



## **NextUp RVA 2019-2021 Strategic Plan**

### **Executive Summary to the Board**

NextUp RVA, Inc., originally named Middle School Renaissance 2020 LLC, formed in 2013 for the specific purpose of building a coordinated system of high-quality, out of school time (OST) services to support the academic, physical and social-emotional development of middle school students in the City of Richmond. Over the course of the past five years, NextUp designed and tested its model, grew its network to four schools and 44 quality community-based providers and teachers, and established strong infrastructure and operational practices to support a coordinated system of services. In July 2016, the Board adopted a three-year strategic plan to guide the organization from its start-up phase to its growth phase.

The 2016-18 Strategic Plan set four goals for the organization:

1. NextUp and its partners will scale services in order to be prepared to offer high quality programming to all Richmond middle schools by 2020.
2. NextUp and its partners will develop and implement an effective measurement system for tracking performance.
3. NextUp will communicate to key stakeholders its unique role and value in serving RPS middle school youth.
4. NextUp will develop its funding resources to support five schools by December 2018.

Guided by this strategic plan, NextUp has emerged as a leader in the OST space, building a network of more than 40 community-based programs and having engaged 1,485 Richmond middle schoolers in expanded learning. In 2018, Richmond's Mayor chose NextUp as a key partner in his plan to create a system for OST from elementary to high school, with a goal of adding 1,000 afterschool slots for RPS students by 2020. NextUp has also raised the awareness of the importance of OST with local print and TV media features, community presentations, and spotlights in regional events such as the March 2018 Capital Region Collaborative and Valentine Museum's History Makers event and Leadership Metro Richmond events.

In January 2018, NextUp's Board of Directors began the important work of creating its next three-year strategic plan guided by a bold question and an inclusive planning approach with four phases:

1. Learning & Discovery (January-August 2018)
2. Visioning (September-October 2018)

3. Focusing (November-February 2019)
4. Approving (March 2019)

The Board established a task group to lead the planning with President & CEO, Barbara Couto Sipe, and hired facilitator, Amy Nisenson of Nisenson Consulting. Each committee of the Board participated directly in creating the strategic plan.

### **The Big Question Guiding Strategic Planning**

How will NextUp scale over the next three years to ensure all Richmond Public Middle Schools have access to enriching and valuable afterschool programming in a way that can be sustained and brings unparalleled value to stakeholders (schools, students, providers, funders and government)?

### **Additional Discovery Questions**

1. What do our schools and providers need from us and what adjustments do we need to make?
2. Where we can best align with RPS's and the City's education goals?
3. Are there adaptations we should make to our service model to address both cost and impact?
4. What specifically do we mean when we say, "diversifying our revenues to sustain"?

The first phase, Learning & Discovery, involved gleaning feedback and input from NextUp's school partners, city leaders, program providers, donors, Board members, families, youth and staff. NextUp commissioned third-party interviews and evaluations as well as staff led surveys, focus groups and facilitated discussions with its key stakeholder groups to learn what NextUp is doing well, what needs to improve, what additional value NextUp can provide, and to assess its fundraising potential. Staff and the Board also researched how similar expanded-learning systems in other cities have evolved their services and business models in order to inform NextUp's operational model and contributions to the community.

For the second phase, Visioning, the Strategic Planning Task Group studied the findings from phase one, affirmed NextUp's mission, vision and core values and defined the three-year goals for NextUp:

**Vision:** NextUp envisions a future in which Richmond's youth will thrive in school, at home and in the community.

**Mission:** To provide all Richmond Public School middle school youth with access to coordinated, high-quality learning experiences beyond the classroom.

**Core Values:** In all that we do, NextUp is:

- Student centered
- Data driven
- Results focused

- Action oriented
- Powered through partnerships
- Committed to quality

**Three-year Strategic Plan Goals:** NextUp will...

- 1) Increase student and school access to high-quality expanded learning programs at five RPS middle schools.
- 2) Promote quality and effective practices among NextUp's growing network of program providers.
- 3) Communicate to key stakeholders NextUp's unique role and the value of OST.
- 4) Develop funding resources to support its growth.
- 5) Advance organizational capacity to meet mission.

During the third phase, Focusing, Board committees and staff answered the questions, "how will we accomplish these goals over the next three years and how will we know if we did?" These answers led to the creation of the strategies, action steps and measures of success for the strategic goals in the plan. While each Board committee took responsibility for specific goals related to their functions, every committee vetted the final draft of the full plan to provide additional feedback. The Strategic Planning Task Group reviewed all feedback, incorporated final changes and has prepared the following 2019-2021 NextUp RVA Strategic Plan for the Board's consideration.

