



LEAGUE OF
WOMEN VOTERS®

League of Women Voters of Metropolitan Des Moines
2017 Strategic Plan
24 July 2017

Executive Summary

"Make no little plans; they have no magic to stir men's blood and probably will themselves not be realized. Make big plans; aim high in hope and work, remembering that a noble, logical diagram once recorded will not die" - Daniel Burnham

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i. Preamble

This document is intended as a start. It is meant as a living, changing, ever evolving instrument to empower the League of Women Voters of Metropolitan Des Moines to create, imagine, and build our organization in new and innovative ways. This document is meant as a framework to guide our growth and progress and shall be revisited annually to ensure that there is consistency with the Mission and Vision set forth below.

I. Mission

To educate the public, advocate for good public policy, encourage and increase participation in relevant legislative discourse, and provide a voice and presence serving the people of Metropolitan Des Moines in the areas reflecting the needs of current legislation.

II. Vision

Communicate our value to the community by generating mechanisms for non-partisan support and legislative impact for positions by providing research, education, and data; by keeping citizens informed through forums and programming; by creating opportunities for inclusive civil involvement; and by staying ahead of and addressing current and relevant issues.

III. Core Tenets

Education | Advocacy | Inclusiveness | Relevance | Civility

IV. Characteristics of Our Organization

Through our process this year, we have self-identified with the following words:

Collaborative | Thoughtful | Advocate | Valued

Our self-actualization of the above terms means that we seek to have a long-term impact by setting goals, objectives, and tactics that will ultimately be representative of these words and of the value proposition set forth by this document. It is paramount to us that our organization embodies the values we have defined for ourselves and the purpose-driven mission exemplified by the characteristics of each of these specific declarations.

V. Value Proposition

In support of the mission and vision stated above, it is essential to clearly express the value we wish to confer on those who interact with and those who we provide for. For the diverse, passionate, and politically engaged, ranging from new entrants to those who have already been involved - those who shared our values and aspire to support the mission of our organization who seek the following:

- To Be Informed in an Unbiased and Accurate Manner
- Actively Make a Difference in their Community
- A Way to Change Anger, Fear, and Frustration into Action

- A Platform to Raise Awareness of Issues
- To Make a Real and Lasting Impact
- An Opportunity to Be Educated on a Platform of Issues

The League of Women Voters of Metropolitan Des Moines (LWVMDM) commits to providing national backing, researched and vetted, fact-based idea forums, the force of their long-standing reputation, and a support system of non-partisan leadership and support on a host of relevant issues, in a respectful, impactful, and far-reaching way.

Section VI below outlines what LWVMDM seeks to provide and outlines key differentiators between our organization and other organizations within the community.

VI. Strategies

There are four core organizational strategy segmentations (tenants) that are essential to our Vision:

- **Education**
 - Provide Access to and Continue to Add to the Organization's Large Library and History of Position Papers.
 - Provide Mechanisms to Education and Catalyze the Public Around Issues.
 - Build on a Legacy of Civility, Legitimacy, and Being Well-Informed.
- **Advocacy**
 - Provide Almost a Century-long Record of Accomplishments and Continue to Build Similar Accomplishments in a like Manner.
 - Form + Strengthen Strategic Partnerships with Collateral or Affinity Organizations.
 - Continue to Build Credibility Through Fact-Based, Purposeful Actions.
 - Engage in Civil Dialog with those who Support our Priorities.
- **Inclusiveness**
 - Act Transparently as an Organization
 - Provide Safe Forums with the Freedom to Discuss Relevant Issues in a Respectful Manner.
 - Reach a Larger Range of Age, Gender, and Racial Diversity.
 - Encourage Discourse Between Like Minded and Non-Likeminded Individuals.
- **Relevance**
 - Provide a Better Understanding to the Public of what the LWVMDM Does.
 - Stay Abreast of Issues that are Aligned with the Organizational Mission and Vision.
 - Continue to Build a Brand Around Honesty, Dependability, and Integrity.

Further elaboration on the relationship to the Vision and granularity is provided below. Our organization differentiates itself by providing **non-partisan**, multi-issued support through the lens of a belief in public policy. Though we have no staff and a small budget, we form strategic partnerships to expand our ability to influence, impact, and be proactive.

VII. Strategic Definition of Central Tenets

Education

By providing opportunities for education, we seek to be part of a bigger conversation on how to educate the public on the layered strata of information that makes up the almost century-long accumulation of data that the LWVMDM has access to. Through education, our organization hopes to not only build a more informed citizenry, but build a framework for this core group to be more prepared for conversations around issues important to supporting our mission and vision.

