

TransGender Michigan



Strategic Plan 2012 - 2015

Executive Summary

In 1997, Susan and I started TransGender Michigan with the idea it would serve as a clearinghouse for transgender related services. We soon found there was little to actually “clear.” We found ourselves trying to fill in some of those gaps, and found the work to be overwhelming, but also rewarding.

Since the fifteen years we started we are encouraged to see more and more of us trans people coming out and stepping up to do the work. We have been approached by some of you asking what you can do to help. That is a good question indeed.

We put our heads together and worked with a former board member to develop this strategic plan, in part to answer that question. In the process we learned strategic planning is something of a work in progress. It is not a business plan, not an operational plan. It is a way to express agreement about which direction we aim to go.

We aim to share more and more of the work and celebrate those already doing the work. We aim to think strategically with you. Together, we trust we can build a greater future for all of us than what we could accomplish alone. How will we do that? This strategic plan is the first of many steps we hope to lead us there. Will you join us?

Love & Hugs,

Rachel Crandall

Executive Director

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Strategic Planning

This plan is less about what we are going to do together and more about how we are going to think together. It is “dynamic” because the fine details are expected to change as the working environment changes. This is a plan for how to put ourselves in proper position so we can take advantage of opportunities when they hit us. Yes, we hit back!

This written strategic plan announces how TransGender Michigan will embark on this fresh perspective, how it will prepare itself to keep up with an ever changing and often hostile environment. *This is strategic thinking*, and without this shift in thinking, we think, there is not much point in pursuing “strategic planning.”

The planning process

This process has unfolded from the enthusiasm sparked at the 2011 International Day of Transgender Visibility and the Transgender Day of Remembrance. At the 2011 Day of Empowerment, led by Transgender Detroit, a town hall meeting was held identify some of the issues facing the community and some ideas to fix them.

Many good ideas are being expressed and explored, but typically with insufficient support to help guarantee success. Central to this plan is building up our capacities to help one another to successfully redress our many issues.

Consider this a working draft, not quite set in stone. It is expected to evolve as new information becomes available. It starts with some assumptions ripe for challenge.

Guiding assumptions

TransGender Michigan was started at a time when few trans people could risk being publically out and serving openly. As the risks to being out decline there are more trans people willing to step up and get involved in the work of improving all of our lives. In the meantime, our pioneers became saddled with a cultural norm of doing most of the work.

When you create something special that others come to depend upon, it is not always easy to let go and trust others to take charge of it. What if others mess it up? Could clients get hurt? What else is at risk if we allow change?

But change we must, or risk being swept aside by the tides of change. We can either let change happen to us, or prepare ourselves to meet change and direct it proactively. And we can do that by identifying our strategic priorities.

Strategic priorities

First, we lay out a strategic core: a revised mission statement, a new guiding vision, our operating values, assessment of our operating environment, and then assess some of dire the needs we face. Then we set some smart goals we can reasonably meet by working together. Ready?

Strategic Core

Mission

Transgender Michigan's primary mission is to provide advocacy, support and education while serving to create coalitions in the state of Michigan to unify and empower transgender and gender nonconforming communities.

Vision

We will be the catalyst and clearinghouse for all things transgender and gender nonconforming in the state of Michigan.

Values

Collaboration	We believe we work best when we work together. In fact, we think our greatest resource is our collective human capacities. Yes, we became accustomed to just a few of us bearing the brunt of the workload. We even got used to the idea of being in control. Then we got tired of working alone, and simply got tired. Oy! We recognize we are on a learning curve for how to transition from our familiar patterns to building sustainable partnerships of effective teamwork. Old patterns are not easily changed. But the cost is too great if we do not change, so change we must, and we are already changing some of the ways we do business. We see cooperation as key to sustainable change. And an important step toward supporting all the work required for easing our many needs.
Grassroots	We believe our best work arises from the wisdom of the crowd. We think meaningful change is best led by those who will be most impacted by such change. We realize we have become accustomed to top-down ways of doing business, but we seek to stretch our boundaries to include such things as crowdsourcing and other forms of participatory democracy. We trust we will find ways to integrate all the local efforts into our broader vision to be a catalyst and a clearinghouse for the hard work done by others. We cannot do the work alone nor seek to work that hard. We need you as much if not more than you need us.

Gender diversity**We believe the differences in the way we each experience gender adds to our shared strength.**

We appreciate how our varied experience of gender is still emerging, resulting in many contested terms and new theories to explore. We affirm anyone who experiences their gender innately, as something essential to their very being, while also affirming anyone who experiences their gender relatively, as something socially constructed. We affirm everyone's right to define themselves, and everyone's freedom of expression to respond to these definitions, in a form that is sensitive to one another's needs. We believe we are stronger when every voice and view is integrated into our whole perspective.