## 2019-2021 Strategic Plan

**Goals, Objectives & Strategies: What do we want to accomplish over the next three years and how will we accomplish it?**

**GOAL 1: NEXTUP WILL INCREASE STUDENT AND SCHOOL ACCESS TO AND PARTICIPATION IN HIGH-QUALITY EXPANDED LEARNING PROGRAMS AT RPS MIDDLE SCHOOLS.**

**OBJECTIVE 1.1 Increase student participation at all school sites**

**STRATEGIES:**

- Assess and adjust outreach and registration processes within the schools to ensure the process is clear and as easy as possible for students, teachers and families.
- Understand key barriers and test effective strategies to attract and retain students, overall and for each subgroup (race, socioeconomic status, IEP status, ELL status, and 8<sup>th</sup> graders).
- Create unique expanded-learning opportunities that attract & retain 8<sup>th</sup> graders.
- Work with elementary schools and elementary OST programs to promote sponsored programming so that rising 6<sup>th</sup> graders successfully transition into middle school expanded learning programs.

**OBJECTIVE 1.2 Increase alignment with school day and RPS Strategic Plan**

**STRATEGIES:**

- Research and test ways expanded-learning programming can influence student literacy development.
- Align sponsored programming with Richmond Public Schools' and city workforce initiatives to nurture students' passion for learning and hands-on, dynamic career-building experiences.

**OBJECTIVE 1.3 Expand to Albert Hill Middle School, achieving strategic goal that all middle schools have quality afterschool services**

**STRATEGIES:**

- Coordinate expansion plans with school leadership, RPS administration and Mayor's Office.
- Secure at least two years of funding support for services.
- Follow NextUp's site design planning model.

**GOAL 2: NEXTUP WILL PROMOTE QUALITY STANDARDS AND EFFECTIVE PRACTICES AMONG NEXTUP'S GROWING NETWORK OF PROGRAM PROVIDERS.**

**OBJECTIVE 2.1 Increase NextUp engagement with program providers to expand best practices and advance quality**

**STRATEGIES:**

- Facilitate and/or sponsor at least four professional development opportunities for our provider network throughout the year that are aligned with the RPS strategic plan and with quality improvement data.
- Institute regular communications and engagement activities between the NextUp main office and the provider network.
- Advocate for expanded access to YPQI for providers.
- Expand NextUp network to include providers within school zones serving 20+ youth to promote shared marketing, learning and coordination.

**OBJECTIVE 2.2 Increase program providers' access to and use of data to grow and evolve programming**

**STRATEGIES:**

- Design and test accountability/impact dashboards for site coordinating agencies and providers.
- Provide technical assistance for utilizing data to improve programming and understand outcomes.
- Share local best practices and learnings with national network of OST and share learning from outside of Richmond with local providers, funders, and schools.

**GOAL 3: NEXTUP WILL COMMUNICATE TO KEY STAKEHOLDERS (FUNDERS, PARENTS, SCHOOL AND GOVERNMENT) OUR UNIQUE ROLE, SERVICES AND THE VALUE OF OST**

**OBJECTIVE 3.1 Increase community awareness of the importance of expanded learning and OST  
STRATEGIES:**

- Build government relations competencies to inform smart policies that improve access and quality of OST.
- Create venues and methods such as blogs, white papers, and community forums for promoting the importance of expanded learning and OST among stakeholders.
- Facilitate discussions with community leaders and stakeholders at least once a year for the purpose of discussing activities, promising practices/learnings, policy activity and community initiatives.

**OBJECTIVE 3.2 Decrease confusion and misunderstanding of NextUp's functions  
STRATEGIES:**

- Conduct naming/branding study to assess the impact of the NextUp messaging, value proposition and brand experience for key constituents.
- Create three-year communications marketing plan with key messaging, outreach and refreshed collateral focused on the NextUp's functions and strategic direction.
- Develop a speakers' bureau of Board members, teachers, students, families and program providers to speak at community meetings and participate in advocacy efforts.

**GOAL 4: NEXTUP WILL DEVELOP ITS FUNDING RESOURCES TO SUPPORT SCALE**

**OBJECTIVE 4.1 Increase number of individual donors and their engagement with NextUp**

**STRATEGIES:**

- Build major gifts program with staff-driven prospecting and strong cultivation/stewardship by staff and Board members.

