

***Stakeholder Assessment Report for Environmental Scan  
Strategic Planning Process 2013-2014  
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## I. Executive Summary

There were several ideas that emerged in this portion of the environmental scan, and these are outlined in this executive summary.

Re-defining success as the *life changes that clients experience* versus the *number of clients served* – and being able to articulate that via specific outcome measurements that indicate the impact that \_\_\_\_\_ is having on the entire community it serves.

How are we working with people so that they avoid such a desperate situation in the first place? What is being done within \_\_\_\_\_ to work on preventing the need, and to break the cycle of poverty? Many people in the interviews and focus group discussions raised questions such as these.

Providing different systems of support for those who have experienced long term (generational) and short-term (situational) poverty was raised during the conversations. Clients of \_\_\_\_\_ - and staff - agree that the needs of all clients are not the same, and providing different systems of support for those who have experienced long-term poverty (versus those with short term, situational poverty) would be beneficial and may provide for client success in transforming their lives.

Increasing use of the mobile van as a “mobile office” for providing services. The idea of the mobile van as a “mobile ministry” was raised, and validated throughout the conversations in this assessment. The notion of staffing the mobile van with a set of services (and people to provide those services) resonated with \_\_\_\_\_’s stakeholders, and the idea of having the mobile van “out and accessible” to those who need services but are hindered by transportation also made sense to those who are familiar with \_\_\_\_\_’s work.

The feasibility of an additional thrift store was raised, as well as the option of expanding the square footage of the current thrift store. A review of the previous work on this question by the organization is suggested during the strategic planning process to determine the best course of action. The question of parking was also raised multiple times (in different settings and by different stakeholders.)

Assuring that \_\_\_\_\_ remain a *people-centered culture* was on the minds of many in this assessment; concerns about becoming “too large,” or “too corporate,” or focused on things other than the people being served were raised, with the hope that \_\_\_\_\_ remain, at its heart, an organization that care about people – and shows it in every way. Everyone served by, volunteering with, supported by, and employed by \_\_\_\_\_ is special and valued, and that must be demonstrated every day.

The consensus of the assessment sample is that \_\_\_\_\_ is driven by community needs, and that the decisions the organization has made during the last 30 years are the right ones to meet those needs.

Embracing a more diverse religious community will be important as \_\_\_\_\_ continues to effectively serve the North Fulton community.

The possibility of additional professional mental health counseling services<sup>1</sup> was mentioned by several in the assessment conversations and should be explored in the strategic planning process to determine if expansion in this area has a place in the organization's future.

Involvement of \_\_\_\_\_ in advocacy and public policy was suggested as an area for \_\_\_\_\_ to provide leadership. Should \_\_\_\_\_ join the significant dialogue already underway about poverty in the metro Atlanta region, including north Fulton? This is an area for discussion in the strategic planning process.

## **II. Methodology**

The strategic planning committee of \_\_\_\_\_ met in December 2013 to begin the strategic planning process. During that meeting, a set of questions was identified to begin the strategic thinking process. Community stakeholders were interviewed by telephone and through focus groups during December 2013, leading to this assessment report.

Five focus groups were conducted on December 17 and 18, 2013, with current clients of \_\_\_\_\_ (two groups, one for non-English speaking clients;) volunteers of \_\_\_\_\_, from all areas of the operation; employees representing all departments; and shoppers from the Thrift Store.

Twenty telephone interviews were conducted by an outside consultant, and these stakeholders included donors, sponsors, volunteers, board members, faith community leaders, past board members, elected officials, and civic organization and community leaders.

Respondents were enthusiastic, open, candid, and clear about \_\_\_\_\_'s work in the community.

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<sup>1</sup> Currently, professional mental health counseling services are available on-site once/month.

### III. Mission, Philosophy, and Success Measures

The interviewees and focus group participants were asked how \_\_\_\_\_ should measure its success. A variety of responses were received, but the most common were:

- Maintenance of the commitment to emergency financial assistance, operation of the food pantry, and providing clothing.
- Revision of client eligibility and different support tracks for different types of client needs. The necessity of relying on evidence of need for eligibility was noted by many in this assessment process, with an overwhelming commitment to continue to serve those in need.
- Who do we serve? \_\_\_\_\_ currently serves people who can find a way to its buildings, or who can locate the mobile van, and several in the interview sample wondered if that is who \_\_\_\_\_ should be serving (or are there others who need assistance that we are not reaching?)
- A defined set of “impact measures” was thought by many to be important, and will be explored in the strategic planning process.

