

# Washington Nationals Youth Baseball Academy

## 2015-2020 Strategic Plan

*Board Approved  
September 10, 2015*

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## Executive Summary

In March 2015, the Washington Nationals Youth Baseball Academy's (WNYBA/Academy) Board of Directors and staff gathered at the Washington Nationals' spring training complex in Viera, Florida, to kick off its second strategic planning retreat. This important planning session solidified the input for the development of this five-year strategic plan (2015-2020).

The Academy's first strategic plan, completed in 2013, had expired and a fresh look at the organization, its goals and priorities was due. The initial plan led to the creation of Board member committees that worked with the Executive Director to drive the startup phase of the organization's life cycle. The new plan covers a 5 year period (2015-2020) where programmatic and operational growth and measurable impact will define success for the Academy.

Informed by feedback from multiple stakeholder constituencies (e.g. staff, parents, participants, partner organizations, funders, and volunteers), analysis of the current state of the organization and a shared vision for the ideal future state of the organization, the Academy identified three key strategic goals. These goals are: **1. Enhance Our Core Program; 2. Develop Organizational Sustainability; and 3. Maximize Our Impact.**

Working groups comprised of Board members, staff and technical experts were created to develop detailed implementation work plans (work plans), with clearly articulated strategies, to meet each goal above. Each strategy was linked to activities, parties, timelines, proof of success, identified resources and targets for monitoring progress. The work plans stand as the foundation of this 2015 Strategic Plan. The plan is intended to be a living document and reviewed and refined as appropriate to chart the organization's path and measure its performance. The organization has grown rapidly in size and scope since 2013. To maintain the same momentum of success in the coming years' implementation of this plan, support from the Board of Directors is paramount.

## History and Context

### Major League Baseball and the Academy

When Major League Baseball (MLB) relocated the Montreal Expos to Washington, D.C. (District), the District Government requested that the new team partner with the City to create a baseball academy serving a disadvantaged section of the city and to model its programs after New York City's Harlem RBI (nonprofit sports-based youth development organization).

The District subsequently agreed to fund a significant portion of construction costs to build the facility in partnership with the Lerner family, the Washington Nationals, the team's new philanthropic arm, the Dream Foundation, and MLB. After reaching an agreement with the National Park Service, the District designated a parcel of federal land in Fort Dupont Park in Ward 7, and negotiations for the development of the Academy with the Department of the Interior ensued. Construction commenced in March 2013 and was substantially completed in less than 12 months.

On March 4<sup>th</sup>, 2014, the Academy officially opened the doors to its state-of-the-art, nine-acre education and recreation campus in Southeast Washington. An independent 501(c)3 nonprofit organization, the Washington Nationals Youth Baseball Academy is has since offered an enduring environment for children from underserved neighborhoods to receive high quality, year-round, holistic youth development programming. The goal of the Academy is to use baseball and softball as vehicles to foster positive character development, academic achievement, and improved health among youth from underserved communities in Washington, D.C.

The facility at the Academy, which opened in March 2014, features an 18,000 sq. ft. education center complete with 7 classrooms, a full teaching kitchen, and multi-purpose training / education space, as well as grounds that include 3 baseball/softball diamonds and a teaching garden. Since its opening, the Academy has already directly served hundreds of children through its after-school and summer programs, designed specifically to meet the needs of youth from underserved neighborhoods, most of whom have limited access to positive mentors and productive out-of-school programs.

### Community Assets

The area surrounding the Academy in Ft. Dupont Park offers unique resources, as well:

- Kimball Elementary School, Sousa Middle School, Cornerstone School, and the Ft. Dupont Ice Arena offer potential for a dynamic community atmosphere for youth and community members within a one-block radius;
- Local community organizations, such as the Advisory Neighborhood Commission 7-F, DC Housing Authority, and the Metropolitan Police Department's 6<sup>th</sup> District Community Outreach Division offer opportunities for partnership and collaboration to benefit local residents;

- The facility is equidistant for numerous DC residents living east of the Anacostia River as well as areas near Capitol Hill and Western Prince George’s County, allowing it to serve as a hub for baseball and softball activities.

