

RNJ Youth Services Strategic Plan (2021- 2024)

Strategic Plan Framework

The RNJ strategic plan framework would consist of the following :

- Context
- Purpose and Mission Statement
- Guiding Principles and Values
- Strategic Goals
- Priority Areas and Strategies to meet goals

Context

In 2014 RNJ Youth Services (RNJ) developed their first multi-year Strategic Plan (2014-17). Three years later RNJ re-profiled their existing strategic plan to reflect directions for the period 2017-20. Being a proactive organization, RNJ set its sights on the development of a new three-year Strategic Plan (2021-24), reflective of navigating existing and new directions in unprecedented times of change.

The renewal of their three year strategic plan helped create a renewed sense of direction and energy in the organization, notably to help the organization navigate their mandate and realize new opportunities in very difficult and changing times. The organization benefitted from the collective reflection on where the organization has been over the past several years and the journey to get to where RNJ is today. An effective strategic plan will help shape RNJ's future, notably by asking "*Where should we be going*" and ultimately defining "*How will we get there*"; this is the crux of strategic plan development.

Purpose and Mission

All contemporary organizations are guided by a statement or statements of purpose and mission. These statements often include a vision statement and a mission statement. A broader statement of purpose reflects, in plain language, why an organization exists, whom it serves and how it serves them after considerable discussion it was determined that one overarching statement of purpose and mission would suffice for guiding RNJ, as follows:

"Providing proven and effective services, in collaboration with community partners, such that every client we engage realizes opportunities for personal growth"

The statement of purpose and mission has three main components:

- RNJ is an organization who provide proven (i.e., programming based on experience and jurisdictional best practice) and effective (i.e., RNJ services and programming is highly effective in meeting client needs).
- RNJ operates in a strong and diverse collaborative network of community agencies, institutions and individuals.
- By providing proven and effective services, in collaboration with community partners, RNJ ensures that every client it engages realizes opportunities for personal growth.

Guiding Principles and Values

In previous RNJ strategic plans, a number of values were identified. These values were provided in the absence of context. Guiding principles and values are affirmations of the operating principles and values you believe in and uphold in your undertakings. Consider the following

RNJ Youth, as a service provider, as a collaborator and as an organization, believes in and upholds a number of key guiding principles and values:

- *We will always act in the best interest of our clients and our community*
- *We are an inclusive organization, respectful of the contributions of a diverse array of clients and partners;*
- *We uphold the principle of equity and fairness for all.*
- *We are an organization that operates with integrity. Trust is earned.*
- *RNJ is stronger and more effective when working in collaboration with others.*
- *We will undertake our core mandate and respect the core mandates of others. In this manner a collaborative network will be strong and effective.*

Goals and Strategies

As mentioned in previous sections, the goals should reflect the key areas of business focus towards the next three years. In consultation with the Board and staff, four main goals were identified:

1. Our Commitment to Our Clients and Community
2. Excellence in Programming and Service Provision
3. Working with Others: Our Collaborative Network
4. Our Organization: Capacity Building for Success

Goal 1: Our Commitment to Our Clients and Community

Strategic Focal Areas:

1. Our commitment to children and youth
2. Our commitment to the broader community

RNJ's core mandate is to provide services and programming to our priority focal clients- children and youth- as well as enabling service provision through partner agencies and organizations. RNJ also provides programming focused on the broader community, notably youth prevention programming. Part of community commitment is the provision of services related to adults within our jurisdictional area. Over the next three years:

- We will continue to maintain our strong commitment to our clients and community through proven and effective services
- We will also focus on accommodating the needs of children younger than 12 years of age. This will require the Board to assess the needs and the directions RNJ can take to accommodate this important youth
- We will embrace new and emerging referral channels including broadening the agency referral network and accommodating client self-referral.

Goal 2: Excellence in Programming and Service Provision

RNJ offers a continuum of services which support our primary children and youth clients and the broader community. The continuum of services consists of two streams, notably:

- Prevention and early intervention: This primarily consists of recreation – type initiatives, such as the Brockville Police and Stingers After School program and Rebound Choices.
- Support and intervention: Services include Rebound Choices (counsellor), Intersections, Extrajudicial Measures, Extrajudicial Sanctions, Youth Justice Committee (Leeds and Grenville Counties), Youth Mental Health Court Worker, Connections and the Direct Accountability Program (adults, Lanark County).

Strategic Focal Areas:

1. RNJ programming- Stay the Course
2. Raising awareness of RNJ Programs and Services
3. Programming within the broader Collaborative Network

The COVID pandemic has had a pronounced impact on the provision of direct live services as was the case pre-COVID. Program staff worked hard to provide the services consistent with COVID protocols and requirements. As we move through 2021 into 2022 there is still the lingering health requirements we have now become accustomed to. To that end RNJ will “Stay the Course” on existing RNJ services and programming for the full term of this plan. Albeit the funding issues facing RNJ and other not-for-profits in today’s climate, RNJ will continue to maintain and build our programs to meet our commitment to our primary focal clients.

