

Principles and Purpose Working Group

Draft Guiding Statements for A Community Convening a Democracy Movement For the United States

CORE IDEALS • PURPOSE STATEMENT • PUBLIC GOALS

Developed August 2010 to January 2012

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24 January 2012



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Draft Guiding Statements for A Community Convening a Democracy Movement For the United States

Developed August 2010 to January 2012
By the Principles and Purpose Working Group

Core Ideals

AUTHENTICITY

We strive to be open with one another in a way that promotes understanding, cooperation and trust.

EMPATHY

We engage with one another exercising humility, listening, honesty, civility and respect.

INCLUSIVENESS

We reach out to and engage with people from diverse backgrounds and political perspectives.

CONTINUOUS LEARNING

We educate and learn from one another, in order to help ourselves and others make better-informed the decisions that shape our common life.

INDEPENDENCE

We remain independent of political parties and strive to keep ourselves free of ideologically based assumptions and influence.

UNITY

We communicate in ways that bring people and ideas together.

DEMOCRACY

We honor the practice of democratic voting to make important decisions through a process that maintains respect for those with minority viewpoints.

Purpose Statement

[Organizational or Community Name] exists to convene, equip and empower a movement of citizens who work together to make real the founding vision of the United States as a country in which “Governments...derive their just powers from the consent of the governed.” *

* Quote from the Declaration of Independence

Public Goals

PUBLIC GOAL 1

Identify, promote and help to secure those improvements to government, business and society that will enable and encourage all U.S. individuals and institutions to act together in ways that strengthen the self-governing voice and power of We the People.

Sub-Goal

Build alliances and create effective public initiatives in areas that bear most directly on the functioning of a healthy and vigorous democracy — such as

- curtailing the undue influence of money in politics;
 - government transparency (three branches);
 - fair and open elections;
 - access to highest-quality, unbiased news and information;
- and
- the development of scalable technological innovations designed to foster greater citizen engagement and participation.

PUBLIC GOAL 2

Model a standard of political discourse and action that enables citizens respectfully to learn from one another and work together to examine the issues and events of the day from the broadest perspective — so that informed, reasoned and wise decisions can be made regarding our future and our general welfare.

Draft Guiding Statements for a Community Convening a Democracy Movement for the United States

CORE IDEALS • PURPOSE STATEMENT • PUBLIC GOALS

History & Aims

Spring and early summer 2010 saw the emergence in the United States of a new political group known as the Coffee Party. The founders of this group outlined a compelling vision of a new approach to political discourse and problem solving — an approach anchored in civility and shared values rather than party and ideology. This initial vision was oriented less towards developing traditional policy positions than towards building a citizens movement capable of ushering in the structural reforms that are necessary to secure the full and equal participation of every U.S. citizen in their own self-governance, and thus to transform the political culture itself.

By midsummer 2010, however, many of the most active and engaged Coffee Party organizers and other members* came to believe that what was missing — and what was necessary, if the Coffee Party was to reach its full potential — was elaboration of the founders' original vision through a process resulting in a set of formally stated organizational values and goals.

These Coffee Party members understood that the authenticity, the legitimacy and thus the authority of these Statements would arise from their being anchored in the expressed hopes and visions of the grassroots membership. Such Statements, they felt, should be ratified by the members and adopted by the leaders of the Coffee Party, enabling the Statements to serve as an abiding touchstone to guide the Coffee Party's planning, conduct and actions.

So, in August 2010, some 25 Coffee Party members organized themselves as the Principles and Purpose Working Group. This Working Group aimed to do two things:

- 1 Engage a large, national sample of Coffee Party members in a conversation about their visions for the Coffee Party. Use member comments and feedback to develop member-supported draft Statements of the Coffee Party's Core Values, Purpose and strategic Goals. And present these Statements to the Board of the Coffee Party.
- 2 Conduct the project via an open, inclusive, collaborative, civil, and democratic process of dialogue, deliberation, and decision making that could be replicated throughout the Coffee Party.

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In the initial visioning phase of the project, the Principles and Purpose Working Group cast a wide net, harvesting ideas from a variety of Coffee Party sources: (a) Coffee Party videos and Web sites created by the founders, (b) statements of principles and goals developed by local and regional groups, and (c) suggestions, comments and feedback offered by Coffee Party members at local meetings, in online forums, during facilitated conference calls and during breakout sessions held at the Coffee Party's September 2010 convention in Louisville, Ky.

This visioning phase jumpstarted an iterative drafting and survey process that lasted for the better part of a year.

Drawing on its initial collection of ideas and insights, the Working Group developed and completed a first draft of Statements of the Coffee Party's Core Values, Purpose and Goals, in November 2010. Over the course of next two months, the Working Group conducted two online surveys that invited a group of a few hundred Coffee Party members to respond to this first draft. Then, in February-March 2011, the Group surveyed a much larger sample on a revised draft of the Statements.

This final survey attracted the participation of nearly 1,500 Coffee Party members.

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Over the 17-month life of the project, the Working Group heard from nearly 2,000 Coffee Party members.

