



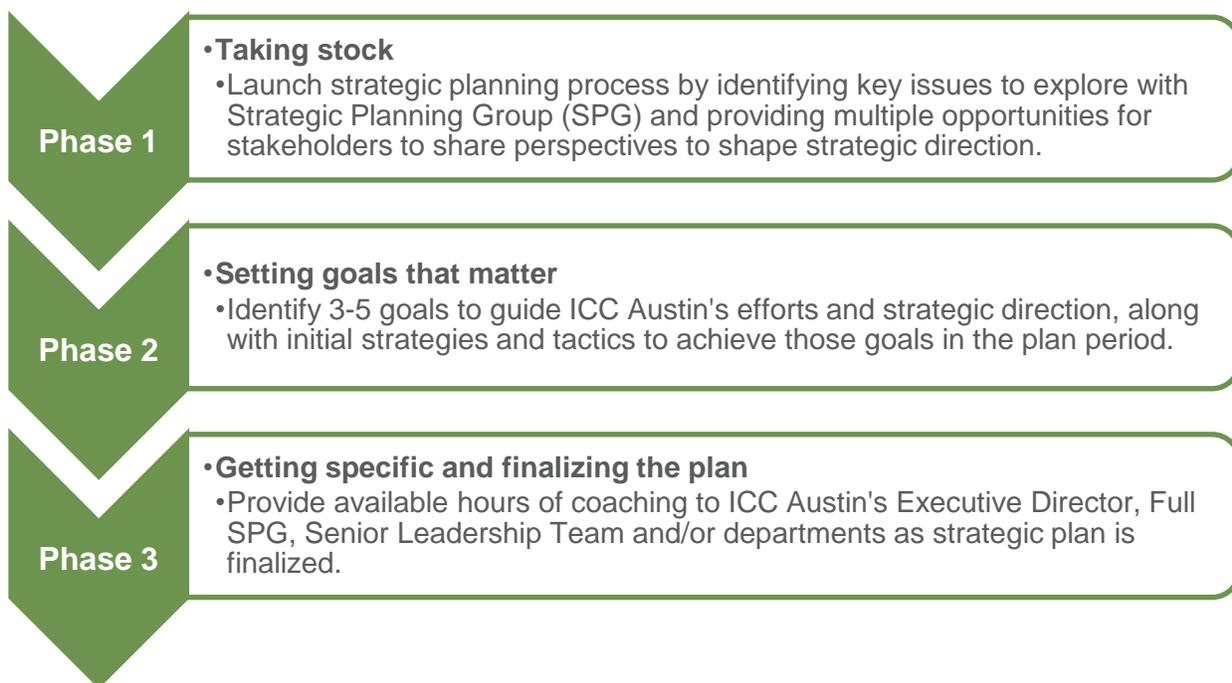
ICC Austin

Strategic Planning Phase I: Themes Summary

DECEMBER 2017

Project Overview & Work Completed

Over the past three months, Mission Capital has been engaged with staff and board members of ICC Austin in Phase I of a three-phase strategic business planning process:



Key questions that ICC Austin's leadership and the Strategic Planning Group decided were critical to addressing the strategic direction of ICC Austin and important guide posts for the strategic planning process were:

- Given ICC Austin's board and members turnover fairly frequently, **how can they set a strategic plan that is impactful, sustainable, realistic, long-lasting and measurable?**
- How could ICC Austin **improve its outreach strategy to students who are most in need** of affordable housing options?
- What **strategic partners should ICC Austin pursue on campuses and in the Austin community** to accomplish their mission?
- How can ICC Austin **address the maintenance demands of existing properties, while also keeping an eye on growing operations** in a way that is sustainable?



- What can ICC Austin do in order to be a **more inclusive and welcoming space for all students**, regardless of race, ethnicity, economic status, sexual orientation, gender, or ability?
- With full appreciation for ICC Austin's past, **how does the organization pivot** from the long established organizational/residential culture to one that is better suited to meet their revised Ends Statement?

This document summarizes the progress made in Phase I and its key findings.

Phase I Overview

Phase I of this project served as the “taking stock” phase of this effort as defined in the planning process graphic above.

During Phase I, the Mission Capital project team completed the following activities:

1. **Strategic Planning Group Kick-Off & Meeting:** Formed and facilitated 2 meetings with the group to help coordinate and guide the project. Members include:
 1. Billy Thogersen, Executive Director
 2. Ashleigh Lassiter, Membership Director
 3. Mila Santana, Board Secretary
 4. JT Harechmak, Community Trustee
 5. Julia Mitchell, Arrakis Labor Czar
 6. Natalie San Luis, Board Member
2. **Document Review:** Reviewed multiple ICC Austin documents to gain a base level understanding of operations, programs, financials and recent history. The documents included resources such as:
 1. Board meeting minutes
 2. Past business plans
 3. Financial statements
 4. Bylaws
 5. Operational policies & staff evaluations
 6. Current change initiatives
3. **Staff, Board & Member Survey:** Designed, launched and analyzed planning survey. Completed by 4 staff members, 8 board members and 107 member residents and 2 alumni, this survey provided inputs on ICC Austin's internal operations, how board members are utilized, ICC Austin's vision and core purposes, as well as ICC Austin's core competencies and strategic direction. (See Appendix A for detailed survey summary)
4. **Member Focus Groups:** Conducted two-member focus groups, with 11 attendees, focusing on a variety of issues ranging from member experience and ICC Austin's unique value to their take on the Ends Statement and how the cooperative can be more effective.
5. **Staff, Board & Key Stakeholder Interviews:** Conducted 10 interviews with board members and key stakeholders



1. Scott Delhommer, Board Treasurer
 2. J.T. Harechmak, Community Trustee
 3. Roxane Zech, Board Vice President
 4. Natalie San Luis, Board Member
 5. Ashleigh Lassiter, Membership Director
 6. Laura Khalil, Office Manager
 7. Chris Hegar, Facilities Manager
 8. Ashley An, College Forward
 9. Stephanie Hernandez, College Forward
 10. Constance Carmona, Breakthrough Central Texas
6. **Themes Summary:** as contained in this document

Strategic Tensions

From meetings, interviews and survey responses, a few strategic “tensions” emerged. The following “tensions of opposites” are not “either/or” in nature. Instead, they represent a continuum of possible emphases that are in tension with one another as ICC Austin moves forward in the strategic planning process.