Advocacy

Solidarity breeds action. LWVMDM at its core finds value in doing things in accordance with a clear roadmap. By doing things that are subscribed to a specific and identified issue platform, we are able to curate a “tribe” of prepared and informed constituents able to find the right channels to disseminate information in an effective way. LWVMDM is not a place for a megaphone, rather it is a place that allows for civil discourse and collaborative efforts that are meant as effective, non-threatening methods to elicit success in their end state. Through action or publication, our efforts are informed, considered, and based on opportunities we feel will have the greatest impact to the largest effected population.

Inclusiveness

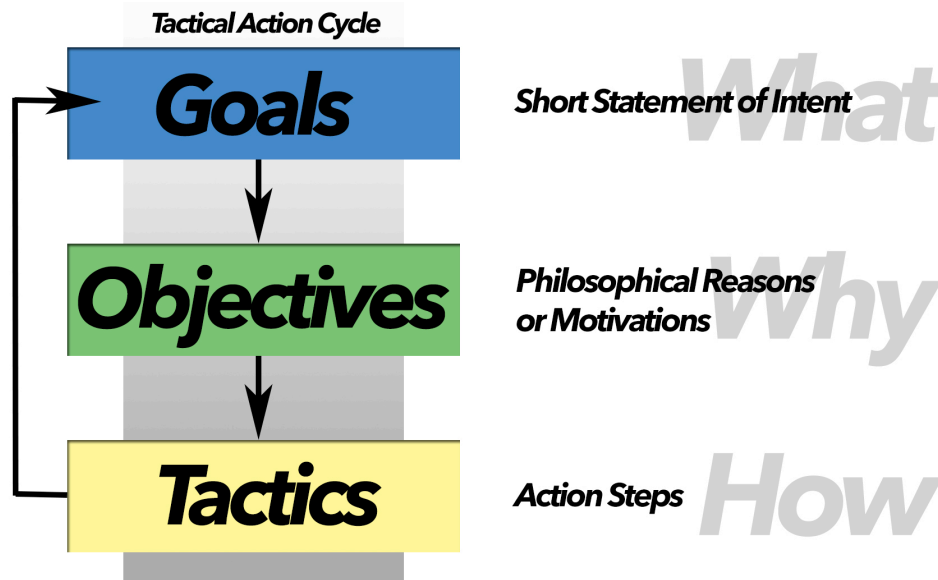
As a non-partisan group, LWVMDM is uniquely positioned to facilitate and enable conversations of kindred spirits. Because our board is a working board, we are more actively able to align the links between the pieces of different strategic conversations from different parts of our community. But inclusiveness does not simply mean party; we seek to more actively involve conversations that include a bigger portion of our demographic reach to strengthen not only our knowledge of issues, but have a larger sense of what each of our core constituent groups do to shape our actions, knowledge, and impact profile.

Relevance

LWVMDM is committed to continuously evolving, with the issues it seeks to address and the ways that it seeks to address these issues. With the engagement of social media and other forms of immediate communication, our organization is positioned to have conversations about new issues in new ways; to reinforce how we can adapt to a changing range of issue venues, visibility, and activity. We acknowledge that peer-to-peer contact has become the norm in terms of information consumption, and commit to not only maintaining an inventory of relevant issues, but making sure our delivery method is appropriate for the target audience.

VIII. Implementation of this Plan

Below is an outline of how the tactical portion of our plan works to implement our goals. The goals listed, their underlying strategies, and how we plan to accomplish them follow the steps outlined below. Each goal is what we plan to do; the objectives define the why we plan to pursue these goals; the tactics define how we plan to accomplish them.



IX. Goals

"What you get by achieving your goals is not as important as what you become by achieving your goals." - Henry David Thoreau

Within each principle exists a set of strategies and goals for the organization. We must align our central tenants with our strategies in order to support our Mission and Vision. We start by indicating some areas that are successful, followed by areas of improvement, and then move into stated goals for each central tenet. We do this because of the need to recognize what we are strongest at, followed by what we may need to address in the context of how these characteristics may impact our ability to be successful.

Strengths: **Committed, Hard-working Board.** Well Organized. Local chapter is passionate / energized about making a difference. Healthy board practices. Dependable, intentional, hard working group. Inclusive and well-intentioned. Effective board meetings. Strong programming.

