



CATHOLIC CHARITIES

WISDOM WORKS COLLABORATIVE | SEPTEMBER 2025

ORGANIZATIONAL VISION AND STRATEGIC RECAP

CURRENT VISION AND EVOLUTION

Our current vision statement focuses on “walking with people who are experiencing struggle and poverty,” but we recognize that the world is calling for something more physical and actionable from our organization.

We see ourselves as an amalgamation of who we serve, reaching out and being available to serve folks who don’t have anywhere else to be served—essentially being a last hope. We understand that how we do this work is important, approaching it with sensitivity around justice and relationship.

SUCCESS STORY MESSAGING AND FUNDRAISING REALITY

We’ve identified a significant issue in how we communicate success to our stakeholders. We tend to focus on extreme success stories, like a family that was sleeping in their car, came through our programs, and now owns a house with three dogs in the backyard. While these stories happen, they occur perhaps once in a million folks that come through our doors. When we value these as an organization and present them as our gold standard, we’re sending problematic messages to our staff and affecting bottom-line decisions about who we serve.

This approach creates several problems:

- We’re not incentivizing serving the hardest-to-serve populations
- We’re incentivizing finding people who will become “pictures on billboards”
- We establish an unachievable bar that does the entire sector a disservice
- We miscommunicate the complexity of our work
- We feed into harmful societal narratives about bootstraps and working harder

The reality is that people only want to fund the “billboard story”—they don’t want to fund someone turning in paperwork on time. We’re tired of playing the game of always having to present the perfect answers and extreme success stories. We recognize this creates unrealistic expectations for 99% of the folks we serve.

We believe there are people who want to get into this work with us—people who understand that this is complicated, important work and want to be part of something better. We see an opportunity to make joint movement in the sector to change the story about the complexity and importance of what we do.

LEADERSHIP TEAM DEVELOPMENT

We’ve completed significant work on our leadership vision. Through our leadership team process, we identified eight key traits for how we want to operate both with each other and with our teams at large:

- Trust
- Support
- Mutual respect
- Unified
- Collaborative

- Curious
- Positive
- Laughter and fun

We recognize that with the leadership team changes we've gone through, we need to provide grace as we work through getting to know each other, figuring out communication styles, and understanding shifting expectations. This is particularly important for staff who may not have direct communication opportunities with new leadership.

SERVICE MODEL AND STAFF EMPOWERMENT GOALS

We've identified limitations in our current service structure. Currently, we have certain services that we provide, and if someone comes in needing other things, we can't help them. We want to shift this paradigm—instead of identifying “these are the things that we do,” we want to figure out how to help the people who come in with their actual needs.

We recognize the need to get away from a scarcity mindset at the frontline level and empower our staff to make decisions and changes in service to the folks who walk through our door.

THRIVING LEADERSHIP PRACTICES

CONSCIOUSNESS

Organizational teams operate more in “as me” & “through me” mindset ♦ Oneness: all staff are fully aware of the duties & stresses of one another ♦ Relationship built on & full of trust ♦ Genuine curiosity (not a “gotcha”)

- We want to try to function from the "as me" and "through me" levels as much as we possibly can.
- We want all staff to be aware of duties and stresses of each other, understanding how their day goes and the pressures they have.
- We want greater trust and relationships to be a central part of this increased awareness, thinking about the people and not just what we have to do.
- We want genuine curiosity among staff about what each other's role is, especially important because we're a large organization that's spread out. We've noticed a "gotcha" aspect and want to ask questions out of curiosity, not out of "you did this wrong."

SKILLS

Giving feedback is a skill ♦ Confidence in skills at all levels ♦ Communication

- We need develop feedback as a skill within our organization.
- We need to help each staff member have confidence in their skills at all levels, so they aren't afraid or get defensive when someone comes and asks questions out of curiosity.
- We need to build out how we communicate across all levels, enhancing communication as a skill.

PATTERNS OF BEHAVIOR

Taking personal responsibility in your part of the greater good ♦ Assuming positive intent ♦ Investment in greater good ♦ Celebrate wins big and small

- We will take responsibility for our part in the greater good, focusing on the bigger picture rather than how we're being affected by it.

- We will assume positive intent as a pattern of behavior, entering into interactions assuming that the intent is positive rather than thinking there's something undermining investment in the greater good.
- We will have patterns of behavior around celebrating wins big and small, slowing down as an organization to acknowledge when we're having successes.
- We will ask questions out of curiosity, not out of a "gotcha" aspect or trying to figure out what someone did wrong.

ACTIONS & PRACTICES

More deliberate human connection across the agency ♦ Lean towards improvement

- We will have more deliberate human connection across our agency.
- We will focus on how we're staying in step with one another and how we're collaborating and communicating.
- We will lean towards improvement with a constant commitment toward how we can get better as a process, as a team, and as an organization.

COMMITMENTS

Commitment to curiosity ♦ Hold sacred space full of trust and respect

- We are committing to genuine curiosity.
- We are committing to holding a sacred space full of trust and respect with one another.
- We will carry forward the candid conversation we started here and build on it with the rest of our leadership team.
- We will create ground rules including "ouch and oops" to have space where you can make mistakes or address when something feels hurtful.
- We will use our existing media platform (Engage) to post and celebrate small wins during the day.