Strategic Plan

Featherfist

POWER & PURPOSE. HOMELESS NO MORE.

Mission

At Featherfist, it is our mission to give “power and purpose” to those in the homeless community by assisting them in their advancement toward self-sufficiency.

Since we realize shelter is not enough, we expand our services to include a full range of social service networks to meet the myriad demands of retraining, rehabilitating and re-entry into the mainstream.

We believe that those persons requiring assistance to be self-reliant, whether mentally or physically exceptional, should have the opportunities that will allow them to function as independent and productive members of society.

It is OUR mission to eliminate homelessness!

Vision

By the year 2020, the Featherfist Model of Human Service delivery to the homeless, the at-risk homeless, homeless veterans, and those living in poverty, will be viewed as a “best practice” resource for addressing the comprehensive needs of homeless families and individuals.
Featherfist will be recognized as a premier provider of in-depth assessments, practical service planning, and effective case management ratios.

Our thirty-five years of documented success will validate the integrity of the Featherfist Model as one of the most successful methodologies for ending homelessness and intergenerational poverty.

Organizational Background and History

Featherfist, formed in 1984, serves homeless men, women and children and those “at risk” of becoming homeless throughout the City of Chicago. For the past thirty years it has provided extensive outreach; comprehensive case management and supportive services and referrals; and preparation for and access to permanent housing, with follow-up case management for a minimum of six months.

With “*Power and Purpose*” as its theme, Featherfist has developed model programs that successfully address the underlying causes of homelessness for individual clients and the homeless population as a whole. In 1990, Featherfist became formally incorporated as a 501C3, and received its first public funding in 1994. The successes to date have brought additional recognition and funding from the City of Chicago, State of Illinois, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, the Congressional Black Caucus and U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

The Featherfist Philosophy

Accomplishments

Over the years Featherfist has achieved several notable successes including:

Over 90% retention - "Those taken off the streets, stay off the streets!"

Over 90% of clients obtained permanent affordable or supportive housing

Over 60% of clients have received necessary health care treatment

Featherfist Resources

- Featherfist offers a skilled and dedicated staff specializing in comprehensive case management services including: basic education and computer training, and other supportive services.
- Featherfist has access to over 1,000 units of housing and a community network of over 40 agencies for long-term counseling and supportive services.
- Featherfist has a fleet of vehicles available for outreach and engagement, and to transport clients to essential services.
- Featherfist provides community educational and motivational speaking events. Through our FEAT program (Featherfist Education and Technology), we offer clients a 12-week comprehensive computer training class. Additionally, the program emphasizes areas of vocational training, technology certifications, and life skills by introducing Language Arts, Math, Reading and Writing into the curriculum.

Program Services

Program Services

Featherfist, a not-for-profit social service agency whose main office is located on the South Side of Chicago in the South Shore community, provides supportive and housing services to the homeless community throughout Chicago. With six satellite offices, Featherfist has four main areas of focus for service delivery:

Outreach & Engagement

Featherfist's very beginnings are rooted in street outreach. Over 30 years ago, before Featherfist was ever an "organization", volunteers combed the streets searching for the homeless. From those beginnings, Featherfist has grown into the premier agency in the City – and specifically the south side of Chicago – for outreach to the homeless citywide on the streets and in shelters and engaging with them to develop relationships that ultimately lead to assisting them with much needed essential services and eventually, housing. During the engagement process, an intake is performed to determine what immediate crises need to be addressed, and to refer the family members for services to address those crises. Outreach and Engagement is the linchpin to developing the relationship between client and case management.

Case Management

Once the outreach has been made, engagement taken place, and any immediate crises addressed, the next step is to conduct in-depth assessment of the household. This assessment is done by the Case Management team. Areas of assessment include, but are not limited to: number of members in the family; current level of income; substance use disorders; mental health issues; chronic physical issues; developmental disabilities, ex-offender status; prior evictions; legal issues regarding DCFS, child support or other child protective concerns. The results of this assessment enable the case manager(s) to begin the development of a service plan and refer family members for appropriate services. This plan not only includes addressing barriers as listed above, but also prepares the family for moving into their own permanent housing. Number of family members, current income and barriers help to determine if the household needs subsidized housing or affordable housing. Case management continues through the housing process and for as long as 24 months.

Program Services

Housing Location	Featherfist's Housing Department receives referrals from Featherfist case managers to begin the housing search for the family. During the case management process, a housing application is completed and indicates the area of the city the family wants to live in, number of bedrooms and any other special accommodations needed. Housing staff begins the search for appropriate housing. Featherfist's Housing Department has a city-wide reputation for developing relationships with housing providers to secure safe, secure and affordable housing in every neighborhood across the city. Some neighborhoods are more challenging than others, but Featherfist's Housing locators make every effort to locate suitable housing in the family's preferred neighborhood whenever possible. Housing locators maintain an inventory of available units, and provide HQS inspections of each unit prior to move-in by the family. Housing staff also, when necessary, arranges for moving assistance for the family.

Program Services

Veterans' Services

Featherfist has expanded its Veterans' Services programs from one (1) in 2004 to five (5) in 2012, and maintains those five programs today. Former military service members comprise a large portion of the homeless population in Chicago. Many of those homeless veterans live with PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder) and/or physical disabilities. These veterans require specialized and comprehensive case management to address their barriers and bring them back into mainstream society. Featherfist, by utilizing case managers who are former service members, and networking with local VA Medical Centers, has been able to successfully house many veteran households. Because of our success rate in housing homeless veterans and assisting them to maintain housing, Featherfist was awarded the only TIP (Transition in Place) Veteran housing program in Illinois in 2012. We recognize the importance of providing the highest quality services to this very vulnerable population and will continue to serve the homeless veterans in Chicago until there are no more *homeless* veterans to serve.

In addition to the four (4) core service areas outlined above, Featherfist also provides supportive services to senior citizens residing in senior housing and veterans residing in housing other than Featherfist's. Featherfist also provides basic adult education and computer training to homeless individuals and the community, and provides job-skills training and employment referrals when appropriate.

Synthesis of Strengths and Opportunities

Synthesis of Strengths and Opportunities

A traditional SWOT analysis was carried out in 2015

Strengths:

- Four Pillars are a strong measurement of Featherfist's mission.
- Comprehensive case management and in-house programs that deliver quality services and maintain compliance with funders.
- Quality, clarity, and consistency of its mission, vision, and values.
- Featherfist adapts to external changes well.
- Stable financials have allowed Featherfist to weather funding changes in government programs.
- Passionate and loyal employees who come from a diversity of backgrounds, and are committed to Featherfist's mission.