The Group also benefited from contributions from some 50 Working Group members, who dialogued and deliberated with one another in nearly 100 (often facilitated) conference calls and in countless supporting conversations by telephone and email.

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In all of its surveys, the Working Group asked Coffee Party members to comment on, and rate, the individual draft Statements on a scale of 1 to 10. The aggregate response to the Statements always was very positive. On the final survey, nearly all the Statements were scored at 9 or better.

Regrettably, the Coffee Party’s leadership didn’t see the advantage in embracing this outcome, and of bringing the Statements into the life of the organization and using them as a movement-building tool.

But, although the Coffee Party’s founders and leaders never officially recognized the Working Group project, the Group persisted in refining the Statements in response to the final survey and continued to hold conference calls from spring 2011 until well into the fall.

Members of the Working Group long had seen the Group as, first and foremost, the steward of the shared vision of individuals who, in contributing to the Principles and Purpose project, were expressing themselves as citizens first. Indeed, it primarily was a vision for the country — not a vision for an organization — that had come to be embodied in the Statements.

During this culminating period, Working Group members came to understand that it was in the truest spirit of the Statements to make clear that this vision was not the reserve of any single organization or group.

Rather, this was a *public* vision; and, *because* it is a public vision, the Statements themselves should be made open-source — should be offered to be accessed, developed, adapted and lived out by *all* who are involved in the larger project of healing the democracy.

And so — with today’s (a) provisioning of the Statements with a non-commercial Creative Commons license and (b) publication of the Statements at CitizenNow.org and on their own open-source wiki at wiki.CitizenNow.org — they are.

The idea is to provide We-the-People oriented individuals, organizations, communities and coalitions with **a set of tools they can use to develop a shared vision for a democracy movement** for the United States — a vision toward which so many of them already are reaching.

In offering these tools, the Working Group considers its work as a Group finished.

But the real work is just beginning.

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Central to understanding these Guiding Statements is the truth that, even when the unifying task at hand is something as deeply felt as the mending of the very fabric of democracy — even then — an organization, a community and a movement are three distinct, if occasionally overlapping, realities.

An organization along these lines, of whatever size, may or may not produce [a] genuine community. By the same token, a community along these lines may or may not include the structural trappings of a traditional organization. Certainly, a movement — a real movement — is an expression of [a] community. Whether, and how, this movement is undergirded by a specific organization — or coalition of organizations — depends on the movement.

So an organization is not a movement, and even a community is not necessarily a movement. And, yet, We-the-People-oriented organizations and communities can and must play an extremely vital and necessary role in creating and nurturing any democracy movement: the role of *convener* — bringing people together around a set of shared ideals, a shared purpose and shared goals.

It is the fact (or potential) of this *convening* role — the fact that it is only having been brought into the orbit of a specific We-the-People-oriented organization or community that a citizen becomes aware of a democracy *movement* (or the possibility of a movement) — that obligates these organizations and communities to be the ones to spell out what the ideals, the purpose and the goals are, and, through them, what the vision is.

The Working Group hopes that these Guiding Statements can be helpful to those who are working to develop this vision — whether theirs is an organization or community of 5...or 5 million.

A few more notes on the Statements...

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The “core values” framing that was a feature of all previous drafts reflected the specific nomenclature of Jim Collins’s book, *Built to Last*, which was the starting point for the process that the Principles and Purpose Working Group designed.

What became clear, however, was that all of the “core values” statements that emerged from the Working Group’s process have a strong *ethical* dimension. They don’t speak solely to values but to something more akin to value-practices or even practice-values.

The reframing to the more interpretively open “Core Ideals” seeks to reflect that.

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The two Public Goals were conceived as a couplet, with each Goal interpreting — and being interpreted by — the other.

The previous draft of Public Goal 2 included a passage referring to “transpartisan approaches.” Ultimately, the Working Group recognized that this word, “transpartisan,” raised more questions than it answered. But it is important to note that this Goal was developed at a time when members of the Coffee Party, in general — and of the Working Group, in particular — were being introduced to the work of Jim Rough, Joseph McCormick and Tom Atlee, and, more broadly, were being exposed to consensus-oriented methodologies of facilitated dialogue, deliberation and decision making.

This was part of the “background inspiration” for how the current draft of Public Goal 2 was finalized.

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So long as they abide by the terms of the Creative Commons license, communities or organizations are welcome to adopt, or adapt, any or all of these Guiding Statements — whether *a la carte* or on the basis of the Working Group’s “full-concept” of Core Ideals, Purpose and Goals.

But the Statements are presented here as “drafts,” in great the hope that — wherever they lie on the spectrum from small local societies to major nonprofits — *some* group of communities and organizations will continue to develop these as living Statements, making them the movement-building tools that the Working Group always intended them to be.

The important thing is that these Core Ideals themselves, this Purpose and these Public Goals be put into practice.

John Lumea

Member, Principles and Purpose Working Group

24 January 2012

* In Spring 2011, the Coffee Party defined a “member,” or “official member,” as someone who makes a specified financial contribution to the Coffee Party. But, prior to that, there was no such definition. Everyone who participated in the Coffee Party — whether in a local group, on Facebook or in other online forums — was considered a member.