

Key Steps in Forming A Nonprofit

1. Begin with a broad charitable purpose that motivates yourself or your group of concerned citizens.
2. Recruit members of the community-at-large who support this broad charitable purpose in order to develop a body of individuals with diverse qualities and resources that can aid you or your group in satisfying this purpose.
3. Draft a mission statement that further refines your broad charitable purpose while providing your founding body of individuals with some realistic and concrete objectives toward which the body may direct its collective energies. This mission statement is the first step toward the implementation of a nonprofit organization to achieve the goals of the founding body.
4. Survey potential funding sources (including local, state, and federal government sources, private foundations and other grant providers) to determine the availability of funds to conduct the mission statement of the new nonprofit organization. Also conduct an analysis of existing organization that would provide similar services. Use the yellow pages of the phone book, the public library, or contact your local state association for listings of agencies.
5. Obtain some "startup finances" to enable your new nonprofit organization to obtain some professional services (e.g., legal, accounting, etc.).
6. Solicit a list of interested individuals from within your founding body interested in becoming the initial board of directors of the new nonprofit organization.
7. Seek legal assistance to incorporate the founding body into a nonprofit corporation by drafting a **Certificate of Incorporation**.
8. Draft a set of **corporate bylaws**, which will serve as the procedure that the Board of Directors, and possibly the members of the corporation, will utilize to make decisions on behalf of the corporation.
9. Hold an **organizational meeting**. You must hold an organizational meeting to formally create the nonprofit corporation. At this meeting the bylaws should be adopted, the Board of Directors should be elected, and all other relevant business should be conducted.

Adapted from an article which appeared *Nonprofit Focus* published by the Council on Community Services of New York State, and written by David Watson, Legal Assistance Coordinator for CCSNYS. For further information on nonprofit incorporation or other legal matters, contact him at (518) 434-9194.