Strategic Blueprint

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REPORT OVERVIEW

**Sections I and II** present the context and goals of this strategic planning process.

**Sections III and IV** of this report describe the process we used in the strategic planning process, and the draft agreements that the planning group of staff, board members, participants and advisors reached about mission, population, and outcomes, which informed Custom Collaborative’s "Theory of Change."

**Section V** outlines the goals and priorities that the planning group established to take the organization to the next level of growth and effectiveness.

**Section VI** proposes implementation recommendations triggered by the discussions and results of the planning process.

**Section VII** outlines the refined goals and priorities that the planning group and the Board approved.

**Appendices**
Appendix A: Custom Collaborative’s Emerging Theory of Change
Appendix B: MacMillan Matrix Analysis and Instructions
Appendix C: Strategy Screen
Appendix D: Action Planning Template
Appendix E: Raw Focus Group, Interview & Session Notes
Appendix F: Deck from Strategic Session
I. CONTEXT & BACKGROUND

Founded in 2015, Custom Collaborative (CC) is a New York City-based entrepreneurship and workforce development program that trains and supports women from low-income and immigrant communities to launch fashion careers and businesses. By learning the standard techniques and ethical business practices of the fashion industry, participants professionalize their sewing and design skills, overcome barriers to employment, and ultimately, change the economics of the industry.

MISSION

The mission of Custom Collaborative is to serve women from low-income and immigrant communities with training and ongoing supports that equip them to achieve viable livelihoods in the women’s fashion industry as designers, fashion entrepreneurs, pattern makers, and seamstresses who create and sell high-quality clothing and accessories.

CC aims to achieve the mission of changing the apparel industry economics for low-income and immigrant women by:

Serving the under-invested

- 85% of Training Institute students are mothers
- 80% of the participants live below the federal poverty level
- 50% live in unstable housing
- CC participants come from 15 nations, including the US

Focusing on sustainability

- At least 90% of all Custom Collaborative creations are made from repurposed and upcycled textiles
- Awareness of environmental impact is at the core of CC’s design instruction and product development

The organization is supported by a five-member Board of Directors and led by its Founding Director, Ngozi Okaro who is supported by a staff of nine.

CONTEXT

As Custom Collaborative’s programming has increased, partnership opportunities have also increased, making greater revenue – and specifically earned revenue – a focus for the future, as well as highlighting the importance of ensuring that Custom Collaborative’s programs and mission are fully aligned.

In addition, Custom Collaborative’s Board has recently undergone leadership change and is eager to identify the organization’s priorities and goals for the future, as well as the related strategies that will best help Custom Collaborative achieve its mission.
As Custom Collaborative moves into strategic planning, some of the key questions that you would like to answer include:

- What trends, needs, and opportunities should drive Custom Collaborative’s programming going forward?
- How can Custom Collaborative best align programmatic and investment priorities with its mission and vision, including determining the different needs – and thus the potential different goals and strategies – that the organization should consider for its work?

Given these challenges, you have partnered with CRE to conduct a one-day planning session with the Custom Collaborative Steering Committee (comprising staff, board members, graduates, and advisors) to address the questions outlined above and produce a set of agreements for Custom Collaborative’s next steps.

Additional critical questions include:

- Are Custom Collaborative’s current mission and vision crystal clear and relevant?
- What is Custom Collaborative’s value proposition?
- What is Custom Collaborative’s desired long-term impact, and what does success look like?
  - What should Custom Collaborative’s priorities be?
  - What trends, needs, and opportunities should drive Custom Collaborative’s activities?
  - Who is Custom Collaborative’s target population?
- How can Custom Collaborative operationalize its goals?
II. CUSTOM COLLABORATIVE’S PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

Custom Collaborative has three major program interventions – each of which is described below:

- **Training Institute** Custom Collaborative's comprehensive 14-week Training Institute teaches the art, craft, and technique of fashion design. The classes specialize in teaching low-income women how to make custom made-to-measure clothing and personalized accessories for women of all body types.

  The training also includes extensive instruction on the fashion business basics including topics in marketing, sourcing, ethical manufacturing, and sustainable fashion, along with personal finance. Students graduate equipped with the toolkit to begin a career in fashion.

- **Business Incubator** Custom Collaborative offers management consulting, mentorship, technical assistance, advanced training, and professional equipment to Training Institute graduates and others in the fashion industry.

  Our goal is to maximize work opportunities and improve socio-economic outcomes for all women.

