Riverbend City: OSC Strategic Plan Mission

Introduction: Welcome to Riverbend City

Expository Text: The Ruby Lake One-Stop Center is a neighborhood employment services facility that is located in a primarily Latino neighborhood. It was established in 2000 as a direct result of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998, which mandated local career centers where workers could easily access employment services. The One-Stop Center is governed by a Workforce Investment Board, and operations are run by One-Stop Center managers. A recent needs assessment of the Ruby Lake neighborhood revealed that the neighborhood has been hit hard by the loss of manufacturing jobs. In response, the Workforce Investment Board has initiated the development of a new strategic plan for the One-Stop Center. The One-Stop Center managers will be involved heavily in the creation of this strategic plan.

Instructional Text: Developing a strategic plan is a complicated process—especially when there are multiple layers of leadership. As you watch members of the Workforce Investment Board and the One-Stop Center managers develop a strategic plan, evaluate the process.

Characters in this Mission:

Phil Brooks - Employment Services Representative, Workforce Investment Board

Kim Cohen - Manager, One-Stop Center

Stella Hennepin - RBC Department of Resources and Economic Development Commissioner

Randy Hogan - Vice President, Riverbend Senior Services

Thomas Velazquez - Community Activist

Darlene Parker - Workforce Investment Board, Director

Anya Petrova - Public Administration Professor

Lydia Robbins - Manager, One-Stop Center

Nathan Williams - Manager, One-Stop Center

Scene 1: Ruby Lake Neighborhood, LaVonne's Cafe

Expository Text: Randy Hogan meets with One-Stop Center manager Lydia Robbins at a local café. The One-Stop Center recently completed a new strategic plan. Since Randy's organization is going to be developing its own new strategic plan soon, he wants to hear about how things went for the One-Stop Center.

Instructional Prompt: Click on the highlighted characters.

Dialogue 01: Randy asks Lydia about the One-Stop Center's strategic planning process.

RANDY:

Lydia, thank you for agreeing to meet with me today.

LYDIA:

No problem, Randy! The One-Stop Center has really enjoyed collaborating with RSS over the years. We're happy to help in any way we can.

RANDY:

Well, we really appreciate your help! We're about to develop a new strategic plan, and I'm here to pick your brain. I understand that the One-Stop Center recently developed a new strategic plan?

LYDIA:

We sure did! It was an awful lot of work, but we're very pleased with the final result.

RANDY:

We're anticipating that our strategic planning process is going to be challenging. To be frank, there are some political issues in our organization, and I think they're going to be an issue as we try to plan for the future. I hope you don't mind me asking — were there political struggles and interpersonal issues that came up as you developed your plan?

LYDIA:

Oh my goodness, Randy, of course there were! I think anytime when you have multiple layers of leadership trying to collaborate, you're going to run into issues.

RANDY:

What layers of leadership were involved?

LYDIA:

Well, local One-Stop career centers are all governed by a Workforce Investment Board, as mandated by the Workforce Investment Act of 1998. In this state, the WIB is directed by Darlene Parker.

RANDY:

The former secretary of state?

LYDIA:

She's the one! Darlene and two other WIB members were heavily involved in the development of the One-Stop Center strategic plan. Besides Darlene, we worked with Phil Brooks, who's the director of the Hennsey County Work Force Center. We also worked with Stella Hennepin, the commissioner of the Riverbend City Department of Resources and Economic Development.

RANDY:

So the Workforce Investment Board — that's one layer of leadership. What other layers were involved?

LYDIA:

My layer — the One-Stop Center managers. We're the people who manage the everyday needs of people who are looking for work in the Ruby Lake neighborhood. All of the managers were involved with the strategic planning, but it was mostly me and Nathan Williams and Kim Cohen who did the work.

RANDY:

Did the One-Stop Center managers have conflicts with the Workforce Investment Board?

LYDIA:

Well, conflict is a strong word. Overall we have a good relationship with the WIB, but the thing is, those folks aren't in the trenches every day like we are. We know firsthand the kinds of struggles that people in the Ruby Lake neighborhood have with finding employment. So sometimes, the suggestions and ideas that came from the WIB just didn't ring true to us.

RANDY:

Interesting. Were there other issues like that?

LYDIA:

Oh, you know, just some political drama. It's no secret that Darlene Parker is probably going to run for governor in the next election. She's planning to run on a fiscal responsibility platform, and that platform made its way into our collaboration at times. Stella Hennepin, the board member from the Department of Resources and Economic Development — she's a friend of Darlene Parker, but the two of them definitely didn't see eye to eye on everything. And the One-Stop Center managers had some heated disagreements as well.