Areas for Improvement: Board is too thinly spread / resource poor. Need more connectivity with state board, national organization, + legislators. **Need to be more out-ward facing** and create more engagement opportunities with members and community. Need more intentional action planning. Current capacity is unable to execute range of plans set forth for action. Need better onboarding and engagement practices. More / better defined board roles and responsibilities are indicated. Need to more intentionally leverage resources, such as Membership Leadership Development Coaches.

The following goals seek to enhance the educational efforts of the organization in aggregate. Since education is the basis of what supports our mission success on multiple levels, this core tenet is listed first.

The below are brief statements of intent, demonstrating our commitment in each area, based on data collected at our sessions:

Education

Internal and Organizational: **Provide Engagement Opportunities for Members in Diverse Ways, Affording the Organization an Opportunity to Evolve.**

External and Programmatic: **Conduct Events that Are More Enticing to the Public; Increase the Ability for the Public to Understand What Value We Provide.**

Advocacy

Internal and Organizational: **Lower Barrier for Entry; Create More Accessible Means of Onboarding + Educating Members; Increase Membership Numbers. Clarify Roles, Responsibilities, and Expectations of Board members.**

External and Programmatic: **Increase Level of Community Brand Recognition. Create a Mechanism for Meaningful Impact on Current Legislative Issues.**

Inclusiveness

Internal and Organizational: **Evaluate and Reorganize Committees to Be More Collaborative and Effective. Increase Board Size Purposefully to Enhance Capacity and Expand Active Involvement Beyond the Board.**

External and Programmatic: **Establish and Lead a Community Coalition Aligned with the Goals of Our Strategic Plan. Increase the Visibility of Our Organizational Efforts.**

Relevance

Internal and Organizational: **Maintain the Integrity of the League; Create Mechanisms for Financial Capacity Building and Long Term Sustainability. Develop Proactive Stance on Dealing with Issues.**

External and Programmatic: **Leverage Organizational Efforts to Provide Evidence of the Efficacy of Efforts in a Broad-based way. Update Image of the League Through Deliberate Action. Illustrate the Need for this organization to the Community.**

X. Objectives

To realize the potential of goals established, smaller steps must be taken. These smaller steps, or objectives, are intended to be succinct and clear. The three main tactical emphasis areas were determined to be:

Leadership | Sustainability | Engagement

Based on our core tenets, we have segmented the tactical objectives in those four main areas within the context of the emphasis areas above:

Education

- A. Increase Educational Opportunities

Advocacy

- B. More Consistently Engage Membership
- C. Evolve Communication + Advocacy / Lobbying Strategies

Inclusiveness

- D. Form More Strategic Partnerships + Increase Community Visibility
- E. Increase Organizational Capacity

Relevance

- F. Maintain + Increase Relevance / Leverage Existing Brand
- G. Reach a Higher Level of Financial Sustainability



XI. Tactics

"Vision without execution is just hallucination." – Henry Ford

What you plan to do is often easier than how you plan to go about doing it. Corresponding with each objective in section VI above is a brief overview of the associated strategy to ensure the objective is met.

Identify the critical inputs, including milestone dates, audience, and durations of major activities, goals, significant local, state, and/or national information. Factor in interdependencies between various dates and activities as required. Input all data into a scheduling program with anticipated budget for tracking, distribution, and resource allocation. Collect and aggregate significant local events for sharing and to allow for adequate review; develop a board policy stance, as appropriate.

Some initiatives, goals, and objectives will require more time than others. As a result, the each committee shall prioritize the goals, estimate the requirements associated with each (i.e. an individual's interest, availability, etc.). Establish a timeline for each major initiative and distributing it to the other committee members to scrutinize. Subsequently, incorporate feedback, finalizing the plan and begin implementation, regularly reporting progress to the board as a whole:

