



revolutionizing sexuality education in the U.S.

strategic plan

2013-2017

answer

sex ed, honestly

answer

41 Gordon Road, Suite C
Piscataway, NJ 08854
(T) 732-445-7929
(F) 732-445-5333

answer.rutgers.edu
sexetc.org

facebook.com/answered
twitter.com/sexedhonestly

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introduction

For far too many, “sex ed” still conjures up the image of an uncomfortable teacher at the front of the room, nervously explaining the human reproductive systems while counting the minutes until the bell rings. Sexuality education is, however, far different—and far more—than that. And it is long overdue for a significant makeover in the minds of most Americans.

Sexuality education is the process through which people acquire information and form attitudes, beliefs and values about sexuality in its broadest definition—a definition that goes beyond pregnancy and STD prevention, body parts and changes. Sexuality is part of one’s core identity—learning how to treat oneself and others with respect and how to understand and communicate with others about intimate, vitally important issues and decisions. Sexuality is about learning to trust others, being clear about one’s own and respecting others’ boundaries around relationships and behaviors.

When sexuality education is truly comprehensive, it encompasses learning about all of the issues above—as well as sexual and reproductive health. Sexuality education is a process that takes place both inside and outside of school. It is conducted in group learning environments and through one-on-one interactions; it is provided by adult professionals, parents, other family members and youth. Answer firmly believes that professionals who are providing sexuality education in one form or another should be trained in how to do so accurately and effectively, and all adults should have access to the support and guidance of sexuality education experts.

Answer’s mission for more than 30 years has been to provide and promote unfettered access to comprehensive sexuality education for young people and the adults who teach them. Answer remains committed to making sure young people can exercise their right to access straightforward, accurate information about sexuality. Answer’s tag line—“sex ed, honestly”—reflects our commitment to providing the information young people need now and well into the future.

In our ongoing work to ensure that our programs and services remain on the cutting edge and learner-centered, we have used what we have found to be the most effective peer education approaches and harnessed the ever-growing power of technology to reach millions of teens online with the knowledge and skills they need. We are also nationally recognized for providing the highest quality, most effective in-person trainings for youth-serving professionals. And we continue to use technology to create new ways to provide professional learning opportunities online for thousands of adults every year.

Although national polls have repeatedly shown that the American public overwhelmingly supports teaching sexuality education to young people, far too many adults still actively oppose it. These opponents are well-organized and well-funded. They consistently politicize the issue and deliberately distort the truth about sexuality education, stirring up unnecessary controversy as they seek to ban or limit the sexuality education that is being taught in classrooms. They undermine frank, honest and open discussions about sexuality and seek to replace them with fear, shame and stigma.



This opposition is reflected in a cultural hesitation to commit to the type of comprehensive sexuality education that is most effective in supporting young people's growth and development. Currently, only 20 states and the District of Columbia mandate sexuality education that includes anything other than HIV prevention; only 13 require that the information taught be medically accurate.¹ Nineteen states require teaching that sexual behaviors are only appropriate within the context of a heterosexual marriage; three require that when sexual orientations other than heterosexuality are mentioned it is only to communicate negative messages, such as associating non-heterosexual people with HIV and AIDS.

This is, of course, the bad news. There is also some good news. Some states do have strong policies relating to more comprehensive sexuality education. Yet even in those states, the state-level requirements do not always trickle down to the school level, where sexuality education can be inconsistently implemented. Health education, which usually covers sexuality education, is often limited to instructing students about HIV, pregnancy and STD prevention. Although these topics are important components of comprehensive sexuality education, they fall far short in providing all that young people need to learn. Young people deserve far better. In order to be happy, healthy and well-adjusted, they should also be learning about relationship skills, body image, self-esteem and much more.

Because of and perhaps despite this, Answer remains a steadfast advocate for sexuality education in America's schools, working closely with key partners throughout the U.S. Over the next five years, Answer is dedicating itself to revolutionizing sexuality education in the U.S. We seek nothing less than a sea change in how sexuality education is perceived, promoted and provided. We intend to not only continue with the most effective elements of our current work, but to also focus our efforts on scaling up our online professional development to engage and train more youth-serving adults who can improve learning in the classroom. We will also use existing as well as evolving technologies to reach and teach millions more young people online. And we will build on and expand our communications and advocacy efforts to reduce the stigma, shame and controversy that distort what sexuality education is and how it supports young people's health and fosters their overall well-being.