RANDY:

Oh my. But you said everything worked out in the end. How did you pull it off?

LYDIA:

Well, let me walk you through some of the steps we took — like creating our mission statement, and our stakeholder analysis. There's a lot that goes into creating a strategic plan, that's for sure.

Scene 2: HUB

Instructional Text: Learn more about how the One-Stop Center created its strategic plan. Click on each of these buttons to find out how the organization approached each of these strategic plan elements.

Sub-Location: One-Stop Center (Mission and Vision)

Expository Text: The Workforce Investment Board and the One-Stop Center managers meet to discuss the new mission and vision of success statements for the One-Stop Center.

Instructional Prompt: Click on the highlighted characters.

Dialogue 02: The WIB and One-Stop managers discuss the mission statement.

DARLENE:

One of our first orders of business is to discuss creating a new mission statement for the Ruby Lake One-Stop Center. That may sound like a simple task, but in my experience, it's not. It's difficult to narrow down the mission of an organization into one succinct paragraph. Keep in mind that we probably won't nail down the actual statement until later in the process, after we identify our strategic goals. But we should start thinking now about how we're going to revise our current mission statement, and keep this in the back of our minds as we proceed.

KIM:

I've never written a mission statement. I've read dozens of them, but I don't think I could accurately describe what the purpose of a mission statement is.

STELLA:

Well, a mission statement is a targeted declaration of purpose. People who want to know more about an organization should be able to read a mission statement and understand who the organization is and why it exists.

PHIL:

And also its philosophy of change, and to which stakeholders it reports.

STELLA:

Yes, thank you, Phil. And ideally, a good mission statement is inspiring to the people who work at, or work with, an organization.

PHIL:

Which is a lot to ask for from one succinct paragraph. So we have a lot of work to do to get this just right.

STELLA:

So maybe we could start by brainstorming. In my opinion, the mission statement needs to contain some language about how the One-Stop Center is mandated by the Workforce Investment Act to provide employment services—although I suppose you could argue that the current mission statement sounds a little clunky with that added language. But on a less technical note, let's just discuss our own thoughts about the mission. What mission do you all feel this One-Stop career center serves?

LYDIA:

Well, I think a lot of what we do is help people muddle through the red tape. If it weren't for us, people who lose their jobs wouldn't know where to start. We have counselors and resources and everything people need to try to find employment.

KIM:

Absolutely. Not that finding a job is easy, but it would be a whole lot harder if it weren't for us. We're out there helping individuals every day so they can navigate the system.

LYDIA:

We sure are. And it also needs to reflect that we're in a neighborhood that's mostly Latino and working-class. Our clients deal with specific problems like language barriers.

KIM:

And many of them deal with a lack of professionalism skills.

PHIL:

But do we really want our mission statement to focus heavily on the specific problems of this neighborhood? Not everyone who uses the One-Stop Center falls into those categories. And the demographics of the neighborhood may change.

LYDIA:

Not anytime soon they won't.

PHIL:

I think the mission statement needs to focus on more program-level issues. The One-Stop Center isn't just about helping individual clients. It's about introducing long-term employment initiatives.

KIM:

That's true, Phil. But keep in mind where we're coming from. When we're trying to help a client feed her family, we're not thinking about long-term initiatives. Our mission is to find her a solution as soon as possible.

DARLENE:

But we also have to focus on long-term solutions. These two missions don't have to be mutually exclusive.

Dialogue 03: The WIB and One-Stop Managers discuss a vision of success statement.

STELLA:

So in addition to our mission statement, we need to come up with a statement that reflects our vision of success. This kind of statement is more externally focused than the mission statement. It describes what the organization should look like once its strategies have been implemented successfully.

PHIL:

And the intent of the vision of success statement is to give external stakeholders a vision of what their advocacy can help accomplish.

STELLA:

So, why don't we brainstorm again? When you imagine a more successful One-Stop Center, what does that look like to you?

NATHAN:

Well, I see more of our clients being able to take charge of their lives. I feel like we offer a lot of bandages to help people through patches that are especially rough. I want to go beyond the bandages and help workers develop marketable skills that lead them to real financial stability.

KIM:

Me too. And I'd like to be able to have some more time with each client so we can help each of them find the right solutions. Sometimes we don't have time to do more than just give out bandages.

PHIL:

Great suggestions. I think it's important to put measurable outcomes in our vision statement. Perhaps we can include some percentages in our vision statement of the number of people who move on to better situations?