Opportunities:

- Reliance on government funding means that Featherfist cannot always fully express or realize their desired outcomes.
- Constant changes to government programs creates a necessity to seek sources of unrestricted funding.
- Lack of consistent marketing of Featherfist and it's programs and case management services.
- Increased need for technological upgrades to internal systems. (e.g., becoming less "paper reliant") and real-time reporting functions

External Influences

ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

Featherfist acquires over 85% of funding through government programs. Reliance on government funding often inhibits Featherfist from fully realizing it's values. This is due to restrictions that government funding places on *how* goals and outcomes must be accomplished, which can limit Featherfist's choices in determining the best way to help each client.

Restrictiveness of government funding also affects other parts of the organization and has led to the agency using outdated technology systems and an increase in burnout among staff. By increasing unrestricted funding and diversifying funding sources, Featherfist would be better positioned to fully express it's values, update technology systems enterprise-wide, and provide additional support for staff members who are fatigued.

Our goal is to increase Featherfist's unrestricted funds by subcontracting case management services and other efforts. This would allow Featherfist to consistently gain a minimum of $250,000 additional revenue with growth year over year. With access to additional funds, Featherfist will have more autonomy in how it serves clients and improves organizational efficiency.

Organization Strengths

- Featherfist has access to varied resources to help their clients.
- AMO and outreach are very strong and increase accountability and connection to the cause among staff.
- Multi level understanding of veterans services and psychology.
- Featherfist is unique in that it provides total in-house services (outreach, housing, and comprehensive case management).
- Best model of services: crisis → permanent housing
- The housing department can house clients quickly, efficiently, and is not restrictive.
- Proven ability to respond in crisis situations.
- Featherfist has strong partnerships and working relationships with landlords across Chicago area.
- Stable and healthy financials.
- Visible in the community.
- Experienced, committed and strong executive leadership team.
- Diversity of skills, experience, and lifestyle of staff.

Organization Challenges

Opportunities

Internal

Funding

Become less dependent on government funding by increasing unrestricted funding.

-

Cultivate a more diverse funding base to increase unrestricted funding.

-

Continue to make healthy financial decisions and diversify so Featherfist maintains its financial stability.

-

Develop better marketing material - explain the origin of name and provide general information about what Featherfist does to funders.

Technology

Conduct structured, mandatory training on new software and technology systems.

-

Create policy for staff regarding use of upgraded technology and systems.

-

Use a secure and encrypted database for client files that staff can access.

-

Increase accountability though through standardized reporting modules in the form of “trigger driven” calendars.

Communications

Conduct regular meetings between department heads to improve interdepartmental communication.

-

Conduct regular meetings between case managers and program director.

-

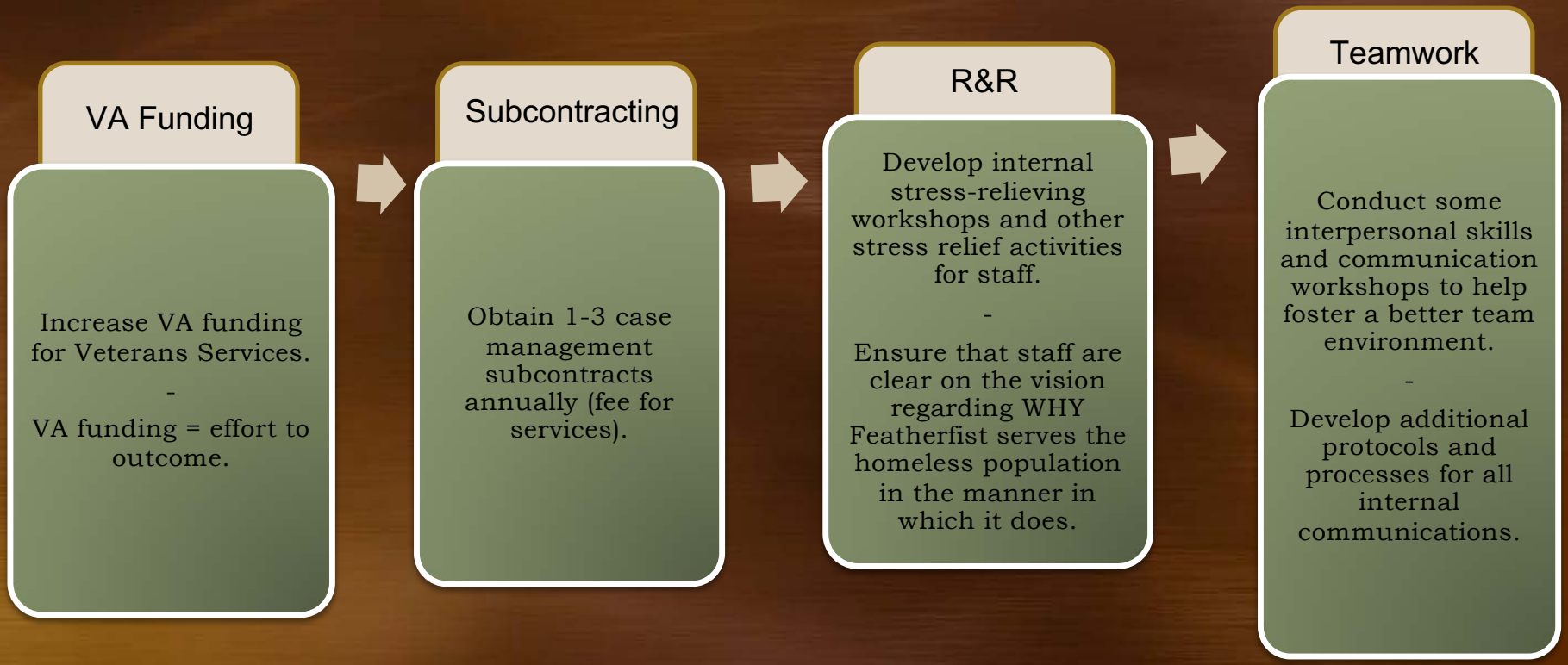
Increase use of technology to improve internal communications.

-

Update website to provide more information about Featherfist programs, services and staff.

Opportunities

External



Current Reality

Current Reality

Support Services

External Strengths

- Other organizations are starting to work with veterans, and can collaborate with Featherfist.
- Featherfist has built strong relationships with partner organizations.