### **Community Need**

Shocking statistics show that in the Ward 7 and 8 neighborhoods that the Academy serves:

- Less than 30% of elementary school students receive proficient test scores in math and reading;
- More than 40% of the population is obese, and access to healthy eating options is limited;
- Of students who complete 8<sup>th</sup> grade, 60% will leave the public education system by the tenth grade;
- Violent and property crime rates reign as the highest in the city.

### **Program Services and Partners**

The Academy reaches youth through a comprehensive range of programs. Students in the core after-school and summer programs participate in academic enrichment, physical activity and health and wellness activities a *minimum* of 120 days each year. The core program currently serves 144 youth (3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> graders), and a new class of 36 rising third graders will be added each summer until the program reaches full capacity at 216 students from 3<sup>rd</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> grades. Coincidentally, the number 216 also represents the number of stitches in a Major League baseball and the intersection between the art and science of baseball as a tool to develop youth. Just as those stitches bear equal weight in holding the baseball together, the 216 Scholar-Athletes will ultimately make the Academy whole, each one as integral as the next.

From 3:30pm to 7:30pm, three days-a-week for thirty weeks during the school year and from 8:00am to 4:30pm for six consecutive weeks, 5 days a week during the summer, Scholar-Athletes participate in programming with: Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) curricula taught with baseball themes, baseball/softball instruction, training and competition, and food education.

Inspired by the Let’s Move! initiative, which seeks to end the epidemic of childhood obesity, the Academy engages Scholar-Athletes in nutrition and good health through partnerships with a number of leading food education / nutrition organizations, including DC Greens, Cooking Matters/Share Our Strength, Brainfood, Epicuriosity, and Kid Power. Programs with these partners have approached food education holistically, from food preparation and cooking to tending a vegetable and herb garden, learning about the essential nutrients found in foods and their relationship to physical activity and brain function.

The culture at the Academy is grounded in the positive values of baseball/softball – instilling a love of physical activity as well as the qualities of determination, resiliency, teamwork and goal setting in the young Scholar-Athletes served. The Academy does this through committed coaches – trained in positive coaching methodology – as well as one-on-one involvement of

academic tutors and mentors who combine to support youth in developing the skills necessary to reach their full academic potential and lead long and healthy lives.

### **Community Engagement**

In addition to its core programs, the Academy is increasingly hosting numerous activities involving families and other community members, such as recreational and competitive baseball/softball leagues, clinics, involvement from members of Congress and the business community, adult education and services, and more, to truly maximize the use of the facility and make the Academy a sustainable D.C. landmark for thousands of area residents. The Academy's facility and approach to youth development has drawn national attention, including official visits and endorsements from MLB Commissioner Robert D. Manfred, Presidential Advisor Valerie Jarrett, and Cabinet Secretary and Chair of the My Brother's Keeper task-force, Broderick Johnson. Future programs will explore the development of a full garden economy, including a market for local residents, and lessons for the broader community in gardening, business, and food preparation for the Academy's event concessions, as well as the development of a city-wide program for the development and support of community-based baseball/softball coaches that will implement a summer league targeted toward low-income youth.

### **The Program Model**

The creation of the Academy's outcome-based program model was developed during the initial planning phase of year one, led by its Executive Director, Tal Alter. The model is based on research, review of other model organizations (e.g. Harlem RBI and Higher Achievement) and support from technical experts in developing the theory of change and program logic model. In addition to the outcome-based program model, the organization created a strategic plan to guide its goals and activities through its initial period of service delivery. The strategic plan focused on four key areas of organizational and board performance, which included: Fundraising and Development; Governance; Financial Sustainability; and External Communications.