¹ http://www.guttmacher.org/statecenter/spibs/spib_SE.pdf



who we are

our vision and mission

*Answer's **vision** is for sexuality to be understood, respected, valued and celebrated.*

*Our **mission** is to provide and promote unfettered access to comprehensive sexuality education for young people and the adults who teach them.*

Our vision is reflected in every aspect of the work we do, whether it is the language we model, our commitment to celebrating the many types of diversity reflected in our youth and adult populations or the straightforward, positive way in which we talk about the immense capacity young people have to use information and skills that are taught to them wisely and responsibly.

We fulfill our mission through a unique set of interrelated programs and services: our trainings and technical assistance offerings help educators and other youth-serving professionals create dynamic and effective learning experiences for young people, and *Sex, Etc.*, our teen-written magazine and website, provides millions of teens every year with the honest, accurate sexuality information they need and deserve. Our adult training work supports our work with and for teens, while what we learn from teens informs how and what we teach adults.

who we work for and with

Answer has three distinct target audiences that play equally valuable roles in educating young people about sexuality.

Youth—We reach out to and work with a broad spectrum of young people from across the U.S., who represent a variety of communities and a diversity of backgrounds, experiences and identities.

Adults—Adults provide sexuality education to young people both in formal settings, such as a school or community-based organization, and through informal interactions, such as a school nurse speaking one-on-one with a young person between classes. Answer also prepares and supports adults who are involved in educating young people in a variety of other equally significant ways, such as school administrators, parents and other adult caregivers.

Strategic Partners—Nonprofit education and advocacy organizations throughout the U.S. committed to the health and well-being of young people are our valued partners. With them, we can continue to shape the future of comprehensive sexuality education in the U.S.

how we work

Since Answer's inception in 1981, our target audiences have grown from schoolteachers and administrators to include young people, community-based educators and other youth-serving professionals. In the mid-1990s, we began to publish *Sex, Etc.*, first as a newsletter and now a magazine and fully optimized website, through which we reach teens directly with accurate and age- and developmentally-appropriate sexuality information. Our work with adults has further expanded to include trainings for far more youth-serving adults, as well as technical assistance in institutionalizing sexuality education, advocating for effective school policies, ensuring that school-based sexuality education aligns with a state's laws and content standards and more. Over more than 30 years, the scope of our work has gone from state-focused to nationwide.

strategic priorities

In support of our strategic plan, Answer is focusing our programmatic and advocacy efforts under four strategic priorities for the five-year period FY2013—2017:

