

POWERFUL VOICES

Strategic Plan

2010 - 2013

Approved by the Board of Directors



June 2010



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Board of Directors of Powerful Voices is pleased to present our 2010 – 2013 Strategic Plan. This plan provides all those involved with the organization – including our board, staff, current program participants, volunteers, alumni, foundation partners and donors – with our strategic focus through 2013.

The mission of Powerful Voices is to foster adolescent girls' development by providing programs and promoting social justice so girls can realize their dreams, engage their communities and shape a better world. Our mission is rooted in our vision for all girls to live healthy and personally meaningful lives in a society that values them.

Our Strategic Plan was developed in consultation with dozens of stakeholders over the course of 12 months, and was unanimously approved by the Board of Directors on March 22, 2010.

Our plan identifies three overarching and inter-connected strategic goals that build upon the success of the past fifteen years.



We see our goals and strategies as guideposts that provide focus and intention around ambitious multiyear efforts. Like any such guiding document, this plan cannot be fully predictive; it exists in the real world and is subject to change. While we expect our priorities and strategies to remain the same, our tactics for accomplishing them will continue to develop in response to changes in the internal and external environment. We look forward to the exciting opportunities presented by this Strategic Plan.

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POWERFUL VOICES STRATEGIC PLAN – FY 2010 - 2013

Mission	Vision	Values
Powerful Voices fosters adolescent girls' development by providing programs and promoting social justice so girls can realize their dreams, engage their communities and shape a better world.	All girls live healthy, personally meaningful lives in a society that values them.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safety • Diversity • Justice • Innovation • Integrity

Our Beliefs & Assumptions

- A strengths-based approach is both respectful and effective
- Girl-specific, relationship-based programs work to empower girls
- Working within institutions to ensure safety and equity is critical to realizing long-term gains in girls' lives
- Life-long social justice activists are created when girls are encouraged to challenge bias, prejudice and inequalities in their everyday lives

Our Impact

Relationships & Identity	Safety & Health	Education & Economics	Policy & Advocacy
Ensure girls connect to their personal values, take pride in their identity, develop healthy relationships with others so girls can meaningfully contribute to their communities and live the lives they most desire.	Prevent girls' victimization, address social/emotional development and promote healthy decision making to address health and safety disparities.	Provide girls with knowledge of how education affects economic success, develop critical thinking, self-advocacy and employment skills to address education and employment disparities.	Support girls and the community to work together on girl's issues to promote equity and make the world a just place for everyone.

Our 2010 – 2013 Strategic Goals

Operational Strength	Leveraged Partnerships	Community Impact
We will build a dynamic work environment that reflects our mission, vision and values and enhances our organization's ability to achieve its goals.	We will create and sustain strategic partnerships that enhance our ability to serve the complex needs of girls.	We will increase and sustain our positive impact in the community through investments in program development, cross-program evaluation, outreach, and organizing.

WHO WE ARE

About Powerful Voices

Since 1995, Powerful Voices has provided free, innovative programs to adolescent girls in Seattle through evidence-based programs in public schools and in the juvenile justice system.

The organization was formed to address issues at their root by instilling leadership skills, fostering the development of critical thinking, and promoting the individual potential in adolescent girls. Our mission is firmly rooted in our belief that strong girls become strong women.

Since completing its first assignment in 1995 – a county-wide needs assessment on behalf of the King County Women’s Advisory Board – Powerful Voices has become recognized for its valuable work in the area of supporting adolescent girls during a crucial period in their lives. The organization has been spotlighted on the front page of the Seattle Post-Intelligencer; is a recipient of a National Juvenile Justice Award; and is recognized as an exceptional organization by the City of Seattle.

We believe that all girls deserve opportunities to grow into strong women. We recognize that many girls face adolescence without the resources that will help them grow and thrive. We work in public middle schools and in the juvenile justice system – places where girls benefit from our unique, positive, all-girl programs.

