

Mission-Vision-Strategy Alignment Guide

Free Resource from Mission-Driven Momentum Podcast

Use this guide to ensure your organization's mission, vision, and strategy work together to create clarity, focus, and momentum.

UNDERSTANDING THE THREE ELEMENTS

Mission (Your WHY)

Definition: Why your organization exists. Your core purpose and reason for being.

Good Mission Statements:

- Are **clear and concise** (1-2 sentences)
- State **who** you serve and **what** you do
- Are **specific enough** to guide decisions
- Are **timeless** (won't need updating every year)
- **Inspire** internal and external stakeholders

Example: "We empower underserved youth through education, mentorship, and resources that unlock their full potential."

Vision (Your WHERE)

Definition: The bold, aspirational future you're working toward. What the world looks like when you succeed.

Good Vision Statements:

- Paint a **picture of the future**
- Are **inspiring and aspirational**
- Are **bold but believable**
- Guide **long-term direction**
- Make people want to **be part of the journey**

Example: "A world where every young person has access to the tools, support, and opportunities to thrive."

Strategy (Your HOW)

Definition: Your roadmap for getting from where you are to where you want to be. Your priorities, goals, and approach.

Good Strategic Plans:

- Have **2-5 clear priorities**
- Include **SMART goals** with timelines
- Assign **ownership and accountability**
- Are **flexible enough** to adapt
- Connect **daily work** to big-picture vision

Example: "Focus on expanding after-school programming to 3 new communities while deepening partnerships with local schools."

THE ALIGNMENT TEST

Step 1: Map Your Current State

Mission:

Vision:

Top 3 Strategic Priorities:

1.

2.

3.

Step 2: Run the Alignment Check

For each strategic priority, ask:

Mission Match: Does this directly support our mission?

- ☐ Yes - Clear connection
- ☐ Somewhat - Indirect connection
- ☐ No - Doesn't align

Vision Progress: Does this move us toward our vision?

- ☐ Yes - Clear progress
- ☐ Somewhat - Indirect progress
- ☐ No - Doesn't move us forward

Clarity Test: Can team members explain how this priority connects to mission and vision?

- ☐ Yes - Everyone gets it
- ☐ Somewhat - Some confusion
- ☐ No - Major disconnect

Step 3: Identify Misalignment

Red Flags:

- Priorities that don't clearly connect to mission
- Strategic goals that feel disconnected from vision
- Team members can't explain the "why" behind priorities
- Programs or initiatives that "just happened" without strategic thought
- Feeling spread too thin across too many directions

If you checked "Somewhat" or "No" for any priority, dig deeper:

- Should we adjust the priority to better align?
- Should we let this priority go?
- Do we need to clarify how it connects?

THE MISSION MATCH TEST

Use this simple framework for any new initiative, program, or opportunity:

Question 1: Mission Alignment

Does this initiative directly advance our mission?

- ☐ **Strong Yes** - Core to our mission
- ☐ **Yes** - Supports our mission
- ☐ **Maybe** - Indirect connection
- ☐ **No** - Doesn't connect

Question 2: Vision Progress

Does this move us toward our vision?

- ☐ **Strong Yes** - Major progress toward vision
- ☐ **Yes** - Moves us forward
- ☐ **Maybe** - Small or indirect progress
- ☐ **No** - Doesn't advance vision

Question 3: Capacity Reality

Do we have the capacity to do this well?

- ☐ **Yes** - We can execute this excellently
- ☐ **Maybe** - Would require stretching
- ☐ **No** - Would compromise other priorities

The Decision:

- **3 Strong Yes or Yes answers** = Green light
- **2 Yes + 1 Maybe** = Proceed with caution, clear plan needed
- **1 or more No answers** = Strong case needed to proceed
- **Multiple No answers** = Pass on this opportunity

REALIGNMENT WORKSHOP GUIDE

90-Minute Team Exercise

Minutes 0-20: Mission & Vision Review

- Read your current mission and vision aloud
- Ask: "Does this still ring true?"
- Identify what feels off or outdated
- Draft any needed updates (don't perfect, just improve)

Minutes 20-40: Strategic Inventory

- List all major initiatives, programs, and priorities
- For each one, run the Mission Match Test
- Identify which are core, supporting, or misaligned

Minutes 40-60: Gap Analysis

- What's missing to achieve our vision?
- What are we doing that doesn't serve mission/vision?
- Where are we spreading ourselves too thin?