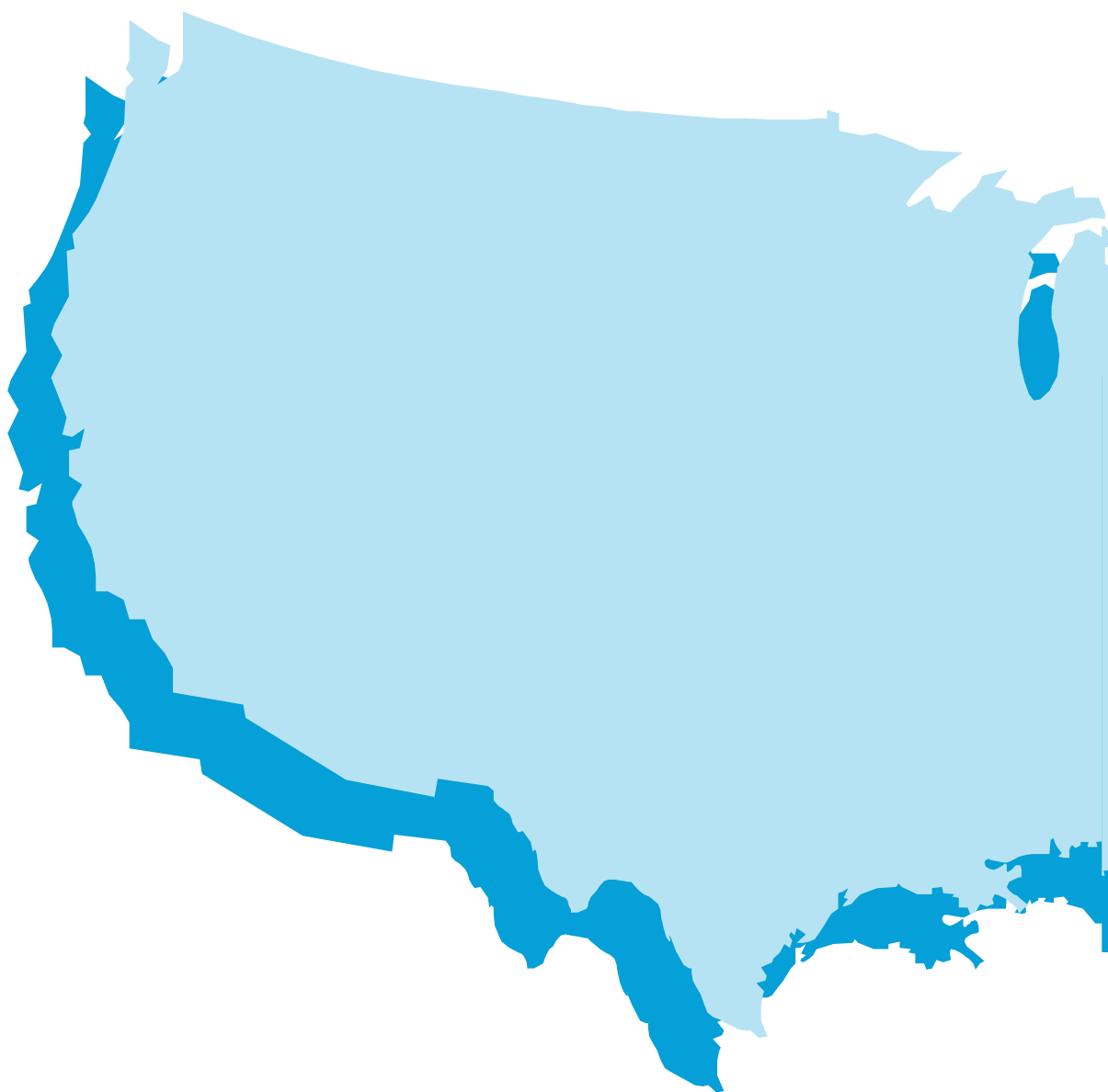
Revolutionize Sexuality Education in the U.S. —How It Is Perceived, Promoted and Provided

Reach and Teach More Young People

Engage and Train More Adults

Build a Stronger and More Effective Organization

Each of these strategic priorities is interconnected. Unless we are able to make a paradigm shift in how sexuality education is perceived and valued in the U.S., we will not be able to reach and teach more young people. Unless we can train more adults on how they can best teach young people about sexuality and galvanize them to become stronger advocates for the need to do so, we will not be able to revolutionize sexuality education in this country. And to adequately address our first three strategic priorities, Answer must become a stronger and even more effective organization.



STRATEGIC PRIORITY 1: REVOLUTIONIZE SEXUALITY EDUCATION IN THE U.S.

Sexuality education for young people will be recognized as a critical foundation for life-long health and well-being.



Goal 1: Dramatically increase young people's and adults' understanding of what age-appropriate sexuality education actually is and why it is essential for young people's physical and emotional health and overall well-being.

Answer will create an overarching communications plan for the organization that focuses on the need to revolutionize sexuality education and Answer's role in making that paradigm shift occur. We will create and implement national sexuality education communications campaigns that use traditional and online techniques to reach and persuade target audiences that high-quality, comprehensive sexuality education is crucial for the well-being of all young people in the U.S. As always, we will incorporate the voices of different constituencies (teens, teachers, parents, educators, policy-makers, etc.) in our communications campaigns.

We will also maximize our use of existing and evolving technologies to educate as wide a population as possible about what comprehensive sexuality education is and why it is important. This will include a redesign of the Answer organizational website and implementing a social media strategy that covers all aspects of Answer's work.

