



# **STRATEGIC PLAN**

## **2014 – 2017**

*Adopted 12.16.13*

*Helping homeless youth move...  
“from surviving to thriving”*

## SUSTAIN & STRENGTHEN

Avenues will sustain and strengthen its existing programs to ensure homeless youths are able to move from surviving the streets to thriving young adults.

### GOALS AND STRATEGIES

**Continuously seek ways to improve programming to have a *lasting* impact on the homeless youth supported, as measured through online self-assessment, interactions with staff and other data capture and analysis.**

1. Fully utilize the online self-assessment evaluation tool, learn from it, and enhance and adjust programming, as appropriate and needed. Improve other forms of capturing and evaluating outcomes.
2. Advance commitment to principles-based youth work (see staff development goal area).
3. Expand positive youth engagement activities through which youth can build relationships, give back to their community, learn leadership skills, and mature. Create meaningful youth leadership opportunities within Avenues and the broader community.
4. Engage youth in social justice learning and activities.
5. Expand youth employment and job training opportunities with business and nonprofit partners in the community.
6. Explore work experience opportunities for youth within Avenues. Explore creating or connecting with a social enterprise to employ youth and give them leadership, job skills and management opportunities.
7. Strengthen independent living skills programming through volunteers, partnerships and staff. Fully implement the Rent Savings Plan so youth get practice saving money and planning for the future.
8. Expand programming through which youth may strengthen their relationships with family and other persons important to them (e.g., family counseling, family reunification services, events and activities).

**Have a well-qualified, trained, diverse and stable direct service team that applies a principles-based approach and social justice lens to its work with homeless youth.**

1. In collaboration with partners, produce a training program on principles-based youth work.
2. Enhance hiring practices with tools to identify candidates who have capacity to provide principles-based care to youth.

3. Implement a professional development plan for staff and candidates with capacity but lacking experience.
4. Enhance hiring practices and staff trainings to increase staff ability to apply a social justice lens to their work.
5. Improve Avenues' wage scale and employee benefits to provide living-wage jobs, decrease employee stress in their personal lives, improve recruitment and performance, and minimize turnover.
6. Integrate skilled, trained volunteers to complement and support the direct service team.
7. Build strong team ethic within Avenues through communications and shared leadership work to fully align program and administrative staff.
8. Apply a principles-based approach and social justice lens in Avenues' relationship with and support of its employees.

**Build and engage in strategic alignments and partnerships to optimize opportunities for our community's homeless youth.**

1. Seek opportunities to collaborate with partners and like organizations to share training resources to align staffs and provide cost-effective trainings.
2. Build a collaborative website with real-time shelter bed availability and full range of services available to homeless youth to improve ease of access to services for youth and their advocates, while also gathering data on homeless youth numbers and needs.
3. Actively engage partners and encourage a high level of collaboration and alignment.
4. Seek and implement opportunities to align Avenues with partner agency services to optimize capacity and ensure youth are able to access the most appropriate services the first time.
5. Build partnerships with agencies and organizations to access their program strengths in areas needed by Avenues' youth (e.g., job training and employment, family counseling).
6. Participate fully in government-led planning efforts, including Heading Home Hennepin, Heading Home Minnesota and Metro Youth Services Redesign.
7. Build and maintain strong relationships with government and quasi-government partners.
8. Build and maintain positive relationships with elected officials at all levels of government.

**Grow the existing host home programs so they are at full capacity.**

1. Implement targeted and intensive host recruitment tactics.
2. Conduct outreach to all youth referral sources to broaden youth participation.
3. Ensure hosts receive strong trainings on setting appropriate expectations of youth, understanding power dynamics in the host-youth relationship and understanding the connection of social justice issues with homeless youth.

**Ensure youth in the host home programs are sufficiently supported so they have a positive experience in the program, address needs, build skills and transition successfully to stable living arrangements.**

1. Increase Avenues' in-house case management capacity and/or take steps to ensure referring partners provide sufficient case management support. Develop memorandums of understanding with partners who refer youth and provide case management support.
2. Review program evaluation process and identify improvements, as appropriate.

**Select and employ an electronic client record system that enables the agency to improve program evaluation, effectiveness and efficiency.**

1. Select or build and implement an electronic records system for the Shelter & Transitional Living Program. appropriate "coordinated intake and assessment system."
2. Participate in community efforts to implement a client-centered and
3. Ensure our electronic records system is fully integrated with the coordinated system.

## **EXPAND & ADVANCE**

**Avenues will 1) support more homeless youth by doing more of what it does well and 2) join with others in the community to advance real social change to prevent youth homelessness.**

### **GOALS AND STRATEGIES**

**Create and operate additional Avenues Shelter & Transitional Living Programs where there is community need, capacity and support.**

1. In collaboration with community leaders and partners, work to design, fund, launch and operate a shelter and transitional living program for homeless youth in the northwest suburbs.
2. Explore other opportunities as they are presented to Avenues to meet homeless youth needs in interested communities.

**Promote growth in housing opportunities for homeless youth.**

1. Support creation of additional scattered site transitional housing and permanent supportive housing opportunities for Avenues youth, either as an expansion of Avenues' operations or through partners.

**Promote and support the expansion of community-based housing opportunities through host home programs.**

1. Support creation of new host home programs in other communities.
2. Where community capacity exists, create additional host home programs and/or expand existing programs.
3. Explore creating an alternative host home program "lite" model that would support informal host homes.

**Advocate for meaningful social changes needed to prevent and end youth homelessness.**

1. Learn about the underlying causes of homelessness and the social changes needed to effectively end homelessness.
2. Engage with respected and effective social justice organizations to support their grassroots organizing efforts and connect Avenues supporters to those efforts.
3. Incorporate and broadcast social justice messages through Avenues' owned media.
4. Incorporate social justice messages when engaging with the media, policymakers, community leaders and community organizations.