### **Organizational Growth and Demand**

The organization has grown rapidly since programming began in October of 2013 through the 2014-2015 program year<sup>1</sup> (July – June) and into the summer of 2015 to include its third and fourth cohort of students, expansion of programming and staffing, dramatic increase in facility use, and demand for services and partnerships. This external demand and community need has raised internal questions and developed competing priorities for the organization.

After completing its second year of programming, developing lessons learned and questions to address, as well as the expiration of the initial strategic plan, it was time to develop a longer term organizational strategy.

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<sup>1</sup> The program year is the summer through the school year, which is typically July – June for planning purposes. The fiscal year coincides with the calendar year (January – December).

The enclosed plan captures the five year strategic direction, goals and priorities for the Washington Nationals Youth Baseball Academy.

Area of Growth	Program Year 13-14	Program Year 14-15	% Increase
Scholar-Athletes	71	108	52%
Other Baseball and Softball Program Participants <sup>2</sup>	429	849	98%
Full Time Staff	3	11	267%
Interns & Volunteers	5	30	500%
Part Time Coaches	5	21	320%
Volunteer Mentors	58	97	67%
Annual Events	175	350	100%
Partner Organizations	15	30	100%

### Theory of Change and Initial Impact

The Academy developed its Theory of Change (see below) prior to its initial year of programming. The theory lays out the challenges plaguing the community it serves, as well as the proposed solutions to address these challenges and create long-term success and outcome achievement. This Theory of Change, in conjunction with the organizational Logic Model (see below), articulates the inputs (resources), activities and outputs, to achieve the objectives (outcomes) for youth, coaches and communities and reach its long-term goal.