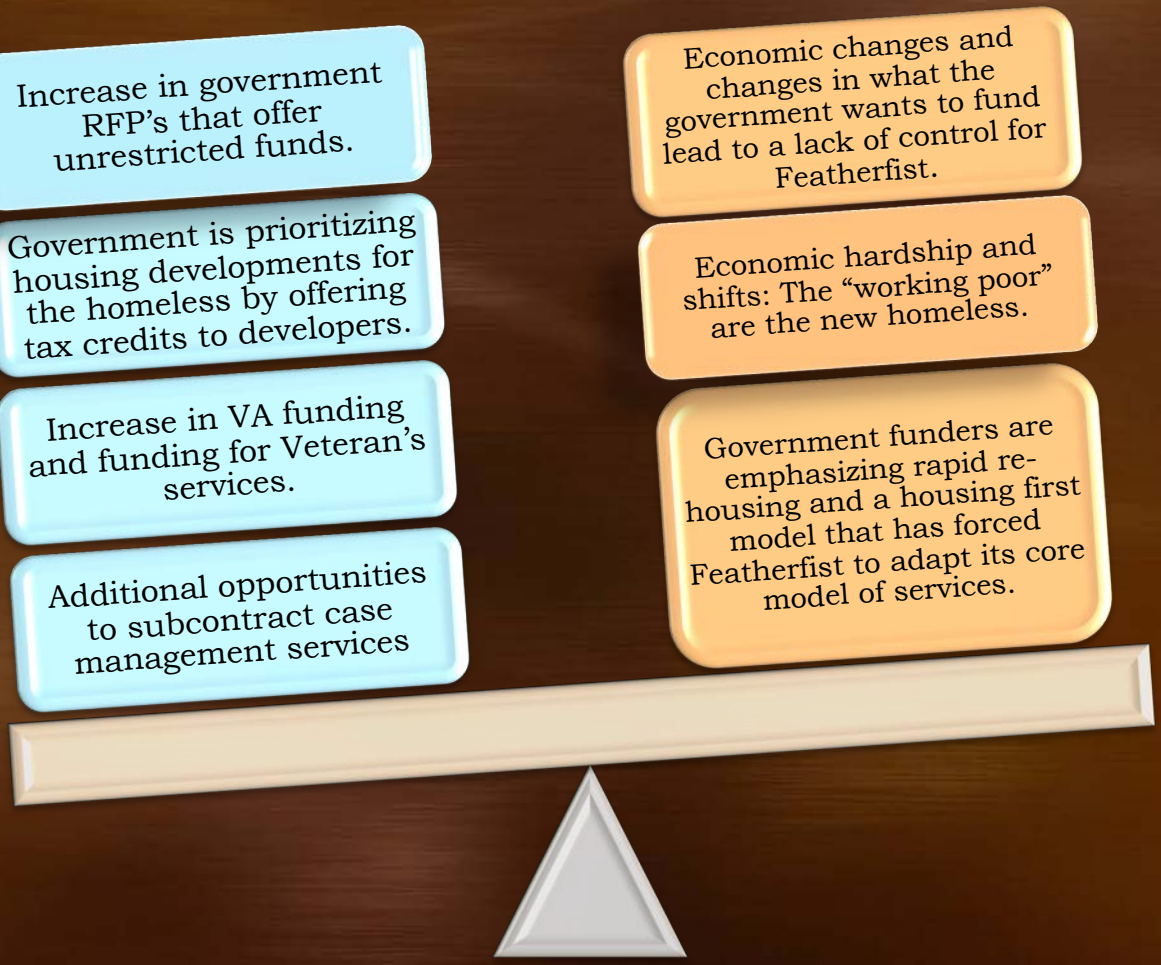
External Barriers

- Non government funding sources have significantly reduced funding.
- Long wait lists for permanent subsidized housing in Chicago.
- Lack of unity in the service provider community leads to lack of advocacy to make the government keep certain types of funding.
- Landlords are apprehensive to house unemployed clients.
- All continuum of care agencies in Chicago lost funding in FY 2014 due to HUD funding cuts.