Raising a broader awareness and understanding of RNJ programs and services will most certainly support our commitment to our primary clients and their families and support the broadening of the RNJ collaboration network. This strategy is addressed in Goal #4.

The Board expressed an interest in exploring RNJ Youth Outreach Initiatives within secondary schools in the three counties and broader initiatives in partnership with the school boards. For the foreseeable future the ability to have direct prevention and early intervention programming within schools is beyond the capacity of RNJ; however there is a need to resurface the need for effective youth outreach within the school system. Continue priority on the delivery of the Stingers program is highly supported by RNJ leadership and the Board.

In recent years RNJ has worked on joint initiatives with other agencies and organizations within the broader collaboration network. Often times RNJ is not the project lead, but plays a significant role in the delivery of the project. RNJ was worked within these initiatives in a manner that is consistent with their core mandate and focused on their primary clients. Strategically these opportunities are desirable. RNJ will continue to explore opportunities to work in projects and initiates in collaboration with agencies that are taking a lead role in the project and initiative.

Goal 3: Working with Others: Our Collaborative Network

Strategic Focal Areas:

1. Collaborative network: increasing our capacity to serve and support clients and our community
2. Building capacity: embracing new collaborations

RNJ has developed a significant and impactful role in the broader collaboration network throughout Leeds, Grenville and Lanark Counties. Working in collaboration with other agencies, organizations and institutions has bolstered the service and support for RNJ priority clients and the broader community. Although many of RNJ’s programs and initiatives are centred on the justice sector, clients support entails working across the full spectrum of sectors, notably mental health, health, addictions and social services. RNJ will continue to play a vital role in the

collaboration network and will ensure its partnership with existing organizations will be maintained and strengthened. Of vital importance is the need for RNJ to continue to play a role in the network consistent with RNJs core mandate and to respect others organizations mandate.

Being a progressive organization, RNJ will continue to seek new partners, possibly from different non-traditional sectors and from other jurisdictions (e.g., regional or provincial level organizations).

Goal #4: Our Organization: Capacity Building for Success

Strategic Focal Areas:

1. New and effective approach to funding
2. Communicating RNJ- who we are and what we do
3. Staff capacity- priorities and approaches
4. Building Board capacity to address a changing landscape

It is an understatement to say that funding to support RNJ programs and serves is one of the greatest challenges faced by RNJ. Funding has always been and will continue to be a challenge. To that end RNJ has identified a few key strategies to address the issue of sustained funding for RNJ programming:

- The Board will develop an overarching framework for addressing an approach to RNJ funding.
- The framework should embrace several approaches which are successfully used by other NFP organizations, including:
 - A fund raising initiative, guided by best practice and lead by an identified champion or leader of the fund raising effort;
 - Sponsorship of events or programs has and will continue to be an effective means to fund RNJ activities and overall operations;
 - Protection of existing annual allocations from government, with possible expansion of annual funding through the Ministry of Education for the Connections program;
 - Grants and application-based funding has been a major source of RNJ funding. Continue to identify suitable grant opportunities, including direct application (by RNJ) and funding applications in partnership with organizations in the collaborative network.

The foundation of capacity building is an effective effort to communicate and promote RNJ Youth Services. A purposeful communications plan will guide RNJ to clearly and effectively articulate who RNJ is and what they offer to primary clients and the community. Effort to date are commendable, however RNJ has identified communications and promotion as a key strategic activity.

RNJ is proud of the accomplishments of the RNJ staff team, notably delivering key programs and serves in COVID times and in times of funding uncertainty. Addressing the funding issue through a more strategic approach will strengthen staff capacity. The Executive Director will continue to play a critical role in maintaining and building a strong and effective professional team.

The Board has always played a strong governance role for RNJ. Board members have been recruited to represent the diversity of RNJ programming and the jurisdictional geographic area

served by RNJ. As we navigate challenging and changing times the Board may wish to critically review its current makeup and take action to bolster capacity in a few key areas such as:

- Strengthening the Board to champion a new and effective approach to funding, notably a fund raising initiative;
- Strengthening the Board to actively communicate and promote RNJ more broadly and effectively;
- Strengthen the Board to address building of delivery of its core mandate.

The Board capacity-building approach is both timely and critical.

Additional Areas for Consideration

Term of the Plan: The Board expressed interest in deeming the plan as a three year plan, with the extension of year 4 upon critical review (i.e., at the end of year 3 examine the need to extend the plan for one more year with minor changes or engage in a new strategic planning initiative).

Demonstrating Impact: The Board identified the need to demonstrate the impact of embarking on the new strategic plan. This could be accomplished through the identification of two or three key outcomes and identify performance measures that would inform RNJ's success in realizing the stated outcomes.

Representation of the Plan: The plan would consist of three documents:

- The comprehensive "Backgrounder" document, which serves as the detailed process review leading to the development of the plan.
- The strategic plan (section 5 of this document); and
- A one page summary of the plan, which could be communicated on the RNJ website.