CASE STUDY - STRATEGIC STAFFING MODEL DEVELOPMENT

GIRLS ON THE RUN TRIANGLE

OVERVIEW

Many councils across the network were heavily impacted by staff turnover post-pandemic. Consequently, as councils set goals to build back program participation and revenue, they were also setting goals to rebuild their staff. The need to rebuild offers an opportunity to assess what has worked well and where there may be an opportunity to restructure to increase capacity and efficiencies. Developing an effective staffing structure to meet the needs of the council and the council's territory is key to maximizing impact, extending reach, and operating with quality.

Girls on the Run Triangle was a council that was greatly impacted by **staff turnover** in 2021. By the middle of the fall 2021 season, the staff had **decreased from 4.5 FTEs to 0.5 FTEs** and 1 intern due to resignations. However, **by the fall 2023 season, the staff consists of 5 full-time staff and 1 part-time staff member** and has built back stronger in both revenue and participants served. This case study showcases the council's opportunity, solution, experience, and positive outcome in building a **strong staffing structure** to meet the needs of the council.

COUNCIL QUICK FACTS – GOTR TRIANGLE

Fall 2021	Fall 2023
Staffing Model (4.5 to .5 FTE): • Council Director (vacant) • Office Coordinator (PT) • Program Manager (FT - resigned) • Development Coordinator (FT - resigned) • Program Coordinator (FT - resigned) • Special Projects (FT - resigned)	**Staffing Model (5 FTE):** • Council Director (FT) • Senior Operations Manager (FT) • Program Manager (FT) • Program Manager (FT) • Program Coordinator (FT) • Heart & Sole Program Manager (PT)
Participants Served: 445	**Participants Served:** 1,010
Number of Sites: 27	**Number of Sites:** 58
Program Registration Revenue: $69,503	**Program Registration Revenue:** $160,381

OPPORTUNITY

GOTR Triangle's current Council Director, Aiesha Edwards, was hired in December of 2021. When she started in her position, there was only one part-time staff member, the Office Coordinator, and one program intern on board.

To serve participants well and build capacity, it was clear that additional staff needed to be hired. As a new Council Director, Aiesha was tasked with solving the problem of how to get the organization to grow and increase efficiency while retaining staff with growth and preventing burnout.

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Aiesha needed to assess potential staffing models that would drive the council towards growth and achieving strategic goals.

COURSE OF ACTION

Developing an effective staffing structure to meet the needs of the council requires assessment, financial forecasting, identifying opportunities, and creating a vision.

Assess:

#1 Immediate Hires: The first step taken was hiring a full-time program staff member to build the priority capacity area of program operations. Aiesha knew that investing in program staff was the priority, as programming is Girls on the Run's "meat and potatoes" in Aiesha's words, and programming needs to run with the highest quality to ensure the council has a sound reputation. She knew that the council needed to spend money to make money and that investing in strong program staff would lead to more girls being served. She hired the program intern to transition her to a paid Program Manager and hired another skilled Program Manager.

To fund these initial hires, GOTR Triangle made the strategic decision to tap into their financial reserves. Aiesha forecasted that if the council could serve more participants by building staff capacity, they'd be able to increase earned income at an adequate rate to support hiring needs. Hiring program staff would also allow Aiesha to dedicate more of her time and capacity to focus on increasing contributed income in collaboration with the board to meet necessary fundraising targets. The council had 15 months of reserves in December of 2021, which is 6 months over the mission advancement marker target for a two-season council. Aiesha and the board agreed on the maximum amount of reserves they felt comfortable investing into making the immediate Program Manager hires they needed.

#2 Team Capacity Assessment: Once these two staff were hired, Aiesha focused on assessing the team's capacity during that first season. Her goal was to dive in alongside her program team to learn the operations while assessing where there are current pain points impacting staff bandwidth and program reach.

This staffing assessment was conducted in a couple of ways:
- **Observing:** Being a fly on the wall while gaining a strong understanding of current staff's processes and systems. Where were things slipping through the cracks? What work is consistently pushed to the back burner due to lack of capacity?
- **Gathering Feedback:** Gaining insight and feedback from the team through conversations and staff surveys. What was stressing out the staff? Where do staff see opportunities to streamline responsibilities?
  - Staff are invited to complete anonymous surveys each season so that they can provide transparent feedback about their roles and their capacity. The primary goal of this survey is to assess satisfaction, and potential burnout, and identify stressors.

#3 Evaluation of Potential Reach of the Council: While assessing current operations, Aiesha evaluated the potential reach of the council.

In evaluating potential reach and maximizing impact, she assessed the following areas:

- **Demographic Data:** Current demographics served vs census data for each county: Reviewed historical council data as well as county census data for the full territory – demographics, racial/ethnic diversity, household income levels, etc.
- **Site Data:** Potential site participation numbers to strive for: Pulled a list of all elementary and middle schools (public, private, parochial) in their council territory from the National Center for Education Statistics to understand current and potential school saturation.
- **Territory Impacts:** Measured the distance and time to travel from one end of the council territory to the other.

#4 Immediate Impressions: Based on these qualitative and quantitative assessments, Aiesha came to a couple of conclusions:

- Girls served had increased but **staff were stressed**. The high number of sites to manage was a big challenge.
- Administrative work and program finance tasks (such as managing facility fees, processing refunds, processing payment plans, etc.) took up a lot of the program managers' time. When **staff are stretched too thin,** that's when errors happen, particularly on the administrative and financial side.
- Staff are spending **a lot of time on the road supporting sites** across a large territory.
- Building **stronger relationships with sites and coaches** will lead to higher retention and, in turn, growth.
- Building **stronger relationships with community organizations and community** leaders is important for growth.

