AN INTERACTIVE QUALIFYING PROJECT REPORT

DEVELOPING A STRATEGIC PLAN FOR THE HAWAH V. KAMARA CHILDREN'S FOUNDATION

MAY 2021 // LYNSA CHAU, BHANUJ JAIN, KYLE MITCHELL, AND ELIANA PALUMBO

Developing a Strategic Plan for the Hawah V. Kamara Children's Foundation

An Interactive Qualifying Project
submitted to the Faculty of
WORCESTER POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE
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Report Submitted to:

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ABSTRACT

The Hawah V. Kamara Children's Foundation (HVK), a non-profit that focuses on providing education and healthcare programs to underprivileged children in Liberia, lacks internal organization and resources. The team created a strategic framework to guide HVK's growth by offering recommendations about its structure, members, and resources. This was done by evaluating the existing structure of HVK, recommending supporting partners, and identifying critical elements of a successful non-profit. The findings and recommendations are summarized in a coherent strategic planning document.

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The Hawah V. Kamara (HVK) Children's Foundation is in need of organizational stability to move forward. To address this need, the goal of this project was to develop a strategic plan to allow HVK to best continue providing important aid to Liberian communities in the areas of healthcare and education. We accomplished this goal through the following objectives: evaluate the pre-existing programs, structures, and resources of the foundation, identify, rank, and recommend potential supporting partners and networks, and identify the critical elements needed for a non-profit to form a strategic plan. This approach enabled HVK to reflect on their achievements and to better visualize their future going forward.

In 2016, HVK investigated the best methods to accurately assist residents of Liberian communities and decided to address the poor literacy rates of the country. The Lab-in-a-Box system is an offline e-learning program created by the Global Sustainable Aid Project (GSAP) as a method to improve literacy and access to education. HVK teamed up with GSAP to implement this system in Liberian schools. This e-learning program includes six thousand articles and more than two thousand textbooks. HVK's goal is to train teachers to use the new technology, improve literacy amongst students, and increase the technology infrastructure of schools in Liberia.

To help HVK move forward with their programs, our team created a strategic plan for the organization to follow. Strategic planning is a way to fully understand the mission, strategies, and organizational values amongst all stakeholders. The strategic plan includes creating a roadmap with milestones monitoring all achievements and results. Strategic planning can also generate valuable marketing information for potential partners, donors, and sponsors. Finally, planning can bring people together because it fosters communication; these conversations can incite meaningful conversations that entice strategic thinking and emphasize the most important goal of the plan: ensuring the organization's long-term success. If done properly, strategic planning can encourage participation and ongoing learning, facilitate communication between parties, and promote accountability.

APPROACH

The goal of this project was to develop a strategic framework for HVK Children's Foundation so that they could best continue to provide aid to Liberian communities. To meet this goal, we evaluated the existing resources, structures, and goals of the foundation, we recommended partners and opportunities that could support HVK's mission, and identified critical elements needed to formalize a cohesive strategic plan.
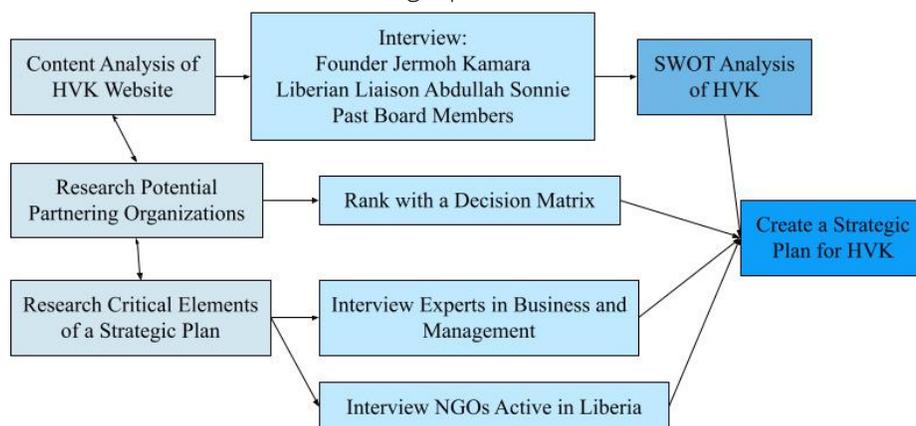
RESULTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Looking at the data we have collected, we can see that HVK has tremendous capacity to make a positive impact on the lives and education of children in Liberia. To do this, HVK requires a fully functioning and financially stable internal infrastructure to support the mission and objectives of the organization. The challenges and opportunities identified by a SWOT analysis make it clear that establishing these structures first will provide HVK with the appropriate momentum and resources to grow.

The current mission of the organization is powerful and meaningful; however, it is broad and vulnerable to being viewed as too widely defined by potential partners, donors, and sponsors. It is also supported by a strong leader and a network of devoted staff. It is also clear that HVK has a great opportunity for ongoing relationships with the communities in Liberia it serves. With more funding and personnel, the quality of these programs can be increased and the reach of the work will naturally increase as well.

By year one, we recommend creating a Board of Advisors who will offer guidance in running the organization and hold everyone accountable to following the strategic plan. Our team also recommends developing partnerships with other non-profits that will offer support to HVK as it grows. With these efforts, we hope HVK will increase their funding by 10-15% which will be used to support its work and to help pay employees. Finally, we suggest that HVK should solely focus on updating the Lab-in-a-Box program to finalize it.

By year three, we recommend creating a Board of Directors of individuals who will assist HVK through financial donations, network connections, or knowledge in specific areas of expertise. Additionally, we recommend HVK performs a program assessment of the Lab-in-a-Box to show the skills the students are acquiring for marketing and fundraising purposes. Lastly, we recommend that HVK begins looking into buildings in Monrovia, Liberia, to set up an office by year five.

By the end of year five, we recommend finalizing the Board of Directors to have approximately five to seven members. Another recommendation is to maintain regular assessments of the organization to monitor the success rate of the programs implemented. In addition, we also propose that HVK starts to consider diversifying and expanding their program scope at this point. Lastly, we recommend the Lab-in-a-Box program should aim to expand to approximately twenty different schools in Liberia.

Additionally, our team recommends that HVK provides a certificate program to employees and volunteers to acknowledge the skills that they have learned as a token of recognition and provide them with a document which highlights their new transferable skills. Second, we recommend that HVK should try to establish a new educational program that focuses on teaching students specific vocational skills that can be applied to non-STEAM fields.

STRATEGIC PLAN

As our final deliverable, our team created a strategic plan that will frame the work of HVK moving forward. All of our evidence pointed to a critical need for a strategic plan in order to help internally structure, organize, and plan the HVK Children's Foundation's future before expansion can be considered.

On this page, you will find two excerpts from our strategic planning document. HVK's updated vision and mission statements and core values from the strategic plan are to the right. Below is a part of the team's recommendations for the first year. The main goal is explained by action steps with a desired time frame.

Vision Statement

"Transforming the lives of Liberian children through access to quality education and technology."

Mission Statement

"We work to improve the lives of Liberians by providing education programs to children, increasing technology accessibility for all, and by working to positively impact Liberian communities."

HVK Core Values

Adaptability: *We find strength in the ability to constantly adapt to new circumstances to continue to provide opportunities to Liberian children.*

Committed: *We are committed to improving the lives of all the children we are able to reach with our programs.*

Growth: *Through the use of our programs, every child will grow into strong and capable adults.*

Inspiring: *We inspire families and children to help and learn from one another to make the world a better place.*

Supporting: *Our organization supports the community by uplifting its children to provide them with a better tomorrow.*

Transparent: *We strive to communicate openly and clearly because a sustainable relationship cannot be built without a solid foundation of trust.*

1-Year Plan

GOAL	ACTION STEPS	TIME FRAME
Create a Board of Advisors	1. Use organization's network of contacts to find suitable individuals 2. Fill the different positions in Board of Advisors a. Recommended size: 2-3 individuals	1. As soon as possible 2. Have 2-3 BoA members by end of Year 1
Develop New Partnerships	1. Use organization's network of contacts to start building relationships with colleagues and organizations 2. Reach out to list of suggested partners 3. Arrange meeting with key stakeholders for partnership proposals	1. As soon as possible 2. As soon as possible 3. Meet with stakeholders by end of Month 6
Increase Fundraising Efforts	1. Reach out to small businesses and similar organizations 2. Apply for smaller donations from companies and organizations 3. Increase initial funding by 15%	1. As soon as possible 2. Start applying by Month 3, and continue applying for new donations every few months 3. By end of Year 1
Improve Program Specification	1. Halt all programs except LiaB 2. Conduct measurable impact assessment of learned skills from LiaB 3. Determine upgrades to LiaB program	1. Immediately 2. By end of Month 6 3. By end of Year 1

Naturally, having a written strategic plan is the first half of the effort to become organized. The second half of the effort is following the plan to the best of the organization's ability. By following the steps in the plan, the organization will meet short term goals and objectives and continually make progress with the actions needed to be taken in order to complete these goals. For a strategic plan to be effective long term, it must be revisited and revised periodically. Conversations between employees and volunteers about each section of the plan must take place to remind and reorient the organization towards a distilled and defined mission with clear goals and action steps.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Our team would like to thank our advisors, Dr. Curt J. Davis and Dr. Ingrid Shockey, for their unwavering support these past few months. Your guidance and support throughout this project has meant the world to our team.

We would also like to thank HVK's founder and CEO, Jermoh Kamara, and HVK's Lab-in-a-Box personnel, Abdullah Sonnie, for their assistance and this amazing opportunity. Our team looks forward to seeing the impact HVK has on Liberian communities in the coming years.

Our team would also like to thank the professors, experts, and personnel from other non-profit organizations who allowed our team to interview them. The information that our team received during these personal communications gave us the knowledge that we needed to create a strategic plan for our sponsor.

MEET THE TEAM

Lynsa Chau

My name is Lynsa Chau, and I'm from Worcester, Massachusetts. I am currently a Junior at WPI majoring in Biomedical Engineering with a concentration in Bioinstrumentation and a minor in Bioinformatics & Computational Biology. This IQP experience really helped me step outside of my comfort zone and allowed me to become much more comfortable talking and presenting. It was fun collaborating and interviewing different people in the business and marketing field. This project gave me the opportunity to improve my communication skills and my ability to work as a team. The experiences that I've gained during this will continue to help me grow and succeed in the future.
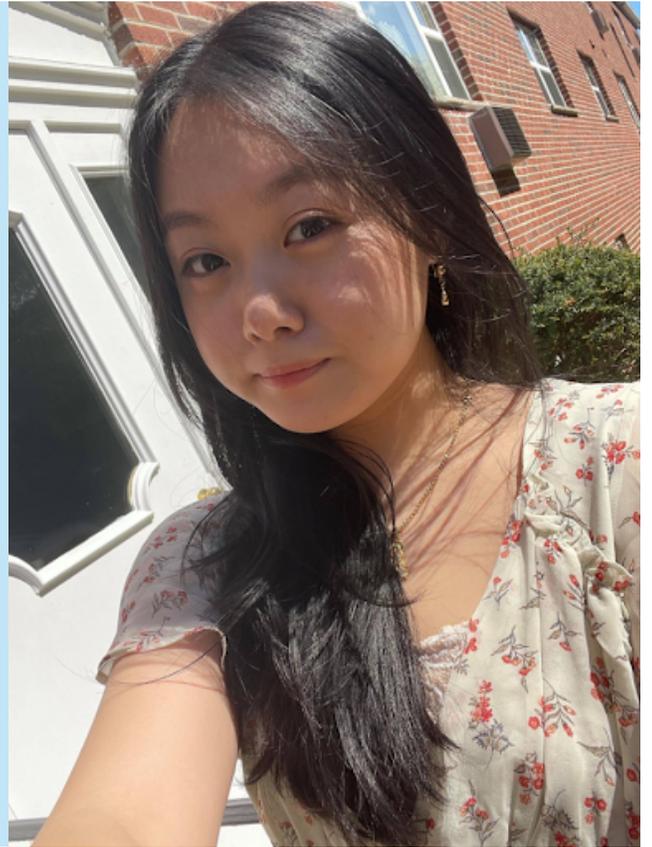
Bhanuj Jain

Hey! My name is Bhanuj Jain. I am from India, but live in the Philippines. I am a Physics and Mathematical Science double major with a concentration in Astrophysics and currently a junior at WPI. While our IQP experience was severely affected by COVID-19, I truly believe I got the opportunity to work with some amazing teammates, faculty, and sponsors. Through overcoming different adversities and challenges, our team was able to produce something truly remarkable and amazing. I had a load of fun throughout this project and learned a lot about myself, my weaknesses, and my strengths. Thank you and I look forward to the success of HVK.