Current Reality

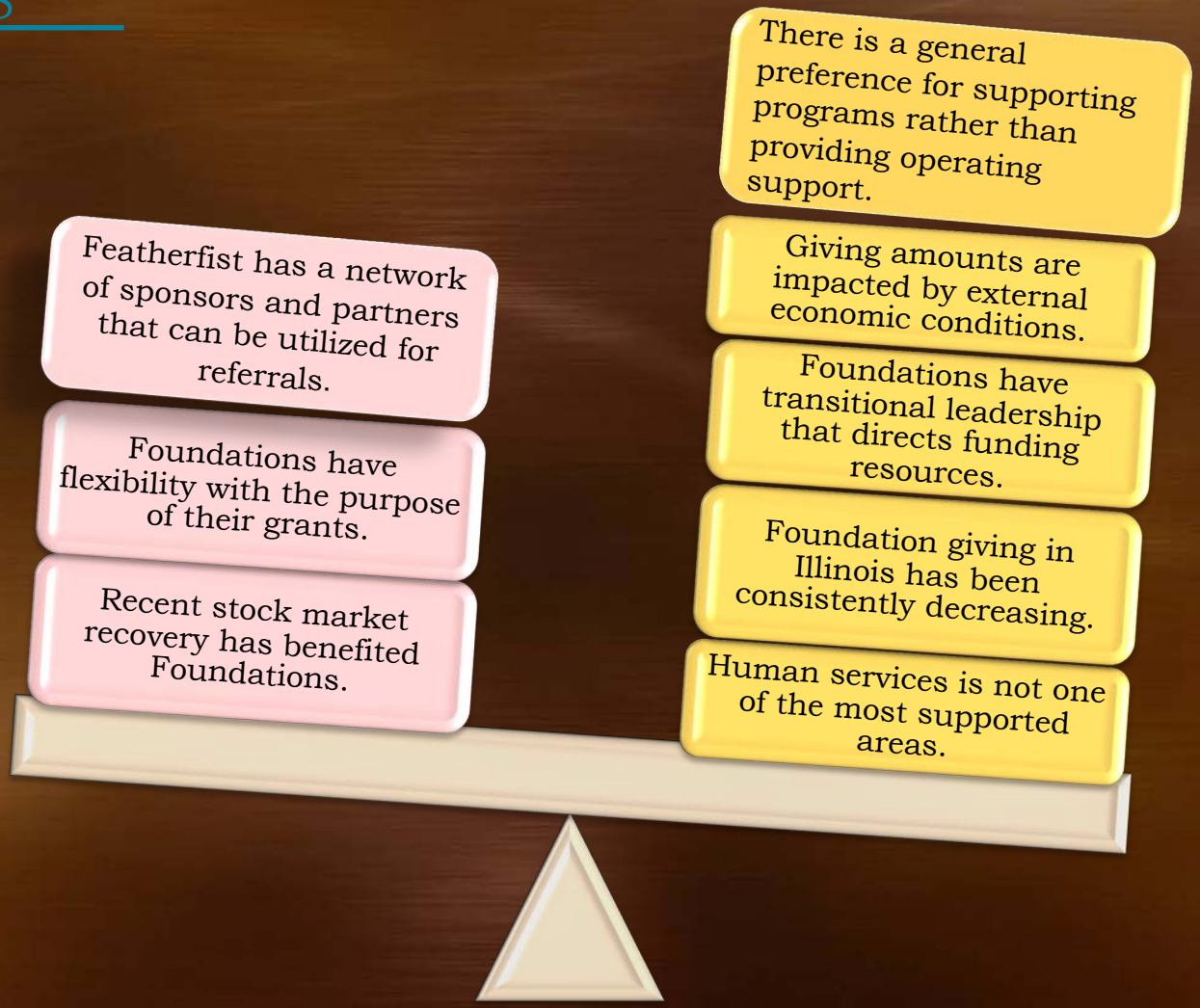
External Strengths	External Barriers

Government Policies



Current Reality

Foundations

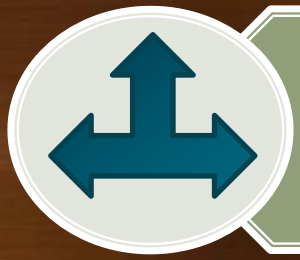


Critical Strategic Issues

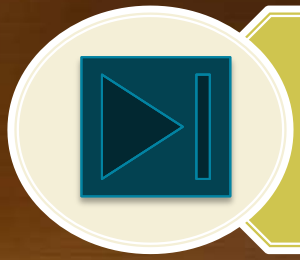
Critical Strategic Issues

What the future holds for Featherfist

The identification of three critical strategies occurred in 2014 that relate to Featherfist's basic mission and vision for success over the next five years.



Increase Unrestricted Funding; diversify funding sources



Upgrade technology and implement continuing education programs to increase efficiencies and streamline processes

Recognize and Address Compassion Fatigue

Increase Unrestricted Funding

Increase Unrestricted Funding

PURPOSE: Featherfist is projected to considerably expand the amount of homeless individuals and families served over the next five years. The purpose of this goal is to further solidify and diversify our funding in order to accommodate this increase.

CHALLENGE: Diversify Featherfist's funding base beyond government programs so the organization is less reliant on changing government programs.

Increase Unrestricted Funding

Measurable Accomplishments (to date):

- Acquired first case management subcontract with New Pisgah Apartments
- Obtained State of Illinois Colbert Consent Decree
- Entered partnership with 3-Diamond Developers
- Earned $100K in unrestricted revenue in FY 2015

Increase Unrestricted Funding

Action Steps

- In each year identify the tasks to be accomplished, including who's accountable and by what date
  - Section 1 is for fee for services
  - Section 2 is Foundations
  - Section 3 is fund development

Increase Unrestricted Funding

2015 Action Steps

1. Fee for Services

- Educate all levels of staff on Featherfist's desire to contract out case management services
- Designate a staff member within Featherfist to be in charge of all inquiries related to fee-for-services
- Optimize website to advertise Featherfist's fee-for-services program
- Develop success metrics for fee-for-services programs
- Encourage senior staff to be proactive in spreading fee-for-services information through WOM (word-of-mouth) campaign
- Examine current relationships with other organizations for possible strategic partners
- Develop processes to guarantee that quality of case management services is upheld

Increase Unrestricted Funding

2015 Action Steps

1. Fee for Services (continued)

- Examine current relationships with other organizations for possible strategic partners
- Develop processes to guarantee that quality of case management services is upheld

2. Foundations

- Appoint a staff member to cultivate relationships with Foundations
- Create template proposal
- Adjust for the needs and purpose of each Foundation
- Apply to Foundations with funding cycles within the year for unrestricted funds
- Utilize external foundation databases to identify potential funders
- Create internal Foundation database with information and funding cycles

Increase Unrestricted Funding

2015 Action Steps

3. Fund Development

- Designate staff member within Featherfist to be responsible for overseeing individual and institutional donor cultivation
- Begin compiling list of information on current and past donors
- Create best practices for Featherfist

Increase Unrestricted Funding

2016 Action Steps

1. Fee for Services

- Begin tracking fee-for-services success metrics
- Continue cultivating base of strategic relationships
- Designate a staff member to put together a quarterly calendar of relevant conventions and networking opportunities centered in the Midwest
- Continue to build portfolio of organizations with whom Featherfist has worked
- List past and current partner organizations on Featherfist website
- Develop exit survey for partner organizations

Increase Unrestricted Funding

2016 Action Steps

2. Foundations

- Create template report with metrics
- Adjust for the needs and purpose of each Foundation
- Maintain relationships with Foundations applied to in 2015
- Submit progress reports for the year
- Seek new Foundation grant opportunities
- Apply to Foundations with funding cycles within the year
- Add support page to website with a list of Foundations

Increase Unrestricted Funding

2016 Action Steps

3. Fund Development

- Designate Featherfist employee to create and send informational materials to keep donors up-to-date
- Complete initial list of 500-1000 potential donors to be contacted
- Outline desired milestones and goals to present to staff and board members
- Outline a plan for donor cultivation

Increase Unrestricted Funding

2017 Action Steps

1. Fee for Services

- Post success metrics on website as they are collected
- Obtain 5 case management subcontracts
- Continue to send staff to conventions for networking opportunities
- Leverage past client organization relationships to expand WOM network
- Ask organizations to list their partnership with Featherfist on their websites
- Ask organizations to refer any potential clients to Featherfist
- Continue to build fee-for-services portfolio
- Expand geographical focus of networking events included in events calendar to include a national focus

Increase Unrestricted Funding

2017 Action Steps

2. Foundations

- Maintain relationships with Foundations applied to in past two years
- Submit progress reports for the year
- Seek new Foundation grant opportunities
- Apply to Foundations with funding cycles within the year
- Apply for renewal of established grants
- Update support page on website and database

Increase Unrestricted Funding

2017 Action Steps

3. Fund Development

Begin reaching out to potential donors once per quarter based on best practices methods selected for the plan

Increase Unrestricted Funding

2018 Action Steps

1. Fee for Services

- Ensure that senior staff and employees are still clear about Featherfist's services and goals
- Ensure that staff members continue to be proactive in spreading case management service information
- Continue with evaluations of service contracting to confirm high quality of services

Increase Unrestricted Funding

2018 Action Steps

2. Foundations

- Maintain relationships with foundations applied to in past three years
- Submit progress reports for the year
- Seek new opportunities and apply for renewal of established grants
- Update the support page on website and database

Increase Unrestricted Funding

2018 Action Steps

3. Fund Development

- Continue to engage in a steady stream of contact with donors
- Leverage current donor network to attract new donors

Increase Unrestricted Funding

2019 Action Steps

1. Fee for Services

- Senior staff will continue to be involved and pro-active in the field and with relevant organizations
- Reach goal of at least ten substantial, developed strategic relationships.
- Use ten strategic relationships to continue to expand WOM network

Increase Unrestricted Funding

2019 Action Steps

2. Foundations

- Maintain established relationships with foundations
- Seek new opportunities and apply for renewal of established grants
- Update the support page on website and database
- Review progress over the past four years and determine a goal for amount of contracts to achieve per year to supplement goal of $250,000/year

