SAN DIEGO
Regional Task Force on Homelessness

Strategic Plan
for the
Regional Task Force on Homelessness

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Prepared by: The Impact Center

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Introduction:

The Regional Task Force on Homelessness (RTFH) is an established leader on many of the fronts fighting homelessness in San Diego City and San Diego County. It is sought out by other agencies across the county, state, and country for advice on planning and operations. The staff supports clients over a large geographical area, and over 1,000 active users of the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS).

In a region that encompasses many governmental entities and service providers, RTFH has demonstrated success in bringing diverse organizations together for common goals. Nowhere is this talent more striking than in its leadership and collaboration during the COVID-19 pandemic. Its partnership with local governments and the San Diego Housing Commission (SDHC) transformed the San Diego Convention Center (SDCC) into a shelter for more than 4,000 people. Despite doubts and risks associated with housing so many in a congregate setting during a pandemic, the program was ultimately lauded as a success: Those without homes needed shelter, and the empty convention center offered its intentionally-designed accommodations for thousands of people. RTFH ensured that the initiative moved beyond 'just shelter' in the SDCC, by promoting the follow-up 'Operation Shelter to Home', which provided permanent or long-term housing for more than 1,000 people.

> *"RTFH is really good at communicating a vision of what they want to accomplish; they articulate a set of strategies for the region that align with the City."*

Since gaining 501(c)(3) status, RTFH has expanded its capacity and flexibility. With active leadership from its Board and its CEO, RTFH is seen as providing a constructive, apolitical voice, while adroitly managing relationships with elected officials. Other organizations in the region rely on RTFH for expertise in the field regarding securing of funding. In tactical operations, it is highly sought-after by other Continuums of Care (CoCs) for advice on HMIS, and its active enlistment of Outreach Staff has led to improvements in the Point in Time (PIT) Count. Its financial position is sound. In initiatives for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI), RTFH has established itself as a leader among its peers.

> *"They are doing great work in voicing the need to involve the concept of equity and embrace an anti-racist lens. It's not an afterthought here."*
> - CEO of local organization for those impacted by homelessness

RTFH is now in a position to grow its capacity as a 501(c)(3), notably in marshaling analytics to drive advocacy, securing funding for innovative initiatives, and becoming a broadly-recognized advocate for regional goals. This Strategic Plan outlines specifics for accomplishing that growth.

1. **<u>Increase the prominence of RTFH in the community</u>**:

   Although its work is highly-regarded by those with whom it has close associations, RTFH is not well-known throughout the region. In addition, it is often mislabeled as a government entity. RTFH should aggressively promote its brand, role, and accomplishments.

   RTFH has been successful in bringing diverse groups together. It should apply this experience to be a convener on a deeper level – to educate, share best practices, advocate, and drive the City and County to work together on common goals.

   <u>GOAL</u>: Develop and implement a communications and branding strategy to make RTFH a clearly-recognized household name throughout the region. The community should know what RTFH 'is' and 'does' (Years 1, 2, 3 - improve each year).

   <u>GOAL</u>: Convene regional gatherings to educate, promote best practices. Bring local governments, nonprofits, and providers together for united actions (Years 1, 2, 3 - improve each year).

2. **<u>Secure Unrestricted Funding:</u>**

   As a c3, RTFH can secure unrestricted funding to build capacity and advance innovative and emerging practices.   Also, RTFH can continue advancing the state of the art for the PIT and Housing Inventory (HIC) Counts, as well as for operational systems such as HMIS and the Coordinated Entry System (CES). In particular, unrestricted funding can be used to cover hard costs associated with HMIS utilization that are not covered by other funding sources. Furthermore, this funding will support RTFH's continued work on the Regional Plan.

   Securing this type of funding will occur at many different levels, and will require different approaches:

   - Funding from corporations, foundations, and large donors would bring the contributors benefits of enhanced corporate image and credit for improving the local economy.

   - Linking specific donors to specific initiatives provides focus for targeted programs and positive publicity for individuals.

   - A small-dollar donor program would build broad community support for RTFH and its mission.

GOAL: Develop an Unrestricted Funding Plan large enough to support execution of the Strategic Plan and the continued growth of the Organization. (Year 1).

GOAL: Fund, staff, and implement the Unrestricted Funding Plan (Years 2 and 3).

3. **Continue leadership in Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI):**

RTFH stands out among its peers in implementing DEI initiatives. With the assistance of Equity-in-Action, RTFH has spearheaded important discussions about DEI – both internally and with its partners. These actions have led to specific, intentional actions, such as diversification of the Board, an active community position in response to the murder of George Floyd, and the creation of the regional Ad Hoc Committee on Homelessness Among Black San Diegans. This Committee has established a strong reputation in many parts of the greater San Diego community. RTFH will strengthen its leadership in this area.