MEET THE TEAM

Kyle Mitchell

Hello! My name is Kyle Mitchell, and I am originally from a small town in central New Hampshire. I am a Junior at WPI pursuing a Bachelor of Science in Robotics Engineering and Mechanical Engineering. The IQP experience this year was not what I imagined when I originally committed to WPI, but the situation our team was put through allowed me to persevere and has provided me with a great experience to take with me into my career. Working with this team has allowed me to utilize my group leadership skills in a non-technical setting and has also allowed me to develop personal relationships with my peers.

Eliana Palumbo

My name is Eliana Palumbo, and I am from Auburn, MA. I am currently a junior at WPI, studying Biomedical Engineering with minors in Chemistry and Materials. I am also on the Pre-Medicine track, hoping to go to medical school one day. I greatly enjoyed collaborating with our sponsor and other professionals in the field of business management. This project was outside of my area of expertise, but it gave me extremely valuable skills and project experience. I will use the knowledge and teamwork skills I gained over these two terms for the rest of my career. I look forward to checking in with the foundation in the future to see the implementation of our project!

Authorship

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Section	**Author**	**Editor**
Content	Lynsa, Eliana, Kyle	Lynsa, Eliana, Kyle
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Chapter 1: Introduction		
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Chapter 2: Literature Review		
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2.1	Bhanuj & Kyle	All
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4.3	Eliana & Lynsa	Lynsa, Eliana, Kyle
Discussion	Eliana & Bhanuj	Lynsa, Eliana, Kyle

Chapter 5: Recommendations and Conclusion		
Section	Author	Editor
Adopt Strategic Plan	Kyle	Lynsa, Eliana, Kyle
Year 1	Kyle	Lynsa, Eliana, Kyle
Year 3	Eliana	Lynsa, Eliana, Kyle
Year 5	Lynsa	Lynsa, Eliana, Kyle
Additional Thoughts	Bhanuj	Lynsa, Eliana, Kyle
Conclusion	Eliana & Lynsa	Lynsa, Eliana, Kyle

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D	Bhanuj	All
E	Eliana	All
F	*See Below*	*See Below*

Appendix F: Strategic Plan		
Section	**Author**	**Editor**
About the Plan	Kyle & Eliana	Lynsa, Eliana, Kyle
Executive Summary	Eliana	Lynsa, Eliana, Kyle
Vision, Mission, Core Values	Lynsa, Eliana, Kyle	Lynsa, Eliana, Kyle
Internal Goals	Lynsa & Kyle	Lynsa, Eliana, Kyle
External Goals	Lynsa & Eliana	Lynsa, Eliana, Kyle
SWOT Analysis	All	Lynsa, Eliana, Kyle
1-Year Plan	Lynsa, Eliana, Kyle	Lynsa, Eliana, Kyle
3-Year Plan	Lynsa, Eliana, Kyle	Lynsa, Eliana, Kyle
5-Year Plan	Lynsa, Eliana, Kyle	Lynsa, Eliana, Kyle
Possible Roadblocks	Lynsa	Lynsa, Eliana, Kyle

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Liberia, a country in West Africa, has been afflicted by a decade-long civil war, which resulted in poverty, political unrest, and the spread of disease. Due to these issues, Liberia's political, economic, sociocultural, and technological infrastructure remained underdeveloped relative to the rest of West Africa. The Ebola epidemic in 2014 severely impacted Liberia's medical and educational systems (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, n.d.). National efforts were focused on alleviating poverty and unemployment, as well as improving education, community development, and access to health care. Many non-governmental organizations (NGOs) work alongside governmental organizations (GOs) in Liberia to help develop their technological and societal infrastructure to improve the lives of residents.

One such NGO is our sponsor, the Hawah V. Kamara Children's Foundation (HVK). HVK is based in Worcester, Massachusetts, USA, but also has an office in Paynesville City, Liberia. HVK's mission is to improve the lives of Liberians by supporting the sustainable development of communities, with a focus on women and children. To best achieve this mission, HVK places a strong emphasis on researching, implementing, and evaluating the effects of their community-driven educational and health-centered programs (such as facilitating e-learning platforms and educating individuals to improve sanitation and hygienic practices) to ensure that they are creating a positive impact on Liberian communities (Hawah V. Kamara Children's Foundation, n.d.-c, para. 2). HVK is dedicated to creating self-sufficient communities, where every citizen has access to education, can improve their welfare, and gain economic independence.

HVK would like to become a more effective and sustainable non-profit organization with a clear focus and strategy for growth (J. Kamara, personal communication, February 15, 2021). Since the establishment of the foundation, a majority of the previous board members have left to pursue new opportunities, leaving HVK at an opportune moment to develop a new Board of Directors as well as a team of volunteers and employees who can continue working towards HVK's original mission. Along with a focused staff for effective management, the foundation could benefit from a comprehensive plan to ensure future success.

Since HVK Children's Foundation needs organizational stability as it moves forward, it is seeking synergistic relationships and partnerships with other organizations with which it is aligned and can receive support. To address this need, the goal of this project was to develop a

strategic framework to allow HVK to best continue providing important aid to Liberian communities in the areas of health care and education. We accomplished this goal through the following objectives: 1. evaluate the pre-existing programs, structures, and resources of the foundation; 2. identify, rank, and recommend potential supporting partners and networks to expand HVK's reach and capabilities; 3. identify the critical elements needed to internally organize a non-profit to form a strategic plan for HVK. This approach enabled HVK to reflect on its opportunities and achievements as an organization and to better visualize their future going forward.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

In this chapter, we discuss significant political, economic, sociological, educational, and health issues in Liberia's recent history, followed by the identification and characterization of the key stakeholders of this project. We introduce the mission, motives, and plans of our sponsoring agency, the Hawah V. Kamara Children's Foundation along with an explanation of the importance of strategic planning. To provide greater clarity on the expected outcomes of this project, we also evaluate several relevant case studies on organizations who have created their own strategic frameworks and the varying results of each.

2.1 Status of Education and Health Care in Liberia

Situated in West Africa, Liberia (**Figure 1**) is a country that was scarred by fourteen years of internal conflicts and civil wars before finally achieving peace in 2003. In its quest for political stability and harmony, more than 250,000 residents were raped, displaced, and/or massacred (Dahir, 2018). While other African nations progressed with social and economic development, Liberia's progress was hindered by chaos and conflict. Because Liberia was engaged in a civil war for so long, its medical, societal, and educational infrastructure was left without the necessary resources to continue to grow.

Figure 1: Map of Africa showing Liberia. Source: *Maps of Liberia* (n.d.)

Liberia has been left with a very poor health care system, with as few as fifty available doctors for the 4.3 million population (Fall, 2019). Schools were closed for nearly a year due to the Ebola epidemic and students lost almost two thousand hours of education due to school closures (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, n.d.). To improve the lives of Liberians, national efforts have focused on poverty, unemployment, education, community development, and access to health care. Many non-governmental organizations (NGOs) from around the globe are working alongside Liberian governmental organizations (GOs) to further develop and improve its health care and education infrastructure.

While the health care system has improved in post-war Liberia, a study conducted by Kentoffio et al. (2016) found that remote populations in Liberia face a disproportionate lack of access to health care services compared to those living in more urban areas. The ability to travel for care is one of the impediments to accessing health services. Kentoffio et al. (2016) reported "seventy-three percent of women in the Konobo survey… reported taking greater than 2 h to walk to the nearest clinic" (p. 6). Thus, while health care may be available, the ability to access it can be difficult for many in remote locations and can dissuade some from getting the care they need. Furthermore, some families forgo health care services because they cannot afford it. A study by Gabani and Guinness (2019) estimates roughly 8% of households in Liberia forgo health care based on affordability (p. 2). With a population size of 4.3 million people (Fall, 2019) and an average family size of 5.1 (Liberia Institute of Statistics and Geo-Information Services, 2009, p. 8), this means roughly 67,500 families in Liberia do not seek health care because they cannot afford it.

Education is another sector under stress since teachers have taken a larger role in the lives of children in post-war Liberia. According to Adebayo (2019), Liberian teachers "see themselves and are seen as second parents, humanitarians, ... counselors, ... and psychologists" (p. 1) for students. There is a different expectation of teachers in other places in the world, such as the US, where their required responsibilities are limited to the school's curriculum. Liberian teachers are burdened with these additional roles because of the need to support students who are working through post-traumatic stress related to the civil war and the Ebola outbreak (Adebayo, 2019, p. 1). Teachers are going above and beyond for their students while also having to deal with low salaries, poor working conditions, and unsatisfactory training. Because of these factors, the quality of education the teachers provide is sometimes inadequate (Adebayo, 2019, p. 4).

Education Minister George K. Werner responded to these issues by creating a program called the Public-Private Partnership Schools for Liberia (PSL) as an attempt at education reform. The PSL program "outsources the country's pre-primary and primary education to private education service providers ... for the next five years" (Adebayo, 2019, p. 4). The PSL's outsourcing of education to private entities during a crisis not only works to reform education, but also acts as a means of social construction and peace building (Verger et al., 2017; Lopes Cardozo & Shah, 2016, as cited by Adebayo, 2019, p. 4). While this program appears to help in all these sectors, the program was only written as a five-year plan. In order to move forward after five years, the Liberian education system needs to be further developed; teachers need to be properly trained to teach, proper resources need to be provided, and schools need to have funding to support the students on their educational journey. The PSL does not have an explicit outline as to how these challenges will be addressed (Global Initiative for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, 2016, as cited by Adebayo, 2019).

Overall, there is a dangerous shortage of adequate educational facilities and sanitation centers in Liberia. Many citizens lack sufficient access to health care, sometimes even lacking toilets. While education is free, in comparison to other African countries, Liberia is still significantly underdeveloped in its quality of education. Many challenges still need to be addressed, such as overpopulated classrooms, enrollment of overage children, and wasted government resources due to under-qualified teachers. Organizations, like HVK, are committed to help improve the situation.

2.2 A Profile of Hawah V. Kamara Children's Foundation's Scope

The Hawah V. Kamara Children's Foundation was founded in Liberia by Jermoh Kamara in 2013 after she witnessed the positive effects educational and health-based programs had on a community in Ghana lacking in basic health and education resources. This experience inspired Kamara to focus her efforts to achieve similar impacts in her country of birth, Liberia. The organization was established in order "to meet the needs of women, children, and families in sub-Saharan Africa, Liberia" (Hawah V. Kamara Children's Foundation, n.d.-d, para. 4) and was registered in Massachusetts as a non-profit in 2016. HVK places a strong emphasis on providing the resources and training necessary to allow Liberian citizens to become self-sufficient and strives to overcome obstacles by creating dedicated programs for each challenge.

Offline E-Learning Kits

In 2016, HVK created a Department of Research and Program Design (DRPD) to evaluate and investigate the best methods to accurately assist residents of low-income communities in Liberia. The DRPD created Project REACH to help create an offline e-learning program designed to address poor literacy. The project was first launched in 2017 and HVK partnered with a school in Liberia to improve STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics) education and increase the technological infrastructure available at resource deficient schools (Hawah V. Kamara Children's Foundation, n.d.-c, para. 6). This e-learning program included over six thousand articles from Wikipedia and more than two thousand textbooks which consisted of various genres and multilingual translation dictionaries.