Upgrade Technology & Implement Continuing Education Programs for Staff

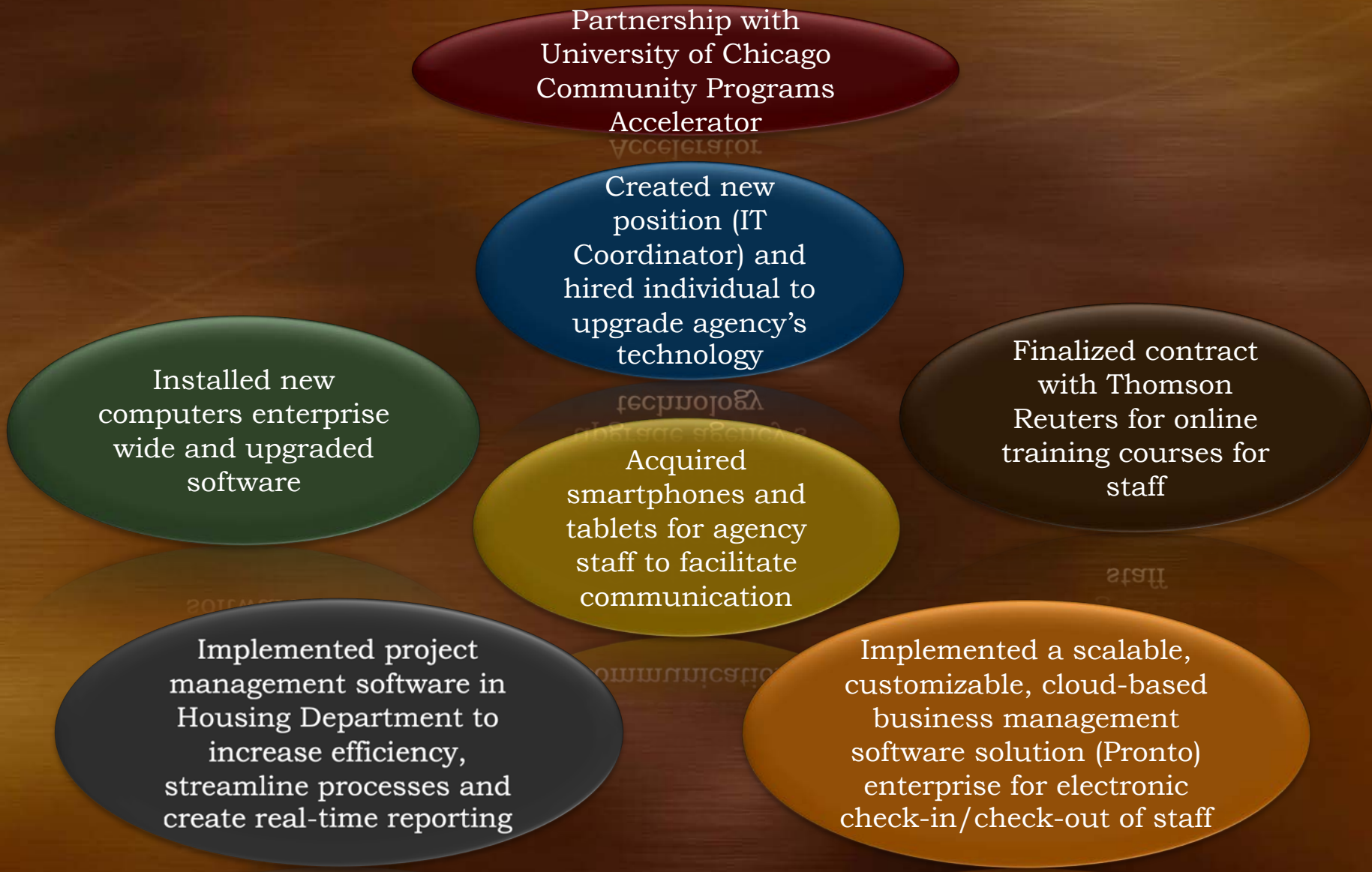
Technology & Continuing Education

PURPOSE: To utilize technology and continuing education and training programs to help Featherfist staff streamline processes, increase efficiencies and expand core competencies.

CHALLENGE: Obtaining funds to upgrade technology and provide external and internal training and workshops for staff.

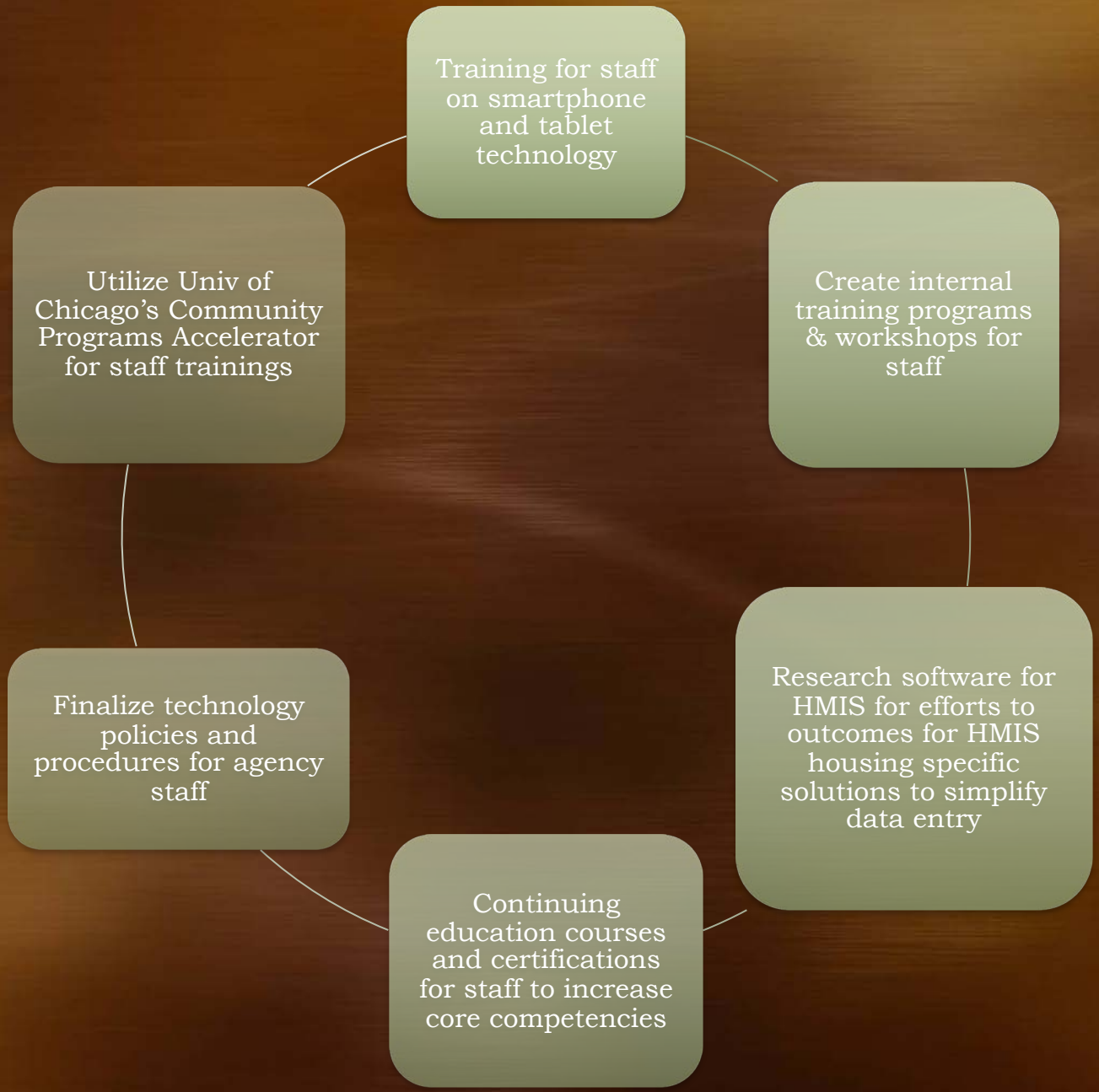
Upgrade Technology & Continuing Education

