Why do we need a strategic plan?

In their book, *Strategic Planning for Nonprofit Organizations: A Practical Guide and Workbook*, authors Michael Allison and Jude Kaye state that, “...strategic planning helps organizations do a better job by helping leaders to be intentional about priorities and proactive in motivating others to achieve them.” In other words, having a long-range plan places the organization in a position to be proactive rather than reactive to fluctuations in the economy, the community environment, and among other organizations.

*Driving Strategic Planning: A Nonprofit Executive's Guide* authors Deborah Kocsis and Susan Waechter inform readers that, “Simply put, the strategic planning process is a management tool designed to improve the effectiveness of an organization.”

A well-crafted strategic plan also becomes a tool for use with potential funding sources. When we ask a funding source for money, we are asking them to “invest” in our organization. If we provide them with a strategic plan, it lets them know that the organization has thought out the future and crafted a plan to continue to meet the needs of the community. The plan outlines the organization’s goals and objectives and tells potential funding sources that their investment will be well placed and that they will get more “bang for their buck.”

The long-range plan also provides the annual operating plan. When an organization has their annual operating plan, they hold the “to do” list that allows both board and staff to share in the work. As with any team effort, this “game plan” ensures that the organization will stay on track and at the end of their fiscal year, be able to look back at all of their accomplishments with a greater sense of achievement.

Without a strategic plan, organizations are often ill prepared for any crisis, large or small. They may be short-staffed or under-funded because care and thought was not put in at the outset; rendering them reactive. If your organization has a plan that is more than two years old or that has been completed within the last two years but is not being used, you now have “The Forgotten Plan.” A strategic plan is only as good as the amount it is worked. Without an annual operating plan, your team may be adrift in the daily work and the mission. You are working hard but need to be working smart as well.

Take out your plan and review it. If you feel it is not meeting your needs, make a commitment to put it back into action. If you don’t yet have a plan, work with your staff and board to make a commitment to secure one. With a solid strategic plan, your organization can continue not only to survive, but thrive and remain a viable organization for many years to come!

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www.missionpossibleconsulting.com
Five Steps to Develop a Strategic Plan

STEP 1
Get Organized
- Note why you are planning and any concerns
- Select a steering group or person to keep the planning on track
- Determine if outside help is needed
- Outline the planning process that fits your organization
- Get commitment to proceed

STEP 2
Take Stock (Situation Analysis)
- Pull together necessary background information
- Review your nonprofit’s past, present, and future situation
- Identify key issues or choices

STEP 3
Set Direction
- Develop a vision of your organization’s future
  - Critical issues approach
  - Scenario approach
  - Goals approach
  - Alignment approach
- Determine how to move the organization toward this future
- Develop a first draft of the plan

STEP 4
Refine and Adopt the Plan
- Review and refine the plan
- Adopt the plan

STEP 5
Implement the Plan
- Implement the plan
- Monitor progress
- Make adjustments
- Periodically update the plan

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Georgia Center for Nonprofits
Components of a Comprehensive Strategic Plan

1. **Background Information** – The process behind the plan.

2. **Vision Statement** – The world you want to create

3. **Mission Statement** – Your part in creating that world.

4. **Core Values** – The principles guiding your work.

5. **Strategic Goals and Objectives** – The “big picture” results you aim for, and the specific results you plan to achieve.

6. **Tactics** – The steps you take to meet each objective.

7. **Staffing Plan** – The personnel responsible for each tactic.

8. **Timeline** – The schedule your plan will follow.

9. **Revenue Plan** – How you’ll gather and deploy resources to sustain your plan.

Building on the Rock
Rainbow Village Strategic Plan 2014-2016
Introduction

Homelessness is a situation; it does not define a person. We are all people who need the same things: love, care, nurturing, and a safe place to call home.

Providing for the needs of homeless families takes a village. None of us are experts on homelessness; but we learn by being in community with our families and listening. Our families are our teachers. They keep us grounded in our work and bless us with love, inspiration, and mutual respect.

We meet our families wherever they are in their journeys. Our work is a call to service, an honor, and a blessing. We are humbled by the courage and perseverance of the families who come into our community, who endure through violence, oppression, disrespect, abuse, and neglect. We are in awe of the power of God at work in transforming lives, because that is the power that leads these people forward to become self-sufficient, and to be able to break the cycle of homelessness. We want our families to go forward from Rainbow Village with the resources and stability they need to bless their children and their grandchildren.

