

Plan Your Programs & Services

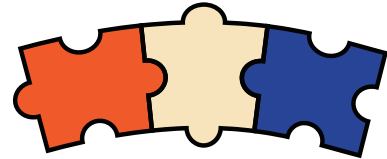
People may be the heart of your nonprofit, but the programs and services you offer are its heartbeat. Every time you consider a new program, you need to make sure it is aligned with your vision and mission so you stay on track. Your programs need to be clearly defined so that they attract participants, volunteers, and donors.

Your programs and services need to serve a charitable purpose. This will most commonly include free or low-cost services to a particular people group in some kind of need.

What are the Basics of a Program?

Your programs may deliver a specific service, such as food distribution in disaster areas, running a camp for kids, or a broader collection of related services like maintaining a resource database of shelters and helping displaced families find housing.

It's important that every program you offer align with your organization's purpose, vision, and mission.



A program should not be a single one-off unrelated activity nor should it be so broad that it's difficult to understand. The more focused you can be, the more successful you can be. Commonly, when people start a nonprofit they try to do everything. This will cause burn out for you and your team, and will make it more difficult to raise funds from donors. You need to be clear on the relationship between what the program offers, the target participants, and the intended outcome.

Planning is an important, but often overlooked, part of the process of establishing your programs. For many the details of their programs and services live in their head. Even long-established nonprofits can get so caught up with the day-to-day things that they don't take time to evaluate the effectiveness and future feasibility of current programs. It's also easy to fall prey to the lure and excitement of creating new programs while failing to ensure they align well with the nonprofit's vision and mission.

Indulge in Some Brainstorming

Brainstorming lubricates the creative circuits. Involve others in the organization. Make notes. Dump all the ideas out on paper or whiteboard or digital file. Don't judge any idea in the moment. Decide later which are the good, the odd, and the ineffective ideas.

Consider programs you've been involved with in the past.

- What did you like and dislike about them?
- What do you wish was included and wasn't?
- Are you interested in developing a similar program?
- What new ideas for programs do you have?



Remember Program Planning is a Process

You need to define your programs before starting your nonprofit. And it's a process that established nonprofits will revisit and refine over time.

You need to be able to provide clear answers to these types of questions for each of your programs:

- Is there a need for this program?
- Who are you providing program services to?
- What specific service(s) does the program provide?
- How does it fit with your organization's purpose, vision, and mission?
- What type of program is it? (humanitarian relief, transitional housing, resources for disadvantaged youth, language skills courses, etc.)
- Will you offer it free or will there be a cost to participate?
- How often will you offer it? (ongoing, seasonal, twice a year, etc.)
- Where will you deliver this program?
- Who will manage and deliver this program?
- How will you access the people that you want to help, and will they see your organization as a place to serve their needs?

Make sure your programs are practical and serve a charitable purpose for a specific group of participants in need. If you can't define it well, you will have a difficult time attracting funding, participants, and volunteers.

Below you will find some real-life examples of nonprofits that **Vision Catalyst** has helped to launch.

Get Inspired By These Real Life Examples



storksupportofnoco.com

Stork Support of Northern Colorado

This growing nonprofit organization is led by committed community members passionate about providing essential maternity, postpartum and newborn needs to under-resourced families from pregnancy and throughout the baby's first year. They collect gently-used maternity, nursing and baby clothes and gear from the abundance within our community, turn these donations into gift boxes and distribute support boxes to NoCo families. Stork Support also collects donations of new items, such as needed essentials to prepare Postpartum Recovery Kits for parents who have recently given birth and formula to feed our community's babies. Stork Support has been serving Northern Colorado families since 2018 and continues because every new family is worthy of a strong start through support.



re-fined.org

Re-fined

Its mission is to form empowering and restorative relationships with survivors of sexual exploitation. Its vision is for every survivor to be nurtured to wholeness through deep, connected relationships with Christ and His people. They offer mentorships and a Faithful Friends support program where a member of Re-fined will "walk alongside a survivor of sexual exploitation in their restoration process; helping them reclaim their self-worth, court support, free cosmetology and fashioning services, and a continuing care community.



health4heroes.org

Health 4 Heroes

The mission of Health4Heroes is to provide veterans and first responders, and their families, access to physical, emotional and spiritual resources in the community that bring health, healing and restoration. It organizes and sponsors events that engage their members with the community through joint activities. These could include fun activities such as bowling, or service projects such as cleaning up parks and trails that enable them to give back to their community. These events are advertised to the community and are free for members and their families. The programs fall into three main program categories: Monthly Social Events, Group Fitness, and Outdoor Recreation.

More Inspiring Real Life Examples



fromtheheartco.org

From The Heart Enterprises

Its mission is to make a difference through mental health, unlifting one man, one woman, and one child at a time. It offers a Mile High Chess Club Rights of Passage Program, a Mile High Chess Club, Youth Retreat, a The Survivors Speak Documentary Series, wellness services, after school enrichment, youth/adult mentoring, in addition to other integrated programs, workshops, and trainings.



flameforum.org

FLAME

Female Leadership and Mentor Exchange - FLAME seeks to advance and empower next generation female leaders by creating and encouraging mentor relationships between women in executive level leadership roles with young women attending college or beginning a career. It encourages and invites top-level women to provide mentor services, in addition to overseeing its mentorship program for recent college graduates and sophomore, junior, and senior college students. It also hosts live FLAME Forum events.



thejetfoundation.com

The Jet Foundation

This nonprofit was born out of personal experience of a family faced with the father's lung cancer diagnosis which fueled a passion to support others while they navigate their own difficult journeys. It provides funding, nutrition assistance and health resources for individuals and families that are facing a cancer diagnosis. A sampling of its diverse yet on-point events are: Pickleball events, and hair care education and services specifically designed to meet the needs of cancer patients.

These are just six examples of the many wonderfully diverse 501c3 approved nonprofit organizations **Vision Catalyst** has helped launch. What programs will you offer that are true to your nonprofit dream to help change the world and reflect your organization's purpose, vision, and mission in practical ways?