Measurable Accomplishments (to date):



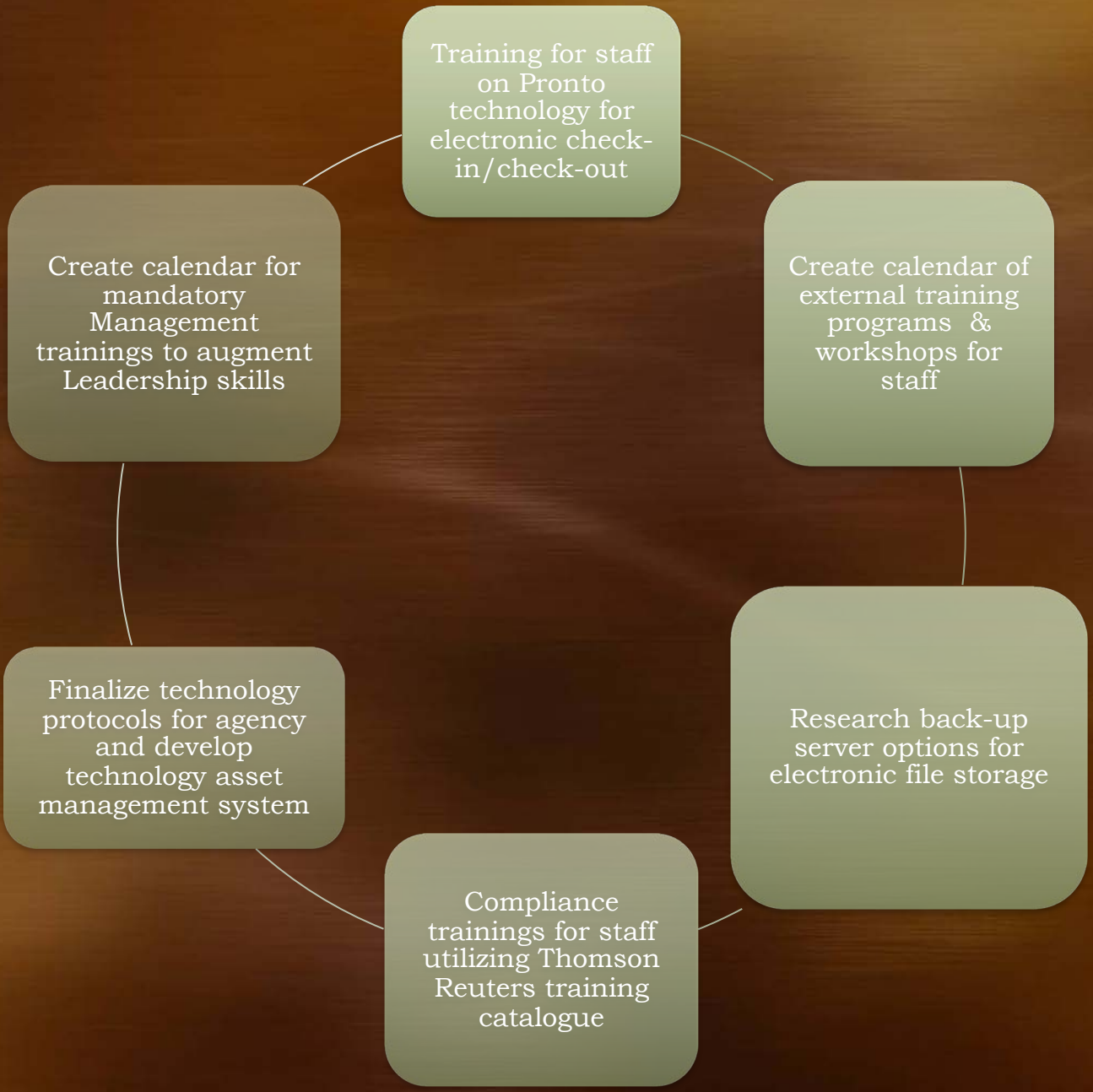
Upgrade Technology & Continuing Education

