

YOUTH CARE

Homeless youth → Off the streets → Preparing for life

STRATEGIC PLAN



2019-2022



YouthCare works to end youth homelessness and to ensure that young people are valued for who they are and empowered to achieve their potential.

Mission: YouthCare works to end youth homelessness and to ensure that young people are valued for who they are and empowered to achieve their potential.

Vision: YouthCare envisions a community where no young person experiences homelessness, all young people have the opportunity to thrive, and the systems that oppress them are dismantled.

2019-2022 Strategic Plan—Executive Summary

For more than four decades, YouthCare has been instrumental in creating change in a young person's life. Today, we are called to sharpen our focus, deepen our impact, and clarify our values and practices so that we are best prepared to fulfill our mission and make a positive impact for young people. Our overarching approach organizes all our business practices and staff efforts towards the outcomes we seek for youth: housing stability, systems of support, financial stability, and wellness.

YouthCare's 2019-2022 Strategic Plan outlines the operational steps and investments necessary for YouthCare to fully implement an outcomes focused approach to service delivery and operational execution. At the end of the three-year plan, we will have implemented the key initiatives described below to focus all our programmatic and operational resources on the goal of moving young people towards long-term stability. These initiatives represent a necessary, but significant investment in young people: they will add \$2 million to YouthCare's ongoing annual budget and require a 10% growth in our staff.

Strategic Priority I: Deepen Our Impact through High-Quality, High-Impact Services

We have shifted our program approach from offering a continuum of care, or a variety of separate services along a continuum, to a single, youth-centered, coordinated program. Our continued implementation of this approach is a cornerstone of our Strategic Plan, as we believe it will enable us to better serve young people and assist them in achieving the long-term outcomes that will contribute to their long-term well-being. The initiatives in this Strategic Priority are focused on YouthCare's core programming, centered on the provision of high-intensity case management services, expanding and improving our employment and educational programs, and leveraging data to drive decision-making, program enhancements, and operational adjustments.

To increase long-term stability and positive outcomes for youth, we will:

- *Provide more individualized pathways to employability* through comprehensive and diverse employment programming, so our young people have the skills and experience required to be strong applicants in modern industries
- *Create opportunities for youth to re-engage with education and improve educational outcomes* by providing informal learning activities, skill development, and formal education programming
- *Expand our employment and education services into a second location* to provide next-level employment and education programming and to ensure that all youth in our target population obtain career-path employment, meet educational goals, and achieve long-term stability


- *Deliver high-intensity case management services*, the cornerstone of our integrated system of care, to each young person enrolled in core programming, by assigning a single Centralized Case Manager who will provide continuity for a young person throughout their time at YouthCare
- *Maintain a range of housing services* for young people experiencing homelessness, leveraging strategic opportunities to expand dedicated units at YouthCare and in the broader community
- *Support long-term self-sufficiency* of youth by implementing a life skills curriculum within housing programming that is aligned with our service philosophy
- *Reduce disproportionality through service excellence* and systems that identify and address lack of parity in outcomes

Strategic Priority II: Strengthen Business Practices to Support High Performance

The initiatives in this strategic priority are focused on aligning our business practices, resources, and people power to support long-term stability of youth. This includes using data to drive decisions internally and to influence stakeholders externally, working to provide a livable wage, equitably developing high performers, and securing the financial resources and organizational infrastructure we need to support efficient and effective delivery of high-quality services.

To create and sustain a culture of high performance, we will:

- *Cultivate a culture of learning* with a focus on continuous quality improvement and outcome-focused performance management in all areas of the organization
- *Enhance care coordination and program refinement* by implementing a new Client Management System
- Invest in our engaged, highly capable, and knowledgeable staff by benchmarking existing positions to *build towards a livable wage* and maintain a high-performance culture supported through pay-for performance
- *Strengthen engagement, training, and professional development* practices to enhance service excellence, increase retention of talented high-performing staff, and promote equity of opportunities for all staff
- *Implement and maintain a high-functioning technology infrastructure* to facilitate care coordination; support service integration; and enhance staff efficiency, effectiveness, and communication across programs and throughout the agency
- *Share knowledge and organizational learnings* to impact policy development and inform public discourse
- Leverage the collective knowledge, power, and influence of our youth, staff, board, and partners to *advocate for adequate resources and fair and equitable policies* that benefit the young people we serve
- *Ensure financial stability and sustainability* by growing public and private funding, deepening relationships with supporters and partners, sharpening grants management practices, increasing liquidity, and implementing effective asset management protocols



Moving Forward: Each of the initiatives outlined in this Strategic Plan is focused on a specific aspect of YouthCare’s service delivery system or organizational functioning. Taken together, they will result in a streamlined, efficient, service experience in an environment that allows the agency, individual staff members, and young people to focus their time, energy, and resources on the achievement of long-term stability for participants.

We recognize that the large-scale initiatives outlined in this Strategic Plan call for a significant investment by all our stakeholders: youth to work diligently to meet their goals; staff to shift how they work individually and as teams; and leadership to manage to clear performance metrics in all areas of the organization. We ask our friends and supporters in the community to join us in our commitment to a better future for our young people, to champion our growth, and to invest in the next generation of YouthCare.

Building on a Foundation

For more than four decades, YouthCare has been instrumental in creating change in a young person's life. Today, we are called to sharpen our focus, deepen our impact, and clarify our values and practices so that we are best prepared to fulfill our mission and make a positive impact for young people and the community.

In 2017, YouthCare embarked on an 18-month period of assessment, discernment, and action that involved youth, staff from across the organization, and Board members, and led to the development of the strategic initiatives outlined in this plan. We gained clarity on what it means for YouthCare to be an organization focused on social justice, and integrated that into our mission, vision, and values. We built stronger management structures and practices and clarified our decision-making processes. We implemented an integrated funding team that meets regularly and works together to strategically consider how we fund our work.

Through this work, YouthCare identified five Strategic Pillars that help frame how the organization will move forward:


- *We will maintain and strengthen our core services* by building on our experience and expertise, proven best practices, and continuous learning.
- *We will address disproportionality* by ensuring equitable access to services, adapting services to meet the needs of youth of color, and leveraging community partnerships.
- *We will create a high-performance culture* by delivering meaningful, measurable, and financially sustainable results for the youth we serve.
- *We will remain an influential organization through strategic thought leadership* that shapes public opinion and policy in our field.
- *We will collaborate with community partners* whose values align with ours to augment our core services and leverage our work towards fulfillment of our mission.

And finally, YouthCare developed our Theory of Change, the bridge that links YouthCare's concrete, daily operations with its mission, around which the initiatives outlined in this plan are built.

Each step along our path was focused on enhancing specific aspects of our work with young people or agency operations. Taken together, they lay the groundwork for our next phase of YouthCare's development, outlined in this Strategic Plan.