Cultural Competence**We believe in being responsive to our cultural diversity.**

We recognize it is not enough to increase visibility of people from different ethnicities but we must ensure we hear their voice, and then respond appropriately. We believe we are all better when we integrate a variety of perspectives in our decisions. We recognize there are many people in our communities with cultural differences to whom we need to be more attentive, including those of all ages, those diagnosed with mental illness, those with disabilities, those across the socioeconomic spectrum, those suffering substance abuse and/or domestic violence, those who have been impacted by the judicial system, those adversely impacted by the War on Terror, and many more. We also appreciate these cultural categories often intersect in ways that complicate our issues. We honor those spaces where lack of cultural competence can be respectfully alerted and proficiently addressed. We affirm the need to freely acknowledge when we ourselves are not being adequately competent in our treatment of others, without retribution but encouragement to try and try again to learn from one another. Lastly, we acknowledge the importance for each person of a different cultural background to speak for themselves, without assuming they can speak for others similarly identified any more than others can speak for them. We do indeed value our cultural differences.

Obviously, there are many more values we express. We highlight these since they speak directly to our current circumstances, and we trust they will lead us in a direction we all seek to go.

Environmental Scan

While this assessment is not exhaustive it provides a solid starting point for moving forward. We are bound to discover more of our collective assets while encountering some more liabilities. Here we have an honest look at some opportunities to embrace, which we can leverage when we address the many challenges threatening our ability to serve our constituents.

Currently looking <i>inward</i> at TransGender Michigan	
Strengths	Weaknesses
501(c)3 status Long term visibility Ties to community Led by broadly respected leader in trans community Education and experience of current board Only trans-specific helpline Paid AmeriCorps volunteer on staff	Founders on board also serving as staff Few board members Culture of a few doing most of the work Anemic capacity; insufficient resources to effectively serve as a statewide agency Inability to respond to every request for service, hurting reputation
Currently looking <i>outward</i> from TransGender Michigan	
Opportunities	Challenges (threats)
Former board member returning with MPA with emphasis in nonprofit management, providing much of the guidance for this strategic planning More capable people who are out and willing to step up and do more Improving public acceptance for trans people creating partnership opportunities	Lack of funding Continuing recession Arcus pulling out of Michigan Developing cultural competencies across many intersecting subgroups Hostile political environment in Lansing

Needs Assessment

2011 Day of Empowerment town hall meeting

At an annual event at Affirmations coordinated by Transgender Detroit, community members were encouraged to express in their own words what they see as the pressing issues facing the local trans community. In the first half they brainstormed issues confronting their lives. Then they segued to some suggested solutions. Their responses are summarized here:

ISSUES

- 1** Forums for bridging our distances
- 2** Encompassing community name
- 3** Engaging general public
- 4** Public interaction
- 5** Community outreach services
- 6** Public accommodations
- 7** Educate public officials
- 8** Outreach & education
- 9** Structure for community
- 10** Health & legal services
- 11** Visibility & humanization of trans experience
- 12** Communication, social networking in community
- 13** Mentors for youth

SOLUTIONS

- 14** Panelist list & place
- 15** Reps for trans in MI
- 16** Training for panelists
- 17** Professional training of educators
- 18** Training on trans issues
- 19** Youth involvement
- 20** Credentialed reps
- 21** Resource lists updated
- 22** List of trans welcoming places
- 23** Open house for training professionals on trans issues
- 24** Combine trans support orgs
- 25** Someone to ensure online info is updated
- 26** Job development
- 27** Trans org board inclusivity
- 28** 24-hour helpline
- 29** Funding search
- 30** Promote via ads
- 31** Address homeless & jobless trans
- 32** Tapping into available resources
- 33** Board development
- 34** Committees for various goals
- 35** Ensure trans majority on org board
- 36** Human capacity & succession planning

While it would be impractical to try to address all of these concerns and experiment with all of these solutions at once, these do provide a context for which needs are considered more important, and which services would be of most value. However, the attendants to this event did not properly represent the diversity in trans and allied communities, so these were taken merely as a starting point. To get input from those who could not attend, an online survey was created to capture a broader perspective of the community's needs and their perception of orgs trying to meet those needs.