Goal 2: Reduce the stigma frequently associated with sexuality education in order to eliminate controversy and support healthy child and adolescent development.

To achieve this goal, we will create and disseminate print and online resources to explain the connections between sexuality education and the overall well-being of young people. These materials will be disseminated to school administrators and policy-makers to gain their support in implementing comprehensive sexuality education. We will create and broadly disseminate easy-to-read fact sheets and/or infographics for the general public that show the connections between sexuality education and overall well-being, as well as pamphlets and brochures for schools, clinics and doctors' offices.



STRATEGIC PRIORITY 2: REACH AND TEACH MORE YOUNG PEOPLE

**All young people will
have unfettered access
to honest, accurate
sexuality education
anytime, anywhere.**



Goal 1: Assess the reach and impact of our work in providing and promoting comprehensive sexuality education to young people.

Answer will evaluate the impact, effectiveness and reach of our current programs in reaching and teaching young people. We will use the data collected from our evaluation efforts to inform refinement of our programmatic direction.

We will also expand our social media outreach to more deeply engage more young people. We will also engage an expert on Web and social media analytics to support us in understanding the current reach of Sexetc.org and the *Sex, Etc.* social media network and expanding our reach to young people.

Answer will also ensure that our teen-written content meets the *National Sexuality Education Standards* (NSES), which Answer and its Future of Sex Ed partners developed.

Goal 2: Expand and deepen the methods we use to help young people learn about sexuality.

Answer will use existing and evolving technologies to provide direct education to young people. In order to do so, we will explore the creation of online sexuality education classes for K-12 students, based on the NSES, and examine ways to adapt mobile technology to maximize the impact of these courses with teens.

We will also increase video content on the *Sex, Etc.* website that educates young people about sexuality and explore ways of reaching new audiences of young people, including younger adolescents, children and non-English speakers.



STRATEGIC PRIORITY 3: ENGAGE AND TRAIN MORE ADULTS

Adults will provide the highest quality sexuality education possible to the young people in their lives.

Goal 1: Assess the reach and impact of our work to train adults to provide comprehensive sexuality education to young people.

Answer will evaluate the impact of our current program effectiveness in engaging and training adults. We will scale up evaluation on the impact of all our programs that train adults, including our online and in-person workshops. We will use data collected from evaluation to refine our programmatic direction.

We will also explore the development of a *Sex, Etc.* curriculum and materials for high school teachers that integrate peer education into the classroom.

Goal 2: Increase the capacity and opportunity of adults throughout the U.S. to provide young people with high-quality, age-appropriate sexuality education.

Answer will use existing and evolving technologies to educate adults and broaden the reach and impact of our professional development. The expansion of our professional development offerings will include the establishment of an online certificate program. We will also build sustainability by exploring funding for replication of our annual Training Institute in Sexual Health Education (TISHE) and creating cadres of both trainers and better-trained educators nationwide.

We will provide technical assistance to educators on implementing comprehensive sexuality education that is mapped to the NSES and that will resonate with young learners. We will also provide technical assistance to help teachers integrate sexuality education into other subjects, and offer guidance to educators on current technologies and trends useful in teaching sexuality education.

Answer will explore ways of reaching new audiences of adults, including parents, adult caregivers, school administrators, medical professionals and non-English speakers.

We will also explore the creation of materials for young people in grades K-5 and create a concept paper for a national initiative on how to more strategically work with parents and other adult caregivers.

Goal 3: Increase the number of states and/or school districts nationwide that provide sexuality education instruction that is consistent with the *National Sexuality Education Standards*.

