

# ACT NOW EDUCATION STRATEGIC GOALS

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ACT NOW Education is a nonprofit organization dedicated to empowering members of the military community through education. Our mission is to provide upskilling, reskilling, and career-enhancing information and opportunities for Active Duty, Veterans, Military Spouses, Reservists, and the National Guard in order to better lives and strengthen minds. This strategic plan outlines our vision, goals, and objectives for the next three years.

## Mission and Vision

### Section Notes

**Mission:** To inspire and empower our community via education by providing upskilling, reskilling and career-enhancing information and opportunities for Active Duty, Veterans, Military Spouses, Reservists, and the National Guard in order to better lives and strengthen minds.

**Vision:** Improving and impacting the military community through the empowerment of education.

### Goals:

1. Increase our impact on assisting our community in finding employment
2. Increase our impact on the military community by expanding our reach and increasing our member base to 100,000 within the next three years.
3. Develop and implement new programs and services that meet the changing needs of our community
4. Increase the number of partnerships with government agencies, nonprofit organizations, and corporate entities to provide additional resources and opportunities to our members.
5. Increase the number of certified and trained members of the military community by expanding our "3 CERT" program, offering additional certification and training programs in other high-demand industries, and partnering with organizations like Coursera and Splunk.
6. Increase our visibility and recognition among the military community by improving our marketing and outreach efforts.

### Objectives:

1. Expand our member base to 100,000 by the end of the three-year period through targeted marketing and outreach efforts, including promoting our partnerships with Coursera and Splunk.

2. Develop and implement new programs and services by conducting community needs assessments and collaborating with relevant stakeholders.
3. Increase the number of partnerships by actively seeking new partnerships and developing relationships with key stakeholders
4. Expand our "3 CERT" program and offer additional certification and training programs by researching the needs of the military community and developing partnerships with training providers, Coursera and Splunk
5. Improve our marketing and outreach efforts by developing a comprehensive marketing plan, leveraging social media platforms, and building relationships with key influencers and stakeholders

### **Strategies:**

1. Increase our impact by leveraging technology and social media to reach a wider audience and enhance our outreach efforts, including promoting our partnerships Coursera and Splunk
2. Develop a comprehensive needs assessment survey to gather information on the needs and preferences of our community.
3. Develop relationships with key stakeholders through regular meetings and networking events
4. Develop partnerships with training providers to offer new certification and training programs, including 3Cert, Coursera and Splunk
5. Develop a comprehensive marketing plan that leverages social media platforms and builds relationships with key influencers and stakeholders

### **Conclusion:**

ACT NOW Education is committed to empowering members of the military community through education and career development. By implementing this strategic plan, we will be able to expand our reach and impact on the military community, develop new programs and services, and improve our marketing and outreach efforts. Our partnerships with Coursera and Splunk will enable us to offer additional certification and training programs to better serve the needs of our community. We are dedicated to achieving our goals and objectives and making a positive impact on the lives of those who have served and continue to serve our country.

# External Assessments of ACT NOW

## Administration

### Section Notes

- Our organization was incorporated in Georgia on October 26, 2021.
- There is a certification of formation on file.
- Resident agent is listed as Mary Donne Peters at 6075 Barfield Rd, Sandy Springs, GA.
- The organization is in good standing in the state, and the annual registration for the current year is due.
- While the organization was founded in GA, we operate out of Ellicott City, MD.
- 501c3 status was achieved in November 2021.
- We currently has access to a group of lawyers for legal advice and to understand applicable regulations.

### Strengths

- Our nonprofit has been incorporated for about 18 months, though the platform has been in existence for over 10 years, thus providing a sizable track record of success.
- All state or IRS paperwork is up to date.
- The organization has a legal team to assist with legal and compliance matters with the state and the IRS.
- The board and staff regularly refer to the mission statement and there appears to be no confusion about the mission to the general public.
- The mission accurately reflects the current needs of the population the organization serves.

### Areas Needing Attention

- The current GA annual report should be reviewed and submitted, and charitable solicitation should be pursued in the states where the organization anticipates receiving contributions (grants and/or donations).

## Strategic Plan

This area covers information related to the organization's goals and assessment of internal and external factors impacting its success.

## Section Notes

- A business plan was developed at the start of the nonprofit organization but is not regularly reviewed or updated
- The plan includes high-level goals for the organization to pursue.
- While the board and team do not refer to the business plan, they understand that the goals listed there are a priority of the organization.
- The main focus of the current business plan is to focus on the minimal viable product (MVP), which is to create a customized website that will function as a dashboard
- The goal is to make the 3Cert program the flagship program.
- Currently, the organization is divided into 4 programs:
  - 3 Cert
  - Master's program (\$18,000 scholarship from the school)
  - SPLUNK program
  - Coursera Program
- Our community is currently hosted on Facebook. The team is currently working on transitioning off Facebook into a custom site.
- Our team regularly informally assesses the market to understand the program landscape and to identify practices from similar programs. The team regularly identifies resources that are shared with the group.
- A social media team is currently being developed.
- Orientations are held every Saturday with 200-500 people attending weekly.

