



STRATEGIC ROADMAP
FAMILY PROMISE OF SOUTHERN CHESTER COUNTY

2019 – 2022

FAMILY PROMISE OF SOUTHERN CHESTER COUNTY

STRATEGY ROADMAP

INTRODUCTION

In response to growing community need around family homelessness, a local affiliate of Family Promise was established in southern Chester County in late 2015 to help children and their families experiencing homelessness achieve lasting self-sufficiency and stability. Since then, Family Promise of Southern Chester County (FPSCC) has been providing shelter, meals, and comprehensive support services through a network of congregations and volunteers to families in need of sustainable housing.

Despite limited resources and increasing need, the organization has achieved rapid success in terms of programming and fundraising. At the same time, FPSCC saw a sudden drop in immigrant families seeking assistance due to changes in the political climate that impact immigrant communities. This shift, along with concerns about the sustainability of volunteer engagement, drove leaders to recognize the need for a strategic framework to guide the organization's efforts over the next two to three years. FPSCC engaged planning consultants, Sonia Stamm and Ana Lisa Yoder, to guide the board and staff in a planning process to identify strategic priorities and outline a plan for achieving them.

PROCESS

FPSCC's Strategic Roadmap evolved through a collaborative process led by a five-person strategic planning committee comprised of board members and the Executive Director. The full board and Executive Director participated in a retreat during which participants reflected on FPSCC's identity and position in the landscape. Participants also identified pressing opportunities and challenges, then agreed on a key strategic question to be addressed, along with criteria for evaluating various options. The group began to identify approaches for addressing the strategic question as guidance for the strategic planning committee, which met four times after the planning retreat to flesh out priorities and goals.

The approach is based on the Real-Time Strategic Planning framework developed by the national consulting firm, La Piana. A nontraditional approach to strategic planning, it is based on extensive research with nonprofits, and focuses on grounding key stakeholders in the identity and market position of the organization, then identifying a current and urgent strategic question facing the organization around which to form strategies.

The process is intended to be replicable, providing a framework for considering and responding to new strategic challenges and opportunities as they arise in "real-time." As questions get addressed, new opportunities and challenges can be explored through a similar process with a tool to ensure there is alignment among the strategies, values, and priorities of the organization. [The Strategic Planning Committee that guided the process from launch to completion will reconvene quarterly to assess the implementation of the plan and ensure that planning occurs on an ongoing basis.]

ORGANIZATIONAL MISSION, VISION, AND PHILOSOPHY

Through the planning process, FPSCC reviewed and revised its mission and vision statements, then developed a values statement, as follows:

Mission

Family Promise of Southern Chester County helps families with children experiencing homelessness achieve sustainable housing and stability.

Vision

Every child has a home.

Values

1. **Respect:** We treat everyone with respect, dignity, and compassion – our guests, our volunteers, our partners, our supporters, and our employees.
2. **Integrity:** We strive to attain the highest level of honesty, transparency, accountability, and ethical behavior.
3. **Dedication:** We are totally committed to and invested in helping our families achieve sustainable housing and stability and in ending homelessness in Southern Chester County.
4. **Working together:** We encourage adaptability and different points of view because we know we are more effective when we work together as guests, volunteers, partners, supporters, and employees.
5. **Safety:** The well-being and safety of our guests, volunteers, partners, supporters, and employees is of paramount importance.
6. **Family:** Keeping families together is essential.

TRENDS

Changes in the political climate and affordable housing market have a noticeable impact on the community FPSCC serves. Political shifts have caused a 50% decrease in the number of immigrant families seeking assistance from FPSCC. Gentrification in Kennett Square has led to a dire lack of affordable housing, leading families to find options further from their support systems, transportation and employment options. The convergence of these factors builds inequity and increases the number of families struggling to break the cycle of homelessness.

These external dynamics naturally put strain on the internal capacity of FPSCC. Reliant upon individual volunteers and congregations for housing and serving guests on a quarterly basis, FPSCC is concerned about exhausting its dedicated, but finite volunteer resources. Similarly, the board and staff are working at capacity as board members support operational activities to augment the very small staff of the organization.

To alleviate some effort from volunteers as well as to build funding sustainability, FPSCC is beginning to shift its fundraising focus from volunteer-led events to individual donor solicitation. The organization's continued success will hinge upon building sustainability of not only funding, but also infrastructure. To that end, FPSCC will continue to build the capacity of the board, staff, and volunteer infrastructure, aligning them with organizational needs around program growth. As the organization moves toward more sustainability, it will be able to execute a flexible and intentional response to changing community needs.

ORGANIZATIONAL IDENTITY AND STRATEGY CRITERIA

As a part of this process, participants reached consensus about key aspects of FPSCC's current identity, clarifying the impact the organization seeks to have, its unique value to the community (FPSCC's strategic advantages), and how the organization sustains itself financially. Stated in its simplest form in the grid below, this tool ensures that new approaches start from a place of shared understanding to recognize and leverage FPSCC's unique position in the community wherever possible.