LYDIA:

Maybe. But what if we don't live up to those numbers? There are a lot of neighborhood factors that contribute to unemployment that are beyond our control.

NATHAN:

Exactly. The One-Stop Center doesn't operate in a vacuum. We can announce that we're going to improve things by X percent and change our services accordingly. But that doesn't change the fact that Ruby Lake High School has one of the lowest graduation rates in the city, and that we have a high teen pregnancy rate.

LYDIA:

And we can't control the fact that some of the major employers in the area have left the city.

PHIL:

I hear your hesitation. But when I say I want to include numbers, it's not because I want this organization to be penalized if these goals aren't met. A vision statement is just that — a vision — not a tool to assess organizational success. And keep in mind that the vision statement needs to be something that will appeal to potential stakeholders. We want potential collaborative partners to buy into the vision and offer their help.

STELLA:

I can see both sides here. It's important to set your goals high and create a vision that everyone works hard to accomplish. But on the other hand, a vision needs to be realistic. The One-Stop Center helps a lot of people, but we can't expect this organization to be a panacea for systemic social problems.

Optional Content - Darlene Parker's Computer: Click on the items in Darlene Parker's computer to learn more about the Workforce Investment Board and the Workforce Investment Act.

Email 01:

From: Mayor Keith Bauer

To: Darlene Parker

Subject: Strategic Plan for Ruby Lake One-Stop Center

Message: Darlene,

I want to reiterate how grateful I am that the Workforce Investment Board is initiating the development of a new strategic plan for the Ruby Lake One-Stop Center. As you know, the recent needs analysis we conducted of the Ruby Lake neighborhood indicates that the neighborhood has been impacted more painfully than we had realized by the loss of manufacturing jobs. The Bauer administration has made employment issues in the city's ethnic neighborhoods a priority. As you develop your strategic plan, please don't hesitate to ask for assistance from my office.

Sincerely,

Mayor Keith Bauer

Email 02:

From: Ann Marie White, Riverbend Communications

To: Darlene Parker

Subject: Meeting

Message: Ms. Parker,

Thank you so much for meeting with us yesterday about your possible upcoming gubernatorial campaign. I am compiling the documentation you asked for and should be sending that to you by EOD tomorrow. All of us at Riverbend Communications would be honored to have the opportunity to assist you with your campaign efforts. We look forward to meeting with you soon. Please feel free to contact me with any questions.

Warmly, Ann Marie White

One-Stop Center Mission and Vision.pdf

Workforce Investment Board Roster.pdf

Sub-Location: Beck University (Strategic Planning Process)

Expository Text: Frustrated by their discussions with the Workforce Investment Board about the mission and vision statements, the One-Stop Center managers seek out the advice of Dr. Anya Petrova about their strategic planning process. Dr. Petrova is a public administration professor at Beck University, specializing in employment studies. She has assisted the One-Stop Center in the past.

Instructional Prompt: Click on the highlighted characters.

Dialogue 04: Dr. Petrova offers advice about mapping out a formal strategic planning process.

ANYA:

Nathan, Kim, Lydia, I'm so glad to see you again. What seems to be the trouble?

KIM:

Well, we've just started developing a new strategic plan for the One-Stop Center. To start, we met with some members of the Workforce Investment Board to talk about our mission and vision statements. The meeting didn't go as well as we wanted.

ANYA:

What happened?

NATHAN:

It didn't go horribly. We just weren't on the same page about everything. We felt like they were approaching things from a long-term, analytical angle. And we approached things from a more immediate problem-solving level, since we work every day with people who need immediate relief.

LYDIA:

We want to nip things in the bud before we get too far into the strategic planning process. Like Nathan said, things didn't go horribly in our first meeting. But things could go badly. It's important that we maintain a good working relationship with the WIB.

KIM:

And we're also worried about how this process is going to work. It's painfully unclear to us who's responsible for what. Since there are multiple layers of leadership involved, we're worried about stepping on people's toes. And we're also worried about work falling through the cracks.

ANYA:

Well, it sounds like stepping back and looking at the process as a whole would be a big help. Have you mapped out your strategic planning process?

LYDIA:

No, not at all. We just jumped in and started working.

ANYA:

I find that at the beginning of the strategic planning process, it's very useful to step back and create a short planning document. This document should formally outline the specific steps that will be followed, as well as the decisions that will need to be made at certain points along the way.

NATHAN:

That sounds like a better strategy than just jumping in. Should we create this document collaboratively with the Workforce Investment Board?

ANYA:

Yes. Some organizations like to schedule a day-long retreat to work on these issues. The idea is to get buy-in at the beginning of the process, so you won't waste time debating the process as you go along.

