



## CASE HISTORY — GROWING EDGE PARTNERS

### STRATEGIC PLANNING: BOYS & GIRLS CLUB

#### The Challenge

A metropolitan club for inner-city children faced a number of crises. Despite successful programs and a fiercely committed staff, operating funds were chronically short and financial survival was very much in question. Their building was 40 years old and in need of repairs. They did not have the money for required maintenance and were faced with stiff regulatory issues, which could force them to close their doors. Though staff morale was high, the club was short-handed due to lack of sufficient funds.

The current Executive Director – less than one year on the job – had inherited from his predecessor a centralized, controlling management culture (which he wished to change) and an excessively large and dysfunctional Board of about 175 members (required by the by-laws). The unwieldy board presented a significant obstacle to progress. The board was strongly divided over the proposed management changes; their numbers alone made it impossible to generate a much-needed strategic plan. The Executive Director turned to us for help in addressing the immediate crisis and the need for more effective planning.

#### Our Response

We interviewed representatives of all the stakeholder groups about their desires for the club's future. We then convened the staff and interested Board members to integrate these ideas into a causal map of the whole system. This work, conducted in eight sessions over four

weeks, resulted in intensive work on the main goal of the organization. It also mandated significant changes in strategy and revealed strategic resources that needed to be more effectively managed. The insights gained from the analysis of the map enabled the management team to identify key conflicts and leverage points in the system and to generate the organization's first comprehensive strategic plan. Simultaneously, we facilitated a change in the by-laws. The board was divided into a small active directors' team and a larger group whose role was to build financial support.

#### Results

- Restructuring the Board and creating planning committees resulted in a diverse, engaged team that was able to address immediate issues and generate an effective plan.
- Formation of a Contributors' Group, in conjunction with clarification of goals and strategies, resulted in an immediate increase in donations.
- Critical new staff positions were created and filled, including a Development Director, who subsequently lead an endowment campaign.
- Strategic plan targets were met in four years; a new building was begun in three years.
- A critical strategic issue was resolved to enable the club to provide a wide variety of high quality programs and double the number of children participating.