- **Worker Owned Cooperative** Is an incorporated, worker-owned sewn-goods cooperative comprised of Custom Collaborative graduates. The cooperative accepts sample and contract manufacturing orders of 1 - 200 pieces and sells made-to-measure clothes to individual clients.

All participants, regardless of the program in which they are enrolled, are assessed and offered supportive services including but not limited to childcare and transportation support, job training and placement; and parenting education and support.
III. ABOUT THE STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

Custom Collaborative’s strategic planning process centered on a combination of the Theory of Change approach, the MacMillan Matrix, and ACORS, a framework for analyzing an organization’s Aspirations, Competitive Edge (for which the MacMillan Matrix also was used), Openings, Red Flags, and Soft Spots.

This approach was designed to help Custom Collaborative make the best decisions now to guide the organization to a future state that:

- Aligns time, talent, and money to activities that have the greatest impact
- Brings together and energizes stakeholders
- Maximizes impact
- Makes effective use of limited resources
- Ensures sustainability

Specific goals were to:

- Clarify and affirm Custom Collaborative’s vision, mission, and core values
- Reach shared agreement on constituency, long-term impact, and future opportunities
- Provide the foundation for this strategic blueprint to guide future actions and decisions.

Using What the Data Told Us

As part of this process, CRE reviewed past assessments, conducted a staff and a graduate focus group, and interviewed several individual stakeholders. A high-level summary of the data, shared at the start of the session, suggests that:

**Custom Collaborative has organizational strengths to build upon...**

- Custom Collaborative’s staff and Board members are passionate about and committed to the work
- The trainees need and value the service that Custom Collaborative is providing
  - Custom Collaborative’s focus on immigrant and low-income women is valuable
  - Custom Collaborative successfully connects trainees with supportive resources and meets them where they are at (i.e. childcare)
  - Custom Collaborative graduates feel they gain useful financial/business skills
- Custom Collaborative’s values align with the values held by its stakeholders

**And there is room for growth internally...**

- Custom Collaborative has limited infrastructure to support its operations
Small staff team with extremely limited capacity to do it all
Executive Director shoulders a lot
Lack of clarity regarding new programs and expansions

- Custom Collaborative’s programs could benefit from clear messaging and defined goals
- Custom Collaborative could benefit from a more robust and engaged Board
- Clear and consistent communication between CC’s staff/participants/Board can be challenging
- Custom Collaborative does not yet have clearly defined metrics and measurement tools to evaluate its impact

**Externally, there also are challenges, opportunities, and trends for Custom Collaborative to be aware of and to respond to.**

- Determining how best to engage with the fashion industry
  - Collaborations with FIT/other designers
  - Guest speakers/teachers
  - Sustainability
- Graduates interested in advance skills Training Institute
  - Advanced designing workshops
  - Next level business development classes
- Opportunities for workforce development relationships for graduates
  - Internship Pipeline
  - Mentorship Program
  - Online Sales through CC Website + Co-Op

This data helped to inform both the design of the session and the group’s work.
IV. CUSTOM COLLABORATIVE’S “THEORY OF CHANGE”

An organization’s Theory of Change (TOC) is a “theory” of how change happens for participants. It is the framework for aligning Custom Collaborative to make change happen, while keeping Custom Collaborative accountable for that change, and empowering Custom Collaborative to say ‘no’ to the many options that will come its way but are not fully aligned with its mission.

This session focused on the Vision/Mission; Population; Outcomes; and Program Strategies elements of the TOC.

A. Vision & Mission

The strategic planning discussions started with vision and mission.

Vision:
- Defines the optimal desired future state Custom Collaborative wants to achieve over time
- Provides inspiration about Custom Collaborative’s long-term goal
- Functions as Custom Collaborative’s “north star”

During the planning session, Custom Collaborative members brainstormed themes for a vision statement that included:
- Belief in the success of women regardless of risk factors
- Empowered Women
  - Leadership
  - Gender Equity
- Holistic/More Skills – How might CC extend itself beyond training enrollment
- Infrastructure for Success
- Environmental Sustainability
- Financial Sustainability
- Advocacy
- Wrap Around Services
The draft vision statement below was drafted by CRE and revised with input from the Custom Collaborative Board:

**Custom Collaborative envisions a world in which all women possess the skills, confidence, and agency to design their futures and contribute to a sustainable world—regardless of race or socio-economic background.**

**Mission:**

- Is the change Custom Collaborative would like to see in constituents
- Is Custom Collaborative’s value proposition – the “why”
- Specifies the people for whom Custom Collaborative would like to make a difference – the “who”
- States the strategies Custom Collaborative takes to make that difference – the “how”

Custom Collaborative’s current mission statement reads, “Our mission is to serve women from low-income and immigrant communities with training and ongoing supports that equip them to achieve viable livelihoods in the women’s fashion industry as designers, fashion entrepreneurs, pattern makers, and seamstresses who create and sell high-quality clothing and accessories.”

