

Strategic Plan

2025

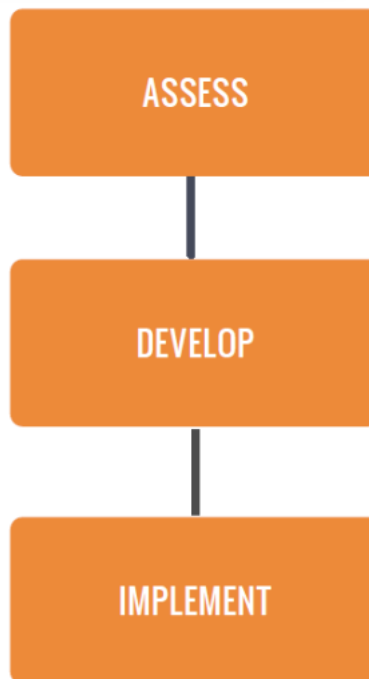
In collaboration with *Access Impact*



Executive Summary

Over the past seven months, Jacaranda Rising (formerly Jacaranda Housing), an organization committed to supporting at-risk, transition-aged adults, has engaged Access Impact in a strategic planning process to clarify its current operating environment, prioritize the needs of its community, and outline a direction for moving forward that would deepen the organization's impact. The following report outlines the organization's new identity, including its strategic direction, and an implementation framework for the future.

The strategic planning process is a three-phased process.



The Assessment phase includes background review of the organization in order to understand its foundation and current environment. We then transition into the development phase, which is an iterative process of co-creating a strategy that makes sense for the organization based on the work done in the assessment. This is done in close collaboration with the Executive Director and Board of Directors. Once the development stage is complete, we move into the implementation phase, where we outline specific objectives and tactics needed to achieve its organizational strategy.

Assessment

The strategic planning project began with an upfront process of discovery, which included materials review, interviews with key stakeholders, and a STAGE Analysis. Conversations with stakeholders were centered around understanding the organization's current mission, its strengths and gaps, how it currently makes decisions, what its future focus might be, and how the organization understands the environment and community in which it works. Interviews were conducted with the following stakeholders:

- Amanda Rodriguez
- Luis Curet
- Jodi Reneaud
- Charlene Allen
- Chanel Hungerford

Interview Themes

Impact on the Community/Strengths:

- Expanding support to include both males and females, adapting to community needs has been helpful.
- Gaining trust and building relationships with vulnerable youth – interviewees expressed that Ali is extremely trusted and well-liked in her workshops and that that trust is absolutely critical to the work.
- Interviewees loved that Jacaranda is providing life skills workshops and resources to help young adults thrive. Housing and basic needs remain the biggest needs right now.

Challenges and Obstacles:

- Securing funding and resources to support programs and housing initiatives; have had to pivot.
- Communicating who Jacaranda is.
- Importance of maintaining trauma-informed practices in all interactions and support services.
- Balancing growth and expansion with the need for personalized support.

Partnerships and Collaboration:

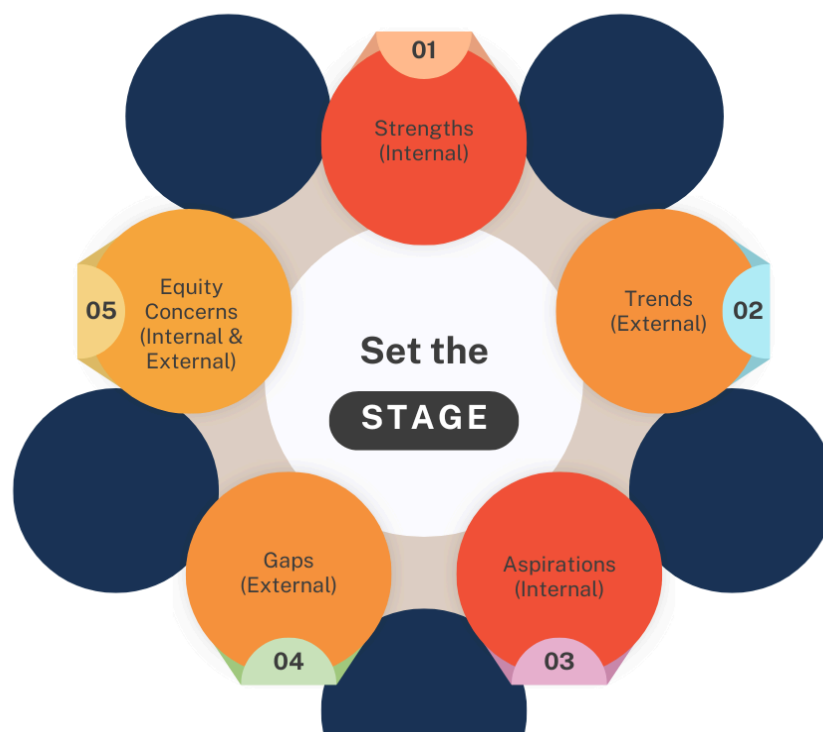
- Engaging with other service providers, homeless agencies, and community organizations to provide workshops and collaborate could be helpful for growth.