By focusing on girls’ strengths, helping girls to define their personal goals and introducing them to new and challenging concepts of opportunity, equality, and responsibility, Powerful Voices supports girls to build strong lives and strong communities. The work that we do has a lasting impact, particularly when sustained by adults – parents, mentors and older peers – who offer guidance and support. Girls learn to stand up and face the challenges they will encounter. They become advocates for themselves and activists in their communities.

Organizational Mission, Vision, Values

Vision Statement

All girls live healthy, personally meaningful lives in a society that values them.

Mission Statement

Powerful Voices fosters adolescent girls' development by providing programs and promoting social justice so girls can realize their dreams, engage their communities and shape a better world.

Values Statement

SAFETY – We believe safety is a basic human right.

Safety is the freedom from the danger of physical, psychological, social, and sexual harm. Safety from harm is fundamental to healthy relationships and self authority which are at the root of the Powerful Voices mission.

DIVERSITY – We believe in the power of diverse communities.

Diversity is the variety of identifying features, including ideologies, racial or ethnic classifications, cultures, gender identities, generations, socio-economic classes, sexual orientations, nationalities, languages, abilities and life experiences. The diversity of the girls we serve, and amongst Powerful Voices' supporters, generates the rich perspective that enables us to offer the solutions needed to develop strong communities.

JUSTICE – We believe in a more just society.

For Powerful Voices, justice means making equitable gains in health, economic, educational, juvenile justice and legal systems. In recognizing that disparities impact the girls we serve, our work centers on girls with the highest needs and those with limited access to opportunities. Powerful Voices seeks to empower girls and their communities to advocate for justice and equity.

INNOVATION – We believe innovation enables us to fulfill our mission.

Innovation is using creativity and critical thought to develop new solutions and approaches to achieve our mission. Combining proven practices with creative opportunities augments experiences and outcomes. Innovation leads to program enhancements, organizational development and more effective community outreach and fundraising, in addition to new marketing opportunities.

INTEGRITY – We believe in acting with honesty and accountability.

Acting with integrity is being ethical, fair, honest and accountable. At Powerful Voices, integrity is fundamental to our decision-making, leadership, direct services, donor and partner relations, and community-wide advocacy.

Our Beliefs and Assumptions

Powerful Voices' theory of change is grounded in a set of beliefs and assumptions that underpin our approach. Our beliefs and assumptions shape how we develop our programs, how we deliver our curriculum, how we set goals and how we communicate who we are to girls, parents, staff, board members, donors and partners. We have four overarching beliefs and assumptions:

A strengths-based approach is both respectful and effective.

Our strengths-based program approach is grounded in resiliency and prevention research and draws from girls' knowledge, skills, values, interests, goals, creativity and passion. Powerful Voices believes the more we use our strengths, the more we lead our own lives in a meaningful way and positively contribute to our communities.

Girl-specific, relationship-based programs work to empower girls.

Girl-specific programming addresses girls' needs for positive girl culture, values and identity development and healthy female connection both with peers and adults. Research shows that girls tend to make decisions within the relational context of peers. Powerful Voices believes adolescence is a crucial developmental time for girls. Skills related to thinking and communication developed during adolescence impact decision-making through adulthood.

Working within institutions to ensure safety and equity is critical to realizing long-term gains in girls' lives.

Even today – decades since the civil rights, feminist and LGBTQ movements — we live in a society where girls are marginalized, sexualized and victimized. The publicly-funded school and detention systems are not historically designed to address girls' needs, often resulting in girls being alienated and institutionally oppressed. Powerful Voices believes that safety and equity are basic human rights within the school and detention systems and essential to promote cultural shift within these systems.

Life-long social justice activists are created when girls are encouraged to challenge bias, prejudice and inequalities in their everyday lives.