## Strengths

- There is an established system for identifying program resources and executing programs that's working well.
- The current team appears to be highly functional and effective at implementing their tasks.
- The programs have strong positive results.
- Not many organizations provide workforce resources, and have the staff with experience, and can execute as well as Act Now Education.

## Areas Needing Attention

- There is a need for a more detailed strategic plan (based on initial business plan) with SMART goals, tasks and timelines associated. The board should be engaged in this process.

# Board of Directors

## Section Notes

- The board is diverse according to race, ethnicity, gender, and age. The majority of participants have lived experience in the military.
- The current board is a working board, which supports the programming.
- Strategically recruit advisory board members who can assist with securing major funding, which includes introducing the organization to key partners, and keeping the organization visible to funders.
- There are currently 8 board members who have spent close to 4,000 hours each working on the programs.
- The board currently meets monthly and there is typically a quorum; the meetings are mostly about board updates and me providing organizational updates and the board weighing in on decisions presented to them.
- There are some board policies in place (bylaws), which were signed by the board. There are no financial management policies.
- The current committee structure is as follows:
  - Orientation
  - Social Media
  - Programming

## Strengths

- The board is committed and the members are supporting the organization's programmatic work.
- The board is meeting monthly.
- The board is incredibly diverse and reflective of the population that the organization serves.

## Areas Needing Attention

- The current board functions as a working board, not a governing board. Both are needed.
- Key board committees should be implemented such as fundraising and governance.
- The board needs member agreements and an orientation process to understand their governing and fundraising roles.
- Ongoing recruitment is needed for board members.
- There aren't financial contributions from any board members (though they volunteer a large amount of time).

# External Relations & Communications

## Section Notes

- There is an unofficial policy against newsletters, so emails are rarely sent out, but it's unsure who has the capacity to write the emails.
- There are several pitch decks.
- There is an internal branding and reference guide (the AcNow notebook).
- There haven't been any press releases developed.
  
- Most external communications are done on social media and the goal on those networks is to build the network and get the participant's data and information. The organization is currently on Facebook, LinkedIn, Youtube, TikTok and IG.
- There is some engagement with government partners - the organization partners with the DOD military spouse employment program.
- There has been some advocacy - Jai recently participated in a briefing on Capitol Hill to talk about transition programs for veterans.
- The organization used to produce content on social media channels (e.g. videos on Youtube)
- Currently a circle of influence hasn't been completed

## Strengths

- The massive member network is primed with key connections that can help to bring in support.

## Areas Needing Attention

- There is no clear external communications strategy; most communications are focused on programming, not external partners.
- The member network should be leveraged more for fundraising and support with communicating the organization's impact.
- There may need to be more staff capacity to develop an external strategy.
- The email newsletter is underutilized.

# Financial Management

## Section Notes

- The 3 Cert program has a budget for this fiscal year - the other programs do not.
- The organization is using Quickbooks for accounting.

- Bookkeeping system seems to be working well.
- The organization is registered with PayPal and Benevity.
- Bank statements are used to present financial information.
- There is no liability insurance for the board currently.

## **Strengths**

- There is an online bookkeeping system in place.
- The 3 Cert program has an established budget.

## **Areas Needing Attention**

- D&O insurance should be considered.

# **Programming**

## **Section Notes**

- The Coursera program is run by Tyrone individual on the team, and the remaining programs are run by Jai. That program has a goal of a certain number of subscribers each year.
- The 3 Cert program has program goals: get at least 75% people certification jobs; the other goal is to make it a recurring certification program. It is not a programmatic goal, but a goal to make it more marketable.

## **Strengths**

- 4 programs are running simultaneously, even with volunteer staff

## **Areas Needing Attention**

- Each program needs a budget and a set of goals.

# **Resource Development**

## **Section Notes**

Annual Expenses - \$200,000

Projected Income - \$240,000

- The current programs are operational based on money available.
- Jai would like to do the 3cert program at least 4 times a year.
- If the programs were implemented as intended, the budget would be a little over a million.



- No fund development in place, but Jai is trying to identify organizations that have funding.
- There are some monthly donors who give around \$10/month.
- Looking to identify organizations or companies to sponsor the organization. It's easier to do corporate funding around events.
- Grant funding is typically unrestricted money.

## **Strengths**

- Potential funding stream in corporate sponsorship
- Previous grant funding has been unrestricted

## **Areas Needing Attention**

- The organization can leverage its network to recruit monthly donors.
- There is no fund development plan in place.

## **Overall Assessment**

Strengths of the organization identified by Jai:

- The community (Facebook)
- Diverse team that come from different walks of life
- Can execute on an idea quickly

Areas that ACT NOW would like to improve:

- Fundraising
- More solid infrastructure
- Advisory board

Due to our incredible track record, ACT NOW is particularly poised to scale its programs and attract major donors. ACT NOW has several untapped resources that can help with scaling. One of the biggest resources - their member network- can be a tool to ensure financial sustainability. The organization also doesn't do much external facing communications; most of their communication is geared towards people taking their classes. With a consistent external message on why it's important to train the military community, ACT NOW can attract more funding.