KIM:

What does the final document look like?

ANYA:

Good question. The final document should be in the form of a process timeline. The timeline should include information about who is responsible for completing each step, along with deadlines for when each step should be completed. This will help you determine who owns which part of the process. It will also help you stick to a schedule. The timeline should highlight specifically how key decision-makers will be involved early in the process to ensure budgetary and staffing buy-in, and how they will be involved at the end of the process to facilitate the implementation of strategy recommendations. I can show you some examples of what these documents look like here in John Bryson's strategic planning textbook. They're on pages 106 to 109.

KIM:

Thanks, Dr. Petrova!

ANYA:

The strategic planning process is a lot of work, and it can be a challenge to get everyone to agree on what steps need to be taken and who should own each part of the process. But once you have the plan together, the rest of the process will go much more smoothly.

Sub-Location: Cafe Olé (Stakeholder Analysis)

Expository Text: The WIB and the One-Stop Center managers have completed their strategic planning process timeline document. The next task is to complete a stakeholder analysis. Today, One-Stop Center managers Nathan Williams and Kim Cohen are having coffee with local community activist Thomas Velazquez to discuss what the community needs from the One-Stop Center.

Instructional Prompt: Click on the highlighted characters.

Dialogue 05: Nathan updates Kim on the strategic planning process.

NATHAN:

Hi, Kim! Welcome back. How was your brother's wedding?

KIM:

Beautiful, thanks! But I feel like I picked a bad time to be gone for 10 days.

NATHAN:

Oh, don't worry. We've got things under control. And besides, you were here for the marathon all-day meeting, where we created the strategic planning document.

KIM:

I'm very glad I was here for that. Can you bring me up to speed on where we're at in the process now?

NATHAN:

Well, at this point we've started our stakeholders' analysis. We met with Dr. Petrova again, and she said that there's three steps in conducting an effective stakeholder analysis. First, you have to identify exactly who has a stake in your organization. Second, you need to figure out what criteria the stakeholders use to judge your organization. And finally, you determine how well your organization is meeting those criteria.

KIM:

Interesting. So who are our stakeholders? People in the Ruby Lake neighborhood who are looking for jobs?

NATHAN:

Yes. But all members of this community are stakeholders since the health of this community has been affected significantly by the loss of manufacturing jobs. And there's another important group of stakeholders — employers. If we are able to provide employers with workers who have skills that are essential to their business, they benefit.

KIM:

Of course. So now what?

NATHAN:

Well, as stated on the strategic planning process timeline, the WIB has taken ownership of analyzing the needs of employers as stakeholders. They're researching companies throughout the city to determine what job skills are most needed. One thing they've been finding is there's a need for people with high-tech, advanced manufacturing skills, like working with specialized optical equipment. Hopefully the One-Stop Center can find a way to partner with a local educational institution so that workers can learn those skills.

KIM:

That sounds promising. So what are the One-Stop Center managers doing? I know you said we were meeting with a community activist today.

NATHAN:

Yes. The task that the One-Stop Center managers own is to conduct a stakeholder analysis of the Ruby Lake neighborhood. We need to figure out how people in the neighborhood judge the success of the One-Stop Center, and what we need to do to meet those criteria. Obviously we're going to need to conduct some focus groups and surveys. But for starters, I've invited a community activist named Thomas Velazquez to have a cup of coffee with us. He's a great guy, and he'll be able to give us a feel for what to look for.

Dialogue 06: Community activist Thomas Velazquez joins Nathan and Kim.

THOMAS:

I appreciate the opportunity to give you input about the One-Stop Center. What questions do you have for me?

NATHAN:

Well, we're developing a new strategic plan, and we need as much feedback as we can get from people in the neighborhood. We're going to be conducting surveys and focus groups. But first we were hoping to get some initial thoughts from you about how the One-Stop Center is perceived in the neighborhood.

THOMAS:

I'm glad to hear that you're looking for feedback from the neighborhood. From what I've heard, the One-Stop Center is a reliable place to go for information if you're out of work. I know you have a lot of Spanish-speaking counselors. But to be frank, people don't think you're doing enough to help them find jobs.

KIM:

What else do people think we should be doing?

THOMAS:

More job training. I know that's an expensive request, but that's what people in this neighborhood need after all the factory shutdowns — especially the Schneider Chemical Plant. Lots of people had good jobs working with chemicals, but those job skills don't translate into anything else.

NATHAN:

We know. We see the impact of the Schneider shutdown every day.