HVK also developed school-based educational programs whose target demographic was primary and junior high school students, as well as teachers. Some goals of these programs were to train teachers to use the technology provided to them, improve literacy amongst students, and increase the technology infrastructure of schools in Liberia. The Lab-in-a-Box system was created by the Global Sustainable Aid Project (GSAP) as a method to achieve these goals. It is an offline e-learning system which includes tablets with access to the GSAP portal, designed to support STEAM based education. In collaboration with the GSAP, teachers were properly trained to utilize the technology before the start of the school year. In addition, four workshops are held every year to further train and support the teachers. Since 2018, twenty teachers have been trained on how to use the system. Over one thousand students have benefitted from the Lab-in-a-Box program (Hawah V. Kamara Children's Foundation, n.d.-c, para. 9). An advertisement flyer from GSAP promoting the Lab-in-a-Box program is shown in **Figure 2.**

Figure 2: Lab-in-a-Box Flyer. Source: Global Sustainable Aid Project (n.d.-b)

Sanitation Innovation

In addition to education infrastructure, sanitation continues to be a major problem in Liberia. Approximately three thousand Liberian citizens, over half of which are children under the age of five, die each year from diarrhea. Ninety percent of these deaths are the result of poor water, sanitation, and hygiene (Water and Sanitation Program, 2012). To address this concern, HVK has partnered with the Global Sustainable Aid Project (GSAP) to provide Liberian schools with adequate latrines. These latrines use the Microflush off-grid system (a sustainable biofil toilet), which has the ability to isolate wastes from human space (**Figure 3**). This program raises money to allow low-income residents to afford their own GSAP Microflush toilet. Moreover, the materials that are used to manufacture the toilet can all be found locally in Liberia, and its ergonomic design prevents odors, flies, and frequent dislodging. These features allow for a more sustainable and hygienic toilet system that also produces pathogen free compost.
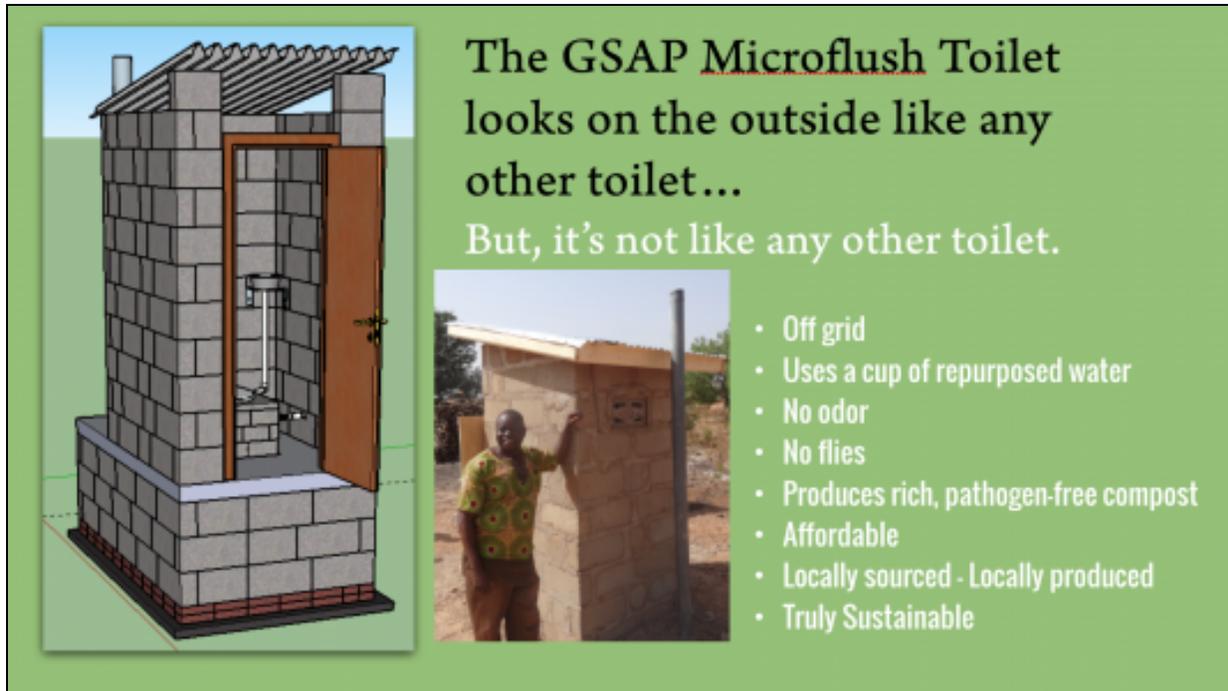
Figure 3: Microflush Toilet Flyer. Source: Global Sustainable Aid Project (n.d.-c)

Health Education Outreach

Lastly, HVK's School-Based Health Programs are currently developing many subprograms focusing on health care in Liberia. One such program is Sexuality Education Risks and Violence (SERV), whose aim is to educate the youth to reduce sexually transmitted diseases. HVK is currently partnering with Dr. Jill McCracken, whose work inspired HVK to adopt SERV and replicate it in Liberia (Hawah V. Kamara Children's Foundation, n.d.-c, para. 7). Additionally, the nutrition program, which is still in development, is evaluating poverty levels, food insecurity, school feeding, and the effect of malnutrition in children. The foundation also plans to partner with the Ministry of Health to provide schools in Liberia with immunizations, as well as dental and eye care. The programs implemented by HVK are aimed to help Liberian communities through specific programs that address each obstacle. They utilize different types of assessments varying from survey methodology to community needs assessments to ensure maximum quality and impact for all of their programs (Hawah V. Kamara Children's Foundation, n.d.-c, para. 24). Over the next five years, HVK plans to create community-based programs to address sexual health and improve mental health conversations.

2.3 Organizational Structure of HVK and Other Stakeholders

The wellbeing of children in lesser-income countries, such as Liberia, is at the heart of HVK's mission and therefore are the intended primary beneficiaries of the organization. HVK's programs are centered around "The Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child Model and the Coordinated School Health Program" (Hawah V. Kamara Children's Foundation, n.d.-c, para. 3). The foundation has extensive experience working with primary and junior high school students and plans to eventually expand into senior high schools in the near future.

The external key stakeholders of HVK include the donors, local communities, suppliers, and other non-profit organizations. Donors and local agencies provide the funding necessary to allocate resources toward maintaining the organization and funding the beneficiaries. In the local communities, the foundation works with eligible schools to provide training to teachers and help students build necessary life skills. While improving the daily lives of communities in Liberia is a lofty goal that requires ample resources and money, the suppliers make it possible to bring resources to schools. Although suppliers may have different motivations than HVK, they should be recognized as reliable sources for materials and resources.

While the external members of an organization are important, the key internal stakeholders play a crucial role in the success of the program. At its core, the foundation is divided into the direct board members and staff volunteers who make up the backbone of the organization. According to the HVK Children's Foundation (n.d.-b), the original board members included the founder, Jermoh Kamara, the co-founder and program specialist, Martin Bruce, the program coordinator, Gertura Gbarbo, consultant, Koua Her, and Lab-in-a-Box personnel, Abdullah Sonnie. This group of individuals made up the internal key stakeholders that provide oversight and decide the overall direction of the organization. The direct board members are in charge of managing the day-to-day operations while upholding the responsibility to plan and monitor financial resources. Staff volunteers are equally important, as they contribute relevant expertise and provide the resources necessary to enable HVK to achieve its intended purpose.

Smaller organizations often find it difficult to accomplish their missions alone, so it is important to identify potential partners and networks, such as other non-profits or companies, with which to work. Kamara has identified many organizations with which she hopes to build a relationship in the future, including Harlem Children's Zone, Seven Hills Foundation, United

Way, and the YWCA. These organizations have similar beneficiaries that prioritize children, health, or education.

In summary, to create a long-term sustainable organization, the ability to communicate and cultivate a positive relationship with stakeholders is a high priority. Stakeholders on both the internal and external level are equally important and must work together well. These relationships will ensure a successful and sustainable non-profit organization.

2.4 How Strategic Planning Can Streamline Outreach

Having a well-documented plan will improve everyday activities that work toward the desired results and goals of the organization. By bringing the organization's priorities to light and improving the way employees work together, goals can be more easily met. Bringing clarity to the focus of the organization will occur due to the dynamic nature of the planning process.

Strategic planning is a way to fully understand the mission, strategies, and organizational values among all stakeholders. It will create a blueprint for future actions based on the current state of the organization with milestones to monitor achievements and results thus far. Strategic planning can also generate valuable marketing information for the organization (Allison & Kaye, 2015, p. 3). These marketing materials, such as spreadsheets, or reports can be used to market at the public level as well as to potential partners and funders. Finally, planning can bring people together because it fosters communication among all staff. Forums for discussion on topics like shared values incite meaningful conversations that entice strategic thinking and emphasize the most important goal of the plan: ensuring the organization's long-term success.

When learning about strategic planning, it is just as important to learn what it is not. A strategic plan is not an alternative to ongoing leadership. The plan provides a frame of reference to help respond to different challenges and environments, but it will never be an "autopilot" alternative to the leaders of the organization (Allison & Kaye, 2015, p. 4). New information may constantly alter plans, sometimes every day. It is important to not be surprised and to continue improving with the original goals in mind. Lastly, this process cannot predict the future. To plan, one must make assumptions about the future, but in the end, the decision must be made in the present. It is vital that all changes are monitored to ensure previous assumptions are still valid.

Allison and Kaye (2015) highlights three key suggestions to plan most effectively. First, they recommend focusing on the most critical issues of the organization. These choices will

define the organization's strategy and must be addressed in the plan. One must not pursue all options because there will not be enough resources or time. Second, it is also recommended to create a planning document, which will become a beneficial resource for the internal operators as well as the organization's partners. For example, a page from a strategic plan from the YMCA can be found in **Figure 4** below. Third, the authors suggest ensuring the strategic plan is connected to work plans and budgets. Short-term priorities and identification of responsibilities is integral during the implementation of a plan. If these ideals are kept in mind, effective planning should be in place.

Figure 4: YMCA Strategic Plan. Source: YMCA of Metropolitan Washington (n.d.)

Whether it be technology, population fluctuation, climate change, inequality, or economic management, organizations must respond in an organized manner to survive and prosper. These responses to the ever-changing world should be planned ahead of time to ensure the best possible outcome. This strategic plan is best informed by analysis and synthesis of information, clarified mission and goal statements, and "the future implications of present decisions" (Bryson, 2018, p. 35). If done properly, strategic planning can encourage participation and ongoing learning, facilitate communication between parties, and promote accountability. The imagination and commitment to the organization will prepare the planning group to effectively address all the challenges the organization may encounter (Bryson, 2018, p. 30-35).

2.5 Critical Steps in the Creation of a Strategic Plan

One of the first steps highlighted by several leaders in the field of strategic planning includes recognizing the mission, vision, and values of the organization. This is imperative to better understand why the organization exists and what its success will look like in the future (Allison & Kaye, 2015; Bryson, 2018; Steiner, 1979). Finalized statements verified by the members of the organization should be referenced in every step of the plan. It is also important to understand the engagement of the organization. The organization's staff can tell the planning team what issues or choices the plan should address, as well as the roles and participation each member in the organization will adopt. The team must ensure that the staff who will be utilizing the plan are committed to the vision and strategy behind creating one (Allison & Kaye, 2015).

To improve an organization, it is beneficial to identify both the negative and positive characteristics of the group from many perspectives early on in the planning process. Oster (1995) recommends surveying expert opinions on the inside and the outside of the organization to compare different viewpoints. This comparison will provide a more complete view of the organization and point out various aspects for improvement.

Another important step includes identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the organization, as well as the opportunities and threats facing them; this is known as a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) analysis (Helms & Nixon, 2010, p. 206-207). By using this analysis, a planning team can make suggestions to better accomplish the organization's mission. Assessing the organization's capacity encompasses the understanding of the staffing and the structures of functions, such as human resources, technology, and facilities.

Assessing the effectiveness of the current staff and board members will also allow the identification of opportunities for improvement. These steps will allow the team to begin to formulate the core of the strategic plan.

A strategic plan is broken up into different sections called content areas. These content areas differ for each organization, however examples of content areas include Capital Resources, Location, Health and Wellbeing, Education, Community Engagement, Infrastructure, and Program and Services. Including clear and relevant content areas in the strategic plan will help guide the organization to the success of its goals.

The largest point of success of strategic plans, according to Evans (2012), is the implementation of the plan. Properly implemented strategic plans require an accompanying operational plan. An operational plan is considered to be the conversion of strategic goals into actions (Evans, 2012). The purpose of developing an operational plan is to have a means to generate the outcomes outlined in the strategic plan. Some organizations lack the knowledge and skills required to properly carry out their goals, so the use of an operational plan can help guide them toward their goals using the resources they have access to. The operational plan can include items such as a timeline for each process, tools for measuring progress, resource requirements, and expected outcome. Overall including this plan will help aid and set up an organization for its best chance of success.

2.6 Summary

From this review, we learned that the scope and depth of HVK's work is already quite extraordinary. A strategic plan will ground the organization as it applies for funding and establishes more partnerships to optimize its goals for Liberia. Best practices in strategic planning include having a comprehensive understanding of measurable benchmarks for success. Essential factors such as communication and ideological mission will improve the strengths of the organization. Finally, short- and long-term goals are a critical step towards the success of the organization.

Chapter 3: Methodology

The goal of this project was to develop a strategic framework for HVK Children's Foundation so that they could best continue to provide aid to Liberian communities. To meet this goal, we created the following objectives:

1. evaluate the existing resources, structures, and goals of the foundation;
2. identify, rank, and recommend partners and opportunities that could support HVK's mission;
3. identify critical elements needed to formalize a cohesive strategic plan.

This chapter outlines methods that the team used to collect data in order to accomplish each objective in greater detail.