Theory of Change

A Theory of Change is the bridge that links an organization's concrete, daily operations with its mission. It is the theory of what it takes to create the change the organization wants to see in the world. YouthCare has developed its Theory of Change based on organizational core competencies and how these can best be applied to meet the needs of program participants and create social value.



Our Theory of Change is more than a method of service provision. It is an overarching approach that organizes all our business practices and staff efforts towards the outcomes we seek for youth. In addition to programming we must ensure that organizational operations support as many young people as possible in leaving YouthCare having achieved those outcomes. This includes maintaining a strong workforce, robust data collection and data management systems, sound program evaluation and data utilization practices, and an integrated approach to funding that aligns financial resources to our core programming.

What we seek for youth who successfully complete our program is long-term stability—strategies and services will be focused on moving youth toward that outcome. This long-term outcome is the top rung of a ladder of outcomes, and achievement builds upon the attainment of short-term and intermediate outcomes. Short-term outcomes are the incremental changes that occur within program as a result of service provision. Intermediate outcomes are the changes that show that participants are ready to exit, or graduate from, YouthCare. Once a young person has achieved all the intermediate outcomes they will enroll in Aftercare. Long-term outcomes are the enduring changes that participants have as the result of the YouthCare program. These are achieved one year after completion of Aftercare. YouthCare has defined long-term stability as achievement along four dimensions. We will hold ourselves accountable to ensuring that one year after program exit participants:

1. Maintain housing stability with no periods of homelessness
2. Maintain a system of support
3. Maintain financial stability
4. Maintain wellness


We will work to move each youth toward intended outcomes in a way that is reflective of where they are individually and within our service continuum.

YouthCare Program Model

We remain committed to providing youth-centered support and services to any young person experiencing homelessness, helping them to stabilize their lives, and when they are ready, working with them on housing, education, and employment goals. Historically, our “continuum of care” was comprised of a range of separate programs to meet distinct needs. Today, we envision a more holistic approach to supporting young people to make change in their lives—YouthCare’s new mission-driven model is one program comprised of integrated service components that together will move youth and young adults experiencing homelessness toward long-term stability.

There are three components to the model: Engagement and Early Intervention, Core Programming, and Aftercare.

Engagement and Early Intervention programming is designed to meet immediate needs, address crisis situations, and serve as an engagement point. These services are available to YouthCare’s service population: any youth or young adult ages 12-24 experiencing homelessness or housing instability in King County. These services are meant to catch youth near the beginning of their crisis and get them connected to resources prior to, or soon after, the experience of homelessness and meet their immediate



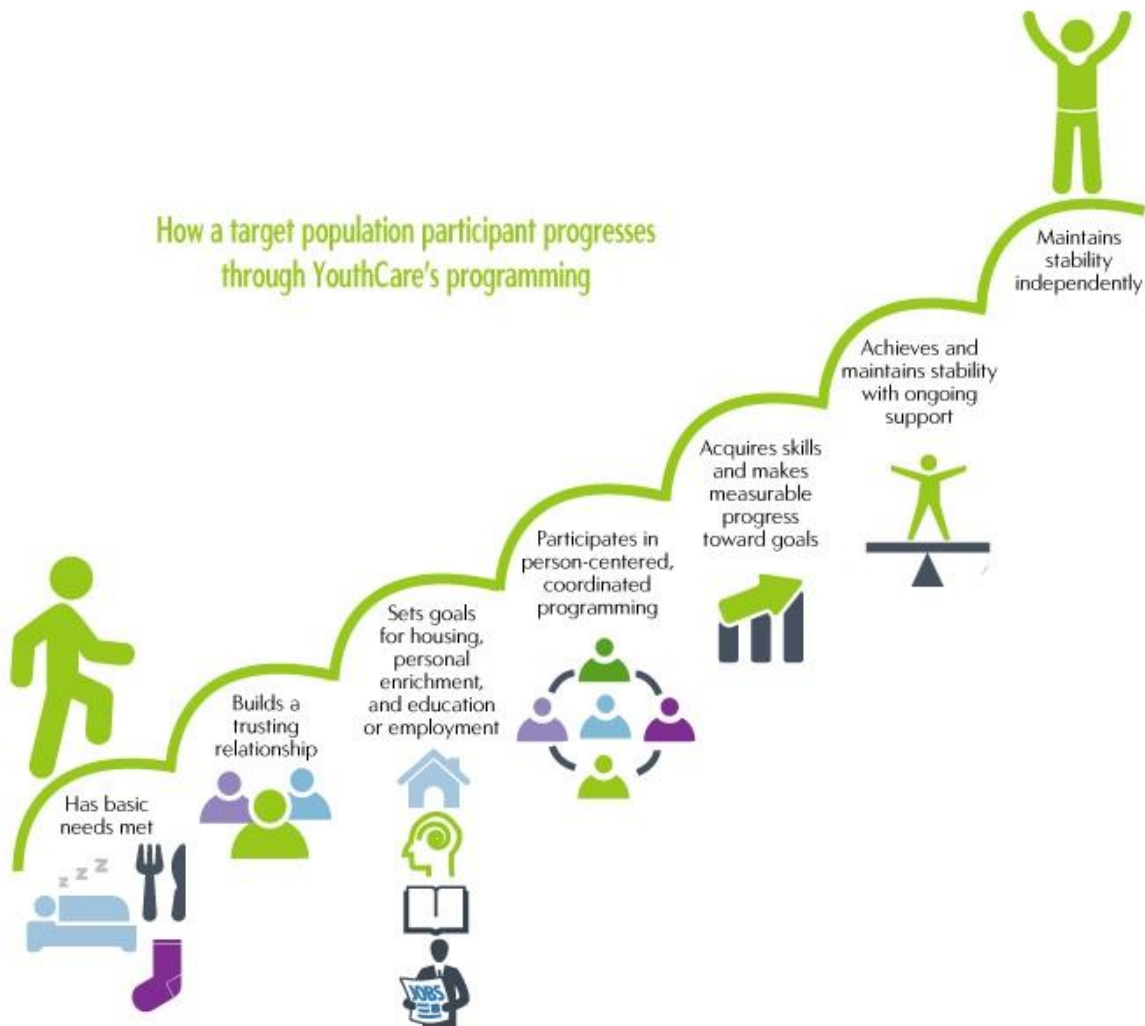
needs through outreach and site-based services. A key component of engagement and early intervention services is to provide a warm handoff to youth who would benefit from our Core Programming. As we have done since our founding, YouthCare will ensure that all youth receive high-quality services in a safe environment.

Core Programming is designed to help young people achieve long-term stability and overall wellbeing. Youth in our target population—youth or young adults ages 16-22 who the organization is best equipped to serve and who would benefit most from program participation—are enrolled in core programming, a range of housing options

and support services including case management, educational programming, employment services, and behavioral health supports. These services will assist youth in the attainment of the organizational outcomes described previously: housing stability, a system of support, financial stability, and wellness.