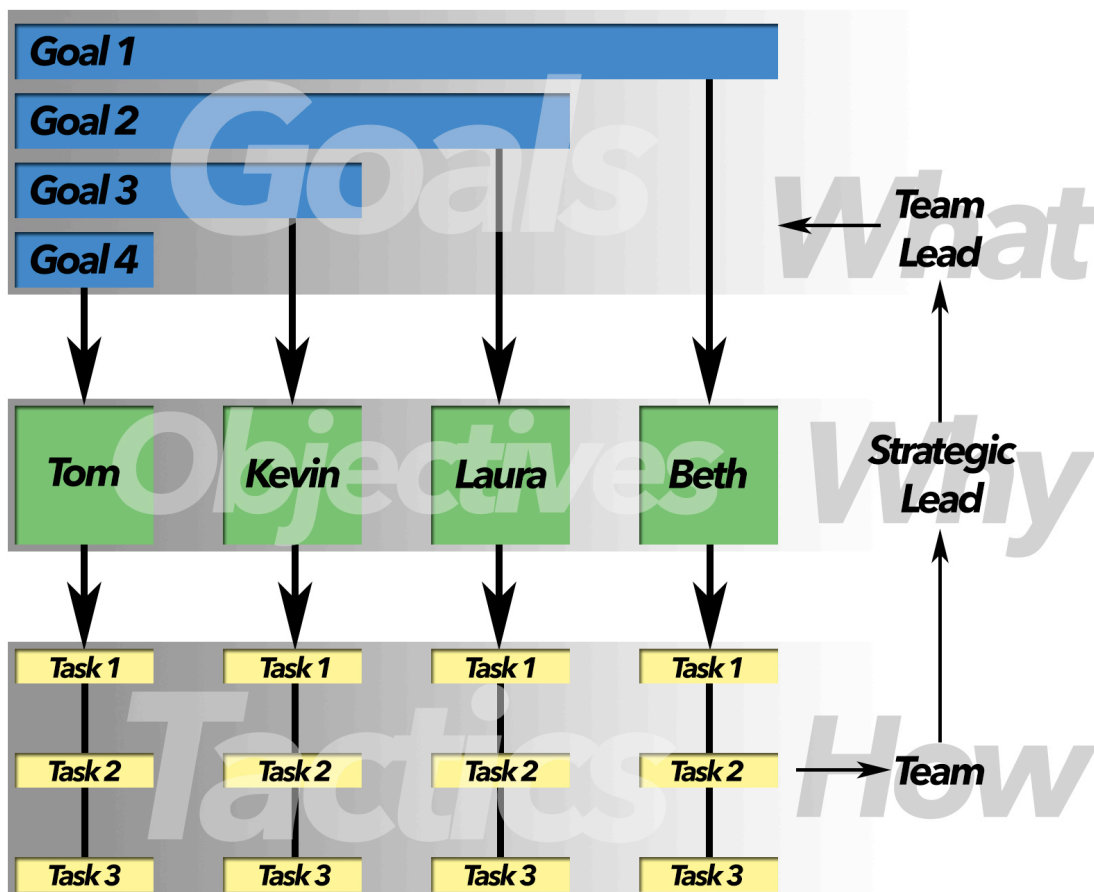


Diagram of Tactical Action Cycle with Additional Granularity; Team Lead = Board of Directors

Education

Objective A: Increase Educational Opportunities

Tactic: Provide high-quality educational programming to members, potential members, and the appropriate community members.

One Year Tactical Plan:

Studies:

- Provide Enhanced Training Opportunities for League Studies
- Inventory and Catalog Existing Studies by Relevant Content Area
- Identify Areas for New Studies / Relevant Content
 - Survey Membership

Legislative Action Education:

- Development of Toolkit to Talk to Legislators
- Inventory Relevant Legislative Issues to Be Addressed
- Identify Channels + Format to Push Out Educational Opportunities
- Provide Educational Materials + Criteria for Appropriate Curriculum
 - Establish Quality Standards
 - Must Align with Mission / Vision
 - Establish Core Problem Areas this Effort is Designed to Address
 - Provide Opportunities for Community (Target Audience) Involvement in Conversation

Operational:

- Primary Responsibility of Organizing and Conducting Programming
- Establish Planning Document for the Above Efforts
 - Timeline
 - Resource Allocation Plan
- Develop Toolkit of Member Benefits
 - Support Groups
 - Education and Advocacy Opportunities
 - Project Work + Engagement Opportunities

Three Year Tactical Benchmarks :

- Establish Growth Metrics for the Above Efforts
- Set Engagement Goals for Projected Growth
- Expand Timeline + Committee to Increase Capacity in this Area

Accountability: Voting Rights + Registration Committee (Education Subcommittee)

Advocacy

Objective B: More Consistently Engage Membership

Tactic: Increase organizational capacity by providing transparency, a lower barrier for entry, and a broader range of opportunities for engagement.