3.1 Evaluate Existing Resources, Structures, and Goals

To understand the founding philosophies and the current state of the organization, we began by completing a content analysis of HVK's website. A content analysis is "a research method used to identify patterns in recorded communication" (Luo, 2019). It provides a way to categorize themes or concepts and analyze them properly. Our content analysis created a baseline assessment of HVK's mission, vision, and values. Our team completed the content analysis by separating data into large categories for organization; these categories included mission, goals, access to healthcare, quality education, sanitation, internal members, and partnering organizations. We documented the organization's values and existing resource base, including the board members, and number of employees. We also noted the range and type of projects that the foundation is engaged with.

The team conducted semi-structured interviews with current and past members of the organization to expand our understanding of the board and its functioning. These interviews were led by preset questions and prompts, with the ability to ask probing questions based on any new information gathered during the interview (Galletta, 2013, p. 47). The interviews were conducted over Zoom with two teammates present. One member was the interviewer and the other transcribed the conversation. Semi-structured interviews were preferred over surveys due to the flexibility, expansion, and clarification of questions that interviews present over surveys (Galletta, 2013, p. 76). We wanted to be respectful of our interviewees' time and gain all relevant insight without troubling them with additional surveys and questionnaires (Galletta, 2013, p. 50).

We interviewed HVK's founder, Jermoh Kamara, HVK's liaison in Liberia, Abdullah Sonnie, and several former board members to learn more about HVK's internal structure, the current state of their programs, key resources, and desired outcomes. Our interview questionnaire guides can be found in **Appendix A**.

We used a strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) analysis to evaluate the raw information collected by our content analysis and semi-structured interviews. Through this tool, we classified the various outward facing programs, objectives, and goals, and evaluated their effectiveness through a lens created by their internal mission and vision statements (Helms & Nixon, 2010, p. 206-207). The SWOT analysis helped the team to understand the internal and external factors influencing HVK. Conducting this analysis helped us to understand HVK in their current state.

3.2 Identify, Rank, and Recommend Partners

The founder of HVK identified several organizations with whom they wished to create synergistic relationships. Our initial focus was to research these organizations to see what they do and who they serve. Through our research, we also identified other organizations who could have been beneficial partners to HVK, including partners located in Liberia. To better understand the potential synergies of these organizations, we examined their scope and stated mission (Tilles, 1963). We collected information from their web-based media, as well. From here, we created a checklist to determine each organization's compatibility with HVK.

After learning basic information on the selected organizations, such as the organization's missions and goals, we assessed and ranked the potential collaborators using a decision matrix. In the decision matrix, the organizations were listed in the left column, while our requirements for each organization were listed in the top row. Our team decided to look at whether the organization's values and mission aligned with HVK's. We also looked at their target audience, experience/reputation, and overall compatibility with HVK. An example decision matrix can be found in **Appendix B**. Each organization was rated on a one to five scale based on each criteria with five being the most similar, and the total score for the organization is calculated by adding all of the criteria scores together. Organizations that had a higher total score were considered the more ideal partners for HVK and the lower weighted scorers were considered less ideal.

3.3 Identify Critical Elements Necessary to Formalize a Strategic Plan

To identify critical elements for HVK's strategic plan, our group completed "action research" (Berg & Lune, 2011, p. 258) in the field of strategic planning. The process of action research included identifying research questions, gathering information to answer those questions, analyzing and interpreting the information, and then sharing the results (Berg & Lune, 2011, p. 264). Our goal was to identify the most critical steps in strategic planning for organizations like HVK. To answer this question, our team compiled resources written by leaders in the field of management and business. We analyzed these resources and decided which elements were most important based on how fitting the element was for HVK, as well as how frequently the element was discussed in the resources we found.

To learn more from experts, we contacted and conducted semi-structured interviews with faculty from the Foisie Business School of WPI and other experts outside of the university that support NGOs. We reached out to Professors Micah Chase, Kenny Ching, Francis Hoy, William Krein, John Lindholm, Elizabeth Lingo, Diane Strong, and Shari Worthington. A sample interview guide for these conversations can be found in **Appendix C**. These interviews helped us to understand the important elements of strategic planning, as well as to identify steps in the creation and implementation of a plan.

To learn from practitioners, we contacted and interviewed representatives from organizations and NGOs that do work in Liberia and other sites in Africa to understand their experiences working with communities in the education and healthcare domains. Our team prioritized reaching out to organizations that had experience working with children and youth groups. These interviews helped us better understand how a successful strategic plan can help strengthen existing programs and improve organizational stability within different non-profit groups. Overall, the interviews provided insight on what components should go into a strategic plan custom tailored to HVK's specific needs.

Chapter 4: Results and Discussion

Through our research, we have identified and have highlighted key observations relating to each of the objectives. We then provide some insight into how this information can be organized into a strategic plan for HVK Children's Foundation to use moving forward.

Part 1 Results

4.1 Evaluate Existing Resources, Structures, and Goals

Our team began the content analysis of the HVK Children's Foundation's website by filtering and organizing the information into relevant categories. These categories include the mission, goals, access to healthcare, quality education, sanitation, internal board members, and partners of HVK.

An evaluation of its mission shows a wide reach in terms of what the organization intends to do. HVK's mission is quite broadly defined with many domains associated with it, including:

"improv[ing] the lives of all Liberians, with a focus on women, children and families,"

"educat[ing], support[ing] and train[ing] Liberians so they can achieve economic self-sufficiency" (Hawah V. Kamara Children's Foundation, n.d.-d, para. 2-4),

"coordinat[ing] health and education programs,"

"provid[ing] community-level health programs," and

"helping to create deep connections across communities"

(Hawah V. Kamara Children's Foundation, n.d.-c, para. 1-4).

The website highlights a wide range of projects that HVK has implemented and plans to implement in the future. All are focused on the same goal: creating a future where the women, children, and families of Liberia can reach their full potential and pass skills onto future generations. With more analysis, however, the scope of the programs as provided on the website is inconsistent. For example, HVK's mission includes many health and education imperatives, but the site also highlights programs related to sanitation.

According to the website (HVK Children's Foundation, n.d.-b), the original board members included the founder, Jermoh Kamara, the co-founder and program specialist, Martin Bruce, the program coordinator, Gertura Gbarbo, consultant, Koua Her, and Lab-in-a-Box

personnel, Abdullah Sonnie. However, through personal communication with Jermoh kamara, our team found this information is outdated, and currently only Kamara and Sonnie are active employees.

The schools or partners that HVK is currently working in include the Diamond Creek Community School, two Paynesville YMCAs, Bright Future Academy, Twins Academy Primary and Junior High, and the Zoe Louise Preparatory Elementary and Junior High. In these schools, HVK has donated school supplies, fed orphan children following the Ebola outbreak, and implemented Project REACH, WASH, and the Lab-in-a-Box. This information is current and HVK will continue to support these partners in the years to come.

Existing Structure and Resources

Interviews brought more specific details to our findings, especially with regard to the existing structure and resources in place. We learned that many of the original founding board members moved on from HVK to pursue new opportunities. The HVK Board of Directors is in need of new members as the current board only consists of founder Jermoh Kamara and Lab-in-a-Box personnel, Abdullah Sonnie. Kamara voiced the clear need for a committed and passionate board, as well as a devoted Executive Director (ED). Ideally, this board will consist of people with financial assets, beneficial connections to powerful people and organizations, and composed of individuals with a personal connection to Liberia. Furthermore, we learned earlier that diversity within a board can bring a balance between fiscal wealth, asset wealth, and knowledge wealth. Kamara described the Executive Director position as one that could be filled by a young Liberian who is passionate about the organization and could bring local knowledge and energy to the position. This Director would take over many of the tasks Kamara has assumed (J. Kamara, personal communication, April 12, 2021).

When discussing the future of the organization, Sonnie agreed with adding board members and also expressed a need for hiring more employees for HVK. He stipulated that any employee under HVK should be "innovative, creative, and hardworking" (A. Sonnie, personal communication, April 15, 2021). However, Sonnie acknowledged that currently, HVK does not have the facilities and resources available to hire and support new employees. To add to the need for funding, he also believes that these new employees should be compensated and properly trained as an incentive to join the team and stay with HVK. While HVK is not able to provide

these facilities with its current limited funding and resources, he believes as long as Kamara remains in charge, HVK will continue to grow and acquire more resources and funding avenues.

Existing Scope and Partnerships

Through our interviews with Abdullah Sonnie, we could better understand the relationship HVK has with communities and schools in Liberia. While most of the schools in Liberia have a positive opinion of HVK, some schools believe that the services offered by HVK are unnecessary, or they have different ideas about how education can best be improved. Currently, many schools look forward to working with HVK, but more funding and resources are necessary in order to upgrade facilities and hire the staff members needed to support these school programs.

Our interviews with Kamara revealed some agreement about the broad scope of the organization. Kamara proposed narrowing the scope of aid to just one sector, where the most impact could be made with currently available resources. Focusing on only one sector of aid would allow HVK to build a high-functioning program that will attract more donors and partners.
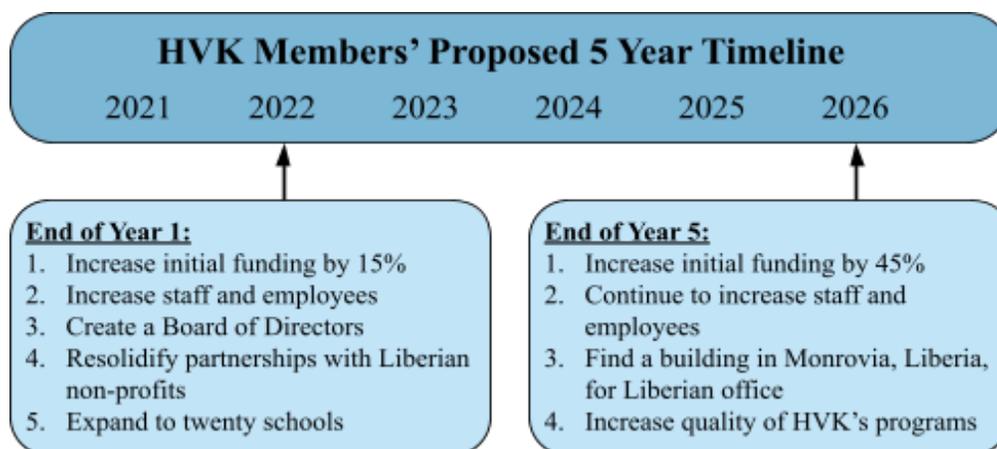
Future Outlook

The lack of funds has caused the organization to shift its focus away from some mission-based efforts originally proposed to work in the sectors of healthcare, education, sanitation, and community development. The remaining focus on education and boosting access to technology in schools across Liberia is nevertheless critical and could bring Liberian students the opportunity to "move into the 21st century" (J. Kamara, personal communication, April 12, 2021). HVK's efforts to educate the youth can enable generations of young people in Liberia to have the skill set necessary to procure jobs and create a more economically secure future for themselves. Most of HVK's outreach requires support and personnel to build strong foundations.

Kamara envisions herself in a training/coaching role to support the new ED until they are comfortable. Once the ED transitions, Kamara would like to be part of the Board of Directors and possibly become the Board President to offer support where she can. She also sees opportunities to reiterate HVK's mission to the other board members to inspire them to continue to care about the organization when they join (J. Kamara, personal communication, April 12,

2021). These mission driven projects require sustained support and attention on the ground as well as in the board. For example, regarding the outlook for partnerships HVK already has with schools in Liberia, Sonnie believes that HVK could improve its relationships through better communication. He voiced that "students need to understand why [HVK is] trying to help" (A. Sonnie, personal communication, April 15, 2021). The work of expanding partnerships in these schools means cultivating ongoing relationships and follow-up. Sonnie suggested creating a presentation that explains the impact of HVK's programs, which could help the children and schools better understand and accept HVK's aid.

Gertura Gbarbo, a past board member of HVK, provided new insights about volunteer and staff motivation. Gbarbo emphasized issues with getting volunteers to work for the organization in the past. Convincing volunteers from the United States to work in Liberia was difficult and affected their personal morale. She suggested that HVK work to obtain funding to pay for essential costs for American volunteers to stay and work in Liberia to ensure stronger buy-in from staff conducting these outreach activities.

Through these communications, a list of goals for HVK was created for the next one and five years. The topic areas focused on identifying sources of funding, creating a Board of Directors, increasing the quality of the programs, increasing the number of schools supported, and finding a location for an office in Liberia. One divergence in goals concerned how HVK should continue with the Lab-in-a-Box program. While Kamara would like to expand the program to twenty schools within the first year, Sonnie would also like to see the quality of the programs improved before future expansion. The breakdown of these generally stated goals can be seen in **Figure 5** below.