During planning sessions, CC members reviewed and reacted to the currently posted mission. Feedback on the statement included:

- The “who” is answered clearly
- The “how” is answered but limited/has a ceiling on it
  - Skills, environment, collaboration
  - Sustainability, business acumen, networking, living best lives
  - Not just “women’s fashion
  - Include sustainable (maybe sustainable fashion industry – is all encompassing)
- The “why” is not fully/completely answered
  - Economic independence/empowerment
  - Gender equity in industry / women leading
  - Achievable equity
  - Not “serve”; transform/support/become empowered
- Justice Lens – the industry is problematic. Who owns is different from who does the work
  - Borrowing from the local food movement strategy to create social, environmental, sustainability at localized level for the Fashion Industry
- Environmental Justice (sustainable materials/fabrics/processes)
- Wage Justice (fair/living wage)
- Economic Justice (financial sustainability)

- Advocacy
- Mentoring
- Build communities with industry

The re-worded **draft mission statement** below is a starting point for revision, which Custom Collaborative members should review, modify, confirm, and propose for Board approval:

*Custom Collaborative trains, mentors, and advocates for low to no-income and immigrant women to build the skills necessary to achieve economic success in the sustainable fashion industry and broader society.*

**B. Population**

The steering committee worked to affirm Custom Collaborative’s service domain and distinguished between its target and service populations.

**Target population** refers to the clients or for whom Custom Collaborative will:

- Hold itself accountable for achieving essential outcomes
- Give priority with regard to resources
- Measure the results of its programs

Custom Collaborative’s **target population**, to be refined by the Committee, is defined as:

*Low- to no-income and immigrant women in New York City seeking to build skills in sustainable fashion and attain economic sustainability through entrepreneurship and industry jobs.*

**Service population** refers to the individuals, groups or communities that Custom Collaborative serves in support of achieving outcomes for its target population.

Custom Collaborative’s list of possible **service populations**, for further review and determination, includes:

- Children of trainees
- Emerging fashion designers
- Manufacturing clients
- Families
C. Outcomes

Part of the planning process was devoted to identifying and articulating Custom Collaborative’s long-term, intermediate and short-term outcomes using “So That” Chains.

In the Theory of Change framework, an outcome:

- Is a socially significant, relatively lasting change such as in:
  - Attitude or values
  - Behavior
  - Conditions or status
  - Knowledge or awareness
  - Perceptions or feelings
  - Policies
  - Skills
- Is directly linked to an organization’s own intentional efforts
- Can be observed, measured, and monitored
- Is used to hold an organization accountable
- Is from the perspective of target population
- Describes the promise you are making to everyone in the target population

1. **Long-Term Impact**

An organization’s long-term outcomes are embedded in its mission. They represent the impact that the organization seeks to accomplish for its constituencies. Custom Collaborative seeks the following long-term outcomes based on its three program areas:

**Independent and financially stable women capable of controlling their own destinies**

**Development of productive leaders and entrepreneurs in the sustainable fashion industry who contribute their talents and abilities to their communities as well as the larger society**
2. **Intermediate Outcomes**

Intermediate outcomes bridge short-term and long-term outcomes. Achieving intermediate outcomes heightens the likelihood of reaching long-term outcomes. Custom Collaborative’s intermediate outcomes by program area are shown in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROGRAM</th>
<th>INTERMEDIATE OUTCOMES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Training Institute</td>
<td>- Graduates have the option to own their own business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business Incubator</td>
<td>- Emerging fashion entrepreneurs feel more self-confident, empowered and supported;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worker Owned Cooperative</td>
<td>- Members generate revenue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Members are exercising participatory management skills</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Custom Collaborative believes that these intermediate outcomes result from achieving the short-term outcomes for their programs, and in turn increase the potential of getting to their long-term outcomes to advocate for a more equitable fashion industry where the women who CC trains and support to become financially stable and independent have access to entrepreneurial and career opportunities in the industry.

