



groundworks
COLLABORATIVE

basic needs met with dignity

STRATEGIC PLAN FY 2016 – 2018

INTRODUCTION

Groundworks Collaborative is the culmination of decades of work by two well-established organizations, Morningside Shelter and the Brattleboro Area Drop In Center. As our two organizations become one, we strive to have much greater impact than either group could have individually.

Over the past few years, our organizations have been working in closer collaboration while exploring the possibility of a merger. We have acknowledged that together, we have the potential to serve more people across a full service continuum, from hunger to homelessness, through a single point-of-entry. As outlined in this plan, we have a shared vision and strategy to reduce gaps in service by providing ongoing support to families and individuals facing challenges finding food, housing, jobs, and other needs.

WHERE ARE WE NOW?

As we begin our work together, we continue to provide all of the services previously offered by Morningside Shelter and the Brattleboro Area Drop In Center – including operation of our region's largest food shelf and our area's year-round and seasonal homeless shelters.

A local shortage of affordable housing continues to increase the length-of-stay for residents in our year-round shelter. The vacancy rate for rentals in Windham County is just 0.5%, compared to a healthy vacancy rate of 4 – 6% (Vermont Housing Needs Assessment 2015). Furthermore, the shortage of affordable housing means that our former residents are spending a greater percentage of their income on housing.

The US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has set the standard affordability threshold at 30%, meaning that housing is considered "affordable" when the occupant spends no more than 30% of their income. However, we have former residents that are spending more than 50% of their income on housing. An individual living on SSI disability benefits alone would need to spend 85% of their income to rent a modest efficiency apartment in Windham County (Vermont Housing Finance Agency).

Our Food Shelf is serving increasing numbers of households, especially in recent months. In April 2015, 765 households used the Groundworks Food Shelf, followed by 897 households in May and 1015 households in June. We don't know exactly why. It could be the result of summer vacation, when fewer children receive free lunch at school. The



recent relocation of the Food Shelf has allowed for more than one person to “shop” simultaneously, which has reduced reducing wait times and allows us to feed more people.

The following pages describe our plan for increasing our impact as we better serve more of our neighbors.

VISION

In 50 years, we know our work will have been successful if . . .

- Capacity exceeds demand for all services we provide.
- Every person (family, individual, household) has their basic needs met: Food, clothing, stable housing.
- The community gives full support for our work.
- Our region is a model and leader in developing community-based solutions to struggles with basic human needs.
- Groundworks is a small organization headed toward going out of business, because the need is so small.
- There is no need for Groundworks.

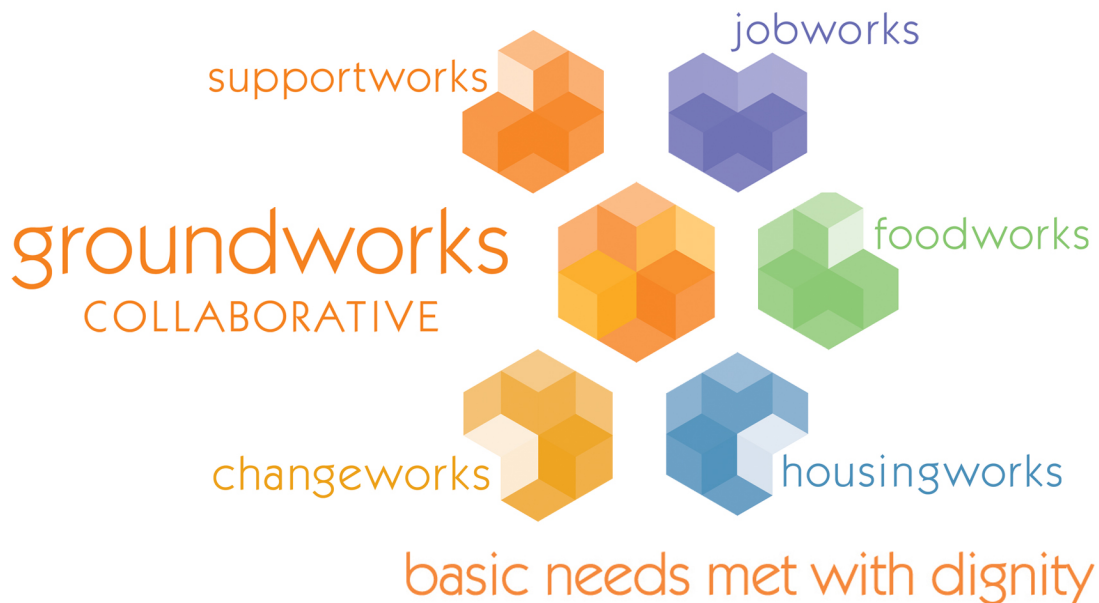
In 3 years, we know our work will have been successful if . . .

