

CASE STUDY

VOLUNTARY ACTION CENTER
OF NORTHERN ILLINOIS



Strategic plan creates an advantage for the future

KEY OUTCOMES

Preparing for the future and remaining adaptable are two essential actions for nonprofits, particularly in the face of challenges like long-term sustainability, a growing economic divide in the community, and the increasing cost of providing services.

CP2 Consulting's strategic planning process provided Voluntary Action Center of Northern Illinois with an opportunity to look ahead, identify priorities, spot challenges and risks, and chart a path forward.



Voluntary Action Center Profile

Founded: 1974

Total Revenue: \$7.6 million

Primary Activities: Human Services



“It’s easy to get caught up in the day-to-day minutia, but it’s important for the key management team to look down the road. By looking ahead, we can anticipate opportunities and be prepared for what’s coming, turning potential surprises into strategic advantages.”

-Nate Kloster, CEO of Voluntary Action Center of Northern Illinois



Finding an intentional focus on the future

Voluntary Action Center of Northern Illinois is a highly regarded community partner that provides nutrition and transportation services across five counties. With important leadership changes on the horizon, the organization is navigating complex challenges around its mission and services.

“The most important planning tool a nonprofit has is its strategic plan,” says Voluntary Action Center of Northern Illinois CEO Nate Kloster. “It solidifies our focus and empowers me to lead more effectively, and it provides a solid foundation for making informed decisions.”

A VALUABLE PROCESS

With one strategic plan successfully implemented, the organization sought a new partner to help guide administrators and frontline staff through in developing a clear plan for the next three years.


It hired CP2 Consulting to engage frontline staff, leadership, and community stakeholders, in the process and set priorities for major initiatives, including long-term funding, diversifying the volunteer base, and improving organizational communication.

The strategic planning process unfolded in a series of phases that build on each other. The board, working side-by-side with staff and community stakeholders, focused on five key questions: Where are we now? Where do we want to be? How will we get there? How will we know when we get there? What changes or risks do we need to consider?

To uncover this vision, CP2 led focus groups, conducted surveys, and solicited feedback from board members, managers, frontline staff, government officials, local business owners, and other stakeholders.

“Even the process of coming up with it is helpful,” Nate says. “It forces you into having good discussions, and if you have an active board, it’s an especially valuable process.”

After conducting five cross-functional focus groups, gathering feedback from key audiences, and conducting a thorough SWOT analysis, CP2 guided executives and the board through a process to determine its desired outcomes, strategic goals, and the short- and long-term initiatives to achieve those goals.



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-Michael Haines, Past President, Voluntary Action Center Board of Directors

"We went into more detailed components of the strategic plan and invited some of the management back," Nate says. "It was a cool process—every one of the people who were involved saw that we took their comments to heart, and that they're components in our strategic plan."

PUTTING THE PLAN TO WORK

Strategic planning doesn't end when the plan is published. In moving from vision to action, a well-formed strategic plan guides decisions and ensures that all activities and programs align with the organization's mission and goals.

"It helps me navigate through our priorities and communicate them to the team," Nate says. "We have key performance indicators and deadlines, and not only do we have three-year goals, but short-term objectives to work through too."

Michael Haines, past-president of Voluntary Action Center's board of directors, knows the value of strategic plans.

Having worked in the strategic planning industry and seen the nonprofit's previous plan fully implemented, he says he was impressed with CP2's process.

"I look at what Cory did and appreciate it as useful, effective, and clear," Michael says. "I was very pleased with CP2's work. Any board with the resources to afford a strategic plan should do one. It's not a vanity project, it's a vital roadmap for achieving long-term goals and ensuring our organization's sustainability."

In all, the work results in more than a plan. Throughout the next three years, this effort will be the driver for turning ideas into reality when it comes to long-term sustainability, community impact, and the future of programs.

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About Us

CP2 Consulting is a strategic planning and organizational development company that works with nonprofit organizations to create and implement strategic plans that achieve measurable outcomes, preventing your plan from gathering dust on a shelf. We work with the organization, individual departments, and your staff to find common values and goals that move your organization forward.

WE HELP NONPROFITS

Strategic Planning

Implementation of Existing Strategic Plans

Organizational Culture



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