2015 Action Steps



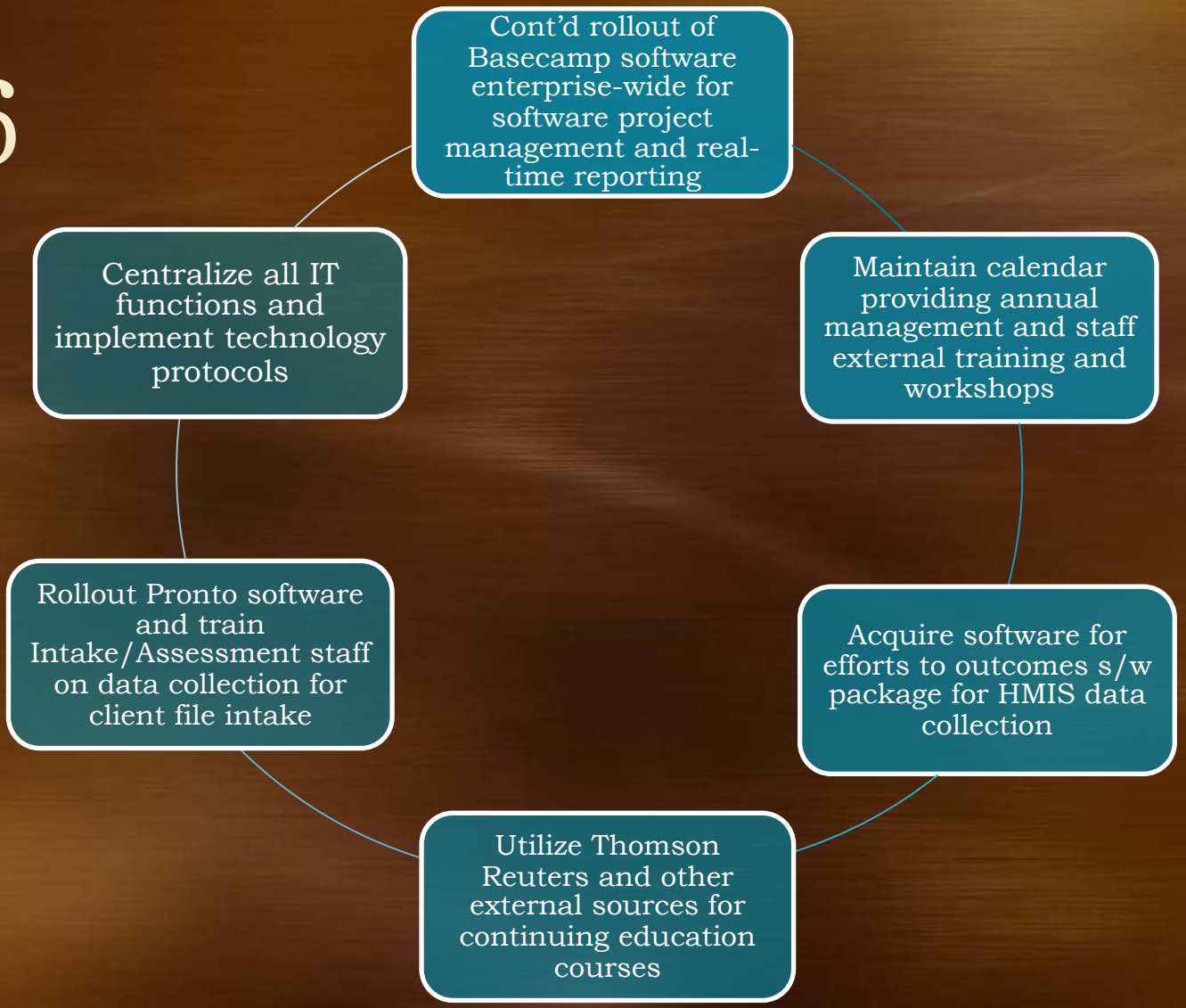
Upgrade Technology & Continuing Education

