- Share your mission statement with others, how does it sound?

  Is it easy to memorize, is it inspiring and memorable? Does it motivate action?
- Consider if your mission demonstrates the uniqueness of your organization in the movement, market, and services.
- Does the mission consider your stakeholders as well (not just clients)?
- The board of directors should provide final approval.
- Make necessary updates to mission statement in documents and assess legal requirements and procedures as a result of the change.
- Promote your updated mission statement and any impact in your work.

PART II

Core Values Review and Development Worksheet

As we do our work, what do we value most?

Organizational values are beliefs held so strongly that they drive people's behavior and dictate how people interact with and treat each other. [2] Core values guide the way the organization operates, makes decision, and treats its employees, volunteers, and clients. Your organization can use the materials below to develop or review your organizational core values. Engage staff, board, clients and stakeholders in these activities!

Questions to help in the development and review of core values:

- What are core values and what do they mean to you?
- What is important about the work we do?
- What is unique about our organization? Unlike other similar organizations, ___ is the only organization that offers ___ (e.g. shelter, children's program) services that result in ___ (e.g. saving lives, safe place).
- What do we like about the values and culture of our organization and co-workers?
- What values guide our work and decision-making on a day to day basis?

Note: You may survey your organization's staff anonymously to gather information to the above questions.

A. Exercise to review current core values

1. Pass out or write on an easel paper your current organizational core values.
2. Individually first, write a sentence defining what each value means.
3. Based on the consensus of all participating, write a sentence for each value that reflects the collective sentiment.
4. For each core value, write an additional sentence about how this value operates in your orginazational practices, policies and/or programs; i.e., *We value _____, which means _____, therefore_____.*
5. After you have written a sentence for each, rank them in terms of how effective your orginazation has been living this value in terms of practices,

[2] Peopleink, "Defining Your Organization's Values-A Step towards Intentional Workplace Culture" available at http://peopleink.com/blog/defining-your-organization%E2%80%99s-values/

policies, and/or programs. Use a scale of 1-3 (3 is fully enacted, 1 is hardly operating at all).

6. Review and assess the need to make any updates. Discussion questions:
   - How is our work and organizational culture consistent with these values?
   - Identify something in your daily work that is **inconsistent** with the organization's core values.
   - What are some small steps we can take to operationalize these values more?

B. Exercise to develop core values for your organization

1. Each team member identifies 4-8 values that are important for the operation of the organization. What are the traits, qualities, and priorities that guide and define ideal organizational behavior.
2. Ask staff, what are the guiding principles that dictate how we treat each other and the people we serve?
   Alternatively: send out a confidential questionnaire with questions listed on the previous page to identify values.
   Examine the lists of values for overlap. Try to build consensus within the team and select the top 5-7 values.
3. Divide group into smaller teams, each team writes a sentence for each core value that highlights **how** you demonstrate or intend to demonstrate the value within the organization. *Sample*: *We value or believe in ____, therefore____*.
4. After you have written a sentence for each, rank them 1-3 (3 is fully enacted, 1 is hardly operating at all). Examine discrepancies and discuss to build consensus.
5. Organizational leadership and board may take more time to finalize and develop a formal values statement for the organization.

C. Activity to discuss interpretation and application of core values:

Materials: Blank white paper to develop a small booklet or zin, art supplies, scissors, small stickers.

Instructions: Each staff member chooses 2-3 core values and creates a zin, small 8-page booklet, with writing or drawings to illustrate how core values are being manifested in programs, policies, and practices in the organization. Staff then share with each other to identify overlap and different points of view.

PART III

Connecting & Aligning Organizational Core Values, Mission & Programs

Are my mission and values working together?

Tree Exercise[3]

It is important that your organization's mission and its core values operate harmoniously in all your programs, policies, and practices and that your organization's decision-making is not at odds with your values. Below, you will see an exercise to help consider how your mission and values complement each other and support your work.

Materials: Copy of the organization's mission statement and list of core values. Drawing of a large tree with branches, trunk, roots, flowers, and fruit. Markers.

Instructions: In the tree drawing, incorporate the following organizational structures:

1. **Roots = mission and core values**
   - Write your organizational **core values**.
   - Post your mission statement below the roots of the tree.

2. **Fruit or flower = programs**
   - Draw a fruit or flower symbolizing a strong program of the organization; write program names inside.
   - Repeat with different programs.

3. **Trunk / bark = infrastructure that supports programs.**
   (Example: planning, governance, human resources, policies and procedures, financial management, self-care program, evaluation…).
   - List **organizational structures** that support programs that are based in your core values.
   - Connect core values to infrastructure and assess if they are aligned.

4. **Connect roots (core values and mission) to fruit/programs:**

[3] The Mission & Core Values Tree Exercise was developed by Beckie Masaki as part of the SOS Institute, a project of Futures Without Violence.

- How are the roots (core values and mission) connected to the fruits/flowers (programs)?
- How do you support the trunk (infrastructure)?
- What is missing?
- What you need to work on to make the different parts stronger?