Future Strategies and Opportunities:

- Expanding geographic reach and services across the Valley.
- Increasing visibility and awareness within the community.
- Collaborating with other organizations and stakeholders to maximize impact.

STAGE Analysis

The last part of the assessment phase is based upon stakeholder interviews and steering committee discussions about Jacaranda Rising. Rather than using a traditional SWOT analysis, the organization employed a STAGE Analysis, which offers a more inclusive and systems-oriented perspective. STAGE emphasizes both internal strengths and external trends, providing a comprehensive view of the organization within its broader ecosystem. Unlike SWOT, which often centers on deficits, STAGE builds strategy around core assets and capacities - an approach that is more empowering and better aligned with deepening impact through collaboration with community partners.



S – Strengths	➤ We allow our workshops to be derailed if the young adults have something more urgent to discuss.(Responsive and Adaptable) ➤ We understand the challenges that the young adults face; provide services that truly help them; and are someone they can count on. ➤ We show empathy and try our best to provide support when they cannot go anywhere else. ➤ We have strong partnerships. ➤ We are communicative, trusting, adaptable, and fill in the gaps. We tapped into an area that was missing.
T – Trends	➤ LAHSA is opening up more funds for housing initiatives for transition age youth (TAY). We have to be in operation for 5+ years in order to qualify for funding. ➤ Government funds seeing the need for TAY specific programs. ➤ Individual funding is hard to find. Foundation funding is focused more on K-12. Young adults ages 18-24 are grouped into adults although they have more specific needs. ➤ Monthly donors have had to pull away (individual donations). ➤ More men are becoming repetitive clients at Jacaranda Rising, specifically. Young men are more reluctant to stay in the foster care system to receive assistance through DCFS.
A – Aspirations	➤ Open a transitional house. ➤ Open a coffee shop for young adults in our programs, offer our workshops, and get them job experience (workshops + job experience + housing) – holistic approach. ➤ Be impactful and fill the needs/gaps. ➤ Become a \$2 million a year nonprofit with paid staff and a full-time Executive Director.

G – Gaps	➤ Housing programs: gaps in programming. Less focused on preparation for independence vs. providing a safe place for young adults to live that is off of the streets. ➤ Jacaranda Rising’s ability to hire staff, recruit consistent volunteers, etc. ➤ Language barriers between our volunteers and some of the young adults. In need of more Spanish speaking volunteers. ➤ While we are good at building trust, it is a process to gain the young adults’ trust. Some residents are not in transitional housing long enough to approach us.
E - Equity Concerns	➤ Language barriers between our volunteers and some of the young adults. In need of more Spanish speaking volunteers. ➤ Trust, not a natural thing. We could build more trust if we can offer more workshops each month. ➤ Planned to expand and offer workshops to young adults in low income and voucher housing, not necessarily transitional housing, but when putting those services out there, they do not attend. (Why? Transportation? Rebranding the word workshop?)

Decision-Making

Finally, before building out its strategy, Jacaranda engaged in a process to create a decision-making tool that would guide its decisions in the future. A strategy screen¹ is a set of criteria for making strategic decisions. These questions are designed to provoke conversation and ensure Jacaranda Rising has discussed and evaluated strategic opportunities from all angles. While saying “yes” to each question is not required to move forward, the intent is that Jacaranda should be able to discuss any areas that need more information or clarity and understand why a decision was made or not made. This is also a tool for transparency; when Jacaranda Rising makes decisions, everyone will know they did so through thoughtful analysis using the below decision-making criteria. Criteria can also be updated and adjusted over time.

¹ *Nonprofit Strategy Revolution, 2008*

Strategy Screen:**Young Adults:**

Does the community we serve need this?

How will this help the young adults become independent?

How will this decision meet the immediate or long-term needs of at-risk young adults in our community?

Could there be negative impacts on the young adults we serve?

Do we need feedback or input from the community or those we serve?

Our Organization:

Is it aligned with our vision, mission, and values?

Do we have the capacity?

Do we have the volunteers we need for sustainability?

Is this a change needed within Jacaranda to move forward successfully into the future?

How will this decision affect our sustainability and future growth?