Our strategic plan contains stretch goals for the future of Rainbow Village. We are planning from a position of strength and in a season of success, celebration, and accomplishment: over the past three years we have funded and built a $6 million Village, bringing our families and services together in one place. In the next three years, we will fund and build the final $3 million phase, providing homes for twelve more families. We will grow to house 30 families and offer much needed childcare services; we will remain debt-free; and we will be sustainable for the long haul.

We will continue to be good stewards of every dollar and every relationship, not just with the people we serve but also with the people who invest their time, talents, and treasure in our work. Every investor is important: the 10 year old who gives her $10 allowance each month and the million dollar investor.

Rainbow Village is not ours. This place belongs to God. We will honor our gift of being part of it by planning with faith, not fear, and by working relentlessly toward achieving our mission.

Rainbow Village is more than transitional housing. We are a transformational community for the homeless families of North Metro Atlanta, and this strategic plan is our future.

What follows is a brief overview of our history and the road map guiding us through the next three years. We appreciate your compassion for the families we serve and your interest in seeing our reach and results grow. We invite your investment and partnership as together we transform lives along this exciting journey.
Highlights of Our History

In its 22 year history over 800 individuals (men, women, children and youth) have transformed their lives from ones of hopelessness to futures of promise. Rainbow Village is committed to continuing its work of assisting families to become whole and breaking the cycles that may have bound them for generations.

Successful families are those that leave Rainbow Village to move into an affordable home of their own. The adults are earning a livable wage and have approximately three months of savings to fall back on in the case of an emergency. They have also eliminated their debt and are successfully managing their income and expenses. Successful families are equipped with tools to sustain them as they move forward to productive lives.

Children and youth have renewed hope and promise for the future knowing they can accomplish their dreams. The children and youth of Rainbow Village are successfully breaking cycles of homelessness, poverty and domestic violence permanently for generations to come. They are our greatest hope and our greatest investment: lives forever transformed by the power of a community of support, education and love.

1991
A vision is born when Josh Costell, a parishioner of Christ Episcopal Church, Norcross donated $25,000 to begin a ministry for homeless families in honor of his mother, Ida. IDA became an acronym for the tenets of the program: Initiative, Development, and Accountability.

Under the direction of the Rector of Christ Episcopal Church, Joel P. Hudson, an abandoned house was leased from Georgia Power Company to Christ Church for $1.00 per year. Rainbow House is founded. With sweat equity and an additional $10,000 investment from Christ Episcopal Church members, the first home, a duplex, is opened and provides a home for two families for 30-90 days.

1993
As the need for homeless services was recognized, Nancy Yancey was hired as Executive Director to concentrate on building an effective program. She became CEO in 2009.

1994
A second home on the same property was leased from Georgia Power. Rainbow House was then able to serve three families at a time.

1995
A board of directors was established. Rainbow House became a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation named Rainbow Village, Inc. Six adjacent homes were leased from Georgia Power to meet the increased
demands for services, bringing the number of families served to nine. Additional churches, corporations and foundations began to partner with and invest in Rainbow Village, Inc.

**1997**
Rainbow Village programs became more comprehensive: an after school program began in the rear of a Rainbow Village home. Program services were increased to provide life skills training classes with community partners. Family stay was extended to up to one year, in acknowledgement of the reality that more time was necessary to successfully transition.

We also learned that our families required additional resources and support accessing community services. DFACS Case managers were contracted to assist families in accessing those resources and services.

**1998**
Rainbow Village received a gift of $500,000 from Jacqueline and Scott Hudgens to purchase property in Duluth, an eight unit apartment complex with four one bedroom and four two bedroom homes.

**1999**
The Duluth complex of Rainbow Village opened in September to provide homes for 7 families. This increased the number of families served to 12 with the 5 remaining homes in Norcross. Hands of Christ (the Duluth Co-op) occupied unit #1 in the Duluth complex for one year.

**2000**
A program director and a case manager were added to the staff to serve the increased number of families. The Program Director developed a series of life skills training classes to educate and equip our families.

**2002**
The Joel P. Hudson Family Service Center opened in a rental home from Georgia Power. The after school & life skills training classes were held here.

**2006**
Mental health counseling was added to the list of services provided through the Rainbow Village program as we discovered what it meant to holistically respond to families in crisis.

**2007**
The Hudgens Family Foundation made a second investment of $500,000 for the acquisition of adjacent property to the existing village for future expansion.

An operations manager and resource development director were added to staff to have better oversight of properties and programs and support volunteerism and fundraising initiatives.
2008
Plans to expand and build an all-inclusive village began. At this point, only three homes were being leased from Georgia Power in Norcross. Only two remained by 2009.