### IV. Programs and Services: *Safety Net to Support Net*

#### A. *The Clients’ Perspective on \_\_\_\_\_ Services & Programs*

From the clients’ perspective, things “are working much better than five years ago.”<sup>2</sup>

Some suggestions from the clients were for *process improvements*, including dividing up the assistance lines by category of need (new intake, financial assistance, food, clothing, etc.) to expedite the movement of the line each day; having “appointment hours” at busy times of the month when appointments are taken for financial assistance so that people who are employed and/or have child care can work around the timeframes for these; sign up sheets or “numbers” for those waiting in line when assistance runs out (so that they can be further ahead in the line the next day;) and additional accommodations for those with disabilities.<sup>3</sup>

Assistance with completing paperwork for other nonprofits and government agencies was seen by clients as a critical service.<sup>4</sup>

Many in the interview sample and focus groups, including existing clients, raised being “the bridge” for other programs. A robust information and referral network (and staff and volunteer knowledge of that network) is critical to helping people move forward and to not duplicating the efforts of others. Having \_\_\_\_\_ fill in

<sup>2</sup> This perspective was offered by clients who have been accessing \_\_\_\_\_ services for several years, and have noticed a difference in the way services are delivered to clients.

<sup>3</sup> The new lobby design in the main building will accommodate some of this change.

<sup>4</sup> This includes the benefits screening, and referrals to other service partners in the community.

“gaps” in services was viewed as important (until clients qualify for other types of assistance.)

A safety issue was identified for those waiting in line for financial assistance, beginning at 3:00 am on some mornings. Concerns were expressed about waiting in lines for hours with very young children, thus the suggestion about appointment times on certain days (or during certain hours on certain days.)

### ***B. Eligibility Criteria***

The *eligibility criteria for services* were mentioned many times in the interview and focus group sample. There needs to be a clear picture of “family need criteria” that is transparent to all. Right now, not everyone is clear about the criteria for client services.

Consistency in staffing, staff training, and application of criteria were also raised as concerns. *Application of criteria* for services was a theme throughout the interviews and focus groups.

The staff focus group discussed a change in mindset to working differently with clients; those experiencing situational poverty need a different type of intervention and support (perhaps) than those who have experienced generational poverty. Those who have experienced psychological trauma<sup>5</sup> need yet a different set of interventions.

### ***C. The Support Net***

The notion of a “support net” in addition to a “safety net” was raised by one focus group, and had resonance in terms of how services are delivered to clients. The support net are the services and programs that move people to self sufficiency, such as those now being offered through \_\_\_\_\_’s Education Center.

Budget/financial management classes were viewed as very positive, and the notion of “accountability partners” to help clients keep good habits was raised by clients in both focus groups as an important tool to help them succeed. Exploration of ongoing mentorship or circles-type support may be beneficial to some of the clients served by \_\_\_\_\_.

The question of \_\_\_\_\_ managing IDAs<sup>6</sup> was raised by more than one person during this assessment process, and may be another viable service that \_\_\_\_\_ could offer in partnership with a local financial institution.

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<sup>5</sup> Medical crisis, physical and emotional abuse, death of loved ones, prolonged unemployment, etc.

<sup>6</sup> Individual Development Accounts, which are usually managed in partnership with a financial institution and with some type of matching contribution for the client/depositor.

Life skills training is critical to taking care of personal papers, important documents, and learning to navigate the various systems that people will need as they move through life. “We can reinforce the positive aspects through follow up meetings, CDs, and waiting room videos,” noted one staff member in the discussion of life skills support.

The Education Center was mentioned many times during the assessment conversations. The opinion of all who mentioned it was that it was the right addition to the services of \_\_\_\_\_ and will continue to make a real difference in people’s lives.

The GED program is deeply appreciated by clients, and job training/referrals was mentioned as an extension of this<sup>7</sup>, either on-site or through additional referrals. In particular, Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) and dental assistant programs were mentioned as ones that may help the most people to find employment.