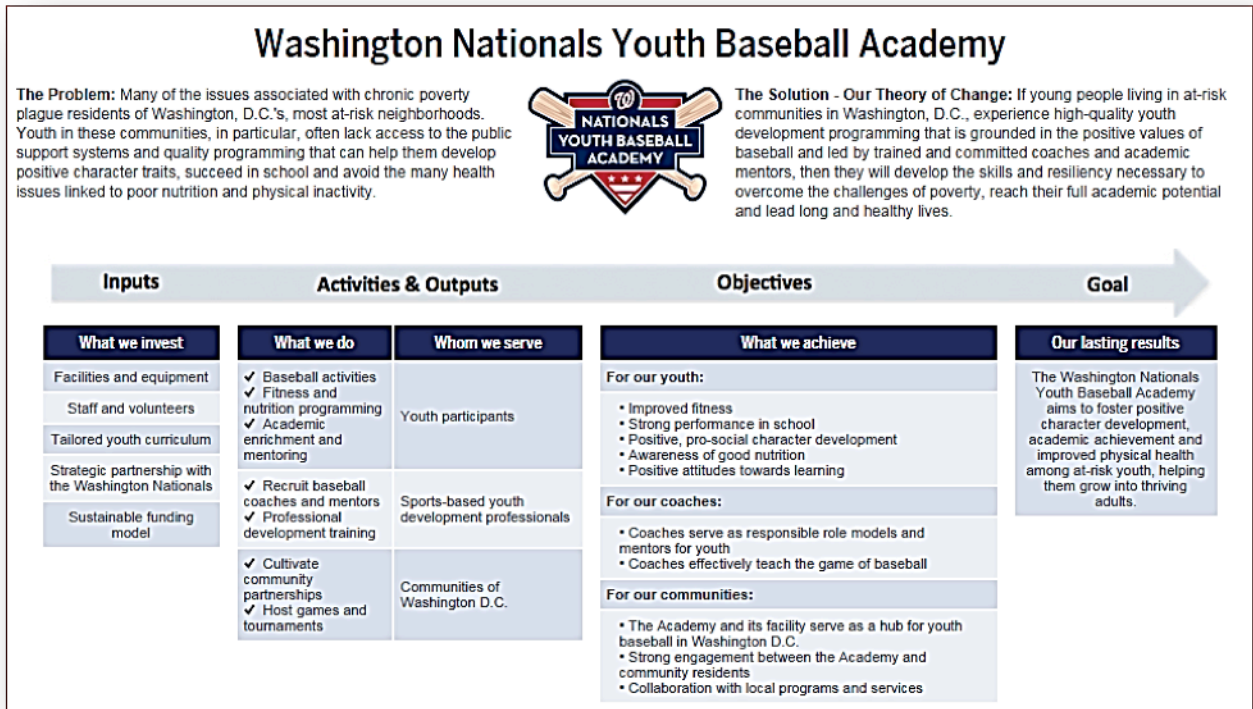
#### Theory of Change

***If young people in Wards 7 and 8 experience high-quality youth development programming that is grounded in the positive values of baseball and led by trained and committed coaches and academic mentors, then they will develop the skills and resiliency necessary to overcome the challenges of poverty, reach their full academic potential, and lead long and healthy lives.***

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<sup>2</sup> Other Baseball and Softball Program Participants includes partner (e.g. MJLL, SDLL, Headfirst, B&GC, etc.) organization’s players and coaches.

## Logic Model



Initial data gathered from annual self-reported surveys of Scholar-Athletes who have been at the Academy for more than 1 year show positive progress and encouraging signs as it relates to the Academy's objectives. Below are the initial impact findings.

### Attitudes Toward Learning

- 100% showed increased belief that they will graduate from HS and an increased desire to go to college
- 83% reported that they like to read for fun (4 or 5), up from 33% at beginning of 1st year
- 100% showed an increased understanding that good grades are important

### Attitudes Toward Exercise

- 100% report being excited (4 or 5) to come to practice (increased from average of 1.9 to 4.9 on a 1-to-5 scale)
- 78% showed increased understanding that exercise is good for them
- 72% showed increased understanding that exercise is important

### Pro-social Development



- 100% have learned to trust coaches and mentors (answered 4 or 5 on a 1-to-5 scale)
- 100% found a "best friend" at the Academy (improved from average of 2.6 to 5 on 1-to-5 scale)
- 100% increased or maintained how much they follow the rules at WNYBA (improved from average of 2.9 to 3.8 on 1-to-5 scale)

## **Strategic Planning Process**

Following the completion of the Academy's initial strategic plan and its first years of programming and operations, the team had gathered an abundance of data, feedback, internal questions, and lessons learned. This information informed the organization's way forward as it looked towards the next five years. The planning process involved several steps that took place over months of work, divided into four major categories of planning: preplanning; two day Board retreat; working groups; and drafting the plan.

### **Step 1 – Preplanning**

A key first step in the strategic planning process was the preplanning phase, which included information gathering and goal setting for the overall process. Multiple meetings and interviews took place during this phase with staff and Board members to determine the overall process, committee structure, responsibilities and resources. Additionally, vital feedback was gathered from a diverse group of stakeholders to inform the organization's direction. The feedback provided supported the review of the organization's accomplishments and shortfalls, assessing the current state and providing direction towards longer term outcomes.

### **Step 2 – Two Day Board Retreat**

The Board of Directors and key staff gather in March 2014 for a two-day offsite retreat to review and dissect the organization's history and accomplishments, mission, vision and culture, vision for the possible, feedback from surveys, SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) analysis, key challenges, priorities, goals, and development of strategies to accomplish goals. The two day facilitated retreat found Board consensus on organizational priorities and goals (growth and impact). The draft strategies to reach the intended goals would be finalized in working groups, along with detailed activities and implementation plans.

### **Step 3 – Working Groups**

Three working groups were developed based on the three main strategic goals developed during the Board retreat. The working groups were comprised of Board members, staff, and technical experts (e.g. development consultant for organizational sustainability goal) pertaining to each goal area. The working groups recommended adjustments and additions to the Academy's mission, vision and organizational values, as well as developed detailed implementation work plans (work plans). The work plans included finalized strategies, activities, responsibilities, resources and timelines for each goal. The final products were presented to the Board in June 2015 by each working group for review and feedback.