3. **Short-Term Outcomes**

Outcome-producing program activities are intensive activities for target participants that are expected to achieve the intended short-term outcomes. The table below shows the short-term outcomes of the CC programs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROGRAM</th>
<th>SHORT-TERM OUTCOMES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Training Institute</td>
<td>- Participants learn sewing skills, pattern making, and business development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Graduate participants get jobs in the fashion industry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Graduate participants earn fair and living wages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business Incubator</td>
<td>- TI graduates and other emerging designers gain industry experience and begin to generate revenue</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
− TI graduates and other emerging designers hone their entrepreneurial ideas with the support of peers and mentors
− TI graduates and other emerging designers launch their own businesses in the fashion industry

Worker Owned Cooperative
− Members identify and build client and industry relationships

Appendix A shows Custom Collaborative’s Emerging Theory of Change (TOC) which should be reviewed and updated as needed. This TOC schematic can be used as attachments to funding proposals for funders to see the impact that CC seeks to achieve.

D. Program Strategies: Assessing how well Custom Collaborative’s programs are aligned with outcomes

Program Assessment 1: The MacMillan Matrix

The MacMillan Matrix was presented as a framework for Custom Collaborative’s Steering Committee to conduct a closer analysis of CC’s programs and their viability. This matrix was developed by Ian MacMillan of the Wharton School of Business specifically for nonprofits, to help them decide how competitive their programs are and what strategic investment or divestment decisions make sense. The MacMillan Matrix provides a framework on which we plotted Custom Collaborative’s programs according to criteria across four categories:

Mission Fit
● Degree to which a program "belongs" or fits within an organization
● Does it have congruence with mission/purpose/vision?
● Does the organization have existing skills and competencies?
● Is the organization able to share resources/coordinate activities with other programs?

Competitive Position
● How much loyalty does the organization have from your client group or community?
● Your success or failure in securing funding
● Your ability to advocate for the program
● The quality of work you do
● Whether you have the skills to do the work
● Able to maintain and increase competency
● Is staffing stable?
● Is the program cost effective?

Alternative Coverage
● Are similar services provided by other organizations?
● Do clients have many other choices?

Program Attractiveness
● Is current stable funding and are there good funding possibilities?
● Attractiveness to funders, volunteers, supporters
● Breadth of support from your constituents or supporters
● Is there high market demand?
● Availability of concrete, measurable outcomes/wins

The MacMillan Matrix suggests that specific combinations of these four sets of questions lend themselves to specific investment or divestment strategies, based on where a program is plotted within the Matrix in response to these criteria. The results of Custom Collaborative’s analysis of its programs are shown on the following page.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>MacMillan’s Recommended Strategy</th>
<th>Key Considerations/Next Steps</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Training Institute      | **Aggressive Growth Strategy**   | • Corporate partnerships/sponsorship could lead to stabilized funding and the ability to support more participants  
                           | • Good mission fit                                                              |                                                                 |
|                         |                                  | • Can we add additional training time for participants who want to learn more advanced skills? (e.g. optional 3-5 class time twice a week) |
|                         |                                  | • Strong competitive position                                                      |                                                                 |
|                         |                                  | • High attractiveness but low alternate coverage                                  |                                                                 |
| Business Incubator      | **Build Strength or Get Out**    | • Develop a list of services that can easily be communicated to Training Institute graduates emerging designers |                                                                 |
|                         |                                  | • More staff/volunteers are needed to support this model. Ideas include volunteer industry reps to host workshops and offer advice, and opportunities to collaborate with other small businesses |                                                                 |
|                         |                                  | • Good mission fit                                                                |                                                                 |
|                         |                                  | • Weak competitive position                                                       |                                                                 |
|                         |                                  | • High attractiveness but low alternative coverage                                |                                                                 |
| Worker Owned Cooperative| **Build Strength or Get Out**    | • The group of women who make up the cooperative is small and there isn’t an established decision-making protocol |                                                                 |
|                         |                                  | • There are only a few women who can take on big projects; what can be done to support members in taking on larger projects? |                                                                 |
|                         |                                  | • Good mission fit                                                                |                                                                 |
|                         |                                  | • Weak competitive position                                                       |                                                                 |
|                         |                                  | • High attractiveness but low alternative coverage                                |                                                                 |
Program Assessment 2: The ACORS Framework

ACORS stands for Aspirations, Competitive Edge, Openings, Red Flags and Soft Spots. Applying the ACORS framework, the planning group discussed five questions:

- What is your aspiration for the future of each Custom Collaborative program?
- What is Custom Collaborative’s competitive edge?
- What are Custom Collaborative’s potential openings/gateways to opportunities?
- What are some red flags that might affect Custom Collaborative’s future?
- What are Custom Collaborative’s soft spots?

