

Strategic Plan Review: Lutheran Community Services Northwest

Logan Prochaska Garabato

University of North Carolina Greensboro

PSC 511D

Professor Hayes

April 13, 2026

Strategic Plan Review: Lutheran Community Services Northwest

For the purposes of this paper, the strategic plan that will be reviewed is for Lutheran Community Services Northwest (LCSNW). According to [its strategic plan for 2026-2028](#), LCSNW “exists to partner with individuals, families and communities for health, justice and hope.” This nonprofit organization provides support to individuals across the states of Washington, Oregon and Idaho. Its services range from behavioral health and immigration support to child and aging adult wellness to victims of crime. In total, the plan is 12 pages in length. Overall, this plan has a strong foundation, but it reads more like an organizational overview rather than an actionable blueprint outlining a clear path forward.

According to Kabeyi (2019), nonprofit strategic plans should demonstrate initiatives that the organization is prepared “to commit to over a period of three to five years” (p. 29). Based on the goals outlined in the LCSNW plan, it appears that the organization does have a defined three-year commitment in mind, covering the years 2026 through 2028. The plan opens with a letter from the organizational leadership of LCSNW, which outlines general information about who the organization assists as well as the nonprofit’s vision and mission. I thought this was helpful information to include, as this plan is not just being viewed by employees but by other stakeholder groups as well. These stakeholders may include potential donors who would benefit from understanding how resources are allocated and how the organization measures impact.

Upon first glance, I did like the overall design of the plan. I thought it was eye-catching, had a lot of photographs that were related to the organization, and it was aesthetically pleasing. Having a visually attractive plan could be very beneficial as it feels more inviting to the average viewer who may not have a strong affiliation with the nonprofit, and it may encourage them to learn more about the organization. Additionally, the layout of the plan made sense and flowed

from one area to another easily. Beginning with an overview of internal and external challenges is an effective approach, as it provides context for the strategies that follow. However, this plan would have benefitted by including a clearer S.W.O.T. analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats). I liked how it addressed the challenges LCSNW was facing, but I didn't see any mention to the things that the organization was doing well that they could lean into in order to advance the goals of this plan.

Another aspect of the plan that was helpful was introducing the three strategic pillars that LCSNW operates from. Under each pillar was a list of strategies that LCSNW would employ in order to reach the goals that the plan listed. The plan concluded with a list of offices and contact information which I would find helpful if I was someone looking to learn more about LCSNW after reviewing the plan, especially if I had picked up a printed copy somewhere. Despite these positives, I had a hard time really following the actual plan that this document laid out. This was primarily due to the fact that there didn't seem to be a true plan really being presented. The "plan" felt more like a wish list of things the staff at LCSNW hoped would happen rather than a roadmap to achieving them.

In strategic planning, setting S.M.A.R.T. (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-Bound) goals is important because it translates the vision of an organization into actionable and trackable objectives – making it very clear when a goal is being met or falling short. There were quite a few goals outlined in this plan and strategies to support them, but I felt like several of these goals were nonspecific and difficult to clearly measure. For example, "high-quality, accessible data used to drive decisions, improve performance, and tell our story of impact" was a goal under the third pillar the plan presented. This statement reads more as a general aspiration rather than a clearly defined objective. It raises several questions: What kind of data will be

used? What makes it high quality? How will success be measured? Additionally, there wasn't any mention of reevaluation to ensure that goals are being met or adjusted. This is a really important element to include in the plan. Kabeyi (2019) explains that one of the main reasons organizations' plans fail is due to a lack of monitoring and evaluation. Even if a goal is ongoing, it is important to evaluate its success rate, at least annually, but there is no mention of that within the plan.

After my initial review of LCSNW's plan, I decided to compare it to two of the plans provided – the Guilford Nonprofit Consortium (GNPC) and the Greater High Point Food Alliance (GHPFA). One notable difference is that both GNPC and GHPFA include detailed information about their strategic planning processes. This provides transparency about who contributed to the plan and can increase credibility with the reader if the planning committee is made up of a diverse group. Additionally, understanding what informed the plan (surveys, focus groups, data analysis, etc.) affirms why certain strategies were chosen. Without this context in the LCSNW plan it is more difficult to evaluate why certain goals and strategies were created.

In conclusion, I don't think that the LCSNW's plan is bad, but it appears to function more as a document to kick off the strategic planning process rather than as a fully developed final product. While it does provide a good background on the organization's mission and explains several of the challenges facing the organization and the community it supports, the "plan" falls short in translating those elements into an actionable roadmap. With some adjustments, especially by outlining clearer goals, incorporating measurable key performance indicators, and defining specific implementation steps, this plan could become significantly more effective in supporting LCSNW's overall reach and success within the communities it serves.

References

Greater High Point Food Alliance. (2022). *GHPFA strategic plan 2023-2025*.

https://uncg.instructure.com/courses/149140/files/18125629/download?download_frd=1

Guilford Nonprofit Consortium. (2020). *GNPC strategic plan 2020-2023*.

https://uncg.instructure.com/courses/149140/files/18096064/download?download_frd=1

Kabeyi, Moses Jeremiah Barasa. (2019). *Organizational strategic planning, implementation and evaluation with analysis of challenges and benefits for profit and nonprofit organizations*.

International Journal of Applied Research and Studies. 5. 27-32.

10.22271/allresearch.2019.v5.i6a.5870.

Lutheran Community Services Northwest. (2025). *LCSNW strategic plan 2026-2028*.

<https://lcsnw.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/2026-28-LCSNW-Strategic-Plan.pdf>