High-intensity Case Management, an evidence-based model rooted in the importance of a trusting relationship with a caring adult, is the core of the program. Upon entry into Core Programming, every youth will be assigned a case manager who will stay with them through the totality of their time at YouthCare.

The delivery of coordinated, youth-centered services is an essential component of the YouthCare model. Service Teams will work in a coordinated fashion on all elements that are important to move that young person to self-sufficiency. Each youth who is part of the target population will receive a slightly different combination of services and a different sequence according to their needs and immediate goals. YouthCare will hold itself accountable to outcomes achievement for program participants who are in our target population. Target population youth will remain in core programming until all intermediate outcomes have been met, at which point they will graduate to a year-long Aftercare program.



Aftercare is not just simple follow-up—while the intensity of the services provided decreases during this period, *Aftercare* is an essential component of our program model. *Aftercare* provides youth a regular touchstone with a familiar, caring adult to provide support and connection as the youth remains stable. If a youth in *Aftercare* does not maintain all their intermediate outcomes, they will be re-enrolled into core programming until they again achieve and maintain all intermediate outcomes before graduating again to *Aftercare*.

2017-2018 Strategic Planning Process

Building on the foundation described above, this strategic planning process engaged youth, staff at all levels of the organization, and the Board of Directors. It resulted in new mission, vision, and values statements, as well as a refinement of our approach to providing the highest-quality services to support long-term outcomes achievement for young people.

Mission, Vision, and Values

Much has changed for YouthCare, the young people we serve, and our community since our mission, visions, and values – YouthCare’s guiding statements – were last updated in 2010. Homelessness in Seattle has grown and is starkly visible. Our social fabric has been stretched, and increasingly, this work requires a broad organizational commitment to social justice values. While the minimum wage is rising, many simply don’t earn enough to keep pace with the rising cost of living in our community. For our young people it is more crucial than ever to provide quality services and support that help prepare them for the future.

Within this context, YouthCare was called to reaffirm and enhance our commitment to provide reliable, excellent services and to more directly name and work to dismantle the institutional barriers and injustices that impact the youth we serve. YouthCare’s mission, vision, and values were revised to better reflect these commitments.

As we embark upon this next era of our work with youth and young adults experiencing homelessness, these principles will guide our way:


Mission: YouthCare works to end youth homelessness and to ensure that young people are valued for who they are and empowered to achieve their potential.

Vision: YouthCare envisions a community where no young person experiences homelessness, all young people have the opportunity to thrive, and the systems that oppress them are dismantled.

Our program delivery, operational execution, and strategic planning are also imbued with our **values:** safety; respect; empowerment; dependability; social justice; equity, diversity and inclusion; leadership; and collaboration.

Deepening our Impact on Youth

We would prefer that no young person needed our services. While they do, we will be a beacon for them in a challenging time: receiving them where they are; ensuring their basic needs are met; helping them identify their hopes and aspirations; providing respectful, efficient, and effective services that move them towards their goals; collaborating with community partners to augment and enhance their service experience and success; and supporting them as they transform their lives and build their futures.



Providing consistently high-quality services for young people experiencing homelessness will require that YouthCare is the preeminent work place for those seeking to make a difference in the lives of young people. We will achieve this by paying our staff a livable wage; providing training and professional development opportunities equitably across the organization; giving clear and timely feedback and support; and ensuring every staff person has the tools they need to do their best every day.

The initiatives outlined in this Strategic Plan are directed towards one goal: that every young person who arrives at YouthCare's door receives consistently high-quality, client-centered services leading to long-term stability. Our services will be delivered by well-paid, well-trained, high-performing staff who are supported by high-functioning systems. All our organizational efforts will be focused on ensuring this is the case.

Strategic Priority I: Deepen Our Impact through High-Quality, High-Impact Services

Building on our 44 years of expertise, YouthCare provides young people experiencing homelessness the services necessary to achieve stability and overall well-being. We center our work in compassion and dignity for others and the belief that all young people should be valued.

We have shifted our approach to programming from offering a continuum of care, or a variety of separate services along a continuum, to a single, youth-centered, coordinated program. Central to this is youth-centered core programming in the areas of housing, employment, education, and high-intensity case management, rooted in the importance of a trusting relationship with a caring adult.

Our program changes are centered in the following principles:

- We are unwavering in our commitment to young people and can be trusted to provide consistent, high quality, and sustainable care.
- We identify, refine, and adopt best practices, operationalize these approaches for YouthCare, and ensure that staff members are trained in and utilize these approaches with fidelity so that every youth we serve receives equitable high-quality services.
- We hold staff and leadership accountable for providing consistently high-quality services and for doing what it takes to ensure members of the target population achieve long-term outcomes.
- We recognize that we can achieve more for young people by collaborating with and learning from partners and inspiring the community to take action. YouthCare engages partners that augment our core services and whose values align with ours, thereby providing synergy as we work towards fulfillment of our mission.

The initiatives in this strategic priority are focused on YouthCare's core programming, centered on the provision of high-intensity case management services and leveraging data to drive decision-making, program enhancements, and operational adjustments. Adaptability, innovation, and strategic partnerships will be crucial to move these initiatives forward and ensure young people achieve long-term stability.

A. Comprehensive Employment Programming Supporting Long-Term Stability for Youth

YouthCare has provided employment services to youth experiencing homelessness for more than two decades. Some young people need initial skills building in order to enter the workforce, others need supported employment opportunities as a first step towards long-term stability, and additionally others need enhanced post-employment supports to increase their long-term success in the workplace. And almost all young people need assistance to obtain employment – such as development of interview skills and how to write a resume. In today’s employment environment, we need a more diverse array of programming and the ability to serve a greater number of young people to ensure they have the skills and experience required to be strong applicants in modern industries, to compete successfully with youth who have not experienced similar disruptions, and to be successful in the employment they obtain.

To achieve these objectives, we will expand our employment programming with an immediate focus on greater integration into our housing programming to ensure those participants have the supports needed to gain employment and get started on their career path. This integration also has the goal of ensuring that housing participants are engaging in job training services that are provided by YouthCare. Employment and Education specialists will work collaboratively within programming to assist participants in developing and meeting employment goals.

Our current space is inadequate to serve the number of young people who access YouthCare and who need employment services or job training with the breadth and diversity of offerings needed to prepare youth to be competitive in today’s market. We must secure a second location to provide next-level employment programming so that all youth in our target population obtain career-path employment and receive services in an environment that is designed to support youth in both an individualized and peer-supported cohort structure.

Actions:

YouthCare will develop comprehensive and diverse employment programming to ensure pathways to employability, with an emphasis on expanding capacity to support youth in core programming to meet organizational outcomes.