Minutes 60-80: Priority Decisions

- Narrow to 2-5 strategic priorities
- Ensure each clearly connects to mission and vision
- Identify what you'll stop doing or de-prioritize

Minutes 80-90: Next Steps

- Assign owners for each priority
- Set first check-in date
- Agree on how to communicate decisions

SIGNS OF STRONG ALIGNMENT

Team members can articulate:

- ✓ Our mission in their own words
- ✓ What our vision looks like
- ✓ How their work connects to both

Decision-making is clearer:

- ✓ Easy to say "no" to off-mission opportunities
- ✓ Confident saying "yes" to aligned work
- ✓ Less debate about priorities

Communication is consistent:

- ✓ Messaging to funders matches internal language
- ✓ Board and staff tell the same story
- ✓ New hires quickly understand what matters

Work feels focused:

- ✓ Energy goes toward high-impact priorities
- ✓ Less overwhelm from competing demands
- ✓ Clear sense of progress

SIGNS OF MISALIGNMENT

► Confusion about priorities:

- Different departments heading different directions
- Competing initiatives for resources and attention
- Unclear what success looks like

► Mission drift:

- Chasing every opportunity that comes along
- Programs that don't quite fit but "seemed like a good idea"
- Funders aren't sure what you actually do

► Team disconnection:

- Staff can't explain how their work matters
- High turnover or low morale
- Burnout from doing too much without clear purpose

► Communication breakdown:

- Different messages to different audiences
- Board and staff aren't on the same page
- External perception doesn't match internal reality

MAINTENANCE CHECKLIST

Monthly:

- ☐ Reference mission/vision in at least one team meeting
- ☐ Check progress on strategic priorities
- ☐ Celebrate wins that align with mission

Quarterly:

- ☐ Review strategic priorities and adjust if needed
- ☐ Run Mission Match Test on any new initiatives
- ☐ Assess team clarity on mission/vision connection

Annually:

- ☐ Full mission/vision review with diverse stakeholders
- ☐ Strategic plan assessment and refresh
- ☐ Alignment workshop with full team

CONVERSATION STARTERS

Use these to spark alignment discussions:

Mission Questions:

- "Can everyone recite our mission from memory?"
- "What would we change about our mission today?"
- "How does your daily work connect to our mission?"

Vision Questions:

- "What does success look like 3 years from now?"
- "Are we making progress toward our vision?"
- "Does our vision still inspire you? Why or why not?"

Strategy Questions:

- "Do our priorities clearly serve our mission?"
- "What should we stop doing to stay aligned?"
- "How can we better communicate our strategic direction?"

Alignment Questions:

- "Where do you see disconnect between what we say and what we do?"
- "What initiative feels furthest from our mission?"
- "If we could only focus on 3 things, what should they be?"

LEADERSHIP REFLECTION

For Executive Directors & Senior Leaders:

Self-Assessment:

- ☐ I can clearly explain how our mission, vision, and strategy connect
- ☐ I reference our mission/vision regularly in communications
- ☐ I make decisions through the lens of alignment
- ☐ I create space for alignment conversations
- ☐ I'm willing to let go of initiatives that don't serve our mission

Your Role in Alignment:

- Model alignment in your language and decisions
- Create rituals that reinforce mission and vision
- Hold yourself and others accountable to strategic priorities
- Make space for honest conversations about misalignment
- Celebrate work that exemplifies alignment

BOARD ENGAGEMENT TOOL

Questions for Board Discussions:

Governance Level:

- Is our mission still relevant and clear?
- Does our vision inspire stakeholders?
- Are we holding leadership accountable to strategic priorities?

Strategic Level:

- Do our strategic priorities align with mission and vision?
- Are we saying "no" to opportunities that don't align?
- What should we stop doing to stay focused?

Operational Oversight:

- Can staff clearly connect their work to our strategy?
- Are resources allocated according to priorities?
- What's our process for assessing alignment?

QUICK REFERENCE CARD

Print this and keep it handy:

ALIGNMENT CHECK:

- ☐ Mission = WHY we exist
- ☐ Vision = WHERE we're going
- ☐ Strategy = HOW we get there

DECISION FILTER:

- ☐ Does this serve our mission?
- ☐ Does this move us toward our vision?
- ☐ Do we have capacity to do it well?

WARNING SIGNS:

- ☐ Team can't explain the connection
- ☐ Chasing every opportunity
- ☐ Feeling scattered or overwhelmed
- ☐ Different messages to different people

NEED MORE SUPPORT?

Podcast: Listen to Episode 3 at missiondrivenpod.com

Blog: Read the companion post for real-world examples

Consulting: Need help with strategic alignment? Contact The Scanland Group at contact@thescanlandgroup.com or visit thescanlandgroup.com

From The Scanland Group:

*Keep leading with heart, keep showing up with purpose,
and keep creating a world where everyone belongs.*