KIM:

Are there specific kinds of job training programs that you think would benefit this neighborhood?

THOMAS:

I don't know. Part of the problem is that not enough kids are graduating from high school. So even if they do get job training, many companies won't hire people these days if they don't have a diploma. I think maybe the One-Stop Center and the city need to find a way to collaborate with Ruby Lake High School. Maybe if kids knew there was a good job training program waiting for them, they'd be more motivated to graduate.

NATHAN:

That's definitely something for us to think about.

KIM:

Do you think people in the neighborhood are happy with their interactions with employees at the One-Stop Center?

THOMAS:

I've heard mostly good things, except for some complaints about…what do you call it? Soft skills training?

NATHAN:

Yes. Soft skills training is where we teach people how to act professionally in a work environment. That's something we've spent a lot of time on lately.

THOMAS:

Well, I'm sure that's important. But I've heard people say that the trainers in that class are condescending. They tell the girls in the class to stop wearing hoop earrings and long nails because they look too ghetto.

NATHAN:

Really? I'm very surprised to hear that.

KIM:

I'm not, actually. I've heard that before from clients.

NATHAN:

Well, maybe that would be a good thing to ask about in our focus groups. Soft skills development is very important, and we want to make sure we're doing it right — without making clients feel like we're talking down to them.

Sub-Location: One-Stop Center (SWOC/T Analysis)

Expository Text: The One-Stop Center managers conduct a stakeholder analysis of the Ruby Lake neighborhood, and the Workforce Investment Board conducts a stakeholder analysis of local employers. Before reconvening with the WIB, the One-Stop Center managers hold a meeting to assess the internal strengths and weaknesses of their organization in relation to external opportunities and challenges or threats — otherwise known as a SWOC/T Analysis.

Instructional Prompt: Click on the highlighted characters.

Dialogue 07: The One-Stop Center managers assemble to begin their SWOC/T Analysis.

KIM:

I'm excited about today's meeting. As you know, Lydia, Nathan, and I have been working directly with the Workforce Investment Board as we develop our strategic plan. But we're at a point where we really need the feedback of all the One-Stop Center managers, so I really appreciate everyone's participation today.

LYDIA:

And we really appreciate everyone's help with the surveys and the focus groups. As you know, those were a lot of work, but we've been very successful gathering data from the neighborhood.

KIM:

Yes, thank you! Now we're ready to conduct an analysis of our internal strengths and weaknesses in relation to external opportunities and challenges or threats. After we clearly articulate this, we're going to be reconvening next week with the Workforce Investment Board, and we'll bring back our collective recommendations. In the meantime, to help us out, we've brought in Dr. Anya Petrova from Beck University. Dr. Petrova is going to facilitate something called a "snow card" technique to help us conduct our analysis. Dr. Petrova? Can you explain to everyone how this works?

ANYA:

Sure, Kim! A "snow card" analysis is a method of brainstorming that goes a step further and synthesizes ideas. I'll be asking you a series of four questions about the internal strengths and weaknesses of your organization in relation to external opportunities, challenges, and threats. You'll brainstorm answers to these questions silently on worksheets. Then you'll write down your best ideas and write them on small sheets of paper — the "snowflakes," so to speak. I'll attach these to the wall, with similar ideas clustered together. As a group, we'll assign a title to each cluster. Then we'll discuss the results.

NATHAN:

That sounds constructive.

ANYA:

I've had a lot of success with this technique. I hope you like it. Okay, here's the first question: What major external or future challenges does the One-Stop Center face? Please brainstorm as many ideas as you have onto this worksheet, and when you're done, take your best ideas and write one idea down on each snowflake.

Dialogue 08: Dr. Petrova begins the snow card analysis.

ANYA:

Okay, folks, thank you for your snowflakes! I've arranged them on the wall and placed them into related clusters. All of these represent external challenges or threats you feel that this organization faces.

As you can see, there are some big clusters. Let's start with the biggest one. Some of the comments here are, "The job force is changing too quickly for our clients to keep up," and "Clients don't have the job skills they need to be successful," and "Skills that were helpful 10 years ago don't cut it anymore in the workplace."

LYDIA:

Interesting. I'm not surprised that this is our biggest cluster.

NATHAN:

This definitely reflects the data we collected in our neighborhood stakeholder analysis. One of the biggest complaints about the One-Stop Center was that we don't offer enough training for the kinds of jobs that are out there.

ANYA:

So what label should we assign to the snowflakes in this cluster?

KIM:

Something about the rapidly changing workforce.

LYDIA:

And the need for job training to help workers navigate this.