One Year Tactical Plan:

Membership:

- Develop + Establish Pipelines for Member Attraction, Recruitment, and Engagement
- Utilize Events for New Board Member / Committee Attraction
- Utilize Existing Programming for Membership "Pitches"

Committee Engagement:

- Survey Membership for Committee Interest Levels and Align with Organizational Need
- Establish Board Onboarding Process + Operational Suite of Policies
 - Mentoring + Internal Education
 - Testimonials + Success Stories of Past Efforts
 - Institutional History + Local Policies
 - Accountability, Expectations, + Consistency

Operational:

- Institute Accountability Measures
 - Mentoring
 - Assign / Develop Relationships with Expanded Membership Circle
- Develop Clear Board Priorities
 - Define + Publish Board Support Opportunities
 - Personalize Experiences for New Board Members (Match to Existing Board Member)
- Establish Expectations for Organizational Involvement
 - Align with "Modern" Expectations for Board Commitment Levels
 - Develop Models for Different Types of Board Involvement

Three Year Tactical Benchmarks :

- Reach 100 Members as an Organization
- Expand Priorities + Programming Based on Expanded Member Needs – Update Survey
- Enhance Personalized Experience for New Board / Committee Members

Accountability : Membership + Community Engagement (Advocacy Subcommittee)

Objective C: Evolve Communication + Advocacy / Lobbying Strategies

Tactic: Enhance the credibility of the organization through increased and more diverse communication. Leverage these efforts into more effective strategies for impacting legislation.

One Year Tactical Plan:

Communication:

- Safeguard Organizational Message
- Identify Target Audience and Most Relevant Communication Method
- Determine Communication + Marketing Plan for Community Reintroduction
 - Break Stereotype of “Stogy”, “Outdated”, “Polite”
 - Determine Communication Efficacy Metrics
 - Develop + Implement New Collateral Materials
 - Social Media
 - Marketing Materials
 - Advertising Channels

Advocacy + Lobbying:

- Provide Advocacy Alerts; Conduct Legislative Forums and Workshops
- Elevate the Research and Actions of All Committees
- Provide Best Practices for Communication Efforts of Legislative Actions
- Recruit Members and Non-Members to Participate in Legislative Discussions
- Meet with Legislators and Community Advocacy Groups to Gain Knowledge and Support

Operational:

- Work with Education Committee to Align Legislative Agenda with Internal Efforts
- Determine How to Leverage Organizational Identity Via Appropriate Communication Channels

Three Year Tactical Benchmarks :

- Provide Training on “How to Talk to Legislators”
- Establish Platform for the Education Committee to Determine Programming From
- Have an Established Network of Community Partners

Accountability : Programs + Advocacy Committee (Legislative Subcommittee / Education Subcommittee)

Inclusiveness

Objective D: Form More Strategic Partnerships + Increase Community Visibility

Tactic: Increase capacity by leveraging existing community resources and building on the existing efforts of other organizations for the mutualistic benefit of both and the community at large.

One Year Tactical Plan:

Visibility:

- Develop a Singular Organizational Voice, In Concert with Marketing, Public Relations, + Communications Committee
- Be More Clear and Consistent with Organizational Communication
- Leverage Voter ID Efforts as Mechanism for Raising the Visibility of Organizational Successes
- Strengthen Organizational "Elevator Pitch"
 - Build a Stronger Emotional Appeal to Community Members (Determine Relevant Mechanisms)
 - New Voter ID Law
 - National Voter Rights Act
 - Clarify that the Organization Advocates for Positions, Not Candidates to Secure Broader Reach

Strategic Partnerships:

- Inventory Current + Desirable Future Partnerships
- Have Strategic Partner Meeting to Determine How Organizations Can Assist Each Other
 - ACLU (American Civil Liberties Union)
 - LULAC (League of United Latin American Citizens)
 - AMOS (A Mid-Iowa Organizing Strategy)
 - NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness)
 - Drake Law Students (Recruitment Pipelines)

Operational:

- Determine + Establish Partner Accountability Measures
- Develop Action Steps to Leverage Partnership Opportunities
 - Establish Agenda for Strategic Partner Meeting
 - Determine Desired Meeting Outcomes
 - Establish Mechanisms for After-actions to Increase Partnership Efficacy

Three Year Tactical Benchmarks:

- Establish and Provide Leadership for Formal Coalition of Collateral Organizations
- Determine + Benchmark Impact of Coalition
- Determine Relevant Community Issues for Coalition to Address in Long Term Event Horizon

Accountability: Membership + Community Engagement Committee (Inclusiveness Subcommittee)

Objective E: Increase Organizational Capacity

Tactic: Utilize Board + Committees to increase the ability of the organization to reach its potential. More specifically, utilize internal membership resources to expand the level of outreach, solidify infrastructure, and build in long term sustainability.