The results of this discussion are shown on the following pages.
BUSINESS INCUBATOR

**Competitive Edge**
Build or Get Out

**Openings**
Participant Mentors
Sustainable Fashion Leadership
Industry Product Collaboration

**Aspirations**
First choice for TI graduates and emerging designers
Ongoing Mentorship Program
Revenue neutral or positive

**Red Flags**
Lack of access to professional equipment needed to complete some jobs
Lack of understanding / education / experience in the model
Lack of funding for start-up costs including equipment

**Soft Spots**
Participant communication
Insufficient funds to cover manpower needs
Volunteer usage
Marketing/branding
WORKER OWNED COOPERATIVE

Aspirations

- CC has its own line and established brand recognition & awards
- Leader in environmental sustainability and women’s economic sustainability
- Independent Worker Owned Co-Operative becomes largest garment manufacturer in NYC

Openings

- Fashion networks – schools and industry
- Market Opportunities – site of emerging design + big consumer base
- Local Manufacturing

Red Flags

- Lack of access to professional equipment needed to complete some jobs
- Lack of understanding / education / experience in the model
- Lack of funding for start-up costs including equipment

Soft Spots

- Space and Location
- Harlem – sense of place
- Few members can take on bigger specialized jobs
- Worker ownership decision making process
- Marketing and Branding
- Volunteer Usage
V. STRATEGIC PROGRAMMATIC & OPERATIONAL GOALS

In the last segment of the planning session, CRE led a goal setting activity for Custom Collaborative to use in identifying and prioritizing goals. The draft goals identified were then reviewed and revised by the steering committee.

By the end of 2023, Custom Collaborative will have achieved the following programmatic and operational priorities:

Programmatic:

A. Identified and responded to the advanced and specialized needs of Training Institute participants
B. Strengthened and further developed fashion industry connections to increase organizational alignment and visibility
C. Strengthened the Custom Collaborative brand including centering environmental sustainability and entrepreneurial skills development
D. Created systems to measure and share outcomes and track programmatic success
E. Built an advocacy model to ensure equitable access to the fashion industry for our target population and encouraged a more gender and racially equitable industry

Operational:

A. Built out the Custom Collaborative team to support growth and expansion
B. Leveraged the enhanced Custom Collaborative brand to expand recognition, fashion industry alignment, and support
C. Created a 3-year fundraising plan to ensure financial sustainability
D. Explored and built up the digital platforms that will best support viable revenue streams
E. Strengthened organizational financial management and sustainability
1. **Goal Setting**

The team began to consider strategies and activities for the top programmatic goals. The core team of the Planning Committee needs to push for the full completion of each of the programmatic and operational goals for the purpose of action planning and moving to implementation including activities, timeline, and lead staff.

### IDENTIFY AND RESPOND TO THE ADVANCED AND SPECIALIZED NEEDS OF THE TRAINING INSTITUTE PARTICIPANTS

#### INDICATORS OF SUCCESS

- Industry partners report that they hire well-trained graduates who are work ready
- 85% retention rate in Training Institute cohorts
- Each graduate is following her graduation business plan or one that she revised with the help of Custom Collaborative
- Student and graduate surveys consistently show satisfaction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STRATEGIES</th>
<th>KEY ACTIVITIES AND STEPS</th>
<th>TIMELINE</th>
<th>LEAD PERSON(S)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Train to the Future</strong></td>
<td>1. Partner with cutting edge manufacturers to determine what skills they want</td>
<td>3 months</td>
<td>Executive Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Partner with fashion schools for research and support</td>
<td>9 months</td>
<td>Executive Director, MD of strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Obtain technical equipment and software</td>
<td>6 months</td>
<td>Executive Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Bring in specialists for modules</td>
<td>2 months</td>
<td>Lead Instructor, Entrepreneurship Coach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Satisfy Participants</strong></td>
<td>1. Plan strategic field trips before the program starts</td>
<td>1 month</td>
<td>Lead Instructor, Entrepreneurship Coach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Provide electronic learning through fashion university or record instructors for later review</td>
<td>6 weeks</td>
<td>Executive Director, Lead Instructor, Entrepreneurship Coach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Present milestone projects during semester</td>
<td>2 months</td>
<td>Lead Instructor, Entrepreneurship Coach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recruit the most suitable students</td>
<td>4. Train and support program instructors in compassion and structured expectations</td>
<td>6 weeks</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. Provide 3 feedback opportunities per cohort</td>
<td>2 months</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Lead Instructor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Partner with a good social service organization</td>
<td>6 months</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Develop and follow a strong intake process</td>
<td>2 months</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Executive Director</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Executive Director, Business Development Consultant</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Strengthen the Custom Collaborative Brand Including Centering Environmental Sustainability and Entrepreneurial Skills Development

