

# *Expanding Our Reach*

The 2009 - 2011 Strategic Plan  
for  
School's Out Washington

Completed April 1, 2009



## **Our Mission: Who We Are and What We Do**

School's Out Washington is a statewide organization focused on building community-based systems to improve the quality and availability of afterschool programs for Washington's school-age children.

Since 1987, we have served as an intermediary organization in the field of afterschool programming in Washington State. SOWA provides training to afterschool program staff, advocates with public policy makers, and cultivates leadership at the grassroots and institutional levels for afterschool programs and issues.

**The following mission statement reflects an important expansion of our reach to encompass the field of youth development working with older teens/high school youth:**

*School's Out provides services and guidance for organizations to ensure all young people have safe places to learn and grow when not in school. School's Out is dedicated to building community systems to support quality out-of-school time programs for Washington's 5-18 year olds through training, advocacy and leadership.*

SOWA achieves its mission through playing an intermediary role in the out-of-school-time system. The main components of an intermediary organization's role are:

- Engaging, convening, and supporting critical constituencies
- Promoting quality standards and accountability
- Brokering and leveraging resources
- Promoting effective policies

To accomplish the above SOWA brings together a wide variety of individuals and groups with a stake in quality, accessible, affordable out-of-school-time programs. In order to convene effectively SOWA is inclusive in its relationships and welcomes a broad diversity of voices to discussions. It continually asks, "Who is not yet at the table?" as it catalyzes thinking about an issue or actions to make progress. Whether it is leading, connecting, or participating, SOWA seeks to build leadership among other partners.

**Our core approach has three elements:**

- Training offers an exciting array of professional development opportunities to meet a wide range of interests, schedules, needs and career paths. Ongoing training for afterschool professionals is key to the positive development of the children and youth in their care.
- Advocacy occurs on all levels from working towards sustainable public funding for afterschool programs to advancing the understanding of how quality afterschool and youth development programs positively benefit the well being of children, youth, families, and communities.

- Leadership provides energy and creativity towards innovating in the field, including more voices at the table, influencing policy to sustain the out-of-school-time system of program and services, and supporting cultural relevancy of programs and services.

## **Our Vision: Why we do what we do**

### **SOWA envisions a society in which:**

- All children and youth are safe, happy, and thriving with caring adults during their non-school hours
- Quality afterschool options are accessible and culturally relevant to all, responsive to community need, and integral to family, youth, and community well being
- Funding for afterschool options and supports is ample, varied, and ongoing
- Afterschool professionals are valued, respected, and well-compensated with easy access to training, education, and information
- Afterschool and youth development programs are essential to healthy and strong individuals, families, and communities

## **Our Values: How We Approach Our Work**

### **We are mission-driven and strive to:**

- Keep as our highest priority the wellbeing of school age children and youth and the professionals who care for them
- Promote cultural relevance and aggressively act to end bigotry and oppression as it is reflected in institutions and services for children, youth, and families
- Gather and disseminate relevant information
- Build leadership capacities of others and support learners
- Implement best practices
- Develop innovative programs
- Identify new opportunities to advance our mission
- Recruit and support a diverse team of professionals who reflect the populations we serve

**We are an excellent employer and strive to:**

- Nurture human connection and hospitality
- Support staff's work-family/life balance and welcome children
- Build relationships and a work environment based on respect, trust, support, and open communication
- Honor individual and collective contributions that help to achieve our common vision
- Blend humor and fun with the serious work we do
- Continuously learn and encourage creativity

**We are a committed, accountable community partner and strive to:**

- Relate responsively to out-of-school time care providers and the families they serve
- Be responsible and accountable for the quality of our services
- Actively and reliably partner in coalitions and collaborations with other organizations
- Empower networks and nurture learning communities

## **Strategic Planning Approach**

SOWA embarked on this strategic planning process with two important questions in mind: "What would it mean to expand services from 5-14 years to 5-18 years?" and "What would it take to create a sustainable organization?" In addition, staff wanted to know how to best build on its success as an intermediary in the system of Washington State out-of-school time programs.

To answer these questions SOWA staff utilized a vast body of high quality information available through its own initiatives and partnerships/collaborations; identified and interviewed knowledgeable individuals in programs and communities across the state; conducted an extensive organizational assessment and prioritized the areas needing attention and, finally, reflected on its accomplishments and work still to be done. A planning team with the help of an external consultant guided this process.

Over the past year SOWA collaborated in and completed many important "taking stock" and "planning" activities. These included Feed Your Brain strategic planning, Non-Profit Assistance Center strategic planning for immigrant and refugee children, A Well-Prepared Workforce, and statewide supply and demand study. Utilizing a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) framework, staff drew out strategic themes from relevant documents for use in this strategic planning process.

Through interviews, focus groups, regularly scheduled meetings with trainers, constituents and key stakeholders, etc., staff gathered more information. The interviewers/facilitators followed a standard protocol in those efforts. The data both affirmed the importance and competence of SOWA's current efforts as well as provided valuable information about community and provider needs around the state. It also identified key issues related to serving older youth, e.g., bridging from school to work/higher education.

Work by the Leadership Team addressed SOWA's internal capacity through extensive analysis using a tool created by McKinsey and Company for use by Venture Philanthropy Partners and modified for use by Social Venture Partners Seattle.

In a retreat setting, staff reviewed the 06-08 strategic plan intentions to identify accomplishments and work ahead. Staff also focused on understanding the ramifications of expanding services up to age 18 years.

