

Recommendations and Strategic Priorities

The SOWA staff reviewed the data collected and collaboratively developed the following priorities as a strategic focus for SOWA over the next three years. These priorities reflect the impact SOWA hopes to achieve and also should be understood in the context of the resources (e.g., money, staff time and infrastructure) available to achieve results.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 1

Increase Equitable Funding for the Field

To respond to this key need raised by stakeholders for SOWA to strengthen advocacy, grantmaking, and funder education/organizing regarding equitable grantmaking, SOWA will prioritize increasing equitable funding for the field through the following:

TACTIC	ACTIONS	WE CAN MEASURE OUR SUCCESS BY TRACKING...
<p>1 Advance SOWA's advocacy plan through a community-driven process.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leverage existing coalitions (i.e., Youth Development Strategy Table) to develop an advocacy plan that <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leverages data Integrates community engagement Elevates youth voice through provider networks Maps opportunities around the state Identifies policy demands and opportunities to shift the political ecosystem With the coalition, develop and implement an advocacy strategy to secure ongoing state funding and resources for the field. Create a process to track which organizations receive state resources in the field. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> # of providers and community members engaged in advocacy # of youth engaged in advocacy # of active YDST members # of policy wins # of BIPOC organizations receiving funding
<p>2 Position SOWA to influence funding practices by developing and disseminating a common grantmaking framework.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assess SOWA's various grant programs to understand commonalities and differences and distill effective practices. Define the set of guiding principles and practices that shape our grantmaking approach. Share the methodology with stakeholders and partners to influence responsive grantmaking practices for the field. Plan for the additional internal infrastructure needed to receive and disseminate additional funding. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completion of a grantmaking framework # of times framework is shared in an online publication, presentation, or convening
<p>3 Secure new funders/ investors to resource the field and advocacy efforts.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Utilize the advocacy plan and grantmaking framework to advocate for more resources. Educate funders on the needs and gaps in the field (as laid out in the advocacy plan). Disseminate additional resources as they emerge towards priorities identified in the advocacy plan. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased municipal, county and state public investments in expanded learning and youth development Increased engagement of private foundations in SOWA's funder convenings and YDST Increased funding for the coalition and SOWA's advocacy leadership

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 2

Strengthen Collective Impact and Community-Driven Solutions through a Formalized Convener Role

To respond to another key need identified by the field for strengthening cross-provider partnerships and elevating youth, provider, and field needs, SOWA will formalize and leverage its unique convener role and prioritize strengthening collective impact and community-driven solutions through the following:

TACTIC	ACTIONS	WE CAN MEASURE OUR SUCCESS BY TRACKING...
1 Clarify and amplify SOWA's identity, role, and purpose as a convener.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Formalize and standardize SOWA's convening purpose, philosophy, and practice grounded in equitable practices, youth development theory and collective impact methodology. Integrate messaging about SOWA's role as a convener in all communications and messaging. Train/socialize and, when possible and strategic, expand staff in the convener role Develop expanded and segmented email lists for ongoing communications 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organization-wide clarity on SOWA's strategies for convening Documentation around convening practices and procedures Email lists are up to date
2 Determine where and who SOWA convenes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop SOWA's convening criteria and priorities Identify other existing cross-sector conveners and key convenings where constituents meet and ensure SOWA has a strategic presence/role balancing local and state efforts Assess gaps and opportunities to establish new groups or convening opportunities to advance other strategic priorities Cultivate strategic partners in local areas to advance SOWA's reach 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Established strategic partners across the state Increased presence at local/state efforts
3 Build and strengthen networks of providers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthen provider networks and connections across the state. Assess opportunities to integrate youth perspectives in networks. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> # of networking opportunities
4 Disseminate learnings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Generate a learning/dissemination agenda to share what is learned with staff internally and partners in the field. Gather ongoing learnings/feedback to continuously improve convening practices and build the capacity and analysis of the field. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Published learning agenda/reports

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 3

Strengthen Data and Evaluation Capacity

To support SOWA’s overall advocacy strategy, its ability to tell the story of the field, and highlight statewide equity and inclusion gaps, SOWA will prioritize strengthening its data and evaluation capacity through the following:

