

# How Nonprofits Can Reinvent Themselves After Mission Success

Do nonprofits disappear into thin air after they achieve their missions? Or can they re-orient around a new and different purpose? Prof. Sheila M. Cannon, Trinity Business School, explores the road less taken.

**Related research:**  
*Mission accomplished? Organizational identity work in response to mission success*, by Cannon, S. M., & Kreutzer, K. (2018) *Human Relations*, 71 (9), 1234–1263.



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*An alliance with a purpose*

# THE 3 Ps IN A CoBS POD

 **PERCEIVE**  
with a set of key takeaways

 **PROJECT**  
with food for thought: on yourself, your organisation and the wider context

 **PERFORM**  
by putting it all into practice using action tips





## ● PERCEIVE with a set of key takeaways

- Nonprofit mission success does not necessarily imply organisation closure. By way of finding a new mission and new identity, nonprofits may be repurposed and redeployed to fulfill a new mission.
- Mission success can lead members to question organisational identity in the face of an out-of-date mission. Organisations must reinvent organisational identity by employing self-reflection and involving stakeholders across hierarchies.
- An integrative approach – acknowledging conflicting beliefs and allowing them to co-exist – has proven to be more successful than employing a competitive approach – the rejection of certain beliefs in favour of others.
- Using an external frame of reference such as bringing in new members, letting go of old members, and looking for short-term financial solutions may lead to an identity crisis and the end of the organisation.
- Finding a new organisational identity that is consistent with existing organisational values, integrates member beliefs, and brings together old and new beliefs enables member loyalty and redirection of the organisation.
- Funding from government and other donors to support reorientation initiatives by nonprofits may be more efficient than building new organisations for a new purpose.



Read the related  
article in Global Voice  
magazine #12; page 35





# ● **PERFORM**

by putting it all into practice

## CHECKLIST

- 1. Acknowledge the need to change organisational identity** and the different perceptions about it that members have. Consult all stakeholders to create a post-mission success new identity and vision/purpose.
- 2. Do not jump the gun to bring on board new managers,** employees and sources for external funding before properly analysing the core values of the past mission, how internal parties align themselves with it, and the transformation needed to achieve a new purpose.
- 3. To gain continued financial support for the organisation,** partner with policymakers/(local) government to assess the impact of closing the organisation after mission success if it is not redefined and given a new lease of life.
- 4. If the new mission is radically different** from previously, rewrite the organisational constitution. Get legal advice on how to rewrite the constitution, as you may not be able to transfer assets to a new, different cause.
- 5. Be consistent with values and actions** in order to retain and attract volunteers, skilled employees, and even funding.



# Getting involved


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