



Inspiring ambition
in Vancouver's leading
youth focused social
services agency

Case Study: Covenant House Vancouver

Covenant House Vancouver uplifts youth in Canada who are facing homelessness by providing both intangible supports of unconditional love and absolute respect, and tangible supports of programs and resources that foster learning, self-improvement and all-round development. After successfully completing development and occupation of two new buildings, *Covenant House* engaged Junxion to develop its next strategic plan.

In recent years, the social services sector has weathered an unprecedented housing crisis, a rapidly worsening opioid crisis, and demands on resources from an increasing number of vulnerable youths from diverse backgrounds who face multiple, complicated barriers to care and quality of life. Vulnerable youth in Metro Vancouver are at increased risk of depression, aggression, substance abuse, delinquency and homelessness.

Junxion Strategy was engaged by *Covenant House Vancouver* (CHV) to facilitate and support development of CHV's new strategic plan. Forefront in leaders' minds was how to find, recruit, and on-board 40% more staff as the agency occupies its two new buildings in Vancouver.



We picked Junxion because their process is both methodical and inclusive. They really covered everything and included everybody. *We have a strong, action-ready plan that will take us into our next era of support and growth.*"

— Herb Eibenstener, *Chief Operating Officer,*
Covenant House Vancouver



Covenant House has successfully navigated rapid growth and change while persistently maintaining operational excellence. Their unwavering dedication is inspiring, especially in the face of unprecedented curveballs like the housing crisis, the opioid crisis, and now the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Business Challenge

As their capacity grows in leaps and bounds with new facilities and staff, *Covenant House* must maintain and enhance the quality of their youth services, while also seizing their opportunities in advocacy and thought leadership in the community. They can both expand their own impact and pursue systemic changes that will create the best possible youth outcomes in society. Many current and potential stakeholders are watching their work—youth, staff, volunteers, donors and partners.

The eternal challenge of building capacity while maintaining a strong record of operational excellence could easily overburden and overtax the agency's team. And the team of professionals at CHV knew that discourse, education and training around diversity, equity, and inclusion would have a strong impact on workplace culture.

How We Helped

Junxion delivered a comprehensive TurningPoint Strategy engagement with the team at *Covenant House*. We started with an extensive material review, including a market and industry exploration; interviews with dozens of managers and senior leaders, including members of the board of directors; and a two-pronged survey that reached out to staff and through them to youth. We also hosted multiple focus groups, so we could hear from staff across the organization. This cross-sectional analysis provided rich insights, which informed the strategy phase of our work.

We convened board members, senior leaders, and representatives of partner organizations for a pair of full-day workshops. A collective visioning activity set the tone for the divergent thinking of the first workshop, and a Theory of Change lens set the tone for the more convergent approach of the second workshop. Participants worked on a capabilities-focused, collaborative activity that helped them create and prioritize timebound goals for each area of strategic focus. This deliberate and structured format yielded a wealth of material that Junxion distilled to develop early drafts of the strategic plan, which were then refined in collaboration with management, senior leadership, and the board.

The final plan contains key capability areas chosen as building blocks for the next decade of change and growth and the specific, measurable initiatives within each area to achieve that growth. The final result is crisp, but comprehensive ten-page plan that cements CHV's core tenets of youth focus, employee engagement and organizational culture, while embracing new initiatives such as thoughtful partnerships and amplified advocacy. A graphic one-page, infographic version conveys the plan to stakeholders such as youth, staff, and online audiences.

Measuring Success

Junxion's meticulous and thorough approach to collecting, consolidating and conveying the views and opinions of key stakeholders ensured that everyone had the opportunity and satisfaction of contributing to the plan. Facilitation ensured that opinions and dialogue flowed organically, different departments connected under the umbrella of a shared vision, and everyone felt engaged. Despite the wide scope and long duration of the project, there was a consistent thread of communication, which ensured that the project aims stayed top of mind for everyone involved. The result is a compelling strategic plan that everyone can stand behind.

