

Determining Ends

Background:

In board governance, the system of Policy Governance^{®1} introduces a method for setting an organization's direction using Ends Policies. Ends Policies are one part of the distinctiveness of Policy Governance when compared to other approaches to governance.

Most people are familiar with the concept of Ends versus Means. While this concept is similar, there are some key distinctive characteristics of Ends Policies that make the concept a powerful tool for focusing a group on what the organization exists to achieve.

Ends policies are statements of: a) what will be different; b) for what group(s) of people; and c) at what cost?

Secondly, because the organization does not exist for itself, Ends are not what the organization does, but rather what results are created by the organization for some group of people. Neither do Ends address the "spin-off" effects. For example, the organization may create employment in the community, which may well be a good thing. But if the purpose of the organization is to provide a service to the community, then employees are the means of doing so, not the intended Ends. (This does not preclude that employees should be treated respectfully and valued.) Of course, there may be times that an organization is created for the purpose of providing employment. For example, a worker-owned co-operative would likely exist to provide meaningful employment for its members.

Thirdly, the statements of Ends come in "sizes". One very broad Ends statement covers others of successively more detail. In other words, an organization has an Ends statement at the broadest level and more specific Ends statements which are contained within broader Ends statements, until the group has determined that any reasonable interpretation is acceptable.

Why Develop Ends Statements:

Ends clarify an organization's direction at a profoundly meaningful level not found in standard strategic planning components (e.g., Mission, Goals, Objectives). When a group deliberates on Ends statements, there is a significant sharing of values as to what is important. The layered structure of Ends ensures that the group pushes toward more specific statements of what outcome, for whom, and at what cost before embarking on strategic planning. The organization becomes focused on meaningful outcomes and the resulting strategies that are determined tend to be also more focused.

¹ Policy Governance is a registered trademark of Dr. John Carver. The authoritative website for Policy Governance is <http://www.carvergovernance.com>.

What you'll need:

- A large wall space upon which cards may be taped and which may be easily seen by the group.
- Chairs and writing surfaces for each participant. If the group is small enough, have everyone sit around a table with one end open for focus on the wall and the facilitator.
- Large recipe cards (for smaller groups), letter sized cover sheet paper (for larger groups), masking tape or sticky tack
- Felt marker pens for each participant (print needs to be seen by participants furthest from the wall).

Steps:

1. Introduce the concept. Note how the statements to be developed are visionary, yet achievable. Discuss the difference between Ends statements as defined in a Policy Governance® system and the normal use of ends versus means.
2. Ask participants to silently think about the next five to ten years. "What should be different for whom because of the organization?". Ask participants to brainstorm in writing as many responses as they can think of using one card for each idea. Encourage them to write just the key words for the idea and to do so large enough for others to read across the room.
3. Ask participants to bring their ideas to the wall and tape them for all to see. Review the cards to ensure that there are no "means" statements. Discard or modify statements to remove striving statements (e.g., to encourage, to foster, to support, to assist).
4. Ask for suggestions of themes that are emerging.
5. With assistance from the participants, sort the cards into hierarchies such that specific ideas are encompassed by broader ideas. Add and modify as needed to create broader encompassing statements, including, if not found in the statements, one overarching statement that encompasses all the others. The result should be that cards are arranged similar to tree roots in which the broadest statement would be the trunk and more specific statements would branch out below it.
6. Discuss how important the various Ends are. Which are the priorities? What is the value (cost) that the group places on these Ends? What is the group willing to pay in shares? Costs to receive the results (e.g., market rate, or better than market rate)? Are the Ends feasible given what the group is willing to pay for the results?