#5 Opportunities: In summary, the overarching staffing opportunities and insights identified were:

- **Redefining Focus:** Managing, recruiting, and retaining should be the focus of program staff. With that goal in mind, what can we take off their plate to help with capacity? How can we take administrative work from their plate?
- **Efficiencies & Relationships:** Currently the staff are covering too much territory. If each staff can focus on 2.5 counties, they'll be able to build stronger relationships with key stakeholders and better manage their time.
- **Redefining Workload:** Utilizing past historical council data and comparative council data, Aiesha determined that 25-30 sites per program staff member seem to be the ideal workload for optimizing bandwidth for staff at a council of their population tier size and territory size.

#6 Developing a vision: Once the opportunities were identified, the next step was to develop the vision.
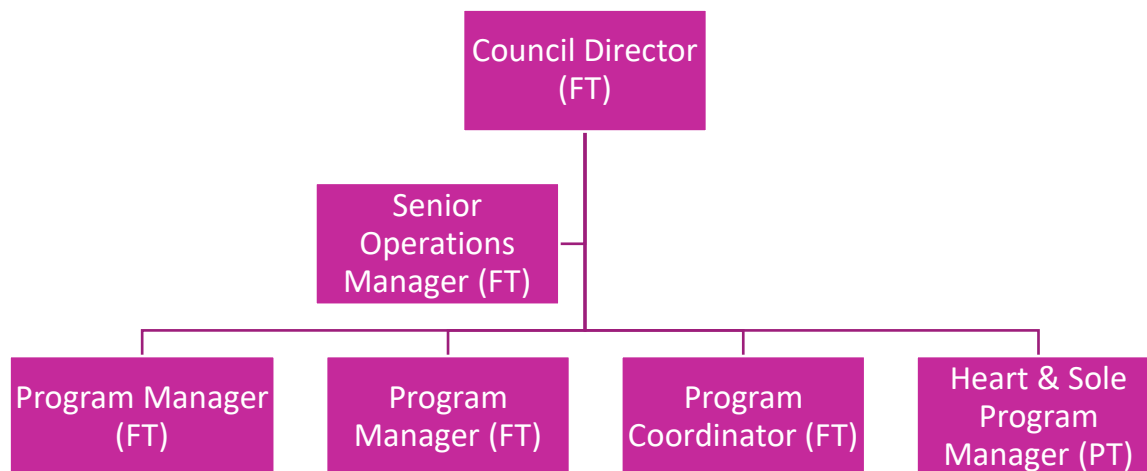
What's the staffing structure that will meet the council's needs and streamline everyone's jobs?

1. **Position #1 - Senior Operations Manager:** To address the need to take **administrative and financial tasks off of the Program Manager's plates,** Aiesha determined that hiring a full-time Senior Operations Manager would be an important next hire. This position would manage bookkeeping, office management, site facility fee payments, refund processing, discount code questions, supply ordering, and other central administrative and financial tasks.

2. **Position #2 – More Program Managers:** From there, with forecasted program growth, additional program staff would need to be hired as Program Managers to **reach their ideal max site capacity of 30 sites.** Based on program forecasts for the year, the council can plan to hire Program Managers accordingly as needed.
3. **Position #3 – Program Coordinator:** Aiesha determined that a full-time Program Coordinator can also be a source of **support on the administrative side of programming** logistics, particularly if Program Managers exceed 30 sites in a given season.

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#7 Retention & Competitive Compensation: Retaining staff is key to maintaining and growing council performance. Building an effective staffing structure where staff have adequate capacity and do not feel burnt out is one step towards high staff retention. However, Aiesha realized that other factors needed to be considered to retain staff, particularly compensation. She didn't want the reason for a team member to leave to be higher compensation or benefits elsewhere for a similar role.

Aiesha collaborated with her board to put together a Staff Compensation Task Force. The task force reviewed staff data of other nonprofits in counties that the council serves, compensation data in the Candid Nonprofit Compensation Report available on the Council Portal, as well as living compensation data market rates. Aiesha used this data to propose to the board for this updated staffing vision, as well as **compensation increases**. In this proposal, she also recommended that an **annual cost of living wage increase should be budgeted for every year** for each staff member. This is something the council had not done previously.

OUTCOMES

This **strong staffing and updated compensation model** for a full-time Council Director, full-time Senior Operations Manager, a full-time Program Manager (one per 25-30 sites), and a part-time Program Coordinator has supported the council in growth in many ways:

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- **103%** build back in Fall 2023 compared to Fall 2019.
- **110%** build back in revenue comparing FY20 to FY23.
- **$14,374** increase in average staff compensation comparing FY20 to FY23.

CHALLENGES

- Potential resistance from the board when the council's staffing model had been structured in a set way for several years.
- Not looking back but looking forward based on new council goals.
- Funding the positions. Need to showcase how the positions will increase impact and revenue.

SUCCESSES & Best Practices

- Using data to demonstrate how increasing staff will increase program impact and revenue.
    - The proposal to the board with the proposed staffing model and increased compensation was approved enthusiastically as Aiesha was able to present how staff would increase impact and revenue.
- A strong regional staff model with central administrative support has led to increased efficiency, higher staff morale, and satisfaction, along with organizational growth.
- Recruited and hired staff with transferrable skills and eagerness to learn.