TACTIC	ACTIONS	WE CAN MEASURE OUR SUCCESS BY TRACKING...
<p>1 Strengthen SOWA’s internal research and evaluation capacity</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Centralize coordination and alignment of data and evaluation efforts across the organization; reduce redundancies and improve efficiency of effort • Explore establishing research and evaluation partnerships as a strategy to expand capacity • Identify and resource priority staffing and infrastructure needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organization-wide evaluation work plan • # of improved data and evaluation processes
<p>2 Implement and strengthen continuous quality improvement processes across SOWA teams</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formalize goals, including equity impact goals, for each program area • Develop a data template for every program area to reflect on data; include disaggregated data and equity measures • Create a standard protocol for how internal teams reflect on data • Generate ideas for a data dashboard: What would be useful to see on-going? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflections from data templates • How often teams reflect on data • Published data dashboard
<p>3 Generate data/evaluation learnings to disseminate</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hold evaluation/ communications/program team meetings to identify data/learning that can be shared broadly with the field. • Gather data/evaluation from partners to share with others. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Published evaluation data • Integration of data into communications and story-telling.
<p>4 Integrate youth voice/perspective into assessment and reflection</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess how to integrate youth and family voice into SOWA’s reflection (through direct work, or elevating the efforts of partners). • Scale/expand this work in future years. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased documentation of qualitative and quantitative data on youth and family perspective
<p>4 With strengthened capacity and partnerships, evaluate existing data and insights and identify research/ evaluation plan to address key knowledge gaps aligned to equity and advocacy priorities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify bright spots and needs in the field, with a focus on racial equity and other equity gaps. • Define potential storylines to articulate the story SOWA wants to tell paired with data; engage community stakeholders in reviewing data and storytelling. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation of a formalized research agenda. • Published stories of the field that utilize data

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 4

Invest in Staff, Organizational Culture and Sustainability

To ensure staff and organizational sustainability and to emphasize the importance of allocating resources to an internal facing strategy, SOWA will prioritize investing in staff, organizational culture and sustainability through the following:

TACTIC	ACTIONS	WE CAN MEASURE OUR SUCCESS BY TRACKING...
1 Develop budget proposals and fundraise for organizational sustainability and full capacity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with an organizational consultant to revise our fund development strategy and staffing plan. • Develop high, medium and low budget scenarios to support increased staffing and infrastructure. • Allocate resources in the following areas as possible: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development staff • Administrative/Operational capacity • Staff compensation/benefits • Infrastructure for the following <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data Systems (Elevate Washington and data analyst/staffing) • Advocacy • Convening • Regional Hubs • Fundraise through grants, major donors, fee-for-service and advocacy efforts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organization-wide evaluation work plan • # of improved data and evaluation processes
2 Invest in a thriving, equitable and inclusive organizational culture.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify a working group to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a prioritized list of organizational culture strategies, sorted by no cost, low cost, high cost. • Assess feasibility based on funding. • Implement highest priority strategies. • Establish a culture of celebration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase rituals for celebration and honoring of diverse cultures • Increase opportunities for informal connection and on-going relationship building 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Streamlined organizational assessment tool • Staff turnover/ retention rate • Exit interviews • Staff satisfaction survey results
3 Establish a professional development strategy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a career progression framework for SOWA staff to see entry points and growth potential in the organization. • Equip supervisors to effectively support staff development & career progression • Explore: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cross-functional and higher-level training & work opportunities • Free/Paid PD opportunities to develop desired competencies • Formalized mentor system 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Growth plans for each staff • Evidence that staff progress in their careers over time • Staff accessing PD opportunities
4 Conduct a strategic assessment by program area.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a rubric to assess program area activities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alignment to Theory of Change • Alignment to Strategic Priorities • Equity Impact • Resource/Cost Need • Plan to improve alignment or reduce program areas that are less well aligned and resourced • Generate a comprehensive work plan for all program areas; including periodic opportunities for structured reflection on progress • Confirm that capacity exists to complete all work as planned. Prioritize available capacity and right-size program work plans to available capacity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workload assessment • Structured opportunities for reflection and evaluation of work plan
5 Build an internal and external communications practice to strengthen alignment and impact across programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish key strategic tools/processes including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2-year communications plan • Brand message framework • Content/marketing strategy and editorial guidelines • Tools, templates and training for staff to become SOWA ambassadors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clearly defined and aligned programs and initiatives • Marketing/ outreach data and feedback • Staff use of communications tools and templates