To ensure pathways to employability for the youth we serve, and aided by a more rigorous assessment process, YouthCare will identify, develop, and deploy a versatile set of “Building Blocks” of employment programming that can be combined in various ways to move young people to sustainable employment. Newly hired Employment and Education specialists will support the integration of employment services across programming, with an immediate focus on housing.

We will expand our services into a second location to serve more young people with more diverse programming. A second location is needed to implement new program activities to support those who are preparing to enter the workforce or who are looking to advance their careers. Programming provided within this new site would include a Job Resource Center; a computer bank for job search, job application, and job retention activities; professional presentation support; and sector-based job training in growth industries such as technology, health care, and hospitality. And it will provide space for classrooms, private meeting spaces, and a Career Closet. This new space will support both employment and education programming.

To succeed with this initiative, it is essential that we build strong and mutually beneficial partnerships with local employers. We will formalize a strategy for employer partnership/relationship management in a broad array of industries tied to the interests and needs of the young people we serve. We will build long-term, sustainable partnerships leveraging the resources in our community to provide a reliable source of work opportunities where our young people can thrive.

This initiative requires the creation of three new positions to increase access to services and ensure attainment of employment and education outcomes for residents of YouthCare’s housing.

Impacts:

- ~ A consistent understanding across YouthCare of the role of employment services in achievement of organizational long-term outcomes
- ~ A shared understanding of the programming available within YouthCare to engage youth toward achievement of employment goals
- ~ Increased capacity to provide employment support services to housing participants
- ~ Increased accountability among staff for youth progress toward employment goals
- ~ Increased capacity to provide employment and job training services through additional program site
- ~ Increased capacity to leverage partnerships with employers
- ~ Participants will graduate from YouthCare having achieved the organizational level employment goal (to be benchmarked)
- ~ 90% of Mid- and Long-Term housing residents will be linked to an Employment and Education Specialist


Resources:

New Staff Positions	Job Developer – 1 FTE Employment and Education Specialists – 2 FTE
Cost of Initiative	\$358,000

B. Re-engaging Youth in Education through Integrated Supports and Services

Most youth and young adults experiencing homelessness have experienced disruption in their education, which in turn has limited their attainment in this area. Given the importance of education level to long-term earning potential, YouthCare actively supports youth to re-engage with educational services. As we focus more on integrated service teams, individual staff members play an important role in attainment of all outcomes for youth engaged in core programming. Given this, we need to better integrate education services into the housing programs.

We will begin by adding capacity in our housing programs to support youth in the development of educational goals with a focus on long-term economic viability. Employment and Education Specialists



will partner with housing staff to provide every youth in our housing programs focused support to meet their individual education goals.

Ultimately, we must increase our capacity and programming to meet the diverse educational needs of the youth we serve, which will require identifying and securing new space that can support these efforts. Enhanced programming will include: individualized, intensive GED instruction within a group setting; GED and Adult Basic Education tutoring and supports; computer skills classes; and credentialed post-secondary education certificate programs. Education and employment programming will be co-located in this new space.

Actions:

YouthCare will build and support a culture of learning among the youth we serve to improve educational outcomes. We will create pathways for clients to re-engage with formal education and support educational attainment by providing informal learning activities, skill development, and formal education programming.

To inculcate a culture of learning throughout our service delivery, YouthCare will standardize best practices across programs to better equip program staff to support youth in attainment of education goals. We will identify and deploy the internal resources needed to move a greater number of youth in core programming toward post-secondary attainment.

As with the employment initiative outlined above, we must secure new space to implement expanded programming, which will include: individualized, intensive GED instruction within a group setting, adult basic education tutoring and supports, and computer skills classes. New space will allow us to bolster our internal capacity to support post-secondary attainment; develop credentialed post-secondary education certificate programs; and provide postsecondary counseling and application support.

This initiative requires the creation of three new positions to increase access to services and ensure attainment of educational and employment outcomes for our young people.

Impacts:

- ~ A consistent understanding across YouthCare of the role of education services in achievement of organizational long-term outcomes
- ~ A shared understanding of the programming available within YouthCare to engage youth toward achievement of education goals
- ~ Increased number of participants enrolled in post-secondary institutions
- ~ Increased capacity to provide education services to housing participants
- ~ Increased capacity to provide formalized and curricularized education services through additional program site
- ~ 90% of Mid- and Long-Term housing residents will be linked to an Employment and Education Specialist



Resources:

New Staff Positions	Education Coordinator – 1 FTE Employment and Education Specialists – 2 FTE
Cost of Initiative	\$324,000

C. Centralized Case Management – a Cornerstone of a System of Integrated Care

Over and over, young people experiencing homelessness in our community describe navigating a disjointed service delivery system. They need to ask for one thing in this office but can only ask for the next thing in the office down the street, or across town, or on a different day. Service provision is not integrated, and the system does not always feel respectful, or humane. Even within a single agency, young people often must tell their story again and again in order to access a specific service. Young people consistently report that not having one person who serves as their main navigator in coordination of services has a negative impact on their overall well-being.

We are called, then, to change how we do business. Research and practice show the importance of a caring adult in the lives of young people experiencing homelessness. The cornerstone of YouthCare’s new integrated system of care is the delivery of high-intensity case management services, an evidence-based model, which will provide continuity for a young person throughout their time at YouthCare.

We will assign a single Centralized Case Manager to each individual enrolled in core programming who will continually assess the young person’s needs, make appropriate internal and external referrals, and will relentlessly respond to and preempt crises to keep the young person on track towards outcomes achievement, while remaining a familiar touchstone for that young person as they progress along their path. The Centralized Case Manager will communicate regularly and coordinate care between the young person and the Service Team comprised of the YouthCare staff within each service area who are working with the young person. The Centralized Case Manager will also coordinate with other service partners in the community to ensure a young person has a seamless service delivery experience.

It will require additional time and resources to fully develop and refine the YouthCare model. Full implementation will take place over several years, requiring shifts in both funding approach and programmatic changes, including moving all our current program-based case managers into the centralized case management system.

Actions:

YouthCare will undertake a 9-month planning process to develop a centralized case management model as identified in the Theory of Change. This model will be the cornerstone of an integrated care structure that utilizes a service team approach to support youth in core programming toward the attainment and maintenance of long-term outcomes.

To develop an operationally and financially viable centralized case management program, YouthCare will convene a working group to review comparable programs serving a similar target population for lessons learned and best practices. Key program components and best practices will be identified, needed modification will be elevated, and a YouthCare version will be developed. The working group will develop an implementation plan to guide the agency’s shift to a centralized case management model.

This initiative will require the creation of three new positions to facilitate implementation of the new centralized case management model.