2009
Offices and program space relocated from Christ Episcopal Church in Norcross to Duluth. The new office space was in downtown Duluth and the program space was provided by Pleasant Hill Presbyterian Church.

2010
A $7.7 million, three-phase capital campaign, “Building Strong Communities....One Family at a Time” is launched. The goal: to construct a new, all-inclusive village to provide a family service center programming space, to allow on-site child care, and triple the number of homes from ten to 30.

2011
Construction began on Phase 1, which was fully funded at $2,600,000. A groundbreaking ceremony was held April 15.

2012
With 200 guests in attendance, Rainbow Village held a ribbon cutting ceremony on April 20 to open the Family Service Center and two new apartment buildings, which provided 12 homes as part of phase one of the capital campaign. On April 27, the office space was relocated from downtown Duluth to the new facility. The remaining two leases for homes with Georgia Power were terminated, and on April 28, eight families from the apartments on Fox Street along with two additional families from Norcross relocated to the new apartment complex.

A full time financial program director was added to staff, replacing contractors. A workforce development program was added. This position increased resident accountability and financial success.

2013
In June, funding of $2,900,000 was secured and construction began on the Community Center at the location of the Duluth apartments on Fox Street in July. Completion of the Center is anticipated in the first quarter of 2014.

A partnership with HomeAid was established in August to construct the third three-bedroom, six unit apartment building bringing capacity to 18 families. Construction will begin in fourth quarter 2013, with anticipated occupancy in the first quarter 2014.

The final phase of the capital campaign is now underway to secure $2,700,000. $1,000,000 to complete construction of the final two, two-bedroom, six-unit apartment buildings, for a total of five buildings and 30 apartments, and $1,700,000 to provide the increased operating costs to sustain the village at a capacity of 30 families at a time.
Rainbow Village Identity and Purpose

**Vision**
Our vision is to be a national model of an educational and holistic approach to breaking the cycles of homelessness, poverty and domestic violence.

**Mission**
The mission is to transform lives for homeless families with children of North Metro Atlanta through a community based transitional housing program that promotes self-sufficiency.

**Values**
Love for God and neighbor
Respect for the dignity of every human being
Support for every member of our community
Engage with humility and compassion
Be good stewards of all resources
Executive Summary

Our future is bright. When we complete construction on the final phase of our expansion, we will have the capacity to serve 30 families. We must grow because the need for our services continues to increase. However, we must be able to serve these additional families with the level of quality programming that we are providing to 12 families.

With the capital campaign nearly complete, we have an opportunity to shift our focus away from building new facilities and towards memorializing the Rainbow Village model: capturing the “secret sauce” that makes our transformative work successful. The time is right to begin making strides toward our vision of becoming a national model.

With this goal in mind, we envisioned a future that is financially secure, with strong leadership and expanded programs that continue to provide holistic support and preparation for residents. A Strategic Plan Steering Committee identified four key strategic priorities as being the most critical to the success of our programs and operation: (1) increased capacity, (2) sustainability, (3) succession planning, and (4) replication of the Rainbow Village model. Each of these four areas was discussed at length and agreed upon by the larger strategy development team, which included individuals with unique expertise in homelessness, education, and employment.

Beginning on January 1, 2014 and working through December 31, 2016, we have set the following goals for each strategic priority:

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<tr>
<th>Strategic Priority</th>
<th>Goal</th>
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<tr>
<td>Increased Capacity</td>
<td>Ensure consistent, quality programming that supports our mission while expanding our programs and services from 12 families to 30 families and providing increased support for our graduates.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sustainability</td>
<td>Secure our future and sustain our ability to serve by securing $1.7 million of private support annually through community, church, corporate, and individual support for Rainbow Village and our work.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Succession Planning</td>
<td>Prepare Rainbow Village for smooth and seamless leadership transitions (planned or emergency) at all levels (board and staff). Ensure a competent leadership team capable of providing credible leadership for the organization.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Replication</td>
<td>Understand the essential elements of our model and establish our strategy to replicate it. We will have at least one site in the replication process in 2015 and then actively serve families at a site other than our Duluth campus by year-end 2016.</td>
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Why Our Work is Important

Addressing Suburban Poverty

Our 22 years of experience working in North Metro Atlanta have taught us a lot about the face of homelessness in our community. There is a common misconception that homelessness is only an inner-city issue -- a consequence of bad choices made earlier in life, a result of laziness, or drug use, or addiction. But homelessness in North Metro Atlanta is a family issue. It is estimated that 60% of the homeless family population in Gwinnett County are children, and 50% of the children are under the age of six.