## Indicators of Success
- Increased Custom Collaborative brand recognition amongst NYC fashion industry
- Increased (monthly) inclusion in press and media
- CC becomes household/industry name for workforce development and sustainability

## Strategies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STRATEGIES</th>
<th>KEY ACTIVITIES AND STEPS</th>
<th>TIMELINE</th>
<th>LEAD PERSON(S)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Rebranding with a design agency | 1. Assess current brand footprint  
2. Find pro-bono partner with industry credentials  
3. Complete rebranding process and develop brand book + guidelines  
4. Redesign website and overhaul social strategy | 6 months | Executive Director (approvals)  
MD of Strategy  
Agency (content development) |
| Partnership Development w/sustainability and workforce partners | 1. Assess/landscape key partners in sustainability and workforce development  
2. Identify target partners, create ongoing commitment → activate around partnership | 8-12 months (coincide w/rebranding) | Executive Director  
MD of Strategy  
Partnership Manager (maintain) |
| Public Relations campaign w/agency | 1. Identify PR partner to support the work  
2. Identify PR position + angle  
3. Agency to pitch CC to appropriate press | 8-12 months (coincide w/key partnership launch) | MD of Strategy  
PR agency |
| Create a CC Branded Sustainable Fashion Line | 1. Source fabrics, design, and manufacture in house for our own collection for Spring/Summer and Fall/Winter  
2. Promote CC Fashion Brand through Social Media, show at | 9 months | Lead Instructor  
Entrepreneurship Coach |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trade Shows to sell specialty retailers</th>
<th>9 months</th>
<th>Lead Instructor, Marketing &amp; Media Fellow</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Establish Custom Collaborative Retail Pop Up Shops</td>
<td>9-12 months</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### CREATE SYSTEMS TO MEASURE AND SHARE OUTCOMES AND TRACK PROGRAMMATIC SUCCESS

#### INDICATORS OF SUCCESS
- Increase in data available to measure effort and impact of each CC program
- Increase in data available to measure ROI on human and financial resources invested in CC programs
- Third-party validation of CC programs based on the metrics available

#### STRATEGIES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>KEY ACTIVITIES AND STEPS</th>
<th>TIMELINE</th>
<th>LEAD PERSON(S)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Identify data to track</td>
<td>1. Hire Data Analyst to design metrics</td>
<td>3 months</td>
<td>Executive Director, Board, Key Donors, Data Analyst</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Redesign programmatic elements that aren’t measurable</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Identify baseline quantitative and qualitative metrics that tell the Custom Collaborative story</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop system(s) to centrally house data</td>
<td>1. Secure easiest and most efficient software</td>
<td>3 months</td>
<td>Data Analyst</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a. Captures both qualitative and quantitative data</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b. Captures point in time and does trend analysis over longer data sets</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Track baseline and program linked data</td>
<td>1. Analyze data for positive and negative trends</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>Data Analyst and Executive Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Evaluate program elements, instructors, and other tools used in the execution of Custom Collaborative’s mission</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
VI. IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

There are three categories of recommendations that CRE proposes to Custom Collaborative:

- **Strategic** – These recommendations center on organizational identity and long-term impact of the organization. We see these recommendations as carving a significant niche for Custom Collaborative and positioning it as an organization that makes a real difference in the lives of the women and communities they serve.

- **Programmatic** – Programmatic recommendations are aimed at solidifying and deepening the outcomes of Custom Collaborative programs and activities. By achieving these outcomes, CC is then positioned to affirm its value proposition as an organization and to demonstrate to its stakeholders (participants, funders, supporters, the Fashion Industry and civil society in general) its impact and influence.