Proactive inclusion	←→	Responsive approach
Decentralized house cultures	←→	Centralized policy/procedure
Cooperative democracy	←→	Policy governance & staff org.
Housing expansion	←→	Maintenance of housing
Affordability	←→	Long-term sustainability

Summary-Level Findings

In evaluating the data and input gathered from each of the above sources, Mission Capital has developed a set of summary findings and observations that ICC Austin should take into consideration moving into Phases II & III of strategic planning. The summary findings have been grouped into the following categories: Governance & Organizational Management, Member Experience, Reputation and Perception, and Innovation and Impact.

GOVERNANCE & ORGANIZATIONAL MANAGEMENT

Overall the board is incredibly passionate and driven towards seeing ICC Austin become the best organization it can be. They genuinely embrace the Ends Statement and what the organization strives to be. With that said, though the tools and resources are available, board members acknowledged not being fully up to speed on roles and responsibilities. Board, staff, and some members also indicated that the board composition, terms, and nominations



processes could be having detrimental impacts on the ability for the board to build institutional knowledge and track progress and impact.

Staff and ICC Austin leadership have made strides to improve the experience of the members and do their best to empower the members to have ownership of the organization. The organization is faced with a unique challenge in having a decentralized governance structure and often may rely too heavily on the board for “steering the ship”. This appears largely due to the prominent issues that arise from month to month that require leadership attention. This can sometimes take strategic focus from other areas within the organization. With limited capacity for staff and/or infrequent communications between the board, progress on these critical issues often flattens out. Unless ICC Austin staff are empowered to more actively own decision making and given the limited term limits, lack of clarity around board roles and responsibilities, and decentralized processes and procedures, ICC Austin could have a challenging time making traction in the strategic areas it finds important.

Board

Observation: In terms of overall function, board members by and large thought that the way the board operates could be improved. Approximately 75% of board members described ICC Austin's board as: “we're doing alright but could use a tune-up.”

The primary reasons identified for this answer were: insufficient onboarding for incoming board members, board turnover and the policy governance implementation that changed how the board fundamentally operated.

- “I do think that has to do with board turnover (and within the houses). Houses don't always understand what they're doing when they elect someone to attend those board meetings and then there's a massive turnover. It takes about 3-6 months to figure out what you're doing and then your term's over.”
- “ICC Austin is a cooperative but it's not the traditional cooperative because our turnover works against that.”
- “The model we inherited from the consultants we worked with before was tailored to a grocery cooperative... [Board members] don't have the skills to synthesize the results that come from board meetings to solicit feedback from their houses.”
- “I hear that policy governance made the board efficient and I think that's true, but before the model was instituted, there was a lot more member participation and input as a whole. It's put more power in the hands of staff and has made the board process more intimidating and inaccessible. It's hard as a 19-year-old new board member to read a board packet and figure out what you need to do.”

Observation: Board members enjoy serving on the board and choose to participate because:

- They strongly support the Ends Statement of the cooperative
- They enjoy seeing ICC Austin's work being utilized to shape policy and decision making
- And many were motivated for the professional development opportunity

Labor credits did not really factor into any of the conversations or survey results as primary reasons people chose to engage at the board level.

Observation: The topic of board turnover and policy governance effectiveness has impacted the board's relationship with the Executive Director, which many characterized as unclear. Semester-long board members relying on the Executive Director to train **them** while they are



charged with holding him accountable for realizing the Ends Statement leaves room for the ambiguity of roles and responsibilities on both sides.

- “Strategic plan being a part of house culture is essential. Training new board members on strategic plan is important. New members get a packet without much training. Long-term vision isn't effectively shared.”
- “The reason why I think the current model is not working is because the board is constantly changing its mind. If I'm the ED steering the ship and I'm constantly being told to change directions, we're not going to get where we actually need to be.”
- “The only criticism from the last board was that they were too dependent on Billy.”
- “Policies are written around what [the Executive Director] CAN'T do and he seems to be looking to them (the board) to ask what he CAN do.”

ICC Austin Management and Staff

Observation: Staff are deeply connected to the organization and the purpose of ICC Austin. Everyone we talked to really appear bought into the Ends Statement and the cooperative model. Many expressed positive reflections on their time with ICC and the Executive Director.

- “...[T]his [job] really challenges [me] to think in different ways.”
- “[Executive Director] is very good at looking at multiple aspects of an issue.”
- “Billy is a strong leader and is good at what he is good at...”

Observation: While there is confidence in the staff and leadership in their work, there are areas where improvement is needed. Some staff do not feel appreciated by the leadership (ED and board). In addition, there was a sense that the organization struggles with sticking to strategic direction and lacks a set of clear core values.

- “With the nature of our board, thank you would go a long way board recognition is almost nonexistent.”
- “I think we could do a much better job appreciating and recognizing staff performance.”
- “I also don't feel that we have a clear sense of or purpose which makes the job difficult.”

Observation: Exacerbating board-ED ambiguity is the acknowledgement by many that the Executive Director's extensive ICC Austin institutional knowledge means that members, staff and board members alike rely on him for key decision-making input. This reliance provides the Executive Director heavy influence over major ICC Austin changes. At the same time, it is unclear to many when the ED should and can make a decision versus when he needs to get board approval.

- “If Billy left, it would be a huge hit. He's effectively the central point of knowledge. Financial and maintenance would be a scramble.”
- “The organization's priority is saying that diversity and inclusion is their number one priority but it's clear that Billy's priority is Ruth Schulze expansion.”

Observation: ED's deep historical ties to the organization are a strength on the operational front. His institutional knowledge of how ICC Austin has historically been run can be perceived as a limitation on the organization's ability to make comprehensive and transformational change. For ICC Austin to become the cooperative it aspires to be, it will take more than just the ED. It would need to be a collective effort on part of staff, board, and membership.

- “Billy wouldn't be on board with anything that he wouldn't have agreed with as a member.”
- “It's not necessarily supposed to be on the ED to always listen to the board, but it's the ability to put all those pieces together.”