One Year Tactical Plan:

Committees:

- Inventory Current Committees / Determine Relevance of Each
 - Determine Specific Tactics of Each Committee
 - Clarify Purpose and Outcome of Each Effort, Aligned with Strategic Plan
 - Align Member Strength with Committee Efforts
 - Determine Committee Meeting Schedule, Accountability, Expectations, Commitment Metrics
- Establish Committee Onboarding Procedures, Reporting Structure
- Establish More Formalized Organizational Chart + Reporting Structure

Operational:

- Create Stronger Ties to State and National Organizations
- Address Intergenerational Communication and Engagement Issues
 - Bridge Communication Gap
 - Build Understanding of Different Generational Needs
 - Increase Diversity of Committees and Leadership
 - Develop Mechanisms for Mutual Respect
- Increase Board Size
 - Determine Purposeful Recruitment Strategies
 - Define Roles and Responsibilities of Board and Committees, Relationships Between
 - Determine + Establish Board Succession Planning Strategy
- Establish + Develop Internal Education Strategies for Committee Members
 - Determine Baseline Curriculum - "Need to Know"
 - Determine Best Method of Inventorying General Membership for Committee Participation and Interest
 - Determine Optimal Committee Size Based on Intended Outcomes

Three Year Tactical Benchmarks :

- Create a Viable Committee Structure; Each Committee to Have Minimum of 5 Members
- Have More General Membership Participation in Committee Work
- Have Each Committee Have 50% Board Member / 50% General Membership Participation

Accountability : Executive Committee (Board Development + Governance Subcommittee)

Relevance

Objective F: Maintain + Increase Relevance / Leverage Existing Brand

Tactic: Utilize the existing brand recognition as leverage to recreate or “reboot” the essential nature of the organization and reestablish the relevance of LWVMDM.

One Year Tactical Plan:

Brand Leveraging:

- Update Content + Utilize Modern Mechanisms (Such as Social Media) for Reigniting Community Interest
- Create Online Organizational Personality / Identity
- Inventory Relevant Effect / Impact of Current Legislative Session
 - Categorize Action Steps, As Appropriate
 - Determine if Collateral Relationships + Partnerships are Able to Assist
 - Catalog Potential Impact to Target Constituency
 - Determine Appropriate Action Steps + Programming to Address Issues Proactively

Operational:

- Determine if Name / Logo is Relevant
 - Develop New Name if Indicated
 - Determine Transition Planning to New Name / Logo / Brand
 - Procure External Resources to Implement this Action
- Be More Purposeful + Proactive with Communication
 - Determine if Redundant Efforts are Underway and Make Recommendations
 - Leverage Established Value Proposition with Community and Membership

Three Year Tactical Benchmarks :

- Determine Effort Alignment with State Level Strategic Planning
- Assess if Reintroduction is Positively Impacting Organization and at What Levels
- Create “Watchdog” Group or Committee of Members Tracking Visibility of Efforts and Collateral Impact

Accountability : Executive Committee (Finance + Operations Subcommittee)

Objective G: Reach a Higher Level of Financial Sustainability

Tactic: Establish a framework for increased financial sustainability and success via additional human resources and a more formalized resource development structure.

One Year Tactical Plan:

Financial Stability:

- Conduct Donation Pitch at Each Meeting
- Identify What Financial Resources are Needed for Growth
 - Programmatic
 - Marketing + Public Relations
 - Educational
 - Administrative Support
- Establish Minimum Board Member Annual Financial Commitment

Financial Capacity Building:

- Recruit a Resource Development Individual to the Board of Directors
- Establish Organizational Monetary Campaign Goals and Timeline for Implementation
- Work with Marketing and Public Relations Committee to Establish Outreach for Financial Campaign

Operational:

- Develop an Organizational Operating Business Plan
- Determine Minimum Number of Members to Reach Financial Viability
- Formulate and Execute Donor / Sponsorship Drive

Three Year Tactical Benchmarks :

- Align Financial + Resource Development Goals with Specific Intended Outcomes
- Develop a Viable Business and Campaign Plan for Longer Time Horizon
- Establish Regular Sponsor / Donor List and Recurring Donation Base

Accountability: Executive Committee (Finance + Operations Subcommittee)