

Vision, Mission, and Values

By Michael Smull

Partner at [Support Development Associates](#)
and NCAPPS Subject Matter Expert

One of the core elements in developing a person-centered organization or system is a clearly articulated vision that is routinely used to provide direction on the journey (Kotter, 1996). The vision must be used and useful. It should clearly state the desired outcome of the transformation effort (Moss Kanter, 1999). As Kanter says, it should be a compelling aspiration (Moss Kanter, 1999). Simon Sinek, another leading change expert, said it should describe the “why” rather than the “what.” If it is well stated and used routinely it will reduce resistance to change (Sinek, 2010). As the vision is about achieving a person-centered organization or system, the outcome is the change in the lives of the people supported. The vision makes clear that people are being supported in having choice and control while living everyday lives in their communities. Vision statements that are compelling aspirations are short and powerful. This is more difficult than it appears. It is tempting to include all the components needed for a person-centered system. However, the result is typically an overly complex, overly long statement. The developers need to find a few phrases whose implementation require the changes needed to have the desired person-centered system. It implies the importance of relationships/connections, purpose and meaning, and contributions.

One of the winners of the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award stated that one of the first activities is to answer three questions (Stubblefield, 2004).

1. Where are we going? (Our vision)
2. Why do we exist? (Our mission)
3. What are the values that guide our everyday behavior?

In many efforts, vision and mission are combined into a single statement. So, the vision may say: *People supported live fulfilling lives that they have chosen for themselves within their communities.* The mission would be: *We exist to assist people in achieving those fulfilling lives.* This makes the mission statement somewhat redundant, assuming that the vision is routinely used to set and assess priorities and the use of resources. A powerful vision



statement creates not only a destination but gives people direction and creates an expectation regarding actions. Modifying the vision statement may look something like this: *People live lives they find meaningful and satisfying.* It demonstrates why the organization exists. The mission would then reflect on what needs to be done to achieve the vision. The mission may look like this: *We provide opportunities to assist people in achieving those fulfilling lives.*

However, this is only true if senior leadership makes use of the vision routinely. The work begins with commitment from senior leaders to develop and make use of a vision statement. Because these efforts are usually done after previous efforts have not been as successful as desired, there must be a demonstrated commitment that will convince the skeptics this effort is different.

One of the other keys elements is having an organizational culture that supports learning and acting on the learning. The value statements can help define and reinforce the desired culture. The values might include:

- *Learning*
- *Psychological safety*
- *Partnership*

If they are routinely used, they help establish and maintain the desired culture by setting the day-to-day expectations of how the organization operates.

Much of the work outlined in the nine elements needs the support of senior leadership, but it's not necessarily done by senior leadership. Developing and making use of the vision mission and values is an exception: Senior leadership needs to be engaged in the development and make visible use of vision, mission, and values if they are going to be successful in leading transformational change.

NCAPPS is funded and led by the Administration for Community Living and the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services and is administered by HSRI.