MEMBER EXPERIENCE

Members we talked to have an incredible sense of connection with living in ICC Austin. Despite many of the concerns that have been voiced through this process, members do enjoy living at ICC. With that said, there were a number of concerns that could be significant challenges to ICC Austin's long-term sustainability. One of the concerns has to do with affordability, maintenance, and cleanliness of the housing. While many members acknowledge the housing is affordable for West Campus, they also feel the housing is not affordable for most students. There were thoughts that West Campus does not have to be the only location for ICC housing. Additional concerns have to do with truly creating an inclusive living space and member safety.

Safety

Observation: While ICC Austin has outlined its stance on key issue areas in its operational policies, the inconsistency of policy and enforcement is concerning. In the interviews, surveys, board minutes, focus groups, etc. that Mission Capital reviewed or administered, many of the problems raised by members present themselves as liabilities for the organization in terms of its cooperative purpose but in some cases, serious legal action – particularly regarding sexual assault. Mission Capital is of the belief that the current approach to handling these cases exposes ICC Austin to short and long-term risk and could be a challenge for the organizations sustainability. ICC Austin should take this opportunity to reevaluate its policies to consider zero tolerance and begin measures to improve enforcement.

- “If the house puts a member on probation with the clear statement that a broken probation results in immediate removal, then that’s how it should be, not another three hours out of the house’s life to have another member review... How can ICC go around talking about how they want to foster responsible citizenship if they treat sexual harassment like it’s no big deal? I’ve seen the stuff that’s happened at [ICC] happen in College Houses and the office evicts people immediately – and that’s how it should be. Tolerating sexual harassment and leaving those policies up to the houses does not make ICC a mutually beneficial community nor does it foster responsible citizenship.
- “Mental health is huge and every year someone has a mental health episode... A member had a mental breakdown recently. They went on a screaming rampage against another member and now they’re in the hospital.”

Diversity and Inclusion

Observation: Members had mixed thoughts on how ICC Austin could be a more diverse and inclusive organization. Most members did feel that ICC Austin should become a more inclusive environment for members, but were not quite sure on how the organization should best go about it.

- “Someone said we should table at Huston Tillotson...That won't work.”
- “A lot of conversation about how unwelcoming ICC can be, and it can be somewhat alienating, but there needs to be some sort of sensibility towards making Mexican jokes... Let's work on house culture and be more inclusionary. It's the responsibility of the houses to change these.”
- “I admire the way the houses evolve, but I think it can be enabling when it comes to the drug culture. Shouldn't be policy, but should be more of a sensitivity to it.”
- “I feel staff is ok being hands-off, but in some situations, we need higher ups.”
- “I feel staff should have been involved in member review to guide and provide more options.”



- “Staff should have a background guiding role with communications with staff officers. Should really facilitate some of this work. ICC has enough people to create outreach committees, but it is hard to get people motivated.”
- “ICC could do a better job coming up with some guidelines for respect. How we treat houses, boundaries, each other.”

INNOVATION AND IMPACT

ICC Austin has a real opportunity to make an impact with their mission. Members are open to the idea of changing ICC Austin for the better when it comes to partnerships, structure, and helping ICC Austin meet its goals. Stakeholders we talked to are excited about the prospects of developing meaningful relationships with ICC Austin as well. With that said, they were insistent that the housing environment be a place where students could thrive and be successful. If ICC Austin wants to really embrace these students, some significant change may be required when it comes to culture and the environment.

ICC Austin’s Unique Value

Observation: Beyond affordability, one of ICC Austin’s top strengths is the camaraderie it provides for college students to develop relationships in a more intimate setting outside of student dorms. The benefit for members is the variety of cooperative environments ICC Austin offers among the various houses they can choose from.

- “Our main draw is not affordability – it’s community. We could dramatically raise prices and still have people living here.”
- “Coops are social environments, the members are families. For the most part, that’s what keeps people living in houses.”
- “Living in ICC is kind of like being at a sleepover all the time... there’s a sense of community that can be hard to find because alienation is a real problem in a major university.”
- The top word that came to mind for members about ICC Austin was “community.”

Opportunities with External Partners

Observation: Currently, Breakthrough Austin is partnering with College Houses to house current college students that serve as teachers & mentors to Breakthrough students during summer programming. This has been a successful partnership for both organizations.

ICC Austin has presented to College Forward students in the past but the perception from College Forward was that none of their students made any meaningful connections with the representatives from ICC Austin

Stakeholders from both Breakthrough & College Forward were supportive of the idea of partnering with ICC Austin. Specific examples of opportunities were discussed such as:

- Breakthrough Austin would be interested in providing programming for ICC Austin residents around financial aid and applying for FAFSA
- ICC Austin could attend Breakthrough sessions to share about housing cooperatives and ICC Austin
- College Forward mentioned the opportunity for ICC Austin to come to speak at Winter Open Office hours on January 4th from 3-7

Making an Immediate Impact



Observation: Stakeholders mentioned a unique opportunity for ICC Austin to provide housing for first-generation students attending ACC. Specifically, students in Manor without access to a car would not be able to easily attend ACC due to their geographic location if living at home. By providing housing through ICC Austin, students in Manor would be able to attend ACC, whereas they otherwise would not have access to attend.

There were various opportunities for outreach to first-generation college students shared by stakeholders such as:

- Participating in high school college fairs
- Partnering with college-readiness programs in high schools such as:
 - AVID, Gear Up, Breakthrough, College Forward, Con Mi MADRE and others;
- Specifically targeting local high schools that reflect the demographics they are looking to connect with such as students at Early College High Schools
- Partnering with on-campus programs that support first-generation college students through programs like: University Leadership Network (UNL), TIP (Texas Interdisciplinary Plan) and Austin College Access Network (ACAN).
 - It was mentioned that ICC Austin might considering participating in ACAN as the network’s conversations focus on best practices for serving first generation college students and students from underserved communities.

