

ENRICHING CULTURE



IN THIS SECTION:

This section focuses on the first core dimension of CULTURE, and more specifically, on what motivates an association to succeed, function and survive. It explores how an organisation's mission, vision, values and rewards and incentives used to recruit and maintain members can contribute to enhancing an association's culture.

WHAT IS CULTURE?

The **culture** of an association refers to the shared values, beliefs, customs, traditions and meanings that brings and keeps people together and, over time, distinguishes the association from others. In essence, it is what motivates an association to succeed, function and survive, and it is often most evident in the way the association 'does things' and 'treats people' both within and outside their organisation.

In the Organizational Capacity Improvement Framework (OCIF), culture is addressed through the following capacity areas:

- An association's **vision and mission**;
- An association's **values**;
- The **rewards and incentives** that are available and promoted in order to attract, retain and motivate members, volunteers and staff.

From the outside, an association's culture can be partially determined by statements related to its mission, vision and values as well as by other statements that define and guide the association's professional, ethical, economical and social responsibilities. For example, these could include a code of professional conduct, a policy related to conflict of interest or a policy related to the association's relationship with industry. Internally, clear and transparent policies and procedures can also offer insight as to the culture of the association, if consistently applied.

Vision, mission and value statements are often developed and revised at the same time as strategic planning exercises. The development of policies, incentives and rewards are usually done on a continual basis over time.

Finally, an association's culture can be changed over time, with leadership that is committed to improving or changing it.

RECOMMENDED PRACTICES

A health professional association with a strong culture:

- *Has defined and adopted mission, vision and value statements that are well understood and supported by its members (see Tool 2.1).*
- *Promotes its mission, vision and value statements broadly and consistently and ensures that the association's actions are aligned with these.*
- *Has defined and adopted a code of professional conduct and/or other similar statements (see Tools 2.2 and 2.3).*
- *Identifies, promotes and institutes rewards, incentives and compensation that meet the needs/expectations of its members, volunteers and staff.*

► **FOCUS: A few thoughts on mission, vision and value statements**

- *Vision, mission and value statements are important governance tools used to define and guide an association's work for the near future. They can be developed when an association is first established or at the time of its first strategic planning exercise. Vision, mission and value statements are not static and must be revised in light of changing environments.*
- *What is the difference between 'mission' and 'vision'? A simple and effective way of distinguishing between the two is using the following definitions:
VisionARY = someone who sees what is possible
MissionARY = someone who carries out the work
Put simply, 'vision' is what the association considers possible and what it commits to, while 'mission' is what it takes to make that vision a reality.¹*
- *Value statements provide insight into how an association will do its work. They are usually intrinsically linked to universally shared values that are prominent in the community where the association belongs. Some examples of values associated with health professional associations include competency, collaboration, diversity, equality, excellence, innovativeness, integrity, justice, leadership, learning, professionalism and teamwork.*
- *The process of identifying an association's mission, vision and values is more powerful when developed through a participatory process, where the input of everyone who is involved in the association is solicited.*

ACTIONS TO MOVE FORWARD

- Develop, adopt and disseminate widely the association's mission, vision and value statements.
- Modify or adapt and ratify the code of professional conduct of its international body (e.g. FIGO), if the association does not have its own, and disseminate widely via the association's website, newsletter and/or Continuing Medical Education (CME) activities.
- Identify and promote the association's rewards, benefits and compensation and promote via a website or other promotional material developed for the association's membership.
- Recognise the involvement of members who have contributed to the advancement of the association's activities during an annual scientific congress or other event.

► **FOCUS: Examples of rewards and incentives for recruiting, retaining and motivating members**

- *Free subscriptions to publications such as scientific journals or the association's newsletter;*
- *Eligibility to qualify for the association's grants and awards;*
- *Reduced cost for the association's scientific congress and other CME activities;*
- *An email address connected to the association's corporate account;*
- *Opportunities to participate in committees that explore areas of interest;*
- *Opportunities to participate in the implementation of the association's projects (e.g. as a consultant or trainer);*
- *Letters of reference for travel visa applications or for other purposes;*
- *Opportunities for public recognition as a specialist who meets the association's membership criteria;*
- *Opportunities to network with other professionals working in the same field;*
- *Opportunities to participate in social/family activities;*
- *Professional development opportunities beyond that of the profession (e.g. training in advocacy and project development).*

► **FOCUS: Good practices when working with pharmaceutical industry**

Collaborations between health professional associations and the pharmaceutical industry can be productive when the partnership is developed with the mutual goal of improving health. The following are examples of concrete actions that can be undertaken by associations to ensure that interactions with the pharmaceutical industry are free of actual or potential conflict of interest and are perceived by all (including the public) as being transparent and ethical. These 'tips' are intended specifically for health professional associations who function in an environment where little or weak regulations exist on this issue.

Health professional associations should:

- Recognise the potential for actual or perceived conflicts of interest in any interaction with pharmaceutical companies and develop codes of conduct, policies and procedures that will be used to guide their relationships with them. These documents should include a focus on the following issues: advertising, consulting, drug promotions, gift-giving, hospitality, medical education activities, guideline development and support for travel.
- Ensure that all collaborations and/or interactions are developed for the purpose of advancing scientific knowledge and best practice in the field of obstetrics and gynaecology.
- Assume leadership to establish the goals, objectives and activities of the initiative for which support is being requested before soliciting the support of industry. Formalise the agreement with a contract that outlines all details, including a budget and a description of how and where their support will be promoted within and outside the association.
- Ensure that all financial transactions related to the activity being sponsored by a pharmaceutical company are directed exclusively to the association. The association can then assume the responsibility to pay all expenses with financial transparency.
- Ensure that any office or audio/visual equipment received as a donation remains the property of the association and are clearly integrated into its fixed assets registry.
- Do not use industry funds for the production of documents that are developed for the purpose of informing stakeholders about the association, such as information pamphlets, annual reports, strategic or other organisational plans, etc.
- When developing and implementing these collaborative initiatives, ensure that all conflicts of interest are disclosed and noted (*see Tools 3.7 and 3.8*).

See also Tool 2.3

ACCOMPANYING TOOLS

2.1 – Example: FIGO Mission, Vision and Value Statements

2.2 – Example: FIGO Women’s Sexual and Reproductive Rights: Rights-Based Code of Ethics

2.3 – Example: FIGO’s Guideline on Ethical Aspects of Human Reproduction and Women’s Health

See the following sections:

- General Issues in Women’s Health and Advocacy
- Issues in Advertising and Marketing Health
- Ethical Issues in Medical Education

OTHER USEFUL RESOURCES

Bal V, Quinn L. The missing link: organizational culture and leadership development. LIA 2001;21(4):14-7. Available: <http://www.ccl.org/leadership/pdf/publications/lia/lia2104link.pdf>

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1. Gottlieb H. 3 statements that can change the world: mission / vision / values. Tucson (AZ): Hildy Gottlieb / ReSolve, Inc.; 2007. Available: http://www.help4nonprofits.com/NP_Bd_MissionVisionValues_Art.htm.