GOAL: Implement recommendations of the Ad Hoc Committee presented to the Board on May 25, 2022 (Years 1 and 2).

GOAL: Share DEI experience with advocacy groups from BIPOC, Veterans', and Seniors' communities to equip and educate, particularly to position them for successful responses to NOFOs as applicable (Ongoing).

GOAL: Partner with existing advocacy groups from BIPOC, Veterans', and Seniors' communities to gain their advocacy for equitable solutions for homelessness (Ongoing).

4. **Establish RTFH as *THE* Leader in Homelessness Information in San Diego City & County:**

RTFH already has access to most of the important homelessness data in the region. If given the tools and personnel resources to powerfully curate and analyze it, RTFH could turn this data into specifically actionable information about homelessness. Equipped with that information, RTFH can 'own the message' and define specific initiatives that drive policy and engage the community. These data-driven initiatives should be specific enough to drive objectives common to the City and the County, advance specific DEI actions, and be embraced by 'the person on the street'.

RTFH could engage local academic and corporate partners to contribute expertise and resources for developing analysis tools.

GOAL: Define and fund a plan for gathering & curating data, implementing advanced analytics, and turning analytics results into actionable initiatives (Year 1).

GOAL: Implement the plan and incorporate feedback for continuous improvement (Years 2 and 3).

GOAL: Promote the analytics results and initiatives such that RTFH shapes the public narrative about homelessness, to dissuade it from being co-opted by those who oppose the mission (Years 2 and 3).

5.   **Increase capacity: Fiscal / accounting team:**

The infrastructure and staffing of the fiscal / accounting team need to keep pace with future growth in the organization's scope and workload. RTFH needs to increase this group's capacity to ensure effectiveness, efficiency, and compliance.

GOAL: Assess the fiscal / accounting team's staffing, structure, and supporting IT systems. Enhance and expand to match work demands (Year 1).

6.   **Increase Capacity: Personnel:**

RTFH's development of a 501(c)(3) organization has had a strong start. In its next steps of organizational maturity, RTFH will build strength at several key leadership levels:

6.1.   **Board of Directors:**

GOAL: Increase the number and relevant expertise of Board members, with specific focus on RTFH's mission as a c3 (Years 1, 2, and 3).

6.2.   **Senior Leadership**:

Although the Senior Leadership team is performing effectively, single points of vulnerability pose significant risks to the organization. RTFH will ensure that there are multiple paths for action when senior leadership's involvement is needed.

GOAL: Assess skills and competencies required for the Senior Leadership team to effectively lead the organization. Expand the skill base of the Senior team to provide the needed leadership and minimize single points of vulnerability (Years 1, 2, and 3).

GOAL: Develop and implement Succession and Retention plans (Year 1).

6.3.   **Organizational Structure:**

GOAL: Identify competency gaps and build critical skills where needed (Years 1 and 2).

GOAL: Retention of skilled critical staff through competitive pay and other support and compensation. Cross train and build on emerging leaders within the organization (Years 1, 2, and 3).

TRACEABILITY TO SWOT ANALYSIS

The table below cross-references SWOT Items in the Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats categories to the six key elements of the Strategic Plan, illustrating the element(s) of the Plan that specifically addresses each item.

SWOT Category	SWOT Item	1. Increase the prominence of RTFH in the community	2. Secure Unrestricted Funding	3. Continue leadership in Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI)	4. Establish RTFH as *THE* Leader in Homelessness Information in San Diego City & County	5. Increase capacity: Fiscal / accounting team	6. Increase Capacity: Personnel	Tactical / Operational Issue
Weaknesses	RTFH is not well-known; their work is not broadly recognized, and they do not have 'hard' political power.	X						
	As the C3 is relatively new, it is still trying to establish its role in the overall San Diego policy ecosystem.	X						
	Even though RTFH collects and administers large volumes of data, the information communicated on its Website can be confusing, incomplete, and dated.				X			

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	Goals of specific projects and Key Performance Indicators against those goals are not clear.				X			
	Dashboards and other measurements are hard to understand. They do not provide actionable insights. Counting of outcomes such as 'success' and 'exit' can be misleadingly oversimplified.				X			
	Most of RTFH's funding is restricted, which hampers its flexibility in doing 'C3-work'.		X					
	Fundraisers such as galas and golf outings are not seen to generate sufficient net income.		X					