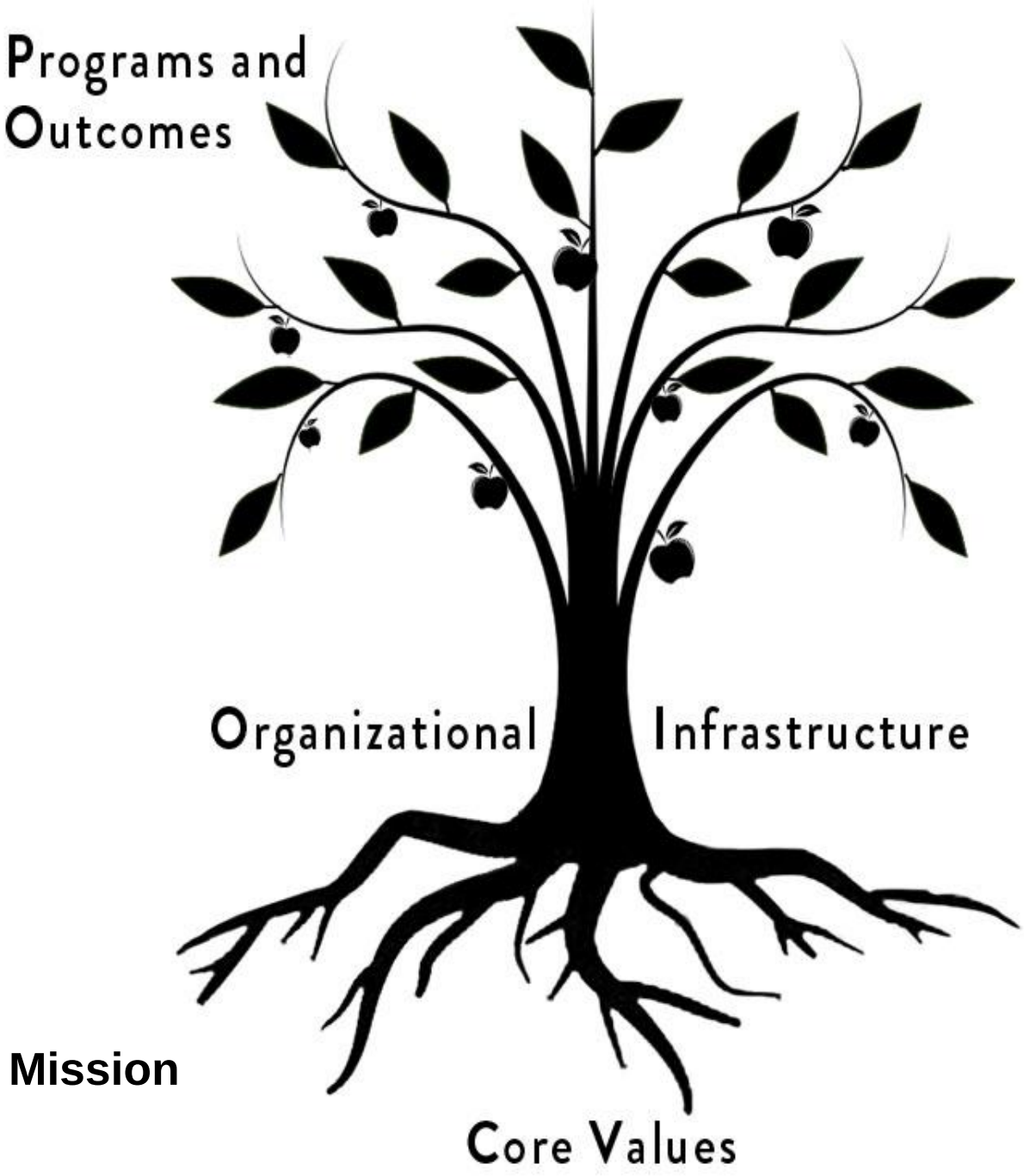
5. Discussion questions and prompts for action:

- How do core values connect (or not) to the mission?
- How are these values lived out in your organization (or not)?
    - In individual, team, and organizational practices and decision making.
- What behaviors/actions demonstrate alignment with your values and beliefs?
- What changes or strategies can you implement to ensure that values are aligned to our mission and applied to individual, team, and organizational practices?
- How can you bring your values and mission statement to life in your organization so that it really guides your work?
- How are the values communicated internally and externally?

Tips for aligning mission and values:

- Recruit and hire staff with a commitment to mission and value alignment.
- Include your mission/values as a component of employee reviews.
- As management, explicitly note how your values play a part in your decision-making processes.
- Include your values within your communications and marketing. Pull them out in blogs, reaffirm them in printed material, such as brochures and annual reports.
- Create a page within your site dedicated solely to your organizational values.
- Use your values to express policies and procedures.
- Review your policies and procedures and update to align with your values.
- Express your values in simple terms using and storytelling to demonstrate a value that may be hard to understand.
- In collaborations, MOUs, and partnerships, ensure that values and expectations are clarified.

Mission and Core Values Exercise
Sample Tree



Organizational Mission and Values Toolkit

Resources

Worksheet

- Core Values Within Survivor Serving Organizations, Worksheet (list & define values)

Mission Statement

- Mission, Vision, and Values and Purpose, BoardSource
- Aligning Mission, Vision, and Strategy
- How To Write a Nonprofit Vision Statement That Will Truly Shape Your Organization's Future (article)
- When to Change Your Mission Statement as a Nonprofit, Board Effect
- Example Mission Statements and How to Craft Your Own

Core Values

- Checklist on Developing a Statement of Values and a Code of Ethics
- How to Develop and Use Core Values (The Management Center)
- Sample Core Values & Principles on How they are Lived (City of Santa Fe Comm.)
- Institutionalizing Core Values (sample check list)
- Prioritizing Organizational Values: The Expanded Matrix Map (Blue Avocado, 2025)
- Codes of Ethics/Values Statement for Nonprofits, National Council of Nonprofits