HVK Members' Proposed 5 Year Timeline

2021   2022   2023   2024   2025   2026

End of Year 1:
1. Increase initial funding by 15%
2. Increase staff and employees
3. Create a Board of Directors
4. Resolidify partnerships with Liberian non-profits
5. Expand to twenty schools

End of Year 5:
1. Increase initial funding by 45%
2. Continue to increase staff and employees
3. Find a building in Monrovia, Liberia, for Liberian office
4. Increase quality of HVK's programs

Figure 5: Summary of goals for HVK in one and five years.

SWOT Analysis of the Organization

A SWOT analysis of HVK Children's Foundation examined the strengths and weaknesses of the organization as well as the opportunities and threats they might face. This SWOT analysis reflects perspectives from members of the organization who have held key positions. In this analysis, the strengths are defined as what sets HVK's mission apart from other non-profit organizations and where the organization excels. The weaknesses include limiting features or items that HVK is lacking outright, and would benefit from improvement. The opportunities express the possibilities and potential for positive impact. Lastly, threats refer to internal or external factors that may negatively affect HVK's success (see **Table 1**).

Table 1: SWOT Analysis based on communications with HVK employees.

HVK SWOT Analysis			
Strength	**Weaknesses**	**Opportunities**	**Threats**
Knowledge and access to the United States and Liberia Founder has connections to non-profit boards Access to WPI faculty network Fundraising knowledge Valued by Liberian communities	Resource limitations Lack of funding and donations Lack of Board of Directors Understaffed Broad scope Communication across the world	High potential for new programs to be implemented Update social media and website Collaborating with other potential partners and non-profits	Increased competition for donations Lack of social media presence may influence growth Government restrictions Possible lack of interest in the Lab-in-a-Box program from communities

This SWOT analysis suggests that HVK has a lot of potential to grow due to its many connections and great relationship with the Liberian community. However, clear problems indicated in the analysis include the lack of funding, personnel, and resources. Social media engagement proved to be both an opportunity and threat to growth. Overall, HVK is in need of a plan to ensure success, but the strengths and opportunities presented are optimistic for future development.

4.2 Identify, Rank, and Recommend Partners

Decision Matrix of Potential Partners

Our team decided to rank different potential partners, including Boys & Girls Club (BGCA), FACE Africa, Harlem Children's Zone (HCZ), Hilltop Schools (HTS), John Snow Inc. (JSI), Kids Educational Engagement Project (KEEP), Rising Academies (RA), Save More Kids (SMK), Seven Hills Foundation (SHF), United Way, and YWCA. The rankings are based on the following criteria: mission and goals, target audiences, experience/reputation, and compatibility. Mission and goals refer to how similar the organization's vision is compared to HVK. Since HVK is heavily focused on educational programs for children, it would be best if these organizations had similar interests for easier collaboration. Target audiences refer to the beneficiaries that each organization primarily targets and whether they have similar demographics to HVK. Each non-profit has its own experience and reputation that they have built over the years. It is important for HVK to work with an organization that has experience working internationally since HVK focuses most of its work in Liberia. The last criteria is the projected compatibility of the organizations. This includes how similar the two organizations are and the potential for them to collaborate. It also includes organizations that HVK has already worked with and the number of connections or resources they might have. This is done so that both organizations will be able to benefit from any potential collaborations. **Appendix D** highlights the core information used to inform the ratings for each organization, and the ranking scores are located in the decision matrix **Table 2.**

Table 2: Decision matrix on partner criteria to rank the organizations' potential for a successful partnership with HVK.

	Criteria / Requirements				
	Mission / Goals	Target Audience	Experience / Reputation	Compatibility	Total Score
Boys & Girls Club (BGCA)	4	4	3	2	13
FACE Africa	3	3	5	4	15
Harlem Children's Zone (HCZ)	4	4	2	3	13
Hilltop Schools (HTS)	5	4	4	5	18
John Snow Inc. (JSI)	3	3	3	4	13
Kids Education Engagement Project (KEEP)	5	5	4	5	19
Rising Academies (RA)	5	5	4	4	18
Save More Kids (SMK)	5	5	5	5	20
Seven Hill Foundation (SHF)	3	3	3	3	12
United Way	4	2	3	4	13
YWCA	2	2	2	2	8

Analyzing the decision matrix on the previous page, our team has concluded that Face Africa, Hilltop Schools, Kids Education Engagement Project, Rising Academies, and Save More Kids are the organizations with the greatest potential for a successful partnership with HVK. This information can be used to make contact with representatives from each organization in an attempt to open a line of communication about a future relationship. As HVK continues to expand, it is important to recognize which organization shares the same values and has the necessary skills and experience to collaborate well with HVK in order for both organizations to accomplish their goals. However, it should be known that our team had trouble contacting members from many organizations due to factors outside our control. Because we did not receive many responses from the organizations listed above, the above analysis was completed by analyzing each organization's website and other published materials.

4.3 Identify Critical Elements Necessary to Formalize a Strategic Plan

To gain a better understanding of the key components that go into a strategic plan, the team interviewed nine WPI faculty and business operations experts with experience in the field of strategic business planning. The expertise ranged from private business consultation, to human resources, to organizational behavior. General advice for newer non-profit groups included recommendations for organizations like HVK to focus on the financial aspects of the organization and prioritizing program quality over quantity. The importance of specificity, when it comes to the 'goods' that are being offered to the beneficiaries by the organization, was also stressed. The interviewees discussed the importance of making a "small but good impact" first, and then building upon it by sharing the outcomes with potential supporters who may be interested in helping to increase the impact (Interview 5, April 22, 2021). As one of our interviewees stressed,

"keep in touch with your clients and your customers and always identify what their needs are and whether or not your mission statement and your services are addressing their needs" (Interview 4, April 14, 2021).

The overall consensus shows that analyzing the beneficiaries' needs and investigating whether HVK's own mission and services are able to meet these requirements is a crucial assessment step for the sustainability of the organization.

When asked what actions should be prioritized in order for HVK to become a more successful non-profit, experts answered that a strong Board of Directors who fulfill dedicated key roles is imperative. These members should be able to assist HVK through monetary donations, fundraising opportunities, business connections, or knowledge in a specific area of expertise. One individual suggested that a smaller Board of Directors would be considered more ideal in best practices. This would allow the members to cultivate more intimate relationships with each other, while another individual suggested a larger Board of Directors would be beneficial because of the diversity and wealth present. It was also emphasized that being passionate or motivated by the goals of the organization is critical for a Board of Directors to be successful, but that is just one factor. One WPI faculty strongly believes,

> "there's nothing wrong with essentially getting a pledge from a board member in advance. They're essentially paying to be on the board, which again goes back to ... who's going to get excited about what they're doing, and feel it's valuable, and it's important to them" (Interview 2, April 13, 2021).

It was explained that having a Board of Directors who are willing to contribute their own money shows that they have the non-profit organization's best interest in mind and are willing to put in the work to make HVK more successful.

The faculty and experts our team interviewed had varying levels of experience with creating strategic plans themselves. Each of the interviewees felt a strategic plan was the most important document to write for organizing any business or non-profit group. This is especially true for providing a framework to support fundraising and money management.

> "Whether they're for-profit or not-for-profit, the key to ... business is managing cash because that's the lifeblood of your business" (Interview 1, April 9, 2021).

Many of the experts emphasized the importance of managing their money since fundraising covers operational expenses needed to achieve HVK's mission and goals. Non-profits can manage their funds by analyzing cash flow statements and cash flow projections to ensure there is enough money to pay for the necessities. Furthermore, it is important for the organization to be transparent with the board members in terms of where the funding is coming from and the

process by which the foundation receives financial support either through donations, grants, or sponsorships. Similarly, the strategic plan process establishes and enables proper communication internally and allows all the board members and volunteers to fully understand the goal and objectives of the organization, since a clear mission statement makes the rationale for implementing the program clear and increases efficiency within the organization. A basic outline of the critical features of a strategic plan and their implementation methods can be found in **Table 3.**

Table 3: A table highlighting the features of a strategic plan.

Strategic Plan	
Features	**Implementation of Important Features**
Mission Statement	Review or develop organization's mission statement and values
Core Values	Identify important core values and principles that guide employees and board members
Internal and External Assessment	Utilize a SWOT analysis
Objectives and Strategies	Establish funding/resource allocations and strategies to accomplish objectives
Measurement of Progress	Incorporate a way to track organization performance and progress against daily goals

It is important to fully understand each feature of a strategic plan because accounting for these different elements ensures that HVK has fully considered any issues or concerns that may arise. Including detailed sections for each element will help the board members and HVK's employees stay on the same page as to what the non-profit wants to accomplish in the short- and long-term. Overall, a strong strategic plan will be crucial to the growth, maintenance, and success for any non-profit.

Part 2 Discussion of the Findings

Looking at the data we have collected, we can see that HVK is an organization that has tremendous capacity to make a positive impact on the lives and education of children in Liberia. In order to do this, however, HVK requires a fully functioning and financially stable internal infrastructure to support the mission and objectives of the organization. The challenges and opportunities identified by the SWOT analysis make it clear that establishing these structures first will provide HVK with the appropriate momentum and resources to grow.

It is also clear that HVK has a great opportunity for ongoing relationships with the communities in Liberia it serves. The programs are well-received by the students and teachers who have access to it and who have had enough support to implement and follow-up with the assessments. With more funding and personnel, the quality of these programs can be increased and the reach of the work will naturally increase as well. Focusing on a single program will be strategically important for showing proof of a positive impact that can be pitched to potential partners to gain additional backing to further support the program and organization.

The current mission of the organization is powerful and meaningful. It is also supported by a very strong leader and a network of devoted staff. However, it is a broad mission and is vulnerable to being viewed as too widely defined to be intriguing to potential partners, donors, and sponsors. Time spent crafting a more narrow mission and scope will ensure that more funders and partners will understand and appreciate the importance of the work being done by HVK and hopefully support them through their expertise and monetary contributions. Developing a network of financial resources and experience could allow HVK to flourish with a more secure base, and strengthen the path forward for HVK in the next coming years.

Chapter 5: Recommendations and Conclusion

At the close of this project, all of our evidence pointed to a critical need for a strategic plan that could internally structure, organize, and plan HVK Children's Foundation's future as a basis for expansion into the communities they serve. We created a strategic plan with the information we collected during the past few months. Naturally, having a written plan is the first half of the effort to build a cohesive focus. The second half of the effort is following the plan to the best of the organization's ability. By completing the steps in the plan, HVK will meet short-term goals and objectives and will make consistent progress towards completing goals by following the actions steps. Our detailed recommendations are listed below.

Part 1 Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Adopt the Strategic Plan

We created a comprehensive and step-by-step strategic plan (**Appendix E**) that will frame the work of HVK moving forward. For a strategic plan to be effective long-term, it must be revisited and revised periodically. Therefore, there is work that needs to be continually done by the members of HVK to make it the most effective plan it can be. Conversations between employees and volunteers about each section of the plan must take place no less frequently than annually in order to remind and reorient the organization towards a distilled and defined mission, with clear goals and action steps.

Because this plan was created by individuals from outside HVK, there are pieces of the plan that lack specific detail and direction. The reasoning for this is to grant the organization some flexibility in how it implements the plan. By defining the milestones and the deadlines that should be met, it allows HVK to do what they feel works best for them in order to reach these specific short-term goals. Recommended action steps have been provided as guidance for HVK to accomplish each objective, but they could be subject to change based on the resources available to the organization at any time or other factors that affect the organization's ability to complete the objectives of the plan. It is the responsibility of the members of the organization to fill in more specifically the specific action steps to reach each objective as needed, or to update the plan as needed as time passes.

Recommendation 2: Meet Year 1 Benchmarks

Identify and Create Board of Advisors

In order to be successful, it is recommended to develop a well-curated Board of Advisors for HVK Children's Foundation. This board's responsibility would be to keep the eventual Executive Director, Program Director(s), and eventual Board of Directors focused and accountable for their work towards meeting administrative deadlines and hitting key milestones. These individuals will need to check in with the Board of Advisors no less frequently than quarterly to assess their progress towards the action steps leading towards goal completion.

The recommended size of this Board of Advisors is two to three individuals of diverse backgrounds, perspectives, and experiences. One of these individuals should have strategic experience in Liberia, another should have academic or institutional expertise, and another should be strongly connected to other organizations and fundraising opportunities. To create this board, HVK needs to create position descriptions based on the recommended guidelines included in the strategic plan and then purposely recruit individuals to fill the positions. This can be done by having HVK reach outside its network of contacts to fill each seat in order to offer HVK the most well-rounded Board of Advisors possible. Another method can also include spreading awareness of HVK's mission to attract individuals that are passionate about Liberia or about the success of the programs being implemented. A Board of Advisors is specifically tasked with keeping HVK on track to meet subsequent benchmarks over time.