## Step 4 – Drafting the Plan

Upon receiving Board endorsement on the strategic goals and detailed implementation work plans, the drafting of the strategic plan took place. The collaborative consultant and staff approach delivered the plan for Board review and approval in 2015 (see approval date on cover page).

## SWOT Analysis

During the Board retreat, the strategic planning group conducted a “SWOT” (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) analysis to assess the internal and external forces impacting the Academy. The SWOT analysis was built upon the preplanning survey work conducted prior to the Board retreat involving multiple constituents and confirmed through exercises at the retreat.

During the preplanning phase of the strategic planning process, surveys were developed to gain insight and feedback from key stakeholders of the Academy. Three surveys were developed for internal (Board and staff) and external (participants, families, partners organizations and funders) stakeholders. Below are the key findings which informed the organizational SWOT analysis and its priorities over the next five years. **Please note that Appendix C does not include all questions and feedback gathered.**

### Totals

- Total Number of Responses: 41
- Internal Responses: 46%
  - Board Members: 10
  - Staff Members: 9
- External Responses: 56%
  - Participants, Parents, Volunteers: 19
  - Funders: 3

### Sample Questions To Inform SWOT Analysis (does not include all questions)

- What is the Academy's Greatest Asset?
- Rank the Academy's Strengths in Order?
- What Areas do We Need to Improve Upon?
- Is There Additional Demand for The Academy and Our Programs?
- Are We Doing Enough to Maximize Our Impact?

## Key Findings

The SWOT analysis supported the organization in identifying the current internal assets, and areas of strong performance (Facility, Brand, Program Model) as well as areas that needed additional support and improvement (Impact, Parent Engagement). The process also identified future and external areas of opportunity (Expansion, Growth and Partnerships) and potential threats (Succession planning, Impact, Parent Engagement).

<p><b><u>Strengths</u></b></p> <p><i>Facility Brand Program Model</i></p>	<p><b><u>Weaknesses</u></b></p> <p><i>Impact Parent Engagement</i></p>
<p><b>SWOT FINDINGS</b></p>	
<p><b><u>Opportunities</u></b></p> <p><i>Expansion and Growth Partnerships</i></p>	<p><b><u>Threats</u></b></p> <p><i>Succession Planning Impact Parent Engagement</i></p>

**Mission**

A mission statement is a declaration of organizational purpose; the reason for existence. The Academy has worked to refine its mission statement to reflect learnings and experiences over the past year, feedback and input from key stakeholders, and an emphasis on what is important to the organization.

*To use the sports of baseball and softball as vehicles to foster positive character development, academic achievement, and improved health among youth from underserved communities in Washington, D.C.*

**Vision**

The vision of the organization captures the organization’s ideal future state. The vision of the Academy has also been reviewed and revised to include language that is more accurate of this ideal state.

*To be a model organization, nurturing the development of D.C. youth into thriving members and leaders of our community.*

## Values

The values of the organization inform the work of its staff and how work is conducted. The values play a role in everything the Academy does and informs how the organization engages with all stakeholders to empower its Scholar-Athletes to live a life of purpose with the ability to make choices, take responsibility, and demonstrate agency. The values below represent the Academy's best:

***Be Outstanding, Be Healthy, Be a Leader, and Continue to Learn***

## The Academy Way

The Academy Way is an extension of the organizations values. The Academy is also the how we go about our day-to-day business. It is a set of core beliefs that make us a productive, cohesive, efficient, and unified team. Our staff can be counted on to bring to life **"The Academy Way"** each day.

1. **All members of WNYBA – scholar-athletes, coaches, staff, and mentors - are considered family.** Because we are doing something that hasn't been done in Washington, D.C., we know mistakes are bound to happen. As a family, we acknowledge our mistakes, learn from them, and move on. When we do something that hurts another, we apologize, rather than make excuses.

2. We are **emotionally committed** to achieving our mission of using baseball and softball as vehicles to foster positive character development, academic achievement, and improved physical health for our scholar-athletes. We see this not as just a coaching job but an opportunity to make D.C. a better place.