Impacts:

- ~ Young people experience continuity in their service provision during their time at YouthCare
- ~ A YouthCare version of intensive, relationship-driven case management that is appropriate for our population and service model is designed
- ~ The new centralized case management model is standardized across the agency and supports youth in the attainment of long-term outcomes
- ~ Enhanced care coordination through service team approach supports service planning across multiple dimensions and provides better experience for program participants

Resources:

New Staff Positions	Centralized Case Management Team Manager – 1 FTE Centralized Case Managers – 2 FTE
Cost of Initiative	\$252,000

D. Housing Services Leading to Self-Sufficiency

Since YouthCare was founded as a three-bed shelter program almost 45 years ago, providing young people a safe place has been a core part of our mission. We will maintain a range of housing options within our programming and will leverage strategic opportunities to increase our inventory.

Young people who have been living on the streets or bouncing from place to place often have not developed the range of life skills needed to live independently and maintain housing. We will bolster our life skills training, building a structure that is not dependent on individual staff members, to ensure youth transition from housing programs to self-sufficiency. We will develop and implement curricula and ensure it is consistently applied across YouthCare, as well as track development of these skills across all service components—youth should learn the same life skills, and have them assessed the same way, regardless of which staff member they are working with or at which site they receive services.

To support all youth working towards long-term stability we must intentionally build consistency in approaches taken across housing programs, for example with case planning and file maintenance. We will adjust staff schedules as needed to support programming; revise job descriptions and titles to articulate clear responsibilities and expectations across programs; and ensure consistent supervision for every staff member. This clarity and consistency will help youth and staff alike navigate more successfully.

Once prepared, youth will launch from YouthCare’s housing into the broader community. Our long-term outcome of housing stability requires the availability of affordable, appropriate housing options throughout the region, including communities in which young people desire to live, particularly if they are rooted there. Given the current housing market, YouthCare must advocate for affordable housing opportunities throughout our region generally as well as actively partner to increase affordable options specifically available for young people exiting our programming.

Actions:

YouthCare will increase access to housing for youth transitioning from programming and enhance services to support the development of skills and knowledge needed for long-term self-sufficiency.

To support more youth and young adults to achieve long-term self-sufficiency, YouthCare will implement a life skills curriculum that is aligned with our service philosophy and intended impact.

To provide an optimal experience for youth, we will clarify roles and responsibilities for housing staff and enhance training aligned to those duties.

We will seize opportunities with our affordable housing partners and through advocacy efforts to increase available options for youth exiting YouthCare’s housing. We will seek the support of community stakeholders and service providers to further analyze how we can best serve youth experiencing housing instability and homelessness in South Seattle and other underserved geographic areas with a goal of helping youth maintain community connections and find housing in a neighborhood of their choice.

This initiative will require the creation of a new position to support the development and implementation of a life skills curriculum for youth in the housing program component.

Impacts:

- ~ Consistent model of care within housing that focuses on the skills needed for long-term sufficiency
- ~ Increased capacity to support long-term outcome of stable housing for youth exiting YouthCare
- ~ Enhanced training and support structure for housing staff
- ~ Standardized staff supervision model across housing programs
- ~ Increased support for young people in South Seattle through strategic partnerships

Resources:

New Staff Position	Life Skills Coordinator – 1 FTE
Cost of Initiative	\$111,000

E. Reducing Disproportionality through Service Excellence

Numerous community assessments have identified that youth of color and LGBTQ+ youth are overrepresented among people experiencing homelessness. We remain committed to serve youth of color, LGBTQ+ youth, and immigrant and refugee youth by developing services to meet needs not currently being met in our community, streamlining and adapting our services to remove barriers to access and engagement of young people, and deepening community partnerships to provide meaningful and culturally relevant programming.

To be effective, we must execute on our values: embrace diversity, assure fair treatment, and provide equitable access to opportunities. We will implement processes to monitor our performance related to access and outcomes attainment between subpopulations in order to identify and address differential access to services and lack of parity in outcomes. This will require a culture of continuous learning and support to build capacity at the program level where service delivery decisions are made regarding individual participants on a daily basis, and the implementation of talent management practices that support equitable access to resources and opportunities for all high-performing staff.

While our primary focus is providing high-quality equitable services to the youth we serve through stronger internal operations and service excellence, to engender change and long-term stability for our young people we must also name and actively work to dismantle those systems that have created inequity in opportunity and economic viability for people of color, LGBTQ+, and immigrant communities.

Actions:

YouthCare will utilize a social justice lens to ensure that there is equitable access to services, that we provide culturally relevant services, and that young people are equally supported in their transition to self-sufficiency. We will develop measurement tools and reports to monitor service utilization patterns and ensure there is parity in outcomes. Additionally, we will implement a strategy to incorporate youth input into development and evaluation of programs and services.

We will work with community partners to assess need and develop a strategy that allows YouthCare to help meet the needs of youth in their communities, by resourcing those communities through partnerships, or if indicated, securing space in those areas.

We will continue to strengthen and focus our advocacy efforts to contribute where we can be most effective in addressing the systems that negatively impact youth.

Impacts:

- ~ Enhanced training for staff to ensure equity in service provision and staff support
- ~ Policies that reflect our social justice, diversity, equity and inclusion values
- ~ Equitable access to YouthCare services, particularly core programming
- ~ Equity in outcomes across demographic markers, and particularly for youth of color and youth who identify as LGBTQ+

Resources:

New Staff Position	The Equity, Inclusion, and Talent Manager position added in the Train and Develop High-Performing Staff initiative and the Impact Manager position included in the Outcomes Focused Performance Management initiative will support successful implementation of this initiative.
Cost of Initiative	Resources dedicated to the New Systems that Enhance Care Coordination and Support Program Refinement initiative will support success in this area.

Strategic Priority II: Strengthen Business Practices to Support High Performance

Over the last decade, YouthCare’s growth trajectory has been primarily opportunistic—we were presented with a need or opportunity and we responded—resulting in significant program development and expansion. Our infrastructure has not grown at the same pace, compromising our ability to ensure excellence in service delivery. We are entering an era of strategic growth that will be underpinned by a strong infrastructure that can both sustain what is in place and accommodate new opportunities. This will require rigor and discipline—our business practices must adapt and grow with our vision.

YouthCare is invested in sustaining a high-performance culture by delivering meaningful, measurable, and financially sustainable results for the young people we serve:

- Implementing a culture of high performance dictates a holistic view of the agency, rather than seeing program and operations as distinct areas of concern. Ultimately, all our efforts—programmatic and operational—are directed to support young people to succeed.
- High performance calls for rigorous assessment of growth opportunities, ensuring relevant stakeholder input is included, impact on existing operations is assessed, potential alternatives are considered, equity and social justice aspects are analyzed, and ultimately, the delivery of high-quality, sustainable services is the result.
- A high-performance culture will be inextricably linked to YouthCare’s ability to recruit, develop, engage and retain the talent necessary to deliver on its mission.