Set Up Partnerships

Strong relationships with other organizations will offer support in many ways, including shared physical resources, expanded outreach, better fundraising, joint projects, and optimizing grants. The founder should reach out to organizations, such as the suggested partners listed in **Section 4.2**, to arrange a meeting with the key representatives in the organization to propose a partnership with HVK. Having these kinds of relationships will allow HVK to build fiscal, asset, and knowledge wealth over time from outside the organization that they can tap into when needed. These relationships are vital for HVK's longevity and their success because the partnerships can act as a safety net of resources.

Launching Fundraising Efforts

HVK needs money to support programs, pay for marketing, offer compensation for their workers, and purchase and maintain resources. For these reasons, it is recommended to increase the available funding by 15%. To do this, the Board of Advisors can leverage their position by reaching out to businesses and organizations that are interested in making contributions for Liberian K-12 STEAM education. Fundraising methods that can be used include curating a list of contacts and donors, regular newsletters, and hosting events that showcase HVK's vision and accomplishments. Spreading awareness through social media presence or through in-person meetings will help identify individuals with shared values. It is vitally important to maintain efforts to increase current and potential donor engagement to be a successful nonprofit.

Without adequate financial resources, the organization cannot move forward: the workers cannot work, the programs cannot be updated, expanded, or run, and the organization cannot conduct adequate marketing. The data collected shows that it is easier for an organization to start building financial security set by receiving many small donations rather than a few large ones. By receiving small donations from people and organizations that believe in HVK's targeted mission, they will have the support to start moving forward.

Focus HVK's Programming

With a current deficit of required fiscal, asset, and knowledge wealth, it is recommended that HVK focuses its efforts into a single program for the short-term. Based on the responses of experts in this study, it was recommended to continue to run Lab-in-the-Box and to pause the activity of any other programs that are active. Not having adequate resources makes running several programs at once very difficult and strains the existing staff and funds. To maximize the resources that HVK does have, it is recommended that time, money, and effort go into developing Lab-in-the-Box into the best program possible. To do this, HVK can leverage the last IQP team's suggestions for upgrades to Lab-in-a-Box (Gosselin et al., 2021), focus on making the program impactful to the students, and make it a self-sustaining program in each school. Having a program that is making a recognizable impact serves as a great way to pitch the organization to others to gain further support moving forward.

Recommendation 3: Meet Year 3 Benchmarks

Conduct a Quality Assessment

The third-year benchmark for HVK is to have increased the quality of the Lab-in-a-Box program in the six schools that participated in the first initiative, and to compile results from program assessments that show the skills the students are acquiring over time. These outcomes will be used as data for further marketing and fundraising for the organization. These data will be used as the "story" of the impact the organization is having on the children in the Liberian schools. Outreach with this information can now be expanded to larger organizations, which will hopefully increase funding to 20-30% from its initial value.

Establish a Permanent Board of Directors

At the end of year three, it is recommended that HVK also establishes a well-positioned Board of Directors. This board can include three to five individuals who will assist HVK through financial donations, network connections, or knowledge in specific areas of expertise. Our team recommends that the Board President position be filled by Jermoh Kamara. Kamara's responsibilities will be to recruit board members with the characteristics outlined in the strategic plan details (see **Appendix E**). Most importantly, at this point, Kamara will recruit an Executive Director (ED). The ED will need to be properly trained and should be fully prepared by the end of the third year.

Liberian Office

By the end of the third year, our team recommends that HVK Children's Foundation identifies a physical location in Liberia to set up its office. It is recommended that the office is located in Monrovia, Liberia, because it is a central point between the schools HVK is currently working with. A thorough evaluation of expenses should be completed to understand if the organization can afford a shared or full building by year five.

Recommendation 4: Meet Year 5 Benchmarks

Further Expansion

By the end of the five-year plan, we recommend that the Lab-in-a-Box program aim to expand to approximately twenty different schools in Liberia. In order for further expansion to occur, the most crucial component would be an abundant amount of fundraising and proper money allocations. Since HVK will be based primarily in Monrovia, Liberia, the expansion of HVK's programs to more schools will require greater transportation costs and additional staff. Since Lab-in-a-Box is an offline e-learning tool, many teachers will need to be thoroughly trained before implementing this system into new Liberian schools. HVK will be able to expand to different schools by reaching out to different communities and assessing which schools are most in need of HVK's services. By expanding to more schools, HVK would become better known which in turn could assist the organization in finding more sponsors and donors. In addition to expanding the number of schools that HVK plans to partner with, HVK should also have secured an office location in Monrovia to make transportation and access to the schools easier. Towards the end of this time frame, HVK should have a stable source of income and regular donations in order to pay for all the resources and manpower necessary for foundation sustainability and expansion.

Stabilize the Board of Directors

Our team recommends that by the end of the five-year plan, HVK should have a committed Board of Directors that fill the recommended requirements for each of the different positions. This expanded Board of Directors should have approximately five to seven members that have the experience and qualities necessary to assist HVK through different challenges that they may encounter. Having a larger Board of Directors by the end of the five-year time frame will allow for easier employee training due to HVK having more personnel with experience in the field that could be of assistance. Most of the Board of Directors at this point in time should have spent enough time with HVK to acquire the resources and experiences required to train a new generation of HVK Directors or employees if necessary. In order to make HVK a sustainable non-profit organization, it is important that the organization has a high employee retention rate, meaning that most employees and board members stay with HVK long enough to train and encourage new employees.

Diversify Current Programs

Our results show that by the end of the five-year timeline, it will be beneficial for HVK to start to consider diversifying and expanding their programs. After acquiring a stable Board of Advisors and Board of Directors, HVK should strive to increase their available funding to 35-45% of its initial income. This funding should be used to increase the number of staff and employees. This increased budget will also be used to improve the quality of its current programs. The team recommends that HVK should then start to create and focus on new programs based on the needs of their beneficiaries. Creating new programs while continuing to innovate current programs will allow HVK to stay relevant and allow for long-term advantages for the organization.

Foster Program Sustainability

Another recommendation that is crucial to diversifying new programs is the sustainability and motivation of these programs. It is important to maintain the regular assessments that have been developed in a way that can be tracked in order to monitor the success rate of the programs implemented over time.

By creating an evaluation system that monitors and tracks the impact of the programs implemented, it can help the board and staff members quickly identify areas that the organization can improve upon. The program evaluation becomes a valuable tool to help strengthen program quality and improve the overall experience for the beneficiaries that HVK serves. The Board of Directors and Board of Advisors are responsible for implementing and maintaining this method of evaluation in order to address concerns early on in the most efficient manner possible. Flexibility and self-awareness will then become key factors for HVK to become a sustainable non-profit as well as obtaining the ability to thrive in its designated sector. This will help HVK save monetary and tangible resources, as prevention is better than reaction, and allow HVK to maximize the benefits and impact of their programs.

Recommendation 5: Additional Considerations Outside the Strategic Plan

Based on our previous interactions with HVK personnel and individuals from outside the organization, our team has included some additional insights that will further help HVK fulfill the one-, three-, and five-year recommendation plans.

Certificate Programs for School Staff and Educators

To improve HVK's relationship with its partnering schools, our team recommends that HVK should provide a certificate program which acknowledges the skills that the HVK trained partnered educators in Liberia have received. This token of recognition allows educators to feel a sense of accomplishment by the end of their training and provide them with a document which highlights their new transferable skills. This certificate program will act as an additional bonus for educators, and may also serve as an incentive for schools and educators who want to form a partnership with HVK in the future.

Introducing Vocational Training Programs

Currently, HVK is focusing on providing STEAM education through its Lab-in-a-Box program. Since most of the workforce is employed in agriculture, trade, tourism, manufacturing, sales, and administration, we recommend that HVK should try to establish a new educational program that focuses on teaching students' specific vocational skills which can be applied to relevant and necessary jobs in Liberian communities. Introducing a new vocational training program will be challenging and HVK will need to be in a better financial state before they can focus on this initiative. However, a vocational program allows HVK to expand its program offerings and attract more funding partners, more schools, and more opportunities for the students to learn. The option allows students to choose the skills they would like to focus on for their futures. The success of these trainings is in building an interest and commitment to skills that can generate lifelong learners who feel that they have choices in their future occupations.

Part 2 Conclusion

Our team strongly believes that the implementation of the recommendations we have suggested will allow HVK to become more successful and grow to become an organization that will make a considerable impact on the lives of Liberian children. The creation of a strategic plan will place the organization on a timeline to optimize its maximum potential educational impact. With more funding, personnel, and steady partnerships, HVK will be a more secure organization that delivers quality opportunities to young people. While the creation of a strategic plan is crucial to the growth of a non-profit, an effective strategic plan should constantly evolve and improve over time to fit the needs of the organization. Since technological and economic factors constantly change, HVK should be able to respond and adapt to these developments quickly in order to become a more successful organization. Given time and effort, HVK could reach a stage where they will be able to expand their operations and focus on multiple different initiatives and projects, with the focus on sanitation, health and community-driven programs. Our team has greatly enjoyed this experience working with the Hawah V. Kamara Children's Foundation and looks forward to seeing the exponential impact of their work in Liberia.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Example Interview Guide for HVK Affiliates

Informed Consent Agreement for Participation in a Research Study
"Developing a Strategic Plan for the HVK Children's Foundation"

Investigators and contact information:
Lynsa Chau: *lkchau@wpi.edu*
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Kyle Mitchell: *kgmitchell@wpi.edu*
Eliana Palumbo: *epalumbo@wpi.edu*
Group Alias: *gr-HVK-IQP21@wpi.edu*

Purpose: The purpose of this study is to understand the current status of the HVK Children's Foundation.

Procedures to be followed: This interview will ask you to reflect on your current and past experiences working for HVK. We may ask for additional information including the organizational structure of HVK, as well as your perception of other employees.

Record keeping and confidentiality: By agreeing to this interview, you are consenting to helping us learn about your experiences and their impact on the future state of the organization. You should feel free to answer at any level to which you wish to disclose. We will be sharing this information with our advisors for evaluation purposes anonymously. This interview is not mandatory and your consent is given freely of your own choice. Any publication or presentation of the data will not identify you, unless you agree to be identified.

For more information about this research, contact the investigators (email addresses are at the top of this document). You can see the final project by emailing a request to our contact information or by using keywords in the search at https://digitalcommons.wpi.edu/iqp/

Your participation in this research is voluntary. The project investigators retain the right to cancel or postpone the experimental procedures at any time they see fit. By consenting to the interview, you acknowledge that you have been informed about the study and wish to consent to participate. You will be asked again after completing the interview for your consent as a matter of respect for your right to change your mind.

Question Topics	Sample Questions
Status of HVK	1. What programs are currently running right now? a. Probe: Why is [insert program name(s)] no longer active? 2. What would you say HVK's biggest weakness is right now? 3. What has HVK done well in the past / currently? 4. Are there any threats facing HVK at this moment? If so, please explain.
Performance in Roles	1. What would you say your strengths are in this position? a. Probe: Where would you like to improve? 2. How would you describe your colleagues' performance in their positions?
Future Plans	1. How do you see the next year for HVK? The next 5 years? 2. What program(s) do you see as being the focus (new or existing)?

Appendix B: Example Decision Matrix on Partner Criteria

	Criteria / Requirements				
	Mission / Goals	Target Audience	Experience / Reputation	Compatibility	**Total Score**
Organization 1					
Organization 2					
Organization 3					
…					

Appendix C: Example Interview Guide for Industry Leaders and Experts

Informed Consent Agreement for Participation in a Research Study
"Developing a Strategic Plan for the HVK Children's Foundation"

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Purpose: The purpose of this study is to understand the current status of the HVK Children's Foundation.

Procedures to be followed: This interview will ask you to reflect on your current and past experiences working for HVK. We may ask for additional information including the organizational structure of HVK, as well as your perception of other employees.

Record keeping and confidentiality: By agreeing to this interview, you are consenting to helping us learn about your experiences and their impact on the future state of the organization. You should feel free to answer to any level to which you wish to disclose. We will be sharing this information with our advisors for evaluation purposes anonymously. This interview is not mandatory and your consent is given freely of your own choice. Any publication or presentation of the data will not identify you, unless you agree to be identified.

For more information about this research, contact the investigators (email addresses are at the top of this document). You can see the final project by emailing a request to our contact information or by using keywords in the search at https://digitalcommons.wpi.edu/iqp/

Your participation in this research is voluntary. The project investigators retain the right to cancel or postpone the experimental procedures at any time they see fit. By consenting to the interview, you acknowledge that you have been informed about the study and wish to consent to participate. You will be asked again after completing the interview for your consent as a matter of respect for your right to change your mind.