- We have created innovative options for increased affordable housing.
- We are implementing a Housing First approach to house our neighbors experiencing homelessness, and we are working towards eliminating the shelter waitlist and reducing demand for the emergency shelter.
- There is more affordable housing and a new commitment to the food-insecure in the community thanks to effective advocacy.
- We have the capacity to meet the community’s demand.
- We have a robust, well-staffed, and effective approach across the continuum of care.
- We have well-developed and strong collaborations with community partners.
- We have a consensus between clients, staff, and community that the merger improved our services.
- The community understands our work and how they can help and get involved.

This plan contains a vision for Groundworks Collaborative’s work over the next three years – encompassing various areas for growth to meet critical needs for our community.

basic needs met with dignity

PROGRAMS



housingworks

- Groundworks Shelter
- Groundworks Seasonal Shelter
- Groundworks Day Shelter

foodworks

- Groundworks Food Shelf

supportworks

- Case Management
- Representative Payee Services

changeworks

- Changeworks Advocacy Committee

jobworks

- NEW!

basic needs met with dignity



Groundworks Shelter offers temporary housing (30 beds) and intensive case management to families and individuals.

- Over the last year, our shelter housed **93** residents, 25 of whom were children.
- Due to the increasing lengths-of-stay, we were only able to serve 10% of the households on our waiting list.

Groundworks Seasonal Shelter (November – April) provides a nightly hot meal and a warm place to get out of the cold. Follow up case management is available through the Groundworks Day Shelter and Drop In Center.

- Last winter, we served **196** unduplicated individuals, sheltering an average of 25 people each night with a maximum of 41.
- Over **5,600** meals were served last winter, prepared nightly by volunteer groups.

Groundworks Day Shelter provides a year-round space to come in out of the elements during the day as well as kitchen, shower, and laundry facilities; a mailing address; a phone; and a clothing room for those in need.

HOUSINGWORKS OVER THE NEXT THREE YEARS

Groundworks Collaborative will develop options across the continuum of care from emergency shelter to permanent housing. Although there is no easy solution for ending homelessness, the key ingredient is housing. We aim to develop multiple housing options to best fit the diverse needs of those we serve.

Benchmarks	2016	2017	2018
Establish a stable location for the Seasonal Shelter	•		
Expand the Seasonal Shelter to year-round operation	•	•	
Expand the space devoted to Day Shelter services	•		
Expand partnerships and collaborations to increase access to affordable housing units (with case management)	•	•	•
Increase Permanent Supportive Housing units		•	•



Supportworks includes Case Management, the Representative Payee program, and a number of ad-hoc supportive services, including clinical counseling services, Community Acupuncture, yoga classes, and a sober support group, among others.

Case Management

Case Managers work with families and individuals facing a variety of challenges, including homelessness, to find and maintain housing. Groundworks offers both short- and long-term help, and provides a rotation of Triage Case Managers so there is someone available to deal with walk-ins or crisis situations.

- Our combined case management programs serve **101** area households.
- Of the households served by the program in FY2015, **67** are currently housed.

The **Representative Payee** program offers financial management services for program participants who receive SSI or SSDI benefits and have trouble managing their own funds. Over the last year, the program managed **57** individual accounts, helping participants maintain their housing by paying rent, utilities, and basic living expenses before distributing any spending money.

SUPPORTWORKS OVER THE NEXT THREE YEARS

In the coming years, we plan to improve the quality and availability of support services to meet the following benchmarks:

Benchmarks	2016	2017	2018
Establish a single point of entry, streamlining entry into the homelessness support system	•	•	•
Add an additional Case Manager to meet the demand for services and reduce the waiting list	•		
Foster the creation of peer-led support groups	•	•	
Establish and maintain Triage Case Management rotation with current staff to maximize existing resources to meet the need	•		
Offer adequate mental health and addiction supports	•	•	•
Implement consistent management tools across programs to gauge effectiveness (clinical / personal)	•	•	•
Establish adequate confidential meeting space to provide effective case management	•	•	

Groundworks Food Shelf is our region's largest food shelf. In FY2015 the Food Shelf served nearly **1000** individuals per month. A recent re-organization of the distribution space has made the Food Shelf more accessible and easier to use, which has increased our impact.

FOODWORKS OVER THE NEXT THREE YEARS

We will continue to strive to efficiently and adequately provide food for all who need it in our community.