Ends Statement

Observation: When asked about the Ends Statement and why they chose to live at ICC Austin, membership’s most common response was, first and foremost, affordable housing. Secondly, members identified either one or two of the following: social justice, diversity and inclusion, cooperation or higher education as the primary pillars of focus for ICC Austin’s environment in offering its affordable housing, but rarely all of the above. The Ends Statement leaves itself open to vastly differing interpretations from membership (and ever-changing board members in particular). The organization, in trying to hold itself accountable to everything in the Ends Statement, ultimately cannot hold itself accountable to any of those aspects. ICC Austin possesses an opportunity to narrow its focus from the current Ends Statement to one that has buy-in from the cooperative as a whole.

- “The Ends Statement is huge and does not provide a clear sense of direction for the organization – which I believe is a barrier in and of itself. What’s more important – diversity, inclusivity, affordability, serving low-income students, fostering responsible citizenship? I don’t think we can be an effective organization with so many “competing” priorities. I would love to see a concrete mission and vision statement developed.”
- “The first step is reaching consensus on what exactly the Ends Statement means. However, I don’t even know where to start, especially given the strong opinions of some members.”
- “Biggest frustration is the Ends Statement – not clear how roles, goals and objectives connect to the Ends Statement.”
- “They want to focus on getting more low income and minority students, but forget to focus on aspects that would make living here more attainable.”
- “I find it very difficult to believe that ICC is trying to move towards social justice and appealing to others saying that we are a social justice organization when our own members make these types of statements to minorities. Change has to come from within, especially from members who do not participate in ICC activities and have little disregard for cooperative living.”



REPUTATION & PERCEPTION

The sense of community ICC Austin houses provides is a strength; the diversity of house cultures and autonomy of house decision-making is another strength, but they belie dangerous complexities that pose challenges for ICC Austin as an organization when it comes to its external reputation. ICC Austin members appreciate just how much members drive and shape the culture, but they also acknowledge that there is need for change. Bad perceptions might be hurting ICC Austin and limiting potential residents more than just cooperative culture.

Some external stakeholders did have some concerns about the culture of ICC Austin for the first-generation college students they work with. Specifically, they mentioned it would be important that housing valued a study environment for students, cleanliness of living spaces and the opportunity to develop leadership skills. There was some concern regarding extreme partying and enforcement of rules by ICC Austin. Even some members openly acknowledged a hesitancy to bring their parents and their own discomforts because of ICC Austin member alcohol and illegal substance use.

Culture

Observation: House culture is incredibly valuable to membership and it is simultaneously holding the cooperative back from being able to retain existing membership, let alone fulfill its desired purpose of courting individuals ICC Austin defines as “students who may otherwise be unable to attain higher education.”

- “I try to explain [ICC Austin] as normal as possible. It's weird that I have to hide certain aspects of the house culture... I tend to hide the clothing optional part from my parents. They wouldn't have been okay with me living here if they knew about that.”
- “You outgrow them, get tired of the noise, want to control your own space, don't want to be so involved in the lives of others, don't want them as involved in your own. Can sometimes be a toxic environment because of drama or normalized substance abuse.”
- [ICC Austin] should be less about partying with no control (because we own it), more studying, participating in the community, and taking care of our houses (because we own it and should pay it forward). I agree that having a sober/chill/no-parties house would be good.
- “Sure, we're all for more diversity, but if co-ops are just intrinsically not something many minorities will gravitate towards despite our best efforts, it does not seem worthwhile to pursue as an “end” for the organization. I think the reason why we haven't made much progress about this issue, despite plenty of time and effort, is that we fail to flesh out what exactly about co-op living may contribute towards a demographic skew. Personally, I know many minorities tend to come from more conservative and/or religious families who would be appalled by a group of strangers being forced to have so much trust and intimacy with one another. It's not like an apartment or dorm, as active investment in the community is required as opposed to just personal investment... There's also the factor of living in houses that tend to be dirtier and more prone to drugs/sex/parties that really makes some minorities, especially those from other countries who may not have a similar housing situation for students back home, feel that co-ops are inaccessible. We need to work on our image above all else in attracting minorities to the house by dispelling misconceptions to the public.”

Outreach and Recruitment of First-Generation College Students



Observation: When asked what is most important for students when considering housing, stakeholders shared that students prioritized the following:

- Affordability and cost, including transparency around paying for food
- Roommates and opportunity for single room (and or private bathroom)
- Location and distance from campus. Many stakeholders shared that the students they work with most often do not own cars so living walking distance from campus is a benefit to students
- Amenities, such as inhouse laundry and having a microwave and/or minifridge in the room
- Furnished rooms

Observation: Stakeholders shared that living in a housing cooperative may be very abstract or intimidating to the students they work with. There was a recommendation to have current students living in the housing cooperative to be engaged in the education and recruitment process. If possible, including members that share diverse backgrounds.

- “Our students are people of color and they may have different cultural norms and habits that a housing cooperative may not identify with. I feel like this is a barrier for our students in considering a housing cooperative. Students of color are trying for find a community, so bringing that into their home space (different cultural norms and habits) can be stressful or difficult. Finding students, you identify with may already be difficult for many of our students.”



Appendix A: ICC Austin Strategic Business Planning Survey Results

ICC Austin 2017 SBP

ICC Austin survey response summary

Background Information

Question 1: What is your primary connection to ICC Austin?

- Staff – 4
- Board member – 8
- Member resident – 107
- Alumni member resident – 2

