

ACT Strategic Compass 2019 – 2021
FINAL

Mission:

ACT for Alexandria is a community foundation that improves the lives of Alexandrians by turning ideas into action and resources into results.

Beliefs & Values:

As Alexandrians, we (ACT's board and staff) find ourselves surrounded by:

- A beautiful city with a rich, complex history and an extraordinary legacy from our forebears;
- A diverse population of newcomers and long-term residents that provides great strength;
- Generous citizens who want to serve and share their time, talent, and money to help our community;
- An effective city government that is committed to private/public partnership; and
- Amazing nonprofits that work hard every day to improve the lives of Alexandrians.

As such, we feel both compelled and obligated to share these assets and to organize effectively to help our community thrive and be ever more inclusive.

The following values guide our work:

- **Collective insights (Learning)**
We listen to and learn from others. Their perspectives help us better understand our community, identify opportunities and learn how we can do our work better.
- **Meaningful connections (Connectedness)**
We are connectors and bridge builders, assisting people and organizations behind the scenes so that they can achieve important goals. We facilitate unified action and celebrate joint achievement.
- **Practical optimism (Optimism)**
Given the richness of our community, we see extraordinary possibilities and are undaunted by the size of a challenge. At the same time, we know that every small step forward is important and can yield big results.
- **Respect for all (Respect)**
Our work is driven by our respect for the unique strengths, experiences and diversity of the people of Alexandria. We work with our partners to ensure justice, empathy and opportunity for all Alexandrians.
- **Thoughtful intentions (Intentionality)**

We are driven to ensure that Alexandria is a vibrant place for all. Some measures of success are easily quantified, but we also rely upon qualitative measures, particularly the experiences and stories of the people with whom we work.

Vision:

Alexandria is a more vibrant community where all residents can achieve their full potential and there is long-term, sustainable support to improve our community.

Strategies:

To accomplish this vision, we will employ the following strategies:

1. Connect

We will connect people to each other and build bridges across neighborhoods, organizations and sectors, laying a foundation for collective action.

Goal:

Nonprofit leaders and donors have the relationships they need to partner and collaborate to lead social change.

Activities:

We will create a deep sense of connection across neighborhoods and sectors; this connectivity will deepen commitment to the community. ACT will provide opportunities for people throughout Alexandria to come together and engage on critical issues. We will partner with the City of Alexandria, Alexandria City Public Schools and others to advance collective goals. Examples include: peer cohorts for nonprofit executives and for donors, giving circles, nonprofit/donor meet-and-greets, and neighborhood conversations that create space for understanding, dialogue and learning.

- Lead collaborative efforts that strengthen connections between nonprofits (such as, ACHSO)
- Facilitate connections between donors and nonprofits
- Coordinate site visits with donors and local nonprofits
- Create peer cohorts for nonprofit leaders and donors
- Offer giving circles
- Support informal neighborhood gatherings (such as volunteer-hosted dinners)

2. Strengthen and Sustain

We seek to ensure that nonprofits have the resources needed to address critical issues that affect Alexandrians.

Goal:

Nonprofit organizations have expanded capacity to achieve their missions.

Activities:

Equipped with a long-term vision for Alexandria, ACT will establish a community endowment to enable a sustained source of annual grants to local nonprofits. (For example, a \$10M endowment could create annual grantmaking totaling \$500,000.) This on-going source of funding will support expansion in nonprofit services and programs across Alexandria, enabling the community to accelerate progress in addressing persistent disparities in areas such as health, education, housing and economic opportunity.

Programs for donors focus on topics such as estate planning, family philanthropy and strategic giving. Donors will be more strategic and effective in achieving their charitable giving goals.

Ensuring a strong nonprofit community goes beyond dollars. ACT will offer technical assistance and capacity building focused on nonprofit sustainability and build a strong network of leaders. Coupled with Spring2ACTion, these activities will enable nonprofits to innovate and grow.

- Create a community endowment
- Create a legacy giving program
- Grow ACT's assets through donor advised funds
- Leverage Spring2ACTion as a fundraising capacity building tool for nonprofits
- Provide capacity building grants, technical assistance and training to support effectiveness and financial sustainability for nonprofits
- Offer leadership development programs for community and nonprofit leaders

3. Mobilize

We will use our influence to raise awareness about community needs and mobilize investment and action to support these needs.

Goal:

- Donors and civic leaders are more aware of community needs and increase their investment in efforts that address those needs.
- ACT's partners are able to make faster progress on collective goals.

Activities:

ACT will work with residents to define what "a vibrant community for all" looks like and mobilize stakeholders to take action. ACT will be even more present and visible in the community with staff and board members serving as connectors and ambassadors. Attending neighborhood events and festivals, ACT board and staff will listen and share what they hear. Armed with community organizing skills, advocacy techniques and

communications expertise, ACT will influence decision makers and cultivate public will for bolder, more courageous action.

- Host forums (like IMPACT) that raise important issues and trends
- Continue to partner with local media to share insights about the community
- Use effective community engagement strategies as we participate in (or host) events around the city to listen and engage
- Craft a vision with the community that defines Alexandria as a “vibrant place for all”
- Offer opportunities for donors and others to learn about community issues

4. Develop

We will invest in our own capacity so that ACT is an enduring, sustainable organization.

Goal:

ACT has the resources, skills and expertise to successfully execute the strategies above.

Activities:

Over the next three years, ACT will invest in building a best-in-class development function that enables ACT to successfully raise a community endowment as well as revenue to sustain our operations. We will implement best practices and explore creative donor cultivation and stewardship activities. A new website and integrated communications strategy ensures that ACT will reach and effectively engage target audiences.

Community engagement and facilitation will become core competencies, allowing staff and ACT ambassadors (consultants, board members, etc.) to engage diverse stakeholders. We will create opportunities for increased community representation in ACT’s work. ACT will prioritize “meeting people where they are” (literally) and have space to host gatherings such as community convenings, giving circles or peer cohorts.

Activities

- Conduct an endowment/capital campaign feasibility analysis
- Strengthen relationship management operations and systems
- Create a branding and messaging strategy to support our strategy
- Secure space to host convenings
- Enhance current facilitation and convening capacity
- Invest in more focused professional development for staff and board