The planning team reviewed the summary information from all of the above sources and activities and identified seven goal areas; subsequently the goals were refined. In a second retreat the whole staff reviewed organizational vision and values and identified 2009 objectives for each goal; in a third meeting staff discussed the feasibility of the draft goals and objectives. With further modification and editing the plan was completed in January 2009. Using a planning template, the staff developed work plans for 2009 based on the strategic goals and objectives.

## **Our Goals and Objectives: How We Will Achieve Our Mission**

An important note about the difference between goals and objectives and how they fit together: Goal statements communicate the umbrella three-year outcomes of the strategic plan. Objectives communicate the specific achievements for each one-year segment of the plan. The objectives are meant to:

- 1) Guide action steps and
- 2) Enable the organization's members to know clearly its achievement.

In order to do the above, the objectives need to have functional and usable specificity in their language. The following are our three-year goals with 2009-2010 objectives.

### **GOAL A: SUPPORT THE DEVELOPMENT OF A CONTINUOUS SYSTEM OF INTEGRATED SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH AGES 0-18.**

**Objective 1: Influence local and state groups to set a policy agenda that includes professionals serving children and youth.**

### **GOAL B: CONNECT AND STRENGTHEN SUPPORTS TO ORGANIZATIONS SERVING OLDER YOUTH.**

**Objective 1: Connect and engage local youth initiatives in Vancouver, Spokane, Tacoma, Shoreline, and King County.**

**Objective 2: Increase awareness of needs and best practices related to programs serving older youth.**

**GOAL C: CHAMPION THE CREATION OF A RESPECTIVE AND VISIBLE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM FOR THE AFTERSCHOOL AND YOUTH DEVELOPMENT WORKFORCE.**

**Objective 1: Develop an evaluation plan, theory of change, and design for outcome measurements.**

**Objective 2: Develop and agree upon a set of core competencies for AYD professionals.**

**Objective 3: Develop an identity for the AYD profession.**

**Objective 4: Design and implement a quality review that addresses content, relevance and delivery of services offered by SOWA trainers/coaches.**

**GOAL D: BROADEN PUBLIC WILL TO CREATE A LONG-TERM SUSTAINABLE FUNDING STREAM FOR AFTERSCHOOL AND YOUTH DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS.**

**Objective 1: Advocate for maintaining or increasing dedicated state funding for the community learning center programs.**

**Objective 2: Establish a working relationship with the new Superintendent of Public Instruction.**

**Objective 3: Develop and implement a comprehensive dissemination plan for the Supply and Demand Study.**

**Objective 4: Provide additional community awareness resources to local constituents.**

**Objective 5: Make a public case about how quality AYD programs reduce school drop-out rates and increase employment options for families.**

**Objective 6: Increase significantly the number of local community leaders participating in Panel of 50.**

**Objective 7: Establish bi-partisan legislative relationships.**

**GOAL E: ACTIVATE AND FOCUS SUPPORT AND RESOURCES FOR QUALITY PROGRAMS SERVING CHILDREN AND YOUTH AGES 5-18.**

**Objective 1:** Develop a unified response about SOWA's work with program quality standards.

**Objective 2:** Create a document that offers common language around standards of program quality and an explanation of SOWA's role regarding standards.

**Objective 3:** Identify existing quality improvement systems for AYD ages 5-18.

**GOAL F: EMBED CULTURAL RELEVANCY IN ALL ASPECTS OF INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL PROGRAMS AND INITIATIVES.**

**Objective 1:** Choose a preferred cultural competency/relevancy assessment tool for use by SOWA.

**Objective 2:** Conduct a cultural competency assessment.

**Objective 3:** Strengthen relationships with partners serving communities of color and immigrant and refugee communities.

**Objective 4:** Review and revise Trainer Apprentice Project program to accommodate individuals serving communities of color or immigrant and refugee communities.

**Objective 5:** Expand and diversify SOWA's training pool by two individuals who represent programs serving communities of color and or immigrant and refugee and culturally based organizations.

**GOAL G: STRENGTHEN SOWA'S LEADERSHIP AS AN INTERMEDIARY ORGANIZATION THROUGH INTERNAL CAPACITY BUILDING.**

**Objective 1:** Create mechanisms that support coordination and integration among programs.

**Objective 2:** Create a process manual that documents existing processes and related timelines.

**Objective 3:** Produce formal definitions of roles and responsibilities of all organizational entities and a complete organizational chart.

**Objective 4:** Create a written and visual story of SOWA as a foundation to understanding its culture.

**Objective 5: Identify current formal and informal measurement schemes in use and assess effectiveness.**

**Objective 6: Brand and position the SOWA website to be the one-stop site for resources and information about out-of-school time.**

**Objective 7: Complete assessment of database system.**

**Objective 8: Create a marketing plan for products and services.**

**Objective 9: Create a system to develop and retain SOWA staff.**

**Objective 10: All programs and services are well defined and fully aligned with mission and vision.**

**Objective 11: Adapt programs and services based on increased knowledge of the diverse afterschool and youth development field.**

## **Accountability**

**We will ensure accomplishment of our goals and objectives by:**

- Creating work plans based on these goals and objectives
- Using these goals, objectives, and work plans as the foundation for our work
- Monitoring progress regularly
- Engaging our partners in implementing the action plans
- Seeking feedback from our stakeholders about our progress