YouthCare utilizes the Performance Imperative, a nationally recognized framework for nonprofit management, to guide our organizational development in this area. An aspect of this is implementing a system of measurement that will enable tracking against intended impact. By focusing on communicative and accountable leadership we strive to provide excellent execution of our services in support of our intended impacts.

The initiatives in this strategic priority are focused on aligning our business practices, resources, and people power to support long-term stability for young people. This includes using data to drive decisions internally and influence stakeholders externally, working to provide a livable wage, equitably developing high performers, and having the financial resources and organizational infrastructure to support efficient and effective delivery of high-quality services.

A. Cultivating a Culture of Learning: Outcomes Focused Performance Management

Central to our belief in what drives positive change for the young people we serve is a relentless focus on outcomes and high-quality provision of services. Creating and maintaining a high-performance culture requires strong executive and board leadership and a focus on continuous quality improvement.

A high-performance culture requires that we: review service provision with an evaluative lens and implement learnings to improve programming and enhance outcome attainments; instill practices to ensure equity in access to services and parity in outcomes; identify the core competencies needed within our agency to support best practices and set expectations of staff accordingly; implement hiring practices that ensure applicants are aware of our culture of high performance and are willing and able to work within that structure; and adopt an accountability structure related to provision of high-quality services as outlined in our Theory of Change.

Actions:

YouthCare will shift agency operations to align to the central tenets of performance management and to cultivate a culture of high performance. We will invest in expanding our capacity for monitoring and evaluation, as well as enhance our capabilities in the areas of data utilization, data-driven decision-making, performance management, and data-informed talent management.

To build and sustain a high-performance culture, YouthCare will set implementation benchmarks, hold ourselves accountable for attainment of organizational outcomes, and formalize opportunities to monitor organizational performance and impact. We will increase our capacity to develop the tools and resources needed to support data-driven decision-making within programs and at the organization level. This will include the implementation of tools for program management with a focus on continuous quality improvement. We will codify best practices recognized in the field into metrics to monitor high-quality service provision. We will stay abreast of changes in and developments related to approaches determined to be best practice and adjust our internal practices as appropriate. And YouthCare will integrate staff competencies that align to the Theory of Change into talent management processes and performance appraisal structures.

This initiative will require the creation of a new position to increase our program evaluation and performance management capacity.

Impacts:

- ~ Increased ability to measure and communicate organizational impact, internally and externally
- ~ Enhanced library of tools that enables staff to efficiently monitor individual participant level progress toward goals
- ~ Enhanced program management that is focused on provision of high quality services and outcomes attainment
- ~ Enhanced supervision models that includes a focus on outcomes attainment at the individual, program, and organizational level
- ~ Performance appraisal structure that leverages data and creates accountability for low performance and incentivizes high performance

Resources:

New Staff Position	Impact Manager – 1 FTE
Cost of Initiative	\$203,000

B. New Systems that Enhance Care Coordination and Support Program Refinement

Young people come to YouthCare seeking support and assistance in creating a new future, and we assist them in that process through collaborative service planning and goal development. YouthCare’s new program model is centered on a cross-agency coordinated care approach to service planning and delivery. In addition, our Theory of Change requires an enhanced ability to monitor both participant progress and agency-level performance. Our current database system does not support the level of coordination and monitoring needed for quality service provision or outcomes management. In order for YouthCare to track and monitor progress on these goals, towards the attainment of long-term outcomes, a new Client Management System (CMS) is essential. Supported by a high-caliber CMS and expanded access across programming, our staff will be able to more accurately reflect and monitor service provision in real-time and more readily reflect attainment of incremental progress toward individual participant goals. A new CMS will also improve a young person’s service experience by reducing redundancy in assessment and providing a tool for integrated and enhanced care coordination. It also creates a way to engage with participants on their progress toward goals in a more dynamic and engaging way than what is provided with the usual paper case file.

The new system will support the identification of youth in the target population, to ensure we are reaching the young people we have identified as benefitting most from what YouthCare offers. It is also necessary to support our new centralized case management model. It will facilitate a holistic, youth-centered view of service utilization and outcomes attainment that can be accessed at the individual, program component, and organizational level. Importantly, the new CMS will capture the information needed to assess equity in access to services as well as facilitate reporting to ensure there is parity in outcomes across different demographic markers.

Information available through a fully-implemented CMS will allow us to explicitly demonstrate our impact and will therefore bolster our position as a leader in the field and help ensure there are adequate resources available to meet the needs of youth and young adults experiencing homelessness. It will also allow us to identify trends and best practices which can be shared with both service partners and policymakers.

Actions:

YouthCare will select and implement a new Client Management System (CMS) that is person-centered, user-friendly, and highly customizable. It will support coordination of care through real-time access to information in a decentralized manner. It will also have robust reporting capabilities which will allow staff across the agency to monitor performance.

To enhance care coordination, point-in time access to client data, and our ability to use data to make programmatic refinements, YouthCare will select a new CMS vendor to design and build a system to meet the agency’s specifications. We will revise data collection tools to reflect our Theory of Change to provide a framework for the adaptation of the system. Staff will be trained on how to effectively use the CMS as a tool to support quality service provision, and the CMS will be implemented across the agency.

This initiative will include the acquisition of a new Client Management System and require a manager-level role responsible for system implementation and on-going maintenance.

Impacts:

- ~ Improved care experience for participants
- ~ Point-in-time access across the agency to participant-level information by staff at all levels to support service delivery
- ~ Increased coordination of care through integrated case planning
- ~ Enhanced reporting capabilities for internal and external functions
- ~ Enhanced assessment tools that are available across service team members, regardless of service area
- ~ Agency programming and operations are refined and enhanced based on internal evaluation practices supported by strong data collection and management processes

Resources:

New Staff Position	Information Systems Manager – 1 FTE
Cost of Initiative	\$406,000

C. Building Towards a Livable Wage

The cost of living in the Seattle area is increasing. The wage gap and living affordability is a conversation not exclusive to YouthCare – this is a city-wide, region-wide, and national conversation. YouthCare can

become a leader in this conversation by recognizing this challenge and working towards more consistent, accountable, and equitable pay within the agency, and more broadly, our community.

Our focus is two-fold: benchmarking existing positions to move towards a livable wage for our staff and maintaining a high-performance culture that is supported through pay-for-performance with enhanced non-monetary or one-time benefits. Our goal is singular: recruit and retain high performers to increase positive service experiences for young people. Staff longevity creates consistency for young people and helps avoid disruption in their care. Longevity also helps ensure we have staff for whom our approach to service delivery is deeply ingrained, leading to a more seamless experience for young people.

Also essential to a high-performing staff team is clarity on what is expected of them and receiving regular feedback. When staff have performance reviews on a regular basis, it creates more opportunity for staff to receive feedback, express their goals, make suggestions for YouthCare, and be coached towards advancement.

Actions:

YouthCare will realign our workforce to meet program needs and strategic objectives, and build a culture of excellence, engagement, and high performance. We will invest in our engaged, highly capable, and knowledgeable staff to ensure service excellence.

