**3. What Guides Us?**

The following definition of terms should serve as a basis for working together with a common understanding. The terms do not have to be used exactly as written. Their use should be adapted to the needs of individual communities.

Vision statement: a powerful, often challenging medium to long-term guiding statement for the next 5-10 years, formulated as briefly and concisely as possible, which does not contain any concrete goals or action steps.

Strategy: states how the company will move in the direction of the vision statement on both a multi-year (approx. 3-5 ) and annual basis. Associated goals and action steps are mutually agreed upon, as what is needed to implement the strategy

Goals: describe what exactly is to be achieved and how. They are specific, measurable, actionable, and time bound. They are formulated in a motivating and concrete way. Associated targets/measures/indicators are usually planned at least annually as part of the annual planning meeting.

Measures: measures to achieve the goals/objectives are derived from the goals/objectives themselves; these describe the task, who is responsible, and the timeline for completion.

Why is a vision statement important?  
The basis for every company and cooperative is a common idea from which the company’s activities emerge. The vision statement answers questions such as "why are we working together?" and "what do we want to achieve together?" It forms the basis for projects and is a statement, which can be referred to in the future when decisions need to be made or when tensions arise. The process of developing a written vision statement clarifies commonalities, as well as, different points of view; it shows if there are enough similar interests to move forward together, as well as, where tensions exist that need to be taken into account.

A well developed vision statement is developed collectively and:

* creates a common identity and self-image
* Orients the development of the company
* Articulates the basis for developing strategies, goals and measures
* Communicates to the outside world what the organisation stands for

The goal is to develop a common vision statement that is the basis of your collaborative work in the company. The statement contains the visions, wishes, dreams, goals, etc., which live in each of the participants of the enterprise.

**In which context is it advisable to work on the vision statement?**

Creating, updating, and reviewing the vision statement should be done:

* when a new cooperative is founded
* when important decisions to be made in an existing community and cannot be made by consensus within a reasonable period of time, because the visions of the individuals are too different
* when a vision statement has been lying dormant in a drawer for several years
* before each addition of new shareholders/responsible persons into a company or at the latest, shortly after adding new shareholders/responsible persons

Work Steps

1. It is important to acknowledge all points of view, ideals, dreams, and wishes. Everyone should share what is important to them regarding the common project. This should be documented and shared. Warning: this is not easy!

* + No one should comment on the views, ideals, dreams, and wishes
  + Don't discuss whether they are realistic or not
  + All "big" and "small" ideas are welcome

1. Each person writes his or her goals, visions, ideals, dreams, and wishes on paper (moderation cards or "Post it" notes etc.). Always only one idea per paper and without names. Allow enough time to compile the cards.
2. Attach these cards to a wall or on a larger piece of paper and allow additions over a period of time, e.g. one week
3. When everything has been compiled, start working with the information:
   1. Round 1: Does everyone understand what is written on the individual cards? Don't discuss whether it makes sense or is possible. This first round is only about understanding what other people think is important.
   2. Runde 2: Sort the cards as a group

* Sort the cards into clusters based on similar themes
* Stay open to the process, positive, and playful. If it turns out that a point is in the wrong place, it is up to you to change it. If necessary, write down points two or more times, because they should be in different places. You can also spontaneously add more cards, if you realize something is missing.

Key to the process is to do this step all together and with everyone actively participating.

1. Division of the vision statement into two areas
2. Core statements for the entire organisation:

* Identify the most important themes that emerged and their corresponding most important statements. These are statements/topics/themes that are of long-term, central importance for the overall operation.
* from these statements formulate the first draft of a *mission* tatement in as few, words as possible, ideally only 2-3 sentences, that are cleary, easy to understand, and gripping. They should be positive, powerful sentences, behind which all participants can stand.

1. Core statements for the different divisions of the organisation
   * Formulate 1-3 *mission* tatements for each of the main branches of the organisation. These should also be powerful, future-oriented, and trend-setting for the respective areas.
   * All operational topics, i.e. goals and how to achieve them (tasks), are dealt with in the next step: "How do we get to where we want to go?”

Possible Addition/Variations

Vision collage

1. This method helps participants to familiarize themselves with their own visions for the future and to include their unconscious thoughts/what they weren’t initially thinking about in the process. Participants gather several magazines covering a variety of topics – technical periodicals, vacation magazines, lifestyle magazines etc. It is important that there are many pictures in the magazines.
2. Next, you sit together in a comfortable circle, but everyone works alone at first. You open up to what a positive future would look and feel like in 10 years and cut out pictures from the magazines that appeal to you. You try to do as little as possible with your head, to be very honest with yourself, and not to be distracted by good or bad articles. You can also include break times in this process. For this you take at least half an hour time
3. Afterwards, each person individually arranges and glues the pictures on a sheet of paper (paper size A 3 to A 2, e.g. half a flipchart paper) and adds, draws, or verbally describes a any missing elements.
4. Then you share the collages with each other and see which personal and business wishes and impulses are reflected in the pictures. Some people and organisations also build this process firmly into their annually planning to get more clarity about their own needs and wishes for the new year. It opens and expands and, as mentioned, works with unconscious content. It always needs a subsequent process of clarification, preferably together with colleagues, and or writing.

GAB method for vision statement development

1. This process is based on a set of questions and a fixed process. It can especiallly be useful for larger institutions/communities.
2. The GAB-Munich has produced a guideline, "The Way to a Vision Statement" by Michael Brater and Anna Maurus. This can be ordered for a small fee at [info@gab-muenchen.de](mailto:info@gab-muenchen.de). A simplified presentation of the questions can be found here and under "further materials".

**Thoughts on developing a vision statement**

We recommend that you begin with your own values, ideals and wishes when creating the vision statement for your organization. Those who find this difficult can be inspired by questions you can find at the “Beginning,” see "further materials."