

PURE TIP SHEET

How to start an organization

As your group grows and progresses, you will probably begin to think about creating a formal organization. Here are some steps to help you move ahead.

1. **Do a reality check:** Do you have a critical mass of people committed to do the work on a continual basis? You need to have, at a minimum, 3 - 10 people concerned and passionate about the same issue, people willing to devote their time, energy, talent and money to your shared work.
2. **Define your goals and objectives:** What do you hope to achieve? The goals and objectives will also help you to determine if you need a formal organization structure. There is strength in numbers, but only when properly organized and managed.
3. **Consider the pros and cons of formal structure.** Some are listed here:

Pros	Cons
Strength in numbers	Labor intensive
Community acceptance/visibility	Management requirements
Financial support for programs/efforts	Staffing/budget requirements

4. **Research community and state requirements for organizational status:** The Internal Revenue Service provides certain categories for tax-free status for not-for-profit organizations: 501©3/7/10. Your status depends on your organizational mission.
 - ▶ Contact your Secretary of State's office to find out the requirements. Most publish procedural guidelines.
 - ▶ There may be fees to reserve the organizational name and to incorporate. This is a legal process but it doesn't require a lawyer to file the paperwork.
5. **Look for a fiscal agent.** Until you have completed all the requirements to be a not-for-profit group, you will have to have a fiscal agent to accept grant or donation monies on your behalf. Contact groups you are familiar with to ask if they will consider being your fiscal agent.
6. **Get training/consultative services** to learn some basics for effectively running your organization.
7. **Study your philanthropic community.** Pick some groups similar to what you would like yours to be, and find out where they get their funding and support. You can look on their web sites or call and ask for their annual report. Contact those foundations which fund their work and begin to talk to them about possible support for your group.
8. **Look for more resources on the following page** which lists books and web site which offer more detail about organizational structure and development.

Good Luck!!!

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Creating and Managing your Non-Profit Organization

Resource List

Suggested Reading List

Michael Allison, *Strategic Planning for Non-Profit Organizations*, ISBN 0-471-17832-2
John M. Bryston, *Creating and Implementing your Strategic Plan*, ISBN 0-478790142-3
Peter C. Brinckerhoff, *Faith-Based Management* ISBN 0-471-39013-5
Murray Dropkin, *The Budget-Building Book for Non-Profits*, ISBN 0-7879-4036-4
James C. Fisher, *Leadership & Management of Volunteer Programs*, ISBN 1-55542-531-3
Charles Garfield, *Training Volunteers for Community Service*, ISBN 07879-4796-2
Ronald A. Landskroner, *The Non-Profit Manager's Resource Directory*, ISBN 0-471-39242-1
Thomas A. McLaughlin, *StreetSmart Financial Basics for Non-Profit Organizations*, ISBN 0-471-20570-2
Andy Robinson, *Grassroots Grants*, ISBN 0-7879-6177-9
Jason Salzman, *Making the News: A Guide for Non-Profits & Activists*, ISBN 0-6133-6898-7
Timothy L. Seiler, *Developing your Case for Support*, ISBN 0-7879-5245-1
Smith, Bucklin & Associates, *Complete Guide to Non-Profit Management*, ISBN 0-471-38062-8

Web sites

Alliance for Nonprofit Management: www.allianceonline.org <<http://www.allianceonline.org>>
Association of Fundraising Professionals: www.nsfre.org <<http://www.nsfre.org>>
Hall Management Corporation: www.hallmgmtcorp.org <<http://www.hallmgmtcorp.org>>
National Youth Violence Prevention Resource Center: www.safeyouth.org <<http://www.safeyouth.org>>
National Organizers Alliance: www.noacentral.org <<http://www.noacentral.org>>
People for the American Way Education Alliance: www.pfaw.org <<http://www.pfaw.org>>
Parents United for Responsible Education: www.pureparents.org <<http://www.pureparents.org>>
Public Agenda: www.publicagenda.org <<http://www.publicagenda.org>>
The Foundation Center: www.fdncenter.org <<http://www.fdncenter.org>>
U.S. Dept of Education: www.ed.gov <<http://www.ed.gov>>