Clients indicated that employment programming can be critical to their forward movement. \_\_\_\_\_ partnerships with employment agencies, and financial assistance to pay the initial fee would be beneficial to clients. Non-English speaking clients particularly noted employment as an area that is important to them, and affordable childcare plays a significant part in the employment picture. Those who do not speak English need additional help in facilitating employment connections and having a centralized place for employment services – a “matching resource” for reputable employers. (Several clients raised the example of Gwinnett Village, which will assist undocumented workers in finding employers who will hire them for short or long-term employment.) A safe location for employers to find workers was mentioned; a gathering place for day labor is needed.<sup>8</sup>

Many suggestions were made about specific types of *navigation assistance* needed by clients, including referrals for child care, housing, disability issues, potential bartering/sharing of services among clients (who could help one another), veterans benefits, primary medical and dental health care, assistance with Grady paperwork (on-site once/month,) Medicaid applications, and health insurance application assistance. Clients that do not speak English need additional assistance with things like the death of a loved one, legal and family matters, basic problem solving (due to language barrier issues), and references. These clients especially mentioned ESOL, health/dental services and tax preparation as critical needs for them, and noted the lack of preventive medical care for adults.

Several suggestions were made regarding the development of a specialized network of community support and small businesses that can assist clients with moving to self-sufficiency. This would formalize what is already being done with medical and

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<sup>7</sup> This means that a continuum from GED to job training to job placement was mentioned by clients as something that is/will continue to be helpful to them.

<sup>8</sup> Roswell, at one time, had a day labor site that was not successful.

dental providers, childcare providers, and other small businesses in the community – and broaden it in scope and scale so that more clients can be helped.

#### ***D. Mobile Van: A Mobile Support Center***

The mobile unit is part of the “support net” and is currently used for financial assistance services, one day per week. The specter of providing additional intake and client follow up through the mobile van was raised. A regular route of stops that clients (and potential clients) can access will be important in order to have the mobile van operating at full capacity, and build trust with the communities that need access to a mobile support center due to lack of transportation. The career-coaching volunteers suggested that this function could also be accomplished through the mobile van, at least in part. A key theme heard throughout the assessment process was that the mobile van could be “staffed” with teams of staff and volunteers who have different areas of expertise to provide a full complement of client services through the mobile support center.

The overall expectation of the stakeholder sample is that the mobile van will be in use *every day* in north Fulton County, delivering services and support to families in need.<sup>9</sup> The van also needs to be in the same consistent locations (on different days of the week) so that trust is built with a community. Suggested locations were Title I schools, retail locations – places where families already gather. The expectation is not necessarily a broader geography, but a deeper one. “Programs should be exported through the mobile unit,” is how one stakeholder/donor put it.

#### ***E. Tutoring***

A tutoring service for the children of non-English speaking parents was mentioned as a need – the parents cannot help their children with homework due to the language barriers and the children still need assistance.

#### ***F. Holiday & Backpack Program***

The holiday program and the backpack program were mentioned as being appreciated by clients. Several community leaders questioned the criteria for the holiday program in particular. This needs to be defined, refined, and communicated clearly to everyone. For example, can families participate year after year in this program? What verification of family need is required, if any?

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<sup>9</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ needs to determine what the cost to serve one person through the mobile van actually is, in order to determine the future of the mobile van’s capacity & utilization.

### ***G. Measurement of Impact/Outcomes***

The notion of evaluating the work being done was raised by staff, board, and community leaders; everyone agrees that \_\_\_\_\_ is doing good work, but all would like to know (in a quantifiable, *beyond-the-number-served-way*) what difference is being made. What is the overall community impact of \_\_\_\_\_'s work in a year? Over five years? Over ten years? How are lives changed through \_\_\_\_\_'s assistance, short term and long term?

Text or e-mail follow up with clients was raised (by staff) as a potentially viable way to keep track and gain follow up with those who have moved from the 'safety net' to 'support net' to 'self sufficiency.'

Among donors, sponsors, and community leaders, the expectation that \_\_\_\_\_ will track its results and then tell the community about those results is real and these folks want \_\_\_\_\_ to "tell the story" beyond the number served.