NATHAN:

How about, "Clients lack skills needed in the changing workforce"?

LYDIA:

Sounds good to me.

ANYA:

Is everyone else happy with this? Yes? Great! Okay. Now let's look at the other challenges and threats you identified by reading the next biggest clusters.

Sub-Location: LaVonne's Cafe (Strategic Issues)

Expository Text: After completing their SWOC/T Analysis, the One-Stop Center managers take Dr. Anya Petrova out to lunch. Over lunch, they discuss the next step of the strategic planning process: identifying the strategic issues that face their organization.

Instructional Prompt: Click on the highlighted characters.

Dialogue 09: The One-Stop Center managers discuss strategic issues with Dr. Petrova.

LYDIA:

Thank you so much for your help, Dr. Petrova. The snow card activity really helped us synthesize our ideas.

ANYA:

You're welcome! And thanks for taking me out to lunch. This place has the best wild rice soup.

NATHAN:

So we're all a little confused about our next task for the strategic plan. We need to identify what we feel the strategic issues for the One-Stop Center should be. We're going to be conferring with the Workforce Investment Board about this, but it's probably a good idea if we formulate our ideas ahead of time.

ANYA:

Well, your goal is to identify the fundamental policy questions that affect your organization. Identifying your strategic issue agenda is the heart of strategic planning. This is so important that often organizations go back and modify their mission statements after they identify strategic goals.

KIM:

And I understand that there are two kinds of issues that we'll be dealing with — strategic and operational?

ANYA:

Yes. Strategic issues are systemic changes that involve taking the organization in a new direction. These are changes that may require extensive knowledge exploration and changes in relationships with your stakeholders. Operational changes are more about fine-tuning what you're already doing. Sometimes these two categories overlap, so there's also a third category of issues that are both strategic and operational.

LYDIA:

So, if we move in a new direction and expand our focus to include extensive job training programs, that's a strategic issue.

ANYA:

Exactly. That's a change that's so big your mission statement will have to reflect it. Your relationship with stakeholders will change in that you'll be collaborating in different ways with employers and government agencies.

LYDIA:

And if we streamline the process of letting our clients know about benefits, that's an operational change.

ANYA:

Exactly. That involves something you're doing already. Improvements in this area won't change your organizational mission.

Dialogue 10: The One-Stop Center managers debate strategic issues.

KIM:

So, before we meet with the WIB next week, can we start talking about strategic issues? Obviously one of the biggest strategic changes we need to make is to significantly expand our job training focus.

NATHAN:

Absolutely. It's kind of funny. When we first met with the WIB, we were adamant that our mission statement had to focus on the immediate needs of our clients. But now that we did some research, we found out that people in the neighborhood actually want us to focus on long-term solutions like job training.

LYDIA:

I guess that shows how important a needs analysis can be.

KIM:

Another change we haven't talked about as much is what we're going to do about our soft skills training.

LYDIA:

Is that a strategic change? Or an operational one?

KIM:

I don't know. Probably it goes into the category of both. I guess it depends on whether we simply update the soft skills training we have — which would be an operational change — or radically change the way we work with people on their professionalism skills.

LYDIA:

Well, we clearly have to make significant changes. We received a lot of feedback that the trainer we've been bringing in for classes is condescending. That's not acceptable.

KIM:

And perhaps even more disturbingly, we received overwhelming feedback that the training is a waste of time. I agree with Lydia that we need to make big changes.

NATHAN:

Wow. I'm surprised to hear you two say this. I think our soft skills training is first rate. We probably need to talk to the trainer about changing her communication style a little, but that's doable.

LYDIA:

Communication style? She's been telling young women that their clothes are too "ghetto." She actually used that word.

NATHAN:

Well, I hate to say it. But that's honest feedback that some of our girls need to hear.

LYDIA:

What? Nathan, are you serious? You think it's okay for the trainer to call our girls "ghetto"? I can't believe I'm hearing this from a black man.

NATHAN:

The trainer didn't call our girls "ghetto." She was making a comment about how their clothing will be perceived in the workplace. That's a brutally honest truth that our clients need to hear.

KIM:

Nathan, I agree with Lydia that the "ghetto" comment was inappropriate. But regardless of that, our clients strongly feel the class is unhelpful. We need a new strategy for teaching professionalism skills.

NATHAN:

No. What we need is to better communicate to our clients why that class is so important. They'd stop complaining about the class if they understood that.

LYDIA:

So our clients don't like the class because they're stupid?

NATHAN:

I didn't say that, Lydia.