## **BE HEALTHY**

**Avenues will pursue its vision and program goals through healthy management, with an emphasis on financial stability, broad community support, good governance and efficient use of resources.**

### **GOALS AND STRATEGIES**

#### **Maintain and grow the Board-Designated Operating Cash Reserve to ensure stability.**

1. Manage the organization's budget to finish with 5-10% annual net revenue. checking account has a minimum of 45 days to cover cash needs.
2. Transfer funds annually into cash reserve fund, while ensuring the operations

#### **Grow all private sources of revenue so that Avenues has a healthy, diverse revenue base to support its vision and goals.**

##### Foundations and Corporations:

1. Maintain positive relationships and healthy reputation with existing foundation and corporate donors.
2. Cultivate 3 to 5 new foundation and corporate relationships annually.

##### Individual Donors:

1. Increase the average annual contribution from current donors by 15% over three years.
2. Conduct an annual campaign to contact all lapsed donors with goal of 20% re-engagement.
3. Develop and implement a cost-effective strategy to significantly expand the individual donor base.
4. Develop an ongoing campaign to convert social media followers to donors.

##### Faith-Based and Civic Organizations:

1. Cultivate relationships / build partnerships with at least 6 faith and civic organizations annually that make Avenues a beneficiary of collections and drives, host Avenues speakers, raise awareness of youth homelessness and promote volunteering in Avenues programs, including the host home programs.

##### Corporate and Business:

1. Develop corporate cause marketing partnerships with local businesses to raise awareness and funds.
2. Pursue, in collaboration with other homeless youth-serving agencies, a cause marketing relationship with a major

corporation to significantly raise community awareness and financial

support for our collective programs.

**Fundraising Events:**

1. Cultivate, maintain and increase third party events to raise awareness of Avenues, expand donor base and grow revenue.
2. Host a signature fundraising event annually that contributes significantly to the annual fund, expands the donor base and raises awareness.

**Maintain existing government funding for current programs and secure new government funding to support new or expanding programs. Ensure Avenues does not become overly-dependent on any single source of public funds.**

1. Maintain positive relationships and healthy reputation with government funders through timely reporting, a demonstrated commitment to collaboration and transparency.
2. Seek and secure new public funding that will enable Avenues to achieve its vision and program goals.

**Build a well-managed volunteer program that integrates volunteers into the delivery of service within Avenues' programs.**

1. Develop and promote meaningful volunteer positions.
2. Develop a volunteer management process and tracking system.
3. Develop annual volunteer retention and recognition strategies; track volunteer retention.

**Recognize Avenues' 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary on December 5, 2014 to honor all youth, volunteers and supporters, raise awareness of youth homelessness, and appropriately promote Avenues.**

1. Strategies to be determined!

**Build a reputation as a thought-leader and trusted source of information.**

1. Establish and maintain Avenues guidelines to ensure common, effective language is used in all communications.
2. Maintain a website with strong content that is informative and up-to-date, with links to the Avenues blog, social media, recent media coverage, and partners.
3. Publish a bi-weekly blog that challenges and informs the community, with dynamic, ever changing scope and perspectives from varying contributors.
4. Build relationships with key reporters. Become a trusted resource that is regularly referenced and quoted regarding youth homelessness.
5. Strengthen the Avenues brand through a collateral materials strategy that includes event takeaways, printed pieces, banners and table coverings.
6. Explore merchandising.
7. Actively use social media to engage new supporters and community leaders, and grow the number of followers, active donors, and email and mailing list participants.

**Operate a high-impact and cost-effective back office support operation, including fundraising, human resources, finance, operations and general administration.**

1. Pursue alignments, collaborations, partnerships and/or mergers to improve effectiveness and impact.
2. Implement technology improvements to increase efficiency of staff and board.
3. Ensure adequate back office staffing to support the whole organization.
4. Provide staff development opportunities.
5. Embrace sustainability and responsibility in operational decisions and purchasing

**Ensure the Board of Directors reflects the communities Avenues serves, is engaged, and is equipped to support Avenues goals.**

1. Seek diversity and balance of Board membership regarding race, ethnicity, culture, profession, age, gender and gender identity, sexual orientation, class, skills and life experience.
2. Incorporate voices on the Board, or in other meaningful capacities, of persons who have experienced homelessness, particularly young people.
3. Actively enhance Avenues' community, policymaker and potential donor connections by tapping Board members' relationships and networks.
4. Deliver social justice training for Board members to increase board capacity for reinforcing Avenues' social justice messages and making decisions through a social justice lens.
5. Have strong Board member participation in board meetings, events, committees and strategic outreach on Avenues' behalf.
6. Design Board meetings to optimize efficiency, strategically tap into board member experience and relationships, and minimize logistical details.
7. Create an Advisory Council / Board to engage high-profile, well-connected Avenues supporters to advance the organizations' credibility in the community and open doors for broader opportunity.
8. Develop a succession plan to ensure consistent and strong Board leadership at the officer and committee chair levels.
9. Implement new Board member orientation to equip new members immediately for impactful service.

**Ensure Avenues Executive Director has the skills and abilities to implement the strategic plan by providing clear vision, effective management and leadership within the organization, and full engagement of the community.**

1. Provide the Executive Director with an annual performance and development review by the Board of Directors.
2. Develop a succession plan to ensure consistent and strong executive leadership of the organization.
3. Support the Executive Director through access to skill development opportunities and mentorships, as appropriate.