### **V. Thrift Store**

The shoppers in the focus group love the photos around the store, and noted that the \_\_\_\_\_ Thrift Store has the best prices but the Goodwill store has the best layout and the best shopping experience. \_\_\_\_\_'s parking can sometimes be a problem, and more space would be better (both for the shopping and the parking.)

Many suggestions were received from employees, volunteers, and shoppers regarding the Thrift Store. These are a summary of the suggestions made during the assessment process.

Review the "needs policies" for family eligibility, including the portions of the policy that provide guidelines for distribution of clothing by age of family members.

Consider adding paid staff positions<sup>10</sup> to manage a growing store operation; volunteers in particular noted the need for additional guidance, oversight, and management of the operation.

Improve the appearance of the store, provide better signage in the public and in the storage areas.

In merchandising, several suggestions were made by shoppers and volunteers:

- Hang linens so that people can see them; shoppers commented that other thrift stores do this and it makes it easier to purchase curtains and other types of linens.

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<sup>10</sup> Currently, there are four paid staff in the store at all times.



- Provide signage in the toy area so that toys can be put back where they belong by shoppers.
- Set up sections for “slightly damaged” goods; items that can be sold “for parts”; and “mismatched” items.
- Add a “mystery bag” section, which is popular at other thrift stores and may work well here too.
- Have a special “item of the week” area or “item of the day” section.
- Find a better way to display the art so that it is more prominent and not hidden behind furniture.

Written job descriptions and supervision is needed for the community service volunteers. The need to have specific things for these volunteers to do was noted by the volunteers in the focus group. Community service volunteers could unload/load donations and purchases; move merchandise around in the storage area to its proper place; keep the incoming donation area neat; sort and hang; straighten store shelves; and keep the trash emptied.

Improvement in the recycling program was suggested; metal is removed from the dumpsters for recycling at this point, and there may be other options to utilize waste materials.

Shoppers in the focus group wondered if \_\_\_\_\_ could do a better job with the donation pick up program. Does \_\_\_\_\_ follow up with people who’ve given previously to see if they have anything else (periodically?) Does \_\_\_\_\_ call neighbors if we are sending a truck to a neighborhood? Or send a postcard to neighbors where pick ups are going to happen the following week? \_\_\_\_\_ should promote this service to the geographic area in which it picks up donations.<sup>11</sup>

Others noted that the operation of picking up donations needs attention, including scheduling, call-backs, and staffing.

The marketing of the Thrift Store was commented on by those in the focus groups and during interviews. Suggestions were made to consider advertising in local newspapers, and put blurbs (regularly and routinely) in congregation bulletins, neighborhood newsletters, and school newsletters. The purpose of the promotion is to obtain donations of items and to attract more shoppers. Sending coupons to current shoppers via e-mail was suggested (and noted that other stores do this).

Promoting days when there are regular specials, i.e. “Tuesday from 9-1 is 50% off”, was suggested by the shoppers as an important way to increase store traffic. Also, promotion to college and high school students, who regularly shop thrift stores (this could be done through congregation youth groups and campus faith based organizations.)

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<sup>11</sup> Currently, \_\_\_\_\_ experiences a high volume for this service & the schedule for pick-ups is always full.

The shoppers suggested that \_\_\_\_\_ solicit donations at the cash register through signage that is prominent (“round up”). The shoppers like the announcements in the store, and suggested that announcements about what the past hour’s sales funded for \_\_\_\_\_ (for example) would be motivational and welcomed by the shoppers.

The shoppers suggested that something be done about the smell in the thrift store, but noted that it is not “as bad” as some other thrift stores in the area.

## **VI. Volunteer Program**

\_\_\_\_\_ is blessed with many dedicated volunteers – an entire “workforce” of volunteers that enables \_\_\_\_\_ to do the work it does on a daily basis. This large workforce requires consistent procedures, processes, and systems to be best utilized for \_\_\_\_\_ and for the volunteers to have the best experience possible. Volunteers need to be made to feel welcome by all staff – at all times.

Several pastors and congregation leaders mentioned that having specific volunteer opportunities – and/or identifying specific volunteer *skill set* needs - would be welcomed, so that they can, in turn, inform their congregations of the opportunities to volunteer with \_\_\_\_\_ (and what need their volunteerism fills.)

