

Executive Summary

Youth Line Strategic Plan 2004-2007

Introduction

The Lesbian Gay Bi Trans Youth Line is a vital service. After a decade of providing support to lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer and questioning youth throughout Ontario, the Youth Line is set to expand its capacity to serve and grow. External and internal forces that effect the organization must be understood and addressed.

From March to October 2004, the Youth Line undertook a strategic planning process to identify strategic goals for the next 3 years. With the support of the Laidlaw Foundation and the Carolyn Sifton Foundation, the Dianne Lister Group was retained to work with the Youth Line to begin the process of identifying organizational priorities and an implementation strategy.

The strategic planning process included consultations with over 250 stakeholders, including staff, volunteers, board members, funders, clients, and community partners. The process included an on-line survey, a facilitated SWOT analysis, an internal organizational and documentary review, and a facilitated stakeholder session.

Key Findings

The strategic process identified a number of key points that address the strengths and weaknesses of the organization as it exists now and used these as a basis for developing goals and visions.

Strengths of the Youth Line include its unique for-youth, by-youth service and its temporary stability of leadership and finances. Human resources of staff and volunteers continue to be the Youth Line's primary resource. However, more attention is needed to nurture these resources to ensure adequate volunteer engagement and a healthy board/staff partnership. Other areas requiring attention include improving its profile to meet its provincial mandate, improving program evaluation, improving long term fund/resource development plans and addressing gaps in its infrastructure.

Strategic Goals

1. Improvements in Programs and Services

In order to improve its programs and services the Youth Line will implement a comprehensive evaluation framework and improve program evaluation and monitoring. This will include the creation of annual program work plans, development of an evaluation framework, implementation of complete program evaluation, and the completion of a needs assessment of queer youth in Ontario.

2. Comprehensive Outreach

The Youth Line will implement a multi-year outreach strategy. This will include the creation of an Outreach Committee and a new provincial outreach strategy. The addition of a Outreach and Marketing Coordinator staff position is needed to maximize the success and reach of any new outreach strategy.

3. Improved Human Resources Management and Leadership Development

The Youth Line will implement a human resources strategy to improve management and leadership within staff and volunteers. This will include the creation of operations manuals for human resources, volunteer training, service provision, and board training and the implementation of an annual staff performance review.

4. Strengthened Organizational Infrastructure

The youth line will strengthen its organizational infrastructure to ensure ongoing stability. This will include a plan to deal with space issues, securing funding for a new phone system, the creation of an operations manuals for all staff, review of IT capabilities and recommend changes and updates, and the creation of a risk management assessment to be revised annually.

In order to achieve the strategic goals, the Youth Line must strengthen and diversify its long term fund development plan. The Youth Line's fund development capacity must also be built from its demonstrated strength – first focusing upon grant proposals aimed at targeted potential private, public and corporate foundations. A primary consideration in this plan must be the generation of a large unrestricted fund which will stabilize funding for core infrastructure costs and operations. The feasibility of the fund development plan will shape the timelines for the implementation of the Youth Line's new strategic goals. In some cases, the Youth Line may not be able to move ahead on all aspects of a strategic goal unless specific restricted funding is secured.

Next steps

The Youth Line will create working groups and committees for each of the primary objectives, including an outreach and marketing committee and a strategic planning implementation committee. Terms of reference and work plans for existing committee will be also informed by the strategic goals. Staff work planning and budgeting will also reflect the strategic goals. Clarity of volunteer, staff and committee roles will be important to start of implementing the strategic plan.

The key themes arising from the Visioning Exercise paint a future picture of the Youth Line as a leading organization that is relevant, responsive, accessible, and has a greatly expanded potential client base. Staff and volunteers have worked tirelessly to build the Youth Line. With an implemented strategic plan, the next several years will bring the organizations capacity to the next level of development. The Youth Line will continue to build on its strengths and address its challenges to ensure that it can continue to provide effective services and to nurture a healthy and efficient organization.