What are the potential risks? Are the risks acceptable?

What is the timeline and is it realistic?

Will this decision impact our current programs/services?

How do we measure the success of this decision?

What are our next steps if it fails?

Could there be negative impacts on the organization's reputation?

What does the field look like? (Who offers this program/service? How can organizations partner with us on this?)

Financial:

Is this financially sustainable?

Will this help us attract funders?

Strategic Framework

Building off of Jacaranda's assessment phase, including the STAGE Analysis and its tool for decision-making, a strategy and organizational identity began to emerge. The first piece in Jacaranda's forward-looking work was to re-clarify its image. While housing was the original intended mission of the organization and remains a key part of the organization's future aspirations, due to the needs of the TAY and the current funding environment, focus has shifted away from housing to instead meeting immediate TAY needs. As such, Jacaranda decided to create a name that would reflect the upward journey of its young adults.

NAME:

After consideration and discussion of multiple names, the name **Jacaranda Rising** was chosen.

VISION:

We envision a Los Angeles County where at-risk, transition-age adults (18-24) break free from the cycles of homelessness, the foster system, poverty, and other challenges, empowering them to become confident, independent adults.

MISSION:

Jacaranda Rising is dedicated to supporting at-risk, transition-age adults (18-24) in Los Angeles County by equipping them with the tools needed to thrive independently. We do this through a trusted blend of life skills training and compassionate support in a welcoming, encouraging environment.

VALUES:

T-Togetherness

H-Honor

R-Resilience

I-Integrity

V-Versatility

E-Excellence

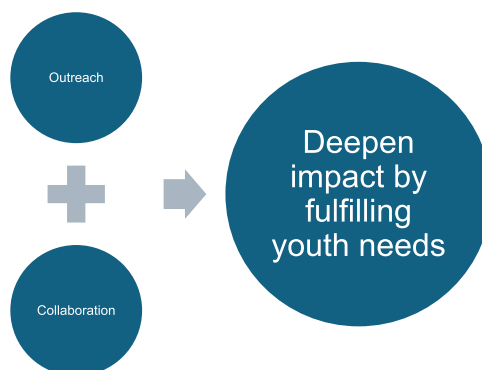
This all leads to Jacaranda Rising's strategic direction, its "North Star," its future focus:

STRATEGIC DIRECTION:

Jacaranda Rising's overarching organizational direction is to fulfill the current needs (job training, life skills, and interpersonal skills) of young adults living in transitional housing in Los Angeles County.

Strategic Priorities:**Immediate-Term:**

The primary focus of Jacaranda Rising's strategic priorities in the next 1-2 years is focused on outreach and collaboration.



Priority 1: Deepen programmatic opportunities with current young adults and expand outreach to more at-risk young adults

Priority 2: Deepen and expand partnerships within the community

Priority 3: Expand volunteer base

Short-Term Resources Needed: \$10,000 per year

Access Impact also led Jacaranda Rising through a fundraising training based on Kay Sprinkel Grace's AAA Fundraising Board. This training is based on the premise that every board member has a role to play in fundraising, and that can be in the form of an Ambassador, an Advocate, or an Asker. By strengthening the board's role in fundraising, Jacaranda Rising can start to move toward achieving the resources needed to achieve its strategy.

Long-Term:

The primary focus of Jacaranda's strategic priority in the next 3-5 years is focused on building a central hub for Jacaranda's work where youth can gather in community while building important life skills.

Priority 1: Develop business plan for Jacaranda coffee shop/drop-in center

Rationale for Strategy

Jacaranda Rising's strategic focus on addressing the current needs of young adults in transitional housing, specifically through job training, life skills, and interpersonal development, responds directly to the systemic barriers preventing long-term stability and independence for transition age adults.

Young adults aging out of foster care often face housing insecurity without the foundational tools or community to excel. According to the Cal Policy Lab, 1,000 youth transition out of the Los Angeles foster care system every year, and a staggering nearly 1 in 4 former foster youth have experienced homelessness between the ages of 21-23. Transition-aged adults often leave foster care feeling unprepared for independence and dismayed at the few opportunities for life-skills training within the system itself.²

² [Aging Out of Foster Care in Los Angeles: Opportunities to Prevent Homelessness Among Transition-Aged Youth](#)

As such, by centering its work on equipping TAY with practical, transferable skills and supportive relationships, Jacaranda Rising positions itself as a critical bridge between instability and self-sufficiency, meeting critical needs. This strategy aligns with the organizational assessment of situational analysis (STAGE), fills a gap in existing services, and leverages the organization's strengths to produce meaningful, measurable outcomes in the lives of transition-aged adults.