Several people suggested publicizing opportunities for families to volunteer together, with a “family night” for volunteering when younger kids might be involved.<sup>12</sup>

### ***A. Structure of the Volunteer Program***

The consensus of the volunteers and staff is that the volunteer program needs more structure, guidance and management. All areas of the volunteer program need shift commitments, job descriptions, supervisors, and organization of the work to be done (either ongoing work or special, time-bound projects).

All of the work to be done by volunteer individuals and groups needs to be organized and written down in a volunteer manual/handbook (virtual or physical or both) that can be accessed by volunteers and their supervisors. This manual/handbook can also contain all of the policies, procedures, and guidelines for volunteers in the organization, and serve as an orientation tool and ongoing training tool for the volunteer program.

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<sup>12</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ does not allow children under 13 to volunteer on-premises due to liability reasons.

## ***B. Volunteer Opportunities***

Some of the volunteer opportunities identified during this assessment are listed below.

- Thrift Store.
  - Back Room/Storage organization.
  - Shelf straightening.
  
- Food Pantry.
  - Shorter shifts are needed due to being afoot the entire time of the shift (2 hours was suggested as the minimum shift time).
  - Prep, set up, and put away are the three areas of work.
  - The food pantry area needs to be re-organized and must be sanitary.
  
- Special Projects (like re-organizing storage areas or the food pantry.)
- Case management and client follow up. This was suggested (based on the model used by other nonprofits) as another way to deeply involve volunteers in the work of the organization and support clients as they move to self-sufficiency. This would require a training program and examples are available. Utilization of volunteers as case managers to provide mentorship and long term follow up with client families is an idea raised by staff.
  
- Outdoor clean up and beautification/landscaping.
  
- Tours of the facility for groups. Knowledgeable volunteers can conduct tours and provide the history of the organization.
  
- Skill-based volunteerism.
  - Volunteers in the focus group said they would like to identify specific skills that they have and that they would be willing to be matched with clients if their skills and connections could be of assistance to clients as they seek employment, etc. This was also mentioned by the organization's corporate supporters as a way to more deeply involve their companies in \_\_\_\_\_'s work, and this is a trend in volunteerism that has taken hold throughout the United States.
  
- Education Center.
  - Additional career coaches could be utilized, as well as GED instructors.

- Clients would like to be able to volunteer their time, and they themselves suggested that appropriate ways be found for them to do so.<sup>13</sup>

### ***C. Volunteer Orientation***

A regular program of orientation and training is needed for the volunteers. An orientation that takes place regularly, i.e. the same day/time of each month, for all new and prospective volunteers, would be very helpful in acclimating everyone to \_\_\_\_\_ and to their volunteer role. There are several excellent models for this type of volunteer orientation that could benefit \_\_\_\_\_.

### ***D. Communication***

The bulletin board needs updated information (including job postings and volunteer position openings). A computer terminal in the storage areas for volunteers to look up information (schedules, volunteer manual, job descriptions, etc.) would be helpful. A specific newsletter for volunteers (that contained information pertinent to volunteer work at \_\_\_\_\_ only) would be very helpful.<sup>14</sup>

Volunteers mentioned that they are often not notified when they are not needed, and show up for their assigned shift anyway (as in the case of staff parties, office closings, etc.) A communication mechanism to let all volunteers know of universal information needs to be in place (e-mail blast, phone robo-call, etc.)

### ***E. Recognition***

Volunteers need to be thanked privately and publicly, and recognized for their work, throughout the year. A volunteer of the month program could be beneficial (with so many dedicated volunteers to recognize) or a volunteer recognized per program periodically.

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<sup>13</sup> Clients are currently welcome to volunteer in the Thrift Store anytime, but may not volunteer in other areas of the organization's operation.

<sup>14</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ has had, in the past, a specific volunteer newsletter but it is currently suspended.

## VII. Community Outreach/Marketing

The residents of north Fulton County who are not \_\_\_\_\_ “insiders” (board members, volunteers, staff) in the interview sample were not aware of the extent of the problem of poverty in the north Fulton County area, and some of the donors who were interviewed said that until they were approached by \_\_\_\_\_, they also had no idea.

Suggestions about spreading awareness include \_\_\_\_\_’s deeper involvement with local business leaders through the Chamber(s) of Commerce in the area. Several interviewees noted that small businesses in particular look for opportunities to give “locally” but may be unaware of \_\_\_\_\_’s existence.