3. We are **professional and purposeful** in everything we do in support of our mission. We recognize that we cannot achieve our mission unless we make the most of the resources that we are given by our donors and other supporters, and we take care to **evaluate every decision** that we make in light of its impact on the overall program.

4. We believe that one's **effort and enjoyment are closely related.** We aim to achieve a healthy balance between our Academy work and the rest of our lives. We realize that restoring our mind and body will enable us to be as effective as possible in the pursuit of our Academy's mission. A set of core beliefs that make us a productive, cohesive, efficient, and unified team. Our staff can be counted on to bring to life **"The Academy Way"** each day.

5. Academy employees take pride in knowing they have the **freedom to go above and beyond** to help achieve our mission. We embrace the opportunity to take initiative and find solutions to challenges on our own.

6. **We continue to learn.** We are restless in finding new and better Academy processes.

7. We confront difficult issues. We assess the problems we face then **challenge each other** when we think there is a better way or a problem to be resolved.

8. **We are always there for one another.** We know that the challenges we face in our work can feel daunting. We're supportive and reassuring when disappointments come about. We also recognize and celebrate our successes.

## Goals

Through the planning process and specifically from the feedback and findings of the organizational SWOT analysis, themes emerged, which informed the organizational goals. Working through the findings the organization has determined its goals for this strategic plan to be the following: **#1 – Enhance Our Core Program; #2 – Develop Organizational Sustainability; #3 – Maximize Our Impact.**

## Strategies

The strategies developed to reach each goal stated above describe the details of how the organization will achieve its goals. The strategies were drafted during the strategic planning retreat with refinement and confirmation of the final strategies determined by each working group. **See Appendix A for detailed strategies and work plans.**

### ***STRATEGIC GOAL #1: Enhance Our Core Program***

- a. Grow program to scale by 2018 (cohorts from grades 3-8; effective programming addressing three core areas of mission - character, academics, health)
- b. Develop parent/community engagement program/focus
- c. Track performance
- d. Measure our impact

### ***STRATEGIC GOAL #2: Develop Organizational Sustainability***

- a. Develop sustainable resources, long-term funding, capitalize on shared value
- b. Clearly define partnership between the Academy, the Washington Nationals Baseball Club, and the Dream Foundation

- c. Develop and train our staff (specifically in cultural context)
- d. Develop process for sustainable Board and staff structures

**STRATEGIC GOAL #3: Maximize Our Impact**

- a. Build and scale a holistic, developmental baseball and softball program with year-round offerings targeted toward youth from low-income neighborhoods
- b. Develop a partnership engagement plan that creates long-term sustainable relationships
- c. Develop a detailed, long-term community engagement program that addresses communities needs and leverages the facility

**Priorities**

Among the multiple strategies identified above, several of them shall be prioritized based on organizational need and timing of the program year. Furthermore, many of the strategies are currently in some form of implementation as this plan is being drafted. Below are the key strategies to be prioritized:

1. **Track Performance** – The current systems and tools being used to track key outputs, data and programmatic information shall be re-evaluated. Engagement with technical experts shall be considered when building the process and systems to track programmatic performance and outcome achievement.
2. **Develop sustainable Resources, Long-term Funding, Capitalize on shared value** – A key priority for the organization is building a detailed development (fundraising) plan to inform the Academy’s efforts in raising funds and diversifying revenue streams.
3. **To build and scale a holistic, developmental baseball and softball program with year-round offerings targeted toward youth from low-income neighborhoods** – The year-round offerings shall be rolled out in the summer of 2015 to begin to address this key organizational priority of developing year round programming and maximizing impact.