KIM:

Oh dear. Listen to us. I can't believe this is getting so heated, and we're just getting started. If we can't talk about our strategic issues without arguing, how are we going to discuss this with the Workforce Investment Board?

ANYA:

If I may interject? This conflict is perfectly normal. Good conversations about strategic plans almost inevitably result in some conflict.

KIM:

Really?

ANYA:

Absolutely. You're talking about issues you feel strongly about, and you're talking about major organizational changes. That's bound to result in some heated disagreement. So just roll with it and try not to make it personal.

Sub-Location: Phil Brooks' Office (Budgeting Plans)

Expository Text: Members of the Workforce Investment Board convene in Phil Brooks' office to discuss budgetary issues related to the strategic plan.

Instructional Prompt: Click on the highlighted characters.

Dialogue 11: The WIB addresses the budgetary issue.

DARLENE:

Phil, thank you so much for letting us meet in your office. As you two know, we're going to be meeting with the One-Stop Center managers next week to discuss strategic issues. I know they've been working hard and I'm looking forward to our meeting. But before we meet, I think the three of us should discuss issues that relate to budget. Too often, budgetary issues get buried in conversations about strategic planning, since budgeting and planning are two very different processes.

PHIL:

I agree, Darlene. We need to make sure that the One-Stop Center's strategic plan is realistic from a fiscal perspective. The best laid plans will go nowhere without budgetary analysis and implementation strategies.

STELLA:

If I may? Of course I agree that budgetary issues are important. But what I'm afraid of is that the Workforce Investment Board is going to turn into the role of budgetary naysayer. I don't want to see the One-Stop Center managers come to us with innovative ideas, and then have us shoot down these ideas because they're too expensive.

PHIL:

Stella, that's a good point. We don't want to be perceived as the naysayers. Ideally, our conversations about budget should be about collaboration. If an idea is suggested that's fiscally prohibitive, we can find ways to modify that idea to make it more realistic—or perhaps come up with creative ways to locate funding.

STELLA:

That's good to hear, Phil. One thing in particular I'm thinking about is the fact that the One-Stop Center managers want to move in the direction of job training. As someone who works in the area of economic development, that's exactly the kind of innovation I want to see. But I know that Darlene has expressed concern about the cost of job training programs, so I can see this turning into a conflict.

DARLENE:

I am concerned with the cost of job training programs. In this economy, the One-Stop Center managers are going to need to be realistic about job training initiatives.

PHIL:

But a poor economy is exactly when we need job training programs. And in the long run, they pay off. If more people are working, then they're not as dependent on social services.

STELLA:

I know, Stella. I'm not opposed to job training programs. We just need to be realistic about the scope.

PHIL:

This is one area where we can help the One-Stop Center managers think outside the box. Job training programs are expensive, but we can help find collaborative partners in industry. If there's a skill set employers need, they might help fund a job training program.

STELLA:

Like advanced manufacturing skills with optical equipment?

PHIL:

Exactly. As part of our stakeholder analysis, we identified that as a skill set that employers in this city need.

DARLENE:

This is a good conversation to have with the One-Stop Center managers. I like the idea that we can collaborate with them to help find alternative funding sources. We're also going to need to talk to them about the nitty gritty of making a budget. The strategic plan absolutely needs to outline specific budgetary recommendations and implementation strategies.

Sub-Location: One-Stop Center (Implementation Plans)

Expository Text: The One-Stop Center managers and the Workforce Investment Board members reconvene at the One-Stop Center to discuss implementation plans.

Instructional Prompt: Click on the highlighted characters.

Dialogue 12: Darlene Parker discusses the importance of developing an organized implementation plan.

DARLENE:

Thank you all for meeting today. We've come a long way on this strategic plan, and I can't tell you enough how grateful I am with everyone's hard work. We've had quite a few meetings, and after quite a bit of discussion, we've finally nailed down a strategic agenda that's fiscally responsible and serves the needs of the One-Stop Center clients. What we need to do now is develop a solid implementation plan. This involves putting into place an effective strategic management system. It's vital to build a strategic management system that will handle the execution of implementation strategies as well as assess performance.

NATHAN:

We read your email about this, Darlene. I'm a little confused. Can you explain to us what you're looking for?

DARLENE:

Sure. In a nutshell, a strategic management system is an organized and ongoing way of monitoring your project after the implementation of the strategic plan. It's a scheduled set of evaluations that will allow you to check on the degree to which your strategies are successful.

NATHAN:

That makes sense. What happens if some of the strategies aren't successful?

PHIL:

That's to be expected. Part of the strategic management system involves making necessary changes as we go along. Even if our strategies are successful initially, there may be changes in the external environment that require us to shift our strategies.