We advance our mission of	Helping families with children experiencing homelessness achieve sustainable housing and stability
Through	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Short-term room and board • Intensive case management • Financial support, as needed • Aftercare
We emphasize our competitive advantage of	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • being only organization in southern Chester County that houses families with children experiencing homelessness and that keeps families together • lower cost operation • strong volunteer engagement • high rate of success
We are sustained by...	Support of faith-based community, foundations, and individuals, and corporate partnerships

Participants also developed a set of criteria with which to evaluate potential approaches and ensure alignment with FPSCC's current identity and priorities. Moving forward, these questions will be populated into a matrix rating tool for use in keeping FPSCC poised to respond flexibly and quickly to strategic questions as they continue to arise:

- A. Is the strategy aligned with FPSCC's mission, vision, and values?
- B. Does the strategy capitalize on our strategic advantages? Do our strategic advantages provide leverage for this strategy?
- C. Does it foster safety of volunteers and families?
- D. Can it be sustainably funded?
- E. Is it within our areas of expertise or can we partner with someone else who brings that expertise?
- F. Does it maintain our integrity/protect our reputation?
- G. Does it avoid alienating our volunteer base or congregations?
- H. Does it have the flexibility to adapt to external changes?
- I. Is there a reasonable cost-benefit?
- J. Do we have current operational capacity or can that be funded?

STRATEGIC QUESTION AND FRAMEWORK

Using the above as a foundation, the board and Executive Director explored the most urgent strategic opportunities and challenges facing FPSCC, then identified a key strategic question to be addressed through this process, along with four primary strategies to be implemented in tandem:

STRATEGY QUESTION:

HOW CAN WE IMPACT MORE FAMILIES BY FILLING OR EXPANDING OUR CAPACITY?

Note: Capacity means families but we recognize that each strategy has implications for organizational capacity (congregations, staff, volunteers, and funding), as well.

STRATEGY 1: ALLEVIATE THE IMPACT OF THE LACK OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING ON FAMILIES IN OUR PROGRAM. (CHAIR: BURT ROTHENBERGER)

Rationale:

Chester County's new long-range plan acknowledges the county-wide lack of affordable housing, which is a primary reason why our organization exists. Increasing the supply of affordable housing enables FPSCC to place families in housing faster, thereby increasing capacity,

Outcomes:

- Reduced waiting time for families to move into permanent housing.
- Families who graduate from FP are demonstrably better tenants

Objective 1: Create partnerships with landlords.

Objective 2: Put all families currently in our program through the Keys to Good Tenancy program and expand this to our program graduates.

Objective 3: Join with local affordable housing advocacy groups.

Objective 4: Explore partnerships with developers of affordable housing.

STRATEGY 2: TARGET OUTREACH TO POPULATIONS WE ARE NOT REACHING TODAY. (CHAIR: KAREN EICHMAN)

Rationale:

The immigrant community is the largest under-served constituency in our area and there has been a dramatic drop in their participation in our program since 2016. There also might be other populations we are not reaching effectively. Increasing the number of immigrants and those from other under-served populations directly increases those we serve, filling – and possibly leading to an increase in – our capacity.

Outcomes:

- The percentage of immigrant families in our program mirrors that of the community at large.
- We are at full capacity 75% of the time.

Objective 1: Create a steering committee charged with assessing current landscape, obstacles, and solutions for reaching immigrant populations.

Objective 2: Expand outreach with immigrant and other populations.

Objective 3: Expand engagement with immigrant and other populations.

STRATEGY 3: INCREASE RESOURCES OFFERED TO OUR FAMILIES. (CHAIR: ANGELA EMRICH)

Rationale:

We must better enable our families to obtain and to remain in sustainable housing. Increasing their skills makes them better tenants and reduces the chance they will become homeless again.

Outcome:

- Families become more self-sufficient in sustainable housing.

Objective 1: Determine complete list of skills/resources needed by our guests and graduates.

Objective 2: Determine what FPSCC can/should realistically deliver (based on Objective 1 outcomes) and how.

Objective 3: Develop plan to deliver selected offerings (based on outcomes of Objective 2) and identify ideal program outcomes.

Objective 4: Evaluate the effectiveness of our programs on an annual basis.

STRATEGY 4: EXPAND, RETAIN, AND SUPPORT OUR VOLUNTEERS AND CONGREGATIONS.

(CHAIR: PHIL DUNCAN)

Rationale:

The organization can't exist without volunteers and congregations. FPSCC's ability to serve families requires volunteers, congregations, and staff, all of which need to be aligned appropriately with our capacity.

Outcomes:

- FPSCC continues to serve families.
- Congregations and other organizations seek us out to volunteer.

Objective 1: Build the Network Committee.

Objective 2: Determine better ways to support our congregations and support organizations.

Objective 3: Determine better ways to support our volunteers.

MOVING FORWARD

This strategic framework includes strategies, outcomes, and objectives, plus an addendum (to be developed) with action steps, timelines, and resources needed for implementation. Its successful implementation hinges upon the engagement of both board and staff. In this case, where the still early-stage organization relies upon board members to function in both governance and operational roles, clarity is especially important and can be defined as follows:

1. **Governance:** The board will monitor implementation of the strategic plan through quarterly reports from the Strategic Planning Committee. The board also will provide expertise where needed and leverage networks to connect Strategy Champions and staff with needed resources. Through the Strategic Planning Committee, the board will assure the planning process is ongoing and involves other relevant board committees as needed.
2. **Operations:** Implementation of the plan falls primarily on staff and board members/volunteers functioning in a staff capacity, starting with an expanded Strategic Planning Committee (comprised of the Executive Director, board members, and Strategy Champions), which will further develop timelines, assemble teams of volunteers, and monitor progress toward completion of objectives and/or oversee adaptations as needed.

This planning framework for FPSCC is designed to respond to new challenges and opportunities as they arise. As key questions are addressed, new questions can be explored through a similar process with a custom tool to evaluate alignment between proposed strategies and the articulated values and priorities, allowing FPSCC to be responsive to a complex, ever-changing, environment.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

FPSCC thanks all those whose input informed this strategy. We look forward to working with you and the entire community as we move into this exciting next stage of our development.