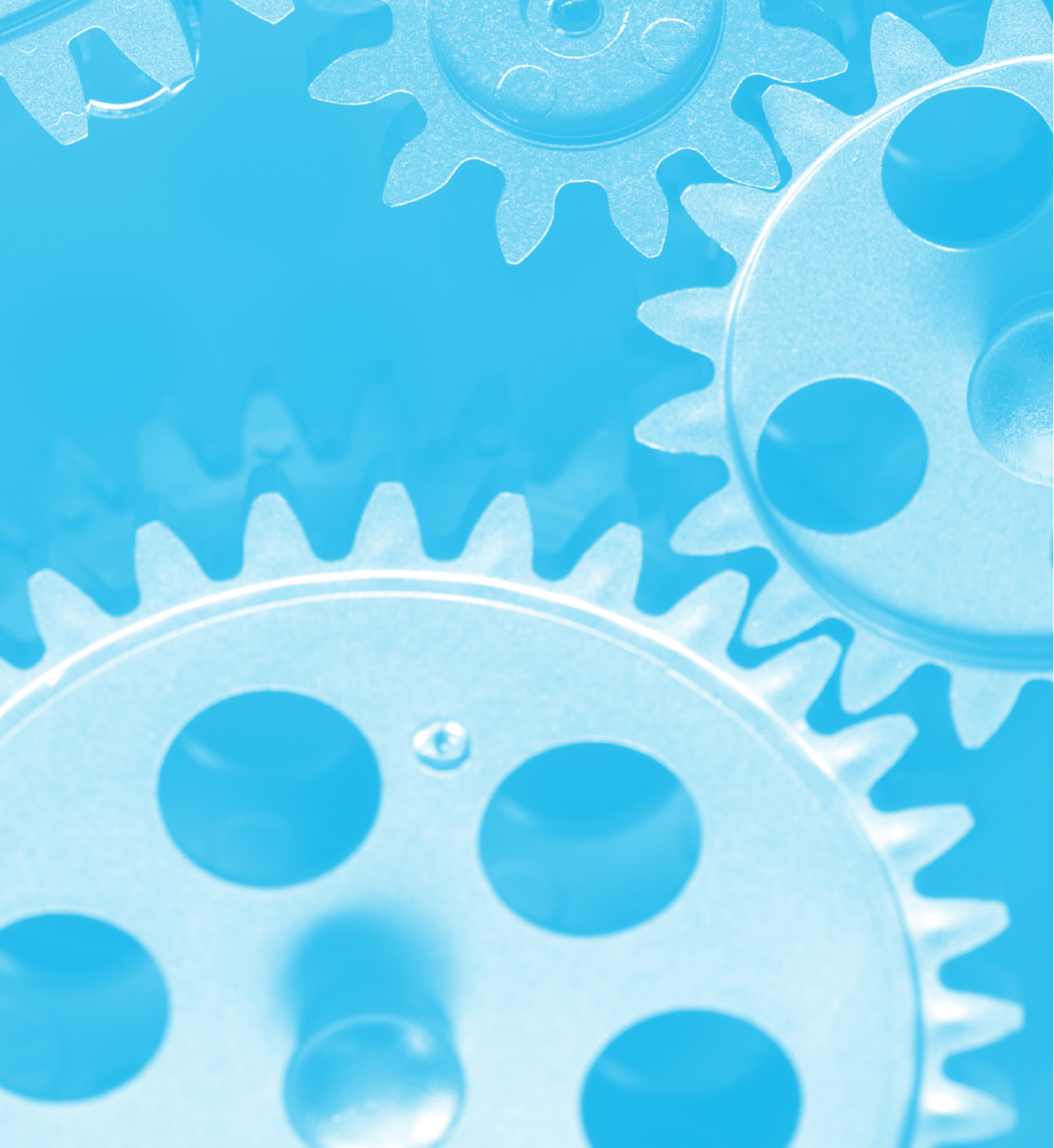
Answer will aggressively promote the NSES at the state and local levels and expand on their use in trainings.



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**STRATEGIC
PRIORITY 4:
BUILD A
STRONGER AND
MORE EFFECTIVE
ORGANIZATION**



The three prior strategic priorities and the respective goals, strategies and actions will inform our institutional strengthening activities for the five-year period 2013-2017.

The following institutional areas must be addressed in order to enable Answer to achieve the goals of its strategic plan:

Assessment and Monitoring

Communications and Visibility

Financial Resources

Human Resources: Staff and Advisory Board

assessment and monitoring

Goal: Increase effectiveness through assessing our existing programs and consistently monitoring ongoing initiatives.

Answer will conduct an overall organizational self-assessment to better focus the future direction of our program offerings. This will include an audit of our current organizational activities, programs and partnerships to determine which activities, programs and partnerships should be maintained, expanded or eliminated.