**OBJECTIVE 4.2 Increase grant resources coming from local, federal, and state grant opportunities.**

**STRATEGIES:**

- Secure a contracted government grant writer to research, cultivate and pursue public sector grants and national foundations.
- Explore national foundations as part of larger city-wide initiative.

**OBJECTIVE 4.3 Increase donor pipeline**

**STRATEGIES:**

- Establish an annual fund campaign to build annual fund donors and cultivate small/mid-size business donors for longer-term major gifts pipeline.
- Increase community presence and engage affinity/network groups to find new and diverse prospects.
- Create volunteer opportunities for corporate partners to engage with students and programs for the purpose of raising awareness of expanded learning and NextUp.
- Evaluate effectiveness and return on investment of donor pipeline initiatives.

## **GOAL 5: NEXTUP WILL ADVANCE ITS ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY TO MEET MISSION.**

### **OBJECTIVE 5.1 Evaluate programmatic and operational model needs**

#### **STRATEGIES:**

- Test and learn to discover what elements of programming optimizes success for students.
- Test and learn to discover what funding model works best for providers and donors.
- Ensure procedures for provider funding are consistent, transparent and appropriately allocated.

### **OBJECTIVE 5.2 Ensure a consistently effective and engaged Board of Directors.**

#### **STRATEGIES:**

- Ensure on-going Board compliance and education.
- Review the strategic plan semi-annually and make changes as needed.
- Build a board recruitment strategy which includes a strong pipeline of potential board members and a board leadership succession plan for board officers and committee chairs.

### **OBJECTIVE 5.3 Ensure people, processes, and technology are in order to advance mission.**

#### **STRATEGIES:**

- Create a CEO succession plan.
- Create a staff succession plan for all key staff positions.
- Create manuals and trainings on NextUp's quality standards and procedures for providers.
- Develop the necessary infrastructure to provide a fulfilling employment experience, including software, technology needs and office space.

### **Measures of Success: How will we know we accomplished our 3-year goals?**

- Partner with at least 5 RPS middle schools to expanded afterschool learning services to reach at least 40% of the student population with NextUp capacity for 30% or more
- At least 60% of participating students attend programs 30 or more days per year
- NextUp site partners will demonstrate commitment to quality and score 3.0 or greater on quality assessment
- At least 5% improvement in youth outcomes of school attendance and social-emotional well-being
- All staff and volunteers along with 75% of lead funders and providers will report they understand NextUp's mission and function and can communicate it to someone else
- Diversified contributions so that no single donor is less than 15% of total contributions
- Operating Reserve will equal \$100,000
- CEO and staff succession plans are in place
- Board attendance and committee participation rates exceed 75%

## Acknowledgements

Creating strategic plans is never an easy task. It requires vision for the future, understanding of the present, inclusion of stakeholders, openness to feedback, critical assessment of risks and opportunities, and the ability to prioritize and balance all that an organization wants to accomplish with what the feedback, the vision, risks and opportunities say are important. That just gets you to the framework of the plan. You must then take a careful look at the plan to ensure it is clear, measurable, and actionable. Lastly, but certainly not least is socializing the plan with your stakeholders to ensure the plan reflects their input and has the support of all those who you will depend on for accomplishing these shared goals.

Thank you to all who participated in the creation of this 2019-2021 Strategic Plan to ensure every middle schooler can access high-quality learning after school!

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### **NextUp Staff**

Barbara Couto Sipe  
President & CEO

Joye B. Moore  
Operations and Development Officer

Candace Simon Benn  
Director of Evaluation and Continuous  
Improvement

Jeanine Turner  
Director of Programs

Kia Johnson  
Manager of Development and Community  
Engagement

Jessica Long  
Program Support Specialist

\*Strategic Planning Task Group Members

## **Strategic Planning Consultant**

Amy Nisenson Consulting

## **Advisors who lent listening ears, learnings, and guidance**

Priscilla Little, Consultant, Forum for Youth Investment

Hillary Salmons, Executive Director, Providence After School Alliance

Wally Stettinius, Community Volunteer

Jessica Strum, Executive Director, Every Hour Counts

## **Reports**

- Development Assessment & Recommendations Report by The Monument Group
- NextUp Program Provider Network Communications Assessment & Recommendations Report by RVA Communications
- Phase I Impact Evaluation by VCU Metropolitan Educational Research Consortium (MERC)
- Citywide OST Recommendations by Forum for Youth Investment and Community Partners
- NextUp Provider Network Input Session facilitated by staff
- Dreams4RPS