2015 Action Steps *cont'd*



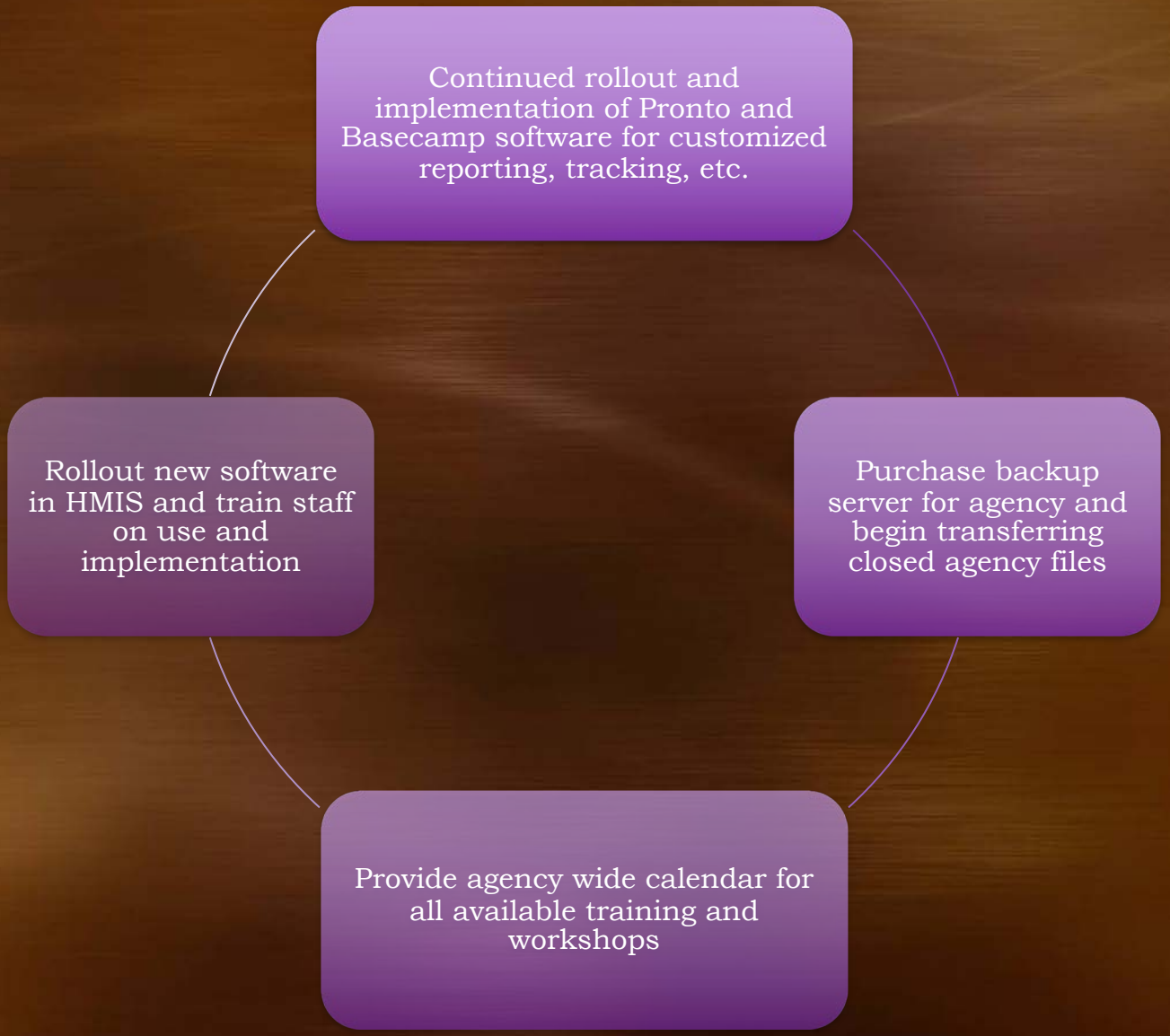
Upgrade Technology

2016 Action Steps



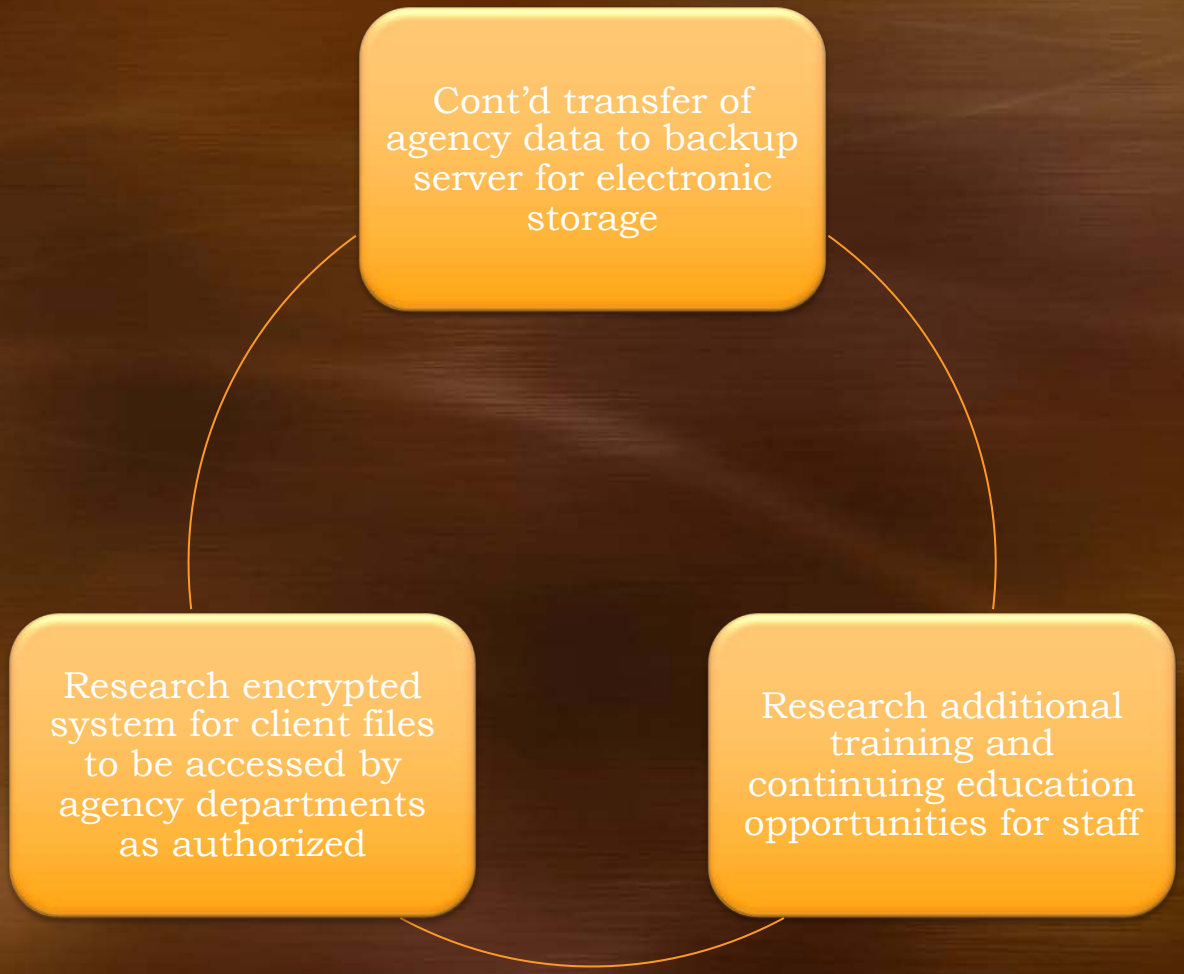
Upgrade Technology & Continuing Education

2017 Action Steps



Upgrade Technology & Continuing Education

2018 Action Steps



Upgrade Technology & Continuing Education

2019 Action Steps

Have internal agency functions and departments fully utilizing Basecamp, efforts to outcome software and Pronto to automate and streamline agency reporting, communications and tracking.

Have all staff fully utilizing all training and continuing education opportunities available

Recognize and Address Compassion Fatigue

Recognize and Address Compassion Fatigue

PURPOSE: To create consistent internal agency initiatives that identify and address Compassion Fatigue amongst Featherfist staff.

CHALLENGE: Develop cost-effective agency programs and activities that will identify individuals that may be suffering from compassion fatigue and create mechanisms to help those individuals.

Strategy Name: Recognize and Address Compassion Fatigue

2015 Action Steps

Conduct an in-house needs assessment of staff utilizing the following tools: (a) Professional Quality of Life (ProQol) Self Test; (b) Compassion Fatigue Self Test; and (c) Life Stress Self Test (Tests are attached)

Identify organizational factors that contribute to compassion fatigue by conducting an organizational assessment.

Develop a questionnaire that helps the employee and direct supervisor design an individualized supervision plan. The questionnaire will examine four areas of work: clinical, educative, administrative and supportive.

Establish weekly one-on-one meetings with employee supervisor customized for the employee based on the individualized supervision plan

Organize simple activity such as a walking or meditation group during the lunch hour or after work to also contribute to staff wellness at no cost

Create calendar for semi-annual or annual 2016-2017 staff retreat and activities (depending on funding available)

Strategy Name: Recognize and Address Compassion Fatigue

2016-2017

Action Steps

Create an employee satisfaction survey (using SurveyMonkey). Once the results were compiled, present the findings during a staff meeting. Then meet in small groups to focus on specific issues and determine what staff and the agency can do to address the problems identified. These suggestions can become newly formed internal committees created to respond to employees' concerns. Use proven methodology to develop Featherfist-centric survey (https://www.surveymonkey.com/mp/employee-surveys/)

Based on assessment results, create an internal peer support group that meets after work hours on a bi-weekly or monthly basis to give staff opportunities to debrief informally and process traumatic material.

Develop strategies to manage work-related stressors in positive ways. Utilize the workbook provided by the National Center on Family Homelessness for agencies that work with the homeless to develop internal agency activities for staff and staff retreat. (Workbook attached)

Staff attends scheduled retreat

Strategy Name: Recognize and Address Compassion Fatigue

2016-2017

Action Steps

Create an annual outstanding service award for employees that are nominated by their peers

Celebrate landmark anniversaries with the agency

Featherfist can take advantage of a number of workshops on compassion fatigue at professional conferences by sending a staff member for training and asking that worker to share what he or she has learned with the rest of the staff.

Review calendar of staff conferences and select staff member to attend

Organize team-building activities and internal workshops to increase workers' feeling of group cohesion and mutual support based on assessments and continued management and staff input

Create calendar and activities for 2018 staff retreat

Strategy Name: Recognize and Address Compassion Fatigue

2018 Action Steps

Strategy Name: Recognize and Address Compassion Fatigue

2018 Action Steps

Cont'd review and implementation of agency action steps

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If funding exists, create a Personal Leave Program where an employee can apply for a three-month leave of absence without losing seniority or benefits

Strategy Name: Recognize and Address Compassion Fatigue

2019 Action Steps

Cont'd review by executive team of existing agency initiatives that assist employees in managing compassion fatigue to identify employees that require assistance

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Annual review of employee participation in agency programs and review of employee feedback to assist in creation of add'l programs to address compassion fatigue