Staff

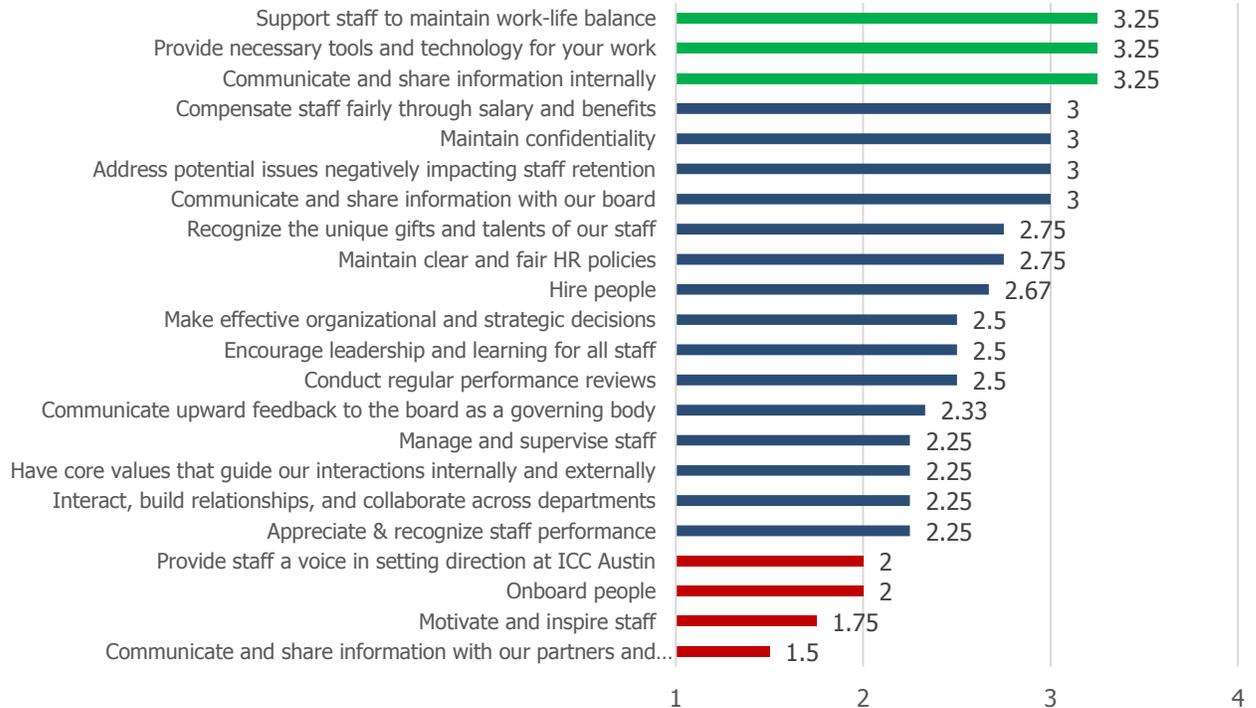
Question 2: How long have you worked at ICC Austin?

- Less than one year – 2
- 4-6 years – 1
- More than 7 years – 1

Question 3: For this question we would like you to consider your experience within the organization across colleagues, supervisors, and organizational systems. Thinking of the organization's current state with your own experiences and observations in mind, please rate how well ICC Austin does the following:



Staff: Organizational Structure & Internal Capacity



Question 4: Of the items you rated as needing improvement, which represents the biggest challenge?

- **Comments have been removed to protect anonymity.*

Board

Question 5: How many years in total have you served on ICC Austin's Board of Directors?

- 1-3 semesters: 6
- 4-9 semesters: 2

Question 6: How many board meetings have you participated in total?

- 1-4 meetings: 3
- 5-8 meetings: 2
- 9-12 meetings: 1
- More than 16 meetings: 1

Question 7: What first motivated you to join the ICC Austin Board? Choose all that apply.



What first motivated you to join the ICC Austin Board?



- Comments:
 - “Get more involved in ICC.”
 - “Wanted to help steer organization.”

Question 8: What do you enjoy about serving on the board?

What do you enjoy about serving on the board?



Question 9: How effectively does the ICC Austin board utilize your skills:

- ICC Austin is aware of my available skills and utilizes them to their full potential: **1**
- I might be able to better contribute to the board, if my skills were better utilized: **7**
- The ICC board does not adequately utilize my skills: **0**

Question 10: How would you describe the general effectiveness of the board?

- 25%: We’re in great shape, functioning like a well-oiled machine: **2**
- 75%: We’re doing alright but could use a tune-up: **6**
- 0%: We’re ready for a new model: **0**



Question 11: If you serve on a committee, how would you describe its general effectiveness? (Please list all committees you serve on in the comment box.)

- We're in great shape, functioning like a well-oiled machine: **0**
- We're doing alright but could use a tune-up: **4**
- We're ready for a new model: **2**

Question 12: Are there specific elements of the Board's effectiveness that you would like to see addressed? If none, is there any element that you would like to make sure the Board keeps strong?

- ***Several comments from board members have been removed to protect anonymity.**
- "The board does a good job of working with the ideas of a few, but could give more room for more voices to speak up."
- "Better explanation of the history of the issues being discussed for newer board members."
- "Improvements: General learning curve, board perpetuation, the knowledge gap between ECC and House reps, understanding of policy governance Keeps strong: commitment to ends policy, value of strategic planning."

Question 13: In what ways, if any, could you be more effectively engaged to fulfill your role as a board member?

- ***Comments have been removed to protect anonymity.**

Question 14: In your opinion, in what ways could ICC Austin's board and staff increase ICC Austin's impact providing affordable housing to those who need it most?

- ***Several comments have been removed to protect anonymity.**
- "Reaching out to community resources."
- "Scholarships to at-need students would probably help."

Vision & Core Purpose

Question 15: ICC Austin's Ends Statement is as follows: "The purpose of the University of Texas Inter-Cooperative Council (ICC Austin), a Texas nonprofit corporation, is to create a mutually beneficial, diverse and inclusive community so as to promote the transformation of society towards cooperation, justice and non-exploitation. To achieve this vision, ICC Austin provides affordable housing to students, primarily those who might otherwise be unable to secure higher education, on a cooperative basis, in an environment that enhances member education, encourages the formation of long lasting communities, and fosters responsible citizenship." In your opinion, how accurately does this statement reflect what ICC is working to accomplish?

- Not at all: **7**
- Somewhat accurately: **40**
- Accurately: **42**
- Perfectly: **6**

Question 16: In your opinion, how accurately does the Ends Statement represent what ICC Austin should be doing to bring its vision to fruition?

- Not at all: **2**
- Somewhat accurately: **24**
- Accurately: **57**
- Perfectly: **12**



Question 20: What barriers/challenges does ICC Austin have when meeting the Ends Statement?