We will also examine how to create more synergy between *Sex, Etc.* and training. We will identify areas in which collaboration would be effective, such as mapping *Sex, Etc.* content to the NSES, using teen-written content in trainings for adults or including teens in trainings and webinars. We will also continue to cross-promote the two program areas to the general public as appropriate to improve identifying both as the work of Answer.

communications and visibility

Goal: Increase the organization's national visibility and recognition.

As a university program with a strongly branded product that has greater national recognition than our organizational name, we will decide whether we need to once again change the organization's name moving forward. In order to do this, we will need to explore the effectiveness of our current organizational name and the possibility of changing it based on feedback from our target audiences. We can then invest resources in ensuring that the name, whether it remains Answer or becomes something else, is a strong brand. An integral part of effectively managing this organizational brand will be creating and implementing a communications and marketing plan that effectively promotes the organization as a whole.

financial resources

Goal 1: Secure the financial future of the organization by obtaining additional individual and institutional (foundation and corporate) donors and significantly deepening the investment of existing donors.

Answer will create and implement an institutional giving plan for foundations and corporations that includes sustaining and increasing the support of current donors and introducing Answer to institutional donor prospects. We will also engage existing and prospective individual donors in varied and meaningful ways, including expanding our planned-giving campaign.

Goal 2: Secure the financial future of the organization by expanding existing and seeking new sources of programmatic earned income.

Answer will increase its earned income by expanding the range and marketing of products and services. To this end, we will evaluate our ongoing marketing methods and create a marketing strategy to expand visibility for all of Answer's services and products.

human resources: staff and advisory board

Goal 1: Support existing staff and increase staff as resources allow in order to implement the strategies and perform the actions outlined in the strategic plan.

Answer will review existing activities to determine the capacity of current staff and the need for additional staff. We will also identify and explore professional development needs and opportunities for the current staff. Based on the organizational self-assessment, programmatic evaluation outcomes and available funding, we will create a plan to hire and house additional staff needed to effectively implement the strategic plan.

We will also empower and support all staff to be comfortable with using and exploiting the power of technology in their day-to-day work. To do so, we will conduct a scan of the organization's technology and social media use to determine existing strengths and areas of improvement within programmatic areas and in general.

Goal 2: Assess and evaluate the existing advisory board structure and Answer's needs to determine the most effective structure moving forward.

Answer will create an advisory board development plan based on the organizational priorities set by the strategic plan. Based on strategic priorities, we will determine what capacities, experiences and connections are needed in advisory board members (e.g., online training, communications, advertising, marketing, Web and social media to assist in communications campaigns and outreach to youth).

Goal 3: Increase the size and geographic representation of the advisory board, bringing on members with giving and/or fundraising capacity.

Answer will generate a constant flow of prospective members for the advisory board based on programmatic and fundraising needs and corresponding skills and capacities. We will identify prospective advisory board members outside of New Jersey in order to broaden our donor base outside of our home state.

conclusion

Our strategic plan for Answer is ambitious. **Revolutionizing the way sexuality education is perceived, promoted and provided in the U.S. is clearly aspirational.** We know that taking the actions and implementing the strategies outlined above will be an incremental process. We intend to make this strategic plan a living, breathing document that will serve as a guide to Answer leadership and staff as we continue to fulfill our mission in new, exciting ways. We will regularly assess our progress in implementing this plan and make adjustments as necessary. Our strategic priorities, however, have been carefully chosen and crafted. We believe that by reaching more teens and engaging and training more adults, we will be able to help teach young people what they really need to know about sexuality and sexual health and, as a result, help ensure their overall well-being.

We recognize that achieving our goals will take an enormous effort as well as time and resources, both human and monetary. We realize that as an organization we must grow even more effective at raising and using funding from individuals, foundations and corporations, as well as generating earned income from our training services and products. And we know the current team assembled at Answer is exceptionally skilled and up to these tasks.

We have the passion, drive and dedication to continue to fight for young people's right to have unfettered access to honest, accurate sexuality education anytime, anywhere.

Answer is part of a larger movement, and we value the strategic partnerships that have and will continue to work with us to transform sexuality education throughout the U.S.