Online survey

Survey respondents were given a list of common needs expressed by people in the trans communities, and then asked to rate what they viewed as the top five to be addressed by TransGender Michigan and other trans support orgs, in order to improve the lives and help the community. The first cohort of 59 respondents expressed their priorities as thus:

Answer Options; Priority:	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	Mean	Count
Inclusive/nondiscrimination laws (for housing, workplace, and public accommodations)	23	8	4	5	8	9.6	48
Changing gender marker on official documents	12	11	6	7	4	8.0	40
Health insurance inclusion for trans procedures	14	10	8	4	3	7.8	39
Healthcare assistance	12	8	6	7	4	7.4	37
Anti-bullying	6	6	10	7	8	7.4	37
Workplace education	5	15	3	5	9	7.4	37
Doctor/therapist registry	7	3	8	7	7	6.4	32
Mental healthcare	8	5	8	7	3	6.2	31
Job assistance/training	5	3	10	6	7	6.2	31
Marriage equality	6	3	2	8	9	5.6	28
Other	1	0	0	0	2	0.2	3
answered question						52	
skipped question						7	

The online survey also elicited respondents' perception of TransGender Michigan. Responses range from 1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree.

Answer Options	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	Mean	Response Count
TGMI is inclusive of all people regardless of their gender identity.	1	1	6	9	26	1	4.35	44
TGMI is inclusive of all people regardless of race or ethnicity.	1	1	5	11	24	3	4.33	45
TGMI is inclusive of all people regardless of their age.	2	1	6	13	22	1	4.18	45
TGMI is the leading organization for trans/gender nonconforming people in Michigan.	1	3	10	15	15	1	3.91	45
TGMI is visible within the LGBTQIA community.	0	6	12	12	15	0	3.80	45
TGMI activities are informative.	1	4	12	10	10	5	3.65	42
TGMI activities are well planned.	1	7	14	8	8	6	3.39	44
TGMI has the resources to address issues endured by trans/gender nonconforming people in MI.	1	9	12	15	6	1	3.37	44
answered question							45	
skipped question							14	

Cultural competencies

The survey was left open and reached nearly 200 respondents, but trans people of color—as well as other subgroups—remained underrepresented. This led to efforts to go directly to trans people of color, where they are at, to learn what exactly they need for their unique set of needs.

TransGender Michigan supports grassroots efforts to becoming more engaging with trans people of various ethnicities and other identities in Michigan, starting in Detroit. Trans people of color in urban settings are disproportionately represented in the annual Day of Remembrance each November. We seek to learn how we together can become more culturally competent to the diversity of trans people throughout Michigan and perhaps beyond.

Trans Empowerment Network

The Trans Empowerment Network (TEN) is an emerging communication channel for bridging the gaps between the many efforts throughout the state to attend to trans specific needs. TEN is expected to provide a heuristic approach to discovery unmet needs specific to trans peoples. By starting a dialogue about what is being done, perhaps more will come to light about all the isolated efforts currently pursued in isolation of one another.

TEN is another grassroots effort independent of TransGender Michigan or any other group. It is not a group but merely a communication conduit to explore working closer together. This network potentially includes virtual and physical meeting spaces throughout the state. A monthly meeting space has already begun at Affirmations. By listening and engaging one another more proactively perhaps we can discover more needs, ideas, values and what one another is doing to redress these many trans specific needs.

Needs internal and external

Before we can adequately address the many need confronting trans people in Michigan we need to build up our internal capacities to effectively respond to them. We recognize that in order to build up such capacities we will need to first demonstrate our stewardship with a few reachable goals. Then we can celebrate our early victories and build upon that energy to address whatever emerges as the next priority item. This is essentially a capacity building plan, but we recognize our capacity will be broadened by partnerships with others.