Question Topics	Sample Questions
Importance of a strategic framework	1. Why did you create a strategic plan for your organization? 2. What were some components you deemed essential for your framework? 3. Were you inspired by a pre-existing layout/framework?
Effects of a strategic framework	1. Who was most affected by the creation of this framework? 2. In your opinion, do you believe having a strategic framework helped your organization gain clarity and focus towards your goals? 3. What were some unintended consequences of the framework? 4. Do you have any advice for an organization that is trying to create their first framework?

Appendix D: Decision Matrix of Potential Partners

Organizations		Mission and Goals	Experience	Internal Structure / Reputation
BAGC	Similarities	• Both support children in an educational environment • Both have nutrition programs aimed at improving nourishment	• Both have offices located in the US • Both have experience working internationally	• Both have a very good reputation in its community
	Differences	• BAGC mainly focuses on a mentorship program to support youth • BAGC prepares youth towards a better career path	• BAGC has expanded to many locations globally and is not limited to certain countries	• BAGC is much larger in scale • BAGC is much older than HVK where it had its start in 1860
FACE Africa	Similarities	• Both have experience with WASH programs	• Both have offices in Massachusetts • Both have experience working in Liberia	• Both are relatively newer NGOs
	Differences	• HVK also focuses on health and education • FACE Africa increased investment in order solve water crisis	• Face Africa has also implemented programs in Nigeria	• FACE africa heavily prioritizes community engagement
HCZ	Similarities	• Both have education programs aimed at helping children gain skills and advantages	• Both have experiences working with local communities (New York vs Liberia)	
	Differences	• HCZ has educational programs centered around personal mentorships and support networks	• HCZ has no experience working internationally	• HCZ relies on the local community for donations and funding • HVK requires people interested in cause for donations and funding
HTS	Similarities	• Both have implemented education programs	• Both have experience working in Liberia	• Both have good reputation in its local community
	Differences	• HTS works with an all girls private academy, primary and high schools in Liberia • HVK mainly works with primary schools		• HTS is very newly established in 2019 • HVK was founded in 2016

JSI	Similarities	• Similar education program focused on improving the lives of the poor • Similar goals to provide knowledge and ability to develop skills through community-based learning activities	• Experience working in international countries	
	Differences	• JSI has many programs, not all necessarily focused on children's education • JSI main focus is on public health services	• JSI has experience working in Africa but not specifically Liberia	• JSI is a larger organization with more experience and connections
KEEP	Similarities	• Both organizations provide resources to children's education facilities	• Both organizations do work in Liberia	• Keep has more staff members which include 6 directors, a chairperson, and the founder
	Differences	• KEEP promotes social injustices of youth by strengthening their capabilities	• KEEP works solely in Liberia, with no office in the United states	• KEEP has four different offices in counties across Liberia • HVK has a main office is in America, with one shared location in Liberia
RA	Similarities	• Both organizations have experience with providing education programs to children • Both have experience with training teachers	• Both organizations have experience working in Liberia	• Both are founded within 2 years of one another
	Differences	• RA is an education company that provides emergency education to children kept out of school due to the Ebola crisis	• RA works in Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Ghana	• RA has worked with over 160 schools
SMK	Similarities	• Both support children's education and community sustainability	• Both NGOs have offices located in Massachusetts • Both have experiences working directly in Liberia	• SMK and HVK are both smaller scale organizations • Both have very good reputation in the community it serves
	Differences	• SMK prioritizes agriculture and providing homes for abandoned children • HVK focuses on providing technological advances to schools in Liberia		

SHF	Similarities	• Both organizations focus on providing resources to communities with unmet needs	• Both organizations have offices in Worcester, Massachusetts	
	Differences	• SHF have programs that focus on clinical, and behavioral health • SHF does not just work with children but have also implemented programs for adults	• SHF have 190 locations around Massachusetts and Rhode Island	• SHF is much larger employing over 4,600 professionals
United Way	Similarities	• Both Organizations have a programs in health and education	• Both have experience working internationally	
	Differences	• United way also focuses on financial stability through job training, money management, and more	• United way has implemented programs in many countries out of the US • HVK only has programs implemented in Liberia	• United way is a much larger organization with 2.8 million volunteers and 9.8 million donors
YWCA	Similarities	• Focus on health and social welfare of children	• Both have offices located in the US	
	Differences	• Focuses on racism and women equality • Provides child-care services	• Focuses on aiding women and families in the US	• Very old organization (dating back to the 1850s) • Much larger in scale

Strategic Plan for
Hawah V. Kamara Children's Foundation
2021 - 2026

Strategic Plan Developed By:

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Table of Contents

Introduction

About the Plan

This strategic plan was developed for Hawah V. Kamara Children's Foundation by students from Worcester Polytechnic Institute as their Interactive Qualifying Project. This project is a fourteen-week process where the first seven weeks are spent conducting initial research on the problem and communicating with the sponsoring organization to develop a Project Proposal. The latter seven weeks are then devoted to completing the project objectives to ultimately achieve the goal of the project. This project was to develop a strategic framework for HVK Children's Foundation for the next five years to help increase the impact of their work through internal organization and strategic action steps. The team hopes that the recommendations in this plan are able to aid HVK Children's Foundation in their growth over the next five years.

Naturally, having a written strategic plan is the first half of the effort to build a cohesive focus. The second half of the effort is following the plan to the best of the organization's ability. By following the steps in the plan, HVK will meet short-term goals and objectives and will make consistent progress towards completing goals by following the actions steps. For it to be effective long-term, it must be revisited and revised periodically. Conversations between employees and volunteers about each section of the plan must take place no less frequently than annually in order to remind and reorient the organization towards a distilled and defined mission, with clear goals and action steps. Recommended action steps have been provided as guidance for HVK to accomplish each objective, but are also subject to change based on the resources available to the organization at any time or other factors that affect the organization's ability to complete the objectives of the plan. It is the responsibility of the members of the organization to fill in more specifically the specific action steps to reach each objective as needed, or to update the plan as needed over time.

Executive Summary

Situated in West Africa, Liberia is a country that was scarred by fourteen years of internal conflicts and civil wars before finally achieving peace in 2003. While other African nations progressed with social and economic development, Liberia was engaged in a civil war for so long that its medical, societal, and educational infrastructure was left without the necessary resources to continue to grow. In addition to its poor health care system, schools were closed for nearly a year due to the Ebola epidemic and students lost almost two thousand hours of education due to school closures (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, n.d.). To improve the lives of Liberians, national efforts have focused on poverty, unemployment, education, community development, and access to health care. Many non-governmental organizations (NGOs) from around the globe are working alongside Liberian governmental organizations (GOs) to further develop and improve its health care and education infrastructure.

One such NGO is the Hawah V. Kamara Children's Foundation (HVK). HVK is based in Worcester, Massachusetts, USA, but also has an office in Paynesville City, Liberia. HVK places a strong emphasis on community driven educational programs (such as facilitating e-learning platforms) to create a positive impact on Liberian communities (Hawah V. Kamara Children's Foundation, n.d.-c, para. 2). HVK is dedicated to creating self-sufficient communities, where every citizen has access to education, can improve their welfare, and gain economic independence.

This strategic plan was created for the Hawah V. Kamara (HVK) Children's Foundation to provide organizational stability to move forward. Strategic planning is a way to fully understand the mission, strategies, and organizational values amongst all stakeholders. The use of the strategic plan includes creating a roadmap with milestones monitoring all achievements and results. Strategic planning can also generate valuable marketing information for potential partners, donors, and sponsors. Finally, planning can bring people together because it fosters communication; these conversations can incite strategic thinking and emphasize ensuring the organization's long-term success. If done properly, strategic planning can encourage participation and ongoing learning, facilitate communication between parties, and promote accountability. This plan will enable HVK to reflect on its achievements and to better visualize its future. The implementation of the plan will allow HVK to have a stronger impact on the lives of Liberian children and create more sustainable communities in the generations to come.

Vision Statement

"Transforming the lives of Liberian children through access to quality education and technology."

Mission Statement

"We work to improve the lives of Liberians by providing education programs to children, increasing technology accessibility for all, and by working to positively impact Liberian communities."

HVK Core Values

Adaptability: *We find strength in the ability to constantly adapt to new circumstances to continue to provide opportunities to Liberian children.*

Committed: *We are committed to improving the lives of all the children we are able to reach with our programs.*

Growth: *Through the use of our programs, every child will grow into strong and capable adults.*

Inspiring: *We inspire families and children to help and learn from one another to make the world a better place.*

Supporting: *Our organization supports the community by uplifting its children to provide them with a better tomorrow.*

Transparent: *We strive to communicate openly and clearly because a sustainable relationship cannot be built without a solid foundation of trust.*

Internal Goals

Required Staff

The following positions are recommended for HVK Children's Foundation to help reach its internal goals. Having qualified and motivated individuals in these roles will propel the organization forward. For each position, a description of the duties of the role as well as characteristics of the individual(s) filling the position are provided. It is up to the organization to find individuals who meet the recommended criteria to fill these positions.

Board of Advisors (BoA)
Recommended board size: 2-3 individuals

Position Duties	*Characteristics and Backgrounds*
- Provide different perspectives and areas of expertise - Provide support and guidance to employees - Help the non-profit remain internally organized - Holds the organization accountable to following the strategic plan	- Dedicated and committed to HVK's vision and mission - Able to lead and guide others - Experience working in Liberia or in another African country - Experience with fundraising and money management - Individuals should have experience in different sectors (e.g., education, healthcare, technology, etc.)

Board of Directors (BoD)
Recommended board size: 5-7 individuals

Position Duties	*Characteristics and Backgrounds*
- Monitor and manage financial resources - Provide a direction for the organization's efforts - Increase communities' awareness of the organization	- Provide important connections for HVK - Provide monetary donations to the organization (require a sponsorship fee to join the BoD) - Willing to invest their time and effort into the work HVK does - Have experience working with nonprofits - Passionate about the impact HVK has on its communities

Transition Coordinator (TC)
Position to be filled by Jermoh Kamara

Characteristics and Backgrounds

- Train the ED to lead and run HVK Children's Foundation
  - Train the ED how to contact and communicate with other employees
  - Share important information, contacts, and procedures with the ED
  - Assist the ED in their duties until they are comfortable working on their own
  - Continue to be a resource for the ED as time goes on for them to gain traction

Executive Director (ED)

Position Duties	*Characteristics and Backgrounds*
- Responsible for managing organization operations - Involved in fundraising / outreach efforts - Reports directly to BoD - In charge of carrying out the BoD's decisions	- Must be passionate about HVK's mission - Works diligently both individually and in a team - Have background experience in many sectors - Must be able to communicate clearly and inspire others - Must be willing to learn and work diligently

Program Director(s) (PD)

Position Duties	*Characteristics and Backgrounds*
- Responsible for researching, planning, and implementing programs - In charge of training and mentoring new program staff / volunteers - Monitors the impact assessments for programs	- Able to self-motivate and encourage / lead others - Experience in an applicable sector (e.g. education, healthcare, technology, etc.) - Strong communication skills - Strong organizational skills - Strong conflict management skills - Strong marketing skills - Strong fundraising skills

Partnerships with Other Organizations

It is recommended for HVK Children's Foundation to partner with other organizations for the reasons described below. Though the team was not able to get into contact with many non-profit organizations that could have been potential partners, members of HVK can continue this outreach to develop these essential relationships. Organizations that the team analyzed as potential partners were Boys & Girls Club, FACE Africa, Harlem Children's Zone, Hilltop Schools, John Snow Inc., Kids Educational Engagement Project, Rising Academies, Save More Kids, Seven Hills Foundation, United Way, and YWCA. The analysis of these organizations can be found in Appendix C of the report.

Benefits of Having Partners	Traits of a Quality Partner
- Provide financial, asset, or knowledge wealth to each other when needed - Having more individuals / organizations collaborating can lead to better idea generation - Opportunities to work together towards the same goal	- Similar mission and goals - Similar target audience - Experience in areas HVK does not - Quality reputation for their work - Willingness to collaborate with HVK

Liberian Office

The rationale for setting up an office in Liberia is discussed below. It is recommended that the office is located in Monrovia, Liberia, because it is a central location between the schools HVK works in (at the time of the creation of this plan). To determine if the organization can afford a full or shared building for an office, a thorough evaluation of HVK's funding should be conducted.

- Easier and faster transportation to partnering schools to provide more resources and support
- Have designated space for physical resources to be stored
- Have designated space for in-person meetings
- Possibility to create a computer library that Liberian community members can access

Housekeeping

Discussed below are a few recommended housekeeping items that HVK Children's Foundation should follow to aid in their internal organization.