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	Tamera provides excellent external executive presence; RTFH needs to broaden that skill set across other senior staff so its effectiveness is not dependent on one person.						**X**	
	The infrastructure (staffing and systems) for the fiscal / accounting team is insufficient for their scope of work.					**X**		
	There is a shortage of positions under the Senior Team (mid-management). Turnover of key personnel is a risk. Programs to recruit, coach, train, and retain key personnel need to be stronger. Consultants are brought in frequently; instead, skills could be built internally.						**X**	

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	The Data Team's capacity is consumed by doing daily operations tasks; they do not have enough capacity to focus on defining and conveying insights gained from the data.				**X**			
	The organization is so busy 'putting out fires' that it has little capacity to screen opportunities and do long-term planning.						**X**	

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Opportunities	RTFH could establish a role as '*The* Expert with The Facts' about homelessness in the region. This would require a commitment to being more public and visible - in social media, on websites, and in all means of reporting. The message needs to be humanized and simplified - in language embraceable by the 'person on the street'. Qualitatively, the message would include empathy and understanding of the situations that cause homelessness. Quantitatively, more powerful analytics could drive policy and inform decision making. More focused, broadly-understood metrics would strengthen community understanding.				X			

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	RTFH could strengthen its role as a convener, going beyond discussions and moving toward actions. RTFH could drive unified regional approaches to funding (e.g., one common approach to HHAP or Homekey funding, as opposed to 'each agency for itself').	**X**						
	Re DEI: RTFH could advocate that homelessness is not about 'just housing' but that it is an equity issue. Working with the Ad Hoc Committee of Black San Diegans, RTFH can partner with BIPOC communities that have potential to be advocates and influencers. RTFH could also be a leader / model for other similar agencies, based on the success of the Ad Hoc Committee.			**X**				

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	Given that in the San Diego area, no Homekey funding has yet been awarded, RTFH could drive an integrated regional effort to improve the success rate in subsequent award rounds.	**X**			**X**			
	RTFH's data tracking could go to deeper levels of analysis - i.e., mapping how individuals are moving stepwise through the system's processes. This innovation could highlight specific performance issues and system problems.				**X**			

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	CalAIM is a relatively new – yet complex – initiative. RTFH could take a lead role in helping service providers find paths to new funding streams available through health insurance. While these funding streams can subsidize housing and food, they must be applied efficiently with respect to administrative overhead. A regional approach, led by RTFH, may improve the chances for success by economies of scale	X						

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	RTFH could be the focus for collection, analysis, and reporting of program performance data, with frequent reporting. In so doing, RTFH would 'own' the message, reducing the chances that others might promote messages that are inaccurate or detrimental to the mission.				**X**			
	RTFH could enhance the regional focus for preparation/coordination for HUD NOFOs in conjunction with other funding opportunities.	**X**			**X**			

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	In partnership with the healthcare industry (e.g., Kaiser), RTFH could analyze the overall cost-saving potential of providing housing and co-lo services for those who are frequent healthcare system utilizers.	X						
	Raising small amounts of private dollars is labor-intensive. RTFH should direct its fundraising efforts toward large amounts from corporate donors, e.g., Biotech companies.		X					

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	The launch of the C3 presents Tamera and her staff with an opportunity to think big. For example, , "What could we do with $10M," to define fundraising goals.		**X**					
	Fundraising should be targeted for unrestricted use, to fund expansion of RTFH's capacity. In addition, consider providing funding to promote collaboration over competition with other funding-seeking organizations.		**X**					

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	Expansion of the Data Team would enable it to provide more expansive, effective analytics. Beyond 'just managing' the HMIS Operational data, this expanded team would generate data-driven messages that engage the community and drive policy.				**X**			
	Data systems should be architected so they can be modified quickly in the event of external changes. An example of such a change is the recent redistricting of the Board of Supervisors, which created new boundaries and a consequent demand for quickly-revised geographical information.				**X**			

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Threats	San Diego City and San Diego County have a history of not working well together. RTFH must continue to exercise caution to avoid antagonizing elected officials							**X**
	RTFH's main focus is on housing. They are often called upon to address related issues such as poverty and unemployment. RTFH needs to beware of the threat of diverting limited resources to non-core issues.							**X**

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	Stakeholders and the general public may see the one-day PIT count as the singular indicator of the scope of homelessness. That data can be used to drive policy, but it does not show the full picture. The number of people served by homelessness-fighting agencies far exceeds the number actually homeless at any given time.				**X**			
	If RTFH does not firmly 'own' the message derived from data analysis, data could be misused by groups favoring less funding for fighting homelessness.				**X**			

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	RTFH should resist funding efforts based on galas and training events, from which the net return does not typically justify the expense.						**X**	
	Staff turnover is a key risk. Targeted retention and succession planning programs should be developed and implemented. Salaries need to be kept competitive.						**X**	