- **Operational** – These recommendations focus on establishing an infrastructure aligned with Custom Collaborative’s present circumstances yet scalable to its future growth. Having this infrastructure will help achieve the programmatic recommendations. To accomplish these recommendations, financial and non-financial resources will be needed.
Strategic Recommendations

“Low-Hanging” Fruit

Create a small, dedicated committee to ensure follow up and closure on Custom Collaborative’s vision and mission statements, target population, and strategy screen (See Attachment C). Be clear about the expectations, deliverables, and timeline for this committee.

Prioritize Custom Collaborative’s Programmatic and Operational goals focusing on what CC will primarily hold itself accountable for, and where it will primarily focus limited resources.

One to Two-Year Timeline

The desire for clarification on Custom Collaborative’s Board function and roles was raised both in previous assessments and during CRE’s data collection. It will be important for CC to review current Board capacity and to weigh the options, including restructuring to best allow for fluid communication, oversight and management. This should include clarified and documented roles and responsibilities and ensuring that board members are committed to the mission of CC and their roles to represent and advocate for Custom Collaborative internally and externally.

Begin building and adapting Custom Collaborative’s communications strategy to increase visibility in the Fashion Industry.
Programmatic Recommendations

“Low-Hanging” Fruit

Focus initial fundraising efforts on the programs identified for aggressive growth.

Review and revise Training Institute curriculum to include optional advanced learning.

Clarify the Business Incubator model, and communicate that decision as needed to stakeholders.

Apply the Strategy Screen to help identify how well a new program or services meets Custom Collaborative’s critical criteria.

One to Two-Year Timeline

As changes are made, establish programmatic outcomes and capture outcomes data, both quantitative and anecdotal. This will serve as continuous program improvement, and increase programs’ ability to attract funders, particularly given the strong outcomes orientation of funders.
Operational Recommendations

“Low-Hanging” Fruit

Recruit fashion industry volunteers as quickly as possible. These could include FIT instructors, CC Training Institute graduates, and/or qualified corporate staff interested in supporting any of the three CC program areas.

Consider inviting interns to fulfill administrative or project or program work with some level of stipend and/or access to resources that are relevant to their school requirements/work.

Review Board composition to ensure diversity of experience, networks, gender, sexual orientation, as well as financial capacity and other considerations.

Build out basic and mandated Board policies and procedures.

One to Two-Year Timeline

Identify new strategic location and other partnerships for program expansion as well as financial supports.
VII. ADDRESSING NEW REALITIES

While Custom Collaborative engaged in its Strategic Planning process, the world faced a global pandemic unlike any health event in the last 100 years. As novel coronavirus (Covid-19) transmission caused New York City businesses and organizations to close their doors, Custom Collaborative has been able to quickly pivot to virtual instruction due to much of the work done over the course of the Strategic Planning process.

Additionally, The United States of America began to reckon with its history of systemic racism marked by social uprisings throughout the country that spread to global protests challenging anti-blackness. As Custom Collaborative continues to find new and innovative ways to support women, it is also clear that CC must be explicit in its goal to support racial and gender equality in the fashion industry while seeking to become an anti-racist organization. These goals have been included in the revised programmatic and operational goals for further review and Board approval.

The Long View

The Theory of Change planning process served as a generative platform for the organization to reflect on its vision, mission, target population, program outcomes, and organizational infrastructure. The discussions and decisions made would be a solid foundation for developing strategic, programmatic, and operational goals. A lot of work lies ahead but the organization is now positioned to act on the recommendations in this report.

Custom Collaborative has invested time, resources, and energy in reassessing its vision, mission, strategies, as well as addressing generative, strategic, and some tactical issues. In the session closing, participants shared one word that described their feelings about the day. These were:

- Illuminating
- Complex
- Powerful
- Empowering
- Inspiring
- Unifying
- Growth
- Creative

When all is said and done, what will move this strategic blueprint forward is leverage of these positive sentiments, and the team’s commitment, courage, and constancy to act on the final decisions that the team and Board make together.
Appendices

Appendix A: Custom Collaborative’s Emerging Theory of Change
Appendix B: MacMillan Matrix Analysis and Instructions
Appendix C: Strategy Screen
Appendix D: Action Planning Template
Appendix E: Raw Focus Group, Interview & Session Notes
Appendix F: Deck from Strategic Session