**Implementation Plan**

A key component to a successful Strategic Plan lies in its execution. The Academy’s “road map” to execute this plan is detailed in the expansive implementation work plans included in Appendix A. The work plans were developed by each working group to include key activities that meet the strategies, as well as responsibilities (parties responsible), timelines (due dates), measures and evidence of success, resources needed (personnel and financial), and targets for monitoring progress. **See sample below and full detailed plan in Appendix A.**

STRATEGIC GOAL #1: Enhance Our Core Program						
Strategies	Activities	Party	Timeline	Measures &	Resources	Monitoring

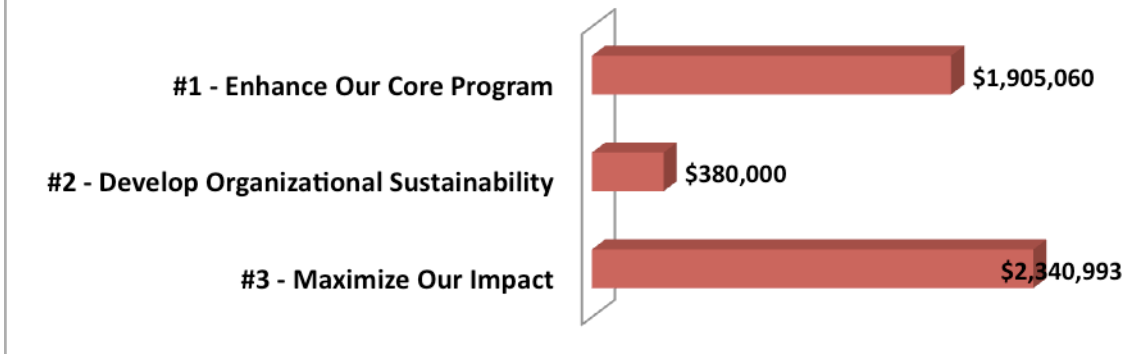
				Evidence		
<b>Grow Program to Scale by 2018</b>  <b>(cohorts from grades 3-8 ; effective programming addressing three core areas of mission - character, academics, health)</b>	Develop and implement Summer Science of Baseball (STEM) curriculum	Zack	Summer Curriculum (June 22, 2015)	Summer STEM Curriculum in place prior to summer programming.	Curriculum - \$200K Mgr, Curriculum & Instruction - \$300k (\$50K/ salary + benefits with incremental increases annually)	June 2015; Katina

### Financial Investments (2015-2020)

Through the development of the organizational strategies and implementation work plans, resources have been identified to support specific activities that contribute to reaching organizational goals. The resources are clearly articulated in the work plans on a micro level (by activity) and have been captured below on the macro level (by strategic goal) to provide a snapshot of the organizational investment during the strategic plan. Please note this investment is over and above proposed operating budgets. **The detailed financial projections are captured in Appendix B.**

Organizational Investment	
Strategic Goals	2015-2020 Estimated Investment
#1 - Enhance Our Core Program	\$1,905,060
#2 - Develop Organizational Sustainability	\$380,000
#3 - Maximize Our Impact	\$2,340,993
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 4,626,053</b>


## Organizational Investment By Strategic Goal



### Monitoring Performance

The Strategic Planning Chair will work with the Executive Director to implement the goals of the plan through the work of the Board Committees and all parties (staff and technical experts) described above and in detail in the work plans. Progress shall be monitored and assessed routinely to allow for adjustments and refinement. Typically the monitoring shall take place quarterly to report to the management team and Board of Directors, but may also allow for more frequent monitoring for certain areas.

Additionally, an organizational strategic planning/performance dashboard may be considered for development, which could provide a high level visual display of progress and potential threats areas. See sample below.



## Strategic Planning Dashboard

	Activity	Goal	YTD	Status	Status Legend
<b>1</b>	<b>Enhance Our Core Program</b>				
1	Develop and implement Summer Science of Baseball (STEM) curriculum			On Track	On Track
2	Assess need for additional STEM curricula for after school program and program expansion			At Risk / Delayed	At Risk / Delayed
3	Assess possible partnerships and/or curricula to address academic achievement in literacy			Very at Risk	Very at Risk
4	Develop strategies to address improved health			Not Yet Measured	Not Yet Measured
5	Develop strategies to address character and holistic development			Not Yet Measured	Not Yet Measured