- ****Several comments have been removed to protect anonymity and to mitigate repetition.***
- A huge challenge ICC Austin has is reaching consensus regarding how to interpret the Ends Statement. There are strong, differing opinions on parsing - which phrases and clauses should supersede others. For example, is it more important to be "diverse and inclusive" or to serve only students "who might otherwise be unable to secure higher education?" Does "diversity" mean mostly people of color? What is considered "higher education?"
- The prices of ICC Austin are not that much cheaper compared to the other housing options around campus.
- Everyone is accepted to ICC.
- Not providing assistance/alternatives to those in greatest financial need.
- Ensuring that non-white, LGBT peeps and women are granted comparatively safe, non-judgmental havens.
- Breaking out of the reputation that we have as a place for white people who like to do drugs.
- The biggest gap between purported purpose and successful execution is in the statement "...cooperative basis, in an environment that enhances member education..."
- Decades of negative stereotyping, a long history of homogenous privileged members, the public perception that they're dirty, steadily increasing rents

Question 21: Thinking about those challenges, do you have thoughts on how ICC Austin could mitigate them moving forward?

- ****Several comments have been removed to protect anonymity and to mitigate repetition.***
- Sober houses, more house oversight, common ideal of respect for home
- In the short term, improve our marketing and outreach, and in the long term, expand outside of west campus.
- Streamlining the end statement as to be more clear and focused.
- Improve education of ICC policies and rules, what is under house delegation and what is not.
- It requires a culture change as well as an image re-do with prospective students. Current image is damaging to us because it pushes away the population that we need to serve the most (serious students who are having a hard time attending college due to financial reasons) and attracts more party-hard, never clean, not very serious students.
- Extending our reach to students who go to ACC and Texas State (and any other schools in the area) who might need affordable housing more so than traditional 4 year UT students
- I think the office could reach out to the recruitment offices at universities to let first year students know their options.
- ICC needs a sexual misconduct policy that includes harassment. ICC needs to talk about sexual misconduct at GMM or orientation or some other ICC-wide event so members know what the standard is in ICC. ICC needs to fund sexual misconduct trainings for the whole house so it's clear that ICC takes this stuff seriously.
- Scholarships. I think the construction of a new house is also an amazing step.
- Strong outreach and advertising campaigns, public partnerships with the university and other organizations, increased diversity among membership, an alumni network and program whose donations can be used to offset the cost of living
- Having policies that members follow requiring them to uphold these statements (ICC has this) but some sort of checks system to make sure the policies are enforced.

ICC Austin's Environment and Strategic Niche



Question 22: When you think about ICC Austin and others currently providing similar programs and services, where do you see the greatest gap in services or unmet needs?

- ***Several comments have been removed to protect anonymity and to mitigate repetition.**
- I think College Houses provides far better opportunities for low income students.
- Keep the houses maintained properly.
- Living alone in an apartment is boring and depressing as hell, while living in a co-op is fun and empowering. On the other hand, apartments are much better at advertising and have a small army of leasing agents giving tours of apartments and aggressively cold-emailing potential customers, while ICC puts up some ads on Craigslist.
- Perhaps lowering the rent? If the rent increases the way it has been, a single will cost about \$1000 in the next 5 years. When I moved in, a single ran about 695 and a double was about 500. These rent prices won't help any but the privileged who can afford it.
- I think there is a lack of education for general members on the importance of the Ends Policy and the mission of ICC. I think most general members understand the importance of cooperation and inclusivity, but miss out when it comes to really reaching those students who may otherwise miss out on higher education if it weren't for ICC.
- Mental health.
- ICC needs to do more to help new members transition into their houses. Things like knowing what a room will look like or if furniture is available are important for new members.
- We need to create a culture that's driven and geared towards student success.

Question 23: Why did you choose ICC Austin when considering housing?

- ***Several comments have been removed to protect anonymity and to mitigate repetition.**
- My parents lived in co-ops and found them to be an excellent growing experience, I wanted to experience that too
- It was affordable housing.
- To live and share experiences with other open students
- I like the community aspect of it, and that food was included in the rent. I liked that the member that live there are also owners of the house, and you are not under a landlord.
- Community.
- I was drawn to co-ops with the idea of labor share, community atmosphere and dinners together. I found ICC online and watched the videos and I knew I wanted to live here.
- Looking at ICC vs. College Houses, I liked that ICC was smaller, and it seemed to prioritize democracy more.

Question 24: From your perspective, why do you think members leave ICC Austin?

- ***Several comments have been removed to protect anonymity and to mitigate repetition.**
- Culture change of house.
- Graduation, lack of respect for house, house cliques or interpersonal conflict
- They graduate, they don't get along with the people (or one or two people in particular) they live with and choose to live harmoniously with other people of their choosing, and/or house drama.
- They get tired of cooperative living. I think the ultimate goal of a lot of the people here is to eventually get their own place and they see ICC as a stepping stone to getting there.
- Cleanliness issues, drug issues, hard to live cooperatively sometimes.
- Members leave after graduation, poor living experiences, cheaper housing alternatives, and to have other experiences.
- The culture and the organizations non-commitment towards our stated Ends. Plus, the lack of accountability.



Question 25: What do you think ICC Austin should do to improve member experience and/or increase retention?

- ****Several comments have been removed to protect anonymity and to mitigate repetition.***
- A very common problem is members leaving due to problem members in a house. It might be good for houses to have better democratic mechanisms to filter the membership, particularly the ability to veto potential problem members.
- Provide scholarships.
- Build better relationship between staff and members. Begin a habitability initiative to make the houses a cleaner, more visually appealing place to live.
- Maybe have more structured member support within the houses as well as more inter-house collaborations so members, esp. those that aren't entirely happy in their current houses, can see there is a larger ICC community outside of their individual house (and another house that might better suit their needs, because I personally believe that coop living itself is suitable for most people)
- Deal with transgressions such as racism and sexual assault as immediate grounds for eviction
- I think ICC should be more on top of maintenance. The houses are older and do not look appealing and sometimes have problems. (Ex. Ants, roaches, occasional rats).
- This is extremely difficult as it mostly depends on the people in the house. Most problems I have heard of are due to uncooperative members. Making it easier to evict someone, but also making sure the system is difficult to manipulate.
- Mandatory new member orientation. Mandatory officer orientation/training.
- Be less about partying with no control (because we own it), more about studying, participating in the community, and taking care of our houses (because we own it and should pay it forward). I agree that having a sober/chill/no-parties house would be good (that was suggested a few times in a row at GMM)
- Members shouldn't have access to substances unless they're mature enough to handle them. Unfortunately that's not really something ICC can directly control. More useful, I think, would be workshops on detrimental aspects of current ICC and student culture, and how we can fix these problems.
- Make consent training something incorporated into house culture, not just something at New Member Orientation. Also involve house or trustee training on managing situations or avoiding things like microaggressions that perpetuate stereotypes or create negative environments for certain people at ICC.
- Again, I think agreed upon values would go a long way in changing the culture. I also think accountability is missing. My hope is that through this process we develop a collective vision and concrete goals that everyone feels empowered to work towards.