Communication	● File and resource storage and distribution should be through Google Drive ● Formal communications (with schools, non-profits, donors, etc) should be through the HVK email address(es) ● Informal communications (and communications to members in Liberia) should be through WhatsApp ● Only use these platforms to limit the number of channels of communication to avoid lost / missed information
Changes and Updates	● All changes should be approved by the BoA and BoD ● All changes must be documented and dated with a clear version history of all documents
Scheduling	● Set up a schedule for in-person (video call) meetings with staff, volunteers, and board members 　○ Have a clear agenda for each meeting 　○ Make these meetings regular (monthly or quarterly) ● Check in with members of the organization on a regular basis

External Goals

Programs

The following are recommendations pertaining to HVK Children's Foundation's programs. These recommendations discuss how HVK should move forward and how to ensure there is enough support for the programs.

- Upgrade the Lab-in-a-Box (LiaB) program
  - Expand topics and information stored in tablets
  - Improve user experience
  - Implement monthly assessments to understand what could be improved
- Focus on improving STEAM education initially
- Implement other programs in a few years when the organization is prepared to do so
- If a new program starts:
  - A PD for the new program must be found
  - An advisor in that sector must be appointed to the BoA (if one does not already exist)
    For example, if a new education program begins, a new advisor is not needed because there should already be one from LiaB; however, if a healthcare program begins (for example), a healthcare advisor is needed on the BoA

Outreach

The recommendations below offer insight into how to best market HVK Children's Foundation to others. This outreach is imperative to the success of HVK because it is this outreach that will attract donors, sponsors, and volunteers to the organization.

- Take professional pictures of staff members and the communities HVK serves
  - Post on the website, Instagram, Facebook, and distribute in e-newsletters
  - Create short bios for each staff member
- Attend networking nights for non-profits to build connections
- Keep the website up-to-date with relevant information and graphics
- Visit Liberian schools to spread awareness of the organization to new educators

Funding

Recommendations related to fundraising for HVK Children's Foundation are below. In order to cover operational expenses for HVK, it is important to maximize the income and donation potential. These recommendations include strategies for where to invest effort into trying to gain funding.

- Prioritize gaining many small donations over gaining few large donations
  - Large sums of money are typically heavily contested and require a lot of effort to apply for
  - Small sums of money are less contested, less work to apply for, and can aid in HVK's outreach efforts by connecting HVK with the donating organization
- Use the connections of members of HVK to find people who would consider sponsoring HVK with a one time or recurring monetary donation
- Sponsorship fee from members of the BoD
- Conduct a funding assessment every six months to verify the budgeting
- Prioritize donor engagement before and after gaining monetary support
  - Host networking nights
  - Advertise volunteer opportunities
  - Use the e-newsletters to keep potential donors and supporters updated on relevant information
  - Follow up with thank yous for others' time, resources, or support

SWOT Analysis

A SWOT analysis examined the strengths and weaknesses of the organization as well as the opportunities and threats they might face. This SWOT analysis reflects perspectives from members of the organization who have held key positions.

Strengths

How and where the organization currently excels

- Knowledge and access to the United States and Liberia
- Connections to non-profit boards
- Access to Worcester Polytechnic Institute faculty network
- Fundraising knowledge
- Valued by Liberian communities

Weaknesses

Limiting factors that would benefit from the organization's attention

- Resource limitations
- Lack of available funding and donations
- Lack of internal structural organization
- Understaffed
- Broad scope of offering aid
- Communication across the world

Opportunities

Possibilities and potential for positive impact by the organization

- High potential for new program development and implementation in the future
- More impactful use of organization's website and social media outlets
- Collaboration with new and returning partners and non-profits

Threats

Internal or external factors that may negatively affect the organization's success

- Competition for donations and support
- Lack of current social media presence could affect organization's ability to grow
- Government regulations and restrictions
- Lack of interest of new and current programs in Liberian communities

1-Year Plan

GOAL	ACTION STEPS	TIME FRAME
Create a Board of Advisors	1. Use organization's network of contacts to find suitable individuals 2. Fill the different positions in Board of Advisors a. Recommended size: 2-3 individuals	1. As soon as possible 2. Have 2-3 BoA members by end of Year 1
Develop New Partnerships	1. Use organization's network of contacts to start building relationships with colleagues and organizations 2. Reach out to list of suggested partners 3. Arrange meeting with key stakeholders for partnership proposals	1. As soon as possible 2. As soon as possible 3. Meet with stakeholders by end of Month 6
Increase Fundraising Efforts	1. Reach out to small businesses and similar organizations 2. Apply for smaller donations from companies and organizations 3. Increase initial funding by 15%	1. As soon as possible 2. Start applying by Month 3, and continue applying for new donations every few months 3. By end of Year 1
Improve Program Specification	1. Halt all programs except LiaB 2. Conduct measurable impact assessment of learned skills from LiaB 3. Determine upgrades to LiaB program	1. Immediately 2. By end of Month 6 3. By end of Year 1

3-Year Plan

GOAL	ACTION STEPS	TIME FRAME
Create a Board of Directors	1. Use organization's network of contacts to find suitable individuals	1. Recruit 1-2 board members by end of Year 2 and 3-4 board members by end of Year 3
Consider a Liberian Office	1. Begin looking at spaces in Monrovia, Liberia 2. Complete expense evaluation to understand financial situation to see if new office is a possibility	1. Start when convenient, but before end of Year 3 2. Complete expense evaluation by end of Year 3
Increase Fundraising Efforts	1. Continue to reach out to small businesses and similar organizations 2. Continue to apply for smaller donations from companies and organizations 3. Increase initial funding by 30%	1. Continue to do this regularly 2. Continue to do this regularly 3. By end of Year 3
Implement Program Quality Assessment	1. Implement LiaB upgrades 2. Conduct measurable impact assessment of learned skills from LiaB	1. By end of Year 2 2. Complete assessment by end of Year 3 and continue to assess each year

5-Year Plan

GOAL	ACTION STEPS	TIME FRAME
Stabilize Board of Directors and Employees	1. Use organization's network of contacts to find suitable individuals 2. Training program for training new employees/new directors 3. Evaluate employee retention rate	1. Have 5-7 members by end of Year 4 2. Within 1 year of employment, conduct a training program for new employees 3. After 1 year of employment, conduct employee evaluations and employees' evaluation of HVK
Further Expand HVK	1. Develop implementation plan for LiaB expansion to 20 new schools 2. Start expanding into the schools	1. By end of Year 5 2. After Year 5
Increase Fundraising Efforts	1. Continue to reach out to small businesses and similar organizations 2. Continue to apply for smaller donations from companies and organizations 3. Increase initial funding by 45%	1. Continue to do this regularly 2. Continue to do this regularly 3. By end of Year 5

Diversify Current Programs	1. Evaluate if HVK has the capacity to support additional programs
	
	2. If possible, establish desired programs
	   a. Elect a PD
	   b. Add an advisor with expertise in program sector to the BoA if necessary
		1. By end of Year 4
		
		2. After the evaluation, find a PD and advisor as soon as possible, and start program development once these individuals are found

Focus on Program Sustainability	1. Conduct measurable impact assessment for each program 2. Train employees to allow them to be more flexible within the organization	1. Quarterly, starting Year 3 Quarter 1 2. Continue to train employees as soon as possible, as needed

HVK Children's Foundation Strategic Plan 2021 - 2026

Possible Roadblocks

POSSIBLE ROADBLOCKS	SOLUTION IDEAS
Inadequate Funding	- Host networking / charity nights - Increase social media presence - Collaborate with organizations to run fundraising events - Apply for more grants - Write letters to potential donors interested in HVK's cause
Lack of Donor Engagement	- Create volunteer opportunities to allow donors to experience HVK's work in Liberia - Create e-newsletters for monthly updates - Networking night to meet donors - Visit organizations, businesses, and schools to teach people about HVK's mission
Upgrades to Current Lab-in-a-Box Program Are Not Possible	- Program assessment to understand what is wrong and what *can* be fixed - Pause LiaB upgrades and instead focus on program sustainability and maximizing the impact the program is having in its current state - Use the program assessments to determine how to maximize impact on students
Lack of Interest in School Partnerships	- Conduct an assessment of the community to understand why there is a lack of interest - Use community opinions to determine what programs are the most desired or needed, and campaign for these programs to be integrated - Locate other schools that would benefit from currently running programs
Unable to Find Suitable Individuals for Board of Advisors / Board of Directors	- Reach out to similar non-profits for advice on recruitment - Reach out to network of colleagues of members of HVK to determine if anyone is interested or knows anyone who may be interested - Post job listings on online job finding websites - Increase incentives of being in the position

hVk
CHILDREN'S
FOUNDATION

Our Strategic Plan

2021-2026

WHO WE ARE

OUR VISION

Transforming the lives of Liberian children through access to quality education and technology

OUR MISSION

We work to improve the lives of Liberians by providing education programs to children, increasing technology accessibility for all, and by working to positively impact Liberian communities

OUR CORE VALUES

Adaptability
We find strength in the ability to constantly adapt to new circumstances to continue to provide opportunities to Liberian children

Inspiring
We inspire families and children to help and learn from one another to make the world a better place

Committed
We are committed to improving the lives of all the children we are able to reach with our programs

Transparent
We strive to communicate openly and clearly because a sustainable relationship cannot be built without a solid foundation of trust

Growth
Through the use of our programs, every child will grow into strong and capable adults

Supporting
Our organization supports the community by uplifting its children to provide them with a better tomorrow

OUR LIBERIA

AT A GLANCE

Population: 4,299,944
Official Language: English
Past and Current Issues:
14-year civil war
Ebola epidemic
COVID-19 pandemic

EDUCATION

15-20% of children aged 6-14 years old are not in school

Fewer than 40% of children graduate from primary school

50.6% of Liberian educators have proper training and certifications

19% of citizens between the ages of 15 and 24 years old are illiterate

UNEMPLOYMENT

Unemployment rates between the ages 15 and 24 years old is 5.1%

64% of Liberians are living in abject poverty.

76.2% of the population lives on less than US $1.00 a day

OUR 5 YEAR PLAN

1
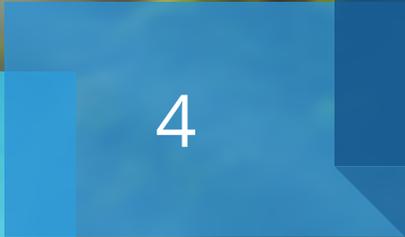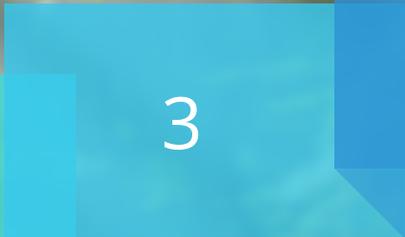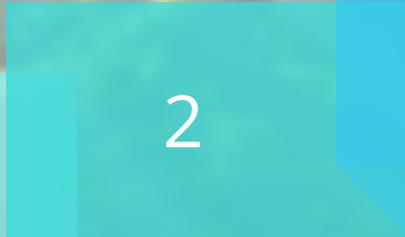- Create a Board of Advisors
- Develop new partnerships
- Increase initial funding by 15%
- Solely focus on Lab-in-a-Box development

2

3
- Establish a Board of Directors
- Look for a Liberian office
- Increase initial funding by 30%
- Perform a Quality Assessment

4
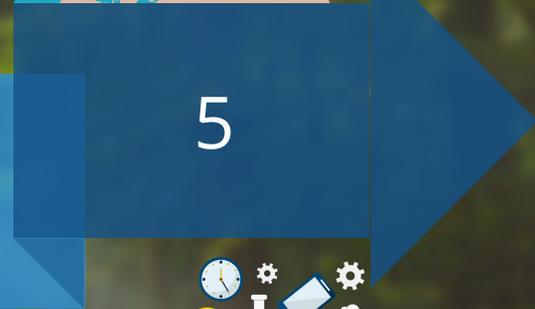
5
- Expand into 20 schools
- Stabilize the Board of Directors
- Expand Program Scope
- Focus on Program Sustainability

OUR TEAM

BOARD OF ADVISORS

- 2-3 committed individuals whose primary responsibility is to keep the members of HVK accountable
- They provide support and guidance to the other members

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

- 5-7 passionate individuals who monitor and manage HVK's resources
- They provide important connections, experience, and direction for the organization

TRANSITION COORDINATOR

- Trains the Executive Director on how to lead and operate HVK
- Act as a role model for members of HVK

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

- Responsible for managing operations
- In charge of carrying out organization's decisions

PROGRAM DIRECTORS

- Responsible for researching, planning, and implementing programs
- Monitors the program for impact and adjusts the program as needed

CONTACT US

✉ contact@hvkchildrensfoundation.org

🌐 https://hvkchildrensfoundation.org

VOLUNTEER WITH US!

SCAN THE QR CODE

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