To create a preeminent workplace, YouthCare will develop a financial plan to meet median pay benchmarks for all positions on an ongoing basis. We will fully implement a pay-for-performance staff compensation system to incentivize high performance and increase our ability to maintain strong staff. We will provide clarity about job roles and responsibilities for all direct service staff and ensure skilled staff supervision throughout the organization. We will provide supervisors and managers the tools and training they need to provide effective annual performance reviews. Leadership development opportunities will be clearly articulated, and accessible, to all YouthCare employees.

Impacts:

- ~ YouthCare is regarded as an outstanding workplace
- ~ Compensation levels facilitate the hiring and retention of high-quality staff
- ~ Staff members have clarity on their roles and responsibilities and how their performance will be evaluated
- ~ Young people experience greater continuity in care as turnover decreases

Resources:

New Staff Position	<i>No positions are added with this initiative.</i>
Cost of Initiative	\$1,432,000

D. Train and Develop High-Performing Staff

An engaged, highly capable, and knowledgeable staff are the foundation of service excellence. When staff are positively engaged and provided with the most appropriate training and tools for their job, excellence as an organization is established. An essential component of excellence is an internal focus on equity and inclusion in our policies, practices, and service provision. Strong engagement and professional development practices are needed to enhance service excellence, increase retention of talented staff, and promote equity of opportunities throughout the organization.

We promote a culture that encourages staff and youth to develop their own strengths, identify areas of growth, and that champions their successes. Supporting and developing staff with consistent training and systems will promote advancement, efficiency, retention, and teamwork. Consistent and known standards for performance, evaluation, advancement, and availability of new opportunities is needed to promote equity and inclusion. Opportunities for staff leadership and voice in decision-making provides a foundation for increased youth voices and leadership as well.

Actions:

YouthCare will build standardized operational and training structures that align to the Theory of Change and Performance Imperative, that are job- and/or team-specific, and that encourage cross functionality. Staff will be provided clarity about the definition, accountability, tools, and supports for success and their ability to grow as a team member and leader.

To support the provision of high-quality services and staff excellence, YouthCare will implement robust, intentional, and equitable staff onboarding, development, and coaching. A comprehensive assessment of training needs by position and program will lead to the implementation of a core training program. We will implement an annual training budget to ensure that there are funds available to train each staff person as their job requires and that supports their professional development. We will increase our capacity to lead, implement, and steward our internal equity and inclusion initiatives. We will track relevant metrics and make refinements and enhancements as needed. We will increase ability to utilize individual performance evaluation tools at all levels (staff, supervisors, and leadership). In addition, we will enhance communication to improve agency cohesion across all services and departments.

This initiative will require the creation of two new positions in the Talent Management area, one focused on equity and inclusion in the organization and one to coordinate our training efforts.

Impacts:

- ~ Youth receive high-quality services delivered by staff who are prepared and supported to effectively carry out their tasks and responsibilities
- ~ Equitable access to training and professional development activities
- ~ YouthCare's internal equity and inclusion initiatives are implemented with strong stewardship

Resources:

New Staff Positions	Equity, Inclusion, and Talent Manager – 1 FTE Training Coordinator – 1 FTE
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Cost of Initiative	\$782,000
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E. Bolster Information Technology Infrastructure to Support High-Quality Service Delivery

As is the case for many nonprofits, YouthCare is challenged to maintain the technological infrastructure and resources required to support service excellence and staff efficiency. As the agency grows, there are more users, computers, and related systems to be maintained. When these systems don't function optimally, staff throughout the agency can't do their best work. And, importantly, the current technology infrastructure is insufficient to support a high-performance culture or to support a new Client Management System, both essential components of this strategic plan.

A high-functioning technology system will support care coordination, service integration and excellence, and communication among staff across programming and throughout the agency, resulting in a more positive experience for youth.

Actions:

YouthCare will invest in technology infrastructure capacity to fully support a culture of high performance and our transformation to a data-driven organization.

To ensure that our infrastructure can support effective programming and a high-performing staff team now and into the future, YouthCare will implement a strategy to include a regular assessment and replacement schedule for hardware and software to ensure best practice capability. We will ensure that every staff person is oriented to the technology available and provided training as needed to meet expected proficiency levels.

This initiative will require the creation of one new IT position.

Impacts:

- ~ Client care is enhanced through the utilization of technology
- ~ Staff have the technological tools needed to support their work

Resources:

New Staff Position	IT Specialist – 1 FTE
Cost of Initiative	\$271,000

F. Strategic Thought Leadership and Advocacy

Through decades of work, YouthCare has become an influential organization that contributes to local and national conversations focused on ending youth homelessness and that shape policy development in our field. We leverage the collective knowledge, power, and influence of our youth, staff, board, and partners to advocate for adequate resources and fair and equitable policies that benefit the young people we serve.

Continued effectiveness will require formalizing our efforts in two areas: 1) sharing of knowledge and organizational learnings to impact policy development and inform public discourse and 2) greater inclusion of youth and staff to amplify the voices of those with lived experience into our advocacy efforts.

Actions:

YouthCare will leverage our decades of experience, program data, and position as a leader in the field to advocate for increased resources dedicated for young people experiencing homelessness and to advance systemic change at all levels – local, regional and national, with an emphasis on issues of oppression and equity. We will do this through information sharing and education to impact policy development.

We will develop and implement a thought leadership strategy that aligns to our strategic priorities and Theory of Change, explicitly demonstrates our impact, and leverages diverse staff and youth voices in our advocacy and communications work.

YouthCare will share best practices and next practice innovations within the field of youth homelessness and the general public in various forums. We will increase the diversity of staff leadership and voice in advocacy efforts and codify power-sharing. We will develop, maintain, and support a Youth Leadership Council as a vehicle for youth engagement, input, and influence.

Impacts:

- ~ YouthCare influences public perception about youth homelessness and impacts resource allocation through policy development in areas that impact young people
- ~ Youth voice is elevated within the organization and within advocacy efforts

Resources:

New Staff Position	<i>No positions are added with this initiative.</i>
Cost of Initiative	<i>No new costs are added with this initiative.</i>

G. Financial Stability and Sustainability with a Focus on Strategic Growth

YouthCare’s ability to provide high-quality services that drive positive outcomes for young people is dependent on the agency’s financial stability. Increasingly, stability is predicated on an integrated approach to fundraising, moving from segmented to holistic, reactive to proactive. We know that data-driven communications and reporting foster transparency, more compelling asks, and greater success. A first step is our newly developed framework for targeted alignment with funders, which will lead to deeper relationships and greater success in outcome attainment. Public and private funders both play a key role in the sustainability of our programs; to best develop and manage these relationships and resources, additional capacity is needed in both areas.