Alongside working to build girls' emotional, social, educational and employment skills, we also believe in encouraging open critical analysis of societal norms so that girls may begin to challenge bias and prejudice and build a more just and equitable world. Research supports the importance of these skills and that a girl is more likely to take on leadership as an adult if this is practiced in adolescence. Powerful Voices believes this combination of skills is essential to the ability to accomplish goals, realize dreams, and shape a more just world.

Our Impact

At Powerful Voices we think holistically about girls, their families and our community's health and wellbeing. Within this holistic context, we seek to make an impact in the following four areas: relationships and identity, safety and health, education and economics, and policy and advocacy.

Relationships & Identity

Ensure girls connect to their personal values, take pride in their identity, develop healthy relationships with others so girls can meaningfully contribute to their communities and live the lives they most desire.

Relationships are central to healthy female adolescent development. Yet harmful, media-fed values in mainstream girl culture often form the backdrop for how girls relate to one another. Additionally, intimate partner violence, bullying and the rise in school gang activity all are operating in the context of relationships. Our programs are a vital, one-of-a-kind opportunity to explore values and identity as girls build healthy peer and adult relationships and transform the culture among girls. These experiences have a lasting impact on how girls understand their identity and form relationships over their lifetime.

Safety & Health

Prevent girls' victimization, address social/emotional development and promote healthy decision making to address health and safety disparities.

Middle school is a key developmental time to address girls' health and safety issues, as patterns of violence and mental illness start early. Girls in the juvenile justice system — with victimization rates estimated as high as 80% — receive little or have no access to information that could save or dramatically improve their lives. A safe environment for health education

and resource access is foundational to healthy decision making, yet the school and juvenile justice systems do not adequately address these needs.

Education & Economics

Provide girls with knowledge of how education affects economic success; and develop critical thinking, self-advocacy and employment skills to address education and employment disparities.

Greater educational attainment results in better employment opportunities and higher income. Girls of color continue to lag far behind in educational achievement and employment readiness; specifically, drop-out rates, pregnancy rates, truancy rates and wage gaps are highest for African-American, Latina, Pacific Island and Native American girls. Immigrant Asian American English Language Learning (ELL) students are underserved and unsupported, experience academic difficulties and are stigmatized.

Policy & Advocacy

Support girls and the community to work together on girl's issues to promote equity and make the world a just place for everyone.

Educational and juvenile justice systems were not historically designed to meet girls' needs. Significant disparities in economic, education, health and juvenile justice outcomes for girls of color exist. In addition, girls' desire to be a leader, as well as their involvement in programs to develop leadership skills, declines with age. Our programs develop leadership skills in tandem with awareness of inequity based on gender, race, class and other forms of discrimination. Policymakers, the community and those responsible for girls' development are among those we want to engage. Together, girls and adults can use these skills to advocate for next-generation gains in education, juvenile justice, employment, health, safety and interpersonal relationships.



2010 SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS



Closing in on its 15th year, Powerful Voices has evolved into an organization with solid roots, loyal supporters, and growing evidence of program impact. In order to better understand where we are now, we spent time identifying, analyzing and attempting to predict where we have the greatest potential and where we anticipate some of our biggest challenges. Collectively, the following strengths, challenges, and trends informed our 2010-2013 strategic goals.

Internal Operating Analysis

Organizational Strengths to Leverage

- Ability to attract ethnically and culturally diverse staff members.
- Strong track record of building and putting in place systems for efficiency and effectiveness.
- Increasingly effective systems of performance evaluation, information technology and financial management.
- Solid fundraising skills and infrastructure.
- Highly mission-driven organization

Internal Organizational Challenges to Address

- Challenge to support and sustain ethnically and culturally diverse board and staff over time, due to limited capacity (size and budget) to offer professional development and career advancement opportunities.
- Long term organizational planning systems still in development: tend to be overly ambitious in overall goal and not specific enough in tactics.
- Programs have evolved incrementally and organically: in need of overall strategic alignment to enable scaling up or down if/when necessary.
- Board's role in strategy, executive director and board evaluation and financial responsibility: meeting basic needs now, room to grow capacity & effectiveness.
- External communications: limited resources make polished appearance a challenge and need more clear strategy to communicate tailored messages .