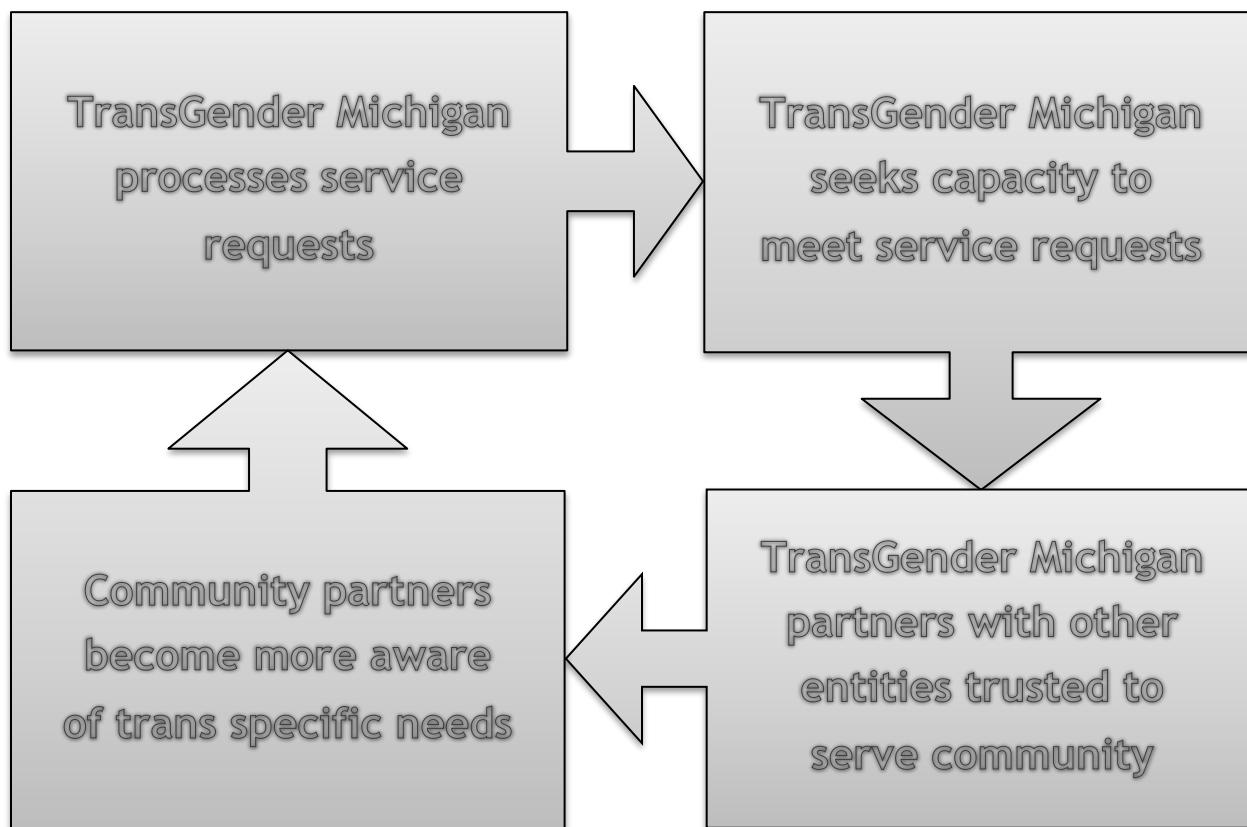
Growth needs

This plan envisions a long term aim of building up board and staff, at least enough to fit the need, and allow founders to transition toward retirement, or at least separating them from dual role of staff and board.

TransGender Michigan finds itself at that critical stage in its young life when the environment compels it to either grow or shrink back. It currently is still in its early phase of being led by its founders. Board members tend to be handpicked supporters of the founders' vision. In fact, the board is more of a pool of available volunteers than a group tasked with the responsibility of the agency's direction. Like many human service agencies of its size, the board is more of a working board than a governing board. This is a natural phase in the life cycle of young nonprofits. This plan envisions an eventual transition for a more proactive, governing board.

Getting back to its original vision, this plan seeks to build its capacities for the benefit of the whole community. To that end, the goals emphasize building partnerships, so we can better help one another address the many trans-specific needs we endure.

Cycle of helping each other



Goals and Objectives

1. Develop current programs to address communities' needs

- 1.1. Clarify how current programming meets current communities' needs
- 1.2. Identify communities' needs not being properly addressed
- 1.3. Identify means, including coalition building, to address these needs
- 1.4. Identify programming costs for building a budget
- 1.5. Identify funding sources to support programs
- 1.6. Develop capacity for program evaluation

2. Build capacity by developing volunteers

- 2.1. Define need for volunteers based on communities' needs
- 2.2. Draft volunteer position descriptions
- 2.3. Solicit volunteers to match open volunteer positions
- 2.4. Hire volunteers
- 2.5. Orient and train volunteers
- 2.6. Thank volunteers

3. Build capacity by developing the staff

- 3.1. Define need for staff based on communities' needs
- 3.2. Identify funding sources for staff development
- 3.3. Draft staff position descriptions
- 3.4. Solicit prospects to match open staff positions
- 3.5. Hire most qualified candidates
- 3.6. Orient and train new staff members
- 3.7. Thank staff members

4. Build capacity by developing the board

- 4.1. Define program needs based on communities' needs
- 4.2. Identify board prospects who can bring needed capacities
- 4.3. Define incentives for prospect to serve on volunteer board
- 4.4. Draft board volunteer position descriptions
- 4.5. Solicit board volunteers to match open board positions
- 4.6. Invite volunteer board members
- 4.7. Orient and train new board volunteers
- 4.8. Thank board volunteers