Family homelessness in Georgia is an ongoing problem. In 2012, five states accounted for nearly half of the nation’s total homeless population: California (20.7 percent), New York (11.0 percent), Florida (8.7 percent), Texas (5.4 percent), and Georgia (3.2 percent). According to a 2012 state report card from the National Center on Family Homelessness, Georgia ranks 49th nationwide on child homelessness, scoring near the bottom on every major indicator: the extent of child homelessness, risk for child homelessness, and children’s well-being. The same report card also found state policy and planning to be inadequate.

Families experiencing homelessness typically are comprised of a mother in her late twenties with two children: 84% of families experiencing homelessness are headed by a woman. More than half of all homeless mothers do not have a high school diploma, even though 29% of adults in homeless families are working. Homeless families have much higher rates of family separation than other low-income families, due to the shelter and foster care system’s involvement, as well as parents sending their children to live with relatives.

Family homelessness has a significant effect on the well-being of children. According to the National Center on Family Homelessness, 83% of homeless children had been exposed to at least one serious violent event, a fact that has lasting consequences, as children who witness violence are “more likely to exhibit frequent aggressive and antisocial behavior, increased fearfulness, higher levels of depression and anxiety, and have a greater acceptance of violence as a means of resolving conflict.” Children experiencing homelessness also are sick four times more often than other children, go hungry twice as often as non-homeless children, and have three times the rate of emotional and behavioral problems of non-homeless children.

School-aged children experiencing homelessness show similar struggles in their academic performance. They are four times more likely to show delayed development, and have twice the rate of learning disabilities as non-homeless children. Over the long term, poor students are twice as likely as non-poor students to have to repeat a grade, be expelled, get suspended from school, or drop out of high school.

3 http://www.familyhomelessness.org/media/306.pdf
Without even a high school diploma, these children will be unable to access higher-paying jobs, and are at risk of continuing the cycle of poverty and homelessness.

During the 2012-2013 school year, the Gwinnett County School System alone accommodated 2,402 homeless children, up from 2,246 during the 2011-2012 school year. This is a trend that we want to reverse, and do so starts with getting families sustainably housed. Loss of housing affects thousands in the North Metro Atlanta region; according to data from Family Promise Gwinnett, there were 26,290 evictions and 18,733 foreclosures in Gwinnett County alone in 2012. At the average family size of 2.5, those numbers combined mean approximately 112,558 family members that lost housing in 2012.

The proverb, “it takes a village to raise a child”, is true for all children. This proverb is especially true for children and families who face the additional challenges of poverty, homelessness, and domestic violence. Raising a healthy, happy child does indeed take a village and Rainbow Village is a refuge of hope, a safe haven of help, and a supportive and nurturing community for families on the journey to self-sufficiency, freedom from the shackles and cycles of poverty, homelessness, and domestic violence.

4 Source: Homeless Children and Youth Liaison, Office of Health and Social Services, Gwinnett County
The Forgotten Plan

Once upon a time, there was a strategic plan named Sam. He had been lovingly crafted by board members who were eager and enthusiastic about the future. They worked for days to get just the right goals and objectives to accomplish in an effort to take their nonprofit organization to new heights. Alas, it didn’t happen. After the initial excitement subsided and reality set in, the board and staff went back to “business as usual” and Sam gathered dust on the shelf. Once in a while, you can spot Sam walking around your community looking for some wonderful board to come along and put him to work. If you should see Sam, please help him find his way.

Remember the old saying, “If you fail to plan, plan to fail.” Don’t let your strategic plan become another forgotten plan like Sam. Setting a course for your nonprofit means your board must take the time to do effective planning. Once that is accomplished, you must work the plan and constantly check the progress to make sure you are moving forward.

Sausage King Jimmy Dean once said, “We can’t change the direction of the wind, but we can adjust our sails to reach our destination.” Adjusting your strategic plan at a yearly retreat allows you to make mid-course corrections. None of us can predict the future but having a good plan and adjusting it from time to time will certainly get you where you want to go.

Not having a plan will relegate your organization to being reactive instead of proactive. Take charge of the direction of your nonprofit now and prepare your strategic plan. It will become your map and compass to the future!
Strategic Planning Information Resources
(Most of these resources can be purchased through BoardSource at www.boardsource.org)

To Go Forward, Retreat!  The Board Retreat Handbook
By Sandra R. Hughes

Driving Strategic Planning: A Nonprofit Executive’s Guide
By Deborah L. Kocsis and Susan A. Waechter

Strategic Planning Workbook for Nonprofit Organizations (Revised and Updated)
By Bryan W. Barry

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