DARLENE:

Exactly, Phil. We'll be continually monitoring the fit between what the One-Stop Center is doing and the external environment. Flexibility is very important.

PHIL:

And another part of the strategic management system is to integrate the plan throughout the organization. There are a lot of moving parts that make up the One-Stop Center. We need a plan to make sure all the parts are working in accordance with the strategic plan.

DARLENE:

And of course, we need to keep a close eye on the budget.

NATHAN:

So how do we proceed? Do we come up with a schedule of dates of evaluation?

PHIL:

Well, yes and no. Obviously we need to keep this on our schedule. It can be very helpful to create goals or benchmarks that we want to meet by certain dates. But we want to avoid thinking of strategic management as something that's exclusively driven by the calendar. We need to keep in mind what's happening in the community at any given time, which can dictate changes in our schedule of evaluation.

Dialogue 13: Everyone thanks each other for a job well done.

STELLA:

As this phase of the process comes to a close, I just want to thank everyone for all their hard work. We've been working on this strategic plan for months, and I know at times everyone's patience has been wearing thin. But all of our hard work has been well worth it. In the next year or so, we're going to see a One-Stop Center that better meets the needs of the Ruby Lake neighborhood.

LYDIA:

Why thank you, Stella! It's been a pleasure working with all of you. When this process first started, I felt very overwhelmed and didn't know how we were going to make this all happen. Working with multiple layers of leadership has been a real challenge. But somehow we pulled it off.

KIM:

I think it's been very helpful to approach the strategic planning process systematically,

LYDIA:

I agree. And one of the most helpful things we did was to map out a formal strategic planning process. Once we did that and figured out who owned which task, things went much more smoothly.

DARLENE:

I agree. It's been a tremendous pleasure working on this project with all of you. And as we continue to work together with our implementation plan, I'm confident that we can continue to do great work on behalf of the One-Stop Center clients.

Sub-Location: One-Stop Center (Get Started!)

Expository Text: Lydia and Anya discuss the documents they need to create a strategic plan.

Instructional Prompt: Click on the highlighted characters.

Dialogue 14: Lydia's computer has all the documents needed to create a strategic plan for the One-Stop Center.

LYDIA:

Thanks for stopping by, Dr. Petrova! We're about to create the formal strategic plan. I was wondering if you'd look over the documents I've collected? I think we have all the documents we need, but I want to make sure.

ANYA:

Sure! Let me take a look and see what you have.

LYDIA:

Everything is on my computer.

Non-Optional Content - Lydia Robbins' Computer: This computer contains important documents that are needed to create a Strategic Plan for the One-Stop Center. Be sure to download these documents!

Folder 01: One-Stop Center Information

OSC Financial.pdf

OSC Mission and Vision.pdf

OSC Employment Directory.pdf

Folder 02: Ruby Lake Neighborhood Information

Ruby\_Lake\_Needs\_Assessment\_Executive\_Report.pdf

Folder 03: Workforce Information Board Information

Workforce\_Investment\_Board\_Roster.pdf

GAO\_One\_Stop\_Center.pdf

Workforce\_Investment\_Act.pdf

Plain\_English\_WIA.pdf

Mission Summary

Congratulations. You have completed the OSC Strategic Plan Mission.

This mission demonstrates the process that one organization has gone through to create a strategic plan. To what degree do you feel their process was successful? As you think of how you might implement strategic plans of your own, what lessons do you think you might take from this mission?

Summary Document Content

MISSION TITLE

OSC Strategic Plan Mission

RECAP:

In this mission, the Ruby Lake One-Stop Center developed a strategic plan. Leaders at this neighborhood career center—which was established in 2000 per the mandate of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998—opted to create this new strategic plan after a neighborhood needs assessment revealed the impact of the loss of area manufacturing jobs. The mission walked through the steps of developing a strategic plan: the mission statement, the vision of success statement, the strategic planning process, the stakeholder analysis, the SWOC/T analysis, the strategic issues, the budgeting plans, and the implementation plans. Two layers of leadership were responsible for developing the strategic plan: the Workforce Investment Board and the One-Stop Center managers.

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

This mission demonstrated the process of developing a strategic plan. This mission also highlighted the political and interpersonal conflicts that often arise in the process of developing a strategic plan—especially when multiple layers of leadership are involved in the planning process. Course competencies associated with this mission are:

Strategically apply operational and assessment practices to demonstrate accountability and performance.

Strategize efforts to improve advocacy.

Align policy initiatives with the organization's mission and vision.