External Trends Affecting Powerful Voices

In the course of our strategic planning effort, Powerful Voices staff and board members engaged in a diligent review and analysis of external trends affecting Powerful Voices. Using current local data and reports, national studies, and key informant conversations, we identified the following as the most likely to affect Powerful Voices in the next three to five years:

Trends Impacting Adolescent Girls

- Girls of color show disparate gains—and in many ways are losing—in social justice arenas including education, health and juvenile justice.
- Mother-daughter (and other adult mentor) relationships and role modeling are increasingly important to the well-being of girls.
- Court-involved girls are not more violent than in previous years, as national media have suggested.
- State-wide, after-school activity involvement decreases significantly with age; as does a girls' desire to be a leader.
- Intimate partner violence against girls needs to be considered a serious health issue with long-range negative consequences.

Trends in Policy, Research & Training

- Increasing interplay between new research and community-based program models: how do we choose between intervention, prevention, or both?
- Emerging governmental leadership around girl's issues.
- A growing movement toward “Program Standards” in education and juvenile justice systems.

Trends in Available Funding

- Some new funders are moving into the arenas of social change, policy advocacy and evidence-based programs.
- There is growing interest in programs with regional or national reach; more corporations partnering with nationally recognized programs (rather than local); larger government grants going to programs with regional or national reach.
- New on-line giving mechanisms have potential to make big difference.
- With the economic downturn and large national or international events like earthquakes, funders are prioritizing “basic needs” over prevention.

Trends Affecting Primary Institutional Partners

- We are noticing a growing interest in all-girl programs with our partners.
- We are seeing increased use of sentencing alternatives over secure detention .
- City, County and State personnel & program budget cuts on schools and juvenile justice systems are likely to negatively affect our partnerships.

Trends affecting All-Girl Program Collaborators

- Expansion and consolidation of all-girl programming moving into the second decade.
- International girls work showing major promise: presents opportunities to share what we've learned with others.

2010 – 2013 STRATEGIC GOALS

We have identified three overarching and inter-connected strategic goals that build upon the success of the past fifteen years. We believe that a multi-year focus of our time and resources in these three areas will yield positive results both in terms of our impact on individual girl's lives as well as on the broader community.



Operational Strength Objectives	Leveraged Partnerships Objectives	Community Impact Objectives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the longevity, morale and quality of staff and their contributions to the organization • Recruit and retain experienced board members who champion our mission and guide the organization to achieve its goals • Enhance the marketing and messaging of Powerful Voices in order to increase our credibility and recognition as a premier direct service and advocacy organization 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase and expand our impact and services through creative and accountable partnerships • Achieve greater operational efficiency through collaborative cost-sharing • Engage in cross-organization issue advocacy to raise awareness and visibility of girls' issues and the need for effective and just policies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grow our ability to serve and support girls' healthy development by refining and enhancing our existing direct service programs • Develop our systems of cross-program evaluation to improve program quality and credibility • Advocate for effective and just gender-specific policies and services within institutions serving girls

PLANNING METHODOLOGY

Powerful Voices has been guided by a Strategic Plan for over a decade. Previous plans have been instrumental in allowing the organization to be intentional and ambitious in the course of its growth as an organization and, ultimately, make a positive impact on the lives of girls, their families and their communities. We approach strategic planning as a community-building effort, reaching out to internal and external stakeholders to gather input and feedback. We also grounded our planning and goal-setting in solid data. This data came together in our situational analysis and anchored our goals and objectives in reality.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

The following documents are available upon request

- Powerful Voices Theory of Change
- Environmental Trend Report
- Operating Capacities Report
- Strategic Plan – Implementation Workplan



Powerful Voices

www.powerfulvoices.org