Benchmarks	2016	2017	2018
Expand local sourcing of food (including local farms)	•	•	•
Enhance the quality of food offered - through fresh produce, taste tests, cooking classes, recipe distribution	•	•	•
Reorganize current Food Shelf layout for easier flow and increased space for staff to sort and stock shelves, and for clients to "shop"	•		
Expand the Food Shelf to accommodate greater in-put and out-put of food, and provide adequate parking and access for food shelf (and potential retail space)	•	•	
Add capacity to Food Shelf staffing by hosting an AmeriCorps member	•	•	•
Expand and refine volunteer recruitment and management	•	•	•



Changeworks is an advocacy committee made up of staff, Board, and community members.

CHANGEWORKS OVER THE NEXT THREE YEARS

Without substantial changes to public policy at the local, state, and national levels, we will continue to face persistent poverty in our community. Within in the context of the effects of homelessness, poverty and food insecurity, we will promote empowerment for individual needs, advocate for systems change, and seek to be the backbone for collective impact efforts in our community. Here's how we propose to do it.

Benchmarks	2016	2017	2018
Increase Groundworks Collaborative's public profile through increased publicity, outreach and advocacy	•	•	•
Foster greater community understanding of systemic and individual causes for homelessness, food insecurity, and poverty	•	•	•
Actively engage and involve local, State and Federal agencies and officials in order to meet the needs of all by changing/improving the system	•	•	•
Expand a network of allies working toward systemic change	•	•	•
Ensure clients participate and lead advocacy efforts	•	•	•
Create an annual Advocacy Plan with concrete and accountable strategies	•	•	•
Host quarterly conversations on root causes of poverty, homelessness, and food insecurity for staff, Board, community, and clients	•	•	•



Employment can be a huge gap for our clients and residents – one we hope to help fill by assisting helping them find work and keep it. While increasing income is a basic goal in all of our case management services, we recognize that our clients need more specific job supports. Our intention with jobs is to echo our approach to housing, which is to create job opportunities and provide the supportive services. As with all of our programs, we rely strongly on community partnerships to connect our clients with jobs.

JOBWORKS OVER THE NEXT THREE YEARS

Benchmarks	FY 2016	FY 2017	FY 2018
Increase job search supports (group, one-on-one counseling, peer support - interviewing, job search, self worth, dignity of work)		•	•
Develop paid work opportunities for clients, including day labor, food shelf, facilities, farm, housekeeping		•	•
Partner to establish social enterprise transitional jobs (juice shop, public works)			•
Expand volunteer opportunities for clients and alumni	•	•	•
Strengthen partnerships for placement in work experience, apprenticeship, permanent jobs	•	•	•

DEVELOPMENT



Our development program currently generates roughly 40% of our annual revenue, with the other 60% coming from State and Federal grants. In addition to hosting two annual fundraising events, and benefitting from two additional fundraisers planned by committees outside of the organization, Groundworks conducts two annual appeals and typically benefits from 1 – 3 ad hoc (one time) fundraisers each year. We strive to produce more informative public relations content for the community, particularly to highlight Groundworks as the product of the merger, and prevent any possible donor attrition resulting from the merger.

DEVELOPMENT OVER THE NEXT THREE YEARS

Our goal is to strengthen our development program to achieve a greater diversity of funding streams and reduce reliance on government grants and contracts.

Benchmarks	2016	2017	2018
Build a more robust donor engagement model	•	•	•
Promote legacy gifts	•	•	•
Explore earned income opportunities		•	
Focus on 2 - 3 annual Groundworks Collaborative fundraising events	•	•	•
Increase and expand donor base	•	•	•
Launch and complete a capital campaign to achieve adequate space for Groundworks Collaborative		•	•

BOARD OF DIRECTORS



BOARD OF DIRECTORS OVER THE NEXT THREE YEARS

Benchmarks	2016	2017	2018
Identify leadership needs and recruit top candidates for the board	•	•	•
Assess board member composition relative to Groundworks' strategic priorities each year, and establish recruitment criteria accordingly - focus on two new outstanding candidates aligned with the greatest Board and organizational needs each year	•	•	•
Enhance board capacity for meaningful engagement in governance, oversight, and fundraising through committees, task forces, field trips, trainings, and evaluations	•	•	•
Create a succession plan to ensure sustainable and effective leadership		•	
Periodically review and update organizational documents, including personnel policies, internal controls procedures, investment plans, bylaws, board committee charters, board and employee manuals, and board skills inventories		•	
Recruit and maintain 1 - 2 board members as consumer representatives	•		