Question 26: Are there organizations, agencies, or people who are the most important partners ICC Austin currently has?

- UT Austin (iiii)
- College Houses (14) 5, ii
- NASCO (4) 5
- Roxane Zech
- House trustees
- AORTA
- Nonprofits
- Austin Cooperative Association
- Caritas
- College housing
- Committee for Combating Oppression (ICC Austin board sub-committee)



- Members themselves (3)
- UFCU
- Safe Place (2)
- Berkley Coops
- UT CMHC
- International Cooperative Alliance
- City of Austin (2)
- Non-capitalist sustainability-centered orgs
- UT Financial Aid
- CHEA
- BVR

Question 27: With that said, are there organizations, agencies, or people who you consider POTENTIAL PARTNERS that ICC Austin should acquire to succeed?

- Austin Community College (4)
- College Forward (2)
- UT (4)
 - UT Microfarm (2)
 - International Office (2)
 - RAAS
 - Equal Opportunity depts.
 - Financial Aid
- Breakthrough Austin (4)
- Other coops
 - REI
 - YBP
- Organizations specific to people of color on campus
 - Black and Latino students orgs
 - Black student union
- Wheatsville (3)
- CHEA
- AORTA/an anti-oppression group
- Food selling company to reduce cost
- Breed & Co.
- City of Austin
 - Gregorio Casar
 - Student Committee
- Planned Parenthood
- Organizations that work with youth at risk / are focused on social justice: SAFE / ECHO / Amplify / A Glimmer of Hope / American YouthWorks / BeHive / Austin Partners in Education / COLLEGE FORWARD** imp! / Southwest Key Programs / etc
 - Lifeworks
- Capital IDEA (2)
- Whole Foods
- AISD (2)
- Huston-Tillotson
- KIPP
- DACA
- DSA Austin



Question 28: Additional Comments?

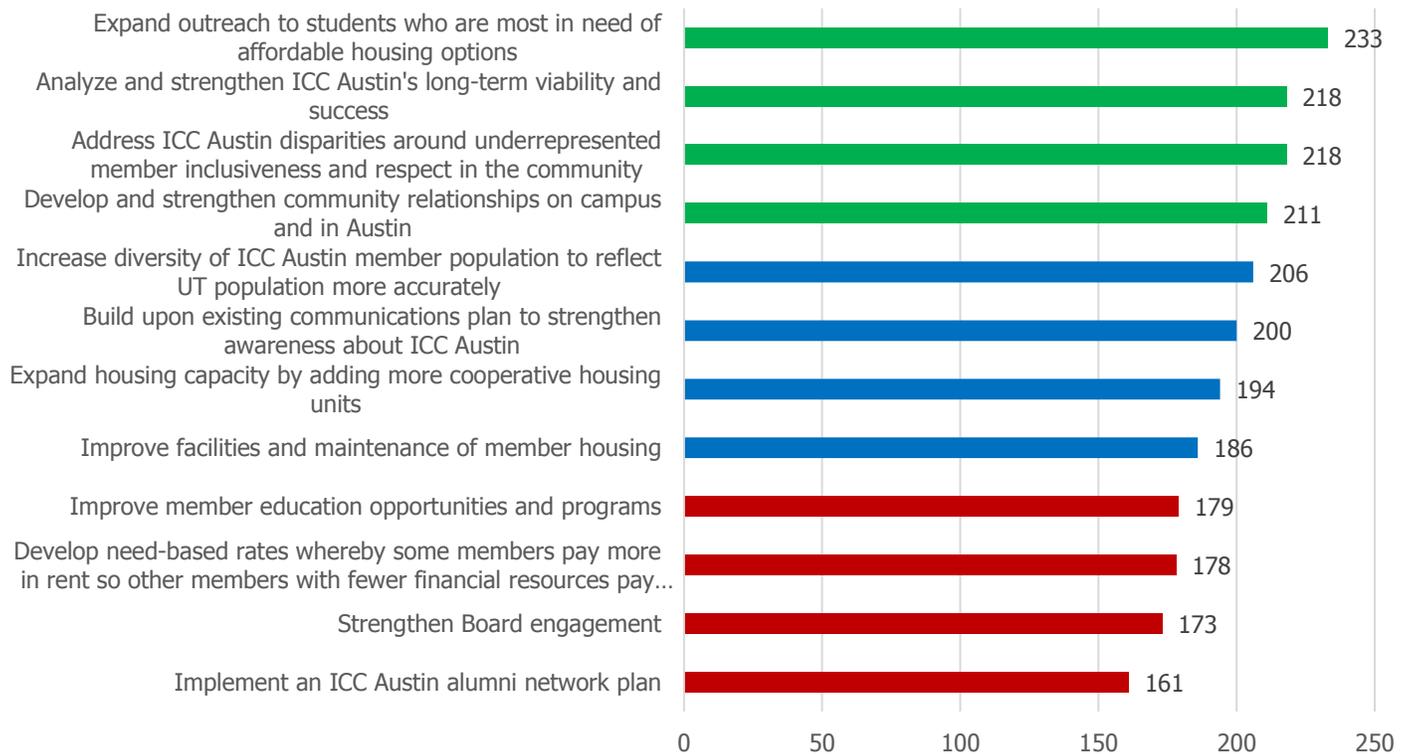
- ****Several comments have been removed to protect anonymity and to mitigate repetition.***
- It would be helpful to have a resource that lists any current partnerships ICC has with organizations, agencies, and people because I was not able to locate that information on the website.
- ICC really does have a reputation of being the dirty coops. ICC needs to emphasize the importance of labor completion and cleanliness, especially around tour time.