Another suggestion (from multiple sources) is to develop a “return on investment” case for support (brief) document and communicate this to Roswell, Alpharetta, Mountain Park, Milton, and Johns Creek businesses so that they can show their employees that \_\_\_\_\_ is a great place to invest donations and volunteer time (both for the business and for them personally.)

The realization that North Fulton County has an evolving demographic was a theme among some of the assessment conversations. Less than 40% of households in Roswell, for example, have children, and understanding that Roswell is an aging community with a good population of young professionals is important for outreach and fund raising. Also, Roswell now has a 30% minority population, with Hispanic residents making up the largest portion of that minority. \_\_\_\_\_ must engage with the leaders of the Hispanic community in Roswell, Alpharetta, Milton, Johns Creek and Mountain Park, as well as the leaders of the African-American community in these communities.

Interviewees suggested that neighborhood reps will be important to recruit, as neighborhood food drives are important to \_\_\_\_\_’s ongoing delivery of services.

In the faith community, reaching out to the Istanbul Center will be important for \_\_\_\_\_; this is an outreach point for the Muslim community.

Faith, business, individual, and foundation supporters all need different messages that are specific and targeted to *them*. Faith community leaders noted that the more specific \_\_\_\_\_’s message is for them, *the better it is* – \_\_\_\_\_ needs to make it “really easy for pastors and lay leaders to re-distribute messages to faith community members.” A formal liaison (lay member) from each congregation might help \_\_\_\_\_ to carry the message inside each organization to volunteers and donors, and assist with accessing congregation budget allocations.

Social media was noted by many as an opportunity for \_\_\_\_\_ to reach more people, as young professionals, teens & college students, and others (of varying

ages) access social media for messages and information. \_\_\_\_\_ may want to expand its social media presence through Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, Instagram, and YouTube<sup>15</sup>.

\_\_\_\_\_’s website was mentioned often. The website needs more frequent updates, and it must become a touch point for social media interaction. The website also can be used to engage volunteers through a password-protected section of the website that contains messages, the volunteer handbook/manual, and contact information for volunteers.

## **VIII. Governance**

A strategic and business plan that is monitored by the board (and that the board’s committees participate in the implementation of) is needed by the organization, and the plan should be communicated to the internal (volunteer, staff) and external community of \_\_\_\_\_ when it is completed.

The board’s composition should be “strategic” - with a clear recruitment plan based on skills, attributes, and backgrounds needed to implement organizational plans.

The board members need data and education about the work that \_\_\_\_\_ is doing. Board involvement and activity with the organization was raised by some of the current and past board members who were interviewed, noting that each board member needs to have a key role on a committee and/or a role as an active program volunteer. A regular schedule of board and committee meetings needs to be adhered to, with expectations of board members clearly defined. A poverty simulation exercise was suggested for the board, in order to foster understanding of \_\_\_\_\_’s programs and the need for the type of sustained support that facilitates movement out of poverty.<sup>16</sup>

Board members’ ambassadorship role was raised by several in the interview sample; seeing board members at local community events, representing \_\_\_\_\_ at Chamber functions, civic groups, and neighborhood associations is important to those we interviewed, and was seen as a key opportunity to continue to tell the \_\_\_\_\_ story to a broader audience (and from additional people.)

\_\_\_\_\_ is encouraged by those in the interview sample to consider an advisory board where friends of \_\_\_\_\_ could serve in an official way but not have the same expectations as active service on the board of directors would entail.

<sup>15</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ currently is active on Facebook and Twitter.

<sup>16</sup> In 2012, a poverty simulation exercise was sponsored by \_\_\_\_\_, with 3 board members/volunteers attending.

The appropriate operating reserve ratio for the organization should be explored, to assure long-term sustainability.<sup>17</sup>

## **IX. Management & Staffing**

“A focused business plan with goals, objectives, and success measures should be the way in which \_\_\_\_\_ runs its operation.” This is the expectation of those interviewed in this assessment.

In the area of staffing and professional development, cross-functional training for staff is suggested in order to be able to “staff” functions across the departments at all times.