Stability also means having the resources to enable YouthCare to mitigate the impact on programs from changes in the political and market environments. Greater liquidity positions YouthCare to take advantage of opportunities, address scaling and growth, and manage unforeseen challenges.

Actions:

YouthCare will ensure the long-term financial stability and sustainability of the organization and its assets by implementing an integrated funding strategy in alignment with the Theory of Change and Strategic Plan.

To ensure financial sustainability and stability of our program initiatives, YouthCare will increase our ability to identify public and private funding sources to support Theory of Change implementation and organizational priorities. We will grow and expand private and public funding by increasing our foundation and corporate giving, major donors, public grants management capacity, and Board of Directors’ impact. We will increase our ability to monitor grant and contract performance to ensure compliance and high performance to support renewability of funding. And to ensure that our program sites support excellence in our program delivery, we will further identify and build processes for managing and maintaining our facilities. Finally, YouthCare will build towards three months liquidity to lend stability in times of financial transition.

This initiative requires the creation of five new positions to generate and steward public and private funds and one position to address asset management needs and priorities.

Impacts:

- ~ Our business practices reflect an integrated approach to financial sustainability
- ~ Public and private financial support grows, and our reserves allow for flexibility and nimbleness
- ~ Agency growth is measured, focused, and thoughtfully considered
- ~ Discretionary revenue is used intentionally and in alignment with strategic priorities

Resources:

New Staff Positions	Public Grants Manager – 1 FTE Compliance and Quality Assurance Manager – 1 FTE
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	Foundations & Corporate Relations Manager – 1 FTE Donor Relationship Manager – 1 FTE Partnerships and Community Leadership Specialist – 1 FTE Facilities Manager – 1 FTE
Cost of Initiative	\$1,038,000

Considerations and Contingencies

This Strategic Plan covers a broad array of activities over a long period of time. As with any such planning scope, we must be prepared to effectively respond to a range of possibilities and changes in the landscape. We have identified key areas that will require our careful consideration as the plan progresses, and the development of contingencies should opportunities or challenges emerge.

Space for Programs and Personnel: First, YouthCare will need additional space to accommodate the programming and personnel proposed in this plan. YouthCare is currently at capacity in our administrative and programmatic spaces, and implementation of these initiatives will push us past critical mass. During the implementation phase, when revenues and expenses are mapped, and timing for each initiative is better understood, we will determine the point at which, and the degree to which, we will need to explore additional space. The costs for additional space are not included in this plan.

Integrated Fund Development: One of the immediate steps following finalization and approval of the Strategic Plan will be the formalization of a plan to secure the resources needed to execute at a high level and meet the three year goals. We will build a fund development plan that includes comprehensive strategies to increase:

- Public resources that align to our Theory of Change and Strategic Plan goals and are a fit for YouthCare's services and mission
- Corporate and foundation relationships that will include expanding into new opportunities from national partners
- The depth of and income from key significant donors that we already are engaged with, and new partners that join the YouthCare supporter family as we expand our capacity to engage new major donors; including an expanded focus on conversations associated to planned gifts and YouthCare's reserves
- YouthCare's annual fund through an expanded events landscape and the broadening of a monthly donors' program
- YouthCare's strategic engagement of influential and high-capacity community members through Board leadership and further engagement opportunities.
- YouthCare's strategic and essential partnerships that garner additional funding or essential resources
- Public funding of a livable wage for staff through advocacy and grants process
- YouthCare's financial efficiencies universally, so that less expenses are fielded that are not mission critical or are duplicative

The case for support – in any form – will focus on building and sustaining an organization committed to and capable of excellence and accountability, one that is outcomes-driven, expert, and a destination for young people, staff and the community alike. Should YouthCare move ahead to be a leader in the redevelopment of the corner of Broadway and Pine for an employment-focused Opportunity Center, the unique visibility, momentum and scale of this project would impact our strategies to reflect more of a capital campaign. This would merge together the case for support, along with naming opportunities, phases and an opportunity for donors of all natures to be part of a historic moment bringing YouthCare to the heart of Capitol Hill while dramatically increasing YouthCare's capacity for employment and

education services through a building that is visible and taps into a special sense of community ownership and participation.

Financial Stability and Flexibility: In addition to growing our base of support comprehensively as described above, YouthCare's financial stability and ability to be flexible and nimble as we navigate opportunities and challenges that emerge in the coming years will require we leverage working capital strategically. To that end, we are building towards having three months of operating funding available at all times. Based on current budget figures this would equate to approximately \$3.8M. With present liquidity of \$1.2M, this would leave \$2.6M to generate. This figure is not currently reflected in the cost of the plan and while potential funding strategies have been discussed, specific strategy development will occur during the implementation phase as with the remainder of the plan. This will include a review of YouthCare's current Operating Reserve Policy by the Finance Committee. In accordance with best practices for an agency of our size and history, this increased liquidity not only provides stability and program continuity in potentially challenging times but also positions YouthCare to be proactive and in control as opportunities emerge or needs are identified, rather than reactive to or reliant on external factors.


Flexibility and nimbleness also require that we have sufficient people power to assess possibilities, coordinate our response, and bridge with internal and external stakeholders. We will monitor our staff capacity to play this roll and if necessary engage external support as opportunities emerge.

Moving Forward

This Strategic Plan outlines the operational steps and investments necessary for YouthCare to fully implement an outcomes focused approach. At the end of the three-year plan, these initiatives will add \$2 million to YouthCare's ongoing annual budget, our staff will grow by 10%, and YouthCare will focus all our programmatic and operational resources on the goal of moving young people towards long-term stability.

Our work continues: we will draft detailed implementation and resource allocation plans for each initiative; implement a fund development strategy; stage and refine our activities; engage staff, youth, and Board members thoughtfully; and adapt to changing circumstances as needed. We will place preeminent importance on leadership; provide high-quality services; recognize that culture and people are instrumental to performance; strive for continuous learning and improvement; and promote collaborative work across functional areas. We will grow mutually beneficial partnerships that align with our values and augment our capacity to generate change for young people.

Everyone has the right to a place they can call home. Everyone deserves to be seen and to be cared about. All young people deserve a secure, stable, and healthy environment. The young people we serve are navigating a challenging set of life circumstances, including numerous systemic and institutional barriers, in their pursuit of safety, a chance to stabilize their lives, and a future full of opportunity. YouthCare's work is hopeful and provides each participant a chance to heal, to truly thrive, and to reach their full potential.



We recognize that the large-scale initiatives outlined in this Strategic Plan call for a significant investment by all our stakeholders: youth to work diligently to meet their goals; staff to shift how they work individually and as teams; and leadership to manage to clear performance metrics in all areas of the organization. We ask our friends and supporters in the community to join us in our commitment to a better future for our young people, to champion our growth, and to invest in the next generation of YouthCare.

ATTACHMENT I: Initiative Implementation Timeline