Moving Forward

Question 29: As you think about the following potential activities, indicate how critical you think they each are to ICC Austin's future success by ranking them as LOW, MEDIUM, or HIGH priorities. While you may think that many are important, please try to distinguish among them to create three distinct groups to help steer ICC Austin's work as it prepares for the future. If you do not know or feel you do not know enough to answer, simply select N/A.

Question 29: ICC Austin's Future Priorities, Weighted



Comments:

- ***Several comments have been removed to protect anonymity and to mitigate repetition.**
- For the need-based rates question, while I do not agree that some should pay more, I think that we can establish scholarships for them. A large majority of people should have the means to pay the current rent, so we can award scholarships to those who really need it.
- UT student population is not as diverse as it should be. ICC should strive to set goals above the demographics of UT.

Question 30: Over the next four years, I wish ICC Austin would START...

- ***Several comments have been removed to protect anonymity and to mitigate repetition.**
- More of a volunteering presence.
- Creating a sober house and more physically accessible entrances to the existing houses
- The alumni program, which would open many doors for future projects
- trying harder to educate new members
- Educating members more about sexual assault.



- Increasing member education, programs, and support (both within and between the houses), partnering with new groups in Austin and at UT and ACC, reaching out to different people and groups to foster more diverse new membership, and encouraging more member engagement with ICC-wide decisions and discussions
- Increase volunteer opportunities and also try to enhance interhouse interactions through events between houses.
- Doing more free events to help community or for fun
- Taking prejudice and harassment within houses more seriously.
- Plan to add a co-op NOT in west campus area, ideally in east side to take advantage of ACC and other potential austin college members.
- Emphasizing the core values of ICC in a more visible manner whether it be through workshops, or just clearly stated in emails or something. More officer/ICC engagement so the houses understand how they should be functioning and ICC can clearly dictate under what procedures the house should run.
- Implementing a way for those looking to transition out of a coop to have it be easier. Alumni network sounds great.
- having a dedicated staff person focused on community and leadership development within the houses.

Question 31: Over the next four years, I wish ICC Austin would STOP....

- ****Several comments have been removed to protect anonymity and to mitigate repetition.***
- Cliques
- Attempting to (or at least talking about) doing any kind of massive overhaul of our policies and MO. I do believe that we could be doing better with outreach, but we're not going to suddenly become more diverse overnight, and we need to keep in mind that they are some people that will just never be interested in ICC no matter how much outreach we provide.
- Worrying about institutional racism within and instead go forward in attempting to attract a more diverse membership
- Increasing rent
- Don't try to do too much at once.
- Partying so much
- Prioritizing diversity over existing member satisfaction issues such as old houses, broken appliances, safety, etc.
- Increasing the rent without compensating for it in some way, i.e. increasing the food budget.
- the current process of board elections and house representative elections. (Tthis may be a START) but we really should explore the viability and effectiveness of a board that changes 3 times per year.

Question 32: Over the next four years, what must be preserved/CONTINUED at ICC Austin no matter what other changes are made?

- ****Several comments have been removed to protect anonymity and to mitigate repetition.***
- Gardens
- Community
- Culture! There's a big history of ICC/UT austin/ the area & I feel most strongly that we don't sell out & start becoming something we're not which is a place for students to be in a family, find themselves, & have a space that's anti-capitalist anti-corporate & is instead hand made.
- The emphasis on inclusion of all people regardless of race, sexuality, gender etc. (the emphasis on inclusion is there, we just need more people to include)
- Build the Ruth Schulze House
- The properties must be kept in good shape.



- Commitment to cooperative principles, a certain degree of House autonomy (I recognize some of this may change, but at least maintaining as much as they can)
- House autonomy in most decisions, inclusivity, and rent prices that are consistent with the West Campus cost of living, taking into account the number of labor hours the members provide to ICC.
- Affordability, cooperativeness, safety, inclusiveness



Final Thoughts

Question 33: Any final thoughts you wish to share about ICC Austin or the strategic planning process?

- ****Several comments have been removed to protect anonymity and to mitigate repetition.***
- There is an immense amount of energy and desire throughout ICC to be more active in our communities and proactively work to improve Austin for the better, but there is currently no outlet for that energy to go. That energy is not only unique to ICC but, without doubt, ICC's most powerful, but most underutilized, resource. Finding a way to release that energy in a positive way that benefits ICC, as well as Austin as a whole, would be an enormously powerful tool to use for achieving ICC's mission.
- I have had quite a bit of experience at ICC and I would just like to see it having more opinions, on doing so it might be more inviting to people. Even though many member intentions are good, shoving radical feminism and extreme liberalism down people's throats is extremely intimidating to a prospective member and I say that as both a feminist and liberal.
- It's clear to me that expansion is the current highest priority of ICC Austin. I wish ICC would stop pretending that it's anything different. I know staff has been working hard on their outside education related to social justice, but there needs to be a strong partnership with an organization, or the acquisition of a staff member who can help this organization be critical of itself in the long term, someone (or a group) with a long history working in these areas, versus expecting our organization to move at the same speed as staff's Education.
- It can be difficult to navigate the ever-changing goals of ICC since there are so many, board turnover is high, some people don't offer their opinion. This survey and recent GMM hopefully provide valuable feedback!
- ICC Austin has made my college experience, and I believe the organization should expand to provide a similar quality of living to more students
- I think the most important things for ICC to do is provide scholarships or need based rent & serve underrepresented groups.
- Spread awareness about ICC coops. A lot of people have no idea what ICC is
- i'm very proud to be part of this sustainable and inclusive movement
- I have overall enjoyed icc and would be willing to work and volunteer with icc past my time here within my coop!
- Living at ICC has been one of the most enriching experiences of my life. Thank you all for this opportunity to experience something like this. Planning for the long term future while trying to maintain affordability while also surviving West Campus tax rates is not an easy task, but it's a fight that should definitely be fought.
- This organization has a tremendous amount of resources at its disposal (we are property owners in central Austin!). I believe members are ready and want to see the organization change and do bigger things; but the purpose, the vision isn't clear. My biggest hope for this process is that we have a clearly articulated mission and vision that