Staff job descriptions with clearly defined functions and a compensation strategy with salary ranges for each job description was noted by the staff as an area for attention in the next strategic plan.

Regarding the acquisition of funds to operate \_\_\_\_\_, the general consensus of the assessment sample is that \_\_\_\_\_ could raise more money from the community.

A clear, comprehensive fund raising strategy needs to be in place so that there is internal understanding of what fund raising is, how it works, and who is involved in acquiring funds for an organization.

The fund raising strategy should have a *continuum of development and stewardship* that begins with schools and congregations and ends with a planned giving program. Civic organizations were mentioned many times in the assessment as organizations that can and should continue to support \_\_\_\_\_ but must be cultivated through all of their frequent leadership transitions.

Reaching out to the “under 40” residents of north Fulton was mentioned frequently in these discussions. Volunteering and funding are linked for this generation and ways must be found to meet this desire for involvement, with flexibility as a key to this volunteerism.

The idea of a signature fund raising event (focused on the business community) that would highlight the work of \_\_\_\_\_ was raised by several in the assessment as an opportunity. Additional cultivation and relationship development with businesses and companies was noted as an area of opportunity in fund raising by many in the interview sample and focus groups.

Ongoing stewardship of individual donors is a critical area for any nonprofit organization, and \_\_\_\_\_ is blessed to have many individual donors to

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<sup>17</sup> Currently, the organization has a 25% operating reserve fund.

communicate with and cultivate on an ongoing basis. Effective *moves management*<sup>18</sup> planning would assist with this process, and involve volunteers in that work.

## **X. Selected Comments from Interviews and Focus Groups**

### **A. General Comments**

- a. Staff and volunteers are open to changes taking place.
- b. The Thrift Store is fantastic.
- c. The education program is near and dear to us. We want to help with food and clothing but self-sufficiency is what we are looking for.
- d. \_\_\_\_\_ should run like a business, with goals for donations and volunteers.
- e. \_\_\_\_\_ needs to look more polished; right now it looks very “home grown” as an organization.
- f. \_\_\_\_\_ is doing a great job. Their partnership with North Point Community Congregation is a huge success.
- g. We like the collaboration among the organizations and the congregations to provide a continuum of services, including housing.
- h. \_\_\_\_\_ is doing what they are supposed to be doing – and doing it very authentically.
- i. \_\_\_\_\_ is the triage place for our community.
- j. \_\_\_\_\_ doesn’t ask congregations for enough of their discretionary money – we should be strategic about it.
- k. We need a good, really disciplined approach to measurement and determining the outcomes that we want to achieve as an organization.
- l. I always trust that \_\_\_\_\_ is doing the right thing with its money.
- m. Customer service training might be helpful in working with the volunteers.

### **B. Client Comments**

- a. Everyone is sincere here and wants to help... and that is appreciated because asking for help is the hardest thing to do.
- b. We need help getting to the next step in our lives.
- c. The food pantry is wonderful. They give us good advice about stretching our food budgets.
- d. The staff show us that they care.
- e. It is very hard to stand in line and be told that there is no more emergency financial assistance. Could there be additional resources for this?

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<sup>18</sup> Moves management is a term used primarily with the non-profit sector in relationship to donor development. It refers to the process by which a prospective donor is moved from cultivation to solicitation. “Moves” are the actions an organization takes to bring in donors, establish relationships, and renew contributions. David Dunlop, the Cornell University senior development officer who developed the concept of moves management, described the idea as “changing people’s attitudes so they want to give.”



- f. More fresh food in the food pantry would be wonderful.
- g. Everything we have suggested in prior years, \_\_\_\_\_ has done to help us.

***C. Employee Comments***

- a. Are our criteria for services too “loose?” Do we “flex” things too much? We should explore and define this as much as we can.
- b. I’d like to see us enable people more than we do – more specialized services with special funding for each service... a “support net.”
- c. There’s a fine line between enabling and helping; we need more accountability in place with our clients.

***D. Comments about Volunteering***

- a. Some of the events for volunteering have not been very organized.
- b. The volunteer program is inconsistent.
- c. The volunteer program needs more structure and guidance. We all just want to do our best for \_\_\_\_\_.
- d. \_\_\_\_\_ is a very worthwhile place to volunteer and I have not regretted volunteering here.